Republic of Liberia

Ministry of Education

EDUCATION SECTOR PLAN 2022/23–2026/27

FINAL VERSION
17 August 2022

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Acronyms and abbreviations

ABE	Alternative basic education
ALCC	Association of Liberian Construction Contractors
ALP	Accelerated learning program
ALP-CS	Alternative Learning Program-Conventional Schools
AOP	Annual Operational Plan
AQE	Accelerated Quality Education
ASC	Annual school census
ASCR	Annual school census report
BECE	Bureau of Early Childhood Education
BFA/HR	Bureau of Financial Affairs and Human Resources
BGA	Bureau of General Administration
BPRD	Bureau of Planning, Research and Development
BBSE	Bureau of Basic and Secondary Education
BSPS	Bureau of Student Personnel Service
BTE	Bureau of Teacher Education
BTVET	Bureau of Technical and Vocational Education and Training
CapED	Capacity Development for Education
CBECE	Community-based Early Childhood Education
CBL	Central Bank of Liberia
CBT	Competence-based training
CCE	Climate Change Education
CEEACA	Center of Excellence for Education Administration and Accreditation
CEO	County Education Officer
CESA	Continental Education Strategy for Africa
CPD	Continuous professional development
CSA	Civil Service Agency
CwD	Children with Disabilities
DA	Department of Administration
DACUM	Developing a Curriculum
DEO	District Education Officer
DHS	Demographic Health Survey
DPRD	Department of Planning, Research and Development
ECD	Early childhood development
ECE	Early childhood education
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EDC	Education Development Center
EIE TWG	Education in Emergencies Technical Working Group
ELSP	Early Learning System Research
EMIS	Education Management Information System
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
ERA	Education Reform Act
ESA	Education Sector Analysis
ESD	Education for sustainable development
ESDC	Education Sector Development Committee
ESP	Education Sector Plan
FDA	Forestry Development Authority
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
G2B	Getting to Best Education Sector Plan
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GDP	Gross domestic product

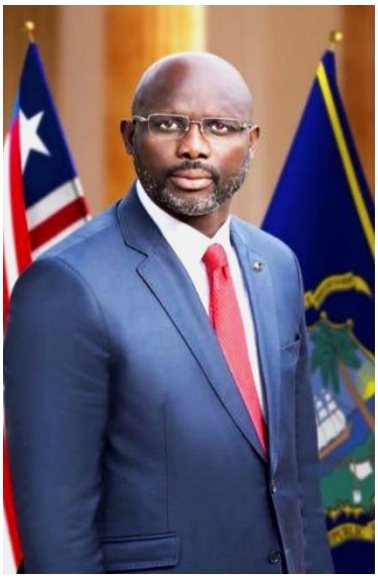
GER	Gross enrollment rate
GOL	Government of Liberia
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
HBECE	Home-based Early Childhood Education
HDI	Human Development Index
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher education institution
HE-MIS	Higher education management information system
HIES	Household Income and Expenditure Survey
HR	Human resources
HRMIS	Human Resources Management Information System
ICT	Information and communication technology
IECD	Institute for Cooperation and Development
IIEP-UNESCO	International Institute for Education Planning – United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPA	Innovations for Poverty Action
IRISE	Improving Results in Secondary Education
IT	Information technology
JESR	Joint education sector review
KPI	Key performance indicator
LBE	Lower basic education
LCC	Liberia Chamber of Commerce
LDHS	Liberia Demographic and Health Survey
LEAP	Liberian Educational Advancement Program
LEG	Local Education Group
LISGIS	Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information
LITCOM	Liberia TVET Commission
LJHSCE	Liberia Junior High School Certificate Examination
LLF	Liberia Learning Foundations
LNQF	Liberia National Qualifications Framework
LPSCE	Liberia Primary School Certificate Examination
MAC	Ministries Agencies and Commissions
MCSSTA	Monrovia Consolidated School System Teacher's Association
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning
MFDP	Ministry of Finance and Developmental Planning
MGCP	Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoU	Memorandum of understanding
MoYS	Ministry of Youth and Sports
MYOP	Multi-Year Operational Plan
NAP	National Adaptation Plan
NCHE	National Commission on Higher Education
NCP	National Curriculum Policy
ND-GAIN	Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative
NDMA	National Disaster Management Agency
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
NER	Net enrollment rate
NLAP	National Learning Assessment Policy
NPAL	National Principal's Association of Liberia
NPTAL	National Parent's Teacher's Association of Liberia

NTAL	National Teachers' Association of Liberia
NSD	National School Database
NSQS	National School Quality Standards
OOSC	Out of School Children
PA	Principal's Association
PAPD	Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development
PCGDP	Per Capita Gross Domestic Product
PP	Priority Program
PSL	Partnership Schools for Liberia
PTA	Parent–teacher association
RMCT	Road Maintenance and Construction Training Program
RPL	Recognition of prior learning
RTTI	Rural teacher training institute
SABER	Systems Approach for Better Education Results
SC	Sub-component
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SGBV	School-related gender-based violence
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SME	Small and medium enterprise
SMT	Senior management team
SNC	Second National Communication
SQA	School quality assessment
SQIP	School quality improvement plan
SRGBV	School-related gender-based violence
STEM	Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics
STR	Student Teacher Ratio
STRIVE	Strengthening Integration through Vocational Education
TCPTRI	TVET Center for Professional Training, Research and Innovation
TES	Transforming Education Summit
TESTS	Transforming the Education System for Teachers and Students in Liberia
TLM	Teaching and learning material
TTI	Teacher Training Institute
TVET	Technical and vocational education and training
TWG	Technical Working Group
UBE	Upper basic education
UC	Unit Cost
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Fund
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USD	United States Dollar
WAEC	West African Examination Council
WASH	Water, sanitation, and hygiene
WASSCE	West Africa Senior School Certificate Examination
WB	World Bank
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association
YSMIS	Youth and Sports Management Information System

REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA

President's Foreword

The President



Education is the cornerstone for the national development agenda of Liberia and the pathway to a brighter future for all of its citizens. Education is not only a right enshrined in our national legislation but also the best investment a government can make as an instrument for securing peace, prosperity, and progress for the young people of today and for the generations to come. Delivering quality education for all children, girls and boys alike, has the potential to accelerate economic growth, advance social development, guide environmental protection, and ensure that future leaders are fully equipped with the knowledge and skills to meet the interconnected challenges of an increasingly complex and uncertain world.

As we rebuild after the school closures due to the Covid-19 crisis, I take this opportunity to commend the new Education Sector Plan (ESP) (2022/23 – 2026/27), which, if fully implemented, would be a powerful tool to mitigate the current challenges in the education system and transform it into opportunities for transformational change in that sector raising the hopes to life, prospects of all children, youth and adults in the country. The ESP thus provides a strategic roadmap for the achievement of the key education policy goals of the Government over the next five years, which I urge all education actors to observe.

The critical task of this ESP is to bring many more children if not all, especially those from poorer, underserved areas, into the education system at the right age, and ensure that they progress through and complete school on time in a healthy, safe, protective environment, and leave with a 21st century foundational skills needed to contribute to, and benefit from national development. Progress in these areas will not only deliver a public good in itself, but also signal our continuing commitment to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal 4 by 2030 as a prelude to the Africa 2063 continent ambition.

Successful implementation of the ESP depends not only on the Ministry of Education but also on the goodwill and commitment of all education stakeholders and other government ministries and agencies. It will also require the full participation, contribution and cooperation of all Liberians, and residents of Liberia. I am heartened by the extent of involvement of the public and other entities of government in the formulation of this document through the extensive consultation that I have been assured, has taken place. I am therefore confident that this document which has the support of the people of Liberia which,

in itself, substantially guarantee a successful public support for its implementation. I am equally confident of the support of development partners who by their endorsement have affirmed their commitment to successful implementation of the Plan.

It is my hope that all who read this ESP will see it as a guide for current action, as well as a 'living document' designed to evolve over time to meet as yet unknown changing needs which may arise in the years to come. Now is the time to seize the moment in this post-Covid era to not simply build back better but to build anew for a better-functioning system of education and the emergence of a better Liberia.

George Manneh Weah

President of Liberia

REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA

Minister's Preface

Office of the Minister

As we consider the processes of national recovery post-Covid-19, the need to improve education in Liberia to accelerate economic growth and social development must be treated with urgency, and as such presents an emergency of a different kind. The successful and timely completion of this Education Sector Plan (ESP) (2022/23 – 2026/27) is most appreciated. With the six-month closure of schools in 2020 and 2021 to contain the pandemic, which hindered the full implementation of the previous ESP, *Getting to Best* (2017 – 2021), we have taken the opportunity to review progress to date and to reconsider how those former challenges can be remedied with new strategies. These, taken together, would be helpful as we reimagine how the education system of our country would deliver transformative change in the post-Covid period.

As the 2030 deadline to achieve SDG4 looms, the ESP has also been completed against the backdrop of the United Nations' global *Transforming Education Summit*, which will be convened at the 77th UN General Assembly meeting in September 2022. The UN frames this event as an opportunity to 'mobilize political ambition, action, solutions, and solidarity to transform education: to take stock of efforts to recover pandemic-related learning losses; to reimagine education systems for the world of today and tomorrow, and to revitalize national and global efforts to achieve SDG-4'. For Liberia, the strategic directions and policy priority programs detailed in this ESP provide a solid platform from which to declare to the world represented in this forum the Government of Liberia's firm commitment to take the concrete, transformative actions needed to further drive progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, and better prepare learners for the challenges of the future. Conversely, we view the ESP as a 'rolling document', which can continue to draw on valuable lessons shared at the Transforming Education Summit to enhance its transformative impact further.

The ESP notes that, currently, too many children remain out of school, especially the poorest girls and boys in underserved communities. The vast majority of the children in school are over-age for their grade levels, which limits the effectiveness of their learning and acquisition of skills, especially when the learning environment is unsafe, unhealthy, and unprotective. The critical task of this ESP, therefore, is to bring more children, especially those from poorer, underserved areas, into the education system at the right ages, ensure they progress through and complete school on time in a healthy, safe, protective environment, and leave with the foundational and 21st-century skills they need to contribute to and benefit from national development.

Achieving this task requires a long-term commitment to breaking with the past of overage and low enrollment, especially for children in underserved communities of our country. It also contributes to elevating the teaching workforce's quality, deployment, and motivation to address associated learning gaps and build the technically skilled human capital needed to drive economic growth.

This ESP accordingly commits to take the bold action needed to achieve three overarching goals: to increase equitable access; to improve the quality and relevance of teaching and learning; and to strengthen the efficiency of the system.

In a breakthrough innovation, we will also for the first time include in the ESP measures to strengthen the resilience of the system so that learning can continue, even when emergencies strike. Both the COVID-19 pandemic and the earlier Ebola outbreak in Liberia have highlighted the need for more resilient education systems that are better prepared to mitigate and respond to crises. The threat of climate change is a further looming threat. Accordingly, MoE has proactively seized the opportunity to include in the ESP the development of a policy framework on disaster risk reduction and climate-change adaptation and mitigation, together with a range of actions for coordinated mitigation and response so that whatever new crisis confronts us going forward, we will be well prepared to meet the challenges.

The ESP goals will be achieved through the following strategic objectives and key interventions:

- **GOAL 1: INCREASE EQUITABLE ACCESS**
  Strategic objectives
  - Reduce the overage student population, starting at the ECE level
  - Reduce the percentage of out-of-school children at all levels, with particular attention to gender and regional disparities

- **GOAL 2: IMPROVE THE QUALITY AND RELEVANCE OF TEACHING AND LEARNING**
  Strategic objectives and selected key interventions:
  - Ensure a functional qualified, motivated teaching workforce, effectively deployed
  - Provide gender-responsive teaching and integrated learning materials that are aligned with the reformed national curriculum and inclusive of quality Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM), TVET, and digital programs and assess students on new curricula contents
  - Expand access to quality, inclusive, and gender-sensitive TVET aligned to the labor market
  - Increase training and careers in STEM and digital education field to develop a capable workforce with skills needed for the 21st century, and scientific literacy, starting from the ECE level
  - Improve school quality standards and ensure that schools and education institutions provide healthy, safe, and protective environments for learning

- **GOAL 3: STRENGTHEN EFFICIENCY AND MANAGEMENT CAPACITY**
  Strategic objectives and selected key interventions:
  - Set up effective monitoring and evaluation through collection and use of quality management information system data for all education levels, including TVET and higher education, for improved management, governance, and accountability of the education system

- Institute continuous professional development (CPD) for leaders, including school principals and administrative staff, to increase the capacity of school administrators and supervisors at all levels, at both central and decentralized levels, with particular concern for women
- Harness the potential of the private sector through strengthened public-private partnerships

These goals and strategic objectives have been translated into five strategic priority programs delivered via the key interventions detailed in the plan. Underlying, cutting across, and guiding these strategic interventions are the Ministry's commitment to the fundamental principles of equity, gender equality and inclusion, and the social justice goals of reducing disparities wrought by gender, disability, and geographical location.

We firmly believe that a 'business as usual' approach will not deliver the education outcomes to which we aspire. This is why the ESP initiates dramatic reforms designed to tackle the long-standing issue of over-age enrolment. These will entail enforcing the right-age enrolment policy and abolishing repetition in Early Childhood Education classes. Children who are over-age for their grades at the primary and secondary school levels will be diverted to alternative programs, requiring high levels of investment in Accelerated Learning Programs and in Technical and Vocational Education and Training. Measures to enforce a zero-tolerance approach to violence in schools will also be adopted to ensure that schools become healthy, safe protective spaces for learning.

We recognize that these reforms are ambitious, yet we believe that the children of Liberia deserve nothing less. With the coordinated support of all education stakeholders - parents, teachers, Ministry and Government staffs at central and decentralized levels, development partners, and civil society organizations – we stand ready to strive to meet these ambitious goals notwithstanding.

This document, developed by the Ministry of Education in collaboration with its Education Development Partners, encapsulates the initiatives to be taken by the Government of Liberia to increase and improve the quality of education at all levels and for all children of Liberia (born or resident) for the next five years ending 2026-2027. We look forward to working with all partners to deliver on these commitments and ensure that no child is left behind in our drive for better education for all.

Prof. D. Ansu Sonii, Sr.

Minister of Education

REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA
Ministry of Education

Acknowledgements

Office of the Deputy Minister
for Planning, Research and Development

The development of this ESP has been a challenging and complex task. Thanks to the dedicated efforts and technical expertise of a wide range of committed individuals from government institutions, development partner agencies, and civil society organizations, we are proud to have succeeded in meeting the tight deadlines set for ourselves and to have delivered on our commitment to have the document ready for launching on National Flag Day, August 24, 2022.

Among our development partners, we would like to express our deep appreciation to the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) for generously funding the development of this document. We would also like to convey our sincere gratitude to UNESCO for their role as Grant Agent for the GPE funds and their provision of high-quality technical expertise to support the ESP development through the UNESCO International Institute for Education Planning (IIEP). We are also extremely grateful to our other education development partners, particularly USAID, the World Bank, UNICEF, and the European Union EU, for donating time and resources to help strengthen the drafting at each stage. We also thank all implementing partners for their valuable contributions throughout the process.

Sister line ministries who also deserve our special thanks include the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning (in particular, the Department of Budget and Development Planning); the Ministry of Youth and Sports; the National Commission on Higher Education; the Ministry of Internal Affairs; and the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection; as well both the House of Representatives and the Senate of the National Legislature, in particular the Committees on Education.

The individuals contributing to the development of this document are too numerous to mention by name. Thanks are particularly due to members of the Ministry of Education's National Technical Team, Led by Honorable Dominic D. N. Kweme, Assistant Minister for Planning Research and Development and coordinated by Alex K. Mbolonda, Director of Planning, MoE, under the overall direction of Honorable Minister Alton V. Kesselly, Deputy Minister responsible for Planning, Research and Development, and assisted by Other Team Members included Eugene W. Jappah, Gabriel Nelson, Moses D. Prowd, Charsley Kumbly, Soudah A. Dolo, Alphonzi Myers, Telebee M. Kamara, Reginald Manhpane, Moses Kesselly, whose valuable contributions from their different departments and fields of expertise have helped shape the strategic direction of the document.

In addition to the National Technical Team, numerous other individuals, departments, divisions, and units of the MoE have also provided insightful inputs and support to the development of the ESP document. They include: Honorable Latim Da-Thong, Deputy Minister for Administration; Honorable Alexander

Duopu, Deputy Minister for Instruction; Honorable Felicia Doe-Sumah, Assistant Minister for Basic and Secondary Education; Honorable James Armah Massaquoi, Assistant Minister for Human Resource and Fiscal Affairs; Honorable Thelma Nimmo, Assistant Minister for Early Childhood Education; Honorable Saku Dukuly, Assistant Minister for TVET-STEM; Honorable Gayflor Washington, Assistant Minister for Teacher Education; Honorable Tarnu Marwolo Bongolee, Assistant Minister for Students Personnel Services; and Mr. Joe K. Gbasakollie, World Bank Education Portfolio Coordinator.

Other entities whose important contributions we also wish to acknowledge include the National Teachers' Association (NTAL); the Parent-Teachers Association (PTA); the Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services (LISGIS); the West African Examination Council (WAEC); Monrovia Consolidated School System (MCSS); Association of Liberia Universities (ALU); and the Federation of Liberia Youths (FLY).

We reaffirm our gratitude to UNESCO at all levels, both at Headquarters in Paris and the Regional Office in Abuja, as well as the national office in Monrovia, and IIEP colleagues and consultants in Paris and Dakar for their consistent and expert support which has greatly help us to continually improve each iteration of the document and bring it to its current, fully elaborated form.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the support of all actors not previously mentioned who have devoted their invaluable time and energy to honing the ESP into this final version, and helped ensure that this document meets the education needs, expectations, and aspirations of all citizens of the country.

Alton V. Kesselly

Deputy Minister, Planning, Research and Development

Introduction

As the world starts to rebuild and recover from the unprecedented disruption of the global COVID-19 pandemic, which swept the world in 2020, the development of *Liberia's Education Sector Plan* (ESP) (2022/23–2026/27) is timely. From the crisis, new opportunities have emerged for reimagining education, rethinking old assumptions, and confronting embedded dysfunctionalities and persistent bottlenecks. This also presented an opportunity to ask and answer the hard questions that will reboot the system back into action, not in the same form as before, but into a better-functioning, more highly evolved version.

The radical disruption of the COVID-19 period, when schools in Liberia were closed for six months, has provided pause for taking stock of the distortions of the current inequities and inefficiencies in the system, which have evolved over an extended period of time, subsequently become entrenched, and continue to severely constrain learning outcomes. In line with many other countries, Liberia has used this hiatus to rethink radical solutions to old problems that are critically needed to create a well-functioning system that delivers quality education for all. While aspects of the previous ESP, *Getting to Best (2017–2021)*, remain unfinished and were interrupted by the pandemic, a new story is emerging in the recovery from the COVID-19 crisis. The findings of the new *Education Sector Analysis* (ESA) (2021) point to new understandings of old problems and reveal new challenges, innovations, and opportunities. Thus, the new ESP presents an opportunity to break with 'business as usual' and seize the moment to reset the education system so that it is fit for purpose in the post-pandemic, rapidly changing broader global environment, where social, economic, and climate-related challenges all require education-related solutions.

The ESP is also being completed against the backdrop of the United Nations' global *Transforming Education Summit* (TES), to be convened at the 77th UN General Assembly meeting in September 2022 as an opportunity to 'mobilize political ambition, action, solutions and solidarity to transform education: to take stock of efforts to recover pandemic-related learning losses; to reimagine education systems for the world of today and tomorrow; and to revitalize national and global efforts to achieve SDG-4'[1]. The ESP represents a solid platform from which Liberia can distil its National Statement of Commitment to be presented at this forum, which outlines the country's vision and concrete transformative actions to further drive progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and better prepare learners for the challenges of the future. At the same time, the ESP remains a living document, which can be further honed to reflect global lessons shared at the Summit by other countries similarly striving to transform their education systems for transformative impacts on students' learning and life prospects.

In Liberia, as highlighted in *Chapter 1*, too many children still remain out of school, especially the poorest girls and boys in underserved areas, with their rights to a quality education unrealized and their potential unfulfilled. Of children who are in school, the vast majority are over-age for their grade, which limits the effectiveness of their learning and acquisition of skills, especially when the learning environment is unsafe, unhealthy, and unprotective. The over-age issue starts at the early childhood education (ECE) level, with knock-on effects that then filter all the way up the system, negatively impacting both internal efficiency in the Ministry of Education (MoE) and lowering returns on investment at the household level. Having disparate age ranges in the same class also puts tremendous pressure on teachers to teach effectively, and many of them are untrained and lack adequate teaching and learning materials (TLMs). Working

[1] https://www.un.org/en/transforming-education-summit

conditions in remote areas are challenging, which is a major deterrent for teachers' willingness to be deployed there and a further constraint on the effectiveness of students' learning.

Combined, these factors have created a vast pool of untapped human capital potential that, if effectively harnessed, could unleash individual creativity and propel dynamic national development.

The critical task of this ESP is therefore to bring more children, especially those from poorer, underserved areas, into the education system at the right age; ensure they progress through and complete school on time and in a healthy, safe, and protective environment; and leave school with the foundational and 21st-century skills they need to contribute to and benefit from national development. Achieving this task requires a long-term commitment to breaking old patterns of late- and non-enrollment, especially of the poorest rural children, and to elevating the quality, deployment, and motivation of the teaching force to address associated learning gaps and build the human capital needed to drive the country forward.

This ESP, accordingly, commits to take the bold action needed to achieve three overarching goals: (1) to increase equitable access; (2) to improve the quality and relevance of teaching and learning; and (3) to strengthen the efficiency of the system.

Drilling down from these goals, as further outlined in *Chapter 2*, MoE has identified a number of strategic pathways to change, which have the most powerful leveraging potential for achieving the three overarching goals and delivering sustainable and transformational results in the ESP's five-year period. These can be summarized as follows:

- **GOAL 1: INCREASE EQUITABLE ACCESS**
  Strategic objectives and selected key interventions
  - *Reduce the over-age student population, starting at the ECE level, through the following actions:*
    - Communicate and enforce the right-age enrollment policy.
    - Abolish repetition at the ECE and lower basic levels through automatic promotion.
    - Divert children who are over-age for grade to accelerated learning programs and non-formal/informal skills-based programs (i.e., technical and vocational education and training [TVET]).
    - Dramatically scale up accelerated learning programs (ALP) by establishing ALP classes in existing lower basic school and providing top-up incentives for lower basic teachers working on ALP after class hours.

  - *Reduce the percentage of out-of-school children at all levels, with particular attention to reducing gender and regional disparities.*
    - Make schools more accessible by constructing and upgrading public schools in underserved areas, including gender-responsive water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) facilities.
    - Subsidize private schools in underserved areas that are not reached by public schools.
    - Reduce the costs of schooling at all levels, including ECE, by providing cash grants to to the poorest students and students with disabilities.
    - Increase community engagement and build upon the community empowerment approach for ECE school expansion.
    - Eliminate public ECE school fees and expand the school feeding program.

- **GOAL 2: IMPROVE QUALITY AND RELEVANCE OF TEACHING AND LEARNING**

Strategic objectives and selected key interventions

- *Ensure a functional, qualified, motivated, and effectively deployed teaching workforce.*
  - Provide incentives (such as cash and accommodation) to attract and support the deployment of qualified teachers in underserved areas.
  - Ensure all teachers are paid according to their qualifications.
  - Implement training and continuing professional development (CPD) programs, and increase the proportion of trained and qualified teachers, especially female teachers.
  - Develop and roll out a system for teacher licensing.

- *Provide gender-responsive teaching and integrated learning materials (TLMS) that are aligned with the reformed national curriculum and inclusive of quality science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), TVET, and digital programs, and assess students on the new curricula contents.*
  - Provide open-access, non-copyright textbook for every child (print or e-version) in public and private schools to improve foundational skills of literacy and numeracy.
  - Develop a national learning assessment system for tracking early learning outcomes at Grades 3 and 6.

- *Expand access to quality, inclusive, and gender-sensitive TVET aligned to the labor market.*
  - Expand TVET offer by establishing TVET stream at secondary level and building and upgrading TVET centers.
  - Develop labor market-responsive, competence-based curriculum and programs in both TVET and higher education.

- *Increase training and careers in STEM and digital education field to develop a capable workforce with skills needed for the 21st century, and strengthen scientific literacy, starting at the ECE level.*
  - Mainstream STEM programs at all levels, starting with the ECE.
  - Provide upper basic and secondary schools with relevant STEM equipment (e.g., micro-science kits, SMART boxes, 'lab in a box', etc.).
  - Equip TVET centers and HEIs with functioning information technology (IT) infrastructure, including internet connectivity and computers.

- *Improve school quality standards, and ensure schools and education institutions provide healthy, safe, and protective environments for learning.*
  - Roll out the National School Quality Standards (NSQS) system.
  - Roll out and enforce the code of conduct to tackle school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) in education institutions at all levels, based on the Liberia Education Advancement Program (LEAP) model.

- **GOAL 3: STRENGTHEN EFFICIENCY AND MANAGEMENT CAPACITY**
  Strategic objectives and selected key interventions

  - *Set up effective monitoring and evaluation (M&E) through collection and use of quality management information system data for all education levels, including TVET and higher education,* for improved management, governance, and accountability of the education system.

- *Institute CPD for leaders, including school principals and administrative staff,* to increase the capacity of school administrators and supervisors, especially women, at both central and decentralized levels.

- *Harness the potential of the private sector through strengthened public–private partnerships.*
  - Strengthen the regulatory and operating framework for public–private partnerships in education.
  - Reinforce relationships with non-governmental partners in educational planning and delivery at national and decentralized levels for full implementation of the ESP policies and strategies.

Underlying, cutting across, and guiding each of these strategic interventions are the MoE's commitment to the key principles of equity, gender equality, and inclusion, as well as the social justice goals of reducing disparities related to gender, disability, and geographical location. For example, in addition to the gender-related strategies highlighted above, the ESP also includes commitments to reducing gender disparities by promoting gender-responsive interventions such as:

- defining effective learning pathways for girls who become pregnant to continue their education;
- reducing teenage pregnancy through skill-based health education and strengthened role of Girls' Clubs;
- rolling out the *Teacher Code of Conduct* to reduce SRGBV in all education institutions;
- recruiting female psychosocial and career counsellors at all levels;
- providing scholarship packages to senior secondary school female students;
- piloting the provision of uniforms and bags to female students in basic education;
- developing a policy that informs incentive packages to attract female teachers into the teaching profession and establishes quotas for female teachers;
- increasing the number of women in leadership positions at school, district, county, and national levels.

With a view to reducing county disparities, under the ESP, the MoE will conduct a school mapping to identify educationally disadvantaged regions, and build child-friendly, disability-inclusive, gender-sensitive, and climate-resilient (in compliance with the *National School Infrastructure Strategy*) educational facilities in such regions (including regional TVET hubs). MoE will also fully implement a decentralization plan to equitably distribute national resource packages based on the identified development needs.

As another innovative measure, Liberia will for the first time include in the ESP measures for strengthening system resilience for continuous learning during crises by mainstreaming gender-responsive climate-change mitigation, disaster risk reduction, and adaptation. Both the COVID-19 pandemic and the earlier Ebola outbreak in Liberia have highlighted the need for more resilient education systems that are able and better prepared to mitigate and respond to crises so that learning never stops, and no child is left behind when emergencies strike. The threat of climate change is a further looming crisis. According to the 2019 Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative (ND-GAIN) Index,[2] Liberia 'is the 29th least ready country and the 6th most vulnerable country to climate change impacts' (University of Notre Dame, 2021), including increased temperatures, increased frequency of intense precipitation, the rising sea levels, and increased erosion. These climate-change stressors can not only affect children's education directly—by putting children's and teachers' lives and well-being at risk and destroying education infrastructure—but

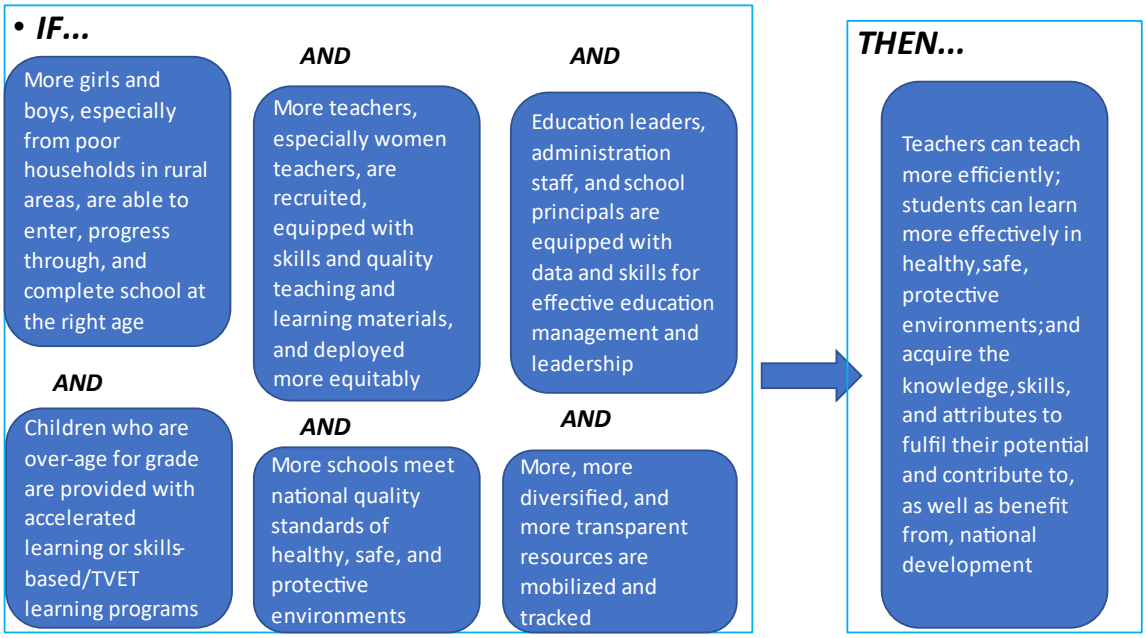
[2] 'The ND-GAIN Country Index summarizes a country's vulnerability to climate change and other global challenges in combination with its readiness to improve resilience' (University of Notre Dame, 2021).

also indirectly, through impacts associated with food insecurity and forced migration, among others. The ESA also notes that existing gender norms and inequalities put girls particularly at risk. Accordingly, measures adopted in the ESP include the development of a policy framework on disaster risk reduction and climate-change adaptation and mitigation; formulation of national and school-based contingency plans; establishment of an early warning chain system; and strengthening coordination mechanisms between the MoE and relevant government agencies for effective mitigation and response.

Because the scale of the challenges outlined in the recent ESA necessitates a commensurately robust and comprehensive approach in the ESP, the pathways to change outlined above have been expanded, in a hybrid structure, into five ESP Priority Programs (PPs) to achieve the three overarching goals. PP1, *access to ECE, basic, and secondary education*, responds primarily to Goal 1; PP2, *quality and relevance of ECE, basic, and secondary education*, responds to Goal 2; and PP3, *governance and management*, responds to Goal 3. PP4, *TVET*, and PP5, *higher education*, cover access, quality, relevance, and management of each of these sub-sectors, in line with all three overarching goals. The ESP, therefore, details an ambitious package of activities to strengthen the whole of the education system, as further elaborated in *Chapter 3*. However, the strategic pathways and key actions highlighted above are prioritized as core interventions, where concerted action has the greatest potential power to unlock persistent bottlenecks in the system and leverage the highest impact on equity, learning, and efficiency. While all results included in the ESP are important and needed, action on these key areas is essential. Should unanticipated resource mobilization limitations constrain implementation of certain aspects of the ESP, available resources will be concentrated on achieving sustainable results in these cores, must-have areas, maintaining the feasibility of the plan.

A high-level theory of change underpinning the ESP is summarized in *Figure 0.1.*

Figure 0.1: High-level theory of change underpinning the ESP



Source: Authors.

With regard to budgeting, the ESP recognizes that high-level national development impacts are at stake. Consequently, the financing of the ESP is not framed as a net cost to the state, but as a critical and high-return investment in the sustainable future of the country. The total cost of the ESP for the five-year period, 2022/23–2026/27, is estimated at USD 967.5 million, as further detailed in *Chapter 4*. This projection is deemed reasonable given the reforms needed to address the challenges at stake and the possible level of resources that can be mobilized, both from increased allocation from the domestic budget and the anticipated volume of external funding. Critical to successful implementation of the ESP and achievement of its anticipated results, however, is how far partners align their support to the ESP's goals. If the support development partners provide is fully, explicitly, and transparently aligned with the ESP's goals, priority programs, and specific objectives, the MoE and donor partners can embrace joint accountability for delivering the ESP's full complement of results. Without such alignment, the resulting funding gap would present a serious constraint to the ESP implementation. The MoE will continue to advocate through the Local Education Group (LEG) for all partners to explicitly link their programs to support the ESP in a transparent, harmonized way that minimizes duplication and maximizes synergies, and is deeply appreciative of all who have already expressed their commitment to doing so.

To help build this essential partner consensus and buy-in, the ESP has been developed through an MoE-led participatory approach, supported by technical assistance from the UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP-UNESCO). With continuing COVID-19 precautions constraining travel, the ESP development process was only launched in February 2022, with a two-week in-country workshop held in Monrovia, co-facilitated by the MoE and IIEP-UNESCO technical team. The IIEP team worked with members of the National Technical Team nominated by the MoE based on their key roles at the department and bureau levels. The teams reviewed the implications of the ESA findings, identified key issues and causal chains, and agreed on the structure of the ESP, along with its components and sub-components, specific objectives, and key indicators. Development of the plan was squeezed into a tight time frame in order to deliver on high-level political commitments to launch the ESP on the National Flag Day, 24 August 2022. Operating with these time constraints, the MoE circulated an initial draft ESP to development partners on 25 May 2022. An MoE-led consultation workshop to review the draft was held on 2 June 2022 in Monrovia. Comments from the workshop and written feedback received from development partners have been systematically reviewed and incorporated into the current version to sharpen the strategic focus of the plan and enhance its feasibility, implementability, and monitorability.

The ESP is clear-eyed on the challenges involved in trying to tackle old, complex, long-standing problems with new approaches. For example, with regards to the delicate issue of over-aged children, the ESA has shown that almost all children in primary school (92 per cent) are over-aged for their grade by at least one year. The figures for rural children are 26 percentage points higher than for their urban counterparts. For the poorest children enrolled in primary schools, over two-thirds (71 per cent) are over-aged by more than three years. The ESA also shows that there the same proportion of 6–11-year-olds in the ECE as in primary education (39 per cent). As mentioned above, such high proportion of over-aged students at the ECE level perpetuates pernicious knock-on effects, whereby over-aged enrollment patterns are replicated throughout the education cycle. Mixing younger and older children at the ECE has a negative impact on learning and raises potential protection issues. Children who are over-aged are also more likely to drop out, making this a critical issue for efficiency, as well as equitable access and learning. The issue of over-age enrollment is a legacy of the civil war years, which has become chronic and unsustainable. The MoE sees that now is the time to get a grip on the problem, and is keenly aware that fixing it is likely to take longer than the time frame of the current ESP. While expansion of ALPs to absorb over-aged children diverted to them is a highly strategic intervention, it is also a huge task, with enrollment in these programs currently representing just over 2 per cent of lower basic enrollment, a figure that has remained static

since 2015. Challenges for the M&E system in accurately measuring progress toward correcting the system and reducing numbers of over-age children will also need to be overcome. In the short term, enrollment rates may actually decrease—for example, as the system takes time to build the capacity to absorb all over-age students diverted from mainstream classes in accelerated learning, TVET, and other alternative programs (see *Chapter 5* for further discussion of M&E).

Overall, the ESP recognizes that there are no silver bullets to eradicate over-age enrollment or quick fixes to rebalance the system. These distortions have been long in the making and will, clearly, take longer than the five-year timeframe to overcome. If they remain unchecked, however, the problem will continue to grow, worsen, and further undermine the other good work being done. Therefore, this ESP seeks to trigger a long-overdue initial shock to begin the process of eradicating over-age enrollment, starting at the ECE and primary levels, to put the MoE onto a pathway that will, ultimately, lead to a more rational distribution of children at each level. Taking this bold action now will pave the way for increased access, improved learning and relevance, and greater efficiency in the system in the long term—a process that will need to be continued, further refined, and reinforced in subsequent ESPs, until the job is done.

Keeping these caveats in mind, the structure of the ESP is as follows:

- *Chapter 1: General context*, which sets out Liberia's sociodemographic and macroeconomic context the ESP is situated in and summarizes the key findings of the most recent ESA (2021).
- *Chapter 2: Vision, priorities, and strategies*, which provides an overview of the strategic directions of the ESP.
- *Chapter 3: Priority programs*, which details the five components of the ESP—access, quality, management, TVET, and higher education.
- *Chapter 4: Costing and financing of the ESP*, which breaks down the costs of the ESP, how it will be financed, and the anticipated funding gap.
- *Chapter 5: M&E and implementation arrangements* which describes the M&E framework.
- *A set of four annexes* which outline:

  Annex 1: ESP alignment with existing policies and plans

  Annex 2: Risks and mitigation measures

  Annex 3: Simulation model projections

  Annex 4: Communication strategy

The ESP detailed below sets out a bold agenda for action for the next five years that, hopefully, partners will find credible, sustainable, and worthy of investment. The MoE calls on all partners to support implementation of the ESP to pave the way for and move the needle toward realization of the national vison for education.

Chapter 1: General Context[3]

This chapter sets out the sociodemographic and macroeconomic context of Liberia in which the ESP is situated. It goes on to summarize key findings of the most recent ESA (2021), looking at issues of enrollment and equity in ECE, basic, and secondary education, as well as the quality of education and management of teaching resources. It also includes an overview of education expenditure trends, together with a situation analysis of TVET and higher education. Functioning of the education administration is also outlined.

The chapter highlights a youthful and growing population that will put pressure on the education system to absorb the increasing numbers of young people and deliver a quality education that equips them with the skills they need to transition into the labor market and fulfil their own and national human capital potential. The legacy of past challenges has led to chronic distortions, where large numbers of children either drop out of or never enroll in school, especially the poorest children in rural and remote areas, and areas where those who are in school are predominantly over-age for their grade and struggling to acquire foundational, life, and workplace skills. The chapter outlines how bottlenecks in the system are both a cause and effect of these distortions, which the ESP seeks to address.

Sociodemographic and macroeconomic context

Liberia is witnessing relative socio-political stability, but the challenging socioeconomic context, further amplified by COVID-19, may create tensions and fuel social unrest, especially among the youth. Growing demographic pressure, widespread poverty, low health outcomes, climate change, and gender-based violence remain key social issues affecting the education sector.

***Demographic pressure, while easing, still represents a heavy burden on the education system that will need to expand to accommodate all children*.**

Liberia's population was estimated to be over 5 million in 2020, with forecasts predicting its growth to 6.4 million in 2030. Population growth witnessed a boom after the war years, and growth rates since have levelled off and are not projected to decrease. The population is characterized by a high proportion of youth, with 40 per cent of the population under the age of 15 in 2020. This contributes to a growing pressure on the education system, which is predicted to need to accommodate an additional 483,000 children and youth by 2030. Furthermore, the population is unevenly distributed over the territorial space, with two-thirds of the population currently living in Montserrado and the three counties that make up the North Central region.

[3] Please note that this chapter is derived from the ESA and uses national population data. Because these data did not include projections at the time, the priority programs and key performance indicators use the UN population data instead. There are, therefore, some discrepancies between the figures in this chapter and the rest of the ESP document. Data will be reconciled in the final version.

Table 1.1: Trend in school-age population, 1962–2030

Number ('000) and %						**Average Annual Growth Rate**			
Age group	2008	2017	2020	2026	2030	2008–2017	2017–2020	1920–2026	1926–2030
3–5	345	412	428	469	500	2.0%	1.2%	1.5%	1.6%
6–11	591	760	795	863	921	2.8%	1.5%	1.4%	1.6%
12–14	246	343	367	402	424	3.8%	2.2%	1.5%	1.4%
15–17	222	313	341	383	405	3.9%	2.9%	2.0%	1.4%
18–23	405	528	589	697	752	3.0%	3.7%	2.9%	1.9%
Total	**1 809**	**2 357**	**2 519**	**2 814**	**3 002**	**3.0%**	**2.2%**	**1.9%**	**1.6%**
Share in total population	50.1%	50.1%	48.6%	48.3%	47.1%				

Source: UN Population Division, medium variant. Estimates and projections.

Liberia has enjoyed relative stability since the end of the civil war in 2003, with elections held since then deemed to be free and credible. However, elections are still recognized to be influenced by patronage practices, which has resulted in a feeling of neglect among the population. In response, civil society in Liberia has been mobilizing, as is evidenced in the growing number of demonstrations in the country that have pushed for reforms to address corruption and improve political inclusion. Liberia is also particularly vulnerable to epidemics, including the outbreak of the Ebola virus disease in 2014 and COVID-19 in 2019, while malaria continues to be the leading cause of morbidity and mortality.

Liberia is particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change with consequences for the education system.

The country is also vulnerable to climate change, which is 'expected to result in more extreme weather situations with more intense temperatures as well as rainfall patterns entailing increased risks and severity of natural disasters' (World Bank, n.d.) Floods, a particularly recurrent natural disaster, are expected to worsen, especially along the coasts due to rising sea levels. The problem is further compounded by the fact that 'Liberia's coastline includes many of its most densely populated and economically vibrant areas (e.g., the capital city of Monrovia and major port city of Buchanan), as well as numerous informal settlements composed of extremely poor households with little ability to either minimize their exposure to natural disasters or cope with the effects of environmental shocks (e.g., West Point in Monrovia)' (World Bank, 2021a). The effects of climate change on the education system will, therefore, become more severe in the coming years and will need to be addressed immediately.

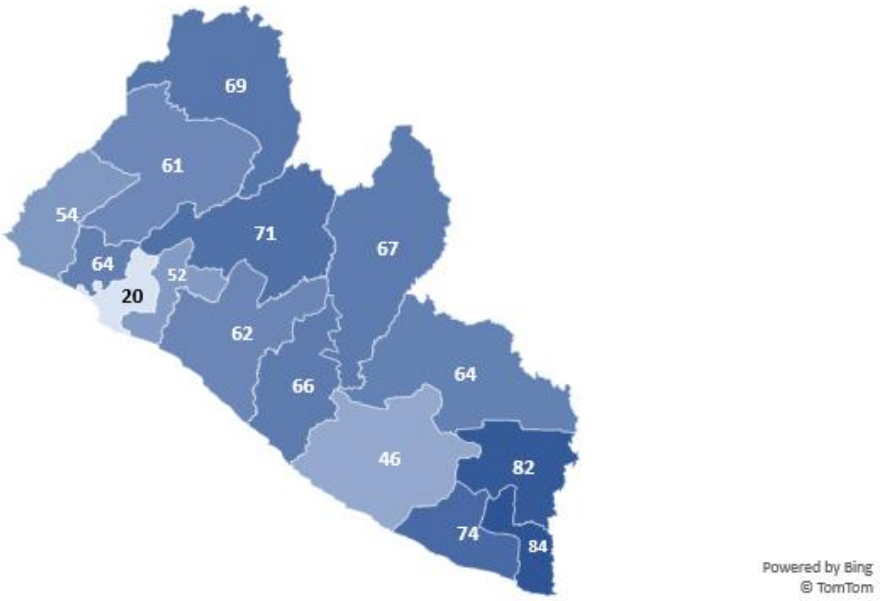
Social indicators, while having recorded some improvements over the years, remain poor and marked by sharp location disparities.

The population is observed to be overwhelmingly poor, with estimates that 50.9 per cent of people were living below the poverty line in 2016, of which 71.6 per cent were in rural and 31.5 per cent in urban areas (LISGIS, 2017). Poverty rates are projected to increase by as much as 9.7 to 13.4 percentage points in 2020[4] as per capita income contracts and food prices rise. The population still lacks access to basic utilities and facilities, although improvements have been noticed, with the proportion of the population having

[4] The World Bank is proposing two scenarios depending on how long the COVID-19 pandemic-related containment measures persist, which ultimately, will affect the pace of economic recovery-related economic and welfare indicators. For more details, see World bank 2020, p: 35.

access to an improved water source increasing from 66 per cent in 2007 to 85 per cent in 2019 (LISGIS, 2021). High maternal mortality rates indicate an overall poor-quality health system, as well as limited access to health care services. According to 2019–2020 Liberia Demographic and Health Survey (LDHS), one-third of children aged under 5 were stunted in Liberia and 10 per cent were severely stunted, indicating the prevalence of chronic malnutrition (LISGIS, 2021). This is particularly concerning because malnutrition and poor health can impair both children's physical and cognitive development. COVID-19 is expected to negatively affect already poor health outcomes, limiting the government's ability to deliver essential health services and the expected associated increases in food insecurity and malnutrition. While literacy rates have improved among the youth, overall illiteracy remains high, particularly among women. In 2019/20, literacy rates for males aged 15–49 years old were 75 per cent compared to 52 per cent for females. Overarchingly, Liberia's Human Development Index (HDI) stood at 0.480 in 2019, positioning the country at 175 out of 189 countries (UNDP, 2020).

Figure 1.1 Percentage of poverty rate by county, 2016



Source: LISGIS HIES, 2016.

Gender-based violence is pervasive, and children and adolescents are particularly vulnerable.

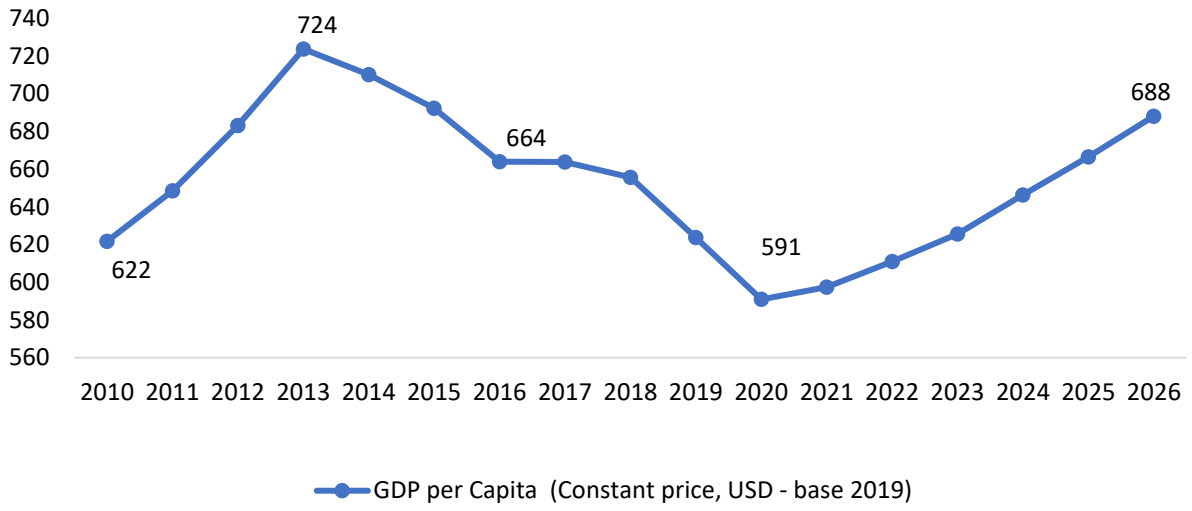
Despite existing legal protections for equal rights of women, studies have revealed that gender equity is still not broadly supported in Liberia, with 33 per cent of women and 62 per cent of men cited as opposing gender equality in 2021. Rates of sexual and gender-based violence in Liberia remain high and were seen to increase during COIVD-19, with rape being one of the highest reported crimes in the country. Children are at a particular risk—between 2016 and 2020, 70 per cent of gender-based violence cases involving sex were perpetrated against children. Sexual violence is also widespread in Liberian schools and negatively affects both boys and girls, although girls remain at the greatest risk of sexual violation, coercion, and transactional sex for grades (Postmus et al., 2015; Steiner et al., 2018). Early childbearing and early marriage rates remain high in Liberia, with 25 per cent of women married before the age of 18 and 30 per cent of women giving before the age of 18; the country's adolescent birth rate remains one of the highest

in the world, despite showing signs of decrease (LISGIS, 2021). Early childbearing represents a major threat for girls' education, with higher risk for school dropout.

The economy was hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic and while rapidly recovering, economic growth remains fragile.

The Liberian economy has suffered greatly from the COVID-19 pandemic due to its small and undiversified nature that makes it very vulnerable to external shocks, as exhibited in the drop in GDP per capita at the peak of the pandemic in 2020. The economy is dominated by services, including agriculture and industry, and remains largely informal—87 per cent of those aged 15 to 64 report employment in the informal sector. Despite the large size of the agricultural economy in the country, productivity is low. As a result, the country imports 50 to 60 per cent of its staple food requirements. Revenues have remained largely stagnant over the past five years, with government expenditure decreasing. Liberia's domestic revenue mobilization is high, yet declining reliance on external funding makes its fiscal position fragile, jeopardizing the provision of quality social services.

Figure 1.2: Trend in the GDP per capita in USD, 2019 constant price, 2010–2026



Source: Central Bank of Liberia (CBL) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) Economic Outlook database October 2021 GDP data protections and UN Population Division 2019 revision population projection (medium variant). GDP estimates start in 2016.

Evolution of enrollment in ECE, basic, and secondary education and equity issues

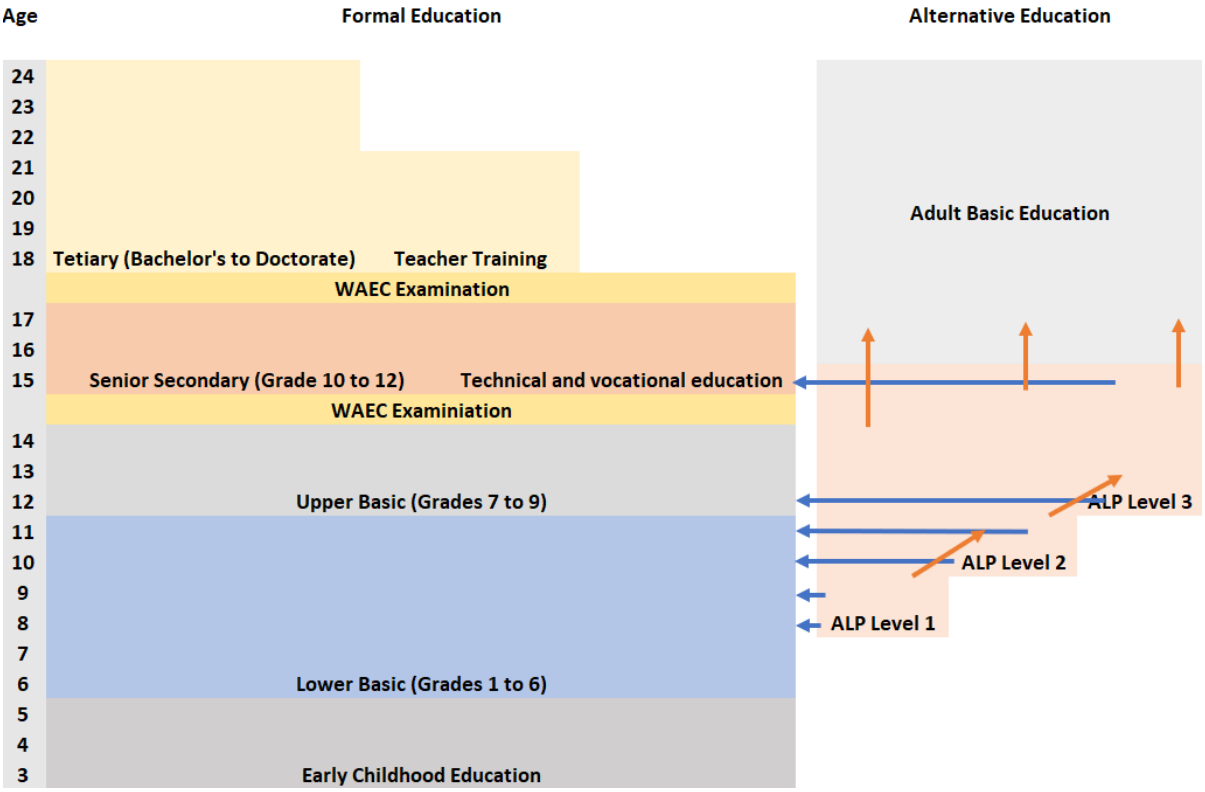
Barriers to equitable access to education remain at all levels, including for girls and students with disabilities, and universal primary enrollment is still not reached. Over-aged enrollment persists as a major challenge across all grade levels, beginning in early childhood, but few learners are directed to alternative education programs.

Basic education in Liberia has witnessed declines in access and is at risk of privatization, with perceived expansion among private and faith-based providers.

Liberia's education structure follows a 3–9–3–4 model, with a parallel alternative education model providing accelerated learning opportunities for 8–15-year-old over-aged students, as well as adult

education. Currently, only lower basic education (LBE) and upper basic education (UBE) are considered part of basic education and are offered fee-free, while pre-primary and secondary continue to charge fees, even in public institutions.

Figure 1.3: Education structure in Liberia, 2021



Source: Authors.

Enrollment at the lower basic level decreased by more than 50,000 students from 2015 to 2019/20, while all other levels witnessed slight increases in overall enrollment. Furthermore, despite the large proportion of over-age students observed across sub-sectors, the alternative education sector remains small, with 13,000 students enrolled in ALPs in 2019/20, which represents just over 2 per cent of primary enrollment. Public schools are the most prevalent providers at the pre-primary (44 per cent) and lower basic (44 per cent) levels; however, they represent the majority at the upper basic (27 per cent) and secondary (22 per cent) levels. Additionally, the proportion of students enrolled in public schools has decreased across all levels since 2015, in favor of an increased enrollment in community- and faith-based institutions.

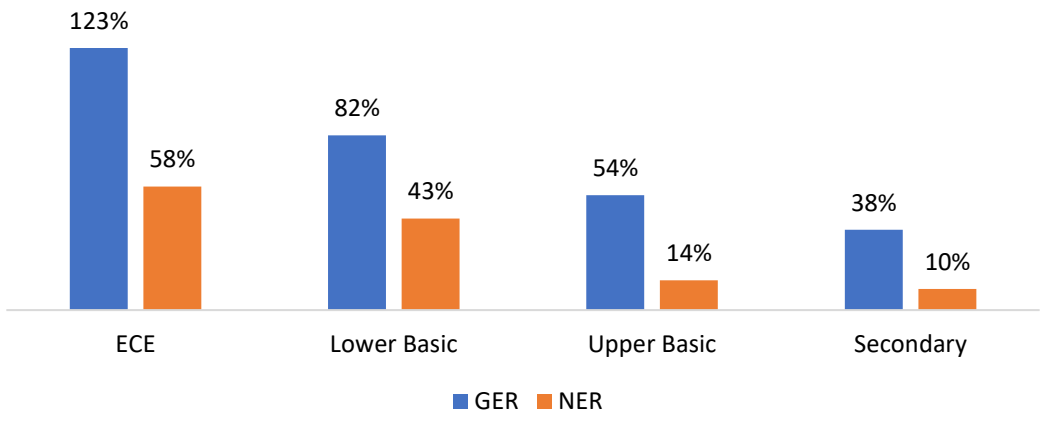
Table 1.2: Total enrollment by ownership type and level, 2015 and 2019/20

		2015	2019/20
ECE	Total	539,660	542,696
	Community	34,740	26,663
	Faith-based	68,003	97,839
	Private	154,979	171,650
	Public	281,938	246,544
	% of Public	**51%**	**43%**
Lower basic	Total	655,049	602,752
	Community	37,159	27,937
	Faith-based	86,472	107,916
	Private	194,042	193,612
	Public	337,376	278,093
	% of Public	**52%**	**46%**
Upper basic	Total	166,921	168,379
	Community	5,114	5,669
	Faith-based	31,435	40,802
	Private	61,415	68,743
	Public	68,957	53,165
	% of Public	**41%**	**32%**
Secondary	Total	105,875	106,194
	Community	2,035	1,734
	Faith-based	30,037	30,714
	Private	41,125	47,680
	Public	32,678	26,066
	% of Public	**31%**	**25%**
ALP	Total	12,952	13,331
	Community	NA	221
	Faith-based	NA	202
	Private	NA	1502
	Public	NA	11386
	% of Public	**NA**	**85%**

Source: Education Management Information System/annual school census (EMIS/ASC) 2015 and EMIS/ASC 2019/20.

Alongside decreases in absolute enrollment, both ECE and LBE have witnessed declines in their gross enrollment rate (GER), from 134 to 123 per cent and from 89 to 82 per cent in ECE and LBE, respectively. However, over the same period, GER in UBE and secondary are seen to have undergone a slight increase: from 51 to 54 per cent and from 36 to 38 per cent, respectively. Across all levels, the net enrollment rate (NER) was observed to be much lower than the GER, indicating the enrollment of many students not of the appropriate age across the levels. At the ECE level, net enrollment was observed to be 58 per cent in 2020. This was greatly affected by wealth quintile, signaling the existence of financial barriers to enrolling in ECE at the appropriate age. For lower basic, upper basic, and secondary, the NER has remained stable since 2015, at 43 per cent, 14 per cent, and 10 per cent, respectively. Wealth is again seen to have a large influence on GER, with populations in the richest wealth quintile exhibiting a primary GER 56 percentage points higher than those from the poorest quintile.

Figure 1.4: GER and NER by percentage level, 2019/20

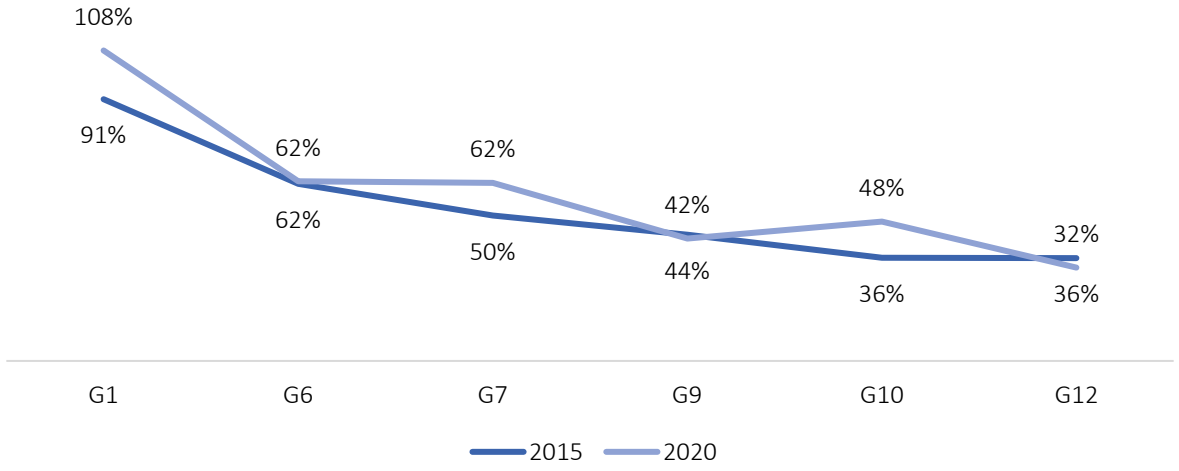


Source: EMIS/ASC, 2019/20.

Repetition has been decreasing and overall transition rates improving; however, intra-cycle dropout remains a major issue.

An examination of the evolution of the schooling profile using administrative data in Liberia from 2015 and 2019/20 shows an improvement in transition rates coupled with a decrease in retention rates. The access rate to Grade 1 was observed to be over 100 per cent, suggesting universal access to LBE. However, this can be understood to be inflated due to the high proportion of over-aged children in Liberia, and the proportion of out-of-school children who have never attended formal education demonstrates that access is not universal. Furthermore, lower basic retention is low, at 58 per cent, indicating high rates of intra-cycle dropout. This is also true at the upper basic and secondary levels, with retention rates for both at 69 per cent. Comparatively, transition rates are high, highlighting issues related to retention within, rather than between cycles.

Figure 1.5: Evolution of the cross-sectional schooling profiles (%), 2015 and 2019/20



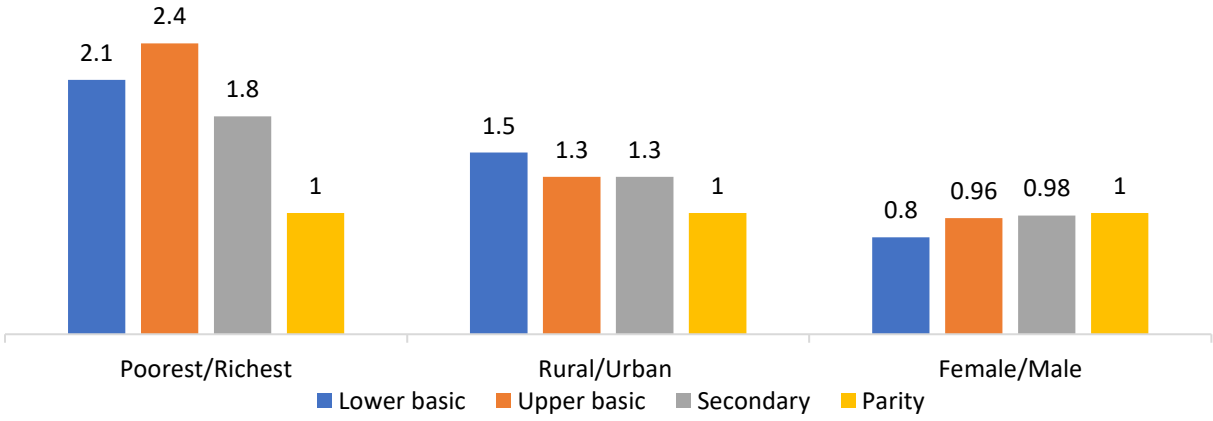
Source: Authors' calculations based on the EMIS/ASC 2015 and 2019/20.

Over-age enrollment persists as a major challenge in Liberia, with prevalence across all sub-sectors, beginning in early childhood.

Over-age enrollment is a major concern for the education sub-sector, affecting all education levels—according to EMIS 2020 data, 67 per cent of ECE students, 79 per cent of lower basic students, 56 per cent of UBE students, and 52 per cent of secondary students are over-aged for the grade they are enrolled in. Over-age enrollment begins at the ECE level, having a domino effect of the proportion of over-age students across grades. Despite the government's emphasis on the age-appropriate school policy, evidence suggests that many students enter ECE above the official enrollment age, rather than being placed in the appropriate grade or alternative education, as the policy suggests. Extreme over-aged enrollment is also seen within older age groups, with a significant proportion of 20–24-year-olds enrolled in both UBE and secondary, despite the official age ranges being 12–14 and 15–17, respectively. This indicates that 13-year-olds and 20-year-olds can be found in the same classroom, which inherently, has negative effects on the provision of a safe and quality learning environment, as well as age-appropriate learning.

Similar proportions of over-age students are seen across population groups, including wealth quintiles. However, differences among population groups are more distinct when examining the proportion of students more than three years above the official age for their grade. Using LDHS 2019/20 data,[5] parity ratios displayed in *Figure 1.6* show significantly higher proportions of the poorest population to be more than three years over-age for their enrolled grade level compared to the richest students, with ratios of 2.1, 2.4, and 1.8 for lower basic, upper basic, and secondary, respectively. Rural students are also more likely to be more than three years over-age than their urban peers, suggesting the existence of both economic and physical barriers for age-appropriate enrollment. As for as gender, there is near parity, with the exception of LBE, where a higher proportion of male students are over-age, with 10 male students over-age by three or more years for every 8 female students.

Figure 1.6: Parity ratios of students more than three years over-aged at grade level, 2019/20



Source: Authors' computations based on the LDHS, 2019/20.

[5] As disaggregated EMIS data were not available, LDHS data were used to calculate parity indices to demonstrate equity dimensions.

Out-of-school children are the most prevalent in the young and older age groups in Liberia, which is reflected in late school entry and dropout.

There is a sizeable proportion of school-age children who are out of school—according to LDHS 2019/20, 19 per cent of lower basic-aged children are out of school, along with 14 per cent of upper basic-aged and 20 per cent of secondary-aged children. Locality and wealth status are again perceived as the most influential factors that affect enrollment, with rural children of LBE age twice more likely to be out of school than their urban peers. The highest level of education attained by out-of-school children reflects the issue of over-aged enrollment—97 per cent of out-of-school children of lower basic age have never attended an education institution. Wealth is a strong determinant of enrollment, suggesting the continued existence of financial barriers to enrollment, despite fee-free access in lower and upper basic levels. Girls are more likely to be out of school in the 12–17 age group, although they are also more likely to have attended some form of education than boys of the same age. This suggests that girls are more at risk of dropout and thereby, face issues of retention, which has previously been linked to girls becoming pregnant while enrolled; boys are more disadvantaged in terms of access.

Table 1.3: Share of out-of-school children (%), 2019/20

Age Group	Attending School	Out of School		
		Total	Left School	Never Attended
6–11	81%	19%	1%	18%
12–14	86%	14%	5%	9%
15–17	80%	20%	9%	12%

Source: Authors' calculations based on the LDHS, 2019/20.

Disparities in access to education are the most prevalent between wealth quintiles, followed by location and gender.

Administrative data show similar levels of enrollment for both females and males, with the greatest difference at pre-primary level, where females have a GER 10 percentage points higher than males. When the intersection between gender and locality is considered, greater levels of disadvantage are observed: 57 per cent of poor and rural out-of-school girls aged 14–17 have no formal education and only 2 per cent attended secondary. The greatest disparities in access, however, are perceived between wealth quintiles, with children from the poorest families 21 per cent less likely to access Grade 1 than those from the richest backgrounds. This is true across all education levels, leading to an average school life expectancy of 10.4 years among the richest quintile, more than double the 4.8 years among the poorest.

Most children with disabilities are not enrolled in school. Lack of funding has hampered the operationalization of commitments of the 2018 Inclusive Education Policy.

The right of all children to education, including children with disabilities, is enshrined in the *Children's Law of 2011*, which was followed by the *Inclusive Education Policy* in 2018. In line with social, not medical, models of disability, the policy defines disability as 'the lack or restriction of the ability to perform an activity in the manner within the range considered normal within the culture context of the human being', highlighting that it is not an impairment per se that is disabling, but the contextual factors, depending on the availability of adaptive environments and/or assistive devices (Liberia, 2018: 5). The policy acknowledges the following categories of students with disabilities: students with visual, hearing, cognitive and physical impairments, and individuals who are gifted and talented (Liberia, 2018: 12).

Between 0.43 per cent (secondary) and 0.74 per cent (upper basic) students in Liberia are reported to have a disability.[6] An average of 0.53 per cent of students enrolled in 2019/20 had a disability, which suggests that nearly all school-aged children with disabilities in Liberia are out of school.

Furthermore, even when students with disabilities are enrolled in school, institutions are often not well adapted and do not have adequate TLMs for inclusive education for those students. As defined by the *Inclusive Education Policy*, inclusive education 'asserts the rights of all students to receive an education that is appropriate to their strengths and needs, regardless of age and disability, [and to be] provided with appropriate education within the regular school setting' (Liberia, 2018: 12). The policy highlights inclusion as a process that 'involves adjusting homes, school and its environment, and society so that everyone, regardless of their status, can have the opportunity to interact, play, learn, work and experience the feeling of belonging and experiment to develop into accordance with the potential and abilities' (Liberia, 2018: 4). However, a recent study of the experiences of students with disabilities in public high schools found limited accessibility adaptations, with only 26 per cent of schools having ramps for wheelchair access and none of the surveyed students citing access to any type of assistive devices (Collins et al., 2021).[7] While the *Inclusive Education Policy* commits to adapting school facilities, providing schools with assistive devices, adapting the national curricula and implementing teacher training modules on inclusive education, lack of funding has hampered efforts to operationalize these commitments. Educational services for children with disabilities are largely delivered by development partners or through the government grants allocated to institutions for students with specific disabilities, with just over USD 90,000 spent on these institutions in 2019, which represents less than 1 per cent of the overall education budget.

Girls' education is negatively influenced by social norms and gendered barriers within schools, including a low proportion of female teachers and leaders, SRGBV, and inadequate WASH facilities.

Social norms, such as sexual and gender-based violence, early marriage and pregnancy, unequal division of domestic labor, and mistrust of women in leadership roles, are key constraints for girls' education. In terms of education opportunities, the data show that despite progress, the poorest rural children, especially girls, face the biggest obstacles to accessing and completing education. Gender inequality intersects with other dimensions of disadvantage, such as location and wealth, to constrain gender-equal education opportunities. Poor and rural girls are seen to experience the highest levels of disadvantage, with 57 per cent having no formal education and only 2 per cent having attended secondary. While dropout of boys is an increasingly pressing issue, specific challenges for boys' education access and retention are less researched.

Within the education system, gendered barriers to education include critically low numbers of women teachers, with only 20 per cent at lower basic and 12 per cent and 10 per cent at UBE and secondary, respectively; this means that girl students lack female authority role models. Additionally, SRGBV levels continue to be high in schools: a study found that one in five students—both girls and boys—report experiencing sexual/gender-based violence from teachers or staff, often related to 'sex for grades' (Davis and Postmus, 2014). The lack of single-sex WASH facilities in schools constitutes a particular barrier for girls, with 25 per cent of facilities allocated for girls and the rest for boys.

[6] Some estimates put the proportion of school-aged children who have a disability as high as 15.3% (SIDA, 2015).
[7] The country also counts one school for blind and one for deaf students.

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, which led to a six-month closure of schools in Liberia, was a serious disruption to education, but it also catalyzed opportunities for innovation.

The state of emergency in Liberia declared in March 2020 entailed a raft of measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19, including the closure of schools, which severely interrupted learning and assessment, particularly affecting poor, rural communities, especially girls, who faced increasing burdens of household duties and care work, as well as heightened risks of sexual abuse, gender-based violence, and teenage pregnancy. Access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene practices, and school feeding was reduced; teachers not formally on the government payroll lost their income; and families struggled to continue their livelihoods and care for their children at home.

Informed by lessons learned from the Ebola outbreak of 2014, the MoE took swift action in close coordination with development partners to facilitate continuity of learning and promote health, safety, protection, and well-being of children, parents, and teachers while schools remained closed. In late March 2020, a Global Partnership for Education (GPE) grant of USD 70,000 provided through the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to support the MoE with an innovative approach to maintaining learning by airing radio lessons and purchasing radios to allow vulnerable children to have access to the programs. A further GPE grant of USD 7 million, also administered through UNICEF, was secured for the two-year Liberia's *COVID-19 Education Emergency Response Plan* (2020–2022), which focused on distance education platforms through radio, TV, SMS, online learning, and printed materials; ECE curriculum and materials; TLMs, including for catch-up classes and ALPs; psychosocial support to teachers, students, and parents by establishing a help desk; and dissemination of messages via radio stations and talk shows. Health, well-being, and nutrition for students, teachers and parents were also promoted, including gender-sensitive WASH facilities for vulnerable schools and health kits for all schools, school health and well-being protocols, as well as a child protection and care program to prevent abuse and exploitation, especially for girls. Accelerated learning based on the revised school calendar was also initiated, together with community mobilization guidance for schools with a focus on back-to-school campaigns.

In addition to the radio lessons, other innovations included the (1) development of age-appropriate and gender-responsive home study tips; parental support tips; and guides for learners, teachers, and parents, including early childhood development (ECD) learners' parents; (2) establishment of a psychosocial support help desk, with systems for tracking child abuse; and (3) school health and well-being protocols and kits. A continuous learning platform in the form of a dedicated Ministry-run education radio station and studio is due to be operational by the end of August 2022, with transmission sites in six counties to maximize coverage. To support the platform, to date, 6,814 lessons have been developed from the National Revised Curriculum for Grades 1–12.

Underpinned by the strong emergency coordination mechanisms put in place, these distance-learning innovations and support materials have increased the resilience of the system in responding to future shocks and strengthened the MoE's capacity to sustain continuous learning during crises, in line with the objectives of the PP 3.5, as further elaborated below.

Quality of education and management of teaching resources

The Liberian education system is faced with a myriad of quality-related education challenges, including an undersupply of TLMs and a high proportion of unqualified teachers—all of which is further reflected in low learning outcomes.

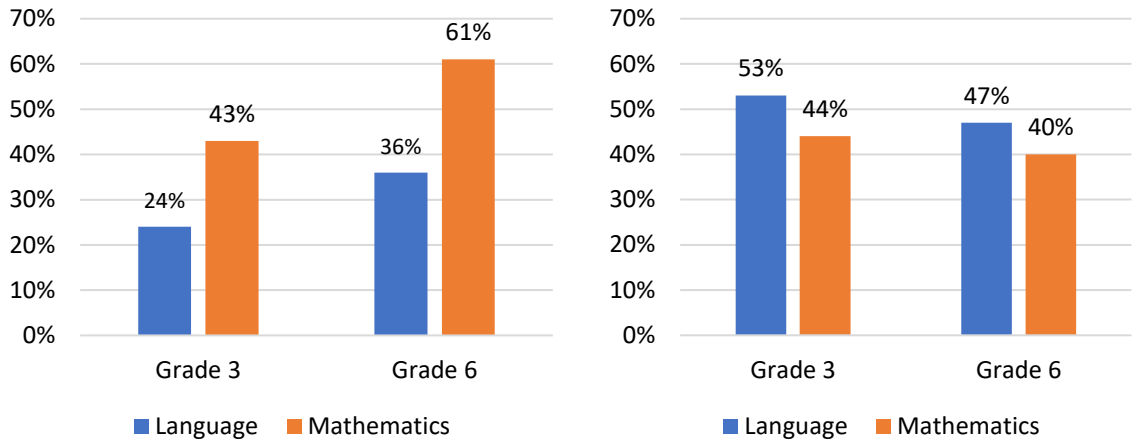
Learning assessments highlight weak foundational competencies, including the lack of school readiness of pre-primary students.

National examinations in Liberia include the Liberia Primary School Certificate Examination (LPSCE), Liberia Junior High School Certificate Examination and (LJHSCE), and the regional West Africa Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE). Interestingly, LPSCE and LJHGCE have continuous assessment components regularly carried out by schools, thereby substantially reducing the 'high stake' pressure from the national examinations. There are no standardized assessments at the ECE level in Liberia. However, data on early skills development could be derived from the Early Learning Systems Research (ELSR) carried out in 2018, which examined student performance, classroom quality, and teaching performance in ECE.

ELSR individual learning assessments conducted in 2018 (Oxford Policy Management, 2018) demonstrated weak levels of school readiness among ECE students, with only 13 per cent of students in public ECE schools demonstrating adequate skills to progress to lower basic education. Community and faith-based ECE schools had similar scores, while private and mission schools had the highest proportion of students scoring in the school readiness proficiency level, at 21 per cent and 20 per cent, respectively. In examining scores by county, large disparities are evident, with Rivercress and Sinoe having much higher proportions of school-ready students (35 per cent and 31 per cent) compared to Nimba and River Glee (6 per cent and 10 per cent, respectively). The low proportion of school-ready ECE students is particularly concerning given the high prevalence of over-aged children in ECE institutions: only 8 per cent of students aged 6, or the appropriate age for LBS entry, demonstrate adequate skills for transition into LBE.

In LBE, a sample-based reading and numeracy assessment was conducted in 2021 with the support of Innovation for Poverty Action as part of an assessment policy reform and targeting learners in Grades 3 and 6 from Bomi, Bong, Grand Bassa, Margibi, Montserrado and Rivercess counties. The assessment provides interesting insights on learning mastery in core subjects at those levels. In language, the results revealed that third graders answered correctly only one in four questions in oral assessment, while sixth graders recorded better performance, at 36 per cent; this indicated sustained weaknesses in the learners' mastery. Boys had better performance than girls in mathematics, scoring 47 per cent on oral exams in Grade 3 compared to 38 per cent for girls, and 65 per cent in Grade 5 compared to 56 per cent for girls. There were only marginal differences in English oral assessment scores. There was also variation by county, with a 14-percentage-point difference between Bong (38 per cent) and Bomi (52 per cent) in oral mathematics score for Grade 3, and a 17-percentage-point difference in written language assessments between Rivercress (36 per cent) and Montserrado (53 per cent) for Grade 6.

Figure 1.7: Proportion of correct scores in language and mathematics assessments, Grades 3 and 6, 2021

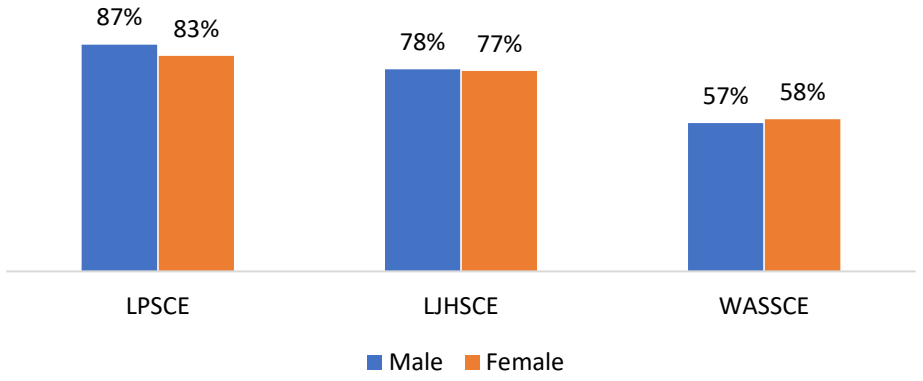


Source: Innovation for Poverty Action's National Learning Assessment Policy Pilot Results, 2021.

End-of-cycle examinations present a better outlook, although examination results in science subjects remain particularly weak at the secondary level.

At basic and secondary levels, the 2020 results from the national and regional examinations show that the majority of the candidates passed their respective examinations, with the share of those who passed dropping with advancing levels of examination. Except for lower basic, where there is only a marginal gap in favor of male students, there are no observable sex differentials in pass rates at the national level.

Figure 1.8: Percentage of candidates passing national and regional examinations, 2020

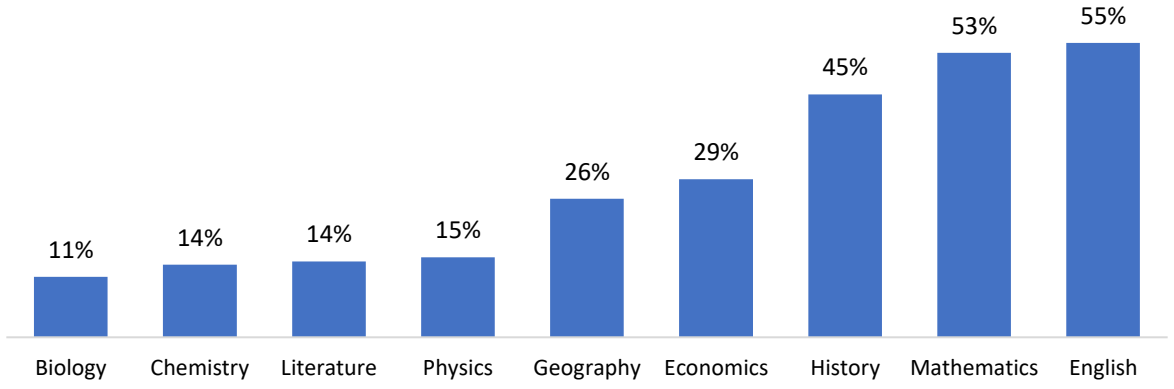


Source: National Learning Assessment Policy Pilot Results, 2021.

Although 6 in 10 candidates who set for the WASSCE in 2020 had at least a pass, the results reveal large variation across subjects, with only mathematics and English registering more than half of the candidates with at least a pass in end-of-cycle exams. Sciences, conversely, had the lowest pass rates, with an 11 per cent pass rate in biology. This may reflect challenges related to poor preparation of science teachers, lack

of complementary staff, and limited investment in science equipment and laboratories, including lack of consumables.

Figure 1.9 : Percentage of candidates with at least a pass in WASSCE, 2020



Source: National Learning Assessment Policy Pilot Results, 2021.

Administration of examinations is improving, but logistics and capacity issues remain.

The administration of examinations in the country is stabilizing, especially for the national examinations, but the West African Examination Council (WAEC) decries operational challenges that may continue to undermine the progress made and have a negative influence on the integrity of examinations. Insufficient logistics and human capacity mean that the council has to involve external parties in the administration of examinations, which is cited as a huge risk to the integrity of examinations.

The number of teacher trainees graduating from public institutes has been in decline and dominated by male trainees.

Teacher training for basic education teachers is offered in three public rural teacher training institutes (RTTIs) and 18 private teacher training institutions, making it highly driven by the private sector. Secondary teachers are trained at the university (A certificate). The number of teacher trainees graduating from the three public RTTIs has been on a general decline since 2012, with male dominance recorded throughout the last decade. These institutions offer the pre-service C certificate required for working in basic education and ECE schools and the B certificate for secondary schools. Recently, the government has introduced the ECE–C certificate to provide specific training opportunities for ECE teachers. However, the roll-out of this certificate has been limited, with no RTTIs offering pre-service ECE–C training and to date, only 174 teachers benefitting from the ECE–C in-service training.

There is a shortage of trained teachers in basic and secondary education.

There is an acute shortage of trained teachers in basic and secondary, a reflection of the low outputs from RTTIs, with the share of trained teachers ranging from 35 per cent in ECE, 45 per cent in lower basic, 31 per cent in upper basic, and 26 per cent in secondary (EMIS, 2019/20). With an average of 45 per cent of teachers trained, this places Liberia below the Sub-Saharan Africa's average of 68 per cent.

There are modest student–to–teacher ratios across basic and secondary schools, ranging from 11:1 in secondary to 37:1 in ECE. The ratios are higher in public schools—from a high of 41 in ECE to a low of 6 in

secondary. However, the ratios go up considerably when only government-paid teachers are taken into account, with student–to–teacher ratio reaching 100 students per one government-paid teacher in public ECE centers.

Table 1.4: Teachers and student–to–teacher ratios, 2019/20

	Enrollment		Teachers			Student–to–Teacher Ratio		
	In all schools	In public schools	All teachers (all schools)	In public schools	Gov't-paid in public schools	All teachers (all schools)	All teachers in public schools	Gov't-paid teachers only in public schools
ECE	542,696	246,544	14,724	5,987	2,472	37	41	100
Lower basic	607,558	278,093	22,488	10,594	7,283	27	26	38
Upper basic	168,379	53,165	13,345	6,641	1,695	13	8	31
Secondary	106,194	26,066	9,646	4,368	913	11	6	29
Total	**1,424,827**	**603,868**	**60,203**	**27,590**	**12,363**			

Source: Authors computations based on EMIS/ASC, 2019/20.

There is an acute shortage of TLMs in classrooms.

In terms of inputs that contribute to quality education, student–textbook ratios in lower basic schools are high, with the best scenario observed in public schools, where up to six learners share a single language textbook. This shortage is also seen in upper basic and secondary levels, where UBE learner textbook ratios average 1:7 in language and mathematics and 1:8 in science. Further, according to Early Learning Systems Research, few play-based learning materials or supports are present in Liberian ECE classrooms; the most frequently used materials are blackboards and chalk. Additionally, some classrooms were observed to pose safety risks, which is particularly concerning in the context of young children.

Table 1.5: Student–textbook ratios in lower basic schools, 2019/20

	Enrollment	Core Textbooks			Student–Textbook Ratio		
		Language	Maths	Science	Language	Maths	Science
Community	27,937	3,775	3,084	2,916	1:7	1:9	1:10
Faith-based	107,916	15,076	12,322	11,823	1:7	1:9	1:9
Private	193,612	28,074	22,286	21,573	1:7	1:9	1:9
Public	278,093	49,488	41,783	37,426	1:6	1:7	1:7
Overall	607,558	96,413	79,475	73,738	1:6	1:8	1:8

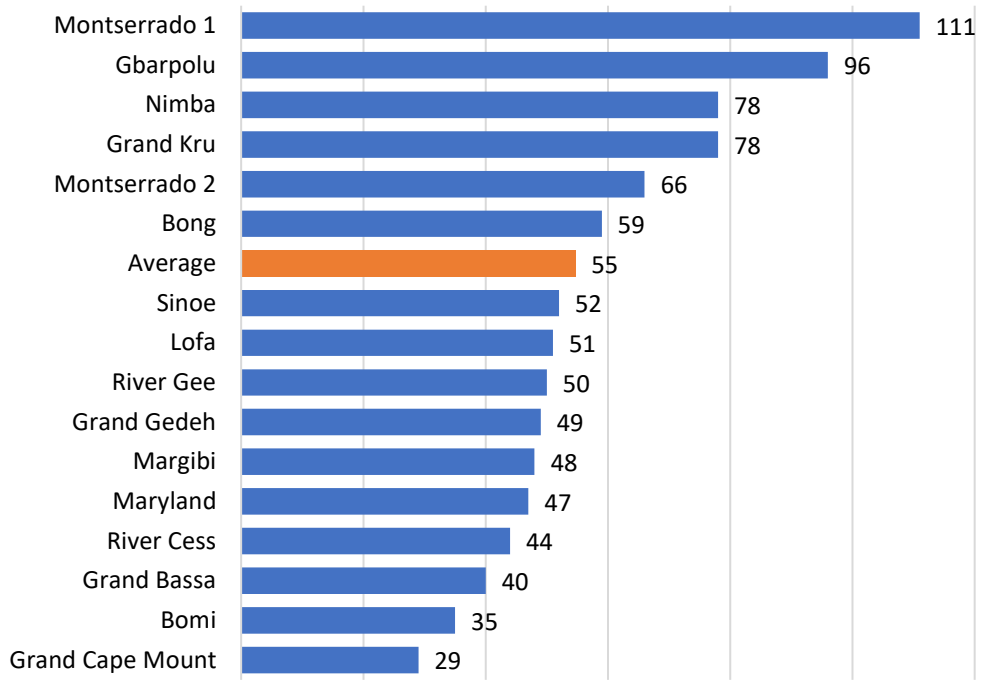
Source: Authors computations based on EMIS/ASC, 2019/20.

Adequate facilities, including sanitation facilities, are limited. Inadequate WASH facilities are a particular constraint for female students.

In terms of learning facilities, trends are more varied according to sub-sector. Adequate average class sizes of 23 and 31 students per classroom are observed in ECE and lower basic. They are much larger in UBE and secondary at 51 and 54, respectively (yet, close to the norm set at 50 students). Additionally, two-thirds of classrooms in UBE and half in secondary are not constructed of solid materials, which can be used as a proxy for the quality of classrooms available. There is a similar shortage in access to sanitation

facilities, notably toilets—on average, more than 111 girls share one toilet in Montserrado 1 county. Inadequate WASH facilities are a particular constraint for girls' hygiene, privacy, and dignity needs. High numbers of over-age girls reach puberty while still in primary school and primary schools have the fewest single-sex toilets.

Figure 1.10: Female student toilet ratio in lower basic schools, 2019/20



Source: Authors calculations based on EMIS/ASC, 2019/20.

Education expenditure

Expenditure on education remains low in Liberia, calling to question the feasibility of achieving the Education 2030 Agenda if the trend is sustained in the future. The financing of education is also particularly regressive and inequitable, with parents of children at lower levels of education absorbing a disproportionate share of education expenditures.

Education expenditure is below recommended thresholds. The majority of expenditure is allocated to recurrent spending, the largest share of which goes to salaries, leaving limited resources for non-salary items.

In FY 2020/21, government education expenditure, as captured in the national budget, represented 13.8 per cent of overall spending and 2.6 per cent of GDP, falling short of the UNESCO recommendations of 20 per cent and 4 to 6 per cent, respectively. Growth in expenditure has been limited due to external shocks, such as the Ebola virus epidemic and the COVID-19 pandemic, leading to a meagre 8 per cent-growth in sectors expenditure over the last eight years. Education expenditure is strongly predictable, with execution rates averaging 93 per cent between 2013 and 2020.

Almost all government expenditure in education is allocated to recurrent spending, with development expenditure fluctuating from a low of 0 per cent to a high of 3.2 per cent of total expenditure over the past eight years. The lack of expenditure on development raises questions about government's commitment to rebuilding and construction. Of the recurrent spending, 63.5 per cent was spent on salaries in 2020/21, while 36.5 per cent was invested in other recurrent elements, such as goods, services, grants, and subsidies. The limited expenditure on non-salary items can influence the quality of education, leaving little room, for instance, for monitoring and supervision of schools by quality assurance teams, which requires resources for school visits.

Table 1.6 Public expenditure on education by type of spending, USD '000, 2013–2020

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20*	2020/21**
Recurrent	68,136	68,251	68,246	76,340	79,248	72,833	70,969	78,717
Development	697	0	0	0	2,600	1,571	0	1,000
Total	**68,833**	**68,251**	**68,246**	**76,340**	**81,848**	**74,404**	**70,969**	**79,717**
% Development	1.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	3.2%	2.1%	0.0%	1.3%

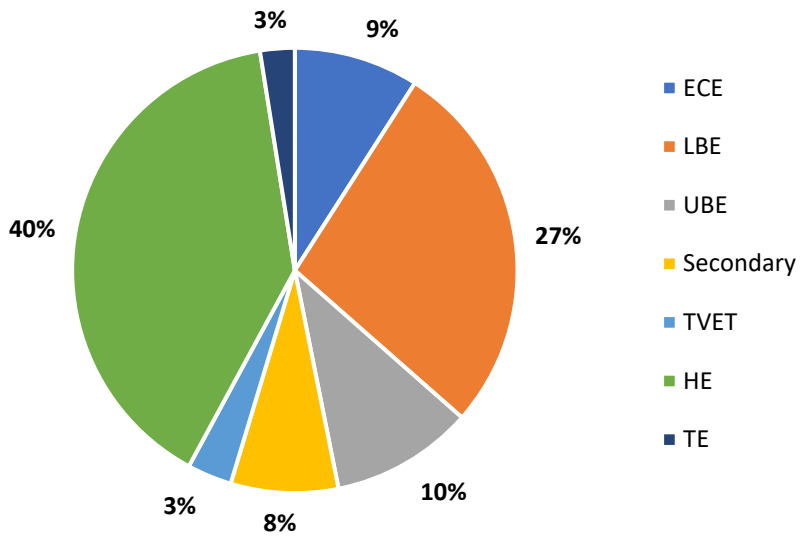
Source: National Budget, Ministry of Finance Budget; Notes: *= Estimated expenditure; **=Budget.

There is notably limited dissemination of financial information outside the publicly executed expenditure, which makes it difficult to have a full comprehension of the inputs to education. Development partners' off-budget spending is currently not adequately tracked.

Post-secondary education accounts for nearly half of Liberia's education expenditure.

Public recurrent spending is skewed toward tertiary education, absorbing the greatest proportion of recurrent public expenditure at 40 per cent, followed by lower basic education at 27 per cent. Expenditure on ECE, while low at 9 per cent, is still relatively higher than in peer countries, which may also explain why access to ECE is higher than in many similar cases. Teacher education registered the smallest share of spending in the sector, accounting for 3 per cent. There are also concerns about the capacity to train teachers, as necessitated by the expanding basic and secondary education, and simultaneously, build capacity of the unqualified teachers in service.

Figure 1.11: Percentage of public recurrent expenditure by level of education, 2018/19



Source: Authors' computations based on National Budget, Ministry of Finance Budget.

Table 1.7: Public recurrent expenditure in education by function/level, in USD '000, 2018/19

Level of Education	Salaries	Goods and Services	Grants and Subsidies	Grand Total
General administration	30,796	979	9	**31,784**
Basic and secondary education	3,906	665	293	**4,864**
LBE	0	321	0	**321**
Secondary education	800	2,236	88	**3,125**
Teacher education	1,488	337	0	**1,824**
TVET	1,400	577	331	**2,308**
Higher education	8,436	3,066	17,105*	**28,607**
Grand total	**46,825**	**8,181**	**17,827**	**72,833**

Source: Authors' computations based on National Budget, Ministry of Finance Budget. **Note*: Subventions to universities always cover salaries for professors and non-teaching staff, among other non-salary items.

Within overall non-salary expenditure, the greatest proportion went to grants and subsidies (68.5 per cent), with almost 100 per cent of this allocated to higher education, while the LBE level and teacher education saw no funding in this category. Among spending on goods and services, the highest proportion was allocated to secondary, followed by higher education and TVET. Also, of all non-salary expenditures, learning materials and supplies represented 4.1 per cent and spending on scholarships 6.4 per cent.

As seen in *Table 1.8*, the government spent USD $27 on every learner in public ECE, USD $72 on those in LBE, USD $262 on learners in upper basic, USD $218 on those in secondary, USD $298 on each TVET trainee, USD $883 on each university student and more than USD $2,153 for every teacher trainee. Compared to the Economic Community of West African States' average of 12.1 per cent, Liberia spends a lower percentage of GDP per student in LBE—11 per cent.

Table 1.8: Public unit cost by education level, 2018/19

Level of Education	Unit Cost	Multiple of Primary Unit Cost	Multiple PCGDP*
Pre-primary	27	0.4	4.1%
Lower basic	72	1.0	11.0%
Upper basic	262	3.6	40.2%
Secondary	218	3.0	33.4%
TVET	298	4.1	45.6%
Higher education	883	12.3	135.4%
Teacher education	2 153	30.0	330.2%

Source: Authors' computations based on National Budget, Ministry of Finance Budget; ASC. * Per Capita GDP.

Because of the underrepresentation of females, especially in leadership positions, as well as the pay gap between male and female staff, males dominate the wage bill.

In terms of beneficiaries, analysis reveals an unbalanced structure in the workforce, with males dominating teaching and non-teaching staff and inherently, the wage bill. Further, females are underrepresented in school leadership positions—for example, they represent 13 per cent of the teaching force in UBE and only 4 per cent of all principals.

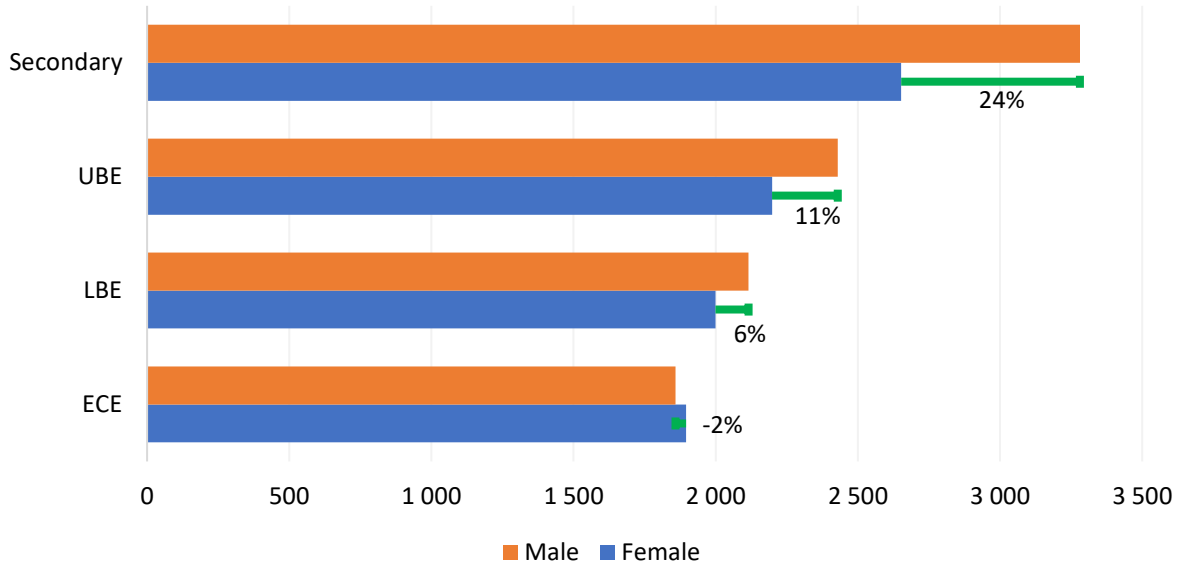
Table 1.9*:* Composition of the teaching staff supported by the public payroll, 2021

Staff Category	Staff Sex	ECE	Lower Basic	Upper Basic	Secondary
Principals	Female	88	83	6	5
	Male	402	704	144	58
	Total	490	787	150	63
	% Female	18.0%	10.5%	4.0%	7.9%
Vice Principals	Female	50	76	10	5
	Male	206	590	146	48
	Total	256	666	156	53
	% Female	19.5%	11.4%	6.4%	9.4%
Teachers	Female	635	1,189	211	100
	Male	1,091	4,641	1,178	697
	Total	1,726	5,830	1,389	797
	% Female	36.8%	20.4%	15.2%	12.5%
Grand total	Female	773	1,348	227	110
	Male	1,699	5,935	1,468	803
	Total	2,472	7,283	1,695	913
	% Female	31.3%	18.5%	13.4%	12.0%

Source: Estimated from August 2021 payroll of the MoE.

The dominance is also partly due to pay gap between males and females, the latter having 6 per cent and 11 per cent lower salaries in the case of teaching and non-teaching staff, respectively. Attracting and retaining a motivated staff will include addressing the pay gap, while also paying attention to the claims of late payment of salaries.

Figure 1.12: Average salary for teacher-in-chalk, in USD, by sex, 2021



Source: August 2021 payroll of the MoE.

More teachers have been added to the government payroll, but gaps remain.

In recent years, large efforts have been made to add more teachers to the government payroll. This has resulted in improvements, with 69 per cent of public-school teachers paid by the government. However, there are still large gaps at the upper basic and secondary levels, with only 25.5 per cent and 20.9 per cent of teachers on the payroll, respectively.

Table 1.10: Teaching staff in basic and secondary education, 2019/20

	ECE	Lower basic	Upper basic	Secondary
Community	484	983	465	431
Faith-based	2,806	4,109	2,356	1,940
Private	5,447	6,802	3,883	2,907
Public	5,987	10,594	6,641	4,368
All teachers	**14,724**	**22,488**	**13,345**	**9,646**
On gov't payroll	2,472	7,283	1,695	913
Not on gov't payroll	3,515	3,311	4,946	3,455
% of gov't paid teachers	41.3%	68.7%	25.5%	20.9%
% of teachers in public schools	40.7%	47.1%	49.8%	45.3%

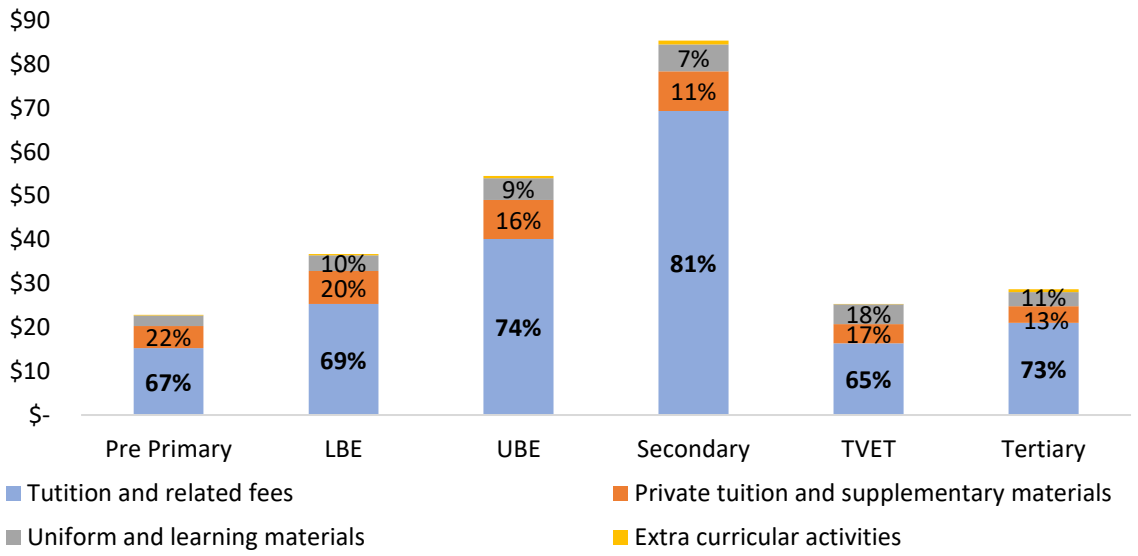
Source: EMIS/ASC, 2019/20.

Households contribute significantly to student's education and spending is regressive, with households at the lowest levels of education contributing the highest amounts.

The low public expenditure on education and the large variations across counties mean that learning must be supported from complementary sources, including households. Spending by households per child is

inequitable: increasing with ascending levels of education (from USD $23 per learner in ECE to USD $85 per learner in secondary). This trend breaks after secondary, where the promise for free tuition in higher education reduces the contribution from families to USD $29 per learner in tertiary and USD 25 per learner in TVET. At the lower levels, household spending on education is mostly focused on tuition and management of institutions, even with the promise of fee-free basic education. It is also quite striking to note that parents' spending per child in tertiary almost equals the level of spending at the ECE level. This indicates that parents support a disproportionate level of cost for the ECE, contributing to the difficulty of parents to send their children to ECE schools, despite the importance of the ECE in building strong and long-lasting foundation.

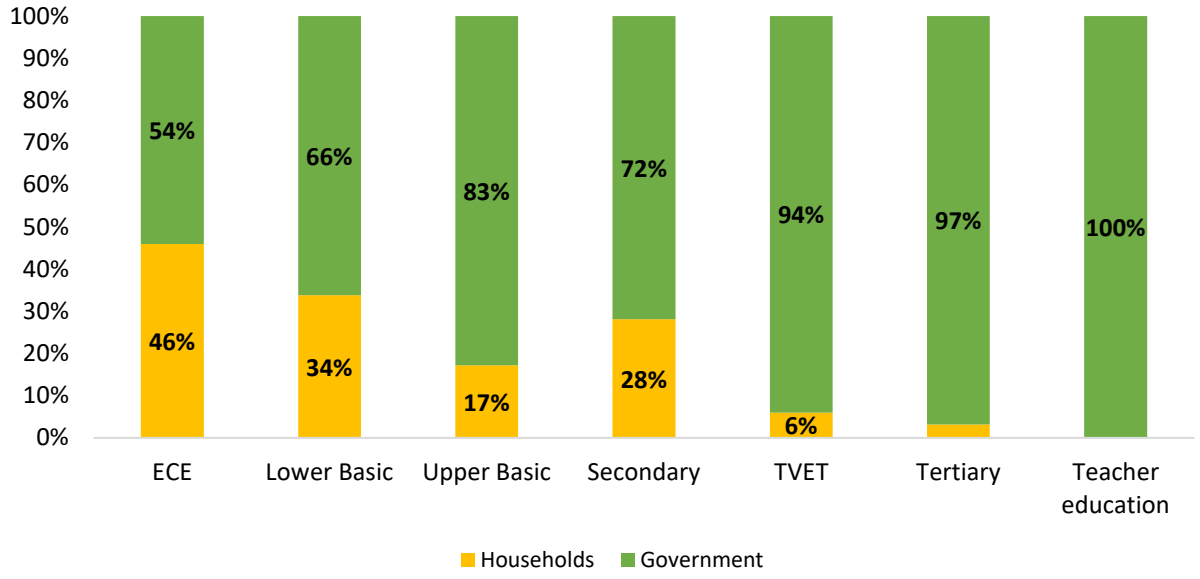
Figure 1.13: Percentage of household spending by nature and education level, in USD, 2016



Source: Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES), 2016.

The financing of education is particularly regressive—the relative contribution of households is the highest at the lowest levels of education: households' expenses represent 46 per cent of the overall spending in ECE, 34 per cent in lower basic, 17 per cent in upper basic, and 28 per cent in secondary. Conversely, it represents barely 2 per cent to 3 per cent at the TVET and higher education levels. The high proportion of households' contribution at the secondary and ECE levels can be explained by the continued existence of fees at these levels, while the government covers almost 100 per cent of the financial burden of post-secondary education.

Figure 1.14: Proportion of spending by the government and households by level of education, 2018/19



Source: Authors' computations based on expenditure reports and HIES, 2016.

TVET and higher education

The youth employment challenge in low-income economies such as Liberia stems from a myriad of demand- and supply-side constraints, including a pervasive informal economy and poor human capital development. While higher education and TVET increase youth's chances of gaining decent employment, in Libera, employment quality remains a major obstacle, requiring more demand-driven and gender-sensitive TVET to respond to labor challenges.

Both formal and informal TVET programs operate in Liberia. The lack of a regulatory body and national assessment system affects TVET service delivery.

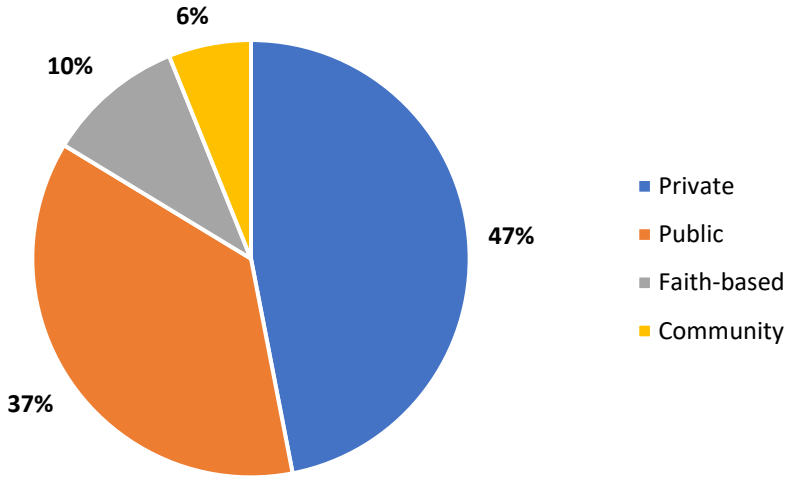
Public TVET provision in Liberia falls under the responsibility of two ministries and is governed by the *National TVET Policy*. While the MoE offers formal vocational education at secondary level (Grades 10 to 12) alongside general education, the Ministry of Youth and Sports (MoYS) operates informal vocational training centers, which offer short-term training programs. These centers target students who have dropped out of high school at or before Grade 10 for training at the basic skills level, while students who have completed at least Grade 10 qualify for training at the intermediate level (Liberia, 2020).

Nevertheless, the system lacks a regulatory body to ensure quality and streamline governance. The absence of a national assessment system leads to varied outcomes of TVET delivery. Training duration ranges from 9 to 72 months, and certificates or diplomas issued after the assessment differ from one institution to another. One of the objectives of the *National TVET Policy* is to develop and operationalize the Liberia National Qualifications Framework. This framework 'shall ensure uniform skill standards and quality of provision and facilitate articulation and access to continuous learning for all, including operators in the informal sector, while promoting up-skilling, re-skilling, multi-skilling, and lifelong learning' (Liberia, 2020: 36). Donor projects, most notably European Union's 'Youth Rising Project', are attempting to strengthen TVET delivery and fill the institutional and governance gaps.

Almost half of formal TVET schools are private and primarily concentrated in four counties.

In 2019/20, formal TVET schools accounted for 49 per cent of all TVET schools (ASC, 2019/20), and nearly half of them were private (47 per cent) and over a third public (37 per cent). Liberia has only five faith-based TVET schools (10 per cent) and three community TVET schools (6 per cent). The spatial distribution of TVET students is highly uneven. Three-fourths of formal TVET students are concentrated in just four counties: Margibi (26 per cent), Montserrado 1 (21 per cent), Montserrado 2 (15 per cent), and Nimba (13 per cent). At the other end of the spectrum, Bong and Grand Bassa counties account for less than 1 per cent of TVET students.

Figure 1.15: Distribution of TVET schools by type of ownership, 2019/20

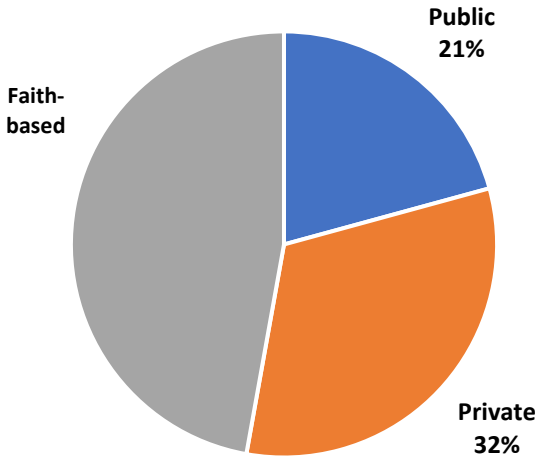


Source: EMIS/ASC, 2019/20.

***Higher education enrollment has increased significantly and is expected to grow further with the introduction of a tuition-free policy at the undergraduate level*.**

The higher education system in Liberia offers three degree levels: associate's, bachelor's, and master's; doctoral degrees are not currently offered. In 2021, Liberia registered a total of 53 HEIs that were licensed and accredited by the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE), the regulatory body for higher education. Of those 53 HEIs, 21 per cent were public, 32 per cent private, and 47 per cent faith-based; there were also 3 rural teacher training institutions and 18 private local teacher training institutes. In terms of geographic distribution, HEIs are not distributed evenly—only 10 of the 15 counties have an institute available, and more than half of the institutions are in Montserrado. Only 17 per cent of HEIs offer master's degree, with the majority offering associate or bachelor's degrees. Higher education enrollment increased by 53 per cent from 2016/17 (51,374 students) to 2020/21 (78,355 students). A new tuition policy has meant that all public universities will be tuition-free for undergraduate students, which is expected to lead to a large increase in enrollment in these institutions, as already noticeable. Yet, there are fears that the system is not adequately prepared to accommodate this increased intake.

Figure 1.16: Distribution of HEIs by type of ownership, 2019/20



Source: NCHE data.

Female TVET students make up only 31 per cent of TVET enrollment and are overrepresented in traditionally gendered trades.

In 2019/20, of the 14,315 students enrolled in TVET, only 31 per cent were female. Looking at the distribution of TVET learners by field of study, computer science/information and communication technology (ICT) made up the largest proportion, at 13 per cent of all students. However, the proportion of TVET learners in most fields of study did not exceed 5 per cent, reflecting the fragmented nature of TVET supply in Liberia. The share of female students in different fields of training reproduces some gender stereotypes, with females largely overrepresented in traditionally gendered trades such as interior decoration (86 per cent), home arts (85 per cent), and hospitality science (85 per cent).

Table 1.11: TVET enrollment by field of study, 2019/20

	Enrollment	Distribution of Learners	
		% by Field	% of Female Students
Computer science/ICT	1,852	13%	15%
Electricity	1,081	8%	5%
Interior decoration	1,070	7%	86%
Electronics	1,062	7%	5%
Hospitality science	985	7%	85%
Home arts	981	7%	85%
Architectural drafting	980	7%	9%
Agriculture	770	5%	12%
Metal work	756	5%	3%
Plumbing	736	5%	2%
Tailoring	718	5%	24%
Auto mechanic	712	5%	9%
Carpentry/Woodwork	570	4%	7%
Business education	497	3%	31%
Pastry	426	3%	89%

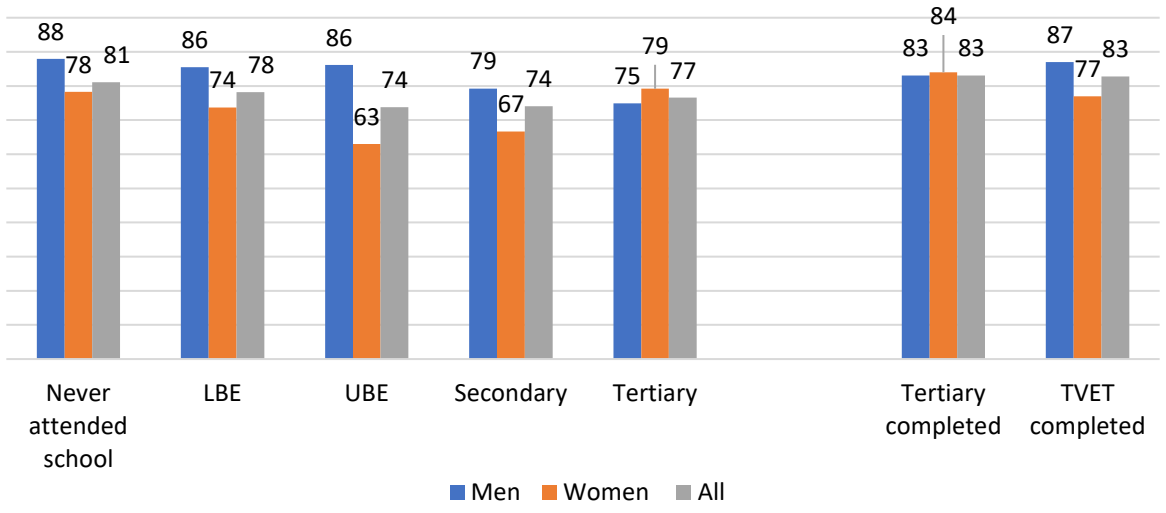
	Enrollment	Distribution of Learners	
		% by Field	% of Female Students
Accounting	364	3%	31%
Building trades	326	2%	23%
Tie-dye	285	2%	55%
Soap making	144	1%	19%
Total	**14,315**	**100%**	**31%**

Source: EMIS/ASC, 2019/2020.

While women's employment rates are high, they are more concentrated in lower level, lower paid positions.

While women's participation in the workforce at 72 per cent is higher than the Sub-Saharan Africa's average, they are concentrated in lower level, lower paid, and often precarious positions that are more likely to be unpaid. Youth employment is overall relatively high (78 per cent when excluding current students), with a tendency to decline with educational attainment (*Figure 1.17*), which is mostly caused by the lack of employment opportunities and skills mismatches. Additionally, one-fourth of tertiary-educated young men are not in employment, education, or training (NEET) compared to 19 per cent of women. Women who are not in employment, education, or training, to a large extent, remain inactive across schooling levels, even when they complete tertiary studies, which indicates that education and labor market dynamics in Liberia do not seem to release women from their responsibilities in the domestic realm.

Figure 1.17: Youth employment–to–population ratio by sex and the highest level of education attained, 2016

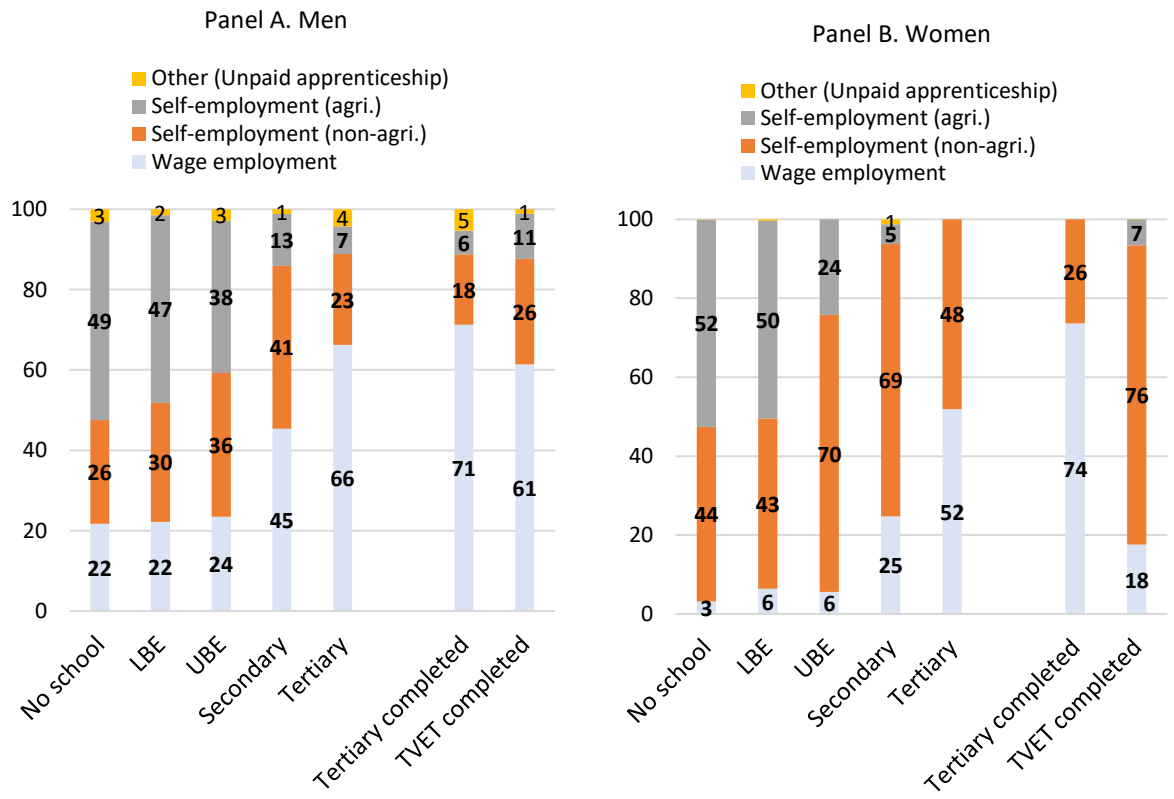


Source: Authors' calculations based on HIES, 2016. *Notes*: Youth are aged 15 to 35. Current students are excluded. Results for tertiary and tertiary completed for women should be treated with caution, because of the overly low sample sizes (39 and 28 observations, respectively).

Youth employment tends to decrease with educational attainment.

While overall relatively high, youth employment tends to decline with educational attainment. According to the strict definition, youth unemployment rate in 2016 did not exceed 1 per cent among young with no formal schooling compared to 13.8 per cent for tertiary-educated youth. The latter typically come from well-off families and can more easily afford to remain unemployed while queuing for better jobs. Excess labor supply for skilled jobs probably also plays a role, leading to protracted unemployment spells. In turn, uneducated youth from poor backgrounds generally have no choice but to take whatever jobs they find to sustain their livelihoods. This situation is exacerbated by the absence of social safety nets and the fact that labor typically is the main source of income for households and is critical for family survival.

Figure 1.18: Distribution of young workers by employment status, the highest level of education attained, and sex, 2016



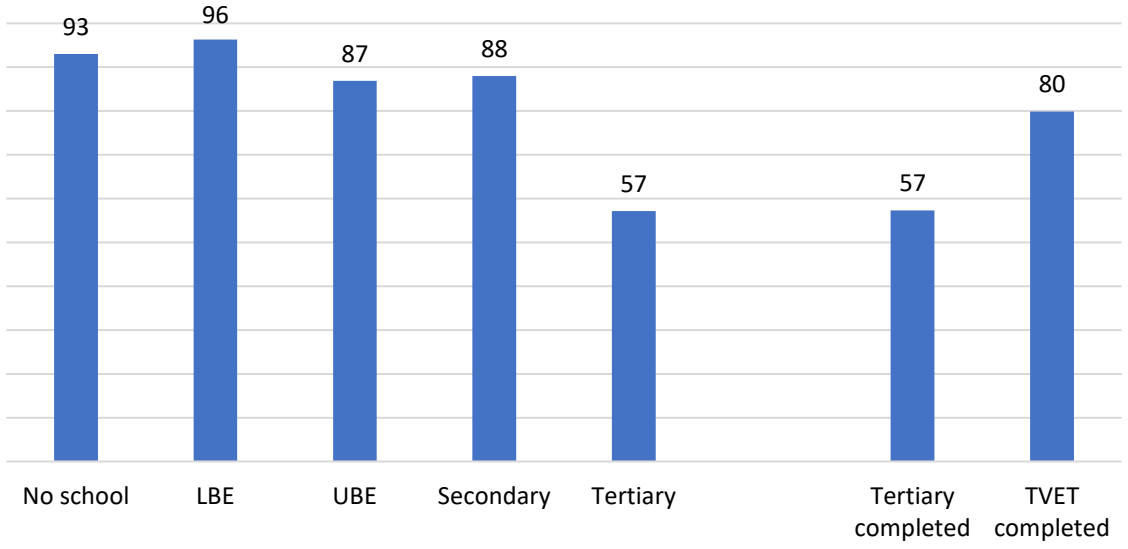
Source: Authors' calculations based on HIES, 2016.

The vast majority of youth are employed in the informal economy. Tertiary education increases youth's likelihood to work in high-skilled jobs.

Informal employment remains the norm among youth in Liberia, with 88 per cent of youth with secondary education and 57 per cent of tertiary-educated youth working informally. While there is a drop with tertiary education, the figures are still far from satisfactory and 80 per cent of youth with competed TVET also continue to work in the informal economy. However, when examining this from the perspective of occupational skill level, it is clear that tertiary education increases the likelihood of youth working in high-

skilled, non-manual occupations: 80 per cent of tertiary-educated youth occupy such positions. Yet, supply-side constraints in the labor market related to the scarcity of available high-skilled jobs does not allow for an optimal allocation of the increasing number of tertiary students who enter the labor market. Furthermore, high-skilled, non-manual occupations are out of reach for most young employees who complete vocational training at just 30 per cent.

Figure 1.19: Youth informal wage employment, by the highest level of education attained, 2016



Source: Authors' calculations based on the HIES, 2016.

This occupational misallocation translates into qualification mismatches, whereby 51 per cent of LBE young employees fall short of the required qualification for their occupation, compared to 35 per cent of tertiary-educated youth who are considered overqualified. However, youth employees with tertiary education enjoy overall substantial income gains, earning on average 3.4 time more than those with secondary education and 6.9 times more than those with no formal education. Additionally, survey results show that tertiary-educated youth have higher job satisfaction.

Functioning of the educational administration

The functioning of the educational system in Liberia rests on the strong foundation of the *Education Reform Act* (ERA) (2011) and is heavily guided by the previous ESP. However, a lack of resources and interfering forces hinder the efficient functioning of the system.

The ERA spells out each department's responsibilities and outlines the decentralized structure of the MoE. Lack of funding and capacity constraints have hampered decentralization efforts.

The ERA of 2011 outlines the decentralized structure of the MoE. Interviews conducted with officials at the central level revealed a strong understanding of, and relative satisfaction with, the administrative structure of the MoE.[8] However, one challenge identified with this structure, particularly the chain of

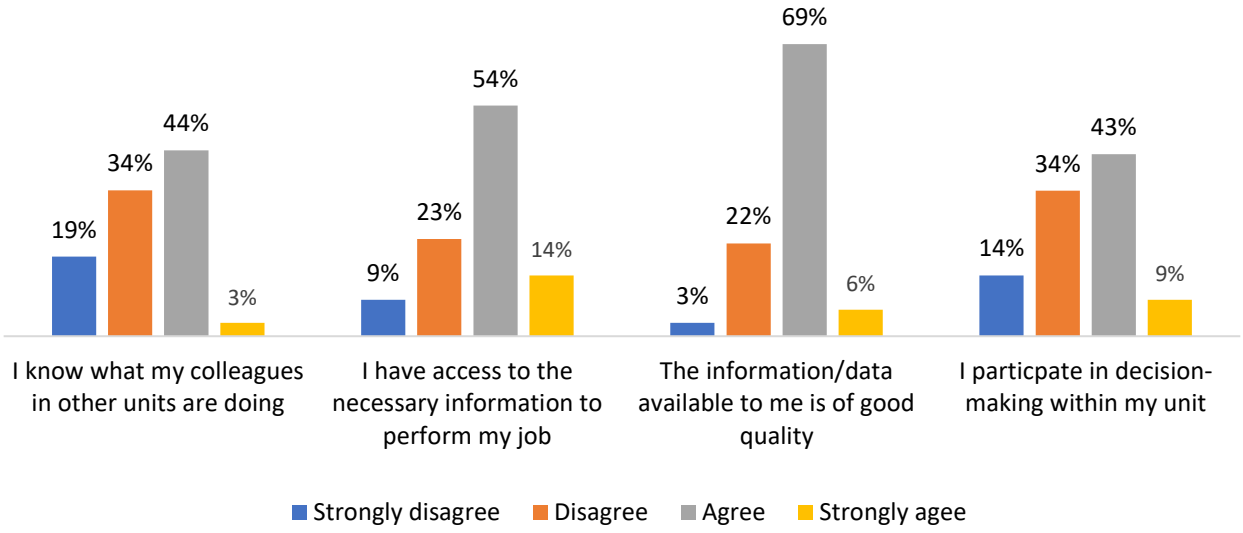
[8] The survey was distributed to ministry staff across all levels, with 40 respondents enumerated. A total of 27 interviews were conducted with upper-level management in the central and county ministries.

command, was that it was deemed to be overly bureaucratic and inflated, proscribing many levels of approval that delay implementation. The ERA delegates authorities to the county level through the establishment of county and district school boards, county and district education officers, parent—teacher associations (PTAs), and school management committees. Yet in practice, funding and capacity constraints have largely hampered the efforts to transfer educational management responsibilities to counties and districts. Advancements have also been fraught with difficulties due to the Ebola crisis and then the COVID-19 pandemic.

There is a lack of capacity in planning and management, with needs to enhance data collection, analysis, and periodic reporting at central, county, and district levels.

The recently completed capacity needs assessment and the subsequent capacity enhancement plan for the MoE (Top Consulting, Inc., 2021) show major requirements for improvements in the planning and management of Liberia's education resources, including great needs to enhance data collection, analysis, and periodic reporting at central, county, and district levels. Lack of data of good quality and staff able to analyze and use the data for planning and decision-making purposes weaken the education system management at all levels. Existing weaknesses are also partly explained by the delayed decentralization process, hindering the county and district levels in playing a strong role in operational planning and management. Scarce financial resources and low levels of capacity and autonomy add further challenges.

Figure 1.20: Perceived knowledge of colleagues' work and assessment of decision-making, 2021/22



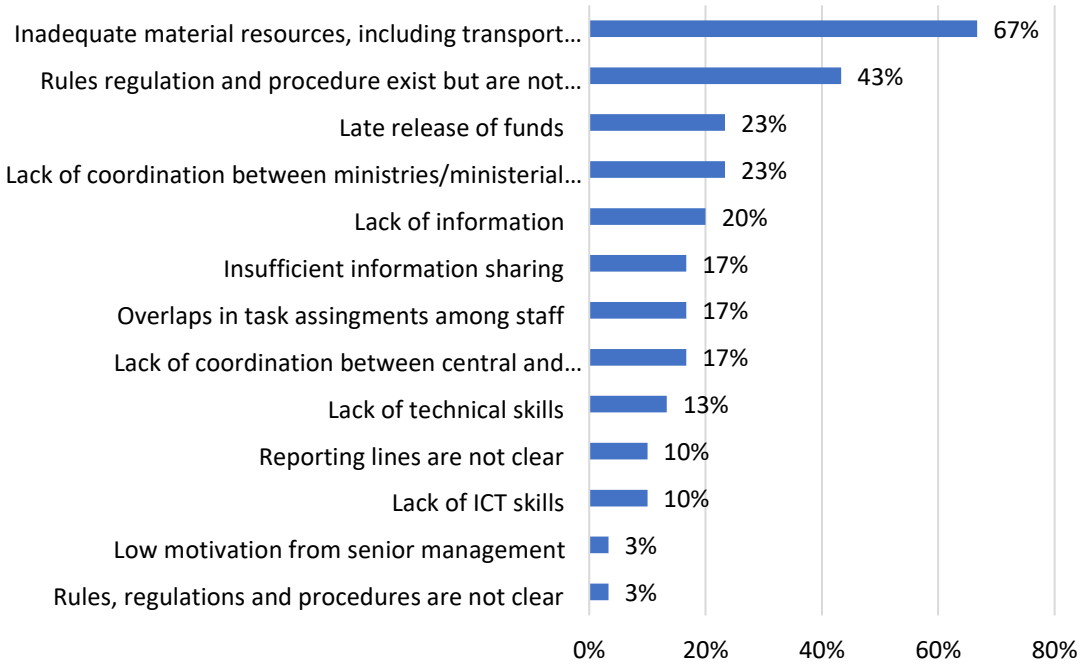
Source: Authors' calculations based on the ESA governance survey data, 2022.

Lack of material and financial resources inhibits effective functioning of the administration.

The MoE's access to office equipment, suitable facilities, and funding was severely constrained. There was extremely low access to internet connectivity, with 57 per cent of respondents citing having no access to an internet connection. Financial resources were reported to be even more scarce, which aligns with the previous observation that no development spending had been allocated to the sector. This creates a

situation where the most frequently reported challenge survey respondents faced was 'inadequate access to material resources, including transport.

Figure 1.21: What are the most important challenges you face to carry out your work well? 2021/22



Source: Authors' calculations based on the ESA governance survey data, 2022.

High teacher absenteeism and late payment of salaries indicate weak teacher management capacities within the ministry.

Generally, teachers in lower basic schools are dissatisfied with their remuneration. Results of the UNICEF's *Time to Teach – Understanding teacher attendance and time on task in lower basic schools'* study, conducted in October 2021, reveal that 8 in 10 teachers are not satisfied with their earnings. This finding parallels levels of satisfaction found among ministry staff. Absenteeism was also reported to be high. The same UNICEF study found that 1 in 5 surveyed teachers had repeat cases of school absenteeism and almost all teachers had missed coming to school at least once in a week. The dissatisfaction is compounded by late payment of salaries—only 40 per cent of teachers report receiving their salaries on time, with the highest, 90-per cent, rate in public lower basic schools. This indicates weak teacher management capacities in the ministry, especially in the payroll department.

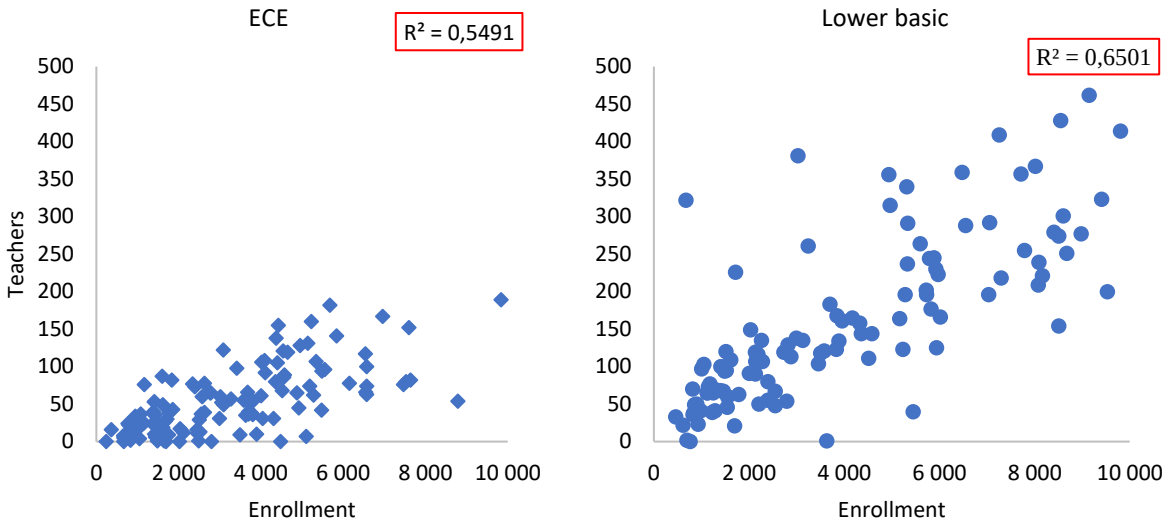
Teacher deployment improves with advancing levels of basic education, but its randomness shows there is room for improvement.

Ordinarily, teachers are allocated to stations based on the number of leaners they are to teach. Yet in the case of Liberia, this relationship is weak,[9] especially in ECE, where 45 per cent (i.e., 100 – 55 per cent) of the teacher deployment is based on factors other than enrollments (see *Figure 1.22*). Teacher deployment improves with advancing levels of basic education—its randomness is at 35 per cent in lower basic and 30

[9] A strong R-Squared is ordinarily calibrated at 0.7, or 70%, on a scale of 0-1

per cent in upper basic, but there is still room for improvement. The deployment of teachers exhibits variabilities across counties: some counties show near-perfect deployment, while in others, all deployments are random and do not follow enrollments.

Figure 1.22: Degree of randomness in the deployment of teachers in ECE and LBE, 2019/20



Source: Authors' computations based on EMIS/ASC, 2019/20

Efforts are being made to strengthen school supervision and quality control through the implementation of the NSQS and School Quality Assessments (SQAs).

The ministry, with support from development partners, has been making efforts to strengthen education quality and accountability through the definition and roll-out of the NSQS. The NSQS was developed to inform the standard of every school in Liberia. The standards cover five 'quality zones' of assessment (teaching and learning, infrastructure, school–community engagement, governance, and disability-inclusive education) and use a benchmarking tool for district education officers' SQAs. The tool was piloted in public schools in six counties in 2021, and national implementation will start in 2022.

Chapter 2: Vision, Policy Priorities, and Strategies

This chapter provides an overview of (1) the overarching **vision** for the education sector for 2022/23—2026/27, (2) the **key pathways to change and related strategies/interventions** that will contribute to the achievement of identified objectives, and (3) **how the planned PPs align with existing** international and regional frameworks and national policies, plans, and programs. A **synopsis of all five PPs,** including related components/sub-components, key targets, and the responsible department/bureau, is presented in the last section.

Vision and goals

The ESP is predicated on the MoE's **vision for Liberia,** namely:

> *'All citizens across all counties and groups have equitable access to quality, relevant, gender-responsive, disability-inclusive education and training at all levels, providing them with the skills to meet the demands of the labor market and contribute to national development and prosperity.'*

To realize the vision, the ESP sets out three key goals for the education sector during the plan period, which are to:

1. Ensure equal, disability-inclusive access to quality education and training for all, at all levels, with special attention to county imbalances, gender equality, and disadvantaged groups (increase equitable access).
2. Develop capable citizens who possess skills that meet the demands of the labor market, and that contribute to national development and prosperity (enhance the quality and relevance of teaching and learning).
3. Improve educational management and leadership that enhances efficient and effective delivery and system resilience (strengthen efficiency).

These goals align fully with the policy aspirations of the Government of Liberia, as outlined below.

Existing education policy, plans, frameworks, and programs

The 2022/23-2026/27 ESP is guided by existing national plans, programs, and policies, as well as regional and international frameworks. An overview of selected major policies/programs/plans and frameworks the ESP is aligned with is outlined below. A comprehensive review detailing how each of the major objectives and/or strategies from these documents is addressed in the current ESP is in *Annex 1.*

The *2011 Education Reform Act* is the overarching law guiding the education sector in Liberia, replacing the Education Law of 2001, and establishing free and compulsory basic education. The act has nine main objectives: (1) ensuring the provision of quality education to every citizen at every educational level; (2) promoting equal access to education opportunities for all, without discrimination; (3) promoting public confidence in the educational system; (4) decentralizing the education system; (5) promoting and protecting human rights in respect to access and opportunities for quality education; (6) reducing

illiteracy; (7) promoting gender equity and equality throughout the educational system; (8) producing citizens with the necessary skills for country development; and (9) ensuring adequate governance and management of the education sector.

The *Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD) 2018–2023* is the second of a series of national development plans under the Liberia 2030 vision framework. Pillar 1 of the PAPD—Power to the People—involves provision of education, health, youth development, and social protection, with the planned education-related outcome of achieving more inclusive and higher quality education with greater access to technical, vocational, and STEM training for all Liberians. Another key Pillar 1 outcome is to reduce gender inequality and empower women and girls. Specific strategies are laid out for ECE, primary, junior high, secondary, and tertiary levels, as well as for adult learners.

In 2015, all United Nations Member States adopted the *2030 Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs) as a global agenda to create a better, more sustainable future for all. SDG 4: 'Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all' has seven targets, covering free, equitable, quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant learning outcomes (4.1), access to quality ECD (4.2), access to quality TVET and tertiary education (4.3), increased number of youth and adults with relevant technical and vocational skills (4.4), eliminating gender disparities in education and ensuring equal access to education for the vulnerable (4.5), literacy and numeracy achievement for youth and adults (4.6), and all learners acquiring the knowledge and skills to promote sustainable development (4.7.).

The regional *Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA) 2016–2025* is a comprehensive 10-year education strategy with the aim to develop quality education systems to ultimately, provide the African continent with the knowledge, skills, and innovation needed to promote sustainable development and achieve the vision of the African Union. The CESA has 12 strategic objectives: (1) revitalizing the teaching profession, (2) building infrastructure, (3) utilizing ICT, (4) acquiring knowledge and skills, (5) accelerating gender parity and equity, (6) launching literacy campaigns, (7) strengthening science and math, (8) expanding TVET, (9) expanding tertiary education, (10) promoting peace education, (11) improving education system management, and (12) garnering stakeholder support. The CESA is complemented by a *Gender Equality Strategy for CESA 2016–2025*, which outlines a strategic approach to addressing gender inequalities and the exclusion of females and vulnerable persons and to integrating gender equality into and through education.

Predicated on Liberia's gender equality commitments, a *National Girls' Education Policy* was developed in 2013, with the overall objective of 'guiding and promoting affirmative action aimed at the progressive reduction of gender disparities in education and training as well as in management structures. The three specific objectives of the policy include:

> '[…] to establish a legislative and institutional framework to initiate, coordinate, monitor, and evaluate programs aimed at promoting gender equality in education, training, and management; to integrate gender and girls' education issues into national, district, and community programs and plans; and to stimulate collective and concerted efforts, at all levels, to eliminate gender disparities in education, training and management'.

The *National Girls' Education Strategy* (2021–2026) has been developed to operationalize the policy. The strategy forms the basis for mainstreaming gender in the ESP and includes specific objectives related to

addressing sociocultural and demand-side barriers to education, addressing supply-side barriers to education, and strengthening MoE's capacity for gender-responsive education management and accountability.

The MoE's commitment to inclusive education is detailed in the *2018 Inclusive Education Policy*, with the goal to 'expand and enable the education management and delivery services to respond to the diverse needs of learners in Liberia.' The seven core strategies of the policy focus on (1) developing instructional materials that take into account students with disabilities, (2) improving teacher preparation and CPD on teaching students with disabilities, (3) training school principals to include students with disabilities in schools, (4) including special education in school quality assessments and reporting, (5) improving data collection on students with disabilities and disability inclusiveness of the school environment, (6) including students with disabilities in school attendance interventions, and (7) training counsellors in special education support.

The 2019 *National School Health Policy* was developed with the intention of providing a legal framework to create an enabling environment for stakeholder engagement in the delivery of quality school-based health services. The strategic objectives of the policy include providing a safe and healthy environment; ensuring skills and competencies for health and well-being are integrated in the national curriculum; making sure students have access to basic preventative health and psychosocial services in schools; and empowering students with gender-sensitive, age-appropriate skill-based health education and promoting physical activity and sports in schools. The integrated school-based health and nutrition services comprise an essential package, covering vision and ear screening, deworming, micronutrient supplements, height and weight measurements, birth registration, vaccination, as well as health information, including information on sexual and reproductive health, prevention of SRGBV, pregnancy, and substance abuse, and referral pathways.

The National Career Guidance and Psychosocial Counselling Policy for Liberian Schools (2019), further elaborates the conceptual and governance framework for creating a positive, enabling environment for teaching and learning and promoting students' well-being. A Career Guidance and Counselling Division is tasked to ensure that education and psychosocial counselling services are provided in all grade schools, and that measures for tackling and preventing all forms of school-related violence are in place.

Pathways to change and related strategies for the next five years

With the unprecedented disruption to education the recent COVID-19 pandemic triggered, implementation of the previous ESP, Getting to Best (G2B), was thrown off track to respond to the immediate emergency education needs fueled by the crisis, resulting in some 'unfinished business'. Crucially, the disruption has, however, also provided an inflection point for bringing new thinking to bear on persistent challenges that hamper achievement of the education vision, breaking with the past, and taking bold steps to unblock systemic bottlenecks so that the system is reset and fit for the future.

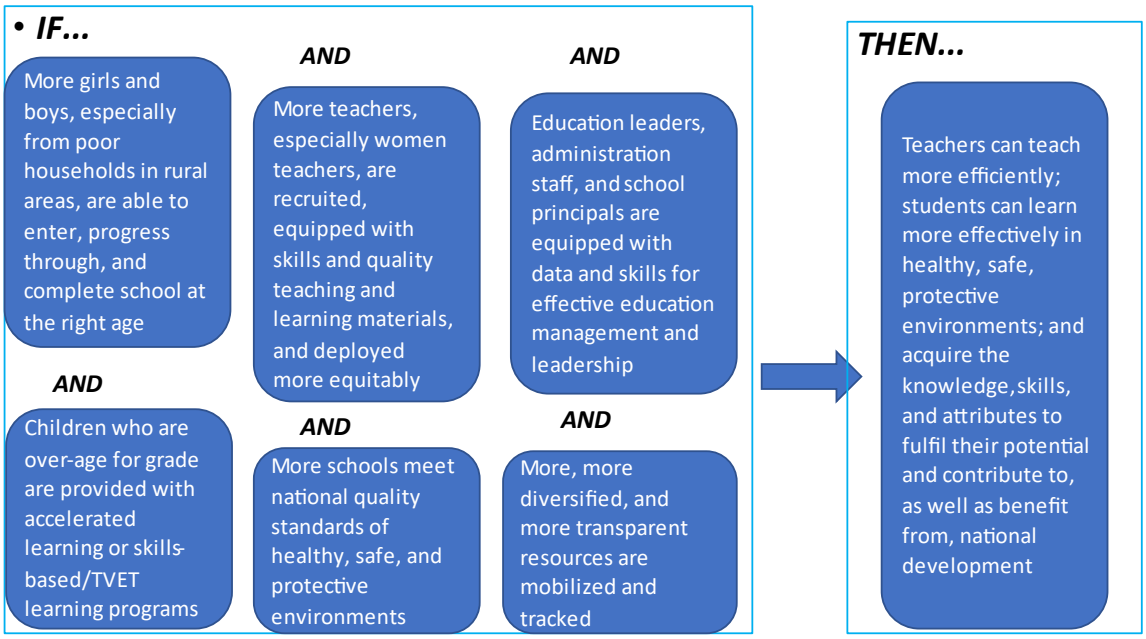
The most critical challenges pinpointed in the ESA, as outlined in *Chapter 1*, can be distilled into three broad categories that affect children's realization of their education rights and relate to equitable access, learning, and efficiency, in line with the ESP's three overarching goals. With regard to equitable access, too many children remain out of school, especially girls and boys from the poorest households in underserved areas, either because they have dropped out or have never enrolled. Social norms affect girls' participation and retention in education, and the increasing disengagement of boys in education is

an emerging concern. With regards to learning, children in and out of school struggle to learn foundational skills of literacy and numeracy, in addition to the 21st-century workplace skills they need to successfully transition to decent work in the jobs market.

With respect to efficiency, a critical issue is that children who are in school are predominantly over-age for their grade at every level of the school cycle. The issue starts at the ECE level, where 82 per cent of all students are over-age (LDHS, 2019/20), with pernicious knock-on effects at every level upwards in the system. This represents a major drain on system's efficiency, as well as on household and individual returns on their investment in education. The issue is a legacy of the civil war years, which has continued to grow unchecked, necessitating urgent and bold action to correct the distortion and restore sustainability to the system.

To address these entrenched and interrelated challenges for children requires a raft of demand- and supply-side interventions, as represented in the high-level theory of change diagram in *Figure 2.1*.

Figure 2.1: High-level theory of change



(with gender, equity, and disability-inclusion mainstreamed throughout)

Source: Authors.

Access for the poorest children in underserved areas will need to be expanded, and measures will need to be taken to ensure they enter, progress through, and complete school at the right age. Children who are over-age for their grade should be diverted to accelerated learning, TVET, or other alternative programs. The quality of learning needs to be strengthened by elevating the number and quality of the teaching force, equipping them with relevant skills and materials, and rationalizing their deployment. Education leaders, including school principals, and administrative staff ought to be equipped with data and skills for effective education leadership and management. Also, crucially, more diversified and more transparent resources need to be mobilized to finance implementation of the measures. *Figure 2.1* provides a diagrammatic representation of this high-level theory of change.

Based on the theory of change, a number of key strategic pathways have been identified as having the highest catalytic potential for leveraging impact at scale and achieving the change that education stakeholders want to see—namely, all children in school at the right age and learning. Effort will be concentrated on these policy and operational levers to drive transformative change across the system, aligned to the three overarching goals outlined above.

For Goal 1, increasing equitable access, the two strategic objectives identified are to:

- reduce the over-age student population, starting at the ECE level;
- reduce the percentage of out-of-school children at all levels, with particular attention to reducing gender and regional disparities.

The first of these, reducing the over-age student population, while immensely challenging to resolve, is viewed as pivotal to achieving all other goals and objectives, given the scale and impact of the issue, as well as its continuing drag on the overall system efficiency.

For Goal 2, improving the quality and relevance of teaching and learning, the four strategic objectives identified are to:

- ensure a functional qualified motivated teaching workforce, effectively deployed;
- provide gender-responsive TLMS that are aligned with the reformed national curriculum and inclusive of quality STEM, TVET, and digital programs, and assess students on new curricula contents;
- expand access to quality, inclusive, and gender-sensitive TVET aligned to the labor market; increase training and careers in STEM and digital education field to develop a capable workforce with skills needed for the 21st century and scientific literacy, starting from the ECE level;
- improve school quality standards, and ensure schools and education institutions provide healthy, safe, protective environments for learning.

For Goal 3, strengthening efficiency and management capacity, the three strategic objectives identified are to:

- set up effective M&E through collection and use of quality management information system data for all education levels, including TVET and higher education, for improved management, governance, and accountability of the education system;
- institute CPD for leaders, including school principals, and administrative staff to increase capacity of school administrators and supervisors, especially women, at both central and decentralized levels;
- harness the potential of the private sector through strengthened public–private partnerships.

Selected key interventions to achieve these strategic objectives are summarized in *Table 2.1*.

Table 2.1: Goals, strategic objectives, and selected key interventions

GOAL 1: INCREASE EQUITABLE ACCESS	
Strategic Objectives	**Selected Key Interventions**
Reduce the over-age student population, starting at the ECE level.	- Communicate and enforce the right-age enrollment policy. - Abolish repetition at the ECE and lower basic levels through automatic promotion. - Divert children who are over-age for grade to ALPs and non-formal/informal skills-based programs (TVET).

	- Dramatically scale up ALPs by establishing ALP classes in existing lower basic schools and providing top-up incentives for lower basic teachers working on ALP after class hours.
Reduce the percentage of out-of-school children at all levels, with particular attention to reducing gender and regional disparities.	- Make schools more accessible by constructing and upgrading public schools in underserved areas, including gender-responsive WASH. - Subsidize private schools in underserved areas unreached by public schools. - Reduce the costs of schooling at all levels, including ECE, by providing cash grants to the poorest students and students with disabilities. - Increase community engagement and build on the community. empowerment approach for ECE school expansion. - Eliminate public ECE school fees. - Expand the school feeding program.
GOAL 2: IMPROVE QUALITY AND RELEVANCE OF TEACHING AND LEARNING	
Strategic Objectives	**Selected Key Interventions**
Ensure a functional, qualified, motivated teaching workforce, effectively deployed.	- Provide incentives (such as cash and accommodation) to attract and support the deployment of qualified teachers in underserved areas. - Ensure all teachers are paid according to their qualifications. - Implement training and CPD programs, and increase the proportion of trained and qualified teachers, especially female teachers. - Develop and roll out a system for teacher licensing.
Provide gender-responsive TLMS that are aligned with the reformed national curriculum and inclusive of quality STEM, TVET, and digital programs and assess students on new curricula contents.	- Provide open-access, non-copyright textbook for every child (print or e-version) in public and private schools to improve foundational skills of literacy and numeracy. - Develop a national learning assessment system for tracking early learning outcomes at Grades 3 and 6.
Expand access to quality, inclusive, and gender-sensitive TVET aligned to the labor market.	- Expand TVET offer by establishing TVET stream at secondary level and building and upgrading TVET centers. - Develop labor market-responsive competence-based curriculum and programs in both TVET and higher education.
Increase training and careers in STEM and digital education fields to develop a capable workforce with skills needed for the 21st century and scientific literacy, starting from the ECE level.	- Mainstream STEM programs at all levels, starting with ECE. - Provide upper basic and secondary schools with relevant STEM equipment (e.g., micro-science kits, SMART boxes, 'lab in a box', etc.). - Equip TVET centers and HEIs with functioning IT infrastructure, including internet connectivity and computers.
Improve school quality standards and ensure schools and education institutions provide healthy, safe, protective environments for learning.	- Roll out the NSQS system. - Roll out and enforce the code of conduct to tackle SRGBV in education institutions at all levels, based on the LEAP model.

GOAL 3: STRENGTHEN EFFICIENCY AND MANAGEMENT CAPACITY	
Strategic Objectives	**Selected Key Interventions**
Set up effective M&E through collection and use of quality management information system data for all education levels, including TVET and higher education.	- Improve management, governance, and accountability of the education system.
Increase capacity of school administrators and supervisors at all levels, especially women, at both central and decentralized levels.	- Institute CPD for leaders, including school principals, and administrative staff.
Harness the potential of the private sector through strengthened public–private partnerships.	- Strengthen the regulatory and operating framework for public–private partnerships in education. - Strengthen relationships with non-governmental partners in educational planning and delivery at national and decentralized levels for full implementation of ESP policies and strategies.
CROSS-CUTTING	
Strategic Objectives	**Selected Key Interventions**
Reduce gender disparities.	- Define effective learning pathways for girls who become pregnant to continue their education. - Reduce teenage pregnancy through skill-based health education and by strengthening the role of Girls' Clubs. - Roll out the *Teacher Code of Conduct* to reduce SRGBV in all education institutions. - Recruit and deploy female psychosocial and career counsellors at all levels. - Provide scholarship packages to senior secondary female students. - Pilot the provision of uniforms and bags to female students in basic education. - Develop a policy that informs incentive packages to attract female teachers into the teaching profession and establishes quotas for female teachers. - Increase the number of women in leadership positions at school, district, county, and national levels.
Reduce county disparities.	- Conduct a school mapping to identify regions of education disadvantage. - Build child-friendly, disability-inclusive, gender-sensitive, and climate-resilient (in compliance with the *National School Infrastructure Strategy*) educational facilities in regions identified as in-need (including regional TVET hubs). - Fully implement a decentralization plan to equitably distribute national resource packages based on identified development needs.

In addition, Liberia will for the first time include in the ESP measures for strengthening system resilience for continuous learning during crises by mainstreaming gender-responsive climate change mitigation, disaster risk reduction and adaptation. Both the COVID-19 pandemic and the Ebola outbreak in Liberia have highlighted the need for more resilient education systems that are able and better prepared to mitigate and respond to crises so that learning never stops and no child is ever left behind when

emergencies strike. The threat of climate change is a looming crisis, with Liberia particularly at risk. Accordingly, measures adopted in the ESP include the development of a policy framework on disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation and mitigation; formulation of national and school-based contingency plans; establishment of an early warning chain system; and strengthening coordination mechanisms between the MoE and relevant government agencies for effective mitigation and response.

These key catalytic interventions for transformational change are embedded within five ESP PPs, organized in a hybrid structure to achieve the three overarching goals. PP1, *access to ECE, basic, and secondary education*, responds primarily to Goal 1; PP2, *quality and relevance of ECE, basic, and secondary education*, responds to Goal 2; and PP3, *governance and management*, responds to Goal 3. PP4, *TVET*, and PP5, *higher education*, cover access, quality, and relevance, as well as management of each of these sub-sectors in line with all three overarching goals. The ESP details an ambitious package of activities to strengthen the whole of the education system, as outlined in the next section and further elaborated in *Chapter 3*. However, the strategic pathways and key actions highlighted above are prioritized as core interventions, where concerted action has the greatest potential power to unlock persistent bottlenecks in the system and leverage the highest impact on equity, learning, and efficiency. While all results included in the ESP are important and needed, action on these highlighted key areas is essential. Should unanticipated resource mobilization limitations constrain implementation of certain aspects of the ESP, available resources will be concentrated on achieving sustainable results in these core 'must-have' areas, maintaining the feasibility of the plan.

Priority programs and targets for the plan period

Systematizing these policy and operational levers into a strategic framework, five PPs will be implemented to achieve the national vision and ESP goals and objectives:

Priority Program 1: Access and equity in ECE and general education;

Priority Program 2: Quality and learning in ECE and general education;

Priority Program 3: Governance and management in ECE and general education;

Priority Program 4: TVET;

Priority Program 5: Higher education.

The priority programs are organized in a mixed structure of both education level and theme. ECE and general education levels are addressed in the thematic access, quality, and governance programs (PP1, PP2, and PP3), while TVET and higher education levels are covered in separate programs (PP4 and PP5). Cross-cutting issues of gender- and disability-inclusive education and climate change are mainstreamed throughout all five PPs.

A synopsis of each PP is presented in the following tables, including the program's related components/sub-components, specific objectives, key targets, and the responsible department/unit.

PP 1: ACCESS AND EQUITY IN ECE AND GENERAL EDUCATION

Program Objective: Increase access to equitable, gender-responsive, and disability-inclusive early childhood, primary, secondary, and alternative education so that children enter education and progress through the system at the right age and in healthy, safe, protective environments.			
Component	**Objective**	**Lead Department**	**Supporting Department**
Component 1.1 **Early Childhood Education**	**Specific objective**: Increase equitable and disability-inclusive access to ECD programs for all in a healthy, safe, and protective learning environment by 2026/27.	Department of Instruction	Department of Planning, Research, and Development (DPRD), Department of Administration (DA)
Sub-component	**1.1.1** Increase access to ECE through the provision of child-friendly, disability-inclusive, and gender-sensitive safe learning space for learners	Bureau of Planning	Bureau of General Administration
	1.1.2 Increase access to ECE through increased parental and community engagement	Bureau of Early Childhood Education (BECE)	
	1.1.3 Reduce the percentage of over-age children in ECE	BECE	Bureau of Basic and Secondary Education (BBSE)
	1.1.4 Strengthen inter-sectoral collaboration to ensure an integrated ECD service delivery for all children in ECE by 2026/27	BECE	
Component 1.2 **Access to basic education**	**Specific objective:** Ensure that all girls and boys complete disability-inclusive, gender-responsive, free, equitable, and quality primary education in a safe, healthy, protective environment, leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes	Department of Instruction	DPRD, DA
Sub-component	**1.2.1:** Build and upgrade education facilities that are child-, disability-, and gender-sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive, and effective learning environment for all	Bureau of Planning, Research and Development (BPRD)	Bureau of General Administration (BGA)
	1.2.2: Reduce number of over-aged children in basic schools through the enforcement of age-appropriate enrollment policy and the provision of alternative education programs	BBSE	BECE, Bureau of TVET
	1.2.3: Reduce the number of out-of-school children at basic education level through inter-sectoral engagement to enroll and keep children in school	BBSE	
	1.2.4: Reduce the cost of learning at basic education level to increase access to and retention in school, especially for girls, out-	BPRD	

Program Objective: Increase access to equitable, gender-responsive, and disability-inclusive early childhood, primary, secondary, and alternative education so that children enter education and progress through the system at the right age and in healthy, safe, protective environments.			
Component	**Objective**	**Lead Department**	**Supporting Department**
	of-school children, and students with disabilities		
Component 1.3 **Access to secondary education**	**Specific objective:** Increase enrollment in secondary school for all boys and girls by creating an accessible, disability-inclusive, gender-responsive, conducive, and safe learning environment	Department of Instruction	DPRD, DA
Sub-component	**1.3.1:** Build and upgrade education facilities that are child-, disability-, and gender-sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, disability-inclusive, and effective learning environments for all	BPRD	
	1.3.2: Reduce cost of learning at secondary level to increase school access and retention	BBSE	Division of Scholarships
Component 1.4 **Accelerated learning program (ALP) and adult literacy program**	**Specific objective:** Reduce the percentage of out-of-school children, over-age learners, and illiterate adults, especially women, by increasing access to quality alternative education programs	Department of Instruction	DPRD, DA
Sub-component	**1.4.1:** Revise the *Alternative Learning Framework* to be gender- and disability-inclusive	BBSE	
	1.4.2: Increase equitable access to alternative learning opportunities for over-age students and out-of-school children	BBSE	
	1.4.3: Increase equitable access to alternative learning opportunities for adults	BBSE	

PP 2: QUALITY AND LEARNING IN ECE AND GENERAL EDUCATION

Program Objective: Improve the quality of the inputs into the system at ECE, basic, and secondary levels so that effective learning can take place in a safe, protective environment, leading to improved learning outcomes at all levels.			
Component	**Objective**	**Lead Department**	**Supporting Department**
Component 2.1 **Curriculum, teaching, and learning materials, and assessment**	**Specific objective**: Enhance delivery of gender-responsive, quality, and disability-inclusive curricula and assessment services at all levels of education so that students have the resources they need to learn effectively	Department of Instruction	DRPRD

Program Objective: Improve the quality of the inputs into the system at ECE, basic, and secondary levels so that effective learning can take place in a safe, protective environment, leading to improved learning outcomes at all levels.			
Component	**Objective**	**Lead Department**	**Supporting Department**
Sub-component:	**2.1.1:** Review the competence-based curricula and enhance capacity of teachers to promote gender-responsive education for sustainable development (ESD), and quality and disability-inclusive learning at all levels	Center for Curriculum Development	BPRD
	2.1.2: Provide TLMs at all levels	Center for Curriculum Development	BBSE, BECE
	2.1.3: Promote regular assessments and dialogue on results	Center for Curriculum Development	BPRD
Component 2.2 STEM	**Specific objective:** Improve the delivery of gender-responsive, disability-inclusive, quality STEM and digital programs at all levels	Department of Instruction	DPRD, DA
Sub-component	**2.2.1:** Promote STEM and digital education	BTVET	BBSE, BGA
	2.2.2: Provide infrastructure and gender-responsive, inclusive quality TLMs for STEM and digital education	BTVET	BBSE, BGA, BPRD
Component 2.3 Teacher education and professional development	**Specific objective:** Develop a robust teacher preparation and continuous development system that increases the proportion of trained and qualified teachers, especially women	Department of Instruction	DA
Sub-component	**2.3.1:** Improve the training capacity of teacher training institutions	Bureau of Teacher Education	Bureau of Fiscal Affairs and Human Resources (BFA/HR), Center for Education Management
	2.3.2: Enhance pre- and in-service training quality and relevance	Bureau of Teacher Education	BFA/HR, Center for Education Management
	2.3.3 Recruit more women into the teaching profession	Bureau of Teacher Education	BFA/HR, Center for Education Management
	2.3.4 Increase opportunity for CPD for teachers	Bureau of Teacher Education	BFA/HR, Center for Education Management
	2.3.5 Enhance the management and governance of teacher education	Bureau of Teacher	BFA/HR, Center for Education

Program Objective: Improve the quality of the inputs into the system at ECE, basic, and secondary levels so that effective learning can take place in a safe, protective environment, leading to improved learning outcomes at all levels.			
Component	**Objective**	**Lead Department**	**Supporting Department**
	programs for appropriate tracking and deployment of teachers nationwide	Education	Management
Component 2.4 **Promoting student well-being programs (integrated school health, school counselling, school feeding, national service, community engagement) and prevent SRGBV**	**Specific objective:** Mainstream relevant disability-inclusive, gender-sensitive student well-being programs within education service delivery to improve learning outcomes	Department of Instruction	DA
Sub-component	**2.4.1:** Expand the provision of integrated school health program, and skilled-based education across all levels of the education service delivery	Bureau of Student Personnel Services (BSPS)	
	2.4.2: Reduce SRGBV and provide counselling services, creating healthy, safe, protective, non-violent learning environments	BSPS	BBSE
	2.4.3: Expand the provision of nutrition and school feeding services across all levels of the education service delivery	BSPS	
	2.4.4: Strengthen community engagement to support the delivery of quality education services	BSPS	
	2.4.5: Operationalize the national service program to promote youth commitment to community services	BSPS	BFA/HR

PP 3: GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT IN ECE AND GENERAL EDUCATION

Program Objective: Strengthen sector governance and management for effective service delivery by prioritizing sector policy implementation through participatory planning, human resources (HR) management, and school supervision and management.			
Component	**Objective**	**Lead Department**	**Supporting Department**
Component 3.1	**Specific objective**: Strengthen evidence-based, gender-responsive, disability-inclusive, sector-wide planning, monitoring, and budgeting with relevant stakeholders at central and decentralized levels for effective service delivery, as well as adherence to relevant education sector policies	DPRD	DA, Ministry of Finance and Developmental Planning (MFDP)

Program Objective: Strengthen sector governance and management for effective service delivery by prioritizing sector policy implementation through participatory planning, human resources (HR) management, and school supervision and management.			
Component	**Objective**	**Lead Department**	**Supporting Department**
Participatory sector planning for improved educational governance, management, and policy implementation			
Sub-component:	**3.1.1** Strengthen participatory planning for improved policy implementation	BPRD	BFA/HR
	3.1.2 Strengthen M&E mechanisms to better track education sector progress	BPRD	
	3.1.3 Improve EMIS infrastructure and capacity to better manage data collection and reporting exercises	BPRD	
	3.1.4 Improve financial management at centralized and decentralized levels	BFA/HR	BPRD, MFDP
Component 3.2 Education sector coordination, partnerships, and communication	**Specific objective:** Strengthen education sector coordination, partnerships, and communication to prompt more effective and efficient education service delivery	DPRD	
Sub-component	**3.2.1:** Strengthen formal coordination and partnership mechanisms to improve education sector performance through close collaboration with leaders and key stakeholders at central and local levels	BPRD	
Component 3.3 HR reform	**Specific objective:** Better deploy and sustain qualified HR in the education system	DA	Department of Instruction
Sub-component	**3.3.1:** Professionalize the teaching workforce through licensing and standardization of schools	Center of Excellence for Education Administration Certification and Accreditation	BFA/HR
	3.3.2: Improve teacher incentives and deployment	BFA/HR	
Component 3.4 Strengthening of school supervision and management for	**Specific objective**: Improve education service delivery at all levels through strengthened management and supervision of the education system	Department of Instruction	DPRD

Program Objective: Strengthen sector governance and management for effective service delivery by prioritizing sector policy implementation through participatory planning, human resources (HR) management, and school supervision and management.			
Component	**Objective**	**Lead Department**	**Supporting Department**
effective service delivery			
Sub-component	**3.4.1:** Provide improved management and supervision of the education system	BBSE, BECE	BPRD
Component 3.5 Strengthening of system resilience for continuous learning during crises	**Specific objective:** Strengthen system resilience for continuous learning during crises by mainstreaming gender-responsive climate change mitigation, disaster risk reduction, and adaptation in national education agenda	DPRD	Department of Instruction
Sub-component	**3.5.1:** Mainstream gender-responsive climate change mitigation, disaster risk reduction, and adaptation in national education agenda	BPRD	BBSE, BECE

PP 4: TVET

Program Objective: Strengthen equitable access, quality, relevance, and governance of TVET system to raise the skills base of Liberian citizens.			
Component	**Objective**	**Lead Department**	**Supporting Department**
Component 1.1 Access and equity	**Specific objective**: Ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable, disability-inclusive, and quality TVET and opportunities to develop skills for employment	Department of Instruction, MOYS	DPRD, DA
Sub-component:	**4.1.1:** Strengthen access to skills-development opportunities through formal, non-formal, and informal TVET	Bureau of Inclusive STEM and TVET, MOYS	
	4.1.2: Stimulate demand for TVET	Bureau of Inclusive STEM and TVET, MOYS	
	4.1.3: Provide accessible, safe, and enabling learning environments for disability-inclusive, gender-responsive access to TVET institutions	Bureau of Inclusive STEM and TVET, MOYS	BPRD, GA
Component 4.2 Quality and relevance	**Specific objective:** Strengthen the delivery of labor market-relevant TVET offer	Department of Instruction, MOYS	DPRD

Program Objective: Strengthen equitable access, quality, relevance, and governance of TVET system to raise the skills base of Liberian citizens.			
Component	**Objective**	**Lead Department**	**Supporting Department**
Sub-component	**4.2.1:** Expand the offer of demand-driven skills in Liberia	Bureau of Inclusive STEM and TVET, MOYS	
	4.2.2: Design and roll out a standardized competence-based curriculum for TVET courses	Bureau of Inclusive STEM and TVET, MOYS	
	4.2.3: Strengthen the focus on STEM and digital skills in all TVET institutions	Bureau of Inclusive STEM and TVET, MOYS	
	4.2.4: Establish regular internal and external mechanisms for initial and continuous professional development in all TVET schools to enhance staff performance and overall service delivery	Bureau of Inclusive STEM and TVET, MOYS	
Component 4.3 Governance and management	**Specific objective:** Improve TVET governance and management system for more effective delivery	Department of Instruction, MOYS	DPRD
Sub-component	**4.3.1:** Establish an effective TVET component of EMIS and Youth and Sports Management Information System (YSMIS) for the governance and management system of TVET institutions to enhance accountability	Bureau of Inclusive STEM and TVET, MOYS	BPRD
	4.3.2: Improve system governance through a dedicated entity, formalization of public–private partnerships, and establishment of coordination with donor community to enhance TVET performance and M&E capacity strengthening	Bureau of Inclusive STEM and TVET, MOYS	BPRD

PP 5: HIGHER EDUCATION

Program Objective: Strengthen equitable access, quality, relevance, and governance of higher education system to raise the skill base of Liberian youth.			
Component	**Objective**	**Lead Department**	**Supporting Department**
Component 5.1 Access and equity	**Specific objective**: Ensure all young people in Liberia have access to relevant and quality higher education and employability skills by 2026/27	NCHE	

Program Objective: Strengthen equitable access, quality, relevance, and governance of higher education system to raise the skill base of Liberian youth.			
Component	**Objective**	**Lead Department**	**Supporting Department**
Sub-component:	**5.1.1** Ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality higher education and opportunities to develop skills for employment	NCHE	
	5.1.2 Create an enabling environment for safe, healthy, and disability-inclusive access to higher education institutions	NCHE	
Component 5.2 Quality and relevance	**Specific objective:** Strengthen the delivery of labor market-relevant higher education offer by 2026/27	NCHE	
Sub-component	**5.2.1:** Determine and shortlist demand-driven skills for expansion in all higher education institutions	NCHE	
	5.2.2: Integrate digital technology in all HEI programs by 2026/27	NCHE	
	5.2.3: Strengthen quality assurance for higher education	NCHE	
	5.2.4: Ensure mechanisms for CPD in all HEIs and at NCHE to enhance staff performance and overall service delivery	NCHE	
Component 5.3 Governance and management	**Specific objective:** Improve higher education governance and management systems for more effective delivery	NCHE	
Sub-component	**5.3.1:** Establish partnerships and collaboration with the private sector through public–private partnerships to enhance offer	NCHE	
	5.3.2: Establish effective higher education MIS and monitoring mechanisms to enhance management and accountability for more effective service delivery	NCHE	

These five priority programs are elaborated in further depth in *Chapter 3*, which follows.

Chapter 3: Priority Programs

Priority Program 1: Access and equity in ECE and general education

The *overall objective* of priority program 1 (PP 1) is to increase access to equitable, gender-responsive and disability-inclusive early childhood, primary, secondary education and alternative education so that children enter education and progress through the system at the right age, in healthy, safe, protective environments.

PP 1 is structured around four components, each focusing on an education level:

- Component 1.1: ECE
- Component 1.2: Basic education
- Component 1.3: Secondary education
- Component 1.4: Alternative education

Component 1.1: ECE

ECE is a fundamental pillar of education that sets the basis for the holistic growth and development of young children. In recent years, ECE has come into the international spotlight as a priority and an indispensable intervention for the development of a young child, as well as the foundation of an effective and efficient education system. While coverage has increased, reducing the high numbers of over-age children at this level remains a pressing challenge, among others, as outlined below.

Key challenges related to ECE:

- Distance to school is too great for young children;
- Payment of fees at the ECE level;
- Financing of education by parents is regressive, with parents paying as much in ECE as in higher education;
- Parent's awareness about the benefits of early enrollment at the right age is low;
- Levels of over-age children and repetition at ECE level are high, which leads to clogging of the system with over-age children;
- Numbers of over-age children in ECE classes are high, resulting in challenges for the teacher to manage the class effectively;
- Unavailability of ECE-specific teachers/caregivers, and limited availability of play-based, age-appropriate curriculum and materials at the ECE level;
- School environment for young children is unsafe and unfriendly;
- Poor enabling environment to support integrated ECD service delivery;
- Level of stunting among children under 5 is high;
- There is a lack of linkage between ECE and primary education.

Specific Objective: Increase equitable and disability-inclusive access to ECD programs for all in a healthy, safe, and protective learning environment by 2026/27.

Indicators	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of Information
SDG 4.2.4: GER at ECE*	128%	89%	EMIS/ASC
GER county gap	52 pp	Decreasing	EMIS/ ASC
% of female students enrolled in ECE	51%	50%	EMIS/ ASC
% of children with disabilities enrolled in ECE, by sex (M/F)	0.9%	2.7%	EMIS/ ASC
% of over-aged children enrolled in ECE, by sex (M/F)	67% 67%/68%	20%	EMIS/ASC
ECE repetition rate	8%	0%	EMIS/ ASC
% of ECE schools providing safe and disability-inclusive learning environments that are climate resilient and gender sensitive, including separate toilets for girls and boys	N/A	TBD	EMIS/ ASC

**Note*: UN population data were used to compute enrollment indicators.

Review of strategies and key activities

In addition to multiple benefits of ECE for the individual child, the Government of Liberia also recognizes the social and economic dividends that quality early learning opportunities contribute to national human capital development in the long run. This recognition has led to the establishment of a formally organized system of ECD supported by the *Reformed Education Law of 2011* and the *National Inter-Sectoral Policy on Early Childhood Development* (NIPECD).

Development in early childhood is a multi-dimensional process. To meet children's diverse needs during the early years, government coordination is essential, both horizontally, across different sectors and vertically, from the national to the local levels. Currently, there is an inter-sectoral collaboration among regulatory and implementing line ministries and agencies for the delivery of ECD services. Though this collaboration is guided by the NIPECD. Yet, coordination of integrated service delivery remains weak and disconnected.

Even though numerous efforts have been made to improve the early childhood sub-sector, there are still disparities in effective service delivery and increasing access remains a challenge. According to the EMIS data of 2019/2020, enrollment is at 542,696 (M: 265,689, F: 277,007). A key pressing issue is that while the NER is 58 per cent, the GER stands at 123 per cent, with 67.5 per cent of children being over-age. Judging from these data, it is clear that a vast number of children who enroll in ECE centers do not enroll at the appropriate age. As a result, there is a huge percentage of over-aged children in the ECE sub-sector, while at the same time, many children of the appropriate ECE age do not benefit from ECE services. Managing ECE classes with such a wide spread of ages is challenging for the teacher. Also, 9,517 (64.6 per cent) of the 14,724 active teachers teaching in early childhood schools across the country are untrained.

Currently, access to organized learning at the ECE level is provided through formal ECE schools. In addition to school-based interventions, a number of community-based ECE centers are established and operationalized in vulnerable, resource-scarce communities and remote rural areas. In these communities, there are large numbers of out-of-school children between the ages of 3 to 5, because there are no schools in their immediate environment. When the nearest ECE schools are not within walking distance for a 3- to 5-year-old pre-schooler, parents tend to delay enrollment until the child is old enough to walk to the nearest school. Long distances to ECE schools are, therefore, one of the factors contributing to the over-aged population in the ECE sub-sector, along with cost barriers, because ECE is not fee-free. There is also a third approach to service delivery: the home-based ECE model. This model requires evaluation for efficiency and subsequent roll-out. It is intended to provide access to a positive and stimulating home learning environment.

In Liberia, government funding for the ECE sub-sector remains focused on salary spending (98 per cent). Financing of non-salary-related spending is almost totally donor dependent. Funding for private provision of ECE is done mainly by private providers and households, while public ECE is funded through donor and private support, including households. Financing of education by parents is regressive, with parents paying as much in ECE as in higher education, a situation that is comparatively abnormal and continues be a barrier to access. Remedial solutions would ultimately require the Government of Liberia to institute a no-fees policy for public ECE and subsidize children to enrol in non-public schools in remote areas, where there are no public ECE schools.

In the aftermath of the Ebola outbreak, the MoE created the *Liberia Education Advancement Program (LEAP)*, formerly known as Partnership Schools for Liberia (PSL), with an aim to improve educational outcomes in selected Liberian government schools through a multi-partner public–private partnership model. As a flagship program of the Liberian education sector, LEAP comprises more than 95,000 students in 487 schools in all 15 counties in Liberia, with roughly half of its student population being ECE learners. One of LEAP's most effective innovations is providing completely *tuition-free* ECE for all students in the program. The tuition costs are subsidized by the program at no cost to the government or the students' parents. Tuition-free ECE has not yet been expanded to the wider school system. LEAP has introduced several innovations that have proven the program increases learning gains cost effectively and at scale and can support system-wide impact in Liberia. LEAP was designed to build capacity within Liberia's existing public education system and accelerate student learning outcomes in schools in some of Liberia's most marginalized communities. Through training and support, the program aims to: (1) improve learning and other educational outcomes, (2) improve school management and accountability, (3) optimize delivery models that the MoE can apply to other Liberian public schools, and (4) generate data and improve data-driven decision-making that can seamlessly be rolled out across the system.

With the aim to increase equitable and disability-inclusive access to ECD programs for all students in a healthy, safe, learning environment by 2026/27, the MoE proposes the following four core strategies to ease both supply and demand constraints:

1. the provision of affordable, child-friendly, inclusive, and gender-sensitive safe learning spaces for ECE learners;
2. increased parental and community engagement;
3. a reduction in the percentage of over-age children in ECE;

4. strengthened inter-sectoral collaboration.

ECE components that involve quality or governance aspects (ECE curriculum, teacher and learning materials, WASH, school safety, teacher training, financing, etc.) will be covered in the respective quality and governance priority programs.

The MoE will increase and further strengthen public ECE and continue to provide access to inclusive early learning opportunities in safe and child-friendly spaces to children across the country, with special consideration for those in remote rural and underserved communities. This will involve both the construction of additional public ECE learning facilities (stand-alone and in public primary schools that do not currently have ECE classrooms) and upgrading existing ECE schools to be child friendly, inclusive, gender sensitive, and climate resilient, with age-appropriate, gender-sensitive, disability-inclusive WASH facilities, in compliance with the *National School Infrastructure Strategy*. Community-based ECD centers will be established in communities where no public primary and ECE schools are available, and home-based ECD services will be expanded beyond the three counties where they currently operate (Bong, Margibi, and Montserrado). An evaluation will be conducted to assess the effectiveness of community-based and home-based ECD models to inform possible future scale-up or measures to transition to public ECE schools. Partner support has been crucial to construct, furnish, and rehabilitate ECE learning spaces, and expand community and home-based ECD services; it is expected to continue over the 2022–2026 ESP plan period.

Reducing ECE fees is a major priority within this ESP to encourage parents to send their children to ECD programs at the right age, reducing out-of-pocket costs to households and helping ensure that all children are able to benefit from quality programs that provide them with the best start in life. To address the considerable financial barriers, the capitation grant will be expanded, and an assessment will be conducted on the possibility of removing fees in pubic ECE schools and subsidizing children to enroll in non-public schools in areas where public schools are not accessible. There will be advocacy for increased government ECE funding to supplement fee-free ECE enrollment.

Parental and community engagement is a fundamental element of ECE that is particularly important for ensuring age-appropriate access to ECE services. To create demand for ECE/ECD and reduce over-age enrollment, the MoE will continue to collaborate with national PTA structures, the National Teacher's Association of Liberia, the Principal Association, other civil society organizations, as well as local government and traditional leaders. The goal of the collaboration will be to increase awareness and advocacy from national to community levels, specifically among parents and caregivers, and encourage broad-based participation in service delivery. This will be achieved by developing print materials and radio broadcasts and organizing town hall and PTA meetings. Awareness-raising activities will focus on the importance of ECE and age-appropriate enrollment, including for children with disabilities, as well as the significance of supporting schools to ensure safe, conducive learning environments for children. These awareness-raising campaigns will be conducted for all schools, not only public schools, with synergy between all ECE awareness-raising activities. Efforts will also be made to remove barriers to access that continue to burden parents and learners across the country.

Reducing the over-age student population at the ECE level is one of the key overall plan priorities, because it is a critical issue that negatively affects the entire education system. To address the issue of over-age ECE students, the legal framework on age-appropriate enrollment in all ECE schools will be fully enforced. Children who are over age by one or two years will be transferred directly to lower basic school, while children who are three or more years over age will be transferred to ALPs. Collaboration between ECE and

lower basic schools will be strengthened so that LBE teachers and administrators are adequately prepared for this new intake of over-age students who have not attended ECE. This will include regular cluster sessions between ECE and Grade 1 teachers. A system will be established to track over-age enrollment in ECE and ensure that the proper transfers are taking place. Retroactive birth registrations will be held at the beginning of the school year, as part of the school health fair, to make sure every child has a birth certificate identifying their correct age. (*Note*: this activity will be addressed in the student well-being sub-component.) As already mentioned, awareness-raising activities for parents and caregivers on the importance of age-appropriate enrollment will be conducted to encourage the correct initial age-appropriate enrollment in ECE services. The no-repetition policy (for ECE up to Grade 3 of lower basic)[10] will be enforced, because repetition also promotes over-age children while artificially increasing class-size with no positive pedagogical impact. The community awareness campaigns will also inform parents, principals, and teachers on the roll-out of the no-repetition policy; having both parental and school engagement in this area will be critical in eradicating the practice.

Considering the multi-dimensional requirement for coordination, the new ESP proposes the MoE-led development of the *National ECE Policy*, which will regulate service delivery vertically, from the national to local levels. The *National ECE Policy* will be developed under the parent policy of the NIPECD to provide guidelines for addressing the current vital issues confronting the sub-sector, including age-appropriate enrollment, pathways for over-age children and out-of-school children, standards of ECE tuition at private schools, reduction or abolition of fees at the public schools, play-based curriculum, school feeding, gender-responsive pedagogy, early identification of and support for children with disabilities, positive discipline and non-violence, and WASH standards, among other topics. At the same time, it is proposed that the MoE work in consonance with other line ministries involved in ECD service delivery to revise the NIPECD to respond to current needs for horizontal coordination among national stakeholders. The NIPECD will, therefore, define the coordination mechanisms and enforcement support for the *National ECE Policy*. Moreover, to strengthen coordination at the national level, a national inter-sectoral technical focal group will be constituted, while the county-level inter-sectoral committee on early childhood development will be reactivated and operationalized. High-level ECE champions from the three branches of the Liberian government will also be established to strengthen advocacy for increased government and donor support to supplement fee-free public ECE provision.

[10] Because children develop at different rates, a no-repetition policy up to Grade 3 will give children time to master early foundational skills.

Sub-component 1.1.1: Increase access to ECE through the provision of child-friendly, disability-inclusive, and gender-sensitive safe learning space for learners

Indicators	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of Information
# of **additiona**l public child-friendly, disability-inclusive, gender-sensitive (including separate toilets for girls and boys), and climate-resilient ECE facilities constructed	N/A	45	EMIS/ ASC
# of child-friendly, flexible, disability-inclusive, gender-sensitive (including separate toilets for girls and boys), and climate-resilient ECE classrooms upgraded (cumulative)	N/A	845	EMIS/ ASC
# of community-based ECD centers established in remote communities	60	260	EMIS/ ASC
# of home-based ECD services established	187	300	Activity report

Activities

1. Construct additional child-friendly, disability-inclusive, flexible,[11] gender-sensitive, and climate-resilient learning facilities in compliance with the *National School Infrastructure Strategy.*
2. Upgrade existing ECE schools (child-friendly, disability-inclusive, gender-sensitive, and climate-resilient) in compliance with the *National School Infrastructure Strategy.*
3. Construct age-appropriate, climate-resilient WASH facilities (handwashing stations, separate latrines for girls and boys) that are gender-sensitive and with special consideration for learners with disabilities in ECE schools where there are no such facilities. *(Tackled in the Student well-being sub-component 2.4.1.)*
4. Establish 200 additional community-based ECD centers in communities where there are no public primary schools (followed by evaluation for efficiency and eventual roll-out).
5. Expand home-based ECD services to additional 113 homes/communities (followed by evaluation for efficiency and eventual roll-out).

Sub-component 1.1.2: Expand access to ECE through increased parental and community engagement

Indicators	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of Information
#/% of children in public ECE benefiting from capitation grant, by sex (M/F)	53,487 22%	125,345 60%	EMIS/ ASC
Public education recurrent spending per public ECE student	$29	$58	National budget report and EMIS/ASC

Activities

1. Put in place a mechanism to reduce cost for parents by expanding the capitation grant, assessing the possibility to remove/reduce fees in public ECE schools and subsidize children to enroll in non-public schools in areas where there are no public ECE schools.
2. Advocate for increased Government of Liberia funding for ECE to supplement fee-free tuition at the ECE level.

[11] Easily adjustable or affordable (IPCC, 2022).

3. Increase awareness among parents, male and female caregivers, and communities about the importance of ECE and age-appropriate enrollment with consideration for child safety and well-being, as well as the significance of supporting schools to ensure a safe and conducive learning space for children (by developing and printing materials, broadcast, town hall meetings, PTA meetings). Conduct at least two sessions per year per county.

Sub-component 1.1.3: Reduce the percentage of over-age children in ECE

Indicators	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of Information
#/% of over-age ECE children transferred to ALP, by sex and by disability status	5,545	40,434	EMIS/ASC
#/% of over-age ECE children transferred to lower basic, by sex and by disability status	0	40,434	EMIS/ ASC

Activities

1. Ensure provision of legal framework on age-appropriate enrollment in all ECE schools.
2. Strengthen the collaboration between lower basic and ECE schools to support lower basic schools' and ALP's intake of over-age ECE students, including establishing a system to track enrollment of over-age children in ECE and their transfer to primary and ALP.
3. Increase awareness among parents, female and male caregivers, school heads, and teachers on age-appropriate enrollment and the roll-out of the no-repetition policy at the ECE level (at least twice a year per county) *(linked to sub-component 1.1.2, activity 3).*

Sub-component 1.1.4: Strengthen inter-sectoral collaboration to ensure an integrated ECD service delivery for all children in ECE by 2026/27

Indicators	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of Information
National ECE policy available and disseminated	No	Yes	Copy of policy
Inter-sectoral policy on ECD revised	No	Yes	Copy of policy
National strategic plan and related operation plan for integrated ECD service delivery developed	No	Yes	Copy of national strategic plan
National inter-sectoral technical working group for integrated ECD service delivery actively meets	No	Yes	Meeting minutes
# of fully functional local inter-sectoral committees on ECD	0	15	Annual report

Activities

1. Develop and disseminate a *National ECE Policy* addressing issues of repetition, over-age enrollment, fee-free public ECE, standard fees for non-public providers, play-based curriculum, gender-equal play, school feeding, TLM and teacher training, and gender-responsive pedagogy. Institute early identification of and support for children with disabilities, positive discipline and non-violence, and WASH standards.
2. Revise the national inter-sectoral policy on ECD, including with a gender lens, and develop related operational plans.
3. Set up a national inter-sectoral technical working group for integrated ECD service delivery.

4. Reactivate and support local inter-sectoral committee on ECD service delivery, including the commissioning of high level ECE champions—both women and men—to strengthen advocacy for integrated ECD service delivery.

Component 1.2: Access to basic education

Key challenges related to basic education

As highlighted in the ESA and Chapter 1, numerous challenges, including both demand- and supply- side constraints, continue to present barriers to children's access to equitable and disability-inclusive basic education.

The key challenges include:

- high inappropriate age enrollment: high rate of children who enter late and are over age for their grade;
- high rates of out-of-school children;
- cost of education that is too high for households;
- long distances to school facilities;
- lack of separate latrines for boys and girls;
- high rates of early marriage and pregnancy;
- unclear learning pathways for girls who become pregnant/lactating mothers;
- high number of children not living with both parents, resulting in persistent non-support for children;
- high rates of SRGBV, including bullying, and failure to fully implement SRGBV-related policies (*Teachers' Code of Conduct*, *Girls' Education Policy*, and *Inclusive Education Policy*);
- Unconducive learning environment for people with disabilities;
- Inadequate funding from the Government of Liberia;
- Poor teacher quality, inadequately qualified teachers, lack of female teachers, lack of interest in the teaching profession;
- Printed copies of national curriculum not available in all schools, and limited access to textbooks and TLM;
- Poor supervision of schools; inadequate school visitation by the division.

Specific Objective: Ensure that all girls and boys complete disability-inclusive, gender-responsive, free, equitable, and quality basic education in a safe, healthy, protective environment, resulting in relevant and effective learning outcomes.

Indicators	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of Information
Lower basic			
GER in LBE, by sex (M/F)	77.5%	76%	EMIS/ASC
County gap GER	45pp	Downward trend	EMIS/ASC
% of female students enrolled in LBE	49%	50%	EMIS/ASC
% of children with disabilities, by sex (M/F)	0.8%	2.4%	EMIS/ASC
% of children over-aged by five or more years	36%	20%	EMIS/ASC/ Household surveys
SGD 4.1.4: Out-of-school rate, by sex (M/F)	19% 21%/17%	Downward trend	Household surveys (DHS)
Gross intake ratio for Grade 1, by (M/F)	102%	85%	EMIS/ASC
SDG 4.1.3: Gross intake ratio to the last grade, by sex (M/F)	59%	70%	EMIS/ASC
Upper basic			
GER in UBE, by sex (M/F)	47%	48%	EMIS/ASC
County gap GER	70pp	Downward trend	EMIS/ASC
% of female students enrolled in UBE	49%	50%	EMIS/ASC
% of children with disabilities, by sex (M/F)	0.7%	2.1%	EMIS/ASC
% of children over-aged by four or more years	32%	27%	EMIS/ASC
SGD 4.1.4: Out-of-school rate, by sex (M/F)	15% 15%/14%	Downward trend	Household surveys (DHS)
SDG 4.1.3: Gross intake ratio to the last grade, by sex (M/F)	24%	30%	EMIS/ASC

**Note*: UN population data were used to compute enrollment indicators.

As established in the *2011 Education Reform Act*, the Liberian education system follows a 3–9–3–4 structure: three years of ECE, nine years of basic education (six years lower basic, three years upper basic), then three years of either secondary or TVET, followed by four years of tertiary education. Basic education is fee-free, but fees are charged at all other levels, including ECE and secondary. There are also three forms of alternative learning programs offered. The ALP is for students aged 8–15, already enrolled in basic education, but over-age by more than two years, who undergo a three-year condensed cycle of schooling, allowing them to re-enter the formal system. ABE is provided for learners aged 15–25 who are already working, and adult education is offered to adults over age 18.

Four types of education providers operate in the country: public, private, faith-based, and community, with public government schools being the main provider at lower basic level (42 per cent of enrollment in 2019/20) followed by private (35 per cent), faith-based (19 per cent), and lastly community schools, accounting for 4 per cent of lower basic enrollment. However, the presence of private providers is increasing—between 2015 and 2020, the proportion of lower basic students enrolled in public institutions decreased by 10 percentage points. At upper basic and secondary levels, private institutions are the main providers, accounting for 41 per cent and 43 per cent of enrollment, respectively.

Different data sources offer varying pictures on the evolution of basic education enrollment since 2015. According to EMIS data, lower basic enrollment has decreased by 50,000 students between 2015 and 2019/20, from a GER of 89 per cent to 76 per cent. The share of students enrolled in public schools has also decreased from 52 per cent to 42 per cent. Decreased enrollment is also shown at upper basic level, although to a less dramatic extent, from a GER of 51 per cent in 2015 to 48 per cent in 2019/20, with a drop in public institution enrollment from 41 to 33 per cent. However, according to the LDHS data, lower basic GER has actually increased to 91 per cent in 2019. This discrepancy may be due to under-coverage in EMIS data collection and population data inaccuracy. The figures are more similar at upper basic level, at 51 per cent in 2019 according to LDHS data. These data also show improvement in net enrollment at lower basic level, particularly for girls, rising from 31 per cent in 2007 for female students to 43 per cent in 2019, and from 28 per cent to 39 per cent for male students. At upper basic, the net enrollment rate increased from 7 to 13 per cent for females and from 9 to 12 per cent for males. Access to lower basic schooling is, therefore, far from universal, with large drops in enrollment at upper basic level. Drastically lower net enrollment rates reveal the extent to which students are not enrolled in the appropriate grade.

Over-age enrollment continues to be a major issue across all levels of schooling, especially in basic education. Late entry begins at pre-lower basic level—60 per cent of 6-year-olds are enrolled in ECE rather than Grade 1, their age-appropriate level—causing a domino effect of over-age students in superior school grades. As of 2019/20, 92 per cent of lower basic students and 95 per cent of upper basic students are at least one year over-age for their grade level, with comparable percentages across most of the population. The number of students who are three or more years over-age is correlated with wealth and location: 71 per cent of the poorest lower basic students are more than three years over age versus 34 per cent of the richest lower basic students, and 66 per cent of rural lower basic students versus 43 per cent of urban.

From 2015 to 2019, lower basic school retention has remained stagnant at 74 per cent but has increased at upper basic level by 9 percentage points, from 75 per cent to 84 per cent in 2019/20. Retention is higher for boys than girls across all levels. Upper basic level is when girls are the most vulnerable to school dropouts, with an 87 per cent retention rate for males and 74 per cent for females in 2019/20. Lower basic to upper basic transition also improved from 90 per cent to 95 per cent, indicating that intra-cycle dropout is a more prominent issue than dropouts between learning cycles. The proportion of grade repeaters has decreased at all school levels, with the greatest decrease at Grade 1, from 18 per cent in 2015 to 8 per cent in 2019/20—a significant achievement given that repetition at this level blocks the entire system with over-age learners. In 2019/20, lower basic repetition was at 6 per cent and upper basic at 6.3 per cent, both equal for boys and girls.

According to the 2019 LDHS, approximately 19 per cent of children aged 6–11 are out of school (LISGIS, 2019). The majority of them have never attended school, indicating issues in access at lower basic level. The prevalence is higher among boys than girls in this age group (21 per cent boys vs. 17 per cent girls) and among rural than urban students (27 per cent vs. 13 per cent). The proportion of out-of-school children decreases at upper basic level—14 per cent of children aged 12–14 are out of school; 5 per cent of them dropped out of school and 9 per cent have never attended, almost equal between male and female students. These figures indicate that many students enroll after age 11, and dropout becomes more of a concern in later grades.

High rates of early marriage and early pregnancy remain distinct barriers to girls' education. While the rate of early marriage under 18 has declined from 35.9 per cent in 2013 to 25 per cent in 2019 according

to the LDHS, it remains well above global standards. Early marriage is more frequent in rural areas—the median age for marriage for girls in rural areas is 19.1 years compared to 23.3 years in urban areas. There are also structural barriers within schools affecting girls' education. Only 56 per cent of schools have WASH facilities and mere 24.5 per cent of those facilities are allocated for girls, negatively affecting female students' attendance, particularly as they reach puberty and need female-friendly facilities to safely manage their menstruation. Notably, many over-age students reach puberty in lower basic school, which have the least amount of separate toilet facilities for girls. Sexual violence is also incredibly prevalent in Liberian schools, negatively affecting both girls and boys, although girls are at the greatest risk.

Several initiatives have been pursued over the last five years to address some of these overarching challenges. Regarding over-age enrollment, schools have begun to conduct their own enrollment analysis, starting with data collection at the school level. A data collection tool was incorporated in the academic calendar to assist schools with this process. This has been included as a key component of the awareness strategy for the 2022/23 academic calendar before the reopening of schools.

In addition, every school is now required to have an age-appropriate enrollment chart for early childhood and Grades 1 through 12 mounted on the wall, which is inspected by DEOs. Awareness campaigns, sponsored by partners, have been carried out over the radio, promoting the importance of education. Also, some interventions on gender-based violence have been implemented with UNICEF's support, such as a training that took place in 100 schools, involving both female and male students and that is now scaled up to 220 public upper basic schools in 11 counties. A number of LEAP schools are also now initiating girls peer education and mentorship groups at various school levels to increase awareness about child rights and other safety issues that might affect them. All partners have enacted safeguarding and child protection practices, and conduct regular safeguarding training for staff, students, and PTAs.

Over the course of the next ESP, four main strategies will be pursued to increase equitable access at basic education level:

1. building and upgrading disability-inclusive, safe education facilities;
2. reducing the number of over-age students through enforcement of age-appropriate enrollment and provision of alternative education programs;
3. reducing the number of out-of-school children through inter-sectoral engagement;
4. reducing the costs of basic education;
5. reducing SRGBV (*tackled in the PP2.4 School well-being sub-component*).

Currently, few schools are adapted to provide inclusive, disability-friendly environments for children with mobility challenges. Consequently, increasing basic education access for *all* children, including children with disabilities, will require not only the construction of new schools to accommodate students who lack easy access to schools in their communities, but also upgrading of existing schools to be disability inclusive and gender sensitive. An evidence-based method will be used in site selection for new schools to ensure they are placed near underserved communities and that natural and climate-related hazards are considered. These newly constructed schools will be designed to be gender responsive and inclusive, with appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities, as outlined in the *Inclusive Education Policy*. Existing schools will be upgraded to have adequate WASH facilities, including separate latrines that are gender sensitive and accessible. Financial support will also be provided to support community schools in upgrading their facilities. In addition, a feasibility study will be conducted on the demand for, modality,

and resources for providing schooling for children with sight/hearing impairments, which could inform the establishment of additional schools. [12]

Over-age enrollment continues to be a pervasive problem throughout the entire school system. Over the next five years, reducing the number of over-age children will be a major priority within the sector plan. This will be achieved by enforcing the age-appropriate enrollment policy, increasing awareness, and training relevant stakeholders (principals, registrars, vice principals, teachers, education officers, and parents). Strong age-appropriate enforcement will be pursued at Grade 1 to make sure no over-age students enter lower basic. Over-age children will be rechanneled to ALPs. Children who are over age by five or more years in lower basic will also be reoriented to ALPs. A mechanism will then be put in place to allow teachers and school administrators to easily reorient over-age children toward the appropriate alternative learning program. Regular district-level cluster meetings will be used as fora to strengthen coordination and information sharing among school leaders and teachers regarding response to over-age students. Finally, awareness raising on age-appropriate enrollment will be conducted within the community through radio campaigns, town hall meetings, and PTA meetings.

Reaching out-of-school children who have never enrolled in school or have dropped out will require a multifaceted, inter-sectoral response. A study will first be conducted to understand the make-up of the out-of-school student population and causes for dropout or prevented access, including gender dynamics and circumstances of children with disabilities. Community involvement will be key to promoting schooling of out-of-school children. Awareness-raising campaigns on out-of-school children and the importance of education will be held in all 15 counties, including awareness about alternative education programs. Identifying and reaching out to individual out-of-school children will also necessitate a very local, community-based response. In this regard, the plan is to recruit community education monitors to directly identify out-of-school children, discover their particular challenges, and connect them to schools and other support systems. This activity has already been carried out in selected communities, with 150 community monitors deployed, and has proven to be an effective mechanism for reaching out-of-school children. There is also a plan to develop an inter-sectoral task team with representatives from the MoE, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Lands and Mines, Ministry of Labor, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Gender, and MOYS, as well as youth group participants. The inter-sectoral task team will research and discuss the gendered root causes for the lack of access and early dropout, such as poverty, lack of parental guidance, cultural practices (e.g., early marriage and female genital mutilation), SRGBV, school distances or location, and the quality of the learning environment. They will then develop strategies to address these challenges.

Despite fee-free tuition at public lower basic and upper basic levels, household spending on basic education remains significant, mainly covering registration and related fees,[13] as well as indirect costs. The increasing proportion of private institutions means that more families are paying school-fees, with little government oversight of how fees are being used. To sustainably reduce school costs, first a study will be conducted on the varying costs of school fees with recommendations of how to regularize them. The study will include reviewing existing policy enshrined in the permit regulation and looking at

[12] For children who are blind, there is currently only one specialized school nationwide, and similarly, only one specialized for teaching children who are deaf.

[13] Related fees contribute to the increment of school fees in both public and non-public schools, and include graduation fees, class project fees, and sometimes, sales of uniforms. Measures are promulgated in the academic calendar to curtail this, but enforcement and monitoring need to be stepped up.

strengthening monitoring and reintroducing subsidies to private schools. These recommendations will be used to develop and disseminate a policy on how fees are charged and what the funds should be used for. DEOs will then be empowered and supported to ensure school fee compliance and the fee use guide will be endorsed.

Additionally, one of the major costs for students is school uniforms, the lack of which can be a major barrier for enrollment, particularly for girls. A study in Kenya (Dufo, Dupas, and Kremer, 2015), for example, found that Grade 6 girls who received free uniforms for two years were 3.1 percentage points (16 per cent) less likely to drop out after three years than their peers who did not receive uniforms (19 per cent of whom dropped out). Informed by this and similar evidence, school uniforms and bags will be provided to students to help increase retention, especially among girls. There is a plan to subsequently, conduct an evaluation on this intervention to guide potential future scale-up.

Scaling up school feeding programs—addressed in the student well-being sub-component 2.4 of the Quality Priority Program—will be another major strategy to reduce costs and increase school access. In Liberia, 30 per cent of children under 5 are stunted, indicating chronic undernutrition. School feeding programs can contribute to improving the nutrition status of children, as well help children remain attentive during the school day. A recent study (Dago and Yogo, 2022) has also found that the school feeding program leads to a statistically significant decrease in child labor, estimated at between 14 and 17 per cent, with boys particularly benefiting, which makes it a cost-benefit investment with multiple positive impacts.

To support lower cost at private schools, targeted subsidies will be provided to students who do not have easy access to public facilities, as determined by the results of a school mapping exercise. Subsidies will also be supplied to support students with disabilities to enroll in private institutions that can cater to their particular needs. Because there is limited information on the number and characteristics of students with disabilities and the particular educational access barriers they face, the MoE, with partners' support, plans to conduct a national disability survey to estimate prevalence of disability in children ages 5–17 and assess and identify education exclusion factors. Additionally, advocacy will be carried out to improve data collection, particularly for the national population census to include the Washington Group module on children with disabilities.

SRGBV remains a critical issue affecting both boys' and girls' enrollment and retention. While activities for responding to SRGBV will be tackled in the student well-being sub-component 2.4.3 of the Quality Priority Program, they are also highlighted here and in the Secondary education access sub-component, because they remain key strategies for safe, equitable school access.[14] Among the planned activities are awareness-raising campaigns within PTAs and communities. Awareness will be raised on the *Girls Education Policy*, *Teachers' Code of Conduct*, and *Inclusive Education Policy* to enforce their implementation, so that community members understand the regulations that are already in place and the rights all students, including girls and students with disabilities, have to safe, accessible education. This includes the right of pregnant girls to return to school, transitioning to night school programs.[15] Awareness raising will also focus on positive masculine behaviors and non-violence, through collaboration

[14] Please note that the corresponding tables are not included in this section to avoid duplication; please refer to student well-being sub-component 2.4.3.

[15]There is currently no official defined pathway for girls who become pregnant to return to the formal school system. The MoE is to update the *Girls' Education Policy* to include this element.

with PTAs and community leaders, as well as public radio campaigns. As part of establishing a whole-school approach to reduce SRGBV, teachers, school principals, DEOs, County Education Officers (CEOs), and PTAs at both basic and upper basic levels will all be trained in SRGBV prevention and response. Further, the student code of conduct, which references prohibition of SRGBV, will be widely disseminated in schools and to key stakeholders. A reporting mechanism and referral system will also be put in place for safely reporting instances of SRGBV. To directly reach students in schools, life-skills clubs will also be established in upper basic schools, promoting gender empowerment and non-violence, and teachers will be provided with SRGBV-related instructional materials.

Sub-component 1.2.1: Build and upgrade education facilities that are child-, disability-, and gender-sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, disability-inclusive, and effective learning environment for all.

Indicators	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of Information
# of new classrooms **built** that are disability inclusive, flexible, gender responsive, and climate resilient (lower basic, upper basic) cumulative	NA	589 lower basic 211 upper basic	EMIS/ASC
#/% of schools with adequate WASH facilities and separate latrines that are gender and disability sensitive	Tackled in Student well-being component 2.4.1		
# of schools receiving funding for upgrading facilities	156	294 168 LB/ 126 UB	EMIS/ASC
% of disability-inclusive, gender-sensitive, and climate-resilient schools (lower basic, upper basic)	N/A	TBD	EMIS/ASC
Activities			

1. Build schools (in compliance with the *National School Infrastructure Strategy*), including public and community schools (that are disability inclusive, gender responsive, flexible,[16] and climate resilient) near communities, using evidence-based site selection.
2. Upgrade existing schools with adequate WASH facilities and separate latrines that are gender and disability sensitive (accessible for learners with physical challenges) *(tackled in Student well-being sub-component 2.4.1).*
3. Increase financial support to schools for upgrading facilities.
4. Conduct a feasibility study on demand for, value-added, location, modality, required resources, and options for establishing schools for children with sight/hearing impairments, and/or optimizing use of existing structures and resources; set up two additional schools if recommended by the study.

[16] Easily adjustable or affordable (IPCC, 2022)

Sub-component 1.2.2: Reduce number of over-aged children in basic schools through enforcement of an age-appropriate enrollment policy and provision of alternative education programs.

Indicators	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of Information
# of lower basic over-age students transitioning to alternative programs, by sex (M/F)	NA	73,010	Project report (Accelerated Quality Education [AQE], Liberia Learning Foundations [LLF]) EMIS
# of district-level cluster meetings addressing over-age students' issues	206	1,030 (cumulated)	Annual report

Activities

1. Reduce the number of over-age students through enforcement of an age-appropriate enrollment policy and reorientation of over-age students to appropriate education program (over-age Grade 1 students and those over age by 5+ years in lower basic to be oriented to ALP).
2. Create awareness on age-appropriate enrollment in communities in all counties through radio campaigns, town hall meetings, and PTA meetings *(also mentioned in Alternative education sub-component 1.4.2).*
3. Strengthen coordination and information sharing on over-age student response through regular district-level cluster meetings.

Sub-component 1.2.3: Reduce the number of out-of-school children at basic education level through inter-sectoral engagement to enroll and keep children in school.

Indicators	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of Information
Inter-sectoral task team established	No	Yes	Reports of inter-sectoral task team meetings
# of education monitors recruited	150	6,000	Annual report

Activities

1. Conduct a study to understand the number and gender dynamics of out-of-school children and over-age learners, including girls and boys with disabilities *(also mentioned in Alternative education sub-component 1.4.2).*
2. Recruit community education monitors to identify and support out-of-school students (*also mentioned in Student well-being sub-component 2.4.*5).
3. Conduct awareness campaigns on out-of-school children in all 15 counties.
4. Establish an inter-sectoral task team with clear terms of reference to address boys' and girls' school dropout and lack of access with ministries of education, justice, lands and mines, labor, internal affairs, and gender, as well as youth groups based.

Sub-component 1.2.4: Reduce the cost of learning at basic education level to increase access to and retention in school, especially for girls, out-of-school children, and students with disabilities.

Indicators	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of Information
Policy on fees regulations in basic education developed and disseminated	No	Yes	Copy of policy
% of schools displaying the list of fees and their use	N/A	50%	Supervision report
# of public school students with school uniforms and bags, by sex (M/F)	0	50,180	Annual report
Activities			

1. Develop and disseminate a policy on how fees are charged and what the funds can be used for, based on the results of nationwide research on the varying costs of school fees (all school types, all levels) with recommendations on how to regularize them.
2. Reinforce and support DEOs to ensure school fee compliance and endorse the fee use guide.
3. Reduce schooling costs and support retention by providing students with school uniforms and bags and conducting evaluation on the intervention; scale up school feeding programs (s*chool feeding tackled in Student well-being sub-component 2.4.4).*
4. Subsidize private schools when there is not sufficient space in public schools or there are no public schools nearby, with a focus on students with disabilities.
5. Conduct a qualitative/quantitative situation analysis study to identify main barriers and opportunities for students with disabilities, and advocate for national population census to include the Washington Group module on children with disabilities to amplify data collection.

Component 1.3: Access to secondary education

Key challenges related to secondary education

The challenges outlined under the basic education chapter are mirrored and exacerbated at the secondary level. As a result, the number of boys and girls transitioning to and completing secondary education drop off dramatically at this level, although recent survey data suggest new promising trends for girls. The key challenges standing in the way of access to secondary education for girls and boys include:

- high inappropriate age enrollment: children who enter late and are over age for their grade;
- very high rates of out-of-school children;
- non-conducive learning environment for people with disabilities;
- too high cost of education for households;
- long distances to school facilities;
- lack of separate latrines for boys and girls;
- high rates of early marriage and pregnancy;
- unclear learning pathways for girls who become pregnant/lactating mothers;
- high rates of SRGBV, including bullying; failure to fully implement SRGBV-related policies (*Teachers' Code of Conduct*, *Girls' Education Policy,* and *Inclusive Education Policy*);
- limited number of female teachers.

Specific Objective: To increase enrollment in secondary schools for all boys and girls by creating an accessible, disability-inclusive, gender-responsive, conducive, and safe learning environment.

Indicators	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of Information
GER in secondary, by sex (M/F)	32%	42%	EMIS/ASC
County gap GER	63 pp	Downward trend	EMIS/ASC
% of female students enrolled in secondary	48.5%	50%	EMIS/ASC
% of children with disabilities, by sex (M/F)	0.4%	1.2%	EMIS/ASC
SGD 4.1.4: Out-of-school rate, by sex (M/F)	20% 18%/23%	Downward trend	Household surveys (DHS)
SDG 4.1.3: Gross intake ratio to the last grade of SE, by sex (M/F)	28%	35%	EMIS/ASC

*_Note_: UN population data were used to compute schooling indicators.

Secondary schooling consists of three years of senior high school, intended for students aged 15–17 after they complete nine years of basic education. Besides the two general streams (art and science), students have the option to enroll in three years of technical or vocational education. Unlike for basic education, fees are charged at secondary level and schooling is not compulsory. Examinations are administered in Grade 9 (LJHSCE) and Grade 12 (WASSCE) by the WAEC. Contrary to the LJJHSCE, which is not a determinant for promotion to secondary, the WASCCE determines the promotion to tertiary education. Private providers dominate the secondary schooling level, accounting for 47 per cent of enrollment in 2019/20, while faith-based and public schools are almost equivalent, representing 27 per cent and 23 per cent of secondary level student enrollment, respectively.

According to EMIS data, secondary school enrollment has remained almost stagnant, with 105,875 students enrolled in 2015 and 107,035 in 2019/20, which amounts to a decrease in GER by 5 percentage points during this period—from 36 per cent in 2015 to 31 per cent in 2019/20. This differs from LDHS data that show secondary school GER reaching 49 per cent in 2019 (discrepancies are likely due to under-coverage in EMIS data collection and inaccuracies in population data.) LDHS data also display significant gains for female students, with GER doubling between 2017 and 2019, from 27 to 53 per cent; male student GER has increased by only 5 percentage points, from 40 to 45 per cent in 2019. Net enrollment rates are also slightly advantageous for female students, growing from 3 to 11 per cent compared to 3 to 9 per cent for males. Disengagement of boys from education, a trend increasingly observed worldwide, is a key gendered issue that requires further research in Liberia.

Wealth and locality are major determinant factors in secondary school access. Urban students had a GER of 69 per cent in 2019 (LDHS) compared to just 17 per cent for rural students, a parity index of 24 per cent. Both groups have low NERs—15 per cent for urban and only 2 per cent for rural students, indicating that almost all rural students enrolled in secondary are not at the appropriate age level. The parity between the richest and the poorest quintiles is just 9 per cent for GER and only 3 per cent for NER—the richest students have a GER of 85 per cent compared to 8 per cent GER of the poorest, underlining the urgency to address these critical equity issues as a high priority for the ESP.

Between 2015 and 2019/20, grade repetition has decreased significantly across all levels and from 11 to 4 per cent in secondary schools. Transition from upper basic to secondary has jumped from 83 per cent in 2013 to 95 per cent in 2019, showing marked improvement in the number of students who continue on to the secondary level. However, retention levels in secondary schools are still low, at 66 per cent in 2019. They have also remained stagnant, with just a 3-percentage point increase from 2013, indicating that the main issue are drop-outs, not initial enrollment from upper basic level. Despite the overall higher enrollment rates for female students, retention rates are lower for girls than boys across all grade levels—they are particularly prominent at upper basic level, but also present at secondary level, with a 76-per cent retention rate for boys in 2019 and 70 per cent for girls. Gaps in retention between male and female students begin at upper basic level and widen by secondary: in 2019, boys were 14 per cent more likely to finish the final year of secondary schooling than girls. Likewise, gender parity in enrollment decreases throughout schooling levels, with a 100-per cent parity at Grade 1 decreasing to 66 per cent in Grade 12.

Over-age enrollment begins at pre-primary level and overflows to every other level of schooling, resulting in the majority of students throughout the school system being over age. In 2019, 84 per cent of secondary school students were over age for their grade level, a lower percentage than upper basic level, where 95 per cent of students were over age; still, the figure is still strikingly high and indicates an inefficient use of scarce resources at both system and household level. The slight decrease at this level is due to lower levels of enrollment at secondary and the fact that over-age students are more likely to drop out before finishing the final years of schooling. This is particularly the case for girls, for whom social and gender norms bring pressure for marriage and childbearing at an early age. All wealth quintiles have similar levels of over-aged children, except for the richest, who are less likely to be over aged. Distinctions between population groups are clearer among students more than three years above their age-appropriate grade—rural students have an over-age rate 14-percentage points higher than urban students, and the poorest students 24-percentage points higher than the richest students at the secondary school level. This underscores the priority need for targeted measures to address these glaring disparities and promote more equity in access across diverse groups.

The highest proportion of out-of-school children is found in the 15–17 age group. In 2019, according to the LDHS, 20 per cent of children in this group were out of school, which is equivalent to approximately 67,000 children. Of the 20 per cent, 8 per cent dropped out of school and 12 per cent never attended, indicating both issues in retention and initial enrollment. There is a higher proportion of female out-of-school 15–17-year-old students than males (23 per cent vs. 18 per cent)—the only age group where this is the case, with gendered norms likely playing a role. Within the 12–17 age group, the poorest children are more likely to have never attended school than left school, as is the case for rural boys.

Disability is also a key factor in keeping children out of school. The *Inclusive Education Policy* commits to promoting the attendance of children with disabilities and other marginalized children. However, while in 2014, it was estimated that 15.3 per cent of school-aged children had disabilities, less than 1 per cent of enrolled students (53 per cent female) across all education levels had disabilities, suggesting that a large proportion of children with disabilities were not enrolled. At secondary level, in 2019/20, just 418 total students with disabilities were enrolled (53 per cent female), representing only 0.4 per cent of the total student population. While most disability types are evenly distributed across all levels of schooling, the proportion of students with learning difficulties decreased from 31 per cent in primary to 19 per cent in secondary, indicating these students are more likely to drop out.

Early marriage and early pregnancy remain widespread in Liberia, contributing to the lower rates of completion observed among girls in the secondary level. Conversely, lack of education access also heightens the risk that girls will enter into early marriage and pregnancy. According to the LDHS data, early marriage, before age 18, has decreased from 35.9 per cent in 2013 to 25 per cent in 2019, but with still higher rates for girls in rural areas and the highest among girls who have no education or whose mothers have had minimal education. The 2019 LDHS data suggest that nearly one-third of women ages 20–24 gave birth before age 18, increasing to 39 per cent in rural areas; the adolescent birth rate (girls ages 15–19) was 128 per 1,000 women. SRGBV, which includes sexual violation, coercion, and transactional sex with teachers for grades, remains common in Liberian schools, putting both girls and boys at risk. The lack of WASH infrastructure, particularly gender-sensitive infrastructure that allows girls to safely manage their menstruation with privacy, is another major barrier for girls. Only 56 per cent of all schools have WASH facilities and only 50 per cent of secondary schools have single-sex latrines, which might not all be functional.

While some important gains in secondary schooling have been made over the last five years, including increased enrollment for female students, lower repetition rates, and increased transition rates from upper basic to secondary schooling, major obstacles in access and equity at remain. Notably, stagnant low enrollment, high levels of dropout, marked disparities in access for rural and poor students, gender-based barriers for female students, limited access for students with disabilities, and SRGBV will be key issues for the next ESP to address.

The three main strategies to increase enrollment in secondary schooling for all children over the next five years of the plan are:

1. building and upgrading disability-inclusive, gender-responsive, safe education facilities;
2. reducing the costs of secondary schooling to increase access and retention;
3. reducing SRGBV to create safe, protective learning spaces and prevent dropout (*tackled in the PP2.4.3 Student well-being sub-component*).

During the ESP's time period, new secondary education facilities will be built, and existing facilities will be upgraded to be gender sensitive, safe, and disability inclusive. The construction of new facilities will include both standalone secondary schools and upgrade of existing upper basic schools into senior secondary schools through the addition of secondary classrooms. Additionally, all existing public secondary schools will be provided with school grants for school rehabilitation and renovation. These activities are currently carried out as part of the World Bank's Improving Results in Secondary Education (IRISE) project and will be continued and expanded by the government.

School costs are a particular barrier for secondary students because the landscape is dominated by more expensive private institutions and fees are also charged at public schools. The cost-reduction activities described in the Basic education component will also apply to the secondary level: a study will be conducted on the various school fee costs, with recommendations on how to regularize them, which will be used to develop a policy on how school fees are charged and what the funds can be used for.

As for activities specific to secondary schooling, in communities where there is a lack of space in public schools, subsidies will be offered, so that students can attend nearby private schools. Scholarships for girls in grades 10–12 are currently provided, through the World Bank's IRISE project, in the four counties with the highest female dropout rates at the secondary level (Bomi, Gbarpolu, Grand Bassa, and Sinoe). They

cover tuition, TLMs, a phone, and other education-related costs; the scholarships are transferred via mobile payments. The government is interested in continuing this activity during the ESP's period, targeting additional cohorts of girls. An evaluation will be conducted following the end of the project to determine the intervention's effectiveness and the extent of future scale-up. Another planned activity by the MoE to respond to the extremely limited access for students with disabilities is to provide free education for all learners with disabilities at the secondary level.

Addressing the widely pervasive issue of SRGBV will require mobilization of students, teachers, school leaders, parents, and community members to both prevent violence from occurring and establish appropriate response measures to support victims and hold perpetrators to account. While tackled in the Student well-being sub-component 2.4.3 of the Quality Priority Program, some of the activities are highlighted here, as well as in the basic education access program, because they are key response measures for access and retention, particularly for secondary school students.[17] Envisioned activities include establishing a whole-school approach to reduce SRGBV by training all secondary school teachers, school principals, DEOs, CEOs, and PTAs in preventing and addressing SRGBV, and establishing a reporting mechanism and referral pathways for reporting SRGBV in schools. To reach students, life-skills clubs will be established in secondary schools and teachers will be provided with SRGBV-related instructional materials. The club will be a channel to address safety issues, discuss communication, leadership skills, and issues related to SRGBV. Private and faith-based schools will be encouraged to adopt the female guidance counsellor approach to play a similar role.

Sub-component 1.3.1: Build and upgrade educational facilities that are child, disability, and gender sensitive, and provide safe, non-violent, disability-inclusive, and effective learning environments for all.

Indicators	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of Information
# of new secondary schools built that are disability inclusive, gender responsive, and climate resilient	N/A	7	EMIS/ASC
# of upper basic schools upgraded to senior secondary schools	N/A	50	EMIS/ASC
# of schools with adequate WASH facilities and separate latrines for boys and girls, and accessibility for students with disabilities	Tackled in Student well-being sub-component 2.4.1		
% of inclusive, gender-sensitive, and climate-resilient secondary schools	N/A	TBD	EMIS/ASC
# of secondary schools financially supported for upgrading facilities	N/A	156	Activity report

Activities

1. Build new secondary schools/upgrade UBS with secondary classes (that are disability inclusive, gender responsive, and climate resilient) near communities, using evidence-based site selection.
2. Upgrade existing schools with adequate WASH facilities and separate latrines that are gender and disability sensitive (accessible for learners with physical challenges) *(tackled in Student well-being component 2.4.1).*
3. Increase financial support to schools for upgrading facilities.

[17] Please note that the corresponding tables are not included in this section to avoid duplication; please refer to student-well-being sub-component 2.4.3.

Sub-Component 1.3.2: Reduce cost of learning at the secondary level to increase school access and retention.

Indicators	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of Information
Policy on fee regulations in secondary education developed and disseminated	No	Yes	Copy of policy
% of secondary schools making public the list of fees received	NA	100%	Activity report
# of scholarships for girls Grades 10–12 in public secondary schools	TBC	1000	Activity report
% of students with disability in public secondary schools, exempted from school fee, by sex	0	100%	EMIS/ASC

Activities

1. Develop and disseminate a policy on how fees are charged and what the funds can be used for, based on the results of nationwide research on the varying costs of school fees, with recommendations on how to regularize them *(tackled in Basic education sub-component 1.2.3).*
2. Reinforce and support DEOs to ensure school fee compliance and endorse the fee use guide *(tackled in Basic education sub-component 1.2.3).*
3. Subsidize private schools when there is not sufficient space in public schools or there are no public schools nearby.
4. Provide scholarships for girls in Grades 10–12 and evaluate the results of the intervention.
5. Provide free education for all learners with disabilities at the secondary school level.

Component 1.4: Accelerated learning program (ALP) and adult literacy program

With the MoE committed to making a concerted effort for tackling the long-standing issue of strikingly high rates of over-age children in the system, alternative education pathways will have a key role in absorbing children diverted from ECE programs in the formal system under the new strengthened over-age policy. Bolstering alternative education options must, therefore, be a key related priority to ensure that children continue to have access to learning, despite being outside formal school, and have defined pathways to transition back into the formal system as and when appropriate. This need for enhanced capacity of the alternative education stream, as well as strengthened linkages with the formal system, raises a number of challenges, as outlined below.

Key challenges related to alternative education:

- inadequate coverage of alternative education programs across Liberia, especially in hard-to-reach areas;
- limited number of partners focused on this area;
- huge stock of over-age children in ECE and primary levels and out-of-school children;
- low demand due to limited coverage of programs and limited awareness among parents of the value of alternative education programs;
- limited infrastructure for alternative education programs;

- insufficient data on key indicators concerning ALP, alternative basic education, and adult literacy programs;
- Shortage of qualified teachers trained in alternative education methodology, especially female teachers;
- outdated alternative basic education curriculum that has not been revised in many years;
- limited monitoring of ALP, alternative basic education, and adult literacy programs;
- persistent wide gender gaps in literacy between women and men: 52 per cent of women aged 15–49 are literate compared to 75 per cent of men (LDHS 2019/20).

Specific Objectives: Reduce the percentage of out-of-school children, over-age learners, and illiterate adults, especially women, by increasing access to quality alternative education programs.

Indicators	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of Information
# of learners enrolled in ALPs, by sex (M/F)	13,311 6,817/6,494	118,653	EMIS/ASC
% of female learners enrolled in ALPs	48.8%	50%	EMIS/ASC
% of learners with disabilities enrolled in ALPs, by sex (M/F)	0,6%	1.8%	EMIS/ASC
# of over-age ECE and primary learners redirected to ALPs, by sex (M/F)	N/A	109,650	EMIS/ASC
SDG 4.6.3 # and % of illiterate youth/adults enrolled in literacy program by sex (M/F), by disability status	N/A	2,703	EMIS/ASC
SDG 4.6.2. adult 15–49 literacy rate (M/F)	75%/ 52%	80%/57%	Household surveys (DHS)

There are three types of alternative learning programs in Liberia: ALPs, alternative basic education, and adult education. ALPs target students aged 8–15 who are already enrolled in basic education but are more than two years over age for their class. ALP provides them with a three-year condensed cycle of lower primary education, after which they can either transition back to formal education or begin working. ALPs are taught by mainstream teachers (on the payroll or volunteer) in primary schools, predominantly those with a lighter workload. There are three levels of ALP, requiring two teachers per level, so a total of six teachers are needed for the full, three-level ALP program. Under the AQE program, , supported by the United Stated Agency for International Development (USAID), ALPs were expanded (as further detailed below) with a top-up of USD 30 provided to teachers who worked on the ALP outside school working hours as an incentive to compensate for their additional workload. Building on and in coordination with the AQE program, the World Bank's LLF program includes a component on expanding ALP for over-age ECE students in six of the most disadvantaged counties, where rates of poverty, stunting, and unqualified teachers are particularly acute (Bomi, Grand Kru, Maryland, Rivercess, River Gee, and Sinoe), with a proposed top-up incentive of USD 50 for teachers working outside regular school hours. In areas neither project covers, PTAs are expected to fill the incentives gap, when needed. Each of these approaches raises questions of sustainability and so far, there is no established policy to guide the provision of top-ups. To

minimize the recourse to top-up and ensure financial sustainability, the MoE is planning to rely as much as possible on mainstreamed teachers, starting with those on the payroll and with less workload.

With the MoE's strategic shift to drastically reduce the number of over-age students by diverting them to alternative education pathways, the demand for ALP will sharply increase, which will put pressure on the existing supply of teachers. In addition to recruiting more teachers, the implication could be that a double-shift system in the school day may need to be initiated to maximize the use of both school premises and the current teaching force.

Alternative basic education is for older students, aged 15–25, who are already in the workplace. It provides them with numeracy and literacy knowledge, as well as leadership and life skills content. Like ALP, alternative basic education has three levels and requires six teachers, including a principal with a teaching role. Alternative basic education covers basic literacy, numeracy, and life skills; is taught in stand-alone centers; and is entirely supported by development partners, including recruitment of teachers, who are not on the MoE's payroll but must have a minimum of a C-level certification. Because alternative basic education is not institutionalized within MoE, lack of data and quality assurance issues are key concerns.

Adult education consists of both primary and secondary education for adults over the age of 18, usually through night school programs that are taught by teachers on top of their normal timetable or by volunteers, with PTAs providing subsidies. the *Accelerated Learning Program Policy* (2007) guides the ALP activities, and the *Alternative Basic Education Policy* (2011) guides the alternative basic education activities. A draft harmonized policy is awaiting endorsement.

A key component of ALP is facilitating students' transition back to formal education, which could be basic/secondary education or TVET. At the end of each ALP level, students take a summative assessment. If they pass the assessment and are less than two years over age for their next grade level, they will be able to transition back into the formal system. If they are more than two years over age after passing the assessment, they progress to the next ALP level (level 2 or 3). When students graduate from level 3 and are 15 years old or older, they can transition to adult education or TVET, or are supported to transition to the workplace. This becomes problematic for 15-year-old students in levels 1 or 2, who are too old to progress to a higher level within ALP but do not yet have the skills to transition into TVET. Alternative basic education programs are less widely available, which may make them less accessible.

According to EMIS data, enrollment in ALP programs has remained mainly stagnant, with 12,952 students enrolled in 2015 and 12,837 in 2019/20. There was a noted decrease in the number of students at level 3 (from 2,976 to 1,992). In 2015, women made up 57.5 per cent of ALP enrollments, but female enrollment dropped to 48.4 per cent in 2019/20, with near parity between male and female learners.

A major alternative education initiative that occurred over the last plan period was the AQE program for Liberian children funded by USAID/Liberia and implemented by the Education Development Center from 2017 to 2021. The AQE program increased ALP access for 63,893 8–15-year-olds across six counties (Bong, Grand Bassa, Lofa, Margibi, Montserrado, and Nimba). In collaboration with the MoE the program supported accelerated education in 264 school sites, provided professional development for 1,229 teachers and 657 education officers, supported 275 PTAs, and renovated 968 classrooms. Resources were provided to the 264 sites, including furniture and operational supplies. Key policies were also developed within multiple technical working groups for the institutionalization of ALP: an Alternative Education School Quality Assessment; an integrated Learner Eligibility Assessment and Certification Policy to assess

ALP learners' eligibility, assessment, and certification in one set of guidelines; and a revised curriculum. The structured ALP curriculum revision was also carried out to align ALP curriculum with the new national curriculum. The revised ALP curriculum is still implemented in the 191 Accelerated Learning Program–Conventional Schools (ALP-CS) established by the program and is planned to be used for ALP-CS scale-up through programs supported by partners, including UNICEF, GPE, Luminos, and BRAC.

An evaluation of the AQE program conducted in 2021 (NORC, 2021) found that overall, the ALP model was well-received, particularly the curriculum, with positive views on sustaining and scaling up the model. Constraints included limited funding, availability of TLMs, and merging of classes. A total retention rate of 65 per cent was achieved, with 22 per cent of ALP students transitioning to conventional school and 43 per cent staying in ALP. Stipends for ALP teaching staff were perceived to be linked to retention of staff and valued as compensation for increased workloads—a key implication for the ESP's intention to provide top-up subsidies for ALP teachers.

Crucially, the evaluation highlighted the critical importance of tackling the issue of over-age children in mainstream schools, noting that 'The ALP can only be sustainable if the conventional system serves on-age children so that ALP can focus on over-age children. As they are currently functioning, the conventional system and ALP are basically two parallel systems serving the same children, in which both groups may be disadvantaged' (NORC, 2021: viii). Therefore, ensuring on-age enrollment and expansion of ALP are the two key leveraging strategies for the MoE to tackle the over-age issue in a sustainable way. To explore how the AQE program could be integrated into conventional schools under the lead of the government, following the end of Education Development Center's management of the program, a pilot was conducted, which revealed four possible scenarios for ALP integration. Schools that have enough adequate classrooms (at least three extra classrooms for the three ALP levels), as well as enough teacher time and demand for ALP, can offer full ALP–CS provision, with all three levels of ALP provided within existing schools. Schools can also provide partial ALP–CS, providing basic education Grades 3–6 and level 1 of ALP or Grades 5–6 and levels 1 and 2 of ALP. Lastly, schools that have a majority of over-age students could exclusively provide ALP classes. The MoE decided that schools could choose the model that best fits their situation based on demand and available resources.

While the AQE and LLFP programs have provided new momentum to the alternative learning program, many challenges in the sub-sector remain. There is still a large stock of over-age children, particularly in ECE and primary, which spill over to every subsequent education level, negatively affecting all students' education. Although over-age students are meant to be transferred to ALP programs, the coverage of alternative education programs in Liberia remains inadequate, particularly in hard-to-reach areas, and many over-age children remain in conventional classrooms.

There is a shortage of qualified teachers properly trained in alternative education methodology, as well as a scarcity of adequate infrastructure to house alternative programs. This limited coverage of alternative programs, in-turn, leads to low demand. There is also poor awareness among parents and community members about the value of alternative education programs, contributing to the overall low enrollment. The expected eventual transition of students from ALP back into basic education often does not occur, with unclear pathways between the two systems. Insufficient data on key ALP, alternative basic education, and adult literacy program indicators, and limited monitoring of all programs make it difficult to monitor quality or plan for adequate program coverage.

Addressing the issue of over-age students, especially at the ECE and primary levels, is an essential overarching priority over the course of the next ESP period. Increasing access to alternative education programs will be the key strategy to reduce over-age students throughout the school system, as well as decrease the number of out-of-school students and illiterate adults. This will be achieved by revising the *Alternative Learning Framework*; scaling-up ALP classes in lower basic schools; conducting awareness-raising activities; and establishing additional adult literacy programs.

Over the next five years, the plan is to revise the existing alternative education policies, including with a gender lens, by integrating components focused on out-of-school children and defining pathways that link the alternative and formal education streams, with consideration for the needs of pregnant girls/lactating mothers and girls and boys with disabilities. This will involve first, a policy review and then, the actual revision process in partnership with key stakeholders. Once the policy revision is completed, it will be essential to inform both teachers and parents of the new policy framework, particularly the provisions related to over-age children's transition between alternative education programs and the formal education system, as well as options for pregnant girls. Orientation for teachers on the new policy framework will occur during back-to-school training; orientation sessions for parents will be conducted at the school-level.

Expanding ALP programs nationally to be able to accommodate the large number of over-age students is a major initiative of the plan and will first, require a study to conceptualize ALP scale-up and detail the phasing, sequencing, and operational steps for smooth roll-out. The study[18] will help guide the MoE in planning the roll-out of alternative education programs, working with partners who want to implement programs, and allocating government resources. Among others, possible strategies for the subsequent scale-up of ALP classes could include holding parallel programs in existing schools with one to three classes reserved for alternative education programs; establishing a double-shift system in lower basic schools, with ALP classes held during the afternoon sessions; and temporarily only offering ALP in selected institutions, when a sizeable number of the student population, such as 90 per cent, is over age. The plan envisions the use of existing teachers on school premises and provide a USD 50-top-up allowance when teachers take on extra ALP shifts during after-class hours, as was effective in the AQE program. It is also possible to assign underused teachers to exclusively teach ALP. Different options will be assessed based on feasibility and sustainability, recognizing that appropriate ALP modalities will be very location specific, depending on the locality, space, and teacher and student population. The newly developed School Quality Assessment (SQA) could be instrumental in identifying which schools have the capacity to accommodate ALP programs. It is important to emphasize that this initiative will require full engagement of the private sector; the MoE will liaise with private school departments to coordinate their respective role in the ALP-scale up.

Scaling up quality ALP provision will not only involve the expansion of classrooms but also necessitate provision of relevant TLMs, a curriculum, and preparing teachers to support ALP students. Consequently, the plan is to provide all ALP classes with adequate TLMs, including student workbooks. Additionally, a revision of the ALP curriculum will be gender responsive and disability inclusive, entail contemporary issues, such as education for sustainable development and climate change, and outline defined learning pathways between formal and alternative systems (note that curriculum revision will be addressed in the Curriculum, TLM, and assessment sub-component 2.1.1). To properly prepare teachers, ALP teaching

[18] In addition to the study, strategies for ALP scale-up will also be informed by the recommendations of the AQE evaluation.

methods and content will be integrated into the teacher training curriculum, including the in-service CPD modules (addressed in the Teacher education sub-component 2.3.) The last important activity for ALP expansion is to improve community engagement and awareness to increase ALP enrollment. Community meetings, held in coordination with basic education, will help raise awareness of the need to enroll over-age and out-of-school children in ALP programs, as well as the importance of initially enrolling children in correct grade level for their age.

As far as other alternative learning programs, it is planned to phase out alternative basic education during the plan period and to instead, direct students over the age of 15 to the informal TVET stream. However, adult literacy programs will be expanded, targeting illiterate adults who have not finished basic education, especially women. These programs will take place in existing schools at night shifts and as with ALP, a USD 50-top-up allowance for existing teachers taking on extra shifts is envisioned. Community-engagement and -awareness activities will be carried out to raise awareness of the value of adult literacy programs to increase enrollment. Special attention will be given to attracting female participants to literacy programs.

Sub-component 1.4.1: Revise the Alternative Learning Framework so it is gender and disability inclusive.

Indicators	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of Information
ALP policy and strategy (including defined pathways between alternative and formal systems) reviewed/revised	No	Yes	Policy review report

Activities

1. Review the current ALP policy to determine to what extent it is gender and disability inclusive, and whether it includes provisions for prevention of/response to SRGBV.
2. Revise the ALP strategy to address increased demand for ALP and include needs of students with disabilities and girls (pregnant/lactating mothers) and ensure pathways between alternative and formal education systems are defined.
3. Conduct orientation to new policy framework during back-to-school training for teachers, parents, and communities at the ECE and primary levels.
4. Revise the ALP curriculum with a gender-responsive, disability-inclusive, and ESD/climate change lens and in alignment with the formal education curriculum *(tackled in Curriculum, TLM, and assessment sub-component 2.1.1).*

Sub-component 1.4.2: Increase equitable access to alternative learning opportunities for over-age students and out-of-school children.

Indicators	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of Information
Feasibility study for ALP scale-up conducted	No	Yes	Copy of needs assessment
# and % of public and private schools with ALP classes	Public – 5% Private – 1%	Public – 36% Private – 16%	EMIS/ASC

Activities

1. Conduct a study to conceptualize the flow of ALP scale-up, including sequencing and phasing, and the implementation plan.
2. Conduct a study to understand the number and gender dynamics of out-of-school children and over-age learners, including girls and boys with disabilities *(tackled in Basic education sub-component 1.2.3).*
3. Scale-up the ALP in existing public and private LBE schools, in particular in under-served areas, according to assessment results.
4. Increase community engagement and awareness of ALP to drive increased enrollment *(tackled in Access PP components 1.1 and 1.2).*

Sub-component 1.4.3: Increase equitable access to alternative learning opportunities for adults.

Indicators	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of Information
# of adult literacy programs	0	135	EMIS/ASC
# of awareness-raising campaigns conducted per county (cumulative)	0	5	Annual report

Activities

1. Establish additional adult literacy programs in existing schools.
2. Increase community engagement and awareness of adult literacy to drive increased enrollment.

Priority Program 2. Quality and learning in ECE and general education

The *overall objective* of priority program 2 (PP 2) is to improve the quality of the inputs into the system at the ECE, basic, and secondary levels so that effective learning can take place in a safe, protective environment, resulting in improved learning outcomes at all levels.

Access and quality are inextricably linked—children are more likely to enter and stay in school if they and their parents can see positive returns on the investment in education in terms of knowledge gained, marketable and life skills acquired, and life opportunities enhanced. Improving the quality of education is, therefore, an urgent priority for encouraging enrollment, improving learning outcomes, and increasing the efficiency of the system.

PP 2 is structured around four components, each focusing on critical quality area:

- Component 2.1: Curriculum, teaching, and learning materials, and assessment;
- Component 2.2: STEM;
- Component 2.3: Teacher education and professional development;
- Component 2.4: Promoting student well-being programs (integrated school health, school counselling, school feeding, national service, community engagement) and prevent SRGBV.

Component 2.1: Curriculum, teaching and learning materials (TLM), and assessment

Results of recent assessments reveal critical learning deficits at all levels, starting in the early years and widening at each higher level. This represents an inefficient use of scarce resources, both in terms of the public funds invested and the sacrifices parents made at the household level to provide their children with education. Hence, the ultimate objective of this component is to enhance the delivery of gender-responsive, quality, and disability-inclusive curricula and assessment services across all levels of education so that students have the resources they need to learn effectively.

Achieving this objective entails tackling a number of key challenges, as outlined below.

Key challenges related to curriculum, TLM, and assessment:

- limited availability of play-based, age-appropriate curricula and materials at ECE level;
- absence of a streamlined transition from ECE to primary Grade 1;
- limited availability of a curriculum at the ECE, lower, upper basic, and secondary levels in some schools, which has led to the poor delivery of content;
- lack of inclusivity in the curriculum, which continues to undermine the participation of learners with disabilities in education (especially children with visual and hearing impairment);
- inadequate TLMs at all levels, causing extreme distress on students and teachers; without adequate learning resources, students are unable to exploit their full potential;

- lack of textbook use policy, resulting in a lack of standards in textbooks use—for instance, teachers use multiple textbooks to provide content on a single topic;
- weak testing and evaluation of learning due to insufficient logistics and human capacity, which means that the examination management body has to involve external parties, and this has caused problems in the past, with cases of examination malpractice;
- foundational gaps in reading fluency, as well as poor learning outcomes generally.

Strategic Objective: To enhance delivery of gender-responsive, quality, and disability-inclusive curricula and assessment services at all levels of education so that students have the resources they need to learn effectively.

Indicators	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of Information
SDG 4.1.1: % of children and young people (1) in Grade 3; (2) at the end of primary; and (3) at the end of upper basic, who achieve at least a minimum proficiency level in (a) reading and (b) mathematics, by sex (M/F)	**G3 (2021)** Language written: 53% (M:54% F:52%) Math written: 44% (M:46% F:41%) **G6 (2021)** Language written: 47% (M:49% F: 45%) Math written: 40% (M:43% F:38%)	**G3** English 60%/60% Math: 52%/49% **G6** English 57%/55% Math: 50%/47%	Assessment report (NLAP pilot)
National examination pass rate, by education level, by sex (M/F)	LPSCE (2020) 77% (M:78%; F:76%) LJHSCE (2020) 77% (M:78%; F:77%) WASSCE (2020) 63% (M:63%, F:63%)	LPSCE M:86%; F:86% LJHSCE M:86%; F:86% WASSCE M:71%, F:71%	WAEC report
Student–textbook ratio, all core subjects average, by education level	LBE: 1:7 UBE: 1:7 Secondary: 1:8	LBE: 1:1 UBE: 1:1 Secondary: 1:1	EMIS/ASC

Over the last five years, the *National Curriculum Policy and Framework* was successfully implemented and in 2019, the standardized curriculum was reformed from content-based to competency-based, at all school levels. The competency-based curriculum reform included integrating civics education, skill-based health education, and geography with African studies (for higher level students). Civics education had been removed from the curriculum during the civil war—the reintroduction of the topic allowed students to once again learn about important national topics relating to government and citizenship. Sexual and reproductive health education has become a crucial response to the rise in early sex, pregnancy, and risky behaviours of the Liberian youth, and the importance of skill-based health education programs in schools is cited in both the *National Policy on Girls Education* and the *School Health Policy*. In partnership with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), skill-based health education was successfully integrated across

subjects in the national curriculum. Textbooks were also provided to classrooms—a major achievement following the destruction from the war and limited materials available within schools.

Despite the recent curriculum revision, the lack of inclusivity in the curriculum content remains a concern, undermining the participation of learners with disabilities in education, especially children with visual and hearing impairments. While the Inclusive Education Policy Implementation Plan includes a strategy to 'review, revise, and adapt national curricula content for diversity of learners and learning needs' (Liberia, 2018: 19), this has not yet occurred and there are currently no specialized TLMs available for learners with special needs. At the ECE level, there is a lack of play-based, age-appropriate curriculum and materials, and the curriculum is not currently aligned with Grade 1 curriculum, which is needed for a coherent transition from ECE- to primary-level schooling. In Liberia, national languages are not used as the language of instruction, at any levels. Alternative learning pathway curricula are not harmonized with basic education curriculum, which complicates students' re-entry into the formal education system.

There is critically limited availability of adequate curricula and TLMs throughout ECE, lower and upper basic, and secondary levels, as well as the ALP, making it difficult for teachers to adequately conduct lessons and preventing students from reaching their full potential. While the development and distribution of teacher guides—a key resource for teachers to implement lessons in classrooms—were envisioned in the last ESP, this initiative was not carried out due to lack of resources. Funding remains a major challenge, with high costs for printing and distributing TLMs at a national scale. Printing materials locally is costly. Although printing materials abroad can be cheaper, high international shipping costs negate potential savings. Logistics in the distribution of learning materials are also complicated, with long distances between schools and roads being inaccessible during the rainy season, six months of the year. The absence of a textbook use policy has also led to a lack of standards in textbooks use, leading to situations where teachers use multiple textbooks to provide material on a single topic.

Assessment results reveal foundational gaps in learning outcomes across all levels of schooling, starting in early grades, with students in Grades 2 and 3 scoring far below oral reading fluency.[19] While assessment is a crucial practice to monitor and improve student learning generally, testing and evaluation of learning areas remain very weak in Liberia, due to insufficient human capacity and logistics. To make up for these weaknesses, the management body for testing has had to involve external bodies, which causes problems with cases of examination malpractice. The lack of standardized national assessments in primary grades prevents timely detection and response to gaps in foundational skills, which only increase in the course of students' schooling.

As part of an assessment policy reform, a 2021 pilot assessment was conducted with learners in Grades 3 and 6 from Bomi, Bong, Grand Bassa, Margibi, Montserrado, and Rivercess counties. The assessment focused on core subjects of reading and mathematics. Overall, Grade 3 students performed particularly poorly on oral language assessments, answering only 1 in 4 questions correctly (24 per cent) and Grade 6 students scored only marginally better, at 36 per cent. Their performance was relatively better on written language assessments—47 per cent for Grade 3 and 53 per cent for Grade 6. In mathematics, Grade 3 students answered 43 per cent of questions correctly in oral examinations and 44 per cent in written. Grade 6 students performed comparatively better in oral mathematics assessments, with 61 per cent of

[19] A 2017 EGRA data, through a NORC 2017 baseline study, showed Grade 2 students read approximately 10 correct words-per-minute (cwpm) compared to the 35cwpm benchmark.

questions answered correctly. They did worse than Grade 3 students in written mathematics assessments, scoring at 40 per cent. Boys had better results than girls in mathematics, particularly in Grade 3, with a 24-per cent better performance than girls, compared to 16 per cent in Grade 6. In language, differences between boys and girls scores were minimal.

National and regional examinations present more positive results, although performance decreases at the senior secondary level. In 2020, 77 per cent of students passed the LPSCE, 77 per cent passed the LJHSCE, and only 6 out of 10 candidates (63 per cent) passed the WASSCE, with large discrepancies across subjects. While 53 per cent of students passed in mathematics and 55 per cent in English, the proportion is much lower in science subjects, at only 15 per cent in physics, 14 per cent in chemistry, and 11 per cent in biology. Overall, pass rates also obscure the actual exam scores, which in the vast majority of cases, are too low to receive credit. In the WASSCE, only 2.17 per cent of candidates passed with credits in at least three of nine subjects, and only 0.43 per cent with credits in both core mathematics and English subjects.

A *National Learning Assessment Policy* (NLAP) was recently developed focusing on addressing the current low learning outcomes across schooling levels and the challenges in assessment capacity. Responding to the *2019 National Curriculum Policy* (NCP), which calls for developing an assessment system for the new competency-based curriculum, the NLAP seeks to assess learning at the primary level to provide early diagnosis of gaps in learning outcomes and ultimately, inform decision-making and remedy processes. Because Grades 3 and 6 are critical points to detect gaps in foundational literacy and numeracy skills to allow for intervention, the policy provides a framework to regularly assess students at these grade levels. To improve upon past sampling weaknesses, a sampling procedure will be established to ensure that sampled populations are representative of all regions of the country; the policy also recommends a sub-sample of out-of-school learners.

The curriculum, assessment, and TLM PP will address the various challenges in these domains in the next five-year sector plan through the following core strategies:

1. reviewing the competence-based curricula, including through a gender and disability-inclusion lens, and enhancing teacher capacity;
2. providing relevant teaching and integrated learning materials at all levels;
3. promoting regular assessment and dialogue on results;
4. monitoring curriculum implementation and coaching teachers (*tackled in Governance sub-component 3.4*).

The ultimate objective of this program is to enhance the delivery of gender-responsive, quality, and disability-inclusive curricula and assessment services, across all levels of education.

Keeping the curriculum up to date with relevant contemporary issues for Liberian students is a major initiative for the ESP, particularly the emphasis on introducing disability-inclusive education, ensuring gender-responsive elements, and integrating education for sustainable development to raise students' awareness of climate change impacts and environmental protection, expand students' adaptive capacity, and reduce their vulnerability to climate change impacts. For the ECE level, in addition to gender and disability inclusion, the focus will be on expanding gender-equal, play-based elements and ensuring coherence with Grade 1 curriculum for a smooth transition to primary schooling.

The Center of Excellence for Curriculum Development and Research will spearhead the reform, completing a desk review to identify relevant content and mobilizing qualified specialists for developing each subject at every level of schooling. The new curriculum will then be piloted and evaluated in selected schools prior to being rolled out and before teacher training on quality curricula delivery is conducted. Teacher Training Institutes and the Teacher's Education Bureau will be key partners for training new and current teachers on the new curriculum content. This same review and revision process will occur for ALP curriculum—currently there is no centralized ALP curriculum, with diverse actors implementing their own curriculum content. Creation of a centralized ALP curriculum that is harmonized with the revised basic education content is envisioned to facilitate students' re-entry into basic education schools. Both hard copies and an e-version (for non-public schools) of all curricula will be produced to ensure that curricula are available to *all* schools across the country.

Once the curriculum reform is completed, TLMs will be developed in line with the new curriculum content. A review, including from a gender and disability-inclusion lens, will be conducted to determine the extent to which existing textbooks and other TLMs are aligned with the revised curricula and what needs to be revised. As a major initiative, in the course of 5 years, textbooks will be provided to *all* students, with a ratio of one core textbook for one student in schools at all levels, as well as relevant TLMs, including workbooks and laboratory manuals for related STEM subjects. This will again include not only hard copies but also e-versions of all TLMS, available on a flash drive and the MoE's website for non-public schools. The digitalization of textbooks and other TLMs will guarantee that regardless of the type of school students attend, they will be able to access materials.

Along with the development of gender-responsive and disability-inclusive teacher guides and student workbooks in line with the new curriculum, specific TLMs for students with disabilities will be developed for the first time, including Braille and sign language resources. For ECE schools, age-appropriate, play-based TLMs that portray women and men, girls and boys with and without disabilities in a range of active roles within and outside the home will be provided—an important element for quality ECE services that support holistic child development. The development of a costed TLM, textbook procurement and distribution plan, and the finalization and roll-out of the *Textbook Management Strategy* will guide the TLM provision process to ensure that set standards are being adhered to. The *Textbook Management Strategy* will establish a set lifespan of books so students can pass them down and reuse for several years.

Regular student assessment and dialogue on results to address gaps in learning outcomes, particularly at the primary level, are another critical aspect that will be strengthened over the next five years. The NLAP is in the process of being finalized, establishing national-level assessments at Grade 3 and Grade 6 levels. During the plan period, the Center of Excellence for Curriculum Development and Research will work with partners to disseminate the policy, including conducting a stakeholder engagement forum to get buy-in from key partners. The NLAP will then guide the development of a national learning assessment system to track the learning outcomes of learners at Grades 3 and 6. To address assessment at the ECE level, ECE teachers will be trained through CPD and pre-service training on how to conduct school-level continuous assessment. Because repetition will no longer be allowed at the ECE level, the assessment findings on each student will be used to guide pedagogical interventions when they transition to the primary level.[20]

[20] The available policy is currently for the primary level. It is intended to be scaled up to the upper level.

A final activity will be the organization of inclusive, quality dialogue fora with stakeholders to discuss assessment results and jointly develop strategies to improve student learning.

Monitoring curriculum implementation has been a major area of deficiency. When a new curriculum is developed, it is important to understand how it is actually implemented in classrooms and what both students and teachers comprehend, in order to provide adequate follow-up and support. The newly developed SQA tool will enable DEOs to assess curriculum delivery in classrooms as part of the 'teaching and learning standard', which specifically encompasses a dimension on curriculum, including the alignment of lesson plans to the curriculum; mastery of lessons by students; and demonstration of curriculum competencies in teaching (note that this activity is addressed in Government component 3.4). This assessment will inform periodic coaching and mentoring for teachers on curriculum delivery and textbook use as part of CPD (addressed in Teacher education sub-component 2.3.4).

Sub-component 2.1.1: Review the competence-based curricula and enhance teachers' capacity to address contemporary and emerging issues, including promoting gender-responsive education, education for sustainable development, and quality and disability-inclusive learning at all levels.

Indicators	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of Information
Gender-responsive, disability-inclusive, age-appropriate, and play-based ECE curriculum validated	No	Yes	Copy of curriculum
% of ECE schools receiving the age-appropriate/play-based ECE curriculum (print or e-copy)	N/A	100%	EMIS/ASC
Competency-based curricula, including emerging and contemporary issues, reviewed, updated, and validated (G1 to G12)	N/A	Yes (for all grades)	Copy of curriculum
% of schools receiving the updated curricula (print or e-copy), by education level	N/A	100%	EMIS/ASC
ALP curriculum reviewed, updated, and validated	No	Yes	Copy of curriculum
% of ALP facilities receiving the updated ALP curricula (print or e-copy)	N/A	100%	EMIS/ASC
% of teachers trained on the revised curriculum, by education levels and by sex (M/F)	37%	100%	Annual report

Activities

1. Revise the ECE curricula to integrate play-based elements, consistent with Grade 1 curriculum aspects of gender responsiveness and inclusiveness for children with disabilities; print/develop e-version of the revised curricula, and distribute the curricula and syllabi appropriately to all schools.
2. Revise the curricula for basic and secondary education to integrate inclusiveness for children with disabilities, gender responsiveness, and contemporary issues, including education for sustainable development and climate change; print/develop e-version of the revised curricula, and distribute the curricula and syllabi appropriately to all schools.
3. Harmonize and align the national ALP curriculum to the revised basic education curriculum, including integrating inclusiveness for children with disabilities, gender responsiveness, and contemporary issues, such as education for sustainable development and climate change; print/develop e-version of the revised curricula, and distribute the curricula and syllabi appropriately to all schools (*also mentioned in Alternative education sub-component 1.4.1).*

4. Train teachers in public schools for quality delivery of curricula.
   - Mobilize content specialists to conduct training on curriculum use in partnership with Teacher education sub-component 2.3 in quality PP.
   - Provide continued mentorship and coaching following initial teacher training.

Sub-component 2.1.2: Provide TLMs at all levels.

Indicators	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of Information
TLMs reviewed (including with a gender-responsive, disability- inclusive, and education for sustainable development/climate change lens) and adopted, by education level	No	Yes	Review report
Set of teacher guides per school ratio, ECE	N/A	1:1	EMIS/ASC
Set of teacher guide–to–teacher ratio, by education level (other levels than ECE)	N/A	1:1	EMIS/ASC
Set of textbooks–to–student ratio, by education level (levels other than ECE)	7:1	1:1	EMIS/ASC
Set of workbooks–to–student ratio, by education level	N/A	1:1	EMIS/ASC
#/% of TLM and visual aid package distributed in public schools, by education level	N/A	6,558, 100% (public)	EMIS/ASC
#/% of ECE schools benefitting from age-appropriate, play-based teaching materials	N/A	2,546, 100% (public)	EMIS/ASC
Textbook management policy validated	No	Yes	Copy of policy

Activities

1. Develop and integrate TLMs for the revised curricula (including climate change, life skills, and skill-based health education materials with a gender and inclusive lens).
2. Review existing textbooks with a gender and disability-inclusive lens, provide guidelines on what is fit for use at all levels (ECE, basic, and secondary), and update according to the revised curricula framework, syllabi, and teacher guides.
3. Develop, procure, and distribute gender-responsive and disability-inclusive
   - teachers' guides to teachers in ECE, basic, and secondary schools, and ALP;
   - textbooks to ECE, basic, and secondary schools, and ALP;
   - workbooks to students at ECE, basic, and secondary schools, and ALP;
   - laboratory manuals to basic, secondary schools, and ALP (also mentioned in STEM sub-component 2.2.2);
   - visuals aids for classrooms in ECE, basic, and secondary schools, and ALP.
4. Provide Braille for students with visual impairment and sign language (visual manual) to students with hearing impairment in ECE, basic, and secondary schools, and ALP.
5. Procure and distribute to ECE schools gender-responsive, disability-inclusive, play-based TLMs with a focus on locally produced and locally relevant materials.
6. Develop a costed TLM and textbook procurement and distribution plan.

7. Finalize the textbook management policy.

Sub-component 2.1.3: Promoting regular assessments and dialogue on results

Indicators	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of Information
Learning assessment policy disseminated	No	Yes	Copy of policy
# of learning assessments conducted per year	2	2	Copy of annual report
# of quality, inclusive dialogue engagements held per year	NA	1	Activity report
Activities			

1. Conduct stakeholders' engagement forum, including women's/girls'/youth networks and disabled people's organizations, and disseminate the national learning assessment policy to all key stakeholders.
2. Develop a national learning assessment system for tracking learning outcomes at Grades 3 and 6. Conduct nation-wide learning assessment survey to provide information on performance results or learning outcomes.
3. Organize inclusive, quality dialogue forums with stakeholders to discuss assessment results and improvement strategies. Conduct inclusive stakeholders dialogue to discuss assessment results and outline improvement strategies.
4. Conduct school-based, teacher-led school-readiness continuous assessment of children at the ECE level *(tackled in Teacher education sub-component 2.3).*

Component 2.2: STEM

In an increasingly globalized world driven by digital technology, it is imperative that schools equip students with the knowledge and skills needed to cope with, thrive in, and contribute meaningfully to the dynamically and rapidly shifting 21st-century economic and social landscape. Accordingly, the MoE has elevated the importance of STEM teaching to a level of high priority in the ESP. Improving the current capacity for STEM teaching, especially ensuring that it is gender sensitive and inclusive of all students, entails tackling a number of difficult challenges, as outlined below.

Key challenges related to STEM:

- non-availability of a STEM policy;
- limited exposure to STEM, coupled with long-standing social constructs that are biased against girls, including girls with disabilities;
- absence of a standardized lab manual to be used in schools to guide lab demonstrators on what activities and experiments are to be demonstrated on a periodic basis;
- lack of lab manuals and functional labs at all levels;
- non-use of the few labs that are equipped due to a lack of trained lab demonstrators;
- limited number of trained teachers and lab demonstrators, especially female;

- lack of training in STEM for majority of teachers in public schools; teachers specialized in other subjects tend to fill the gap in STEM subjects, without adequate knowledge on the subject matter, resulting in poor deliverables;
- lack of exposure to and awareness of the importance of STEM education, with an absence of science clubs and science fairs in schools;
- lack of access to STEM and digital education;
- inadequate internet access and connectivity, and access to e-equipment—urban/rural divide and socio-economic divide.

Strategic Objective: Improve the delivery of gender-responsive, disability-inclusive, quality STEM and digital programs at all levels.

Indicators	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of Information
% of students passing in general science and mathematics in LJHSCE, by sex (M/F)	LJHSCE (2020) general science 81%/80% math 80%/80%	LJHSCE general science 90%//90% math 90%/90%	WAEC report
% of students passing in biology, chemistry, physics, and mathematics in WASSCE, by sex (M/F)	WASSCE (2020) math: 53% biology: 11% chemistry: 14% physics: 15%	WASSCE math: 60% biology:20 % chemistry: 20% physics: 20%	WAEC report
SDG 4.4.2 % of youth/adults who have achieved at least a minimum level of proficiency in digital literacy skills (M/F)	N/A	50%	YMIS and EMIS/ASC HH survey

Over the last five years, due to lack of funds and partners, the MoE has not been able to capture STEM activities under the national ESP. However, STEM is now recognized as a crucial field for advancing Liberia's sustainable development and economic growth, providing students with the key 21st-century skills needed in today's workforce. Both medium- and long-term STEM interventions are integrated in the 2018–2023 Pro Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development, including specialized training for STEM teachers, recruiting qualified STEM teachers, and establishing three regional STEM institutions.

Promoting digital education will involve adapting teacher's pedagogical practices to incorporate and use digital technologies, as well as providing students with opportunities to directly use technologies to allow them to acquire the basic digital literacy skills that have become crucial in today's global society. In the coming years, as the country becomes more connected with increased electricity and internet access, digital technology access will also become increasingly easier and widespread, and it will be less costly to roll out digital programs. Accordingly, the recently developed *2021–2026 ICT in Education Strategy* commits to embedding ICT in teaching, learning, and assessment in Liberian schools and details objectives and activities in four key areas: (1) teaching, learning, and assessment using ICT; (2) teacher professional learning; (3) leadership, research, and policy; and (4) ICT infrastructure. Improving girls' and women's

access to STEM subjects is also cited in the *National Girls' Education Policy* as a strategy for improving the quality of girls' education.

While the increased focus on STEM is encouraging, many challenges still need to be addressed to improve the quality of, and equitable access to, STEM subjects across Liberian schools. Notably, there is no national STEM policy needed to guide the organization and advancement of the sub-sector. Girls' participation in STEM subjects is also particularly limited; stereotypes and myths about girls' inferiority in STEM subjects discourage girls from pursuing STEM courses and related careers, leading to mostly male-dominated STEM-related professions. Availability of competent STEM teachers, particularly female teachers, is another major issue. Although STEM topics are integrated in the current competency-based curriculum revised in 2019 and an IT curriculum has been developed, there is still a large shortage of qualified STEM and digital teachers, because the majority of teachers in Liberia are not trained in STEM subjects. In some rural areas, English teachers fill this gap, but without adequate knowledge on the subjects, their delivery is very poor. Adequately teaching STEM subjects also requires relevant hands-on TLMs, such as functional laboratories, science materials, IT devices (including desktop PCs, laptops, and printers) and internet connectivity, all of which are largely absent across the country. Rural areas especially have limited equipment and internet access, widening the rural/urban and socioeconomic divide in digital and STEM competencies.

The inclusion of STEM as a major component of the quality and learning in ECE and general education PP provides the opportunity to comprehensively develop and advance the STEM sub-sector and tackle the identified obstacles. The first major set of strategies to enhance quality, inclusive STEM focuses on *promoting* STEM education through the development of a national policy; establishing university collaboration programs, after-school science clubs, and a national science fair competition; recruiting female teachers; and developing model stem schools, as discussed further below.

The development of the *STEM Policy and Strategy* is in its preliminary stage. UNESCO actively works with the Division of STEM in the entire policy development process. Stakeholders' meetings are planned with representatives from universities that offer STEM disciplines, research institutions in STEM, and leaders of industries in STEM areas. The consensus reached during these sessions will subsequently, inform the policy development process. Additionally, a survey will be conducted at various tertiary institutions that offer STEM disciplines, other STEM institutions, and STEM-field industries. The findings from the survey will paint a detailed picture of the challenges and concrete, demand-driven labor and market needs, which will be key inputs to inform the development of the policy. Upon its finalization, the MoE, through the Division of STEM Education, will print/develop an electronic version of the policy and distribute it to all K-12 schools and universities, research institutions, and ministries and agencies, as well as make a downloadable version available on the ministry's website.

Critical to attracting students into STEM areas of work, especially female students, is this link between universities and schools. The planned enrichment programs, including campus visits and a STEM symposium with senior students majoring in STEM subjects at various universities, will expose senior secondary students, Grades 10–12, to different STEM career pathways at the university level. Another important initiative to engender interest in STEM subjects is the establishment of student-led STEM clubs at the lower basic, upper basic, and secondary school levels in both private and public schools, particularly targeting female students. Under teachers' supervision, the science clubs will conduct projects and make field trips to STEM institutions and industries. Finally, the science fair competition will test students' knowledge in STEM subjects, while encouraging creativity and innovation by having them address real-world problems. The competition will be held at both regional and national levels, bringing together

schools from the 15 counties, with the winner from each county advancing to the national-level competition. The first, second, and third place winners will receive specific prizes, such as scholarships and other supports. The STEM division will collaborate with school leadership to develop and implement the competition.

As a further measure to attract more female students in STEM, the MoE has resolved to recruit more female teachers, particularly in the subjects of biology, chemistry, physics, and mathematics, where there are currently few female teachers compared to male teachers. Having female teachers in these subjects will encourage female students to pursue science education classes and also serve as role model for girls wanting to follow the same career pathway. The STEM division will work with the Teacher Education Division to prioritize the recruitment of female teachers, targeting female students at universities and training institutions. This will include the development of a special package for new female teacher recruits, incentivizing their pursuit of STEM subjects. Note that these activities will be tackled *in the Quality PP Teacher education component 2.3.2* and in *the Governance PP HR component 3.3.2.*

The last major initiative for the promotion of STEM and digital education is the development three model STEM schools—residential schools that focus on STEM subjects, equipped with computer, science, and engineering labs. These schools will serve as regional hubs, where all students in the area will be able to access STEM resources and connect with expert teachers.

Providing sufficient STEM infrastructure and quality TLMs for STEM and digital education is the next major strategy axis. Currently, only selected schools have science laboratories, most of which are not properly equipped. During the next five years, existing laboratories in senior secondary schools will first be renovated. The next goal will be to expand them, establishing laboratories in senior secondary schools that do not yet have them, for at least one school per county. These laboratories will serve as hubs for other students in the area. In the short term, selected public lower basic, upper basic, and senior secondary schools that do not have laboratories will receive micro-science kits—cost effective kits already introduced in selected schools by UNESCO—or 'lab in a box' kits, which provide portable laboratory equipment, currently supported by UNICEF, as a pilot initiative to allow students to conduct practical science experiments and exercises, right in the classroom. Evaluations of both the micro-science and 'lab in a box' kits will inform potential future scale-up of the pilot. Age-appropriate laboratory manuals, both hard copies and e-versions, will also be provided at all schooling levels to allow students and teachers to fully use lab and micro-science equipment. At the ECE level, this type of equipment is not yet required to teach STEM, but STEM activities in line with the ECE curriculum that can use materials already found in and around the classroom (such as plants) will be developed.

In terms of digital infrastructure, the SMART box digital learning platform is currently rolled out in partnership with the World Bank. The SMART box system operates without internet and with limited electricity, charging laptops/tablets that run on battery power, thus enabling rural schools with limited internet connection to access diverse learning resources. Laptops come pre-loaded with lessons and new content can be easily added. Each SMART box can accommodate 30 students and all devices are monitored from a central location. If the pilot with 156 schools is successful, the project will be expanded to other schools in the country. The plan is to then customize the SMART box digital platform to be aligned with the national ICT curriculum and upload other relevant and approved education materials for students' use. An evaluation will be conducted on the SMART box system to assess to what extent these technologies successfully support students' STEM and digital learning, and what lessons can be applied for future scale-up of these interventions.

Building the capacity of STEM teachers and enhancing their CPD is the final major strategy in the implementation of quality STEM education in the country (note that these activities are addressed in the Teacher education sub-component 2.3). In alignment with the new ICT curriculum and digital infrastructure, teacher training institutes will train teachers in the use of digital classrooms and the implementation of digital content. CPD programs for STEM teachers, including digital teachers, at both upper basic and secondary schools will increase the capacities of current STEM teachers in all STEM subjects and provide them with opportunities to keep their competencies up-to-date. The earlier mentioned strategies in promoting STEM education will be the other key piece in expanding the pool of qualified STEM teachers over the long term—students who become engaged in STEM subjects through the university collaboration programs, after school clubs and science fairs, will be the core base of future STEM teacher recruits.

Sub-component 2.2.1: Promote STEM and digital education.

Indicators	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of Information
National STEM policy and strategy developed and disseminated	No	Yes	STEM policy and strategy
% of schools with science clubs established	0%	50%	EMIS/ASC
% science clubs' members who are female	0%	50%	MOE/Division of Science
% of secondary schools that have a STEM collaboration program with universities in place	0	50%	STEM division implementation reports
% of schools that participated in the science fair across the country, by education level	0%	50%	County-level registration documents
# of regional public STEM hubs constructed and operational	0	3	EMIS/ASC

Activities

1. Develop the national STEM policy and strategy, including conducting a survey to assess STEM challenges and concrete, demand-driven labor and market needs.
2. Print/develop an e-version and distribute national STEM policy and strategy to all K-12 schools and universities, research institutions, and ministries and agencies.
3. Establish science clubs in both private and public schools, from the lower basic to secondary level.
4. Recruit female teachers in biology, chemistry, physics, and mathematics, in collaboration with Teacher Education Division *(tackled in Governance sub-component 3.3.2).*
5. Establish enrichment programs with universities to connect secondary school STEM students (Grades 10–12) with universities.
6. Conduct science fairs in schools across the country, from Grade 1 to Grade 12.
7. Construct three regional STEM hubs.

Sub-component 2.2.2: Provide infrastructure and gender-responsive, disability-inclusive quality TLMs for STEM and digital education.

Indicators	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of Information
% of senior secondary schools with functional laboratories	0%	50%	EMIS/ASC
% of schools that have received laboratory manual (print or e-version)	0%	100%	EMIS/AS
# of micro-science kits procured and distributed, in public schools	150 kits	545 kits	EMIS/ASC
# of 'lab in a box' kits procured and distributed	0	270-LB 70-UB	Activity report
# and % of SMART box digital platforms set up and customized in public secondary schools	0, 0%	26, 10%	EMIS/ASC

Activities

1. Provide functional and adequate science laboratories in existing secondary schools, based on the results of the STEM infrastructure needs assessment.
2. Develop, print, and distribute science laboratory manuals at the lower basic, upper basic, and secondary level (printed or e-copy) *(tackled in Curriculum, TLMs, and assessment sub-component 2.1.2).*
3. Provide micro-science kits to public upper basic and secondary schools and conduct an evaluation for possible scale-up.
4. Provide 'lab in a box' kits for public lower basic and upper basic schools and conduct an evaluation for possible scale-up.
5. Set up and customize the SMART box digital platform to align with national ICT curriculum and conduct an evaluation of the SMART box platform for possible scale up.

Component 2.3: Teacher education and professional development

Teachers are arguably the most powerful and influential factor in children's education experience, holding the key to whether schooling leads to a life-long love of learning, self-efficacy, and expanded life prospects, or a negative cycle of learning failure, low self-esteem, and early dropout from the school system. A well-qualified, committed, professional teaching force is, therefore, critical to improving the quality of education, lifting children's aspirations, and enabling them to reach their full learning potential. Ensuring that teachers are equipped with knowledge and skills in gender-responsive, disability-inclusive pedagogy is essential to enable them to bring out the best in all students. The MoE, accordingly, places quality teacher education and professional development as a top priority in the ESP.

A critical shortage of female teachers is a particular concern, given their potential for providing positive role models of women in positions of authority for girls. Their presence in schools also contributes to a more gender-balanced, safe, protective school environment, which can help prevent SRGBV and associated school dropout.

Concerted action will therefore be taken to tackle this and other key, related challenges identified in the ESA, as outlined below.

Key challenges related to teacher education and professional development:

- shortage of trained teachers in classrooms, especially women;
- critical shortage of qualified female teachers at all levels;
- unsynchronized C certificate curricula across teacher training institutions;
- shortage of teacher educators, especially women, for specialized programs in ECE, STEM, special, and disability-inclusive education;
- lack of professionalization of teachers through licensing;
- lack of comprehensive CPD plan to ensure lifelong learning opportunities for teachers;
- inadequate logistics to monitor teacher training institutions;
- lack of a synchronized automated system to track teacher training, credentials, and continuous learning.

Strategic Objective: Develop a robust teacher preparation and continuous development system that increase the proportion of trained and qualified teachers, especially women.

Indicators	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of Information
SDG 4. C1: Proportion of teachers who have received at least the minimum organized teacher training (e.g., pedagogical training) in pre-service or in-service required for teaching at the relevant level, by sex (M/F)	ECE: 35% LBE: 45% UBE: 31% Secondary: 26%	ECE: 72% LBE: 66% UBE: 53% SE: 51%	EMIS/ASC
County gap in % of teachers trained, by education level (M/F)	ECE 52 pp LBE 75 pp UBE 53 pp Secondary 74 pp	Downward trend	EMIS/ASC

Teacher education provision focuses on pre-service training through public and private teacher training institutes, and in-service training, principally organized through partner programs.

Pre-service, C certificate teacher training is currently offered at three public Rural Teacher Training Institutes (RTTIs) in Liberia: Kakata, Webo, and Zorzor. The C certificate is the minimum qualification for ECE and Grade 1–6 teachers, consisting of an 18-month-long pre-service training (previously a 9-month course). An ECE-C level certificate was introduced in 2016 but is currently only offered as an in-service training option at the Webo RTTI. The in-service, B certificate training program for upper basic schoolteachers was also launched in 2015/16, in the Kakata RTTI, with plans to establish the program in the other two institutes. Senior high school teachers are required to have a bachelor's degree or equivalent, considered to be an A certificate. In addition to the RTTIs, there are 18 local private teacher training institutes, of which 17 offer C certificates and one offers A, B, and C; there are also four universities that provide teacher training.

From 2013/14 to 2018/19, the number of graduates from the three public teacher training institutes dropped by half—from 530 total graduates in 2013/14 to 276 graduates in 2018/19. The vast majority of

teacher graduates are male, with only 16 per cent of female graduates in 2018/19. There has been a 26-per cent increase in the number of practicing teachers in the country between 2015/16 and 2019/20, from 64,281 teachers to 81,130, indicating that a large proportion of new practicing teachers are not trained in public RTTIs. This is an issue of critical concern which, the reasons for which are little understood as yet, and will be an element of focus of an upcoming study on barriers to attracting men and women into the teaching profession, as further detailed in PP3.3, Human Resources Reform. Many teachers in the country remain unqualified—only 61 per cent of lower basic-level teachers were trained and only 53 per cent at the upper basic level, a critical quality issue to be urgently addressed in the ESP.

A major achievement over the last five years was the development of an accelerated C certificate curriculum, a form of in-service training targeting untrained teachers on the government payroll. This entailed the roll-out of specific ECE-C accelerated certificate in 2021. At the present time, 184 ECE teachers (51 per cent female) are certified, and the current cohort of 194 ECE teachers (46 per cent female) will receive their certificates by July 2022. The development of the ECE-C certificate is promising progress by providing ECE teachers with ECE-tailored training. However, it is still currently only offered as an in-service training. B certificate training also remains limited and is only provided in the Kakata RTTI; plans to expand the training offer have not yet been implemented.

In 2021, 185 of lower basic education teachers (11 per cent female) have been provided with in-service training in the lower basic curriculum and currently, 170 teachers from disadvantaged counties (9 per cent female) are undergoing training to be certificated by July 2022. CPD opportunities are limited, consisting of ad-hoc initiatives from donors and development partner agencies. While it was planned to develop and pilot a government-run CPD teacher training program in the BEST, no framework for CPD has yet been developed and CPD activities currently consist of short refresher training sessions funded by partners, instead of a systematic, institutional approach. This included a UNICEF-funded 5-day training on pedagogy and psychosocial issues, which trained 11,000 teachers in public schools across all grade levels. CPD certificates were awarded to 6,428 participants of this refresher training, but without any official CPD framework in place, the certificate is not yet tied to any accredited system.

The shortage of trained, qualified teachers in classrooms across all levels of schooling remains a core challenge to providing quality, gender-responsive, inclusive education to Liberian students. Qualified female teachers in particular are scarce, especially at the secondary level, but the causes this scarcity need to be more clearly understood. There is also a shortage of teacher educators for specialized programs such as ECE, STEM, and disability-inclusive education, as well as for the new focus area of climate change. For teachers who are trained, the lack of professional development opportunities inhibits them from keeping up to date on their competencies. Furthermore, there is no monitoring system among teacher training institutions and no synchronized automated system to continue to track teacher training, credentials, and continuous learning, which inhibits sufficient management of teacher education programming.

The major strategies for the next education plan will seek to address these challenges, focusing on:

- increasing the capacity and quality of teacher training institutions;
- expanding and improving pre- and in-service training;
- recruiting more women into the teaching profession;
- increasing opportunities for systematic CPD;

- enhancing the management of teacher education programs.

Expanding the capacity and improving the quality of teacher training facilities will allow for both an increased intake of pre-service teaching students and the expansion of an in-service training program to reach untrained teachers already in the classroom and provide CPD opportunities. First, a needs assessment will be conducted to identify the concrete expansion needs (in both trainers and intake capacity) to accommodate both increased pre-service and in-service intakes, taking into account the particular health, safety, and protection needs of women students, and to determine to what extent in-service training will be provided in RTTIs. Besides larger premises, improved facilities and living quarters in the residential institutes, including gender-sensitive WASH facilities, will help attract a wider variety of candidate profiles, including women. Existing classes, dormitories, libraries, and housing units will be renovated and updated, including to ensure access for individuals with disabilities. Development stakeholders will be key partners for these renovation activities.

Improving the quality and relevance of the pre-service training curriculum is the next core area of focus. While the student curriculum was updated in 2019 to be competency based, the teacher training curriculum has not yet been aligned, creating a disconnect between the curriculum teachers are meant to teach in the classroom and the one they themselves are taught during their training, which limits the positive impact of the curriculum reform. Alignment between the ECE and lower basic curriculum will also be important for a smooth transition to lower basic schooling, especially if not all children are benefitting from ECE. Additionally, because repetition will no longer be practiced at the ECE level, it will be important for ECE teachers to be able to conduct school-level assessments to help inform pedagogical interventions as students transition to lower basic education. Considering the massive, planned expansion of ALP to address the pervasive issue of over-aged students, all teachers must also be prepared for the possibility that they will teach ALP students in the coming years. Therefore, the plan is to revise and update ECE C, lower basic C, and B certificate curricula, including addition of the gender responsive and disability-inclusive pedagogy, zero tolerance for SRGBV, and pedagogy for teaching ALP students. For the ECE certificate curricula, content will also be developed on how to conduct continuous school-based assessment on school readiness at the ECE level.

The USAID-funded Transforming the Education System for Teachers and Students in Liberia (TEST) program has already commenced a curriculum revision for the ECE and lower basic level. TEST plans to establish a curriculum revision board and a gender equity and social inclusion taskforce to guide the process. A revised teacher training curriculum will also require recruiting additional qualified trainers to teach TTI students on the new curricula, particularly in specialized programs such as disability-inclusive education, climate change, and STEM subjects.

Another important aspect of the curriculum revision will be the alignment of training curricula to the university curriculum. Currently, there is no coherence between the two different types of institutions, which means that teachers who complete their C certificate training at RTTIs would have to start over if they chose to enter university. Aligning the two curricula would allow teachers to build on their previous training to continue on at university level. The last initiative for improving pre-service training is expanding the ECE C certificate to a pre-service training offer. Because the ECE C certificate is presently only provided for in-service teachers, expanding the certificate to pre-service training will be crucial for ensuring that ECE teachers enter classrooms with the skills required to support holistic child development, play-based learning, and gender-equal play.

The imbalance of female teachers entering the profession compared to male teachers, particularly at the secondary level, remains a critical concern, especially considering the positive influence female teachers can have on girls' education. Incentivizing female students and female trainers to enter teacher training institutes would help correct this imbalance. Therefore, the MoE plans to develop an incentive package for the recruitment of female RTTI tutors and provide female trainees with scholarships. Safe day-care facilities will be created in each RTTI to allow mother trainees with young children to come to the RTTIs with their children. It is also suggested to lower the entry selection level for females to 80 per cent (pass at WASSCE), while keeping the one for males at 85 per cent.

While establishing a comprehensive CPD program was one of the activities envisioned in the BEST, it never materialized due to a lack of resources and capacity. Implementing relevant CPD will again be a key targeted strategy in the next five-year plan.

The first step will be to develop a comprehensive CPD framework that aligns with the new teacher's licensing program and the new curriculum. This would include training on inclusive education for students with disabilities, training on teaching ALP students, gender-responsive pedagogy, climate change, life skills and skill-based health education, the code of conduct with zero tolerance for violence in schools, ICT, and career guidance and psychosocial counselling. CPD activities will also cover how to use textbooks and newly developed TLMs to deliver lessons in these domains. Upon development of the framework, the first gender-responsive CPD programs will be designed, implemented, and monitored, and will include a selection of self-directed programs. The CPD division will be in charge of the training sessions, including designing the programs and overseeing their governance. However, the programs will take place within the teacher training institutes. CPD programs will then be scaled up to occur biannually for key subjects for all teachers, as well as RTTI trainers and relevant CPD staff. To encourage participation in self-directed CPD initiatives, a motivational package for teachers will be developed. This could include linkage to the new teaching licensing regime, where CPD will be a requirement for up-to-date licenses.

Enhancing the management and governance of teacher education is the last core initiative to improve teacher education and professional development. In partnership with the Liberia Learning Foundation, the Bureau of Teacher Education and the Center of Excellence, an automated teacher database is currently being developed. This database will allow all the important information about each teachers' credentials to be collected in one central location, including their profile, employment and licensing status, and number of in-service training sessions attended, to facilitate teacher management and supervision. This system will then be linked with the existing RTTI data collection tool to ultimately, have one comprehensive RTTI database that contains information not only on personnel, but also on RTTI facilities, enrollment, graduation, and so on. To carry out evaluations of teacher training institutes, the SQA tool that is currently rolled out for basic and secondary schools will be adapted for monitoring purposes and regular teacher training institutes monitoring visits will be held to assess schools against the criteria of the SQA tool. The information from the database and these assessments will then be used to develop teacher training institute school profiles, providing a snapshot of the main characteristics and achievements of each teacher training institute.

Sub-component 2.3.1: Improve the training capacity of teacher training institutions.

Indicators	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of Information
# of RTTIS classes renovated	0	12	RTTIs facilities records
# of RTTIs dormitories renovated	0	15	RTTIs facilities records
# of RTTIs libraries renovated	0	3	RTTIs facilities records
# of RTTIs teacher trainers' housing facilities renovated at the RTTIs	0	25	RTTIs facilities records
# of new RTTIs classes constructed	0	18	RTTIs facilities records
# of new RTTIS dormitories constructed	0	6	RTTIs facilities records
# of RTTIs libraries constructed	0	3	RTTIs facilities records
# of new RTTIs teacher trainers' housing facilities constructed	0	30	RTTIs facilities records

Activities

1. Conduct capacity needs assessment to determine RTTI expansion needs to accommodate pre- and in-service training, including trainer capacity and facility capacity.
2. Renovate/construct and furnish existing classes, dormitories, libraries, and teacher trainers' housing units, including access/safety for women/men with disabilities, based on the capacity needs assessment.

Sub-component 2.3.2: Enhance pre- and in-service training quality and relevance.

Indicators	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of Information
ECE C, primary C, and B certificates curricula to include gender- and disability-inclusive pedagogy revised, approved, and disseminated	No	Yes	Copy of validated certificates curricula
ECE C, primary C, and B training curricula aligned with the teacher university curriculum	No	Yes	Copy of validated certificates curricula
Pre-service ECE C certificate curriculum developed	No	Yes	Copy of validated certificate curricula
# of teacher trainees enrolled in **pre-service** programs, by certificate, by sex (M/F), cumulatively			RTTIs facilities assessment records
for B certificate program	N/A	2,335	
for primary C certificate program	N/A	607	
for ECE C certificate program	N/A	750	
# of teacher trainees enrolled in **in-service** programs, by certificate, by sex (M/F), cumulatively	N/A	988	RTTIs facilities assessment records
for B certificate program	N/A	2,040	
for primary C certificate program	N/A	3,088	
for ECE C certificate program			

Activities

1. Review and revise ECE C, lower basic C, and B certificate training curricula and modules to be aligned with the newly developed student curricula and teacher university curricula, and to include:
    1. Gender-responsive and disability-inclusive pedagogy with zero tolerance for SRGBV;
    2. pedagogy for teaching ALP students;
    3. methods to conduct continuous school-based assessment.
2. Establish pre-service ECE C certificate.
3. Pilot and roll out new teacher training modules and monitor results.
4. Recruit and train additional trainers, in particular female, when needed, for the ECE C, primary C, and B certificates, and other specialized programs (STEM/digital classrooms and special disability-inclusive programs) *(also mentioned in STEM sub-component 2.2).*

Sub-component 2.3.3: Recruit more women into the teaching profession.

Indicators	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of Information
% of female RTTI teachers benefitting from incentive package	0	10%	RTTIs annual report
% of students enrolled at TTIs who are female	N/A	TBD	RTTIs annual report
# of day-care facilities established on RTTI premises	0	3	RTTIs facilities records

Activities

1. Develop an incentive package for the recruitment of female RTTI tutors.
2. Promote female trainees' participation and retention by (1) formalizing RTTIs entry requirements for male and female students and (2) establishing day-care centers in all three RTTIs to promote the participation of female trainees with young children.

Sub-component 2.3.4: Increase opportunity for CPD for teachers.

Indicators	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of Information
Comprehensive CPD framework developed and disseminated nationwide, and relevant gender-responsive CPD modules developed	No	Yes/3 CDP modules	National Teacher Training Manual and Plan
SDG 4.C7: # and % of teachers who received in-service training (CPD) in the last 12 months, by type of training, by sex (M/F)	N/A	14,974/100%	Training report
# and % of teachers receiving incentives for self-direct CPD	N/A	3,339/10%	Training report

Activities

1. Develop comprehensive CPD framework and relevant and gender-responsive CPD modules that align with teachers' licensing and the newly developed curriculum, and include:
    a. training on inclusive education for girls/boys with disabilities;
    b. training on teaching ALP students;
    c. gender-responsive pedagogy;
    d. climate change;
    e. life skills and skill-based health education
    f. code of conduct/zero tolerance for violence in schools;
    g. ICT;
    h. career guidance and psychosocial counselling;
    i. conducting continuous school-based assessment on school readiness (for ECE teachers);
    j. use of textbooks and TLMs to support teaching in these domains.

(*Career guidance and psychosocial counselling are also mentioned in Student Well-being sub-component 2.4.2; coaching for curriculum delivery and textbook use is also mentioned in Curriculum, TLM, and Assessment sub-component 2.1.4).*

2. Conduct biannual CPD training for teachers, RTTIs trainers, and CPD staff at RTTIs with partners' support, using the CPD curriculum, coordinated by MoE and harmonized within the MoE training cycle and timeframe.
3. Design motivational packages for teachers' self-directed CPD initiatives and roll them out.

Sub-component 2.3.5: Enhance the management and governance of teacher education programs for appropriate tracking and deployment of teachers nationwide.

Indicators	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of Information
Automated teachers database developed and operationalized	Not available	Established and operationalized	MoE record
# of RTTI consolidated EMIS report available	0	18	EMIS
# of RTTIs monitored per year	0	9	EMIS

Activities

1. Develop and operationalize an automated RTTI personnel database (aligned with EMIS and HR management databases, and including private RTTIs), including teacher profile, year and county graduated, employment and licensing status, and pre- and in-service training sessions attended (*tackled in Governance PP sub-component 3.3.1).*
2. Strengthen existing RTTI data collection tool for improved management and monitoring:
    a. develop one comprehensive RTTI database (including personnel database in activity above and school facilities, curriculum, enrollment, graduation, etc.);
    b. Revise SQA tool for monitoring purposes;
    c. Develop school profile based on the RTTI database.
3. Conduct regular RTTI monitoring visits.

Component 2.4: Promote student well-being programs (integrated school health, school counselling, school feeding, national service, community engagement) and prevent SRGBV.

Students who feel healthy, safe, and protected in their learning environment are more likely to achieve better academic results, conduct themselves appropriately in class, integrate into the social fabric of the school well, and gain more satisfaction from their education experience. The promotion of student well-being is, therefore, a critical priority for improving individual- and systems-level education results. While the MoE and partners increasingly support student well-being programs, some key challenges remain, as highlighted below.

Key challenges in promoting student well-being:

- lack of supporting environment within schools to address psychological, social, emotional, and career needs of students and learners;
- inadequate provision of nutrition, school-based health services, and skills-based education;
- high level of SRGBV;
- low level of awareness among community members of the role community engagement plays in education service delivery;
- low sense of national spirit, patriotism, and commitment to community services among Liberian youth;
- largely donor-driven resource mobilization to support program implementation, with little or no Government of Liberia budgetary allocation.

Strategic Objective: Mainstream relevant disability-inclusive, gender-sensitive student well-being programs within education service delivery to improve learning outcomes.

Indicators	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of Information
#/% of schools with functional, full WASH package	707/ 33% (all levels)	2,792/100%	School health annual report
# of life-skills clubs established in upper basic and secondary schools	707 (all levels)	1,707	School health annual report
# of schools where students receive daily hot meals, by sex (M/F)	246,231 (all levels)	331,293	School health annual report

Promoting citizens' well-being is highlighted as a national priority in the Government of Liberia's blueprint for development, the PAPD. The PAPD's pillar one: Power to the People, for example, focuses on empowering women and girls, particularly through education, and supporting the meaningful transition of youth into adulthood, as well as providing social protection investments to improve lives and create local demand. In alignment with the PAPD, MoE's policy also takes note of the SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being and SDG 4a, which commits signatories to providing education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive, and effective learning environments for all. Key policy documents, including the School Health Policy, School Feeding Policy, Psychosocial Counselling Policy, Community Engagement Policy, and Girls' Education Policy, provide sector-specific frameworks for student well-being programs, although there remain implementation challenges to be tackled in this ESP period.

Recognizing the importance of student health and well-being, the MoE and partners have embarked on several initiatives to improve students' learning experience over the past five years. Key achievements include the development of the National School Health, Career Guidance and Psychosocial Counselling, and Community Engagement policies.

In line with these policy directions, a manual for the training of career guidance and psychosocial counsellors has been developed, together with implementation guidelines for school counselling program and terms of reference of female guidance counsellors. The recruitment and deployment of 200 female counsellors at senior secondary schools was carried out under the ministry's IRISE Project to promote a

safer learning environment for girl's education. The Ministry also provided full WASH packages to 707 schools; integrated deworming and vision screenings in 982 schools; eyeglasses and referrals, including for teachers; micronutrients supplements across 79 schools; and school feeding programs to 278,043 students in 1,032 schools. Furthermore, the ministry began home-grown school feeding programs in 142 schools, established 155 school gardens, and trained 10,000 teachers in psychosocial support services. Also 966 teachers were trained in the delivery of skill-based health education, 44,624 young people were reached with skill-based health education, and 7 schools were provided with functional school-based clinics.

Despite this progress, there remain some critical challenges in the implementation of the student well-being component, which calls for reflection in program design and implementation. First, there is no supportive environment within the school setting to address psychological, social, emotional, and career needs of learners and teachers. Many young people find it difficult to make informed career choices, which affects their earnings in adult life. They also struggle with coping mechanisms for dealing with daily pressures. Another major issue is the high level of SRGBV, which affects girls in particular, but also boys and creates a hostile learning environment for all children. Amid the enormity of these challenges that fuel dropout, poor learning outcomes, and social deviancy, ensuring that schools in Liberia have a school counselling program in place by the end of 2026 is increasingly relevant.

There is also inadequate provision of nutrition, school-based health services, and skills-based education at all levels of the system. In spite of efforts by education service delivery partners to secure the provision of basic school-based health services (nutrition and school feeding, full disability-inclusive WASH package, deworming, and screening of all sorts, among others), there is a need to expand services at all levels of the school system to contribute to improved learning outcomes.

With regards to school eye health, the evidence shows vision impairment is one of the most common preventable disabilities for children. Worldwide, more than 300 million children have a vision impairment that can be easily corrected with spectacles (WHO, 2019). Children with a vision impairment are at a major disadvantage in school. It is estimated that 80 per cent of classroom learning during a child's first 12 years occurs through vision, and children with a vision impairment have lower educational outcomes, such as lower rates of completion and literacy (World Bank, 2019). Girls in low- and middle-income countries are more affected by vision impairment than boys, because their access to diagnosis and treatment are more limited, which adds to inequities (Castell, 2019).

Another issue is the low sense of nationalism, patriotism, and commitment to community services among Liberian youth. Liberia still lags behind within the sub-region regarding a national youth service program. As a result, young people of Liberia lack an understanding of what nationalism, patriotism, and commitment to community services are. There is also a low level of awareness among community members, stakeholders, and school administrators about the critical role community engagement plays in education service delivery, which affects program sustainability.

Lastly, resource mobilization to support program implementation is largely donor driven, with little or no government of Liberia budgetary allocation. Student well-being programs are not always sustainable, because they are not prioritized during national budget planning. Consequently, interventions always experienced short-stop funding from partners. Because student well-being interventions help to improve student learning outcomes, resource mobilization through the national budget is the surest way of sustaining the implementation of student well-being programs.

The strategic intent of component 2.4 is to ensure that student well-being and related issues are mainstreamed into the ESP at the highest level, cutting across all levels of schooling in Liberia. Five sub-components are envisioned to continue to build upon the progress made in the last five years and address the remaining challenges:

1. expanding the provision of the integrated school health program and health services;
2. combatting SRGBV, and establishing career guidance and psychosocial counselling services, creating healthy, safe, protective, non-violent learning environments;
3. expanding the provision of nutrition and school-feeding services;
4. strengthening community engagement;
5. operationalizing the national service program.

The first major strategy addresses the provision of school-based health services, nutrition, and skills-based education to equip all students with the necessities and skills to live healthy lives and stay safe in school. In terms of school infrastructure, a full WASH package—safe drinking water; single-sex, disability-inclusive toilets with facilities for safe, dignified menstrual hygiene management; and hand washing stations—will be established in additional schools (as elaborated under PP 1, access to ECE and general education). Adolescent girls will also be provided with disability-inclusive menstrual hygiene education and products to help ensure their continued attendance and retention. There will also be a scale-up of the existing integrated, school-based health program, covering vision screening referrals and provision of eyeglasses, deworming, micronutrient supplements, height and weight measurements, birth registration, early disability screening vaccination, and other key health services. These services will be provided to all students in schools, including ALP students, regardless of whether students are in morning or afternoon school shifts.

The scale-up of school eye health services will be led by the MoE with support by a consortium of partners, including EYEalliance and LV Prasad, who will provide implementation support for vision screenings, glasses, and referrals for both students and teachers in Bomi, Grand Cape, Margibi, Montserrado, and Mount, and Sightsavers who will provide support in Bong, Grand Gedeh, Grand Kru, Maryland, Nimba, River Gee, and Sinoe. Among other important health measures in the integrated school-based health program, birth registration, including retroactive birth registration, will be essential for ensuring that students are placed in age-appropriate classrooms. Early disability screenings, which will be implemented in cooperation with the Ministry of Health, are also essential to make sure that children with disabilities can receive the required support and care as early as possible.

To provide regular health care on school premises, health rooms will be established within schools for first aid and timely referral of sick students. Finally, a disability-inclusive physical education and sports program will be established to promote physical fitness within schools. The Division of School Health will be the main actor responsible for these activities in collaboration with the Bureau of Student Personnel Services and the Division of Physical Education and Sports.

The availability of career guidance and psychosocial counselling services within schools is critical to support student's social, emotional, and psychological needs and ultimately, improve their learning outcomes and career opportunities. Currently, only 200 school counsellors are deployed throughout the country. ESP envisions recruitment and deployment of an additional 1,000 counsellors at all school levels, among teachers already working in schools. This would involve building the capacity of school counsellors,

ensuring that they have the required skills to support and guide students. As part of the school guidance initiative, a fully functional record keeping and referral system will be developed so students can receive continuous care throughout their schooling careers and be referred to external health and support services, when required. This will include a mechanism for safely reporting instances of SRGBV. The Division of Career Guidance and Psychosocial Counselling will spearhead these reforms in partnership with the Bureau of Student Personnel Services. The World Bank IRISE project will also be an important partner to scale-up the recruitment and deployment of female counsellors.

Because SRGBV is a pervasive issue, with root causes in societal and gender norms, the entire school body and wider community will need to mobilize to implement both prevention and response measures, as discussed in the Access PP components 1.2 and 1.3. A whole-school approach to reduce SRGBV will be established in lower basic, upper basic, and secondary schools, including training teachers, school principals, DEOs, CEOs, and PTAs in SRGBV prevention and response, and providing them with SRGBV-related instructional materials. The student code of conduct, which references prohibition of SRGBV, will be widely disseminated in schools and to key stakeholders. To further ensure safe practices and non-violence within schools, a safe school protocol will be developed and rolled out, promoting positive discipline and penalizing violence. The protocol will build on the MoE's LEAP initiative, which has already introduced a 'school safeguarding approach' and streamlined training held each semester on student safety for use in all LEAP schools and for all community members.

Two different awareness-raising activities are also planned. First, within PTAs and communities, awareness will be raised on the *Girls Education Policy*, *Teachers Code of Conduct*, and *Inclusive Education Policy* to enforce their implementation, so that community members understand the regulations that are already in place and the rights all students, including girls and students with disabilities, have to safe, accessible education. This includes the right of pregnant girls to return to school, with pathways for their continued learning to be clarified during the process of developing a harmonized alternative education policy. The second activity will focus on positive masculine behaviors and non-violence by collaborating with PTAs and community leaders, as well as through public radio campaigns.

To directly reach students, extra-curricular, non-mandatory school life-skills clubs will be established in upper basic and secondary schools, promoting life skills, sexual reproductive health, gender equality, and non-violence. Life-skills clubs are an effective mechanism to address sexual and reproductive health rights and gender norms and contribute to the reduction of SRGBV and teenage pregnancy. Other clubs, established by organizations such as the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) and Red Cross, also provide life and leadership skills for boys and girls in school. An evaluation of life-skills clubs will be conducted during the ESP period to assess their impact and inform further scale-up.

School feeding has had a positive influence on student enrollment, performance, and completion, and on reducing child labor, while also benefitting parents and local communities, as highlighted in Access PP component 1.2 Therefore, expanding the provision of school feeding services across the country is planned for the next five years, including the provision of non-food items such as cooking utensils, particularly during and after emergencies. The main current partners in school feeding in Liberia—the World Food Program, Save the Children, and Mary's Meals—will continue their school feeding programs and a new funding partner will be brought in thorough a USAID school feeding grant. The Division of the School Feeding Program, in partnership with the World Food Program, is revising the *2013 School Feeding Policy* to include a code of conduct for effective service delivery. Subsequently, strategic and operational

plans will be developed to operationalize the revised policy's activities. The home-grown school feeding program, which purchases locally grown commodities from local farmers, currently operates in 142 schools. It will also be scaled-up over the next five years, with the objective of making the home-grown model the predominant model of school feeding in the country. Additionally, school gardens will be established as another way of providing local food for schoolchildren and allowing them to actively participate in agriculture practices at school.

The local community plays an important role in keeping students in school and supporting education programs, but there is little awareness of the importance of this collaboration and the structures are not always in place to facilitate community participation. The first planned activity under this sub-component involves increasing community members' awareness of educational programs and strengthening their role as key stakeholders so that they feel a sense of ownership and want to get involved in service delivery throughout all school levels of education. Related to this, quarterly stakeholder coordination meetings will be established at national and county levels, so that community members and other key stakeholders can regularly meet and work together to implement relevant, timely education initiatives. The capacity of PTA leadership will also be strengthened, specifically on topics related to current issues, such as gender-responsive actions to support girls' education, positive parenting, positive discipline, and community engagement. Local community will also be key in the response to out-of-school children. It is planned to continue to recruit community education monitors, who will be tasked with identifying out-of-school students, discovering their particular personal challenges, and connecting them to schools and other support systems (note that this activity is addressed in the Basic education sub-component 1.2.3). Community monitors will also liaise with schools to support student protection and promote overall school accountability. The Division of Parents, Community Engagement and National Dropout Prevention will be the main division responsible for these activities, in collaboration with the Bureau of Student Personnel Services.

To ensure that every youth develops a deep sense of nationalism, patriotism, and belongingness, it is imperative to introduce a national service program. This program will also allow youth graduating from colleges and universities to have better opportunities to participate and make meaningful contributions to the national development. The national service program has been activated with the appointment of the director and provision of office space at the national level, but still needs to be fully operationalized in terms of assigning additional staff and extending to subnational levels, as well as providing the necessary resources. The Division of the National Service Program will work in partnership with the Bureau of Student Personnel Services to first develop a national policy and strategic plan for the service program to guide its implementation. Structures would then be established at the regional level to oversee decentralized service delivery. To garner sufficient resources for the program, high-level advocacy activities will be carried out to institutionalize the program and receive direct budget support from the government. Finally, after all structures have been established, youth personnel will be recruited and deployed, from regional down to school level.

Sub-component 2.4.1: Expand the provision of integrated school health program and health services across all levels of the education service delivery.

Indicators	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of Information
# of students benefiting from vision screening, provision of eyeglasses, and referral, by sex (M/F)	14,020	318,787	School health annual report
# of students benefiting from deworming, by sex (M/F)	11,863	257,201	School health annual report
# of students benefiting from micronutrient supplements, by sex (M/F)	7,307	57,792	School health annual report
# of female students receiving disability-inclusive menstrual hygiene education and product	0	132,162	School health annual report
# of schools with functional full WASH package	707 (all levels)	2,792	School health annual report
% of schools with special package (first aid and referral)	0	100%	School health annual report
% of schools with sports equipment	0	100%	School health annual report

Activities

1. Scale up integrated school-based health program covering vision screening, deworming, micronutrients supplements, disability screenings, menstrual hygiene education and products for all adolescent girls, and other health services in schools.
2. Provide full WASH package—safe drinking water point, segregated child-friendly toilet facilities inclusive of menstrual hygiene management, and a hand washing station for all students, including those with disabilities *(also mentioned in Access PP components 1.1 and 1.2).*
3. Establish and equip health rooms for first aid and timely referral of sick students.
4. Provide disability-inclusive physical education and sports program for all students to achieve fitness and optimal health.

Sub-component 2.4.2: Reduce SRGBV and provide counselling services to create healthy, safe, protective, and non-violent learning environments.

Indicators	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of Information
# of school counsellors recruited (among teaching staff), deployed and trained, by sex	200	1200	Annual report/EMIS
% of teachers and school principals in schools, DEOs, and CEOs who have received training on preventing and addressing SRGBV	Teachers – 4% Principals – 11% DEOs – 50% CEOs – 75%	100%	Activity report
% of PTAs in schools who have received training on the prevention of SRGBV	11%	100%	Activity report

# of schools applying the Safe School Protocol	0%	100%	School health annual report
# of life-skills clubs established in upper basic and secondary schools	707	1,707 schools	EMIS/ASC

Activities

(SRGBV activities also mentioned in Access PP components 1.2 and 1.3)

1. Recruit, deploy, and train career guidance and psychosocial counsellors (male and female) to address learners' social and emotional needs.
2. Design and execute fully functional record keeping and referral system for students at all levels, including reporting/referrals for SRGBV.
3. Disseminate code of conduct with reference to SRGBV in schools and to key stakeholders.
4. Train teachers, school principals, DEOs, CEOs, and PTAs in preventing and addressing SRGBV at lower basic, upper basic, and secondary levels, and provide them with related instructional materials.
5. Build on the LEAP model to develop, roll out, and ensure compliance to the safe school protocol to promote positive discipline, forbid corporal punishment, and penalize violent conduct.
6. Carry out awareness-raising on *Girls' Education Policy*, *Teachers Code of Conduct*, *Inclusive Education Policy*, and positive masculine behaviors and non-violence with PTAs and communities, as well as through radio campaigns.
7. Establish life-skills clubs to promote skilled-based health, skill-based health education, and gender empowerment in schools; conduct evaluation of the clubs' impact.

Sub-component 2.4.3: Expand the provision of nutrition and school feeding services across all levels of the education service delivery.

Indicators	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of Information
Policy and strategic plan on school feeding program revised	No	Yes	Copy of policy
# of students receiving daily hot meals, by sex	246,231	331,293	Annual report
# of schools providing home-grown feeding/school garden	142	392	Annual report

Activities

1. Revise the existing school feeding policy and develop strategic and operational plans, as well as a standard operating procedures framework for the delivery of an effective school feeding program.
2. Provide food supplies inclusive of non-food items, particularly during and after emergencies, for all school children to improve enrollment, retention, and completion rates at the ECE, basic, and secondary levels.
3. Scale up home-grown school feeding program as a means of empowering local farmers and the school communities for reliable and sustainable school feeding program.
4. Expand school garden intervention as a means of providing local food commodities for school children and improving their agricultural knowledge and experience.

Sub-component 2.4.4: Strengthen community engagement to support the delivery of quality education services.

Indicators	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of Information
# of community education monitors recruited	*Tackled in Basic education sub-component 1.2.3*		
# of PTA leaders trained in gender-responsive behavior and other skills	1,320	44,177	Annual report

Activities

1. Increase community awareness of educational programs as key stakeholders to develop a sense of ownership to support quality service delivery at school levels, including by establishing quarterly stakeholder coordination meetings at the national and county levels to discuss community engagement issues and programming.
2. Build capacity of PTA leadership on gender-responsive behaviors to support girls' education program, community engagement skills, positive parenting skills, and positive discipline.
3. Recruit community education monitors to identify and support out-of-school students, ensure students' protection inside and outside the classroom, and promote accountability in schools *(tackled in Basic education sub-component 1.2.3).*

Sub-component 2.4.5: Operationalize the national service program to promote youth's commitment to community services.

Indicators	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of information
Strategy policy framework documents on national service developed and available at the national level (print and e-version)	No	Yes	Annual report
# of decentralized structures established for national service	0	3	Annual report
# of youth personnel recruited and deployed, by sex (M/F)	0	1,500	Annual report

Activities

1. Develop the national policy and related strategic plan for the national service program to guide program's implementation.
2. Decentralize the national service program at the regional level by establishing structures for effective program coordination and delivery.
3. Conduct high-level advocacy for the institutionalization of the national service program and direct budget support from the Government of Liberia.
4. Recruit and deploy national youth personnel at the regional, county, district, community, and school levels.

Priority Program 3: Governance and management in ECE and general education

The *overall objective* of priority program 3 (PP 3) is to strengthen sector governance and management for effective service delivery by prioritizing sector policy implementation through participatory planning, HR management, and school supervision and management.

The success and development of Liberia's education system depends on the education administration's ability to plan, implement, and monitor its education services in an effective way, predicated on gender-responsive, equity, and disability-inclusive principles. This requires strong coordination mechanisms and effective communication between the central and decentralized levels of the system, as well as with other ministries, development partners, and non-state actors. This priority program identifies the main areas of work for improved steering and functioning of the education administration in Liberia. During ESP 2022/23–2026/27, the following major components will be prioritized:

- Component 3.1: Participatory sector planning;
- Component 3.2: Education sector coordination, partnerships, and communication;
- Component 3.3: Human resources reform;
- Component 3.4: School supervision and management;
- Component 3.5: System resilience strengthening.

Component 3.1: Participatory sector planning for improved educational governance, management, and policy implementation

The MoE faces a number of management and governance challenges:

- low government expenditure on education;
- high proportion of off-budget spending by development partners, which constrains tracking of resources for planning and budgeting;
- poor and untimely data reporting coupled with insufficient number and undertrained staff;
- outdated infrastructure;
- limited capacity to lead research activities;
- lack of a national monitoring and evaluation framework for the education sector;
- weak decentralized system;
- weak coordination and information sharing among stakeholders and MoE, which leads to overlapping programs and conflicting expectations;
- weak education policy implementation;
- limited capacity for mainstreaming gender in data analysis, planning, budgeting, monitoring, and policy implementation.

Specific Objective: Strengthen evidence-based, gender-responsive, disability-inclusive sector-wide planning, monitoring, and budgeting with relevant stakeholders at the central and decentralized levels for effective service delivery, as well as adherence to the relevant education sector policies.

Indicator	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of Information
# of EMIS reports delivered on time	0	5	EMIS reports
# of JESRs conducted on time (cumulative)	1	5	JESR report
% of national budget allocated to education and training	14%	18%	Copy of approved budget

Liberia's education system needs strong planning and management to function well and be able to deliver education services that improve access and learning outcomes for all children and youth in the country, including those with disabilities. The *Education Reform Act* (ERA) of 2011 outlines the MoE's governance and accountability structures, as well as the roles and responsibilities of management at all levels. The *National Education Policy* (2011) and the *Liberia Education Administration Regulations* (2011) provide detail on the direction the ERA defines. The *National Policy on Girls' Education* (2013) also highlights the MoE's responsibility to build its capacity to respond to girls' education needs. As highlighted in the 2021 ESA, MoE officials and key stakeholders commonly share a clear understanding of the sector's regulatory framework. At the same time, major problems are identified with the proper application of existing rules and regulations.

The recently completed capacity needs assessment and the subsequent capacity-enhancement plan for the MoE (Top Consulting Inc., 2021) show a major need for improvements in the planning and management of Liberia's education resources, including a great necessity to enhance data collection, analysis, and periodic reporting at the central, county, and district levels. Lack of sex-disaggregated data of good quality and staff able to analyze and use the data for planning and decision-making purposes weaken education system management at all levels. Existing weaknesses are also partly explained by the delayed decentralization process, which hinders the county and district levels in playing a strong role in operational planning and management. Scarce financial resources and low levels of capacity and autonomy add further challenges.

Another issue is the limited information available on development partners' off-budget spending. A large proportion of spending in the education sector is supported by off-budget projects that are not mainstreamed within the government and therefore, not recorded. Without tracking this donor contribution, it is very difficult to understand the overall resources available for the system.

Despite existing challenges and persistent governance and financial constraints, the MoE records some important achievements regarding the overall planning and management of the sector in the past five years. Key accomplishments include: (1) three joint education sector reviews that brought together all key stakeholders to take stock and agree on future priorities; (2) the National Education Summit in 2018, where the new government, through local consultations, assessed the status of education, identified ECE, upper secondary, and TVET as strong priorities, and used the summit for resource mobilization; (3) disbursement of school improvement grants to 21 per cent of all public ECE schools since 2019 and 78 per cent of all public secondary schools since 2021; (4) ensured learning continuity during the COVID-19

pandemic, and planned and monitored reopening of schools with the education cluster; (5) completed and validated the 2019/2020 school census report, including a transition from paper-based to digital data collection and management process; and (6) developed the *National Girls' Education Strategy*, which includes explicit interventions for strengthening MoE's capacity for gender-responsive education management and accountability, in line with the *Girls' Education Policy*.

The ERA defines roles and responsibilities of the central ministry of education, rural teacher training institutes, centers of excellences (accreditation and certification, curriculum and research, and education management), and the county and district education offices, with a specific objective to 'decentralize the education so that it has maximum effect across the country', (Liberia, 2011: 4) in line with the Government of Liberia's *National Policy on Decentralization and Local Governance* (2012). The Act delegates authorities to the county level through the establishment of county and district school boards, county and district education officers, PTAs, and school management committees. However, in practice, efforts to transfer educational management responsibilities to counties and districts have largely been hampered by funding and capacity constraints. The Education Management Center, tasked with a broad mandate under the Act and a reporting accountability to the Deputy Minister for Planning, Research and Development, has not yet been established. Advancements have also been fraught with difficulties due to the Ebola crisis and subsequently, the COVID-19 pandemic.

During the 2022/23–2026/27 ESP period, the central MoE will put strong emphasis on further advancing implementation of the provisions of the ERA, including the decentralization agenda. This includes a review of progress toward decentralization so far, analysis of bottlenecks, and a strategy for accelerating progress. The Education Management Center will also be established to deliver on its mandate to: (1) develop standards for training programs; (2) provide technical assistance in the management of the education system; (3) make research information easily accessible to the public; (4) mobilize resources, develop criteria and procedures for school finance, supervision, and personnel management, and facilitate design of a system for the delivery of educational services; and (5) develop programs and policies that will lead to the creation of a learning environment that promotes quality education.

Emphasis will also be placed on working with all counties to enhance their capacity to use data and evidence to better plan and monitor their work. Limited technical and professional capacities at the county and district levels require training of personnel to improve planning and management processes and procedures. To do this, county and district education officers also need to know how to analyze and use data, including sex-disaggregated data, for planning and monitoring purposes. The ministry receives significant support from development partners for different types of system-strengthening initiatives. This is expected to continue over the 2022–2026 ESP period, including a focus on better monitoring and reporting at all levels, strengthening the Annual School Census, and improving school management and supervision. Quality data produced through a strengthened EMIS, together with other evidence produced under the ESP and from other sources, will enable the MoE to compose a robust mid-term review, to be conducted in the 2024/25 school year, and an end-line review of ESP results in 2026/27.

Given the importance of ICT in improving educational planning and monitoring processes, the MoE seeks to expand the use of ICT solutions to serve the decision-makers at the schools, districts, counties, and the central ministry. In particular, mobile phones and internet connectivity can function as a channel to enhance monitoring of education progress. To improve ESP program implementation, the MoE intends to establish a user-friendly ICT platform for school reporting and real-time mobile phone-based monitoring.

Key features of the platform will include the capability to plot reports geo-spatially in real time, seamless integration with SMS, and applicability as a real-time geographic information system.

This component focuses on strengthening of the educational administration's operational planning and monitoring system and procedures. This includes establishing conditions that will promote effective, gender-responsive, disability-inclusive, and participatory planning,[21] monitoring, and communication procedures from central to decentralized levels, and development of a policy that spells out standard M&E procedures. The four sub-components cover the key areas that need further investments for better education service delivery in Liberia:

1. participatory sector planning procedures and practices at the central and decentralized levels;
2. strengthened monitoring mechanisms;
3. improved EMIS;
4. improved financial management.

Sub-component 3.1.1: Strengthen participatory planning for improved policy implementation.

Indicators	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of Information
# of gender-responsive capacity-enhancement plans for the county and district levels (based on needs assessment) defined	0	16	Copy of capacity development plans
# of counties with annual operation plan for implementing the ESP	0	16	Copy of county annual work plans
# of counties with a functional education board	0	16	Department of Planning (MoE)

Activities

1. Review progress toward implementation of the decentralization mandate, including analysis of bottlenecks, and develop a strategy to accelerate progress.
2. Improve the quality of the annual planning cycle at the county and district levels by conducting a capacity needs assessment of the sub-national level (building on the national capacity assessment supported by the World Bank) and defining capacity-enhancement plans for county and district levels.
3. Conduct awareness/orientation sessions on stakeholders' roles and responsibilities, as well as training to develop key education stakeholders' capacities at all levels of the system, including education boards.
4. Central MoE to support counties in the development of annual operation plans for the implementation of the ESP, with support from partners and donors.
5. Based on the findings of the capacity development assessment and plan, make the county school boards functional according to the responsibilities outlined in the ERA 2011 and provide adequate training to boards to enable them to carry out their responsibilities.
6. Establish the center for education management, including terms of reference, roles and functions, staffing, and operational, monitoring, and financing plans.

[21] Participatory planning takes into account the central and decentralized staff and all the partners and donors in the sector.

Sub-component 3.1.2: Strengthen MEL mechanisms to better track education sector's progress.

Indicators	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of Information
National Education Sector MEL Policy, strategy and operational plan developed and approved	No	Yes	Copy of the approved *National M&E Policy*
# of joint education sector reviews (JESRs) conducted and actions implemented (cumulative)	0	5	Annual JESR report
E-education platform for MEL established	No	Yes	JESR report

Activities

1. Develop and approve the *National Education Sector Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Policy, strategy and operational plan* that emphasizes decentralization and organizational learning.
2. Strengthen the capacity of M&E officers at all levels (develop and improve gender-responsive M&E tools, review and update process and procedures).
3. Conduct annual JESR and monitor the implementation of agreed upon actions.
4. Establish an e-education platform for school mapping and MEL.
5. Conduct selected annual tracking studies for deeper dives in specific themes to be reported on at JESR—for example, public expenditure on education tracking survey; shifts in deployment of teachers (men/women); availability/implementation of curriculum; and roll-out of health clubs for girls/boys.

Sub-component 3.1.3: Improve the EMIS infrastructure and capacity to better manage data collection and reporting exercises.

Indicators	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of Information
# of annual school census reports available at end of the academic year (cumulative)	1	5	Annual school census report
# and % of education officers trained in data collection procedures (16 CEOs+124 DEOs =140)	50%	100%	Annual report
All plans, EMIS data, and reports made publicly available on the MoE's website	No	Yes	MoE's website

Activities

1. Conduct the school census each year.
2. Provide EMIS with state-of-the-art equipment/logistics (hardware and software).
3. Establish realistic scheduling for data-management activities (collection, processing, analysis, and reporting).
4. Provide CPD opportunities to EMIS staff, including training on sex-disaggregated data and gender analysis.
5. Train DEOs and CEOs and other education stakeholders on data collection procedures.
6. Ensure all plans, EMIS data, and reports are made available publicly under the Freedom of Information Act (e.g., on the MoE's website).
7. Conduct mid-term review (2024/25) and end-line review of the ESP (2026/27), using EMIS and other data and evidence produced under the ESP and other sources.

Sub-component 3.1.4: Improve financial management at centralized and decentralized levels.

Indicators	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of Information
# of new sources of education financing	0	5	Annual and JESR reports
# of donor contributions to education tracked	0	50	Annual and JESR reports
% off-budget education expenditure	50%	25%	ESA report from BFA and BPRD
Policy on the unit cost for the delivery of education at every level developed	No	Yes	ESA report from BFA and BPRD
New chart of accounts reflecting the MoE's program areas, available	No	Yes	Copy of chart
Subsidy Policy available	No	Yes	Copy of policy
Audit report available	No	Yes	Copy of audit report

Activities

1. a. BPRD and BFA will work with other key stakeholders to establish a task force on education financing to identify new and innovative sources of education finance and engage with ministries and stakeholders to target resources to the ESP priority areas.

   b. This will be complemented by annual donor funding conferences to strengthen the MoE's international fundraising capacity and conduct a diaspora fundraising campaign.
2. BPRD to conduct policy dialogue on synchronizing the tracking of public education-related expenditures and track education-related expenditures of other line ministries.
3. BPRD and the BFA will strengthen the financial management information system by establishing/developing a harmonized tool for the tracking of off-budget expenditures in education in the MoE's budget framework, with a specific focus of spending by partners, concessions, and so on. With technical assistance, this will be linked with the human resources management information system (HRMIS) and EMIS.
4. BPRD will develop a policy on unit cost for the delivery of education at every level.
5. BFA will work with the MFDP to create new chart of accounts that reflects MoE program areas.
6. BPRD and the Assistant Minister for Fiscal Affairs will work with other stakeholders to finalize and implement a *Subsidy Policy* covering all sub-sectors to free up resources for public schools and reduce subsidy to non-government schools.
7. Internal Audit and Assistant Minister for Fiscal Affairs will conduct financial verifications/audit on transfers and subsidy expenditures.

Component 3.2: Education sector coordination, partnerships, and communication

Effective implementation of the ESP is critically reliant on the coherent and cohesive use of collective domestic and external resources to maximize efficiency, achieve results, and leverage impact. This requires the MoE to take a firm lead in coordinating the efforts of strategic partners and other stakeholders to ensure they align with ESP priorities, support ministry-led initiatives, optimize opportunities for synergy, and avoid wasteful duplication and overlap.

However, a number of challenges need to be overcome to reach this goal, as listed below.

Key challenges related to coordination, partnerships, and communication:

- Weak coordination among stakeholders and ineffective communication lead to overlapping programs and conflicting expectations.
- The Local Education Group (LEG) predominantly focuses on information sharing, instead of serving as a strategic forum for policy dialogue on ESP implementation.
- The MoE's organization of the Education Sector Development Committee (ESDC) is inconsistent, and the committee's attendance is limited compared that of the LEG.
- Vertical communication is challenged by inadequate information dissemination, while horizonal communication is severely lacking.
- There is no regulatory framework to guide the implementation and enforcement of public–private partnerships.

Specific Objective: Strengthen the education sector coordination, partnerships, and communication to prompt more effective and efficient education service delivery.

Indicators	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of Information
% of donors and implementing partners providing financial and activity reports at least once a year in accordance with the MOE's standardized template	0%	100%	MOE's Donor Coordination Unit
Approved regulatory framework for public–private partnerships	No	Yes	Approved framework

As a national sector plan, the ESP 2022–2026 is first and foremost the responsibility of the government of Liberia, which will make the final decisions on committing resources for its implementation. Development partners and different non-state actors also play a critical role in the Liberian education sector, and the ESP is a key resource to guide the MoE's engagement with all active stakeholders in the sector at all levels of the system. The process of preparing the ESP has been firmly led by the MoE, involving other ministries, development partners, and non-state actors at key moments to contribute input in the planning process. To ensure effective plan implementation, the ministry expects all education stakeholders in Liberia to commit funds and align their work to the content of this ESP.

During the implementation of BEST 2017–2021, the MoE's Donor Coordination Unit took steps to improve coordination and communication among all key stakeholders in the sector. Since 2019, there has been a

well-established partner coordination platform, with specific terms of reference for the functioning of the ESDC and the LEG. The LEG's overall objective is to ensure that the support of education development partners is provided to the Government of Liberia in an expected and harmonized fashion and is aligned in support of the government's overall development agenda and strategy. The LEG comprises nine core members. The LEG meetings serve as the main policy dialogue and coordination forum for discussion on matters relating to the education sector and support to the Government of Liberia in developing a national education strategy based on a sector-wide approach. The ESCD, on the other hand, is a more inclusive body, which coordinates all development partners and other stakeholders who are not part of the core membership of the LEG but have subscribed to MoE's sector harmonization efforts.

Coordination on climate change is a new area for MoE. Yet, at present, coordination and communication on climate change between the MoE and other stakeholders is poor, as noted under sub-component 3.5 below. The MoE's plans to establish focal points on climate change education and disaster risk reduction, clearly defining their roles and responsibilities. This will foster linkages with existing mechanisms under the overarching coordination architecture.

The ministry is particularly pleased with the effective coordination between partners during the COVID-19 pandemic, including weekly coordination meetings of the ministry-led Education Cluster (operationalized as the Education in Emergencies Technical Working Group). Yet, the education system continues to suffer from frequent duplication of efforts. Due to the large number of non-state actors involved and too limited financial and human capacities at the central ministry, county, and district levels, effective coordination and communication remains challenging. In terms of the ministry's coordination with donor and implementing partners, the ESP identifies two priorities: accurate and timely reporting from all partners, and active participation in coordination meetings.

The coordination meetings, standardized template, and other mechanisms proposed in the ESP will improve systematic communication across the sector and facilitate the vertical and horizontal flow of information, including sharing of financial expenditure data, plans, budget, and reports on activities in the sector. A robust communication strategy will also be developed to help make sure the government, development organizations, communities, and civil society stakeholders at all levels, national and decentralized, understand the objectives, strategies, and activities of the plan, and their role in implementing them to achieve the planned results. As achievement of the ESP results is critically dependent on the concerted and coordinated efforts of all partners, the communication strategy will detail the steps for further strengthening buy-in, joint ownership, and shared accountability for delivering on the ESP commitments.

During implementation of BEST 2017–2022, the MoE gained important experience in the critical role that different types of public–private partnerships can play in delivering education services in cost-effective ways. In the last Getting to Best ESP, the MoE proposed to pilot public–private partnership as the PSL. This approach was clearly incorporated into the ESP to guide the implementation of the pilot. The pilot was launched immediately after the launch of the Best ESP in 2016.

In 2018, the PSL was rebranded as the LEAP—a multi-partnership model with the aim to find sustainable and affordable solutions to improve educational outcomes across the system through direct intervention in selected Liberian government schools. In the LEAP model, the Liberian government maintains, monitors, and staffs every school, retaining a 100-per cent ownership of the program. The partners support the educational service provision at these schools through professional development training,

innovation, community engagement, and quality assurance, in line with the MoE's public education curriculum and the 2011 ERA (Liberian law). After six years of operation (including two academic years affected by COVID-19-related school closures), LEAP's four implementing partners currently support 487 tuition-free schools in all 15 Liberian counties, comprising more than 95,000 students from early childhood education to Grade 9. Although costs vary by partner, per-student unit costs have reduced to a point where they are potentially affordable and sustainable system-wide. External evaluations have demonstrated the program can positively improve learning outcomes, with some providers delivering learning improvements equivalent to 0.6 standard deviations.

Building on the LEAP experience, during the ESP 2022/23–2026/27 implementation period, the ministry foresees and will actively promote an increase in the number of public–private partnership initiatives. In this context, the MoE sees the need to develop a regulatory framework for public–private partnerships that will clarify the roles and responsibilities of each party. Building on recent years' experience with public–private partnerships, the forthcoming public–private partnership regulatory framework will encompass and define three broad types of partnerships: (1) those between multilateral companies and the Government of Liberia; (2) those that include faith-based, private, and community schools and the government; as well as (3) LEAP providers. The MoE will also use the framework as a monitoring tool to ensure that private providers in partnership with the government adhere to minimum standards of quality and infrastructure. The development of the public–private partnership regulatory framework will be done in close consultation with all key stakeholders, including representatives from the existing partnership schools and from private authorities. Public–private partnerships are also a critical issue for TVET and higher education and will be addressed directly in the corresponding PPs for those sub-sectors.

To inform the most efficient way to institutionalize the LEAP model into the education system, an options paper will be developed during the plan period for the possible evolutions of LEAP, including analysis on best practices and lessons learned.

Sub-component 3.2.1: Strengthen formal coordination and partnership mechanisms to improve education sector's performance through close collaboration with leaders and key stakeholders at the central and local levels.

Indicators	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of Information
# of donors and implementing partners providing financial reports at least once a year in accordance with the MoE's standard template	0	50	MOE's Donor Coordination Unit
% of LEG meetings with at least 80% attendance by donors and partners	70%	100%	MOE's Donor Coordination Unit
% of LEG meetings per year where ESP implementation is an agenda item	NA	100%	MOE's Donor Coordination Unit
# of ESDC meetings organized by the MoE yearly	7	12	MOE's Donor Coordination Unit
# of donors and implementing partners attending ESDC meetings	20	45	MOE's Donor Coordination Unit
Public–private partnership regulatory framework developed	No	Yes	DPRD
Activities			
Reporting mechanisms among donors and partners improved: 1. MoE will encourage, monitor, and report to the LEG on the use of the MoE standard reporting template for donors' and partners' financial contributions and activities. 2. MoE will encourage donors and partners to participate in LEG and ESDC meetings, including discussions on ESP implementation. 3. Develop, implement, and monitor implementation of a regulatory framework for public–private partnerships, using a participatory approach. 4. Develop an options analysis paper for evolution of LEAP, including analysis of lessons learned and good practices with a view to considering how these can be institutionalized into the education system to strengthen existing MoE capacity. 5. Strengthen formal governance dialogue structures between MoE and MFDP and other line ministries. 6. Develop and roll out a communication strategy to build buy-in and ownership of the ESP.			

Component 3.3: Human resources reform

Effective and efficient use of human resources (HR) is critical to achieving results and a key MoE's accountability to tax-paying citizens, parents, children, and all education stakeholders. However, progress in this area is hampered by the key challenges outlined below.

Key challenges related to HR:

- absence of placement of retired teachers;
- low and declining enrollment in RTTIs, leading to diminished pipeline of new teachers entering the profession
- uneven distribution of teachers, particularly in the rural areas, leading to high student–teacher ratios;

- huge number of volunteer teachers not yet placed on government payroll;
- inadequate communication channels regarding teachers' needs at the school and central ministry level;
- underpayment of some teachers based on their qualifications;
- lack of support staff (security staff and janitors) in many public schools;
- low interest of some qualified teachers to take up an assignment in rural areas due to lack of attractive incentives;
- limited representation of female teachers at all education levels;
- limited number of science and geography teachers in classrooms, especially women;
- too few women who progress to leadership roles as school principals and in the administration, as CEOs and DEOs;
- limited opportunities for teachers' CPD.

Specific objective: Better deploy and sustain qualified human resources in the education system.

Indicator	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of Information
% of schools with a satisfactory student–teacher ratio	TBD	TBD	EMIS/ASCR
# of licensed teachers qualified according to national standards, by sex (M/F)	0	5,000	EMIS report
% of female teachers and principals	12% principal 22% teachers	20% principals 30% teachers	Civil Service Agency (CSA)-MoE employee registry
% of female DEOs and CEOs	6% (CEO) 16%(DEO)	13% (CEO) 20% (DEO)	CSA-MoE employee registry

This component addresses the fundamental need for qualified HR to achieve the MoE's vision and mission, as outlined in this ESP. In recent years, with support from key development partners, the ministry has made important progress in terms of HR management. The ERA of 2011 establishes the MoE's HR Division with three units, covering recruitment, retention, and separation of services. The ERA also calls for the establishment of the Center of Excellence for Accreditation and Teacher Licensing. In line with the ERA, several achievements have been made. The following are some of the recent accomplishments:

- began the establishment of the Center of Excellence for Accreditation and Teacher Licensing with the hiring of its director;
- established a new HRMIS in 2018, moving from a paper-based to a digitally managed system; the system now functions in 4 out of 16 county education offices (Bong, Montserrado 1 and 2, and Nimba counties);
- trained 16 county HR officers to use the online system; provided printers for 16 DEOs and computers for 16 HR officers, and 10 motorcycles for 10 HR officers in 2021;
- conducted personnel spot checks for staff profiling and checking against the payroll conducted in four counties from October to December 2021, covering 35 per cent of all staff across Liberia (1,004 schools), including volunteer teachers and other staff;

- improved the payroll system, enhancing the structure of employee register/personnel record by expanding the number of categories and with one consolidated payroll since 2019;
- transferred, in 2020/21, a total of 2,554 teachers and non-teaching staff as retirees to the social security payroll;
- improved coordination to manage the MoE's payroll by establishing an inter-ministerial committee in 2020, including the civil service agency, the MFDP, the National Social Security and Welfare Cooperation, and the national teacher association of Liberia; LEAP providers have worked closely with the MoE on its national payroll reform; hundreds of teachers have benefitted by getting placed onto the MoE's payroll as legitimate civil servant teachers in LEAP schools.

Effective deployment of qualified teachers to the right locations is a major prioritized strategic shift over the plan period. This will require ensuring that teachers receive proper training and certification, are well paid, and have favorable working conditions, with sufficient incentives and support to remain in their assigned posts.

While the ERA of 2011 states that 'every person to be employed or recruited as a teacher shall possess a teaching certificate or degree' and 'shall be licensed to teach' (Liberia, 2011: 32), no such system currently exists, resulting in a large number of unqualified teachers and limited accountability in the teaching profession, which ultimately affects the overall quality of education in Liberia. During the ESP period, the MoE seeks to establish a licensing and accreditation regime that will professionalize the Liberian workforce. Such a regime will ensure that qualified teachers entering the teaching profession are individually assessed, trained, certified, and licensed, and that they continue to keep their skills and competencies up-to-date throughout their career. During the ESP period, school accreditation will be another vital element in securing the quality of schools, with an established school performance monitoring system in place and set school quality standards.

The main strategies for licensing and accreditation over the next 5 years will focus on making the Center of Excellence for Education Administration Certification and Accreditation (CEEACA) functional, launching the teacher certification and licensing program, and subsequently, rolling out school accreditation. Once the CEEACA is operational, the four main activities for the roll-out of the professionalized teacher certification and licensing program will be undertaken: (1) developing gender-responsive national procedures and policies; (2) establishing a database of teachers and schools' administrators; (3) developing a question bank and electronic tracking system; and (4) conducting a pilot providing the first 5,000 teacher licenses. A medium- to long-term priority is the roll-out of the accreditation of schools. However, this will occur after teacher licensing is operational, which is expected to take place around year 4 or 5 of the plan. The already-established cross-sectoral technical working group and partners will play a key role in this process, jointly developing a *School Standardization Policy*.

During the ESP period, the MoE will continue its efforts to improve teacher management. Continued removal of teachers who have passed the mandatory retirement age from the payroll will free up fiscal space on the payroll for the ministry to hire new qualified teachers. Additionally, improved anticipation of attrition will allow for better planning for effective recruitment and deployment. Advocacy activities for additional budgetary support will also help to close the existing underpaid teacher salary gap. The MoE will also develop and implement a national workforce management strategy, covering teaching and non-teaching staff. The strategy will define mechanisms on how to recruit competent teachers and other staff; address gender imbalances; deploy teachers efficiently based on the needs of schools, including in hard-

to-recruit areas; provide CPD and upgrading opportunities; incentive packages; and how to monitor performance. Envisioned incentives include providing accommodation for secondary teachers in rural areas, particularly in STEM subjects, where there is currently a lack of qualified teachers. Beyond just a cash incentive, provisioned housing will encourage secondary school teachers to settle in their assigned community.

To address the low level of female representation in both teaching and school leadership positions, incentive packages will also be developed and piloted, encouraging the recruitment of female principals and teachers, including in specialized areas such as STEM and disability-inclusive education, as well as the retention and promotion of female principals, DEOs, and CEOs. An evaluation of the results at the end of the plan will inform future scale-up measures to such initiatives. A study will also be conducted on the barriers preventing people from entering the teaching profession, with a specific focus on women and including issues surrounding enrollment in RTTIs and other teaching training institutions in order to inform the development of future strategies to attract trainees, including further incentive packages and provision of adequate support.

Sub-component 3.3.1: Professionalize the teaching workforce through licensing and standardization of schools.

Indicators	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of information
A functional CEEACA established	Partially established	Functional	Organogram, terms of reference, and confirmation of approval from the office of the President
# of teachers professionalized through teacher certification and licensing, by sex (M/F)	0	5,000	Annual CEEACA report
# of schools standardized through accreditation	0	500	List of standardized schools

Activities

1. Establish and make functional the CEEACA.
2. Develop and validate the gender-responsive *National Procedures and Policy for Licensing and Accreditation.*
3. Establish a functional database of teachers' and administrators' Profiles, including year and county graduated, employment and licensing status, and pre- and in-service training sessions attended, to inform the certification and licensing (*also mentioned in Teacher education sub-component 2.3.5*).
4. Roll out the National School Quality Standards.

Sub-component 3.3.2: Teacher incentives and deployment (public schools).

Indicator	Baseline 2021	Target 2026/27	Source of information
# of underpaid teachers regularized	0	4,065	CSA-MoE employee registry
# and % of teachers receiving incentive in rural, hard-to-reach areas, by sex (M/F)	0%	10%	CSA-MoE employee registry
# of teachers and school administrators receiving annual awards, by sex (M/F) (cumulative)	0	150	Report
# and % of female teachers receiving incentives	0%	10%	CSA-MoE employee registry

Activities

1. MoE will advocate for additional budgetary support to close underpaid teacher salary gap.
2. HR division will develop and implement the MoE Teaching Workforce Management Strategy, including a teacher incentive structure to attract, deploy, develop, and retain teachers in hard-to-reach areas, such as accommodation for secondary teachers in rural areas.
3. The CEEACA will introduce national educators' awards program (30 awardees per year).
4. A study will be conducted on the main barriers to entering the teaching profession, with a specific focus on women, and including enrollment in RTTIs and other teacher training institutions.
5. Incentive packages for the recruitment of female teachers at all levels and in specialized areas, such as STEM and disability-inclusive education, as well as female principals will be piloted, and results will be evaluated at end of plan *(also mentioned in STEM sub-component 2.2.1).*
6. Methods to improve retention and promotion of women in leadership positions, including principals, DEOs, and CEOs, will be piloted.

Component 3.4: Strengthen school supervision and management for effective service delivery

The school's involvement in defining and evaluating its areas of improvement is critical for lasting improvements in the quality of education, from early childhood to senior secondary education. This work entails improving the ways in which the school is managed and building close relationships between the different school actors, including the principal, teachers, and the local community. Key challenges identified are outlined below.

Key challenges:

- unclear role in/capacity for school supervision and management;
- lack of performance-management tools;
- National School Quality Standards system not yet enforced;
- limited DEO's logistical capacity for supervision;
- limited knowledge of school supervision among DEOs and school management committees;

- lack of policy on school management and supervision;
- poor coordination and information sharing at the central and decentralized levels;
- limited number of schools with established school management committees.

Specific objective: Improve education service delivery at all levels through strengthened management and supervision of the education system.

Indicator	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of Information
% of schools (public) supervisors (principals and DEOs) trained in school leadership	38%	100%	Annual performance report
% of public and private schools visited per year	N/A	70%	Annual performance report
% of schools with established school management committee	11%	60%	Annual performance report
% of public and private schools reaching A and B grades in the national quality standards set by the MoE	N/A	50%	Annual performance report

In recent years, Liberia's education system has made significant advances in terms of school improvement planning and management. In close collaboration with development partners, school management committees have been trained and they developed their own school improvement plans. School grants have been effectively implemented and serve to improve the learning environment, as defined by the plans. To strengthen the school-level management, training has been provided for about 850 school principals to enhance their capacity in school leadership. During the plan period, additional school management committees will be established throughout the country and their members will be supported through continuous capacity development. Training for school principals and DEOs will also be expanded, and DEOs' capacity will be enhanced through provision of transport and office equipment.

In recent years, the MoE, with support from development partners, has taken steps to strengthen education quality and accountability through the definition and roll-out of the NSQS. The NSQS were developed to assess the standard of every school in Liberia. They cover five 'quality zones' of assessment (teaching and learning, infrastructure, school-community engagement, governance and inclusive education) and use a benchmarking tool for DEOs school quality assessments (SQAs). School management committees undertake a self-assessment of their ranking against the five quality zones and, based on the findings, develop a school quality improvement plan (SQIP) containing priority actions needed to help the school move up the quality ranking. School grants are used to fund the SQIP. The SQA tool was piloted in 450 public schools (with each school receiving a report card) in six counties in 2021, with the World Bank support. National implementation will start in 2022.

The MoE is also planning to build on the earlier pilot of the school profile mechanism as a complementary tool to improve management capacity and supervision at all levels (central, district, county, school) and increase accountability through the systematic disclosure of comparative information on key school performance indicators. The one-page profiles are produced at school, district, and county levels, providing data on three dimensions: (1) school context (urban/rural, road accessibility, distance to health

center, and so on); (2) available resources (teachers, textbooks, school grants, and others, if any); and (3) performance (exam pass rates, dropout rates, repetition rates, parity ratios). The profiles are then compiled in simple matrices, ranking schools according to the three dimensions. This provides a dashboard decision-makers can use to identify, within a given district or county, the best performing schools, relative to their context, and low efficiency schools, where more resources might be needed. Such profiles can help DEOs and CEOs target schools most in need of supervision and support. For transparency and accountability, a simplified one-page school report card is provided to communities and school boards/committees with information on how the school ranks compared to others. The MoE plans to expand this by adapting relevant profile tools to ensure they cover the most relevant indicators and producing the profile yearly, drawing on the EMIS and WAEC data.

Sub-component 3.4.1: Provide improved management and supervision of the education system.

Indicators	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of Information
National policy on school supervision available	No	Yes	Copy of policy available
% of schools with established school management committee	11%	60%	Annual performance report
# and % of schools with the SQA conducted and report card generated	450/20% (public)	100% (public)	SQA report
% of schools with developed SQIP	11%	60%	Annual performance report
% of schools with school report card generated and distributed, derived from EMIS/school census	N/A	100%	EMIS report

Activities

1. Develop a national policy on school supervision and management with operational guidelines.
2. Enhance the capacity of school supervisors by providing of continuous capacity development for school principals and DEOs.
3. Provide DEOs with transport and office equipment, office supplies, and fuel and lubricants.
4. Establish a school management committee in all schools nationwide, aiming for gender balance in membership.
5. Capacitate school management committee members through the provision of continuous capacity development and logistics.
6. Roll-out the SQA and SQIP in all schools nationwide. Pilot school profile mechanisms derived from EMIS and WAEC data, as an additional tool for inspectors and school leaders.

Component 3.5: Strengthening system resilience for continuous learning during crises

The COVID-19 pandemic and the Ebola outbreak in Liberia before that have highlighted the need for more resilient education systems that are able and better prepared to mitigate and respond to crises so that learning never stops and no child is left behind when emergencies strike. While the closure of Liberian schools in 2020 as a COVID-19 response measure severely disrupted the regular functioning of the education system and put a brake on implementation of G2B, lessons learned from the Ebola response enabled the MoE and development partners to respond swiftly and effectively to the crisis. A Liberia Education Cluster report on the assessment of the effects of Ebola on education conducted in 2015 revealed a number of key lessons that helped inform the ministry's COVID-19 response (Liberia, 2020a). The report showed, for example, that most children did not participate in learning during the emergency, and that while Teach-by-Radio programs were useful, utilization rates varied widely and were not used at all in Grand Gedeh and Rivercess counties. Parents remained very supportive of children's return to school and local communities were involved in school re-opening activities, including school maintenance and repairs, community mobilization and awareness raising, provision of psychosocial support, and school feeding.

Parents' priorities were the provision of TLMs, uniforms and school feeding; repair of damaged infrastructure; and promoting Ebola awareness/prevention practices. Parents also wanted time to be allocated during the school year for review of learning points prior to closures. Learning continuity was sustained through provision of health kits, renovation of WASH infrastructure, paying private-school teachers hazard packages, development of teaching by radio packages, and distribution of TLMs and other school supplies. Distribution plans, materials for teaching by radio, and school health protocols, among others, that were developed during the response to Ebola were reviewed and strengthened during the COVID-19 response. Coordination mechanisms with the Ministry of Health (beyond community engagement), Ministry of Justice, and Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection on mitigation and prevention of sexual abuse and exploitation and gender-based violence (GBV) during COVID-19 were also utilized.

Acting in close coordination, the MoE and education partners secured a USD 7-million grant from the GPE to implement the Liberia Emergency Education Response Plan, which encompassed a comprehensive raft of measures to maintain learning; promote health, protection, and well-being of children, teachers, and parents; and mobilize communities. The plan was informed by lessons learned from the Ebola-related experience, as outlined above and in *Chapter 1*. The project also supports the establishment of the ministry's radio station, which will be a key plank in the system's resilience to maintain continuity of learning during crises—6,814 lessons already developed from the National Revised Curriculum for Grades 1–12 are available for on-air broadcasting. The LDHS finds that less than half of households in Liberia currently have access to radios; options for increasing the availability of radios will be explored.

In addition to the Ebola and COVID-19 crises, climate change is another, regretfully bigger, crisis that has been unfolding over the past decades, but has started to attract attention in the education sector only recently. Yet, climate change effects, such as more frequent and intense weather events, are already negatively affecting the livelihoods and well-being of teachers, learners, and communities, and the situation is expected to worsen.

According to the 2019 ND-GAIN Index,[22] Liberia is the 27th least ready country and the 6th most vulnerable country to climate change impacts (University of Notre Dame, 2019). The country is expected to experience, among other things, increased temperatures, increased frequency of intense precipitation, rising sea levels, and increased erosion. The latter two stressors are likely to exacerbate the risk of flooding. These climate change stressors can not only affect children's education directly, putting children's and teachers' lives and well-being at risk and destroying education infrastructure, but also indirectly, through impacts associated with food insecurity and forced migration, among others.

The ESA notes that existing gender norms and inequalities put girls at a particular risk. Adverse impacts on females, for example, include: having to travel further for scarce fuel/water; a greater risk of violence, trafficking, and early marriage as household economies are squeezed; less access to food than males when food sources are scarce; challenges in managing menstruation when access to water is constrained; less access to information; and exclusion from decision-making processes that affect them.

While education is increasingly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, it also has a critical role to play in both climate change and adaptation and mitigation. The ESA also notes that education of women and girls is a key prerequisite for their meaningful participation in effective climate action. A recent international education, however, shows that presently, no country formally recognizes the contributions an investment in girls' education could make toward their climate strategy, and only 4 of 95 surveyed countries met the criteria for gender-responsive climate education.

In a ground-breaking step, the ESP recognizes responding to these multiple and gendered climate change-related challenges as an urgent priority—this is the first time this focus has been included in education sector planning. Achieving concrete results requires focused action on the following fronts, listed below.

Key challenges:

- Several natural and climate change-related disasters (floods, heavy rains, extreme temperature, etc.) regularly affect the normal functioning of the Liberian education system with important consequences and gendered impacts for learners, teachers, and the education system more broadly.
- These threats are projected to increase both in terms of frequency and intensity.
- The education system lacks institutional mechanisms to face current and projected threats, including those related to climate change.

[22] 'The ND-GAIN Country Index summarizes a country's vulnerability to climate change and other global challenges in combination with its readiness to improve resilience' (University of Notre Dame, 2022).

Specific objective: Strengthen the system's resilience by mainstreaming gender-responsive, inclusive climate change mitigation and disaster risk reduction and adaptation in the national education agenda.

Indicator	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of Information
A policy framework on disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation and mitigation in education is developed	No	Yes	Policy framework document
% of schools equipped with locally specific contingency plans	0	50%	Annual report

In 2021, Liberia submitted its Second National Communication to the United Nations Framework on climate change. This communication and the National Adaptation Plan recognize the importance of education as a key response to climate change. However, few programs related to climate change education have been implemented in recent years, with very little attention paid to the different needs, vulnerabilities, and capacities of women, girls, men and boys, including those with disabilities, to cope with and respond to climate change impacts, as well as participate in the design of mitigation measures. The few existing climate change education-related programs, such as Green Clubs,[23] are only offered to tertiary students, mainly in and around Monrovia. Furthermore, there is a lack of awareness of these programs. In the same vein, at present, there is no education-specific action plan on climate change and the adaptive capacity of the school education system remains limited. As for the curriculum, although it currently includes some information on weather and climate, as well as global warming,[24] its content remains limited. On the other hand, the urgency of mitigating and adapting to climate change effects is increasingly visible—for example, costal erosion[25] has generated the loss of 0.8 square kilometres of land[26] (The World Bank, 2021a). Hence, if no action is taken, climate change could not only slow down, but also reverse educational achievements.

To ensure that learning never stops, it is essential to continue building the resilience of the education system. Yet, building resilience 'is not only about developing policies and providing services, it is about building the resilience of schools to provide emotional support and care for teachers and students and the resilience of the students themselves' (UNESCO, 2021). To this end, the MoE will establish a national contingency plan and support the sub-national and school-level training for developing contingency plans that focus on locality-specific natural and climate change-related hazards. These contingency plans will include, among others, safety standards for specific hazards (floods, storms, etc.); schools drills to practice, critically evaluate, and improve response and preparedness; evacuation plans; temporary learning spaces; and alternate modes of instruction to ensure learning continuity. Given the different needs, vulnerabilities, and capacities of women/girls and men/boys, including those with disabilities, it will be important to secure their meaningful participation in the plan's design. Women's groups, youth networks, and disabled people's organizations should all be represented and have a voice.

[23] This program is offered by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).
[24] General science (primary) and geography (secondary).
[25] The 2018 floods were particularly intense and trigged 15,000 new displacements in the country (IDMC, 2021).
[26] Further, in the greater Monrovia area alone, 'a predicted 16 cm sea level rise by 2030 would put at risk 675,000 people and 9,500 hectares of land' (World Bank, 2021a).

However, no contingency plan will be effective without a holistic and multi-stakeholder approach. Because climate change is a complex phenomenon, which can affect several sectors at the same time, the MoE will work closely with other government agencies responsible for climate change and disaster risk reduction, such as the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the National Disaster Management Agency (NDMA), as well as civil society representatives. This partnership will minimize the risk of maladaptation and propose timely, flexible, and improved responses/plans that will not only increase the resilience of the education sector, but also align its approaches with those of other sectors and systems climate change will also severely affect. Given that, at present, coordination and communication between the MoE and other stakeholders on climate change is poor, the MoE will establish focal points on climate change education and disaster risk reduction, clearly defining their roles and responsibilities, and ensuring linkages with existing sector coordination architecture (see *sub-component 3.2 above*).

It is also important to highlight that the collaboration between the MOE, EPA, NDMA, and other agencies will not be limited to information sharing; it will also be strengthened by working together to conduct a comprehensive school-based hazards and vulnerability assessment.[27] This assessment will help, among other things, determine whether schools are resilient to extreme events (e.g., storms, floods, heavy rains, etc.) and identify those that urgently need to be relocated or adapted. An early warning communication chain will also be developed between the Education in Emergencies Technical Working Group (EIE TWG), NDMA, and school principals.

While developing contingency plans is an important step, it is not enough; it is essential to ensure their effective implementation in schools and provide continued support to teachers. To this end, EMIS will collect and analyze data on climate change, disaggregated by sex and disability, including monitoring indicators to assess the impact of climate change on teachers, learners, and educational facilities and track progress in climate change adaptation. Additionally, because the effective implementation of the plans and activities described above depends, inter alia, on financial resources, contingency funds will also be mobilized for climate change-related disasters.[28]

Sub-component 3.5.1: Mainstream gender-responsive climate change mitigation, disaster risk reduction, and adaptation into the national education agenda.

Indicators	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of Information
Education-specific action plan on climate change developed	No	Yes	Annual performance report
% of schools equipped with locality-specific contingency plans	N/A	50%	Annual performance report
Early warning communication chain between the education cluster (EIE TWG), NDMA, and school principals developed and deployed	No	Yes	MFPD

[27] To gain a deeper understanding of the local context and the vulnerabilities of the population to climate change, it is vital to involve the community in this activity.

[28] Contingency finance is a risk-retention approach for addressing loss and damage associated with climate change impacts. They are used for early response and early recovery (OCHA, 2018).

Indicators	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of Information
EMIS includes data on school infrastructure, disaster risk management, and climate change	No	Yes	EMIS/ASC
Pool for emergency response to climate change-related disasters for schools created	N/A	Yes	DPRD

Activities

1. Develop an education-specific action plan on climate change in line with the *National Policy and Response Strategy on Climate Change,* which clearly defines roles and responsibilities within the MoE, appointing focal points on climate change education and action, and strengthening their capacities by training the persons in charge. Strengthen the collaboration between the MoE and other government agencies in charge of climate change and disaster risk reduction, such as the EPA and NDMA, to provide more effective and timely crisis response.
2. With the support of the EPA and NDMA, conduct a thorough school-based hazards and vulnerability assessment to inform the development of nation-wide, locally relevant contingency plans for disaster risk reduction and climate change mitigation and adaptation.
3. Through a participatory approach with civil society engagement, develop national, sub-national, and school-level contingency plans focusing on locality-specific natural and climate change-related hazards. These plans should be gender responsive, disability inclusive, and based on cultural values, as well as local and scientific knowledge.
4. Establish an early warning communication chain between the EIE TWG, the NDMA, and school principals. When a hazard occurs, all principals can be warned directly, allowing immediate action to protect the entire school community.
5. Strengthen the EMIS to collect and analyze data on school infrastructure, disaster risk management, and climate change, including monitoring indicators to assess the impact of climate change on the education system.
6. In collaboration with the EPA and NDMA, conduct awareness campaigns on climate change and disaster preparedness and response in all schools.
7. Mobilize donor funds to support education response to climate change-related disasters, including provision of radios for distance learning.

Priority Program 4: TVET

The *overall objective* of priority program 4 (PP4) on TVET is to strengthen equitable access, quality, relevance, and governance of the TVET system to improve Liberian citizens' skills base.

As noted in the ESA, the youth employment challenge in low-income economies, such as Liberia, stems from a myriad of demand- and supply-side constraints. On the demand-side, these mainly include economic underdevelopment, jobless growth, non-conducive business environment, weak competitiveness, low labor productivity, lack of wage employment and decent work opportunities, and a pervasive informal economy. On the supply-side, the problem mostly relates to poor human capital development. Young people are either not qualified enough, or the skills and competencies they acquire do not live up to labor market needs and employers' expectations. In this context, terminal levels of education, TVET and higher education, have a critical role to play in building human capital, enhancing youth employability and employment prospects, and accelerating national development.

To help address skills gaps between market demand and education system supply, the MoE will undertake a significant strategic shift in this ESP period by expanding the TVET track of MoE multilateral schools,[29] as described in more detail below. This shift will help incentivize students to complete secondary education, because they will be able to graduate with certified skills that are marketable in the workplace. It will also help unleash the unrealized potential of this age group to contribute to the human capital development of the country.

Additionally, as part of the MoE's commitment to tackling the chronic issue of over-age enrollment, youth who are over age for secondary school will be integrated into informal TVET programs to help unclog the general education system and increase the number of skills-development opportunities for this vulnerable group.

Key challenges:

- lack of up-to-date, quality data;
- fragmentation of TVET provision and limited funding;
- low overall access to TVET, with unequal access between young women and men;
- inadequate facilities that do not cater to the needs of girls and persons with disabilities, and exacerbate the risks of gender-based violence;
- gender-based occupational segregation: female learners are primarily found in fields deemed as 'feminine' (e.g., hairdressing, beauty, and make-up), and male learners in fields deemed as 'masculine' (e.g., auto mechanic, driving, carpentry, and masonry);
- low representation of female learners in key sectors and trades with high employability and wage potential (electricity, transportation, infrastructure, ICTs, agriculture, services, tourism, and manufacturing);
- low social prestige of TVET in Liberian society;

[29] The TVET track is of the three tracks available at the senior secondary level (Grades 10–12), in addition to the arts and science tracks.

- weak linkages between TVET providers and private-sector actors;
- lack of adequately trained TVET teachers, especially women;
- absence of uniform and sufficiently demand-driven curricula;
- pending establishment of a governing structure, Liberia TVET Commission (LITCOM);
- lack of comprehensive data sources at school and ministerial levels;
- absence of dialogue and decision-making mechanisms for public and private actors;
- lack of a mechanism to enhance female participation in TVET governance and management;
- lack of a program to support and strengthen the administration and management of all TVET training centers, including quality assurance;
- low rates of transition from TVET to stable or satisfactory employment, especially for young women.

In an effort to address these significant challenges and meet SDG goals (SDG 4.3: Equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university; and SDG 4.4: Number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship), the Government of Liberia, in consultation with national and international TVET stakeholders, has put in place a *National TVET Policy* (2015–2020) and a draft TVET Legislation that is currently under review for enactment into law.[30] Other policy frameworks supporting the TVET reform process include the ERA of 2011, the G2B ESP 2017–2021, and the PAPD. The *National Policy on Girls' Education* (2013) also includes provisions to improve girls' and women's access to vocational training, science and technology, and continuing education.

The *National TVET Policy*, developed by the inter-ministerial taskforce on TVET, chaired by the MoYS and co-chaired by the MoE with support from UNESCO through its Capacity Development for Education (CapED) Program, aims at:

> '[…] mitigating the misalliances between the skills supply and the needs of the industry, reskilling to aid the current workforce meet the changing strains of the industry, leaving the traditional formal educational tract and engendering a paradigm shift towards the acquisition of skills that add value to the human person, developing and adopting standardized curricula for different disciplines and integrating the informal sector into the country's TVET platform' (Liberia, 2021).

The *National TVET Policy* was revised in 2021, five years into its implementation, to cover the 2022–2027 period. UNESCO supported this review, which highlighted the persisting lack of political will for the policy's implementation. The ESP 2022/23–2026/27 represents a unique opportunity to sustain this dynamic and revamp the key components of the TVET policy, including strengthening its gender focus, which calls for bolder investments in this key education sub-sector in Liberia.

Public TVET provision in Liberia falls under the responsibility of two ministries—MoE and MoYS—and is governed by the *National TVET Policy*. There are three types of TVET programs: formal, non-formal,[31] and informal. The regulation of the formal TVET system is currently under the responsibility of MoE through the TVET Division of the Bureau of Science, Technology, Vocational and Special Education, which oversees

[30] The draft law is entitled 'Liberia Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Act 2020'.
[31] Non-formal TVET provision, including mainly NGOs and local associations.

the accreditation of all TVET institutions operating in the country, governed by the ERA of 2011. MoE offers formal training and vocational education at the secondary level (Grades 10–12), along with general education in so-called multilateral schools. It also offers some informal TVET programs for out-of-school children.

MoYS, on the other hand, is in charge of the informal TVET[32] through its TVET Bureau. The informal TVET particularly targets literate, semi-literate, and illiterate disadvantaged community youth (including school dropouts), offering them TVET and on-the-job training. MoYS also deals with the recognition of prior learning, predominantly through traditional/informal apprenticeships. MoYS runs seven informal vocational training centers. There are two types of short-term training programs, a basic skills level for students who have dropped out of high school at or before Grade 10, and an intermediate level for students who have completed at least Grade 10 (Liberia, 2020b).

Presently, certification of trainees is not done exclusively by MoE, because many government agencies are involved in skills development. Due to a lack of uniform curricula for the various trades, for the time being, certification is carried out by different training providers who work in silos, which makes benchmarking into a national qualification equivalency framework problematic.

In 2019/20, the ESA noted a total of 49 TVET schools in Liberia, under the MoE, concentrated in three regions (North Central, Montserrado, and South Central), leaving the other regions seriously underserved.

In terms of enrollment, EMIS data from the same year show a total of 14,315 students enrolled in TVET (30.5 per cent women). Of 19 fields of study, computer science is the most popular (13 per cent of students, 14.9 per cent of whom are female), followed by electricity (8 per cent of students, 5 per cent female), interior decoration (7 per cent of students, 86 per cent female), and architectural drafting (7 per cent of students, 15 per cent female), which indicates a high degree of fragmentation in TVET supply.

In terms of TVET completion, 2015 data show that 9.5 per cent of young men have completed TVET studies, while only 6.4 per cent of young women have done so, signaling that female students were more prone to drop out of the TVET system than males.

With regard to gender, the share of female students in the different fields of training reproduces certain gender stereotypes, with low representation of females enrolled in fields deemed as masculine, such as plumbing (2 per cent), metal work (2.5 per cent), carpentry (7 per cent), electronics/ICT (5 per cent), electricity (5 per cent) and auto mechanic (9 per cent). Conversely, women were overrepresented in trades deemed as feminine, including home arts (85 per cent), hospitality science (85 per cent), and interior decoration (86 per cent). Disrupting the intergenerational transmission of gender stereotypes is key to opening up the entire spectrum of existing education and employment opportunities to women.

The establishment of LITCOM is one of the objectives to be achieved within the ESP time frame to provide an overall strategic and operational direction and address current system fragmentation. LITCOM's establishment is contingent on the government's approval of the draft TVET legislation.

A number of development partner projects in the field of TVET have emerged following the approval of the *National TVET Policy* in 2015. The Youth Rising project, funded by the European Union (EUR 25 million,

[32] In Liberia, the term 'informal TVET' is used to designate TVET provision targeting out-of-school and other vulnerable groups typically leading to informal sector employment

2018–2024) and implemented by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), is the single most important donor initiative in the domain of TVET and it has implemented some of the key components of the TVET policy. As part of a regional initiative that includes Kenya, South Africa, and Zambia, the project aims to strengthen the Liberian TVET sector in its capacity to deliver equitable and gender-balanced access to high-quality and demand-driven TVET, focusing on strengthening TVET capacity in six schools in five counties.

To achieve this, the project will support capacity development at the central and local TVET provider levels and strengthen links with the private sector. The intervention will address equality issues, with a focus on remote south-east rural areas and vulnerable youth, including people with disabilities. Overall, the project aims to empower Liberian youth to respond to economic growth opportunities by enhancing the TVET sector's capacity to increase their employability and entrepreneurship potential. The project also seeks to improve the quality, relevance, and modernization of TVET by strengthening links with the private sector, improving the governance, planning, management, and delivery capacity at governmental and TVET provider levels.

UNIDO also implements a Sweden-funded Promoting Youth Employment by Supporting Technical and Vocational Education in Liberia project (2018–2024, EUR 5 million). The project focuses on (1) improving teachers' capacity through participation in formal teacher training for vocational education, (2) strengthening human capital to correspond to economic needs, (3) increasing private sector's participation in stewardship and engagement with the TVET sector at school level, and (4) supporting the establishment of the TVET Center for Professional Training, Research, and Innovation (TCPTRI).

The Government of France and its development agency AFD finance the Strengthening Integration through Vocational Education (STRIVE) project (2020–2025, EUR 10 million) implemented by the European Institute for Cooperation and Development. Between 2020 and 2025, the project aims to train 100 trainers in new pedagogical practices; support eight training centers in improving their training sessions; train 2,000 young trainees and help them find employment opportunities; and train and follow-up on 300 farmers in the development of new practices in fish farming and market gardening.

Another project, funded by the EU and the German government and implemented by GIZ, focuses on skills development in the transport sector (2018–2025, EUR 6 million). The project has led to the development of a demand-driven curriculum for a 12- month competency-based training under the Road Maintenance and Construction Training Program (RMCT), developed by Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and coordinated by the Association of Liberian Construction Contractors.

The ESP proposes a number of activities in continuity with Youth Rising and the other donor projects, pursuing much of the same goals, albeit with an expanded scope at the system level.

In this context, the PP on TVET will focus on three main components:

1. Access and equity;
2. Quality and relevance;
3. Governance and management.

Note: While the TVET system is under the responsibility of two ministries, MoE and MoYS, the proposed activities address the TVET system as a whole and, therefore, propose activities to be led by the two

ministries. Throughout the sub-components, activities and indicators, the formal (including new standalone TVET centers, TVET stream in secondary schools) and informal component are considered.

Component 4.1: Access and equity

For the first component on access and equity, a number of demand- and supply-side interventions are envisaged, including the construction of new, both formal and informal, TVET schools in rural areas. This will help address geographical disparity in the supply of skills-development opportunities, which represents one of the key challenges for an equitable delivery of TVET, with only few institutions in the North West and South East A and none in the South East B. MoE and MoYS will need to identify the counties most in need of new TVET centers and use available funds to promote much-needed investments in new infrastructure and training.

In a significant strategic shift, as noted above, the MoE will further strengthen youth skills development by expanding the TVET track in existing public secondary schools, in addition to the arts and science streams currently in place (also referred to in *Access PP s, Secondary education sub-component 1.3*). An additional 20 schools will dedicate three classrooms (one per grade) for the TVET stream, meant for age-appropriate secondary school students.

Component 4.1 also addresses the establishment of pathways to ensure that out-of-school children and over-aged youth are integrated into the skills-development system to increase the number of skills-development opportunities for these vulnerable groups. This requires identifying entry points within the education cycles for both groups before formalizing new pathways and initiatives aimed at ensuring the absorption of a significant share of out-of-school children and over-aged youth into the informal TVET system. This will prepare the TVET system as a whole for the growing influx of students in the years to come. In addition, informal TVET of MoYS will absorb over-age students at the secondary level. Scholarships for both out-of-school children and over-age students are envisaged as a means to incentivize this shift. To reach at-risk youth, particularly those struggling with substance abuse issues, the MoYS is establishing a detoxification and rehabilitation program within the Youth Agriculture Training Center, which will then feed into vocational training.

This component additionally envisages investments to improve the state of TVET facilities to make them gender-responsive, inclusive spaces. It also entails demand-side measures, such as the provision of comprehensive scholarships (including tools and materials) for underrepresented groups, in line with the *National Policy on Girls' Education* (2013) and *Liberia Inclusive Education Policy* of 2018, with emphasis on meeting the diverse needs of students. Responsibilities for the implementation of these activities is shared between the MoE and MoYS, in line with existing procurement rules and regulations. To prioritize infrastructure works, it will be necessary to identify key interventions in all school spaces.

County authorities will conduct awareness-raising campaigns to promote TVET among youth, focusing on both traditional and social media and the community level. The campaigns will take place once a year for formal TVET and twice a year for informal TVET. Key messages will center on the importance of TVET for employability broadly speaking, as well as specific messages on key training sectors. They will target underrepresented groups, including young women, rural youth, and young people with disabilities. Additionally, to change both female and male students' perceptions of women's roles in society and encourage the enrollment of female TVET students, emphasis will be placed on recruiting female TVET

teachers by favoring female candidates during recruitment processes and providing a dedicated financial incentive.

Globally, this set of interventions will improve prospects for girls and boys of all categories to have equal access to affordable, gender-responsive, inclusive, and quality TVET and training opportunities to develop skills for employment, in line with SDG 4.3 targets and in continuity with the G2B ESP.

Specific Objective: Ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable, disability-inclusive, and quality TVET and opportunities to develop skills for employment.

Indicator	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of Information
# of students enrolled in TVET (formal and informal), by sex	19,714	50,000	EMIS/ASC and MoYS report/Youth Management Information System (YMIS)
% of TVET (formal and informal) female students	30% (formal)	35% (formal)	EMIS/ASC and MoYS report/YMIS
% of TVET learners with special needs, by sex (M/F)	NA	% to triple	EMIS/ASC and MoYS report/YMIS

Sub-component 4.1.1: Strengthen access to skills-development opportunities through formal, non-formal, and informal TVET.

Indicators	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of Information
# of new standalone informal TVET centers (MoYS) # of MoYS informal centers upgraded	N/A 0	3 7	MoYS annual report/YMIS
# of public secondary schools with a TVET stream	7	27	EMIS/ASC
#/% of over-age secondary youth transferred to informal TVET, by sex (M/F)	0	8,448 /5%	EMIS/ASC and MoYS annual report/YMIS
#% of out-of-school youth (15–24 years old) enrolled in informal TVET, by sex (M/F)	5,400/ 1%,	20,643/2%	EMIS/ASC and MoYS annual report
# of rehabilitation programs for at-risk youth established	0	1	MoYS annual report
# of youth detoxified and provided with psychosocial, mental and sexual reproductive health services, by sex	0	15,000	MoYS annual report

Activities

1. MoYS will create and upgrade standalone informal TVET schools with a focus on rural areas to meet the growing demand for skills across the country, in cooperation with key actors (PTAs, county leadership, and civil society organizations). Facilities should follow all design requirements for disability-accessible, gender-friendly spaces, including ramps and separate latrines, in line with the Universal Design Principles.
2. MoE will establish a TVET stream within existing public secondary schools.

3. MoE and MoYS will formalize and operationalize specific pathways to ensure integration of over-aged girls and boys from formal schooling into informal TVET.
4. MoE and MoYS will formalize and operationalize specific pathways and strengthen existing mechanisms to ensure integration of out-of-school girls and boys into informal TVET.
5. MoYS will establish detoxification and rehabilitation program for at-risk-youth in Montserrado county through the Bensonville Youth Rehabilitation and Agricultural Training Center, providing psychosocial, mental and sexual reproductive health services, and market-driven vocational skills.

Sub-component 4.1.2: Stimulate demand for TVET.

Indicators	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of Information
# of media reports on awareness-raising campaigns (radio, TV, social media hits)	0	15	MoE/MoYS annual report
# of scholarships granted to underrepresented groups	0	1,095	MoE/MoYS annual report

Activities

1. County authorities will conduct awareness-raising campaigns, under the supervision of MoE and MoYS, focusing on media (traditional and social media) and communities, and ensuring women and men are actively represented in a range of professional fields and roles.
2. MoE and MoYS will set up a comprehensive scholarship scheme that will cover administrative fees and living costs and target underrepresented groups (students with special needs and females in STEM) in formal and informal TVET (50 per cent females, 10 per cent people with disability, and 30 per cent females in STEM).

Sub-component 4.1.3: Ensure accessible, safe, and enabling learning environments for a disability-inclusive, gender-responsive access to TVET institutions.

Indicators	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of Information
# of new female teachers recruited	0	90	EMIS/ASCR and MoYS annual reports/YMIS
Code of conduct for tackling gender-based violence in and around TVET centers validated	No	Yes	Copy of code of conduct
% of TVET schools implementing the school of code of conduct for TVET trainers and school administrators	N/A	100%	EMIS/ASC and MoYS annual report/YMIS

Activities

1. MoE and MoYS will adapt facility design to embed all requirements for disability-accessible, gender-friendly spaces, including ramps and separate latrines, in line with the Universal Design Principles in TVET schools.
2. MoE and MoYs will promote the recruitment of female teachers through active sensitization and positive discrimination in line with the Quality PP, Teacher education sub-component 2.3.

Component 4.2: Quality and relevance

The second component, on quality and relevance, focuses on making the TVET offer more market relevant. It promotes a transition towards competence-based training (CBT) to make curricula more demand-oriented.

The component includes the roll-out of a survey to identify emerging trades and skills needs. The roll-out will be led by MoE and MoYS and involve the private sector and other actors at the county level. The survey will target key private-sector players, including the chambers of commerce, the Engineering Society of Liberia, the Liberia Business Association, and the Association of Liberian Construction Contractors. The findings of the surveys will be used to update the course offers and promote new opportunities for girls in non-traditional fields.

Parallel to this initiative, the MoE and MoYS, in cooperation with development partners, will launch modules on soft skills and self-entrepreneurship, targeting youth in the informal sector.

The ESP also promotes a system-wide transition toward CBT. MoE and MoYS will govern the shift, in cooperation with the private-sectors stakeholders listed above and all other interested parties, including development partners. The development of curricula through the 'Developing a Curriculum' (DACUM)[33] methodology will be followed by the production of TLMs.

A stronger emphasis on STEM and digital skills is another element of this component. MoE and MoYS, in cooperation with private-sector actors, will conduct a mapping of existing gaps in TVET in regard to the STEM and digital skills offer. This will lead to new courses and updates to existing training offer, with a focus on encouraging more girls to enter STEM (mirroring the *STEM sub-component 2.2*). Given that PP2 already addresses the needs for STEM labs in MoE schools, PP4 envisages a similar action targeting MoYS TVET centers, including dedicated teacher training measures.

TCPTRI is also expected to organize CPD in the areas of CBT, digital skills, mainstreaming gender, climate change, and environmental sustainability, as well as hands-on industry experience for TVET trainers.

The activities of the second component will strengthen the market orientation of the formal and informal skills-development offer by investing in the knowledge base, a stronger focus on STEM and digital skills, and the transition toward gender-responsive pedagogic models with a focus on gender bias-free competence acquisition for both women and men, in line with international standards.

[33] A standard international methodology for curriculum development in TVET, focused on the competencies needed to perform a specific occupation.

Specific Objective: Strengthen the delivery of a labor market-relevant TVET offer.

Indicator	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of Information
% of youth who completed TVET and are qualified, by sex (M/F)	53% (2016)	80%	Household survey/labor force surveys

Sub-component 4.2.1: Expand the offer of demand-driven skills in Liberia.

Indicators	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of Information
# of TVET schools/centers provided with updated equipment and tools	0	27 (MoE), 7 (MoYS)	EMIS/ASC and MoYS annual report
# and % of students trained in soft skills and self-entrepreneurship, by sex (M/F)	N/A	Based on the survey results	EMIS/ASC and MoYS annual report
# of MoYS TVET schools offering career guidance and counselling services	0	9 (informal)	EMIS/ASC and MoYS annual report
# and % of students benefitting from work-based learning schemes of any type, by sex (M/F)	NA	3 000	EMIS/ASC and MoYS annual report

Activities

1. MoE and MOYS will launch an industry-based TVET skills-demand survey targeting the private sector to identify emerging trades and skills needs in the 15 counties of Liberia.
2. Based on the survey findings, MoE and MoYS will develop syllabus and roll out comprehensive soft skills and self-entrepreneurship training modules for youth in the informal sector, and update equipment in the centers.
3. MoYS TVET centers will establish guidance and career counselling services to facilitate school-to-work transition.
4. Under the supervision of MoE and MoYS, Skills Development Fund will be established to facilitate the school-to-work transition (work-based learning programs, apprenticeships, dual training) in cooperation with the local private sector, ensuring girls and boys are offered an equally wide range of fields.
5. Biannual tracer studies will be conducted with a focus on MoYS TVET centers and MoE TVET schools' graduates' transition to the labor market.

Sub-component 4.2.2: Design and roll out a standardized, competence-based curriculum for TVET courses.

Indicators	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of Information
Labor market-responsive CBT curricula using DACUM methodology developed and disseminated	No	3 (pilot)	Copy of curricula
# of TVET centers that have access to CBT TLM	0	36	EMIS/ASCR and MoYS Reports
# of centers implementing at least three CBT courses	0	36	EMIS/ASCR and MoYS Reports
Activities			

1. MoE and MoYS, in cooperation with sector-specific private-sector actors within the framework of Sector Skills Councils, will develop labor market-responsive CBT curricula, using DACUM methodology.
2. MoE and MoYS will develop dedicated TLMs for CBT, with a focus on STEM.
3. TVET centers will implement CBT courses using gender-responsive pedagogy.

Sub-component 4.2.3: Strengthen the focus on STEM and digital skills in all TVET institutions.

Indicators	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of Information
# of MoYS TVET institutions equipped with functional STEM and digital skills-related equipment and spaces	0	9	EMIS/ASCR and MoYS Reports
Activities			

1. MoE and MoYS will launch a national mapping on existing gaps (trades, skills, competencies, equipment) in STEM and digital skills offer in the TVET system.
2. STEM labs in MoYS TVET centers will be built in line with *STEM sub-component 2.2.*
3. Relevant TLM will be developed.
4. Teacher training on STEM will be provided to MoYS teachers, in line with *STEM sub-component 2.2.*

Sub-component 4.2.4: Ensure regular internal and external mechanisms for initial and continuous professional development in all TVET schools to enhance staff performance and overall service delivery.

Indicators	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of Information
# of TVET teaching staff benefiting from pre-service training, by sex (M/F) (cumulative)	NA	469 (F:129)	EMIS/ASC and MoYS annual report
# and % of TVET teaching staff benefiting from in-service/CPD training, by sex (M/F) (cumulative)	NA	2,245 /100%	EMIS/ASC and MoYS annual report
Activities			
1. MoE and MOYS, in cooperation with TCPTRI, will provide pre-service and in-service training for TVET trainers with specific attention to female staff and staff with disabilities, focusing on gender-responsive pedagogy, CBT, digital skills, and mainstreaming climate change and environmental sustainability, as well as hands-on industry experience in line with the comprehensive CPD Framework of *Teacher Education sub-component 2.3.*			

Component 4.3: Governance and management

Component 3, on governance and management, promotes much-needed improvements to data systems achieved by improving the management of a TVET component of EMIS and YSMIS. Investments will be needed to strengthen capacity at central and decentralized levels to strengthen, on the one side, integrated data management systems at central level and, on the other side, the development of primary sources of data. Technical assistance from in-country development partners can play a role in leveraging knowledge and experience in this domain.

The updated TVET Policy highlights this issue more in detail:

> 'The Educational Management Information System (EMIS) under the MoE has made efforts to capture TVET data during the yearly data collection analysis of information on the education sector as a whole. Unfortunately, EMIS only captures enrollment in limited number of TVET institutions under the MoE. Parameters like completion and pass rates that are captured in the secondary education sub-sector are not captured for TVET. Trainer qualifications and TVET financing are all missing in the EMIS. Data from TVET institutions under other ministries are not captured in the EMIS database, which limits the quality assurance process of the skills development in the country. UNESCO is in the process of supporting the EMIS division of the MoE to adequately capture information on TVET nationwide, including sex-disaggregated data. They can collaborate with the Ministry of Labor, which is in the process of implementing data acquisition for skills demand and skills forecasting to align with the requisite training delivery to be able to include labor market information system and skills forecasting tool to improve upon the curriculum to meet labor market needs' (Liberia, 2020b: 6).

To further strengthen data management in the sub-sector, MoYS will lead the development of a new YMIS to track informal TVET.

In addition, the component proposes the establishment of sector skills councils[34] as an innovative governance mechanism, pursuant to the *TVET Law* and as a means to diversify the sources of funding for TVET institutions. Sector skills councils would operate as industry-led entities, establishing occupational standards to bridge mismatches between skills supply and demand.

This third component relies heavily on progress in approval of the TVET legislation. In the absence of a stronger legislative framework, the lack of a sector authority to coordinate the TVET offer will hamper a system-wide change.

Specific Objective: Improve TVET governance and management system for more effective delivery.

Indicator	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of Information
# of sector skills councils in place	0	5	MoE and MoYS
TVET national qualifications framework approved	No	Yes	Copy of the national qualification's framework
# and % of TVET institutions with a functioning system for reporting to EMIS and YSMIS	0%	100%	EMIS and MoYS YSMIS

Sub-component 4.3.1: Establish an effective TVET component of the EMIS and YSMIS for the governance and management system of TVET institutions to enhance accountability.

Indicators	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of Information
% of TVET schools (public and private) with a functioning system for reporting to EMIS and YSMIS	0	100%	EMIS and YSMIS reports
% TVET schools with EMIS and YSMIS trained staff on database management	0	100%	EMIS and YSMIS reports
Activities			
1. MoE, in cooperation with MoYS, will design, operationalize, and host a TVET component of the EMIS and YSMIS database for the governance and management of the TVET system, focusing on key indicators (enrollment, completion, staff, etc.).			
2. Training to strengthen the capacity of administrative staff in MoE and MoYS central and TVET schools for data collection and analysis of the TVET component will be rolled out.			

[34] Sector skills councils are decision-making mechanisms involving public and private actors in TVET governance to address skills mismatches.

Sub-component 4.3.2: Improve system governance through a dedicated entity, formalization of PPPs, establishment of coordination with donor community to enhance TVET performance, and strengthened M&E capacity.

Indicators	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of Information
LITCOM established and operational	No	Yes	LITCOM founding documents
Memorandum of understanding (MoU) on PPPs in TVET established, in line with the TVET Policy and Law	No	Yes	Copy of the MoU
# of sector skills councils in place	0	5	Sector skills councils founding documents
Donor-government technical coordination mechanism in place	No	Yes	Coordination mechanism founding documents

Activities

1. LITCOM regulatory authority will be established.
2. MoE and MoYS will adopt an MoU with private-sector actors on PPPs in TVET to create an enabling environment for private sector's involvement, defining roles and responsibilities, and in line with TVET legislation.
3. Sector skills councils in the key sectors for job generation will be established to strengthen private sector's participation in the governance and management of TVET, in line with *TVET Law* and in continuity with development partners' projects.
4. A donor–government technical coordination mechanism will be established.
5. Strengthen MoE and MoYS capacities in M&E

Priority Program 5: Higher education

The *overall objective* of priority program 5 (PP 5) is to strengthen equitable access, quality, relevance, and governance of the higher education system to enhance the Liberian youth's skill base.

The ESA shows that higher education and, to a much lower extent, TVET increase young people's chances of transitioning to the labor market and securing decent, non-precarious, reasonably remunerated, and satisfying jobs. However, the quality of employment is a major challenge in Liberia and the most educated youth are not exempt from it. More demand-driven and gender-sensitive TVET and higher education systems are needed to tackle young labor underutilization and mitigate prevailing skills mismatches. While the country's low level of economic development continues to constrain the demand side, investment in higher education, particularly in the research stream, can be the driver of innovation, technical know-how, and economic growth. On the supply side, investing in more relevant, inclusive, and quality higher education will help realign skills mismatches and improve the supply of appropriately skilled graduates who meet the employment needs of the labor market and can meaningfully contribute to national development.

To optimize these benefits, however, the ESA identifies a number of challenges, as listed below.

Key challenges:

- access to higher education limited to a small fraction of the population;
- disparities in access across the country;
- underrepresentation of some groups in higher education (women, people with disability, low-income households, households from rural areas, etc.); share of female students has slightly declined in the last 10 years;
- severely limited availability of post-graduate degrees and none at PhD level;
- most HEIs offering courses that do not meet the demand of the labor market;
- inability of the higher education system to integrate digital technologies into its delivery modalities and course content;
- lack of awareness of the importance of skill-based education;
- low share of female lecturers among higher education teaching staff;
- obsolete legislative instrument for National Commission for Higher Education (NCHE) (i.e., 1989 Act on higher education);
- absence of a framework on financing higher education;
- lack of sufficient resources to accommodate increasing demand;
- lack of capacity to monitor HEIs;
- limited management information system;
- limited participation of women in management and decision-making roles, including on the NCHE.

The NCHE serves as the regulatory body of the higher education system. It was established in 1989 to formulate broad policy guidelines for the establishment of HEIs. Its mission is to set standards and

regulations to ensure that all public, private, and faith-based tertiary education institutions in Liberia create, sustain, and provide relevant and quality higher education. Namely, the NCHE is responsible for: (1) monitoring, evaluating, and accrediting all HEIs, (2) facilitating the establishment of an autonomous national accreditation center, (3) approving new and existing higher education programs for funding, and (4) reviewing existing programs at HEIs to establish priority programs of study based on national needs. However, the oversight role of the NCHE faces some limitations, because government grants and transfers are given directly to HEIs.

The higher education system in Liberia comprises three main degree levels: (1) associate's degrees, after two-year courses in junior colleges as part of non-university post-secondary education; (2) bachelor's degrees, generally after two years of general courses followed by two years of specialization in a particular field of study at the university; and (3) master's degrees, generally after two years of university studies beyond the bachelor's degree. Students must pass an entrance examination to access higher education.

Currently, the higher education system in Liberia does not offer doctoral degrees, with only a few PhD holders who were given scholarships to do their doctoral studies abroad. In a major shift, however, the NCHE) has announced that in a year's time, the country should have its first PhD students, starting with social sciences and humanities. The University of Liberia is in the process of establishing strategic partnerships with other universities abroad to, in the coming years, develop PhD programs.

In 2021, Liberia registered a total of 53 HEIs duly licensed and accredited by the NCHE, of which 11 are public, 17 are private, and 25 are faith based. In terms of enrollment, the number of students enrolled in HEIs has increased in the last 10 years—from 28,550 in 2011/12 to 78,355 in 2020/21, of which 52,429 (67 per cent) were enrolled in public HEIs. The share of female students slightly declined in the same period—from 41 per cent (11,786) in 2011/12 to 40 per cent (31,490) in 2020/21. The ESA highlights data gaps for higher education, noting that NCHE is conducting a new national data-collection exercise on higher education, with a full statistical report to follow.

The distribution of HEIs by region and county sheds light on the spatial disparities in the provision of higher education—HEIs are available in only 10 of the 15 counties. South-Eastern and North-Western regions are underserved, with only 2 HEIs in each, compared to 11 HEIs in the North Central region and, 37 HEIs in the South Central region, the highest number of all. The Montserrado county alone possesses half of all HEIs in the country, all found in Monrovia and its surroundings. Only nine HEIs offer postgraduate education, equivalent to 17 per cent of all HEIs. The vast majority operate at the undergraduate level, offering in 43 per cent of associate's degrees (23 HEIs) and in 40 per cent of bachelor's degrees (21 HEIs). Postgraduate education is essential to allow young people to compete for high-skill occupations. The University of Liberia is, by far, the largest HEI in the country. It enrolls 31,158 students (M:18,441/F:12,717), close to 60 per cent of all students in public HEIs; every year, around 2,000 to 3,000 students graduate.

Overall, the higher education system in Liberia is confronted with major challenges. Despite the relatively high public recurrent expenditure on higher education, the sub-sector lacks sufficient resources, including scholarships, to address the increasing number of tertiary students. With the new tuition policy, all public universities will be tuition-free for undergraduate students. They will be not exempted from registration fees, but these are relatively small. Consequently, at the University of Liberia alone, 8,000 new students are expected to enrol for the next academic year.

To accommodate the intake of all new students, increased resources and investment are needed to hire more staff, rehab and expand existing facilities, and procure the necessary equipment. Technology also comes into play. Blended learning, which combines face-to-face with online teaching and learning, emerged with the COVID-19 pandemic. However, access to ICT and even basic infrastructure services, such as electricity, is costly.

In light of this set of challenges, PP 5 is structured along three components:

1. Access and equity;
2. Quality and relevance;
3. Governance and management.

Component 5.1: Access and equity

The first component, on access and equity, includes supply-side measures, such as the provision of merit/need-based scholarships for underrepresented groups to access private HEIs, which is to be established by the NCHE in cooperation with National Commission on Disability. In addition, the NCHE will set up merit-based scholarships for Liberian university graduates to undertake master's or doctoral studies abroad, when not available in Liberia. Similar to PP4 on TVET, the emphasis of the *Access and equity* component is on improving the inclusiveness of premises, focusing on hard and soft components. On the one hand, the ESP plans infrastructure upgrades to ensure that HEIs' spaces are accessible to people with disabilities and provide for gender-friendly WASH and safe learning spaces. To this end, the NCHE is also responsible for the development and implementation of codes of conduct for teaching and non-teaching staff with a focus on creating safe learning spaces, preventing SRGBV, and promoting inclusive practices. The codes are to be developed in cooperation with the Ministry of Gender and Social Welfare, the National Commission on Disability, and relevant civil society organizations.

An additional planned equity activity is to increase the amount of female higher education teachers by giving preference to female teaching candidates during the recruitment process. Having a representative number of female teachers in universities will encourage female students to participate in higher education and pursue professional careers.

Specific Objective: Ensure all young people in Liberia have access to relevant and quality higher education and employability skills by 2026/27.

Indicator	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of Information
GER in higher education (SDG 4.3)	15.1%	16%	NCHE annual report
% of female students	40%	45%	NCHE annual report
% of students with disability	N/A	Tripled	NCHE annual report

There are two sub-components under this specific objective:

1. Ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality higher education and opportunities to develop skills for employment.

2. Create an enabling environment for safe and inclusive access to HEIs.

Sub-component 5.1.1: Ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality higher education and opportunities to develop skills for employment.

Indicators	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of Information
# of university students, by sex (M/F)	78,355 46,865/31,490	100,039 M/F	NCHE annual report
# of students from underrepresented groups benefitting from merit-/need-based governmental scholarship scheme, by sex (cumulative)	N/A	10,293	NCHE annual report
# of students benefitting from research grants (abroad), by sex (M/F)	N/A	390	NCHE annual report
Activities			
1. NCHE, in cooperation with the National Commission on Disability, will provide scholarships covering living costs to promote access to higher education for underrepresented groups, with a focus on female students from rural areas and students with disabilities. 2. NCHE will provide research grants for students to undertake master's and doctoral studies abroad.			

Sub-component 5.1.2: Create an enabling environment for healthy, safe, protective, and disability-inclusive access to higher education institutions.

Indicators	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of Information
# of HEIs with facility design adapted to Universal Design Principles, including separate toilets for women and men, accessible for people with disabilities	4	11	NCHE annual report
% of HEI adopting the code of conduct to prevent sexual and gender-based violence	0%	100%	NCHE annual report
% of female lecturers in public HEIs	16%	21%	NCHE annual report
Activities			
1. HEIs, in cooperation with the National Commission on Disability, will upgrade HEI facilities according to the needs identified in the assessment needs survey. This should also embed all requirements for disability-accessible, gender-friendly, safe learning spaces, including ramps and separate latrines, in line with the Universal Design Principles. 2. NCHE will adapt the code of conduct for HEI teaching and non-teaching staff trainers and school administrators, with a focus on safe learning spaces, SRGBV, and disability-inclusive practices, and will support its roll-out by HEIs. NCHE will monitor compliance with the code of conduct (as part of regular monitoring activities). 3. NCHE will advocate for female candidacy during teacher recruitment.			

Component 5.2: Quality and relevance

The goal of the second component, on quality and relevance, first and foremost, is to strengthen the market relevance of the existing offer, in line with G2B. To do so, the NCHE will generate up-to-date knowledge on current labor market demands for a highly skilled labor force, using a specific survey to shortlist the demand-driven skills for the labor market and analyze gendered barriers for women and men. This survey will be complemented by a tracer survey to assess the quality of labor market entry of HEIs leavers. The findings of the two studies will help HEIs design and roll out programs to meet the job market's demand of skills and help ensure that girls and boys are not channeled into gender-stereotypical fields of study.

Strengthening digital aspects in the higher education offer is also a key priority for the new plan. Financing equipment updates and providing students with suitable online platforms at the HEI level are key proposed measures. In addition, it is pivotal to mainstream digital technology into all existing curricula, with a focus on revising the existing course offer and providing the teaching force with digital literacy skills.

Given the lack of quality-assurance mechanisms in the current setup of the Liberian higher education system, the ESP 2022/23–2026/27 proposes to establish such a mechanism through an independent agency. This is one of the key recommendations of the Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER) Higher Education Country Report of 2017 and it still holds relevance. There will be a need for major capacity development at the HEI level to secure the functioning of quality assurance, with a focus on M&E activities to ensure a full understanding of, and compliance with, the required standards.

Specific Objective: Strengthen the delivery of a labor market-relevant higher education offer by 2026/27.

Indicator	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of Information
% of higher education graduates in employment 1 year after graduation, by sex (M/F)	77%/66% (2016)	82%/71%	Household survey/labor force surveys

Four sub-components will support the achievement of this specific objective:

1. determine and shortlist demand-driven skills for expansion in all higher education institutions;
2. integrate digital technology in all HEIs;
3. strengthen the Quality Assurance Framework for Higher Education;
4. ensure mechanisms for CPD in all HEIs and at the NCHE to enhance staff performance and overall service delivery

Sub-component 5.2.1: Determine and shortlist demand-driven skills for expansion in all HE institutions

Indicators	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of Information
# of new labor market-relevant programs developed	N/A	Minimum 3	NCHE annual report
% of HEIs offering accredited employability skills programs (public and newly accredited)	45% (Public)	100%	NCHE annual report
Activities			
1. HEIs and the NCHE will design relevant employability skills programs to meet the job market skills demand, based on the findings of two related major surveys: (1) the assessment of demand-driven skills for the labor market, including an analysis of gendered barriers for women and men—this will also include non-traditional skills that will help empower individuals, especially women; and (2) a tracer study to assess the quality of labor market entry of HEIs leavers. 2. HEIs and NCHE will roll out relevant employability skills programs to meet the job market skills demand.			

Sub-component 5.2.2: Integrate digital technology in all HEI programs by 2026/27.

Indicators	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of Information
# of HEIs with updated IT infrastructure	0	11	NCHE annual report
# of HEIs with online learning platforms and registered to e-libraries	3	11	NCHE annual report
# of HEIs mainstreaming digital education in their program (public and private)	0%	100% (public)	NCHE annual report
Activities			
1. HEIs will be equipped with functioning IT infrastructure, including internet connectivity and computers, and provide them with online learning platforms and e-libraries for students, regardless of their gender and disability status. 2. The NCHE, in cooperation with HEIs, will mainstream digital content and technologies into all existing curricula to ensure basic digital literacy for all university graduates, regardless of their gender and disability status. This could include creating new specific courses on digital technologies, if needed. 3. HEIs will develop programs to strengthen digital skills of university teaching force, with focus a on reducing gender barriers.			

Sub-component 5.2.3: Strengthen the Quality Assurance Framework for Higher Education.

Indicators	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of Information
Quality Assurance Framework for Higher Education established	No	Yes	Copy of the framework
% of HEIs with quality assurance departments in place	0%	100%	NCHE annual report
Activities			
1. The NCHE, in cooperation with HEIs, will establish and roll out an overall Quality Assurance Framework for Higher Education. This will include training NCHE's staff on prescribed standards for HEIs and supporting HEIs to establish and staff quality assurance departments.			

2. The NCHE will conduct regular monitoring activities to ensure compliance of HEIs with the prescribed standards.

Sub-component 5.2.4: Ensure mechanisms for CPD in all HEIs and at the NCHE to enhance staff performance and the overall service delivery.

Indicators	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of Information
# of NCHE staff provided with gender-responsive CPD training, by sex (M/F)	0	20	NCHE annual report
# and % of HEIs staff provided with gender-responsive CPD, by sex (M/F)	0	100% (Public)	NCHE annual report
Establishment of merit-based career advancement pathways	No	Yes	NCHE annual report
# of females in leadership positions	N/A	5 percentage pts. increase	NCHE annual report

Activities

1. The NCHE will provide relevant NCHE staff (management, M&E, and inspectorate) with gender-responsive CPD training.
2. HEIs, under the supervision of the NCHE, will provide their staff with gender-responsive CPD training (materials will be shared with non-public HEIs for their roll-out).
3. The NCHE will establish a promotion mechanism for HEI staff performance, with a key focus on faculty welfare and support for promoting women to managerial positions.

Component 5.3: Governance and management

The third component, on governance and management, focuses on establishing partnerships with the public and private sector to facilitate a rapid absorption of higher education graduates into the labor market. The sub-sector will also strengthen its international partnerships with foreign universities to: (1) strengthen the offer and (2) explore avenues for the development of in-country research capacity through a doctorate-level school. The NCHE will also consider ways to actively advocate for increasing the number of women in leadership positions, including as lecturers.

The ESP also addresses data constraints. The SABER Country Report highlighted the lack of a management information system for higher education as one of the key issues of the entire higher education system in 2017. For better system management, the ESP proposes to establish a higher education management information system (HE-MIS) hosted by the NCHE, including the development of technical capacities in all HEIs to regularly produce all administrative, enrollment, performance, and financial data needed. In-country donors can play a role by mobilizing the technical expertise needed to set up a basic but functioning HE-MIS.

Specific Objective: Improve higher education governance and management systems for more effective service delivery.

Indicator	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of Information
# of new international partnerships established	N/A	At least 1	NCHE annual report
HE-MIS annual report available on time (end of calendar year)	No	Yes	Copy of annual report
% of HEIs meeting prescribed standards	0	100%	NCHE annual report

Achievement of this specific objective will be supported through two sub-components:

1. partnerships and collaboration with the public and private sector through public–private partnerships to enhance offer;
2. an effective HE-MIS to enhance management and accountability for more effective service delivery.

Sub-component 5.3.1: Establish partnerships and collaboration with the private sector through public–private partnerships to enhance offer.

Indicators	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of Information
# of national partnerships with public and private sector established to provide concrete employment opportunities for university graduates		At least 5	NCHE annual report
# of one-day stakeholders conference organized by the NCHE between HEIs graduates and prospective employers (cumulative)	N/A	5	NCHE annual report
# of international university cooperation partnerships established	N/A	At least 1	NCHE annual report
Activities			
1. The NCHE, HEIs, and public- and private-sector actors will establish national partnerships with employers to provide concrete employment opportunities for university graduates. Career days, where future graduates meet with prospective employers, will be regularly organized. 2. The NCHE will establish a coordination platform to strengthen interactions in the higher education ecosystem, including public and private higher education stakeholders, public- and private-sector actors, and development partners. 3. The NCHE, in cooperation with international HEIs, will initiate international university cooperation partnerships at regional and global level to strengthen academic offer and explore the potential for research capacity development in Liberia through establishment of a doctorate-level school. 4. The NCHE, in collaboration with the Ministry of Financial Affairs, will lobby partners to mobilize extra resources for the higher education sector.			

Sub-component 5.3.2: Establish effective HE-MIS and monitoring mechanisms to enhance management and accountability for more effective service delivery.

Indicators	Baseline	Target 2026/27	Source of Information
% of relevant NCHE and HEIs staff trained on HE-MIS database management, data collection, and data analysis	0%	100%	NCHE annual report
% of HEIs monitored per year	N/A	20%	NCHE annual report
Activities			
The NCHE, in cooperation with development partners, will support the setup of a HE-MIS for all HEIs: 1. The NCHE/EMIS will design, operationalize, and host a HE-MIS database for the governance and management of higher education and HEIs focusing on key indicators (enrollment, completion, staff, facilities, funding, etc.). This will include rolling out a training to strengthen capacity of administrative staff in NCHE and all HEIs in data collection and analysis of the HE-MIS database. 2. The NCHE will monitor and enforce prescribed standards through HE-MIS, regular correspondence with HEIs, and spot visits.			

Chapter 4: Cost and Financing of the ESP

This chapter sets out the cost, expenditures, and financing requirements to meet the policy objectives delineated in the 2022/23–2026/27 ESP, as well as the projected funding gap and resource mobilization options to finance the gap. The ESP explicitly recognizes the role of education in achieving high-level national development impacts identified in the country's *PAPD 2018–2023*, Liberia's blueprint for socioeconomic change. The financing of the ESP is, therefore, framed not as a net cost to the state, but as a critical and high-return investment in the sustainable future of the country. This is the basis for negotiating with the Ministry of Finance the allocation of sufficient domestic resources to achieve the planned results, as well as for strategic dialogue with development partners to leverage the impact of their support.

As further detailed below, the extent to which partners align their support to the ESP's goals will be critical to successful implementation of the ESP and achievement of its anticipated results. If the support development partners provide is fully, explicitly, and transparently aligned with the ESP's goals, priority programs, and specific objectives, the MoE and donor partners can embrace joint accountability for delivering the ESP's full complement of results. Without such alignment, the strategic impact of external resourcing will be diluted, and the resulting funding gap will present a serious constraint to ESP implementation. The MoE will continue to advocate through the LEG for all partners to explicitly link their programs to support the ESP in a transparent, harmonized way that minimizes duplication and maximizes synergies; the MoE deeply appreciates all partners who have already expressed their commitment to do so.

The projections detailed in this chapter were made using a demographic simulation model that was specifically developed for Liberia. Based on a hypothesis formulated on the evolution of student growth and the selected policy options and objectives, the simulation model enables estimation of the main costs of the planned education policies and strategies. The model only includes the most significant costs of planned policies and objectives, focusing on: staff salaries and incentives; subsidies to non-public schools; school buildings and equipment; and key non-salary expenditure, including textbooks, TLMs, and school health and well-being-related interventions.[35] All other interventions, here termed 'system-strengthening activities', were costed in sessions with the national team and technical experts. This cost includes those related to policy development, staff training, and community awareness.

This chapter projects a plausible scenario that allows for a significant but manageable financing gap and presents the implications for resource mobilization over the ESP period. Projected cost components by type (current and capital) are presented in *Table 4.1* below, followed by sub-sector in *Table 4.2*, and by item (salaries, curriculum, TLM, etc.) in *Table 4.3*. The main underlying assumptions and targets are

[35] The multi-year operational plan (MYOP) that will accompany the ESP will provide a more granular, reliable estimate of the expenses to be incurred during the ESP implementation period, by helping: (1) identify priority activities, including those not taken into account by the model, which will be implemented during the plan implementation period; (2) calculate the cost of activities, using a micro approach, by relying on a list of inputs and related unit costs; and (3) link the activities to potential sources of financing (e.g., government budget and partners' financial contribution, highlighting additional resources to be mobilized).

consolidated in *Annex 3, Table A3.1*. The full list of projections and base year data are available as a separate document to the ESP.

Cost of the ESP

The following *Table 4.1* shows the summary of total ESP cost projections (both recurrent and capital costs) over the 2022/23–2026/27period, with a breakdown of cost by education level (*Table 4.2*).

The total cost of the ESP for the five-year period is estimated at USD 967.5 million, under the selected scenario. This projection is deemed reasonable given the reforms needed to address the challenges at stake and the possible level of resource mobilization. During the plan period, the level of expenses is projected to increase over time, from USD 146.7 million in 2022/23 to USD 219 million in 2026/27. The large increase recorded between 2023/24 and 2024/25 is driven by the nationwide distribution of TLMs, planned for 2024/25, which drives up spending accordingly. Overall, there is an anticipated 49 per cent increase in spending during the period to support both the expansion of the sector at various education levels, in line with school population projections and commensurate with the quality and equity improvement measures needed to achieve the planned results.

Table 4.1: Projected total education and training expenditure, by nature, 2022/23–2026/27
USD '000, constant 2019 prices

	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	Total	% Increase
Recurrent	115,423	135,328	165,090	155,309	167,068	738,217	45%
Capital	31,283	46,771	48,425	50,948	51,900	229,326	66%
Total	**146,706**	**182,099**	**213,515**	**206,256**	**218,968**	**967,544**	49%
% Capital	**21.3%**	**25.7%**	**22.7%**	**24.7%**	**23.7%**	**23.7%**	

Source: Derived from the financial simulation model.

Projected cost by sub-sector

The evolution of projected expenditure by education level shows the gradual and important increase in expenditure necessary to implement the MoE's high-priority strategic shift to tackle the long-standing issue of large numbers of over-age children in the system, which has incrementally built over many years, impeding progress in efficiency and effectiveness. As detailed earlier, a key strategy is for the massive number of over-age children to, over the years transit, into the ALP (up to 89,000 students in public ALP programs by 2026/27, see *table A3.5* in *Annex 3*). The alternative budget, that the ALP is part of, will accordingly witness the highest increase (+3,631 per cent, although starting from a very low amount). This is a significant, but essential and high-return investment in system's efficiency and individual learning prospects. The increase in ALP investment is followed by TVET (+136 per cent) and secondary education (+115 per cent), both pushed by the anticipated high level of enrollment at those levels in the years to come. Only system-strengthening activities are seen to decrease in spending over the plan period, which can be explained by the concentration of training and policy development activities in the first years of the plan.

This increased allocation of funds in the sub-sectors will be achieved through a corresponding decrease in higher education spending, whose share in total projected expenditure will drop from 20.8 to 18.0 per

cent during the plan period. This will supply a more balanced and equitable structure for financing of the education and training sector. The share of the compulsory education segment (lower and upper basic) will also slightly decrease to reach 38.6 per cent of total expenditure in 2026/27 (from 40.2 per cent at the beginning of the period). This is due to an expected, more limited increase in the number of students at these levels as a result of strategic interventions to enforce the over-age policy, including promoting right-age school-entry and diverting over-age students into ALP and informal TVET. The share of ECE in expenditure (8.6 per cent at the beginning of the period) will also decrease slightly to reach 8.3 per cent in 2026/27, following the anticipated decrease in enrollment due to transition of over-age students into basic education and ALP. Given the existing large share of over-age students currently at the ECE level, the number of new students entering ECE at the right age will still be lower than the number of over-age children channeled out of ECE into other programs.

Table 4.2: Projected total education and training expenditure, by education level, 2022/23–2026/27 USD '000, constant 2019 prices, and %

	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	Total	% Inc
Amount in USD ('000)							
ECE	12,663	13,768	17,711	16,782	18,087	79,011	43%
LBE	44,485	48,265	68,775	59,731	63,108	284,363	42%
UBE	14,521	17,243	21,885	19,734	21,486	94,868	48%
SSE	16,424	27,223	34,711	33,520	35,283	147,161	115%
TVET	5,442	7,319	9,636	14,912	12,852	50,161	136%
HE	30,490	35,324	35,476	37,507	39,419	178,215	29%
TE and CPD	12,290	13,397	15,251	14,657	15,679	71,274	28%
ALP	97	9,568	2,064	2,731	3,622	18,082	3,631%
System	10,294	9,990	8,006	6,683	9,433	44,407	-8%
Total	**146,706**	**182,099**	**213,515**	**206,256**	**218,968**	**967,544**	49%
Distribution %							
ECE	8.6%	7.6%	8.3%	8.1%	8.3%	8.2%	
LBE	30.3%	26.5%	32.2%	29.0%	28.8%	29.4%	
UBE	9.9%	9.5%	10.2%	9.6%	9.8%	9.8%	
SSE	11.2%	14.9%	16.3%	16.3%	16.1%	15.2%	
TVET	3.7%	4.0%	4.5%	7.2%	5.9%	5.2%	
HE	20.8%	19.4%	16.6%	18.2%	18.0%	18.4%	
TE and CPD	8.4%	7.4%	7.1%	7.1%	7.2%	7.4%	
AE	0.1%	5.3%	1.0%	1.3%	1.7%	1.9%	
System	7.0%	5.5%	3.7%	3.2%	4.3%	4.6%	
Total	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	

Source: Derived from the financial simulation model.

Projected cost by item

The overriding principle within the ESP is that the budget will be a pro-equity instrument targeting an increased share and volume of recurrent and capital expenditure toward the more disadvantaged groups and districts, where there is an under-enrollment, particularly for the poorest girls and children with special needs. Various key initiatives support the pro-equity focus, including:

- the significant increase of the 'teacher incentives' budget item (by 156 per cent over the period) to foster the posting of teachers in hard-to-reach areas, and promote female candidacy and recruitment into the teaching profession;
- the 'grant, subsidies, and scholarship' budget line that encompasses grants to public ECE schools and subsidies to private schools to lower school fees and provide scholarships for girls and children with special needs at various education levels (+177 per cent increase over the period).

Noting the positive impacts healthy, safe, and protective school environments have on access and learning, school health and well-being interventions, including school feeding programs, and measures to combat SRGBV will also be particularly promoted and scaled up over the plan period to enhance both access to and quality of the school experience. To further strengthen learning results, there will be strong emphasis on investing in school-quality items, particularly curriculum and TLMs, for which expected spending will reach USD 47.2 million over the plan period. This will include the distribution of the curriculum to all schools, and relevant textbooks and TLMs to public schools (with private schools having access to digitalized versions) starting in school year 2024/25, which leads to the huge increase in expenditure for that year.

Table 4.3: Projected total education and training expenditure, by item, 2022/23–2026/27 USD ('000), constant 2019 prices, and %

	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	Total	% Inc
Amount, USD '000							
Recurrent							
Salaries	51,055	54,619	60,390	64,852	69,493	300,409	36%
Teacher incentives		394	642	825	1,009	2,870	156%
Grants, subsidies, and scholarships	2,093	3,042	4,067	4,829	5,791	19,823	177%
School feeding	12,897	14,150	15,503	16,935	18,451	77,936	43%
School health and well-being	1,763	3,654	5,933	8,226	10,706	30,282	507%
Curriculum and TLM	9	9,378	27,766	4,925	5,111	47,189	57 331%
Training	11,240	13,599	15,474	14,763	15,661	70,736	39%
System strengthening	10,294	9,990	8,006	6,683	9,433	44,407	-8%
Others	25,608	27,424	28,622	34,021	32,061	147,735	25%
Total recurrent	***115,423***	***135,328***	***165,090***	***155,309***	***167,068***	***738,217***	***45%***
Capital							
Construction and rehabilitation	25,868	39,939	41,243	43,393	43,951	194,395	70%
WASH	5,113	5,366	5,653	5,962	6,289	28,384	23%
Other capital	301	1,466	1,528	1,593	1,660	6,548	451%
Total capital	***31,283***	***46,771***	***48,425***	***50,948***	***51,900***	***229,326***	***66%***
Total	**146,706**	**182,099**	**213,515**	**206,256**	**218,968**	**967,544**	**49%**
Distribution, %							
Recurrent							
Salaries	44.2%	40.4%	36.6%	41.8%	41.6%	40.7%	
Teacher incentives	0.0%	0.3%	0.4%	0.5%	0.6%	0.4%	
Grants, subsidies, and scholarships	1.8%	2.2%	2.5%	3.1%	3.5%	2.7%	
School feeding	11.2%	10.5%	9.4%	10.9%	11.0%	10.6%	

	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	Total	% Inc
Amount, USD '000							
School health and well-being	1.5%	2.7%	3.6%	5.3%	6.4%	4.1%	
Curriculum and TLM	0.0%	6.9%	16.5%	3.2%	3.1%	6.3%	
Training	10.1%	9.4%	8.9%	9.0%	9.0%	9.2%	
System strengthening	8.9%	7.4%	4.8%	4.3%	5.6%	6.0%	
Others	22.2%	20.3%	17.3%	21.9%	19.2%	20.0%	
Total within recurrent	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*	
Capital							
Construction and rehabilitation	82.7%	85.4%	85.2%	85.2%	84.7%	84.8%	
WASH	16.3%	11.5%	11.7%	11.7%	12.1%	12.4%	
Other capital	1.0%	3.1%	3.2%	3.1%	3.2%	2.9%	
Total within capital	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*	

Source: Derived from the financial simulation model.

Capital expenditures will fluctuate over the plan period between around 21.3 per cent and 25.7 per cent of projected expenditures. To improve learning environments, over the plan period, school and classroom construction and rehabilitation will take place, particularly in in underserved areas of the ECE, senior secondary education, and TVET sub-sectors. Specific attention will be given to gender-responsive, disability-inclusive WASH to ensure that public schools, in particular, are equipped with adequate WASH packages that meet the MoE's national quality standards and promote safe, dignified access for girls and children with disabilities (i.e., safe drinking water point, single-sex child-friendly toilet facilities inclusive of menstrual hygiene management, and hand washing stations for all students).

Financing the ESP

Domestic resources and the financing gap

The ESP resource envelope is estimated based on a series of assumptions about the evolution of various macro-economic aggregates, including GDP growth, the GDP to domestic revenue ratio, and the share of education and training expenditures[36] in the total government expenditures.

Given Liberia's economic recovery since the COVID-19 pandemic, a more 'optimistic' estimation was adopted based on the following assumptions:

- Based on the IMF projections, steady growth in national wealth will reach 5.7 per cent by 2026/27. MoE will also remain in close dialogue with the MFDP to continually validate the macroeconomic framework.
- Share of domestic revenues in GDP will grow steadily to reach 18 per cent from today's 14 per cent, following the Government of Liberia's active resource-mobilization strategy.
- A growing share of government expenditures allocated to education and training expenditure will grow from current 13.8 per cent to 18.2 per cent. Confidence in this assumption is bolstered by Liberia's commitments to increase domestic financing for education over the five-year period, which was made at the July 2021 Global Partnership for Education Summit.

[36] Includes expenditure on education and training for both MoE and MoYS.

Table 4.4: Key macro aggregates, baselines, and end-of-plan year estimates

	Baseline (2019/20)	End-line Simulated Scenario
GDP growth (2019 constant prices)	-2.5% (COVID time)	5.7%
Domestic revenues to GDP ratio	14%	18%
Education and training expenditures as total share of government expenditures (MoE and MoYS)	13.8%	18.2%

Sources: IMF WEO April 2022 for GDP growth, MFDP national budget book FY2021, and financial statements of the consolidated fund account FY 2020–2021 and FY2021.

Table 4.5 below, extracted from the simulation model, presents the projected domestic resources available for the education and training sector over the course of the plan period. Accordingly, the level of domestic resources available for the education and training sector during this period will amount to USD 642 million. This represents a growth both in terms of the proportion of total expenditure allocated to education and training—from 14.7 per cent to 18.2 per cent (and when excluding interest from 16.1 to 20.6 per cent) and a growth in education and training expenditure as a proportion of GDP—from 3 to 4 per cent over the plan period.

Table 4.5: Evolution of projected education and training resources available, 2022/23–2026/27, USD in constant prices 2019 and %

	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
GDP (million USD)	3 257	3 436	3 630	3 834	4 051
GDP real growth rate, %	4.9%	5.7%	5.6%	5.6%	5.6%
Domestic revenues to GDP ratio, %	16.0%	16.5%	17.0%	17.5%	18.0%
Domestic revenues (‘000 USD)	519,726	565,876	616,305	670,606	729,246
Total Gov’t expenditures (‘000 USD)	664,423	715,593	771,350	831,101	895,352
Expenditures for education and training* ('000 USD)	97,642	111,359	126,717	143,730	162,596
As % of GDP	3.0%	3.2%	3.5%	3.7%	4.0%
As % of Gov’t expenditure	14.7%	15.6%	16.4%	17.3%	18.2%
As % of Gov’t expenditures (excl. interest)	16.1%	17.2%	18.3%	19.5%	20.6%
Domestic recurrent ('000 USD)	95,387	108,556	123,263	139,514	157,487
Domestic capital ('000 USD)	2,255	2,803	3,454	4,217	5,109

Sources: IMF WEO April 2022, MFDP national budget book FY2021, and financial statements of the consolidated fund account FY 2020–2021 and FY2021. Authors’ projections using the financial simulation model. *Includes MoYS training expenditures.

The first financing gap can be estimated on the basis of the macro assumptions identified above and the estimated cost of the plan. *Table 4.6* below presents the initial funding gap under the simulated macroeconomic scenario, as well as the second funding gap, which includes projected external resources from development partners based on funding projections from major donors (see *table A3.8* in *Annex 3*).

Table 4.6: Estimated funding gap, USD '000 and % (2019 constant prices)

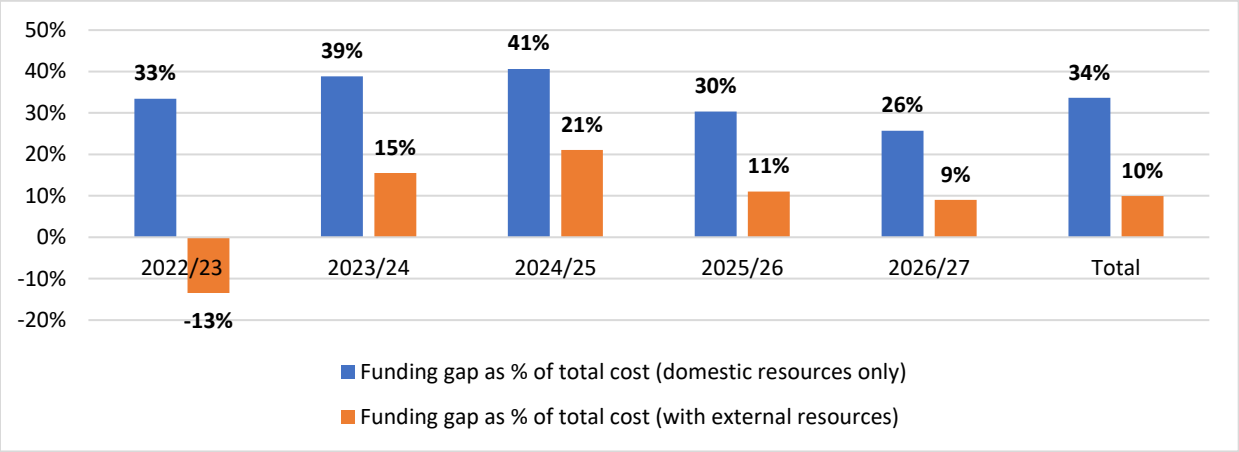
	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	Total
ESP projected expenditures	146,706	182,099	213,515	206,256	218,968	967,544
Available domestic resources	97,642	111,359	126,717	143,730	162,596	642,044
Initial funding gap – without external funding	49,064	70,739	86,799	62,526	56,372	325,500
Funding gap as % of total cost (domestic resources only)	***33%***	***39%***	***41%***	***30%***	***26%***	***34%***
Projected external funding	68,806	42,529	41,787	39,697	36,677	229,496
Funding gap with external funding	-19,742	28,210	45,012	22,829	19,695	96,004
Funding gap as % of total cost (with external resources)	***-13%***	***15%***	***21%***	***11%***	***9%***	***10%***

Sources: Derived from the financial simulation model.

The projected funding gap without external funding is large, totaling USD 325.5 million over the plan period and representing 34 per cent of the total plan cost (*Table 4.6* above). However, when estimated external funding is included, it decreases significantly to USD 96 million (or 10 per cent of the total plan cost), with even a surplus recorded in the first year of the plan implementation. The sharp drop in external funding between 2022/23 and 2023/24 can be attributed to the conclusion of many projects in the 2022/23 financial years, particularly large projects led by the World Bank. This gap is assessed to be feasible due to the anticipation of more donor commitments to be released in the coming years, as well as the hope that donors will commit funding specifically in line with the ESP. Critical to ensuring that the funding gap remains manageable is the expectation that development partners' support will be fully aligned with the ESP's goals, strategic directions, and priority interventions to ensure the available funding remains adequate; this alignment will enable successful implementation of the plan and achievement of the planned results.

Figure 4.1 below provides a visual representation of the funding gap.

Figure 4.1: Estimated funding gap over the plan period, without and with external resources, % of total ESP cost



Sources: Derived from the financial simulation model.

Resource mobilization to finance the gap

The funding of the ESP will require concerted efforts from the Liberia Government and a significant contribution from education development partners. A number of strategies will be pursued to close this gap, including:

1. Generate adequate financial resources for the education and training sector – increase the national budget share going to education and training.

As discussed in *Chapter 1*, government spending on education is significantly lower than the international benchmark (20 per cent of the budget to be allocated to education). To effectively implement policies and strategies in ESP 2022/23–2026/27, the MoE and MoYS will continue to work closely with the MFDP to increase the share of the national budget going to education and training. The ESP will be a valuable advocacy tool to concretely demonstrate what results will be achieved with this investment and how these results contribute to accelerated social and economic growth and national development for all. The ESP also demonstrates how efficiency gains will optimize the use of resources, particularly by tackling the key issues of over-age and out-of-school students, as well as strengthening budgetary planning, execution, and reporting from the county to central levels. The MoE's public commitments for the 2021–2025 GPE replenishment to steadily increase domestic resources for education over the five-year period[37] further strengthen the evidence base for expecting the increase to be realized.

2. Advocate for more and more diversified external funding, and ensure the predictability of external support, both as part of the overall funding commitments.

The sector will negotiate with existing development partners and explore new partnerships to support the education and training sector. There will be special emphasis on ensuring that partners directly align their support to the strategic shifts and priority programs delineated in the ESP to meet the mutually agreed upon goals and share accountability for results. In this way, the large share of the education budget provided by development partners can be considered at least on-budget, if not as sector budget support. By establishing policies on the disclosure of all educational spending by other line ministries, government agencies, and external partners and strengthening educational expenditure reporting at all levels, across government, as well as by educational partners, the MoE will have a more accurate picture on what resources flow into the sector and what results towards meeting ESP goals are being achieved.

3. Foster public–private partnerships and enhance the roles of the private sector in funding educational programs.

This a key strategic shift, as outlined in the ESP, and various strategies will be adopted to encourage private provision of education and promote public–private partnerships to strengthen delivery of ESP results. New public–private partnerships will particularly be explored for the TVET and higher education sub-sectors, which have the strongest potential for linking with the private sector. At the lower basic level, public–private partnerships, such as LEAP, also provide an opportunity to reduce

[37] Partner Countries' Commitments, Liberia, https://assets.globalpartnership.org/s3fs-public/document/file/2021-07-Liberia-Domestic-financing-commitment.pdf?VersionId=yrJ35gHgbaGhg15DP_NspQIuAiVA8CVy.

household education expenditure burden—a key element in increasing access, especially for the poorest students.

4. Manage available resources efficiently and effectively through strengthened accountability to increase value for money.

In addition to strengthening planning, budgeting, and monitoring to track efficient use of resources, other cost-saving measures will be explored. These include using lower basic school premises to host ALP programs; using LBS teachers to deliver ALP; increased reliance on the internet and digitalization to deliver the curriculum; delivery of textbooks and TLM to schools, particularly non-public schools in urban settings; increasing and promoting the community-based ECE approach to lower the cost of infrastructure and ECE service delivery for ECE expansion. The MoE will also increase efficiencies by expanding digitalization of major administrative functions, starting with EMIS and HR management, as well as increasing reliance on e-fora to foster dialogue. Data security and transparency for improved governance will also be prioritized.

Chapter 5: Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning, and Implementation Arrangements

Monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) mechanisms are critical to ensure the MoE and partners have evidence that the plan is on track to achieve its targets and if MEL data reveal the plan is off-course, to direct course-correcting actions to bring it back on track. MEL also promotes accountability and transparency, while providing a sound evidence base for reporting and documentation. This chapter looks at both the implementation arrangements and the reporting mechanisms that are in place to ensure proper roll-out and MEL of the planned activities over the next five years.

Implementation arrangements

The **Department of Planning, Research and Development** is primarily responsible for the planning, monitoring, and supervision of the 2022/23–2026/27 ESP. As detailed in the 2011 ERA, this mandate includes:

- design, development, management, and coordination of policies, procedures, and activities for reviewing and updating national education plans;
- ensuring that developed plans are in consonance with the national development priorities and objectives.

The Deputy Minister of Planning, Research, and Development oversees these processes.

Various other stakeholders at different levels and with different functions also intervene in the plan implementation and monitoring. They operate at central, sub-national, and school levels and include policy, technical, and operational functions. *Figure 5.1* below provides a synthesized visual illustration of those actors and the links between them.

At the policy level, the **minister and deputy minsters** (who make up the senior management team [SMT]) are the key decision-makers, in charge of approving and endorsing policies and activities for implementation. The MoE-led **Local Education Group (LEG**) and **Education Sector Development Committee (ESDC)**, respectively representing a core and expanded group of education development partners, provide a coordination forum for policy dialogue and harmonization, and are involved in the processes of education sector plan development, endorsement, monitoring, review, and implementation.

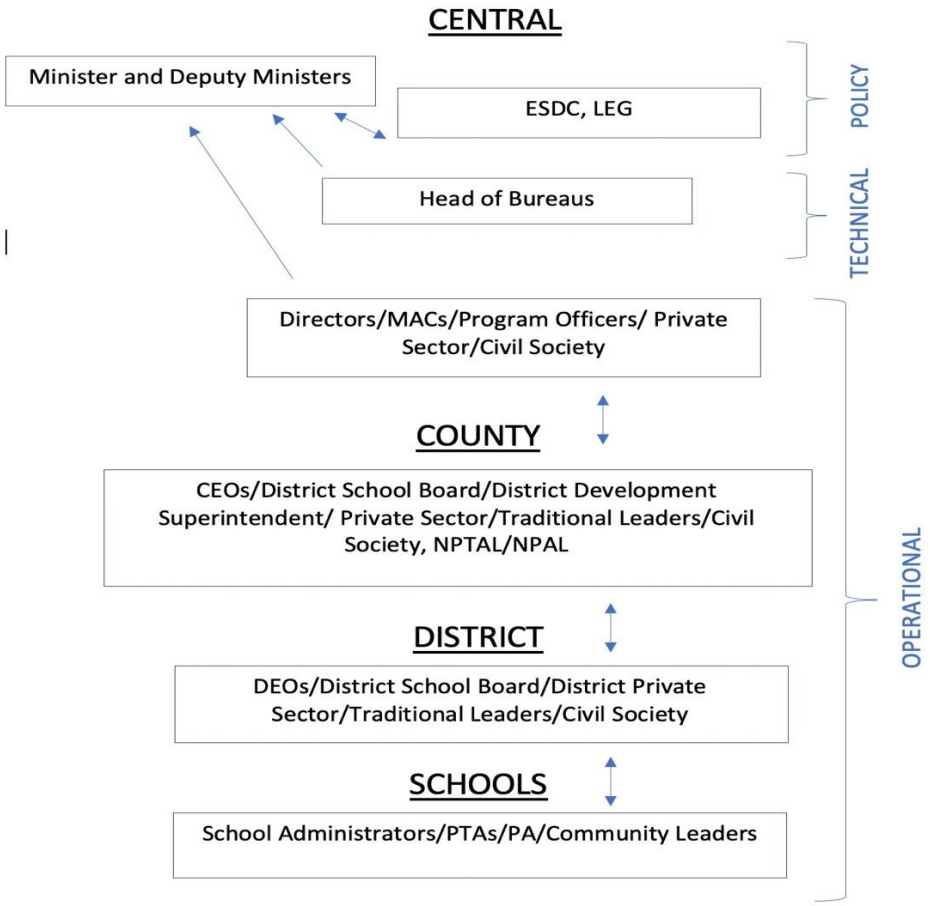
At the technical level, **heads of bureaus** are responsible for the coordination of activity implementation and the management of activity supervision.

At the operational level, **directors, ministries, agencies, and commissions, and program officers** are the technicians responsible for overseeing implementation of the activities that are endorsed/initiated by the SMT. Certain private-sector and civil society actors will also have leading responsibilities in implementation, depending on the nature of the activities.

The other stakeholders involved at the operational level are responsible for the implementation of their respective activities on the ground. At county and district levels, this includes County Education Officers

(CEOs), District Education Officers (DEOs), District School Boards, District Development Superintendents, National Parents Teachers association of Liberia (NPTAL)/National Principals Association of Liberia (NPAL), and private sector and civil society actors. At school level it includes school administrators, Parents Teacher Association (PTA), Principals Association (PA) and community leaders.

Figure 5.1: Stakeholders involved in ESP implementation and related links



Source: Authors.

ESP MEL mechanisms

ESP implementation and monitoring tools

The **M&E result matrix** of the ESP, along with the **key performance indicators (KPIs) matrix** and the **Multi-Year Operational Plan (MYOP),** form the core of ESP implementation and MEL tools.

It is supplemented with the **National School Quality Standard System (NSQS)** that includes **School Report Cards,** and with **School Profiles,** as well as **dedicated studies and evaluations**

The **M&E results matrix** allows the MoE and stakeholders to track progress and adjust strategies and activities as needed over the plan period to reach planned objectives. Indeed, the framework details how key activities will be tracked over the plan period, with set indicators for each activity output, and yearly and end-line targets. The source of monitoring data is clearly identified for each indicator. The **KPIs matrix, derived from the M&E result matrix,** serves as a type of dashboard to indicate the advancement toward the overarching strategic goals/shifts for the sector over the plan period. While not exhaustive, the selection of KPIs provides a synthetic overview of ESP outcome-level achievement of key objectives. KPIs help gain a quick overview of the achievement of the core priorities of the plan.

The **MYOP** breaks down plan activities into further detailed action steps, indicating the associated costs of activities, the responsible individual, and expected time period for activity implementation. The MYOP provides the basis for more comprehensive, budgeted annual operational plans that guide each bureau's annual activity implementation. Under this new ESP, counties will be expected to develop their own Annual Operational Plans (AOPs), in line with the national MYOP.

ESP implementation and monitoring key review/reporting mechanisms

While the M&E result matrix, the KPIs matrix, and operational plans serve as key tools to direct and track ESP activities, a coordinated and responsive plan implementation will also require regular reporting and review of plan's progress. This will be achieved through the following key review/reporting mechanisms (see also *Table 5.1* below), that includes both bottom-up and top-down approaches.

With regard to **school level reporting**, the key tools are the **School Profile** and **School Quality Assessment (SQA) report card**, as described in more detail under PP3.4.

- *School profile.* These one-page profiles will be produced for basic and secondary education, as well as RTTIs, at school, district, and county levels, providing data on school context; available resources; and performance, which enables a ranking of schools according to these three dimensions. Based on the ranking, resources can then be targeted more strategically to areas of greatest need. At the same time, the profiles also promote transparency and accountability to local stakeholders, as a simplified one-page school report card is provided to communities and school boards/committees with information on how their school ranks compared to others. This creates a feedback loop and provides parents with powerful information on which to base demands for better performance.

- *School Quality Assessment (SQA) report card.* Conducted by DEOs as part of the National School Quality Standards (NSQS) system, the School Quality Assessment covers five 'quality zones' of assessment, namely: teaching and learning; infrastructure; school–community engagement; governance; and disability-inclusive education. Results are measured against set benchmarks and consolidated in a report which is shared with the school principal and discussed with PTAs, again promoting increased transparency and accountability.

Field monitoring reports

On a quarterly basis, the county M&E officers compile field monitoring reports. These reports track progress against the county AOP, covering government's and development partners' interventions. The four quarterly reports feed directly into the county's annual implementation report.

Joint education sector reviews (JESR)/reports

The JESR is a collaborative initiative between the MoE and its education development partners to comprehensively assess progress against the ESP 2022/23–2026/27. It builds directly on the finalization

of the annual school census and should take place during the last quarter of the fiscal year. JESR participants represent a diverse cadre of stakeholders, including different ministries (finance, planning and development, gender, children and social protection, youth and sports, justice), education development partners, implementing partners, civil society organizations, private schools, and media. At the central level, each responsible unit reports on progress against its AOP component on an annual basis.

The JESR is both backward and forward looking. Backward-looking, it assesses progress in the ongoing fiscal year by looking at:

- implementation progress against planned activities and targets in the ESP's results matrix and annual work plan;
- implementation of recommendations by the previous JESR;
- progress on key sector indicators and key reforms over the last year to facilitate discussion around relevance and recommendations;
- recognition of counties with high results in learning, access, equity, and quality.

Forward-looking, it will:

- review the AOP for the fiscal year;
- assess the financing arrangements, availability, government's and partners' commitment, and funding gaps for key components of the plan;
- review implementation modalities, coordination, and harmonization;
- make recommendations for follow-up action to unlock bottlenecks and strengthen implementation in the coming year.

The JESR is the platform for comprehensive analysis of the plan, stakeholder consultations, and identification of major ESP activities. The exercise serves to avoid duplications and provide recommendations for improved coordination, harmonization, and greater impact. To prepare for the national JESR, pre-JESRs are organized at the county level. This preparation is a process of working with the counties at the level of the CEO, to prepare them for participation at the national JESR. Counties are the direct beneficiaries of all interventions and projects, so their participation completes the JESR process by lending plausibility to achieving targets set against each ESP objective. A team of planners from the central level is appointed to coordinate the pre-JESR, which commonly takes place the during the week before the national JESR in one county. Before the pre-JESR, each county prepares an implementation report covering its achievements based on inputs from the DEOs and implementation partners. Major challenges the new ESP will tackle are: (1) harmonization of reporting through introduction of a county template, and (2) enhancing the counties' involvement in defining the content of the annual work plan.

Mid-term reviews/reports

A mid-term review of the ESP will take place in the 2024/25 school year, half-way through plan implementation. It will take stock of plan's progress and performance against the planned targets and objectives, as well as problems encountered. While similar to the annual JESR, the mid-term review will be a more methodical and in-depth exercise and may be supported by external studies. The mid-term review provides an opportunity for the MoE and partners to validate the continuing relevance of the goals and strategic objectives, and make any needed adjustments of activities, indicators, and targets for the rest of the plan period in view of identified obstacles or opportunities.

End-line review/evaluation and report

A final, end-line review of the ESP in 2026/27 will evaluate the in its entirety, assessing what was achieved, what was not achieved, major challenges, and lessons learned for the future. This review will be particularly useful for informing the subsequent ESA and the next ESP.

Table 5.1: Recap of main M&E reporting documents

Item	When	Purpose	Content	By Whom	For Whom
Annual School Census Report	August/ Annually	To have timely data for planning	Education information gathering	BPRD	SMT, donors, and IPs
JESR	Novem-ber/ Annually	To review county- and central-levels progress and challenges, and prepare a way forward (next AOP) to address those challenges	Monitoring annual operational plan	BPRD	SMT, donors, and IPs
WAEC report	July/ Annually	To measure quality of learning outcomes in three dimensions: lower basic, upper basic, and secondary	Monitoring annual operational plan	WAEC	SMT, donors, and IPs
School profile	Annually	To measure schools, districts, and counties education performances to help targeting support in schools most in needs	School card	BPRD	DEOs, CEOs, Principals
SQA report card	TBC	To assess school quality in teaching and learning, infrastructure, school–community engagement, governance, and disability-inclusive education	Report card	Department of Instruction	DEOs, CEOs, Principals
Mid-term Review of ESP	2024/25	To review implementation status and realign priorities, including targets and activities	Mid-term Review Report	DPRD	SMT, donors, and IPs
End-line Review of ESP/ Evaluation	2026/27	To review what has been achieved in the plan period, including major achievements, challenges, and lessons learned	Evaluation report	DPRD	SMT, donors, and IPs

Key sources of information

Proper M&E of the plan implementation require to mobilize a variety of data from different sources, including:

- **The annual school censuses**
  The annual school census provides key statistics in a concise and straightforward way. It is meant to provide all key educational stakeholders with essential education statistics to take stock of progress in terms access and learning. These data should be used for decision-making and allocation of education resources in relation to the needs of the various education districts and counties. Each year,

the annual school census starts with updating of school listings, with major emphasis on new, existing, and closed schools (public and private). The next step is to build the digital application and update the census questionnaire. This should be done during the first quarter of each fiscal year. This is followed by a piloting and refinement period, after which training-of-trainers takes place. All education officers and county staff are once a year called for training on the application and the process of data collection. The actual data collection should take place in May each year. This in turn, should give enough time for cleaning, analysis, and reporting from June to August. The EMIS will be improved and extended to RTTIs, TVET and HEIs.

- **Database of teachers' and administrators' profiles**
  Currently being developed in partnership with the Liberia Learning Foundation, the Bureau of Teacher Education and the Center of Excellence, the database will consolidate all key personnel data in one central location, including their profile, employment and licensing status, and number of in-service training sessions attended. This system is to be linked with the existing RTTI data collection tool to create one comprehensive RTTI database that contains information not only on personnel, but also on RTTI facilities, enrollment, graduation, and so on. This resource will greatly facilitate teacher management and supervision, as well as monitoring.

- **NSQS**
  As mentioned above, the National School Quality Standards (NSQS) system allows assessment of the standard of every basic and secondary school in Liberia and will also be extended to include RTTIs. The system will generate a comprehensive dataset on school standards in the country relating to the five 'quality zones' assessed (teaching and learning, infrastructure, school–community engagement, governance, and disability-inclusive education), and will also provide a benchmarking tool for district education officers' school quality assessments (SQAs).

- **WAEC assessments**
  The purpose of the WAEC assessments is to annually determine student performances in Grades 3, 6, 9, and 12. Each year, the assessment results provide essential data that can be used for improvement efforts at the different levels of the education system. The assessment results are used to inform curricula revisions, as well as teacher management decisions, provision of teacher training, and TLMs. This means that assessment results inform resource allocation decisions at the school, district, county, and central levels; schools with poor assessment results are given priority in terms of teacher management and various support efforts.

- **Studies/evaluations**
  A series of studies/evaluations will complement the data arsenal. Evaluations will take place at the end of key project phases, and center on the effectiveness and immediate impact of projects. They will focus on whether activities are on track and whether outputs and outcomes are being achieved. This will help identify lessons learned from the initial phases of implementation to be used to improve further delivery and the scale-up on the assessed and other projects. *Table 5.2* below provides a recap of the various studies and evaluations that are scheduled to be conducted under the new plan.

Table 5.2: Key studies and evaluations planned under the new plan

PP Component	Study/Assessment/Evaluation	Activity Number
1.1: ECE	Evaluation of community-based ECD model for efficiency and eventual roll-out	1.1.1.4
1.1: ECE	Evaluation of home-based ECD services for efficiency and eventual roll-out	1.1.1.5
1.1: ECE	Study to assess possibility of removing/reducing fees in public ECE schools and to subsidize children to enroll in non-public schools in areas where there are no public ECE schools	1.1.2.1
1.2: Basic education	Feasibility study on demand for, value-add, location, modality, required resources, and options for establishing schools for children with sight/hearing impairments, and/or optimizing use of existing structures and resources	1.2.1.4
1.2: Basic education	Study to understand the number and gender dynamics of out-of-school children and over-age learners, including girls and boys with disabilities	1.2.3.1
1.2: Basic education	National research on the varying costs of school fees	1.2.4.1
1.2: Basic education	Evaluation of the impact of providing students with uniforms and bags	1.2.4.3
1.2: Basic education	Qualitative/quantitative situation analysis study to identify main barriers and opportunities for students with disabilities	1.2.4.5
1.3: Secondary education	Evaluation of scholarships for girls in Grades 10–12	1.3.2.4
1.4: Alternative education	Study to conceptualize the flow of ALP scale-up, including sequencing and phasing, and implementation plan	1.4.2.1
2.1: Quality - Assessment	Learning assessments (G3 & G6)	2.1.3.2
2.2: STEM	Survey to assess STEM challenges, and concrete demand-driven labor and market needs	2.2.1.1
2.2: STEM	Needs assessment on secondary-school STEM infrastructure (including laboratories and SMART classrooms)	2.2.2.1
2.2: STEM	Evaluation on micro-science kits for possible scale-up	2.2.2.3
2.2: STEM	Evaluation on 'lab in a box' kits for possible scale-up	2.2.2.4
2.3: Teacher education	Capacity needs assessment to determine RTTI expansion needs to accommodate pre- and in-service training, including trainer capacity and facility capacity	2.3.1.1
2.4: Student well-being	Evaluation on life-skills clubs' impact	2.4.2.7
3.1: Governance – Participatory planning	Capacity needs assessment of the sub-national level (building on the national capacity assessment supported by the World Bank) and defining capacity enhancement plans for county and district levels	3.1.1.2
3.1: Governance – Participatory planning	Selected annual tracking studies for deeper dives on specific themes to be reported on at JESR (e.g., public expenditure on education tracking survey; shifts in deployment of teachers [M/F]; availability/implementation of curriculum; roll-out of health clubs for girls/boys)	3.1.2.5

PP Component	Study/Assessment/Evaluation	Activity Number
3.2: Governance – Participatory planning	Options Analysis Paper for evolution of LEAP, including analysis of lessons learned and good practices with a view of how these can be institutionalized into the education system to strengthen existing ministry capacity	3.2.1.4
3.3: Governance – Human resources	Study on the main barriers to entering the teaching profession, with a specific focus on women, and including enrollment in RTTIs	3.3.2.4
3.3: Governance – Human resources	End-line evaluation of teacher incentives (including those for female teachers and female school leadership)	3.3.2.5
3.5: Governance – Mainstreaming climate change	School-based hazards and vulnerability assessment to inform the development of nation-wide but locally-relevant contingency plans for disaster risk reduction and climate change mitigation and adaptation	3.5.1.2
4.2: TVET – Quality	Industry-based TVET skills-demand survey targeting the private sector to identify emerging trades and skills needs in the 15 counties of Liberia	4.2.1.1
4.2: TVET – Quality	Tracer studies focusing on MoYS TVET centers and MoE TVET schools' graduates' transition to the labor market, on a biannual basis	4.2.1.5
5.1: Higher education – Access	Needs assessment of HEIs facilities in terms of requirements for disability-accessible, gender-friendly, safe learning spaces, including ramps and separate latrines, in line with the Universal Design Principles	5.1.2.1
5.1: Higher education – Quality	Survey assessment of demand-driven skills for the labor market, including an analysis of gendered barriers for women and men	5.2.1.1
5.1: Higher education – Quality	Tracer study to assess the quality of labor market entry of HEIs leavers	5.2.1.1

The MEL system proposed seeks to put in place the building blocks required for a robust system that generates quality evidence on which to base decision-making and institutional learning, while acknowledging that this is a challenging task, starting from a low baseline. Currently, the EMIS is transitioning from a paper-based to a digital system, which is a significant step forward, though the key gaps in information completeness and reliability remain, constraining progress. What information is available can be patchy, with data on TVET, RTTI, NFE, HEIs not fully developed or linked into a unified, harmonized database, with databases scattered across different departments. As these sub-sector databases are further developed, it will be critically important to ensure consistency and coherence in their structures and formats to facilitate linkage between databases, particularly HR and EMIS, so that effective interfaces can be established for easier storage, retrieval and use of data. Some information on TVET, for example, is available in EMIS, but development of the database on Youth Skills needs to use the same templates, identification codes, and fields to enable cross-referencing and eventual merging of the two databases at a later date. While the quality and timeliness of data is a key constraint, capacity for analysis and utilization of data is also limited. This means that the data available may not be turned into usable information that promotes evidence-based decision-making and feedback loops for institutional learning. Capacity development in this area, from central to sub-national levels, including at school level, is vital to progress. At the same time, communicating on key progress and results will be important to create awareness, support stakeholders, including communities, engagements to further support the transformation needed.

In order to be able to produce, manage and use all the education data presented above, the MoE will develop a MEL strategy that includes a capacity building plan. In the coming years, further work will be

needed to harmonize and shorten existing questionnaires and tools (annual school census, NSQS, and school grading), and clarify roles and responsibilities between the district, county, and central levels. Also, challenges need to be solved at the school level, most notably the lack of knowledge about the relevance of the school census and the EMIS form.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) matrix

The below matrix provides a summary of the KPIs that will be used to monitor critical sector outcomes and outputs, with related baseline and annual targets between 2022/23 and 2026/27. Somewhat problematic for the accuracy of the projections is the issue of over-age enrollment that blurs the evolution of schooling access indicators.

With these caveats, KPIs serve as a type of dashboard to indicate the advancement toward the overarching strategic goals and priorities for the sector over the ESP period. The combination of indicators has been chosen in this regard. The selection of indicators was also based on the availability of data, and was done in accordance with national plan documents and the SDGs. Indicators with missing information will need to be filled over the first years of the plan, as data collection improves.

The KPIs track progress against the ESP's overarching goals of improving access, learning, relevance, and efficiency by measuring enrollment rates, learning outcomes, and completion rates respectively at the outcomes level. The KPIs also measure progress towards key policy priorities under each goal. Under the goal of increased equitable access, for example, the KPIs include indicators to track changes in the percentage of overage students at ECE, LBS and UBS levels. Under the goal of improved quality and learning, indicators are included to track improvements in the percentage of teachers trained, and the percentage of schools meeting national school quality standards, amongst others, while progress towards the enhanced efficiency goal is measured by the availability of annual school census reports, conduct of annual JESRs, numbers of public-private partnerships, and improvements in education expenditure, including on-budget external financing. Cross cutting issues with a focus on gender and geographic equity, and inclusion are also included in the KPIs.

Table 5.3: KPIs for ESP

SDG 4 Target No.	KPI No.	KPIs	Baseline (2019/20) unless stated	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	Source of Verification
ESP GOAL 1. INCREASED EQUITABLE ACCESS									
4.1 & 4.2	**1**	**HIGH-LEVEL OUTCOME: Enrollment rate – Based on UN population data**							
		1.1 ECE GER (%), M/F	128%	113%	96%	88%	89%	89%	EMIS/ASCR
		1.2 LBE GER (%), M/F	77%	84%	83%	85%	82%	76%	EMIS/ASCR
		1.3 Gross Intake Rate in LBE (%), M/F	102%	102%	98%	98%	93%	85%	EMIS/ASCR
		1.4 Upper basic education GER (%), M/F	47%	47%	47%	47%	48%	48%	EMIS/ASCR
		1.5 Senior secondary education (SSE) GER (%), M/F	32%	32%	34%	37%	39%	42%	EMIS/ASCR
		1.6 Number of students enrolled in ALP, M/F	13,311 6,817/6,494	14 435	15 835	61 936	74 658	88 990	EMIS/ASCR
		1.7. Number of students enrolled in TVET (formal and informal), M/F	19,715	19 715	27 286	34 858	42 429	50 000	EMIS/ASCR & YMIS/MoYS
		1.8 Higher education GER (excluding TE), M/F	16.2%						HE-MIS
		1.12 Number of students enrolled in adult literacy programs, M/F	0	541	1081	1622	2162	2703	EMIS/ASCR & YMIS/MoYS
4.1	**2**	**% of over-age students**							
		2.1 ECE, M/F	67.0% 66.5%/68.4%	67%	55%	44%	32%	20% 20%/20%	EMIS/ASCR & Household surveys
		2.2 LBS (children over-aged by five or more years) M/F	36%	36%	32%	32%	28%	20%	EMIS/ASCR & HH surveys
		2.3 UBS (children over-aged by four or more years), M/F	32%	32%	31%	30%	28%	27%	EMIS/ASCR & HH surveys
4.1	**3**	**Repetition rate in ECE**	8%	8%	6%	4%	2%	0%	EMIS/ASCR

SDG 4 Target No.	KPI No.	KPIs	Baseline (2019/20) unless stated	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	Source of Verification
4.1	**4**	**% of out of school children**							
		4.1 Of LBS school age, M/F	19% 21%/17%	Downward trend*					Household surveys (DHS)
		4.2 Of UBS school age, M/F	15% 15%/14%	Downward trend*					Household surveys (DHS)
		4.3 Of senior secondary school age, M/F	20% 18%/23%	Downward trend*					Household surveys (DHS)
ESP GOAL 2. IMPROVED QUALITY AND RELEVANCE OF TEACHING AND LEARNING									
4.1	**5**	**HIGH-LEVEL OUTCOMES: Learning outcomes, Lower basic**							
		5.1 % of students in Grade 3 achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in (1) English (writing) and (2) mathematics (writing), by sex (M/F)	English: 53% (M:54% F:52%) Math: 44% (M:46% F:41%)	N/A	N/A	57%/56% 9%/45%	58%/58% 50%/47%	English 60%/60% Math: 52%/49%	Early grades assessment report
		5.2 % of students in Grade 6 achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in (1) English (writing) and (2) mathematics (writing), by sex (M/F)	English: 47% (M:49% F: 45%) Math: 40% (M:43% F:38%)	N/A	N/A	53%/50% 46%/43%	55%/52% 48%/45%	English 57%/55% Math: 50%/47%	Early grades assessment report
4.1	**6**	**HIGH-LEVEL OUTCOMES: Learning outcomes, Upper basic**							
		6.1 % of students passing LJHSCE STEM subjects (general science, math) by sex (M/F)	General science 81%/80% Math 80%/80%	83%/82% 81%/81%	84%/83% 83%/83%	86%/86% 85%/85%	88%/88% 87%/87%	General science 90%/90% Math 90%/90%	WAEC report
4.1	**7**	**HIGH-LEVEL OUTCOMES: Learning outcomes, Secondary**							
		7.1 % of students passing WASSCE STEM subjects (general science, chemistry, biology, and physics), by sex (M/F)	Math: 53% Biology: 11%	54% 12%	55% 14%	57% 16%	58% 18%	Math: 60% Biology: 20%	WAEC report

SDG 4 Target No.	KPI No.	KPIs	Baseline (2019/20) unless stated	2022/ 23	2023/ 24	2024/ 25	2025/ 26	2026/27	Source of Verification
			Chemistry: 13% Physics: 14%	15% 16%	16% 17%	17% 18%	18% 19%	Chemistry: 20% Physics: 20%	
4.3	**8**	**HIGH-LEVEL OUTCOMES: Qualification outcomes, TVET**							
		8.1 % of youth who completed TVET and are qualified, M/F	53% (2016)	58%	64%	69%	75%	80%	Household surveys/labor force surveys
4.4	**9**	**HIGH-LEVEL OUTCOMES: Employment outcomes, Higher education**							
		9.1. % of higher education graduates in employment 1 year after graduation, M/F	77%/66% (2016)		78%/67%			85%/75%	Household surveys/labor force surveys
4.6	**10**	**HIGH-LEVEL OUTCOMES: Learning outcomes, adult literacy (15–49)**							
		10. Adult (15–49) literacy rate, M/F	75%/ 52%	76%/53%	77%/54%	78%/56%	78%/57%	80%/59%	Household surveys (DHS)
4.c	**11**	**% of teachers trained—for example, who have received at least the minimum organized teacher training (e.g., pedagogical training) pre-service or in-service required for teaching at the relevant level, by sex**							
		11.1 ECE, M/F	35%	43%	50%	57%	65%	72%	EMIS/ASCR
		11.2 LBE, M/F	45%	46%	51%	56%	61%	66%	EMIS/ASCR
		11.3 UBE, M/F	31%	31%	36%	42%	47%	53%	EMIS/ASCR
		11.4 SSE, M/F	26%	27%	33%	39%	45%	51%	EMIS/ASCR
		11.5 TVET (formal), M/F	5%	33%	43%	52%	62%	71%	EMIS/ASCR
		11.6 Number of licensed teachers, M/F	0	1 000	2 000	3 000	4 000	5 000	EMIS/ASCR
	12	**% of schools with satisfactory student–teacher ratio**							
		12.1 ECE	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	EMIS/ASCR
		12.2 LBE	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	EMIS/ASCR

SDG 4 Target No.	KPI No.	KPIs	Baseline (2019/20) unless stated	2022/ 23	2023/ 24	2024/ 25	2025/ 26	2026/27	Source of Verification
		12.3 UBE	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	EMIS/ASCR
		12.4 SSE	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	EMIS/ASCR
	13	**Student–textbook ratio (public)**							
		13.1 LBE	7:1	7:1	7:1	1:1	1:1	1:1	EMIS/ASCR
		13.2 UBE	7:1	7:1	7:1	1:1	1:1	1:1	EMIS/ASCR
		13.3 SSE	8:1	8:1	8:1	1:1	1:1	1:1	EMIS/ASCR
4.3	**14**	**14. 1 Number of TVET institutions (formal and informal) using standardized labor market-responsive CBT curricula (cumulative)**	0	0	0	36	36	36 Formal -27 Informal -9	EMIS/ASCR
4.4	**15**	**% of youth/adults who have achieved at least a minimum level of proficiency in digital education**	N/A	TBD				TBD	EMIS/ASCR, YMIS/MoYS, HE-MIS & Household surveys
	16	**% of schools meeting national school quality standards**							
		16.1 ECE	N/A	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	SQA report
		16.2 LBE	N/A	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	SQA report
		16.3 UBE	N/A	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	SQA report
		16.4 SSE	N/A	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	SQA report
ESP GOAL 3. ENHANCED EFFICIENCY									
4.1	**17**	**HIGH-LEVEL OUTCOMES: Completion rate – Based on UN population data**							
		17.1 To Grade 6, M/F	59%	59%	62%	62%	65%	70%	EMIS/ASCR
		17.2 To Grade 9*, M/F	24%	25%	26%	28%	29%	30%	EMIS/ASCR

SDG 4 Target No.	KPI No.	KPIs	Baseline (2019/20) unless stated	2022/ 23	2023/ 24	2024/ 25	2025/ 26	2026/27	Source of Verification
		17.3 To Grade 12*, M/F	28%	29%	31%	32%	34%	35%	EMIS/ASCR
	18	**Annual census reports available at the end of academic year: (General education, Y-TVET and HE) (#)**	1	3	3	3	3	3	Copy of annual censuses
	19	**JESR on ESP implementation covering all sub-sectors published each year (#)**	1	1	1	1	1	1	Copy of JESR report
	20	**% of public school principals and DEOs trained in school leadership**	38%	50%	63%	75%	88%	100%	Activity report
	21	**Framework for public–private partnership regularly approved**	No	Yes				Yes	Approved framework
1.a.2	**22**	**% of national expenditure allocated to education and training (MoE)**	14%	16%	17%	17%	17.5%	18%	National Budget Book
	23	**% off-budget education expenditure**	50%	45%	40%	35%	30%	25%	Report from BFA and BPRD
	24	**Counties with annual ESP operational plan (#)**	1 (2021)	16	16	16	16	16	Copy of county annual work plan
ESP CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES									
		REDUCING GENDER DISPARITIES AND DISPARITIES FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIALS NEEDS							
4.5	**25**	**% of female enrollment**							
		25.1 ECE	51%	51%	51%	50,5%	50%	50%	EMIS/ASCR
		25.2 LBE	49%	49%	49%	49%	49%	50%	EMIS/ASCR
		25. 3 UBE	49%	49%	49%	49%	50%	50%	EMIS/ASCR

SDG 4 Target No.	KPI No.	KPIs	Baseline (2019/20) unless stated	2022/ 23	2023/ 24	2024/ 25	2025/ 26	2026/27	Source of Verification
		25.4 SSE	48.5%	48,5%	49%	49%	50%	50%	EMIS/ASCR
		25.5 ALP	49%	49%	49%	49%	50%	50%	EMIS/ASCR
		25.6 TVET (formal and informal)	30% (formal)	31%	32%	33%	34%	35%	EMIS/ASCR & YMIS/MoYS
		25.7 HEIs	40%	41%	42%	43%	44%	45%	HE-MIS
		25.8 Literacy programs	N/A	TBD				65%	EMIS/ASCR & YMIS/MoYS
4.5	**26**	**% of female teachers**							
		26.1 ECE	67%	67%	67%	67%	67%	67%	EMIS/ASCR
		26.2 LBE	20%	21%	22%	23%	24%	25%	EMIS/ASCR
		26.3 UBE	12%	13%	14%	15%	16%	16%	EMIS/ASCR
		26.4 SSE	10%	11%	12%	13%	14%	15%	EMIS/ASCR
		26.5 TVET	34.5%	35%	36%	37%	38%	39%	EMIS/ASCR & YMIS/MoYS
		26.6 HEIs	40%	41%	42%	43%	44%	45%	HE-MIS
4.5	**27**	**Women in leadership positions (public)**							
		% of females in leadership positions (principal/vice principal)							
		27.1 ECE	18%	19%	20%	22%	23%	25%	EMIS/ASCR
		27.2 LBE	10.5%	11%	12%	13%	14%	15%	EMIS/ASCR
		27.3 UBE	4%	5%	6%	7%	8%	10%	EMIS/ASCR
		27.4 SSS	8%	9%	10%	11%	12%	13%	EMIS/ASCR
		% of females in leadership positions (CEO and DEO)							
		27.5 CEO	6%	6%	6%	13%	13%	13%	EMIS

SDG 4 Target No.	KPI No.	KPIs	Baseline (2019/20) unless stated	2022/ 23	2023/ 24	2024/ 25	2025/ 26	2026/27	Source of Verification
		27.6 DEO	16%	16%	17%	18%	19%	20%	EMIS
4.5	**28**	**% of schools that have developed and put into practice a code of conduct regarding SRGBV**	0%	100%				100%	EMIS/ASCR
4.5	**29**	**% of students with special needs enrolled**							
		29.1 ECE, M/F	0.9%	1%	1%	2%	2%	2.7%	EMIS/ASCR
		29.2 LBE, M/F	0.8%	1%	1%	2%	2%	2.4%	EMIS/ASCR
		29.3 UBE, M/F	0.7%	1%	1%	2%	2%	2.1%	EMIS/ASCR
		29.4 SSE, M/F	0.4%	1%	1%	2%	2%	1.2%	EMIS/ASCR
		29.5 ALP, M/F	0.6%	1%	1%	2%	2%	1.8%	EMIS/ASCR
		29.6 TVET (formal and informal), M/F	N/A	TBD				Triple	EMIS/ASCR & YMIS/MoYS
		29.7 HEIs, M/F	N/A	TBD				Double	HE-MIS
		29.8 Literacy programs, M/F	N/A	TBD				Triple	EMIS/ASCR & YMIS/MoYS
		REDUCING COUNTY DISPARITIES							
4.1	**30**	**Learning outcomes, % county gap**							
		30.1 County gap in the % of students in Grade 3 achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in (1) English (writing) and (2) mathematics (writing)	Math: 11 pp English: 20 pp	Downward trend**					Early grades assessment report
		30.2 County gap in the % of students in Grade 6 achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in (1) reading and (2) mathematics	Math: 10 pp English: 12 pp	Downward trend**					Early grades assessment report

SDG 4 Target No.	KPI No.	KPIs	Baseline (2019/20) unless stated	2022/ 23	2023/ 24	2024/ 25	2025/ 26	2026/27	Source of Verification
4.c	**31**	**Teachers trained, % county gap**							
		31.1 ECE	60 pp			Downward trend**			EMIS/ASCR
		312 LBE	75 pp			Downward trend**			EMIS/ASCR
		31.3 UBE	53 pp			Downward trend**			EMIS/ASCR
		31.4 SSS	74 pp			Downward trend**			EMIS/ASCR
4.1	**32**	**GER (max value–min value) based on national population**							
		32.1 ECE	52 pp			Downward trend**			EMIS/ASCR
		32.2 LBE	45 pp			Downward trend**			EMIS/ASCR
		32.3 UBE	70 pp			Downward trend**			EMIS/ASCR
		32.4 SSS	63 pp			Downward trend**			EMIS/ASCR
		32.5 County **with no** TVET centers	6	6	6	4	2	0	EMIS/ASCR & YMIS/MoYS

Note: * The completion rates to G9 and G12 are flawed due to data quality issues. As data quality improves (on both enrollment and repetition), there will be a need to update both the baselines and the targets. ** The simulation model captures the evolution of major education aggregates **at the national level**, making difficult the estimation of the evolution of indicators at the sub-national level. As far as county gap indicators are concerned, tracking them will be important to ensure that over years, the gap between counties is narrowed.

Annexes

Annex 1: ESP Alignment with existing policies and plans

Table A1.1: ESP Alignment with existing policies and plans

National, International, and Regional Programs/Frameworks Major Strategies	How Is It Addressed in the ESP?
PAPD 2018–2023	
ECE strategies: Revise fees, engage parents, improve facilities, reform curricula, provide systematic and continuous training of teachers/care givers, implement interventions to reduce over-age enrollment	**Priority Program 1**: Access and Equity in ECE and General Education Component 1.1: ECE **Priority Program 2**: Quality and learning in ECE and general education Component 2.3: Teacher Education and professional development Component 2.4 Promote student well-being
Primary education strategies: Invest in teacher quality, introduce primary-level assessments, improve community engagement	**Priority Program 2**: Quality and learning in ECE and general education Component 2.1: Curriculum, assessment, and TLM Component 2.3: Teacher education and professional development Component 2.4 Promote student well-being
Jr. High strategies: Community engagement, gender-responsive interventions	**Priority Program 1**: Access and equity in ECE and general education Component 1.2: Basic education **Priority Program 2**: Quality and learning in ECE and general education Component 2.3: Teacher education and professional development (*subcomponent 2.2.3: Recruit more women into the teaching profession*) Component 2.4 Promote student well-being
Secondary strategies: increase the proportion of qualified teachers; reform curriculum; implement reform and shift in pedagogical approach, 3-track framework	**Priority Program 2**: Quality and learning in ECE and general education Component 2.1: Curriculum, assessment, and TLM Component 2.2: STEM Component 2.3: Teacher education and professional development

National, International, and Regional Programs/Frameworks Major Strategies	How Is It Addressed in the ESP?
PAPD 2018–2023	
	Component 2.4 Promote student well-being
Adult learners (Ages 18–lifelong) strategies: Establish/upgrade TVET institutes of 21st century and full degree granting; ABE/ALP scale up; national service program, adult literacy targeting parents	**Priority Program 1**: Access and equity in ECE and general education Component 1.4: ALP, and adult literacy program **Priority Program 4**: TVET Component 4.1**:** Access and equity Component 4.2: Quality and relevance
Higher education strategies: Improve the relevance, level of capacity, accessibility, and participation in higher education	**Priority Program 5**: Higher education
Agenda for Transformation 2030	
Sector Strategy: Assure equitable access to free basic education (Primary & Jr. High) for all children and youth, including girls and the disabled, with improved outcomes	**Priority Program 1**: Access and equity in ECE and general education Component 1.2: Basic education Component 1.4: ALP, and adult literacy program **Priority Program 2**: Quality and learning in ECE and general education Component 2.4 Promote student well-being
Sector Strategy: Improve quality, relevance, and accessibility of secondary, vocational/technical education, programs and to alternative basic education programs for out-of-school adolescents and youth	**Priority Program 1**: Access and equity in ECE and general education Component 1.3: Secondary education Component 1.4: ALP, and adult literacy program **Priority Program 2**: Quality and learning in ECE and general education **Priority Program 4**: TVET
Sector Strategy: Strengthen decentralized educational services and support information management systems, at national and community levels	**Priority Program 3:** Governance and management in ECE and general education
Sector Strategy: Improve PTA and national oversight, standards, coordination, and monitoring mechanisms to ensure quality education, including non-government ECCD programs for children aged 0 to 5 years	**Priority Program 2**: Quality and learning in ECE and general education Component 2.4: Promote student well-being **Priority Program 3:** Governance and management in ECE and general education Component 3.1: Participatory sector planning for improved educational governance, management, and policy implementation Component 3.2: Education sector coordination, partnerships, and communication

National, International, and Regional Programs/Frameworks Major Strategies	How Is It Addressed in the ESP?
PAPD 2018–2023	
Sector Strategy: Increase numbers and improve competencies of teachers in formal schools and alternative basic education programs	**Priority Program 2**: Quality and learning in ECE and general education Component 2.3: Teacher education and professional development
Sector Strategy: Ensure the quality and relevance of higher education and TVET learning in Liberian context	**Priority Program 4**: TVET **Priority Program 5**: Higher education
SDGs 2030	
4.1 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes	**Priority Program 1**: Access and equity in ECE and general education **Priority Program 2**: Quality and learning in ECE and general education
4.2 Ensure that all boys and girls have access to quality ECD, care, and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education	**Priority Program 1**: Access and equity in ECE and general education Component 1.1: ECE
4.3 Ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical and vocational education 4.4 Substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship	**Priority Program 1:** TVET
4.6 Ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy	**Priority Program 2**: Quality and learning in ECE and general education
4.7Eensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development	**Priority Program 1**: Access and equity in ECE and general education Component 1.4: ALP and adult literacy **Priority Program 2**: Quality and learning in ECE and general education
CONTINENTAL EDUCATION STRATEGY FOR AFRICA (CESA) 2016–2025	
Specific Objective 1: Revitalize the teaching profession to ensure quality and relevance at all levels	**Priority Program 2**: Quality and learning in ECE and general education Component 2.3: Teacher education and professional and development
Specific Objective 2: Build, rehabilitate, and preserve education infrastructure and develop policies that ensure a permanent, healthy, and conducive learning environment in all sub-sectors and for all, so as to expand access to quality education	**Priority Program 1:** Access and equity in ECE and general education Component 1.1: ECE (*Sub-component 1.1.1: Increase access to ECE through the provision of child-friendly, disability-inclusive, and gender-sensitive safe learning space for learners*). Component 1.2: Access to basic education (*Sub-component 1.2.1: Build and upgrade education facilities that are child-, disability-, and gender-sensitive and provide safe, non-violent,*

National, International, and Regional Programs/Frameworks Major Strategies	How Is It Addressed in the ESP?
PAPD 2018–2023	
	disability-inclusive, and effective learning environment for all). Component 1.3: Access to secondary education (*Sub-component 1.3.1: Build and upgrade education facilities that are child-, disability-, and gender-sensitive and provide healthy, safe, non-violent, disability-inclusive, and effective learning environment for all*). **Priority Program 2:** Quality and learning in ECE and general education Component 2.4: Promote student well-being **Priority Program 4:** TVET Component 4.1: Access and equity (*Sub-component 4.1.3: Ensure accessible, healthy, safe, and enabling learning environments and disability-inclusive, gender-responsive access to TVET institutions).* **Priority Program 5:** Higher education Component 5.1: Access and equity (*Sub-component 5.1.2: Create an enabling environment for healthy, safe, and disability-inclusive access to HE institutions)*
Specific Objective 3: Harness the capacity of ICT to improve access, quality, and management of education and training systems	**Priority Program 3:** Governance and management in ECE and general education Component 3.1: Participatory sector planning for improved educational governance, management, and policy implementation **Priority Program 5**: Higher education Component 5.1: Quality and relevance (*Sub-component 5.1: Expand the offer of demand-driven skills in all HE institutions*)
Specific Objective 4: Ensure acquisition of requisite knowledge and skills as well as improved completion rates at all levels and groups through harmonization processes across all levels for national and regional integration	**Priority Program 2:** Quality and learning in ECE and general education
Specific Objective 5: Accelerate processes leading to gender parity and equity	**Priority Program 1:** Access and equity in ECE and general education Component 1.1: ECE (*Sub-component 1.1.1: Increase access to ECE through the provision of child-friendly, disability-inclusive, gender-sensitive, healthy, and safe learning space for learners*). Component 1.2: Access to basic education (*Sub-component 1.2.1: Build and upgrade education*

National, International, and Regional Programs/Frameworks Major Strategies	How Is It Addressed in the ESP?
PAPD 2018–2023	
	facilities that are child-, disability-, and gender-sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, disability-inclusive, and effective learning environment for all; Sub-component 1.2.5: Reduce SRGBV at the basic level to reduce school dropout). Component 1.3: Access to secondary education (*Sub-component 1.3.1: Build and upgrade education facilities that are child-, disability-, and gender-sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, disability-inclusive, and effective learning environment for all; Sub-component 1.3.3 Reduce SRGBV at the basic level to prevent school dropout*). **Priority Program 2:** Quality and learning in ECE and general education Component 2.3: Teacher education and professional development (*Sub-component 2.2.3: Recruit more women into the teaching profession*) Component 2.4: Promote student well-being **Priority Program 4:** TVET Component 4.1**:** Access and equity (*Sub-component 4.1.3: Ensure accessible, safe and enabling learning environment and disability-inclusive, gender-responsive access to TVET institutions*) **Priority Program 5:** Higher education Component 5.1: Access and equity *(Sub-component 5.1.1: Ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality higher education and opportunities to develop skills for employment)*
Specific Objective 6: Launch comprehensive and effective literacy campaigns across the continent to eradicate illiteracy	**Priority Program 1**: Access and equity in ECE and general education Component 1.4: ALP, and adult literacy program
Specific Objective 7: Strengthen the science and math curricula, and disseminate scientific knowledge and the culture of science in the African society	**Priority Program 2**: Quality and learning in ECE and general education Component 2.1: Curriculum, TLM and assessment Component 2.2: STEM
Specific Objective 8: Expand TVET opportunities at both secondary and tertiary levels and strengthen linkages between the world of work and education and training systems	**Priority Program 4**: TVET

National, International, and Regional Programs/Frameworks Major Strategies	How Is It Addressed in the ESP?
PAPD 2018–2023	
Specific Objective 9: Revitalize and expand tertiary education, research, and innovation to address continental challenges and promote global competitiveness	**Priority Program 5**: Higher education
Specific Objective 10: Promote peace education and conflict prevention and resolution at all levels of education and for all age groups	**Priority Program 2**: Quality and learning in ECE and general education Component 2.1: Curriculum, TLM, and assessment
Specific Objective 11: Build and enhance capacity for data collection, management, analysis, communication, and improve the management of education system as well as the statistic tool, through capacity building for data collection, management, analysis, communication, and usage.	**Priority Program 3:** Governance and management in ECE and general education Component 3.1: Participatory sector planning for improved educational governance, management, and policy implementation

Annex 2: Risks and mitigation measures

Table A2.1: Risks and mitigation measures

Risk Level	Risk	Potential Impact	Mitigation Strategies
	External		
High	Inadequate resources to implement ESP programs and activities	Critical components of programs may not be implemented	Prioritize critical components in the ESP; hold donor summit to ensure commitments are known; review funding position quarterly; ensure development partner contributions are clearly highlighted in budget; lobby cabinet and legislature; ensure coordination with partners to avoid overlapping implementation of ESP programs and activities; continuous engagement with MFDP and legislature for sound budget allocation at all education levels
Moderate (IMF world economic outlook shows projections decreasing from 8% in 2022 to 5% in 2027)	High inflation in Liberia	Insufficient funds to cover plan activities	Identify alternative cost-efficient ways to implement activities; timely implementation of activities; develop plan budget based on projected trends of inflation; track macro-economic indicators
Moderate (Although the risk of crisis in Cote d'Ivoire and Guinea is high, impact on Liberia school system is limited as refugees go to francophone countries)	External disruption (e.g., conflicts in neighboring countries, refugee influx, internal displacement of population)	Influx of students the education system does not have the capacity to cater to	Continual engagement with Liberia Refugee Repatriation and Rehabilitation Commission, UNHCR, UNICEF, and LRRRC; Develop permanent education in emergency plan; county and district planning; ensuring adequate contingency budget in MoE programmatic budget line and chart of accounts; include emergency funds as contingency in donor program budgets; engagement with ESDC
Moderate	Pandemics/epidemics	Disruption of schooling and ESP activities Redirection of ESP human capacity and funding to emergency spending	*The plan acknowledges these risks and has integrated a series of activities to prevent, mitigate, adapt, and increase school and system resilience. Other specific mitigation measures include: Activate current education emergency plan; Develop permanent education in emergency plan; Contribute to updating of national disaster-risk reduction plan annually and include in JESR; ensuring adequate contingency

Risk Level	Risk	Potential Impact	Mitigation Strategies
			budget in MoE programmatic budget line and chart of accounts; include emergency funds as contingency in donor program budgets; engagement with ESDC
Moderate	Environmental factors (e.g., rainy season, climate change, natural disasters)	Disruption of schooling, damaging of school infrastructure, disruption of ESP activities Impact on speed and scope of ESP implementation	*The plan acknowledges these risks and has integrated a series of activities to prevent, mitigate, adapt and increase school and system resilience. Other specific mitigation measures include: Consider in operational plan; Time activities for different seasons; use distance education approaches for training; use mobile communications; contribute to updating of national disaster-risk reduction plan annually and include in JESR
High	Elections	Disruptions to school year, violence, and possible changes in senior managers; incoming ministers may have different priorities	Use SMT to endorse yearly operational plan; timetable activities; accordingly, publicize ESP main activities; ensure education officers, both central and decentralized, are prepared, involved, and know the plan well; briefing and transition plans for all political positions
	Internal		
High	Inadequate capacity, resources and logistics to implement the scope of programs and components	Some components may not be fully implemented	Implementation of capacity-building activities within the capacity-enhancement plan; Operational plan to break down responsibilities to lower ranking officers and required resources for each activity; continue conducting routine performance appraisal of Ministry officers; strengthen quarterly and annual review and reporting to improve program management
	Program-level		
Low	Discrimination and inappropriate behavior in the workplace including gender-based violence (within the MoU and at the school level)	Inconducive work environment leading to poor staff performance and disrupted implementation of ESP activities	Enforce standing order for civil service; Enforce teacher's professional standards and teacher code of conduct; Enforce *National Gender Policy*

Risk Level	Risk	Potential Impact	Mitigation Strategies
Moderate	Prolonged process of placement of teachers onto payroll	Delayed hiring and replacement of teachers to fill teaching gap	Dedicate enough staff resources; digitize the automated personnel action notice (PAN) system; improve inter-ministerial/agency coordination (payroll stakeholders); establish repository of qualified teachers that expedites hiring processes
High	Inadequate school-level coordination of activities	Disjointed interventions that do not have the desired impact (e.g., transferring over-age ECE students into the primary level will not bring about improved learning if there is no coordination between ECE and primary teachers)	Training for principals, teachers and relevant activity stakeholders; planned coordination meetings between ECE and primary teachers/administrators; careful timetabling of school-related activities during operational plan development and clear delineation of responsible parties; clear communication with school authorities
High	Irregular and uncoordinated school monitoring visits	Poor school performance/low standards are not identified and corrected; Schools do not change poor practices and school authorities are not held accountable	Capacitate CEOs, DEOs, and school authorities and provide adequate logistics; enhance collaboration and communication among monitors; establish intra- and inter-regional collaboration between schools; provide improved communication with PTAs
High	Insufficient preparation, coordination, and awareness among relevant stakeholders to implement the age-appropriate policy (at the school level)	Over-age interventions do not have the desired impact; Over-age students remain in incorrect levels or are not adequately supported in new learning streams	Train school administrators and teachers on age-appropriate measures; provide an enabling environment for policy implementation; conduct awareness-raising activities among parents and communities; coordination among ECE and primary levels, and primary and alternative learning programs; MoE lobby with Ministry of Health to issue birth certificates; increase supervision by CEOs, DEOs of age-appropriate enrollment at the school level
High	Insufficient capacity of alternative learning pathways (including TVET) to accommodate over-age students (infrastructure, teachers, TLMs)	Alternative learning programs/TVET will not be able to accommodate over-age/out-of-school children; Over-age students will remain in inappropriate age levels; Alternative learning programs/TVET will be of poor quality	Develop a clear roadmap for ALP and TVET scale-up; Strengthening coordination between institutions; Build and expand existing ALP/TVET facilities; Train additional ALP/TVET teachers and administrators; Provide resources for ALP/TVET facilities

Annex 3: Simulation model projections

Table A3.1: Key education policy levers used

	Baseline	Projections
Macroeconomic Framework		
Education expenditure as % of total gov't expenditure	14%	18%
Domestically generated revenues as % of GDP	14%	18%
% of development/capital expenditures of total ED expenditures	2%	4%
ECE		
Gross Intake Rate (GIR) to nursery	170%	130%
Gross Intake Rate (GIR) to kindergarten (Proxy completion)	78%	100%
Share of repeaters	8%	0%
% of students over-aged by 3+ years to be transferred to primary	0%	75%
% of over-aged students overaged by 1 or 2 years	32%	10%
% of students over-aged by 3+ years to be transferred to ALP	1%	75%
% of students over-aged by 3+ years	35%	10%
Average school size	93	93
Share of public schools	45%	50%
Public schools only		
% female students	44%	50%
Student–classroom ratio	25	25
% female teachers	45%	50%
% of teachers paid by the government	29%	34%
% of untrained teachers	64%	0%
% of underpaid teachers regularized	0%	100%
% of teachers receiving hardship incentives	0%	10%
% of female teachers receiving incentives	0%	10%
Health services		
% of students receiving vision screening	0%	25%
% of teachers receiving vision screening	0%	25%
School feeding beneficiaries	0	3000
Proportion of students receiving capitation grants	22%	60%
TLM		
% of schools with teachers' planners	0%	100%
% of students receiving workbooks	0%	100%
% of schools with play-based materials	0%	100%
% of schools with audio-books	0%	100%
% of schools with visual aids	0%	100%
Year of TLM distribution		2024
Construction		
Number of new schools to be built	0	45
Number of new ECE community centers to be built	0	290
% of classrooms in poor condition to be refurbished	0%	50%
Number of schools to receive WASH facilities	295	928
Lower Basic		
Gross Intake Rate (GIR) to G1	102%	85%
Gross Intake Rate (GIR) to G6 (Proxy completion)	59%	70%
Share of repeaters	6%	3%
% of students over-aged by 5+ years to be transferred to ALP	5%	50%
% of students over-aged by 5+ years before transfer	36%	20%
Share of public schools	46%	50%
% of female students	46%	50%
Public schools only		
Classroom–student ratio	86	86
Student–teacher ratio (all teachers)	26	26
% of teachers paid by the government	55%	55%
% of gov't paid teachers female	23%	28%
% of untrained teachers	62%	45%
% of underpaid teachers regularized	0%	100%

	Baseline	Projections
% of teachers receiving hardship incentives	0%	10%
% of female teachers receiving incentives	0%	10%
School health services		
% of students receiving vision screening	4%	50%
% of teachers receiving vision screening	4%	50%
% of students dewormed	3%	50%
% of students receiving MHM products	0%	50%
% of students receiving special packages	0%	5%
Number of students benefitting from school feeding	182 210	255 499
% of girls receiving uniforms and bags	0%	25%
TLM		
Student–textbook ratio	7:1	1:1
Student–workbook ratio	NA	1:1
% of schools with printed curriculum	0%	100%
% of schools with printed teachers guide	0%	100%
% of schools with visual aids and TLM package	0%	100%
% of schools with lab guides	0%	100%
% of schools with sports equipment	0%	100%
% of schools with micro science kits	4%	10%
Year of TLM distribution		2024
Construction		
Proportion of required classrooms to be constructed	0%	100%
Proportion of classrooms in poor condition to be refurbished	0%	10%
Proportion of schools to receive first-aid materials	0%	100%
Proportion of schools with a WASH station	12%	35%
Upper Basic		
Effective promotion rate from G6 to G7	88%	92%
Gross Intake Rate (GIR) to G9 (Proxy completion)	24%	30%
Share of repeaters	6%	3%
% of students over-aged by 4+ years	32%	27%
% of over-aged students transferred to informal TVET	0%	10%
Share of public schools	32%	35%
% female students	46%	48%
Public schools only		
Student–classroom ratio	57	57
Student–stream ratio	27	27
% of female teachers	4%	9%
% of teachers paid by the government	21%	21%
% of female gov't paid teachers	15%	20%
% of untrained teachers	80%	55%
% of teachers receiving hardship incentives	0%	10%
% of female teachers receiving incentives	0%	10%
% of underpaid teachers regularized	0%	100%
Student health services		
% of students receiving vision screening	3%	50%
% of teachers receiving vision screening	1%	50%
% of students dewormed	3%	50%
% of students receiving micronutrient supplements	1%	50%
% of students receiving MHM products	0%	50%
% of students receiving special packages	0%	5%
Number of students benefitting from school feeding	32 010	48 846
% of girls receiving uniforms and bags	0%	25%
TLM		
Student–textbook ratio	7:1	1:1
Student–workbook ratio	NA	1:1
% of schools with printed curriculum	0%	75%
% of school with e-curriculum	0%	25%
% of school with teachers guides	0%	100%
% of school receiving e-teachers guides	0%	0%
% of schools with visual aids and TLM package	0%	100%

	Baseline	Projections
% of schools with lab guides	0%	100%
% of schools with micro science kits	0%	10%
% of schools with sports equipment	0%	100%
Year of TLM distribution		2024
Construction		
Proportion of required classrooms to be constructed	0%	100%
Share of classrooms in poor condition to be refurbished	0%	10%
Proportion of schools receiving first-aid kits	0%	100%
Proportion of schools with a WASH station	3%	25%
Secondary		
Effective promotion rate from G9 to G10	106%	100%
Gross Intake Rate (GIR) to G12 (Proxy completion)	28%	35%
GER (standard computation)	32%	42%
Proportion female	49%	50%
Proportion of students to be transitioning to SS technical stream	0%	15%
Proportion of students over-aged by 4+ years	39%	35%
Average school size	116	130
Share of repeaters	4%	2%
Share of public schools	25%	30%
Public schools only		
Student–stream ratio	44	44
% of teachers paid by the government	18%	25%
% of female gov't paid teachers	14%	19%
% of untrained teachers	86%	50%
% of female teachers receiving incentives	0%	10%
% of underpaid teachers regularized	0%	100%
Student health services		
% of students receiving vision screening	7%	50%
% of teachers receiving vision screening	1%	50%
% of students dewormed	6%	50%
% of students receiving micronutrient supplements	3%	50%
% of students receiving MHM products	0%	50%
% of students receiving special packages	0%	5%
Number of schools with a female guidance counsellor	200	1700
Number of students benefitting from school feeding	32 020	48 846
% of girls receiving uniforms and bags	0%	25%
Scholarships		
% of students with disabilities receiving scholarships	0%	100%
Female students receiving scholarships annually	0	1000
TLM		
% of schools with printed curriculum	0%	80%
% of school with e-curriculum	0%	20%
% of schools receiving smart boxes	0%	10%
Total tablets to be distributed	0	6180
% of school with teachers guides	0%	100%
% of schools with visual aids and TLM package	0%	100%
% of schools with lab guides	0%	100%
% of schools with micro science kits	4%	10%
Year of TLM distribution		2024
% of girls receiving uniforms and bags	0%	25%
Student–textbook ratio	8,00	1,00
Student–workbook ratio	0,00	1,00
Year of TLM distribution		2024
Construction		
Number of new schools to be built		7
Number of model STEM centers to be built		3
Number of UB schools to upgrade to SSS		50
Number of schools in poor condition to be refurbished		156
Proportion of schools receiving first-aid kits	0%	100%
Proportion of schools with a WASH station	0%	25%

	Baseline	Projections
Proportion of schools with science labs	0%	50%
Alternative Education		
% of out-of-school children enrolled in ALP	0%	5%
Adult Literacy (AL)		
Average center size	0	20
Total AL centers as % of LB school	0%	5%
% of AL teachers on gov't payroll	100%	100%
% of AL schools receiving teacher guides	0%	100%
% of AL schools receiving TLM	0%	100%
% of AL schools receiving workbooks	0%	100%
Year of TLM distribution	2024	2024
Accelerated Learning program (ALP)		
Student–teacher ratio (public)	62	45
Student–teacher ratio (private)	15	45
% of ALP teachers on payroll	20%	100%
% of teachers in private schools receiving stipend	0%	20%
% enrollment in public schools	86%	75%
% of LB schools offering ALP	5%	13%
Student health services		
% of students receiving vision screening	0%	50%
% of teachers receiving vision screening	0%	50%
% of students dewormed	0%	50%
% of students receiving MHM products	0%	50%
% of students receiving special packages	0%	5%
TLM		
% of schools receiving teacher guides	0%	100%
% of schools receiving TLM	0%	100%
% of students receiving workbooks	0%	100%
% of schools receiving visual guides	0%	100%
Year of TLM distribution		2023
Construction		
Proportion of adult literacy centers to be constructed		100%
Formal TVET		
% of out-of-school children enrolled in TVET	1%	1%
Total enrollment in TVET institutions	19 715	50 000
% in formal TVET	73%	73%
% of TVET students in public institutions	55%	60%
% of SS schools with TVET streams	4%	11%
Public schools only		
% of instructors paid by the government	17%	17%
% of unqualified instructors	95%	29%
% of female students receiving scholarships	0%	5%
% of teachers receiving teachers guide	0%	100%
% of schools receiving technical equipment	0%	100%
Student–textbook ratio	8:1	1:1
Student–workbook ratio	NA	1:1
Target year for distribution		2025
Construction		
Proportion of SSS schools requiring upgrade for TVET expansion	0%	100%
Number of multilaterals to be refurbished	0,00	0,00
% of informal TVET institutions with updated STEM labs and digital training equipment	0%	100%
% of TVET informal institutions with gender sensitive facilities	0%	100%
Number of informal TVET centers to receive WASH facilities	-	7
Number of informal TVET centers to receive digital facilities	-	7
Informal TVET		
% of out-of-school children enrolled in informal TVET	1%	2%
Students/trainer ratio	36	36
% of TVET centers with training materials	0%	100%
Higher education		
GER (18-22 years old)	16%	17%

	Baseline	Projections
% female	40%	45%
% of students in publics Institutions	62%	65%
Public institutions only		
Lecturer–student ratio	32	32
Total students receiving scholarships per year (abroad)	0	50
Proportion of students receiving scholarships (private)	0	10%
Teacher education		
TTIs		
% of female TVET trainees	20%	30%
% of female TVET trainees receiving scholarships	0%	10%
% of female teachers at RTTIs	0%	20%
Scholarships		
% of female students to receive scholarships	0%	10%
Number of students with disabilities receiving scholarships for RTTIs/year	0	10
In-Service CPD		
% of senior secondary schools to receive training	0%	100%
% of upper basic schools to receive training	0%	15%
% of ECD caregivers to be trained	0%	100%
Regular in-service CPD		
% of government-paid ECE teachers to be trained annually	0%	100%
% of government-paid LB teachers to be trained annually	0%	100%
% of government-paid UB teachers to be trained annually	0%	100%
% of government-paid SS teachers to be trained annually	0%	100%
% of government-paid ALP teachers to be trained annually	0%	100%
% of government-paid TVET teachers to be trained annually	0%	100%
% of government-paid HE lecturers to be trained annually	0%	100%
School leadership training		
% of public school principals to be trained	38%	100%
% of non-public school principals to be trained annually	0%	5%
% of SMC members to be trained annually	0%	20%
% of PTA members to be trained annually	0%	20%

Table A3.2: School-age population

	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	% Change
ECE	440 440	447 018	453 508	460 348	468 797	6%
Lower basic	817 069	828 367	839 650	850 871	863 195	6%
Upper basic	379 695	385 469	391 083	396 646	401 991	6%
Secondary	356 719	364 191	371 183	377 524	383 150	7%

Source: UNPD projection 2019 revision, medium variant.

Table A3.3: GER (after transfer)

	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	% Change
ECE	133%	113%	96%	88%	89%	-33%
Lower basic	84%	83%	85%	82%	76%	-10%
Upper basic	47%	47%	47%	48%	48%	2%
Secondary	32%	34%	37%	39%	42%	31%

Source: Derived from the financial simulation model.

Table A3.4: Over-age children

	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	% Change
ECE	67%	55%	44%	32%	20%	-70,1%
Lower basic (5+ years)	36%	32%	32%	28%	20%	-44,8%
Upper basic (4+ years)	32%	31%	30%	28%	27%	-16,2%

Source: Derived from the financial simulation model.

Table A3.5: Number of students, public

	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	% Change
ECE	272 269	238 107	209 337	199 774	208 908	-23%
Lower basic	325 843	330 298	345 517	340 033	328 545	1%
Upper basic	57 422	59 794	62 225	64 738	67 308	17%
Secondary	29 208	33 537	38 173	43 093	48 277	65%
Formal TVET	8 075	11 370	14 772	18 282	21 900	171%
Higher education	54 460	57 119	59 779	62 433	65 025	19%
Pre-service TED	941	971	1 002	1 032	1 063	13%
ALP	14 435	15 835	61 936	74 658	88 990	516%
Informal TVET	7 508	10 771	14 060	17 358	20 643	175%

Source: Derived from the financial simulation model.

Table A3.6: Number of teachers paid by the government

	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	% Change
ECE	1 788	1 850	1 912	1 974	2 036	14%
Lower basic	6 843	6 936	7 269	7 153	6 950	2%
Upper basic	1 497	1 555	1 614	1 676	1 738	16%
Secondary	913	1 069	1 239	1 420	1 614	77%
Formal TVET	32	44	58	71	86	171%
Higher education	1688	1774	1861	1947	2032	20%
ALP	247	287	1 197	1 543	1 978	701%

Source: Derived from the financial simulation model.

Table A3.7: Share of teachers paid by the government

	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	% Change
ECE	30%	31%	32%	33%	34%	14%
Lower basic	55%	55%	55%	55%	55%	0%
Upper basic	21%	21%	21%	21%	21%	0%
Secondary	20%	21%	22%	24%	25%	27%

Source: Derived from the financial simulation model

Table A3.8: Projected donor financing, select donors, USD

Donor	Budget USD SY1	Budget USD SY2	Budget USD SY3	Budget USD SY4	Budget USD SY5	TOTAL
World Bank	42,663,889	2,437,842				45,101,731
UNICEF	4,000,000	4,000,000	4,000,000	4,000,000	4,000,000	20,000,000
USAID	22,000,000	22,000,000	22,000,000	22,000,000	22,000,000	110,000,000
EYELLIANCE	287,478	92,000	58,000			437,478
LGT Venture Philanthropy Foundation/LEAP Philanthropy Funders	5,500,000	5,500,000	5,500,000	5,500,000	5,500,000	27,500,000
GPE	550,000	9,175,000	9,175,000	9,175,000	8,625,000	36,700,000
EU	4,500,000	2,500,000	500,000			7,500,000
EU (pipeline)	1,000,000	3,500,000	7,500,000	6,000,000	3,000,000	21,000,000
Sweden	400,000	800,000	400,000			1,600,000
Total	**80,901,367**	**50,004,842**	**49,133,000**	**46,675,000**	**43,125,000**	**269,839,209**
Total (2019 prices)	**68,806,537**	**42,529,072**	**41,787,571**	**39,697,044**	**36,677,772**	**229,497,996**

Sources: Donors' report during ESP draft national consultation.

Annex 4: ESP Communication strategy

The MoE cannot achieve the ESP goals alone; a concerted effort by all stakeholders who feel a mutual accountability for the ESP results is essential to accelerate progress. A robust communications strategy for the ESP is therefore critical to successful implementation. If all stakeholders are aware of the policy reforms, understand what they entail as well as their own role in implementing them, and – crucially - feel that the new approaches will improve their lives, then they will be motivated to lend their efforts to achieve the goals.

The Ministry's Communication Strategy, currently in draft, acknowledges the vital role of communication in achieving institutional goals, noting three key dimensions to be effective:

- To inform, by providing credible, factual, timely, accurate, and balanced information to the public regarding Ministry activities to raise awareness, build understanding, and generate engagement
- To listen, to be persistent, motivational, innovative and proactive in receiving relevant information, creating feedback loops from the public back to the Ministry on implementation progress and challenges to inform decision-making, unblock bottlenecks, improve practice, and strengthen outcomes.
- To converse, by establishing two-way communication channels to encourage involvement and invite dialogue from stakeholders through accessible channels so that they have a voice in the reform process which MoE is responsive to, and feel they have a stake in achieving its success.

For the Ministry in general, therefore, communication plays a key role in improving institutional accountability, transparency, and learning, as well as in building stakeholders' buy-in and ownership for strengthened impact. For the ESP specifically, a number of key policy reforms introduced represent a breaking away from a 'business as usual' approach, and it is essential that these are known, clearly understood, and accepted by all stakeholders if the anticipated results are to be achieved. For example, enforcement of the policy on right-age school entry, long acknowledged only in the breach, may come as a shock to parents, and the rationale will need to be clearly explained as a prerequisite to bringing about the required behavior change. Teachers and school principals too will need clear guidance on how to implement the policy effectively, as well as to drop the practice of student repetition at ECE levels. The shift to divert over-age learners in primary classes to alternative programs is also a significant innovation which needs to be carefully communicated to avoid confusion and potential resistance. Promoting TVET as a positive career choice rather than a second-rate option is also a key message, along with ensuring that schools are healthy, safe, protective spaces for learning with zero tolerance for violence of any kind.

Other innovations embedded in the ESP that will also need to be communicated effectively include the roll-out of the National School Quality Standards System, including School Report Cards and School Profiles tools. Together these provide important inputs to inform discussions on school quality and performance with PTAs at school level, making them an important resource for grassroots reporting upwards. Critically, these tools form an empowering accountability mechanism for raising parents' awareness of the quality – or lack thereof - in their schools, who are then better equipped with knowledge and information to strengthen demand for better school performance and quality education at community level.

In the current situation, Ministry capacity to deliver these positive communication outcomes is limited. While a Communications and Public Relations Division is established at central level under the Minister's Office, there are no corresponding communications focal points at decentralized level, with communications responsibilities delegated to CEOs and DEOs. The Communications Division of the MOE is responsible for crafting messages, setting standards, providing guidance, establishing, and maintaining channels of communication with the Public, partners and stakeholders. A separate

communications protocol document has also been drafted, which outlines the process by which communications will be drafted and approved to maintain message discipline avoid potential confusion of inconsistent mixed messaging.

Approved communications messaging is passed down from the Communications Division on an as-needed rather than systematic basis, with DEOs tasked to disseminate to PTAs at local level. The same communication chain system is used to convey messages upwards from communities to central level for consideration by the SMT. The Ministry's Communication Strategy has been drafted but not yet completed, and in its final version will need to include reference to the specific communication requirements of the ESP.

Communications channels established under the GPE-funded *Liberia COVID-19 Education Emergency Response Plan* (2020-2022) for disseminating Covid prevention and control behavior change communication messages through print and electronic media, including national and community radio, internet and SMS provide a functioning system from which to build further. Formats used include jingles and talk shows. A modern TV and radio studio set up under the project to facilitate on-line learning could be further utilized to reach households, especially via solar radios procured and distributed with project funding. A Community Mobilization Guidance note produced and disseminated to support the 'Back to School' campaign after schools re-opened also provides a useful model for communicating with and engaging the community to spur action.

Expansion of the MoE communications function is constrained by a lack of sustainable funding for the TV/radio studio and limited human resource and institutional capacity. A key activity of the ESP will therefore be to complete the Communication Strategy that is currently in draft, which includes a costing plan, leverages the communication channels already in place, and is informed by lessons learned from the Covid-19 Response Project. To maximize ownership and buy-in, this should be developed through an inclusive, participatory approach that enables all stakeholders from central to local level to have a voice and ensure that the solutions proposed meet the needs of different audiences and are technically feasible in a range of contexts.

The current draft Communication Strategy is described as 'the first step in developing a comprehensive communications strategy, setting out best practice for all staff and as a roadmap for the way forward'. It focuses particularly on the need for articulating communication messaging for the promotion of the Government's five-year Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development. The launch of the new ESP provides a timely opportunity for building on the draft and elaborating it into a fully comprehensive document which includes a specific focus on ESP communication needs. While the details of the Communication Strategy will be fleshed out through a participatory process to strengthen and finalize the current draft, it will also need to be explicitly linked to the MEL strategy, so that knowledge generated from the MEL system is fed back into the communication chain to strengthen accountability and improve practice.

The goals will need to support the MoE's overarching vision for the sector, namely, *'All citizens across all counties and groups have equitable access to quality, relevant, gender-responsive, disability-inclusive education and training at all levels, providing them with the skills to meet the demands of the labor market and contribute to national development and prosperity.' (ESP Ch.2*). In addition, it will need to articulate specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timebound communications objectives for supporting the behavior changes outlined in the ESP high-level theory of change (see ESP, Introduction).

In terms of target audiences, the MoE has a number of internal and external stakeholders that need to be kept informed, listened to and engaged in regular dialogue. In August 2019, the Communications

Division undertook a mapping exercise, identifying the following stakeholders with whom the Ministry needs to engage.

Internal to MoE:

- MoE Central Office, County and District Education Office Staff
- Government teachers and school administrators
- Education boards

External to MoE (within Liberia):

- PTAs, National Teacher's Association of Liberia (NTAL), National Principal's Association of Liberia (NPAL), Monrovia Consolidated School System Teacher's Association (MCSSTA)
- Private school teachers and administrators
- Parents and guardians of students
- Students
- Young people out of school
- Government of Liberia line ministries/agencies/commissions of the executive branch; national legislature; judiciary,
- Local CSOs, including women's groups, youth networks and disabled people's organizations, and local branches of international NGOs
- Local media

External (International)

- International aid organizations
- International media
- International NGOs
- International / African Governments
- International Research Organizations
- International Education Providers
- International Education 'Thought Leaders'/Advisors
- Liberia Education Accelerated Program (LEAP)
- LEAP Providers' international leadership

Not all audiences will need to be engaged on every policy priority or issue. Therefore, a detailed plan will be needed to map out the specific audiences relevant to each element of the ESP.

Channels for communication that are available for different purposes include:

- Sharing data, policy dissemination, and publishing information on reforms
    - Publishing on the ministry's website, which MoE plans to strengthen, along with its Facebook account, and other social media platforms
    - Talk shows
    - MoE quarterly newsletter
    - Donors' websites
    - Donor/partner email chains
- Public awareness campaigns for beneficiaries (students, parents, community members) about main ESP programs
    - Radio campaigns
    - Print media
    - Town hall meetings
- Communication activities within the ESP
    - Communication for behavior change (e.g., to encourage age-appropriate enrollment)

- Communication for monitoring and accountability – sharing information so that communities can identify problems and report them (e.g., school report cards; school profiles produced under the National School Quality Standards system).

Monitoring how effectively the Communication Strategy is achieving its goals and how implementation may be further strengthened can be discussed via forums for consultative engagement with development partner stakeholders, such as the LEG (Local Education Group); and ESDC (Education Sector Development Committee), and. should also be a standing item in the annual Joint Education Sector Review, using data generated from the MEL and other available feedback loops.

The launch of the ESP in August 2022 is a key and high-profile communication event for highlighting the key reforms that will be introduced, with endorsement from the President sending a strong message of the Government's commitment to achieving the ESP goals. Following the launch, the Division of Communications will move forwards to finalization of the Communication Strategy as an urgent priority, leveraging the promotional buzz generated by the launch and ensuring that a consistent communication flow is kept up to maintain public interest and further build the buy-in needed to make successful implementation of the ESP a matter of everyone's business. To this end, provision has been made in the MYOP estimated budget to support development and roll-out of the Communication Strategy.

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