



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

NATIONAL POLICY ON GIRLS' EDUCATION



October 2021

“Providing an enabling environment for, training and management.”

“Show the light the people will find the way.”

Republic of Liberia
Ministry of Education, Girls Education Division
Monrovia, Liberia

www.moe.gov.lr
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Hotline 1416

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This document was made possible by the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) through UNICEF under the COVID-19 Education in Emergency (EIE)

THE LIBERIAN EDUCATION PHILOSOPHY

The underlying philosophy of Liberia’s education is enshrined in the constitution of Liberia.

1. We believe that the 21st century Liberian Education System will provide equal access to quality education for all residents, regardless of race, color, creed, sex, culture’s traditional practices, or religious and political affiliations.
2. We believe that the 21st century Liberian Education System will celebrate diversity of its rich cultures and people and create the platform for the promotion of unity and nationalism.
3. We believe that the 21st century Liberian Education System subscribes to the Liberian Constitution and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the fundamental human rights of every individual.
4. We believe that the 21st century Liberian Education System subscribes to the principle that the societal needs of its peoples be fully developed for economic development.
5. We believe that the 21st century Liberian Education System will provide opportunities for its citizenry to be technologically literate and lifelong learners.
6. We believe that the 21st century Liberian Education System will provide a secure, nurturing, and caring learning environment.
7. We believe that the 21st Liberian Education System will prepare its citizenry to become productive contributors to nation building through technical and vocational training as well as through the pursuit of higher education.
8. We believe that the 21st century Liberian Education System will function on a decentralized administrative structure to ensure the effective and efficient delivery of quality education for all peoples.

FOREWORD

The revised National Policy on Girls' Education is very significant to Liberia's economic growth and development. Gender inequality is widespread in most developing countries, and Liberia is no exception. In the past, girls were more vulnerable in communities and less likely to enter school and complete their education.

Girls' education contributes to a reduction of gender inequalities and an improvement in personal health. Particularly for girls, education significantly affects reproductive health and improves child mortality and welfare through better nutrition and higher immunization rates. Moreover, education serves as an effective preventive weapon against HIV/AIDS. Girls' education also increases productivity and earnings significantly.

The Government and its partners have made significant interventions to improve girls' enrollment, safety, and completion of school. This is shown by the figures in the recent school census report. More girls are completing school now.

The present number of girls enrolled at junior, secondary, and tertiary levels has experienced a significant increase owing to several interventions which include increased access, scholarship opportunities and training, and awareness.

To change this, the Government has introduced a tuition-free policy in public schools and approved minimum fees for registration. These interventions are meant to ensure that all girls have equal opportunities to access quality learning in safe spaces.

This policy seeks to minimize the huge gender disparities currently existing in the education sector and supports the implementation of specific interventions to curtail gender imbalances and barriers to girls' education.

The Ministry encourages all its partners and officials, including County and District Education Officers, principals, teachers, school administrators, and communities, to assume complete ownership of this policy to guarantee its full implementation.

We appeal to all education stakeholders to take appropriate steps by developing relevant plans, programs, and strategies focusing on the specific needs of girls. We encourage organizations and communities to implement programs that seek to attract and retain girls and women in schools.

The Ministry of Education

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Prioritizing girls' education is one of the most effective ways for ending poverty in developing nations. The second revision of the National Policy on Girls' Education is a hallmark of the Government of the Liberia commitment to include emerging issues such as Education in Emergency (EIE) and new related policies on girls' education.

We are pleased to acknowledge all who contributed to the formulation of this policy, including members of County School Boards, County and District Education Officers, and County Officers from the Ministries of Justice, Health and Social Welfare, Gender and Development, Internal Affairs, and Information in all fifteen counties.

Additionally, we laud the efforts of members of the Technical Working Committee for the revision of the National Policy on Girls' Education. Your contributions and dedication to ensuring the modification of the 2006 policy by incorporating strategies to address emerging challenges and trends in girls' education were remarkable.

Special thanks go to UNICEF, for its support in providing funds for this review. Finally, we extend our gratitude to KEEP, UMOVEMENT, Read Liberia, Save the Children, We Care, FAWE, and all other organizations, partners, and individuals who have been very instrumental in advancing the education of girls. The technical support of Mr. Trokon W. Wayne is highly appreciated.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CWIQ	Core Welfare Indicator Questionnaire
EFA	Education for All
EMIS	Education Management Information Service
FAWE	Forum for African Women Educationalists
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEEP	Gender Equitable Education Program
GER	Gross Enrollment Ratio
GIR	Gross Intake Rate
GOAL	Girls' Opportunities to Access Learning
GPI	Gender Parity Index
HIV	Human Immune Deficiency Syndrome
IRISE	Improving Results in Secondary Education
LISGIS	Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
NALSP	National Association of Liberian Schools Principals
NER	Net Enrollment Ratio
NIR	Net Intake Rate
NTAL	National Teachers Association of Liberia
TVET	Technical Vocational Education and Training
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNGEI	United Nations Girls Education Initiative
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
YWCA	Young Women Christian Association

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK

1.1 Introduction

According to Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, everyone has the right to education. This right to education extends to both boys and girls and implies that education shall be free and compulsory at least in the elementary and junior high levels. It is against this background that the 1990 World Conference on Education marked the emergence of an international consensus that education is the single most vital element in combating poverty, empowering women, promoting human rights and democracy, protecting the environment, and controlling population growth. At this conference, Nations/states also agreed to expand early childhood education, reduce male-female literacy gaps, and expand basic education opportunities for young people and adults.

As proof of the Government of Liberia's commitment to the elimination of discrimination, Liberia has ratified the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. To fulfill the provisions within the Beijing Platform of Action, the Ministry of Gender was established in 2001.

The Ministers of Education Conference held in South Africa in 1990 reflected on progress made toward achieving the Education for All (EFA) Goals and attributed the slow pace of development of education in Africa to austere economic adjustment programs, increased debt burden, bad governance, inadequate resources, corruption, natural and man-made disasters, and HIV/AIDS.

In response to international protocols and commitments, Liberia's Ministry of Education prioritized the implementation of the EFA Goals through the development of a National Action Plan, with programs focused on issues such as early childhood education, free and compulsory primary education, gender equality, adult education, skills training for out-of-school children, the Accelerated Learning Program, and HIV/AIDS awareness. This National Action Plan led to the enactment of the Education Law of 2001 making primary education free and compulsory for all Liberian children.

Over the years, the Liberian education system has been dominated by male enrollment, at all levels, especially at the upper basic and secondary levels.

According to the 2012/13 School Census report, girls constitute 47 percent of the student population at the pre-primary level and 44 percent at the primary level. Enrollment of girls is projected at 40.5 percent and 37 percent for junior and senior high levels respectively. Although there have been considerable achievements, the figures are not satisfactory especially at junior and senior secondary levels.

The repetition rate for primary school girls in 2010–11 was 6.9 percent; the repetition rate for boys that year was 6.2 percent. In a study conducted by Plan International (2012), 42 percent of 133 girls interviewed in Montserrado, Grand Cape Mount, and Grand Gedeh counties reported having repeated a school year at least once. A little more than half the girls reported repeating a school year because they failed their exams.

The annual School Census of 2019/2020 shows that 49.5 percent of the total enrollment of 14, 524, 53 are girls. 69.9 percent of all girls that are in school are over-aged. By gender disaggregation, females have the higher repetition rate. However, it is noteworthy that the repetition rate drop progressively with increasing levels of education. For instance, while the repetition rate of ECE is 8.16 percent, it is 6.25 percent, 5.90, and 3.68 for lower basic, upper basic and secondary respectively.

There are 60,542 teachers in Liberia. Only 28 percent of all teachers in Liberia are females. While 66.7 percent of all the teachers at the ECE level are females, only 28 percent, 11.8 percent, and 9.6 percent of the teachers at the lower basic, upper basic, and secondary levels, respectively, are females.

Liberia is making significant strive to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) related to quality Education (SDG4) and Gender Equality (SDG5).

SDG 4: Quality Education

Literacy rates of 15–24-year-olds: 80%
Net enrollment ratio primary education: 100%
Primary completion rate: 80.6%

SDG 5: Gender Equality

Ratio of girls to boys in primary education: 1.0
Ratio of girls to boys in secondary education: 1.0

Liberia is close to meeting the target literacy rate of 80 percent for 15- to 24-year-olds. The literacy rate for the 15- to 24-year-old population, defined as anyone who can read and write any language, is 76.7 percent. Among the 15- to 24-year-old population, 71.0 percent of females and 82.8 percent of males are literate (LISGIS, CWIQ Survey, 2010).

Liberia is making some progress on the target of 100 percent primary school net enrollment. The 2019–20 School Census reports a net enrollment of 58 percent for pre-primary, 43.4 percent for primary, 13.6 percent for junior high, and 10.2 percent for senior high levels. Female net enrollment for the 2019–20 school year was 51 percent in pre-primary, 48.9 percent in Lower Basic, 48.6 percent in Upper Basic, and 48.5 percent in Secondary.

Similarly, Liberia’s primary completion rate of 66.0 percent is falling short of its target of 80.6 percent. The UNESCO Institute of Statistics reports a grade 6 gross intake rate, which is a proxy for grade 6 completion of 60.3 percent for girls and 71.6 percent for boys in 2011 (UNESCO, Institute of Statistics).

Although Liberia will not meet the SDGs 5 targets of 1.0 in the ratio of girls to boys, some gains have been made in gender parity. Between the 2015–16 and 2019–20 school years, Liberia made gains in gender parity in junior and senior high school.

The 2019 – 2020 school census shows an increase in enrollment of boys and girls at the primary school level. It also revealed that 50.93% of boys and 49.07% girls are accessing primary education (now lower basic education).

An analysis of trends in girls’ education in Liberia indicates that the overall improvement in the situation of girls’ education is progressing because of several interventions by government and partners. Gender disparities and imbalances in girls’ education are common in every region of Liberia. This contributes to inequality in education opportunities, which ultimately leads to lack of economic empowerment, low participation in decision making, lack of access to essential social services, and vulnerability to gender-based violence and HIV/AIDS. Despite the challenges, performance and age-appropriate enrollment of girls is gradually increasing. The results of the 2020–2021 Liberia National Assessment Test (LNAT) administered to third graders indicate that 82.96% females and 82.7% male females passed. The Liberia Primary School Certificate Exams

(LPSCE) results show that 93.17% females and 93.17% male made a successful pass. The Liberia Junior High School Certificate Exams results indicate that 93.22% females and 93.08% male passed.

The Education Reform Act of 2011 was signed into law on August 8, 2011, replacing the Education Law of 2001, approved January 8, 2002. It constitutes Title 10 of the Liberian Code of Laws Revised. It applies to all schools and education institutions within the country with the exceptions of military training centers, police and security training institutions. This document references many policies and regulations that are derived from the Reform Act, and the statements and details of the Act prevail in any confusion or dispute about policies or regulations.

The objectives of this Act are to govern and regulate the educational system and the delivery and management of that system and include the following:

- Ensure the provision of quality education to all citizens at every level of the educational strata.
- Promote equal access to educational opportunities for Liberians, without discrimination of any kind.
- Promote and protect the concept of human rights for all Liberians, both with respect to access and opportunities for quality education.
- Promote gender equity and equality throughout the educational system and opportunities for education.

Chapter 2 of the Education Reform Act clearly states the continuity, functions, and powers of the Ministry of Education. Some of these functions are directly related to achieving girls' education:

- a. Provide and ensure the provision of quality education to all citizens and residents without discrimination.
- b. Develop and sustain an education system that allows all students to realize their talents and capabilities irrespective of gender, race, religion, social or economic status, or background.
- c. Reduce illiteracy by providing quality, realistic, and practical education at all levels for all citizens and residents without discrimination.

- d. Enhance the rights and uplift the status of all citizens and residents in society through well-designed and directed quality education programs.

Targets in the 2006 National Policy on Girls Education have not been achieved to an appreciable level. Liberia has seen a minimal improvement in completion rates for girls at junior high school and a widening gap in the Gender Parity Index moving from junior to senior high school. These trends have been attributed to a range of factors, including uneven targeting of education investments, teacher absenteeism, poor improvement in supervision. cultural factors including child labor and early marriage, and the limited employment opportunities for women once they complete their education. All these factors are prevalent in all counties of Liberia.

The enrollment rate at the primary level is steadily increasing; in contrast, as girls transition to the junior secondary level, a sharp decline in enrollment and retention has been observed. The situation worsens at senior secondary and tertiary levels. Low retention and completion remain daunting constraints and are due to many factors, including teenage pregnancy, poor performance, and unsatisfactory learning environments.

The Ministry of Education has instituted several actions to mitigate the challenges mentioned in the 2006 girls' education policy. Currently through the IRISE project, girls are being given support package containing scholarship, stipends and smart phones. Two hundred female guidance counselors are being recruited to support girls in school. Girls are also being supported through after school tutorials, girls club and the provision of learning and recreational material. This is being done through the Gender Equitable Education Program (GEEP), supported by UNICEF.

The support to girls' education through partners has also increased. New partners like Kids Education and Engagement Project (KEEP), UMOVEMENT, Helping Our People Excel (HOPE), Paramount Young Women Initiatives have also joined to support girls through different activities. The United Nation Girls Education Initiatives (UNGEI) has been reactivated and is currently making great strive in girls' education.

1.2 Rationale for the Revision of the National Policy on Girls Education

Since the launching of the National Policy on Girls' Education in 2006, the Liberian context has changed considerably. The passage of the Education Reform Act in 2011 advances girls' education through the introduction of free and compulsory education that extends from grades 1 through 6 to grade 9 and supports the establishment of decentralized structures for efficient service delivery.

Challenges in girls education that were visible in 2006 have been reduced and in some cases are non-existent. Based on this fact, the Ministry of Education decided to revise the current National Policy on Girls Education to reflect the current realities at international, regional, national, and local levels with workable strategies and interventions. Additionally, it identifies strategies to monitor and assess progress toward achieving the policy goals and offers guidance and a shared vision for achieving girls' education.

1.3 Vision of the Policy

This policy envisages a society free from gender disparities in all sectors and an education system in which all children (girls and boys) have equal access to affordable and quality education.

1.4 Policy Goal

The goal of this policy is to provide an enabling environment for gender equality in education, training, and management. It is intended to establish guiding principles in Liberia's endeavors to eliminate gender disparity and identify priorities for government and stakeholder action.

1.5 Objectives of the Policy

1.5.1 General Objective

The overall objective of the National Policy on Girls Education is to guide and promote affirmative action aimed at the progressive reduction of gender disparities in education and training as well as in management structures.

1.5.2 Specific Objectives

Specific objectives follow:

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

1.6 Guiding Principles

The National Policy on Girls Education is guided by the following principles:

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states the following: (1) everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all based on merit; (2) Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace. (3) Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children (United Nations, 1948).

The Convention on the Rights of the Child

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is a human rights treaty setting out the civil, political, economic, social, health, and cultural rights of children. The Convention defines a child as any human being under the age of 18, unless the age of majority is attained earlier under a state's own domestic legislation.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child is the first legally binding international instrument to incorporate the full range of human rights—civil, cultural, economic, political, and social rights. In 1989, world leaders decided that children needed a special convention just for them because individuals under age 18 often need special care and

protection that adults do not necessarily need. The leaders also wanted to make sure that the world recognized that children also have human rights.

The Convention sets out these rights in 54 articles and two Optional Protocols. It spells out the basic human rights that children everywhere have: the right to survival; the right to develop to the fullest; the right to protection from harmful influences, abuse, and exploitation; and the right to participate fully in family, cultural, and social life. The four core principles of the Convention are non-discrimination; devotion to the best interests of the child; the right to life, survival, and development; and respect for the views of the child. Every right spelled out in the Convention is inherent to the human dignity and harmonious development of every child. The Convention protects children's rights by setting standards in health care; education; and legal, civil, and social services (United Nations, 1989).

By agreeing to undertake the obligations of the Convention, national governments including Liberia have committed themselves to protecting and ensuring children's rights, and they have agreed to be accountable for this commitment before the international community. State parties to the Convention are obliged to develop and undertake all actions and policies in the light of the best interests of the child.

Education 2030 (Incheon Declaration)

The Education 2030 Framework for Action was adopted by 184 UNESCO Member States on 4 November 2015 in Paris. It is the result of a collective effort involving in-depth, wide-ranging consultations driven and owned by countries, and facilitated by UNESCO as well as other partners. The development of the Framework was guided by the Education for All (EFA) Steering Committee convened by UNESCO and finalized through the Drafting Group for the Education 2030 Framework for Action.

The Sustainable Development Goal 4 targets:

Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

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.

4.2 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care, and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education.

4.3 By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational, and tertiary education, including university.

4.4 By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs, and entrepreneurship.

4.5 By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, and children in vulnerable situations.

4.6 By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy.

4.7 By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.

4.a Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all.

4.b By 2020, substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing States and African countries, for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programs, in developed countries and other developing countries.

4.c By 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially the least developed countries and small island developing States.

Beijing Platform for Action

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action is a visionary agenda for the empowerment of women. It is also one of the reference frameworks to analyze the situation of women around the world and to assess the efforts of States in support of women's empowerment.

Adopted by consensus in 1995 following the mobilization of over 40,000 government delegates, experts, and civil society representatives at the Fourth World Conference on Women, the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action embodies the commitment of the international community to achieve gender equality and to provide better opportunities for women and girls. The platform of action responds to the collective effort of women and girls around the globe who have fought to achieve gender equality and women's rights and acts as a continuum of the international community's commitment to addressing civil, political, social, economic, and cultural inequalities. It remains relevant today, affirming that women's rights are human rights and that equality between women and men benefits everyone.

The Beijing Platform for Action reaffirmed Governments' commitment to the following:

- The equal rights and inherent human dignity of women and men and other purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and other international human rights instruments, in particular the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women and the Declaration on the Right to Development.
- Ensuring the full implementation of the human rights of women and of the girl child as an inalienable, integral, and indivisible part of all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Building on consensus and progress made at previous United Nations conferences and summits—on women in Nairobi in 1985, on children in New York in 1990, on environment and development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, on human rights in Vienna in 1993, on population and development in Cairo in 1994, and on social development in Copenhagen in 1995 with the objective of achieving equality, development, and peace. Achieving the full and effective implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women; and

- The empowerment and advancement of women, including the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion, and belief, thus contributing to the moral, ethical, spiritual, and intellectual needs of women and men, individually or in community with others, and thereby guaranteeing them the possibility of realizing their full potential in society and shaping their lives in accordance with their own aspirations (United Nation, 1995).

In addition to these international protocols and conventions, the Revised National Policy on Girls' Education is guided by these national instruments:

- Liberia National Gender Policy (2009)
- National Policy on Girls' Education (2013)
- National Education Reform Acts (2011)
- Liberia Education Administrative Regulations (2011)
- Education Sector Plan (2022 – 2027)
- The Pro-poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (2017 – 2023)
- Liberia Agenda for Transformation (2013 – 2017)
- Liberia Children's Law (2011)

CHAPTER 2: SOCIAL ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

2.1 Poverty

Liberia is a country with a difficult past and a challenging but optimistic future. The Government remains optimistic and has the responsibility to support children and youth toward the realization of their full potentials. They can choose to start a vocation, make an adequate salary, get married, raise children, fulfill religious obligations, maintain a network of friendship, and fulfill community responsibilities. But thousands of children in Liberia may not be able to live a fruitful life if nothing is done to address existing social economic and cultural challenges, which in most instances adversely affect the girl child.

Poverty within families is prevalent. Currently, 1.7 million people in Liberia are living in poverty and about 1.3 million are living in extreme poverty. A comprehensive poverty profile study conducted jointly by the Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs and UNDP-Liberia in 2008 estimated that about 63.8 percent of the population of Liberia lives below the national poverty line of US\$1.00 per day and close to 48 percent of the population lives in abject poverty (International Monetary Fund, 2008). Incidence of poverty in post-war Liberia has increased significantly. The level of poverty is 67.7 percent in rural areas and 55 percent in urban settings.

The high incidence of poverty, discrimination, and gender disparity for women and girls in Liberian society continues to be a major factor that has a negative impact on the girl child's attempt to access and benefit from education opportunities in Liberia.

In the past, women and girls performed most of the productive activities. Many girls provided domestic labor and were engaged in petty trade to supplement family income, leaving them with little or no time to acquire an education. The 2008 National Population and Housing Census revealed that women and girls in Liberia constitute over half of the nation's population and perform approximately 83 percent of all productive activities in rural agriculture and other sectors (Government of Liberia, 2008). However, with all of the different interventions including massive awareness on the important of girls education and equal opportunities for all, this practice of intense domestic responsibilities for girls have been reduced. Girls

and boys are now sharing responsibilities and are attending school equally.

Harmful cultural practices affect girls' education adversely. Liberia's social and administrative structures governed by Town, Quarter, Clan, Paramount Chiefs, and District Commissioners are deeply attached to their cultural norms and values.

2.1.1 Unemployment

One of the main issues for Liberian families is unemployment. Many girls live in poverty and are unable to access an education because their parents or families are unemployed and as a result are unable to provide the needed support.

Liberia, like most developing countries, is experiencing high unemployment and is often classified as one of the world's poorest countries. Many children and youth live in poverty, with parents who have no employment or no gainful employment. The issue of unemployment in Liberian society is a serious concern, and it poses a threat to peace and stability in a country that has just emerged from a protracted civil crisis.

2.1.2 Lack of Relevant Skills and Training

With the increasing emergence of vocational-technical skills training centers and schools, many girls in Liberia have been trained in the various disciplines offered, especially in tailoring, soap making, and hair dressing. Unfortunately, there has been little demand for these skills, and the quality of training acquired has been too low to meet the demands of employers. The training offered in most of the existing institutions does not meet the needs of girls and the various sectors in Liberia in the real sense of employment. As a result, matching available skills with the job market demands has been difficult.

2.1.3 Single Parenthood

One of the key contributing factors to girls' poverty in Liberia is single parenthood or lone parenting. Some youth, especially females, are sole caretakers and must care for three or four or more children. As a result, some of these parents give up sending their children to

school. Some children are not provided adequate support to attend clinics when they fall ill, do not get adequate and nutritious meals, and are at most times marginalized and excluded in their communities, especially in rural areas. The two main causes for single parenthood are death, especially resulting from the 14 years of war, and family separation. Given the pressure to make ends meet, many of Liberia's girls who are also single parents engage in child labor (using their children as bread winners), a violation of the children's fundamental rights.

2.1.4 Maltreatment of Children Living with Foster Parents

Significant numbers of children do not live with their biological parents, but with uncles, aunts, or other extended family members. If both parents die, for example, the children are taken in by extended family members of the parents, typically the father's family. Discrimination in such situations is quite common, and the new children in the household are often expected to do extra work. These children may be subjected to maltreatment such as food deprivation and beatings, and they lack access to the dominant pathway of receiving redress.

2.1.5 Child Labor

In most Liberian communities, children work to supplement a meager family income or otherwise to help with the family business. Many children who find themselves in this condition live with single parents who are unemployed. Therefore, a key contributing factor to child labor in Liberia is single parenthood. The Liberia 2007 Demographic and Health Survey indicates that Liberian households consist of an average of 5.0 persons and that almost one-third (31%) of households are headed by women (DHS, 2007).

Many children work full time in mining and plantation areas, which means they work throughout the day, week, and month to sustain themselves and their families. Many of these children and youth are not in school. The most vulnerable are households headed by a child, mainly by a girl.

2.2 Cultural issues

2.2.1 Boys' Preference in the Family

Education is a human right, and it is fundamental to the development of human potential and the full participation in a democratic society (United Nations, 1948). Everyone has the right to education, regardless of gender; race; social, cultural, or religious affiliation; or disability. However, in some parts of Liberia, families allow boy children to attend school, but not their girl children.

Culturally, it is believed that the boy child will carry the father's name, and so the family name and roots will not be cut off or buried. However, the girl child will get married and take on her husband's name; therefore, the family name will be lost. Because of gender stereotypes, there remains a strong belief that the man is the head of the house and family, and this will always be. So, for the girl child and her male siblings, favors and honor are often given to the boys instead. This gender insensitivity is a big cultural challenge to girls' education and development in Liberia.

2.2.2 Traditional or Bush Schools

One of the main cultural issues affecting girls in Liberia is the "Traditional School." It has been a barrier to the education of girls and dangerous to their health. Although good practices go on in this school—for example, the school is centered on preparing girls as young mothers and wives for marriage and womanhood in general—the practice of female genital mutilation overshadows these benefits and labels the essence of the traditional school as "inappropriate". Apart from the health implications of female genital mutilation, the school denies girls access to formal education.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs, to address the issues of drop-out due to traditional school has developed a policy on the scheduling of traditional schools. Traditional schools are to be conducted when conventional schools are on vacation.

2.2.3 Early Marriage

Because of economic reasons, many parents in Liberia, especially in indigenous settings, encourage their girls to marry at very early age, when they should be going to school. This practice has become a

norm which is sometimes accepted as a source of support for parents and their dependents. The gain perspective overshadows the devastating results of exploitation, but that still does not make it right.

Girls who marry as children are often more susceptible to the health risks associated with early sexual initiation and childbearing, including HIV and obstetric fistula. Lacking status and power, these girls are often subjected to domestic violence, sexual abuse, and exploitation. Early marriage almost always deprives girls of their education or meaningful work, which contributes to persistent poverty.

The international community recognizes child marriage as a serious development problem, but growing awareness has not led to committed, coordinated action against this practice.

2.3 Policy to Address Social and Cultural Barriers to Girls Education

To address social and cultural barriers to girls' education as a means to empower girls, the central Government and local authorities should implement the following provisions:

- a. Mobilize and provide specific funds to promote girls' education in every region.
- b. Mainstream girls focus and life skills training in the academic curriculum.
- c. Provide incentives such as financial aid and scholarships to girls in need.
- d. Provide practical means to ensure the implementation of the National Policy on Girls Education to ensure that girls have full and equal access to quality basic education.
- e. Modify the practices and calendar of the "Traditional Schools" or Poro and Sande Societies.
- f. Increase awareness on child labor practices.
- g. Implement policies, laws, and programs that will prevent girls from getting married and pregnant at an early age.
- h. Institute policies and programs that will allow or enable parents to encourage their girls to go to school.

- i. Ensure compliance to the age-appropriate enrollment regulation in the academic calendar.
- j. Create awareness on the importance of girls' education and the danger of some cultural practices to all stakeholders including County and District School Board members, PTAs, etc.

To handle issues related to social and cultural barriers, the following responsibilities should be undertaken by regulatory bodies:

- a. County School Boards should ensure that issues affecting girls' education are discussed in Board meetings for speedy remedies. Additionally, Boards have the responsibility to ensure that a portion of resources allocated by central and local Governments and Concessions are directed toward achieving the goals of girls' education.
- b. District School Boards shall be responsible for making decisions targeting reduction in challenges affecting girls education. Issues affecting girls should be reflected in all reports made to County School Boards.
- c. School Administrators should report issues related to student attendance, performance, and drop out to parents as soon as they are noticed. These matters should also be discussed in Parent-Teacher Association and School Management Committee meetings. These issues should also be highlighted in their reports to the District Education Officer.
- d. Community Leaders should encourage parents to send their children to school at the appropriate age. Issues confronting girls' education should be discussed in community meetings and solutions identified and implemented.

CHAPTER 3: IMPROVING ACCESS AND QUALITY

3.1 Factors Affecting Access and Quality

Economic, social, and cultural problems affect access to quality education as it relates to the girl child. One of these underlying factors is poverty. Some parents cannot afford tuition for children in the absence of a government school in the area, and they cannot afford breakfast or lunch for children. Even with the introduction of free and compulsory education, they cannot afford to provide basic school supplies (e.g., uniform, notebook). Girls are sometimes used as breadwinners for their family and fall prey to sexual exploitation and transactional sex.

Other factors adversely affecting access to quality of education are related to governance and leadership.

The limited number of public schools creates a situation wherein girls must walk long distances to schools.

Partial implementation of the Education Reform Act and lack of awareness of an implementation plan for the National Policy on Girls Education are also governance and leadership factors.

Bad road conditions, inadequately trained and qualified female teachers, low teacher-student ratio, and discrimination against children with disabilities significantly affect access and quality.

Issues relating to the limited number of school days due to students' participation in market days and the closure and use of school buildings for community occasions are also contributing factors hampering access to quality education.

Major factors affecting the quality of education in Liberia include inadequate school supplies and their untimely delivery, inadequately trained and qualified teachers, a bureaucratic salary payment process for teachers and school administrators, weak monitoring and supervision, poor classroom management, and limited instruction time spent with students in some classroom.

Other social elements affecting access and quality are drug abuse, single parenting, teenage pregnancy, peer pressure, and commercial activities attracting young girls (e.g., the mining industry).

The limited provision of extra-curricular activities, gender-sensitive school environment, curriculum, and the absence of special programs for girls lagging in their lessons undermine both access and quality.

Another key factor that affects access is poor health or access to quality health services. Poor health can affect the attendance of students and their ability to keep up with their lessons.

3.2 Policy to Improve Access and Quality to Girls Education

- a. Advance the goal of equal access to education by taking measures to eliminate discrimination and bullying in education at all levels based on gender, race, language, religion, national origin, age, disability, or any other form of discrimination and, as appropriate, consider establishing procedures to address grievances.
- b. Provide access to basic education and ensure retention and completion of primary education by at least 70 percent of primary school-age children; close the gender gap in primary and secondary school education by the year 2030; provide quality universal primary education in all parts of the country by 2030.
- c. Eliminate gender disparities in access to all areas of tertiary education by ensuring that girls and women have equal access to career development, training, scholarships, and fellowships and by adopting positive actions when appropriate.
- d. Create a gender-sensitive educational system to ensure equal educational and training opportunities and equal participation of women in educational administration, policy making and decision making.
- e. In collaboration with parents, non-governmental organizations (including youth organizations), inter-sectorial ministries, communities, and the private sector, provide young women with academic and technical training, career planning, leadership and social skills, and work experience to prepare them to participate fully in society.
- f. Increase enrollment and retention rates of girls by allocating appropriate budgetary resources; by enlisting the support of parents and the community, through campaigns, flexible school schedules, incentives, textbooks, scholarships, and

other means to minimize the costs of girls' education to their families.

- g. Facilitate parents' abilities to choose education for the girl child; by ensuring that the rights of women and girls to freedom of conscience and religion are respected in educational institutions through the repeal of any discriminatory law(s) or legislation(s) based on religion, race, or culture.
- h. Promote an educational setting that eliminates all barriers that impede the schooling of pregnant adolescents and young mothers, including, as appropriate, affordable, and physically accessible child-care facilities and parental guidance to encourage those who are responsible for the care of their children and siblings during their school years to return to or continue with and complete schooling.
- i. Improve the quality of education and equal opportunities for girls and boys to ensure that they can acquire the knowledge, capacities, aptitudes, skills, and ethical values needed to participate fully under equal conditions in the process of social, economic, and political development.
- j. Make available nondiscriminatory and gender-sensitive professional school counseling and career education programs to encourage girls to pursue academic and technical curricula to widen their future career opportunities.
- k. Provide counseling, awareness, and sensitization for girls in communities.
- l. Implement school and community health programs, including family planning and sexuality education.

Eradicate Illiteracy among Females

- a. Reduce the female illiteracy rate to at least half of its 2020 level, with an emphasis on rural women; migrants, refugees, and internally displaced women; and physically challenged persons.
- b. Provide widespread access to and seek to ensure gender equality in the completion of primary education for girls by the year 2030.

- c. Establish girl's educational clubs that promote periodic motivation sessions, field learning, and experience sharing sessions.
- d. Eliminate any gender gaps in basic and functional literacy.
- e. Encourage adult(s) and family's engagement in learning to promote literacy for all females.
- f. Promote literacy, life skills, scientific and technological knowledge, and work toward an expansion of the definition of literacy, considering current targets and benchmarks.

Improve Girls and Women's Access to Vocational Training, Science and Technology, and Adult Literacy Program (ALP).

- a. The Ministry of Education shall facilitate the development and implementation of education and training policies for women and girls, especially; those entering the labor market, by providing skills that meet the needs of a changing socio-economic development.
- b. Provide recognition to non-formal educational opportunities for girls and women in the educational system.
- c. Provide information to women and girls on the availability and benefits of vocational training, training programs in science and technology, and programs of continuing education.
- d. Design educational and training programs for women who are unemployed to provide them with new knowledge and skills that will enhance and broaden their employment opportunities, including self-employment, and develop their entrepreneurial skills.
- e. Diversify vocational and technical training and improve access for and retention of girls and women in education and vocational training in such fields as science, mathematics, engineering, environmental sciences, and technology.
- f. Promote women's central role in food production and agricultural research, extension, and education programs.
- g. Encourage the adaptation of curricula and appropriate teaching materials.

- h. Develop policies and programs to encourage women to participate in all apprenticeship programs.
- i. Ensure access to quality education and training at all appropriate levels for adult women with little or no education, for women with disabilities, and for documented migrant, refugee, and displaced women to improve their work opportunities.

Develop Nondiscriminatory Education and Training

- a. Develop curricula, textbooks, and teaching aids free of gender-based stereotypes for all levels of education, including teacher training, in association with all concerned—publishers, teachers, public authorities, and Parents Teachers Associations.
- b. Develop training programs and materials for teachers and educators that raise awareness about the status, role, and contributions of women and men in the family and society with a view to providing them with effective strategies for gender-sensitive teaching.
- c. Promote equality, cooperation, mutual respect, and shared responsibilities between girls and boys.
- d. Take actions to ensure that female teachers and professors have the same opportunities as an equal status with male teachers and professors, in view of the importance of having female teachers at all levels and attracting girls and retaining them in school.
- e. Introduce and promote training in peace education and conflict resolution.
- f. Take positive measures to increase the proportion of women gaining access to educational policy and decision making, particularly women teachers at all levels of education and in academic disciplines that are traditionally male dominated, such as the scientific and technological fields.
- g. Support and develop gender studies and research at all levels of education, especially at the postgraduate level of academic institutions, and apply them in the development of curricula, including university curricula, textbooks, and teaching aids, and in teacher training.

- h. Develop leadership training and opportunities for girls and women to encourage them to take leadership roles both as students and adults in civil society.
- i. Develop appropriate education and information programs with due respect for multilingualism in conjunction with the mass media that make the public aware of the importance of nondiscriminatory education.
- j. Develop human rights education programs that incorporate the gender dimension at all levels of education, by encouraging higher education institutions, especially in their graduate and postgraduate, judicial, social, and political science curricula, to include the study of the rights of women as they appear in United Nations Conventions.
- k. Remove illegal, regulatory, and social barriers, where appropriate, to sexual and reproductive health education within formal education programs regarding women's health issues.
- l. Encourage, with the guidance and support of parents and in cooperation with educational staff and institutions, the elaboration of educational programs for girls and boys.
- m. Create integrated services that shall raise awareness of their responsibilities and to help them assume those responsibilities, considering the importance of such education and services to personal development and self-esteem.
- n. Provide a platform to avoid unwanted pregnancy, the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, especially HIV/AIDS, and such phenomena as sexual violence and abuse.
- o. Provide accessible recreational and sports facilities, establish and strengthen gender-sensitive programs for girls and women of all ages in education and community institutions; to support the advancement of women in all areas of athletics and physical activities, including coaching, training, and administration, to participate at the national, regional, and international levels.
- p. Recognize and support the rights of women and girls to education and promote a multicultural approach to education

- that is inclusive and responsive to their social and academic needs, aspirations, and cultures of indigenous women.
- q. Acknowledge and respect the artistic, spiritual, and cultural activities of indigenous girls and women.
 - r. Ensure that gender equality and cultural, religious, and other diversities are respected in educational institutions.
 - s. Promote education, training, and relevant information programs for rural women and girls using affordable and appropriate technologies and mass media, such as radio programs and other traditional means of communication.
 - t. Provide non-formal education, especially for women and girls in rural communities, so that they realize their potential regarding health, micro-enterprise, agriculture, and legal rights.
 - u. Remove all barriers to access to formal education for pregnant girls and provide alternatives including but not limited to:
 - Accelerated Learning Program (ALP classes)
 - Alternative Basic Education Program (ABE)
 - Night Schools
 - Vocational Training Centers
 - v. Pregnant girls are encouraged to transition to any of the above programs thus reducing absenteeism which will be caused by pregnancy related illnesses (morning sickness, fatigue, etc.).
 - w. Other girls who are not pregnant should also be protected by the removal of pregnant girls from the classes.
 - x. Pregnant girls in examination classes should be allowed to sit the Liberia National Assessment Test (LNAT), Liberia Primary School Certificate Exam (LPSCE), Liberia Junior High School Certificate Exam (LJHSCE), and the West Africa Senior Secondary School Certificate Exam (WASSCE).

Allocate Sufficient Resources for and Monitor the Implementation of Educational Reforms

- a. The Government should ensure a gender sensitive budgetary approach throughout the sectors.
- b. Establish a mechanism at appropriate levels to monitor the implementation of educational reforms and measures in relevant ministries, and establish technical assistance programs, as appropriate, to address issues raised by the monitoring efforts.
- c. When necessary, mobilize additional funds from private and public institutions, foundations, research institutes, and nongovernmental organizations to enable girls and women, as well as boys and men on an equal basis, to complete their education, with particular emphasis on underserved populations.
- d. Provide funding for special programs, such as programs in mathematics, science, and computer technology, to advance opportunities for all girls and women.

Promote Lifelong Education and Training for Girls and Women

- a. Ensure the availability of educational and need-based training programs for women and girls to increase their knowledge and skills required for living in, contributing to, and benefiting from their communities and country.
- b. Provide support for childcare and other services to enable young mothers to continue their schooling.
- c. Create flexible education, training, and retraining programs for life-long learning that facilitate transitions between women activities at all stages of their lives.

CHAPTER 4: STRATEGIES ON GIRLS' RETENTION AND COMPLETION

4.1 Girls' Retention and Completion

Girls face challenges in retention and completion at every level of Liberia's education system—from pre-primary to basic and secondary school up to university level.

Girls face challenges in retention and completion at every level of Liberia's education system—from pre-primary to basic, up to secondary level. Only 49.2 percent of girls at ECE, 47.8 percent at Primary, 48.8 at Upper Basic, and 46.9 at Secondary levels repeated their respective grade (Annual School Census, 2019-2020).

There is a wide gap in the completion rates of boys and girls. Significantly fewer girls than boys transition from one grade to another. The gross enrollment and completion rates drop further for senior high girls.

4.2 Policy on Retention and Completion

- a. The age of entry for Early Childhood Education (ECE) is 3 years. The age of entry into Basic Education, which begins with grade 1, is age 6 and is in line with regional and international standards. According to the Education Reform Act of 2011, Lower Basic Education covers grades 1 – 6 with the appropriate ages ranging from ages 6 to 11, and ages 12 to 14 in grades 7 to 9 in Upper Basic Education. Secondary Education, constituting grades 10 to 12, starts from age 15 to 17.
- b. Preventive approaches and measures should be taken to ensure girls are properly supported to remain in school and perform well in their lessons.
- c. When a girl child drops out of schooling at any level or is at risk of dropping out for whatever reason, she must be counseled to understand the importance of education and to return to or stay in school or enter Alternative Education Programs (ALP).
- d. Sexual harassment and any form of violence, whether physical or psychological, should be treated in line with provisions in the Education Reform Act of 2011 (Section 7.3.1) and the

Ministry of Education’s Administrative Guidelines (p. 98). Bullying should be addressed as a form of violence.

- e. Any individual found obstructing the entry or completion of the girl child’s education should be prosecuted by the Ministry of Justice or any concerned individual through the courts.
- f. All children have a right to education as inscribed in the Children’s Law of 2011 (Government of Liberia, 2011c). Therefore, parents, guardians, and communities are encouraged to send their girl child to school. Until an enforcement mechanism is put into place by the Ministry of Education, the community leadership should intervene when parents or guardians fail to send the girl child to school at the appropriate age.
- g. The Ministry of Education should actively ensure that there are female teachers at all school levels.

4.3 Role of Ministry of Education and Regulatory Bodies

- a. The Ministry of Education is responsible for the development, dissemination, and enforcement of National Policies: The Education Reform Act of 2011, the Liberia Education Administrative Regulations, the Code of Conduct for teachers and school administrators and other policies that support the introduction of important measures that bring educational equity for girls.
- b. The Ministry of Education seeks to foster “a barrier-free environment where all students, regardless of their socio-economic barriers, gender, or ability have the opportunity to benefit equally from the gains of educational resources”.
- c. At the local level, the Ministry of Education has two regulatory bodies responsible for implementing these education policies: the County School Board and the District School Board. At the community level, the school administration, in consultation with Parent-Teacher Associations, is responsible for implementing education policies.
- d. To achieve educational equity, the Ministry of Education has stated that it will offer:

- Equitable access to high-quality and culturally sensitive relevant instruction, curriculum, support, facilities, and other educational resources.
- Textbook content that is free from prejudice based on gender, religion, sex, nationality, class, or single conclusion bias.
- Recruitment, support, and retention of ethnically and gender diverse and culturally competent administrative, instructional, and support personnel; the Ministry shall actively strive to have our staff reflect the diversity of the student body; and
- Welcoming and empowerment of families, including underrepresented families, as essential partners in their student’s education, school planning, and District decision making.

Further, the Ministry of Education has adopted a policy of zero tolerance for weapons and violence in schools. The policy, as stated in the various Liberia Education Administrative Guidelines, Policies, and Regulations, “provides the power for administrators to address potentially dangerous situations. It sets the tone for all to understand that weapons, violence, and drug use is not tolerated, and will not be allowed in any of the public schools. The purpose of the policy is to provide a school environment that is conducive to learning and thus ensure that all children have the right to be educated in a safe and nurturing environment.”

The Education Reform Act of 2011 makes special reference to sexual offenses, including sexual coercion, intimidation, or blackmail; sexual assault; sexual abuse; impregnating a student; and rape and gang rape. The National Policy on Girls Education supports the due process of the law in the prosecution of cases of sexual offenses, which are criminal as defined by the Penal Code.

In line with the Education Reform Act of 2011 and the Liberia Education Administrative Policies for Reform, the National Policy on Girls Education recommends that the Ministry of Education promote and ensure the education of girl children through the implementation of the following activities:

Recruit more female teachers!

- a. Encourage and train more female teachers from the pre-primary to the senior secondary level. One third of pre-primary public-school teachers are women. However, women make up only 9.1 percent of the primary and secondary teaching force in public schools. Emphasis should be placed on incentives for training and employment of women as teachers. Women's presence in school will encourage parents to send their girls to school.
- b. The Ministry of Education shall include qualified female educators with disability when recruiting teachers.
- c. Enact measures that make the teaching profession attractive to females.

Make schools and teachers more gender sensitive!

- a. Develop more gender-sensitive curricula and textbooks.
- b. Integrate gender-sensitive pedagogy into pre-service and in-service teacher training programs.
- c. Integrate guidance and counseling into pre-service teacher training programs and in the schools.
- d. Design, develop, provide, and make available for partners' use programs fostering psychosocial skills and positive guidance and counseling techniques.
- e. Provide girl-friendly latrines.
- f. Provide educational facilities, including science labs that promote educational excellence, especially in the sciences and mathematics, and train teachers in their use.
- g. Provide public libraries and reading rooms that are accessible to all students including those with special needs and train teachers and community members in their management.
- h. Provide girls equal opportunity for recreational activities, including sports and excursions.

Expand school coverage!

- a. Expand the coverage of public basic and secondary schools to all districts and in rural and remote settings to reduce the

home-to-school distance for girls and minimize the risk of violence or harm to girls including those with special needs.

- b. Provide boarding facilities for girls in selected areas.

Engage the community in support of girls education!

- a. Have the Ministry of Education in partnership with other ministries and stakeholders (child welfare committees, parent-teacher associations, and other community structures) conduct a national campaign aimed at promoting the education of the girl child.
- b. Establish girls' clubs to offer income-generating activities by providing seed money.
- c. Act on the commitment to build the capacity of parent-teacher associations, women's groups, child welfare committees, and other community structures to institute and carry out community mobilization and gender sensitization for girls' education.
- d. Build the capacity of parent-teacher associations in monitoring schools for student and teacher attendance and other aspects of school life and facilities that impact girls' entry, attendance, and completion.

Provide incentive programs that help keep girls in school!

- a. Lobby and allocate bursaries and scholarships that will allow more girls including those with special needs to gain access to secondary and tertiary education.
- b. Support school feeding in areas of low girls' enrollment, which will serve as an incentive for parents to send their girls to school.

Provide academic support programs that help keep girls in school!

- a. Provide tutorial programs for girls, especially in all core subjects (social studies, science, mathematics, and English).

Build the Ministry of Education's capacity to respond to girls' education needs

- a. Ensure that County School Boards fully understand and disseminate ERA 2011 and the National Policies on Girls

Education to District School Boards and schools under their purview.

- b. Build the capacity of Parent-Teacher Association staff, Girls Education Division staff, and other Ministry personnel in monitoring and evaluating girls' education programs nationwide.
- c. Support the Girls Education Division operations to provide guidance and policy support within the Ministry and with education partners through budgetary allotment and logistical support.
- d. Build the capacity of and support the County School Boards to monitor progress toward closing the enrollment and achievement gaps between girls and boys.

Implement and make viable free and compulsory basic education!

- a. Provide and encourage the enrollment of children in formal schools and the re-enrollment of children, especially girls, who may have dropped out.
- b. Provide alternative forms of education, including Alternative Basic Education (ABE), Accelerated Learning Program (ALP), and Technical and Vocation Educational Training (TVET), for those children who may have dropped out of school.
- c. Support the continuity of the school grants program.

Network and collaborate with education partners.

- a. Establish partnerships with other partners—including government agencies, nonprofit organizations, the United Nations, businesses, media, National Teachers' Association of Liberia (NTAL), National Association of Liberian school Principal (NALSP) and the community in general—to meet girls' education needs.
- b. Sensitize international NGOs and other education partners on the girls' education-related policies of the Government of Liberia as well as the reporting and referral pathways in cases of violence and abuse.

Convene an Administrative Panel of Inquiry to hear and decide upon appeals of County School Board decisions on administrative and sexual offense cases.

- a. According to Section 7.2.2 of the Education Reform Act of 2011, a party may appeal a decision of the County School Board to the Minister who upon receipt of the appeal appoints an Administrative Panel of Inquiry headed by the legal counsel of the Ministry to hear and decide on the appeal. Decisions of the Minister’s Administrative Panel of Inquiry shall be appealable to statutory court of competence jurisdiction within the legal system of Liberia (p. 38).

4.3.1 Role of County School Boards

The role of County School Boards is to ensure the full implementation of the National Policy on Girls Education as described in Section 5.3, at the local level. County School Boards shall make sure that District School Boards are aware of their roles and responsibilities in this respect and enforce implementation. County School Boards will support District School Boards to ensure the availability of copies of the policy in schools and communities.

Further, County School Boards will support the use of funds and human resources to promote girls’ education. In doing so, County School Boards shall:

- Ensure proper utilization of the school grants to meet the needs of girls.
- Advocate for an allotment from the County Development Fund to promote girls’ education; and
- Promote the engagement of communities in support of the National Policy on Girls Education.

In cases of administrative and sexual offenses, the Education Reform Act of 2011 states the following:

All hearings and investigations to complaints within the county school system shall be governed by the principle of due process. Decision of a Board of Inquiry and Discipline shall be appealable to the full membership of the District School Board whose decisions are appealable to the County School Board, whose decisions are appealable to the Minister of Education (Government of Liberia, 2011d, p. 38).

4.3.2 Role of District School Boards

District School Boards should work in line with the County School Boards to fully implement the National Policy on Girls Education. Specifically, the District School Boards shall:

- Ensure that school authorities understand the National Policy on Girls Education and
- Monitor and supervise schools and enforce policies.

In the case of administrative and sexual offense, District School Boards are authorized through Section 7.2.1 of the Education Reform Act of 2011 to perform the following functions:

Hearings and investigations in administrative and sexual offense cases or complaints shall first be conducted by a Board of Inquiry empanelled by the District School Board. All complaints shall be filed in writing to the Chairman of the District School Board who, in consultation with the members of the Board shall empanel an ad-hoc Board of Inquiry and Discipline (Government of Liberia, 2011d, p. 38).

4.3.4 Role of School Administration

The role of the school is to implement the National Policy on Girls Education. The school shall:

- Engage parents to enroll all girls in school at the appropriate age and time and monitor progress.
- Make the National Policy on Girls Education available for review by teachers, parents, and students and disseminate the policy at the community and school levels.
- Develop a reporting mechanism in the school in case of violations of the National Policy on Girls Education.
- Use the prescribed reporting mechanism in criminal and sexual offense cases where the District School Board or judiciary system is involved.
- Ensure that the school is promoting a girl-friendly environment (e.g., girl-friendly latrines, sufficient seating, equal opportunities for girls to participate in school activities and sports); and

- Provide health education that addresses girls' needs in the following areas: alcohol, drugs, and tobacco; HIV/AIDS; reproductive health, psycho-social well-being (fear of failure, materialism, self-esteem, effects of bullying, peer pressure to do the wrong thing); and safety.

4.3.5 Role of Community Structure

In principle, community involvement should be flexible, address local needs, and build the family's capacity to improve their child's achievement. Thus, every school should identify barriers or factors that may inhibit meaningful interaction between the community and the school.

Additionally, every school should develop a monitoring and evaluation structure that ensures effective implementation of family and community involvement policies. The community structures include the Parent-Teacher Association, the School Management Committee, the Child Welfare Committee, and the District Advisory Board. These community structures shall:

- Monitor and implement the National Policy on Girls Education.
- Raise awareness to encourage parents not to send their children out to sell goods in the marketplace or engage in transactional sex.
- Support girls retention and completion in school;
- Advocate for and monitor the use of the school grants to promote girls education; and
- Ensure that girls are properly dressed for school and arrive and leave on time.

CHAPTER 5: GIRLS' RIGHTS AND PROTECTION

5.1 Girls' Rights and Protection Issues

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) Statement on the Protection of Girls' Right to Education, adopted on 19 October 2012 states: "Girls' and women's right to education is a central obligation of States parties under the CEDAW Convention." This obligation is set out in Articles 2 and 10 of the CEDAW Convention as well as in other international human rights documents (United Nations, 1979).

Gender-based violence takes on many forms, including incest, rape, sexual exploitation and abuse, genital mutilation, sexual harassment, domestic violence, and trafficking. Gender-based violence remains one of the most atrocious symptoms of gender inequality. Gender-based violence continues to increase despite protection mechanisms put in place to curtail these occurrences of physical, sexual, emotional, and psychological abuse and neglect.

5.2 Policy on Girls' Rights and Protection

Strengthen Protection Systems

- Establish strong coordination and referral path structures at the national and local levels to ensure effective protection systems. These structures should include the Ministries of Health, Justice, Education, Gender, Children and Social Protection, Labour, Information Cultural Affairs and Tourism, Internal Affairs, including partners and civil society organizations.
- Strengthen key components of the school and community protection system, including creating community-based child protection committees and strengthening inter-agency referral and coordination mechanisms.

Provide Psycho-Social Services

- Provide psychosocial support training to teachers, school administrators and PTAs.
- Establish or improve the quality and delivery of psychosocial services and community-based interventions for vulnerable children, especially the girl child.

- Establish effective mechanisms to protect children in emergencies and provide early response services for child sexual abuse.
- Conduct intensive advocacy for zero tolerance for violence against children using positive forms of discipline.
- Avoid cultural practices that are harmful to children, and corporal punishment.

Provide Rehabilitation and Reintegration Services

- Strengthen a range of rehabilitation and reintegration services for girls in orphanages and those in conflict with the law to make the services more girl friendly.
- Support the development and implementation of key national policies and programs that ensure a protected environment for children, especially girls.

Better Knowledge Generation and Management

- Improve the collection, analysis, and use of data on child rights violations, with an emphasis on improving accessibility to and use of gender- and age-disaggregated data to inform stronger advocacy, programming, and monitoring.

Protection from Gender-Based Violence

- The Ministry of Education shall establish mechanisms to ensure that girls are provided platforms to facilitate the reporting of cases relating to gender-based violence.
- The Ministries of Education and the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection shall work closely with the Ministry of Justice to ensure that victims of sexual-based violence get speedy redress through the Liberian Judicial System.

CHAPTER 6: INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

6.1 Institutional and Management Arrangements

The Girls' Education Division shall exist within the Bureau of Basic and Secondary Education with the mandate to conceptualize, develop, and implement projects and programs geared toward promoting girls' education in all parts of the country. It has the responsibility of establishing clear benchmarks and ensuring effective coordination of all activities being initiated or implemented by organizations and communities.

The Girls' Education Division shall be headed by a Director who reports directly to the Assistant Minister for Basic Education. The Director shall be supported by other staff including three Regional Supervisors, each covering specific political subdivisions of the country.

In addition, the Ministry of Education and other regulatory bodies and structures have a pivotal role in guaranteeing that girls' education is given the needed attention. These Regulatory Bodies shall include the United Nations Girls Education Initiative (UNGEI). County Development Council, the National Education Advisory Council, County School Boards, District School Boards, and County and District Education Offices. They are required to initiate, develop, and mobilize resources to support girls' education programs.

A Girls' Education Task Force shall be re-activated to assist with identifying priorities and coordinating girls' education programs within the country. The Task Force shall comprise the Ministries of Justice; Gender; Information, Culture, and Tourism; Youth and Sports; Internal Affairs; and Health and Social Welfare. Additionally, the Task Force shall consist of organizations identified by the Girls' Education Division. It should be required that the Task Force meet at least once every month to discuss issues pertinent to girls' education.

Similar structures shall be established at the county, district, school, and community levels to specifically focus on girls' education issues as deemed necessary by the Girls' Education Division. Strong coordination mechanisms shall be effectuated to facilitate the timely exchange of information between these structures and the Girls' Education Division working in close collaboration with the Girls' Education Task Force.

7.1 Mechanisms for Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting

The mechanism for monitoring, evaluation, and reporting shall be developed to guarantee a satisfactory level of accountability for achieving the objectives set forth in the National Policy on Girls Education.

The Girls Education Division, in close collaboration with the Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation Divisions, shall have the responsibility for the overall monitoring, evaluation, and reporting against objectives of the policy. Other key partners shall include United Nations Girls Education Initiative, County School Boards, District School Boards, County and District Education Offices, Nongovernmental Organizations, and the Girls Education Task Force.

Key responsibilities of the Girls Education Division and the Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation Divisions shall be to develop specific girls' education indicators; define appropriate monitoring, and evaluation instruments; develop tools for and conduct periodic impact assessments; and mainstream gender desegregation and analysis in all processes leading to data collection, research, and reporting.

Additionally, a tracking system shall be developed to track indicators, disseminate information, and prepare requisite reports for circulation to internal and external stakeholders.

The Girls Education Division shall work with the relevant Divisions in the Department of Planning, Research and Development, and other stakeholders to compile an annual Girls Education Report Card. The report card shall track the progress of the Ministry of Education in meeting the objectives of the Education Reform Act of 2011 and the National Policy on Girls Education.

The timeframe for the National Policy on Girls Education shall be for five years. A mid-term evaluation of the policy shall be conducted after two and a half years of policy implementation. Evaluations will also be conducted at the end of the five years of implementation.

7.2 Overall Monitoring and Evaluation Indicators

Specified indicators will be used to evaluate the extent to which the objectives of the policy are being achieved and to assess its impact.

Quantitative and qualitative data on the following will be required to measure progress, gaps, and impact.

1. Population data disaggregated by sex, age, and geographic location.
2. Enrolment data disaggregated by type, sex, and different levels of the education system.
 - Gross Intake Rate (GIR)
 - Net Intake Rate (NIR)
 - Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER)
 - Net Enrollment Ratio (NER)
 - Percent of Girl Enrollment
3. Gender Parity Index (GPI)
4. School entry age by sex, levels, and geographic locations
5. Number of female and male teachers disaggregated by different levels of the education system and geographic location.
6. Number of female and male school/education administrators
7. Data on performance, repeaters, and completion/retention disaggregated by sex, levels of the education system, and geographic location.
8. Literacy levels of boys and girls, men, and women
9. Prevalence of sexual harassment and gender-based violence in schools and communities by geographic location
10. Number of laws and policies that include punitive measures for those acting in opposition to girls' education.
11. Prevalence of teenage pregnancy and early marriages
12. Number and type of schools constructed per community, district, and county.
13. Public Expenditure on Education as a % of Gross Domestic Product (GDP)
14. Public Expenditure on Education as a % of Total Government Expenditure

15. Public Recurrent Expenditure on Education as a % of Total Government Recurrent Expenditure
16. Unit Cost (public recurrent expenditure per pupil) by Level

CHAPTER 8: RESOURCE MOBILIZATION

8.1 Resource Mobilization Strategies

Achievement of the National Policy on Girls Education is heavily dependent on the availability of funding. To attain the desired results, these measures should be undertaken:

- The Ministry of Education shall commit at least 5 percent (5%) of its Fiscal Year Budget to projects and programs promoting girls' education. Other sources of funding for attaining girls' education shall include County and Social Development Funds, donors, and community contributions. Parent-teacher associations and School Management Committees shall also be encouraged to make minimum contributions toward improving girls' education in their respective geographic locations.
- The Ministry of Education and its partners shall always ensure that the allocation of funds, including school grants, and decision-making concerning projects are gender sensitive.
- Public-private partnerships shall be sought to raise supplementary funding to support girls' education activities within Liberia's borders. When necessary, additional funds shall be mobilized from private and public institutions, foundations, research institutes, and non-governmental organizations to enable girls and women, as well as boys and men on an equal basis, to complete their education, with particular emphasis on underserved populations.
- Partners and donors shall be encouraged to consider increasing funding for the education and training needs of girls and women as a priority in development assistance programs.
- Partners and donors working in close collaboration with the Government shall ensure that funding for girls' education is maintained or increased in structural adjustment and economic recovery programs, including lending and stabilization programs.
- A comprehensive implementation plan shall be developed for the purpose of guiding the execution of interventions in a

holistic and coordinated manner. Proposals shall be written to mobilize funds as may be required.

ANNEX 1: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Child Labor: work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential, and their dignity and that is harmful to physical and mental development.

Completion Rate: percentage of students completing the last year of primary school. It is calculated by taking the total number of students in the last grade of primary school, minus the number of repeaters in that grade, divided by the total number of children of official graduation age.

Enrollment Ratio: ratio of females to males enrolled at a specific level of education.

Gender: range of physical, mental, and behavioral characteristics pertaining to, and differentiating between, masculinity and femininity. It refers to the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships between women and men and girls and boys.

Gender Equality: a condition in which women and men have equal conditions and opportunities for realizing their full human rights and for contributing to, and benefiting from, economic, social, cultural, and political development. Gender equality is therefore the equal valuing by society of the similarities and the differences of men and women, and the roles they play. It is based on women and men being full partners in their home, their community, and their society. Gender equality starts with the equal valuing of girls and boys.

Gender Equity: fairness of treatment for women and men, according to their respective needs. This may include equal treatment or treatment that is different but is considered equivalent in terms of rights, benefits, obligations, and opportunities.

Gender Mainstreaming: a process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies, and programs, in all areas and at all levels, and as a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic, and social spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated.

Gender Disparities: inequalities that exist in some quantity between two or more groups, mainly male and female.

Gender Parity Index (GPI): a socioeconomic index usually designed to measure the relative access to education of males and females.

Gross Domestic Product (GDP): The monetary value of all the finished goods and services produced within a country's borders in a specific time, although GDP is usually calculated on an annual basis. It includes all private and public consumption, government outlays, investments, and exports less imports that occur within a defined territory.

Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER): the total enrollment in a specific level of education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the population in the official age group corresponding to this level of education. The GER can exceed 100 percent due to late entry or/and repetition.

Gross Intake Rate (GIR): the total number of new entrants to a given grade of education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the population at the official school entrance age for that grade.

Net Enrollment Ratio (NER): the enrollment of the official age group for a given level of education, expressed as a percentage of the population in that age group.

Net Intake Rate (NIR): new entrants in the first grade of primary education who are of the official primary school entrance age, expressed as a percentage of the population of the same age.

ANNEX 2: TECHNICAL WORKING COMMITTEE FOR THE REVISION OF THE NATIONAL POLICY ON GIRLS' EDUCATION

Government Ministries/Agencies

- Ministry of Education
- Ministry of Justice
- Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection
- Ministry of Information, Culture, and Tourism
- Ministry of Youth and Sports
- Ministry of Internal Affairs
- Ministry of Health and Social Welfare

Organizations

- National Association of Liberia School Principals (NALSP)
- National Parent Teachers Association (NPTA)
- Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE)
- Young Women Christian Association (YWCA)

Partners

- United States Agency for International Development (USAID)
- United Nations Children Education Fund (UNICEF)
- UN Women
- Plan International
- Save the Children
- CONCERN
- Education Development Center (EDC)
- Read Liberia/Research Triangle Institute (RTI)
- Youth Movement for Collective Action (UMOVEMENT-Liberia)
- Kids Educational Engagement Project (KEEP)
- WECARE Foundation

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