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Liberia Girls' Opportunities to Access Learning (GOAL) Plus Project

Quarterly Report

Q1 - 1 September, 2013 – 31 December, 2013



January, 2014

A partnership with the:

American Institutes for Research and Forum for African Women Educationalists

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Prepared by:

American Institutes for Research

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Acronyms

AIR	American Institutes for Research
AYP	Advancing Youth Project
CEO	County Education Office
DEO	District Education Office
DP	Development Partners
FAWE	Forum for African Women Educationalists
GED	Girls' Education Division
GOAL	Girls' Opportunities to Access Learning
IBB	International Book Bank
IP	Implementing Partners
IR	Intermediate Result
L-MEP	Liberia Monitoring and Evaluation Program
LTTP	Liberia Teacher Training Program
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MCC	Millennium Challenge Corporation
MOE	Ministry of Education
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OCA	Organization Capacity Assessment
PMP	Performance Monitoring Plan
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
SIP	School Improvement Plan
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

I. Executive Summary

The Girls' Opportunities to Access Learning (GOAL) Plus project is a two-year United States Agency for International Development (USAID)-supported activity implemented by a partnership comprised of the American Institutes for Research (AIR) and the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) Liberia. The aim of the GOAL Plus project is to build on the success of the previous GOAL project to improve primary school girls' retention, attendance, and enrollment in 60 schools in Bong, Lofa, and Grand Bassa counties. To this end, GOAL is offering: (1) a scholarship program; (2) Parent Teacher Association (PTA) capacity building and community grants to improve the learning environments of schools; (3) an outreach awareness campaign to create support among parents and communities for girls' education and appropriate age enrollment; (4) whole-school health interventions; (5) support to the Ministry of Education (MOE) on topics related to girls' education; and (6) capacity building support to FAWE to strengthen their finance, administration, logistics, and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) activities. Research and evaluation activities are being carried out to provide evidence concerning the performance key interventions and issues than impact girls' success in education to inform the policy dialogue and programming related to girls' education.

GOAL Plus overlapped for a two month period with the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC)-GOAL project. This allowed for the continuity of staff and activities. As GOAL rolled out the appropriate age enrollment campaign with the MOE, GOAL Plus was able to begin the sensitization and enrollment campaign for all 60 schools participating in the GOAL Plus project. GOAL Plus renewed the relationship with the 40 GOAL-supported schools and introduced the GOAL Plus support program to the 20 GOAL comparison schools community meetings held in September in Lofa, Bong, and Grand Bassa Counties.

GOAL Plus distributed scholarship packages to 6,037 girls in Grades 1-6 at 60 schools in Bong, Lofa, and Grand Bassa counties with 502 teacher support kits delivered to their teachers. Related school fees will be paid and uniforms will be distributed in January 2014. GOAL Plus continued its messaging and campaign to encourage on-time and appropriate age enrollment in GOAL Plus communities, with a focus on enrolling in Grade 1 at age 6, resulting in the enrollment of 62 new age appropriate girls in Grade 1. During the first quarter, GOAL Plus also held community mobilization events in ten communities with 620 parents, teachers, and community members and leaders in attendance.

GOAL Plus staff reviewed the book inventory provided by International Book Bank (IBB) and selected books that were appropriate for basic education basic subjects, like reading and math, as well as youth-friendly literature in English.

The GOAL Plus community mobilization and grants team conducted the PTA pre-assessment in the 31 GOAL Plus supported schools that previously had not participated in the GOAL grants program. The PTAs new to the GOAL project will have opportunities to engage in learning by doing through school improvement project implementation and other activities including targeted trainings on topics including basic operations, school improvement plan (SIP) development, grant proposal writing, financial management, and project implementation as well as strategies to monitor student and teacher attendance. A total of 154 PTA leaders participated in the first phase of GOAL Plus PTA trainings.

GOAL Plus staff engaged MOE staff at the national, county, and district levels. GOAL Plus staff worked closely with the MOE and other Development Partners in development of the MOE's draft 3 Year Operational Plan. GOAL Plus met with the GED Director to develop a strategy for dissemination of the revised National Policy on Girls' Education to all counties and schools and for development of the gender focal point training. GOAL Plus met with the new county and district education officers to sensitize them on the GOAL Plus activities. GOAL Plus staff also began adaptation of the Organizational Capacity Assessment (OCA) Tool for its capacity building activities with FAWE.

Finally, the GOAL Plus staff, with support from the AIR leadership, consulted with the MOE and USAID to determine areas of research that are of highest priority and more likely to be actionable when results are forthcoming. The three topics that were of most interest to the three groups of stakeholders were:

1. Girls' transition rates and trends from Grade 6 to Grade 7;
2. PTA strengthening and sustainability – what makes a successful and productive PTA;
3. The extent to which support for access (GOAL Plus intervention) is associated with learning achievement.

The project also revised the refined the M&E system for tracking project indicators and activities including the M&E Officer attending the USAID Environmental Compliance training.

II. Description of Activities during the Quarter (September – December 2013)

Introduction

The USAID GOAL Plus project is implemented by the American Institutes for Research and the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) Liberia began operations in September 2013 with a two year period of performance through October 2015. GOAL Plus overlapped for a two months period with the Millennium Challenge Corporation GOAL project. This allowed for the continuity of staff and activities. As GOAL rolled out the appropriate age enrollment campaign with the MOE, GOAL Plus was able to begin the sensitization and enrollment campaign for all 60 schools participating in the GOAL Plus project. Based on their skills and commitment, GOAL Plus retained all of the staff from the GOAL project. This aided in the seamless transition from GOAL to GOAL Plus. GOAL Plus is able to leverage the knowledge, experience, and relationships cultivated under the previous GOAL project to implement the expanded scope of GOAL Plus in Bong, Lofa, and Grand Bassa counties and with the MOE.

During this start-up phase for the project, GOAL Plus staff held consultative meetings with several Donor and Implementing Partners to share information, strategies and tools, including the USAID-Advancing Youth Project (AYP), regarding PTA strengthening; CONCERN, regarding USAID-funded activities in Grand Bassa; and UNICEF, regarding support for Upper Basic Education and transition support for girls from Grade 6 to Grade 7. A consultative meeting was scheduled with the USAID-Liberia Teacher Training Program (LTTP) for early January 2014.

Overall Objective: Improved Education Opportunities for Girls in Selected Communities of Lofa, Bong, and Grand Bassa Counties

Activity 1: Expand the most promising model (scholarships and community mobilization) to all 60 GOAL schools

IR 1: Increased Access to School for Girls in Targeted Communities of Bong, Lofa, and Grand Bassa Counties

IR 1.1: Improved Academic Performance for Girls in Targeted Grades in Targeted Schools

GOAL Plus renewed the relationship with the 40 GOAL-supported schools and introduced the GOAL Plus support program to the 20 GOAL comparison schools community meetings held in September in Lofa, Bong, and Grand Bassa Counties. The 40 original GOAL schools that received the separate intervention models under GOAL, were introduced to the whole package of interventions to be provided under GOAL Plus. Agreements were signed with these schools for two years of GOAL Plus assistance to support for girls' education. (One school, Yaindawoun Public School in Suakoko District, Bong county, was dropped from the original 40 GOAL-supported schools for a demonstrated lack of commitment – it closed before the end of the school year to accommodate bush school attendance – and a new school was added in its place, David Fejue Public School in Suakoko.)

Scholarship Packages

The first activity after the signing of the school agreements was the procurement and distribution of scholarship packages and teachers' kits. Girls enrolled in grades 1 to 6 continued to receive in-kind scholarships (Activities 1.1.7 and 1.1.8), and GOAL Plus will reimburse their school-related

fees (actual amount or up to the limit of US\$5.00 at a public school and USD 12.50 at a community school as prescribed by the MOE) in January 2014 after confirmation of enrollment (Activity 1.1.6). The full scholarship package contains a uniform, a book bag, school supplies, and basic hygiene items. All girl students were measured for uniforms and tailoring was completed within this quarter. Uniforms will be distributed in January 2014. Principals have been advised of the January distribution of school fees and uniforms and agreed not to turn any girl students away in the absence of these before the GOAL Plus distribution.

Along with the scholarship packages, GOAL Plus provided a basic teacher's kit to all teachers in the primary school grades at the beginning of the semester (Activities 1.1.1 and 1.1.2). The teacher's kit includes such items as a lantern and batteries for teachers to work on lesson plans and correct homework at night, lesson planning books, chalk, copybooks, pens, and pencils. All teachers receive a book bag with basic supplies. Pre-primary teachers will receive teachers' kits during the January distribution of girls' school uniforms. GOAL Plus also distributed a complete set of textbooks for each grade and blackboard paint to all schools to enhance classroom teaching practices during the September re-introduction of GOAL Plus to schools described above.

Table 1: Number of Students and Teachers Receiving Scholarship Packages & Teachers' Kits in GOAL-Plus Supported Schools (Semester I, 2013-2014)

County	Scholarship Packages	Teachers Support Kits		
	No. of Grades 1-6 girls receiving packages	Male	Female	Total
Grand Bassa	2,439	134	38	172
Bong	1,335	162	13	175
Lofa	2,263	146	9	155
Total	6,037	442	60	502

Table 2: Administrative Supplies to 60 GOAL-Plus Supported Schools (Semester I, 2013-2014)

County	Items Description								
	Blackboard Paint (pcs)	Plan book (pcs)	Dusters (pcs)	Pens (red+blue)	Teachers' Bag (pcs)	Ledger (pcs)	Batteries (pcks)	Lamps (pcs)	Chalk (bxs)
Grand Bassa	126	344	126	1,032	172	172	172	172	126
Bong	168	350	168	1,050	175	175	175	175	168
Lofa	126	310	126	930	155	155	155	155	126
Total	420	1,004	420	3,012	502	502	502	502	420

Through partnership with the International Book Bank (IBB), GOAL Plus will provide US\$400,000 worth of reading materials as awards and incentives to girls and parents for achievements, including high academic performance and on-time and appropriate age enrollment (Activity 1.1.17). These awards will increase the availability of personal reading materials and at-home libraries and supplement the early grade reading activities of Liberia Teacher Training Program (LTTP). GOAL staff reviewed the book inventory provided by IBB and selected books that were appropriate for basic education basic subjects like reading and math as well as youth-friendly literature in English. Teachers and students will benefit from the increased availability of high quality materials to supplement their classroom teaching practices for individual

professional development and classroom use (Activity 2.13). GOAL Plus provided payment for the shipment and IBB has scheduled the shipment for arrival in January 2014.

In August 2013, the MOE, with support from MCC-GOAL, conducted an enrollment campaign that asked parents to enroll their child in school at the right age – and at the right time. GOAL Plus staff will continue to place particular emphasis on its community-based awareness raising activities in the 20 new communities where GOAL Plus has begun operations. GOAL Plus will continue to deliver messages about on-time and appropriate age enrollment, with an emphasis on enrollment in Grade 1 at age 6 or 7, and the importance of girls' education and other related topics. In the first semester, 62 girl students enrolled at ages 6-7. GOAL Plus will award certificates in the next quarter to parents of the children who were enrolled at the appropriate age (Activity 1.1.9).

Girls' Clubs, Mentoring, and Tutoring

Tutors are being identified in the new GOAL Plus-supported schools. Teachers already teaching in the school are being identified while there is ongoing follow-up with tutors who previously served in the GOAL schools. In cases where a previously serving tutor has been transferred or otherwise left the school, that tutor will be replaced. Under GOAL Plus, only students faced with difficulties in meeting the right marks will be encouraged to attend the tutoring class that focuses on four core subjects, math, English, science and social studies.

IR 2: Improved Learning Environment for Girls in Selected Communities of Bong, Lofa, and Grand Bassa Counties

PTA-Community Mobilization and School Improvement Grants

PTA Assessments. GOAL Plus is continuing the successful strategy developed under GOAL of PTA capacity building through training, experience sharing, peer mentoring, onsite technical assistance, and experiential learning. PTAs that did not previously receive support from GOAL were assessed (Activity 2.1) on their current capacities to receive tailored training, onsite technical assistance, peer mentoring, and opportunities to participate in experience-sharing workshops (Activity 2.2 and 2.3). The PTAs will have opportunities to engage in *learning by doing* through school improvement project implementation and other activities. Trainings will include basic operations, SIP development, grant proposal writing, financial management, and project implementation as well as strategies to monitor student and teacher attendance.

The purpose of the PTA pre-assessment was to establish diagnostic profile for designing and delivering PTA strengthening activities. The diagnostic focused on five thematic areas: PTA leadership and governance, capacity building support required to increase PTA efficiency and effectiveness, participation, accounting, and internal controls and segregation of duties. Thirty-one (31) school PTAs across six districts in three counties of Bong, Lofa and Grand Bassa that will directly receive first-time school improvement grants assistance were assessed. Individualized school visitations were carried out in order to get more complete descriptions.

GOAL Plus community mobilization and grants team conducted the PTA pre-assessment in the 31 GOAL Plus supported schools that previously had not participated in the GOAL grants program and are earmarked to receive non-competitive school improvement grants this year from GOAL Plus. The mobilization and grants team also conducted mobilization awareness activities in 10 GOAL Plus program schools.

The pre-assessment summaries of the 31 new schools are presented below:

Lofa County PTA pre-assessment summary

- Seven out of nine PTAs have an established leadership;
- On average, less than half of the parents reportedly turn out for PTA meetings;
- There is an average of two females represented in PTA leadership;
- Meeting minutes and decision taken are not announced routinely;
- PTAs participation in activities are planned with specific roles;
- Leadership tenure is 2 years which is in line with MOE regulations of PTA leadership tenure;
- PTA filing systems are unorganized and incomplete;
- More than half of PTAs lack proper leadership and management systems;
- Half of the PTAs' meeting minutes are taken and kept on kept on a regular basis and reflect discussions held;
- Only half of PTAs decisions reportedly are carried out;
- About half of PTAs reported conducting need assessments but in most cases it involved only the PTA chairperson acting on an individual basis
- No SIP development experience was among PTAs; less than half of PTAs have an existing PTA plan; roles were not reported to be specified in the implementation of work plans;
- Less than half of the PTAs say that they mobilize more than 25 percent of resources for the school;
- 50 percent of schools in Lofa do not have a system for tracking expenditures; and
- One in nine PTAs is receiving outside NGO assistance.

Bong County PTA pre-assessment summary

- All 15 PTAs assessed in Bong have an established PTA leadership;
- On average, between 25-30 percent of parents were reported to attend and participate in PTA meeting and activities;
- There is an average of two females represented in PTA leadership;
- On an average only 25 percent of parents are involve into the decision making process at school;
- On an average, a PTA leader holds that position for about 3 years;
- PTAs support schools in different ways; support is most often focused on payment of PTA dues and farm making;
- School support activities in Bong range from school gardening to payment of PTA dues;
- PTAs need capacity building for leadership, management and record keeping;
- About 90 percent of PTAs do not have organized financial systems. Financial records are not kept and cash is spent without receipts or properly documented;
- Half of the PTAs have received prior training; No direct financial assistance from an outside NGO or government has been received to date;
- Almost none of the PTAs reported the ability to conduct a needs assessment; and
- PTAs receive support requests from the school which are mostly in the form of physical support.

Grand Bassa PTA pre-assessment summary

- All nine schools in Bassa have an established and structured leadership but lack a constitution and bylaws;
- There is an average of one female represented in PTA leadership;
- About 90 percent of school leadership says they involve parents in PTA meetings and PTA decision making and that parents have specific roles and responsibilities;
- PTA support for school activities primarily consists of individual school visitation by parents and maintenance of school building;
- None of the nine schools have previously developed SIPs;
- Each PTA visited conveyed an understanding of financial management but only one school (Saturday Town Public School) has a bank account;
- The Grand Bassa PTAs have more active relationships with NGOs compared with PTAs in Bong and Lofa counties; and
- Only 3 out of 9 PTAs assessed in Grand Bassa have received prior PTA training.

PTA Strengthening. The GOAL Plus community mobilization and grants team conducted a three (3) day training for five PTAs leaders from each of the 31 new GOAL Plus schools targeted to receive school improvement grants based on information learned from the PTA pre-assessment. The training focused on PTAs becoming aware of their roles and responsibilities and at the same time acquiring basic knowledge and skills in developing SIPs. The SIPs will be developed to create a more supportive learning environment for girls (and boys) and help parents to become more involved in overcoming obstacles and barriers that keep children, especially girls, from enrolling, attending, and completing school,

During this initial PTA training, two (2) PTA strengthening modules were used that included the MOE PTA Operational Training Module and the GOAL Plus SIP training module. The MOE PTA training module spells out the roles and responsibilities of the PTA, their leadership structure, along with their day-to-day operational function in the school. The SIP training module then operationalized the MOE module by applying PTA operations to planning for school support. This PTA training was conducted jointly by FAWE staff and AIR staff.

Description of the training activity. FAWE led the session on PTA training using the MOE operational training module. Topics included PTA organization, structure and function, leadership, formation of PTAs sub-committees, team and relationship building, advocacy by the PTA, planning and conducting PTA meetings, advocacy and resource mobilization, conflict management, PTA by-laws and constitution, and promoting girls' education. School Improvement Plan training is hands-on and a part of the GOAL Plus capacity development model that helps build PTAs' knowledge and skills using existing resources to improve the school environment, expand their understanding of the use of data for decision making, and become more thoughtful about what they can do to keep girls enrolled and attending school. From GOAL experience, about 90% of SIP resources come from within the school communities.

The SIP touches on the whole school environment: academic, hygiene and sanitation, school/community relationship, the learning environment, and more. The SIP includes short, medium, and long-term activities. When PTAs identify their priority needs, they are classified by their short, medium, or long-term timeframe. Short-term priority needs are usually visible,

quick win projects that motivate PTA to do more in improving their school environment. Many short-term needs, such as a fixing broken student chairs or roof repair, are implemented using GOAL Plus school improvement grants. PTA implementation of middle and long-term priority needs have tended to be based on their own resources.

School improvement planning is held in community-wide meetings with the participation of community members, parents, students, and school administrators. This participation brings about a greater understanding of issues and likelihood of change. Given the different factors affect children enrollment, attendance, and academic success and their decision to stay in school or drop out early, there is much greater chance that community-wide meetings will allow participants to identify and discuss what really affects students and their decision to stay or drop from school. The process also fosters wider community participation in school oversight by helping community members to observe and discuss their school’s operations and progress.

PTA leaders at the training participated in group work practice sessions on how to facilitate the development of SIPs in wider community meetings in their individual school communities. They were trained on ways to identify priority needs and categorized them according to short, medium and long-term perspectives. Each school PTA leader produces a draft SIP for their school community, which they took back to their communities to serve as a guide in the development a complete SIP, reflecting the views and aspirations of the teachers, students, school administrators, parents, and local leaders. The PTA leaders at the training reached a consensus agreement to submit their final school improvement plans not later than the second week of January, 2014.

Table 3: Sample format for GOAL Plus-supported SIPs

Needs	Who	How	When	Monitoring	Resources	Source of resources
Short-term						
Fixing of twenty arm chairs	Teachers, principal, parents, GOAL Plus grant	GOAL Plus grant will be used to purchase materials while PTA will provide the labor	Dec 2013-Feb 2014	Parents, teachers, community members and GOAL Plus	PTA and GOAL Plus	PTA and GOAL Plus
Medium-term						
Increase parental support and supervision for students	PTA leadership	PTA leadership create awareness at PTA meetings for parents to increase support for their children’s school attendance	Dec 2013-May 2014	Parents, teachers, community members and GOAL	PTA and teachers monitoring committee	PTA
Long-term						
Reduce over-age students especially girls in school	Parents and PTA leadership	PTA leadership sensitizes parents during PTA meetings to begin sending children to Grade 1 by age 6	Dec 2013-July 2014	Parents, teachers, community members and GOAL	PTA monitoring committee	PTA

Training outputs. The PTA training lasted for three days: PTA roles and responsibilities for 1½ days and the SIP development session for another 1½ days. A total of 154 PTA leaders participated in the training along with six District Education Officers (DEOs) and three MOE county planning officers.

Table 4: Number of participants attending PTA operational training workshops by county

County	No. of participants		Total
	Females	Males	
Lofa	18	27	45
Bong	21	43	64
Bassa	15	30	45
Total	54	100	154

Community Outreach and Awareness Raising

Apart from the PTA pre-assessment, the team also carried out community mobilization meetings in selected communities where current enrollments were negative (where current enrollments below expectations for 2013). Parents, other community members, local community leaders, school administrators and teachers, PTA leaders and students were present at the meeting. The school communities that received mobilization awareness on the importance of girls' enrollment, along with the number of participants at these meetings, as presented below.

Table 5: Community Mobilization Meeting Summaries from Grand Bassa, Lofa and Bong Counties

School	Community	County	Sex		
			Male	Female	Total
Hope KG & Elem. School	Tarbar/Buchanan	Grand Bassa	50	112	162
Bless Elementary	Kator/Buchanan	Grand Bassa	21	84	105
Water Tower	Water Tower	Grand Bassa	3	13	16
Benson River Elem. School	Benson River Comm.	Grand Bassa	16	41	57
Joseph M. N. Gbadyu	Taye Town	Grand Bassa	36	27	63
Autumn King Public School	Buchanan	Grand Bassa	11	3	14
Kpanay Town Public School	Kpanay Town/Buchanan	Grand Bassa	27	90	117
David Fejue Public School	Gbatala Town	Bong	7	0	7
Gorpo Dolo Boi Public School	Belefania Town	Bong	22	21	43
Zuwulo Public School	Zuwulo Town	Lofa	18	18	36
Total			211	409	620¹

In addition to the PTA pre-assessment and awareness raising activities on enrollment, in-depth discussions were held with newly assigned County Education Officers (CEOs) in Bong and Grand Bassa counties to introduce the GOAL Plus project to them and to establish expectations

¹ This number included PTA 23 PTA members who are not included in the count for Indicator, "Number of participants at town hall meetings on girls' education" as they are included under "Number of PTAs or similar school governance structures supported."

for coordination, communication, and relation building. Briefing meetings also were held with newly appointed DEOs in Grand Bassa, Bong, and Lofa.

IR 3: Increased Awareness of the Importance of Educating Girls in Selected Counties, Districts, and Communities

Activity 2: Provide support to the Ministry of Education in the dissemination and use of the National Policy on Girls' Education

GOAL Plus is continuing its close support relationship with the MOE's Girls' Education Division (GED). GOAL Plus staff met with the GED Director to develop a strategy for dissemination of the revised National Policy on Girls' Education to all counties and schools. It was tentatively agreed, to be confirmed with the Assistant Minister of Basic and Secondary Education, that GOAL Plus, in collaboration with the GED, would develop a training package for principals and school gender focal persons that would introduce and operationalize the revised National Policy on Girls' Education in terms of guidelines, procedures, and actions that can be taken at the school-community level to implement the policy. This training package is to be piloted and refined in Grand Bassa, Bong, and Lofa, then handed over to the MOE in a training-of-trainers for MOE trainers to use nationwide. This activity has been included in the draft 2014-16 MOE Operational Plan that is to be presented to Her Excellency, the President². Hard copies of the revised National Policy are currently housed at the GOAL Plus Office in anticipation of the dissemination effort.

The GOAL Plus program continues to support the MOE commitment to girls' education. This commitment was stated in the draft 2014-16 MOE Operational Plan in the following way:

Objective 2: To increase access, enrolment, transition, retention and completion at all levels

Specific objective 2.2: Increased enrollments at each level

Output 2: Support for Girls' Education (enrolment) is continued until parity is achieved in upper primary.

Activity 2.1: Disseminate and implement the MOE National Policy on Girls' Education

Activity 2.2: Ensure that INGO/NGO activities supporting girls' education are in alignment with and supportive of the National Policy on Girls' Education

Activity 2.3: Encourage INGO/NGO collaboration to ensure continuity of support for girls' enrolment, completion and transition to the next level of education

Activity 2.4: Solicit and study information on cost-effectiveness of girls' education support programs for possible replication in counties with continuing large disparities between girls' and boys' enrollment, performance, completion and/or transition rates.

Activity 3: Conduct research on issues related to girls' completion of primary education and extend M&E activities

GOAL Plus continues to use its rigorous M&E system to track girls' enrollment, attendance, completion, and retention at an individual level (Activity 3.7) for use in decision-making at the program and school levels. GOAL Plus is collecting enrollment data for girls and boys in pre-primary and junior high grades associated with GOAL Plus-supported schools (Activity 3.8) to

² GOAL Plus staff worked closely with the MOE and other Development Partners in development of the MOE's draft 3 Year Operational Plan

feed into the analysis of GOAL Plus' school programming and to better understand transition rates and patterns. GOAL Plus also is collecting additional data on boys in the GOAL Plus supported schools (Activity 3.7) to explore any effects and unintended consequences of the GOAL and GOAL Plus interventions on boys and across the schools holistically and that can provide a natural within-school comparison group that can be used to estimate the program's impacts.

The GOAL Plus staff, with support from the AIR leadership, consulted with the MOE and USAID to determine areas of research that are of highest priority and more likely to be actionable when results are forthcoming (Activity 3.9). The three topics that were of most interest to the three groups of stakeholders were:

1. Girls' transition rates and trends from Grade 6 to Grade 7;
2. PTA strengthening and sustainability – what makes a successful and productive PTA;
3. The extent to which support for access (GOAL Plus intervention) is associated with learning achievement.

1. *Girls' transition rates and trends from Grade 6 to Grade 7 (Activity 3.11)*. GOAL Plus is tracking enrollments rates in Grade 6 in GOAL Plus-supported schools and Grade 7 in nearby schools and, to the extent possible, the transition of girls from grade 6 to 7 on an individual basis. UNICEF is interested in co-locating their programming support for upper basic education with GOAL Plus-supported schools to facilitate the transition for girls. Based on discussions to date and a review of recent research, UNICEF may use GOAL Plus type scholarships to encourage access to Grade 7, then transition to performance-based scholarships to promote academic achievement in Grades 8 and above.

Qualitative research on this topics will occur during the first year at the community level with key stakeholders—including girls, teachers, parents, community leaders, and MOE staff and stakeholders—in order to better understand the motivations, opportunities, and challenges related to these issues. This study may include moving beyond anecdote to get a more nuanced and realistic understanding of the effects of over-age enrolment on drop out and how the project's Girls' Club and sexual and reproductive health activities affect retention and transition for adolescent girls and young women. It was agreed with UNICEF that we would resume these discussions for program planning after the New Year.

2. *PTA effectiveness – what makes a successful and productive PTA*. GOAL Plus also will explore a managed phase out in schools that received the full package of services in order to evaluate the maintenance and sustainability of the program and girls' attendance and completion in schools after the completion of project provided services (Activity 3.10). This inquiry is expected to include an assessment of the 'positive deviants' – the communities and parents who have the same problems as most but still succeed to send their girls to school and for those girls to succeed – to provide guidance for strengthening other PTAs.

3. *The extent to which support for access (GOAL Plus intervention) is associated with learning achievement*. The Liberia Teacher Training Program (LTTP) is introducing, among other system strengthening interventions, teaching-learning materials and teacher training to improve and promote early grade reading and math skills in grades 1-3 to date and will extend it to grades 4-6. LTTP is supporting 10 schools in Bong that also have support from GOAL-Plus. While GOAL Plus' focus is on access, support and monitoring for regular attendance and the supplemental activities provided, such as school supplies, Gender-Responsive Pedagogy training for teachers,

and tutoring and mentoring also are expected to have a positive influence on learning. The presence and absence of LTTP's early grade reading and math in GOAL Plus schools provides an opportunity to assess to relative extent to which the GOAL Plus intervention package affects learning achievement.

Activity 4: Build the technical and managerial capacity of our partner, FAWE, in logistics, financial management, and monitoring and evaluation

Strengthening local institutions is critical for sustainable development and to ensure the relevance and viability of local interventions and support. USAID Forward and the USAID Project Design Guidance encourages partnership and development of local institutions for sustainability, local relevance, promotion of gender equity, and to foster a climate for data use and evidence for decision making, and adaptive management practices.

GOAL Plus will work with its partner, FAWE, to implement an adapted Organization Capacity Assessment (OCA) Tool (Activity 4.1). The OCA will be facilitated through a guided, interactive self-assessment with FAWE. The OCA will provide a baseline and foundation for organizational learning, team sharing, and reflective self-assessment and for tracking progress within the organization over time. Using information produced by the OCA, GOAL Plus will provide targeted capacity management and systems capacity development activities with FAWE to allow them to enhance their mission to promote gender equality and female empowerment beyond the scope of the GOAL Plus project.

There are seven OCA Tool categories that will be assessed as they relate to roles and functions that are critical to the success of GOAL Plus as well as other donor-funded projects that FAWE designs and implements. These categories are: (a) governance, (b) management practices, (c) human resources, (d) financial resources, (e) service delivery, (f) external relations, and (g) sustainability. The roles and functions for which the capacity development activities will be applied are strengthening of its procurement, inventory, and distribution systems, with a focus on the scholarship package and teachers' kit distribution (Activity 4.2), as well as financial and contracts management (Activity 4.3).

GOAL Plus staff have begun adaptation of the OCA Tool for this purpose. It was agreed with FAWE to conduct a mutual review of the adapted tool and the assessment process after the New Year and to conduct the assessment and begin the first round of capacity development training in the next quarter.

Monitoring & Evaluation

The GOAL Plus team developed a draft Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP) following start-up of the project and submitted it to Liberia – Monitoring and Evaluation Program (L-MEP) for their third party review. The team revised the PMP and submitted it to USAID on November 22, 2013 as specified in the Cooperative Agreement. During this reporting period GOAL Plus updated and created new data collection and tracking instruments for the GOAL Plus activities and new PMP indicators, including the sign-in sheets for the scholarship packages and teacher's kits. The tools were designed so that each scholarship item and number of items to be given to beneficiaries are placed on the forms. This not only provides GOAL Plus with discrete and accurate data but also publicly demonstrates transparency and ensures accountability.

The entry of the names of the scholarship beneficiaries who received their scholarship packages in November and December 2013 were begun in this period. The entering of the names of the

scholarship beneficiaries is done systematically into the project database (master list). After the process of entering the names, a verification process is carried out to ensure that the data in the master list are clean, correct, and reliable. This has partly been done by Bong and Loaf, but has not started yet for Grand Bassa. Under GOAL Plus, data on pre-primary students are being collected as are data on Grade 7 students. New enrollees can be separated from continuing enrollees in the database for reporting under SART. Additional tools were created so that quality data for all PMP indicators will be ensured.

The GOAL-Plus M&E Officer attended the training offered on November 1, 2013 at the US Embassy for all USAID Implementing Partner (IP) M&E staff and Environmental Managers.

The main objective of the training was to identify USAID Environmental Compliance Procedure or 22 CFR 216 (Reg 216) and discuss the three activity areas when it comes to USAID Environmental Compliance Procedure. The training included:

- Basis Introduction to Reg 216;
- Mission and IPs role and responsibilities with respect to environmental compliance;
- Using Initial Environment Examination to develop operational Environmental Mitigation and Monitoring Plan; and
- Integrating environment compliance into regular field monitoring and reporting.

According to the information provided in the training, the GOAL Plus project falls in the category of “very low risk” activities.

III. Challenges and Lessons Learned

Challenges

1. The previous 20 GOAL comparison schools did not have an expectation of the GOAL Plus program and lagged somewhat in their mobilization related to girls' education. Following the awareness raising from the GOAL Plus team and the measurement taking for school uniforms, enrollments picked up to a quicker pace. The grants only schools were similarly slow to respond.
2. The mass transfer of CEOs/DEOs required re-orientation in those offices, so that the historical memory of the previous CEOs/DEOs was lost through their transfer. The staff experienced enthusiasm and support from the new officers but their ability to serve as advocates is limited until they can experience more from the project.
3. Teacher absenteeism remains a huge challenge in promoting retention in the GOAL Plus schools across the three counties. Much of the chronic absenteeism can be attributed to teachers leaving school for over a week to collect pay checks. In Lofa, for example, the only banking institution is located in Voinjama, the county's main city located north, about 70 to 90 kilometers from Salayea and Zorzor districts where GOAL Plus school are located. While the teachers are away, the students are simply left without teachers.

Lessons Learned

1. When the concept of the school improvement was introduced to PTAs, they did not initially reflect on the diverse resources and information they had at hand to help their schools. As the training sessions progressed, the PTA leaders articulated more resources they had at hand and suggested decisions on the use of the resources to improve the school environment. Many of the participants at the training also agreed that the hands-on, skills-focused methods proved to be engaging and effective than the *chalk and talk* or giving direct instructions alone. The development and implementation of the SIP is potentially one of the more sustainable parts of the project as it directly involves the interaction of parents, students, school administrators, and community leaders and members in improving education for their own girls.
2. One time contact with the PTA leaders is not sufficient to make a difference. In order for parents and community members to produce good SIPs and results, follow-up individualized technical assistance and coaching will be required after training events.
3. Establishing collaboration and linkages with MOE CEOs/DEOs to visit and monitor schools and PTAs and to provide support in the development and implementation of the SIPs also will be encouraged and supported. GOAL Plus will invite CEOs/DEOs to accompany them on school-community follow-up visits and also will provide a fuel allowance for them to make interim visits between GOAL Plus activities.
4. Attending education sector meetings and providing regular updates to key education stakeholders at the County and Central levels by GOAL Plus representatives on project activities, progress, and challenges also is necessary for the smooth coordination and implementation of the project. Given the frequent turnover of government staff, it is appropriate that education sector meetings be regularly attended by program staff to provide updates about the project and orientations, as needed.

IV. Status of Overall Project Progress and Performance on Key Indicators

GOAL Plus field activities have started as planned, showing results on distribution of scholarship packages, teachers' kits, and supplemental teaching-learning materials in the first semester of the 2013-14 school year. Girls' have been measured for uniforms and tailoring has been completed. Uniforms and first semester school fees will be distributed early in January 2014. Progress on establishing an OCA Tool baseline for FAWE and on their capacity development will be shown in the second quarter, January-March, 2014. Spots check on student and teacher attendance will produce data on those indicators in the next quarter, as will other activities schedule for that period.

V. Activities Completed and Not Completed

Quarter 1 (September – December 2013)

Indicator	2013				Notes
	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	
Overall Objective: Improved Education Opportunities for Girls in Selected Communities of Lofa, Bong, and Grand Bassa Counties					
Intermediate Result 1: Increased Access to School for Girls in Selected Communities of Bong, Lofa and Grand Bassa					
<i>Activity 1: Expand the most promising model (scholarships and community mobilization) to all 60 GOAL schools</i>					
1.1 Conduct community meetings in 40 existing schools and 20 new schools					Completed and ongoing
1.2. Sign agreements with 60 program schools for two years of GOAL Plus assistance to school-community support for girls' education					Completed
Sub-Intermediate Result 1.1: Improved Academic Performance for Girls in Targeted Grades in Targeted Schools					
1.1.1 Procure teaching/learning supplies for grades 1 - 6 teachers					Completed
1.1.2 Distribute teaching/learning supplies to grades 1 - 6 teachers					Completed
1.1.3 Provide Gender Responsive Pedagogy training to 20 new schools					
1.1.4 Mentor & monitor teachers for Gender Responsive Pedagogy in 60 schools (schools with previous training Dec-Feb)					
1.1.5 Coordinate with LTPP in Bong and Lofa Counties					Joint technical staff meeting (GOAL Plus and LTPP) scheduled for January 7, 2014
1.1.6 Payment of school related fees for girls (grades 1-6 in 60 schools)					Enrollments confirmed and agreed with principals for payment of fees in January 2014
1.1.7 Procure scholarship packages for grades 1 - 6 girls in 60 schools					Completed
1.1.8 Distribute scholarship packages and recreational materials					Completed
1.1.18 Provide after school tutorials to scholarship recipients with low academic performance in core subjects					Ongoing support in nine schools from tutors trained under GOAL
Intermediate Result 2: Improved Learning Environment for Girls in Selected Communities of Bong, Lofa, and Grand Bassa Counties					
2.1 Conduct PTA pre-assessment in 20 new+10 previous scholarship only schools					Completed
2.2 Strategize appropriate interventions and technical assistance to address PTA capacity development needs					Completed
2.3 Provide technical support to PTAs according to the pre-assessment w/ technical support for SIPs and announce solicitation for annual grants to 30 schools					Begun with 31 PTAs newly receiving support from GOAL/GOAL Plus
2.11 Support schools and communities in regular monitoring of enrollments & attendance and for mobilizing responses (e.g., via town hall meetings)					Completed and ongoing
Intermediate Result 3: Increased Awareness of the Importance of Educating Girls in Selected Counties, Districts, and Communities					
<i>Activity 2: Provide support to the Ministry of Education in the dissemination and use of the National Policy on Girls' Education</i>					

Indicator	2013				Notes
	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	
3.1 Finalize strategy to disseminate the National Policy on Girls' Education					Draft strategy developed with GED Director; to be confirmed with Asst. Minister and included in the MOE's 2013-15 Operational Plan in January 2014
3.2 Assist the MOE with dissemination of the National Policy on Girls' Education through the grants program and teacher training					Planned for next quarter
3.4 Develop talking points for presentations, posters, and laminated handouts to promote policy awareness and use					Planned for next quarter
Activity 3: Conduct research on issues related to girls' completion of primary education and extend M&E activities					
3.7 Track girls' enrolments, attendance, repetition, and completion in grades 1-6 in program schools; and boys' enrolments, attendance, and completion rates at the same schools					Enrollments completed; attendance, repetition and completion scheduled for 2014
3.8 Track girls' enrolments and completion at the pre-primary and junior high grades associated with schools					Completed for first semester 2013-14
3.9 Consultation with MOE and USAID to determine priority and actionable topics for research					Completed
3.12 Integrate M&E and research findings into media campaign and national policy to support girls' education.					Planned for next quarter
3.13 Reproduce spot messages on key issues					Planned for next quarter
3.14 Facilitate live radio discussions on the importance of girls' education					Planned for next quarter
Activity 4: Build the technical and managerial capacity of our partner, FAWE, in logistics, financial management, and monitoring and evaluation					
4.1 Conduct collaborative assessment of FAWE's institutional capacity for procurement, inventory, logistics, financial management, and M&E using adapted OCA Tool					Process agreed upon; OCA Tool adaptation begun; assessment and initial training planned for next quarter
Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E)					
5.1 Collect student enrolment data from schools					Completed and ongoing
5.2 Collect student and teacher attendance data					Scheduled for January 2014

VI. Plans for the Next Quarter (January - March 2014)

Activity 1: Expand the most promising model (scholarships and community mobilization) to all 60 GOAL schools

- Uniform distribution to students of the scholarship program
- School fees payment for students of the scholarship program
- Procure scholarship packages and teachers' kits for second semester
- Distribute second round of scholarship packages to Grade 1 to 6 girls and teachers
- Record Keeping Training for teachers and school administrators
- Provide certificates to parents who enrolled their children in grade 1 at ages 6/7
- Establish new Girls' Clubs in new schools
- Girls' Clubs Mentors Training
- Develop and coordinate traditional story competition among Girls' Clubs
- Provide after school tutorials to scholarship recipients with low academic performance
- Gender-Responsive Pedagogy Training for Teachers
- Identify Gender Focal Persons at schools and conduct pilot training (Female teachers, or a volunteer female community worker)
- PTA Operational & SIP refresher town hall meetings
- School Progress Card Training
- Grant Proposal development training PTA leaders
- Grants financial management training
- Coordinate with LTTP in Bong and Lofa counties

Activity 2: Provide support to the MOE in the dissemination and use of the revised National Policy on Girls' Education

- Finalize strategy to disseminate the revised National Policy on Girls' Education
- Assist the MOE with dissemination of the revised National Policy on Girls' Education through the grants program and training
- Develop talking points for presentations, posters, and laminated handouts to promote policy awareness and use

Activity 3: Conduct research on issues related to girls' completion of primary education and extend M&E activities

- Integrate M&E and research findings into media campaign and national policy to support girls' education.
- Reproduce spot messages on key issues
- Facilitate live radio discussions on the importance of girls' education

Activity 4: Build the technical and managerial capacity of our partner, FAWE, in logistics, financial management, and monitoring and evaluation

- Conduct collaborative assessment of FAWE's institutional capacity using adapted OCA Tool and begin capacity development activities for procurement, inventory, logistics, financial management, and M&E

Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E)

- Collect student and teacher attendance data

VII. Results towards activity objectives

*F Framework Indicator

Indicator	Indicator Type	Unit of Measure	Disaggregation	Baseline Year	Baseline Value	2014 Target	2014 Actual (as of Dec 2013) ³	2015 Target	2015 Actual	End of Project Target	End of Project Actual
Overall Objective: Improved Education Opportunities for Girls in Selected Communities of Lofa, Bong, and Grand Bassa Counties											
*Number of learners (continuing and new) enrolled in primary schools and /or equivalent non-school based setting with USG support	*F Indicator	Number	Grade, Age, School, County, and District	2013	6,097 (f)	+5% 6,402 (f)	6,037 (f) 6,296 (m) 12,333 (t)	+15% (7,012)		+15% (7,012)	
Percentage of girls and boys who complete their grade	Custom	Percentage	Grade, Age, School, County, and District		TBD	+5%	NA	+15%		+15%	
Percentage of girls and boys who pass their grade	Context	Percentage	Grade, Age, School, County, and District		TBD		NA				
Number of girls from 6 th grade in USG supported schools who transitioned to 7 th grade	Context	Number	Grade, Age, School, County, and District				NA				
Average teacher attendance rate	Context	Percentage	School, County, District, Gender		TBD		NA				
FAWE's organizational capacity in targeted areas strengthened	Custom	Number	Central	2013	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD		TBD	
IR 1: Increased Access to School for Girls in Targeted Communities of Bong, Lofa, and Grand Bassa Counties											
Number of in-kind scholarship awards distributed in USG supported schools	Custom	Number	Grade, Age, School, County, and District	2013	6,097	6,237	6,037	7,172		13,409	
*Number of textbooks and other teaching and learning materials (TLM) provides with USG assistance	*F Indicator	Number	Grade, Sex, School, County, and District	2013	0	454	60 (f) 442 (m) 502 (t)	454		908	

³ f=females; m=males; t=total; NA= not applicable for this reporting period

Indicator	Indicator Type	Unit of Measure	Disaggregation	Baseline Year	Baseline Value	2014 Target	2014 Actual (as of Dec 2013) ³	2015 Target	2015 Actual	End of Project Target	End of Project Actual
Number of teachers who receive gender responsive pedagogy training	Custom	Number	Grade, Gender, School, County, and District	-	0	180	N/A	0		180	
Percentage of enrolled girl students in targeted grades attending school	Custom	Percentage	Grade, Age, School, County, and District	2013	TBD	+1	N/A	+2%		+2%	
Number of girls enrolled at an appropriate age in grade 1	Custom	Number	Grade, Age, School, County, and District		TBD	75	62	200		275	
IR 1.1: Improved Academic Performance for Girls in Targeted Grades in Targeted Schools											
Number of girls attending tutoring classes	Custom	Number	Grade, Age, School, County, and District	2013	1,120	600	NA	600		1,200	
Number of girls participating in Girls' Club activities	Custom	Number	Grade, Age, School, County, and District	2013	985	1,000	NA	1,500		1,500	
Percentage of girls and boys who pass their grade	Context	Percentage	Grade, Age, School, County, and District		TBD		NA				
IR 2: Improved Learning Environment for Girls in Selected Communities of Bong, Lofa, and Grand Bassa Counties											
*Number of PTAs or similar school governance structures supported	*F Indicator	Number	School, Community, County, and District	2013	30	60	31	60		60	
Number of PTAs that prepare school improvement plans (to be confirmed in final PMP as some PTA's support two schools)	Custom	Number	School, Community, County, and District	2013	29	56	NA	56		56	
Number of grant-supported PTA school improvement projects completed	Custom	Number	School, Community, County, and District	-	0	30	NA	20		50	

Indicator	Indicator Type	Unit of Measure	Disaggregation	Baseline Year	Baseline Value	2014 Target	2014 Actual (as of Dec 2013) ³	2015 Target	2015 Actual	End of Project Target	End of Project Actual
Number of schools that present school progress card results to their communities	Custom	Number	School, County, and District	2013	40	60	NA	60		60	
IR 3: Increased Awareness of the Importance of Educating Girls in Selected Counties, Districts, and Communities											
Number of participants at town hall meetings on girls' education	Custom	Number	Community, Gender, County and District		0	1,500	396 (f) 201(m) 597 (t)	1,500		3,000	
Number of trainings for MOE on using data for decision making	Custom	Number	National, County and District		0	2	NA	2		4	
Number of teachers trained on National Policy on Girls' Education and role as gender-focal person for the school	Custom	Number	School, County and District	-	0	60	NA	0		60	

