



Study on Governance Challenges for Education in Fragile Situations

Liberia Country Report



Foreword and Acknowledgements

The European Commission study management team, Brussels, consisted of representatives from the Social and Human Development and Migration Unit of DG, European Aid. The Study Reference Group consisted of representatives from the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies, Education and Training Foundation, DFID, GTZ, CIDA, IIEP UNESCO, World Bank, Ulster University and the European Commission.

These groups and the consultancy team would like to thank the officials of the Ministry of Education and the European Commission Office in Liberia, for their cooperation in facilitating the study and helping to arrange the Liberia field visit in June 2009. In particular, special thanks are accorded to Dr. Joseph D.Z. Korto, Minister of Education, who made his precious time available for personal consultation on the study.

In addition, the consultancy team would like to thank the senior officials and technical staff of the Ministry of Education for making time available for specific meetings and provision of documentation. Special thanks are accorded to Joan Casanova, EC programme manager, and the ECSEL team, who helped organise specific meetings and provided other key documentation and advice.

In particular, the following people are acknowledged for their support, advice and documentation: Dr. Joseph D.Z. Korto, Hon. Matthew G. Zarzar, Prof. J. Emmanuel Roberts; Mrs Fecelia S. Doe-Sumah, Mr. J.McCormack, Mr. Nick Waterman, Mrs Rozanne Chorlton, Mrs Margaret Sancho-Morris, Ms Alleesha Taylor, Mr. Ernest Gale, Dr Albert Dupigny, Dr Kacem Bensalah, Mr. Tim Brown, Mr. Bernard Batidzirai, Mr. Anthony Dewees, Ms Kristiina Karjanlahti and Ms Caroline Schmidt. Particular thanks are given to the staff of a district education office and a number of schools visited.

It is hoped that this analysis will be a useful contribution to the development of education in Liberia in the coming years. It is also hoped that the analysis accurately reflects the views and analysis of those consulted and relevant documentation. The lead author of this report is Mr. Chris Perry, designated consultant for the Liberia case study. The Study and consultancy team has been managed by Euro-Trends.

This Study was financed by the European Commission. The contents of this country report is the sole responsibility of Euro-Trends and the consultancy team and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Commission.

Map of Liberia



Table of Contents

Foreword and Acknowledgements.....	1
Map of Liberia	2
Glossary of Terms and Acronyms	4
1. Historical Perspectives: Sector Performance and Resilience	5
1.1 Analysis of Long-Term Sector Performance and Resilience.....	5
1.2 Analysis of Factors Affecting Sector Resilience and Fragility	6
2. Education Sector Fragility Assessment: Status and Outlook	9
2.1 Key Features of Sector Resilience and Fragility	9
2.2 Overall Education Fragility Status Assessment	12
2.3 Sector Fragility and Resilience Outlook, Opportunities and Risks	13
3. Education Sector Governance Assessment: Status and Outlook	15
3.1 Context beyond the Sector	15
3.2 Actors, Interests and Incentives in the Sector	16
3.3 Sector Governance/ Accountability Relations	18
4. Main Findings: Scope and Diversity of Local and Donor Supported Initiatives.....	19
4.1 Summary of Findings: Local Initiatives.....	19
4.2 Summary of Findings: Donor Supported Initiatives	21
5. Main Findings: Lessons Learned and Good Practice.....	25
5.1 Analysis of Local Initiative Good Practice: Lessons Learned	25
5.2 Analysis of Donor Supported Initiative Good Practice: Lessons Learned	26
6. Country Report: Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations	28
6.1 Conclusions and Key Issues	28
6.2 Key Recommendations: Improved Education Programme Planning / Design.....	29
6.3 Key Recommendations: Enabling Aid Effectiveness and Sector Governance	30
Selected Bibliography	31

Glossary of Terms and Acronyms

Acronym/Term	English
AfDB	African Development Bank
ALP	Accelerated Learning Programme
CEO	Country Education Office
CF	Catalytic Fund
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
CSRS	Civil Service Reform Strategy
DEO	District Education Office
DP	Development Partners
EC	European Commission
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ECSEL	EC Support to Education in Liberia
EFA	Education for All
EMIS	Education Management Information System
EPF	Education Pooled Fund
ESP	Education Sector Plan
ESWG	Education Sector Working Group
FACPEL	Free and Compulsory Primary Education in Liberia
FTI	Fast Track Initiative
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEMAP	Governance and Economic Management Assistance Programme
GER	Gross Enrolment Rate
GoL	Government of Liberia
HIPC	Heavily Indebted Poor Countries
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
IDA	International Development Association
IFMIS	Integrated Financial Management Information System
IMF	International Monetary Fund
iPRS	Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy
LISGIS	Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services
L-PERP	Liberian Primary Education Sector Recovery Program
MCSS	Monrovia Consolidated School System
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoF	Ministry of Finance
NER	Net Enrolment Rate
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NIMAC	National Information Management Centre
NPFL	National Patriotic Front of Liberia
NPV	Net Present Value
NTGL	National Transitional Government of Liberia
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OSI	Open Society Institute
PFM	Public Financial Management
PRGF	Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility
PRS	Poverty Reduction Strategy
PSM	Public Service Management
RALS	Rapid Assessment of Learning Spaces
SMC	School Management Committee
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNMIL	United Nations Mission in Liberia
USAID	United States Agency for Development
WFP	World Food Programme



1. Historical Perspectives: Sector Performance and Resilience

1.1 Analysis of Long-Term Sector Performance and Resilience

Since its establishment in 1822, Liberia has been governed by the descendants of former American slaves, but this dominance ended with a coup in 1980 when power was seized by Samuel Doe. After pressure from the United States and others, Doe allowed the return of political parties in 1984 and won a rigged presidential election in 1985. Doe exploited long-simmering tensions between Americo-Liberians and indigenous ethnic groups in order to consolidate his power base during this time.

Decades of civil war began during 1989 (see *Figure 3*) when the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), led by Charles Taylor, started an uprising against the Government. The Government was quickly overthrown and, despite the intervention of a rapid response ECOWAS force, conflict continued into the middle of the next decade with numerous cease fires and peace agreements failing to deliver a lasting peace. When the capital of Monrovia was destroyed in 1996, all parties of the conflict agreed to elections which were won by the NPFL in 1997; installing Charles Taylor as president.

The government was not effective at bridging the political divide however and the country returned to civil war in 1999 with peace finally being achieved in 2003 with the creation of a Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) and the formation of a National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL). After largely free and fair presidential elections were held in 2005, President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf was inaugurated in January 2006.

Table 1: Selected Liberia Education Performance Indicator Trends, 1990-2006¹

Indicator	1990	1995	2000	2006	Sub-Saharan Africa, 2006
Primary GER	n/a	25.4	99.9	91.5	94.2
Secondary GER	n/a	13	32.3	n/a	38
Tertiary GER	n/a	4.1	15.6	n/a	6.3
Primary NER	12.3	n/a	66.2	39.5	72.7

Prior to 1950's, education was not a priority for Government and was mainly provided by the private sector, particularly missions, with the few having an education coming from families of the elite and from coastal areas.² However, with the introduction of new government policies, between the early 50's and early 70's enrolment increased seven-fold and the number of teachers six-fold, with

¹ World Bank Statistics.

² World Bank, 1975, Liberia: Growth with Development, a Basic Economic Report

primary net enrolments rising to around 50%.³ With the election of William Tolbert as president in 1971, a policy of self help and self reliance for the rural hinterland of Liberia was introduced, with Government prioritising spending in coastal areas.⁴ Despite this policy, and enabled by a strong community response and support from the international community, primary net enrolment grew to around 76% by 1980.⁵

The civil war in Liberia over the 14 years between 1989 and 2003 had a devastating impact on the education system. It is estimated that 41% of primary schools and 14% of secondary schools, of all types, were significantly damaged or completely destroyed over this period. During the relative peace in the late 90s, after the presidential election, efforts were made to reconstruct schools and classrooms and enrolment doubled.⁶

Enrolment levels quickly recovered once the civil war ended in 2003, though have become dominated by overage children, with much weaker participation from children of the correct schools age (shown by a fall in primary NER from 66.2% to 39.5% between 2000 and 2006 – see *Table 1*).

Figure 1: 2007/08 Primary NER and GER, By County

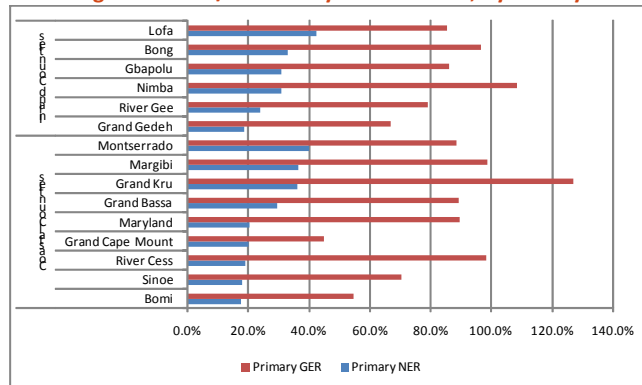
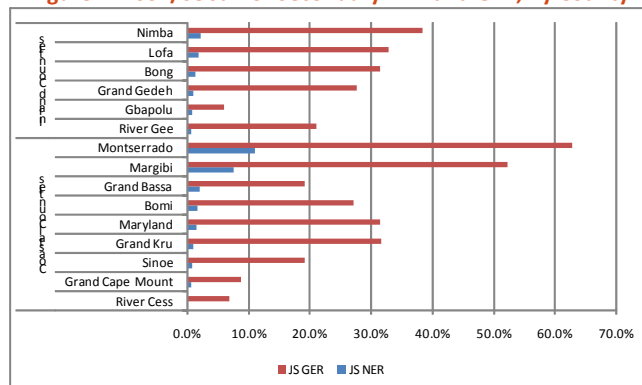


Figure 2: 2007/08 Junior Secondary NER and GER, By County



Source: MoE 2007/08 School Census

As of 2007/08, national NER enrolment rates are 33% and 5% for primary and junior secondary respectively, compared to GER rates of 89% and 40%. Current participation rates (see *Figures 1* and *2*) show distinct inequities across the country, consistent with historic under-investment in rural areas. For example, whilst good progress has been made in improving equitable access and participation in primary education, there are significant disparities in junior secondary participation rates between the majority of counties and the two urban counties near Monrovia (Montserrado and Margibi).

1.2 Analysis of Factors Affecting Sector Resilience and Fragility

The roots of the conflict can, in part, be traced back to historic tensions and inequalities between the descendants of American settlers (concentrated in coastal and urban areas) and indigenous Liberians

³ World Bank, 1975, Liberia: Growth with Development, a Basic Economic Report

⁴ Personnel communication, John Sumo, UNICEF.

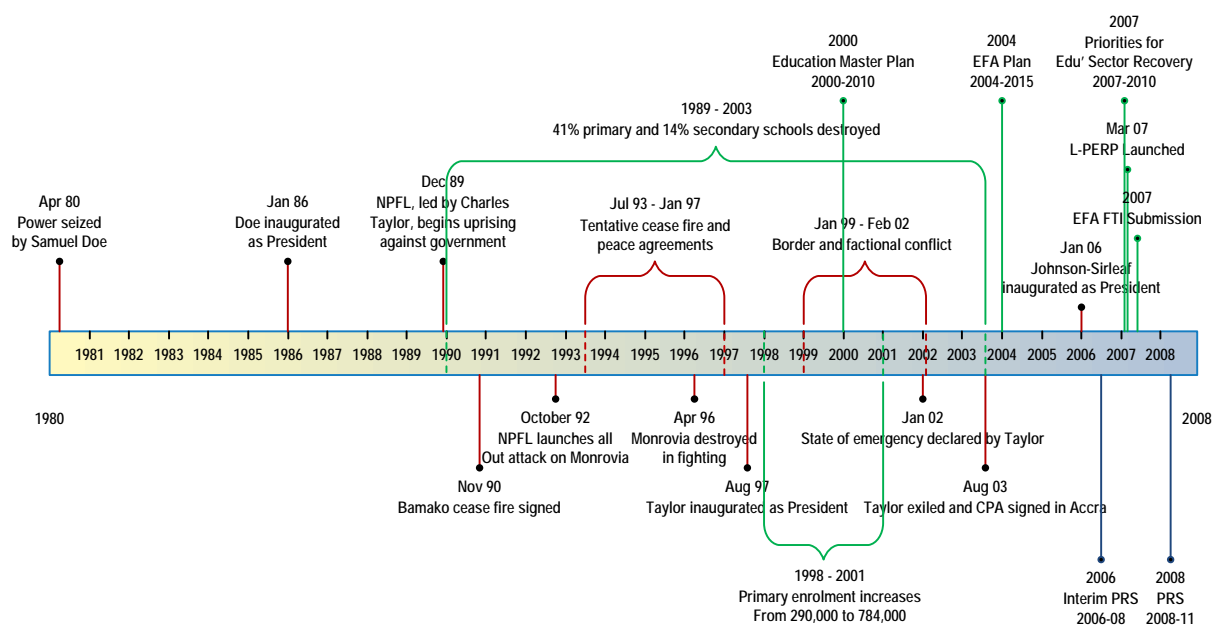
⁵ Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 2006, Education in the Conflict to Post-Conflict Transition in Liberia

⁶ GoL MoE, 2007, Priorities for Education Sector Recovery in Post-Conflict Liberia

(in the rural hinterland). These inequalities were clearly evident in access to education opportunities before President Tubman's "Unification and Integration" policy was launched in the 1950's.

The main factor which has contributed to fragility within the education sector is the same as for the country as the whole: poor governance. Education has been a means by which certain groups dominated Liberian society and sustained their domination, including through long-standing historic inequalities between American settlers and indigenous peoples, and latterly along ethnic lines. Despite significant efforts being directed towards the development of governance institutions (many of which have never existed) there are concerns that the root causes of poor governance in Liberia are still not being effectively addressed.⁷

Figure 3: Summary Chronology of Key Events in Liberia, 1980 - 2008



In reviewing the historical perspectives of education in Liberia, a number of key factors can be identified which have contributed to either increased resilience or increased fragility in the education sector (see Table 2). For most of the conflict years between 1989 and 2003 there was no effective Government in the majority of the country and little or no direct resources being made available to schools or teachers from Government. During this time, communities had no alternative but to provide education for their children through their own initiative, often with the support of NGOs or international aid organisations.

During the conflict years there was a serious breakdown in the links between central government, local authorities, service providers and communities. Education managers at the local levels were displaced or unable to carry out their duties, public service providers were unable to function due to a lack of funds and parents stopped sending their children to school for fear of their conscription into the conflict. These factors again contributed to communities pursuing their own education initiatives.

⁷ Sahel and West Africa Club/OECD and ECOWAS, 2008, Orientations and Challenges of Economic and Social Reconstruction in Sierra Leone and Liberia

Table 2: Factors Influencing Education Sector Resilience or Fragility

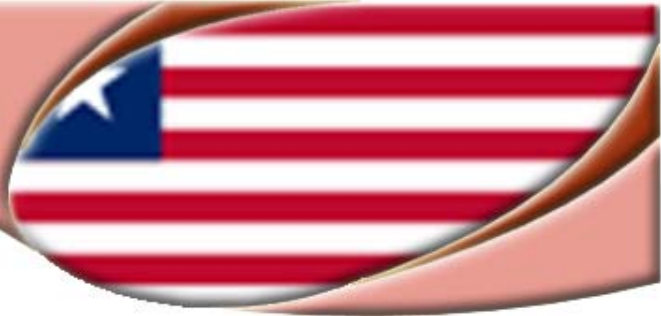
Resilience	Fragility
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strong community-driven initiatives over 1989 – 2003 when there was effectively no Government and periods of relative peace. ▪ Massive expansion of Community schools (from a total of 54 in 1989 to 1,370 in 2007/08). ▪ Early recognition (1997/98) by Government of the role education could play in helping demobilise and reintegrate ex-combatants led to implementation of Accelerated Learning Programmes (ALP). ▪ Very high level of demand for education from parents and youth. ▪ Keeping children and ex-combatants in school (e.g. through ALP) reduces vulnerability to recruitment as combatants. ▪ Introduction of free and compulsory education policy in 2001 by the NTGL. ▪ Nationwide 2003 back to school campaign had a positive and broad based impact on communities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ During conflict years, education was not generally seen as a priority for many families, compared to the security of their children at home. ▪ Teachers and education managers displaced during conflict years. ▪ Persistent inequitable provision of education services between coastal areas and hinterland. ▪ Lack of resources and political leadership to implement and enforce free education policy. ▪ Competition for limited resources between overage youth and children of correct school age. ▪ Lack of reliable data has hindered policy and strategy development and credible financial planning in the sector. ▪ Fragility/resilience issues not generally considered or built into education programme scoping or design processes.

There has been significant effort towards developing education sector policy and strategic plans since the beginning of the decade, when the Education Master Plan 2000-2010 was launched. Despite experiencing serious capacity constraints, the Ministry, with assistance from NGO and UNESCO representatives, formulated a comprehensive set of sector wide policies and strategies. However, the plan was considered to be of limited utility given that little or no data was available to support its development and the involvement of sub-national stakeholders was limited. Consequently, the plan had little credibility, financing estimates were considered to be well below actual needs and as a sector development framework it has not contributed to increased resilience.

In response to the 10 year education master plan, the GoL developed an EFA Action Plan in 2004 as a strategic component of the basic education aspect of the Master Plan. The development of the EFA plan, as with the master plan, was largely driven by donor agencies with limited GoL leadership. There was also concern over the costing of the EFA plan since it was based on financing estimates within the master plan.

In order to deliver early peace dividends, the MoE with development partner support, formulated the Liberian Primary Education Sector Recovery Program (L-PERP) in 2007. While lacking a sector wide framework for education, the LPERP represents movement towards a programmatic approach away from short-term emergency initiatives.

Following on from the L-PERP, the Ministry of Education is currently leading the development of a ten year Education Sector Plan (ESP) 2010-2020 which is expected to provide a comprehensive set of policy priorities for the whole sector, substantially prioritising primary and secondary education and presenting an evidenced based medium-term financing plan, including capital and recurrent requirements. The ESP formulation process is participatory, involving all parts of the Ministry and will incorporate an extensive stakeholder consultation process.



2. Education Sector Fragility Assessment: Status and Outlook

2.1 Key Features of Sector Resilience and Fragility

Since presidential elections in 2005 and the inauguration of President Johnson-Sirleaf in early 2006, Liberia has made promising development progress. Recovering from decades of civil war and poor governance, the country is now beginning to attract inward investment (including from Mining companies), public services are being restored, a skilled and educated diaspora is returning and enrolment in education is increasing rapidly.⁸

Nevertheless, serious development challenges remain which are potential drivers of fragility. A key source of potential sector fragility is the ability of Government to sufficiently fund education. The current government inherited massive debts, the majority of which were accrued in the 1980s and 1990s. As of mid-2007, it was estimated that Liberia's public and publicly guaranteed external debt was US\$ 4.7 billion in nominal terms (96% of which was in arrears).⁹ By comparison, the Government of Liberia's estimated revenue for 2007/2009 was US\$ 200 million.

In order to facilitate accelerated poverty reduction and with recognition of Liberia's inability to pay off its debts, the Government and its major creditors initiated a process to eliminate or substantially reduce debts. IDA/IBRD, AfDB and IMF arrears have now been cleared and Liberia reached the HIPC decision point in March 2008. The Government has agreed HIPC completion point triggers with the IMF and anticipates completion by 2010/2011. Until Liberia has achieved the HIPC completion point, it is unable to borrow and has to adhere to cash based budgeting. Even after achieving HIPC completion, Liberia's ability to service external debts will remain vulnerable, even on concessional terms.

However, Liberia has demonstrated strong economic growth since the end of the last civil war, with GDP growth rising from 2.5% in 2004 to around 9.5% in 2007 and is projected to reach above 10% in 2009. Government spending has risen from around US\$ 135 million in 2006/07 to a projected US\$ 347 million in 2009 (see *Table 3*); an average annual growth rate of 52%. This growth has primarily been as a result of increased tax revenues due to improvements in collection systems and economic growth within taxable sectors.

⁸ World Bank, 2009, Draft Country Situation Report

⁹ IMF, March 2008, Liberia: Enhanced Initiative for Heavily Indebted Poor Countries— Decision Point Document, Debt Sustainability Analysis, and Staff Supplement. IMF Country Report No. 08/106

Table 3: Selected Sectoral Shares of Government Spending 2006-2009 (US\$ millions)^{10, 11, 12}

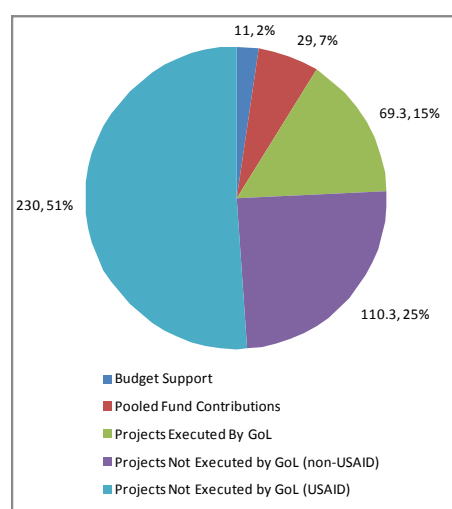
Sector	2006/07 Outturn (Provisional)	2007/08 Outturn (Provisional)	2008/09 Outturn (Provisional)	2009/10 Budget (Projected)
Education	11.1 (8.2%)	23.4 (11.2%)	19.6 (6.6%)	25 (7.2%)
Salaries	2.6	9.7	9.2	14.4
Recurrent	8	11.1	7.5	7
Capital	0.5	2.6	2.9	3.6
Defence and Security	3.8 (2.8%)	8.1 (3.9%)	10.6 (3.6%)	14.5 (4.2%)
Total	135	208.8	297.1	347

Spending on education has more than doubled since 2006/07 and is projected to reach US\$ 25 million in 2009/10. However, the share of Government spending allocated for education has remained roughly constant at around 7%-8%. The sharp increase in education spending in 2007/08 was the result of a one off contribution to the general budget by ArcelorMittal Steel for social and community development activities in the three states in which it is operating.

Despite facing serious budgetary constraints and strong competition for resources, this slow growth in government allocations to education is a potential source of sector fragility, particularly given the scale of infrastructure development that is required. The 7.2% allocated for education in 2009/10 is well below the EFA FTI benchmark of 20%, but the suggested share allocated to non-salary recurrent spending is consistent with the FTI benchmark at 33%.

Figure 4 shows that less than a quarter of all ODA is channelled through Government systems or managed by Government agencies. Total ODA projected for 2009/10 amounts to a total of around US\$ 450 million or 58% of combined government and donor spending. Only US\$ 23.3 million is captured under the 2009/10 budget as World Bank, AfDB and EC grants, with the remainder noted as an Annex to the budget.

Figure 4: Projected ODA Disbursements by Type, 2009/20



Planned ODA disbursement for the education sector in 2009/10 is estimated to be US\$ 45 million (64% of combined government and donor spending), none of which is channelled through government systems or managed by Government agencies. The levels of off-budget support in the education sector could potentially contribute to increased fragility through substituting for government financing; creating long-term legacies from short-term financing strategies.

¹⁰ Government of the Republic of Liberia, July 2007, National Budget 2007-2008,

¹¹ Government of the Republic of Liberia, August 2008, National Budget 2008-2009

¹² Government of the Republic of Liberia, 2009, Draft National Budget 2009-2010

Despite continuing progress in assuring security and political stability and delivering peace dividends, the root causes of fragility and conflict remain open to exploitation by potential “spoilers”. The political and security situation still depends upon the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), which has 15,000 peacekeepers and 1,115 police personnel deployed in the country.¹³

The Government of Liberia recognises that historical poor-governance has been a driver of fragility and has been making positive efforts to address this issue, including through the Governance and Economic Management Assistance Programme (GEMAP)¹⁴ programme and implementation of the iPRS and subsequently a full PRS. However, these efforts will take time to deliver significant institutional change and systems of vested interests remain entrenched in the public sector.

The governance and rule of law pillar of the PRS includes a set of core principles which articulate the current governments strategy of responding to “the deficiencies of past governments and establishing an environment of productive engagement between the state and citizens”, supported by voice and accountability through a strong civil society. The PRS adopts a strong state-building focus, towards capacity, accountability and responsiveness, alongside mainstreaming peace building efforts across all four pillars.

However, not enough is being done in Liberia to nurture improved resilience through a stronger focus on nation-building and there is little recognition of the *need* to do so amongst the international community or the *desire* to do so amongst national political elites.¹⁵ Building institutions in post-conflict Liberia is necessary but not sufficient given that “At the core of Liberia’s conflict lies a class of marginal young people who currently lack faith in any kind of institutions. They consider that family, marriage, education, markets and the administration of justice have all failed them.”¹⁶

Education management capacity and the overall policy environment for education are not yet sufficiently developed to contribute to increased sector resilience. Recent assessments conclude that management and governance capacity at all levels are weak due to a lack of human and institutional capacity and logistics.^{17, 18} Progress in the education sector has been constrained by the absence of a comprehensive national framework for education development which is sector wide in scope.

However, there are a number of positive trends which are beginning to address these issues. There is a high level of political will within the Ministry of Education with strong leadership from the Minister and his senior management team. A broad range of Ministry officials have been participating in the formulation of a comprehensive Education Sector Plan (ESP) which has full

¹³ AfDB/OECD, 2008, African Economic Outlook

¹⁴ GEMAP was developed in response to international concern at the robustness of PFM systems in post-conflict Liberia. GEMAP objectives cover revenue collection, expenditure controls and government procurement and concession practices. A key feature of the programme is the use of international experts with co-signature authority and management contracts in selected ministries and state-owned enterprises.

¹⁵ Sahel and West Africa Club/OECD and ECOWAS, 2008, Orientations and Challenges of Economic and Social Reconstruction in Sierra Leone and Liberia

¹⁶ World Bank, 2005, Community Cohesion in Liberia: A Post-War Rapid Social Assessment

¹⁷ World Bank, 2009, Draft Country Situation Report

¹⁸ Government of Liberia, 2008, Poverty Reduction Strategy

Ministry leadership and ownership and which is expected in the second half of 2009. This will for the first time provide a sector-wide strategic framework which will enable cross-cutting issues (e.g. youth skills and employment) to be more effectively addressed.

2.2 Overall Education Fragility Status Assessment

A recent youth fragility assessment incorporated the results of an Education and Fragility Assessment Tool (see *Table 4*). The results of the assessment point to a number of dimensions which are contributing to continuing fragility in the education sector, including: a) constraints to state financing of education, b) serious capacity constraints and poor governance in service management and delivery, c) chronic shortage of qualified teachers available to teach, d) large numbers of youth with little or no basic education and related need for adult or accelerated learning programmes, e) practice of unofficial fees, bribes or sexual exploitation in the classroom and f) limited availability of youth skills training programmes.

Table 4: Current Patterns of Fragility in Education in Liberia¹⁹

Dimension	Rating
The inability of states to fund either capital or recurrent education expenditure.	High
A weak or non-existent management of service delivery marked by corruption, rent seeking and lack of transparency	High
Discrimination and exclusion of specific groups in school have led to blatant inequities	Low
Stifled public engagement and schools that are no longer supported by government or parents	Low
Government authorities are no longer seen as useful, trustworthy or legitimate by the people	Medium
The chronic or post-conflict shortages of qualified teachers who have fled or been killed, or who remain or return but cannot or do not want to teach	High
Violence against educators as evidenced by abductions, torture, and murders of education staff, teachers, officials and students	Low
Violence taking the place of negotiations in problem solving processes whether in schools or in education policy arenas	Low
The large numbers of war-affected youth, demobilized soldiers and young people who have not had access to or have not completed basic education	High
School fees or bribes or sexual exploitation used in exchange for access, retention and performance of students	High
Serious under-funding of skills training for youth although it may prevent recruitment into military or criminal activity	High
The weak interface between education development and humanitarian assistance	Medium
The neglect of secondary and tertiary education	Medium
need for adult education programs and accelerated learning opportunities	High
Poor or non-existent reintegration of refugees and internally displaced persons into mainstream national education systems	Low

The dimensions assessed to have little or no contribution to fragility are all mainly related to civil society issues and findings include: a) little or no discrimination or exclusion of specific groups within schools (though regional disparities remain), b) continued strong community participation in education and public support of schools, c) little or no violence against educators and use of negotiated and peaceful approaches to conflict resolution and problem solving in the education sector and d) effective reintegration of refugees and internally displaced persons into communities

¹⁹ USAID, 2009, Liberia Youth Fragility Assessment

and subsequently the formal education system. These findings are consistent with the historical review of sector performance and underline the role of communities in developing resilience in the sector in Liberia.

The level of community engagement in, and demand for, education is expected to continue and will contribute significantly to increased sector resilience. There is strong commitment within the Government of Liberia to support education and the PRS details clear policy objectives for the sector and how it is expected to contribute to broader socio-economic development. However, there has been an insufficiently robust policy and strategy response within the education sector and an absence of a sector wide framework is a barrier to Liberia effectively addressing a number of drivers of fragility in the sector (e.g. youth skills and employment).

In summary, the education system in Liberia is characterised by: a) an increasing level of *commitment* that is potentially challenged by government under investment in education b) a gradually increasing level of *capacity* that is currently challenged by an under-developed policy environment and ODA that is not sufficiently aligned or harmonised. Against this background, the education sector can be characterised as being in a post-conflict/reconstruction stage which will rapidly enter early recovery, provided the anticipated ESP proves to an effective sector-wide development framework, that aid effectiveness in the sector improves and additional resources for education are mobilised quickly.

2.3 Sector Fragility and Resilience Outlook, Opportunities and Risks

Education sector resilience has, in part, been improved as a result of emergency relief, quick-impact projects and programs, including a focus on re-integration of war affected youth into education. The challenge will be to build on this foundation and for there to be continued progress in developing increased resilience in the sector and mitigating the drivers of fragility. Continued efforts will be needed both within the sector and the broader governance environment in order to secure increased resilience.

The main risk to longer-term education sector resilience is under-investment by Government. Despite apparent strong political commitment to education, there is evidence that growth in the share of the government budget allocated to education has stagnated. A related issue is that whilst GoL adheres to cash based budgeting as part of HIPC arrangements, there are limited incentives for medium-term planning and budgeting. Another related issue is that, even though debts continue to be cleared, this is creating no additional fiscal space as Liberia was not servicing these debts anyway.

Nevertheless, a number of opportunities exist to increase allocations to the education sector. The main opportunity is to increase the alignment of external assistance to government development frameworks and plans. This would have the potential to increase policy leverage in the sector, including related to budget allocations, and reduce the risk of external assistance substituting for GoL financing. A related opportunity exists to secure Catalytic Funding under EFA FTI once the ESP has been finalised and is being used as a basis for MoF budget negotiations.

There is a potential risk of increased sector fragility if staff capacity remains concentrated at the top of the Ministry of Education. A related risk is that if capacity development efforts continue to focus on MoE and school levels only there is the potential for sub-national education management to

become marginalised. A related risk is that without sequenced development of systems and processes and provision of sufficient operating resources and equipment, whatever capacity is developed will not be fully utilised.

However, a number of potential opportunities exist which could ameliorate capacity development risks. The main opportunity is to develop a comprehensive capacity development strategy and plan, consistent with the overall ESP policy and strategy framework and in line with broader Public Service Management (PSM) reform plans. A related opportunity is for any education capacity development strategy and plan to focus very strongly on decentralisation, especially the roles of District and County Education Offices (DEOs and CEOs). As part of this strategy, an opportunity exists to incorporate approaches that seek to stimulate the demand side.

A further potential risk to resilience in the education sector is associated with the effectiveness of aid in the education sector. There are major challenges with the coordination of external assistance and its alignment with government priorities. However, an opportunity exists to use the anticipated ESP release to reinvigorate partnership processes in the sector. This could include setting up new institutional arrangements which secure increased harmonisation, alignment and mutual accountability through a joint ESP appraisal process and the development of a subsequent sector performance review process linked to ESP implementation.



3. Education Sector Governance Assessment: Status and Outlook

3.1 Context beyond the Sector

Liberia's economic governance arrangements are steadily improving: Liberia achieved the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative completion point in March 2008, qualifying for debt relief equivalent to 90.5% (around US\$ 2.8 billion) in end-June 2007 net present value (NPV) terms. However, despite being an important step towards longer term fiscal sustainability, this debt relief has not created any additional fiscal space since GoL has been servicing almost no debt. It is anticipated that beyond HIPC transitional grant financing will be provided by IMF, IDA & AfDB to offset interim debt servicing.

Achieving completion is critical in creating fiscal space since Government is unable to borrow further before the HIPC completion point is reached. However, IMF supports GoL request for some borrowing ahead of this (for specific infrastructure development), conditional on appropriate safeguards in place.

As part of assuring fiscal discipline and without any loan facilities, the Government is committed to balanced cash budgeting. However this results in a highly constrained budget and limited incentive for developing medium-term expenditure frameworks. As a result, the Government is appealing for budget support to create fiscal space; a position strongly backed by the IMF in its Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility second review. There are recent examples of budget support grants being provided by World Bank and French (targeted) and AfDB (general). The amount provided under this support totals less than \$25 million over 2 years.

The Government has demonstrated good progress under: a) the Governance and Economic Management Assistance Programme (GEMAP) since 2005 and b) Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF) since 2008. However GEMAP fiduciary arrangements are only transitional and highly intrusive into Government processes and there is an urgent need to complete transition to using permanent Government systems, including before the HIPC completion point is achieved. Overall, there is still limited channelling of ODA through government systems, with low PEFA 2007 scores undermining donor confidence.

Good progress is being made with Public Financial Management (PFM) reforms. A draft PFM law has been submitted to the legislature for approval and anticorruption legislation has been enacted, followed by the establishment of an Anticorruption Commission. However, budget implementation remains slow due to delays in approval, difficulties in implementing new procurement act and capacity constraints in line ministries. Overall, PFM plans are broadly on target, including,

implementation of IFMIS, budget reconciliation, cash-flow management, external audit and procurement. PFM regulations anticipated mid 2009.

Public Service Management (PSM) reform is a priority: A key milestone within PSM reform has been the establishment of a Governance Reform Commission through a 2007 Act, consistent with provisions within the 2003 Comprehensive Peace Agreement. However, a strong culture of patronage remains within the civil service which encourages decision making outside of formal organizational channels. As part of planned reforms, there is a strong focus on developing broad-based institutional arrangements, including inter-ministerial committees, stakeholders' forum and donors' forum as part of strengthened accountability mechanisms.

A comprehensive Civil Service Reform Strategy (CSRS) was launched in June 2008, alongside a Situation Analysis on the Mandates, Missions, Functions and Organization Structures of Government Ministries. This strategy and situation analysis present comprehensive recommendations for public service rationalization, streamlining and refocusing, but there is insufficient guidance on how line Ministries should respond or a change management focus.

3.2 Actors, Interests and Incentives in the Sector

Government of Liberia: In order to promote plurality, the President has sought to create ethnic diversity within the cabinet and line Ministries' through the creation of numerous deputy and asst. minister positions within line Ministries. However, appointees to deputy and Assistant Minister posts may have limited technical and/or political skills and experience. In addition, appointments along ethnic or faction lines potentially create political territories within normally technical positions. For example, MoE leadership prefers to focus on school as opposed to classroom construction and the forthcoming elections planned for 2011 have the potential to influence targeting of sector resources.

The Government is committed to decentralization and empowering civil society as indicated in GEMAP and PRSP policies, strategies and targets. However, local officials continue to be appointed by the central government, potentially leading to confusion over whose interests they represent amongst civil society. Legislation in the form of the Draft National Policy on Decentralization and Local Governance is starting to make provision for the local election of key country and district officials. The approval of this bill will be a critical step in strengthening governance arrangements at local government levels.

Ministry of Education: Education is amongst the most geographically dispersed ministries with 15 County Education Offices and 86 District Education Offices and as such presents opportunities for central Government to engage with civil society not available in other sectors. Whilst the Government has a policy of decentralisation and education management is theoretically decentralized, in practice most decisions are taken by central MoE and instructions given to counties and districts with CEOs and DEOs having access to minimal resources. The LPERP includes specific targets for increased levels of delegated authority to CEOs and DEOs and a review of progress against these targets is currently underway.

There is strong political will and leadership in central MoE amongst the Minister, Deputy Ministers and Asst. Ministers. However, human capacity tends to be concentrated at the top of the organization with serious constraints elsewhere. Staff want to develop skills, but limited opportunities and other sources of employment undermine commitment to their duties. Whilst the L-PERP provides some focus on capacity development, there is no overarching strategy and it provides only very broad targets associated with management capacity and interventions are limited to supply-side training courses with no mentoring or coaching approaches.

There is strong commitment to pro-poor and equitable sector policy development and strategic planning as evidenced through L-PERP and ESP formulation and review processes. However, the effectiveness of programme implementation in achieving pro-poor and equitable goals could be potentially undermined by competing political interests within MoE and a persistent culture of political patronage. Positive developments include an inclusive approach to developing the ESP which is minimizing opportunities for political capture. The ongoing joint MoE/DP review of L-PERP implementation provides a basis for future transparent performance review processes against agreed sector policy and strategy.

Non-State Actors: There has been very strong private investment in education; for example, households contributed over twice the amount of government funding in 2006/07. However, significant disparities exist in the consumption of public education resources. For example, in 2006/07 urban areas captured 62% of total education resources, despite only having 32% of the relevant population. Consumption inequities persists due to difficulties in disbursing public funds, urban concentration of teaching staff and potential substitution effects of off budget external assistance in rural areas.

There is a very strong engagement in education by young adults who were denied access to education during the conflict years or since, especially through Accelerated Learning Programmes at both primary and secondary levels. However, these changing student profiles has given rise to increased difficulties persist in student / teacher relationships, due to: a) teachers being held accountable more often, b) ability of teachers to adapt to different power dynamics and c) behavioural consequences of the conflict on youths. A number of locally driven initiatives have been set up to try and combat this, including through setting up local area arbitration committees elected from principles and community members.

Service Providers: There is a very strong history of public-private partnership in education service delivery with over 49% of all schools (58% of total enrolment) being privately, community or mission run in 2007/08. However, the introduction of a free primary education policy is causing drift away from private and mission schools towards already over-crowded public/community primary schools. In a highly resource constrained environment, it is essential for the Government to assure the efficient use of all education resources (both public and private) in the country and as part of ESP formulation, MoE is reviewing public/private partnership strategies in order to enable this.

Development Partners: Donors provide significant funding to the education sector, with an estimated US\$ 45 million allocated for 2009/10, compared to Government funding of US\$ 25 million. 69% of this donor financing is under USAID projects alone. It is difficult to have a clear view of DP

financing of the education sector in Liberia, making it hard for GoL to estimate the total education resource envelope. The Ministry of Planning is putting in place requirements and systems for donors and NGOs to report the nature and extent of their support.

Partnership arrangements within the sector are being increasingly strengthened through a number of sector working groups and appointment of a donor coordination adviser. However, other aspects of aid effectiveness are being undermined since much of the donor support is channelled outside of the budget and directly to implementing agencies. There is some evidence that donors are becoming more confident in the use of Government financing systems, including through UNICEF/Dutch financing of an Education Pooled Fund and EC plans for general budget support.

3.3 Sector Governance/ Accountability Relations

A positive development within the Ministry has been the use of a number of consultations with County and District Development Committees and representatives from the National Legislature related to the drafting of the new Education Sector Plan (ESP). There is some concern however, amongst development partners, regarding the time being taken to develop the ESP, and the limited engagement by other Ministries (e.g. finance, youth) in this process. Further participatory approaches are planned when the first ESP draft is released (expected in July 2009) with MoE planning a comprehensive review process, including civil society representatives and development partners.

The Education Law 2001 includes a focus on school/community governance arrangements through requiring that schools (public or private) should have a Board of Governors, Parents Teachers Association and a School Management Committee (SMC). However, as of drafting of the L-PERP (2007) the provisions in the law related to school governance had largely not been implemented. MoE included a focus on these governance arrangements with the L-PERP through specific goals and targets (e.g. 50% of SMCs approve school plans and oversee school performance by 2010).

The Education Law 2001 provides for free and compulsory primary education and in order to offset parental contributions the Government, without direct support from DPs, has introduced a school block grant system for all public and community schools. However, there is limited transparency and no clear systems in the current school block grants system and funds are usually kept and utilized, with limited community consultation, by school principals. A number of studies have been undertaken by MoE and DPs to overhaul the block grant system and review the feasibility of using the banking system and it is anticipated the ESP will respond to these study findings.



4. Main Findings: Scope and Diversity of Local and Donor Supported Initiatives

4.1 Summary of Findings: Local Initiatives

The Government of Liberia has faced a number of challenges in developing its own initiatives within the education sector. Strong competition for very limited resources and an absence of decentralised education management as the result of the conflict made it difficult for the central Ministry to assert strong and effective leadership during the years immediately after the CPA was signed. However, there are a number of examples of where the Ministry of Education has led, in some cases with the support of donors, the implementation of a number of important initiatives.

For example, the Accelerated Learning Programme (ALP) has been at the centre of education reconstruction efforts over the last decade (see *Box 1*). With the end of the second civil war and signing of the peace agreement in 2003, children rapidly began returning to school. Encouraged by the free basic education policy (as stipulated in the 2001 Education Law) which the new Government began to actively promote from 2006 onwards, a large number of overage youth who not received and/or completed primary education began to flock to schools.

At this time, concerns were raised concerning: a) capacity of the system to cope with additional demand from overage youth, b) negative impact on younger students of studying together with older youth and c) high opportunity costs for older youth and related likelihood of drop out. These concerns, together with the return of some development partners and NGOs after the war resulted in a rapid expansion of the ALP programme.

Box 1: Accelerated Learning Programmes

During the years of conflict between 1989 and 2003, there were periods with virtually no education provision in the majority of the country. The legacy of this period was to create a very large number of young people who had received intermittent and incomplete primary education or no education at all.

After the end of the first civil war in 1997, the Ministry of Education, supported by UNICEF, embarked on a mission to Uganda to review an Accelerated Learning Programme (ALP). In 1999, the Ministry and UNICEF, began implementing a similar programme, tailored to the Liberian situation, particularly focussed on young ex-combatants as part of demobilisation efforts.

The goal of ALP is to meet the educational needs of primary school drop-outs, and over-aged children and youth, by enabling them to complete their primary education in three years; it is also hoped to contribute to the prevention of further conflict by engaging young people in schooling. ALP is currently implemented in ten counties of Liberia under the leadership of the Ministry by a variety of Implementing Partners/NGOs.

Key findings associated with the ALP, include:^{20, 21} i) there is strong community support for ALP amongst all community stakeholders, b) student learning outcomes are generally as high or higher than those of conventional students, in particular for older students, c) some parents prefer to send their children to ALP Centres than to conventional schools and d) some communities have favored the establishment of ALP Centres over that of conventional primary schools.

Another important initiative led by the Ministry and supported by a number of development partners has been the establishment of a comprehensive Education Management Information System (EMIS). The first comprehensive and reliable set of education statistics since the end of the war was released in 2008 containing data for the 2007/08 school year (see *Box 2*). This was a major milestone for the Ministry and a significant step towards enabling evidence-based planning.

As has been indicated in previous sections, the absence of reliable data on the state of the education system has significantly constrained sector planning and budgeting. The 2007/08 school census data is now helping to address these constraints by being used to: i) provide a situation analysis as part of the Ministry's in-development Education Strategic Plan and World Bank country situation report, ii) provide a baseline for ESP medium-term plans and budgets and iii) facilitating the targeting of specific education programmes or initiatives.

Key findings associated with developing the EMIS include: i) the collaborative nature of the initiative has been essential for its success, ii) weak records keeping at school levels has necessitated the use of enumerators, iii) 518 enumerators were recruited (on the basis of local knowledge and education) by District Education Officers and provided with training and iv) there is recognition amongst partners of the high cost of the initiative and the need to reduce these costs if it is to be sustainably funded by the Ministry.

Box 2: Establishing a Functioning Education Management Information System (EMIS)

The Ministry of Education, with support from UNICEF, embarked on the first post-war education census in 2005/06. This data has never been formally published due to ongoing data quality issues which the MoE is still attempting to resolve. Learning from the 2005/06 experience the Ministry conducted a second post-war census in 2007/08, the results of which were published, widely distributed and which are now being extensively used.

The EMIS 2007/08 was a highly collaborative effort, led by the Ministry and included: i) UNICEF funding for equipment and materials procurement and provision of incentives to enumerators and data entry staff, ii) the Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services (LISGIS) assisted with questionnaire design and preliminary analysis of data, iii) the National Information Management Centre (NIMAC) led the development of the EMIS database, iv) Monrovia Consolidated School System (MCSS) pilot tested the questionnaire and v) United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) assisted by airlifting staff and instruments/questionnaires used for the census to various hard-to-reach areas around the country.

Another key initiative that the Government of Liberia and the Ministry has spearheaded is Free and Compulsory Primary Education in Liberia (FACPEL). A paper was drafted outlining the means by which this policy could be implemented and the Government adopted the policy in 2005.²² As a

²⁰ USAID, 2008, ALP for Positive Living and United Service Mid Term Evaluation Review

²¹ World Bank, 2009, Draft Country Situation Report

²² National Transitional Government of Liberia, April 2005, Results Focused Transitional Framework (Revision)

result, the Government introduced a school grants scheme in 2006/07 aimed at offsetting parental contributions from fees.

Key findings associated with FACPEL include: i) the budget allocation for school grants has risen from US\$ 0.7 million in 2006/07 to an estimated US\$ 1.1 million in 2009/10, ii) school grants are exclusively funded by the Government of Liberia, iii) the per student allocation under the scheme amounted to an estimated US\$ 1.67 per student in 2008/09²³, iv) the reported coverage in 2008/09 was around 750,000 students in 2,870 schools, compared to 540,000 students in 2,122 schools reported in the 2007/08 school census and v) funds are channelled to schools via county and district education offices from the central Ministry.

4.2 Summary of Findings: Donor Supported Initiatives

It is difficult to obtain a clear picture of the extent of donor contributions to the education sector in Liberia. Estimates for 2009/10 from the Ministry of Finance (MoF) indicate that donor contributions will have risen to US\$ 45 million, with USAID being the largest overall contributor by far (see *Table 4*). By comparison, Government contributions are around US\$ 25 million.²⁴

The vast majority of donor financing to the education sector is channelled outside of the budget, direct to non-government implementing agencies. This, combined with a lack of aid monitoring systems within Government, makes it difficult to estimate total resources available to the education sector and is reported to have an impact on MoE budget negotiations.

Aid modalities have not changed significantly since the Government came to power in 2006, with the majority of external assistance continuing to be provided through projects managed by non-government implementing agents. The main areas of support continue to be: a) teacher training, b) accelerated learning programmes, c) school construction and d) textbook procurement. 86% of all donor contributions is directed towards basic education.

Despite Ministry of Education capacity constraints being cited as a significant barrier to the effective implementation of education reforms, there has been relatively limited capacity development support to the MoE. There is no coherent capacity development strategy or roadmap in place and donor support for capacity development tends to be linked to their own specific programme areas (e.g. USAID) or focussed on overall sector plan development (e.g. World Bank).

²³ Government of the Republic of Liberia, 2009, Draft National Budget 2009-2010

²⁴ EC Support to Education in Liberia (ECSEL), May 2009, Draft Situation Analysis and Inception Report

Table 4: Total Current Donor Commitments to the Education Sector, 2009

Development Partner	Total Committed (US\$)	Area of Support	Modality
EC	12,000,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Institutional and Organisational Capacity Development ▪ Curriculum Development ▪ Teacher Training ▪ Classroom Construction and Rehabilitation 	Programme Estimate
Norway	13,111,955		Projects
Save the Children UK	1,400,000		Projects
UNICEF	26,903,086		Projects
USAID	67,400,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Accelerated Learning Programmes ▪ Education Planning Capacity Development ▪ Teacher Training ▪ Supply of Teaching and Learning Materials ▪ School and Training Institute Rehabilitation ▪ Scholarships for Girls ▪ Adult Literacy 	Projects
WFP	15,000,000	School Feeding	Local Contracting
Netherlands	12,000,000	Education Pooled Fund	Pooled Fund
Open Society Institute	4,500,000	Education Pooled Fund	Pooled Fund
Total	152,315,041	-	-

Key findings related to donor supported initiatives since the end of the civil war include:

- **Donor support has tended to focus primarily on formal basic education.** Due to serious resource constraints in the sector, and the country as a whole, formal basic education has been identified as the first priority within efforts to move from emergency relief to early recovery. For example, despite MoE having produced an initial medium-term sector-wide framework for education²⁵ in early 2007, MoE and donors decided to delay its development into a comprehensive strategic framework and programme in favour of developing the Liberian Primary Education Recovery Program (L-PERP), including as part of delivering early peace dividends.
- **Expectations for support under the EFA FTI Catalytic Fund were unrealistic.** A key objective of the L-PERP was to secure funding from the EFA-FTI secretariat under the Catalytic Fund (CF) to help fill projected primary financing gaps over a 3 year term. The CF steering committee strongly encouraged Liberia to submit an application for FTI status and for subsequent support under the CF.

This raised expectations within the Government of Liberia, including the President, and support under the CF was seen as essential in supporting the transition into early recovery. However, in the event, whilst Liberia was given FTI status, it was denied access to the CF. Whilst this should not have been a surprise, given the conditions of the fund and the fact that Liberia neither had an approved PRS nor a full sector policy and plan, the rejection was a political embarrassment.

²⁵ Ministry of Education, 2007, Priorities for Education Sector Recovery in Post-Conflict Liberia 2007-2011

- **A locally developed education pooled fund has been an effective stop-gap measure.** In response to the Government being denied funding under the EFA FTI Catalytic Fund, UNICEF and MoE formulated the concept of an Education Pooled Fund (EPF) as a multi-donor trust fund designed to support implementation of the L-PERP. The financing agreement for the fund was signed by the Ministry of Finance in 2008 with initial funding being provided by UNICEF with finance from the Government of the Netherlands (\$12 million) and the Open Society Institute (\$4 million).²⁶

The EPF has been used to support: a) classroom construction and provision of water and sanitation in schools, b) provision of instructional materials and development of a revised curriculum and c) teacher development. Though currently only focussed on primary education, it is anticipated that additional education sub-sectors will be gradually incorporated as costed plans are developed. However, as of mid 2009, the majority of EPF funds having been allocated there have been no further commitments from other donors to contribute to the fund.²⁷

Box 3: Education Pooled Fund

The Education Pooled Fund (EPF) was established as a multi-donor trust fund with the overall objective of accelerating the transition from emergency response to a development framework in the sector. The fund is currently supporting implementation of the Liberia Primary Education Recovery Program (L-PERP). However, it is anticipated that the fund will facilitate the gradual move towards a sector wide approach as other sub-sector plans and budgets are developed and additional develop partners support the EPF.

In line with Paris Declaration Principles, the EPF is characterized by: a) Government ownership - MoE is responsible for governing the EPF and once funds are donated to the EPF they belong to GoL, b) use of national legislation and procedures, including alignment with GoL budget development calendar as opposed to development partner schedules, c) a sector wide approach, d) donor coordination and e) preparation for direct budget support.

- **The extent to which development partners in the education sector in Liberia have responded to changing circumstances has been highly variable.** The most flexible response has been from the Open Society Institute (OSI), a non-traditional donor. The foundation saw an opportunity to provide transitional support to the Ministry of Education through the EPF, alongside providing TA to adopt a mentoring and coaching role in the Ministry.²⁸

Trends in the focus and modality of external assistance are gradually beginning to change. Whilst many donors continue to provide more traditional support for technical aspects of education development (e.g. teacher training, curriculum development, accelerated learning) there is a strong recognition for these initiatives to be aligned within a sector-wide policy and strategic framework in order to support the transition from emergency relief to systemic development.

²⁶ UNICEF, 2008, Briefing Note: The Education Pooled Fund

²⁷ It is perhaps worth noting that whilst the EPF mobilized US\$ 16 million, Sierra Leone secured only US\$ 13 million under the EFA FTI and, despite applying for FTI status at around the same time, Sierra Leone had still not received any funds from the FTI by the time US\$ 10 million had been disbursed under the EPF.

²⁸ The OSI (funded by the Soros Foundation) does not usually engage in this way, but was responding to a direct request from the President (who was once an OSI West Africa board member) after the Government was denied funding under the EFA FTI Catalytic Fund.

Box 4: EC Support to Education in Liberia – ECSEL

The EC Support to Education in Liberia (ECSEL) project was designed in 2005 and the financing agreement was signed a year later. However, the extensive time required to mobilise support under the particular project modality and delays in recruiting a managing contactor resulted in ECSEL starting in early 2009; a delay of over two years. A priority for the TA team during the inception period was to review and revise the project logframe, given that: a) it had been written almost four years previously and b) all ECSEL funds had to be committed by October 2009 with implementation being completed in two instead of three years (in order to adhere to rules under the particular project modality).

The EC delegation attempted to work within the constraints of the ECSEL project modality and respond to the concerns of the MoE and other development partners through reviewing opportunities to channel funds into the EPF. Even if the possibility of ECSEL contribution to the Education Pooled Fund had been considered at the beginning 2009, the lack of precondition (audit assessment) and the timing of approval for modifying the implementing modalities of ECSEL did not allow the EC to eventually contribute to the EPF.

Partnership approaches within the sector have been strengthened in recent years. Whilst there is no formal Education Sector Working Group (ESWG) or similar, a Sector Steering Committee for Education is chaired by MoE and meets regularly with broad representation from donors and NGOs. Prior to the appointment of a donor coordination adviser in early 2009, these steering committee meetings tended to focus on coordination issues around individual donor concerns. However, with the adoption of the L-PERP and formulation of the ESP, these meetings have become more focused on strategic alignment and plans are being developed to hold a joint review around L-PERP implementation.

There is also recognition that the need to support organisational capacity development within MoE is becoming increasingly urgent. ECSEL incorporates components focused on institutional reform, quality assurance, monitoring systems development and planning and budgeting, but this support is only just coming online. Support from other donors in these areas has been limited, though there are examples where specific interventions have delivered important results, including: a) UNICEF support to EMIS which has facilitated the publication of annual education statistics since 2007/08²⁹, b) World Bank funded consultant supporting MoE with a detailed sector baseline assessment and subsequent ongoing development of the Education Sector Plan and c) mentoring and coaching support under from the OSI.

²⁹ The publication of the 2007/08 National School Census Report was a landmark for the Ministry of Education and provided the first set of reliable and credible education statistics in recent years; allowing MoE to finally pursue evidenced based policy and strategy development.



5. Main Findings: Lessons Learned and Good Practice

5.1 Analysis of Local Initiative Good Practice: Lessons Learned

Formulating a baseline dataset as early as possible is essential in supporting credible policy and strategy formulation. The Ministry of Education made a number of attempts to develop policy frameworks for the sector (e.g. Education Master Plan 2000-2010) but which were constrained by a lack of data. The Rapid Assessment of Learning Spaces (RALS) conducted in 2003 was sufficient to get an idea of the scale of reconstruction required, but it was not until the release of the first set of post-war education statistics in 2008 that MoE and development partners had access to comprehensive and accurate data about the sector.

The experience in Liberia would appear to constitute good practice on a number of levels. Firstly, the RALS was focussed on quickly obtaining a data set in order to facilitate reconstruction efforts, as opposed to more structured systems and capacity development. This was an immediate priority, but started to lay the foundations for the subsequent development of the EMIS.

A potential opportunity was missed in 2005/06 when the first full post-war census was conducted, but the data not released, due to concerns over its accuracy. This decision has delayed formulation of credible medium-term sector budgets and plans and had a negative impact on resource mobilisation in the sector. However, a further example of good practice is the collaborative approach applied to EMIS implementation, drawing on expertise from a number of sources across government and development partners.

Accelerated Learning Programmes have been highly effective and have strongly contributed to increased community engagement in education. It is clear that ALP programmes in Liberia have been highly successful at providing basic education opportunities for overage youth and ex-combatants and encourage adult learning. A further lesson learned is that many communities prefer the ALP programme and many children of conventional school age are being enrolled in ALP classes. A related lesson learned is that ALP can divert students and resources which should be in the conventional school system, but because of the relatively higher costs of ALP, these are being used less cost effectively to deliver similar results.

Too much prioritisation within sector development planning can result in distorted strategies that are unable to respond to cross-cutting or thematic issues. For example, in Liberia various assessments and analysis³⁰ point to youth issues being key drivers of fragility (e.g. under-employed, under-skilled) and which the current prioritised focus on primary education in the education sector

³⁰ Government of Liberia, 2008, Poverty Reduction Strategy

is unable to sufficiently address. A related lesson learned is that, without appropriate cross-government cooperation (e.g. with Ministry of Labour), strategies for addressing these cross-cutting themes will not be effective.

5.2 Analysis of Donor Supported Initiative Good Practice: Lessons Learned

The Education Pooled Fund (EPF) has been a highly successful transition funding mechanism for the sector. A key lesson learned is that using GoL legislation and procedures related to EPF financial management has increased GoL ownership and commitment, despite increasing the time required to implement and operate the EPF. Another lesson learned is that donors may be reluctant to fund locally driven initiatives such as the EPF, particularly if they are contributing to other global funding mechanisms (e.g. EFA FTI).

Where development partners have a broad portfolio of assistance, there should be specific efforts to identify and promote cross-sectoral initiatives which are mutually reinforcing. For example, where cross-government governance reforms impact directly on the sector and have the potential to help mobilise additional resources in the sector (e.g. broader PFM reforms and medium-term sector planning and budgeting). A related lesson learned is the importance of screening education policies and plans against broader efforts related to peace building and fragility reduction and ensure that sector initiatives are consistent with and respond to these approaches and are contributing to increased resilience.

Supporting institutional and organisational capacity development within the sector should be an immediate priority, including during emergency relief phases. Whilst provision of basic services can provide early peace dividends, it is increased institutional and organisational capacity that sustains these dividends and mitigates the risk of them being undermined by persistent weak sector capacity as countries transition into early recovery.

Providing external assistance for institutional and organisational capacity development only once a country is going through early recovery has potential risks, including: a) undermining the medium-term impact and longer-term sustainability of basic services provided during the emergency relief phase and b) the related risk of undermining civil society confidence in the state and diluting the impact of emergency relief efforts as peace dividends.

High levels of off-budget support from development partners, combined with a lack of data on these contributions, are potentially influencing Government budget allocations to the education sector. Whilst significant effort has been made by the Ministry of Finance in collating data on education sector financing, there is limited information about medium-term prospects and plans. The risk is that high levels of off budget support could lead MoF to prioritise government funding towards other sectors with less external support, essentially leading to external assistance substituting for government funds.

A related less learned is that development partners need to assure they are pro-active in promoting and following up on aid coordination and viewing it as a mutual responsibility of partners in the sector and not just that of Government. As part of this, there needs to be more accountability and transparency in sharing funding and performance information.

Where Government officials have limited experience of working with donors, there is a particular need to ensure clear understanding and communication of the opportunities and limits of external assistance. There have been a number of examples where expectations have been raised unrealistically or where confusion over project arrangements has led to implementation delays. Assumptions about government experience of donors and of working with donor systems should not be under-estimated. A related lesson learned, is that even if programmes of external assistance are focussed on priority areas which have been assessed to have high impact on governance outcomes, inflexible modalities for their implementation can lead to reduced impact and undermine partner confidence.

Another lesson learned is that highly placed TA who are able to nurture trust with Government can adopt a mentoring and coaching role which can be effective at developing capacity within the Ministry to engage with development partners and other Government Ministries. A related issue is the need for donors to commit to long-term engagement as partners in the transition from early recovery to longer-term development and move away quickly from short-term emergency interventions in order to nurture confidence and mutual accountability for improved sector outcomes.



6. Country Report: Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusions and Key Issues

An overarching conclusion is that the roots of the civil war in Liberia and fragility in the education sector can be traced back to policies of inequitable resource allocation and government supported development between American settlers located in coastal regions and indigenous peoples in the hinterlands. These inequities have been exploited by successive political interests in order to gain more political power and control over natural resources, resulting in devastating conflict throughout the country.

A related conclusion is that historically poor governance in Liberia has failed to unite the divided polities of indigenous peoples and settlers and that the notion of nationhood in Liberia remains contested. This is clearly recognised by the Government of Liberia and the PRS includes specific policies and strategies which are intended to address these issues. Whilst the security situation in Liberia remains stable and the outlook appears positive, the country is still reliant on an extensive UNMIL force and it is important to remember that the conflict in Liberia, as in other neighbouring countries, was not resolved but terminated.

Despite these historic legacies, there has been a positive response to education in the country. A key conclusion is that community demand for education is high and that communities and students see education as a means of improving their livelihoods. A related issue is that competition for resources between children of the correct school age and youths (e.g. within ALP) denied access to education during the conflict is placing significant pressure on an already over-stretched system.

A related conclusion is that this high level of demand and potential competition for resources from ALP programs could potentially lead to increased sector fragility. An important related issue is that current ALP approaches and financing strategies have developed out of an emergency post-conflict response and are not grounded within a policy led and strategic sector wide approach.

A further conclusion is that education can contribute to broader peace building efforts, but has limitations, including: i) education can play a positive role in strengthening social cohesion during periods of stability, but its impact is limited during conflict, ii) education has the potential to help bridge inter-generational divisions after conflict, but not addressing the needs of youth denied access during conflict has the potential to exacerbate these divisions and iii) rapid mobilisation of communities in getting children back to school (together with provision of basic resources) after conflict provides a sense of joint purpose within committees, contributes towards longer-term education sector resilience and potentially provides peace dividends.

Another key conclusion is that whilst debt relief under the HIPC is highly welcome in Liberia and essential for securing continued development, it will not create any immediate fiscal space. A related conclusion is that HIPC conditions of cash-based budgeting and a halt to any new borrowing have reduced fiscal space further and reduce incentives for medium-term sector planning and budgeting.

A related conclusion is that development partners could be doing more to improve resource mobilisation in the sector. The limited alignment of external assistance in the education sector is potentially resulting in substitution, particularly given the highly constrained nature of the GoL budget. A further conclusion is that alternative education funding modalities (e.g. MDTF, Budget Support) which enable stronger ownership, alignment and harmonisation have not been sufficiently considered. A key issue is that many donors are still basing decisions on out of date assessments (e.g. PEFA 2007 was conducted in 2006) and do not adequately consider recent developments (e.g. PFM legislation and systems) which often occur rapidly in a transition environment.

6.2 Key Recommendations: Improved Education Programme Planning / Design

Specific recommendations to the GoSS-MoEST in Liberia include:

- i)** To make finalisation of the ESP an absolute priority and to launch a ESP review process with broad stakeholder participation, including from development partners, other government agencies and country and district education offices. As part of this ESP review, to develop revised and more structured partnership processes and obtain formal adoption of the plan by development partners.
- ii)** To commission an independent strategic review of Accelerated Learning Programmes. The lessons learned and conclusions in this report indicate that these programmes may in some areas be competing with conventional education but that costs may be higher and benefits no better. There is a need to redefine the policy objectives and strategies (including financing) of these programmes, including their relationship to skills development and TVET.
- iii)** To prioritise the development of a comprehensive capacity development strategy and plan once the anticipated ESP has been approved. Key areas of focus within this strategy and plan could include: a) capacity development for decentralisation (including incentives to stimulate the demand side), b) strengthening middle management in the Ministry of Education, c) linkages with broader PSM reforms and d) sequencing with the development of systems, procedures and regulations.
- iv)** To incorporate a priority focus on youth skills-development and employment issues within the ESP and any subsequent operational budgets and plans, consistent with overall strategic directions provided in the PRS and in partnership with other relevant Government agencies.

6.3 Key Recommendations: Enabling Aid Effectiveness and Sector Governance

Specific recommendations to the international education donor community in Liberia include:

- i)** To step up efforts to mobilise additional resources for the sector and to ensure better alignment of these resources by choosing appropriate financing modalities (e.g. EPF, general or sector budget support). A related recommendation is to provide an updated assessment of Government Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability, particularly in education, in order to strengthen development partner confidence for choosing specific financing modalities.
- ii)** Related to this, to focus additional resources on a number of key areas. Firstly, to support the GoL with its school grants scheme, both in terms of i) providing resources, and using these to leverage increased GoL financing and ii) technical expertise to help strengthen fund channelling arrangements, including use of bank accounts. Secondly to support a rapid junior secondary school expansion programme, particularly in rural underserved areas, using common harmonised procurement arrangements.
- iii)** To allocate a much higher proportion of external assistance to supporting management and governance capacity development in the sector. A related recommendation is to support the review and appraisal of the anticipated ESP and use this as the basis for supporting the Ministry to develop a capacity development strategy and plan against which external assistance can be better programmed. A key priority could be to support the strengthening of county and district education offices.
- iv)** To maintain financial and logistical support to EMIS supports and not withdraw this support too early. EMIS is beginning to demonstrate how mission critical it is to the education sector but the sustainability of systems is still fragile. Development partners should sustain funding for EMIS for the foreseeable future, alongside supporting a shift towards more cost effective implementation. A related recommendation is to expand this support to cover other mission critical information systems (e.g. human resources and financial).

Selected Bibliography

- World Bank, 1975, *Liberia: Growth with Development, a Basic Economic Report*
- Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 2006, *Education in the Conflict to Post-Conflict Transition in Liberia*
- GoL MoE, 2007, *Priorities for Education Sector Recovery in Post-Conflict Liberia*
- Sahel and West Africa Club/OECD and ECOWAS, 2008, *Orientations and Challenges of Economic and Social Reconstruction in Sierra Leone and Liberia*
- World Bank, 2009, *Draft Country Situation Report*
- IMF, March 2008, *Liberia: Enhanced Initiative for Heavily Indebted Poor Countries— Decision Point Document, Debt sustainability Analysis, and Staff Supplement. IMF Country Report No. 08/106*
- Government of the Republic of Liberia, July 2007, *National Budget 2007-2008,*
- Government of the Republic of Liberia, August 2008, *National Budget 2008-2009*
- Government of the Republic of Liberia, 2009, *Draft National Budget 2009-2010*
- AfDB/OECD, 2008, *African Economic Outlook*
- World Bank, 2005, *Community Cohesion in Liberia: A Post-War Rapid Social Assessment*
- Government of Liberia, 2008, *Poverty Reduction Strategy*
- USAID, 2009, *Liberia Youth Fragility Assessment*
- Liberia FTI Appraisal, 2007
- USAID, 2008, *ALP for Positive Living and United Service Mid Term Evaluation Review*
- National Transitional Government of Liberia, April 2005, *Results Focused Transitional Framework (Revision)*
- EC Support to Education in Liberia (ECSEL), May 2009, *Draft Situation Analysis and Inception Report*
- Ministry of Education, 2007, *Priorities for Education Sector Recovery in Post-Conflict Liberia 2007-2011*
- UNICEF, 2008, *Briefing Note: The Education Pooled Fund*