POLITICAL ECONOMY ANALYSIS
THE EDUCATION SECTOR IN LIBERIA AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADVOCACY

USAID Liberia Accountability
and Voice Initiative (LAVI)
AID-669-C-16-00003

July 2017

CONTENTS

ACRONYMNS

CEO	County Education Officer
COTAE	Coalition for Transparency and Accountability in Education
DEO	District Education Officer
GoL	Government of Liberia
G2B	"Getting to Best" Strategic Plan
LAVI	Liberia Accountability and Voice Initiative
MoE	Ministry of Education
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NPTTI	Network of Private Teacher Training Institutions
NTAL	National Teachers Association of Liberia
PE	Political Economy
PEA	Political Economy Analysis
PSL	Partnership Schools for Liberia
RTTI	Rural Teacher Training Institutes
TVET	Technical Vocational Educational Training
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USD	United States Dollars
WAEC	West Africa Exam Council

OVERVIEW

The objective of this report is to identify realistic entry points for the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)-funded Liberia Accountability and Voice Initiative (LAVI) and its partners to strengthen horizontal and vertical linkages among actors to advocate for and monitor policy and accountability reforms in the education sector in Liberia.

Documents consulted for this report include political economy analyses (PEAs), development partner and non-governmental organization (NGO) reports, academic research, Government of Liberia (GoL) documents, and articles from journals, magazines, and newspapers (see Annex 1). The LAVI and USAID teams based in Monrovia and the Washington DC area were especially helpful in identifying and providing many of these documents. Field research was conducted in Monrovia and Kakata, Liberia from May 28-June 7, 2017. This fieldwork included semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders (see Annex 2 for a complete list) and site visits to a cross-section of public and private schools (see Annex 3 for a list of schools visited). LAVI organized a workshop to discuss report findings on July 20, 2017.

APPROACHES

IDENTIFYING THE EDUCATION SECTOR AS A PRIORITY AREA FOR LAVI SUPPORT

In January 2017, LAVI worked with GeoPoll/Mobile Accord to conduct a national survey to obtain citizens' perception of the major issues that are trending in Liberia. According to this survey, education emerged as one of the three priority areas for possible LAVI support, along with security and budget and transparency. A total of seven areas were identified.

As a follow-up to this survey, LAVI supported the National Civil Society Council of Liberia to conduct five complementary regional consultative dialogues that were held in Bomi, Maryland, Grand Gedeh, Bong, and Bassa counties. These dialogues brought together 176 participants to discuss and prioritize GeoPoll/Mobile Accord survey results. Dialogue attendees included women, youth, elderly, persons with disabilities, and local leaders, along with representatives from the media, professional associations, trade unions, civil society, and community-based, faith-based, and non-traditional organizations.

During these dialogues, education emerged as one of the three priority areas for LAVI support, along with security, and budget and transparency. When discussing the importance of education to development, a dialogue participant from Maryland County emphasized that "[a]n uneducated society is a blind society that will never appreciate development gains and can be swayed away easily". Others in the county linked education to discouraging bribery and contributing to national progress. A guest speaker at the Grand Bassa County dialogue summarized these perspectives well: "The growth for any nation lies in the value of a responsible and educated youth, committed and dedicated to service."

Overall, dialogue participants identified the following issues that need to be addressed to achieve improved learning outcomes: teacher shortages, teacher training, salaries and benefits; school quality; bribery; enforcement of education laws; supervision and monitoring of schools and teachers; classroom resources; access to schools (transportation and infrastructure); privatization of government schools; standardized curriculum; and community colleges.

POLITICAL ECONOMY OF EDUCATION REFORM

The political economy (PE) approach used in this report "asks questions about the development context, including the factors that impact growth and governance such as politics, rules and norms, social and cultural practices, beliefs and values, and historical and geographical determinants" (USAID 2016: 3). In addition to building on USAID's *Applied Political Economy Analysis (PEA) Field Guide* (2016), the following PE questions also draw on the work of other development partners and experts with PE analysis experience.[1]

- *Public policy framework:* What are the relevant public policies, including laws, rules, and regulations, currently in place that are intended to address education sector goals?

- *Domestic, regional and global dynamics:* What are the broader domestic, regional, and global trends that impact and/or characterize the provision of education in Liberia?

- *Capacity of organizations required for policy formulation, implementation and sustainability:* What are the gaps in resources (both financial and human) and technical capacity of key organizations that are required to identify, formulate, implement and sustain meaningful policy and institutional educational reform (Otoo et al. 2009; Fukuyama 2013)?

- *Incentives/disincentives for reform:* How do formal/informal networks, interests and incentives/disincentives impact the way "institutions" and "organizations" support or prevent the policies that focus on improving educational outcomes (Cross et al. 2001; Cross and Parker 2004)? [2]

- *Political will:* Who are the key formal and informal decision-makers, and do they have the political will to drive and sustain educational reforms?

- *Transparency and accountability in policy life cycle:* Are there clear and transparent accountability mechanisms in place for the identification, formulation, implementation and sustainability of education reforms?

These PE questions offer a focused, systematic way to identify and understand key education challenges, and inform the establishment of coalitions to advocate for and monitor education policy and accountability reforms to address these challenges.[3] For the purposes of this report, these PE questions

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[1] See the following reports and articles by: United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID 2009, [UKAid] 2014), the World Bank (2010; 2013; 2014; 2016), the European Union (Unsworth 2012), along with academic researchers and policy practitioners (Gobewole 2016; Fisher et al. 2013; Routley et al. 2013).
[2] Institutions are defined as the "systems of established and embedded social rules that structure social interactions" (Hodgson 2006), while organizations are administrative and functional structures with a specific purpose or goal. Institutions influence, either formally or informally, how public sector delivery organizations operate and carry out their bounded missions.
[3] This UK-Aid review specifically asks: "[w]ho are the relevant actors, what are their interests, and how are their incentives and strategies shaped by the contexts in which they operate, how do they exercise power in pursuing their ends, and what are the consequences for students, schools and the larger education system?" (Kingdon et al 2014: 7; see also Grindle 2004).

served to frame the interviews with key stakeholders, and focus analyses of key challenges presented below. Additional, targeted research will be required to further focus and refine policy reform entry-points for these coalitions.

CHALLENGES TO AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVED EDUCATION OUTCOMES

SECTOR OVERVIEW

Beginning in 1989, Liberia experienced a protracted period of political instability and civil war until 2003, when the Accra Peace Agreement between warring factions was signed and United Nations (UN) peacekeepers were invited to provide security and monitor implementation of this agreement. Two years later, democratic elections were successfully conducted, resulting in the election of the current President, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. After a decade of post-conflict rebuilding under President Sirleaf's leadership, Liberians were faced another crisis: the unexpected outbreak of a devastating Ebola virus in 2014-15 which resulted in over 2,800 confirmed deaths. Less than two years after the last confirmed Ebola death the country, Liberians are preparing for presidential and legislative elections (Pailey and Harris 2017; *Financial Times*, April 8, 2016) and the withdrawal of UN peacekeepers early next year, after nearly fifteen years of service in the country.

A casualty of this tumultuous history has been the effective provision of education services (Save the Children 2005). The education sector has not received the political attention and financial resources (*Financial Times*, April 8, 2016) required to meet the rising expectations of improved education access and quality, especially since President Sirleaf's election in 2005. After this election, people had high expectations that were very difficult for the newly elected government to meet. The civil war left the country's infrastructure in shambles, with many schools, hospitals and government offices across the country looted and in disrepair, very few stretches of quality paved road, and energy generation, transmission and distribution woefully degraded and inadequate. Rebuilding the education system was one of many urgent, competing national development priorities.

To address the issue of access to education, there have been a wide array of education providers operating in Liberia over the years, in the form of public, mission-sponsored, concession-sponsored, private sector, public-private partnership, and community-funded self-help schools (Longfield and Tooley 2017: 118). Since 1981, enrollment in early childhood, basic and secondary education in Liberia has increased nearly five-fold, representing a substantial improvement in student access to education services (Ministry of Education [MoE] November 2016: 14). Despite these gains, 47.3% of Liberia's population has no formal education, which is above the regional average of 34% (MoE November 2016: 12). Women and girls remain under-represented in upper basic, senior high, TVET, tertiary education, the three rural teacher training institutes (RTTIs), and in the teaching force. (MoE November 2016: 23). In addition, approximately 40% of primary school students are three years (or more) older than the appropriate age for their grade (MoE November 2016: 15).

Shortly after becoming education minister in 2015, George Werner focused his efforts on addressing teacher absenteeism (removing 1,892 dead or retired teachers from the payroll) and initiating the Partnership Schools for Liberia (PSL) Program, based on the charter school movement in the United

States and academies in England. This Program has focused on improving education quality,[4] allowing eight independent operators (three of them for-profit firms) assume the management of 93 public schools across the country (*The Economist*, February 23, 2017). The privatization of select public schools was controversial from the start, with an array of local and international stakeholders expressing concerns broadly related to access, quality and cost.

The local NGO Coalition for Transparency and Accountability in Education (COTAE) evaluated PSL after five months of full-scale implementation and concluded that "there [were] more challenges to the program than its benefits and chances of succeeding" (COTAE 2016: 6; see also *Financial Times*, April 21, 2017). Numerous local and international magazines and newspapers, along with donors and international organizations have since added their perspectives to the debate surrounding PSL.[5] This vigorous, public debate among government and non-government stakeholders has resulted in heightened tensions between education sector stakeholders and focused the public's attention on perceived merits and problems with PSL's approach, but not on the fundamental root causes of poor learning outcomes at all educational levels.

Over the past five years, there has been a shift in focus from the post-conflict goal of increasing access to a more balanced approach that focuses on improving quality as well. While the GoL's *Agenda for Transformation* (a medium term economic growth and development strategy from 2012-17) prioritizes "equal access to high-quality and free compulsory basic education and to a variety of post-basic education and training opportunities that lead to an improved livelihood and/or tertiary education (Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs 2012: 88), the MoE's 2016 *"Getting to Best" Strategic Plan* (G2B) has begun to focus attention on quality, prioritizing professionalizing principals and teachers, improving school quality, and monitoring and accounting for progress in a recently released three-year action plan based on G2B. To oversee the reforms required to achieve these and other priorities, including the further rollout of the PSL Program, the MoE is also establishing an Education Delivery Unit (MoE 3-Year Plan 2017; MoE Education Sector Plan 2016).

It remains to be seen how implementation of these plans will be affected by the upcoming presidential and legislative elections. Formal campaigning by candidates is scheduled to begin on August 8th, with elections planned for October 10, 2017. While "policy issues have not featured prominently in the public discourse, the electorate seems to be yearning for candidates with practical solutions to Liberia's grim socio-economic outlook" (Pailey and Harris 2017: 9). The upcoming political transition is an opportunity for stakeholders to initially engage candidates, and then newly elected leaders, on the need for targeted education reforms that focus on improving learning outcomes. Regardless of candidate priorities and political party platforms,[6] LAVI-supported coalitions can make modest but consequential contributions to an inclusive, informed, and evidence-based policy dialogue once the newly elected government assumes office early next year.

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[4] 63.10% of teachers in the school system are qualified to teach, with the majority working in Montserrado, Nimba and Bong counties (MoE 2016).
[5] See articles and reports by *Financial Times, The Economist*, Right to Education, All Africa News, BBC World Service, *The Guardian, The Huffington Post, and Mail and Guardian* cited in the bibliography.
[6] Presidential candidates are beginning to present their views on challenges in the education sector, and proposed polices to address these challenges (see Senah 2017).

CHALLENGES AND OPPROTUNITIES

The desk research, interviews, and site visits conducted for this report revealed nine education policy challenges to improved learning outcomes in Liberia, divided into two categories. The PE questions presented above informed and focused this research, and helped to identify these challenges. There are five first level challenges that are fundamental, underlying root causes of poor learning outcomes, and four additional, second level challenges that can be addressed once the first level root causes are resolved. These challenges are briefly described in this section.

FIRST LEVEL CHALLENGES

Poor teaching quality and classroom learning relevance: According to a recent GoL audit report, 54 percent of teachers in the classroom do not have the required credentials. This report also states that an excessive number of schools are not in compliance with curriculum and syllabus requirements (with 381 of 1,161 junior secondary schools not using the required syllabus), and classrooms exceed required student teacher ratios (*FrontPage Africa* 2017). This has been attributed to, among other factors, poorly designed and ineffective curricula, low salaries and benefits that inhibit the recruitment and retention of qualified teachers (see *New Narratives* 2017), and limited teacher training opportunities for improved classroom skills and course content knowledge.[7] In addition, many school administrators do not have the capacity to effectively manage schools. There was consensus among stakeholders interviewed that inadequate teaching quality, along with the relevance of the curricula used in the classrooms, has undermined productive learning environments for students, thus generating cohorts of poorly trained students without basic skills and unable to meet regional West Africa Exam Council (WAEC) standards.

Over the years, several development partners have supported the MoE's efforts to address these challenges, with the World Bank (2010, 2016) and USAID (2013; 2014; 2016) supporting teacher training and the provision of basic education. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the European Union have also been active development partners in this sector.

Limited sector communication and stakeholder engagement: Many stakeholders outside of government expressed frustration over the lack of meaningful dialogue with government – specifically with the MoE – despite the existence of formal channels of communication. The MoE holds monthly meetings with stakeholders, including development partners, civil society and professional associations – but they are perceived to be parallel to actual decision-making. Establishment of the PSL Program and the MoE's approach to removing "ghost teachers" from the payroll were repeatedly cited as examples of policy decisions that were made without adequate stakeholder input. This has undermined working relationships in the sector.

Ineffective implementation of accountability measures: Many stakeholders identified the 2011 Education Reform Act, and the consultative process that led to formulation and passage of this Act, as an appropriate starting point for improving accountability in the education sector. This Act restructures authority and decision-making in the education sector, specifically decentralizing decision-making to the county and district levels. According to some stakeholders, including development partners, this can

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[7] Substantial research has been conducted on the relationship between qualified teachers and student learning (Pritchett 2015; Evans and Popova 2015; Glewwe and Muralidharan 2015; Schiefelbein and McGinn 2013; Gbollie and Keamu 2017).

facilitate improved oversight and supervision of teachers and school administrators by community members with direct and personal interests in improving education outcomes instead of relying on centralized planning and implementation that emanates from Monrovia. Currently, the oversight burden falls on under-resourced District and County Education Officers (DEOs and CEOs) that often cannot keep up with the monitoring and oversight demands of multiple schools scattered across their respective districts and counties. Implementation of improved monitoring and oversight of schools by these district and county officers, along with the establishment of new, community-based oversight bodies at the district and county levels, were cited by stakeholders as key unmet provisions of the Act.

Insufficient resources and prioritization: The current government has multiple competing priorities, with very limited resources. The 2016-17 total education budget is $86,165,512 United States Dollars (USD), accounting for 14.36% of the overall national budget. The MoE's budget is $45,049,766 USD, with $35,058,631 USD devoted to salaries. This leaves very little left for improving teaching and learning in the classroom and strengthening accountability for results across the country. To achieve sustainable learning outcome improvements, additional resources are required, and they need to be strategically allocated to address the first and second level challenges summarized in this section.

High turnover in key education public sector entities, including the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, the Ministry of Youth and Sports, and institutions of higher learning: Each new Minister brings a new leadership team, along with a new vision and priorities (sometimes contradictory), often with short timelines, high pressure demands for immediate results, limited institutional capacity, and insufficient resources. This has been the case for the MoE, which has had multiple ministers during President Sirleaf's administration.

SECOND LEVEL CHALLENGES

Inappropriate use of resources: The lack of transparency and accountability throughout system, specifically in terms of ineffectual monitoring and oversight of stakeholders responsible for policy formulation, implementation and sustainability, has resulted in corrupt practices in the education system (Cuffey 2001; Yengbeh 2013; Chapman 2002). This has been exacerbated by low salaries for teachers and principals, along with often long delays in the payment of these salaries. Many stakeholders expressed frustration about corrupt practices by some school teachers and administrators. There have been reported incidents of public school teachers and administrators requiring additional fees for educational services that are supposed to be free. Gender based violence against female students, including teachers and administrators requiring sexual favors from female students in exchange for grades and other educational services, is also cited as a widespread problem in schools across the country (MoE November 2016: 24).

Inadequate school facilities, insufficient teaching materials, and limited physical access: Many school facilities across Liberia are in poor physical condition, without laboratories, libraries, and other teaching materials. This was evident during site visits to public and private schools, with this issue was repeatedly emphasized by teachers, principals and others interviewed. Overall, 41.47% of Liberian schools are solid structures built with cement blocks, 79.13% have access to water, and 48.14% have functioning toilets. Only 21.48% have all three. These national statistics do not capture regional infrastructure disparities, however. For example, while ten percent of schools in Grand Cru County are solid structures, this percent rises substantially to 68% in Montserrado County (MoE Statistics Report 2016: 18).

There is also limited physical access due to impassable roads and few, if any, public transportation options for students, teachers and administrators. The challenge of impassable roads and limited transportation was summarized succinctly by a resident of Bong Mine: "My village…has no way to reach [services]. We walk to schools, we walk to clinics, it takes all day (USAID 2014). To improve physical access to schools, the primary and secondary road network needs substantial upgrading throughout the country: in 2014, Liberia had 66,000 miles of roads, but less than seven percent were paved (USAID 2014). Donors are addressing this issue, with the World Bank and African Development Bank investing in road improvement programs, and the Millennium Challenge Corporation supporting road maintenance planning (MCC 2016).

Eroding higher education capacity and results: Colleges and universities across the country suffered similar setbacks as primary and secondary schools during the war, with professors fleeing, buildings physically degraded, and intermittent student enrollments due to security considerations.

As a result, the capacity of university and colleges has been severely undermined. The Association of American State Colleges and Universities to Liberia noted that before the war, "there were 27 PhDs, 24 Masters-qualified faculty in a University of Liberia unit, with baccalaureate-trained faculty only used as lab and teaching assistants. After the war, that unit only had 2 PhDs left, and 4 Masters-qualified faculties" (Education Sector Analysis 2012: 234). Higher education results have been affected by these capacity constraints along with the poor quality of students that graduate public and private schools across the country, often still in need of remedial instruction when entering college and university.

Limited education data for decision-making: Access to quality data has been challenging, particularly in the rural, remote parts of country that are difficult to reach. Education data are, however, more readily available in the accessible areas of Liberia. For example, Montserrado County, which has over one third of the country's population and a "significant share of the most educated Liberians, significantly influences indicators measured at the national level" (MOE November 2016: 18). Quality data from all regions of the country are needed to develop national policies that can address the unique regional circumstances of general education challenges, and ensure that policies are evidence-based, transparent, and foster increased accountability throughout the sector.

The five first level challenges were identified by stakeholders as fundamental root causes of the second level challenges. *Poor teaching quality and classroom learning relevance* directly impact the quality of students accepted for study at institutions of higher learning. Poorly prepared incoming college and university students require these institutions of higher learning to dedicate scarce time and resources to remedial learning before focusing on college level content. *Limited sector communication and stakeholder engagement* and *ineffective implementation of accountability measures* provide opportunities for rent-seeking at the national and local levels, and they also undermine the establishment and management of dependable data collection and monitoring systems. *Insufficient resources (and prioritization)* can serve as a "rationale" for corrupt practices. It also limits the funds available for improving infrastructure and school access, higher education capacity, and establishing and managing quality data collection systems. *High leadership turnover* in the education sector is also a cross-cutting challenge that impacts decision-making, especially given the centralized governance structure of the sector.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LAVI[8]

The nine inter-related challenges described above need to be addressed to achieve comprehensive reform of the education sector. However, given the limited scope of the LAVI, focusing on ways to address the cross-cutting challenge of poor teacher quality and classroom learning relevance – specifically salary, training and curriculum issues – offers the best opportunity for sustainable impact. These three issues were repeatedly cited by stakeholders across the education sector, and they are also cited in GoL *Agenda for Transformation* and MoE G2B planning documents, and addressed in the 2011 Education Reform Act.

The following three challenges offer advocacy opportunities related to teacher quality and learning relevance.

#1: Strengthen sector communication and stakeholder engagement by:

- improving and regularizing substantive communications between stakeholders to strengthen sector-wide coordination among government and non-government stakeholders; and

- supporting sector governance mechanisms, based on existing planning documents, established norms, and stakeholder consensus, that facilitate transparency in the identification, formulation, implementation and sustainability of education policies.

While there is a consensus regarding the major impediments to improving learning outcomes, stakeholders have not been able to productively work together to identify tangible solutions. Improving teacher quality and the relevance of the curriculum, enhancing accountability across the education sector, and providing additional resources, are areas of common agreement. They offer opportunities for productive policy dialogue, and jointly owned and implemented reforms to address sector challenges. Given the high turnover of leadership teams, government priorities shift without sufficient attention to existing plans (and laws) and often without additional stakeholder consultations. Coalitions of government and non-government stakeholders can advocate for, and offer specific ways to improve, a consultative process that responds to and builds on existing plans and laws even when leadership changes.

#2: Enhance accountability in policy identification, formulation, implementation and sustainability by:

- systematically evaluating the existing policy framework to determine implementation status of current laws and relevance to current strategic priorities; and

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[8] LAVI's initial work on national resource management "window" identified research areas that complement the research areas and cross-cutting issues proposed for the education "window", specifically focusing on management and administrative failures, lack of accountability and weak civil society, poor transparency, and lack of citizen participation and awareness (USAID 2017: -6).

- supporting the implementation of implementation strategies, based on existing strategic plans and policy framework, with a well-designed monitoring and evaluation framework that has achievable milestones.

There was a consensus among civil society organizations and professional associations interviewed that while the government engages them in longer-term planning exercises, their role in policy formulation, implementation, and sustainability has been limited. Several stakeholders also conveyed that government does not consistently leverage their technical expertise, capacity and support when implementing policies that have broad-based support. The 2011 Education Reform Act, along with the *Agenda for Transformation* and G2B plans, offer a practical starting point for building coalitions around already agreed upon challenges, and advocating for more consistent and rigorous implementation of policies, laws, rules and regulations currently in place.

#3: Mobilize additional resources based on sector priorities by:

- supporting the development and implementation of strategies to advocate for additional resources that are evidence-based and that support existing sector priorities.

According to the GoL's 2017-18 Draft National Budget (GoL 2017: 301), there are nineteen different "spending entities" that comprise the education sector. This does not include the Ministry for Youth and Sports, which shares the responsibility for delivering technical vocational educational training (TVET) with the MoE. These nineteen entities are comprised of the MoE and University of Liberia, which receive the largest appropriations, along with seventeen other entities that manage, coordinate, or deliver education services.[9] Advocating for additional resources in the sector will require a broad-based coalition of government and non-government entities to engage decision-makers in the budget process, including but not limited to the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, and key elected members of the Senate and House of Representatives.

KEY STAKEHOLDERS AND POSSIBLE COALITION MEMBERS

Stakeholders with common interests in addressing these four challenges include principals, teachers, parents and students, along with public and private teacher training colleges, institutes, and institutions of higher learning. Civil society organizations focusing on education, youth, gender, accountability and transparency are also important players.

The National Teachers Association of Liberia (NTAL), which focuses "on matters affecting the terms and conditions of service for teachers, lecturers, and other education employees", is a key reform stakeholder, along with national professional organizations representing Parents Teachers Associations and principals. The three Rural Teacher Training Institutes, along with the Network of Private Teacher

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[9] These entities include: Cuttington University, William V.S. Tubman University, the Monrovia Consolidated School System (MCSS), the Booker T. Washington Institute, three Rural Teacher Training Institutes (RTTIs), five community colleges, Harbel College, Bong Technical College, the West African Examinations Council, the Agricultural and Industrial Training Bureau, and the National Commission on Higher Education.

Training Institutions (NPTTI)[10] have an interest in advocating for additional teacher training opportunities and curriculum reform.

Coalitions that include government stakeholders (where appropriate) can contribute to rebuilding trust in the sector, and present an opportunity to establish a consensus around defining and addressing a given policy challenge. The MoE is especially pivotal to reform, and will need to be proactively engaged by coalition members, and possibly included in coalitions focusing on sector governance and stakeholder communication, and resource mobilization.

CROSS-CUTTING ISSUE AREAS TO FRAME ADVOCACY EFFORTS

The following cross-cutting issues inform and affect these policy challenges, and provide practical ways for coalitions to frame advocacy initiatives, depending on the mandate, capacity and resource base of each coalition member.[11] They also present opportunities to bring together a diverse array of stakeholders to advocate for and monitor the same policy and accountability reforms in the education sector, but driven by different, but complementary, interests and incentives.

- Access
  - o Education sector stakeholders strive to ensure that students have equal opportunities to benefit from the provision of educational services.

- Quality
  - o The provision of educational content that is reflected in relevant curricula and materials for learning basic skills, including, but not limited to, literacy, numeracy.[12]

- Financing
  - o Governments ensure that a sufficient proportion of the national budget is allocated to finance education equitably and effectively.

- Sector governance
  - o The policies, laws, rules and regulations that govern key stakeholders in the education sector ensure for the effective delivery of education services.

- Inclusion, equity and gender parity

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[10] NPTTI is comprised of the following seven private teacher training providers: Christian Aid Program, Liberia Educational Action for Development (LEAD), Liberian Cooperative Standard Education School System Teacher Training College (LICOSESS), Liberia Institute for Teacher Education and Reforms (LITERs), Standard Teacher Training Institute, Teacher Aid Program (TAP), and We Care.

[11] See Barber (2010) for research on how coalitions can drive change in the education sector.

[12] Kingdon et al (2014: 7; see also Grindle 2004) succinctly summarize the tension between access and quality in the delivery of educational services, "…access-oriented reforms tend to be easier to implement, since they provide citizens increased benefits and politicians tangible resources to distribute to their constituencies, such as expansion of jobs for teachers, administrators, service personnel, construction workers, and textbook and school equipment manufacturers. Quality-enhancing reforms by contrast often focus on accountability and cost-effectiveness and threatens the interests of many of these stakeholders who in turn block their implementation." See also Williams (2017).

- o Ensure that all groups have equal and unbiased access to quality education services.[13]

- Accountability
  - o Education sector stakeholders responsible for the delivery of education services are expected to achieve measurable learning results.

- Transparency
  - o The timely and predictable distribution of budgeted resources within and between government and non-government stakeholders in the education sector that can be observed by the public.

- Monitoring and evaluation
  - o The process of regularly and systematically collecting data and information for tracking and assessing progress toward achieving defined education outputs and/or outcomes.

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF EDUCATION REFORM IN LIBERIA: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The challenges described in this report are embedded in the complex interplay of interests, incentives, and capacity levels of stakeholders (Kingdon et al. 2014). Even when there is stakeholder consensus, strong political will, and adequate resources to improve learning outcomes, reform is often difficult to achieve. There are, however, opportunities for LAVI to strengthen horizontal and vertical linkages among stakeholders to advocate for and monitor policy and accountability reforms that focus on addressing the root causes of poor and inadequate learning outcomes. The following PE factors can inform the scope and content of these reforms:

- Build on the *existing policy framework*, including the 2011 Education Reform Act and the G2B Strategic Plan;

- Continue to focus on improving education "quality" in addition to the post-conflict priority to increase access, a longer-term *trend* reflected in evolving GoL priorities;

- Address limited *capacity* among education policy planners and implementers, along with teachers and principals entrusted with the provision of education services;

- Mobilize *formal and informal networks* of stakeholders committed to reform (including government and non-government stakeholders);

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[13] In a study on education and equal opportunities among Liberian children, Jose Cuesta and Ana Abras contend that "circumstances play a dramatic role in educational disparities among Liberian children, especially parental education, but also gender, orphanhood, birth order, location and exposure to conflict" (2013: 238). While spending may have an impact, given the "meager public budget ion education", increasing access also requires addressing the actual circumstances of Liberian children.

- Leverage the *political will* of the MoE (along with other key sector stakeholders) to improve education quality with additional resources and new, even if controversial, approaches; and

- Recognize that the lack of effective *transparency and accountability* mechanisms contribute to corrupt and inappropriate practices in public and private schools across Liberia.

The cross-cutting issues identified in the previous section can help LAVI-supported coalitions coalesce around a common frame of reference for, and approach to, the policy challenges identified in this report.

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ANNEX 2: INTERVIVEWS

Government of Liberia

Ministry of Education

- Saa David Nyuma, Jr, Assistant Minister for Planning, Research and Development
- Bill C. Pyne, Administrative Assistant, Department of Planning, Research and Development
- Kammi Sheeler, Overseas Development Institute Fellow
- Nathaniel Sikeley, Director, Division of Funding and Project Development, Department of Planning, Research and Development

- Michari G. Tomah, President's Young Professional Program, Donor Coordination

Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Al-Hassan Conteh, Ambassador of Liberia to Nigeria, Benin and Equatorial Guinea & Liberia's Permanent Representative to ECOWAS

Ministry of Finance and Development Planning
- Tanneh Bruson, Deputy Minister, Budget
- Fredrick Krah, Director, Aid Management Unit
- Alice Williams, Director, Social and Community Services Unit

Monrovia Consolidated School System
- Adolphus Benjamin Jacobs, Superintendent

National Commission on Higher Education
- Michael P. Slawon, Director General

University of Liberia WVS Tubman Teachers College
- Moses Y. Yarkpawolo, Acting Dean

Civil Society

Association of Liberian Universities
- Emmanuel Daykeay, Executive Director
- Saaim W. Naame, General Secretary

Coalition for Transparency and Accountability in Education (COTAE) and Center for Transparency and Accountability in Liberia (CENTAL)
- Anderson D Miamen, Executive Director

Liberian Economic Journalist Association
- Emmanuel Mensah, Member

Spark
- Christian E. Steinbarth, Strategic Development Coordinator
- Melany Oey, Project Manager

Youth Coalition for Education Liberia (YOCEL)
- Beyan Flomo Pewee, Executive Director
- Josie M. Blahyi, Gender, Advocacy & Communication Officer

Liberia Cooperative Standard Education School System (LICOSESS)
- Benjamin Yele Wehye, Chief Administrative Officer

National Teachers Association of Liberia (NTAL)
- Mary Mulbah Nyumah, Acting President
- Samuel Y. Johnson, Sr., Secretary General
- J. Willie Forkpa, Deputy Secretary for Professional Development
- Andrew F. Korkulo, Information Technology Technician and Consultant Program Coordinator
- Gabriel Paul, Public Relations Officer
- Alice T. Freeman, Staff Member

Monrovia Consolidated School System Parent Teachers Association
- J. Mason Saweler, Chairman
- James K. Saysay, Co-Chairman

National Private School Parent Teachers Association
- T. Edwin Sherman, President

Monrovia Consolidated School System Principal's Association

- Emmanuel Karph, Head

Open Society Institute West Africa (OSIWA)
- Massa Crayton, Liberia Country Officer

United States Government

United States Embassy
- Rachel Meyers, Political Officer
- Sara Greengrass, Political Officer

United States Agency for International Development
- Anthony S. Chan, Mission Director
- Mervyn Farroe, Deputy Mission Director
- Malcolm Phelps, Education Team Leader
- Education Team Members
- Jeremy Meadows, Director, Democracy and Governance
- April O'Neill, Deputy Director, Democracy and Governance
- Michael Haines, Democracy and Governance Officer
- Daryl Veal, Democracy and Governance Officer

Development Alternatives International (DAI) Executive Council
- Charles Tye Lawrence, National Programme Officer, Embassy of Sweden
- Henry Reed Cooper, Lawyer, Cooper and Togbah

Peace Corps
- Kevin Fleming, Liberia Country Director

Millennium Challenge Authority
- Monie R. Captan, Chief Executive Officer

USAID Liberia Voice and Accountability Initiative (LAVI)
- Milica Panic, Chief of Party
- Dan Smock, Deputy Chief of Party
- Michele Rogers, Monitor, Evaluation and Learning Director
- Ebenezer A. Zonoe, Coalition and Advocacy Manager
- Abel Bembo, Capacity Development Intern
- Lauren Reese, Project Outreach Associate
- Weamie Z. Than, Grants Officer
- Ame Asu David, Acting Capacity Development Director
- Field Monitors
    o Agnes D. Korporal, Grand Bassa
    o Abednego Mehn, Bong
    o Kelvin Richardson, Bomi
    o Patricia Goli, Grand Gedeh
    o Estella Logan, Rivercress
    o Daniel K. Dolo, Maryland
    o Matthew Zeon, Margibi
    o Prince Wesseh, Grand Cape Mount
    o Eric Gbasue, Grand Kru
    o Prince Kennedy, Lofa
    o Nelson Kartee, Nimba

- o Perry Boyee, Sinoe
- USAID Local Empowerment for Government Inclusion and Transparency (LEGIT)
- Ross Worthington, Chief of Party

USAID Advancing Youth Program
- Denise Clarke, Chief of Party

Private Sector

Bridge International Academies
- Joe K. Gbasakollie, Deputy Country Director
- Josh Nathan, Director of Academics

Cyber-Ed Christian School
- Michelle Dennis Wento, Co-Founder and Administrator

Independent Consultant and Democracy and Governance Expert
- Mahamed Boakai

Liberian Chambers of Commerce

Development Partners

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
- Bernard Batidzirai, Education Director

World Bank
- Kirsty McLaren, Education Consultant

European Union
- Elizabeth Mary Lanzi Mazzocchini, Programme Manager, Education, Cooperation Section

ANNEX 3: SITE VISITS

Public Schools
- J.W. Pearson Elementary School
    - o Florence G. Munyeneh, Principal
- Tubman High School, Monrovia
    - o Mr.Alassis N. Goldore, Principal
    - o Kokulo D. Suo, Vice Principal for Instruction
    - o Mr. Zogar C. Campbell, Vice Principal for Administration
- Lango Lippaye High School, Kakata
    - o Robert M. Zaza, Principal
    - o Mohammed J.S.L. Conteh, Vice Principal
    - o Sakuvogui Z. Beyan, Vice Principal

Private Schools
- A.T. Warner High School, Monrovia
    - o Amos T. Warner, Principal
    - o Richard B. Nyenaton, Vice Principal
    - o Darius S. Tapiel, Dean
    - o Buster Koiyan, Teacher

- George V. Gibson United Methodist School, Kakata
  - Deyusor? T. James, Vice Principal

Kakata Rural Teacher Training Institute
- Shadrach Y. Kerl, Director
- Shorna F. Sherif, Academic Dean