



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

LIBERIA

An Evaluation of the Core Education Skills for Liberian Youth (CESLY) Program and Recommendations for Future Non-Formal Education Programming In Liberia

October 2011

October 2011

This publication was produced for review by The Mitchell Group, Inc. The author's views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government.

An Evaluation of the Core Education Skills for
Liberian Youth (CESLY) Program and
Recommendations for Future Non-Formal Education
Programming in Liberia

Prepared for
United States Agency for International Development (USAID/Liberia)

Prepared By:
David P. Evans, Team Leader and Senior Education Analyst;
Moses B. Jackson, Education Analyst;
Luis I. Rodriguez, Senior International Development Expert;
Bernice Yalley, International Program Analyst

Liberia Monitoring and Evaluation Program
American Embassy
111 UN Drive, Mamba Point
Monrovia, Liberia
Telephone: +231-77-054-825
Fax: +231-226-152

The Mitchell Group, Inc.
1816 11th Street N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20001
Telephone: (202) 745-1919
Fax: (202) 234-1697

“CESLY brought us from nowhere to somewhere”

District Education Officer, Lofa County, Liberia

Contents

- List of Acronyms and Abbreviationsiv**
- Executive Summary 1**
- I. Introduction4**
 - A. Goal and Purpose of the Evaluation. 4
 - B. Methodology..... 4
 - C. Structure of the Report 6
- II. Background 7**
 - A. Brief History of Liberia 7
 - B. Development Environment and Challenge..... 7
 - C. Education Sector in Liberia 8
 - D. Overview of the CESLY Program..... 9
 - E. Government of Liberia Education Policy on NFE 10
 - F. USAID Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) and Education Strategy..... 10
- III. Findings on CESLY Program 12**
 - A. Increased Access to NFE and ALP. 12
 - B. Strengthened Core Literacy, Numeracy, LifeSkills, and Work Readiness. 13
 - C. Improved Teacher Skills..... 14
 - D. Increased Number of Quality Learning Materials in Classrooms. 15
 - E. Learning Resource Centers..... 15
 - F. Contribute to Government of Liberia Policy Implementation..... 16
 - G. Establishing Foundation for Job Placement or Formal Job Training..... 16
 - H. Other Findings about the CESLY Program..... 17
- IV. Areas for Advancing Youth Project Focus..... 18**
 - A. Address Management at the Local Level 18
 - B. Help Implement Effective Decentralization Program 18

C. Increase Efforts to Develop NFE	18
D. Clarify NFE and ABE Programs	19
E. Whole School Approach.....	19
F. Greater Community Involvement.....	19
G. School-to-Work Issues	20
H. Classroom and Teaching Methodologies	20
I. Technology.....	20
V. Lessons Learned/Recommendations	21
A. Start Small (or slowly) and Build on Success.....	21
B. Establish Clarity in the Program Purpose.....	21
C. Experimentation and Testing.....	21
D. Quid Pro Quo.....	21
E. Be Proactive about Building Capacity within the MOE.....	22
F. Fix the Small Things.	22
G. Consider a “Whole School” Approach.....	22
H. Design a Low-cost Model for Replication.	22
I. Improve School and District Governance and Community Involvement.	23
J. Integrate AYP Programming into GOL Planning.	23
VI. Conclusions	24
Annex 1. Documents Consulted	25
Annex 2. List of Key Individuals Interviewed.....	28
Annex 3. Individuals Interviewed and Meetings.....	30
Annex 4. List of Schools and Sites	32
Annex 5: Table of Educational Data “at a glance.”	34
Annex 6: Semi-structured Questionnaire used for Interview Guidance.....	35

Acknowledgements

This evaluation was undertaken in September and October 2011 by a team of four people: David P. Evans, Team Leader and Senior Education Analyst; Moses B. Jackson, Education Analyst; Luis I. Rodriguez, Senior International Development Expert; and Bernice Yalley, International Program Analyst. The team was ably assisted in the field evaluations by Mark T. Bassie, Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist - Education, Liberia Monitoring and Evaluation Program (L-MEP), and B. Yourfee Kamara, Regional Coordinator L-MEP.

Over the course of the evaluation, the team met and worked with many people who provided enthusiastic support to our efforts and we wish to thank them all, even if we cannot name them here. We wish to give special thanks, however, to the following people:

- Julia Richards, Chief of Education, USAID/Liberia
- Mardea Nyumah, CESLY Contracting Officer Technical Representative (COTR), USAID/Liberia
- Anne Fleuret, L-MEP COTR/Senior Program Advisor, USAID/Liberia
- Randal Thompson, Chief of Party L-MEP
- Mike Richards, Knowledge Management Officer L-MEP
- Simon James, Program Director, Core Education Skills for Liberian Youth (CESLY)
- Katy Anis, Basic Education Technical Expert CESLY
- Gary Walker, Chief of Party, ORT Training and Employment Program
- Johnson Odharo, Chief of Party, Liberia Teacher Training Project (LTTP)
- Mator M.F. Kpangbai, Deputy Minister of Instruction, Ministry of Education

Any errors in the report are, of course, the sole responsibility of the evaluation team.

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

ABE	Alternative Basic Education
ALP	Accelerated Learning Program
ALPP	Accelerated Learning Program Plus
AYP	Advancing Youth Project
CDCS	Country Development Cooperating Strategy
CEO	County Education Officer
CESLY	Core Education Skills for Liberian Youth
COTR	Contracting Officer Technical Representative
DO	Development Objectives
DEO	District Education Officer
EDC	Education Development Center, Inc.
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessment
GCR	Gross Completion Rate
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GER	Gross Enrollment Ratio
GOL	Government of Liberia
GPA	Grade Point Average
LRC	Learning Resource Center
LTTP	Liberia Teacher Training Program
MOE	Ministry of Education
NCR	Net Completion Rate
NER	Net Enrollment Rate
NFE	Non Formal Education

NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
RTI	Research Triangle Institute
RTTI	Rural Teacher Training Institute
TEP	Training and Employment Program
UNMIL	United Nations Mission in Liberia
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association

Executive Summary

Purpose: The purpose of this evaluation is twofold: first, to conduct an end-of-project evaluation of the Core Education Skills for Liberian Youth (CESLY) project in Liberia and identify whether or not the project met its objectives; and second, based on those findings about the CESLY project, make recommendations to USAID/Liberia regarding how to expand access to and improve the quality of basic education for overage and out of school youth in Liberia.

Methodology: In an effort to achieve these two purposes the evaluation team used four methods to gather information, including document review; one-on-one interviews with key stakeholders at the national, county, district and school levels; focus group interviews with direct and indirect beneficiaries, including 20 CESLY administrators, 34 principals, 70 teachers, 172 students, and 55 parents; and field observation in 11 schools in Montserrado, Bong, Nimba and Lofa counties. These interviews were conducted after CESLY project-supported classes had ended.

Background: The CESLY project was a two-year program started in August 2009 and extended for two additional months until November 2011. The goal of the CESLY project was to increase equitable access to quality basic education for overage and out of school youth and adults. More specifically the program was intended to:

- Deliver Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) classes for overage youth and adults;
- Strengthen core literacy, numeracy, work readiness and life skills for children and youth ages 10 to 35;
- Develop Non-Formal Education (NFE) curricula and pilot them across six counties;
- Improve teacher skills in NFE;
- Increase the number of quality learning materials available to classrooms;
- Continue support to a minimum of six Learning Resource Centers; and
- Contribute to emerging Government of Liberia (GOL) policy implementation in project-related areas.

Findings:

- A. Increased Access to NFE and ALP.** The CESLY project surpassed its enrollment target by 106 percent (training 17,816 learners) with almost 40 percent of these learners in the NFE category. Although the number of participants exceeded the targets, there were still dropouts in both the ALP and the NFE programs due, at least in part, to inefficient lighting in the classrooms.
- B. Strengthened Core Literacy, Numeracy, Life Skills and Work Readiness.** According to CESLY estimates ALP-regular learners increased their Grade Point Average (GPA) by 39 percent, while ALP-youth learners increased their GPA by 41 percent. A more in-depth study of learning and numeracy gains conducted by the Research Triangle Institute, however, showed mixed and more modest improvements. The literacy, numeracy and life skills components were widely praised and appreciated by all as a real opportunity to learn.

- C. **Improved Teachers' Skills.** Teachers¹ commented on having better control of the classroom and more precise teaching methodologies. They also indicated using more effective lesson plans to present in the classroom. The CESLY project, however, did not highlight the pedagogical differences between untrained trainees and teachers trained at the RTTIs, which produced some confusion among teachers in the same school. There was also no further training specific to training adults in the NFE evening program.
- D. **Increased Number of Quality Learning Material in Classrooms.** The classrooms used by the CESLY project were timely furnished with instructional resources, which included chalk, paper and textbooks. In many cases teachers would share these goods with their non-CESLY counterparts. Teachers and students complained about not having access to textbooks which were frequently locked away in the principal's office to secure them from theft.
- E. **Learning Resource Centers (LRC).** The six LRCs were located in the county seats and often near or sharing space with local education administration offices. Because the CESLY program had closed down, the LRCs were all closed during the team's visits with exception of the one in Monrovia, which was opened for a visit by the evaluation team. The Centers, although well stocked with books and computers, appeared to be utilized by students of both the surrounding secondary schools and the University. Although the LRC was intended to be a reading room for all learners, the material was found to be too advanced for beginning readers, and there was very little material oriented for beginning readers.
- F. **Contribute to GOL Policy Implementation.** The CESLY project was successful in working with district MOE staff in field testing the ALP and NFE curricula and in subsequent program monitoring. The CESLY project was also instrumental in the design of the Alternative Basic Education (ABE) strategy for the MOE. However, various stakeholders revealed a sense of doubt about the MOE's current capacity and political will to assume full responsibility for youth programming.
- G. **Establishing the Foundation for Job Placement or Formal Job Training.** There are currently 2,360 ALP graduates in the Training for Employment Program (TEP), a program funded by the Open Society Foundation and USAID and implemented by ORT, receiving job skills training. In Liberia the number of youth under 20 is around 60 percent with youth under 17 at 52 percent. It was clear from the interviews that the CESLY project participants crave the practical application of work-related skills including prioritization of activities, planning, goal-setting, decision-making and responsibility. Unfortunately, the evaluation team was unable to see the TEP in operation, and TEP has not had much impact in the communities visited.

Recommendations:

- A. **Start Small (or slowly) and Build on Success.** The GOL will want to set ambitious targets and implement the Advancing Youth Project (AYP) as quickly and widely as possible. However, the reality is that the MOE on all levels, but especially at the county and district levels, has exceptionally weak technical and managerial capacity and, in

¹ The CESLY project facilitators were existing regular MOE teachers trained at RTTIs or other providers and untrained teachers that are part of the MOE staffing list.

addition, the MOE is expected to simultaneously undertake several reforms, including a major decentralization of the ministry.

- B. **Establish Clarity in the Program's Purpose.** One of the problems early-on in the CESLY project was a focus on establishing outputs before the systems were in place to adequately deliver those outputs. Ensure that everyone understands that the AYP program is a project designed to deliver a model for ABE in Liberia.
- C. **Experimentation and Testing.** In keeping with the CESLY program's purpose of ABE model development, foster an environment of experimentation, testing different approaches. Establish baseline data early-on in the program and use the baseline data to test for program impact.
- D. **Quid Pro Quo.** Although the GOL has meager resources, and the MOE has a thin operating budget and very weak capacity, USAID should insist that the MOE provide resources to supplement the \$35 million USAID assistance package.
- E. **Be Proactive about Building Capacity within the MOE.** USAID and its partners should continue to provide training opportunities for the MOE staff, but the training should go beyond just in-class training programs by affording practical, hands-on opportunities for MOE staff to grow into educational managers and technicians.
- F. **Fix the Small Things.** Small, apparently insignificant, things can hamper project success. For example, the Taa Bora lighting system for NFE classes offered between 6 and 9 pm was inadequate.
- G. **Consider a "whole school" Approach.** Because of the dearth of good usable learning materials in most schools, many teachers used the NFE and ALP materials in the regular formal school program, although they were not always trained in the use of these materials. The materials were intended to be used only for the ALP-Youth and ALP-regular programs. Insofar as possible, USAID should consider a "whole school" approach to training teachers.
- H. **Design a Low-cost Model for Replication.** Given the meager resources available to the MOE and the inertia exhibited throughout the MOE system, USAID and its partner, the Education Development Center (EDC), should develop a low-cost replication model so that the program can be taken to scale nationwide, or at least replicated in the six counties where the program intends to work.
- I. **Improve School and District Governance and Community Involvement.** USAID/Liberia and its partner, EDC, should enhance the role and responsibility of the parents and community in the schools and districts and, thereby, improve the transparency and accountability of the school system.
- J. **Integrate AYP Programming into GOL Planning.** While being the early donor of a newly created department in the MOE is a great opportunity to assist the GOL, USAID/Liberia and its partner, EDC, must be vigilant to ensure that the AYP does not race ahead of the MOE and create discontinuities between the AYP program and MOE plans.

I. Introduction

A. Goal and Purpose of the Evaluation.

The goal of this evaluation is to assist USAID/Liberia to make informed management decisions about future programming in the area of non-formal education in Liberia. There are two purposes of this evaluation. The first purpose is to conduct an end-of-project evaluation of the Core Education Skills for Liberian Youth (CESLY) Project and identify whether or not the project met its objectives. The second purpose of the evaluation is to make recommendations to USAID/Liberia regarding how USAID can implement and expand access to and improve the quality of alternative basic education for children and youth (ages 10 to 35) in Liberia.

USAID/Liberia already has designed a follow-on activity to the CESLY program, the Advancing Youth Program (AYP). The implementer of the AYP program will be required to develop a Life of Activity Strategic Plan, Performance Management Plan and First Annual Implementation Plan for the new program in the first 100 days of the program. As a result, USAID/Liberia requested that the evaluation team develop specific recommendations based on the CESLY project's achievements, lessons learned and best practices that can contribute to the development of this new activity's plans.

B. Methodology

In an effort to achieve the goal and purposes of the CESLY program, the evaluation team used four methods to gather information, including:

- *Document review* of all relevant CESLY documents, as well as other contextual information that could inform the team on key issues such as development strategies for the country, its particular economic development and its human and institutional capacity requirements. (Please see Annex 1 for a selected list of documents reviewed).
- *One-on-one interviews with key stakeholders* were conducted at the national level, county and district levels, in communities where the CESLY activities were implemented. The team interviewed key Ministry of Education (MOE) personnel at the central ministry level, as well as three County Education Officers (CEOs), nine District Education Officers (DEOs) and eight school principals. In addition, the evaluation team interviewed about 75 knowledgeable observers of basic and Non-Formal Education (NFE) in the donor and non-governmental organization (NGO) communities. (Please see Annex 2 for a selected list of key persons interviewed).
- *Focus groups interviews* were conducted with direct and indirect beneficiaries, including about 20 CESLY project administrators, 34 principals, 70 teachers, 172 students, and 55 parents. (Please see Annex 3 and 4 for the numbers of individuals interviewed by county).
- *Field observations* were made by visiting communities and schools where the CESLY program was implemented. Although the CESLY program was in the final stages of completion and some schools were already closed, the evaluation team visited 11 schools ranging from primary, primary and junior secondary, and

secondary schools. In most cases the schools were in session but, class observation was not always possible or useful, owing to the tight schedule of the interviews and the confusion created by visitors to the school. Field visits were carried out in four of the six counties where the project was implemented; the counties of Montserrado, Bong, Nimba and Lofa. These are also the proposed focus counties of the AYP. (Please see Annex 4 for the list of schools visited by county).

The evaluation team used a semi-structured questionnaire for each of the client groups to guide the interviews. The questionnaires were intended to be used as guidance and the interviewer would ask more in-depth questions as the interviewee and time permitted. (Please see Annex 6 for the semi-structured questionnaires).

The evaluation team experienced some constraints in carrying out the CESLY evaluation due to the timing and special circumstances existing in the country at the time of the evaluation:

- The evaluation was primarily carried out in October, just after the CESLY program had begun to close down and many CESLY team members were leaving. To capture the experience of the CESLY project team, the local evaluation team member carried out individual and focus group interviews using a semi-structured questionnaire in September, the next-to-the-last month of the CESLY project. The full evaluation team benefited from only a few days of interaction with most of the CESLY program's staff. However, the evaluation team did meet with the key leadership of CESLY program, including the Chief of Party, the Basic Education Advisor, and Chief U.S.-based backstop officer for the CESLY project, and they provided very helpful information.
- The evaluation was carried out at a time when presidential elections were being held. Everything was closed for three days around election time, and many government or NGO officials were not available before or directly after the elections.
- Schools were not in session during the first part of the evaluation but were open six days after the election. As a result, classroom observations were not possible for the first part of the evaluation, but some observations of regular school classes were made during the second part of the evaluation. Unfortunately, the presence of the evaluation team and the disruption caused by the evaluation made most classroom observation difficult.
- Given the circumstances and timing of the evaluation, the team was not able to select a random sample of people for the focus groups. Although the evaluation team requested that the CESLY field coordinators and local representatives assemble a random sample of people, in many cases it appeared that the local organizer of the interviews, usually principals, supplemented the people who had responded to the invitation with other knowledgeable, but available people. Though the results of the interviews may not be statistically significant with any confidence levels, the consistency of the responses throughout the country left little doubt about the veracity of the information collected.

C. Structure of the Report

Section II will briefly outline the current context of the country, including basic information about the education sector, the CESLY program, and the GOL and USAID plans in education. Section III of the report will present the findings from the CESLY project evaluation. Section IV will review the evaluation findings relevant to the new AYP, and Section V will summarize the lessons learned and make recommendation about how to address any issues the evaluation team found.

II. Background

A. Brief History of Liberia

In the early 19th century, Liberia rose to the forefront within the U.S. abolitionist movement as a suitable place to resettle freed American slaves. Despite resistance by the indigenous people, settlement went ahead in present-day Monrovia and along the coast. The citizens of the new republic came to be known as Americo-Liberians, and one of their first actions was to subjugate the indigenous people forcing thousands to work as slaves and laying the groundwork for decades of war a century and a half later.

For nearly a century, Liberia foundered economically and politically while indigenous populations continued to be repressed. During William Tubman's presidency (1944–71), Liberia experienced massive foreign investment, and for several decades following World War II, Liberia sustained sub-Saharan Africa's highest growth rate which financed considerable economic and social development. For example, in 1980 Liberia had one of West Africa's best developed education systems. The influx of foreign money began to distort the economy, however, resulting in exacerbation of social inequalities and increased hostility between Americo-Liberians and the indigenous population. Although the government conceded a series of reforms (until 1963, 97 percent of Liberians were denied the right to vote) in the 1960s and 1970s, the government continued to be controlled by about a dozen related Americo-Liberian families, and corruption was rampant.

In April 1980, the government was overthrown in a coup and over the next 25 years the country suffered a series of devastating wars at the hands of several warlords, despite an endless number of peace accords that failed to bring peace. More than 100,000 people died, looting destroyed infrastructure and out migration of qualified personnel took a toll on the country's institutions, leaving Liberia with very weak systems and organizational capacity.

In 2005, former World Bank economist Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf won the presidency, becoming the first woman to be elected president anywhere in Africa. Many are frustrated with the pace of change in the country, despite the many progressive measures that have been taken during the past few years to overcome the wounds of the civil war, including the introduction of free elementary schooling throughout the country. The United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), its military force and a host of international NGOs still exert huge influence in parts of Liberia. Despite the enormous challenges, change has been significant, the president remains a popular leader, and Liberians are cautiously optimistic about the future.

B. Development Environment and Challenge

With about 30 persons per square km, Liberia is one of the least densely populated of West Africa's coastal countries. Monrovia, with about one third of the country's population, is the

Liberia Quick Facts

Population: 3.79M
Median Age: 18.3 years
Literacy (age 15 and over who can read and write): 57.5%
GDP: \$974M
GDP Real Growth Rate: 5.1%
GDP Per Capita: \$500
GDP by Sector:

- Agriculture : 76.9%
- Industry: 5.4%
- Services: 17.7%

only big city, with other, small population centers scattered across the nation. Elsewhere, large tracts of the country are completely uninhabited or have only very scattered populations. The population of about 3.7 million consists overwhelmingly of people of indigenous origin belonging to more than a dozen major tribal groups. Americo-Liberians account for about 5% of the total.

The social, economic, and psychological damage inflicted by Liberia's civil war was enormous. Commercial and productive activities were disrupted as warlords looted and vandalized the country. It is estimated that Gross Domestic Product (GDP) fell by 90 percent between 1987 and 1995, one of the most massive economic collapses ever recorded. Currently, Liberia is the second poorest country in the world with an estimated per capita income of \$500 per year. Huge numbers of people are unemployed or underemployed and many people live on about \$1 per day. Other human development indicators also declined during the war years and are only now starting to recover. Risks to economic growth, livelihoods and food security are extensive, serious and multifaceted. The distribution of wealth is highly inequitable and more than half of the rapidly-growing population is under the age of 18, placing heavy demands on the delivery of basic services like health and education.

Within this context, development efforts in Liberia are shaped by the potential for conflict to re-emerge, a slowly recovering and donor-dependent economy, and crippling weaknesses in institutional capacity and systems.

C. Education Sector in Liberia

The Ministry of Education (MOE) operates an education system with a 9-3-4 structure; nine grades of basic education, which includes three grades of junior secondary education, three grades of senior secondary education or technical/vocational education, and four years of tertiary education. The higher education system is a semi-autonomous unit within the MOE. Education is free and compulsory through the first nine grades² with entry into technical/vocational education institutions dependent upon completion of primary and junior secondary education.

Much of Liberia's education system was destroyed by the civil war, but considerable progress has been made over the last five years. The 2006 school census showed that: 31 percent of public schools were destroyed; the pupil-to-classroom ratio was 300:1; the student-to-textbook ratio was 27:1; and an estimated 62 percent of teachers were untrained and unqualified with more than 40 percent lacking a high school degree. The 2006 census also showed that only 40 percent of children of primary school age (6 to 11) attended primary school. At the same time, the Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER), a measure of the total number of children in school of any age, was 83 percent. This means that over half the children in primary school in 2006 were overage or outside the target age range for primary school.

Although there is a dearth of current data on key education indicators, available data indicates some improvement in primary education, even though there are large problems in the access, quality, equity and relevance of the education services provided. For example, the pupil-to-classroom ratio has improved to about 25:1; the student-to-textbook ratio has improved to 4:1;

² Junior Secondary education only became free and compulsory in July 2011.

and the numbers of untrained and unqualified teachers has improved to 48 percent. In 2009, the national Net Enrollment Rate (NER), the percent of children of primary school age that attended primary school, increased slightly to 42 percent, while the GER increased nationally to 106 percent. The Gross Completion Rate (GCR), the completion rate for all students in primary school, is currently 83 percent, while the Net Completion Rate (NCR), the primary school completion rate for students in the age 6 to 11, is only 3.4 percent. More than half of all adults are functionally illiterate; twice as many women as men. It must also be noted that in every data category girls are disadvantaged in schooling with a gender parity index of 88 percent in most data. For example, median years of school completed for women aged 15 to 49 stands at 1.6, four years less than for men. These data clearly indicate that there are large numbers of people, especially women, in primary school who are overage, and reflects, in part, the estimate that more than 500,000 people received no education, or they had some form of interruption of their education during the civil war years.

The data for junior secondary and high school are even worse. Currently, the GER for junior secondary is about 48 percent, but the NER is only 7 percent. At the high school level, the GER is 30 percent while the NER is only 6 percent. These data also indicate the presence of large numbers of overage students.

D. Overview of the CESLY Program

The CESLY project was designed to address some of the educational and youth development challenges outlined above. The goal of the program was to increase equitable access to quality non-formal basic education.

The CESLY project is composed of two complementary interventions: 1) the Accelerated Learning Program (ALP), and 2) the Non-formal Education program (NFE). ALP was developed by the GOL and represents a condensed primary school curriculum for Grades 1 through 6, and is organized into three levels: Level 1 (equivalent to Grades 1 and 2); Level 2 (equivalent of Grades 3 and 4); and Level 3 (equivalent to Grades 5 and 6). CESLY ALP learners attended school in either ALP-Regular or ALP-Youth programs. ALP-Regular serves learners who are older (10-18 years) than school age, while ALP-Youth serves significantly older (18-35) learners. The CESLY pilot program in NFE targeted youth aged 15-35 years, but did not observe a strict cap on the upper age.

The CESLY program objectives were intended to:

- Deliver Accelerated Learning Program classes for overage youth and adults;
- Strengthen core literacy, numeracy, and life skills for children and youth ages 10 to 35;
- Develop NFE curriculum and pilot it across six counties;
- Improve teacher skills in non-formal education;
- Increase the number of quality learning materials available to classrooms;
- Continue support to a minimum of six Learning Resource Centers; and
- Contribute to emerging Government of Liberia policy implementation in project-related areas.

The project was implemented by the Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC) in partnership with the GOL, through the Ministry of Education, and two sub-contractors, Research Triangle Institute (RTI) and the YMCA of Liberia. Initiated on August 13, 2009, the project was supposed to be completed by August 31, 2011, but was extended until October 30, 2011.

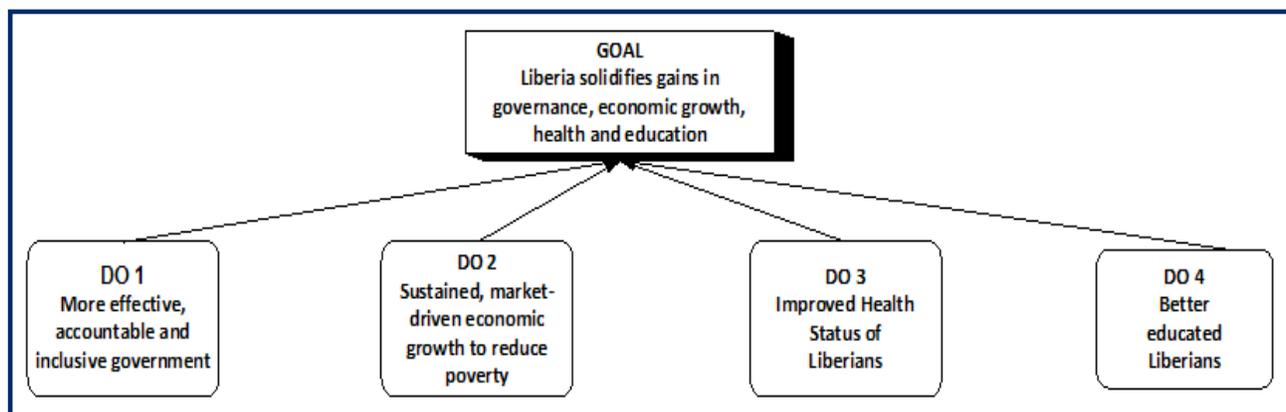
E. Government of Liberia Education Policy on NFE

In March 2011, the MOE signed a plan to create and manage a national system of Alternative Basic Education (ABE). The new ABE system is designed to provide a single, national system for the planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of literacy, numeracy, life-skills, work readiness and other alternative basic education services throughout the country for older, out-of-school youth and adults who wish to read, write, count, attain life and work readiness skills. The ABE system will prepare them for their return to formal education at the seventh grade level, achieve a sixth grade equivalency, join an apprenticeship or vocational education program, enter wage employment, or pursue self-employment. The intended beneficiaries of ABE system are youth 13 years or older, adults, school dropouts from basic education, economically active persons who want to continue learning, women and girls, and vulnerable and disadvantaged populations. The MOE plans to establish a Division of Alternative Basic Education to carry out the objectives of ABE.

F. USAID Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) and Education Strategy

USAID/Liberia’s Strategic approach over the next five years is “to work simultaneously on the foundations needed to recover, rebuild and build upon key systems, skills and capabilities, while working to achieve key, quantifiable results in the four focus sectors.” Working under the overall goal of solidifying the gains made in governance, economic growth, health and education, the four focus sectors or development objectives (DO) are:

- DO 1: More Effective, Accountable and Inclusive Government
- DO 2: Sustained, Market-Driven Economic Growth to Reduce Poverty
- DO 3: Improved Health Status of Liberians
- DO 4: Better Educated Liberians



In an effort to focus its efforts, USAID/Liberia's strategic approach is to concentrate interventions on four critical sectors in six economic development corridors within six counties (Lofa, Nimba, Margibi, Montserrado, Bong and Grand Bassa).

The education sector faces significant obstacles in achieving its development objective to better educate Liberians which include:

- Low age-appropriate enrollment in primary school and large drop-out rates;
- Poor quality of education at all levels;
- Persisting inequities across the system with respect to girls' participation;
- Lack of basic educational opportunities for large numbers of overage and out of school youth and young adults;
- Severe shortages of qualified teachers who can effectively manage the classroom;
- Limited capacity of key institutions, including the Ministry of Education (MOE) ; and
- Centralized systems, often unproductive bureaucracy and inefficient use of resources.

To address these obstacles, USAID/Liberia's education sector strategy will work in the following areas:

- Improve the quality of basic education through teacher professional development and curricular reforms;
- Improve the capacity of the MOE to provide and use data for informed decision-making, planning and policy development;
- Support the decentralization and de-concentration of the MOE, working with county and district-level MOE representatives and school boards, supervisors and principals to upgrade their understanding of and accountability for ensuring high standards in teacher quality and professional performance;
- Strengthen monitoring and evaluation strategies to facilitate school and classroom reforms;
- Provide incentives for female students and teachers to participate in educational opportunities;
- Extend evidence-based Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) into new counties to ensure all children are reading by Grade 3;
- Mount a sensitization campaign to increase parents' appreciation, and that of civil society generally, of the importance of educating girls and women; and
- Continue the existing non-formal education to open educational access and address the needs of over-age young adults, including ex-combatants, to be better prepared for employment and other forms of income generation.

III. Findings on CESLY Program

The evaluation team conducted field visits to four of the six counties, Montserrado, Bong, Nimba and Lofa, where the CESLY program had been operational. As part of the evaluation, key program stakeholders and beneficiaries were engaged individually or in focus group interviews to determine the extent to which core objectives of the program were met. In addition to interviews, the field evaluations allowed for physical evaluation of the actual learning environment and for observation of the dynamics among program participants. Finally, the field visits also permitted the evaluation team to witness the subtle impacts of the program that, while not measured by quantifiable indicators, were important factors in the evolution of the CESLY program.

In Montserrado, Bong, Nimba and Lofa counties group interviews were conducted with six different participant groups which included County Education Officers, District Education Officers, principals and school administrators, teachers, students and Parent/Teacher Associations (PTA) members. The crux of the field evaluation centered on assessing the goals of the CESLY program: increased access to non-formal basic education and ALP classes; strengthened core literacy, numeracy and life skills; improved teacher skills; increased number of quality learning materials in the classroom; ensured accessibility of learning resource centers; and contribute to GOL's education policy implementation. Through the CESLY project partnership with World ORT to provide training and job placement, the evaluation also served to assess the program's capacity to provide work readiness training and eventually extend its non-formal education curricula to create a vocational skills training platform.

A. Increased Access to NFE and ALP.

The CESLY Task: As a part of its poverty reduction strategy, the GOL sought to provide access to quality and relevant educational opportunities. The CESLY project complemented this goal by increasing access to learning opportunities, and improving school attendance, enrollment and retention rates.

Accomplishments: In a summary report of its own activities, the CESLY project notes having met the majority of its targets: it surpassed its student enrollment target by 106 percent (17,816). About 40 percent of those learners were NFE learners. Considering the CESLY project was able to achieve both the development and the piloting of the NFE Level 1 curriculum in only two years, one must conclude that the program was successful.

Findings: Though the evaluation did not involve validating the CESLY project's figures, it did review the methods and practices that may have contributed to the increased access to the CESLY program. The program directly addressed these goals via innovative teaching practices that, according to teachers in Salala, were more participatory and allowed students to engage. An unanticipated benefit of students' involvement in their own learning process was less class time being devoted to discipline and classroom management, and students retaining their attendance in the ALP classes.

The evaluation team also noted that the CESLY project was successful in increasing access to schools, in part due to the program's location in communities that are easily accessed from major roads. According to one CEO, however, "the program should have begun in the furthest

outreaches of the rural community and then gradually move to cover more county area.”³ The CEO suggested that the CESLY program’s reach to remote rural areas could have been increased by greater involvement by school administrators in the decisions regarding the location of the CESLY program’s activities. According to the CEO, training DEOs and other education officials to deliver the new pedagogy would have served to empower school administrators and encouraged their participation in the CESLY program.⁴ Greater inclusion of the county and district education officials may also work in tandem with the proposed GOL decentralization process.

Though the numbers of the CESLY project’s participants exceeded the targets, there were still some drop outs, especially in the NFE program. Stakeholders were almost universal in their observation that the Taa Bora lighting was ineffective and often dimmed shortly after classes begun. For those students whose instruction was in the evening, the lack of lighting was a disincentive to continue. At the Dahn Gborwin Public School in Nimba County, 30 of the 65 NFE students enrolled reportedly dropped out due to poor lighting. If the lighting system cannot be improved, moving classes to earlier in the evening or increasing daytime weekend classes may help to solve the lighting problem.

B. Strengthened Core Literacy, Numeracy, Life Skills, and Work Readiness.

The CESLY Project Task: Strengthening literacy, numeracy and life skills was one of the major tasks of the CESLY program.

Accomplishments: According to CESLY project estimates, ALP-regular learners increased their GPA by 39 percent, while ALP-youth learners increased their GPA by 41 percent. It is difficult to interpret these results because it is unclear if the improved grades were a result of better reading and numeracy skills, or the result of some other factor such as improved attitudes of learners, or a perception by teachers that the ALP learners must be improving. Clearly, something positive was happening, but it is unclear what that was or how that increase could be attributed.

A study conducted by a CESLY partner, the Research Triangle Institute (RTI), concluded that the CESLY project showed a positive impact on reading achievement as measured by the baseline, midterm and final assessments in both the ALP and NFE programs. Average performance scores on most reading sub-tasks that examined skills, such as letter identification, oral reading fluency and reading comprehension, increased from the baseline to the final assessments. In mathematics, the results were less clear insofar as learners were further behind and their performance in reading was not as strong.

Though the evaluation team could not determine the level of reading fluency, students in several locations indicated reading *Sonie’s Story* and *Pehm Pehm Ben* for pleasure. For students of both the ALP and NFE programs, the CESLY literacy and life skills program provided a welcoming learning environment and a transformation in their behavior, abilities, and self-confidence. Students basked in their achievements including the ability to handle a pen or pencil, count and

³ It should be noted, however, that schools were selected by the MOE.

⁴ This point should be also viewed in the light that several DEOs were Master Trainers who trained teachers under CESLY.

identify money, dial a phone number, write their names, or read a book. It is noted that ALP students, who were more likely to matriculate directly into junior secondary school, would have the opportunity and incentive to practice reading on their own.

Findings: Basic literacy, numeracy and life skills as primary deliverables of Liberia's public education systems are lacking. Those learners who now seek to normalize their education are left with inexperienced and often untrained teachers in overcrowded classrooms and unsuitable learning conditions. Life skills was an important component of the CESLY program lauded by students, parents and teachers alike. For parents, life skills engendered a sense of community, responsibility and respect in their children that had been eroded by the years of civil unrest. The ALP and NFE programs encouraged an atmosphere wherein children and youth embraced responsibility in their communities, were serious about their studies, and reflected a sense of self. One teacher in Montserrado County volunteered that a neighboring community wrote a letter of gratitude for ALP's contribution to achieving literacy among women and requested that the program continue. Life skills resonated with students who gained new knowledge about decision-making, reproductive health, and peace-building.

C. Improved Teacher Skills.

The CESLY Project Task: Improved teacher capacity was a key component of the program. Educators were to be trained in core competencies and foundation skills including reading, writing, math, social studies and science. Moreover, teachers were taught new pedagogical styles that embraced critical thinking, participatory learning and creative applications of learning. Other core teacher training goals were an increase in teacher time-on-task, attendance, punctuality and overall teaching practices.

Accomplishments: The CESLY project committed considerable resources to preparing educators to deliver a diversified and unique curriculum, and as a result focus group interviews revealed CESLY-trained teachers to be program beneficiaries as well. Teachers commented on having better control of the classroom and a more precise teaching methodology. Several teachers in the counties indicated they were using more effective lesson plans and teaching methodologies in their classrooms. Teachers interviewed in Maimu Town in Bong County were particularly vocal about the positive impact the new lesson plans had on their students' ability to learn and retain information. Instructors also seemed knowledgeable about the program's goals and could articulate its distinction from the conventional teacher curriculum.

Findings: Since the CESLY project was working with existing teachers, it was not intended to compete with the USAID-funded Liberia Teacher Training Program (LTTP) and the Rural Teacher Training Institutes (RTTIs), which to date have trained and certified 900 in-service teachers. Of that number only 400 have been officially assigned and placed on the MOE payroll. The CESLY project did, however, demonstrate the pedagogical differences between the two groups, which added pressure on untrained or newly certified teachers in the conventional programs to model their styles after the ALP or NFE classrooms. CESLY teachers noted during interviews that the other school teachers appreciated the different lesson plans and teaching formats. Other incentives of the CESLY project, such as regular and consistent salary stipend payments (\$50 per month) and the delivery of instructional materials, helped to boost educator's morale and this was reflected in their teaching. By design, the CESLY project did not train regular primary teachers who were not involved in the CESLY-supported ALP/NFE programs. It

also appears that the CESLY project largely used primary school teachers to deliver NFE programs and that many of those teachers were not specifically trained for teaching adults.

D. Increased Number of Quality Learning Materials in Classrooms.

The CESLY Project Task: This program component was responsible for the distribution of resources, including textbooks, reading materials, and teaching aids.

Accomplishments: The availability and distribution of learning materials distinguishes the CESLY project from conventional government funded classes in Liberia. The CESLY project's classrooms were furnished with instructional resources, which included chalk, paper and textbooks and other materials. In some cases teachers would share these goods with their non-CESLYproject counterparts. Teachers at the Morris Farm Community School in Montserrado said that in some instances, the world maps provided by CESLY were students' first opportunity to see a map of Liberia or the world.

Findings: Most students interviewed acknowledged having used the CESLY project reading and learning materials, especially *Sonie's Story*, as part of their regular classroom texts. In some communities these books were reclaimed at the end of the school year. Teachers and students also complained about not having access to textbooks because they were frequently locked away in the principal's office to secure them from theft. Though *Sonie's Story* and the other narratives often had an embedded moral message, there was no life skills textbook which the students may have found more useful. Moreover, the frequency with which classroom texts and books were exchanged using the mobile libraries was not clear.

E. Learning Resource Centers.

The CESLY Project Task: The program was mandated to provide support and strengthen six Learning Resource Centers (LRCs) as a means to encourage the continued educational growth of ALP students, and to promote a culture of literacy within the larger community.

Accomplishments: The LRCs were located in the county seats and often shared a space in administrative buildings. Students, teachers and education officials in the counties where the LRCs were located were appreciative of the LRCs, but chagrined by their dependence on them, now that they have been temporarily closed.

Findings: All of the LRCs were closed at the time of the evaluation. However, the CESLY program team opened the Montserrado LRC for inspection by the evaluation team.⁵ The Montserrado LRC was well stocked with books and computers and appeared to be utilized by students from both the surrounding secondary schools and the University of Liberia. It should be noted, however, that the mandate for the LRCs does include service to the broader community and, in this regard, they were successful in attracting a wide range of users. It could not be assessed if the LRCs were operating as centers of instruction and tutelage, or as reading rooms. If the centers were intended to be a reading room, the materials were found to be too advanced for beginning readers. The LRCs were libraries, but had few resources for new learners.

⁵ The LRCs were in the process of closing down under a two-month no-cost extension until a new activity could be awarded.

There was no indication that the CESLY project had trained MOE staff to take over the LRCs. At those locations where the LRC shared space with school administrative offices, when the CESLY program, closed the entire building was then without electricity⁶ or a means to access the generator, computers, internet or books and other instructional material. It also appeared that the majority of focus group interviewees had not heard of the LRCs. Given the nature of the NFE and ALP programs, it appeared mobile libraries were more appropriate.

F. Contribute to Government of Liberia Policy Implementation.

The CESLY Project Task: The expansion, reach and longevity of the CESLY program will depend on the congruity between the CESLY project and the future education policy of the Ministry of Education. Part of the success of the program will be measured by an improved capacity by the MOE to communicate its own programs that meet the educational needs of the society.

Accomplishments: The CESLY program was able to gain traction in Liberia because of the collaborative approach it achieved with the MOE on a strategy for implementation. Similarly, the CESLY project was successful in working with district MOE staff in the field, testing the ALP and NFE curricula and in subsequent program monitoring efforts. As the GOL begins the process to decentralize its education sector, the CESLY project staff assisted in crafting the recently signed National Education Reform Act and are contributing to the design of the subsequent Alternative Basic Education (ABE).

Findings: The CESLY program sought to work with MOE departments to strengthen their capacity in monitoring and evaluation, communications, pedagogy and teacher quality. While the Ministry has been supportive of CESLY programming and seeks to adopt the ABE pedagogy as part of the Liberian education policy, interviews with various stakeholders revealed a sense of doubt about the Ministry's current capacity and political will to assume full responsibility for the program. The USAID follow-on program, Advancing Youth, will continue to provide professional development for the MOE staff.

G. Establishing Foundation for Job Placement or Formal Job Training.

The CESLY Project Task: Through a work readiness curriculum, the CESLY project prepared learners for livelihoods and job placement. The CESLY project has coordinated with the Open Society Foundation and its implementing partner World ORT, to offer training opportunities for youth through the pilot Training for Employment Program (TEP). This program is the only functioning work training initiative by the CESLY project and is limited in scope and reach by USAID/Washington policy to work readiness activities.

Accomplishments: There are currently 2,360 ALP graduates in the TEP program, which seeks to provide opportunities in carpentry, soap making, hair dressing, blacksmithing, tailoring and other activities. The World ORT training program is a pilot project with limited funding and locations. The evaluation team limited its evaluation of the TEP to interviewing the program implementation staff at its headquarters.

⁶ CEO offices may have had generators, but there was no fuel to run them.

Findings: Currently the number of youth under 20 hovers near 60 percent of Liberia’s total population, with youth under 17 at 52 percent. Students, educators and other CESLY program beneficiaries grasp the importance of securing viable employment, both as a means to earn a livelihood and as means to stabilize the confidence and psychological wellbeing of the population. To CESLY participants, the work readiness program signifies an entrée into the formal work environment. Learners and teachers alike crave the practical application of work-related skills, including prioritization of activities, planning, goal-setting, decision-making and responsibility.

In each of the four counties, and particularly in the rural surroundings of Bong, Lofa and Nimba, stakeholder groups strongly advocated that a vocational skills training element be incorporated into any education program. In interviews with NFE and ALP students in Lofa, it was expressed that academic education needs to be followed by a trade. This sentiment was echoed especially among the older NFE students who would not seek to enter the formal education system upon completion of the alternative basic education program.

The TEP was not expansive enough to have had an impact in many of the communities interviewed. However, the CESLY project’s stakeholders did request that areas for vocational skills training be added.

H. Other Findings about the CESLY Project

The overall purpose of the CESLY project was to improve educational opportunities and create access for many disenfranchised young adults. In terms of meeting its quantitative objectives for training educators and attracting participant, the CESLY project was a marked success. However, now that the CESLY project is over, there is little evidence of MOE programs to provide accelerated learning opportunities for overage youth, and it is remarkable that many schools and districts have not sought to continue the CESLY program.

Much of the achievement of the program lies in the qualitative effects of creating a culture of learning. The CESLY project’s students expressed an almost visceral pride and a sense of breakthrough at being able to recognize letters and numbers for the first time. For these individuals, they were finding entry into a new community of education and learning, and a new vocabulary by which to structure and articulate thought. At the completion of their Level 1 studies, NFE students in Lofa County had a T-shirt printed with the phrase “From Darkness to Light” emblazoned across the front to express their achievement. “Education was seen like magic prior to the arrival of the CESLY Project in our communities,” said one student.

For students, teachers and community members alike, there was a focus on the future and what was possible because of an education. Students were able to envision possible careers and integration into a community. The CESLY project built the capacity of both educators and learners. It integrated parents into their children’s education and resulted in rebuilding normalcy into community life.

IV. Areas for Advancing Youth Project Focus

The greatest impact of the CESLY project can be seen in the positive perception that the school community has around the program. The methodologies, design of materials, innovative ways of delivering the curricula in class, and the training and constant monitoring of the CESLY project's teachers were all viewed very positively. This impact, however, has created a positive "tension" within CESLY school, where all teachers would like to be able to benefit from these innovations. This poses a challenge to the education institution, especially at the local district and eventually county levels. The demand from non-CESLY schools to become one, or to benefit from the project's education innovations, is growing day by day. An additional impact is that the NFE/ABE implemented in communities showed that there was a great need felt for this type of programming.

A. Address Management at the Local Level

The articulation and communication between County Education Offices, District Education Offices, schools and communities is still weak. Certainly, the lack of electricity and poor road conditions are major factors, but the small amount of petrol allocated for motorbikes every month is the main cause for the very limited mobility of education agents, particularly DEOs. The MOE should stand by its commitment to make education a priority for the development of Liberia and work to solve these basic management issues.

B. Help Implement Effective Decentralization Program

Decentralization is perceived at all levels as a promise and an opportunity to address all of the current and emerging challenges that the education system faces. However, this promise can turn very quickly into disappointment, if its implementation is not carefully planned. It is not only a question of bringing decision making authority closer to the field, such as the decision to fix school benches locally and not in Monrovia, but to ensure good collaboration between stakeholders within the system at all levels. Toward that end, a key element is building an efficient communications system linking stakeholders. In a technology poor environment such a system could be built by more effective planning.

One of the major advantages of decentralization is that the needs emanating from the field, and the response by the new decision making center, the CEO's office, will be more effectively coordinated, but will depend on the planning to establish a process to respond to these needs. It will be important to have a strategic plan that is understood and implemented at all levels, i.e., schools, district and county offices, and closely monitored. The strategic plan must be backed up by realistic budgetary exercises and funding allocations. A strategic plan for all stakeholders will make it possible to recognize the real needs at the school and community levels and ensure a more accurate planning and delivery system that addresses those needs.

C. Increase Efforts to Develop NFE

The NFE component of the CESLY project has been very successful in spite of the difficult conditions in which it operated, e.g., due to the lack of effective lighting in classrooms, a major reason for dropout of learners. Adult education programs clearly address a critical reality in Liberia, namely, the overall need of its population to gain access to basic education. Liberia is still rebuilding following 14 years of a war that not only destroyed the country, but the capacity

of its inhabitants to earn a decent livelihood. A population that is beginning to recover from psychological trauma regards education as an opportunity to have a future. The education system will face new challenges during the recovery process such as instituting an Alternative Basic Education system that is necessary to stimulate a nationwide literacy campaign. This huge task cannot be implemented only by the MOE. There is a need to build a vast coalition of donors and NGOs to participate in an effort to create the best possible conditions to deliver the ABE courses, by bringing light to classrooms, providing appropriate instructional and reading materials and teaching resources. It is the responsibility of the GOL to build hope in its citizenry, but also to deliver on this goal.

D. Clarify NFE and ABE Programs

The implementation of the NFE program showed that adult learners not only need to learn in their own space, but also require teachers who use adult-appropriate teaching methodologies, as well as appropriate learning and reading materials. Thus far the MOE has not established an Alternative Basic Education unit, with appropriate curricula, teaching methodologies, learning and reading materials. This unit should be established as soon as possible in order to deliver coherent, appropriate and efficient educational content to a growing adult population enrolling in the ABE classes. By doing this the MOE will responsibly address the growing need of an adult population eager to learn and catch up with the challenges of life in the 21st century, and will offer guarantees that the development process established for Liberia has some chances of succeeding.

E. Whole School Approach

The CESLY project's methodologies to plan and deliver lessons are perceived as positively affecting the education system. Positive "tensions" were created between the CESLY program and non-CESLY program trained teachers, but was resolved in an informal manner by the CESLY program trained teachers sharing the methodological aspects of their training with their colleagues. This is indicative of the new requirements for equal treatment that will emerge from the school communities, and eventually from other non-CESLY program schools at the district and county levels. Thus the MOE will be challenged to develop a realistic whole school approach and a low-cost model that can be replicated in all schools. Strategies such as an "Adopt a School" program could be designed with the AYP providing some Training of Trainers training to teachers already trained in the CESLY project in order for them to replicate the model in their own and other schools.

F. Greater Community Involvement

Although PTAs are in many cases very active organizations in their schools, it seems that the emerging need for education from adults is beginning to produce larger phenomena: the willingness of the community surrounding the school to contribute to the improvement of their education facilities in as many ways as possible. Thus, there is a unique opportunity to invite the citizenry at large to become part of the education process that ultimately will lead to new work and economic growth opportunities for the community as a whole.

The education system needs to take this into account by creating opportunities for citizens' inclusion in the detection of needs, planning processes, school to job opportunities by training PTAs, creating venues to consult, debate and plan education at the local level.

G. School-to-Work Issues

Youth skill training has become the new “cure-all” strategy to offer youth some hope about their futures. However, the strategy is beginning to backfire. An array of job skills training programs are being offered throughout the country, possibly generating youth with “trade skills” they cannot use to generate income. The number of tailors, bakers and other skills may become excessive in small towns. As a result, there may be a need for better coordination between the skills training programs and the economic development or job market development authorities.

H. Classroom and Teaching Methodologies

Despite the good practices that the CESLY program has instilled in the education system, the practices are still not fully operational. Teachers still carry out their “chalk and talk” routine in classrooms where benches are still not adapted to the action learning methodologies. Because schools still use desks that are bulky and massive pieces of wood, classrooms cannot be re-arranged into classroom environments that are more conducive to action learning methods.

I. Technology

Liberia needs to take advantage of technology to support its educational goals. However, its use needs to be carefully planned. There is a need to find appropriate technological responses to immediate problems such as lighting.

V. Lessons Learned/Recommendations

Given the findings from the review of the CESLY program and the assessment of the environment for the AYP program, the evaluation team offers the following lessons learned/recommendations for future programming in the field of ABE.

A. Start Small (or slowly) and Build on Success.

There are a number of reasons to be optimistic and assume that the successor to the CESLY project should get off to a fast start, but there are equally compelling and arguably stronger arguments to go slow. The CESLY program has been reasonably successful and the proposed implementer, Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC), of the follow on project is the incumbent. The newly established Department of ABE within the MOE will want to produce early results for the expected second-term of the current Liberian administration. The GOL will want to set ambitious targets and implement the program as quickly and widely as possible. However, the reality is that the MOE on all levels, but especially at the county and district levels, has exceptionally weak technical and managerial capacity and, moreover, it is expected to simultaneously undertake several reforms, including a major decentralization of the ministry as well as the development of the NFE program. In addition, the World Bank and other donors are planning substantial investments in education, some of which appear to have similar aims. USAID should resist the pressure to meet the GOL's political goals, and "just say no." USAID should focus its investments, as it currently plans to do, in a few districts in a few counties in the country and consider phasing implementation over several years.

B. Establish Clarity in the Program's Purpose.

One of the problems encountered early in the CESLY program was a focus on establishing outputs before the systems were in place to adequately deliver the outputs. As tempting as it may be to think of the AYP program as one of service delivery, it is fundamentally a program that will deliver a model for GOL replication. At best, the follow on program will only deliver services to a fraction of the more than 4,200 primary school communities in the country. Ensure that everyone understands that the AYP program is a program designed to deliver a model for ABE in Liberia.

C. Experimentation and Testing.

In keeping with the program's purpose of ABE model development, foster an environment of experimentation, testing different approaches. Establish baseline data early in the program and use the baseline data to test for program impact. Measure learning gains by using different approaches to deliver the services and measure the cost-effectiveness of those approaches. For example, perhaps use the MOE facilitators to deliver the NFE program in one county, while using NGO facilitators in another county. Learn by doing and make the AYP program a "living strategy" for ABE rather than a static one-size-fits-all approach.

D. Quid Pro Quo.

Although the GOL has meager resources and the MOE has a thin operating budget and very weak capacity, USAID should insist that the MOE provide resources to supplement the \$35 million USAID assistance package. In particular, one of the major aims of the AYP program is to build capacity and institutionalize ABE within the MOE. In many cases, there is a dearth of personnel to train and build capacity. USAID and its partner, EDC, should conduct a

management audit of the operations and staff at each targeted district or county office and insist that personnel be placed in the key position before the institution building assistance begins.

E. Be Proactive about Building Capacity within the MOE.

Although the MOE has some people with good technical skills, they constitute a very thin veneer within the central Ministry and at the local level, particularly CEOs and DEOs. It would be difficult to underestimate the need to build capacity within the MOE, especially at the county and district levels. USAID/Liberia and its partners will need to continue to provide training opportunities for MOE staff, but consideration should be given to going beyond just in-class training programs by affording practical, hands-on opportunities for MOE staff to grow into educational managers and technicians.

F. Fix the Small Things.

Small, apparently insignificant, things can hamper a project's success. For example, the Taa Bora alternative energy lighting system for NFE classes offered between 6 and 9 pm was not effective. The solar lights faded early during the class time period and participants had to bring flashlights to compensate. Almost everyone from the DEO to community members noted the failure of the lights, and most thought that the poor lighting was the single most important reason for the dropouts in the program. USAID/Liberia's partner in the CESLY program seemed to tout the Taa Bora lights as an accomplishment because they provided at least some illumination and were made by community members using donated, recycled plastic water bottles. However, the Taa Bora lights were inadequate and impractical for most communities. This might be a good area to experiment with different options, now that inexpensive and more durable commercially alternatives are available.

G. Consider a "whole school" Approach.

Apparently, only a few teachers from each school were recruited for teaching in the NFE or ALP programs for overage and out of school youth. They were taught non-formal teaching methods and how to use the learning materials. Because of the dearth of good usable learning materials in most schools, many teachers used the ALP and NFE materials in the regular formal primary school program. The training of some, but not all, teachers in the school created some tension between the teachers. Moreover, when a CESLY trained NFE facilitator was transferred out of the school, the program was handicapped. It is understood that much needs to be done to rationalize pre- and in-service teacher training in Liberia but, insofar as possible, USAID/Liberia may wish to consider a "whole school" approach to training teachers.

H. Design a Low-cost Model for Replication.

One of the objectives of the AYP program is to institutionalize and devolve responsibility for implementing the NFE program to the MOE by the end of the program. Given the meager resources available to the MOE and the inertia exhibited throughout the system, USAID and its partner, EDC, may wish to develop a low-cost model for replication. A model that would at least expand literacy, numeracy, life skills, and work readiness opportunities for older youth so that the program can be taken to scale nationwide or, at a minimum, to all of the six counties where the program intends to work.

I. Improve School and District Governance and Community Involvement.

Despite significant training under the CESLY project, most PTA members did not have a clear idea about their roles and responsibilities, and few PTA members exercised their prerogatives. Moreover, only a few schools had an action plan and most districts were only vaguely aware of the concept of strategic planning. There was little evidence of transparency and accountability in the schools and districts. USAID/Liberia and EDC should consider enhancing the role and responsibility of the parents and community in the schools and districts, thereby, improving the transparency and accountability of the system. Among other things, undertake a program that trains parents, community members, teachers and principals altogether in order to develop a time-phased action plan for their respective schools, and to help them understand their roles and responsibilities to oversee the action plans. The action plan and the MOE budget for the school should be displayed in an accessible location so that anyone can see them in order to measure progress toward the plan's objectives and the allocation of resources. The same sort of program could also be mounted for school districts.

J. Integrate AYP Programming into GOL Planning.

As a result of USAID/Liberia's ongoing collaboration with the GOL, the current design for the AYP program is effectively the new ABE program of the MOE. As this education program reaches maturation, and before it is fully transitioned to the GOL, it is important that the MOE has the capacity and resources to fully absorb the program into its itinerary. In this vein, it is important that the Ministry, USAID/Liberia and EDC work together to ensure that the AYP does not race ahead of the Ministry and create discontinuities in the program. Full sustainability can be achieved when the program is adopted at a pace and cost that the GOL is able to sustain.

VI. Conclusions

Although the CESLY program had a shaky start, it finished strongly. CESLY was a two-year program intended to finish, strengthen and expand the work started in an earlier effort. The project inherited staff, methods and procedures from an on-going ALP program and was pushed prematurely into overly ambitious implementation. Despite these early problems, the CESLY program recovered well over the second year and met the project's results and most of the targets that were mutually set with USAID. Moreover, the non-quantifiable benefits of the program are apparent to any observer. By nearly every account, the CESLY program was a success.

Despite the success of the CESLY program, there are a number of short-comings. Prominent among those are the lack of reliable data on the student/teacher/community profiles and student learning gains attributable to the CESLY program. There is also a lack of documentation on the challenges related to working with limited infrastructure, chief among those being providing reliable lighting for learners who could only receive instruction after daylight hours. In addition, the CESLY project contended with teachers who were not fully trained and were challenged by their own low levels of literacy and numeracy; the full involvement of local authorities was not achieved; and meaningful gains in learning and measurable impact could not be demonstrated as the result of limited baseline data.

As USAID/Liberia works to assist the MOE in implementing its new education initiatives, and as the CESLY project's contractor moves forward with a new AYP program, there are several challenges that the consortium of partners will need to address, which include development of a low-cost model for replication, achieving effective decentralization, and promoting greater community involvement to ensure complete project ownership. These recommendations are offered with the best of intentions and in the hopes that they will help USAID assist the wonderful people of Liberia to improve their education and their lives.

Annex 1. Documents Consulted

Liberia Development Context

- Liberia Interagency Conflict Assessment Framework (ICAF). 2010.
- Conflict Sensitive National Long Term Vision for Sustainable Development. UNDP 2011.
- Liberia Poverty Reduction Strategy. Government of Liberia 2011.
- Liberia National Capacity Development Strategy. UNDP & Liberia Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs, 2011.

USAID

- Country Development Cooperation Strategy 2011-2015 (draft). USAID, 2011.
- Feed the Future, multi-year strategy, 2012-2015. USAID, 2011.
- Developing Liberia's Economic Corridors. USAID, 2011.
- CESLY presentation at LTTP. USAID, 2011.
- Advancing Youth Program, RFA. USAID, 2011.
- Liberia Youth Fragility Assessment. USAID, 2008.

Education

- Education Reform Act. Government of Liberia, 2011.
- Ministry of Education Policy on Alternative Basic Education. USAID, UNESCO, GOL, 2011.

Training and Employment

- Training and Employment Program, Quarterly Report July-September 2011. ORT, 2011.
- Trainer Incentive Program. ORT, 2011.
- Training and Employment Program, Interim Report. ORT, 2011.
- Center for Skills Innovation. ORT, 2011.

CESLY Program Materials

- In Service II Training Package for ALP Teachers and NFE Facilitators. CESLY, 2010
- All Service Lesson Plan. CESLY, 2009.
- Non-Formal Education Curriculum: Work Readiness Facilitator's Manual for level 1. CESLY 2010
- Alternative Basic Education Curriculum. Work Readiness Facilitator's Manual level 1, semester 1. CESLY 2011.
- Non-Formal Education Curriculum. Work Readiness Facilitator's Manual, level 1 semester 2. CESLY 2010.
- Non-Formal Education Curriculum, Literacy. Learner's Book level 1. CESLY 2011.
- Non-Formal Education Curriculum, Literacy. Facilitator's Manual for level 1. CESLY 2010.
- Non-Formal Education Curriculum, Literacy. Facilitator's Manual for level 1, semester 2. CESLY 2010.
- Non-Formal Education Curriculum, Numeracy. Facilitator's Manual for level 1. CESLY 2010.
- Non-Formal Education Curriculum, Numeracy. Facilitator's Manual for level 1, semester 2. CESLY 2010.
- Non-Formal Education Curriculum, Numeracy. Learner's Book for level 1. CESLY 2011.
- Alternative Basic Education Curriculum, Life Skills. Facilitator's Manual level 1, semester 1. CESLY 2011.
- Guide to Incorporate Life Skills into ALP. CESLY, 2010.
- EGRA Plus Reading Manual. CESLY 2009.
- In-Service Make Up Training Package for ALP Teachers. CESLY 2009.
- School-Community/PTA Training Guide. CESLY 2010.
- Impact of Alternative Basic Education on Youth in Conflict-Affected Environments. CESLY 2011.
- Consultant's reports. CESLY 2010.

- Sonie's Story. CESLY, 2010.
- Sonie's Story 2, CESLY, 2011
- CESLY Quarterly Report October-December 2009.
- CESLY Quarterly Report January-March 2010.
- CESLY Performance Management Plan. CESLY 2009
- MOU USAID-OSF-MYS-MOE. 2010.
- MOU CESLY and Teachers/Schools Administrators. Unknown.
- CESLY Mid-Term Evaluation. Patrick Cummins, 2010.
- CESLY Project Response to the Mid Term Evaluation. 2010.

Annex 2. List of Key Individuals Interviewed

A. Ministry of Education (MOE)

1. Hon. Mator M.F. Kpangba Deputy Minister of Instruction, MOE, Liberia.
2. Hon. Yonton Kesselly Director of Technical Education, MOE, Liberia
3. Hon. Thomas Clark ALP Coordinator, MOE, Liberia

B. Core Educational Skills for Liberian Youth Project (CESLY), Liberia

1. Simon James Chief of Party, EDC/ CESLY, Liberia
2. Katy Anis Basic Education Technical Expert, C/CESLY
3. William Massaboi M&E Analyst, CESLY Project
4. Moses Kwalula Capacity Development Specialist, CESLY
5. Pauline Browne Curriculum Development Specialist, CESLY
6. Sebastian K. Toe Teachers Training Specialist, CESLY
7. Flomo Golanyon Distant Education & Gender Specialist, CESLY
8. T. Edwin Kamara Literacy & Numeracy Specialist, CESLY
9. Robert Reeves Communication & Outreach Coordinator, CESLY
10. Tilay A. Kollie Life Skills/Service Learning Coordinator, CESLY

C. United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Liberia

1. Dr. Michael L. Boyd Ph.D. Senior Economic Growth Officer, USAID, Liberia.
2. Dr. Julia Richards Chief Education Officer and A/COTR, USAID, Liberia
3. Mardea Nyumah COTR, USAID, Liberia

D. USAID- Liberia Teacher Training Project, (LTTP)

1. Dr. Johnson Odharo Chief of Party, Liberia Teachers Training Project, Liberia

E. ORT World Training & Employment Program

1. Gary Walker Chief of Party, ORT, Liberia

Annex 3. Individuals Interviewed and Meetings

CESLY Key Informants

1. Simon James, Chief of Party, CESLY
2. Kathy Anis, Basic Education Technical Expert, CESLY
3. Moses Kwalula, Capacity Building Specialist
4. Pauline Browne, Curriculum Development Specialist
5. Fertiku Harris, Literacy & Numeracy Specialist
6. Tilay Kollie, Lifeskills/Service Learning Coordinator
7. Moses Kwalula, Capacity Building Specialist
8. Sebastian Toe, Teacher Training Specialist
9. William Massaboi, M & E Analyst

FOCUS GROUPS

10. M&E Officers Focus Group
11. Team Leaders Focus Group
12. Training Officers focus group
13. Community Participation Officers

USAID

14. Dr. Michael L. Boyd , Economic Growth Officer, USAID
15. Dr. Julia Richard, Chief Education Officer, USAID
16. Gary Walker, Chief of Party, World ORT
17. Hon. Mator Kpangbai, Deputy Minister for Instruction, MOE, Liberia

18. Hon. Thomas Clark, ALP Coordinator, MOE, Liberia
19. Hon. Yonton Kesselly, Assistant Minister for Vocational Education, MOE
20. Johnson Odhara, Chief of Party, Liberia Teacher Training Program

Montserrado

21. DEO Montserrado County
22. Focus group at Antoinette Tubman Public School at Croziervillle comprising Principals, PTA, students and facilitators in Montserrado
23. Focus group at Morris' farm Public School at Coca-Cola Factory Community comprising Principals, PTA, students and facilitators in Montserrado

Lofa

24. CEO Lofa
25. DEO Voinjama
26. DEO Zorzor
27. Principals, Teacher, PTA & Participants-VOINJAMA DISTRICT
28. Principals, Teacher, PTA & Participants-ZORZOR DISTRICT

Annex 4. List of Schools and Sites

MONTSERRADO COUNTY		Schools Represented	Program Type	CEOs	DEOs	Admins	Principals	Teachers	PTAs	Students	Total
TOTAL INTERVIEWED				0	1	0	5	10	12	55	83
St. Paul Left Bank		Antoinette Tubman	NFE								
		Harrisburg Public School	NFE								
Todee		Morris Farm Community School	ALP								
		King Gray Public School	ALP								
NIMBA COUNTY		Schools Represented	Program Type	CEOs	DEOs	Admins	Principals	Teachers	PTAs	Students	Total
TOTAL INTERVIEWED				1	5	5	16	30	28	36	121
Bain-Garr		J.W. Pearson School	Youth/ABE								
		Gbuyee	ALP Regular								
		Tondin	Regular/ABE								
		George A. Dunbar	Regular/ABE								
		G.W.R.	Regular/ABE								
		Gbedin	Regular/ABE								
Saclepea 1		Johnny Voker	ALP								
Saclepea 2		Flumpa Public School	ALP								
		Dahn Gborwin Public School	ALP								
Sanniqueлие-Mahn		New Sanniqueлие Campus	ALP Youth								
		Gbalassonon	ALP Regular								
		Davoryee	ALP Regular								
		Gbapa	ABE								
		Zolowee	ALP Regular/Youth								
Geh		Zorgowee Public School	ALP								
		Zor-Kialeу	ALP								
		Karn Elementary	ALP								
Twah River		Garplay Public School	ALP								
BONG COUNTY		Schools Represented	Program Type	CEOs	DEOs	Admins	Principals	Teachers	PTAs	Students	Total
TOTAL INTERVIEWED				1	1	1	8	18	9	8	46
Panta-Kpaii		Nyakoi Bee Elementary School	ALP								
		Samuel B. Cooper	ALP								

	Quayee Public	ALP									
	Kpanyah Site	ALP									
Gbarnga	N.V. Massaquoi	ALP									
	J.F. Clarke	ALP									
Salala	Quelimin Toto School	ALP									
	Kolleh Gwee	ALP									
	Kolila Town School	ALP									
	Donfah Elementary School	ABE									
	E.J. Yancy	ALP									
	Mamadi	ALP									
	New Totota School	ALP									
	Moipata Public School	ALP									
	William V.S. Tubman	ALP									
LOFA COUNTY	Schools Represented	Program Type	CEOs	DEOs	Admins	Principals	Teachers	PTAs	Students	Total	
TOTAL INTERVIEWED			1	2	2	5	12	3	73	98	
Salayea	Gorlu Public School	ALP Regular/Youth									
	Telemu Site	ABE									
	Succromu Site	ABE									
Zorzor		ALP									
	Antoinette Tubman School	Regular/Youth									
	Sumo Kuta Public School	ALP Regular/Youth									
	Flomo Vorgborwolo Public School	ABE									
Voinjama	Kintoma Community School	ALP Youth									
	Lawalazu Public School	ABE									
GRAND TOTAL			3	9	8	34	70	52	172	348	

Annex 5: Table of Educational Data “at a glance.”

Liberia Education Fact Sheet: 2009

County	Student Enrolment Primary	Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) Primary %	Net Enrollment Rate (NER) Primary %	Gender Parity Index (GPI) Primary %	Gross and Net Completion Rate Primary % GCR NCR	Number of Teachers	Percent Trained Teachers	Pupil/trained Teacher Ratio	Pupil to Textbook Ratio
Bong	59,679	112	36	.88	84 2.6	1,888	48	66	3
Grand Bassa	29,445	84	28	.79	51 0.5	1,095	48	56	4
Lofa	47,281	98	46	.86	91 3.6	1,377	46	74	2
Montserrado	208,645	119	56	.88	99 5.3	8,382	59	42	4
Ninba	95,232	122	39	.92	90 3.8	3,191	47	63	5
National	605,236	106	42	.88	83 3.4	22,120	48	57	4

Annex 6: Semi-structured questionnaire used for Interview Guidance

Questions for Meetings with Principals

Describe briefly what the CESLY program did and ascertain if people know about the program. Find out something about each individual's involvement in the CESLY program. Explain that this is an end-of-project evaluation whose aim is to make recommendations on how to improve the program in the future. Tell everyone that there will be no attribution of their comments and that we are just collecting comments and opinions about the CESLY program.

- 1) What impact did the CESLY program have in their schools or area? Please get them to be as specific as possible.
- 2) What successes can they cite about the accelerated learning program (literacy and numeracy program)?
- 3) What did you understand the life skills training program to be? How effective was the life skills program of the CESLY?
- 4) What areas could be improved of either the accelerated learning or life skills components? Please be specific.
- 5) From the point of view of a principal, what difficulties or challenges did you encounter in the implementation of the CESLY Program?
- 6) What was the level of involvement of the DEO in the implementation, monitoring, and supervision of the CESLY program?
- 7) What do you know about the Learning Resource Centers (LRC)? How did the teachers use the LRC?
- 8) How useful were the learning materials, (books, learning aids, teachers aids) supplied by CESLY?
- 9) Are there any areas that you learned new things (lessons learned) or can you highlight any best practices of CESLY?
- 10) Did you (the principal) observe any changes in teachers due to the CESLY program?
- 11) How can the CESLY program be improved in the future?

Questions for Meetings with Teachers

Describe briefly what the CESLY program did and ascertain if people know about the program. Find out something about each individual's involvement in the CESLY program. Explain that this is an end-of-project evaluation whose aim is to make recommendations on how to improve the program in the future. Tell everyone that there will be no attribution of their comments and that we are just collecting comments and opinions about the CESLY program.

- 1) What impact did the CESLY program have in their schools or area? Please get them to be as specific as possible.
- 2) What successes can they cite about the accelerated learning program (literacy and numeracy program)?
- 3) How effective was the life skills training of the CESLY program?
- 4) What areas could be improved of either the accelerated learning or life skills or work readiness components? Please be specific.
- 5) From the point of view of a teacher, what difficulties or challenges did you encounter in the implementation of the CESLY Program?
- 6) What was the level of involvement of the DEO in the implementation, monitoring, and supervision of the CESLY program? What were some of the limiting factors regarding DEO involvement?
- 7) What do you know about the Learning Resource Centers (LRCs)? Did you find the LRC useful? Why?
- 8) How useful were the learning materials, (books, learning aids, reading materials, teachers aids) supplied by CESLY?
- 9) What, if any, changes occurred in your knowledge, skills, or classroom practices due to CESLY? Are any of these changes best practices that should be highlighted?
- 10) How can the CESLY program be improved in the future?

Questions for Meetings with Parents

Describe briefly what the CESLY program did and ascertain if people know about the program. Find out something about each individual's involvement in the CESLY program. Explain that this is an end-of-project evaluation whose aim is to make recommendations on how to improve the program in the future. Tell everyone that there will be no attribution of their comments and that we are just collecting comments and opinions about the CESLY program.

Questions:

- 1) What impact did the CESLY program have in their children, schools or community? Please get them to be as specific as possible.
- 2) What successes can they cite about the accelerated learning program (literacy and numeracy program) with their child or other children?
- 3) How effective was the life skills training of the CESLY program? Are there specific examples about how the life skills training affected their child or other children in the community?
- 4) What areas could be improved of either the accelerated learning or life skills or work readiness components? Please be specific.
- 5) How useful were the learning materials, (books, learning aids, reading materials) supplied by CESLY?
- 6) What, if any, changes did the parents observe in teachers as a result of CESLY, particularly in terms of the teachers' skills, or classroom practices?
- 7) How can the CESLY program be improved in the future?

Questions for Meetings with CEOs

- 1) What do you know about the CESLY program?
- 2) Has the implementation of the CESLY program helped your work and in what way?
- 3) Is there in your county a need to address over aged children through a special program?
- 4) Do you know how many teachers were trained to teach in the CESLY program curriculum?
- 5) Did the CESLY program implementation make more work for you? How do you feel about that?
- 6) Did you receive any communication from the MOE about the implementation of the CESLY program before it came to your county?
- 7) Did you receive any monitoring, supervision or any other kind of support form the MOE (in the form of additional budget, training, materials etc)? Explain.
- 8) What was your relationship with the CESLY program staff? Did they visit you? Provide support? Take you to school visits?
- 9) What were to your knowledge the results of the program? How would you improve the program and its materials?
- 10) Should CESLY continue? Why?

Questions for Meetings with DEOs

- 1) What do you know about the CESLY program?
- 2) Has the implementation of the CESLY program helped your work and in what way?
- 3) Do you know how many students participated in the CESLY program in your district? Was that amount enough? Would you have liked to have more? Why?
- 4) Do you know how many teachers were trained to teach in the CESLY program curriculum?
- 5) Did you visit schools where the CESLY program was implemented, was it difficult for you? Were you able to perceive differences between schools with CESLY and without CESLY?
- 6) Did you receive any communication from the MOE and or your CEO about the implementation of the CESLY program before it came to your district?
- 7) Did you receive any support form the MOE or County in the form of additional budget, training, materials etc? Explain
- 8) What was your relationship with the CESLY program staff?
- 9) To your knowledge, what were the results of CESLY?
- 10) How would you improve the program and its materials?
- 11) Should CESLY continue? Why?

Questions for Meetings with Students

- 1) When were you a participant in the CESLY program? For how long?
- 2) What subjects did you take? Reading, pronunciation, mathematics?
- 3) What is your understanding of job readiness training? Or life skills lessons?
- 4) How did you find the education useful to you?
- 5) How was the education not useful?
- 6) Are you familiar with the Learning Resource Center? If so, did you ever use it? For what?
- 7) Did you find books and learning materials available in the LRC? If yes, what sorts of books and materials?
- 8) Did the CESLY books and learning materials provide a motivation for learning? If so, which materials did you like the most?
- 9) Did you use any of the CESLY learning materials to practice your reading? Which ones? Did they provide a motivation for starting or joining reading clubs?
- 10) How did CESLY prepare you for work or for getting a job?
- 11) What do you believe to be the good things about the CESLY program? Why do you feel this way?
- 12) What have been some weaknesses of the CESLY program? Why do you feel this way?
- 13) What would you do to improve the CESLY program?