



Combined Project Information Documents / Integrated Safeguards Datasheet (PID/ISDS)

Appraisal Stage | Date Prepared/Updated: 24-Apr-2017 | Report No: PIDISDSA21391



BASIC INFORMATION

A. Basic Project Data

Country Liberia	Project ID P162089	Project Name Liberia: Getting to Best in Education	Parent Project ID (if any)
Region AFRICA	Estimated Appraisal Date 19-Jun-2017	Estimated Board Date 29-Dec-2017	Practice Area (Lead) Education
Financing Instrument Investment Project Financing	Borrower(s) Ministry of Finance and Development Planning	Implementing Agency Ministry of Education	

Proposed Development Objective(s)

The Project Development Objectives are to improve equitable access to early childhood education (ECE) and teacher quality in ECE and in primary education in targeted disadvantaged counties, and to strengthen national school accountability systems.

Components

- Improving the quality of and access to early childhood education in targeted disadvantaged counties
- Teacher training and certification in targeted disadvantaged counties
- Improving school management, accountability and systems monitoring
- Variable Part/Disbursement Linked Indicators
- Project Management and Sector Program Support and Coordination

Financing (in USD Million)

Financing Source	Amount
Education for All - Fast Track Initiative	11.07
Total Project Cost	11.07

Environmental Assessment Category

C - Not Required

Decision

The review did authorize the preparation to continue



Other Decision (as needed)

B. Introduction and Context

Country Context

1. Liberia is a post-conflict country with substantial levels of vulnerability and fragility. The protracted 14-year civil war from 1989 to 2003 cost the lives of approximately 250,000 people and led to substantial losses in material wealth and social progress. Since 2003, with the support of development partners, including a robust United Nations Peacekeeping Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), Liberia has maintained peace and stability, revived the state administration, improved governance, rebuilt basic infrastructure and made progress on key human development indicators.¹ In 2013, the Government of Liberia (GoL) outlined its *Agenda for Transformation*, which sought to build on ten years of stability and set the country on a course for inclusive growth.²
2. Liberia's post-war gross domestic product (GDP) growth had been strong from 2004 to 2013. Real GDP grew on average 7 percent annually, with significant contributions from agriculture and services. An increase in commodity prices was accompanied by an expansion in the mining sector (mostly iron ore), as well as diamond and timber production. Hit by a twin shock – the Ebola epidemic and a fall in commodity prices – Liberia's GDP growth dropped to 0.7 percent in 2014 and to 0 percent in 2015.³ These recent events revealed the vulnerabilities of Liberia's economy. The latest International Monetary Fund (IMF) projection is for GDP to contract by 0.5 percent in 2016 and to realize a modest rebound, to 3.2 percent, in 2017. Projections of medium-term growth are in the 6 percent range and are expected to be driven by mining activity, particularly gold production, as well as a rebound in growth in non-mining sectors of the economy.⁴
3. The level of poverty in Liberia remains high. Nearly 70 percent of the population in Liberia (20 percentage points higher than other developing countries in Sub-Saharan Africa) lives on less than US\$1.90 per day. Although gross national income per capita in Liberia has nearly doubled since 2003, Liberia continues to have one of the lowest human development indices in the world, ranking 177 out of 188 countries.⁵
4. From 2006, the GoL has strengthened political stability. The President was successfully re-elected in 2011. Presidential and legislative elections are scheduled for October 2017. The transition to a new administration may result in political uncertainty, particularly within government Ministries.
5. The withdrawal of UNMIL is on schedule even though the deadline for complete withdrawal remains uncertain. After the withdrawal of UNMIL, the GoL will fully assume its own security responsibilities. The expected transition will become one of the most significant milestones for Liberia but may contribute to some uncertainty in the security environment.

¹ World Bank. Country Partnership Strategy FY13-17.

² Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs. (2012). Republic of Liberia Agenda for Transformation. Monrovia: MoPEA.

³ IMF. (2016). Liberia Selected Issues paper.

⁴ IMF Country Report No. 16/392. December 2016.

⁵ UN Human Development Report 2015



Sectoral and Institutional Context

6. The section below provides a snapshot of the country's education sector. Since the end of the civil war in 2003, the Ministry of Education (MoE) has rebuilt the public education system with the aim of increasing access to quality education for all. Liberia has recognized education as a key priority in its medium and long-term development plan. The Education Sector Plan (ESP) 2010-2020 was completed in 2010 and aimed to provide all Liberians with the opportunity to access and complete education. The ESP goals were reinforced by the *Agenda for Transformation* and Education Reform Act of 2011, the latter of which restructured the MoE Bureaus, and laid out a pathway to decentralization through the establishment of County and District Education Boards. The recently (2016) completed and endorsed Getting to Best Education Sector Plan 2017-2021 (G2B-ESP) continues the reform agenda but with a programmatic approach and with priorities set for a strong focus on improving equitable access and strengthening the provision of quality education.

7. The education sector share of total government spending has increased incrementally since 2013, with the exception of the 2014/2015 fiscal year (FY), when the Ebola epidemic forced the closure of schools and resulted in the redirection of government resources toward managing the crisis. While most other sectors saw budget reductions for FY2016/2017, GoL refrained from making cuts to the education sector allocation. For FY 2016/2017, GoL has allocated 14.36 percent to the education sector. The GoL also invests in the education sector through its support to other Ministries (e.g., the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the Ministry of Internal Affairs) including through government-funded scholarships, legislators' grants to schools in their constituent areas, transfers to technical and vocational education and training (TVET) programs, concession agreements with businesses (which in turn fund local educational services) and County Development Funds directed toward local education systems. This support is estimated to have brought at least US\$10,650,602 in additional public funds in FY 2015/16 to support education, increasing the total expenditure on education from 13.46 percent to 15.17 percent of the national budget. Over the medium term, the GoL projects a slight increase in the share of government spending on the education sector.

Challenges facing the Education Sector

8. Some of the key challenges currently facing the education sector include: (i) low learning outcomes; (ii) over-age enrollment at the early childhood education (ECE) and primary education levels; (iii) disparities in access and completion at the basic education levels; (iv) inadequately trained and inequitable distribution of teachers; and (v) inadequate management and accountability systems at the central and school levels.⁶

9. **Low learning outcomes.** Most available evidence points to pervasively low student learning outcomes at both the primary and secondary education levels in Liberia. From 2008 to 2015, several programs conducted small-scale assessments of early grades students' literacy outcomes. In nearly all assessments, the mean score for Grade 3 students' oral reading fluency was lower than 25 correct words per minute – a score significantly lower than the MoE literacy benchmark of 45 correct words per minute.⁷ Poor performance extends into later grades: in 2014, 46 percent of students sitting for the Grade 12 West African Examinations Council (WAEC) exam obtained a passing score overall.

⁶ Liberia MoE. (2016). Getting to Best Education Sector Plan 2017-2021.

⁷ Liberia MoE and World Bank. (2015). Liberia Education Sector Analysis. (2015). S. King, M. Korda, L. Nordstrum, & S. Edwards. (2015). Liberia Teacher Training Program: Endline assessment of the impact of early grade reading and mathematics interventions.



10. ***Over-age enrollment at ECE and primary education levels.*** Nearly 40 percent of children enrolled in ECE and primary schools are more than three years overage for their grade. At the ECE level, nearly 50 percent (over 250,000) of all children enrolled in ECE are 6 years old (the age for Grade 1), or older. The main reasons for over-age enrollment are school fees, lack of awareness on age-appropriate enrollment among parents, and distance to school.

11. ***Disparities in access, completion and school resourcing at the basic education level.*** Disparities in basic education access and completion are largely explained by poverty, urban-rural status, distance from school, and gender. Just under one-half (47 percent) of youth aged 10-19 from households in the lower two wealth quintiles (the poorest 40 percent of households in the population) reach Grade 6 compared to 88 percent of youth from households in the top wealth quintile. Despite some recent progress, in most counties outside of Montserrado county (the country's wealthiest county), girls' access to and completion of basic education (primary and junior high school) remains far below that of boys.

12. ***Inadequately trained and inequitable distribution of teachers.*** According to the 2017 MoE Teacher Verification and Testing program, 40 percent of qualified primary school teachers do not possess the minimum required knowledge of English needed to be an effective instructor at the primary level. The distribution of qualified teachers in Liberia highly favors economically advanced regions. For example, in Montserrado County, the student to trained teacher ratio (STTR) is 34:1. However, in counties with a high incidence of poverty, including Rivercess, Sinoe, Gbarpolu, Grand Bassa and River Gee, STTRs range from 64:1 to 90:1.⁸

13. ***Inadequate management and accountability systems at the central and school levels.*** Currently, the majority of school principals are untrained and do not have the guidance, expertise, resources or support needed to effectively manage schools and teachers. In addition, District Education Officers (DEOs) do not have sufficient resources to travel to schools, nor do they have the expertise and tools needed to play an effective monitoring, accountability and support role, at the school level. The absence of Liberia-specific school quality standards and tools for measuring school quality improvements are critical gaps. At the system level, the MoE Education Management Information System (EMIS) system has become more robust over the past five years. However, without sustained funding and ongoing capacity development, there is a significant risk that recent successes will not be sustained – which will undermine efforts to strengthen data-driven decision-making.

Government Strategy and DP support

14. The G2B-ESP (2017-2021) was developed by the Government to address widespread and persistent challenges with regard to access, equity and learning outcomes in basic education in Liberia. The G2B-ESP has established nine priority program areas including ECE, primary education, curriculum reform, improved teacher management, school accountability and some priorities at post-basic levels. MoE will use the G2B-ESP to implement a series of strategic, evidence-based and innovative programs to measurably improve education quality, access, equity and relevance in Liberia during the plan period. The development partners (DPs) have started to align their respective programs with the G2B-ESP goals.

⁸ Ministry of Education. (2016). Liberia Education Statistics Report 2015-16. Monrovia: Ministry of Education.



C. Proposed Development Objective(s)

Development Objective(s) (From PAD)

The Project Development Objectives are to improve equitable access to early childhood education (ECE) and teacher quality in ECE and in primary education in targeted disadvantaged counties, and to strengthen national school accountability systems.

Key Results

15. The Project will monitor the following key development indicators:

- Direct project beneficiaries, disaggregated by sex;
- Net enrollment rate in ECE in the targeted disadvantaged counties;
- Share of qualified ECE and primary teachers in the targeted disadvantaged counties; and
- Percentage of public schools receiving one or more School Quality Assessment (SQA) monitoring visit annually in the targeted disadvantaged counties.

D. Project Description

16. The proposed GPE-funded Liberia G2B Project, in alignment with the G2B-ESP, includes the following components: (i) Improving the quality of and access to ECE⁹ in targeted disadvantaged counties; (ii) Supporting teacher training and certification in targeted disadvantaged counties; and (iii) Improving school management, accountability and systems monitoring; (iv) Variable Part/DLIs; and (v) Project management and sector Program support and coordination. The total project cost is US\$11.07 million. As noted above, and consistent with current GPE guidelines, this grant will consist of both a Fixed Part and a Variable Part.

Component 1: Improving the quality of and access to early childhood education in targeted disadvantaged counties (US\$2.9 million)

⁹ The areas of Early Childhood Education (ECE) and Early Childhood Development (ECD) overlap, and MoE is increasingly emphasizing the importance of awareness of child development needs, including those which are physical, cognitive and psychological.



17. The objective of this component is to improve the quality of and access to ECE in targeted disadvantaged counties. The component consists of two sub-components: (a) ECE School Improvement Grants; and (b) Community-based ECE. International research has shown that children who have low levels of cognitive development in early childhood are more likely to repeat grades and to drop out of school early. In addition, it is more cost efficient to target interventions early rather than late in a child's life. The activities proposed under this component include school-based grants with rich international experience and community based ECE that is cost efficient and has been carried out in the country by other DPs (Open Society Foundations and UNICEF) with positive results.

Sub-component 1.1: ECE School Improvement Grants (US\$2.66 million)

18. This sub-component will finance school improvement grants for all public schools¹⁰ that have ECE classes in the targeted disadvantaged counties¹¹. The first year of implementation will focus on preparing schools for the school improvement grants, including updating school grant guidelines, verifying school bank accounts, and helping schools develop school grant utilization plans. Grants will be provided annually beginning in the second year of the project. The list of eligible expenditures will be detailed in the manual and school grant guidelines which will be limited to: teaching and learning materials for ECE classrooms; construction of/materials for gender- and age-appropriate urinals and toilets; minor repairs to ECE classrooms; and stipends for primary teachers to teach after-school or additional classes for over-age students in ECE in order to facilitate their transition into primary school. Schools will continue to receive grant for over-age students whom they help transition to primary school under the project for a period of one year.

Sub-component 1.2: Community-based ECE (US\$ 240,000)

19. This sub-component will finance training of 60 community caregivers and support the establishment of at least 20 community-based ECE centers in remote areas in targeted disadvantaged counties that lack access to school-based ECE. In the first year, these 60 caregivers will receive training in ECE and in running their own community caregiver program (for 2.5 months) followed by an internship in an ECE school (for 3.5 months). The training will be based on the training provided to community caregivers under the Ministry of Gender's Economic Empowerment of Adolescent Girls and Young Women (EPAG) project supported by the World Bank. The proposed project will subsequently provide a US\$80¹² monthly stipend to these community-based ECE caregivers and support them in running small community-based ECE programs for the period of the project. The community-based ECE programs will use existing infrastructure provided by the community to run their programs.¹³

Component 2: Supporting teacher training and certification in targeted disadvantaged counties (US\$1.6 million)

20. The objective of this component is to increase the number and proportion of certified primary and ECE

¹⁰ For Liberia, public schools include both public and community schools (community schools were established by communities during the civil wars and reconstruction period and continue to function as such, though they currently receive additional support from the government. For example, the teachers in community school tend to be on the government payroll).

¹¹ The project expects to reach 40,000 ECE students per year across 572 public schools in five targeted counties.

¹² The same amount as the UNICEF community ECE program, to be determined during appraisal.

¹³ The project will not finance renovation or construction of community-based ECE centers.



teachers in targeted disadvantaged counties¹⁴. This component consists of two sub-components (a) in-service ECE C Certificate teacher training for unqualified ECE teachers in targeted disadvantaged counties; and (b) accelerated in-service C certificate¹⁵ teacher training for unqualified primary teachers in targeted disadvantaged counties. The training of both the unqualified ECE teachers and primary teachers will be nine months and will be held during school holidays and vacation and training will be locally-based. The approach will ensure teachers are not absent from their classrooms and do not have to travel long distances to a Rural Teacher Training Institute (RTTI). In addition, this approach will be more cost-effective.

Sub-component 2.1: In-service ECE C certificate teacher training for unqualified ECE teachers in targeted disadvantaged counties (US\$800,000)

21. This sub-component will finance an in-service teacher training program targeting 700 unqualified ECE teachers who are currently teaching ECE classes in public schools in the targeted disadvantaged counties.¹⁶ MoE has prioritized in the G2B-ESP, the establishment of a nationally-recognized ECE qualification which is equivalent to the C certificate¹⁷ in terms of the payment level. In the first year of the G2B Project, the MoE will verify the efficacy of the existing training curriculum and process through a pilot training for approximately 100 ECE teachers. The curriculum will introduce the play-based approach to ECE teachers. The pilot will provide a wider understanding of the unit cost of training and the sustainability of institutional and financial arrangements. In subsequent years, training will be scaled up to 200 teachers per year. Teachers who complete the ECE C Certificate training will be assessed and receive a bio-metric certificate.

Sub-component 2.2: Accelerated in-service C certificate teacher training for unqualified primary teachers in targeted disadvantaged counties (US\$800,000)

¹⁴ The targeted counties are the same throughout the project.

¹⁵ C Certificate is the minimum requirement for teaching at the primary level.

¹⁶ The number of targeted beneficiaries will be reviewed after the completion of the payroll verification exercise and initial scoping work. If the number of unqualified teachers on GoL payroll is lower than expected in the targeted counties, the project may consider expanding to other disadvantaged counties in the latter years of the project.

¹⁷ The minimum teacher qualification required for teaching in primary education.



22. This sub-component will finance an in-service teacher training program targeting 700 unqualified primary teachers who are currently working in public schools in targeted disadvantaged counties.¹⁸ Initially, the Project will support the Bureau of Teacher Education to review and update the existing in-service C Certificate program materials. In addition, teachers will be trained in strategies for supporting non-reading children in early grades who are struggling to acquire basic skills so that these children can be moved from the ECE level to Primary. The piloting and rollout of the training for primary teachers will follow the same modalities of the ECE C Certificate (Sub-component 2.1).

Component 3: Improving school management, accountability and systems monitoring (US\$2 million)

23. The objective of this component is to improve school quality through strengthened school-based management and more robust school support, monitoring and accountability systems. This component consists of two sub-components (a) school quality standards, school monitoring and inspection; and (b) school management and quality improvement through principal training. Currently, there are no systems, standards or tools for measuring school quality, or tracking school quality improvements. Further, school principals and DEOs do not have the expertise, guidance or resources needed to improve school quality or execute critical school management, support and accountability functions. In the absence of these capacities, important school management issues such as teacher absence and post abandonment; unauthorized school closure; payroll management issues; and educator code of conduct violations are not addressed in a proactive and timely manner.

Sub-component 3.1: School quality standards, school monitoring and inspection (US\$1 million)

24. This subcomponent will finance the piloting of a school quality assessment (SQA) tool, the development of National School Quality Standards (NSQS), and training and support for DEO staff to visit public schools on an annual basis. An SQA tool, currently being developed by the MoE, will be piloted and rolled-out nationally under the proposed project, to support school quality improvements and to strengthen accountability in education. The project will then support the MoE in developing NSQS on the basis of findings from the SQA tool pilot. The sub-component also ensures funding for DEOs to visit over 2,500 government schools by year four of the project where they will use the SQA tool, in addition to annual workshops for 98 DEO staff on the utilization of the SQA tool.¹⁹

Sub-component 3.2: School management and quality improvement through principal training (US\$1 million)

25. The sub-component will finance the development and delivery of a school principal certification program for 1,500 school principals in public schools for basic education. Based on preliminary discussions, training modules may include the following topics: school quality improvement, school management and leadership, school administration, teacher supervision, management and support, parent teacher association (PTA) and community engagement and participation, and financial management (FM). This training will adopt a similar

¹⁸ The number of targeted beneficiaries will be reviewed after the completion of the payroll verification exercise and initial scoping work. If the number of unqualified teachers on GoL payroll is lower than expected in the targeted counties, the project may consider expanding to other disadvantaged counties in the latter years of the project.

¹⁹ The GoL is planning to set up an independent Inspectorate reporting directly to the Minister of Education. This sub-component will lay the groundwork for the establishment of the Inspectorate by developing the standard and tools for monitoring and strengthening the accountability of actors at every step of the chain. The purpose of the Inspectorate will be to: (i) provide an independent means of strengthening accountability at the district and school levels; (ii) accelerate communication of critical issues to senior MoE staff for action; and (iii) build monitoring capacities of DEOs and school management staff.



modality as teacher training, which will be piloted, lasting one-year, held during school holidays and vacations, and will be cluster-based. Participants will receive formal certification after the end of the training after passing the completion test.

Component 4: Variable Part/Disbursement Linked Indicators (US\$3.57 million)

26. The variable part will address three essential dimensions of the education system – equity, efficiency and learning outcomes-using the result-based financing (RBF) modality. The DLIs used for this Component are the following, to: (a) increase in the proportion of qualified ECE and primary teachers, in the targeted disadvantaged counties; (b) improvement in teacher payroll management; and (c) establishment of a national primary student learning assessment system. The Variable Part and its DLIs are aligned with the overall project objectives and design -- which itself is tightly aligned to Ministry priorities. There is strong complementarity and synergy between the DLIs and the other project components.



27. The equity DLI is to increase in the proportion of qualified ECE and primary teachers, in the targeted disadvantaged counties. Component 2 (teacher training) will generate 1,400 newly certified ECE and primary teachers by year 4, which by itself is not enough to meet the target of the DLI. Provision of training are incentives for these teachers to remain in rural disadvantaged areas, strengthened with a bond agreement. However, the GoL will be encouraged to take steps to promote teacher retention rate in rural areas by putting trained teachers on the correct pay grade and provide incentives for teachers to stay after year 4 of the project as the 2-year bond for the first two rounds of trainees expires, through interventions such as improved school level monitoring. This DLI will also incentivize the Ministry to deploy new graduate teachers, replace identified ghost teachers with qualified teachers and take other measures to improve the equitable distribution of trained teachers.

28. The efficiency DLI is to improve system of teacher payroll management. It addresses the obscurity around teacher positions and inefficiency generated from having ghost and illiterate teachers in the system. The DLI is a “stretch indicator” since payroll management has been a persistent challenge for the GoL and requires significant collaboration between agencies²⁰. This indicator builds on the Ministry’s successful reform agenda regarding identification and removal of ghost teachers and teacher testing to determine whether teachers have basic functional literacy. Transparent and published payroll information can help prevent ghost teachers from creeping back into the system – which wastes scarce resources that could be used for qualified teachers. Removing functionally illiterate teachers can also free up the space for qualified teachers.

29. The learning outcome DLI is to establish a national primary student learning assessment system.. Currently, the MoE does not have a national student learning assessment at the primary level to monitor student learning outcome. The current national examinations (Grade 9 and 12, administered by WAEC) are designed for selection and end-of-phase assessment and provide limited diagnostic data. There are only a small number of project-specific early grade assessments. This DLI will provide incentives to establish and implement a regular national primary assessment for Grades 3 and 6. If successful, the DLI will lay the foundation for improved diagnostics, better targeting of training and material development, and more accountability around learning outcomes. As there is a relatively short timeframe and a limited amount of resources, DLI 3 is a suitable “stretch” activity with a large potential impact. IPA and RTI have conducted sample-based learning assessments in Liberia and may provide guidance and support.

30. Given the modest Variable Part budget, the GoL has proposed, in close coordination with ESDC, a small number of DLI targets.

Table 1. Component 4 Disbursement Linked Indicators Summary

Focus	DLI	Year 1 Target	Year 2 Target	Year 3 Target	Year 4 Target	Total (US\$m)
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²⁰ Civil Service Agency (CSA) is in charge of payroll.



Equity	To increase in the proportion of qualified ECE and primary teachers, in the targeted disadvantaged counties	46.50%	50%	55%	60%	1.2
Efficiency	To improve system of teacher payroll management	Register of teachers on government payroll updated and published	Register of teachers on government payroll updated and published	Register of teachers on government payroll updated and published	Register of teachers on government payroll updated and published	1.37
		Remove 250 functionally illiterate teachers from the payroll	Remove 250 functionally illiterate teachers from the payroll	Remove 250 functionally illiterate teachers from the payroll	-	
Learning outcomes	To establish a national primary student learning assessment system	National Assessment Policy, approved and disseminated	Report evaluation of pilot of Grade 3 and Grade 6 student assessment in English and Mathematics	Publish results of national Grade 3 and Grade 6 student assessments in English and Mathematics	-	1
Total						3.57



31. An independent verification agency will be utilized to verify the progress against the achievement of the DLI targets in addition to data from the EMIS. Potential verification agents include autonomous universities, reputable non-government organizations (NGOs), DPs²¹, and/or private consulting firms. The Education Sector Development Committee (ESDC) will be an important factor in providing advice, oversight and verification support of DLIs.

32. **Eligible expenditures.** Disbursement under the variable part would be against an Eligible Expenditure Program (EEP) (up to a capped amount and against achievement of agreed DLIs). The EEP will include G2B-ESP programs in the GoL Consolidated Budget chart of accounts, salaries and compensation, and grants. According to GPE guidelines, due to the ex-post approach of the Variable Part²², the Government can invest in any activities that contribute to the achievement and verification of DLIs and subsequently receive payment. The funds will go into eligible budget lines in the Liberian consolidated budget. These budget lines will be identified by project appraisal.

Component 5: Project Management and Sector Program Support and Coordination (US\$1 million)

33. The objectives of this component are to ensure robust project management and to facilitate sector program support, capacity building and coordination. Specifically, this component will finance: (i) a Project Delivery Team (PDT); (ii) technical assistance (TA) for EMIS and the design of a national assessment system; (iii) communications; and (iv) monitoring by independent verification agencies.

34. The PDT will be comprised of a project coordinator, a procurement specialist, an FM specialist, and a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) specialist. The Project Coordinator will liaise with relevant MoE Departments and Bureaus to drive implementation of the project components (for both the Fixed Part and the Variable Part). The PDT is expected to play a critical role in ensuring implementation of project activities at the county level and as such, the PDT will be closely involved in the facilitation of local project coordination and strengthening implementation capacities among MoE education office staff in targeted disadvantaged counties.²³ The FM specialist and procurement specialist hired under the PDT will dedicate a portion of their time for knowledge transfer and capability building of MoE FM and procurement departments.

35. The Project will utilize independent verification agencies (IVA) for verification of specific project activities, especially the timely verification of the achievement of DLIs. In addition to IVAs, the Project Coordinator will work closely with the MoE Department of Planning, Research and Development to ensure that information and data on program implementation and results are integrated into MoE and joint sector annual planning, reporting and coordination systems.

36. This component will finance TA to MoE to strengthen the EMIS system and national learning assessment. The TA for the EMIS will focus on addressing data needs and improving data accuracy, data utilization, MoE EMIS Unit staff capacity, and utilization of new information and communications technologies (ICT). TA also includes the one to support the development of a national learning assessment system to measure progress in literacy and numeracy in Grades 3 and 6.²⁴ This component will also finance expense related to communications. The communications strategy will be an important element to ensure that all the project stakeholders, especially at local level (that is, districts, schools, and communities), are aware of the project

²¹ The Ministry has received an offer of support from USAID to provide support from an independent verification agency under contract to USAID.

²² Ex-post approach means that payments on the Variable Part are made after results are verified.



objectives, interventions and roles of stakeholders in this project. The communication strategy will also include outreach to communities and households about the benefits of ECE and the importance of age-appropriate enrollment to a child’s long-term development and well-being.

E. Implementation

Institutional and Implementation Arrangements

37. The project will be implemented over a period of four years. The project implementation arrangements build on the institutional and implementation arrangements used for the Liberia GPEG-BEP with changes to reflect lessons learned. The MoE will have overall responsibility for the implementation of the proposed project. At the local level, the proposed project will be supported by County Education Officers (CEOs) and DEOs. DEOs and school principal staff are expected to play a key role in supervision and monitoring of project implementation.

38. The PDT will be established and will be responsible for the day-to-day operations of the proposed project. The PDT will be responsible for: (i) coordinating with project stakeholders (CEOs, DEOs, contractors, communities, DPs, ESDC, and so on) on implementation matters related to project activities; (ii) monitoring outcome and output indicators, including physical verification (spot checks) on the progress of implementation through field visits and overseeing independent verification agency; (iii) preparing and submitting regular reports to the MoE, the World Bank as Grant Agent, and GPE, as needed; (iv) maintaining fiduciary oversight/control through FM, procurement of goods and services and TA in accordance with World Bank guidelines and procedures; and (v) strengthening the capacity of the key MoE departments at the national and sub-national levels and transfer of skills through specific training and learning on the job. The PDT is expected to be absorbed by the MoE by the time the project closes.

39. The ESDC serves as the oversight body to oversee the implementation of the recently endorsed G2B-ESP. The ESDC includes representatives from the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, as well as donor representatives. The ESDC reports to the SMT of the MoE. The ESDC will be involved in monitoring of the project especially to supplement the independent verification of project activities and progress on DLIs.

²³ The MoE envisions establishing an Education Delivery Unit (EDU) tasked with overseeing implementation of priority G2B-ESP activities. This work builds on GoL experiences in establishing delivery units in other Ministries with support from AGI and the World Bank. The PDT may work within the EDU once the EDU is established.

²⁴ Discussions on a Grade 3 assessment are in a preliminary stage. Based on ongoing discussions, the MoE may seek to implement a Grade 2, rather than a Grade 3, learning assessment. Component 4 (Variable Part/Disbursement Linked Indicators) will finance the delivery of the national assessment policy, the implementation of the assessment and the completion and dissemination of the assessment report.



F. Project location and Salient physical characteristics relevant to the safeguard analysis (if known)

No safeguard policy will be triggered under the proposed project.

G. Environmental and Social Safeguards Specialists on the Team

Gloria Malia Mahama, Social Safeguards Specialist
Sekou Abou Kamara, Environmental Safeguards Specialist

SAFEGUARD POLICIES THAT MIGHT APPLY

Safeguard Policies	Triggered?	Explanation (Optional)
Environmental Assessment OP/BP 4.01	No	
Natural Habitats OP/BP 4.04	No	
Forests OP/BP 4.36	No	
Pest Management OP 4.09	No	
Physical Cultural Resources OP/BP 4.11	No	
Indigenous Peoples OP/BP 4.10	No	
Involuntary Resettlement OP/BP 4.12	No	
Safety of Dams OP/BP 4.37	No	
Projects on International Waterways OP/BP 7.50	No	
Projects in Disputed Areas OP/BP 7.60	No	

KEY SAFEGUARD POLICY ISSUES AND THEIR MANAGEMENT

A. Summary of Key Safeguard Issues

1. Describe any safeguard issues and impacts associated with the proposed project. Identify and describe any potential large scale, significant and/or irreversible impacts:

There is no safeguard issue associated with the proposed project.

2. Describe any potential indirect and/or long term impacts due to anticipated future activities in the project area:

Not applicable.



3. Describe any project alternatives (if relevant) considered to help avoid or minimize adverse impacts.

Not applicable.

4. Describe measures taken by the borrower to address safeguard policy issues. Provide an assessment of borrower capacity to plan and implement the measures described.

Not applicable.

5. Identify the key stakeholders and describe the mechanisms for consultation and disclosure on safeguard policies, with an emphasis on potentially affected people.

Not applicable.

B. Disclosure Requirements

C. Compliance Monitoring Indicators at the Corporate Level (to be filled in when the ISDS is finalized by the project decision meeting)

The World Bank Policy on Disclosure of Information

Have relevant safeguard policies documents been sent to the World Bank for disclosure?

NA

Have relevant documents been disclosed in-country in a public place in a form and language that are understandable and accessible to project-affected groups and local NGOs?

NA



All Safeguard Policies

Have satisfactory calendar, budget and clear institutional responsibilities been prepared for the implementation of measures related to safeguard policies?

NA

Have costs related to safeguard policy measures been included in the project cost?

NA

Does the Monitoring and Evaluation system of the project include the monitoring of safeguard impacts and measures related to safeguard policies?

NA

Have satisfactory implementation arrangements been agreed with the borrower and the same been adequately reflected in the project legal documents?

NA

CONTACT POINT

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APPROVAL

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