EVALUATION REPORT

PROTECTING CHILDREN'S RIGHT TO EDUCATION

Evaluation of NRC's Accelerated Learning Programme in Liberia

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The report attempts to reflect the views obtained from the various respondents that the team held discussions with. The team however takes final responsibility for the findings, conclusions and any omissions.
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List of Acronyms

ALP  Accelerated Learning Program
CEO  County Education Officer
DEO  District Education Officer
EFA  Education For All
ESP  Education Sector Plan
GBV  Gender Based Violence
GoL  Government of Liberia
IBIS  Danish Non Government Agency for Development
IDP  Internally Displaced Persons
IGA  Income Generating Activity
IP  implementing Partners
LRTF  Liberia Reconstruction Trust Fund
LTTI  Liberia Teacher Training Programme
INEE  Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies
MDG  Millennium Development Goal
MoE  Ministry of Education
MoU  Memorandum of Understanding
NRC  Norwegian Refugee Council
PRESET  Pre-service training
PRS  Poverty Reduction Strategy
PTA  Parent Teacher Association
RREP  Rapid Response Education Program
SCF-UK  Save the Children Fund UK
SEA  Sexual Exploitation and Assault
SGBV  Sexual Gender Based Violence
SWAp  Sector Wide Approach
ToR  Terms of Reference
UNICEF  United Nations Children’s Fund
USAID  United States Agency for International Development
WAEC  West African Examination Council
WFP  World Food Program
YEP  Youth Education Pack
Executive Summary

Background:
Liberia is currently undergoing a recovery process following more than 14 years of violent conflict that resulted into massive destruction and population displacement. The provision of basic social services including education remains uneven and an unacceptably high number of children remain out of school. There are on-going efforts to strengthen the education sector, however due to limited resources, current efforts have largely concentrated on the formal education system and less so on over-aged children who have missed out schooling on account of the conflict.

In line with its mandate, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) with funding from Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been supporting Emergency Education programs for children and youth in Liberia since 2003, initially under the Rapid Response Education Program (RREP) and starting 2005, the Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) and Youth Education Pack in the counties of Grand Cape Mount, Bomi and Gbarpolu. The ALP program which has been offering a condensed primary school education for over-aged children is scheduled to end in July 2010, following the completion of two learning cycles; and government policy to phase out the accelerated learning program by June 2012.

Objectives of the Evaluation:
An independent evaluation was commissioned by NRC to establish the contributions of this program, the effectiveness in implementation and impact on the targeted communities.

The evaluation which was conducted between January and February 2010 focused on three key objectives:

1) To assess the quality of education offered in the ALP in light of the needs of learners and communities, taking into consideration the accelerated nature of grade completion.
2) To review the added value of the multi-faceted approach of linking adult literacy and young mothers’ classes to the ALP program
3) To evaluate the sustainability of the ALP program, with emphasis on the capacity of community and MoE to continue education in ALP schools.

Conclusions and Recommendations:
Below are the main conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation in relation to these objectives. Given the timing of the evaluation i.e. end of program, greater emphasis has been given to recommendations for the future rather than the on-going program.

Contribution of the Program
NRC’s Emergency Education programming is commended for its timeliness and responsiveness to the different stages of the crisis in Liberia right from the emergency phase to the transition between early recovery and post conflict reconstruction and
development processes. One of the key strengths of this program has been its adaptability to the changing needs and context of its targeted beneficiaries and inclusion of appropriate interventions.

At the broader level, NRC’s ALP has made a significant contribution towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Education For All (EFA) goals and specifically in terms of protecting the rights of over aged children to equitable access to basic education. By so doing, the ALP is not only expanding learners opportunities to become productive citizens; but also mitigating some of the disparities that fuelled and/or were a consequence of the conflict. The ALP has thereby been instrumental in promoting social cohesion and reducing opportunities for future conflict.

NRC’s ALP has played an important role in the return and re-integration process in the three counties of Bomi, Gbarpolu and Grand Cape Mount. The re-establishment of schools has acted as a ‘pull factor’ in remote and underserved communities where schools had been completely destroyed during the conflict.

In terms of government policy, the program has contributed to rebuilding the education sector through support towards implementation of the Liberia Primary Education Recovery Program (LPERP). NRC’s contributions include: a) infrastructural development through the rehabilitation/construction/expansion of 37 schools and construction of 52 schools including 4 which will be completed by the end of 2010; b) human resource development through the recruitment and training of 249 teachers and 50 teacher assistants and re-establishment of PTAs; and c) increasing access to 7269 over-aged learners, 45 % of whom have been girls.

Quality of the Program

NRC’s ALP has not only focused on increasing access to education but has endeavored to deliver a relatively high quality education program for its targeted group. Evidence of this includes the fairly high retention rates and performance levels of learners in the NRC ALP schools. The West African Examination Certificate results have shown that learners from these schools perform comparably and even better than counterparts in formal schools. Many have been able to join junior high school and continue to perform well. Discussions with the learners and communities also indicate that the program has had a positive impact on the behavior, perception and attitudes of the learners and have resulted in to greater self esteem, confidence, tolerance and respect, in addition to bringing out the leadership abilities and talents of learners.

NRC’s ability to produce relatively grounded students and high learning achievements in spite of the accelerated nature of the ALP program has been a result of a combination of factors that have put a premium on flexibility, inclusion, participation and relevance. The high quality of the program has been achieved through:

- application of a curriculum that facilitates acquisition of a basic education; and balances basic literacy and life skills dealing with issues of peace, civic education, HIV/AIDS which are extremely important in this post conflict context and among learners entering adulthood;

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1 As part of NRC’s Return and Reintegration project
existence of teacher support and supervision mechanisms that have ensured the regular attendance of teachers as well as adoption of learner-centred teaching methodologies;

flexibility of the school timetable in response to the learners circumstances;

provision of school kits and educational materials to promote learning and motivate learners;

provision of conducive learning environment that is safe and secure and promotes greater interaction through small class sizes; and

attempts to increase greater involvement of parents and communities in children's education.

These have been facilitated by the presence of a committed and dynamic program management team which has endeavored to draw from the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) standards and reflect the changing needs in its programming. Another extremely important factor is the availability of resources which has been made possible by a multi-year funding arrangement with the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The multi-year funding has allowed for more predictability.

Despite its successes, NRC's ALP has experienced a few challenges that have also yielded important lessons. Although lower than those experienced by some other implementing partners in Liberia, NRC's ALP has experienced a 22% drop out rate. Gaps in data management and the absence of follow up mechanisms have made it difficult to rank in order of prevalence factors responsible for drop-outs, even though they revolve around social and economic factors. The ALP targets a number of learners with adult responsibilities and whose circumstances therefore necessitate a regular income. The ALP as it is currently designed does not address the issue of vocational skills.

The ALP curriculum does not sufficiently take into account the diversity in educational experiences and particularly the learning needs of over-aged children who have never been to school.

Delivery of a high quality program requires enormous human, material and financial resources and is particularly difficult in an environment where social services and systems have broken down. The recruitment of qualified personnel and particularly female teachers from the targeted communities and/or those willing to work in the program areas has been difficult.

Working within a government framework as has been the case, necessitates reliance on government systems for the procurement of curriculum materials. Procurement has been delayed and has affected the timely delivery of textbooks, which have also not been sufficient. Harmonisation of NRC's teacher training program and remuneration scales with those of the government has also been challenging.

Finally, whereas the program has worked in 125 communities, the number of beneficiaries is modest. There are many remote communities with over-aged children in the three counties that have not been reached due to logistical challenges, resource and time constraints. The latter relates to government's decision to phase out the program initially by 2010 which has compelled NRC to limit itself to two learning cycles.
Added value of the Young Mothers Classes and Adult Literacy

The NRC ALP program has been modified progressively to include pilot initiatives i.e. the Young Mothers classes and the Adult Literacy program (both of which target girls and women). This inclusion has contributed to the achievement of ALP objectives, and in particular, improvements in school attendance and completion rates among girls.

The Young Mothers classes which aims at challenging the stigma associated with teenage pregnancy have benefited a total of 952 girls including those who have never been to school, by offering a flexible and supportive learning environment, complete with child care facilities. A total of 133 girls have since re-enrolled in school and gone on to join junior high school. The Adult literacy program has on the other hand benefited over 4000 learners who have been equipped with basic literacy skills. This experience with education has not only boosted the learners’ confidence but has increased their appreciation of the value of education and interest in sending their children to school.

In addition to the above, these interventions are supporting other efforts to reduce gender disparities and improve the status of girls and women in these communities. Already, the acquisition of literacy skills has opened up leadership opportunities for some of the program beneficiaries in the PTAs and active participation in community affairs.

Sustainability - Community readiness

As already mentioned, NRC’s ALP has made significant contributions to the communities where the program has been operating. As the program comes to an end, it is important to establish the level of community readiness and MoE commitment to take up the program.

Great effort has been taken throughout program implementation to promote involvement of the various stakeholders and thereby promote ownership and chances for sustainability. Critical capacities have been developed and building blocks for sustainability put in place. These include:

- the increased appreciation of the value of education that has created demand for services.
- the sense of ownership developed through participation in construction and rehabilitation of the schools which has instilled a certain sense of ownership.
- the establishment of community level structures i.e. PTAs which have been equipped with basic management skills;
- the creation of local champions for education i.e. over-aged children and learners who have benefited from the ALP and adult literacy classes.
- the involvement of local religious leaders has been important in promoting acceptability of the program and girls education and it is hoped that the leaders will continue to use their leadership platforms to maintain this support.
There are however a few challenges that will impact on community readiness in the short term including the high poverty levels caused by the destruction of livelihoods. This is likely to affect the level of the community members’ contributions to sustenance of education programs. PTAs are therefore still at a nascent level. Accountability relations between communities and government departments at the County and District levels are also still very low – thus limiting the communities’ capacity to demand for services.

**Government commitment:**
The Government has the mandate and is obliged to support and promote education activities in Liberia including those established by development partners. The fact that the ALP has been part of government policy has ensured close collaboration with government departments particularly at the County and District level in relation to identification of sites, communities, learners, monitoring of schools and to some extent training of teachers. This level of involvement has ensured that government is fully aware and a partner in implementation as indicated in the MoU signed between the two parties.

However while government is appreciative of NRC’s contributions and is willing to support education efforts in these communities due to the huge demand for these services, its capacity to do so quickly has been constrained by a weakened institutional capacity and inadequate funding. These combined with internal bureaucracy are likely to delay the absorption of teachers and full operation of former NRC ALP schools by the MoE.

**Recommendations:**

As earlier mentioned, there has been greater focus on recommendations for the future rather than the present program that is coming to an end. The recommendations are presented in no particular order of priority and it is hoped that some of these will feed into NRC’s revised education strategy. The last two however pertain to the on-going program and should be part of the exit strategy.

1. Future programming should recognise that over-aged children in post conflict countries have varied education needs. A range of education programs that combine basic literacy skills and vocational skills and offer the learners multiple pathways should therefore be offered alongside the current ALP model. NRC should for example consider strengthening linkages between its ALP and Y.E.P

2. Curricula materials for accelerated learning programs should be revised and enriched to take into account the diverse educational experiences of over-aged learners, particularly those who have never been to school.

3. Funding towards emergency education programmes should be increased to meet the huge unmet needs and facilitate wider coverage of such interventions in conflict affected communities.

4. Because of its temporal nature, greater effort should be taken to ensure that Emergency Education interventions eventually link up with the formal education
system and contribute to efforts to strengthen the ‘supply side’ i.e. government systems.

5. Robust Monitoring & Evaluation systems at all levels of the program must be established to support early detection of problems and support timely and effective responses.

6. Because of the overwhelming evidence of girls increased vulnerability during conflict and post conflict situations, ‘protection’ strategies for girls including those that promote their retention in school, should be part and parcel of Emergency Education interventions.

7. Inclusion of a literacy component for adults has been successful in as far as promoting school attendance. However future initiatives of this kind would benefit from a curriculum that balances the strategic and practical needs of the targeted beneficiaries i.e. inclusion and linkages between literacy and livelihood issues.

8. As part of its exit strategy, NRC should consider continued support to the communities and specifically the PTAs aimed at strengthening their governance role and capacity to engage MoE officials and mobilise resources.

9. NRC should initiate dialogue with the MoE and jointly develop a phase out strategy that allows for an orderly and planned take-over of the facilities by the government.
1.0 Education in Emergencies – the Rationale

Both the Education For All (EFA) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) underscore the basic right to education and the imperative therefore, for all children and youth, regardless of their circumstances, to access quality education. Education is empowering and promotes the realization of all other human rights. The EFA Global Monitoring Report 2010 estimates that 72 million children out of school worldwide and more than half of them – 37 million live in conflict fragile states².

These statistics and related studies have drawn attention to the plight of children and youth affected by conflict and are the basis for advocacy efforts for “education in emergencies”³ as a core part of humanitarian programming. The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) is advocating for the recognition of education as the 4th component in humanitarian assistance on a par with Food and Water, Medical attention and Shelter. Children and youth in emergency and transitional settings are vulnerable to various risks and dangers and therefore require special protection. Education has a critical role to play in protecting the well-being of these children by providing physical protection, cognitive and psychosocial support – all of which are critical in particularly difficult times. Education’s unique transformative potential offers an excellent vehicle for improving security, healing, social service provision, and reintegration following crises⁴.

Liberia is currently undergoing a recovery process following more than 14 years of violent conflict that resulted into massive destruction and population displacement. The peace agreement signed in 2003 and subsequent elections in 2005 have provided the country with the much needed respite to rebuild its infrastructure and economy, as well as restore the delivery of basic social services to the citizens of this country. However, in a country where everything is a priority, the government’s capacity to fulfill its obligations is currently stretched and reconstruction efforts are struggling to keep pace with the communities’ high expectations. The provision of basic social services including education remains uneven and an unacceptably high number of children remain out of school.

1.1 Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)

In response to these challenges, a number of development partners and humanitarian agencies including the NRC, have stepped in to deliver and/or support the implementation of various education activities in Liberia.

In line with its core mandate, NRC has been supporting emergency education programs for children and youth in Liberia since 2003, initially under the Rapid Response Education Program (RREP- 2003 - 2005) in Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps in Montserrado and later the Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) and the Youth Education Pack (YEP) in the North-western part of Liberia in the counties of Grand Cape Mount, Bomi and Gbarpolu.

2 Save the Children: Delivering Education for Children in Emergencies: A key building block for the future.
3 refers to a broad range of educational activities – formal and non-formal – which are life-saving and life-sustaining and critical for children, youth and their families in times of crisis, post emergency, recovery and reconstruction.
4 UNICEF submission to the Committee on the Rights of the Child 2008 Day of General Discussion (19 September 2008) “The right of the child to education in emergency situations” (CRC articles 28 & 29)
The Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) offers a condensed primary school education for over-aged children, who have missed regular schooling as a result of the war. NRC’s ALP which began in 2005 is scheduled to end in July 2010, following the completion of two learning cycles.

1.2 Purpose of the Evaluation
The main purpose of the evaluation was to obtain an independent assessment of the ALP program in Liberia, to get an understanding on the relevance and quality of the program and how effectively it has been implemented by NRC and its impact on the beneficiaries and the community at large. The full Terms of Reference (ToRs) are attached as Annex 1.

The evaluation team was specifically required to assess:

i. the quality of education offered in the ALP in light of the needs of learners and communities, taking into consideration the accelerated nature of grade completion. Areas to assess are ALP learners’ performance, the effectiveness and appropriateness of teaching and learning methods, the relevance of curriculum, syllabus, and teaching/learning material, reasons for learners retention and drop out, and the impact completing ALP has had on the lives of learners in terms of future opportunities.

ii. the added value of the multi-faceted approach of linking adult literacy and young mothers’ classes to the ALP program; and

iii. the sustainability of the ALP program, with emphasis on the capacity of community and MoE to continue education in ALP schools and recommendations to ensure sustainability following NRCs phase out of ALP.

1.3 Methodology
The evaluation was conducted by a team of three, comprising of two international consultants and one local consultant. The methodology used included:

- A desk study which involved review of relevant documents. A full list of documents consulted is provided in Annex 2. Prior to the field work the team also met with NRC’s Evaluation Steering Committee in Oslo, Norway to discuss the scope of the evaluation. It was agreed that although the evaluation team would review all four components of the program\(^5\); the main focus should be on the ALP.

- 11 days of field work in Liberia (carried out between January 18\(^{th}\) - 30\(^{th}\) 2010). The team visited a total of 17 communities, including 10 schools, in the three targeted counties of Grand Cape Mount, Gbarpolu and Bomi. The selection of communities, schools and informants was done upon recommendation by NRC staff in Liberia\(^6\). The team had prior to the field work requested to meet with both ALP communities considered to be well functioning and those perceived as weaker. The team also specifically asked to visit communities where the ALP program had already phased out. Both easily accessible and remote communities were visited. Based on this the evaluation team sees the selection of communities and schools visited as representative for the program.

- During the field visit interviews and focus group discussions were held with a total of 408 informants, including current and former ALP learners, teachers and teaching assistants, Head-

\(^{5}\) i) ALP, ii) Adult Literacy iii) Community Mobilisation and iv) School construction

\(^{6}\) The ToRs proposed a minimum of 15 communities out of the currently 100 active ALP schools and communities.
teachers, Adult literacy students, parents, community and PTA members and representatives of County and District Education Officers (DEOs). For further details see Annex 3. The team also held several discussions with the ALP staff in Monrovia and Tubmanburg as well as MoE officials at national level. Interviews were also conducted with representatives of Ibis, Save the Children UK and UNICEF. See Annex 3 for list of respondents.

- The team has based its findings on a combination of quantitative assessments of progress towards achieving stated targets (Annex 5), with a qualitative appraisal of impact and sustainability. A combination of open questions and semi structured interviews were used in the data collection process. Interview guides for all stakeholder groups were prepared prior to the field visit. Structured observations were also made, specifically during ALP classes and on school facilities in order to assess their condition. Gender sensitive methods of data collection were also applied. Triangulation was done to validate information collected.

Before leaving Liberia the team presented and discussed its findings with the NRC ALP team and the NRC Country Director in Monrovia.

1.4 Limitations

Whereas the Evaluation team had access to various documents and reports, the team encountered a few challenges including the absence of baseline data and incomplete statistical data against which to draw empirical conclusions and concrete judgments. The team was also unable to engage some key stakeholders, e.g. the substantive County Education Officers (CEOs) and DEOs, as well as ALP drop-outs. This denied the evaluation first hand information on some of the pertinent issues. The limited time and long distances involved, also made it impossible to visit as many communities as would have been wished.

1.5 Organisation of report

The report is structured as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction and background of the project
Chapter 2: A Contextual Analysis in relation to the education sector in Liberia.
Chapter 3: Project description of the ALP in terms of background, goal and objectives.
Chapter 4: Assessment of the four main components of the program in relation to effectiveness, impact, relevance and appropriateness, coverage and sustainability issues.
Chapter 5: Co-ordination
Chapter 6: Conclusions and recommendations, specifically in relation to NRC’s Education strategy and Exit Strategy

7 The data on ALP learners, and adult learners as well as school construction differs in the various documents
2.0 Contextual Background

2.1 Overview of the social and economic context

As earlier noted, the conflict in Liberia has had a catastrophic impact on the country as a whole in terms of loss of lives and productive assets, destruction of basic infrastructure, diminished productive capacity and collapse of the economy. Poverty in Liberia is as a result, pervasive and acute, particularly in the rural and remote parts of the country. By the time of the elections in 2005, the average income in Liberia had declined tremendously and was approximately only a quarter of what it had been in 1987. On-going recovery efforts to restore the economy and improve the living standards of Liberians have however, been slowed down by among others, the absence of basic infrastructure and the impassable roads in the rural areas. These have seriously constrained access to economic opportunities, as well as the provision of basic services i.e. water, electricity, health and education. And yet in light of Liberia’s turbulent history, the availability of, and access to these basic social services is crucial for sustainable peace building and national cohesion.

Table 1. Selected Social Economic Indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GDP per capita</td>
<td>US$ 256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life expectancy</td>
<td>47.7 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty levels</td>
<td>80% live on US$ 1 a day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fertility rates</td>
<td>6.8 children per woman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment levels</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population &lt; 25 years</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy levels</td>
<td>51.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maternal mortality rate</td>
<td>578 per 100,000 live births</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Parity Index</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infant mortality rate</td>
<td>157 per 100,000 life births</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


2.2 The Education Sector

Liberia’s education sector was severely affected by the protracted conflict which destroyed its physical infrastructure and weakened its institutional capacity. The education indicators and the literacy levels are generally very low, as many children, youth and adults have missed the opportunity to go to school.

Liberia’s education sector is essential to building the human capital required to rebuild and transform the nation. And although the sector is beginning to improve, it is still relatively weak. Most schools in the country lack text books, basic equipment and school supplies. There are insufficient numbers of qualified and motivated teachers and the low wages have made teacher retention difficult. These and other factors, such as an ‘outdated’ curriculum, inadequate teaching materials and weak management and supervision mechanisms at all levels, have contributed to poor education outcomes and low literacy levels. Enrolment, attendance and completion rates are generally low, particularly

9 Liberia’s Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) 2008,
10 Education Sector Master Plan 2000 – 2010
11 PRS 2008
12 World Bank 2008 report, the primary completion rate in 2006 in Liberia was 11.8% with 69.3% of males and 57.5% for females.
among girls and exhibit huge disparities between the urban and rural areas\textsuperscript{12}. The biggest challenge for the MoE however is that of inadequate and undefined sources of finance that will enable the sector to keep pace with the increasing demand for quality and relevant education. According to the PRS 2008, government expenditure on the sector ranges between 2.2 - 2.6 \% of GDP which is far less than the recommended 6\% ratio.

Mindful of its obligations to meet the MDGs, the Government of Liberia (GoL) has set into motion reforms to kick start the sector under, the Liberia Primary Education Recovery Program (LPERP) (2007 – 2010). The GoL also with effect from 2007 abolished tuition fees for public primary schools to encourage families to send their children to school\textsuperscript{13}. This has resulted into an increase in school enrolment especially among girls\textsuperscript{14}. However the absence of government schools in some communities, and the auxiliary costs associated with uniforms and scholastic materials, remain a hindrance for many. The high enrollments coming after a long period of war, have also created some distortions in the education system. The 2006/7 School census revealed that 73\% of children enrolled in primary school are over the age of 11, half of these being 15 years or older.

2.3 Addressing the needs of over-aged children

The problem of the large number of over-aged children who had missed out on school because of the conflict, was identified in the late 1990s. As a stop-gap measure, the MoE had then, with the support of UNICEF embarked on the design of the Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) – a condensed primary education curriculum to expand educational opportunities for over-aged children/ youth between the ages of 8 – 24 years. Full scale implementation of the ALP was however delayed by the re-occurrence of war and only began in earnest in 2005. The MoE has since established an ALP Co-ordination Unit and has developed ALP learning & teaching materials, and more recently the ALP Policy Guidelines 2008 to guide implementation efforts.

The program has largely been supported by humanitarian and development agencies including: Ibis, IRC, NRC, Save the Children (UK), UNICEF and USAID. As of 2007, the program was being implemented in 11 counties, in 499 schools and had reached a total of 53,697 students, 46.1\% of whom are girls. Following the inclusion of 4 additional counties between 2007–2009, this number has since increased to 75,820 students\textsuperscript{15}. While the statistics are not available, it is likely that a good number of these learners have since joined junior secondary school where this opportunity exists.

However, implementation of the ALP has not been without challenges. The more significant include the weak government monitoring, supervision and co-ordination mechanisms; and the delayed operationalisation of the policy guidelines that have not only hindered a standardized approach in delivery of the program, but continue to pose problems to the integration of the former ALP schools into the MoE structures. Others included the inadequacy of curricula materials, gaps in the ALP

\textsuperscript{12} The 2006/7 School Census Report: a third of all students enrolled in primary schools are found around the capital in Montserrado County, whilst less than two-hundredths are found in schools in rural Bomi County.

\textsuperscript{13} 65\% of the children of school- going age were not in school (2005)

\textsuperscript{14} MOE/ UNCEF: NALP, 2007 showed an increase in enrolment esp. among girls by 24\% between 2006 and 2007.

\textsuperscript{15} MoE Education Sector Review Report (ESR), 2009
curriculum and the limited options available to ALP learners\footnote{Many communities lack secondary schools} upon completion, and particularly those who do not complete or join high school. Combined, these have invariably impacted on the success of the program.

Furthermore, despite the participation of many actors, the targeted coverage has not been realized. According to the Education Sector Review (ESR) Report 2009, the target of the ALP was to reach approximately 300,000 children and youth between 2007-2010. Only a quarter i.e. 75,820 children have been reached\footnote{MoE Education Sector Review Report, 2009} – meaning that there are many over-aged children particularly those in the hard to reach areas that are still unable to access education. Unfortunately, owing to a MoE directive to the effect that implementation of the ALP would cease in 2010, many organisations engaged in the ALP have since completed and/or are in the process of winding up their support.

\subsection{The future of the ALP}

Despite the level of unmet need, the MoE has recently reiterated its position on winding up the ALP, although the end date has been extended to 2012 from the initial deadline of 2010. This has caused serious concerns as to the fate of over-aged children whose needs can not be addressed in the formal school system. Addressing the education needs of this large number of these adolescents and youth is critical for their meaningful engagement in society. The absence therefore of targeted and appropriate interventions leaves them at the risk of exploitation and manipulation, and if left out of social and economic activities, they could be a threat to stability.

Whereas there is no clearly articulated exit policy for the ALP as of now, several policy proposals\footnote{MoE, 2009, Accelerated Learning Program: Which Way Forward?} have been made and are under consideration. The MoE argues that the ALP’s continued implementation on a project basis is not sustainable and it rather supports the creation of a longer term program\footnote{ESR  Report 2009}, particularly as the ministry moves towards a sector wide approach (SWAp) and as the country as a whole moves towards the reconstruction and development phase. Information abound suggests that USAID has expressed interest in supporting the MoE with the development of an alternative program targeting youth between 15 – 35 years. While the details are scanty, it is believed that the program will address some of the concerns that have been raised regarding the need to equip the over-aged children and youth with relevant knowledge and appropriate skills that will increase their productive capacity.

If the program goes ahead it would appear to correspond with the draft Education Sector Plan (2010-2020) whose priorities for the Sector include: \textit{i)} strengthening the school curriculum and strengthening the quality and accessibility of skills and vocational training.

It is premature to speculate on MoE’s policy regarding the educational needs of over-aged children, but the available information suggests that more emphasis will be placed on vocational skills. Under the SWAp, partners targeting this group will most likely be required to conform to these considerations in their programming and tailor their program activities accordingly. What also remains unclear are the plans for over-aged learners between 10-14 and the possibility of the continued distortion of the education system.
3.0 NRC’s Accelerated Learning Program: Project Description

The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) has been an active humanitarian partner in Liberia during the different phases of crisis. The organisation has through advocacy, capacity building and program activities, made a significant contribution to the emergency, reintegration and early recovery processes. NRC has been delivering Emergency Education programmes in Liberia since 2003 initially under the Rapid Response Education Program (RREP), and starting 2005, the Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) and Youth Education Pack (YEP).

3.1 Alignment with NRC Policies

NRC’s engagement was first and foremost determined by its global mandate i.e. to provide humanitarian assistance activities to refugees and internally displaced communities as was the case in Liberia in 2003. Within this broader mandate, is the underlying principle that “NRC will respond to education needs in all phases of crisis and emergency where it has a presence and its intervention is needed.”

The primary objective of the NRC Education core activity is to respond rapidly to education needs and thereby contributing to durable solutions for refugees, internally displaced persons (IDP’s) and returnees by facilitating access to basic education and training, promoting education as a prime protection tool and providing training in, or information on, conflict management, human rights, reconciliation and peace building. Its specific objectives are to:

- Provide education to refugees, IDP and returnee children as their right
- Promote education as a life-saving and life sustaining intervention in emergency situations
- Protect children and youth from recruitment into armed forces, crime or sexual exploitation
- Address the special information and learning needs of people living in situations of crisis or emergency
- Create secure learning environments so as to promote and protect the well-being of learners
- Strengthen local capacity to meet the education needs and sustain basic schooling

NRC’s Education Policy

3.2 Processes leading to NRC’s Accelerated Learning Program in Liberia

NRC’s Emergency Education portfolio in Liberia was preceded by a needs assessment conducted by UNICEF in 2002 that identified education as one of the critical protection concerns for the IDP communities. NRC subsequently established its base in Montserrado county and in 2003 embarked on the RREP, a 6-9 month intensive emergency education program. The program targeted out of school children and youth in the IDP camps with the aim of providing them with psycho-social support, survival messages and literacy skills that would facilitate their entry into formal school.

The signing of the Accra Peace agreement in 2004 expanded space for humanitarian activity, and led to the extension of the program to Bomi county and subsequent establishment of an NRC field office in Tubmanburg. The program was later expanded to include returnee communities in the counties of Bomi, Gbarpolu and Grand Cape Mount, where NRC had signed an agreement with UNHCR as Lead agency for the return and reintegration process. Surveys carried out in the IDP camps and return areas in 2004 – 2006 (as part of NRC’s Returnee Monitoring Project) had identified the lack of

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20 Camp Management, Education, Distribution and Shelter, Information, Counselling and Legal Assistance
21 NRC Education Handbook
22 The net primary enrolment of children aged 6-18 years at the time stood at 25% while literacy rates were at only 37%.
23 7 camps in Montserrado county, 30 communities in Cape Mount, Bomi and Gbarpolu.
basic social services including schools, health services and food security, as some of the critical needs and pre-conditions for return of IDPs to their areas of origin\(^{24}\). These three counties bordering Sierra Leone were seriously affected by the conflict and are today, some of the poorest regions\(^{25}\) of Liberia.

### 3.3 The switch from RREP to ALP

Whereas the RREP was a ‘bridging program’, NRC was forced to adjust the length of the program due to the absence of formal schools in many of the return areas and the need therefore, to prevent the children who had enrolled from becoming drop-outs all over again. The program was thus modified and began running classes in line with the Liberian Primary School curriculum.

The program was further modified in 2005 following a MoE policy that directed all non formal education activities to operate within the Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) framework. The switch from the RREP to ALP which began April 2005\(^{26}\), was eased by the fact that both had more or less the same objectives, i.e. increasing educational opportunities for over-aged children whose education had been interrupted by the war. The added advantage of the ALP was its multiple year arrangement and ability to keep children in school longer where there were no formal schools. One key challenge for NRC at the time, was reconciliation of the three year ALP with its Emergency Education mandate. This was however later resolved following requests from the GoL and UNICEF for continued support to the sector and additional 3 year funding (2007-2010) from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs\(^{27}\).

### 3.4 Program goal, objectives

NRC signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Government of Liberia (GoL) to implement the Accelerated Learning Programme in the three counties of Bomi, Gbarpolu and Grand Cape Mount, initially in 2006 and later in 2008 for a period of three years (2008-2010).

The Accelerated Learning Program component is and remains the main focus of the program. The program has however developed progressively to include other components: i) Adult Literacy; iii) Young Mothers and pregnant teenagers classes; iv) Community Mobilisation; and v) School Construction (see chart on next page). These have been included in response to the changing needs and context so as to promote achievement of the program objectives and goal.

The program has been targeting the following categories:

1. Over-aged children (from 10 to 17 years old)
2. Pregnant teenagers
3. teachers and teaching assistants
4. illiterate adults
5. Communities

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\(^{25}\) Northwest region is the second poorest region in Liberia - Participatory Poverty Assessment 2008  
\(^{26}\) NRC Proposal Document LRTF 2006  
\(^{27}\) Page 21, NRC Education Hand Book
NRC's Accelerated Learning Program: Project Description

- Facilitate access to basic education for children between 10 and 17 years old with limited or no educational background
- Expand the implementation of Adult Literacy classes with specific focus on women
- Ensure the sustainability of primary schools implemented by NRC

Objectives:

- Support to MOE officials
- Provision of teaching/learning materials
- Recruitment & training of teachers
- Construction of school buildings
- Community awareness meetings
- Training of PTAs
- Returnee and local out-of-school children have access to basic education including Language arts, Mathematics, Science, Social studies and to information and activities in the fields of health and hygiene, including HIV/AIDS.
- Teachers, teaching assistants, MOE staff and NRC staff are trained in their field of expertise.
- Children are involved in sport activities and peace activities.
- Communities are provided with schools' facilities and child protection education regarding hygiene and women's rights.
- Communities are empowered in the fields of education.
- To contribute to war-affected over-age children receiving basic education.

Advantages:

- Communities where ALP is implemented are empowered in the fields of education, child protection, health and hygiene, and women's rights.
- Teachers, teaching assistants, MOE staff and NRC staff are trained in their field of expertise.
- Communities are provided with schools' facilities and child protection education regarding hygiene and women's rights.
- Returnee and local out-of-school children have access to basic education including Language arts, Mathematics, Science, Social studies and to information and activities in the fields of health and hygiene, including HIV/AIDS.
- Teachers, teaching assistants, MOE staff and NRC staff are trained in their field of expertise.

Activities:

- Provision of teaching/learning materials
- Recruitment & training of teachers
- School programmes for 10-17 year olds
- Reading classes for adult learners
- Young mothers classes
- Provision of teaching/learning materials
- Support to MOE officials
NRC’s Accelerated Learning Program: Project Description

NRC Country Director

Education Program Manager

ALP Project Coordinator

Field Office Coordinator

Finance/Administration

Logistics Manager

Support Staff: Finance, admin, guards, etc.

Assistant Community Mobilisation Officers

3 Health and Hygiene Sensitisation Officers

6 Assistant Community Sensitisation Supervisors

(one for each county - also referred to as community sensitisation supervisors)

5 Community Mobilisation Officers

3 Community Mobilisation Officers

Education Officers

4 Education Officers

Assistant Education Officers

Construction Officer

(covers Bomi, Grand Cape Mount)

4 Assistant Construction Officers

Finance/Admin Manager

Support Staff: Finance, admin, logistics, warehouse, guards, drivers, cleaners etc.

Program Management (staff) structures as of September 2009

NRC Evaluation Report 2010 (NCG)
4.0 Program Assessment: Findings

4.1 Component 1: The Accelerated Learning Program (ALP)

4.1.1 Component description:

NRC’s Accelerated Learning Program in Liberia draws heavily from the INEE\textsuperscript{28} standards and is similar to other ALP programs around the world. However, some modifications have been made to suit the local needs and the Liberian context.

Main features of NRC’s ALP program in Liberia

- Targets over-aged boys and girls between 10 – 17 years who have missed out on their education
- Utilises the ALP curriculum developed by UNICEF and MOE
- Condenses 6 years of the primary school curriculum into 3 years: Level I; Level II; and Level III; learners may sit for exams in order to join Secondary school.
- Consists of 4 core subjects: Numeracy, Language Arts, Social Studies and Sciences
- Class sizes of a maximum of 30 learners
- Classes conducted for a full year and follow school calendar
- Classes run in both community schools and shared facilities with government schools
- Lessons conducted for an average of 4 hours every day
- Has a timetable with five 40 minute periods per day
- 2 teachers per class – 1 teacher and 1 teacher assistant
- Provides regular monitoring and support mechanisms for teachers

Since its inception in 2005, the program has been progressively modified to increase its coherence with the government’s ALP Curriculum and policy. Significant changes include adjustment of the school cycle to coincide with the MoE school and examination calendar. Although NRC does not employ government teachers for its program, it is increasingly aligning its teacher training program to meet government requirements for accreditation purposes and future absorption into the government education system.

NRC has run two phases of the program i.e. 2005 – 2007 and 2007 – 2010, and had by December 2009 implemented the ALP in 125 schools.

4.1.2 Project Effectiveness

\begin{center}
\textbf{Component Objective: To facilitate access to basic education for children between 10-17 years old with very limited or no educational background in the three counties of Bomi, Gbarpolu and Cape Mount}
\end{center}

Right at the outset, it is important to stress that the other components discussed in other sections of this report have also contributed to the achievement of this objective. Strategies towards fulfillment of this objective have thus included: the construction and rehabilitation of school facilities; provision and

\textsuperscript{28} Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies: Minimum standards for Education in Emergencies, Chronic Crises and Early Reconstruction.
distribution of teaching and learning materials; recruitment and training of teachers and community mobilisation efforts.

a) Expanding Access
According to the available data\(^{29}\), the program has since 2005 enrolled a total of 7269 over aged children and given them, the opportunity to attend school and acquire a basic education. 45% of these children have been girls bringing the program closer to its gender parity targets.

NRC’s ALP has succeeded in realizing and even exceeding its enrolment target (7200 learners) by addressing some of the obstacles that have previously hindered access to education in the targeted counties. NRC achieved this by:

- *increasing proximity* of over-aged learners to school facilities through the construction of 52 schools including 4 that will be completed by end of 2010 and rehabilitation/construction/expansion of 37 schools under NRC’s Return and Reintegration project.

- *provision of a free education*: Whereas the GoL introduced a policy on compulsory free primary education in 2007, it has not been able to enforce it fully\(^{30}\). The fact that the NRC’s ALP is completely free has contributed to high enrolment. Many of the learners\(^{31}\) mentioned *proximity* and *free education* as their main motivation for joining the ALP, and expressed their gratitude to NRC for the provision of free learning/teaching materials which had enabled them to attend school.

- *delivering an appropriate program that is tailored to the needs of the over-aged learners*: A significant number of the over-aged learners joining the ALP in Level 1 have never been to school and would not be comfortable nor would it be desirable for them to study with younger children.

- *implementing a multi-level program*: Unlike other agencies implementing the ALP in Liberia\(^{32}\) – NRC’s provision of all three ALP levels concurrently, enabled the enrolment of learners at different levels.

The excellent examination performance of NRC’s ALP schools in the national level exams (90% pass rates) and thus perceptions of the ALP as a high quality education program, are reported as having impacted on enrollment figures\(^{33}\). Other factors, such as NRC’s community mobilisation efforts and the government’s campaign on girls education, are also likely to have contributed to the surge in enrollment figures for girls.

However, the excellent grades and the fact the ALP schools were until recently the only schools in 90% of the communities, increased the pressure for enrolment of children outside the targeted age group. Information obtained suggests that some effort has been made to address this problem – nevertheless the team met a number of children who were below age and some above.

**Recommendations:**

- There is a need to develop a clear policy to be shared with all stakeholders on selection criteria of learners and assessment for entry into ALP at the appropriate level.

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\(^{29}\) Figures obtained from NRC Field office in Tubmanburg

\(^{30}\) the additional costs associated with education are a hindrance to many poor families

\(^{31}\) FGDs with ALP learners in Markoma, Bomi,

\(^{32}\) MoE/UNICEF 2008: Evaluation of the National ALP

\(^{33}\) Liberia Reconstruction Trust Fund (LRTF) - 2007 Annual report
The high demand for the ALP suggests the need for increased funding towards Emergency Education programs to promote equitable access to quality education for children from conflict affected communities.

b) Completion levels

Retention and completion rates are important indicators of the quality of an education program and its responsiveness to the needs of its learners.

According to the figures obtained, slightly more learners than expected completed the cycle in 2008 and 2009. The figures indicate that 87% of the 1200 learners enrolled in 2005 completed the full cycle in May 2008 and 79% of (1700) that enrolled in 2006 completed the cycle in May 2009. 36 % of these were girls meaning that fewer girls than boys complete the ALP. According to the targets it is expected that at least another 3010, 45% of whom are girls will complete the program in June 2010.

Table 2:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enrolment figures</th>
<th>2007/8</th>
<th>2008/9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2021</td>
<td>1400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1834</td>
<td>1112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3855</td>
<td>2512</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Factors influencing retention

“Free, Fun and Flexible” are the three words that were repeatedly heard from current and former ALP learners when asked what it is they liked about, and what had kept them in, the NRC ALP.

- Flexibility of the school time-table and provision of ALP classes in the afternoon has enabled the learners to balance their domestic responsibilities with their academic pursuits.

- The availability of scholastic materials and other resources have been an incentive for regular school attendance. NRC provides children with a student kit (copy books, stationery, school bag) which has ensured that the learners have the basic materials to actively participate in class.

- Regular teacher attendance is what distinguishes the NRC ALP. Both current and former ALP learners reported that they liked going to school because “the teachers were always there and taught them well”. Participatory teaching methodologies and teacher attendance have added to the perception of the NRC ALP as providing quality education, particularly when compared against the government schools where teacher morale and attendance is a huge problem.

- Physical Education (P.E) was very much appreciated by all the learners interviewed. Sports provide learners with an opportunity to build friendship, enhances team work and self-esteem which are important factors in school retention.

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34 Provisional statistics obtained from NRC Field Office in Tubmanburg
35 Program targeted 70% completing the ALP
36 There were 3518 learners in level III as of January 2010.
• **School feeding programs:** Whereas all the ALP schools have previously benefited from the World Food Program (WFP) feeding program, the program is currently being phased out and remains operational in only a few schools. During the field visit, the team noted that those schools still benefiting from the feeding program had by comparison, higher enrollment and attendance figures. One such school had a total of 353 students and 10 Level III classes (5 in the morning and 5 in the afternoon) with an average of 35 learners in each class.

• **Parental and community support as discussed in 4.2 and 4.3** have also contributed to improved school attendance.

**Reasons for drop-outs**

The evaluation found that drop out rates in the NRC ALP program are considerably lower than those experienced by other partners in Liberia. Through a range of interventions NRC has succeeded in bringing the drop-out rate down from a high of 30% in 2005 – 2007, to the current level that ranges between 22 – 20%. Drop-out rates for both girls and boys are more pronounced in levels II and III, and are slightly higher among girls. In other words, proportionally fewer girls complete the program. Up to 25% of both girls and boys who reach Level III do not feel confident enough to sit for the exams and these are usually those whose attendance is irregular. Some of these repeat the class, but many drop out soon after.

One of the key limitations of this evaluation was the inability to interact with ALP drop-outs to obtain first hand information on their reasons for leaving the program. The problem was further compounded by the absence of any program data and follow up of such cases. The evaluation observed that while the specific reasons for girls drop-outs are more documented, there is less information on the boys. However, information obtained from current ALP students, students in junior high school, young mothers’ classes, community members and teachers suggests the following reasons:

• **Migration to other towns:** The destruction of livelihoods during the conflict and the extremely limited economic opportunities in the three counties have necessitated individuals/ families’ migration to Monrovia and other areas in search of jobs. However, according to one of the partner agencies, many unsuspecting children/youth are being lured from the rural areas to Monrovia by “could be” traffickers under the false pretext of scholarships and better school opportunities/jobs.

• **Lack of parental support** and high levels of poverty have had a negative impact on children’s educational attainment and achievement. The loss of parents has forced many learners to take on adult responsibilities, hence the need for income to sustain themselves. For example, many boys have reportedly dropped from the ALP in Lofa bridge in Cape Mount to engage in mining activities. Furthermore, a number of children living with relatives have to literally earn their keep by taking on a disproportionately heavy domestic burden. Teachers reported late-coming, irregular attendance and eventual drop-out of children living under such circumstances.

• **Proximity:** A few of the respondents cited the fairly long walking distances between the schools and some communities as having discouraged girls attendance. This is mainly due to security concerns, particularly when walking back home in the evening hours.

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37 Tubmanburg ALP school.
38 Ibis 2008, Evaluation of ALP in Liberia
39 For example 1308 out of a total of 6636 children dropped out of school between 2007/8 and 2008/9
40 ALP teacher
41 Interviews and focus group discussions in Bomi, Gbapolu and Grand Cape Mount.
42 Interview with Save the Children (UK)
43 live alone, have children or siblings to look after and/or are cohabiting
44 The low participation of girls in Markoma ALP i.e. 8 girls compared to 26 boys was attributed to its location.
• **Early marriages/ Teenage Pregnancies:** There is an extremely high rate of teenage pregnancy in Liberia, including in the three counties targeted by NRC. This is partly as a result of the high prevalence of sexual exploitation and assault (SEA). It is also a consequence of the conflict, where the lack of parental support and guidance has necessitated the adoption of other means of survival. For example, many adolescents and youth still attending school are cohabiting as a coping mechanism. The communities which are largely Muslim also have a tradition of early marriages where girls above the age of 14 are considered of marriageable age. The absence of female role models has not helped matters and many girls aspirations are rather limited as demonstrated by one learner: “if you are lucky and you get a good man – your whole condition will improve. Your life will be happy”

• **Local Traditions:** The limited value attached to girl’s education versus the traditional non formal education i.e. the “Bush schools” has also contributed to girls drop-out. Girls between 10 – 13 years are obliged to attend initiation rites in the “Bush School” for up to 2 months where they are among others trained to be good wives and housekeepers. Until community mobilisation efforts supported by a government directive intervened, these rites frequently coincided with the school calendar – forcing girls to miss school and eventually drop out.

• **Poor academic experience:** One of the teachers reported that a number of learners in Levels I and II, who have not attended school previously, experience significant difficulties in following lessons owing to their limited cognitive skills, and eventually drop out. NRC in 2007 conducted an exercise in Bomi County that included shifting learners from one level to the other due to the unsystematic manner in which original placements had been done. The exercise also removed nearly 333 children from the program, including a number who were under-age and were re-directed to the formal schools.

**Recommendations:**

• NRC needs to develop clear guidelines and standardized assessment tools to support the appropriate placement of learners.

• NRC needs to develop a more robust M & E system and that is operational at all levels (program, school and community) to enable the tracking of ALP learners and drop-outs by gender and thus: a) support the development of appropriate and timely interventions; b) monitor program effectiveness; and c) quality assurance.

• Over-aged learners in conflict affected communities have diverse education needs including skills training for income generation. It is important therefore to provide a range of educational programs including those that balance literacy, life and vocational skills.

• NRC should wherever possible strengthen linkages between its education programs so as to provide over-aged children with a range of options including joining programs that combine basic literacy with vocational skills e.g. the Y.E.P.

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45 68% of Liberian girls have their first child before reaching the age of 18 due to forced early marriages and rape (PRS 2008)

46 Some respondents reported that this included some form of FGM. This is however a taboo subject in these communities and hence details were scanty.

47 Tubmanburg, Biakini, Gonzipo and other schools

48 Oral assessments of students’ capacities were conducted to determine the suitable level of entry
Efforts taken to reduce Drop-Out rates

As indicated earlier, NRC has since 2007 instituted measures to respond to the high drop out rates. The inclusion of the community mobilisation component and the Adult Literacy Program are some of the ways that the program has attempted to build a supportive environment for education (see 4.2 and 4.3).

All the schools have a school attendance policy and attendance registers which should be used to monitor attendance. Some of the teachers that the team met reported counseling learners and engaging families on issues of absenteeism. According to a Principal in Tubmanburg, attendance figures are also regularly presented during PTA meetings and collective strategies devised to reduce absenteeism. This practice was confirmed by PTA members in the various communities visited by the evaluation team.

Although it only lasted a short time due to funding gaps, sports competitions organized in 2007, in cooperation with the Norwegian Confederation of Sports and Olympic Committee, in some ALP schools, were reported to have motivated many children, and boys especially, to attend school. This affirms that the inclusion of physical education (P.E) in the curriculum contributes to the retention of children in school.

c) Young Mothers’ Classes

Perhaps the most significant intervention in relation to drop-outs has been the introduction of the Young Mothers classes in 2007 which is also an example of gender responsive programming. The program’s unique contribution lies in its targeting of girls who have been doubly disadvantaged i.e. have in the past missed out schooling on account of the conflict and during post conflict, on account of pregnancy. According to the PRS 2008, the majority of girls (68%) in Liberia have their first child before reaching the age of 18. The Young Mothers Classes was thus designed to stem the number of school drop-outs from the ALP and enable girls complete school.

The program benefited a total of 952 young mothers between 2008 and 2009. This figure also includes girls who were not enrolled in the ALP and others who have never been to school, thus indicating the level of enthusiasm with which these classes were received. The team met a number of young mothers who had dropped out of school several years ago (in grades 4 – 9) and were now as a result of participating in the young mothers classes considering re-joining school.

Features of the Young Mothers’ classes

The young mothers’ classes were introduced in 2007 following the high drop out rate of girls on account of pregnancy and early marriage. Girls have previously been discouraged from going back to school after pregnancy. The program which offers a further condensed program was designed as a bridge program to enable girls resume classes upon delivery.

The classes are conducted by ALP teachers three times a week for 2 hours. Class time is flexible and to the convenience of mothers. Each class is provided with a child-minder to baby sit while the mothers study. Classes include instruction on basic numeracy and literacy skills, taken from Level 1 of the ALP curriculum. This because even those previously higher classes have experienced serious learning loss. Some additional components i.e. health education, hygiene and HIV/AIDS are also incorporated.

The program benefited a total of 952 young mothers between 2008 and 2009. This figure also includes girls who were not enrolled in the ALP and others who have never been to school, thus indicating the level of enthusiasm with which these classes were received. The team met a number of young mothers who had dropped out of school several years ago (in grades 4 – 9) and were now as a result of participating in the young mothers classes considering re-joining school.

49 FGDs with Young Mothers Classes in Bo Waterside, Married Camp
Added value
The young mothers’ classes have mitigated the stigma associated with early pregnancy and eased resumption of school while offering the mothers the flexibility to attend to their young babies. The statistics for 2009 show that a total of 133 young mothers who had participated in these classes were able to re-enroll in school: 64 in ALP classes, 69 in the formal schools. Only 33 gave up school completely. While it was not possible to make deductions on the significance of these numbers in relation to the completion rates, it is important to stress that the successful retention of even one single girl in school, in communities where female illiteracy rates are so high, is a worthwhile investment.

For the older mothers who have never been to school, these classes have created a ‘window of opportunity’ to access basic literacy. Many of the mothers interviewed expressed pride at being able to write basic sentences and to do simple calculations and indicated that they were going on to embark on small enterprises, provided they got some “money to turn their hands” i.e. financial support.

From the evaluation’s perspective, the young mothers’ class provides a platform to address a number of issues that continue to impede girls education. These include high teenage pregnancies, HIV/AIDS STIs and Sexual Gender Based Violence (SGBV). These girls are potential ‘ambassadors’ who could educate their peers on these matters. Some of the current limitations are the ad hoc basis in which these issues are handled by the mobilisers, as well as the fact that classes are mainly run by male teachers who may not have received specific training on these life skill issues from a gender perspective.

Recommendations:
- There is overwhelming evidence of girls increased vulnerability during conflict and post conflict situations. This suggests that ‘protection’ strategies for girls including those that promote their retention in school, should be part and parcel of Emergency Education interventions.
- Some of the life skill issues to be addressed might necessitate external support. NRC should wherever possible, establish linkages with other service providers in better position to handle and provide the young mothers with gender and age-responsive SRH materials and services.

d) Learners performance
The evaluation included an assessment of Learner achievement which is an important indicator of the quality of an education program. The evaluation did not prepare a specific assessment tool for current and former learners, but relied on the West African Examination Council (W.A.E.C) exam results for 2008 and 2009, classroom observations, off the cuff questions, simple reading exercises given to the current learners, as well as feedback from teachers at the current ALP schools, DEOs, teachers and Principals in the Junior High schools.

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30 above 17 years
The available statistics indicate a remarkably high pass rate among students who have participated in the NRC ALP. 71% of the learners who completed Level III in 2008 and 2009 sat for the W.A.E.C exams. 95% of these passed in the first grade. Some of the exam result sheets made available to the evaluation team indicated an average score of 80 – 88% for each of the four core subjects. Each of the schools had some exceptional students with an average score of 90% in each of the subjects. This indicates that the majority of those who have managed to complete Level III have mastered the essential literacy and numeracy skills to support their transition to grade 7.

When compared against the 2009 results of five other schools, NRC’s ALP grades were comparable, and in some cases significantly higher than those of children who had attended the government and Mission schools. Although fewer girls (37%) sat for the exams, their pass rates and grades were comparable with the boys. The difference in performance between the rural and urban schools was marginal, although the latter on average had higher scores. While it might be a coincidence, one of the schools currently benefiting from the feeding program also had some of the highest scores. This could be deduced to establish a correlation between adequate feeding and higher learner achievement. There are other factors as well responsible for the better performance of the NRC ALP schools including the regular attendance of teachers and regular learning, teaching methodologies and the availability of teaching and learning materials.

The evaluation also attempted to obtain information on the performance of former ALP learners that have joined junior high school. A key challenge once again was the absence of data on the whereabouts of former ALP learners, including data on the number of ALP learners that have actually joined junior high school.

However, according to secondary school teachers and principals met, former ALP learners are doing well and even better than their counterparts from the formal schools. For example, one former ALP learner, currently in Sinje Junior High School, was the overall second best performing student in the district. Although they reported some initial difficulty in adjusting to the new learning environment, former ALP learners are performing well and have developed coping mechanisms carried over from the ALP. A few reported having carried on the ALP models of co-operative learning in pairs and self-directed learning by borrowing text books and reading them overnight. One former ALP learner informed the team that she occasionally pays an older student to tutor her on concepts that she can not understand.

Assessment of the current learners’ performance was mainly done through observation. The team observed lessons in five Level III classes – three of which were having numeracy lessons. From observation, the majority of learners appeared to enjoy maths and exhibited an acceptable level of proficiency in numeric and basic mathematical operations.

There was however some evident difficulty with the Language Arts including spoken English. Whereas it is understandable that English is a second language for the learners, the indiscriminate use of grammar limits the learners’ ability to communicate effectively and to be understood. This becomes increasingly important as they engage with people outside their community. Secondly, although a few of the learners in Level III, who were subjected to simple reading exercises were able to read fairly well, it was at a much slower pace than should be expected at that level. In spite of its centrality to learning, - reading is a nation wide problem in the Primary school system due to the shortage of books. Many school going children lack basic reading skills which affect their capacity to learn effectively. This has necessitated the development of a specific program to address the

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31 Focus group discussion with former ALP Learners in Sinje
Nevertheless, the evaluation was informed that the reading levels of the ALP learners are better than those in the formal schools. One of the DEOs met remarked that what distinguished NRC’s ALP learners from others was their ability to read. This can probably be attributed to the NRC’s efforts to provide the learners with simple readers, which have been useful in building their vocabulary and enhancing their reading skills.

**Recommendations:**

- Education programs should aim at ensuring a careful balance of material and human resource inputs and support mechanisms to promote the quality of interventions and learner outcomes

**e) Relevance of Curricula, syllabus and teaching/learning materials**

The evaluation team also attempted to assess the *relevance* of the curriculum, syllabus and teaching and learning materials in relation to the education needs of the target group. The learners are operating in difficult circumstances and lack the skills and knowledge to transform their lives and are in danger of being marginalized. Additionally they have diverse learning needs.

The primary objective of ALP curriculum was to reduce the disparities created by the war by providing over-aged learners with a basic education that will expand their opportunities. The findings indicate that the ALP curriculum has to this extent attempted to address the education needs of these over-aged learners in terms of the skills, knowledge and attitudes that they require to: a) complete primary school and access secondary school education; and b) to promote a cohesive society.

This has been achieved through the provision of a complementary education program whose duration and design takes into account the age related issues of the learners (10-18) and their presumably higher cognitive skills; and hence a *condensed* curriculum that ensures completion of the required learning within a shorter period of three years. The existence of this program as indicated in (4.1.2) has motivated the enrolment of over-aged learners who had otherwise been locked out of the formal school system.

The ALP curriculum has been derived from the MoE Primary School Curriculum thus ensuring the easier integration of over-aged learners into the formal school system. The link with the MoE system has ensured that ALP learners are able to sit for national exams (W.A.E.C) and obtain MoE accreditation which has facilitated their entry into junior secondary school. Whereas condensed, the ALP syllabus content closely matches the primary school syllabus and contains a careful selection of the most essential elements in the four core subjects: Language Arts, Maths, Social Studies and Science thus ensuring that ALP learners acquire the basic numeracy and literacy skills within the limited time-table.

Still on content, the curriculum has integrated complementary topics/subjects (Peace education, HIV/AIDS, Human Rights, Agriculture) aimed at equipping ALP learners with relevant life skills and instilling civic values that are so important to Liberia’s reconstruction process and sustained stability. One of the issues emphasized in the materials is the country’s multi-cultural history and the need for greater appreciation and respect of the different ethnic groups so as to reduce the historical disparities.

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52 Early Grade Reading Assessment Program - designing a research-based early grade reading curriculum
53 Bomi County
54 10-18 years old children/youth, including child mothers, children associated with fighting forces, orphans, child heads of households etc.
Based on the ALP learners’ performance and examination grades, the evaluation can confirm that inspite of the accelerated nature of the program, the ALP curricula and syllabus ensures that over-aged learners are able to attain learning outcomes similar to those of their counterparts in the formal school system. It is however important to note that whereas the syllabus might be adequate as far as content is concerned, proper grade completion and achievement heavily rely on the availability of teaching and learning materials and the teaching methodologies applied in the classrooms.

Accelerated learning is dependant on the use of ALP teaching methodologies. It is apparent that the ALP curriculum has put as much emphasis on the information to be given to learners, as it has on the manner in which it should be delivered. The teaching methodologies are taking into account the age, experiences and different learning styles of the over-aged learners.

Information obtained from a range of sources suggests that the additional teaching materials, including textbooks and manuals developed by MoE, have been instrumental to and have eased the delivery of the ALP curriculum which has been critical in light of the varied teacher qualifications.

The Teacher Manuals developed for each of the four subjects have for example, simplified teaching by presenting topics in a step by step and easy to follow manner. The Teacher manuals contain detailed lesson plans, additional subject content and provide teachers with suggestions on learner centred activities that are stimulating and enable students to make connections between concepts taught in the classroom and their everyday experiences, and thus promote the retention of knowledge. The Teachers’ Manuals have also emphasized the use of local materials particularly in the teaching of hard to grasp numeracy / science concepts thus attempting to make learning even more practical.

Some of the NRC ALP teachers that the evaluation team met indicated that they had each been provided with a set of these teaching and learning materials, which had accordingly enhanced their teaching and contributed to better subject delivery. Most of them were in agreement that if covered as recommended, the curriculum materials were largely sufficient. Time has however been cited as a serious constraint due to the variances in learners’ abilities and learning pace. NRC’s ALP program has addressed this problem by running a more intense program and slightly longer school calendar i.e. 238 instructional days as opposed to the 150 days recommended by the MoE, thus giving the NRC teachers an edge over their counterparts.

There are other challenges that have been experienced in relation to the MoE ALP curriculum materials and specifically with regards to its responsiveness to the diverse learner needs and capacities.

Information obtained from various respondents and literature point to gaps within the Language Arts Level 1 curriculum. The curriculum does not sufficiently take into account the learners’ deficiencies in the English language. It has been reported that many of the learners who have never been to school experience great difficulty and frustration in following lessons due to their inability to participate meaningfully. Many of the children are still learning to read, rather than reading to learn.

This finding correlates with information obtained from the Education Sector Review 2009 (ESR) which indicates that: “The majority of ALP students across all programs continue to score poorly on reading

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55 Evaluation reports and discussions with the NRC teachers and trainers
56 Lesson objectives, learning points, class activities, learning materials, lesson duration and expected outcomes
57 MoE/ UNICEF: Evaluation of NALP
58 UNICEF/MOE: Evaluation of NALP; IBIS – Evaluation of ALP
comprehension skills, though ALP students scored slightly higher than students in the conventional primary grade system. The ALP curriculum assumes some prior familiarity with letters, phonemes, and numbers. Many entering ALP Level 1 lack such fundamental building blocks of learning and struggle to catch up”.

The Language Arts curriculum also makes assumptions about the teachers’ mastery of the English Language. It is particularly difficult for many who are not qualified teachers and have not attained the level of subject specialization that the curriculum assumes.

Another challenge in relation to the ALP curriculum is the insufficiency of MoE recommended text books. Whereas some topics in the Teachers Manuals require the support of text books, these are not readily available to students – due to delays in procurement and distribution by the MoE59. Most of the schools visited had only a few copies of the text books that could only be utilised during group work and at best on a ratio of 1:5 learners. Because of this scarcity, schools are not willing to lend books thus limiting the learners’ ability to undertake independent research and increase depth of knowledge. This has necessitated the copying of notes on the blackboard and reduces learning time. Supplementary books that have been donated60 and distributed by MoE are a little advanced, set in a very different context and not suitable for learners whose reading skills are limited. However those teachers who had attempted to use them reported that this wide variety of resource materials had expanded their subject knowledge and afforded them a variety of ideas on how to deliver topics.

The ALP curriculum also falls short on areas related to creative development. i.e. by excluding some subjects e.g. art and music which denies children an opportunity to explore their creative side, talents and the therapeutic effects of these subjects on their well being and expression. Coincidentally, a number of former ALP learners included it in their list of recommendations.

NRC61 has attempted to address some of the curriculum problems by including an induction program akin to pre-school, where such learners are for a given period of time equipped with the most basic numeracy and literacy skills. Materials provided to such ALP learners include slates and chalk to enable learners practice writing and identification of basic letters and numbers.

NRC has also provided a variety of readers at various levels to increase learners’ reading and comprehension skills. Furthermore, the curriculum has been enriched through the inclusion of small but significant features in the ALP schools such as devotion time on the daily school time-table which aims at promoting religious tolerance and understanding; and daily hoisting of the flag which reinforces a nationalist spirit.

However, the fact that the ALP students are doing comparatively better than learners in the public schools, suggests that the ALP curriculum is appropriate, also when taking the accelerated nature of the program into account. As most of the ALP students are over-aged it is likely that they have a higher learning capacity than their younger peers in the formal schools. This probably contributes to the fact that they are able to cope with a condensed curriculum.

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59 ESR 2009
60 Million Book March implemented by Visions in Action and Books in Africa
61 Information obtained from one of the NRC trainers
Recommendations

- NRC should develop clear guidelines and standardized assessment tools to determine level of maturity, cognitive ability, and appropriate entry level in the ALP.

- An Induction component should be added to the ALP and relevant curriculum materials developed.

- ALP should be adequately resourced with the relevant teaching and learning materials to supplement teachers’ knowledge and skills and promote effective teaching practices.

f) Teachers Performance

It is the opinion of the evaluation team that the NRC teachers have played a pivotal role in the program’s effective delivery.

Teacher Training

As indicated in section 2.0, the country suffers from an acute shortage of qualified teachers and it is on this basis that NRC chose to recruit high school graduates for training as ALP teachers, as opposed to utilizing the available government teachers. Whereas this decision was contested, NRC’s considerations are well placed given that: employing government teachers would create a work overload and thus probably lead to inefficiencies and /or deprive the government schools of the few available teachers. Besides, the training of additional teachers will be adding to the teaching force, and if integrated, would support the transfer of new methodologies into the formal system. NRC also believed that although they lacked the basic teacher qualifications, the newly recruited teachers would be more amenable to the adoption of new methodologies, i.e. the learner centred methodologies that underpin the ALP.

Since 2005, NRC has recruited and trained a total of 249 teachers and 60 teaching assistants. A key objective of the ALP was to ensure a gender balance among the teachers. But as of 2010, only 10% of the teachers in the program are female i.e. 21 out of the remaining 202 teachers.

Despite the program’s efforts, it was unable to identify many women in the communities with a high school certificate due to the historically high illiteracy rates amongst women in Liberia. Efforts to recruit female teachers from Monrovia were equally unsuccessful due to amongst others, reluctance to work in the rural areas and their reduced mobility on account of familial responsibilities. This led to the adoption of other strategies e.g. raising incentives and lowering entry requirements for female teachers. The program has since been able to recruit some female teaching assistants, although they remain disproportionately few. It is planned that these teaching assistants will with regular training and support, including classroom based training, eventually be promoted to full teachers.

All the teachers have undergone various levels of training including: pre-service training (PRESET) where teachers have been equipped with subject specific expertise, AL principles, effective teaching

NRC’s Teacher Training Program

- Uses own trainers
- Training involves a 10 day PRESET
- Monthly In-service workshops
- 1 day refresher targeted teaching skills training workshops twice a month on cluster/district basis
- 6-8 workshops on general subjects (classroom management, lesson planning
- 14 opportunities for Micro-teaching
- Teacher supervision and monitoring visits twice a week.
practices, lesson preparation, teacher/ community collaboration and administration and record keeping. HIV/AIDS, SEA and Child Protection, psychosocial, child psychology issues are now also included in the training program. The PRESET has been augmented by regular in-service training opportunities and supervision and support.

NRC has since 2009 aligned its training program to fit with the MoE minimum requirements. MoE trainers/ CEOs are now involved in the training. Teachers that are yet to qualify have so far undergone a 3 week residential training to be followed by another in March 2010. 84 teachers are expected to sit qualifying exams for the “C” certificate. This is the beginning of the process to seek government accreditation and pave way for their integration in the government’s teaching force.

**Effectiveness and appropriateness of teaching and learning methods**

NRC has endeavored to provide its schools and teachers with the necessary teaching and learning materials including the curriculum, teachers’ manuals and additional teaching/ instructional materials including manila/ poster paper, attendance registers, student report cards and a variety of reference books including those donated by other partners. Teachers in the NRC schools are in comparison to their counterparts in government, fairly well resourced.

The Evaluation team visited a number of ALP schools to establish the level at which the teachers have put their training in practice. The team observed lessons in five classes - three of which were handling mathematics, one science and the other social studies. In all the classes visited, the teachers exhibited a certain level of preparedness and organization and had topic lesson plans prepared for the duration of one week outlining the objectives, approaches and key learning points. This according to the teachers enabled them to prepare teaching aids and examples ahead of time, as well as to switch and adjust topics as and when the need arises.

An important point that is evident in the ALP schools is the issue of attendance. All the teachers maintained an attendance register that indicated the number of boys and girls in and out of school. In most of the schools visited by the evaluation team, attendance trends are discussed with the PTA. One of the teachers also reported that he uses the register to follow up on students in the community whose attendance is irregular.

From our observations – the majority of teachers exhibited a lot of enthusiasm and skills for maintaining a highly energized and interactive classroom through the use of music interludes and energizers. Their approach to learners was fairly friendly and included the use of various techniques to involve the learners. These included brainstorming techniques that encouraged the different learners to provide and explain their own answers in line with the teachers’ probing. This approach enabled the learners to give each other feedback and raise additional questions in relation to their peers’ answers, and in the process laugh at and correct their own mistakes. The ALP learners also informed the evaluation team that the use of group work, as well as learning in pairs, were common.

Regarding assessment, teachers informed the team they mainly relied on recall methods, daily homework and the use of quizzes and tests twice a month to gauge learners’ understanding. Two of the classes visited also had Teaching assistants who went around checking copy books as the teacher explained concepts on the board.

There are however a few weaknesses observed including the limited use of teaching materials and aids. Although NRC has provided the teachers with materials, all the classes except for two, had posters on the wall and even those were neither aesthetically appealing nor legible from a distance. In

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62 C Certificate for Primary School teachers
one class, different topics and subjects were stacked up on three posters and with no apparent order. Most teachers said that storage concerns had necessitated them to carry their posters back and forth from home, although in one the schools visited posters that had been developed co-operatively were kept in the library for use by all teachers.

There was also a tendency for some teachers to proceed at the pace of the fast learners most of whom sat in the front rows. The team observed a few learners who appeared disinterested and did not participate in the lessons. In all cases these appeared to be either younger than the rest of the group or visibly older.

Discussions with the NRC trainers also indicated that some of the teachers were experiencing some difficulties with adjusting to the new lesson plan format that is even more learner centred and requires the teacher to present learner activities and teacher activities. Efforts to rectify this and other problems observed during supervision visits include regular in-service training programs, micro-teaching and bi-weekly workshops on identified topics.

On the whole however, the NRC ALP teachers were largely commended by their current and former learners. Many of the latter attributed their good performance to the regular attendance of teachers which has been enabled by the regular supervision of teachers by a team of NRC trainers/supervisors. A few of the ALP teachers also mentioned that they gave free lessons on Saturdays for the weakest students in order to help them catch up. This also indicates the high level of commitment of many of the ALP teachers.

The higher wages previously paid to the teachers have also been a motivating factor. Unfortunately until recently when government wages were raised, the disparities in incentives had created tensions between NRC’s ALP teachers and their government counterparts.

**Recommendations:**

- NRC’s teacher training program should include Materials development workshops to improve teachers’ skills on use of improvised local materials from the local environment and community.

- Regular teacher in service training programs, on the job support and supervision mechanisms should continue to be part of NRC’s ALP education programs.

- Great care should be taken to ensure that the incentives paid to ALP teachers do not create disharmony. Salaries should not greatly exceed those of qualified teachers in the public sector.

- Broaden and utilise creative approaches of attracting and developing the capacity of female teaching staff from targeted communities.

**4.1.3 Impact**

The ALP has contributed to many positive changes, both at the individual level and in the larger community where it has been implemented.

At the individual level, the ALP has opened doors to new possibilities and has accorded children, who were hitherto locked out of the education system, an opportunity to pursue their aspirations. The most immediate impact for many of these children has been joining junior secondary high school from
where they can continue with their learning in pursuit of their dreams. Some of the former ALP learners that the team met shared their aspirations of becoming professionals and leaders in different fields. For instance, two girls indicated that they would like to become Presidents. This could be partly attributed to the presence of a positive female role model such as H.E. Ellen Sirleaf-Johnson. But, it is probably also a result of the confidence that the ALP program has instilled in them, and the sense of purpose and direction i.e. to work towards whatever they want to attain.

It was also evident that ALP has enabled the development of social skills, leadership skills and raised the learners self esteem. One of the learners, currently in junior high school, has been able to compete and win several leadership positions in addition to being the Goal Keeper for the School Football team. This example can be seen as a testimony of how effective the program has been in re-awakening the children’s potential.

Discussions with community members indicated that the program had contributed to a positive change in behaviour and personal hygiene. According to them, many of the ALP learners have dropped the aggressive behaviour and vulgar language acquired during the conflict and were more respectful of others and themselves. The community members also reported that learners had contributed to better hygiene practices at home and in the community by conveying the health and hygiene knowledge obtained from school to the community setting.

At another level, the ALP has created employment opportunities and professional careers for those who were recruited as teachers. The majority were High school graduates and have now been given an opportunity to train and obtain accreditation as Primary school teachers. If and when these teachers are absorbed into the government system, the ALP will have made an important contribution towards government’s objectives of strengthening the teacher force and the quality of teaching and learning.

Finally, the ALP has increased public and government’s appreciation of the role and effectiveness of complementary education programs in meeting the education needs of disadvantaged groups and reducing disparities.

On the negative side, the evaluation team noted that a number of the learners enrolled in the NRC ALP program were below 10 years old when they started in the program. Apparently no records on the actual age of the learners exists. But, in one of the classes visited, 5 out of 30 learners were less than 10 years old at the time they started in the ALP programme. 8 out of 21 Ex-ALP students met in Medina, were also under aged when they started in the ALP school. When asked why they did not go to the public school, they responded that their parents did not have the money to send them to public school. They also mentioned that the fact that the teachers show up in the ALP school, and that the ALP school is considered as better than the public school, had been important when the decision to go to the ALP school had been taken. This situation points to the fact that the ALP school in the long run could undermine the public school system.

### 4.1.4 Relevance and Appropriateness of the ALP

One of the far reaching consequences of the 14 year old conflict in Liberia has been the destruction of the education system and the subsequent creation of a category of over-aged and uneducated children who dropped out of school and/or missed school during this period. Despite its commitments

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63 lawyers, doctors, engineers, ministers, teachers, nurses and ambassadors
64 Prince Weah, Married Camp – Secretary for the Quiz and Press Clubs, Class Prefect
to the EFA goals, GoL’s efforts in the post conflict period have largely focused on the re-establishment of the formal education system with a specific focus on children of primary school-going age.

The NRC and other partners have stepped in to protect over-aged children’s right to basic education through the timely implementation of a range of non formal education programmes including the Accelerated Learning Program (ALP). The ALP has not only increased access to education but has also facilitated the re-entry of over-aged learners into the formal education system thus expanding their opportunities to acquire knowledge and skills that will enable them to participate actively in the country’s social and economic processes. By removing some of the barriers to access, the ALP has played an important role in reducing disparities in education that were created by the conflict and whose continued existence pose a threat to the long term stability of Liberia.

However, based on the MoE statistics, it would appear that whereas NRC and other partners have made significant contributions towards reducing the number of over-aged children without an education, the number of those yet to benefit from these interventions is even higher. Some of those that have been reached have dropped out of the program on account of various constraints and others who have completed the ALP have dropped out again due to the lack of nearby secondary schools and/or the prohibitive tuition costs.

The need for the continued provision of non formal education programs targeting this category of children therefore still exists. The findings of the evaluation suggest the existence of sub-categories within this category of over-aged children i.e. a slightly younger group of 10 – 15 and a slightly older group of children above 15. While many of the learners in the NRC ALP have successfully completed the program and joined junior high school, there are a number that have dropped out, many on account of their circumstances, adult responsibilities and the need therefore to engage in income generating activities. This suggests that the education needs vary and understanding of these needs should be the basis for future programming efforts.

The MoE has issued a directive that effectively ends implementation of the ALP in 2012 and is planning to develop a program targeting over-aged children and youth above 15 years of age. Plans for out of school children between 10 – 14 years remain unknown. In these circumstances, the evaluation perceives NRC’s continued participation in the area of advocacy and recommends as follows:

**Recommendations**

- NRC should advocate for improved data collection to establish the level of need and ensure that policies take into account those that have been left out and appropriate targeted interventions are developed.

- NRC should advocate for the development of a range of complementary education programs that take into account the varied education needs of over-aged learners.
4.2 Component 2: Adult Literacy Program

The Adult Literacy Program component was initiated in 2007 in Bomi, Grand Cape Mount and Gbarpolu partly in response to repeated requests from members of the community interested in acquiring basic literacy skills. Adult Literacy is not a universal component of the NRC education policy, however NRC decided to pilot this intervention as a strategy for building community and parental support for the ALP program, which was at the time experiencing high school drop-outs. This decision was based on research that has indicated a strong co-relation between the literacy levels of parents and their children’s participation in education and achievement levels. It was thus hoped that the AL would mitigate the school drop-out rates.

4.2.1 Component description:

The decision to introduce Adult Literacy classes was aided by two factors: a) the extremely high illiteracy rates65, particularly among women in the targeted communities; and b) the readily available resources i.e. ALP school facilities and teachers that could be extended to the program with relatively limited additional costs.

Features of the Adult Literacy Program

- program includes: basic reading and writing, numeracy and basic life skills program has two stages: (beginner 1 year and reading class 1 year)
- class sizes range between 10 – 20 learners at enrolment
- courses run for a total of 108 hours over a period of 6 months
- classes are conducted three times a week
- classes last one and a half hours and are normally in the evening
- conducted by NRC teachers with some training in adult learning methodology
- teaching methodologies include role play, drama, posters.
- learning resources include simple readers, copy books, slates etc
- life skills include basic topics (human body, family, community, Country history, communication, time, money, quantity, health, book keeping, conflict resolution)
- learners are awarded ‘NRC certificates upon completion

The program primarily targeted women as part of NRC’s efforts to promote gender equality and specifically to increase women’s capabilities and participation in the recovery efforts and societal processes generally.

4.2.2 Effectiveness

**Immediate objective: To extend the implementation of adult literacy classes with specific focus on women in three counties**

Since its inception in 2007, the program has benefited more than 4000 adult learners in 144 communities, 60% of whom have been women. Approximately 60% of these have since completed the program having achieved the basic literacy skills. A high number of the adult learners that the

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65 PRS 2008, Illiteracy rates in Liberia estimated at 60% and higher among females
evaluation met reported that the ability to read and write had given them greater control in the handling of their personal affairs.

However, information obtained (Annex 5) shows that the initial enthusiasm for the classes has been difficult to sustain – targeted numbers were not realized and that the program has experienced a relatively high drop-out level. This is attributed to various factors including the competing demands on the time of the targeted learners, a good number of whom are widowed and/or single mothers. Another factor that has seriously affected regular attendance is the seasonal livelihood patterns in some of the communities. This has in some communities necessitated the closure of classes that were no longer considered viable.

Heavy income demands (in a post conflict environment with limited opportunities and resources) have also affected enrollment and attendance levels. NRC’s adult literacy program is limited to equipping learners with basic knowledge, literacy and life skills that can be applied to everyday situations and that enable learners to participate in the community. This has put it into competition with other functional adult literacy programs being implemented in the same communities, and loss of some of its learners. One such example is the program implemented by Samaritan Purse which combines literacy classes with livelihood components, including the supply of related inputs.

At a programmatic level, NRC’s limited experience in adult literacy appears to have affected the overall quality and delivery of the program. The evaluation team observed some gaps in the curricula and teaching methodologies which were not sufficiently linking the learners’ experiences and context to the learning process and nor giving adequate attention to developing critical thinking skills. This is unfortunate given the link between ‘literacy and consciousness’ to social change. Learning materials, such as readers, and teacher support & supervision mechanisms are also lacking. The latter have understandably been complicated by proximity and accessibility issues, as well as the fact that classes are held in the evening hours when travel in and out of the communities may not be safe.

4.2.3 Impact
While it may not have been very effective in terms of realizing the targeted figures, the adult literacy program has had a noticeable impact on the lives of its learners in terms of their behavior, perceptions and attitudes. Participation in the program has visibly increased the self-esteem and confidence of learners by enabling them carry out practical tasks more independently. A group of women in Markoma indicated that they were now more confident going to the clinics since they could now communicate better, complete forms, read prescriptions and administer medicines to their children as instructed. A number of learners also reported that the program has improved their ability to perform simple numeric calculations in the market without being cheated.

The program has had an empowering effect on its learners that has boosted their self-esteem and enabled them to explore and exploit their capabilities. One of the learners, a grade 5 school drop-out in Medina, reported that the classes had restored her belief in her own potential. As a consequence she is now teaching children in Grade 1 in Kindergarten. The acquisition of basic literacy skills have also boosted women’s confidence to speak and express their opinions in community meetings, and even compete for leadership positions, which until now has not been common. Several of the female PTA members are also beneficiaries of the adult literacy program and some of these have since taken up other leadership opportunities as well. For example, the team met with one female community chief who was also attending the NRC Adult Literacy classes.

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66 Many of those in the three communities are engaged in farming, fishing and mining
67 NRC: Adult Literacy Program: Level 1 and 2 Learning Objectives
However, the most visible impact of the program has been the change in attitudes and increased appreciation of education. For the majority of the female learners, the adult literacy classes have been their first opportunity to participate in an education program. This personal interaction with education and the boost that it has given to their self esteem has enhanced the learners’ awareness and appreciation of the importance of education. One of the learners, a 40 year old widow and a mother of 7 who had never been to school, informed the team that her parenting style had changed since she joined the Adult Literacy classes. She had for instance become very strict regarding her daughters’ movements to ensure that they are not misled and forced to drop-out of school prematurely. This exhibits a positive change in attitude regarding girls’ education which is so important in communities where it has previously not been valued.

This increased appreciation of education has translated into better parenting and the greater involvement of parents in their children’s education. Some of the parents\textsuperscript{68} reported their increased interest in checking their children’s progress cards and homework books since they could now read and understand what was in these books. Others informed the evaluation team that they were now re-scheduling domestic chores to allow their children to attend to school activities, a point that was confirmed by the ALP students. Interestingly, some had adopted some form of co-operative learning with their children by sharing readers and doing homework assignments together, thus improving their own literacy and numeracy skills.

The evaluation team thus concludes that the Adult Literacy program has been of significant value and has contributed to the success of the ALP. While there are no statistics to verify this, the parents’ increased understanding of the value of education has in all likelihood contributed to reduced absenteeism and regular school attendance\textsuperscript{69}, supporting the assumptions that led to its inclusion. A significant number of the ALP learners that the team interacted with, reported that their mothers were attending the adult literacy classes. By equipping learners with basic literacy skills, the program has also facilitated parents’ increased involvement in school management, e.g. as members in Parent Teacher Associations (PTA). The benefits of this extend beyond the ALP and are important in promoting future education initiatives in the community.

### 4.2.4 Relevance and Appropriateness

While the number of beneficiaries is modest, it can be said that the program has contributed to efforts to reduce illiteracy. For the women in these communities, the program has opened the door for their increased engagement in leadership positions and enhanced their ability to access other opportunities. From the ALP perspective, the program has been of great relevance and has had positive outcomes on school attendance levels and improved prospects for school completion.

It should however be noted that as a program being implemented in a post-conflict situation, the Adult Literacy program has had some limitations. Whereas basic literacy skills are critical to development, they are not on their own capable of sustaining the interest of adults living in impoverished communities and with urgent income needs. This has been well illustrated by the low retention levels and community preference for literacy programs that also address livelihoods issues.

**Recommendation:**

- If NRC decides to continue with Adult Literacy classes in future Emergency Education programs, more attention needs to be given to balancing the strategic and practical needs of

\textsuperscript{68} Focus group discussion with Adult Literacy Class in Sinje

\textsuperscript{69} Since introduction of Adult literacy and community sensitisation, drop out rates declined from 30 % to 22%
the targeted beneficiaries i.e. inclusion and linkages between literacy and livelihood issues. This could be done by strengthening linkages across NRC’s program portfolio i.e. where it includes food security initiatives and/or in partnership with other agencies engaged in livelihoods.

- Future programming for adult literacy should exhibit greater flexibility in response to the targeted learners’ context and circumstances.
- There is also a need to enrich the Adult Literacy curriculum. If literacy programs are to increase learners’ active engagement in nation building through critical thinking, informed decision-making and leadership, it is important that the curriculum/syllabus makes stronger connections, with peace-building, gender, community development activities and human rights issues among others.

4.3 Component 3: Community Mobilisation – Creating Ownership

4.3.1 Project Description

The community mobilisation component was introduced in 2007 in response to irregular school attendance and high drop-out rates from the ALP classes as well as some of the emerging protection concerns in the communities where NRC was operating, and which have implications for the education program. As indicated in 4.1.2 a number of children have been forced to abandon school on account of early marriages, cultural rites, illness and the need for family labor.

Features of the Community Mobilisation Program

- 1 Community Mobiliser from each ALP community recruited and trained
- Mobilisation of communities to send their children to school, construction of schools, maintenance of school buildings
- Sensitisation of communities on child protection, health/hygiene and women’s rights
- Community awareness sessions held weekly and at community gatherings
- 1 NRC Community supervisor per County responsible for training & weekly monitoring
- Establishment and training of Parent Teacher Association (PTA)

4.3.2 Effectiveness

Objective: To increase awareness and to build capacity in communities on education, child protection, health, hygiene and women’s rights in three counties in Liberia

In order to reach the above objective the NRC has mainly focused on the activities mentioned in the above text box. According to Annex 5, outputs have been achieved as planned and 125 mobilisers have been recruited. Efforts to promote a gender balance in this category have not been successful due to difficulties of finding women with the required qualifications and willingness to do this work. 118 PTAs in operating schools have also been established and trained.

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70ToRs for the Evaluation of the Accelerated Learning Program, Adult Literacy and Community Mobilization (11.11.2009)
a) Community Mobilisation
Community mobilisers were recruited in 2007 after a thorough selection process that involved the communities and have since been trained and equipped with publicity materials to support their weekly awareness sessions. The mobilisers are supported by NRC supervisors who visit communities once a week.

While the mobilisers have played an instrumental role in raising awareness around various issues and mobilising for school construction, it has not been an easy task. Community members are busy and sustaining their interest is difficult. It was thus suggested that awareness methods should be diversified to include more entertaining and interactive methods e.g. video shows and forum theatre.

Sustaining mobilisers has also been difficult particularly following a decision at the end of 2008 to halt the monthly payment of the 20USD incentive. According to NRC staff the decision to stop paying the community mobilisers was deliberate and a step towards preparing the communities for phase out of external support. It however affected morale and the activities undertaken by community mobilisers dropped as a consequence, forcing NRC staff to carry out some of the activities71. The payments72 were also stopped to decrease tension with other members of the community who were not being paid. The evaluation team was informed that thus, only about 100 mobilisers73 are currently active and only in those communities where ALP schools are still operational.

The decision to stop regular training activities in 2008 due to funding constraints may have also affected the mobilisers’ effectiveness by reducing opportunities to collectively identify solutions to community mobilisation challenges.

b) Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs)
The establishment of Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) in line with government regulations, was introduced as a new activity in the ALP program in 2009. The program has established and /or reactivated PTAs in all communities where NRC is running its ALP program. Through NRC’s encouragement, all PTA boards have at least one or two female members. This has been a challenge owing to gender disparities that have led to women’s low literacy levels and subsequently participation in communal affairs.

All the PTA executive boards74 have received training75 on: their governance, school maintenance, project planning and fundraising, which according to them, has strengthened capacity on school management.

However, from discussions with communities and NRC staff, it was evident that the level of community participation and ownership in relation to school activities varies greatly between communities. Some communities are more pro-active than others (see example in textbox above), a

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71 Such as conducting trainings in the communities on child rights and child protection
72 NRC semi annual report for 2009.
73 The evaluation team did not have the means to verify this number
74 chairperson, a vice chair person, treasurer, adviser and a secretary.
All five members of the executive board from all PTA’s
75 The trainings were conducted according to the Ministry of Education’s PTA training manual
factor that has been attributed to leadership qualities, level of influence and community cohesiveness. From the team’s observations, the more active PTAs included religious leaders who wielded influence, or persons who had a higher level of education and thus more aware of the importance of education. Communities with more driven Mobilisers also appeared to be generally more active with regards to school activities. This was also the case for communities where the teachers were recruited from inside the community.

On the whole however, even the seemingly active PTAs are not yet at the desired level. Many of those that have initiated income generating activities (IGA) are yet to realise any benefits. It is however a promising beginning.

4.3.3 Impact
The absence of empirical evidence makes it difficult to ascertain the exact impact of this component. However anecdotal evidence suggests that awareness and attitudes around education, child protection, health, hygiene and women’s rights have improved.

Several representatives of the communities mentioned that both the community mobilisation and the adult literacy classes have contributed to an increased appreciation of education and especially the rights of girls to an education and are now participating in efforts to improve school attendance in the ALP schools (see text box). Community members reported an increased interest in inquiring after children who were found in the community during school hours.

Sensitisation activities have contributed to improvements in hygiene behaviour. In several of the communities visited, regular clean up campaigns are taking place, some of which started before the program. Some community leaders also reported increased usage of latrines and community members mentioned that they are now regularly washing their hands before eating and after visiting the latrine. It was also reported (even though statistics are not available) that incidences of diseases such as malaria and diarrhoea had been reduced. In one community the informants said that they had not registered any cholera cases for more than a year. The seemingly improved health situation is probably also linked to other interventions by NRC (under another program) which included construction of pit latrines and hand pumps in some of the targeted communities.

The sensitisation efforts have also resulted into greater awareness around women and children’s rights. Several of the male respondents indicated that they have become more attentive to their wives needs. The following is a representative quote: “When my wife comes from the garden and I see that she is tired, I will take the baby off her back and hold it. I never thought of doing this before”. A few communities reported a reduction in cases of violence. In one of the communities fines for wife and child beating had been introduced. When asked how the community would spend the collected fines, the chief in Maher responded as follows: “So far we haven’t been able to collect any money as

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76 According to one respondent, communities with transient populations and leaders not hailing from the community were more difficult
77 Interviews with community mobilisers, NRC staff and other stakeholders
78 Note that the Red Cross had distributed mosquito nets in some communities to fight malaria
79 17 percent of child deaths in Liberia were attributable to malaria and another 20 percent to preventable environmental diseases such as diarrhea and cholera, PRS 2008
nobody is beating their wives and children anymore”. Discussions with the Gender Focal Point in Bomi County and available statistics indicate that Gender Based Violence (GBV) is a major problem in Liberia and that the majority of cases are not reported. However from these communities, it is clear that a combination of sensitisation efforts and deterrent measures can be a start in tackling the issue.

4.4.4 Relevance and Appropriateness
According to thePRS (2008), the prolonged conflict, the lack of facilities and the socio-cultural practices in many of the return areas, have affected health and education outcomes, as well as the respect for women's rights.

The Community Mobilisation component has thus been instrumental in: a) increasing awareness on human rights, health/ hygiene; b) contributing to attitudinal changes and an increased appreciation of girls and women’s rights; c) building community capacity in school management; d) improved school attendance in school as a result of increased community support. These have ultimately reinforced all components of the ALP program.

In terms of appropriateness, it is plausible to say that the activities undertaken to realise the project objective have been largely appropriate but not sufficient. The level of training given to the PTAs has not been sufficient and it is clear that they need more support and exposure with regards to engaging MoE; and initiating and sustaining income generating activities.

Furthermore, the payment of cash incentives might not be the most effective nor a sustainable approach to motivating community members. It might have been better to explore other material or symbolic incentives e.g. certificates which are very much appreciated in many communities and had been requested.

Recommendations:

- NRC should in the remaining period of the current program, provide additional support and training to PTAs on IGAs and school management issues. The training should include sharing information on successful initiatives and exploring innovative approaches of mobilising resources, e.g. establishment of endowment funds.

- Additional capacity building could be organised through exchange visits for PTA’s from different communities to facilitate the sharing of experiences and adoption of good practices.

- NRC should in future ALP programs continue to support PTAs in establishing income generating activities (IGA). But this component should be introduced at the beginning of the implementation of the program, so that the IGA's are fully established and profitable before external support is withdrawn.

- Incentive structures must be balanced to avoid creating tensions and disruptions, as well as to avoid affecting motivation and volunteerism negatively.
4.4 Component 4: School Construction - Building back better

The school construction component has been a substantial element of the NRC ALP program in Liberia. This component has its roots in the Shelter Program which started in the IDP camps in 2003. According to the available information, there were no school buildings in 46 new communities where NRC started the ALP; while government schools in the remaining 79 communities had been completely destroyed and in need of serious rehabilitation.

The main goal of this component has been to improve access to education and to provide a enabling learning environment for primary school students in the program areas and has thus involved both construction of new schools and rehabilitation of government schools. In the case of the latter, an arrangement has been arrived at where facilities are shared with the formal classes through a shift arrangement. This has been perceived as NRC’s contribution towards strengthening and improving the government education system. It is also cost effective and a strategy for enabling the easier integration of learners from the ALP to the formal school system.

4.4.1 Project description

Communities are involved in the school construction, although the degree of their involvement has changed during the course of the ALP program. Initially communities were only involved in selection of school sites and provision of labour for which they were paid in cash or kind (food for work). The strategy was changed in 2008 to increase ownership. Construction is now preceded by community meetings during which roles, responsibilities and contributions of both parties are agreed upon. Communities are now required to provide local material (e.g. mud bricks) and labour, while the NRC provides other materials that are not locally available and only pays for highly skilled labour. These changes have been necessitated by the desire to build community ownership of these structures.

Following construction, management committees and selected members of the community have been given some basic training on maintenance. This has been reinforced by the training of PTAs under 4.3 who have the overall responsibility of maintaining school facilities after they have been completed.

4.4.2 Effectiveness

Objective: To ensure the sustainability of primary schools implemented by NRC in three counties in Liberia

The component has been implemented efficiently (see Annex 5) and 46 permanent schools and 8 semi permanent schools have been constructed in total with the support of communities. 23 out of the targeted 27 schools to be constructed in the period 2008-2010 have been completed and the remaining 4 will be completed before July 2010. Combined, these schools have contributed to increased access to education for over-aged learners and other children in the targeted communities.

Furthermore, the active engagement of the communities in the whole process has ensured that schools are generally located in central and easily accessible locations.

The component has also contributed to the creation of a conducive learning environment. Each of the eight NRC schools visited had three classrooms, an office, a store and a kitchen. All the schools
visited had pit latrines and a well appreciated sports ground. Most schools had hand pumps and were equipped with the necessary furniture: blackboards, desks and benches.

It is important to point out that while the school size is sufficient for the ALP, it does not conform to the MoE standards which require 6 classrooms as the minimum and to some extent constrains their future integration into the formal education program. Nevertheless, adequate space left outside the new school buildings ensures that all buildings could be extended at a later stage.

Challenges
When considering the qualitative aspects of the school facilities, some weak areas were detected and as discussed could benefit from further improvement.

According to information from NRC staff, 18 hand pumps have been constructed in relation to ALP schools. But there are still schools that are without hand pumps for example, the ALP school in Tubmanburg. The team also observed that the hand pumps did not function in several of the schools visited. Information obtained indicated that most of the hand pumps had been constructed during the rainy season when the water level was high. The wells were therefore not very deep and thus do not contain water during the dry season when water levels fall.

The team also noted a few other issues that have affected the quality of the learning environment in some schools. ALP classes sharing facilities with government schools have no access to the latrines which are locked up in the afternoon; and as such the learners experience great inconvenience.

None of the schools had washing facilities near the latrines, thus contradicting the hygiene lessons taught in the ALP schools and the awareness sessions held in the communities.

Only two of the schools visited had clearly marked latrines for boys and girls and only one of the schools had locks inside to ensure privacy. The lack of inside locks places all students, and in particular the girls, in a vulnerable situation when visiting the latrines. The team was informed by NRC that inside locks had been provided to all schools who are yet to fix them, probably due to their limited appreciation of and need for more sensitisation on gender specific concerns.

It was also noted that in a few of the schools the desks were too small considering that the students are mainly between 10 and 17 years old. In two other schools, the ratio of students per desk was quite high. The shortage was attributed to damage and theft owing to the absence of proper security.

The MoE standards were developed after the NRC started constructing its schools. The team did not succeed in obtaining a copy of the MoE official standards for school construction and is thus basing its statements on NRC reports and information collected in the field through interviews with MoE representatives and NRC staff.

31 NRC staff and Community Members
32 According to some respondents, this is due to tensions between the management of both programs that could be as a result of envy of the support, materials and incentives given to the ALP classes.
33 The team was, however, told that in some of these schools the students knew which latrines were to be used by whom.
34 One of the communities visited acknowledged receiving locks, but had not yet found time to install them.

The evaluation team was later informed by the NRC management team that water and sanitation is not part of the NRC policy. In programs where there is a need for a water component the NRC will normally team up with a partner organisation which has technical competence in this field. As no such partner was present in Liberia, the NRC made an exception and allowed the NRC in Liberia to implement the water component itself. It is thus reasonable to conclude that limited technical competence has contributed to the problem of the hand pumps.
lack of security in many schools has affected the storage of learning materials and sports equipment\textsuperscript{85}.

What all this suggests is that MoE, PTAs and communities are yet to fully exercise their role in maintenance of the schools. The team met some communities which seemed rather apathetic. In one of these, the PTA had given up on repairing the school hand pump after one attempt. In two others, where the ALP had phased out, the schools were no longer in use for various reasons. It should be mentioned that the two latter communities had not benefited from PTA training. The inactivity of these communities seems to stem from lack of leadership skills, understanding of roles and is compounded by high poverty levels and dependency.

4.4.3 Impact
The construction and rehabilitation of schools have led to increased access to education for children and has contributed to increased enrolments (see 4.1.2). It is also clear that the construction and rehabilitation of schools have contributed to an improved learning environment for both boys and girls in the targeted communities, as learning facilities previously were very poor, if at all existing.

As earlier indicated, the construction of schools has played an important role in the return and reintegration process and has been a pull factor in the return areas. The schools constructed are the first sign of reconstruction in these communities and have created a sense of normalcy and peace. The schools are increasingly being integrated in communal activities and a rallying point for community mobilisation and development. For example, the facilities are being utilised for meetings, literacy classes and in other communities also serve as kindergartens.

Involvement of communities in the construction has ignited a sense of pride, ownership and appreciation of own potential. Members from one of the communities currently constructing a school indicated that this was to be the first of many and were envisaging constructing another structure. The community had already contacted the DEO to ensure inclusion of their school in the district plans.

Through discussions with community members it became evident that ownership towards the schools were much stronger in communities where the members had received PTA training and where they had been actively involved in the construction process without receiving incentives, as opposed to those who had not been involved in a similar way. This was further indicated through the difference in the level of maintenance of the school buildings. In the communities where active participation had been part of NRC’s strategy the schools were reasonably well kept, while in the other communities the lack of maintenance was striking. Leadership and the sense of ownership is thus crucial to the future sustainability of the school buildings.

4.4.4 Relevance and Appropriateness
The low literacy rate and the urgent need for school in Liberia indicate the high relevance of the school construction component. The program has thus contributed towards government’s education objectives of increasing access to quality, safe, and hygienic schools.

The evaluation team considers the school building/construction component on overall basis as appropriate. The design in particular is appropriate for the local conditions i.e. lack of electricity, 

\textsuperscript{85} In some places the community did provide some incentives for a community member to be responsible for the security of the school. This arrangement made it possible to keep the above mentioned items in the schools.
humidity and high temperatures. The two side walls in each classroom had several small openings which allowed sufficient daylight and fresh air into the classroom.

**Recommendations:**

- Prior to exit, the NRC should make sure that all hand pumps constructed are functional even if it requires seeking external expertise. This should include refresher training for community members on maintenance of hand pumps.

- As the NRC will continue to be in Liberia for at least two more years after the ALP programme has been phased out, the NRC should continue to support and follow up PTAs in the ALP schools at least for the first year after closing down the programme.

- NRC should at all times endeavour to partner with organisations with the required technical expertise when implementing technical aspects of the program e.g. construction and WATSAN activities.

### Coverage

The program’s primary target group for the ALP were the over-aged children between 10 -17 years that have missed schooling and/or have never attended school due to the conflict. The main objective was to increase access to education for these children.

NRC is the only organisation implementing ALP in the three counties of Bomi, Gbarpolu and Grand Cape Mount. Due to absence of baseline statistics it is difficult to ascertain whether all the children in the target group have been reached. However according to the NRC staff, there are some remote areas in these counties that have not been reached due to financial and time constraints. Nevertheless, there are also many children both over-aged and under-aged living in the communities where the program operates who have benefited from the ALP and the Young Mothers’ classes.

In those areas where it is operating, the program has put some effort in addressing the specific needs and protection concerns for both boys and girls to ensure that no one is left out. It is notable that there has been greater focus on girls who are marginalised through the local traditions, practices and attitudes in the program area. Section 4.2 elaborates some of the gender responsive interventions that have been put in place to increase retention levels. These include the young mothers classes, community sensitisation efforts around children’ rights, SEA and HIV/AIDS. Except for sports, there are no evident gender specific strategies targeting boys.

However as also indicated in section 4.2, there has been a significant portion of the target group whose primary education needs have not been sufficiently met. The reasons for this vary and include both non-school factors and gaps in the ALP curriculum. The latter have been elaborated in section 4.2, and point to the need for greater flexibility in Emergency education programming to increase its responsiveness of the learning needs of over-aged children and create various pathways. A noticeable gap in the program has been absence of strategies targeting over-aged children with disabilities.

The program has had mixed success in coverage of other targeted groups and the broader communities where the ALP schools are located. Attempts to achieve gender parity amongst teachers, community mobilisers and PTAs have not been very successful, although some work is underway to redress this situation. Coverage of the adult learners has also not been very successful.
due to gaps in the curriculum. That said the evaluation team is of the view that the program has at times been at the risk of taking on too many things and trying to be everything to everyone.

4.6 Sustainability - Making Schools Work

A number of benefits have been derived from the ALP including increasing access to education and thereby construction/ rehabilitation of school facilities and training of teachers. The program has also contributed to increased awareness around human rights, child protection, health and hygiene issues. As the program comes to end, it is important to establish the level of community readiness and readiness of the MoE to sustain these benefits of the ALP and especially the education program.

4.6.1 Community readiness

It is clear that NRC has throughout program implementation attempted to prepare the communities for its eventual phase out. This has been done at various levels through education activities; mobilisation & sensitisation efforts, school construction and establishment of PTAs with a view to developing a sense of ownership and capacities for future management. While it is difficult to predict with certainty how the communities will respond when the program, below are some pointers on the level of readiness.

The value a community attaches to something determines the extent to which they are willing to keep it and is the foundation for sustainability. From the evaluation's perspective, one of the most important achievements for this program has been its ability to challenge traditional perceptions in the targeted communities and increase their appreciation of education. The ALP, the community sensitisation, adult literacy and young mothers' classes have played an important role in raising awareness around the economic and social value of education and as indicated in previous sections, have created demand. During the field visits, numerous requests were made by the community members seeking for an extension of the program and pledging their readiness to support similar interventions. Indeed in some communities, kindergartens have already been established in the ALP schools. One of the community members referred to “ALP as the future” – which the evaluation team interpreted to mean that the ALP had established a strong foundation for the future. The ALP has created ‘champions’ for education and many of who have benefited from the ALP are likely to ensure that their children go to school. Girls' education and the status of women generally will in all probability benefit from the presence of many more ‘literate’ mothers and female role models/ leaders in these communities.

Related to the above is the issue of acceptability which again has been attained through mobilisation efforts and particularly the engagement of community and religious leaders. The contracts signed between the communities and NRC regarding re-scheduling of traditional rites and ensuring school attendance are an indicator of the attitudinal shift regarding children's rights in general and girls rights to a formal education. It is anticipated that these leaders together with the community mobilisers will continue to use their leadership platforms to rally community support around education, rights and hygiene issues.

The presence of PTAs which have received some training on their governance management roles is also an important factor for the sustainability of the schools and education programs as a whole in the community. PTAs have voiced their commitment to ensuring that the schools are maintained. The response from members in one community was as follows: “We suffered for this school, so of course we will maintain it! The evidence of this capacity is however still limited. Only a few PTAs have
established income generating activities from which they hope to derive funds for meeting some of the recurrent costs. These projects are mainly agricultural, small in scale and certainly not capable of providing quick and regular returns. The ability to raise contributions from community members is currently difficult as the majority lack assets and is only beginning to revive livelihoods that were completely destroyed by the conflict.

Another challenge that the team noted in some communities is the quality of leadership and lack of initiative. The team visited 2 communities where the ALP has phased out and in both cases, the facilities were in various stages of disrepair, although one was still being utilised as a community school. It is important to point out that one of these was phased out before the PTA training began and probably did not benefit from sufficient sensitisation. As mentioned earlier (4.4), ownership to the ALP schools in the communities where the NRC did not initially involve the communities sufficiently is weak, which again represents a challenge in relation to ensuring sustainability of the school buildings.

It was also apparent that the accountability relations between the communities and the MoE are still very weak. There was very limited awareness in the communities on MoE's mandate and responsibilities in relation to basic education and many were not aware of the possibility of engaging MoE on these issues.

From the fore-going, it is clear that whereas they show the necessary willingness, the communities are not yet fully ready to manage the schools without the additional support of NRC and or the MoE.

Recommendations

- The team recommends that NRC continues to support to the communities and specifically the PTAs on resource mobilisation and dialogue and engagement with MoE officials.

4.6.2 MoE Commitment

The MoE has the mandate over the provision of basic education and to that extent has oversight responsibilities for education programs regardless of whether they are run by INGOs or the Ministry itself. Information obtained from documents and interviews with officials at the County and District level suggest that MoE has been involved at various stages of NRC’s ALP program, albeit intermittently, and is at this level, very much aware of the program.

Most of those that the evaluation team spoke to acknowledged the contribution of the program in light of the acute shortage of classrooms and therefore expressed willingness in taking over the structures. They were however not in position to commit until such a time that the issue is formally presented and discussed at the national level and county co-ordination meetings.

A key challenge mentioned in relation to the Ministry’s readiness is the inadequate funding. The officials that the team met warned that the inclusion of new items in the budget was likely to take a
while. This also includes the future inclusion of ALP teachers on the government payroll (for further discussion on this issue see chapter 5 on Coordination). The challenge therefore for the communities and NRC will be the maintenance of the teachers after the program ends. It is likely that a good number of the ALP teachers, except for those recruited from within the communities, are likely to return to Monrovia in search of new opportunities.

**Recommendation**

- The sustainability of the school buildings and maintenance as educational facilities depends on the willingness of the MoE to take over the responsibility of the buildings and how soon this is done. The Evaluation team would therefore like to recommend that discussions on these issues are started as soon as possible at both the County and the National levels to secure a proper handover of the school facilities.

**5.0 Co-ordination Issues**

**5.1 Collaboration between NRC and MoE**

The cooperation between the MOE and NRC is currently regulated by a memorandum of Understanding (MoU) (Annex 7), which was signed in December 2008 for a period of three years. The MoU stipulates the expected levels of collaboration between the two parties.

Coordination with MoE structures has taken place at three different levels: national, county and district level and at varying degrees. At the national level, it has included participation in the national ALP coordination meetings which are jointly chaired by the MOE and UNICEF; review meetings and sharing of quarterly progress reports. A similar arrangement exists at the county level where coordination and information sharing meetings with Education partners are held on a monthly basis. Meetings at the district level are less formal and occur on an ad hoc basis when required. Coordination mechanisms with MoE schools are undefined and dependant on PTAs. (Written progress reports are not shared at county and district level).

In addition to the meetings, NRC has collaborated with the MoE officials at the county and district level on a range of activities including selection of sites for school construction, assessment and identification of ALP beneficiary communities, training of teachers and trainers. NRC has provided some logistical support to the DEOs’ and CEOs’ to facilitate monitoring and supervision visits. This has been greatly appreciated by the MoE. Although, according to interviews with NRC staff, the expected level of monitoring support has not been attained, NRC has benefited from policy guidelines, supply of instructional materials and training resources from MoE which have eased delivery of the ALP program.

Despite these collaborative efforts, the level of co-operation between the two partners is wanting in some aspects and particularly at the national level. Whereas MoE officials acknowledge NRC’s significant contribution to the sector, the Ministry has in the past raised some objections on aspects of program delivery, e.g. NRC’s non-involvement of MoE trainers in its training program and NRC’s

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36 NRC and MoE had previously developed MoU on an annual basis
teachers’ incentives. There have been efforts since 2009 to rectify these issues although these have been complicated by contradictory policy directives from the MoE. An example was the delay in securing MoE approval on NRC’s teacher training program.

In spite of efforts to strengthen relationships, serious communication gaps persist between the two partners. An issue of great concern is the MoE’s limited knowledge of NRC’s plans for phasing out the ALP in July 2010. It was the understanding of the evaluation team that this information has been relayed to MoE but formal discussions regarding the development of a joint plan for eventual take-over of the schools by MoE have not been initiated. Furthermore, when looking at the different paragraphs in the MoU, it does not seem as if the MoU has been followed up properly by either of the parties. From discussions with various respondents, including representatives of the MoE at different levels, it would appear that the above mentioned challenges partly stem from:

- **Internal communication gaps** within the MoE exacerbated by overlapping roles in some cases; and the fact that different aspects of the ALP (policy, co-ordination and training) are being handled by different departments. Sharing of information between these departments at the headquarters and between the headquarters and county level officials appears to be very limited. Thus progress reports from partners are not circulated.

- **Institutional capacity issues** within the MoE at the county and district levels, coupled with the enormous responsibilities at those levels, have affected the level of leadership and support given to NGO programmes.

- The fact that NRC started its education program in Liberia during an emergency situation when local government structures were almost non-existent seems to have affected later attempts at coordination. In an emergency situation there is often not much time for thorough coordination, and organisations tend to work independently and make decisions which might not have been discussed adequately with the local government. It appears that this mode of operation has, to some extent, persisted.

- **High staff turnover and frequent changes in programme management within NRC’s ranks** have also affected continuity in communication and collaboration. This situation has obviously prevented the possibility of cultivating a close relationship with the MoE and thus affected the continuity in communication. Both the MoE and the NRC did mention this fact as one of the reasons for the challenges related to communication.

The evaluation team observed that NRC has put more effort in collaboration at the County level and less so at the national level. While this is important since the County MoE officials are on the ground where activities are concentrated, poor relations with the MoE at the national level could have undesirable consequences. In the interim, they have diminished NRC’s capacity to actively engage in dialogue and influence policy around over-aged learners. This is unfortunate given the amount of information and experience that the organisation has amassed from its Emergency Education activities in Liberia and elsewhere. In the medium term, they could lead to delays in the absorption of the ALP teachers and take over of the ALP schools.

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87 The salaries offered by NRC to ALP teachers have for some years been 50 USD a month, while the MoE has been paying its teachers 30 USD a month. However, the government has recently raised its teachers’ salaries to a slightly higher level than what the NRC ALP teachers are receiving.

88 Under para 6.1, MoE should be involved in planning and evaluation of the program but this has not happened, although MOE officials at the county level have been facilitated to conduct regular monitoring and supervision.
5.2 Relationship with other development partners

A number of organisations including UNICEF, Ibis, IRC, USAID, Save the Children (UK) have been involved in implementation of the ALP. This fairly large number of actors has necessitated the establishment of an inter-agency co-ordination framework co-chaired by UNICEF and MoE. This framework was expected to facilitate the sharing of information/good practices, identification of challenges and harmonisation of efforts in relation to the MoE ALP policy. Initially meetings were conducted on a monthly basis, but have become increasingly irregular.

From the evaluation's observations, inter-agency co-ordination has thus far prevented overlaps and duplication. Each of the partners has been operating in specified counties. Although the framework creates opportunities for increased collaboration and sharing of synergies, in practice, the organisations have implemented activities more or less independently. Only Ibis and NRC have collaborated on a few issues.

Information sharing has also been relatively limited. Through discussions the evaluation team had with some of the above mentioned partners, it was evident that the while NRC’s contributions to the ALP were undisputed, the other partners felt that it was not actively participating in this forum and was therefore not very visible.

Recommendations:

- NRC should initiate dialogue with MoE officials and other key partners at the national level on the ALP phase out and areas for future collaboration. Discussions should be based on the MoU and recommendations of the ESR 2009.

- NRC should also organise stakeholder meetings with Communities/PTAs, Principals and MoE officials at County and District level on the phasing out of the program with a view to developing a common exit strategy.

- Organise a joint visit/tour of ALP schools for MoE at national level as part of the phase out program and preparation for hand-over. Such a trip would promote dialogue between the various parties and trigger the MoE planning processes and inclusion of new schools in MoE development plans.

- In future ALP programs a close cooperation and coordination with the MOE should be cultivated from the start of the program. The ownership of schools and the responsibility for future maintenance, as well as responsibility for teachers, should be clearly stated in the MoU between the MoE, NRC and communities and should be available to all.
6.0 Conclusions and Lessons Learned

6.1 Conclusions

The ALP has been a critical intervention in light of the massive destruction of the education system in Liberia; and has made a significant contribution towards strengthening of the sector. Furthermore, the ALP has gone beyond education and has played a pivotal role in post conflict and recovery processes and particularly return and reintegration where schools have been a significant ‘pull factor’ in return areas.

More importantly, the ALP has been instrumental in promoting the realization of the rights to an education for over-aged children outside the formal school system in the impoverished communities of Bomi, Cape Mount and Gbapolu. By removing some of the critical barriers to access, the ALP has expanded the over-aged children and youth’s opportunities for participation and integration in the country’s social and economic processes. By mitigating the existing educational disparities between these regions and other parts of the country, the ALP has contributed to on-going efforts to strengthen the foundation for peace and stability in Liberia.

In addition to its ability to mobilize the required resources, an important strength of the program has been its adaptability to the changing needs and context of the targeted communities through the addition of targeted interventions to support realisation of the program goal. Both the Young Mothers and Adult Literacy classes which are examples of gender-responsive programming have not only contributed to improved girls participation in the ALP, but have also been directed at raising the status of women in these communities.

Throughout the program, significant effort has been made to engage and involve communities thereby increasing acceptability and promoting support for education activities. The building blocks have been put in place and some capacities developed, although the level of community readiness is still at a nascent level.

The program has in the process of implementation experienced a number of challenges, many of which have been addressed and provide useful lessons. There are however a few such as the challenges of working in highly impoverished communities and the inability of the program to address its beneficiaries' livelihood concerns. This has been compounded by the fact that there are very few other agencies operating in this region. Another challenge has been that of working with a weakened and overstretched education system that has resulted into various delays at different stages of the program. Working with remote communities which lack basic services, amenities and are difficult to access has also created logistical challenges for program management and has added to the financial costs of implementation. It has been difficult to recruit technical staff from these regions as it has been difficult identifying INGOs or local organisations to partner with.

However the program has generated many lessons that could be used to improve future interventions of a similar nature.
6.2 Lessons learned

- The provision of basic scholastic materials (copy-books, pens, pencils) and school meals not only increases the chances of school enrollment but also promotes retention and the performance of children from poor conflict affected communities.

- Flexibility and a stimulating learning environment motivate participation and is core to the success of education programs targeting over-aged children and adult learners.

- Over-aged learners in conflict affected communities have diverse experiences and therefore different information and education needs. For example, those learners with adult responsibilities are more likely to drop-out of programs that do not address their livelihood concerns and urgent income needs.

- Barriers to literacy are varied. Inappropriate grade placement that does not take into account the level of maturity, language limitations and cognitive skills of learners increases the likelihood of drop-outs and leads to inefficiencies.

- Learners who do not attend school regularly are more likely to suffer from poor education experiences and eventually drop out.

- The absence of feedback mechanisms and regularly updated data on learners who have completed the program or dropped out makes it difficult to establish program quality and effectiveness as well as the development of timely and responsive interventions.

- Girls are extremely vulnerable to SEA in conflict and post conflict situations. Targeted interventions that address gender specific issues promotes chances of girls retention and completion of school.

- If adequately resourced (i.e. necessary teaching and learning materials), accelerated learning programs are capable of providing an education that is competitive and enables achievement of higher learner outcomes.

- The provision of adequate text books supplementary reading materials promotes accelerated learning.

- Availability of simplified curriculum materials eases the delivery of accelerated learning programs, particularly where teachers are not qualified.

- Regular teacher support and supervision are essential to the adoption of diverse and effective teaching methodologies and improved teaching standards.

- Communities and parents increased appreciation of the value of education promotes enrolment of children and regular school attendance.

- Engagement of various actors including traditional and religious leaders in mobilisation efforts is critical to gaining acceptability and building local support for formal education (particularly for girls) in communities where traditional and religious customs are highly valued.
• Involvement of communities at all stages of planning, implementation and monitoring of programs promotes ownership. However the earlier communities (PTAs) are supported to take on management functions, the higher the chances for a smooth transition when external support is withdrawn.

• Incentive structures for teachers and mobilisers must be sensitive to local systems and strike a balance between commitment and sustainability in the long run.

• Even where government systems are weak, it helps harmonise program activities to the greatest extent possible as part of strengthen the broader education system and fostering sustainability of interventions.

• Continuous communication between all stakeholders right from the national level to the targeted communities is key to the success and sustainability of complementary education programs. Program implementation must be matched with active policy dialogue.

• MoUs between different stakeholders should be actively used as tools for co-operation and should be jointly reviewed regularly.

6.3 Proposals for inclusion in Education strategy

Below is a list of proposals that have been derived from the lessons learned from implementation of the ALP in Liberia. The list is not exhaustive but includes pointers on some of the important issues to include in the entry strategy for future ALP programs.

1. Thorough needs assessment, risk assessment and stakeholder mapping prior to implementation of program in communities to establish needs, level of demand, feasibility, and community interest.

2. Awareness raising activities are conducted prior to the ALP with MoE officials at all levels (central, district, and local) within existing schools, PTAs and within the local community to promote understanding of program and responsibilities, collaboration and ownership. PTA functions must start at the time of site selection to promote participation and sustainability.

3. A Standardised assessment tool should be developed to establish maturity, cognitive skills and capacity of learners in order to facilitate appropriate placement.

4. Utilisation of shared facilities wherever possible to reduce costs, promotes MoE ownership, easier integration of ALP learners into formal school system and sustainability of facilities.

5. Greater alignment with MoE policies, processes regarding accreditation etc. Signed MoU and a strategy for integration of ALP students, teachers and Schools developed and implemented from the beginning of the program.

6. Provision of a range of educational activities with backward and forward linkages and ensuring a balance between academic, life skills and vocational skills depending on the context and needs of population.
7. Induction program to prepare over-aged learners who have very limited education experience or never been to school.

8. Apply diverse recruitment strategies to promote gender equity in program implementation.

9. Establishment of a robust M & E system at all levels to promote quality assurance and accountability.

10. Development of partnerships with local NGOs or INGOs and where possible engage them in implementation particularly in areas where NRC lacks expertise.

6.4 Exit Strategy

NRC’s ALP program comes to an end in June 2010 and below are proposals on some of the issues that must be resolved in order to promote a smoother transition and eventual take over of the facilities and teaching personnel.

1. Formal discussions with MoE at national, county and district level regarding ALP phase out formalities (schools, teachers) initiated at the earliest opportunity.

2. Dialogue with MoE and other partners around the integration of the ALP in ESP and some level of support to development of alternative program for over-aged children.

3. Mapping of ALP schools to provide detailed information on status of each school, facilities, and teaching staff, PTAs to MoE at district, county and national level in support of integration process.

4. Continued support to communities and specifically PTAs for an agreed period of time.

5. While ALP is being phased out, NRC should consider scaling up YEP particularly in those communities where schooling and other opportunities are limited.
ANNEX DOCUMENT
A. Project Background

Project context and rationale:
The 14 year long civil war in Liberia killed over 200,000 people, displaced one million and completely destroyed the country’s infrastructure and economy. A peace agreement was signed in 2003 and presidential elections were held in 2005. NRC started its education activities in Liberia in 2003, first by implementing the Rapid Response Education Program (RREP) in IDP camps in Montserrado County and later expanding the RREP to three counties: Bomi, Grand Cape Mount and Gbapolu. In April 2005, the Ministry of Education in cooperation with UNICEF decided that all non-formal education activities in Liberia should be within the Accelerated Learning Program (ALP). ALP was developed to meet the needs of over aged children and the program allows the children to complete the six years of primary school in three years. NRC replaced the RREP program with ALP in its 3 counties of implementation. In 2007, the Liberian Ministry of Education MoE took to continue the ALP in Liberia till 2010.

Since 2003 till the end of 2007, more than 7000 students have been attending ALP schools run by NRC. In September 2007, NRC started the current three year program. Over 4,000 new ALP students were enrolled in the first level, they are to complete the full three year ALP cycle in July 2010. The total enrolment stood at 7200 children in 2007, these included those who were in Level 2 and Level 3. NRC implemented ALP in 125 schools. The number stands at 4550 in 2009 as some have now graduated and some dropped out.

Since September 2007, NRC has trained and supported 249 ALP teachers and 27 teaching assistants. Most of the teachers and teaching assistants are not qualified teachers but high school graduates. Hence NRC has provided regular 2-3 days training sessions to increase their teaching competence. In August 2009 NRC conducted a longer in-service teacher training course of three weeks duration. The MoE requires a minimum six weeks residential training and follow up field based trainings for the teachers to qualify for the award of a C certificate if they complete and sit for the final test, NRC will therefore by the end of 2009 provide an additional 3 weeks course to those teachers that passed the post-test to enable the ALP teachers to obtain the C-certificates.

The main constraints faced in the running of the ALP are the high drop-out rate caused by the necessity for the learners to find sources of income, early marriage and pregnancy. To stabilize the attendance and to convince the communities to send the children to school, NRC decided in 2007 to initiate community mobilization as a component of the project - 72 community mobilisers were recruited, and 3 supervisors are in charge of monitoring and training them. Community mobilization is a long-term process and is broader than only education; the mobilisers are trained in child protection, health and hygiene, and women’s rights. The objective is to heighten awareness in the communities regarding issues linked to these topics, as well as to prepare the community to take over the programs when the NGOs leave.

To prevent and respond to pregnant girls and young mothers who drop out of the ALP program, NRC took an initiative in 2007 and developed a specific program for young mothers and pregnant teenagers. The
most important topics of the ALP curriculum were selected and are taught to these teenagers. The number of teaching hours was reduced for young mothers, and NRC employs babysitters to take care of the babies when their mothers are attending school. 300 girls attended these classes.

In May 2007, NRC initiated the adult literacy classes in its areas of ALP implementation. This component of the project promotes general education. Adults, by going to school, are models for their children and are more committed to support schooling for the children of their community. More than 2000 adults were enrolled in 2007. Adult literacy reading classes were developed in order for the adults to continue to practice reading, writing and numeracy after completing the first year of adult literacy school.

There were no primary schools in most of the communities where NRC started ALP classes, thus NRC initiated the rehabilitation of school buildings in 2007 and has continued to include school construction and rehabilitation in its education programming. NRC established its first ALP classes in temporary structures, or in locations like town halls and churches. The construction of school buildings is linked to attendance rates and the commitment of the community to participate and contribute materials and labor for the construction. 27 new schools are to be constructed in the period 2008–2010.

Project objectives:

Overall objective
To contribute to war affected over-age children receiving basic education

Specific objectives
- To facilitate access to basic education for children between 10 and 17 years old with very limited or no educational background in three counties in Liberia
- To expand the implementation of Adult Literacy classes with specific focus on women in three counties in Liberia
- To increase awareness and to build capacity in communities on education, child protection, health, hygiene and women’s rights in three counties in Liberia
- To ensure the sustainability of primary schools implemented by NRC in three counties in Liberia

Components of NRC’s ALP program in Liberia:

Overall ALP programming
The ALP targets mainly over-aged children (from 10 to 17), who dropped out of school or never went to school because of the war. The curriculum which was developed and defined by the MoE and UNICEF focuses on four core subjects: language art, mathematics, science and social studies. The ALP has three levels (one level per year): Level 1 is the equivalent to grades 1 and 2 in mainstream primary schools, Level 2 is equivalent to grades 3 and 4 and Level 3 to grades 5 and 6. After level 3, the students sit for the national primary examination and can register in a high school and continue their studies in secondary education if they pass the exams. NRC recruits teachers for this program from the community and trains them regularly on ALP subjects content, child centered learning and other pedagogical issues.

Young mothers and pregnant teenagers program
This is a specific program developed by NRC to respond to the drop-out of female teenagers from the ALP program and other formal schools. The most important topics of the ALP curriculum were selected and are taught to these teenagers. The number of teaching hours is reduced.

Adult literacy program
The Adult Literacy program promotes general education. It is built on the premise that adults, by going to school, are models for their children and are more committed to support schooling for the children of their community if they are literate. To further their practice of reading and writing after completion of the first year, reading classes are organized in the communities and are attended 2 or 3 times a week.
Community mobilization
To stabilize the attendance and to convince the communities to send the children to school, NRC initiated community mobilization as a component of the project. Community mobilisers are recruited and trained on education, child protection, health and hygiene, and women’s rights. The objective is to heighten awareness in the communities regarding issues linked to these topics, as well as to prepare the community to take over the programs when the NGOs leave.

Schools construction
There were no school buildings in most of the communities where NRC started ALP schools. The school construction component responds to the creation of a safe and accessible learning environment for the children. Following the recent requirement by the Ministry of Education, two to three classroom buildings, toilets and kitchens are constructed. The community has to show commitment by providing local available materials and labor in the construction process.

B. Purpose of the evaluation and intended use
The main purpose of the evaluation is to obtain an independent assessment of the ALP program in Liberia to get an understanding on how effective NRC has implemented the different program components and the impact of the program on the beneficiaries and the community at large.

The overall objective of the evaluation is two-fold:
1) To assess the quality of education offered in the ALP in light of the needs of learners and communities, taking into consideration the accelerated nature of grade completion. Areas to assess are ALP learners’ performance, the effectiveness and appropriateness of teaching and learning methods, the relevance of curriculum, syllabus, and teaching/learning material, reasons for learners retention and drop out, and the impact completing ALP has had on the lives of learners in terms of future opportunities. The added value of the multi-faceted approach of linking adult literacy and young mothers’ classes to the ALP program should be reviewed.

2) To evaluate the sustainability of the ALP program, with emphasis on the capacity of community and MoE to continue education in ALP schools. Focus should be on community/MOE commitment and capacity to support education, and suggest recommendations for how to ensure sustainability following NRCs phase out of ALP.

The findings and conclusions shall be shared with the NRC Head Office, the Education adviser, the Education programme manager, donors and other interested persons engaged in ALP programme set-up, assessment and phase out.

C. Scope of work and methods
The evaluation should cover the overall assistance provided trough the ALP program in Liberia in the period of 2005 to 2009. However the evaluation should take cognisance of the fact that NRC will be phasing out of ALP in 2010 when the current students who are all in Level 3 finalise their studies.

The methodology should include:
- **Document review:** As a general background, the evaluation team should examine in depth relevant materials in NRC, such as country information, the NRC country strategy for Liberia, the NRC education policy, the education project proposals, action plans, project applications, agreements and relevant evaluation reports.

- **Field visits:** At the suggestion of the country office, the evaluation team should visit at least 15 communities (5 in each county). The team should physically examine the processes and activities of the various components of the project. Visits will be to running ALP schools and communities where NRC was earlier running ALP and where activities are now phased out.
• **Interviews of beneficiaries:** Include interviews with current learners in ALP program and adult literacy classes regarding their learning needs. The teachers and teaching assistants on the curriculum and methodologies. The children who have completed ALP and joined formal school education and those that have dropped out. The parents of the children and community members where ALP is being implemented to solicit their views of the program and the results. The consultant must ensure that female and male beneficiaries (learners, parents, community members) are given equal chance to raise their opinions, and provide sex-disaggregated details on who have been consulted.

• **Interviews with NRC staff, Ministry of Education Officials and partners in education sectors:** The evaluations should focus on finding out how the MoE is involved in the ALP activities and how the staff manage follow up and coordinate activities of the project.

**Evaluation principles:**
The evaluation will be guided by the following rules/considerations:

- Openness: of information given, to the highest possible degree to all parties, when there are not special considerations against this
- Publicity/public access to the results when there are not special considerations against this
- Broad participation: the interested parties should be involved when relevant / possible
- Reliability and independence: the evaluation should be conducted so that findings and conclusions are correct and trustworthy

**D. Specific issues to be covered**
The evaluation team will assess the performance of the ALP program and its components in Liberia by applying the following criteria. These criteria are defined in NRC evaluation policy. The questions under each criteria are meant to guide the evaluation team in focusing on key issues for NRC

**Relevance/ appropriateness:**
- What processes led NRC to start up the ALP program in Liberia?
- What process led to inception of the Adult literacy, young mothers’ classes, and schools construction as additional components of the program?
- What methodologies have been used to ensure stakeholders participation in the inception of the program and implementation of the program?
- How does the program address the needs of the over aged children to complete their primary school education, in light of the accelerated nature of the program?
- Has the program adapted to respond to changes in the situation of the target group or to other contextual changes?

**Effectiveness:**
- Are the project objectives and activities sufficiently clearly defined? Are they relevant to the context and to the envisaged outcome of the program?
- Is the ALP curriculum, syllabus, teaching and learning materials effectively contributing to the learning and proper completion of different levels or grades of the primary school curriculum?
- To what extent has ALP helped over aged children meet their primary education needs and helped them join junior secondary education?
- To what extent has the adult Literacy program helped adult women and men learn how to read and write?
- How have the schools constructed or renovated by NRC complied to MoE’s standards and improved access to education and improved learning environment?
- To what extent are the young mothers’ classes helping meet the education needs of the girls who have dropped out of school?
- How effective are the teaching staff members?
Coverage:
- What are the main reasons that the ALP project has succeeded or has failed in meeting the primary education needs of over aged children in the area of operation?
- Has there been effort to adopt different approaches to different community needs in the area of operation? Comparative studies.
- How has the program met the specific needs for girls and boys?
- Did the program design appropriately reach the intended beneficiaries, or has anyone been left out?

Impact and sustainability:
- To what extent are changes attributable to the intervention? Are all changes positive?
- How are the children who have completed the ALP cycle 2005 to 2008/2009 doing in Junior high schools or in the communities?
- How has the program prepared the communities for eventual takeover of the projects when NRC phases out?
- How are the schools where ALP has phased out currently being operated?
- How are the school buildings and other facilities built by NRC being utilized and maintained by the communities?

► Propose a revised Education strategy based on the findings from all the above components.

E. Evaluation team
NRC seeks an international consultant or consultancy firm as the team leader, the consultant/consultancy firm must hire national evaluator/resource person(s) as part of the evaluation team. The evaluation team should take into consideration gender balance in its composition. The Education team in Liberia will map out the locations of the schools and communities that hosted or continue to host ALP Interventions over the period (2005 to date). The team will suggest a travel routes for the evaluation team to ensure as many schools and communities as possible are reached within the agreed timeframe.

F. Steering committee
An evaluation steering committee will be established, with the following members:
- Astrid Everine Sletten, Country Director Liberia
- Fred Magumba Program Manager Education Liberia
- Oddhild Günther, Evaluation adviser
- Silje Sjøvaag Skeie, Education adviser
- Marit Backe, Head of section Central and Western Africa
- Marianne Irion, Programme Coordinator Liberia and Côte d’Ivoire

In case of staff turnover, the one taking over the relevant position above will automatically be included as the new member of the Steering committee. The Steering committee will oversee administration and overall coordination, including monitoring progress. The main functions of the Steering committee will be to:
- establish the Terms of Reference of the evaluation;
- select external evaluator(s);
- review and comment on preliminary findings and recommendations, and;
- establish a dissemination and utilization strategy.

G. Timeframe and budget considerations
The whole process of the evaluation will have a time frame of eight weeks starting beginning of December 2009 and ending January 2010.

The evaluation team is scheduled to start its work beginning of December, conducting field visits during the period of mid December 2010. The team leader should alert the Evaluation advisor at NRC
immediately if serious problems or delays are encountered. Approval for any significant changes to the evaluation timetable will be referred to the Steering Committee.

Stipulated budget frame: NOK 300,000

Expression of interest, including an inception report of max 4-5 pages and outline budget should be forwarded to the NRC HQ Evaluation adviser (Oddhild Günther: oddhild.gunther@nrc.no) no later than November 23rd 2009. The final decision on the candidate will be taken immediately afterwards.

H. Reporting
At the end of the field research, the evaluation team will hold a workshop with the NRC Education team, main stakeholders and other relevant staff from the NRC Liberia office identified by the Steering committee to discuss the preliminary findings of the evaluation exercise.

A draft report should be submitted no later than January 4th 2010. The Steering committee will review the report and provide comments to the evaluator by January 18th 2010. The completion date for the Final evaluation report will be January 25th 2010, with the consultant having addressed NRC’s comments as appropriate.

The size of the report should be approximately 40 pages, clearly written in English, using Arial 11 point. The evaluation report should consist of:

- Executive summary and recommendations not more than five Pages.
- Main text, to include index, emergency context, NRC mandate, evaluation methodology, commentary and analysis addressing evaluation purpose and outputs to include a section dedicated to the issue of particular lessons-learning focus, conclusions.
- Appendices, to include evaluation terms of reference, maps, sample framework, and bibliography.

All material collected in the undertaking of the evaluation process should be lodged with Evaluation adviser prior to the termination of the contract.

Once the final report is submitted, the lead evaluator will be called to present findings to the Steering committee and possibly other NRC management staff.

I. Follow up
A management response, including any plans for incorporating recommendations into the programme, will be prepared by the PM Education NRC Liberia within two months after receiving the final report. It is the responsibility of the Country Director to ensure that the realization of these plans is monitored and documented. Further follow-up at HQ level will be ensured by the Programme Coordinator.
ANNEX 2  LIST OF DOCUMENTS CONSULTED

General documents:
- Education Sector Master Plan 2000-2010 (Ministry of Education Liberia)
- Draft Education Sector Master Plan 2010-2020 (Ministry of Education Liberia)
- School Census report 2006-2007 (Ministry of Education Liberia)
- Participatory Poverty Assessment 2008 (Government of Liberia)
- Delivering Education for Children in emergencies: A key building block for the future (Save the Children)
- Final Evaluation report of the PLAN Education Renewal Program in Sierra Leone (NCG, September 2007)
- Assessment of the National Accelerated Learning Program in Liberia (Ministry of Education Liberia and UNICEF, October 2007)
- Report on ALP activities covering the period January – December, 2009 (ALP Management team, Ministry of Education, Liberia)
- UNDP – Liberia annual report 2008
- Liberia Poverty Reduction Strategy (March 2008)
- The relevance of Gender Statistics in policy making in Liberia (paper to the Global forum on Gender Statistics, 26-28 January 2009, Prepared by Jerolinmick Piah, Assistant Minister for Planning and Administration, Ministry for Gender and Development, Liberia)
- Liberia Demographic Health Survey (2007)
- UNICEF – At a glance: Liberia (http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/Liberia_statistics.html)
- INEE Minimum Standards Handbook

NRC documents:
- NRC Evaluation Policy - Learning from experience
- NRC Education Policy
- Gender Policy
- Protection Policy
- Education in Emergencies and Transition phases – still a right and more of a need – policy paper
- Education Handbook
- Evaluation Report 2009: Small Steps to rebuild Communities with YEP: NRC Youth Education Pack Project in Liberia
- Project proposal 2005
- Quarterly reports 2005
- Project proposal 2006
- Annual report 2006
- Project proposal 2007
- Annual report 2007
- Revised Project proposal 2008, 2009, 2010
- Annual report 2008
- Semi annual report 2009
### ANNEX 3: LIST OF PERSONS CONSULTED

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ms. Silje Skeie</td>
<td>Education Advisor</td>
<td>NRC Oslo</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Ms. Oddhild Gunther</td>
<td>Evaluation Advisor</td>
<td>NRC Oslo</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Ms. Marit Backe</td>
<td>Head of Central and West Africa</td>
<td>NRC Oslo</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Ms. Torill Sæterøy</td>
<td>Program Coordinator, Liberia</td>
<td>NRC Oslo</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Mr. Alphoso M. Sheriff</td>
<td>Member, ALP Management Team</td>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Mr. Thomas R. Clarke</td>
<td>ALP Management Team Member</td>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Mr. Patrick Davies</td>
<td>ALP Management Team Member</td>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Mr. Bernard R. Batidzirai</td>
<td>Education Specialist</td>
<td>UNICEF</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Ms. Evelyn Barry</td>
<td>Education Officer</td>
<td>UNICEF</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Ms. Birgitte Rassumussen</td>
<td>Regional Director</td>
<td>Ibis</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Ms. Rosalind Hanson-Alp</td>
<td>Country Programme Director</td>
<td>Ibis</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Mr. Bent Jahns</td>
<td>Programme Coordinator, Education in Emergencies</td>
<td>Ibis</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Mr. Sarthak K. Pal</td>
<td>Country Director</td>
<td>Save the Children UK</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Ms. Astrid Everine Sletten</td>
<td>Country Director</td>
<td>NRC</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>Mr. Fred Magumba</td>
<td>Program Manager</td>
<td>NRC</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>Mr. Magnus Mienwipia</td>
<td>Project Coordinator</td>
<td>NRC</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Mr. John Flomo</td>
<td>Field Coordinator, Bomi, Grand Cape Mount and Gbarpolu Counties</td>
<td>NRC</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>Ms. Tamba Kelly</td>
<td>Acting Education Officer Bomi County</td>
<td>NRC</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>Mr. Jonathan Jaygbay</td>
<td>Education Officer Bomi County</td>
<td>NRC</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>Ms. Nana Y. Wilson</td>
<td>Acting Education Officer Bomi County</td>
<td>NRC</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td>Mr. Alimou Bayoh</td>
<td>Community Mobilization Officer, Gbarpolu</td>
<td>NRC</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>Mr. Thomas M. Marwolo</td>
<td>Community Mobilization Officer Cape Mount</td>
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<td>23</td>
<td>Ms. Forance Tumbay</td>
<td>Assistant Education Officer, Bomi</td>
<td>NRC</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>Ms. Lucia M. Coleman</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>Mr. Dolinsky Skylee Paye,</td>
<td>Assistant Community Mobilization Officer, Bomi</td>
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<td>26</td>
<td>Mr. Tennah Masssquio</td>
<td>Assistant Education Officer, Bomi County</td>
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<td>27</td>
<td>Mr. Prince Samuels</td>
<td>Education Officer, Gbarpolu County</td>
<td>NRC</td>
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<td>28</td>
<td>Mr. Sumo Reed</td>
<td>Construction Officer, Gbarpolu County</td>
<td>NRC</td>
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<td>Mr. Moses M. Moloroi</td>
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<td>Teacher training</td>
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<td>- Trainingissu</td>
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<td>- Programme performance</td>
<td>- Delivery of concerned curriculum</td>
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<td>- Programme duration</td>
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<td>- Programme content</td>
<td>- Appropriate delivery of the programme</td>
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<td>- Gender issues</td>
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<td>- Target issues</td>
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**Objective No.2:**
To expand the implementation of Adult Literacy classes with specific focus on women in three counties of Liberia.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Components</strong></th>
<th><strong>Relevance</strong></th>
<th><strong>Effectiveness</strong></th>
<th><strong>Coverage</strong></th>
<th><strong>Impact</strong></th>
<th><strong>Sustainability</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Community Mobilization</td>
<td>Processes/ circumstances in the project area that led/necessitated the inclusion of the community mobilization component</td>
<td>No of PTAs/SMCs established</td>
<td>No of SMCs trained</td>
<td>No of community mobilisers</td>
<td>Quality of training of mobilizers</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Hygiene, care, child care, Programming of CHV</td>
<td>Extent to which communities are actively involved in ALP and other components of the programme</td>
<td>Quality of the community mobilization component: - No of PTAs/SMCs</td>
<td>No of community mobilizers</td>
<td>No of PTAs/SMCs</td>
<td>Quality of the mobilization component</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Support for education, school enrolment, women’s rights, attitudes, behaviour</td>
<td>Quality of training of SMCs/PTAs</td>
<td>No of communities reached (v) targeted number</td>
<td>Factors affecting coverage of communities</td>
<td>Community readiness to manage schools after completion of program</td>
<td>Community readiness to manage schools after completion of program</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Objective No.3:** To increase awareness and to build capacity in communities on education, child protection, health, hygiene and women’s rights in three counties.
Objective No.4: To ensure the sustainability of primary schools implemented by NRC in the three counties in Liberia

**Component:** School Construction

**Relevance**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>i.</strong> Appropriateness of school structures and extent of compliance with Sphere standards.</td>
<td>Classroom sanitation facilities (for boys and girls)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ii.</strong> Proximity to the communities</td>
<td>Proximity to the community</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>iii.</strong> Creation of a conducive learning environment</td>
<td>Creation of a conducive learning environment</td>
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**Effectiveness**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Metric</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>i.</strong> Number of schools / classrooms constructed/rehabilitated in each county</td>
<td>Number of schools / classrooms constructed/rehabilitated in each county</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ii.</strong> Factors that influenced pattern of school construction / rehabilitation</td>
<td>Factors that influenced pattern of school construction / rehabilitation</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>iii.</strong> Improvement in access to education</td>
<td>Improvement in access to education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>iv.</strong> Improvements in school construction and rehabilitation processes</td>
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**Coverage**

<table>
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<tr>
<td><strong>i.</strong> Level of community support and participation in construction processes</td>
<td>Level of community support and participation in construction processes</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>ii.</strong> Capacity of PTAs and SMCs in the maintenance of the schools.</td>
<td>Capacity of PTAs and SMCs in the maintenance of the schools.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>iii.</strong> Community contribution to schools construction and maintenance</td>
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**Sustainability**

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<tr>
<td><strong>i.</strong> Increased access to education / enrolment for girls and boys</td>
<td>Increased access to education / enrolment for girls and boys</td>
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<td><strong>ii.</strong> Improvements in learning environment</td>
<td>Improvements in learning environment</td>
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<td><strong>iii.</strong> Increased enrolment of girls</td>
<td>Increased enrolment of girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>iv.</strong> No of schools / classrooms</td>
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To ensure the sustainability of primary schools implemented by NRC in the three counties in Liberia.
### ANNEX 5: ALP program achieved results

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<td>Number of young mothers receiving education</td>
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<td>2009: 20-10.5%</td>
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<td>2010: 20-10.7%</td>
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The numbers in this table are based on NRC annual reports and information received from NRC staff.
MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Between

The Ministry of Education of the Republic of Liberia

And

The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) made and entered into this month of [Dec 22, 2003] by and between The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) Country Programme in Republic of Liberia, represented by Country Director, Mr. Carsten Hansen, hereinafter known and referred to as NRC, “The Party of the First Part” and the Ministry of Education of Republic of Liberia, represented by the Honourable Minister of Education, Joseph D.Z. Korto, Ph.D., hereinafter referred to as the Ministry of Education, “The Party of the Second Part”.

1. Terms of the Memorandum of Understanding

1.1 That for and in consideration of the services to be rendered by the parties to the delivery of education services in Liberia; and need for mutual understanding of the roles and responsibilities in this partnership, the parties mutually agree to execute this Memorandum of Understanding.

1.2 That it is agreed between the parties that this Memorandum of Understanding shall be for 3 (three) years, and that these years should be the same as the budget year of the Republic of Liberia, commencing in July, up to and including the 30th day of June, of the following year. It is further agreed and understood that at the expiration of the given period provided for herein, the parties to the Memorandum of Understanding shall have the option to review, alter and extend this Memorandum based on mutual agreement.

2.0 Purpose of the Memorandum of Understanding

2.1 This Memorandum of Understanding is intended to articulate the roles and expectations of the partners; to provide a framework for linking partners support to the national education goals; and guidelines collaboration and harmonization of the resources of the parties in the interest of education recovery in Liberia.

3.0 Background

3.1 The Liberia Education Landscape

3.2 Long years of civil war damaged school infrastructure; brought on a flight of trained teachers from the classroom; and experienced administrators from the school system. When teachers were repeated told they would not be paid their meagre salaries for months on end, they abandoned the classrooms other forms of employment. School funding were gradually reduced, and re-allocated to other efforts, including the war. Following the end of the civil war, and the holding of democratic elections, the new government of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf made education a high priority for her administration. Schools are being renovated, and new ones constructed. School buildings are being renovated, and new ones constructed; learning materials are being designed and provided; and teachers are being trained to meet the challenges of our new education recovery plan.
3.3 A modern Education Management Information System is being established to provide reliable and comprehensive data on the system that would inform effective school planning. Through the cooperation and support of our education development partners, various interventions are planned to address the weaknesses of the system. Many assessments, including planned or being conducted. These include Early Childhood, Curriculum Reviews, Peace and Human Rights Education, teacher matters, public expenditure on education, Early Grade Reading, and a Country Status Report on Education. These will feed into, and lead to the formulation of a 10-year Education Sector Plan. These augur very well for the recovery and expansion of education in Liberia. Finally, a robust intervention for training and building the human and organization capacity of the Ministry of Education is being planned. These are extremely optimistic times for education in Liberia.

3.4 The Ministry intends to carry out this challenging task by establishing strong partnership with all stakeholders, national and international for coordination and harmonization of all resources allocated to Liberia for its education recovery plan; and expects its donor partners build this coordination and harmonization under the Principles of the Paris Declaration. Consequently, the MOE and Education Implementing Partners are committed to, and will abide by the following Principles of the Paris Declaration:

- Transparency and accountability through full disclosure of information pertaining to educational projects proposed
- Acceptance of, and respect for, Ministry of Education leadership in execution of projects; and active facilitation of this leadership
- Sharing of information, experience, expertise and organizational capacity, including staff and equipment
- Public acknowledgement of GOL leadership and ownership for projects being undertaken, as is consistent with the supporting role of education partner.

4.0 Background of the Education Partner (including the vision, mission, location of headquarters, previous experience, funder(s), and experience in education reform)

The Refugee Council is a foundation converted from the association called The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), which was established by voluntary Norwegian aid organizations engaged in the work for refugees. The Foundation is to continue the humanitarian traditions and the experts competence that the association and its members have represented.

The NRC, with its head quarter located in Oslo – Norway works under the vision: “To promote and protect the rights of all people who have been forced to flee their countries, or their homes within their countries, regardless of their race, religion, nationality or political convictions. This will be achieved by acting as an independent and courageous spokesperson for refugee rights and internationally, by providing humanitarian assistance in emergency situations and by strengthening the capacity of the UN organizations to offer and co-ordinate international aid and protection. The NRC shall, in all possible ways, seek to provide viable, durable solutions with regard to both its activities as a spokesperson and its emergency relief efforts”.

The NRC is working in more than 20 countries around the world, and has developed specific experiences within its 5 (five) core activities: Shelter, Camp Management, Information, Counselling and Legal Assistance (ICLA), Emergency Food Security and Distribution and Education.

The NRC enjoys support from a variety of different donors, such as: ECHO, EU, DFID, USAID, UNHCR, WFP, SIDA, UNICEF, FAO and specifically from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (NMFA)
5.0 Target (Geographic) Area(s) of Program Delivery

NRC Liberia implements its education activities (ALP and Youth Education Pack) in Bomi, Grand Cape Mount and Gbarpolu Counties. Considerations to expand into Montserrado and Margibi counties are ongoing.

6.0 Roles and Responsibilities

6.1 The Partner “NRC” shall

- Involve Ministry of Education in planning and evaluation of the program. There shall be two annual reviews, mid-year and end-of-year. The review dates will be agreed and shall form part of the Partner’s Annual Work Plan.
- Coordinate all field activities and share relevant information with the national and regional MOE authorities, and other stakeholders.
- Conduct education activities necessary to achieve the three key strategic objectives outlined in Section 5.
- Support the Ministry of Education to develop, implement and roll out the National strategy to respond to the protection issues for girls and reduce the risk of sexual exploitation and abuse in schools.
- Partner shall include in each project budget a line item for funding joint monitoring, reviews and joint evaluation when projects are implemented outside the immediate Monrovia area.
- Submit quarterly progress reports (hard and electronic copies) based on agreed report format. Reports should be circulated to the three deputy ministers, Donor Coordinator, the EMIS, county and district education officers.
- Conduct and/or support advocacy, community mobilization, sensitization or training activities that support the achievement of the goals and objectives of the partner.
- Assist the Ministry of Education at National, County and District levels to validated good practice models in achieving the vision and mission of the partner.
- Provide any other support, including training and/or workshops, to the Ministry of Education at National, County and District levels in keeping with capacity and resources of the partner permit.

7.0 Ministry of Education shall:

- Formally approve the the Annual Work Plan, and actively participate in the bi-annual reviews, needs assessments, program impact assessment, and to send timely respond to partner requests.
- Keep the partner fully informed about GOL Education Plans and Program.
- Assist partners in the resolution of any potential disputes or conflicts, including but not limited to, school and youth center staffs, Parent-Teacher Committees, arising in school or school/youth center communities.
- Assist partners in providing appropriate forum to exchange information, experience and to validate and share good practice with other partners.
- Support programs and activities that facilitate its work.
- With partner, design an utilization/deployment strategy that will integrate their teacher corps into the national teacher corps provided they meet the requirements for teaching in Liberian schools.
- Provide advice to partner in dealing with other Ministries of the Government of Liberia (e.g. Work permit applications) as long as the matters relate to delivery of its approved education services.
8.0 Monitoring & Evaluation

- The Ministry of Education and the partner shall jointly develop and implement a plan to monitor and evaluate the activities arising out of their Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).
- The County Education Offices, Ministry of Education and the Field Offices of the partner shall jointly monitor and evaluate the project activities in their county of assignment according to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The Department of Planning, Research & Development shall conduct monitoring and evaluation in collaboration with the Partner as may be deemed necessary.
- A comprehensive evaluation based on agreed criteria by both the Ministry of Education and the Partner shall be organized at appropriate intervals depending on the scope and implementation period of the project as stated in the specific proposal. These evaluations from each county will feed into an overall evaluation report jointly written by the MOE and the Partner.
- Detailed quarterly progress reports, including specific data and information on beneficiaries, target schools, and communities will be submitted by the Partner in an agreed report format to facilitate storage in, and retrieval from, the MOE EMIS.
- The Partner will give at least 10 copies of its bi-annual and annual reports on its activities to the MOE.

7.3 It is further mutually agreed and understood that all of the terms and conditions contained in this MOU shall be binding upon the parties hereto and shall extend to their successors-in-office and/or assigns, as though they were specifically named herein and affixed their signatures hereto.

7.4 It is also agreed and understood that in the event of disagreement, dispute or conflict pertaining to any provision of this MOU, or interpretation thereof, each party shall make maximum efforts to resolve it through constructive dialogue and consultation in a spirit of partnership. However, in the event of serious violation of the MOU, either party may terminate the MOU without further obligations to the other party. However to avoid an abrupt disruption of services, in the event that an unsolvable problem were to occur with a project that has been implemented for more than 6 months, the Partner must give the Ministry of Education reasonable time to identify a replacement provider for the target community.

7.5 In the event of force majeure that may put the Partner’s staff implementing the program at risk the Partner shall have the right to withdraw its presence from the areas of the program. Verbal notification shall be made as soon as it is known that it that it is not possible for the program to continue. As soon as would allow, the Partner’s Country Management shall formally notify the Ministry of Education of this decision.
9.0 Signatures

In witness whereof the undersigned, being duly authorised thereto, have on behalf of the Partners hereto signed the Memorandum of Understanding at the place and on the day written below:

On Behalf of The Norwegian Refugee Council

Name: Carsten Hansen

Designation: Country Director

Signature: [Signature]

Date: 22.12.2008

Witness: [Witness]

Date: 22.12.2008

On Behalf of Ministry of Education

Name: (Name of Ministry of Education)

Designation: Minster of Education

Signature: [Signature]

Date: 22.12.2008

Witness: [Witness]

Deputy Minister for Planning, Research & Planning

Date: Dec 22, 2008