

## **President's International Education Initiative Expanded Education for the World's Poorest Children Liberia Fact Sheet**

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### **Education Overview**

The Liberian education system was destroyed during the country's 14-year war. A 2003-4 Liberian Ministry of Education (MOE)/UNICEF study found that 20% of schools had been destroyed, and many of the remaining are in urgent need of repair. In addition, many education managers and teachers left the country during the conflict and have been replaced by teachers without formal qualifications or experience. Currently, an estimated 62% of teachers in Liberia are unqualified. The result has been reduced enrollment; between 2000 and 2002, the gross enrollment ratio for girls declined from over 72% to just above 35% and from 73% to just above 48% for boys. The election of President Ellen Sirleaf-Johnson has brought signs of hope; between 2006 and 2007, enrollment rates increased by 24% for girls and 18% for boys -but at a cost to quality, given already strained systems and infrastructure. In addition, there are large numbers of over-age learners in primary school. For example, a recent school census found that 85% of the students in grade G were 8 to 20 years old, with 50% being between 11 and 20 years.

### **Key Elements of the Fast Track Initiative (FTI)**

Liberia's FTI plan was endorsed in March 2007 with a commitment to support sector planning and restructuring efforts under the Liberian Primary Education Recovery Program. In order to build public trust and engage civil society, the Government of Liberia must be able to provide services on a consistent and regular basis. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) meets monthly with the MOE and other donors to coordinate activities and ensure that adequate financial and human resources are available to restart primary and lower secondary school activities. Other donors in the sector include Norway, the European Union, UNICEF, UNESCO, the World Food Program and international non-governmental organizations. The Fast Track Initiative was created in 2002 as a partnership between developing countries and donors to accelerate the delivery of universal primary education in the world's poorest countries.

### **Current Program**

USAID assists the Liberian Government in implementing the organizational, budgetary, and policy changes required to revitalize the education system, and pave the way for enhanced socio-economic growth. USAID will help to improve access to quality education through enhanced systems development and upgraded primary level instruction. Young adults currently benefit from basic skills instruction through the Accelerated Learning Project and put these skills to work by creating community development projects. In addition, the Liberia Teacher Training Project works with faculty and staff of the national university and two rural teacher training institutes to improve their skills and knowledge in preparation for re-starting competency-based teacher training. Under the President's African Education Initiative, USAID provides scholarships to girls in Liberia.

### **Illustrative Next Steps of the New Initiative.**

With increased funding from the new education initiative, USAID could assist the Liberia MOE to rebuild education systems and support decentralized management. In order to improve learning, USAID could help enhance the management of primary instruction through a full revision of the national teacher training curricula and enforcement of minimum standards for teachers' performance, while also infusing new approaches and methodologies into school instruction. In addition, USAID could provide much-needed materials and textbooks along with mentoring and computer literacy to improve the quality of the Liberian public school system.