



USAID's Core Education Skills for Liberian Youth (CESLY)

FINAL PROGRESS REPORT

AUGUST 2009-OCTOBER 2011

Submitted by Education Development Center, Inc.

Contract No EDH I 05-00031-00; Task Order No EDH I 05-05-00031

This document was produced for review by the United States Agency for International Development. It was prepared by Education Development Center, Inc. for the USAID/Core Education Skills for Liberian Youth (CESLY) Project, Contract No. EDH-I-00-05-00031-0. This report is made possible by the support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development. The contents are the sole responsibility of Education Development Center, Inc., and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

Table of Contents

ACRONYMS	
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	1
INTRODUCTION	3
<i>BACKGROUND</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>PROJECT MANAGEMENT</i>	<i>3</i>
TECHNICAL PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS	6
<i>TASK #1: FINAL TWO LEVELS OF STUDENTS ENROLLED IN ALP PLUS GRADUATED</i>	<i>6</i>
1.1 Campaigns to Sustain Youth Enrollment and Retention	7
1.2 Development and Implementation of a Gender Strategy	8
1.3 Establishment of Female Clubs.....	10
1.4 Dissemination of Information about Value of Retention for Adolescent Girls	11
1.5 Support and Strengthening of PTAs	11
1.6 ABE Committee Established and Engaged	12
1.7 Provision of Lighting	12
1.8 Assessing a More Suitable Solar Option	13
1.9 Graduation of Level 3 Learners.....	14
1.10 CESLY Recommendations for Enrollment and Retention in Future Youth Programming.....	14
<i>TASK #2: IMPROVED ACCESS TO AND IMPROVED QUALITY OF BASIC EDUCATION WITH EMPHASIS ON IMPROVED CORE LITERACY AND NUMERACY SKILLS</i>	<i>16</i>
2.1 Training of Teachers	16
2.2 Training Resource Material Development.....	18
2.3 Videography	18
2.4 Support to Quality Teaching in the Classroom	19
2.5 Teacher Observation and Assessment.....	20
2.6 Teacher Skills Building	20
2.7 Promotion of a Culture of Reading	21
2.8 Development of Liberian Reading Content.....	22
2.9 Mobile Library.....	23
2.10 USAID/CESLY Writing Contest	24
2.11 Developing Skills of Liberians to Create Written Materials	24
2.12 Recommendations.....	25
<i>TASK #3: MINISTRY OF EDUCATION ASSISTED IN DESIGNING, PILOTING AND IMPLEMENTING A NON-FORMAL LITERACY AND NUMERACY CURRICULUM</i>	<i>28</i>
3.1 Framework Development	28
3.2 Development of Level 1 Materials.....	29

3.3	<i>Pilot Test of Level 1 Materials</i>	30
3.4	<i>Curricular Material Review Process</i>	30
3.5	<i>Field Test of Level 1 Materials</i>	30
3.6	<i>Development of Level 2 Materials</i>	32
3.7	<i>Development and Pilot Testing of End of Project Assessment Package for Level 1</i>	33
3.8	<i>Challenges and Recommendations for Future Alternative Basic Education Activities</i>	36
TASK #4: QUANTITATIVE ASSESSMENT OF READING AND NUMERACY SKILLS ACQUISITION		39
4.1	<i>Reading and Math Assessments</i>	40
4.2	<i>Assessment of Linkages to Peace, Security and Conflict Mitigation</i>	43
4.3	<i>RTI interviews on Violence and School Safety</i>	44
4.4	<i>Impact of the Program on Teaching and Learning</i>	48
4.5	<i>Recommendations</i>	50
TASK# 5: LIFE SKILLS PROGRAM EXPANDED, IMPROVED AND INTEGRATED INTO ALP REGULAR, ALP YOUTH AND NFE PROGRAMS		52
5.1	<i>Expansion of Life Skills Content Area across Accelerated Learning Programs</i>	52
5.2	<i>Development and Testing of the Life Skills Curriculum</i>	52
5.3	<i>Training of Teachers and School Administrators</i>	54
5.4	<i>Assessment of Life Skills</i>	54
5.5	<i>Career Guidance and Counseling</i>	54
5.6	<i>Service Learning</i>	55
5.7	<i>Challenges and Recommendations</i>	55
TASK# 6: LEARNING RESOURCE CENTERS SUPPORTED AND STRENGTHENED		57
6.1	<i>Provisions of Service to the Public</i>	57
6.2	<i>LRC Design</i>	57
6.3	<i>Broader Service Provision: Serving as a Center for Intellectual Stimulation</i>	58
6.4	<i>County Level Coordination between USAID/CESLY and MOE</i>	58
6.5	<i>Human Resource Capacity Building</i>	59
6.6	<i>Leveraging of Volunteers to Support Youth Initiatives</i>	59
6.7	<i>Challenges and Recommendations</i>	60
TASK #7: IMPROVED POLICIES AND STRENGTHENED CAPACITY FOR IMPLEMENTATION		62
7.1	<i>From “Capacity Building” to Technical Collaboration</i>	63
7.2	<i>Joint Monitoring and Supervision in the Field</i>	64
7.3	<i>Ministry of Education Passes Policy on Alternative Basic Education</i>	66
7.4	<i>Stakeholders Engaged in Sustaining the Momentum of Alternative Basic Education and Workforce Development for Youth</i>	66
7.5	<i>Development of an Alternative Basic Education Field Implementation Manual</i>	67
7.6	<i>Contribution to the Development of Education Law</i>	67
7.7	<i>Contributions into the 2012-2017 Medium Term Plan for Education Reform and Development in Liberia</i> ...	68
7.8	<i>Policy Dialogue: “Friday- No Good School Day”</i>	68
7.9	<i>Addressing Demand for Incentives from MOE Staff</i>	68

7.10	<i>Linkages, Coordination and Collaboration with Partners</i>	69
7.11	<i>Celebration of International Celebrations</i>	69
7.12	<i>Trainer-of-Trainers Workshop to Integrate ABE into Pre-service Training at Teacher Training Institutes</i>	70
7.13	<i>Recommendations</i>	70
TASK # 8: EDUCATION SUPPLIES DISTRIBUTION		71
8.1	<i>Assessing the Readiness of Schools to Receive, Maintain, and Use the Books</i>	71
8.2	<i>Receipt of Textbooks from Publishers at MOE Warehouse</i>	72
8.3	<i>Allocation of textbooks to schools</i>	72
8.4	<i>Distribution of Textbooks to Schools</i>	72
8.5	<i>Challenges and Recommendations on Textbook Distribution</i>	73
TASK #9: SMALL GRANTS UNDER CONTRACT IN SUPPORT OF PROJECT OBJECTIVES		75
9.1	<i>Production and Distribution of Instructional Materials</i>	75
9.2	<i>USAID/CESLY Recommendations for Effective Instructional Materials Supply In Future Youth Programming</i>	76
TASK#10: IDENTIFY, PROMOTE AND MANAGE IMPLEMENTATION OF PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS IN SUPPORT OF PROJECT OBJECTIVES AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT		78
10.1	<i>Partnerships to leverage non-USG funds</i>	78
10.2	<i>All Learners Undergo Work Readiness Coursework and Assessment</i>	79
10.3	<i>Learners Placed in Post-Program Options</i>	81
10.4	<i>Training for Employment Program (TEP) Activities Increased Placement Recruitment in 5 Counties</i>	81
10.5	<i>Collaboration with Empowering Adolescent Girls Project Initiated</i>	82
10.6	<i>IT for Women Skills Training Instituted</i>	82
10.7	<i>Using Alternative Energy for Income Generation</i>	82
10.8	<i>BBF Donated Books Delivered to USAID Supported Schools and Other Schools across the Country Supported by the Ministry of Education</i>	83
10.9	<i>Challenges and Recommendations for Workforce Development Placements</i>	83
TASK # 11: COMMUNICATIONS/OUTREACH		85
11.2	<i>Use of Media to Boost Retention</i>	85
11.3	<i>Radio Programs Produced and Aired</i>	85
11.4	<i>Use of Visual Media</i>	86
11.5	<i>Making Media a Platform for Youth</i>	87
11.6	<i>Harnessing the Dynamism and Passion of the MOE Communications Unit</i>	87
11.7	<i>Recommendations</i>	88
CONCLUSION		89

ACRONYMS

ABE - Alternative Basic Education

ALP - Accelerated Learning Program

ALPP - Accelerated Learning Program Plus

CEO - County Education Officer

CESLY – Core Education Skills for Liberia Youth Program

CPO - Community Participation Officer

DEO - District Education Officer

EO - Education Officer

EPAG – Empowering Adolescent Girls Program

FGD - Focus Group Discussion

IFESH –International Foundation for Education and Self Help

KRTTI - Kakata Regional Teacher Training Institute

LRC – Learning Resource Center

MOE – Ministry of Education

MYS - Ministry of Youth and Sports

NFE - Nonformal Education

NVYS - National Youth Service Volunteers

OSI - Open Society Institute

RTI –Research Triangle Institute

SMC - School Management Committee

TEP – Training and Employment Program

UNVS - United Nations Volunteer Service

WAEC - West Africa Examinations Council

WRF - Work Readiness Facilitator

YMCA – Young Men’s Christian Association

ZRTTI - Zorzor Regional Teacher Training Institute

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



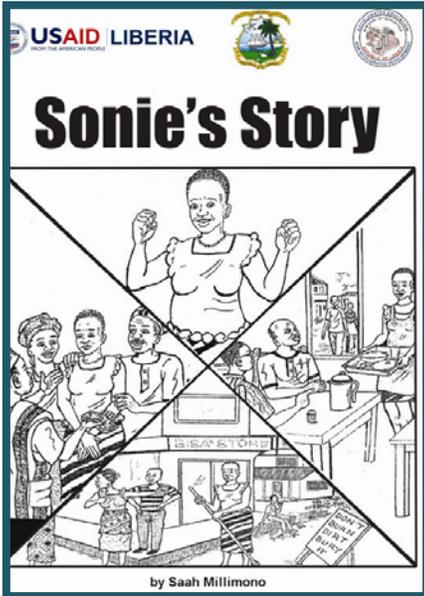
The overall purpose of the Core Education Skills for Liberian Youth program was to improve educational opportunities and outcomes for Liberian youth and young adults. Access for students to education was provided through both the Accelerated Learning Program and through the Non Formal Education pilot. Quality of education was supported through extensive training of teachers in learning centered methods, supported by regular monitoring of teachers. Materials supplied to teachers and students enhanced the classroom experience. CESLY's core team consisted of EDC, the YMCA of Liberia, and Research Triangle Institute, with each organization bringing unique and complementary strengths. The YMCA long history of service to youth in Liberia and extensive network was essential, as was RTI's contribution to the projects evaluation of student performance over time. CESLY's integrated management structure ensured that all staff, regardless of institutional affiliation, worked together and in close partnership with Ministry of Education counterparts to achieve common goals. In all aspects of the project, staff worked closely with the Ministry of Education from national to district levels, to develop, implement, monitor and evaluate education programs.

In total, 17,816 students enrolled in nonformal education and accelerated learning over the course of the project with 65% of learners graduated from ALP Regular Level 3 and 55% of

learners graduated from ALP Youth Level 3. Considerable effort was made to enroll and retain female students, including the establishment of women focused clubs and focused sensitization of communities. The enabling environment for education was further strengthened through support to basic education committees and PTAs around Liberia in the form of training and materials.

1436 teachers were trained over the course of the project, with follow up provided at regular cluster meetings and experience sharing activities. Content knowledge among these educators was identified as a serious obstacle to effective teaching practices, to which the project responded with more prescriptive curricular materials and responsive training activities. Despite this constraint, gains in reading were realized across the entire student body, with a notable 98% improvement in comprehension by NFE students and a 53% improvement in fluency among ALP regular students.

Work readiness and life skills curricular content was integrated into both ALP and NFE classrooms, implemented in 355 learning sites across the country. Level 1 materials integrating this content with literacy and numeracy were finalized after field testing for the Non Formal Education pilot, and initial draft curricular materials for Level 2 completed. A framework for delivery of the same content was developed for three full levels.



At a community level, students now have improved access to reading materials after the CESLY intervention. The YMCA delivered a total of 307,452 textbooks to formal schools around the country. Additional textbooks received from Brothers Brother Foundation were distributed to both formal and ABE classrooms. The project also facilitated the production of local materials including Sonie's Story and an anthology of written material produced within school communities. Mobile libraries provided further access to printed materials to underserved areas. Access was also provided through Learning Resource Centers operated by CESLY field staff. 74,737 visits in all were made for use of computer lab and reading rooms. To support classroom attendance in evening classes, 5,280 Taa Bora lanterns were procured, assembled and distributed by the project, with over 280 individuals benefiting from associated training.

To further goals of connecting students with work opportunities beyond the CESLY project, partnerships were developed with the Open Society Foundation, the Daphne Foundation and Oldebrecht to provide training opportunities to youth. As a result of these partnerships, transitions to formal secondary school, and student entrepreneurship, 59% of ALP graduates were successfully placed in post program options. With EPAG, an IT for Women skills training Program designed and piloted with 64 girls. For future placement efforts, data and documentation was created to facilitate connections, including graduate profiles, and a partnership stakeholder directory.

A facilitation process led by CESLY technical leadership involving multiple stakeholders resulted in the successful endorsement of an Alternative Basic Education policy, thereby institutionalizing non formal education for future Liberian students.

INTRODUCTION

Core Education Skills for Liberian Youth (CESLY) is a 2 year project awarded by USAID/Liberia through a contract to EDC, to extend and expand the previous USAID-funded project, the Accelerated Learning Program for Positive Living and United Service (ALP PLUS or ALPP). From August 2009 to October 31, 2011, CESLY worked with the Liberian Ministry of Education (MOE) to provide education and livelihood opportunities to out-of-school youth in six counties of the country. Through partnerships with the MOE, the YMCA of Liberia, and RTI International, EDC led the implementation of eleven diverse tasks, including curriculum development for the Ministry's new nonformal education program, teacher training, capacity development of MOE staff, provision of training opportunities for youth, and the development of teaching resources and reading materials. This report summarizes the project accomplishments in each of the eleven tasks areas and describes how these accomplishments were achieved.

BACKGROUND

Fourteen years of civil war left deep and marks on Liberia's children and youth and on its education system, marks which were still very evident in 2009 when USAID/CESLY started. Youth had missed out on an education and on opportunities to be part of intact families and communities, and they had experienced violence, trauma, and dislocation. The education system was destroyed during the war to such an extent that six years into relative peace and stability, the basic foundation blocks were not yet fully back in place. In addition to major physical infrastructure needs, there were significant gaps in the teaching force, in teaching and learning materials, and in educational leadership and administration. At the end of the war, USAID invested in contributing to Liberia's political, economic and social rejuvenation, including significant support to accelerated learning programs designed to fill in the missing years of education for the country's children and youth.

The Accelerated Learning Program (ALP), developed for and implemented in Liberia beginning in 1998, was designed to address some of the needs of youth who never enrolled in primary school or dropped out due to the war. In 2004, USAID expanded the basic ALP in six counties, to include additional classes for older youth (up to age 35), with additional life skills and service learning components; training for PTA members to support and strengthen local education initiatives; and support for county learning resource centers. With the CESLY project, USAID Liberia was continuing this investment in education and youth development, with an increased emphasis on strengthening the reading, math and work-related skills that would enable youth to successfully transition into productive livelihoods.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

The USAID/CESLY project was implemented by a consortium of three partners; Education Development Center (EDC), Research Triangle Institute International (RTI) and the Young Men's Christian Association of Liberia (YMCA-Liberia). EDC was the lead partner, operating from an office based in the YMCA Building in Crown Hill, Monrovia, together with a small office in the central MOE building.

For EDC, RTI and YMCA-Liberia, the primary counterpart on the USAID/CESLY project was the MOE. The project was designed to work closely with the MOE at all levels including development of curriculum, design of policy documentation, capacity building for central and county staff, regular monitoring of schools, teacher and principal training etc. Close integration with the MOE was integral to the success of the project.

In coordination with the MOE, the project was responsible for managing the diverse range of tasks outlined above and detailed below. In particular the project was focused around the delivery of the MOE's ALP class for "Regular" students aged 10-18 and for "Youth" students aged 18-35. The project was also mandated with the development and piloting of a new MOE Non Formal Education (NFE) program (later revised to the Alternative Basic Education program (ABE)).

In addition to the Monrovia office, the project also operated from Learning Resource Centers (LRCs) in the six counties; Bong, Grand Gedeh, Lofa, Maryland, Montserrado and Nimba. In four of the counties, the LRCs were co-located within the County Education Offices. This facilitated coordination between the project staff and their counterparts in the ministry.

Within these counties the project worked with an average of 60 ALP schools and 15 NFE sites. All ALP sites were 'inherited' from the USAID-ALPP program, with students studying at ALP Level 2 and Level 3 classes during the 2009-10 school year and at ALP Level 3 classes during the 2010-11 school year. The NFE classes piloted Level 1 of the newly designed curriculum during the 2010-11 school year. MOE teachers were trained to teach both the ALP and the NFE curriculum, holding classes mostly in the evening.

RTI was responsible for managing and analyzing data collected on the impact of the program, most notably in the areas of reading and mathematics but also in the areas of Principal, Teacher and Student perceptions of the impact of the program around issues such as community optimism, and levels of violence etc. The primary methods of analysis were the EGRA (Early Grade Reading Assessment) and EGMA (Early Grade Math Assessment) tools. RTI collected data at various times during the program including ALP baseline (November 2009), Midterm (May 2010) and endline (May 2011) and the NFE baseline (January 2011) and endline (May 2011). See Task 4 below for further details.

RTI provided 2 full time staff based in Monrovia, an Assessment Coordinator and a Finance and Administration Officer. RTI provided specialist support from the US to support areas including development of instruments, training of assessors, data entry and analysis of results.

YMCA-Liberia was responsible for a variety of tasks within the program. The initial task was the delivery of over 300,000 textbooks to almost 2,500 MOE schools in all counties of Liberia. A complicated and challenging logistical task, YMCA accomplished this in an efficient manner. YMCA staff were also responsible for developing the Life Skills modules as part of the NFE curriculum and for providing career guidance and placing graduates in post program options, including entry to Junior Secondary School, training programs and job opportunities.

YMCA provided staff at both the Monrovia central office level and at the LRC level. Within Monrovia, YMCA provided the Youth Programming Director, Life Skills/Service Learning Coordinator and Work Readiness/Service Learning Coordinator together with a Procurement Officer and Project Accountant. In the LRCs, the YMCA provide two Work Readiness Facilitators and one NFE Coordinator in each LRC.

A further partner on the project was World ORT. Via a leveraged partnership with the Open Society Foundation (OSF) together with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Youth and Sports, World ORT organized the Training and Employment Program (TEP). The program provided training opportunities for 2400 graduates from the ALP. OSF provided \$1m and USAID/CESLY provide \$656,000 in cash and in-kind contributions to the program (see Task 10 for further details and details of other partnerships).

The management of the program between the three organizations contracted under the USAID/CESLY project together with the MOE was both challenging and constructive. The organizations each brought their own technical expertise which greatly enhanced the project. The location of RTI and YMCA staff within the USAID/CESLY offices contributed to the coordination between the partners as did the location of the field staff in the County Education Offices. Between the implementing partners, development of assessment parameters and tools sometimes took longer than anticipated, whilst timelines of delivery of reports was sometimes problematic due to a variety of reasons. This affected the development of the curriculum materials in some cases.

EDC also worked closely with the YMCA finance and operations staff to ensure compliance with USAID and Liberia regulations and laws and to generally improve the overall capacity of individuals and the organization, allowing the YMCA to both better manage the finances within the USAID/CESLY program and also within other external programs. The availability of staff with appropriate capacity was at times problematic, leading to a requirement for additional technical assistance and training, particularly with regard to curriculum development and M&E. With regard to the MOE, turnover of staff within the ministry was sometimes problematic, whilst resource and capacity constraints sometimes hindered initiatives such as MOE-led monitoring of schools, teaching of more complicated concepts, managing school schedules etc. USAID/CESLY worked closely with the MOE on these and other issues to improve both the implementation of the program and also the general capacity of the MOE. However, despite these challenges, the overall implementation of the project and coordination between the different partners was extremely positive.

TECHNICAL PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

USAID’s contract with EDC outlined eleven Tasks, designed to reach the overall objective of expanding access to and improving the quality of basic education for children and youth (ages 10 to 35). The timeframe was short for reaching the ambitious targets and diverse deliverables for these Tasks, and there were many logistical and capacity challenges to implementation. During Year 1, the focus was on establishing a solid foundation through teacher training, curriculum design and educational programming. This work continued in Year 2 and expanded to include implementation of a focused workforce development strategy, piloting the nonformal education curriculum and working on policy development and MOE capacity building. In the Task subsections that follow, project targets and accomplishments are summarized, followed by discussion of key learning points that guided USAID/CESLY implementation.

Task #1: Final Two Levels of Students Enrolled in ALP PLUS Graduated

Indicator	Target	Achieved	Percent of Target Achieved
Student Enrollment	16,744	17,816	106%
# of adult learners enrolled in USG supported schools or equivalent non-school settings.	2594	8243	318%
% of female students enrolled in ALP program	50% for ALP regular, 58% for ALP youth	43% ALP regular, 61% ALP youth	86% percent achieved ALP regular, 104% percent achieved ALP youth
% of learners completing ALP regular programs	70%	65%	93%
% of learners completing ALP youth programs	70%	55%	79%

Key Accomplishments:

- 8,219 individuals graduated from Level 3
- High drop-out and absenteeism patterns reduced through enrollment and retention campaign
- 356 clubs female clubs established in 6 counties
- 89 Alternative Basic Education committees established
- 292 PTAs/ABE Committees established or strengthened
- 1696 School Community /PTA members trained through capacity building sessions
- Over 2100 participants trained on how to sustain adolescent girls and young women in educational programs
- Two sexual and reproductive health workshops conducted for members of 59 schools in Bong.
- Procurement, assembly and distribution of 5,280 Taa Bora lanterns for night lighting of youth classes
- 174 memoranda of understanding signed with communities using Taa Bora on the use and security of solar energy
- Over 280 individuals from school communities, Learning Resource Center, county level & MOE central staff trained in the fabrication and maintenance of Taa-Bora alternative energy

USAID/CESLY KEY LEARNING POINT: ONGOING, SUSTAINED RETENTION CAMPAIGNS ARE VITAL IN ORDER TO KEEP LIBERIAN YOUTH ENROLLED

1.1 Campaigns to Sustain Youth Enrollment and Retention

As outlined above, USAID/CESLY was a follow-on project to the 3-year, USAID-funded Accelerated Learning Program Plus (ALP PLUS or ALPP), working in the same counties, districts and schools. However, due to the handover between the projects, classes of ALPP had closed at the end of the previous school year and the beneficiaries were uncertain about the status of the program and continuation of accelerated learning. These uncertainties lead to a significant issue in terms of enrollment and retention amongst Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) students and teachers at the start of the project.

Having assessed and identified the issue of absenteeism and retention, USAID/CESLY responded by beginning an intensive monitoring and mobilization campaign for enrolment and retention of learners. The strategy called for community visits and engagement with influential people/stakeholders in the community. Starting before each semester, a team of technical and field staff members began moving into each school community to carry out mobilization. The head of the community assembled community members including religious leaders, youth groups, women's groups and parents, among others and explained the importance of education and the need for them to encourage the youth of the community to go to school. Following this, the county Community Participation Officer conducted follow-up visits to ensure that students and learners were in school or were attending sessions as per the schedule. Mid- semester, the team re-enforced its campaign by revisiting the communities to find out whether or not there were any drop outs. If there were drop outs, members of the team went from house to house and personally talked to the students or learners in an attempt to retain them.



In practical terms, this strategy helped to sustain the USAID/CESLY project as a whole, because had the retention strategy not been focused and persistent, learners or students would not have remained in class and the program would have failed.

MEDIA REINFORCES FACE TO FACE RETENTION EFFORTS

Media and communications efforts were integrally woven into community engagement and retention activities. See task 11 on Communications and Outreach for further discussion of this topic. From experience of the first months of year 1, the following lessons were learned and actions taken in following quarters.

EARLY LESSONS LEARNED	USAID/CESLY RESPONSE
Enrollment campaigns must be started well in advance of the school year.	Enrollment campaigns for NFE and ALP began in June 2010, 3 months before the school year.
The fact that the academic year starts in September does not mean that classes are in session	USAID/CESLY staff was actively engaged in working with the principals and teachers at the start of the semester so significant instructional time was not lost through delayed start up. USAID/CESLY became an advocate for promulgating information about the academic calendar to schools (particular in January 2011 when the start date of schools was changed 3 times).
Because a student enrolls, he or she may not continue attending school.	USAID/CESLY placed an emphasis on keeping students retained in school through: sustained site visits, radio spots, Youth Empowerment radio program, training and engagement of PTAs holding of community gatherings, use of town criers
Nothing is more important than face to face presence.	In Year 2, CESLY realigned the budget to include a much, much greater emphasis on the on-site presence of staff, firstly with field office staff but also with USAID/CESLY Technical and MOE staff. This greatly increased the sense of accountability and personal commitment of both educators and students.

GIRLS NEED SPECIFIC ATTENTION TO STAY ENROLLED

1.2 Development and Implementation of a Gender Strategy

Midway through the project, the project received the reading and math baseline assessment results showing that girls lagged behind boys' achievement in every area. Girls' enrollment was also lower than boys'. As one individual put it, "In Liberia, "youth" means boys." So without targeted efforts, project interventions would not reach girls and serve their needs. The project undertook a series of steps to prioritize enrollment, retention and achievement of girls, including the following:

- Hiring of a Gender Specialist
- Development of a gender strategy at the community level in which community leaders encourage females to participate in the program and local leadership is used as an entry point to involve young girls in the program.
- Encouragement of males who did not want their spouses/partners to be involved in the program to join education as well.
- Support and visits to Female Clubs
- Training of teachers, principals, education officers, PTAs and other stakeholders on specific gender violence prevention strategies
- Training of teachers and principals on awareness of the importance of investing in females and reinforcement of their efforts

- Rearrangement of the nonformal education curriculum so that modules on pregnancy prevention and gender violence prevention come first in the syllabus, before girls have dropped out.
- Development of the Sonie Story series, profiling a girl who encounters challenges common to girls in Liberia and overcomes thereby becomes a role model.
- Creation of specific opportunities in workforce development (e.g the IT for Women training and the linkage of girls into the Empowering Adolescent Girls Business Training program).
- Collaboration with Peace Corps and other partners to host workshops on sexual and reproductive health

These activities bore fruit to some extent. The program saw a large increase in female participation and enrolment especially in ABE, and more couples enrolled together. Project staff were told that gender based violence decreased in USAID/CESLY schools and communities in part because both young men and young women had increased awareness of the issues and of ways to speak out and take action.

At the time of the final assessment of ALP Level 3, we found that the initial trend continued, where males are still outperforming females on both reading and mathematics tasks tested. However, access and participation levels had improved and moreover, females are still slowly catching up. Whilst both ALP and NFE female students are lagging behind their male counterparts, a closer look at the NFE data shows that female students are actually learning faster than male students. For example, on the connected text task, female students improved 65% over baseline, while male students improved by only 27% over baseline. This could lead to a plausible conclusion that the program's targeted efforts to help female students more is paying off. At the same time it needs to be noted that the starting base of female students at the time of the NFE baseline assessment was rather low.

Other areas of the gender strategy had more direct impacts, not only on young women but also on their male colleagues, teachers, principals, family members and others in the community. For example, an assessment of the program's impact on conflict elicited these responses from participants in focus group discussions about gender-based violence:

Community members

Gender violence used to happen, but as a result of the program, it has reduced. (Male PTA Member, Nimba)

In this community we used to beat our wives for not giving us sex, but from this program gender based violence is reducing. (Male PTA Chairman, Lofa)

I used to beat on my wife, from the time went for training with CESLY and other organizations workshop, I stop it. (Male PTA Chairman, Bong)

Male Community Member (Maryland): There has never been a case of such since then. There is fine atmosphere now. No raping. Those who were involved we asked them to attend trauma healing sessions.

Teachers and Principals

Gender based violence has stopped in the community, but before, this community used to be really hot. (Male Principal, Bong)

Before then, people used to abuse women on campus and in the community, but because of the GBV awareness and the one-on-one [information] we can pass around from our knowledge we get from the ALP, gender based violence cases have reduced. (Female ALP Teacher, Grand Gedeh)

First time when a child fails under a teacher, he or she was requested for money or sex, but as a result of the constant training on GBV, we are able to reduce it. (Male ALP Teacher, Maryland):

Learners

Gender based violence used to be high to the extent that male teachers used to exchange grades for sex, but because of this program it has disappeared. (Male ALP Student, Maryland)

My brother's habit of beating his wife changed. Because I talked to him from the lesson I get from the classroom, he stopped. (Female ALP Student, Maryland)

Women were taken as fun boxes, so we used to beat them. Today, there is less problem. (Male NFE Learner, Grand Gedeh)

The boys in my school used to attack the girls because the girls refused to be their girlfriends, but from the time we started studying about life skills, we cannot do it anymore. (Male ALP Student, Bong)

There use to be harassment by men; they had sex with us at will and always told us that they bought us. (Female ALP Student, Bong):

Some men used to take their wives out of the NFE Session to beat them, but after we learned small thing about life skills on how to talk between people, it can't happen again. (Female NFE Learner, Bong)

Although not statistically proven, this evidence collected via direct conversations and focus groups does lead to the conclusion that the program has had positive impacts with regard to gender issues. In the future, USAID/CESLY recommends that 'girls issues' be included from the onset of strategic planning, that the efforts outlined above be continued and that future types of innovation and creativity occur. It will be particularly important to encourage girls to go into the teaching profession and to develop a girl-specific workforce development strategy to maintain girls' enrollment in job placements.

In a nation where two females have jointly won the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize, future projects need to increase and accelerate their gender policy and strategy in robust and integrated ways. Access of girls and young women to education is a momentous step forward in a nation steeped in cultural and traditional practices and beliefs, but much remains to be done.

1.3 Establishment of Female Clubs

As part of USAID/CESLY's efforts to increase and enhance female participation in decision making and leadership, the project initiated the establishment of female clubs in all ALP/ABE schools and sites. The purpose of the clubs was to create solidarity among female learners and to enable them to become advocates of issues around gender-based violence and retention. In some ABE sites, female clubs are involved in agricultural activities such as plantain farms, peanut farms, etc. Proceeds from the sale of these products were used to purchase more seeds and to assist other members of the group.



In future it may be possible to link Female Clubs with organizations active in micro-saving and micro-enterprise development in order to enhance the benefit and support that females can gain from participating in such clubs.

1.4 Dissemination of Information about Value of Retention for Adolescent Girls

USAID/CESLY facilitated a number of capacity building sessions on “Retaining Adolescent Girls and Young Women in Educational Programs” for various participants including MOE staff, EOs, partners, community and educators etc. These sessions took place at the “Sustaining the Momentum” workshop at Kakata Rural Teacher Training Institute (see below), during PTA training, teacher training, youth volunteer training, MOE capacity building as well as at a number of venues. The goal of these efforts was to ensure that a wider cross-sector of Liberia’s population understand the value of investing in girls and young women and helping them participate in education and reduce drop-out rates. USAID/CESLY sought to directly leverage the lessons learned during implementation into greater advocacy.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT BENEFITS YOUTH RETENTION

1.5 Support and Strengthening of PTAs

USAID/CESLY completed training for PTAs in 222 communities with 1696 school-community stakeholders. Participants included: PTA officers, youth volunteers, student/youth representatives, women’s representatives, school administrator, chiefs, local administrator and law enforcement officers. The goal of the training was to strengthen the school-community relationship so that communities would take ownership for schools and for the education of their students. Specifically, the training focused on strengthening PTA and community stakeholder capacity in the areas of: governance and management, networking and advocacy, tracking and communicating education performance, financial management, and planning and project management. Among some of the workshop topics were: Managing alternative energy; school safety & gender violence; promoting the role of females; psycho-social support for students; civic education and peace strengthening; service Learning and work readiness; promoting reading; resource mobilization and income generation; budgets and record keeping; and action plan development.

At the completion of the PTA capacity building training in March 2010, community members returned to their communities to begin work with other stakeholders in support of quality education. Regular field visits from USAID/CESLY staff in Year 2 reinforced PTA work on PTA’s implementation of action plans around the following topics:

- Strengthening of the PTA structure at the community level
- Conducting regular meetings PTA meetings
- Creating awareness on the role and responsibilities of the PTA and the community
- Taking actions to address school safety concerns and address problems faced by their local school
- Engaging in small project to provide adequate support for teachers
- Work with school administrators to address teachers and students delinquency including other matters to improve quality education for their children



1.6 ABE Committee Established and Engaged

Parent Teacher Associations are not just applicable to children. Youth benefit when community takes ownership of youth education. As a way of enabling communities to take ownership of the ABE program, a committee was established in every ABE site to ensure that learners were tracked and encouraged to remain in session. A total of 89 ABE committees were set up throughout six counties. The structure of the committees included a town chief, youth leader, women's group leader, elders from different quarters, religious leaders, etc.

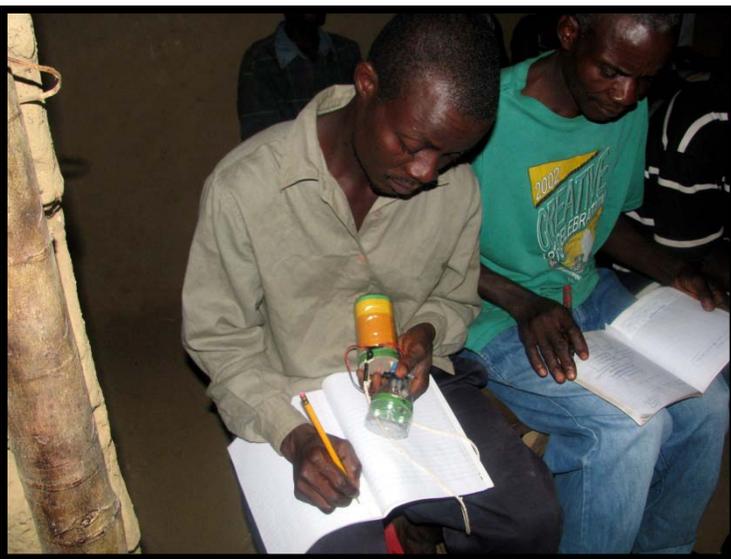
A term of reference (TOR) was also developed for the committees, in collaboration with central and county level MOE staff. In keeping with the TOR, the ABE committee monitored class sessions, kept track of facilitators, administrators and learners to ensure that everyone play his/her role and followed up on learners who dropped out by inquiring about their problems and if possible, provided support to ensure that they returned to sessions. The MOE was engaged in follow up visits to monitor these ABE Committees. These ABE Committees both improved enrollment as well as retention of learners. The project has noted that the ABE Committee were effective support to education. However further investment is needed to strengthen these school governance structures so that community is fully aware of their responsibilities.

PROVISION OF EFFICIENT NIGHT LIGHT= INCREASED ENROLLMENT & RETENTION

1.7 Provision of Lighting

The majority of the ALP and ABE classes took place in the evenings due to the fact that the learners were engaged in other activities during the day. As almost no schools have access to a generator, this required the provision of lighting in each classroom

At the start of the project, USAID/CESLY planned to build on earlier innovations with Taa Bora solar lighting devices that can be made in Liberia with commercial produced components. In November of 2009, Taa Bora lights were procured from Green Energy LLC in the United States. By late July 2010, 91 boxes of Taa-Bora materials arrived in Liberia; each box contained materials for the construction of 30 lights. USAID/CESLY had originally planned to train youth and communities in Taa Bora light construction but due to the late arrival of the lights, plans were adjusted. Despite a 3 day community training, the complex construction process proved difficult and caused many broken parts; the project realized that trained staff that would be able to assemble the lights more quickly.



Training in Taa Bora assembly, use and management was conducted for USAID/CESLY's Work Readiness Facilitators, Community Participation Officers and MOE HQ staff and then replicated to community members in each of the 176 sites in the six counties. MOE staff were trained from the following Ministry of Education units: Bureau of Technical and Professional Education, PTA unit, Tubman Voc-Tech High School, Early Childhood Development unit, and others, etc.

The Daphne Foundation, a partner who also wanted to test Taa-Bora solar lanterns in Liberia, provided 100%

GDA funding for training for USAID/CESLY staff. In addition, other partners included the Center for Sustainable Energy Technology (C-SET) and a female-church group called Charity Prayer Band (CPB) which provided both the training and the permanent installation service at one of the USAID/CESLY supported schools - King Gray Public school.

Once the lights were installed, continual field visits were required to maintain the lights and ensure they were used for the intended purpose. However members of the USAID/CESLY school communities felt strongly that the lights were not proving sufficient luminosity to support learning in the classroom and that this was directly affecting student retention rates. Through this field support, numerous lessons learned were gleaned:

- The School Management Committee (SMC) should be involved in the management of the lights
- The MOU on responsibility for the lights must be signed in the presence of the DEOs
- The DEOs should be trained to provide technical support to the previously trained community members
- USAID/CESLY and DEOs should conduct joint monitoring
- Everyone involved should be made to feel responsible for the security for the lights to reduce the threat of theft and of misuse of both wall mounted and portable units
- The School Management Committee, learners and community members should assist the school administration with the charging of the lights
- Enrollment and retention is directly linked to adequate lighting

With regard to problems with the lights, the following reasons were cited: the components (esp. light emitting diode, battery & switch) were fragile; some of the lights were constructed poorly; some school administrations lacked the commitment to charge the lights; lack of specialized tools at the community level prevented community from repairing lights.

1.8 Assessing a More Suitable Solar Option

Experience from using the Taa-Bora solar lanterns indicated that a more effective light source is needed for classrooms. USAID/CESLY therefore investigated various options. The Wonderful New Energy Industry Liberia, Inc. is currently the sole provider of large fixed solar panels, which CESLY decided to pilot. A double 80 watts panel was mounted at the Harrisburg Public in Montserrado County. The panels provide enough power for 3 bulbs in each class room, 2 outside for security lighting and 2 bulbs in the office of the administrator and his assistant. The lighting is extremely bright, far more so than the provided by the Taa Bora option. However there are significant cost implications as well as increased security risks (the school has a night watchman to deter theft).

Meetings have also been held with d.Light and One Degree Solar, companies which are starting to offer lights for sale for the Liberian market. As yet, no company is providing the lights within Liberia which means significant shipping and customs issues and costs prior to delivery of lights. However both commercial companies and NGOs are planning to import the lights soon and it is expected that soon there will be the opportunity to pilot different options.

VARIOUS SOLAR ENERGY OPTIONS



Liberty 2



Liberty 8



Desk lamp



80 watts panel



d.light

1.9 Graduation of Level 3 Learners

Task 1 activities entailed graduating two cohorts of ALP learners. By the end of the 2011, the program was able to maintain enrollment and graduate a total of 8,219 individuals from ALP Level 3. This achievement was celebrated by ceremonies at each school. All learners were later provided with their own copy of Sonie Story 2 book to celebrate their success.

This activity area is actually of the areas in which the most significant progress was made, albeit this was one of the few indicators that was not fully met. The project originally set a very high target for completion of 77%. In Fiscal Year 2011, the year 2 target was revised to reflect a more reasonable, but still ambitious enrollment in the pilot and to reflect the realistic retention rates of older youth. These rates were not fully met, with Year 2 seeing 67% of learners (70% male, 64% female) complete ALP regular programs and 53% of learners (55% male, 52% female) complete ALP youth programs.

In the end, 65% of all ALP regular students graduated from accelerated learning while 55% of ALP youth graduated. The variations between these two programs speak to the differences in age, child bearing responsibilities, daytime farming obligations and other income generation needs that older learners face. This decreases both the time and focus that these learners have for their studies.

1.10 CESLY Recommendations for Enrollment and Retention in Future Youth Programming

YOUTH ENROLLMENT AND RETENTION

- Enrollment campaigns need to start early on, with a minimum of 3 months lead time.
- Retention campaigns need to continue ongoing for the duration the class is in operation.
- Retention campaigns need face-to-face engagement with youth with a physical presence in community and need to build upon personal relationships to develop a sense of accountability.

GENDER

- Gender issues need to be specifically addressed in order to significantly increase the retention, specifically of women. It will be particularly important to encourage girls to go into the teaching profession and to develop a girl-specific workforce development strategy to maintain girls' enrollment in placements.
- Female clubs should be linked with organizations active in micro-saving and micro-enterprise development.

- Collaboration with other partners should be continued, to disseminate awareness on the needs and value of investing in young women, sharing information about potential opportunities for girls, and tracking progress of girls through a research or learning agenda.
- Increase the gender parity in staffing at all tiers of programming. This is particularly important for positions where the staff person has high contact and high visibility with beneficiaries and is seen as a role model.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- ABE Committees were effective in supporting education. However further investment is needed to strengthen these school governance structures so that community is fully aware of their responsibilities.

USE OF MEDIA TO BOOST YOUTH RETENTION

(see Task 11)

ALTERNATIVE ENERGY

- The quality of night lighting has a direct impact on retention numbers.
- A sizeable procurement period is needed at the beginning of the project period before start of classes, if enrollment levels are to be influenced by the solar device.
- School safety and security of lights is paramount to the overall effectiveness of solar energy and should be prioritized in installation of every kind of solar energy device.
- In signing responsibility to maintain the lights, individuals need to sign for individual accountability in case of loss.
- Community members need thorough, in-depth repeated training if they are to be expected to maintain devices.
- The cost of durable solar power may be high but may have a further reaching impact than the current alternative energy modality being used – if security can be guaranteed.

Task #2: Improved Access to and Improved Quality of Basic Education with Emphasis on Improved Core Literacy and Numeracy Skills

Indicators	Targets	Achieved	Percent of Target Achieved
# of textbooks and other teaching and learning materials provided with USG assistance	A minimum 16,744 materials distributed to CESLY learners + formal school textbooks to be determined	384,594	
# of PTAs or similar school governance structures supported	A minimum of 150 institutions supported	292	135%
# of teachers/educators trained with USG support	A minimum of 1200 CESLY teachers and educators trained	1436	120%
% change in academic scores	5% over baseline	40%	800%

Key Accomplishments:

- 1436 teachers trained
- Over 600 Teacher observations conducted
- 384,594 instructional materials distributed
- Production of 14 Liberian-based reading materials
- Mobile library circulated in 6 counties
- Culture of Reading implemented in 355 sites and schools
- Preparation of 13 different training manuals and training packages

Task #2 focused on improving access and quality of basic education. Much of the work in this area focused on teacher training, classroom support to teachers, production of reading materials, and production and airing of radio teacher modules.

INTENSE, EXPERIENTIAL TEACHER TRAINING, FOLLOWED UP BY CLASSROOM SUPPORT, GENERATES RENEWED PASSION AND QUALITY IN TEACHING

2.1 Training of Teachers

USAID/CESLY provided in-service training to a total 1436 accelerated learning and Alternative Basic Education (ABE) teachers in 6 counties. (Refer to Task 3 for discussion of ABE.) Training was provided through both large simultaneous in-service sessions during summer and winter vacation period and through cluster-based experience sharing occurring

on a quarterly basis between large sessions. The training focused on providing teachers and principals in-depth core content training in reading, math, literacy, numeracy, life skills, work readiness and as well as passion for pedagogy and beyond the classroom skills. Content-related training focused specifically on the new ABE curriculum for literacy, numeracy, work readiness and life skills, and significant time was devoted to peer micro-teaching.



These professional development events were conducted and supported by USAID/CESLY technical team, Ministry of Education staff, master trainers, LRC Training Officers and NFE Coordinators. Priority was placed on recruiting master trainers from previous projects and enhancing the skills of these trainers. Many training participants commented that the quality of the master trainers increased compared to previous trainings; the investment in these key trainers was crucial in quality training courses.

Another key factor was the commitment of participants to evening review sessions which provided insights that allowed trainings to be continually improved. Text messages to staff at other training sites in other counties ensured that there was consistency between sites. Technology in the form of audio (radio) modules, filming with handheld cameras and projectors were also used. Adding this layer of complexity through technology on to an event of this scale was a challenge but increased the impact of the trainings.

LRC Reading Rooms Assistants were also key in the operation of Book Fairs at the In-service training. Book Fairs provided resource materials and useful information about the training and the USAID/CESLY project. Newsletters, local newspapers, magazines, copies of Sonie's Stories, general reading materials, child reading books, and teachers' manuals were available. While interest was low in the beginning, demand for use of the Book Fair was generated in all counties..

Overall the presence of motivated personnel together with a well planned but flexible training program contributed to the success. USAID's recognition of the value of investing in teachers as the key for making change at the student level was appreciated. The following comments from male teachers and principals about CESLY teacher training are reflective of the general feedback:

The steps in teaching [was most useful] and will guide me and the way I present the lesson; that's how the students will take interest. The knowledge can be applied anywhere. (ALP Regular Teacher, Bong)

The teaching method has helped me make the lesson easier for the students. The training approaches make me fortify for any teaching profession. (ALP Regular Teacher, Bong)

From the In-service Training, I was able to correct my mistakes like time on task, helps me to be on time. If any teacher comes late every time, I send them home or advise them not to come late anymore. (ALP Regular Principal, Bong)

I learned a broader knowledge of lesson planning. The training has also advanced my understanding of lesson planning from the conventional system and method. It has also kept me busy as a teacher. (ALP Regular Teacher, Bong)

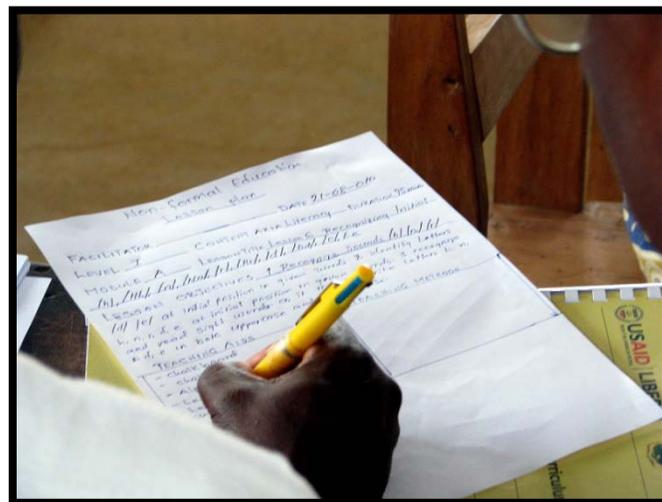
I learned new ways of teaching; students' interaction - dividing students into groups. I attended REAP workshop in Bentol from June 4 2011 and my presentation proved the importance of CESLY training. (Male ALP Youth Teacher, Bong)

To me, my own impact for CESLY, the great thing I enjoy about them is that they were able to give us the manual to teach but the Ministry was not able to give us anything. They actually give us knowledge through constant workshops. (Male ALP Regular Teacher, Lofa)

2.2 Training Resource Material Development

In order to support the administration of teacher training for alternative basic education, the project has produced materials that are modular, making it easier to use the materials to implement professional development in a number of areas related to alternative basic education. The following manuals were developed:

- In-service Teacher Training Manual for Accelerated Learning
- In-service Teacher Training Manual for Alternative Basic Education Level 1, Semester 1 & Semester 2
- Cluster-based Experience Sharing Manual for Alternative Basic Education Level 1
- Training of Trainer Guide for Alternative Basic Education Orientation for Education Officers and Master Trainers
- Training of Trainers: Instructing Pre-service Teachers in Alternative Basic Education
- Ministry of Education Capacity Building in Alternative Basic Education
- Sustaining the Momentum: Alternative Basic Education and Workforce Development for Youth
- School Community Training Package
- Youth Volunteer Training Package
- Locally Generated Materials: Liberians Writing for Liberia Training Package
- Alternative Energy Management Training Manual
- Alternative Energy Income Generation Training Manual



2.3 Videography

Videography was piloted during the USAID/CESLY training to promote peer learning and to model good teaching. Videos of ALP teachers and ABE facilitators were shown to highlight good teaching skills and strategies. In the initial pilot, MOE staff and project staff were trained in recording skills, and then recorded during facilitators during training sessions. Selected examples were played back to the large group during evening sessions. These video clips were later edited into an educational piece that can be played at cluster teacher training sessions. Observing their colleagues teach on video motivated and inspired teachers to excel, to perform with passion and quality, and to emulate best practices. It is suggested to make videography an integral part of future teacher training sessions. Future possibilities include a heightened use of video in the classroom itself. Another use of video during teacher training was the showing of full-

length films. In the evenings during free time, inspirational movies were shown about the power of teaching, such as Stand and Deliver, Pay It Forward and Precious.

The use of videography had some constraints. Flipcams were easily affected by viruses; took too many hours to charge especially in remote schools where there was no electricity; and the quality of images produced at night was poor. In the future, more high tech equipment might be an option worth investigating.

ACTIVE, ONGOING PHYSICAL PRESENCE IN CLASSROOMS IS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTORS IN CREATING AND SUPPORTING CHANGE IN TEACHING PRACTICE

2.4 Support to Quality Teaching in the Classroom

Supportive field visits served as the hub of USAID/CESLY's intervention aimed at improving teacher performance and quality. Teacher support focused on the monitoring and supervision of schools and classes to ensure quality and improve teaching and learning; the administration of Teacher Observation Tools; ensuring teachers maintained sufficient time on task; tracking attendance and grades for students, especially girls; and providing support to weak schools in order to strengthen the teachers. LRC staff provided ongoing pedagogical support on a regular basis to all classrooms in their county. In addition, the Monrovia-based staff along with their MOE counterparts conducted a series of monitoring trips in which the following activities were conducted:

- Modeling of critical thinking teaching
- Monitoring of student attendance and student participation in class
- Monitoring of progress in reading and literacy
- Observation of NFE lessons and progress in curriculum content
- Correction of misinformation
- Videography of model teaching
- A number of other areas revolving around quality in the classroom.

Teachers and principals in Bong, Lofa and Monsterrado counties had this to say about the impact of field staff's presence at learning sites:

The change that has come as a result of CESLY monitoring usually gives us zeal to teach.

Their visit gives us more power or strength to work. For instance, if somebody is visiting you get more energy to do the right thing.

[Of] all the support, when it comes to training, monitoring and support, I will outline the three points, especially the monitoring aspect. It was intense thereby making me have the passion for the work."

Yes, [CESLY monitoring] helped to strengthened us. This has served as motivating force, timeliness and doing our jobs.

I love CESLY because they always keep us on our guide. At times there were lapses. But from the supervision, I got on my guide.

CESLY is full of work. CESLY makes you busy by ensuring that teachers' attendance as well as what is in the planning is going in line with what the students have in the books.

CESLY is like a "Military Man". The time you don't expect them that is the time they come on you, so I am always ready to carry out my job.

These statements are encouraging because at the start of the program, teachers' performance was poor and they were often not in class. In one early case, a driver was traveling to a school at 10 am, and the principal was walking down the road and spotted him coming and jumped into a bush! The driver stopped, persuaded the principal to come out of the bush and drove him back to the school. So the impact of physical presence in the classroom and teachers feeling accountable cannot be underestimated.

2.5 Teacher Observation and Assessment

USAID/CESLY staff conducted over 600 school visits to conduct classroom observation, with content derived from tools used in other EDC programs. Some areas of focus measured in the tool included teachers' mastery of core content, use of instructional materials as part of class sessions, and classroom management. The monitoring and observation was useful in that teachers felt accountable, knew their performance was being observed and were able to engage in constructive conversations with their observers. The collection tool also clearly outlined best practices for teachers, which gave focus to feedback sessions and facilitated monitoring.

As a monitoring and evaluation tool, we learned that a more rigorous approach to training assessors for tracking progress over time needs to be applied. Early rounds of data collection indicated that the first version of the observation tool was complex, and it was also difficult to identify qualified and objective assessors. Subsequent simplifications of the instrument made cross comparison of the data challenging. To effectively capture the change in teacher performance over time, careful training in observation and data collection is needed.



2.6 Teacher Skills Building

Student performance cannot significantly increase without a comparable improvement in teacher performance. An informal assessment of teacher's skills in literacy and numeracy was conducted during the first in-service training was conducted and the results were found to be extremely low. A heavy emphasis was placed in all subsequent training sessions on strengthening of basic core content knowledge in literacy and numeracy, reading and math. This has been reiterated through a total of five different training interventions.

USAID/CESLY later realigned funds in order to print and distribute Teacher Skills Builders, resource materials developed by the Liberia Teacher Training Program to strengthen core content in reading and numeracy. Sets of these materials were printed for all 355 learning sites. MOE EOs and USAID/CESLY staff was trained in how to use the materials, which were distributed to teachers with the knowledge they would be tested on their progress. Despite the attention paid to building teachers' skills, their skills remain low. The following table documents the results of the skills builder tests at the end of the CESLY program in June 2011.

The table indicates wide differences between the teacher performance by county. Whilst teachers in Montserrado county have a better grasp of English language and its usage than in any other county, teachers in Bong, Nimba and Grand Gedeh were particularly low performing in their mastery of English. In the area of math, Bong, Nimba and Grand Gedeh again had extremely low scores scoring with 93% of all teachers in Grand Gedeh failing the math exam.

County	Total Assessed	Math		English	
		Passed	Failed	Passed	Failed
Maryland	163	77%	23%	77%	23%
Bong	164	18%	82%	46%	54%
Nimba	171	20%	80%	51%	49%
Grand Gedeh	179	7%	93%	42%	58%
Montserrado	169	64%	36%	88%	12%
Lofa	116	74%	26%	81%	19%
Total	962				

The data indicates that there needs to be considerable attention in working with teachers to improve their content knowledge. If this is not accomplished, then it will be difficult for teachers to work with learners in level 3 when the content is at a higher level. The data also shows that the same three counties scored highest in both tests. This could be due a variety of issues including better original teacher training, better training by USAID/CESLY staff, better support by MoE staff, etc. Further research is required to understand why there is such a difference in order to improve in other counties. However, there is room for improvement even in the best performing counties and hence ongoing support to teachers is vital.

PROMOTING A CULTURE OF READING GENERATES MOTIVATION AND ENTHUSIASM TO READ, BEYOND ACADEMIC PURPOSES ONLY

2.7 Promotion of a Culture of Reading

From the start of the project in the earliest teacher training sessions, the project introduced the concept of a culture of reading. Students, teachers, and principals were encouraged to organize various kinds of events, such as reading competitions, spelling competitions, invitation of community guests to read and posting of reading on bulletin boards. Schools were encouraged to take the culture of reading beyond the classroom and engage community members.

Over the life of the project, these activities were carried out in various schools. Many times, Sonie’s Story 1 was used as a tool for public reading and for competitions of comprehension questions. International Literacy Day in particular was a day in which all counties engaged in school-level, cluster-level or county level competitions. Sometimes prizes such as dictionaries or scrabble games were awarded to contestants. The competitions also provided an opportunity for schools in the same cluster to compete, either between accelerated learning schools or between students in conventional vs. nonformal education. In some places, particularly Maryland, DEOs became very involved in supporting activities and recognizing winning students.

The following describes focus group discussants’ views on promoting a culture of reading in CESLY-supported schools.

From the different in-service training and refreshers as well as cluster based experience sharing, culture of reading improved through setting up reading clubs and encouraging competitions. (Male ALP Youth Teacher, Bong)

One of my students took part in a reading competition and took 1st place. Most of them have adapted a culture of reading through the reading club and materials like story books provided by CESLY. (Male ALP Regular Teacher, Bong)

The Sonie book makes some of us to read. It also makes me to read other books. (Male ALP Regular teacher. Grand Gedeh County)

Yes, improve reading skills; they want to get books from library to read; there is more interest in reading. (Male ALP Youth Principal, Bong)

While this activity is not quantifiable, it had a great qualitative impact in increasing the interest, motivation and spirit of healthy competition around reading. It is recommended that culture of reading activities be continued and encouraged in future follow on programming for youth.

2.8 Development of Liberian Reading Content

Promoting a culture of reading in Liberian schools is a key component of the alternative basic education program. However, presently, there is a scarcity of reading materials in most public schools. The few available instructional materials are concentrated in urban schools and are generally produced outside Liberia. The context and content usually lack local relevance and application, making it difficult for both teachers and students to read and understand the text. USAID/CESLY has commissioned reading materials authored by Liberian writers as part of efforts to help create a more print-rich society, promote the culture of reading and improve basic reading skills. These reading materials have been developed in conjunction with the alternative basic education curriculum and can be used as supplements for reading inside or outside the classroom. The story of Fatu and Saah, in particular, is weaved into the Work Readiness curriculum and Sonie Story 1 is woven into the literacy curriculum. With the exception of the Yes, We Can Anthology, Fatu and Saah and the CESLY Writing Competition, all the below listed reading materials have been leveled down for new and beginning readers.

Sonie's Story 1 - This is the start in a series of stories is about a girl named Sonie who flees her village because of cultural challenges and confronts these adversities in a positive way to transform her life.

Sonie's Story 2 - Sonie Becomes a Community Leader - Sonie enrolls in formal school and begins to educate others about safe drinking, harmful agriculture techniques, dangers of sand mining, peaceful conflict resolution and other topics.

Sonie's Story 3 - Sonie Achieves Her Goal - Sonie helps her younger brother, stands up against mob violence, says no to gender violence, establishes her own business, pays off her debts and eventually graduates from high school.

Rising Above and Beyond - Stories written by Liberian authors to enhance and complement learning activities in the areas of peace education, service learning, community development, gender issues, HIV/AIDS, teenage pregnancy, work readiness skills, and other life skills (Example stories include: women who use up-country girls as maids and don't allow them to go to school, motorcycle drivers who learn from one another about how to better protect their passengers' lives, a girl in West Point who learns to read so she can guide her blind grandfather as he begs, etc.)

Fatu and Saah - A story about work readiness and how to cultivate the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed in the world of work.

Yes, We Can - Locally generated materials written by MOE staff, civil society representatives, principals, education professionals, teachers and learners. These materials include stories, poems, nonfiction prose, traditional folklores etc.

Our Life Our Culture (USAID/CESLY Writing Contest) - These stories are written by students in USAID/CESLY ALP schools on various themes such as the importance of education, gender issues, peace and conflict, peer pressure, etc.

Pehn Pehn Ben - Pehn Pehn is a Liberian word for a motorcycle. This is a story about a motorcyclist named Ben and how he demonstrates positive values, work skills and ethics contrary to the general perception in Liberia that young male motorcycle riders are irresponsible and incorrigible.

Reading Materials for Neo Literate Liberian Learners -- Five stories have been customized to appropriate for beginning readers: Sonie Story 1 for New Readers; Sonie Story 2 for New Readers; Sonie Story 3 for New Readers; The Adventures of Pehn-Pehn Ben for New Readers; and Rising Above and Beyond for New Readers. The first and second tranche of the mini-series Sonie Story 1, and Sonie Story 2 have been delivered to students and the stories have become enormously popular. Some classes have made songs and skits about the stories. The stories are written to be engaging and stimulating and provide for food for critical thinking. Questions have been developed to accompany Sonie Story 1 in the area of word recognition, reading comprehension and critical thinking.



2.9 Mobile Library

In order to increase access of books to rural schools and develop and improve the culture of reading, each LRC took a series of approximately 200 Macmillan readers and other books and circulated these to schools for around 2 weeks each. Sets of 50-100 books were delivered on a rotating basis to USAID/CESLY schools, with special emphasis on distant, remote or hard to reach schools. A teacher or principal was charged with ensuring maximum usage and proper management of the books and both teachers and students are encouraged to read books and if possible take them home overnight. A short assessment was given to check if students have read and understood what they have read.

Mobile library distribution was not without its challenges, including the requirement for logistical coordination with other visits to schools to reduce costs and ensuring the security of the books whilst at the same time encouraging teachers to allow students to take them home. However the benefit of mobile libraries is that in the absence of other reading materials, they are a viable and feasible option for extending the availability of materials to students and teacher.

PROMOTION OF A CULTURE OF READING CANNOT GO WITHOUT PROMOTION OF A CULTURE OF WRITING

In the effort to promote of not only a culture of reading but also writing, USAID/CESLY sponsored the celebration of International Literacy Day with a writing contest , inaugurated a USAID/CESLY Writing content commissioned original works by Liberian authors and hosted the Locally Generated Content workshop.

2.10 USAID/CESLY Writing Contest

USAID/CESLY launched a writing contest at International Literacy Day in September 2010. Over the course of the year, stories were submitted and by the end of the academic year, the stories were compiled as a book to be used by learners in Liberian schools. The end product is an engaging and touching compendium of stories that will be printed and distributed to large cohorts of students in a follow-on activity.

However, the writing contest was not without its challenges. Students tended not to submit original stories; when the story was a traditional tale this was acceptable, but sometimes they were simply clear copies. However original pieces were also often not very engaging. Ensuring that students were the authors was also challenging as it became apparent that teachers and principals also sometimes wrote stories instead of students. Timelines were also an issue as the materials also

took a very long time to produce and to be relayed to the USAID/CESLY office. These all point to the need to focus in more on a culture of writing in the classroom, so that students have support, guidance and reinforcement in how to write stories.

USAID/CESLY has also striven to institute a new culture around cheating. USAID/CESLY seeks to present tests as times to demonstrate learning, rather than as high stakes incidents. Messages around homework are also continually emphasized to help learners see the value of doing their own homework rather than having an older brother or sister complete it. All of these messages were reemphasized through the USAID/CESLY writing contest in which project strove to reinforce the need for students to complete original works for submission into the contest.

2.11 Developing Skills of Liberians to Create Written Materials

Building on the lessons learned from the USAID/CESLY Writing Contest, the project sponsored a capacity building workshop to build skills in writing material development. The Locally Generated Content workshop was designed to build the skills of Liberians as authors themselves, to build the skills of Liberian educators to help teachers and students themselves write original works, to help Liberians understand the components of engaging piece of writing, and to create pieces culturally relevant to Liberian youth. The initiative helped to blur the distinction between professional educator vs. village facilitator or government official vs. civil society implementers, so that each individual contributed their own talent to creating interesting and engaging reading materials for Liberia. The stories were solicited around topics such as peace, education, empowerment of girls and women, life changing narratives, traditional stories and other topics of interest.

A large volume of stories was received of varying levels of quality. These stories required an intense and time-consuming amount of editing, which was largely carried out with the support of IFESH volunteers. However, by the close of the project, an anthology of stories called “Yes, We Can” was edited, illustrated, and made print ready. This can be printed and distributed to future cohorts of learners.



2.12 Recommendations

TEACHER RECRUITMENT

- Careful selection, training and subsequent support of teachers needs to be prioritized if teachers are to perform successfully. Future recruitment needs to be done in close collaboration with EOs/county boards; however, there may be political hurdles to overcome, to ensure that the best teachers rather than most senior are recruited.

TEACHER TRAINING

- Given the quality, experience and educational level of Liberian teachers, many of whom cannot read at 6th grade level, the training of teachers was vital in ensuring quality in the classroom. Large training events are helpful for high quality technical assistance and consistency in content, but must be followed up with periodic training in smaller units where teachers develop greater comfort levels and ability to mentor and peer coach one another.
- Master Trainers should be adequately trained in pedagogy and mastery of core content so that they can train facilitators with confidence and ease.
- Recruitment and inclusion of female Master Trainers should be prioritized so that there are sufficient female Master Trainers to be role models for female teachers.
- In-service teacher training should ideally be two weeks, to give more time for model lessons and micro teaching activities. However the school calendar poses challenges to this, with the only long break being in July/August.
- Facilitators should be taught how to make instructional materials such as maps, charts and learning aids.
- Provide resources to facilitators at training events, such as books, newspapers, and teaching aids.
- Equal focus should be given to improving the writing skills and instructional practices of teachers.
- Assess teachers' skill levels in English and math before and after training.
- Prepare training content and materials using language that reflects the reading levels of teachers, to accommodate the needs of those who read at the 6th grade level or below.
- Education Officers should be heavily involved in planning training events and in the support and follow up to facilitators.
- Teachers should be certificated on the basis of merit and performance.
- Invest in high quality video equipment so that videos showing good teaching strategies and practices of Liberian facilitators can be used during teacher training events.
- Timing, content and delivery of training should be coordinated between the MOE and various NGOs conducting teacher training to avoid duplication of interventions. Closer collaboration and coordination with LTTP will ensure that there is no duplication in efforts.

INSTITUTIONALIZING ABE INTO PRE-SERVICE TEACHER TRAINING

- The initial pilot to train Regional Teacher Training Institute (RTTI) instructors in Delivery of ABE of Pre-Service Teachers should be extended and expanded. ZRTTI instructors need further training and support in

working alternative basic education into the curriculum, and the leadership needs support in maintaining a pilot class in the neighboring village of Fisebu. A plan for officially certifying instructors and teachers in ABE needs to be developed. can become certified.

TEACHER MONITORING AND CLASSROOM SUPPORT

- Conduct cluster-based teacher training and support on a quarterly basis, to reinforce and strengthen skills.
- Train selected teachers or administrators to serve as mobile classroom mentors, tutors or coaches.
- Teachers, especially females, who show significant improvement and demonstrate innovative teaching skills should be recognized, honored and be eligible to serve as master teachers or mentors
- Ensure that classroom observation tools used are clear, require only moderate training, are easily interpretable and can be used for immediate improvement in the classroom.
- Significantly engage MOE county level staff in all monitoring. Work with MOE to reinforce the need for their wholehearted support without demand for incentives. (see Task 7 for further details)

TEACHER ACHIEVEMENT

- Continue to invest in improving teachers' basic math and reading skills in multiple ways. Consider how to encourage teachers to regularly engage in skills building outside of classroom hours, with support. Teacher skill building should happen at the cluster level, with reinforcement at larger periodic in-service trainings.
- Conduct pre and post testing of teacher skills so that change in teacher content knowledge can be correlated against student progress in achievement.

TEACHER SUPPORT

- Support for instructional supplies and livable financial compensation need to match teachers' labor and contribution. In line with MOE salary increases, there was an increase in stipend payments from \$15 to \$50USD. This has motivated teachers but this amount will need to be sustained or possibly increased in accordance with MOE policies and inflation. The MOE needs to play a key role in sharing this cost and during the course of the follow-on project should take over the payments to ensure that the ABE program is sustainable during the post-donor era.

CULTURE OF READING

- It is recommended that culture of reading activities be weaved in as part of future programming for youth. Culture of reading activities should be extended beyond the classroom to engage the community at large. This will benefit not only ABE learners, but also regular students and also other community members.
- Mobile libraries should continue to be used in the absence of other books. Other books should be printed and distributed in Liberia. In addition donated books from organizations such as Brother's Brother Foundation is also useful to improve the book stock in schools and LRCs.
- Comprehension and critical thinking questions to accompany each of the reading materials should be developed.

CULTURE OF WRITING

- The culture of reading strategy will need to be broadened, extended and widened to incorporate more of learner's work and contribution of materials to read.
- The MOE, educators and teachers need to be engaged in further training on how they can help students practice the craft of writing and help students generate their own work to be posted on the walls and to be printed and distributed.

Task #3: Ministry of Education assisted in designing, piloting and implementing a non-formal literacy and numeracy curriculum

Indicator	Targets	Achieved	Percent of Target Achieved
Number of adult learners enrolled in USG	1,300	8,243	318%
Number of youth of appropriate age enrolled in NFE	4,500	4,374	97%
Number of CESLY learning sites where improved and expanded life skills program is implemented	187	355	190%

Key Accomplishments:

- 15 Level 1 documents finalized.
- 19 Level 2 documents zero drafts prepared
- Framework for three levels developed
- 11,504 learners enrolled in field testing the materials.
- Assessment for literacy, numeracy, life and work readiness developed and piloted
- Achievement scores analyzed

Through Task #3, USAID/CESLY assisted the Ministry of Education assisted in designing, piloting and implementing a non-formal literacy and numeracy curriculum for the CESLY Project. This section on Task 3 highlights activities in the process of development and field testing of level 1 curricular materials of the Alternative Basic Education. The report below covers a summary of the field testing process with recommendations for a future curriculum development.

BUILDING AN ENTIRELY NEW PROGRAM IS LABOROUS AND INTENSIVE, BUT REAPS REWARDS IN TERMS OF YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN LEARNING

3.1 Framework Development

The development of the ABE curriculum was a multi-phase activity, preceded by series of consolidated efforts by key education stakeholders. The curriculum development process began in December of 2009 when a review of the existing curriculum for youth and adults was conducted. Multi-sectoral stakeholders from education, gender, health and justice were convened in a workshop to establish consensus on the goals, objectives, framework, levels, content standards and educational principles to guide any type of nonformal education system in Liberia. They also reviewed a host of available curricula used in Liberia and other countries.

This was followed by a Curriculum Writing Workshop for content development teams composed of MOE staff and sectoral stakeholders. The teams agreed upon the components to be featured in the facilitator's manual, developed detailed outlines for the topics to be covered, developed sample lessons in literacy, numeracy, life skills and work readiness.

The project also engaged in a series of discussions regarding equivalency with formal school. In February 2011, MOE and education experts were brought together to develop an outline of requirements for equivalency. In the second equivalency content meetings of April 2010, MOE, stakeholders and USAID/CESLY specialists worked alongside West Africa Examinations Council (WAEC) personnel to review components of the new formal school curriculum and WAEC exam to ensure that key components of the grade 1 -6 formal school curriculum were captured in the framework for nonformal education.

In February 2011, following the experience of half a year of pilot testing, a workshop was held in the MOE to finalize the results of the framework development process. Technical Working Group, MOE and other stakeholders were brought together to flesh out the details of the Level 1 and 2 curriculum. Following this gathering, when curricular and policy information was presented to MOE officials, feedback came that the curriculum should be changed from the previously agreed 4 levels to 3 levels, that it should be finished in 3 years and that students should reach 6th grade equivalency. The subsequent process of conversion from 4 levels to 3 was time-consuming. In order to conserve time and resources, the project engaged its technical advisors to craft the curriculum into three levels and ensure that the components of the existing formal school curriculum could be addressed.

This set the stage for the finalization of frameworks in August 2011 during a workshop in which all level 2 developers, MOE staff and other engaged parties went through complicated process of remapping the three levels of content to ensure that all details of the ABE content standards and 6th grade equivalency information was included. The final results of this two year process of dialogue, revision and polishing, include education and content area technicians, along with MOE policy makers, is reflected in the curricular frameworks contained in the Technical Guide to the Alternative Basic Education Curriculum, which was submitted to the Ministry of Education in September, 2011.

3.2 Development of Level 1 Materials

The initial materials developed through the Curriculum Review & Consensus Workshop and the Curriculum Writing Workshop was later used as a basis for developing the curriculum. The work of writers engaged in the first production of sample materials was reviewed and individuals demonstrating higher ability to produce were identified for the next phase of production. Through the first half of 2010, curriculum writers worked on producing zero drafts of level 1, semester 1 curriculum in literacy, numeracy, work readiness and life skills. Identified content writers subsequently developed a curriculum package which includes 1 facilitator's manual per semester of 54 lessons each and an accompanying learner's workbook. The commencement of Level 1 piloting, the conducting of August 2011 teacher training, and the quarterly strategic planning helped to provide a space to reflect on the needs of for curriculum enhancement and the realistic challenges regarding the comprehension level of facilitators and learners.

Initial curriculum materials were primarily produced in Liberia. After a careful review, the project chose to engage international writers with multi-country experience to work with local writers in order to create a solid foundation of materials. Over the course of the year, the project's Technical Working Group reviewed all content, and other expert reviewers were also asked to review and provide input into the curriculum. By December 2010, the second semester of Level 1 materials was released for piloting.

Materials completed for the ABE Level 1 curriculum are: Literacy Facilitator’s Manual and Learner’s Workbook, Semester 1 & 2 and Sonie’s Story for use during both semesters; Numeracy Facilitator’s Manual and Learner’s Workbook, Semester 1 & 2; Life Skills Facilitator’s Manual Semester 1&2 and Learner’s Workbook; Work Readiness Facilitator’s Manual Semester 1 & 2 and Learner’s Workbook, and the accompanying story of Fatu and Saah.

3.3 Pilot Test of Level 1 Materials

The development of the curriculum materials included a pilot test. The project chose to conduct a piloting exercise before the “field test” since the field test target set by USAID was 10,000 learners. Piloting the curriculum provided input and reactions from learners and facilitators before rolling out with a larger cohort.

Facilitators from five schools (in urban and rural Montserrado County) participating in the pilot test were trained in the use of the materials, and then observations of teaching were then conducted over a 2 week period. The curriculum team visited these schools, held focus group discussions and collected feedback and inputs which were incorporated into the curriculum. Initial lessons learned from these visits focused on the content and implementation focused on the need to 1) provide more time for each lesson; 2) provide support to facilitators, whose reading levels were very low and who had no experience facilitating participatory activities; 3) simplify all materials while providing background on unfamiliar topics in all content areas. The pilot test learning of June was rolled directly into the in-service teacher training in August.



3.4 Curricular Material Review Process

The development of materials for Level 1 followed a systematic review process. As materials were developed, they were submitted to the Technical Working Group which was drawn from a cross section of stakeholders. It comprised relevant MOE technical staff, various organizations (WAEC, Making Enterprise, Community Empowerment Program, World Bank) and education partners (CONCERN, IBIS, National Adult Education Association of Liberia, Lutheran Church in Liberia School System, Liberia Entrepreneurial and Economic Development, EduCARE Liberia, LIBTRALO, Grassroots Education, etc.) and others involved in rendering services in content areas of the curriculum. The Technical Group met several times for the purpose of reviewing, providing inputs and subsequently endorsing the materials before they were field tested. Feedback from the review process was incorporated into the curriculum by the content specialists. Revised materials were submitted to the Technical Working Group for endorsement before being submitted to the MOE for approval.

3.5 Field Test of Level 1 Materials

Materials developed for Level 1 went through a process of field testing where materials were produced and distributed, data from the field test was collected and compiled, and this was fed into both the revision of the curriculum and the refinement of implementation practices. USAID/CESLY operated the non-formal education field test in 89 NFE classrooms and 266 ALP classrooms. Within these 89 NFE sites, the entire package of literacy, numeracy, Life Skills and Work Readiness classes were taught to 4,364 students. The Life Skills and Work Readiness curriculum were also

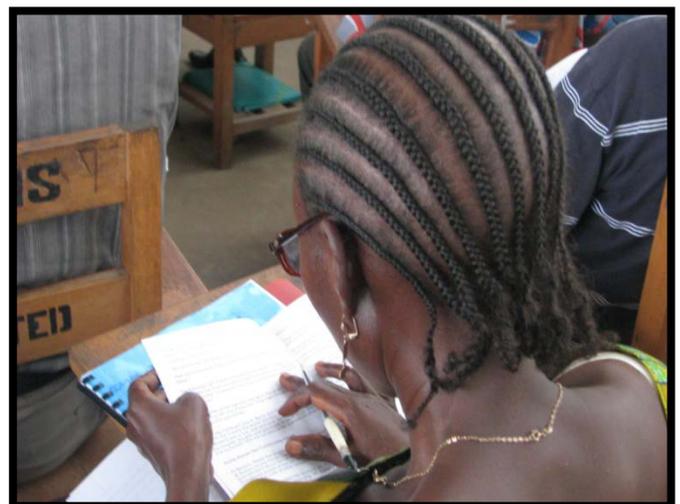
tested in the 266 ALP classes. Data from the field test was collected over a period of eight months from all NFE sites and some ALP schools. The objective of collecting data on the NFE curriculum Level 1 was to gather information on the different aspects of the curriculum including its relevance, utility, and feasibility among others. Feedback collection methods included interviews with facilitators; focus group discussion with learners; classroom observation by NFE Coordinators in the field; classroom observation by Technical Specialists during field visits; sharing and reflection on data at quarterly strategic planning; analysis of field reports.

Initial data collected highlighted opinions about materials and challenges faced with the implementation-delivery of lessons in the NFE curriculum. These include among others: time allotted to teach lesson; vocabulary – reading level of words used in the curriculum; difficulty understanding the content presented in the facilitator manual; number of activities to be covered in a given lesson; mastery and delivery of new concepts especially in Life Skills and Work Readiness.

Follow up data collected was not substantially different from the responses gathered from the first rounds of data collection. From reappearance of themes, some assumptions and conclusions can be made about the strength and weaknesses of materials developed. Learners identified the curriculum strengths as relevance, significance, needs, interest, and utility. However it was clear that lessons needed to be further simplified to suit facilitators and learners ability to grasp content and to cover lessons within allotted period. In addition, learners noted that the lessons helped in understanding others; helped in living with others in families and communities; pertained to real life things that happen in the community and were applicable to daily life; helped to change ways and attitudes, helping learners become agents of change. Learners think that the modules and lessons are good for them.

The relevance of literacy and life skills materials was further strengthened by the use of Sonie’s Story, as learners developed and sustained interest in the story and expressed their sincere desire to be able to read the story on their own. Learners noted that lessons were practical and applicable to their daily lives (for example, lessons helped to show the best ways to prevent diseases and take good care of the families; taught about good hygiene and good health care; good leadership skills; good citizenship). From their responses on what they disliked about lessons, learners pointed out the use of hard or difficult words that learners do not understand; inability to capture main idea in some lessons; too many things to do in one lesson resulting in learners not remembering everything; tendency of facilitators to write on the chalkboard and asking learners to read and make written notes, when learners were not fully literate to read, copy or understand these notes.

Overall, content seemed difficult for learners and teachers needed more time to complete the lessons thoroughly. In some cases the facilitators rushed through the materials and some learners, especially those with lower literacy skills, were left behind not understanding the content. Almost one third (300 out of 972) of learners interviewed during the first round of data collection indicated that the lessons being taught were difficult. From observations of classrooms and interviews with teachers, the difficulty of materials was not limited to a specific content area. Each curriculum strand had its own unique challenges. In the Literacy course, both facilitators and learners found phonics and phonemic awareness to be challenging. It is obvious that learners would find phonemic awareness difficult since facilitators



themselves were not grasping it. In Life Skills and Work Readiness lessons, difficulty centered around the understanding of concepts which are relatively new to the facilitators and the use of words not matching the literacy level of facilitators and learners. For numeracy, both facilitators and learners named reading story problems, two-digit division and fractions as difficult content.

Learners initially expressed the need for more materials including work books (to practice writing/ tracing letters) and reading books and books; o be given the chance to practice sounds and know them before going to another lesson; more writing and reading practice during class time; more numeracy practice during class time; to have illustrations to explain the lessons in simple terms/ facilitate the comprehension of lessons. Later during the field test learners requested work books, flash cards, posters (on HIV/AIDS for example), more storybooks, workbooks for Work Readiness/Life Skills, and more reading materials. They specifically requested reading materials at their level (Sonie story is very interesting, but many were unable to read the book themselves). From these responses it became apparent that materials developed were moving too fast and were not in line with the level (prior knowledge and skills) of learners.

In addition to the data from the field test observation tools, USAID/CESLY collected data through its teaching and learning assessment. This gave specific information on what content areas people found challenging and what topics within these areas were most difficult to master. The data collected from the field test falls in two categories: 1) It allowed curriculum writers to draw conclusions on the materials being developed in terms of their strengths and weaknesses and 2) it highlighted instructional challenges with the implementation of the curriculum.

While some of the areas of the content could be leveled down through the curriculum, many of the issues related to the implementation and use of the curriculum could be resolved through teacher training. But in the process of slowing down the speed of delivery and level of the content, content developers have had to grapple with how these changes greatly extend the length of time needed to cover the content and also lengthens the amount of time needed to achieve basic literacy and numeracy or equivalence with 6th grade. The need to “slow down” the delivery of content is likely to prove a challenge to whilst attempting to cover the equivalency of 6th grade curriculum in 3 levels rather than 4. Curriculum developers have grappled with how to adapt not only the individual lessons but also the framework itself so that it grounds the learners in the content and yet at the same time adequately ensure that the key content areas of the formal school curriculum are covered.

Implementation. It should be noted that part of the curriculum development process included not only instructional material development but the development of a whole new system for program delivery. Enrollment strategies, targets, guidelines for placement, management were all developed. The learning from this was later developed into an implementation manual described in Task 7.

MAXIMIZING MOMENTUM GIVES A HEAD START TO NEXT PHASE OF CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

3.6 Development of Level 2 Materials

By February 2011, the project observed that while the initial curriculum development process had been laborious and time consuming, when the right content developers had been identified and lessons learned incorporated, the momentum picked up. USAID/CESLY built on this momentum by deciding to go beyond the commitment to develop Level 1 materials, and pour resources and energy into Level 2. Content developers were engaged in February of 2011 to commence development of Level 2 materials. The project held a Level 2 Working Session for two weeks in August, 2011, to ensure a common approach to Level 2 development, consistency across content areas, integration between content areas, and incorporation of first hand classroom observation to feed into the Level 2 materials. Other objectives were to couple international content developers with local counterparts, to give internationals firsthand experience in the

classroom and to mentor local content developers in higher standards of quality. Much of this work was accomplished, frameworks were revised, and work on writing Level 2 materials moved ahead. By the end of the final quarter of the project, almost all Level 2 curriculum materials had been drafted and were ready for external review. .

3.7 Development and Pilot Testing of End of Project Assessment Package for Level 1

During Year 2 of the project, USAID/CESLY developed an end of level assessment tool for the ABE curriculum. The purpose of the assessment was to:

- pilot an assessment that could be revised and adapted into the ABE curriculum
- assess results of the field test of the Level 1 curriculum in terms of how much content learners mastered during the period of the field test
- compare differences in the performance of learners in relation to the lesson or module they had reached in the curriculum by the timing of the test
- compare how learners perform across different modules and content areas

The end of project assessment was not directed at assessing individual learners and determining promotion from one level to another. An assessment to determine promotion will be administered at the start of a new program when learners would have completed all of the lessons for Level 1. Because the assessment was a pilot being administered at the end of the project, USAID/CESLY did not want learners to become confused and equate this with a test that determines promotion to the next level. Therefore this administration of the pilot was labeled an “end of project assessment” rather than end of level assessment.

HISTORY OF TOOL DEVELOPMENT

Discussions began in July 2010 regarding the type of assessment approaches to be used and evolved throughout the life of the project. Reaching a decision on assessment remained one of the serious challenges faced by the curriculum team. Assessment for literacy and numeracy were quite clear from the initial stages and materials were developed with the assessment component embedded in the lessons. During the field test, the team grappled with how to assess learners in Life Skills and Work Readiness. Suggestions were discussed on the use of different forms of assessment: paper and pencil test, assessment of knowledge, attitude and follow up in the community etc. The merits and problems of each of these were weighed up against, among other things, the literacy level of learners. A consensus was reached that assessment for Life Skills and Work Readiness for Level 1 would be simple and focus on testing of knowledge. It was decided that forms of assessment would be varied at Level 2 when learners had acquired improved basic literacy skills. Specific decisions regarding specific content areas are indicated as follows.

- Life Skills and Work Readiness - Assessment would take the form of a pre- and post-test to be at the beginning and end of each module. For mid-module assessment, learners would be given a scenario relating to the theme of the module to either discuss or role play and will be evaluated on how they perform during these activities.
- Literacy and Numeracy Assessment – There would be a pre-assessment at the beginning of the year and a post-assessment at the end of the year. There will be mid and end of module assessments embedded in the curriculum.
- Progress for Literacy and Numeracy would be reported using numbered grades while for Life Skills and Work Readiness a check list is to be developed outlining traits that learners have exhibited during the activities.

- Movement from Level 1 would be based primarily on performance in Literacy and Numeracy. The end-of-module assessment scores constitute 75% while the end-of-level assessment constitutes 25% of the final score. A learner who earns a final score of 60%+ is eligible to move from one level to another. Work Readiness and Life Skills would not be determinants for promotion. Assessment in this area would be for facilitators and learners to gauge the level of learning taking place among learners and provide feedback on instruction to the facilitator.

Development of assessment tools occurred during the course of curriculum development for Semester 2 from September through December 2010. In March 2011, USAID/CESLY gathered staff from various departments of the Ministry of Education and conducted a training session on how to develop assessments for curricular materials. As culmination of the training, MOE staff were then engaged to review and evaluate the ABE assessment modules. The final assessment tools were finalized in April and then administered in May of 2011.

LEVEL OF CONTENT COVERED AT TIMING OF ASSESSMENT

At the timing of the administration of the assessment, classes were at various points in the curriculum. This variation was unavoidable due to differing speeds at which facilitators had progressed through the curriculum. However because of the imminent project close down, the assessment had to be administered regardless of whether a class had completed all modules or not. 54.2% of sites had completed the final module in Life skills while 40% had completed the final module in Work readiness. For Literacy, 66% of sites had completed the final module and 53% had completed the final module in Numeracy.

Reasons for this delay and variations were several: inadequate allocation of time; inconsistency in holding classes for the required number of hours; late arrival of learners due to farming and marking responsibilities; ending classes early because of darkness and the inefficiency of solar lighting coupled with difficulty of recharging lanterns during the rainy season. More generally, absence of facilitators, the degrees of confidence in the materials were also factors as was community adherence to timing was less than precise. For these reasons, the theme of “time on task” had been highlighted in the proposal and workplan stage and this message constantly reinforced in every teacher training. Despite this emphasis, communities still lacked strict adherence to timeliness particularly in rural areas where clocks are less common. Consequently, all content areas were not consistently taught three times a week as scheduled. Content areas were alternated/ rotated leaving some content areas to be taught once while others were taught twice.

CONSTRAINTS TO ASSESSMENT ADMINISTRATION

The administration of the end of project assessment proved more challenging than envisaged. Lessons learnt from the administration of the assessment included:

- **TIMING:** The timing of the assessment June 6- 17 was not optimal, due to administration of final exams to regular primary students, and resulted in lower turnout. In addition, domestic activities related to farming season affected the availability of learners during the June period. In some sites, the assessment had to be administered over several days as learners were not always present when scheduled.
 - *Lesson Learned:* It is necessary to educate participants on the difference between formal and nonformal academic calendars and the different timing of future ABE assessments. Alternatively assessments could be administered concurrently with primary school testing to remove confusion.
- **DURATION:** 172 questions were developed in total for the 4 content areas, addressing each of the topics in the modules covered over the course of the year. The administration of the assessment ranged from four to seven hours. As a result of

this, learners became tired and lost concentration. At some sites the assessment had to be stopped and continued the following day. In other sites the assessment was administered over several days. The different timeframes allowed in different schools, the availability and motivation of learners to sit through multiple hours or days of tests therefore all skewed the results.

- *Lesson Learned:* Future versions of the assessment should trim down the content to a representative sample of curriculum taught. Alternatively, assessments for different content areas can also be scheduled on different days. All assessments should be conducted according to agreed time periods so not as to disadvantage some students over others.
- **CONDITION OF ADMINISTRATION:** The conditions of assessment varied from county to county in terms of quality of night lighting and classroom environment. Strong night lighting was a challenge, but LRCs supplied supplementary high beam lighting where possible. In addition, in several cases, test administrators did not fully understand instructions, which compromised the administration.

RESULTS

In general, the assessments were difficult for learners. Life skills and the work readiness content areas were perceived as easier than the literacy and numeracy assessments, while literacy and numeracy were reported as more challenging. The challenges were attributed to learners' inability to read the passages/text in the assessment, or to respond in full sentences. Since there were multiple choice items, in many cases learners guessed in order to complete the test. Results from each of the content areas are summarized in the table below.

Learners' Performance per Content Area in End of Project Assessment

Content Area	Scores			
	0%	0-49%	50-69%	70% and above
Life skills	2%	9%	31%	57%
Work readiness	1%	9%	13%	77%
Literacy	17%	42%	16%	25%
Numeracy	4%	46%	16%	34%

- The results to confirm reports from the administration of the end of project assessment which highlighted the difficulty level of the Literacy and Numeracy curriculum as compared to the Life Skills and Work Readiness curriculum. The majority of the learners (75% for literacy and 66% for numeracy) scored below 70% in the assessment, while 42% and 23% scored below 70% in Life Skills and Work readiness respectively. The following could explain learner's performance in these content areas.
- Level 1 Life Skills and Level 1 Work Readiness were designed to be taught for students with zero level literacy. The method of grasping may be have been easier if they were less dependent on literacy skills to process content

- Learners could make use of their life experience as well as curriculum content to answer the questions, perhaps guessing at the answer correctly
- Life Skills and Work Readiness questions were mainly true and false questions, making them easier to answer, than literacy or numeracy where individuals are asked to make calculations or write sentences themselves
- The literacy and numeracy assessments were more rigorous than the Life Skills and Work Readiness assessments.

The higher scores in Life Skills and Work Readiness were actually contrast with feedback received from monitoring visits, field testing documents and focus groups. Facilitators and learners often cited Life Skills and Work Readiness concepts as being completely new, unfamiliar and difficult to understand, though they also mentioned the information as being useful and welcome.

3.8 Challenges and Recommendations for Future Alternative Basic Education Activities

CHALLENGES

The field test generated passion, interest and enthusiasm from learners, as documented in the focus group discussions.

From teachers and principals: The manual was most useful, because that's the resource material. It is from it I know exactly what to do in the classroom.

There has been change in my teaching practice, I have been a teacher for some time but getting into the CESLY program, the use of teaching aid has change my way of teaching and without the aids, the learners will not know actually what you are teaching them.

Unlike the conventional school, there are no learning materials, but with all these learning materials there are changes.”

In the conventional school, we borrow learning materials or teach from our heads, but with these learning materials there are changes.

Instructional materials were the most useful because without them there would not be any good teaching. Teachers would only eat the stipends for nothing and pretend to be teaching.

From a female ABE Learner: Yes, the books that you give our teachers for them to use and teach us were good because they took their time in teaching us who are beginners.”

However, the quantitative assessment scores illustrate the challenges in the achievement levels in literacy and numeracy For instance the percentage of students reading at **45 correct words per minute** (cwpm) demonstrates the amount of work still to be done:

Percent of students reading 45 cwpm	Level	Baseline	Midterm	Final
ALP Regular Male	Level 3	16%	47%	58%
ALP Regular Female	Level 3	26%	43%	41%
ALP Regular Overall	Level 3	21%	45%	50%
Percent of students reading 45 cwpm	Level	Baseline	Midterm	Final
ALP Youth Male	Level 3	14%	72%	60%
ALP Youth Female	Level 3	13%	39%	39%
ALP Youth Overall	Level 3	14%	53%	50%
Percent of students reading 45 cwpm	Level 1	Baseline	Final	
NFE Male	Level 1	13%	21%	
NFE Female	Level 1	5%	11%	
NFE Overall	Level 1	7%	14%	

“In literacy, I did not know the difference between uppercase and lowercase letters or the different sounds of letters. During my school days, I never did phonics so how could I teach it.” (Female ABE Facilitator, Bong)

“[After training], we now know how to pronounce certain words like ‘cat’.” (Male ALP Youth Teacher, Montserrado)

When teachers are not proficient, they do not convey accurate skills to learners. Significant time was spent on core content during in-service training, and after seeing the level of teacher’s basic comprehension of letters and sounds, project plans were changed Year 2 to allow even more time for in-service training and the purchase and distribution of teacher skill builder guides to reinforce basic concepts. However, the problem is much larger than can be resolved during in-service training. It needs to be tackled on a variety of fronts including a short term increase in the amount of training in literacy that all MOE teachers receive; a medium term plan of introducing literacy and reading focused content in teacher training colleges so that newly trained teachers enter the profession with knowledge of how to read; and a longer term plan of improving the general literacy rates of the population.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NEXT STEPS IN CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

The results of the assessment have been shared with the curriculum developers, along with the teaching and learning assessment findings and the field testing documents. Therefore many of the above recommendations are already being considered in the latest drafting process of Level 2 curriculum development. These recommendations should continue to be taken into consideration into consideration in the next phase of planning of follow-on program activities, with specific attention to the following:

- Engage broad-based curriculum developers with experience in multiple countries to build the framework and architecture, while simultaneously investing local developers to populate content
- Reduce the level of vocabulary in the lessons
- Slow down the pace of introducing new lessons and the time expected to anticipated a concept

- Plan around the timing and scheduling of classes
- Incorporate knowledge of learner pace of mastery into the overall time allotted to reach Level 3, i.e. equivalent of a 6th grade education.
- Ensure that the MOE is aware that the implementation of Level 2 and 3 cohorts is a field test, that the issue will need to be assessed whether youth & adult learners can achieve mastery of 6th grade content in the allotted period (with the knowledge that various Liberian and international education technicians have postulated that more time is needed).
- Continue emphasis on basic core content knowledge to be emphasized in teacher training sessions
- Support the continuation of the pilot of pre-service training of RTTI instructions in alternative basic education so that the new teachers come out with more solid foundation in literacy and reading and are better prepared to teach adults
- The ABE Field Implementation Manual needs to be shared with MOE, reviewed by partners, discussed and dialogued. This could be integrated into the review and approval process of upcoming versions of curriculum
- Plan for adequate monitoring to allow facilitators to receive constant, continual on-site coaching to help them master letter sounds, word sounds and the content of teaching reading so that they can better help their learners master literacy and reading
- Pilot better functioning solar options to provide light at night that is more conducive to learning.

Task #4: Quantitative Assessment of Reading and Numeracy Skills Acquisition

Indicator	Targets	Achieved	Percent of target achieved
Average score of participating students on comprehension (story understanding) exercise, ALP and NFE	<i>35% increase over baseline</i>	<p><i>ALP Regular:</i> (No Level 2 at final assessment) Level 3: M=36.72(16%increase) F=30.99(-15%) <i>ALP Youth:</i> Level 3: M= 37.75(35%); F=31.05(18%) <i>NFE :</i> M=18.7% (95% increase); F=6.69% (101% increase) (percent of students scoring 80% or higher of questions correctly) M=45.54% (115% increase) ; F= 41.48% (393% increase) (mean reading comprehension score)</p>	<p><i>ALP Regular:</i> -1% improvement by Level 3 Regular students <i>ALP Youth:</i> ALP Youth: 29% improvement by Level 3 Youth students <i>NFE:</i> Percent of students scoring 80% or higher of questions correctly- 104% increase Mean reading comprehension score - Overall: 275% increase</p>
Fluency in connected text, measured as average correct words read per minute, ALP and NFE	<i>35% increase over baseline</i>	<p><i>ALP Regular</i> (baseline to final) (No Level 2 at final assessment) Level 3: M= 53.20 (139%); F= 40.22 (33%) <i>ALP Youth:</i> Level 3: M=51.27 (166%); F=37.72 (76%) <i>NFE Final Level 1:</i> M= 22.89 (27% increase); F= 11.39 (65%increase)</p>	<p><i>ALP Regular:</i> 78% improvement by Level 3 Regular students <i>ALP Youth:</i> 118% improvement by Level 3 Youth Students <i>NFE:</i> 46% increase over baseline</p>
Average mathematics score of participating students	determined after conducting baseline	Composite index report is not possible. Refer to RTI final report for results on individual math tasks. See below for further information	n/a

Key Accomplishments:

- Baseline, Midline and Endline Assessments of ALP conducted and Initial and Endline Assessments of NFE conducted
- Increase in reading skills of students

Task #4 focused on assessing student progress in reading and math assessment, as well as a qualitative exploration of the project impact on conflict mitigation. RTI was responsible undertaking the activities in Task 4.

COMBINED PROJECT IMPACT LEADS TO INCREASE IN STUDENT READING ABILITY

4.1 Reading and Math Assessments

RTI administered the assessments in reading and math (Early Grade Reading Assessment and Early Grade Math Assessment) to students enrolled in ALP courses at baseline, midline, and end of project; and to students enrolled in NFE/ABE at baseline and end line. A detailed discussion of the administration of assessments and analysis of results is found in RTI reports.

EGRA results: The results of the baseline, midterm, and final assessments show that participation in both ALP and NFE interventions had a positive impact on reading achievement. A summary of the baseline, midline and endline EGRA results are as follows:

Accelerated Learning Program Students		
Indicator	Midterm (2010)	Final (2011)
Average correct words read per minute (cwpm) in connected text.	ALP Regular Level 2: M= 29.22 (245% increase); F= 25.97 (98% increase) Level 3: M=44.98 (102%); F=41.10 (35%) ALP Youth: Level 2: M= 51.26 (532% increase); F= 31.87 (218%) Level 3: M=60.49 (214%); F=38.77 (81%) Target for Year 1: 20% increase over baseline	ALP Regular (baseline to final) (No Level 2 at final assessment) Level 3: M= 53.20 (139%); F= 40.22 (33%) Overall: 78% improvement by Level 3 Regular students ALP Youth: Level 3: M=51.27 (166%); F=37.72 (76%) Overall: 118% improvement by Level 3 Youth Students Target for Year 2: 35% increase over baseline
ALP Average score – percentage correct - of participating students on comprehension	ALP Regular: Level 2: M=33.82 (58% increase); F=31.67 (34%) Level 3: M=42.11 (32%); F=41.26(14%) ALP Youth: Level 2: M=45.86 (119%); F=38.96 (112%) Level 3: M=54.65 (96%); F=40.84 (56%) Targets for Year 1: 20% increase over baseline	ALP Regular: (No Level 2 at final assessment) Level 3: M=36.72(16%increase) F=30.99(-15%) Overall: -1% improvement by Level 3 Regular students ALP Youth: Level 3: M= 37.75(35%); F=31.05(18%) Overall: 29% improvement by Level 3 Youth students Targets for Year 2: 35% increase over baseline

NFE Classes		
	NFE Initial Assessment (Jan 2011)	NFE Final Assessment (May 2011)
NFE Average correct words read per min (cwpm) in connected text.	Level 1: M = 17.96; F= 6.9	Level 2: M= 22.89 (27% increase); F= 11.39 (65%increase) Overall improvement: 46% increase Targets for Year 2: 35% increase over baseline
NFE Average score – percentage correct - of participating students on comprehension (story understanding) exercise.	M=9.41% ; F= 3.33% (percent of students scoring 80% or higher of questions correctly) M=21.18% ; F= 8.41% (mean reading comprehension score)	M=18.7% (95% increase); F=6.69% (101% increase) Overall: 104% increase M=45.54% (115% increase) ; F= 41.48% (393% increase) (mean reading comprehension score) Overall: 275% increase Targets for Year 2: 35% increase over baseline

Average performance scores on most reading subtasks that examined skills, including letter identification, oral reading fluency, and reading comprehension, increased from the baseline to the final assessments. The results of descriptive analyses showed ALP learners posting higher average reading achievement than their NFE counterparts (within the context of ALP students working on the Grade 6-level curriculum and NFE students working on the entry-level literacy curriculum). Despite these apparent differences, the results of t-tests showed that the differences between school types were not statistically significant.

Differences in average reading performance also appeared within program types for ALP students. The results of descriptive analyses of the ALP schools showed that ALP Regular students, who were younger in age, tended to post higher average reading scores than older Youth group students. In the final phase of data collection, the average reading achievement of ALP Regular students was higher than that of ALP Youth students on nearly all (4 of 6) subtasks. However, these differences were small and not statistically significant.

In contrast, differences by student sex were statistically significant for both school types. ALP and NFE female students consistently posted lower average scores on each reading achievement subtask in comparison to their male peers in the baseline assessment. This pattern was also noted with both ALP and NFE students in the final assessment. However, when looking at the overall gains, among ALP students, males outperformed females on nearly all subtasks and across both group types (Regular and Youth) in the final assessment (females both scored lower and made smaller improvements between baseline and final than their male counterparts). This finding suggests that the ALP program may have made a greater impact on male achievement than on female achievement.

Given that NFE and ALP students are older than typical primary school age children who are learning to read, it is difficult to make cross-country comparisons with other adolescents and/or adults in terms of levels of key early reading skills. However, when comparing the oral reading fluency scores of NFE and ALP students with those of primary school age students in other countries, it appears that ALP and NFE students continue to lag behind, albeit to different degrees. The ALP groups, both Regular and Youth, approached the oral reading fluency scores found among other

Liberian students. Both groups performed considerably lower than U.S. oral reading fluency benchmarks. Undoubtedly, these comparisons between adults and children, who are learning at very different paces, are not ideal, but they provide some insight into the abilities of NFE and ALP students.

EGMA Results: Unlike with reading, for mathematics it is not yet possible to devise a composite index as per the expert panel advice. Unlike in reading where one composite score is used – fluency in reading a passage – in mathematics such composite score does not exist. Combining multiple tasks into one composite score may lead to disguising some important information for each individual task tested. For example, if additions, subtractions and multiplications were to be averaged and turned into one composite score, we would lose important information that is gleaned when one is looking at these individual tasks. For example, in case of NFE students, improvements have been noted on additions and subtractions, but not on multiplication where it has actually declined. Given this, and if the scores of these 3 items were averaged into one, there would be the risk of not reporting the fact that student performance on additions and subtractions have improved, which indicates that teachers are grasping the concept, or that that teachers and students need more help on multiplication.



Overall, the math results have not shown improvements similar to those in reading. ALP students declined on almost all of the tasks tested. NFE students improved on many tasks that are not demanding in terms of computational skills such as simple addition and subtraction. However, on more demanding tasks such as divisions and multiplications, performance remained at the same level or even declined.

The EGRA and EGMA assessments provided invaluable information to both the USAID/CESLY program and to future similar programs. One challenge of the large scale assessments was that collecting the data, conducting data entry and analyzing the information took longer than planned and thus the results were not able to be used in revision of the curriculum materials or the overall assessment of the program. Sufficient time required for data collection and analysis therefore needs to be incorporated into the planning process, allowing time for the many delays that could be faced during the process.

In addition to the EGRA/EGMA studies and the assessment of nonformal education discussed in Task 3, RTI and EDC also conducted two qualitative assessments: 1) on the impact of the project on youth in conflict-affected areas 2) on the impact of the program on teaching and learning.

INVESTING IN BASIC EDUCATION AND LIFE SKILLS MAKES A CONSIDERABLE DIFFERENCE IN PEACE AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION AMONG YOUTH AND COMMUNITIES

4.2 Assessment of Linkages to Peace, Security and Conflict Mitigation

The USAID/CESLY contract called for assessments into the links to peace and security and conflict mitigation.

In response, USAID/CESLY conducted the following informal assessment on the “Impact of Alternative Basic Education on Youth in Conflict-affected Environments.” Through focus group discussions with 70 participants, including female and male youth, teachers, administrators and PTA members, USAID/CESLY program participants explored whether they had noted any change in the areas of: conflict and conflict resolution; handling differences of opinion; physical violence; gender-based violence; school safety; perception of youth by the community; psycho-social well being; areas for program improvement. Overall, focus groups discussions reported a positive change in the way people dealt with conflict and related issues.

Although further study is required to establish any direct link between the ABE Life Skills content and change in behavior at a community level, anecdotal evidence reported in these focus groups suggests that positive change has been observed.

PEACE AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION	The responses related to peace and conflict mitigation could be grouped into several areas: the way individuals deal with conflict themselves, the way program participants have become active in mitigating conflict between others, and observation of reduction in conflict in and around the school community. Data was also generated around specific areas including change in physical violence or in gender violence.
PERSONAL BEHAVIOR CHANGE IN RELATION TO CONFLICT	In general, program participants cited an increase in their ability to handle conflict, whether it be related to controlling their temper, ceasing from engaging in fighting or refraining from “causing confusion”.
CHANGE IN PHYSICAL VIOLENCE	Learners noted observable changes in their own tendency toward physical violence specifically after participation in the program.
IMPACT ON MITIGATING CONFLICT BETWEEN OTHERS	Data from the focus groups reported that a large number of students, as well as other program participants (such as facilitators, principals and community members), had become proactive in solving disputes between other people. They cited various methods that they use for settling disputes and resolving conflict between others. In many cases, program participants had become recognized by the community and labeled as peacemakers. Respondents cited this being due to the program, specifically to the life skills component.
REDUCTION IN CONFLICT AT THE COMMUNITY LEVEL	A number of focus group respondents pointed to a general reduction of conflict in the school and in the wider community. They sometimes spoke of reduction in physical fighting as well as engagement of those in the “arms struggle” into education. In addition, respondents cited greater engagement of the PTA in conflict resolution.
GENDER	The responses in the area of gender could be categorized in two areas: reduction in gender violence and change in gender relations. Within the area of gender relations, some changes were specifically cited as due to increased literacy while others were related to broader participation in the program.
REDUCTION IN GENDER VIOLENCE	Participants cited a great number of changes in the area of reduction in gender violence. Program participants spoke of gender violence being reduced in the community, a reduction of teachers exploiting students in sex for grades, men changing their habits of beating wives, and a greater reporting and follow up on rape cases.

CHANGES IN GENDER RELATIONS DUE TO PARTICIPATION IN THE PROGRAM	Both women and men cited a number of changes that had come about in gender relations since participating in the program. Women’s newly acquired literacy skills had changed their relations with their husbands. Women talked about being proactive about educating their husbands, and husbands talked about changing behaviors by sharing household work with more equality. Some also cited sharing money more equitably, greater equity in food distribution, greater support to allow women to continue their studies, and reduction in household arguments. In some cases, women are standing up and speaking for themselves in community meetings and better able to represent themselves in decision-making. A male program participant spoke of his new role as an advocate of women’s issues at the community level.
PSYCHO-SOCIAL HEALTH	Learners and those around them, noted an improvement in the way they expressed themselves and spoke about a general increase in self-confidence. Changes in the way that community members view youth were noted, which later linked with greater leadership and role modeling among program learners as well as other types of participants (PTA members, community members, teachers, principals and administrators).
CHANGE IN SELF CONFIDENCE	Participants reported a greater self-esteem and greater pride in themselves that was linked to various areas, be it literacy skills, peacemaking skills or greater work readiness
CHANGE IN HOW LEARNERS ARE PERCEIVED BY OTHERS	Participants cited a change in how other community members perceived them. They cited this change as being due to increased literacy skills, participation in school, changed attitudes and relationships with other community members.
LEADERSHIP	The program had a specific impact of increasing leadership behavior among participants. Respondents cited being referred to as role models by other community members.
IMPACT ON OTHER LIFE SKILLS	Beyond the changes specific to peace and conflict and self-esteem, a range of changes were noted linked to life skills. Respondents cited changes in respecting others, planning their families, participating in environmental and clean-up campaigns and becoming initiating community development activities.
WORK READINESS IMPACT	Learners cited a number of areas which have impacted their ability to be work ready. They point to greater numeracy and money management skills. TheSome also discuss how specific skills like studying the market or maintaining their own personal health have helped them to be more productive at work.

4.3 RTI interviews on Violence and School Safety

As part of the USAID/CESLY program, RTI also conducted an evaluation into violence and school safety. Respondents were asked to answer three questions related to safety and violence in their communities and schools:

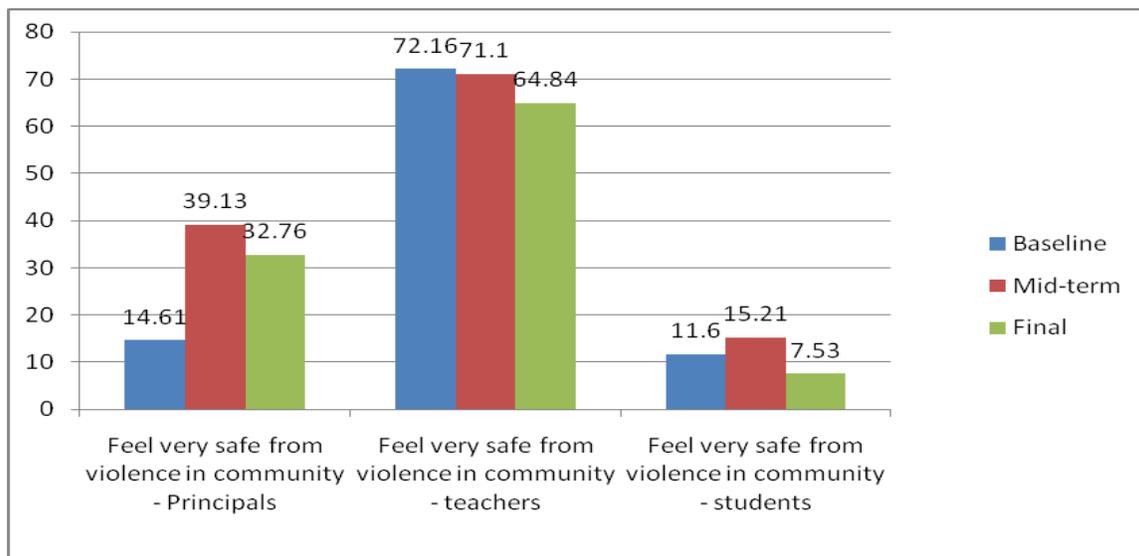
1. “How safe do you feel with respect to violence in your community?” Although we reported only “very safe” answers, note that a significant number of respondents also said “safe,” which is important.
2. “Do you think your students are safe from violence in your school?” We reported on the number of respondents who said “yes.”
3. “Do you know of anyone who has been approached in a harassing way?” Again, we reported on the number of “yes” answers.

The following graphs compare change in attitude of program participations. The full results are summarized in the RTI Endline Assessment.

ALP Respondents

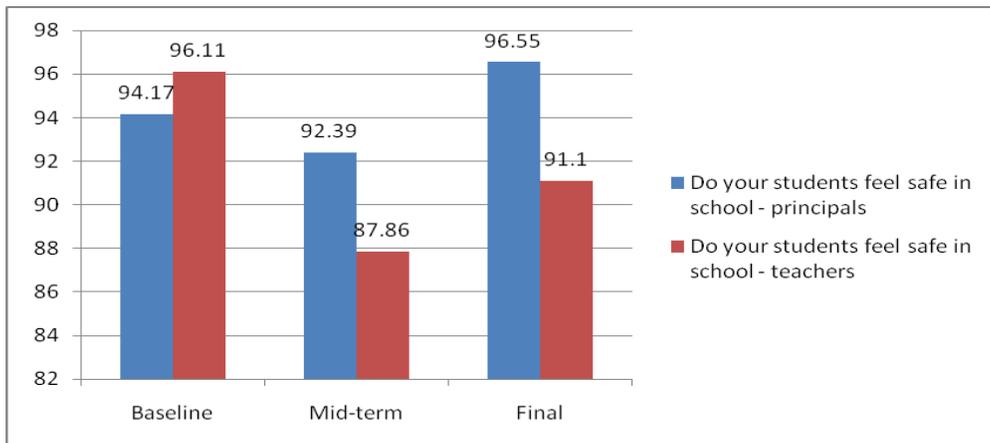
With respect to the first set of questions, ALP principals indicated that they felt safer at the final assessment than at the time of the baseline, but less safe than at the time of the midterm assessment (see *Figure 1*). Teachers' responses were somewhat more consistent, but indicated a gradual decline, in their view, in safety in their community. Students' responses were also consistent, but they felt the least safe in their community, with rather low numbers responding that they felt "very safe." A decrease in this opinion between baseline and midterm and between midterm and final assessment was also noted.

Figure 1: ALP Principal, Teacher, and Student Views on Safety in their Community (% "yes")



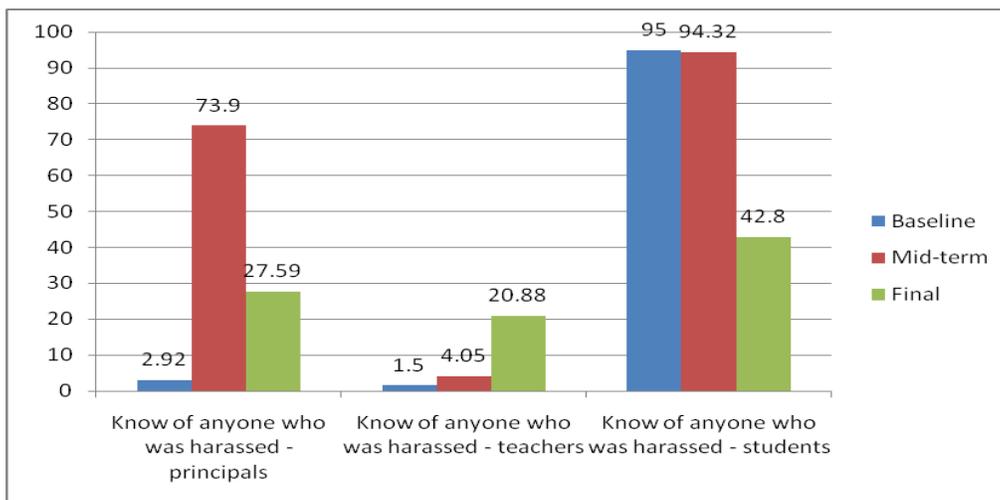
When asked about their opinion on the safety of learners in their schools, the principals' responses remained positive across all assessments and improved by a few percentage points over time. As for teachers, their responses also remained rather high, with slight but not significant decreases from baseline to midterm to final assessment (see *Figure 2*).

Figure 2: ALP Principals' and Teachers' Views on Safety in School (% "yes")



ALP student data regarding their views on harassment incidents indicate a significant improvement across assessments—that is, a significant decrease in the number of students who knew of someone who had been approached in a harassing way. The numbers went down from about 90% to slightly more than 40%. As for the principal views on this point, the numbers reported went up significantly from baseline to midterm, but then dropped significantly at the final assessment. As for the teachers, unfortunately, it was noted that there was an increasing trend across assessments in the number of teachers who knew of someone being harassed (see Figure 3).

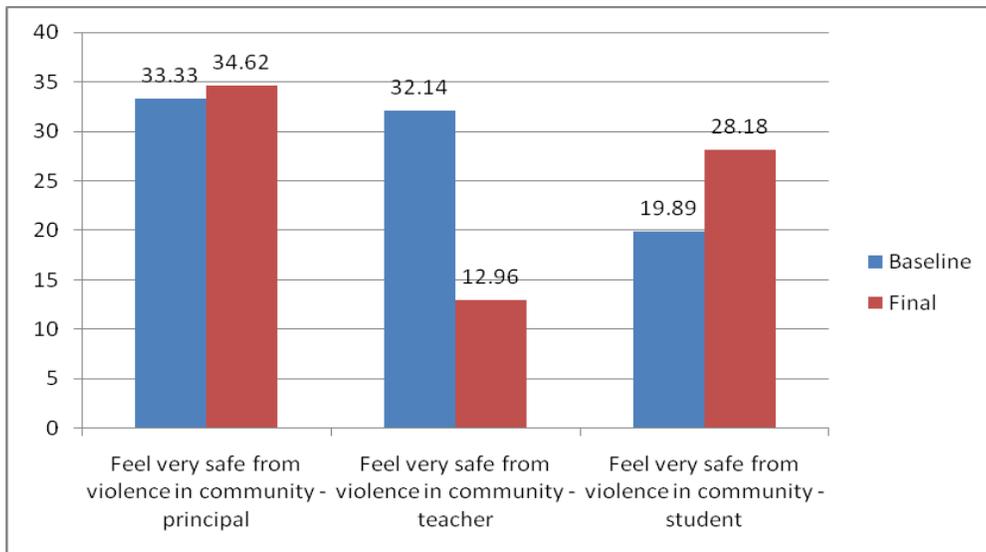
Figure 3: ALP Principal, Teacher, and Student Views on Harassment (% "yes")



NFE Respondents

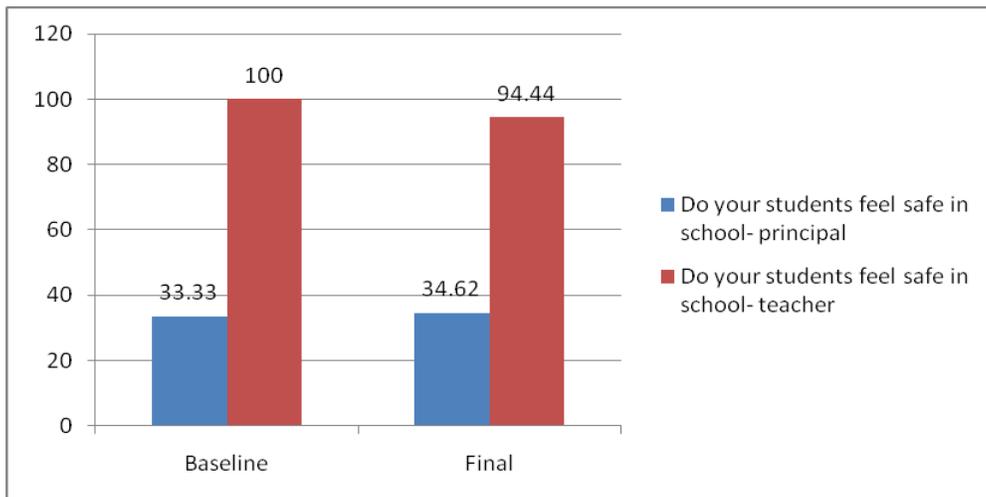
With respect to the NFE program, it was noted that more consistent views across the different respondents—principals, teachers, and students—on all three questions asked. With respect to the first set of questions, a significant number of respondents said that they felt “safe” in their communities, but the report includes only the “very safe” response since that indicates an absolute positive answer (see Figure 4). There was no significant change between baseline and final assessment for principals. However, there was a decrease in the number of teachers who said they felt very safe in their communities. On the other hand, the number of students who said they felt very safe in their communities increased.

Figure 4: NFE Principal, Teacher, and Student Views on Safety in Their Community (% “yes”)



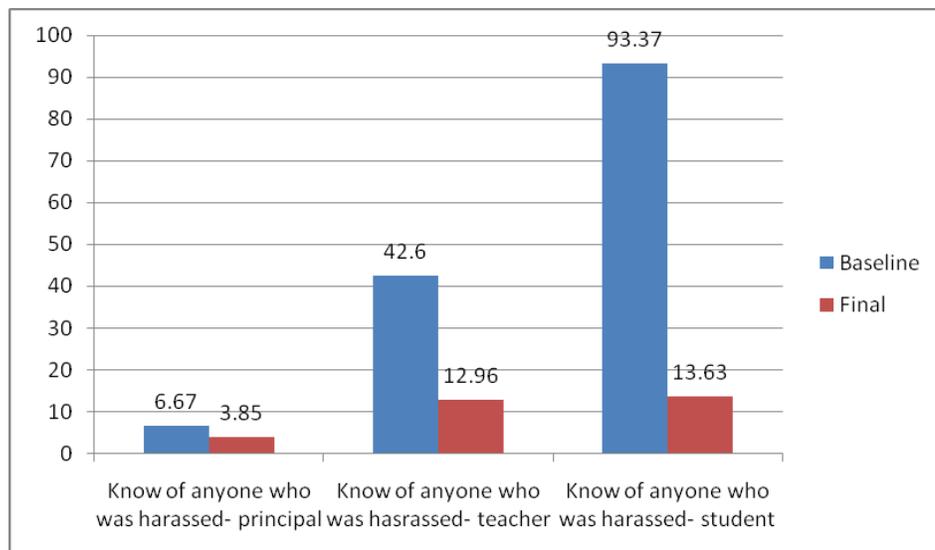
With respect to the safety of learners in their schools, as expressed by teachers and principals, no significant changes were found between baseline and final assessment (see Figure 5). All of the teachers at the time of baseline felt that their students were safe, as opposed to 94.44% of them feeling this way at the time of the final assessment. The responses from principals registered a slight increase.

Figure 5: NFE Principal and Teacher Views on Safety in School (% “yes”)



With respect to the views on harassment, this is a question where there was a significant decrease in the number of respondents who had heard of such incidents (see Figure 6). The largest improvements were noted in the proportion of students who had heard of harassment incidents, which decreased from about 94% to about 14%. A similar trend occurred in the case of NFE teachers, as well as in the case of NFE principals.

Figure 6: NFE Principal, Teacher, and Student Views on Harassment (% “yes”)



Further details on these figures and other details of the in-depth interviews are included in the RTI Assessment report.

COMBINED PROGRAM INPUTS CREATED ENERGY AND IMPROVEMENT IN QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING, ACCORDING TO TEACHERS AND LEARNERS

4.4 Impact of the Program on Teaching and Learning

During Quarter 9, USAID/CESLY staff and MOE staff conducted focus group discussions to measure the impact of the project on teaching and learning with teachers and learners in all six counties. Three communities were selected in each county taking into consideration urban, semi urban and rural communities. Participants included students/learners, teachers/facilitators and principals/administrators. The teaching and learning assessment explored the impact of the project on teaching and learning exploring the impact of particular interventions such as: Curriculum; Teacher Training; Instructional Materials; Timeliness of Instructional Material Arrival; Experience Sharing Sessions; Impact of the Stipend Increase; Service Learning; Night Lighting; Monitoring; Monitoring by USAID/CESLY staff; Joint MOE and USAID/CESLY Monitoring; Monitoring by MOE; Monitoring by Principals. The assessment revealed the following:

USAID/CESLY teacher training was reported as having made a large impact in the professional development of teachers. Teachers report now using student centered approach as opposed to the teacher centered method, better lesson planning and overall improvement in teaching.

Regular supportive monitoring and supervision of teachers has helped to improve their skills, performance and confidence in their ability and create a sense of zeal and feeling of being both cared for as well as more accountable.

Instructional materials provided by USAID/CESLY have served as a critical lifeline for facilitating and sustaining classroom instruction. “If it had not been for CESLY, I don’t know how we would have really managed to teach”.

The provision of local supplementary reading materials has increased and stimulated students’ desire to read.

The assessment teams reported specific improvements in performance and knowledge by students and teachers in the 4 content areas as well as changes in issues such as study techniques, ability to carry out group work and the continuation of students to higher levels of education.

When teachers and principals looked at their own performance, after project interventions, they noted positive changes in: time on task; lesson planning; method of presentation; student-centered teaching; group work; classroom management; distribution and use of materials at school level; working with older youth and adults; assessing student progress; teacher comportment; corporal punishment; record keeping. Through the data of focus group, “ripple effect” changes also surfaced in the areas of: culture of reading; confidence and expressing oneself in public; leadership; peer influences to enrolling in classes; increased education of younger children; gender relationships; community relationships and community activism; peace and conflict; pregnancy. Here is just a sampling of the kinds of overall changes that focus group discussants noted.

- Male ALP Youth Student, Lofa: “I used to score 20 percent, but later on when the program came in I started scoring good grades like 80 percent.”
- Male ALP Regular Teacher, Bong: “Students can now read fluently. One of my students Magdalene Tubman, took part in a reading competition and took 1st place; most of them are now gone to Jr. high in different schools. Most of them have adapted a culture of reading through the reading club and materials like story books provided by CESLY.”
- Female ABE Facilitator, Bong: “Yes, some of them are fast in learning. Most of them are willing to learn. They don’t even want this project to end. Some of them even want to go to Jr. high school. When I give test some of them can score high grades that I’m not even expecting. Some of them that could not read and write are now doing so. Like spelling and writing their own names, counting 1, 2, 3... etc. Those that use to like palava [fighting] are now making peace in their communities.”
- Male ALP Regular Teacher, Grand Gedeh County: “CESLY has brought changes in my teaching life. I never used to have love for the teaching profession. But CESLY has made me to develop interest in teaching, especially the materials they taught us.”
- Male ALP Youth Teacher, Nimba: “Yes, there is by far-far improvement in my teaching.” Male ALP Youth Principal, Lofa: “Training by CESLY has made us to above all other teachers in Liberia.”
- Female ABE Facilitator, Bong: “Yes, for example in literacy, I did not know the difference between uppercase and lowercase letters or the different sounds of letters. During my school days, I never did phonics so how could I teach it. But because of training and instructional teaching aids, I am now able to put a word in syllables to be able to pronounce it. I also realize that phonics can be done in any language. e.g. At one workshop an American lady ask us how to greet in Kpelleh; when she was told how she put the words in syllables and pronounce it very well. From there I realize that once you break a word into syllables you can pronounce it. The life skills module has given me a lot of strategies in teaching. e.g. Most people took the program for joke, but after they saw their colleagues going further they came to join the program. So I allow them to register because the number was large I could not refuse them. I introduce the back and forward to help new learners catch up with their colleagues.”

Learners and teachers offered a many suggestions on how the program could be improved in the areas of: curriculum timing; curriculum and class content; teacher training; teacher training: content area needs; instructional and reading materials; leveling of classes; stipends; night lighting; workforce development: provision of skills training; workforce development: placements concurrent with educational participation; following learners through the higher grades; material support; service learning; CESLY monitoring; youth volunteers; documentation and reporting;

institutionalization. The feedback from the focus groups is particularly relevant for informing curriculum developers about what areas learners and facilitators most challenging. The data also gives detailed information that can inform future teaching training design as well as the development of a workforce development strategy.

4.5 Recommendations

The RTI report concluded that the USAID/CESLY program showed a positive impact on reading achievement. At the same time, it was not possible to determine the impact of the program as currently conceived in comparison to other types of reading interventions or standard instruction due to the lack of a control group (since there is no non-USAID/CESLY program aimed at out-of-school youth). Further, the NFE program was assessed after a short period of implementation, with three and a half months between the two testing periods, as well as final assessment occurring after only eight and a half months of class operation. Thus, NFE is not directly comparable to the ALP program, which represents a cumulative investment of three years in reading or language instruction. With these limitations in mind, the following recommendations were proposed:

Sustain and scale up the USAID/CESLY program - both ALP and NFE programs showed student learning increases in reading. Given the brief implementation period of NFE in particular, it stands to reason that a longer intervention would result in more reading gains. It is strongly recommended that future programs focus its support toward teachers and schools, so that NFE learners acquire all of the basic skills, as tested by EGRA and EGMA, before the end of Level 1. That is, to learn how to read and perform basic mathematical functions before learners transition to the next level.

Improve female reading achievement – the findings suggest that males outperformed females at baseline, and that gaps in achievement by sex increased over the course of the intervention. For future programs, additional emphasis should be placed on raising female achievement. During this project period, USAID/CESLY hired a Gender Specialist, launched retention campaigns for females, conducted female club strengthening, produced reading materials specifically oriented to females, and reoriented the curriculum to meet females’ needs (e.g., by placing prevention of pregnancy and gender violence at the start of the lessons before females drop out). However, these and other efforts to strengthen female achievement should be continued and strengthened.

Focus on reading comprehension - Students appeared to make marked improvements in several early literacy skills, such as letter identification. However, the percentage of students who successfully answered 80% of reading comprehension questions remained low. In the program, basic components of reading were emphasized in Year 1, while Year 2 focused on reading comprehension and practice of writing. In future programming, reading comprehension should be a focus of instruction from program inception, and it should be increasingly emphasized as basic reading skills are acquired. It is recommended that future projects review the EGRA Plus: Liberia reading intervention, which provides clear scope and sequence as to how to approach reading. This reading intervention has proved to be successful in ensuring that students learn how to read in less than one year and has been adjusted for Grades 1–3.

Focus on mathematics - Some improvements have been made on the numeracy front, but these are rather low, and more emphasis and focus needs to be given to the mathematics area. The NFE curriculum and support provided to teachers need to be more intense so that all learners acquire basic numeracy skills, as assessed by the EGMA tool, before the end of Level 1. The assessment results indicate that students can perform some tasks (number identification, simple additions and subtractions), but not all basic mathematical functions (multiplication, quantity discrimination, divisions) that are key foundational skills for complex mathematical functions that will come in subsequent years and curriculum.

Calibrate the curriculum - Even though at the end of Level 1, NFE learners are expected to have rudimentary literacy knowledge according to the program, the assessment after only three months of intervention showed that important gains are possible. Reading and mathematics skills that were assessed using EGRA and EGMA are the most basic skills that anyone can learn, and learning them quickly is critical for future learning. It is recommended that the NFE curriculum and teacher training material be calibrated so that these skills are acquired before NFE learners transition to Level 2.

Conduct a quasi-experimental study of USAID/CESLY - To fully gauge the impact of the ALP and NFE programs, a quasi-experimental study would be an ideal scenario. The lack of a control group means that it is not possible to accurately and entirely attribute the learning gains seen in participants to the program itself. Creation of a control group was considered at the beginning of the project; however, it was determined that it would not be possible to create one given the sampling population. For instance, all of the ALP schools had been receiving support for a few years before the USAID/CESLY program started, and they were to continue receiving support through the program. In the context of randomized control trials, this type of scenario leads to the “contamination” of the control group in case one would have been selected. In other words, no true control group would exist because there would be no schools that would not be receiving the intervention. The same issue was noted for NFE schools. All of the NFE schools were to receive the intervention, resulting in the inability to create control schools. After reviewing different possibilities, it was agreed in the end that measuring progress over baseline would be sufficient to gauge the impact of the project.

Consider further investigating the implementation of the mathematics intervention - On more than half of all mathematics tasks, the percentage of zero scores (in other words, the number of students who could not complete the tasks) increased from baseline to final assessment, and those findings were statistically significant. On the others, zero scores decreased, and this, too, was statistically significant in nearly all cases. This finding suggests a certain amount of disequilibrium in the quality of the math intervention by subtask; explanations for this variation should be investigated, so that appropriate steps can be taken to improve mathematics achievement across the board. At the very least, the future programs could investigate the following two possibilities. First, for the NFE program, it may be the case that the curriculum is calibrated in such a way that some of the EGMA-assessed tasks are taught in later levels, e.g., Level 2. This would not apply to the ALP students, because they should have already learned this material. Second, it would be very important to determine if teachers’ content knowledge of some of these skills are at the level desired and needed.

TASK# 5: Life Skills Program Expanded, Improved and Integrated Into ALP Regular, ALP Youth and NFE Programs

Indicator	Target	Accomplishment	Percent of Target Achieved
% of CESLY learning sites where improved and expanded Life Skills program is implemented	187	355	190%

Key Accomplishments:

- Collection of data on field test in 89 NFE sites and 266 ALP schools across 6 counties
- 1,436 teachers trained to facilitate Life Skills for alternative basic education
- Life Skills Level 1 materials reviewed and endorsed by the Ministry of Education
- Zero-draft of Level 2 Life Skills Semester 1 materials developed
- Observable changes witnessed in conflict resolution, violence, gender relations, pursuit of education and other areas after completion of life skills pilot

Task 5 focused on the improvements to the life skills program and integration into both accelerated learning and alternative basic education. Of the 11 tasks in the task order Tasks 5 and 8 were the primary responsibility of the USAID/CESLY partner, Liberia YMCA. These tasks were focused on strengthening the MOE's role through collaboration at central and local levels for the following activities: technical assistance; training; capacity building and monitoring and evaluation; fostering a spirit of service to one's community through service learning activities; and provision of face-to-face career counseling to build youth skills for employment.

5.1 Expansion of Life Skills Content Area across Accelerated Learning Programs

In order to expand and improve the life skills curriculum, while the nonformal education curriculum was being reviewed and revised, USAID/CESLY implemented existing Life Skills curriculum, which had been developed and used in the Accelerated Learning Program Plus, in all 266 ALP youth and ALP regular classes during the 2009-2010 school year. This exercise was useful to undertake, as field visits demonstrated that teachers were not proficient in teaching life skills topics without specific and detailed teacher training. Life skills was then prioritized as a major area for training not only for nonformal education facilitators but for accelerated learning teachers as well.

5.2 Development and Testing of the Life Skills Curriculum

In order to improve the curriculum, the team reviewed existing global and Liberian live skills curricula, and identified areas for improvement through a Curriculum Review and Writing Workshops in January 2010. The Technical Working

Group met and identified the following areas of health and hygiene, psycho-social well being, peace and civic education, the environment, and communications around which content standards should be developed:

- (a) Promoting the personal growth and development of oneself, one's family members and other members of the community
- (b) Making decisions that maintain personal, family and community health
- (c) Communicating effectively with others
- (d) Maintaining peace and strengthening the local community; and
- (e) Protecting the natural environment

After these content standards were developed, curricular materials were developed from February 2010 through June 2010. In June, the materials were piloted at 6 sites in Monrovia. Learning from the pilot was incorporated into the materials and teacher training in July/August 2010, and by September 2010, the new Life Skills curriculum was field tested in approximately 89 NFE sites and 266 ALP sites. Other partner organizations involved in adult literacy also volunteered to conduct field tests at their centers as a means of equipping program beneficiaries with the requisite knowledge of Life Skills thereby adding value to their programs.

The Life Skills course was offered in every NFE class session as part of the core content. In addition, a clearly structured timetable was negotiated with the MOE to ensure that Life Skills was taught in ALP. Life skills classes were held 2 days a week during social studies period in ALP classes, and 3 days a week at NFE sites.



NFE Coordinators collected data on the relevance, usefulness and feasibility of the curriculum. Feedback was generated through interviews with facilitators, focus group discussion with learners, and classroom observations. This was a key step in the field test as it informed curriculum writers on future directions in revising Level 1 and the development of Level 2 materials. Feedback on the field test revealed that learners enrolled in the program were pleased with particular topics such as malaria, STIs, HIV/AIDS, gender based violence. The materials covered issues applicable to their daily lives that could help them take care of themselves and respond in healthy ways on these issues. The data also revealed that some of the content was unfamiliar to teachers, so they therefore had difficulties teaching life skills issues or “escaped” topics. This information was then back into the curriculum by simplifying the topics and vocabulary as well as linking with teacher training.

The effectiveness of the curriculum was greatly influenced by the content knowledge, facilitation skills and reading level of facilitators. Teachers were accustomed to using formalized teaching methods rather than facilitation skills. Moreover, handling sensitive topics such as reproductive health and gender issues created discomfort since these topics are seen as a taboo in most rural communities.

The effectiveness of the curriculum was greatly influenced by the content knowledge, facilitation skills and reading level of facilitators. Teachers were accustomed to using formalized teaching methods rather than facilitation skills. Moreover, handling sensitive topics such as reproductive health and gender issues created discomfort since these topics are seen as a taboo in most rural communities.

FACILITATORS NEED IN-DEPTH TRAINING IN ORDER TO EFFECTIVELY LIFE SKILLS CONTENT THAT IS UNFAMILIAR TO THEM

5.3 Training of Teachers and School Administrators

USAID/CESLY took learning from the Year 1 implementation of ALP and the pilot testing of the life skills curriculum, and the curriculum and pedagogy team rolled this into the development of training materials that focused on particularly challenging issues including reproductive health, sexually transmitted diseases and peace and conflict issues. Over the life of the project a total of 1436 teachers were trained in life skills in 5 separate professional development treatments. The training gave teachers specific practice in micro-teaching so that they could practice teaching difficult topics, receive support and become more comfortable with culturally sensitive issues (particularly those related to sexual and reproductive health). USAID/CESLY engaged teachers in micro teaching and used peer review sessions to help facilitators evaluate their training methods and Life Skills content during micro-teaching. Given the level of the teachers and observations of in-class deliver of life skills issues, teacher training was seen as paramount to achieving greater results in student comprehension of life skills issues.

5.4 Assessment of Life Skills

The curriculum team grappled with the form of assessment to be administered in Life Skills due to the fact that Life Skills are composed of cross-cutting applications of knowledge, values, attitudes and skills, and measuring the outcomes of Life Skills can be difficult. Different forms of scenario-based assessment were explored but the final consensus pointed to options that could be easily understood and implemented by facilitators, less subjective to score and cost effectively implemented. An end of project assessment was administered in July 2011 to measure how much learners had gained from the intervention of Life Skills. The challenges of second language and mixed ability led to inconsistencies in the completion of modules across the counties. Facilitators were constrained to translate from English to dialect which affected the completion of a module within a specified time. Hence learners were assessed based on the number of modules they had covered during the pilot. Out of 1,384 learners assessed within the 6 counties, 57% scored 70% and above. This shows that learners gained information on topics covered in the modules but that more work was needed to improve the pass rate.

5.5 Career Guidance and Counseling

A total of 12 Work Readiness Facilitators were assigned in USAID/CESLY counties to conduct career counseling. Individual and group career counseling were both used, with much more emphasis on group counseling. This was due to the logistical difficulties and the huge caseload of learners to be served by the counseling process. In order to engage all participants in the program, Community Participation Officers and Peace Corps Volunteers supported Work Readiness Facilitators in counseling.

Career counseling interventions helped learners identify their career goals and increase students' educational expectations for themselves. For some learners who had not decided on which careers to take on, counselors guided them in options available in their communities and possible career choices. Due to the economic situation in Liberia, options for graduates are extremely limited. In light of these challenges, many graduates proceeded either to junior secondary school or to take part in the apprenticeship program organized in coordination with World ORT (see below).

5.6 Service Learning

Service learning was embedded in the curriculum to help meet specific curriculum goals and develop character and life experience of students. Sample activities were developed, for example to celebrate Handwashing Day or to engage in environmental clean-up activities. Service Learning was covered with teachers in all five professional development interventions. It was observed that service learning is a new concept and getting teachers/facilitators to implement it was difficult. Service learning was not carried out consistently. Out of 60 schools selected to conduct service learning only 31 schools were enthusiastic to implement, conducting activities centered on gardening and hygiene awareness.

Field staff analyzed some of the challenges experienced in service learning implementation:

1. Service learning not carried out consistently. Only a few locations with particularly committed teachers carried it out.
2. Participants sometimes expect payment or food for carrying out service (though the issue of expectation of payments depends from place to place).
3. Participants thought it was a one off event, not an ongoing activity.
4. Participants sometimes associated it with punishment when a student violated school rules (like when misbehaving students are sent to brush the grass around the school compound).

Fundamentally the idea of service learning was not grasped by LRCs or schools, and further training in understanding the concept, and greater ownership, institutionalization and support by the MOE is needed.

5.7 Challenges and Recommendations

LIFE SKILLS CURRICULUM

- Life skills curriculum should be set at a very simple level, including simple vocabulary, simplified concepts with further background material for facilitators in a resource guide.
- Life skills topics should be covered in depth in teacher training, particularly concepts that are sensitive or new to facilitators (reproductive health, conflict resolution).

CAREER COUNSELING

- While career counseling was very useful, the heavy caseload of beneficiaries per staff was too high to allow for more than group counseling. A follow on program should assign a lower number of beneficiaries to each work readiness facilitator and make financial and human resource provisions for career counseling. An accurate and realistic assessment of both the educational and economic opportunities available within different communities is also imperative.
- Midway through the program, USAID/CESLY received additional support from Peace Corps and was able to train volunteers in counseling services. A follow on program may also benefit from proactively seeking out volunteers to train in psycho-social support and specifically career counseling.

SERVICE LEARNING

- Training teachers, community leadership including PTA, students, administrators, MOE staff and field staff in service learning is essential to ensure a clear understanding, participation and support. It is important that all

stakeholders understand the distinction between service learning and community service, that they make the connection between class and community, and understand the value of service without pay.

- Not only training, but curricular materials and verbal presentation of these materials should emphasize that service learning should be seen as core to the program, based out of the curriculum and connecting academics to real life.
- Connecting service learning with grades will help students place more emphasis on engaging in service learning and link it to academic performance.
- The involvement of the MOE in service learning will promote ownership at all levels of the MOE. Reinforcing service learning in schools will get teachers to understand that the activity is part of MOE goals to help youth transition from school to work. MOE staff, CEO, DEOs and other education staff should be all involved in training, planning and leadership and oversight of service learning implementation.

Task# 6: Learning Resource Centers Supported and Strengthened

Indicator	Target	Accomplishment	Percent of Target Achieved
# of visits to access LRC Services	3000	74,737 visits	2491%

Key Accomplishments:

- 74,737 visits made for use of computer lab or reading room
- New patterns of collaboration set in terms of county level support of alternative basic education
- 7 different Experience Sharing sessions to build field staff capacity

6.1 Provisions of Service to the Public

During the project period, the Learning Resource Centers (LRCs) provided services to a total of 74,347 users across all 6 counties. These services included use of the reading room and use of the computer lab. By the last quarter, this ratio was 65% male users and 35% female.

These large figures can be attributed to the concentrated inputs into the technology services at the LRCs, mainly the provision of new generators and additional computers coupled with technical support provided daily to staff to ensure the functionality of applications. Another reason for heightened use is attributed to the increase of information dissemination through training sessions and through publicizing LRC services that was conducted over the life of the project.

6.2 LRC Design

In addition to the offices of USAID/CESLY field staff, the LRCs also included computer labs and reading rooms. The computer labs provided free internet services for browsing and emailing, free computer training and access for doing research and homework. Beneficiaries of the Computer Lab included MoE staff, Education Officers, Teachers, Principals, Students, Prison officers, NGO workers, and other community members. A series of computer training sessions were conducted at the LRCs. Specific target groups include: a) county level education staff b) an all-girls for IT class c) MoE staff from within the CEOs office and d) students during vacation period.

The reading room provided learners, students, teachers, MOE staff and other partners and community members the opportunity to research, complete assignments and read materials of their interest. The library also facilitated the promotion of the culture of reading. Under this project, mobile books were distributed from the library to schools as outlined above. Through this support, students of schools that were far away from the LRCs were able to improve their reading and comprehension skills.

6.3 Broader Service Provision: Serving as a Center for Intellectual Stimulation

In addition to computer and reading services to the public, the LRCs also served as hubs for information and education sharing in counties where few other intellectual congregation points for the public existed. Some of the functions of the LRC served are:

- Research center for CESLY teachers, students, learners and others
- Host county officers meetings
- Conduct mini workshop (PTA, Administrators, USAID/CESLY teachers)
- Training sessions for external organizations such as Women’s Campaign International
- Community outreach
- Intellectual discourse for students
- Communication services
- Access to photo copier, printer, computers and internet
- Production of teaching and learning aids
- Accelerated learning resource materials
- Reading room

INVESTMENT IN HUMAN RESOURCES EQUALS EFFECTIVENESS OF PROGRAM OUTPUTS

6.4 County Level Coordination between USAID/CESLY and MOE

Coordination with partners formed an integral part of the project. USAID/CESLY staff were able to coordinate all project activities with their MoE partners, i.e. County and District Education Officers. Coordination with MoE at the county level was centered around but not limited to the following: selection of teachers and facilitators; selection of NFE sites; joint monitoring and supervision of USAID/CESLY intervention schools/sites; attendance, presentations and backstopping at USAID/CESLY training; resolving problems at USAID/CESLY intervention schools/sites; investigating and taking appropriate action(s) against principals or teachers who failed to perform duties; information sharing and free flow of communications; sharing of office space. The positive results that developed from the collaboration between MOE and USAID/CESLY show:

- Reduction in the transfer of CESLY trained teachers from USAID/CESLY schools/sites to non USAID/CESLY schools.
- DEOs, CEOs and teachers greatly increased commitment to participating in USAID/CESLY trainings
- Increase in the knowledge of MOE staff on issues of youth, alternative basic education, pedagogy, workforce development and related issues
- Joint participation in curriculum enhancement
- Increase in the capacity of EOs in computer skills
- Increase government/civil society collaboration in planning & implementing educational strategies

6.5 Human Resource Capacity Building

Over the project period, seven different capacity building sessions were held to provide guidance, clarity and skills building to county level staff. These sessions served primarily LRC staff with the MOE staff also engaged, to a lesser degree (for fuller description of MOE capacity building see Task 7). Just a few of the many topics covered include:

- School Performance Mapping
- Classroom Monitoring and supervision
- Joint MOE/CESLY Monitoring
- Enhancing Effectiveness of Community Youth Interns
- Implementation of the Development Asset Profiles
- Rollout of the Workforce Development Strategy
- Use of the Curriculum
- Support to Taa Bora Alternative Energy Effectiveness
- Managing Learning Resource Centers and Alternative Basic Education
- County Level Work Planning
- Basic computer trouble shooting skills
- Hardware and Software Effectiveness
- Financial and Administrative Management

These are just a few of the topics covered over the quarterly experience sharing sessions. These training sessions enabled staff to share information from the field, gather new mandates and new directions from the USAID/CESLY central office and build skills needed to enhance performance of the program in the field. Regular, intense and high quality communication was essential to building a committed, knowledgeable and skilled field staff team.

6.6 Leveraging of Volunteers to Support Youth Initiatives

To build on the positive experience of the ALPP program, USAID/CESLY also collaborated with Peace Corps Liberia, IFESH, and other volunteer organizations. Peace Corps volunteers were assigned in Bong and Grand Gedeh counties. Their presence at these LRCs did not just benefit these two but all six LRCs as best practices were transmitted between LRCs. Peace Corps volunteers in these LRCs were able to organize reading clubs; support culture of reading activities; build the capacity of librarians in library management and setting up Dewey Decimal system; provide support for mobile library activities; support community mobilization and sensitization for the use of the LRC; contribute to psycho-social support efforts; provide reproductive health training in Bong County for almost 135 female learners of the female social club in Bong County; develop an IT training manual; provide instructional support for the IT training for girls.

IFESH volunteers in Liberia also served as an invaluable resource. Two years in a row they served as on-site assistants to in-service training, sometimes facilitating sessions and sometimes assisting trainers develop their presentations. They also served a valuable role at the Learner Generated Content workshop in which they helped almost 100 participants edit and improve the quality of their story writing.

Coordination with National Youth Service Volunteers was also very effective. USAID/CESLY provided one week of training during the volunteers month-long training course. These volunteers then went out and provided tutoring services, support to service learning and other community engagement activities in USAID/CESLY school sites. The

caliber of volunteers was high which proved to be useful in that the tutoring they provided was accurate and relevant for students.

6.7 Challenges and Recommendations

COMPUTER LAB USAGE

- Limited computers meant only a limited number of users could access the computer lab at a time – additional computers would be beneficial.
- The slowness of the internet speed was a source of frustration. However the high cost of internet access in Liberia means that this is unlikely to be resolved until the undersea cable is in connected in 2012/13.
- The age of the computers and their susceptibility to viruses limited functionality – additional new computers and better software protection would improve this.
- The location of Grand Gedeh LRC, in the CEOs office, was quite far from central town, thus making it difficult for users to access it. However since the project is designed to work with the MOE, co-locating with the CEO is preferable.

LIBRARY SERVICES

- Many of the books in the library had been donated and were outdated. Additional books that are relevant to the Liberian school curriculum would improve the Library.
- The mobile library could also be improved via providing additional books for circulation to increase both the frequency and duration that the books are in schools.

BROADER PUBLIC SERVICE PROVISION

In some counties there are few locations which can serve as intellectual congregation points. In follow on activities it is important to continue allowing Learning Resource Centers to serve as a hub for intellectual stimulation and encouragement of youth and community members to acquire knowledge and information.

COUNTY LEVEL MOE/CIVIL SOCIETY COLLABORATION

One challenge over the life of the project was engaging the Central MOE in discussions about the long-term sustainability of the LRCs. Discussions were initiated in Year 1 but then all senior staff in the MOE were replaced. During the time it took to bring this issue to the new MOE management the USAID/CESLY field staff, continued to try to prepare county level staff for the takeover of the LRCs. USAID/CESLY also strove to embed themselves with the county MOE and work as a team so that county officers saw alternative basic education schools as their own. This was a gradual process. EOs originally saw USAID/CESLY as an “NGO” running its own schools. But over the life of the project particularly through the process of the intensive in-service training, EOs began to see the teachers as their own and used the events to disseminate messages and build relationships with the civil servants in their jurisdiction. By the end of the project, collaboration was not perfect, but it was much stronger than it was at the start.

Challenges

1. Education Officers were reluctant to monitor or supervise alongside with USAID/CESLY staff at the field level.
2. EOs were not really willing to single handily do monitoring and supervision of USAID/CESLY intervention schools/sites, without CESLY initiating their monitoring.
3. EOs always expected tips/compensation at the end of joint monitoring and supervision process.

Recommendations

1. A strategy should be put in place between EDC/CESLY and MoE at the higher level for mandatory joint monitoring and supervision visits by CESLY field staff and EOs.
2. The MOE needs to put in place and enforce a clear policy to govern EO request for incentives for performance of monitoring
3. Discussions and agreements need to be made early regarding MOE sustainability of LRCs. These agreements need to be documented in writing.

INVESTMENT IN HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

The ability to hold quarterly Experience Sharing sessions brought cohesiveness among the team, provided a forum for problems to be solved, enabled USAID/CESLY to develop and disseminate a project wide vision, provided an arena evaluating quality and provided a forum to motivate staff to perform. Staff and other attendees commented that the quality and value-added of the sessions increased with each quarter. Following programs should invest the time in periodic information sharing and capacity building to enhance program outputs and effectiveness.

YOUTH VOLUNTEERS

It is recommended that a future project continue leveraging the inputs of volunteers, especially highly skilled and self – motivated volunteers such as those seen through Peace Corps and IFESH. However volunteer management can be labor-intensive and a project should clearly designate responsibility for the management, guidance and support of volunteers.

Task #7: Improved Policies and Strengthened Capacity for Implementation

Indicator	Targets	Accomplishments	Percent of Target Achieved
# of laws, policies, regulations, or guidelines developed or modified to improve equitable access to or the quality of education services	1	1 policy passed	100%
# of officials and administrators trained.	200, at federal, county, district, school levels	1263	632%
% of MoE staff showing improvement on individual/unit capacity assessments	20% improvement	51%	257%
Number of people trained in monitoring and evaluation with USG assistance	15	323	2153%
Number of people trained in strategic information management with USG assistance	15	323	2153%
Number of host country institutions with improved management information systems as a result of USG assistance	2	2	100%
Number of host country institutions that have used USG assisted MIS information to inform administrative and management decisions	2	2	100%

Key Accomplishments:

- Alternative Basic Education Policy passed
- 20 events held in which Ministry of Education staff capacity was built.
- A total of 1,263 training incidences of MOE Central Office Staff in areas including communications, maintaining retention of adolescent girls, alternative energy, workforce development, assessment, critical thinking and literacy and numeracy
- Significant increase in joint monitoring and supportive supervision
- 75 Master Trainers received train-the-trainer workshop on how to use the ABE curricula in Literacy, Numeracy, Life Skills and Work Readiness
- Input provided to development of Education Act
- 15 County Education Officers and 103 District Education Officers received capacity building skills to serve Liberian youth and discussed methods of Sustaining the Momentum of Alternative Basic Education system and policy in Liberia
- 52 Education Officers from Montserrado, Bong, Lofa, Nimba, Grand Gedeh and Maryland trained in Basic Computer Skills.

Task #7 focused on building the capacity and strengthening the policies of the MOE. The original contract called for a broad focus in support of basic education quality and enhancements in both the formal and nonformal sectors. During the program revision, at project mid-term, USAID/CESLY agreed with USAID to focus Task 7 activities in order to specifically strengthen and support the Ministry in areas relevant to nonformal education and youth and development.

The following activities discuss the achievements undertaken in various areas of policy development and capacity building.

WHEN MOE STAFF HAVE HANDS-ON ENGAGEMENT IN DEVELOPMENT, IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING THEY DEVELOP A SENSE OF OWNERSHIP AND COMMITMENT AND ENTHUSIASM THAT IS INVALUABLE

7.1 From “Capacity Building” to Technical Collaboration

USAID/CESLY worked closely with MOE staff, recognizing the skills and experience that they brought with them and identifying areas where these skills could be improved. Year 1 focused on establishing a solid educational program, with capacity building occurring mainly through teacher training activities and engagement in curriculum and framework design and revision.

MOE capacity building was taken on as a more explicit activity in Year 2 as the project used inputs from key senior MOE staff to design its capacity building plan. At the central MOE level, CESLY conducted regular workshops on topics identified and prioritized with Ministry staff. These intensive workshops were held within the Ministry during regular work hours. Relevant Ministry technical staff were invited as participants with some MOE staff serving as co-facilitators. In addition, key external experts or stakeholders were also invited to stimulate discussion and dialogue. County level capacity building occurred through a series of numerous events. Over the course of the project, training sessions were conducted for MOE staff in the following areas.

1. Dynamic Teaching and Learning in the Classroom
2. Planning for Large Scale Teacher Training
3. Sustaining and Maintaining Instructional Material Resources
4. Curriculum Framework Design and Development
5. Reviewing of Curriculum Field Testing
6. Training of Trainers in NFE Curriculum Content in: Literacy, Level 1, Semester 1 & 2
7. Training of Trainers in NFE Curriculum Content in: Numeracy, Level 1, Semester 1 & 2
8. Training of Trainers in NFE Curriculum Content in: Work Readiness, Level 1, Semester 1 & 2
9. Training of Trainers in NFE Curriculum Content in: Life Skills, Level 1, Semester 1 & 2
10. Training of Trainers in NFE Curriculum Content in: Reading for ALP Level 3
11. Training of Trainers in NFE Curriculum Content in: Math for ALP Level 3
12. Dealing with Mixed Level NFE Classes
13. Focus on Numeracy : MATH is FUN!
14. Life Skills Content Knowledge for MOE Central Staff
15. Work Readiness Content Knowledge for MOE Central Staff
16. Work Readiness and Workforce Development Strategy
17. Workforce Development: Placement into Post-Program Options
18. Work-related Money Management
19. Critical Thinking
20. Materials Development and Assessment
21. Comprehensive Approach to Reading Instruction
22. Leveling Down Reading Materials to a Neo-literate Audience
23. Second Language Issues and Use of Mother Tongue in Education
24. How to Undertake Enrollment and Retention Campaigns
25. Enrolling and Maintaining Adolescent Girls in School
26. Boosting Girls Retention and Achievement
27. Prevention of Gender Based Violence
28. Guidance and Counseling
29. School Performance Mapping by County
30. Managing Learning Resource Centers
31. LRC Sustainability and County Level Engagement

32. Improving LRC Efficiency
33. Project Management
34. Roll out and Implementation of Policy
35. Early Grade Reading and Math Assessment
36. Conducting EGRA Informal Assessments
37. Monitoring and Supervision
38. Classroom Observation
39. Radio Production for Educational Purposes
40. How to Use Radio Distance Education Modules
41. Website Enhancement
42. Internal Communications Flow
43. Information Technology Basic training
44. How to Conduct Videography for Recording Teachers
45. Alternative Energy Management: Taa Bora Construction and Maintenance
46. Locally Generated Materials Development
47. Formation of Alternative Basic Education Committees (PTAs)
48. Reviewing M & E Indicators and Data Quality in Nonformal Education
49. Quarterly Work Plan Development
50. How to Liaise with the Press on Nonformal Education Issues
51. Fiscal Responsibility with USAID Resources

These topics and issues were covered in the following types of events:

- Sustaining Momentum of Alternative Basic Education and Workforce Development for Youth (June 2011)
- Building Skills of Liberian Youth (Jan 2011)
- Pre-service Training of RTTI Instructors (Sep 2011)
- Master Training of In-service Trainers (Dec 2009, July 2010)
- Education Officer Training (July 2010)
- Curriculum Consensus Building Workshops (Jan 2010)
- Curriculum Writing Workshops (Jan 2010)
- Curriculum Framework Development Workshops (Jan 2010, Feb 2011, August 2011)
- Locally Generated Materials Workshop: Liberians Writing for Liberians (April 2011)
- Early Grade Reading and Math Assessment Training Workshops (November 2009, April 2010, Jan 2011, March 2011)
- Learning Resource Center Experience Sharing (quarterly basis -Nov 2009-June 2011)
- Monthly MOE Capacity Building Sessions (February, March, April 2011)
- Week-long IT Basic Skills Courses (June 2011)
- As well as many other venues and fora in which capacity building sessions could be woven in.

USAID/CESLY took the opportunity to maximize opportunities for capacity building. For instance, MOE staff participated in the quarterly strategic planning with USAID/CESLY technical staff, developed key messages and implementation strategies alongside USAID/CESLY staff and both participated in and designed and led sessions during the training of Master Trainers. In many of these sessions (particularly Sustaining Momentum, Building Skills of Liberian Youth, and Experience Sharing) USAID/CESLY also sought to actively seek out the engagement of NGOs and other development partners. Terms such as “partners” and “partnership” were reiterated and specific efforts made not to differentiate between employees, civil society and MOE so that all could see themselves as collaborators in alternative basic education.

7.2 Joint Monitoring and Supervision in the Field

USAID/CESLY found that the ongoing engagement of MOE staff in project activities was highly productive for furthering project outcomes. In October 2010, USAID/CESLY invited members of the Accelerated Learning unit,

Primary Education unit and the Assistant Minister for Technical and Professional Education on field visits to USAID/CESLY sites. These field visits were productive, and resulted in increased engagement, commitment, comprehension of issues related to basic education for older youth and the realities on the ground. USAID/CESLY also engaged MOE staff in In-Service Trainings and field site visits in all of the six counties, with individuals from the Policy and Planning, Teacher Education, Communications, Primary Education, PTA, School Health, Adult Education, Secondary Education, Monitoring and Evaluation, and other units participating.

MOE staff were engaged in monitoring and supervision trips on the following themes: Support to Development of Linkages in Livelihoods and Workforce Development; Community Outreach; Communications; Promotion of Female Participation in Nonformal Education; Quality in the Classroom ; Instructional Materials Management; Implementation of Qualitative Assessment of Teaching and Learning; Monitoring and Evaluation; Curriculum Field Testing; Management of Alternative Basic Education and Learning Resource Centers.

USAID/CESLY and MOE realized that these trips were valuable and mutually beneficial for the Ministry, for the schools and for USAID/CESLY as a project. In the field, those trips have allowed EOs, principals, teachers and students to have direct contact with central MOE officials, to learn from their guidance and to voice their constraints. MOE staff come back from trips with a knowledge of realities in the field, an understanding of the real constraints that are being faced, and a renewed sense of purpose and commitment to their work. They also collaborate with USAID/CESLY and jointly engage in problem-solving and completion of terms of reference for the visits. Below follow a few of the comments of project beneficiaries when asked about joint MOE and USAID/CESLY monitoring.

Male ALP Youth Teacher, Montserrado: “CESLY and MOE staff joint monitoring has a great impact. This tells me that CESLY is in partnership with Government and that the government is aware of what CESLY is doing. It has great impact.”

Male ALP Principal, Montserrado: “CESLY and MOE joint monitoring always keep us on guide to the extent that the DEO often say we should not make him shame.”

Male ABE Facilitator, Montserrado: “Once we are monitored by CESLY based on the partnership with MOE we felt that we are being monitor by MOE.”

Male ABE Facilitator, Bong: “Yes, DEOs and CEOs are also part of CESLY in-service training so they pay regular visits to my school and inspect my roll book and lesson plan book so I make sure everything is alright.”

Female ABE Facilitator, Bong: “Yes, because they too have been part of CESLY training so they do regular monitoring and supervision. They even encourage me to carry CESLY methodology of participatory learning to the conventional school I’m teaching. I am also regular in class and very careful in lesson planning to make sure the right thing is done.”

A major challenge to this activity was the need for clarity in covering of field costs. The project worked with USAID and other education stakeholders to develop consistency in payment so that the project managed MOE travel costs at a reasonable rate that didn’t compete or detract from the engagement of other organizations with the MOE (see discussion below).

POLICY CHANGE CAN EFFECT PROGRESS FOR YOUTH AT THE UNDERCURRENT LEVEL, THAT SOUND IMPLEMENTATION ALONE CANNOT

7.3 Ministry of Education Passes Policy on Alternative Basic Education

After a policy development process that started in January 2010, including consultative workshops, policy planning settings, vetting with ministerial authorities, revisions to policy, and other activities, the MOE approved a policy on ABE in May 2011. The policy creates a national system for the planning, training, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of alternative forms of basic education for out-of-school youth and young adults throughout Liberia. The policy aims to reach young people, 13 and above, who have either never attended or not completed formal schooling and who wish to

The ABE system to be operationalized across Liberia prepares youth in literacy, numeracy, life skills, and work readiness enabling youth and adults to transition into formal education by achieving 6th grade equivalency through the completion of three levels of coursework or gaining skills relevant to the world of work. The policy details how skills needed by youth and young adults differ from those required by young children. Education for youth needs to address important daily living skills and knowledge such as money management, environmental practices, health concerns, and conflict resolution skills.

In June, 2011, USAID/CESLY, in collaboration with Ministry of Education, held a three day training program under the theme: *Sustaining the Momentum: Alternative Basic Education and Workforce Development for Youth*. The conference was conducted in order for the investment in education and livelihoods for youth to be reviewed, lessons learned revisited and plans made for continuation of efforts. During this event, participants, including MOE central office staff, CEOs, DEOs, civil society, learners, teachers, administrators, and community leaders worked together to develop implementation plans in order to guide the roll-out of the ABE Policy in Liberia. The plans included, but were not limited to: Roles and Responsibilities in Promoting the ABE System in Liberia; Recommendations for Improving the Quality of Service Delivery of Educational and Livelihoods Activities Implemented for Youth in Liberia; and Sustainability Plan Indicating Commitment to Establishing a National Agenda for Alternative Basic Education in Liberia, among others.

Elements of the policy and resulting implementation plan have also been incorporated into the Ministry of MOE's Medium Term Plan for Education Reform and Development in Liberia.

7.4 Stakeholders Engaged in Sustaining the Momentum of Alternative Basic Education and Workforce Development for Youth

Sustaining the Momentum: Alternative Basic Education and Workforce Development for Youth was conducted in June, 2011 in KRTTI. This event was held in order for the investment in education and livelihoods for youth through the USAID/CESLY project to be reviewed, lessons learned revisited and plans made for continuation of efforts. In order move ABE forward, MOE staff at central and county levels, as well key education stakeholders, implementers, community leaders, as well as representatives of teachers, principals and students were trained with up to date information on the latest developments in the field and practical experience in the skills relevant to sustaining education for youth.

The ABE policy was launched at this event. Speeches and addresses on behalf of the MOE during the opening ceremony from the Assistant Minister for Administration, the Assistant Minister for Technical and Professional Education, the Assistant Minister for Primary Education, the Assistant Minister for Secondary Education, the Assistant Minister for Planning, Research & Development, Director of Communications, Director of Adult Education, and Director of Parent Teacher Association Unit.

An exhibition was held, which allowed participants to get direct experience of alternative energy lanterns, number cards, curriculum materials, reading materials and other materials distributed to the field. Following the main plenary session, in-depth capacity building sessions were held on various topics, including: Sustaining dynamic teaching learning in the classroom; Monitoring and supervision; Retaining adolescent girls and young women in the program; Sustaining and maintaining instructional material resources; Managing learning resource centers and alternative basic education; Sustaining livelihood & workforce development; Documentation and record management; Community mobilization, retention and outreach; Sustaining and maintaining alternative energy resources.

The event was significant in that it brought EOs from all counties, together in one place and gave them a forum for learning and interacting together. One consistent message regarding ABE was delivered to all government and civil society members as well as representatives of teachers, learners, administrators and communities and other stakeholders.

7.5 Development of an Alternative Basic Education Field Implementation Manual

Another major deliverable of this project was the development of an ABE field implementation manual. While a large level of effort was placed on writing the curriculum, significant effort also went into designing the implementation methods to be used in piloting the new ABE program. The implementation manual provides guideline to help MOE or civil society implementers put in the operating strategies that can make the content of the curriculum successful.

This ABE Implementation Field Manual was created to:

1. Serve as framework and guidelines through which ABE intervention can be standardized within Liberia (understanding that consistency is desirable, but not uniformity).
2. Serve as a tool for translation the ABE policy that into implementable steps
3. Detail communication and community outreach interventions, specifically addressing strategies for adolescent girls and young women' retention in ABE programs.
4. Provide implementers with tools for implementing the curriculum and the pedagogical approaches to accompany it.
5. Outline a management and support system to enhance effectiveness and ownership of the program.
6. provide suggestions and strategies to help educational implementers link to workforce and livelihood options

This manual was not mandated, but was proactively developed when the importance of the implementation components to the success of the curriculum field test were noted.

7.6 Contribution to the Development of Education Law

The development of the youth-oriented ABE policy has coincided with and has fed into the development of the National Education Law. At the National Education Consultative Conference, convened at the Cuttington University Campus in Suakoko, Bong County, from 3rd to 5th February 2011, USAID/CESLY provided by a diverse set of stakeholders into the Basic Education Working Group, covering concerns and issues relevant to basic education for youth. The outcomes of all deliberations and consultations were forwarded for input into the development of the new Education Act which was recently signed by President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf.

The project ensured that a Technical Specialist with relevant technical expertise contributed to youth related issues in various working groups, including Basic Education, Education Law, Evaluation, Tertiary Education, Secondary Education, Workforce Development, Vocational Training, and Early Child Development. CESLY later took an active role in documenting, achieving consensus and typing up inputs to the Education Law, Teacher Education and Basic Education working groups.

Following the conference USAID/CESLY made detailed edits to the Education Law and incorporated consolidated inputs from local Technical Specialists, in-country Technical Experts, and overseas Technical Advisors. USAID/CESLY also engaged in collaborating with other education stakeholders and ensuring they had access to information and opportunities to contribute.

7.7 Contributions into the 2012-2017 Medium Term Plan for Education Reform and Development in Liberia

USAID/CESLY later contributed to the development of the Medium Term 5 Year Plan that would feed into Liberia's Poverty Reduction Strategy. The strategic objectives include: (1) to operationalize the ABE policy into a functioning system, (2) to integrate ABE into the teacher education program to provide qualified teachers for this important economic development mechanism, (3) to create a mechanism for the placement of ABE learners into workforce development placements, and (4) to increase the impact of ABE through the coordination and collaboration of non-state actors.

These inputs represent the culmination of two years of policy work, in which dialogue was initiated among stakeholders, policy developed, approved and passed, and finally the actions emanating from that policy formulated into Liberia's out of school youth plan to be reflected in the longer Poverty Reduction Strategy that feeds into Liberia's 30 year strategic plan to move from a low income to a middle income country.

7.8 Policy Dialogue: "Friday- No Good School Day"

In Quarter 6 extensive field visits revealed a serious concern: In many schools across Liberia there is a belief that Friday is "no good school day". Both teachers and students are often not found at school on Fridays, a practice which seems to be pervasive across all six counties.

After identifying this trend across many sites, the CESLY technical team raised the issue at the MoE central level and conversations were held with various Ministry officials. Follow up actions occurred in Quarter 7, when USAID/CESLY convened Education Officers from all 6 counties at the Zorzor Building Skills for Serving Liberian Youth activity and presented the findings, the situation, the MOE central policy on the situation and steps that could be taken to ameliorate the situation. EOs were later asked to give presentations to all present at the opening session of the In-service Training, so that teachers and principals could hear directly from County officials the MOE's policy about conducting of school on Fridays. These efforts were followed up by USAID/CESLY monitoring efforts to reinforce time on task in the classroom. In a follow-on program, this situation will need to be monitored so that progress or regress can be collaboratively addressed by the MOE and those monitoring in the field.

7.9 Addressing Demand for Incentives from MOE Staff

One perennial challenge faced by the program was demand for incentives on behalf of MOE employees. This occurred at all levels with CEOs and DEOs generally requesting a "tip", telephone scratch cards, fuel or some other incentives to monitor MOE schools supported by USAID/CESLY. The project found that sometimes MOE staff would make decisions about whether to attend workshops depending on who gave better per diem. They also would chose to go or not to participate in USAID/CESLY field visits or field training site depending on the allocated transport allowance. The issue of incentives was discussed with an all-EO event in July 2010, and brought both contentious debate from many and concurrence from a few. In January 2011, USAID/CESLY was formally approached with a letter from all EOs demanding more perks at training and incentives for monitoring. At this juncture, USAID/CESLY used the opportunity to more formally address the problem.

The letter was shared with USAID and “Guidelines for Covering Costs of Ministry of Education Employees” was developed. This included costing for: transport, meals, incidentals, lodging for in-town training, out-of-town training and field visits. These guidelines were then shared at a series of Education Sector meetings and with finance administrators from all USAID-funded education projects. Once the guidelines were agreed upon these forwarded to USAID for further dialogue with MOE top officials. It is hoped that putting in place a consistent framework will help MOE staff focus on the content of the work, reduce competition between programs, and decrease unproductive investment of project funds.

COORDINATION ENHANCES COHERENCE AND IMPACT IN THE EDUCATION SECTOR

7.10 Linkages, Coordination and Collaboration with Partners

One area of progress over the life of the project is the furtherance of collaborative relationships with other education partners. USAID/CESLY became a regular participant in the I-NGO forum monthly coordination meetings and held individual meetings with Concern, LTTP, ECSEL, GOAL, NAEAL, IBIS, Ministry of Gender, Ministry of Justice, FAWE, Spark, NRC, World Bank, UNICEF and a series of other partners active in education and workforce development. In addition, USAID/CESLY was very active in stimulating joint meetings with USAID Education Partners in beginning the first of a series of cross project meetings with GOAL, LTTP, LMEP, FORECAST and EHELD. Meetings were held on general coordination, and participation in trainings, sharing of curriculum materials and information etc.

Beyond the USAID partners, USAID/CESLY also collaborated with a number of other partners. These included the Ministry of Gender’s Empowering Adolescent Girls Program (EPAG) where collaboration including the sharing of resources, serving on an Award Selection Committee to select Literacy Implementing partners, and recruitment of graduates to participate in EPAG’s Business Training. USAID/CESLY also worked with CONCERN and IBIS as partners who implemented the alternative basic education curriculum field test version in their own education programs.

Numerous other interactions were held with a variety of other actors and stakeholders in the fields of education, youth, economic development, environment, economic growth, energy and other areas. Coordination between partners such as this is improving. However there is still a requirement for improved coordination and collaboration to reduce duplication, increase sharing of resources and increase information sharing across projects.

7.11 Celebration of International Celebrations

Over the life of the project, USAID/CESLY helped commemorate international celebrations such as International Handwashing Day which was observed via service learning activities. USAID/CESLY was particularly engaged in the celebration of International Literacy Day celebration. In 2010, the celebration was observed in the YMCA gymnasium and the Deputy Minister spoke of the new draft policy. In 2011, International Literacy Day was celebrated by a host of partners, civil society and the MOE, was coordinated by the Adult Education Forum, composed of 13 partners and chaired by the National Adult Education Association of Liberia. Over 450 adults and youths celebrated the occasion, which included an outdoor parade, public symposium and dramatic presentation. The media including newspapers, radio and television highlighted the significance of the day.

LONG TERM PLANNING AND TRAINING HELPS EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS PREPARE FOR MORE EFFECTIVE DELIVERY OF ABE CONTENT THROUGH BETTER TRAINED TEACHERS

7.12 Trainer-of-Trainers Workshop to Integrate ABE into Pre-service Training at Teacher Training Institutes

USAID/CESLY conducted one major Pre-service Master Trainer of Trainers Workshop for faculty and administrators of ZRTTI and other MOE to equip them with the skills to deliver pre-service training to teachers-in-training in content and pedagogy related to ABE. MOE staff learned the skills necessary to serve as master trainers of ABE and to run pilot training schemes in ABE model classrooms. Microteaching was emphasized throughout the training and nearby villagers were brought in to participate as micro-teaching ABE participants.

One objective in Liberia's Medium Development Plan is the integration of ABE into pre-service teacher training and this pilot training represents the first step toward that objective. Conducting training with pre-service instructors will allow for a much more thorough and grounded understanding of literacy and numeracy by upcoming teacher trainees, so that one of the key constraints on student achievement, i.e. teacher mastery of content, can be gradually overcome.

7.13 Recommendations

In sum, USAID/CESLY focused its first year on ensuring its education and field program was solid, while the second year of programming allowed for more direct focus on policy development and strengthened capacity for implementation. In order for this momentum to continue, the following recommendations are proposed.

- Continue working closely with MOE staff at all levels in all aspects of the project, including design, monitoring and evaluation.
- Actively engage the MOE in roll out of the ABE policy implementation plans, not only in active counties but at the MOE level and across in Liberia. In addition, the ABE Field Implementation Manual needs to be shared with MOE, reviewed by partners, discussed and dialogued. This could be integrated into the review and approval process of upcoming versions of curriculum.
- The initial pilot to train RTTI instructors in Delivery of ABE of Pre-Service Teachers should be followed up. ZRTTI instructors need further training, particularly practice in micro-teaching. ZRTTI as an institution needs support in maintaining a pilot class in the neighboring village of Fisebu. A plan needs to be developed on how TTI instructors and teachers can become certified. And most importantly, the results of the activity need to be tracked and progress shared with MOE, LTTP and other education partners.
- The Adult Education Forum needs support in order to be able to provide more awareness on literacy activities and the International Literacy Day celebration
- The issue of payment to MOE needs to be directly addressed through discussed between USAID and MOE. The decisions on payment for transport, lodging, per diem or honoraria need to be agreed upon by both institutions and widely promulgated to all MOE staff as well as all education sector partners.
- Proactive efforts need to be made to collaborate between USAID partners, as well as with UNICEF, World Bank, UNESCO and other implementing partners, like Concern, IBIS and many others. Continued involvement in I-NGO fora and regular USAID meetings, together with the creation of a new donor coordinator position at the MOE will go some way to alleviating some of the disconnects.

Task # 8: Education Supplies Distribution

Item	Indicator Targets	Current Level	Percent of Target Achieved
# of books distributed	100% of total-300,965 books	384,594	128 %

Key Accomplishments:

- 307,452 formal school textbooks delivered directly to school sites.
- 77,142 textbooks donated by Brother's Brothers Foundation delivered to MOE & ABE schools and LTPP for teacher training sites

Task 8 supports increased access to educational materials for primary (grade 1) and junior secondary students (grades 7, 8 & 9) across Liberia. The YMCA was the local partner supporting EDC in achieving specific task 8 outcome of 300,000 textbooks distributed to all 419 public and 132 community junior secondary schools in all 15 counties. The specific contractual responsibilities of the YMCA for this task were to assess the readiness of schools to receive, maintain, and use the books, allocate books amongst the schools according to data on grades and enrollment and distribute books to schools that are ready to receive them, and make arrangements for the storage of books to be distributed later. Subsequently the MOE expanded the target number to 2,496 schools.

RELIABLE DATA SOURCES ARE KEY TO EFFICIENT LARGE SCALE DISTRIBUTION OF SUPPLIES

8.1 Assessing the Readiness of Schools to Receive, Maintain, and Use the Books

Assessment and school verification exercises were carried out in November through December, 2009, and also in July 2010, respectively with DEOs, principals and PTA authorities. The assessment reached a total of 270 sampled schools or 49% of the targeted 551 schools across the 15 counties of Liberia. A spot-check verification and desk research was additionally carried out (in consultation with the MOE EMIS and local education officers) based on the MOE's expanded target of 2,496 schools. The assessment report provided information on student population per grade levels, the road conditions to gain access to the selected schools, total number of schools to possibly receive textbooks, the availability of storage facilities, and the issue of preparedness for storage and security of the textbooks when delivered.

The assessment result was one of the factors that informed the process for the planning of textbooks distribution. YMCA put into place appropriate mechanisms that yielded an assured social mobilization and community participation in the assessment and ensured textbooks distribution in an organized manner.

Findings, Analysis of Findings & Results: Findings during the assessment, including the total student population of targeted schools and grade levels (grades 1, 7, 8 and 9) for the textbooks distribution, were categorized and allocation made accordingly in view of the MOE ratio for number of students to a textbook. Additionally other aspects such as

road condition, availability of storage facilities and investigation of current policy for books storage and utilization formed part of the assessment and are further explained in the sub-paragraphs below.

Road Condition/Access to Schools: Road conditions to many schools were challenging. More remote schools needed books to be off-loaded to smaller 4x4 vehicles, to motorbikes and even to foot to reach the schools.

Security and Safety of Storage Facilities: Only 49% of the schools assessed had storage facilities, many of which needed significant rehabilitation. In many locations there were no systems in place for assured security of the textbooks and other supplies. The fact that many schools are located at outskirts of communities without security guards posed risk for possible loss or theft of the textbooks and other school supplies. Against these constraints, transport contractors and YMCA agents were strongly cautioned to endeavor as much as possible to deliver directly to schools (instead of using county or district level storage facilities, if available) and to encourage school authorities to distribute textbooks to students with immediate effect on receipt of their consignments.

Existence of Policy for Books Storage, Security and Utilization: Many school authorities reported that they had some kind of system in place to manage book storage, security and use; however the system was not necessarily documented. Due to the lack of existing materials in many schools it was difficult to assess whether the system was indeed in effect.

8.2 Receipt of Textbooks from Publishers at MOE Warehouse

A total of 310,695 textbooks were received for distribution. A total of 206,735 textbooks comprising Mathematics, Science and Agriculture and teachers' guide for Elementary and Junior high schools were received from Longman and Pearson, and a total of 103,960 English textbooks were received from EVANS publishers. YMCA inventoried the books and divided them among the schools according to data on grades and enrollment.

8.3 Allocation of textbooks to schools

Allocation of textbooks was conducted in accordance with the MOE EMIS data and based on the MOE's official ratio of two students to one textbook. The remaining books were allocated to selected schools with larger population size in Bong, Nimba, Montserrado, Margibi and Grand Bassa counties.

8.4 Distribution of Textbooks to Schools

The national launch of the CESLY Textbooks Distribution was held on August 2, 2010. The occasion was attended by representatives of USAID, MOE, EDC, YMCA, and other education sector representatives. The launch was conducted at the MOE Warehouse on Newport Street, Monrovia, where the textbooks were kept.

Textbooks Distribution Summary Table

County	# of sch Districts	# of Schs	# Of Sch reached	Percentage	Student Population	Text Books Per Population	Excess Books Distributed	Total Books Distributed
Nimba	12	431	431	100%	25,692	36,620	14,914	51,534
Monterrado	6	180	180	100%	29,204	46,012	36,372	82,384
Cape Mount	4	136	136	100%	4,429	5,945		5,945
Bomi	4	81	81	100%	3,038	4,432		4,432
Gbarpolu	6	112	112	100%	4,480	5,184		5,184
Margibi	3	100	100	100%	11,941	17,728	21,648	39,376
Bassa	5	179	179	100%	8,006	9,732	5,892	15,624
Bong	8	296	296	100%	21,729	31,881	12,564	44,445
Lofa	6	270	269	99.6%	16,000	22,104		22,104
Rivercess	4	116	116	100%	4,150	4,662		4,662
River Gee	4	94	94	100%	3,756	4,880		4,880
G.Gedeh	6	105	105	100%	4,464	6,468		6,468
Grand Kru	8	119	119	100%	4,555	6,194		6,194
Maryland	8	134	126	94%	5,950	8,072		8,072
Sinoe	7	143	143	100%	4,754	6,148		6,148
		2,496	2,487		152,148	216,062	91,390	307,452

With reference to the above table, the YMCA reached the premises of 2,487 schools, or 99.6% of the 2,496 schools targeted with 216,062 books. Additionally, 128 schools out of this number were again reached with 91,390 surplus textbooks based on approval of the MOE. Hence, 307,452 books were delivered. This is 102% of the targeted 300,965 books for delivery. In addition to ground transportation, UNMIL also provided support by airlifting 119 cartoons or 2,142 kilograms of textbooks to Greenville, Sinoe County, and a YMCA staff to and from Greenville to support distribution in the county. Of the nine schools not reached, eight were in Sodoke School District, Maryland County which could not be reached due to the inaccessibility of the district and hence the books were signed over to the CEO, whilst one was in Lofa which had closed.

8.5 Challenges and Recommendations on Textbook Distribution

Under the approved Scope of Work for Task 8, the agreed Outcome of the Task was to distribute 300,965 textbooks to 551 MOE approved schools. Actual quantity of textbooks delivered by publishers however increased by 3.56% (or 10,695 additional books) and number of schools increased from 551 to 2,496 (or 352.9%) – ie, additional 1,945 schools. With a fixed allocation of US\$300,000, cost management and task completion schedules were extremely difficult.

- Budgeting for textbook distribution needs to be commensurate with the actual number of schools to be reached

Enrollments in a number of schools were higher compared to the 2008/2009 school data provided by the MOE and used to determine textbooks rations per school. This affected the likelihood of school administrators distributing the textbooks to students as there were more students than the number of textbooks available. It was intended that textbooks

would be given to students on a basis of 2 pupils to 1 textbook. Also, some schools had changed status from primary to junior secondary without prior knowledge of the MOE and were requesting textbooks for junior secondary schools. YMCA however kept to the official data provided by the MOE.

- Enrollment data needs to be accurate prior to devising distribution plan and budget.

During the distribution exercise, it was observed that previously supplied educational materials such as textbooks, school bags, notebooks, etc, were still stocked in the storerooms of some schools. The risk is that textbooks distributed may not be given to students for use as intended.

- The MOE needs to ensure that principals and teachers are utilizing the books provided in an appropriate manner.

Delay in response to questions about changes to operational plans caused increases in budget required (an increase of approximately 13% of the original budget) as some schools received two separate deliveries.

- The MOE should be much more directly involved in future distributions, with donors allocating responsibility to the MOE and with the MOE seeing the distribution, storage and proper use of textbooks as a responsibility of their own that development partners assist with, rather than viewing it as a sole responsibility of an NGO.

Task #9: Small Grants under Contract in Support of Project Objectives

Item	Indicator Targets	Current Level	Percent of Target Achieved
Number of grants disbursed	All ALP and NFE sites	Grants disbursed to 355 sites	n/a

Key Accomplishments:

- Production/procurement and distribution of 333,320 teaching and learning materials
- Capacity building of school communities, school administrators, MOE staff and stakeholders in stewardship and management of the materials

PRESENCE OF INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS IN THE CLASSROOM INCREASES TEACHER AND STUDENT PASSION FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

9.1 Production and Distribution of Instructional Materials

By the end of the project 330,320 assorted teaching and learning materials had been delivered to ABE project participants (not including all the textbooks distributed to formal schools).

In year 1 of the project USAID CESLY realized the great need for having instructional materials in the field and realigned the budget to put a substantially larger amount of funding into the distribution of the teaching and learning materials. The grants strategy was also finalized to focus purely on instructional material supply.

By the end of the project, just a selection of the items that had been distributed includes:

Sonie Story-Student edition Semester 1	Numeracy Work Books (for NFE learners)
Sonie Story-Teacher edition Semester 1	Literacy-Facilitator's Manual-Level I
Teacher Skills Builder s	Life Skills Manual (for facilitators)
Story charts (16 stories)	Work Readiness Manual (for facilitators)
Sight Word	Literacy Manual Semester II (for facilitators)
Word and Letter Cards	Numeracy Manual Semester II (for facilitators)
Multiplication chart (for NFE learners)	Literacy workbook
Alphabet Chart (for NFE learners)	Numeracy workbook
Number chart (for NFE learners)	Sight words for NFE learners
Replica money--Liberian dollars (5, 10,20,50, 100)	Sustaining the Momentum Alt Basic Educ
Replica money--United States dollars (1-100)	Mgment materials
OYSS BOOKS (Grades 1-6)	Numeracy Workbook (Module D)
Skill Builders-English(Topics 1-7)	Sonie Story 2
Skill Builders-Math(Topics 1-7)	ABE Policy
Work Book-English(Topics 1-7)	School start-up packages (full set of teaching and learning aids for each site)
Work Book-Math (Topics 1-7)	
Literacy Work books (for NFE learners)	

The reaction of participants to these learning materials was very positive. Participants took Sonie’s Story and made songs, dramas and reading competitions out of it. In one site, an individual attending the graduation ceremony was moved to fund a scholarship to the competition winner. School communities were extremely pleased with the receipt and use of materials in their communities. The following quotations from the teaching and learning assessment describe some of the reaction of project beneficiaries.

Male ALP Regular Teacher, Lofa: “Because of the abundance of supplies, it makes us energetic in our teaching.”

Male ABE Facilitator, Montserrado: “In the conventional school, we borrow learning materials or teach from our heads, but with these learning materials there are changes.”

Male NFE Facilitator Grand Gedeh County: “The reading books made us to know what is inside the book.”

Male ABE Facilitator, Montserrado: “The program being new, the learners did not understand the contents areas, but after receiving the materials and they were introduced to the learners by me, the materials help direct demonstration in classes in order for learners move faster.”

Male ALP Regular Teacher, Lofa: “Especially the visual aids, it makes the lesson easy for the students to understand.”

Male ALP Youth Teacher, Lofa: “For me, [the most useful input was] the reading especially the Sonie Story. They read it as if they were there during the writing of the book.”

All in all, from focus groups discussions with 475 project participants, the subject or value of instructional materials was raised 100 times by different discussants.

It is important to ensure that these materials are not lost or squandered at the end of the USAID/CESLY project. In order to try to prevent this from happening, a memorandum of understanding was signed in each school community regarding stewardship and management of the materials. The project also conducted training at the Sustaining the Momentum workshop in order to reinforce with EOs, teachers, learners, school administrators, community members, civil society representatives and project staff members the value and procedures of managing the instructional materials to ensure long term use and benefit.

9.2 USAID/CESLY Recommendations for Effective Instructional Materials Supply In Future Youth Programming

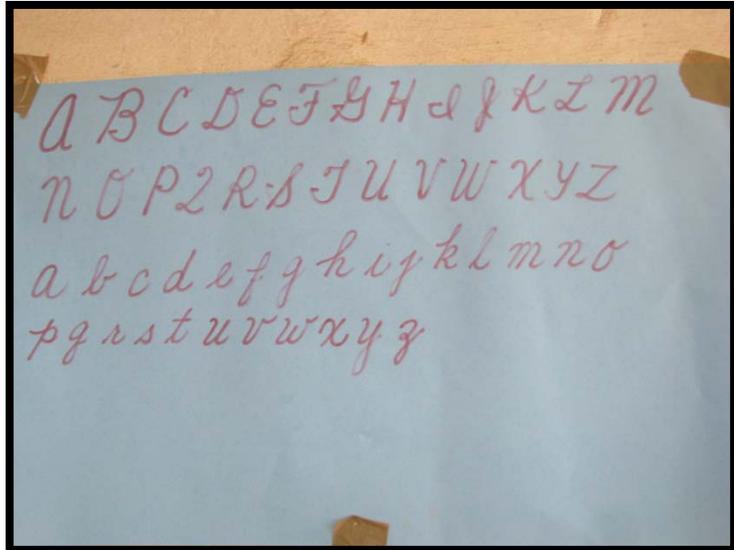
The project learned the following lessons through the process of large instructional materials distribution.

TIMELY DELIVERY OF INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

It is important to ensure that materials are delivered in a timely manner to ensure that learners and facilitators enjoy the maximum benefit. Efficient planning to allow sufficient development, approval, production, and delivery time is all imperative.

USAGE OF INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

Materials being either misappropriated or stored in a dusty box in the principal's office rather than being used for their intended purposes is a perennial issue in Liberia. Instructional materials must be accompanied by a memorandum of understanding and formal ceremony to help participants develop a sense of accountability for the materials. It is also necessary to conduct periodic monitoring trips with central MOE and county level education staff fully engaged.



The presence of the MOE helps a) the Ministry understand what materials are being supplied and b) helps school communities develop a sense of weight and accountability about the stewardship of the materials they have been entrusted with.

SECURITY OF GOODS SUPPLIED

There were several reports of burglaries to school property and as a result, school authorities sometimes kept instructional materials off site. In order to encourage the materials to remain on site and be used regularly, then doors, locks, and other safety measures should be provided to school communities.

Task#10: Identify, Promote and Manage Implementation of Public-Private Partnerships in Support of Project Objectives and Workforce Development

Item	Year Two Targets	Accomplishments	Percent of Target
Amount of money leveraged	25% of the matching funds allocated in budget	420%	1680%
% of ALP graduates transitioning into post-program options	60% successfully placed in post program option (disaggregating by junior secondary, skills training, employed, self-employed)	59% rate of placement across the year	98%

Key Accomplishments:

- 11,504 learners within the program undergo end of project assessment in the coursework of the Work Readiness curriculum
- 4,863 of 8,219 graduates placed in post-program options
- TEP program activities increased placement recruitment for apprenticeships in 5 counties
- 77,142 BBF donated books delivered and distributed
- IT for Women skills training piloted and commenced for 64 girls
- Strengthened linkages and collaboration with public and private partners including MOE-TVET , MYS, EPAG, TECHDEL delegation, Chevron, etc.
- Data and documentation created, including graduate profiles, workforce development linkages, partnership stakeholder directory

10.1 Partnerships to leverage non-USG funds

USAID/CESLY developed several partnerships with other organizations to increase the impact of the program through the accessing of non-USG funds. These partnerships include:

Daphne Foundation - Training for “Taa Bora” specialists

USAID/CESLY leveraged \$13,122 from the Daphne Foundation to train staff and community members to assemble “Taa Bora” solar lanterns that are used by communities to provide light for evening classes for youth. USAID/CESLY contributed approximately \$30,000 to the ongoing training and production program to which the Daphne Foundation component was an integral part (see Task 1).

Open Society Foundation - Employment training for ALP program graduates

The project leveraged \$1 million dollars from the Open Society Foundation (OSF) to facilitate apprenticeship training for 2400 CESLY-supported ALP graduates. The OSF leverage is implemented by World ORT. USAID/CESLY contributed \$656,000 in cash and in-kind contributions (see details below).

Brothers to Brother (BBF) - Books Donation

The project negotiated a partnership with the BBF Foundation in collaboration with U.S. publishing companies to donate containers of approximately 75,000 textbooks, teachers' guides and other learning and teaching resource materials to be used by USAID/CESLY, the USAID Liberian Teacher Training Program and other Ministry of Education schools. BBF donated approximately \$2m of books. USAID covered the costs of shipping one of the three containers (\$9,000) and paid a total of \$40,000 to sort, pack and distribute books to all 355 USAID/CESLY schools and the largest 184 MoE High Schools in the 15 counties of Liberia (see details below).

Odebrecht - Apprenticeship Training

USAID/CESLY collaborated with Odebrecht, the engineering company responsible for the Buchanan-Yekeba railway line on behalf of Accelor Mittal. Odebrecht provided an apprenticeship to USAID/CESLY student James Konnah to learn machine greasing between October and December 2011. USAID/CESLY leveraged \$420 from Odebrecht and contributed \$100.

There were many other partners, both informal and formal. Informal stakeholders in education helped develop the curriculum (e.g. NAEAL), pilot the curriculum (e.g. CONCERN) and facilitate training (EG IFESH). Formal partnerships were established with Peace Corps who provided volunteers to work in the LRCs and provide training and with the Empowering Adolescent Girls (EPAG) training project through the Ministry of Gender & Development (MoGD) (see below).

PRIOR TRAINING IN WORK READINESS IS NECESSARY TO PREPARE YOUTH TO SUCCEED IN WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PLACEMENTS

10.2 All Learners Undergo Work Readiness Coursework and Assessment

USAID/CESLY developed ABE curricula for youth in four content areas: Literacy, Numeracy, Life Skills and Work Readiness. Specific training in work readiness training was provided to all 11,504 learners in Year 2, including the 7,129 students in the Accelerated Learning Program Level III as well as the 4,375 NFE learners. Some of these young people may have skills that would enable them to access job opportunities but many have low chances of success due partly to their lack of knowledge relative to employers' expectations. The essence of the Work Readiness content area was to enrich the learners with knowledge, attitudes and skills that would benefit them in the world of work. Learners who participated studied:

- MODULE A: Introduction to Employment and Work Readiness
- MODULE B: Personal Leadership Development
- MODULE C: Career Planning
- MODULE D: Wage Employment vs. Self-Employment
- MODULE E: Introduction to Entrepreneurship (Part 1)
- MODULE F: Work Attitudes and Conduct
- MODULE G: Work Related Money Management
- MODULE H: Finding a Job

- MODULE I: Preparation for Vocational Training
- MODULE J: Apprenticeship

On the assessment administered to all students participating in the curriculum, 77% of learners scored 70% or above, a passing grade. Below is some of the feedback from beneficiaries on the value of the work readiness component.

Female ABE Learner, Montserrado: “The Work Readiness has changed my attitude to be on time in the market and how to also talk to my customers.”

Male ALP Youth Teacher, Lofa: “Work Readiness- - when most of our students came first they did not know how to set goals, but now they are able to go about looking for ways to make more money independently.”

Male ALP Youth Teacher, Lofa: “Since the beginning of the program, like Maretha Fayiah, in the work readiness manual, like business, since she came through the program, now she started her business in April and now she has a huge market.”

Male ALP Youth Teacher, Lofa: “Most of my students have changed, especially when they are dealing with buyers, they talked to the customers good and the areas they are doing businesses are clean.”

Male ALP Youth Teacher, Lofa: “I have seen improvement of my youth, like John Saklia he is the head of the carpenter shop here. He takes contract from the entire nearby towns here.”

Male ALP Regular Teacher, Lofa: “I observed them in the community, where they are able to identify community need, assess demand. I see them selling scratch cards on the road.”

Male ALP Regular Principal, Lofa: “Like someone of our learners are now sitting and planning what they are going to buy from the market and they also observe the principal gained and the interest.”

Male ABE Facilitator, Montserrado: “I have seen a lot of changes in the youth. For example, there is a lady in the class could not allocate extra money other than transportation when going to the market, but now, through our work readiness session (budgeting), she is able to allocate extra money just in case there is shortage.”

Female ABE Facilitator (Kialay Public School, Nimba): “Yes, John Walker, once a drunk has now understood the value of his life from CESLY program and is showing good example in the community.”

The curriculum has been very useful for both learners and those teaching the curriculum. However more simplicity geared to the level of the learners, more in-depth training in the content area for instructors, and direct linkage with workforce development placements will enhance effectiveness of work readiness training in the future.

WORKPLACE DEVELOPMENT PLACEMENT NEEDS ADEQUATE HUMAN AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES, INCLUDING MENTORING AND FOLLOW-UP, TO BE EFFECTIVE

10.3 Learners Placed in Post-Program Options

As part of key measurable indicators to be reached under this project, the project team working with its partners was able to place 4,863 Accelerated Learning Program graduates over the second year of the USAID/CESLY program. This indicator shows that by the end of the project, up to 60% of completers had transitioned into post program options ranging from returning to Junior Secondary Schooling (JSS), self employment, job placements in the private or public sector and/or linkage to apprenticeship form of training for skills development.

Year 1 & 2 Graduates/Completers Against Placements

Total Graduates To Date (Years 1 & 2)	# Placed By End of Project	% Reached To Date (Years 1 & 2)
Year 1 (3,738) + Year 2 (4,481) = 8,219	4,863	59%

10.4 Training for Employment Program (TEP) Activities Increased Placement Recruitment in 5 Counties

USAID/CESLY provided funds in partnership with the Open Society Foundation (OSF) to offer training opportunities for youth throughout Bong, Lofa, Nimba, Maryland and Grand Gedeh. The OSF provided \$1million to the project, and the implementing partner, World ORT, started a pilot of the Training for Employment Program (TEP) program in September 2010 with an apprenticeships intervention that has since been fully rolled out in all of the five counties. Over USAID/CESLY Year II, covering the period October 2010 through September 2011, a total of 2,360 ALP level III graduates were placed into various workforce training options. These include: oil press, soap making, cosmetology, pastry making, tailoring, carpentry, motorcycle repairs and auto-mechanics amongst others. These activities are components of the formally signed MOU involving the MYS, MoE, USAID and OSI targeting at least 2400 graduates who had completed Level III through USAID/CESLY in 2010, 2011 or earlier through ALPP Plus. World ORT will continue to manage the training program through January 2012, utilizing OSF funds.

World ORT’s final report during the USAID/CESLY contract period was submitted with the September Quarterly Report.

GIRLS NEED TARGETED SUPPORT TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PLACEMENTS

10.5 Collaboration with Empowering Adolescent Girls Project Initiated

The Empowering Adolescent Girls (EPAG) project is a World Bank/Nike Foundation/Government of Denmark funded project implemented through the Ministry of Gender & Development (MoGD). This training program includes 6 months in the classroom then 6 months of follow-up and mentoring support when placed in businesses.

USAID/CESLY has worked with the MoGD through the EPAG project, to recruit 375 female graduates (who completed ALP Level III or NFE Level I) for participation in EPAG's second round of training for adolescent girls and young women in the areas of business and job development skills. Unfortunately, the recruitment could not reach its target due to factors ranging from the limited contact details for girls, which meant that it was difficult to contact them, and the decision of many girls to enroll into junior secondary school and drop out of the training. USAID/CESLY was overly optimistic in the original targets agreed with EPAG and as a result, only 89 girls were active participants in the training.

Both the IT for Women training course and the EPAG experience have shown CESLY that if girls are going to be successful in workforce development placements they need specific support. They need clear explanation of program expectations at the outset; parents/caretakers/boyfriends may need to be engaged; they need to provide multiple forms of contact information for themselves, their families and other communities members; they need coaching and support to enroll; and they need ongoing monitoring, follow up and personal relationships to ensure that they stay enrolled. If they have children, arrangements may need to be made for child care and girls may need specific discussions of whether they can handle both junior secondary school and a workforce development training program or just one of these options.

10.6 IT for Women Skills Training Instituted

Information technology is increasingly becoming a necessity for youth, whether they are in the labor force or unemployed, in school or out of school. However it is frequently young men that advance in this area, leaving young women behind. During the past year the program rolled out a pilot 6 month IT training curriculum for 64 women. Although a small number of trainees were included, the piloting of the activity paves the way for greater enrollment of girls in the IT for Women program in future youth programming.

ALTERNATIVE ENERGY DEVICES MUST MAKE BUSINESS SENSE IN ORDER TO GENERATE PROFIT FOR YOUTH

10.7 Using Alternative Energy for Income Generation

The Taa Bora Income Generation strategy is a pilot effort that targeted 2 communities in Montserrado and aimed to provide ALP Level III learners & community structures with business, team building, and record keeping skills that would enable the effective management of a business. A five day training was

conducted in Nyen for 16 participants: 5 learners, 1 Community Youth Intern, 1 administrator, and 1 community leader from each community.

Status of Income Generation:

By the end of the project pilot, the Point Four team had accumulated \$375.00 Liberian dollars (US \$4.93) from lights rental. The group had not anticipated the issuance of city power in their neighborhood which prevented them from being able to rent out the lights. Nyen is located in a rural area with an environment suited for doing such business. Community members rent lights for \$100.00 Liberian dollars per month, and had generated \$900.00 Liberian dollars (US \$12.67) during a three month period.

Lessons Learned:

In order to make businesses more profitable, greater engagement or support of income generation groups may be needed. In terms of profitability, the quantity of lights supplied cannot support the rental service and sales of the lights. The sale price of all Taa-Bora materials is \$25.00USD, while it may take \$30-35.00USD to have the product on hand in Liberia. There are advantages when ordering in large quantities if the Taa Bora product were used as the alternative energy product to be used. In addition, complaints with functionality on the large scale use of Taa Bora in classroom, influence community demand for the device. In sum, the alternative energy device should be well suited to the environment; a clear business plan should be mapped out and market assessment completed in order to make alternative energy profitable.

10.8 BBF Donated Books Delivered to USAID Supported Schools and Other Schools across the Country Supported by the Ministry of Education

During year II of the project Brother Brothers Foundation (BBF) donated books to the Liberian school system through USAID/CESLY in collaboration with the MOE. Three containers of Pearson and McGill books were donated for both primary and high school use as supplementary text books. A total of 76,619 books were received, including: 54,455 assigned to the MOE, 12,225 for USAID/CESLY and 9,939 for LTTP. Prior to distribution 1,388 MOE books were damaged during a flood in the warehouse and were subsequently handed to the MOE operations department.

During Quarter 8, the sorting and delivery of these books to all USAID/CESLY, USAID/LTTP and MOE-supported schools was completed. The distribution covered over 538 schools across the 15 counties of Liberia including the 180 MOE junior and senior secondary sites, 355 sites under USAID/CESLY. USAID/LTTP also received its shipment for delivery to beneficiaries.

10.9 Challenges and Recommendations for Workforce Development Placements

Overall, the workforce development activities were positive. However, there were multiple challenges that need addressing in future projects.

CHALLENGES:

- The content materials delivered to the learners and students were of a high standard but the vocabulary and concepts were too highly advanced for their learners' level.
- Not enough awareness was carried out for GDA networks identified and the timing for these negotiations were tight, i.e arrangements were close to placements activities thus making it difficult to actualize.
- More awareness needed to be raised about the EPAG program to enhance participation and retention.
- The MOE lacked the capacity to take responsibility for the clearing of the shipped containers of books which incurred extra costs to the project. GDA arrangements and cost responsibility needs to be clearly spelled out from the start.
- Initiating partnerships in the middle of the project implementation rather than at the onset reduced the chances of collaboration especially with profit making entities.
- It is necessary to be realistic with timelines - the ORT placement schedule was slow to start up but eventually ramped up to the full speed and met the target.
- The caseload of target beneficiaries created a challenge for the performance of staff. There is a need to consider reduce the ratio of Work Readiness in future interventions.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE DIRECTIONS:

- A system should be formulated to enhance the quality of career guidance and profiling.
- Existing data should be drawn upon and the market needs assessments should be reinforced to inform future linkages and placements.
- Placement in workforce development options is labor intensive and needs dedicated human resources, sufficient staff, who are well trained and well resourced in order to give full cycle support, from initial career counseling, to profiling, to placement, to mentoring and ongoing support.
- GDA linkages should be initiated early on in the project, strong human relationships should be formed and donors should take care not place too many demands on private sector.
- Refresher training for field staff should be more readily available and continual and the tools for data processing and collation (qualitative and quantitative) should be standardized.
- Collaboration with other program partners will increase awareness of workforce development/work readiness as well as to help staff advance further in performance of workforce programming.
- Continue with local partners - the YMCA partnership enhances credibility and chances for local ownership and sustainability when locally accepted individuals are engaged in workforce development placements.

Task # 11: Communications/Outreach

Indicator	Target	Achieved	Percent of Target Achieved
# of communications activities/pieces undertaken by MOE	5	21	420%

Key Accomplishments:

- Spot messages and dramas on CESLY activities produced and aired in all 6 counties
- 10 radio modules for teachers produced and aired
- 21 media press activities undertaken
- Capacity building in communications conducted for 27 MOE staff
- video features produced

MEDIA REINFORCES FACE TO FACE ACTIVITIES

11.2 Use of Media to Boost Retention

USAID/CESLY used radio messages to boost enrollment throughout all six counties. Utilizing community radio stations, both spot messages and a drama, explaining in Liberian English the importance of the ABE and its core content areas, were broadcast.

11.3 Radio Programs Produced and Aired

In order to re-enforce the skills and knowledge that teachers and facilitators acquired from the periodic In-Service Training sessions, USAID/CESLY produced a 15 minute radio feature series called “Developing Youth Potential Together.” This program was aired on Radio ELBC. It was aired once a week, with a repeat- that is it was heard twice weekly. The mini-series covered ten modules on topics such as Teachers Time on Task, each of the elements of the Evidence-based Approach to Reading, Culture of Reading, Critical Thinking, Passion for Pedagogy, among others. The program also featured success stories from teachers, students, facilitators, principals, administrators, community members as well as other partners who delved into different topics. As a result of this radio show, teacher content learned in the in-service training was reinforced.

Radio education in a future follow-on activity could be buttressed making use of ample time in rural areas and overcoming the hurdles of remote distance and impassable roads.

11.4 Use of Visual Media

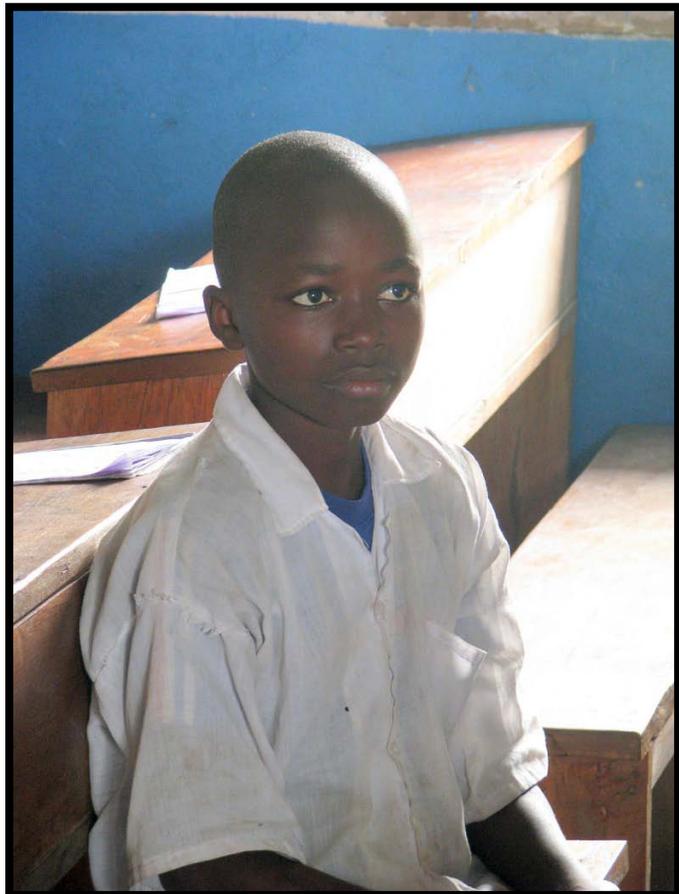
At the mid-point of the project, videography was introduced with to facilitate micro-teaching, which proved very popular with teachers. However, the technicalities of virus infestation and power supply in remote areas limited the potential use of videography. With technological solutions to these two challenges, videography could be utilized to a much greater extent in a future follow-on.

During year 2, the project utilized its work with teachers and beneficiaries to create two film features. Videography was used in January 2011 In-service training and video features were shown in the June 2011 Sustaining the Momentum event with all stakeholders. At the end of the contract period, the project had the opportunity to invest in filming two scenarios highlighting the importance of ABE education with different actors.

During future programming of the CESLY follow-on or other youth projects, the development time and resources invested in visual media should be used for wider dissemination of messages of education and work readiness for youth. The following DVDs are available for use:

Showcasing Alternative Basic Education:

This short video feature introduces ABE, including the rationale for youth education in Liberia, the features of ABE, the linkages to workforce development, the Ministry perspective on ABE and youth perspective on ABE.



Dynamic Teaching: This half hour video introduces teachers to dynamic teaching. It first exposes the audience to “hum drum” teaching and then takes a look at how classrooms can be transformed in the areas of literacy and reading, numeracy and life skills. The feature focuses in on passion for pedagogy and critical thinking as key elements for teachers to work on.

To Be or Not To Be: These two documentary style spots feature two scenarios highlighting the importance of ABE education, with different actors playing as students in a feature by the “What Took You So Long” international film crew. The “good” character obtained basic numeracy, literacy, work readiness and Life Skills and later entered the world of work. The “bad” character did not take the education seriously and therefore ended up back where they started from.

GENERATING INTEREST CREATES INTEREST

11.5 Making Media a Platform for Youth

At the outset of the project, USAID/CESLY aimed to engage in 5 joint media undertakings with the MOE and ended up by initiating 21 different media activities, including press release production, press coverage, publication of policy, radio talk shows and other activities. Examples are listed below.

- Coverage of Ellen Sirleaf’s Signing of the Education Act
- Radio, Press & Television Coverage Literacy Day
- Radio Talk with Assistant Minister on Alternative Basic Education
- Numerous Live Radio Talks Show During Teacher professional development and other training events
- Press and Radio Talk Show on Locally Generated Content – Culture of Reading and Writing
- Radio Talk Show on Sustaining the Momentum of Alternative Basic Education
- Promulgation of ABE Policy in Major Newspapers
- Press Coverage of Level II Curriculum Development
- Radio Talk Show on Girls Rights and Education
- Production 4 different quarterly newsletters

By the end of the project, the journalism community would proactively contact CESLY and show up unannounced at CESLY events. Even after the project had formally disengaged staff, staff were still being called upon to appear on radio talk shows. This indicates to CESLY that the impact of proactively contacting the media, encouraging their involvement, resulted in a platform for youth issues to be widely promulgated. These activities should be continued in a follow-on, so that efforts for greater attention in media, in public communications materials, in MOE documentation, in radio reaching vernacular audiences can work in a complementary way to increase the awareness of youth issues and value for youth investment at multiple levels.

11.6 Harnessing the Dynamism and Passion of the MOE Communications Unit

Part of the main objective of Task 11 Communication and Outreach was to improve the capacity of the MOE to undertake communications activities. In October 2010, USAID/CESLY organized training on Communication Technical Strengthening involving MOE Communications Unit and staff involved in internal communications such as secretaries of various departments as well as special assistants to deputies and Minister.

The USAID/CESLY team also engaged the Communications Unit in every field trip, ensuring that at least one member was present. In this manner, Communications staff jointly collected information on ABE field activities. The CESLY team also engaged MOE in the production and review of all press releases and media articles.

The in-depth, multi-county collaboration had an impact on MOE passion. This proactive stance both on the part of CESLY and MOE helped to foment enthusiasm and energy for youth education, through joint trips, through media events, through new initiatives and through opening up the circle to be ever more inclusiveness of MOE staff.

11.7 Recommendations

- Use media to boost youth retention, particularly through radio spots and dramas
- Combine media coverage with face to face follow up for best effectiveness
- Proactively engage the media, and invite media to occasions of interest
- Make direct connections between coverage of media and elevation of the awareness and value given to the platform for youth, alternative basic education and workforce development
- Linkage information and communication technology into pedagogy
- Find creative ways for the increased use of visual media in Liberian society and communities
- Continue embedded collegial and collaborative working relations between youth programming implementers and the MOE communications department

CONCLUSION

There were a myriad of challenges encountered during the project. However during the two years of the project the USAID/CESLY staff and their MOE counterparts developed a sense of unity which addressed many of the challenges. MOE staff at central, county, district and school levels all benefited from working with the project.

The MOE Communications Director outlined some of the benefits of working alongside USAID/CESLY staff in a radio talk show broadcast on June 2, 2011;

[The] CESLY program has been very, very wonderful. I must admit, to be precise, they invited the Division of Communication to go in the field with them. Every trip they made we are on the trip traveling to Grand Gedeh, Maryland, Nimba, Lofa and you name the rest. To be precise, this organization, this program, is the only program that invited us to go on the field with them to see for our very selves, what is happening and what they are implementing. It is not just rhetoric, it is not just on a paper, but it is practical.
....

We traveled to Wolugisi Mountain. That is not a small place. We got down from the car, we pushed the car, and we make sure we reached there that day as the Communication Team. And people were there. After the war, no one has ever reached there. But CESLY was there in that community. And I stood for a long time. I said Wow, this is wonderful.

I am 100% satisfied with their partnership. Because they have been the only partner that has been collaborating with us, when it even comes to decision making! They will ask us for our input. What you think? How you think we can make this program to be a success?

The EOs are the foot soldiers for the Ministry of Education. And we have to incorporate them. And then it will come to central office. So we talk with EOs, we say, "What you think?" Because we don't want to take unilateral decision that will affect central office. "This is what the CEO said. What is your input? Can we go this way? Can we go that way?" This is the program we want in the Ministry of Education. It is ours to advocate. Or to talk to. To ask the partner. ...

CESLY is always on the ground. These are the partners we are looking for. Not people who will go and sit in Ganta. Not people who sit in Kakata making and writing a lot of papers that have no kind of good implementation.

In case of any eventuality that CESLY will say 'oh we are not able to continue this program', EOs, Education Workers, what can we do collectively to sustain and carry this program to the balance counties or to sustain it within the counties where it has already been operating to keep the momentum, to keep the zeal, to keep that motivation, to keep

on carrying this kind of a program to our people, to our villages, to our towns, even on the farms! Because you know the program help the pregnant women to come from the farm, and when you go on their school they ask you questions. ...

These are the ideas that we are subscribing and we are dabbling in from CESLY program. They have been effective and we want their program to take root in our heart. We have the passion for the program!

It is not only CESLY staff. Today or tomorrow CESLY staff vanish. Ministry of Education must be able to maintain and sustain this program. You will only do that when you have the knowledge, when you have the training, when you can relate and when you know what to do and how to do it successfully. So we are telling CESLY to keep on keeping on. We will do our best, and we want you to reach to the rest of the counties so that other people who are there will benefit from the program. The day you phase out, it is our Liberian brothers, our community dwellers, our own brothers and sisters, Department Chief and Town Chief, who take the responsibility of this program and maintain it and sustain it so that those in the interior, in the villages in the town will have access to basic education.

At the conclusion of the project in October 2011, USAID/CESLY is pleased to report the accomplishments outlined above, most notably the very positive relations with the MOE at all levels, a cohort of teachers with greatly improved expertise and a large number of youth with the skills and knowledge necessary to either continue with their education or improve their chances in the wider world.

This report has outlined the great challenges that have been faced, and that still remain to be faced in Liberia. The scale of these challenges must not be underestimated but it is hoped that the recommendations that have been made, provide assistance to both the MOE and implementing partners in developing and delivering high quality and effective of programs.