



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION



Evaluation of the Accelerated Learning Programme in Liberia

Final REPORT

Stella Manda, November 2011

Acronyms

AIDS

ALP Accelerated Learning Program

CA Content Analysis

CAFFs Children Associated with the Fighting Forces

CBOs Community Based Organisations

CEO County Education Officers

CESLY Core Education Skills for Liberian Youth

COBET Complementary Basic Education in Tanzania

COPE Complementary Primary Education

DEO District Education Officer

DPs Development Partners

ECA Economic Commission for Africa

EDPs Education Development Partners

EFA Education for All

EMIS Education Management Information System

ESP Education Sector Plan

FGD Focus Group Discussion

FPFTR Female Pupil Female Teacher Ratio

FTI Fast Track Initiative

GDP Gross Domestic Product

GDP Gross Domestic Product

GER Gross Enrolment Rate

GOL Government of Liberia

HIV Human Immunodeficiency Virus

IBIS

IEC Information Education and Communication

ILO International Labour Organisation

IMR Infant Mortality Rate

IPs Implementing Partners

IRC International Relief Committee

JHS Junior High School

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|--------|--|
| LISGIS | Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services |
| MDGs | Millennium Development Goals |
| MMR | Maternal Mortality Rate |
| MOE | Ministry of Education |
| MTR | Mid Term Review |
| NAEP | National Assessment of Education Program |
| NER | Net Enrolment Ratio |
| NFE | Non Formal Education |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organization |
| NPSCE | National Primary School Certificate Examination |
| NRC | National Red Cross |
| NRC | Norwegian Refugee Council |
| OOSC | Out of School Children |
| PRS | Poverty Reduction Strategy |
| PTA | Parent-Teacher Association |
| PTR | Pupil-Teacher Ratio |
| PTTR | Pupil Trained Teacher Ratio |
| SCF-UK | Save the Children-United Kingdom |
| SHS | Senior High School |
| SMCs | School Management Committees |
| SWOT | Strength Weaknesses Opportunities Threats |
| TC | Technical Committee |
| TORS | Terms of Reference |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children's Fund |
| UPE | Universal Primary Education |
| USAID | United States Agency for International Development |
| USD | United States Dollar |

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The Liberia Ministry of Education, with support from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), commissioned a consultancy to evaluate the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and impact of the Accelerated Learning Programme (ALP) in the country. Results from the evaluation are expected to be utilised for policy and programme related discussions on two planned initiatives: the Non-Formal Education (NFE) programme in the Education Sector Plan (ESP) and the Comprehensive Education Policy.

The evolution of the ALP

Two Liberian ministers traveled to Uganda in 1998 to learn how an accelerated learning programme, COPE, was being implemented after the civil war there. COPE was an alternative education programme targeting children who were above the official school age who either dropped from school or never enrolled due to war in that country. After the visit to Uganda, the Liberia Ministry of Education introduced ALP in 1999 as an interim education programme for: i) Children Associated with the Fighting Forces (CAFFs) ii) Returnee children; and iii) Internally displaced children whose schooling was disrupted by the war. The ALP is a three- year primary school programme compressed from the six (6) years of the primary school cycle. It is based on the Liberian primary school national curriculum. Since its inception, ALP has evolved to respond to the changing environments of children and young persons who were above the official age for schooling. Currently, ALP is being implemented in all the 15 counties and 57 out of the 96 (59 per cent) of the education districts countrywide.

During its implementation, the ALP suffered from the twin problems of fragility and uncertainty due to the recurrent conflicts in 2000/2001 and 2003/2004 and at least two Ministry of Education policy decisions to end the programme in 2006 and in 2009/10. This uncertainty prompted UNICEF to support the Ministry of Education to conduct an assessment of ALP in 2007. Findings from the assessment were to inform both the ministry and its implementing partners on the most effective way for ALP to meet the needs of children and adolescents whose education had been disrupted. The assessment recommended that ALP should continue for a minimum of five years before re-assessing its utility and relevance in the country. In response to this recommendation, the Ministry of Education reversed its earlier decision to end the programme during 2006/2007 and instead let it run to 2012.

Rationale for the Evaluation

Following the latest MOE pronouncement to phase out the ALP in 2009, some implementing partners and education development partners ended their support to ALP while others, such as IBIS, USAID and UNICEF, started to phase out their implementation plans. Meanwhile the government have factored the ALP in some of its policy document such as the Education Reform Act of 2011; the Education Sector Plan of 2011; and the Liberian Primary Education recovery Program of 2007. However the government would require empirical evidence on the future utility of the ALP. UNICEF, the lead agency in education in general and the Alp in particular is set to develop a joint country programme with the GOL. It is against this background that UNICEF supported the Liberia Ministry of Education to carry out this evaluation.

The purpose of the Evaluation

Hence the purpose of the evaluation is to establish the extent that the ALP was relevant, efficient and effective in providing education to children whose education was interrupted by the Liberia war. However, since the number of young people above the official school age in the primary education system in Liberia is still very high (65 per cent of all learner) the results of the evaluation of the ALP will provide empirical evidence for its future utility.

The evaluation approach and methodology

Led by a technical committee of comprising officials from the implementing partners, the MOE and LISGIS, the evaluation was based mostly on secondary evidence. Hence both quantitative and qualitative data were drawn from documents in the form of databases, plans, reports and related tools. To validate data from secondary evidence data was collected from at least 120 respondents from institutions and from the 5 sampled counties - 33% of all the counties in Liberia; namely: Bomi (Low ALP enrolment); Grand Bassa (Low ALP and girls' primary school enrolment); Maryland (Low ALP enrolment); Montserrado (High ALP enrolment); Nimba (highest ALP enrolment). Accordingly, care was taken that the schools that were selected provided urban, peri-urban and rural representation.

Respondents for primary data included: i) Ministry of Education headquarters officials; ii) County education officers; iii) District education officers; iv) PTA chairpersons PTA members/parents/guardians; v) Regular primary school/ALP principals; v) ALP Teachers Regular primary school; vi) ALP teachers; vii) ALP learners; viii) Regular primary school learners; ix) Ex-ALP learners in the JHS grade 7 and x) Grade 7 JHS; xii) officials from the EDPs and the IPs. Fieldwork was carried out by eight researchers were orientated on the assignment for two days ion during which they pre-tested and revised the questionnaire The main sources of data were: i) Documentary review/desk study; ii) Observations; iii) Focus group discussion with; iv) SWOT analyses; v) Structured and unstructured interviews.

Limited time and personnel impacted on adequate achievement of some methodologies such as content analysis of the ALP and the conventional primary education curriculum and comparisons and trends of the grade 6 WAC examinations for the ALP implementing schools and the regular schools. Unrecorded phasing out of ALP schools impacted on coverage of field research. However, these limitations have not impacted negatively on the validity the findings.

The conceptual framework

Analysis and articulation of findings was guided by the ALP Policy Guidelines in terms of the inputs that were to go into the ALP; processes for realising outputs from the programme; the environment in which he ALP was operating fro; the outputs realised as a result and outcomes and impact from the programme.

Key Findings

Inputs

- ✓ The ALP reached out and provided a forum for social reintegration of children and young people of different ages and socio-economic backgrounds who were most affected by the war in one way

or the other including girls. They included: i) Children Affected by Fighting Forces (CAFFs); ii) returnee children; iii) internally displaced children; and iv) young mothers many of who were victims of war-associated sex crimes. The different age cohorts participating in the ALP included: i) 8-10; ii) 8-14 ; iii) 7-18; iv) 8-16; v) 8-18; vi) 8-24; vii) 9-18; viii) 10-17; ix) 12+; x) 19-35.

- ✓ The default use of conventional primary school teachers facilitated equivalent and even higher quality of teachers with that of conventional primary schools. Most (99%) of the the ALP teachers were from the conventional primary education. Hence the shortage of trained teachers in the regular primary school has been mirrored in the ALP too; however the presence of the untrained and nolunteer teachers resulte into low Pupil Teacher Rate (PTR) in the ALP of below the ALP statutory one of 1:3.
- ✓ A worrisome situation however is that of decrease of female ALP teachers from 18% in 2003 to 14% in 2008/2009.
- ✓ The ALP has been operating without de jure guidelines for ten years (1998- 2008). However, lately the ALP has been operating in a policy context which provides for its legitimacy following recognition by the Education Reform Act of 2011, of the accelerated education as a delivery mode for learners above the official school age in Liberia; its inclusion in the Primary Education Reform Programme and in the ESP, as well as the presence of the ALP guidelines the latter since 2008.
- ✓ Academically, ALP learners performed at the same level with - in some cases better - than those in the conventional primary schools in the four core subjects (Language Arts; Science; Mathematics and Social Studies).
- ✓ Albeit by default, the WFP in the process of supporting attendance and retention in the public conventional primary schools also supported the ALP learners with school meals especially the young mother-

How the ALP was implemented

- ✓ While the inception of the ALP was informed by logic, experience of the ALP designers and empirical evidence; later on the programme continued without being adequately informed by empirical evidence to justify its existence. No empirical evidence was sought or used regarding: i) whether the post-war obstacles to learning opportunities had been mitigated or not; and ii) the magnitude of the problem of young people above the official school age in Liberia by age; gender; and geographical coverage and key drivers of the presence of children above the official school age other than the post-war conditions; and iii) the extent to which the education system in Liberia was ready to deliver primary education as a development programme. This influenced the back-and-forth decisions by the MOE “to end” and “not to end” the programme.
- ✓ The centralised nature of education made it inevitable to use the county as the lowest level in the education management system to plan, coordinate and monitor the implementation of the ALP

The ALP's operating environment

- ✓ At least 80 per cent of the ALP implementing schools has been in the public conventional primary schools.¹
- ✓ ALP accountability and decision-making structures have been a blend of IPs and government, overlapping and at times running parallel to each other.
- ✓ During the ALP implementation, the MOE provided the necessary institutional framework for operationalising the programme.

¹ Other types are: community; public, mission, and private primary schools.

- ✓ EDPs and IPs also managed the ALP from their national headquarters outside the country each with hierarchies cascading down to the school level alongside the same hierarchy as that of the MOE as follows:

:

Donor--- →EDP--- →IDP--- →MOE--- →CEO--- →DEO--- →Principal--- →Level Teacher.

- ✓ Presence of IPs/EDPs in counties was unevenly distributed. For example, River Gee had the lowest NER and yet only one IP operating while Sinoe, despite the very low NER, ALP only went there this year – had only one IP. River Cess too has the one of the lowest NER but by 2007 it had no IP as well as Grand Bassa; Bomi and Grand Cape Mount.
- ✓ Approaches to implementing the ALP by some IPs contributed to inefficiency to education; but the IPs/EDPs also brought into the ALP complementary niches
- ✓ Inclusion of the ALP in the Education Pooled Fund is a key step towards harmonising IPs' funding with a potential for minimising operational costs of the programme. However, exclusion of the ALP from the grants on the other hand, would leave many potential learners above the official school age out of the Liberian education mainstream.
- ✓ With the announcement of closing the ALP, there has been 'mass' exodus of ALP teachers.
- ✓ The child-centred teaching methods have proved to be popular among the current and the ex-ALP learners. However, most ALP teachers manage to teach for half the required duration per period.
- ✓ Phasing out of the ALP has been driven more by a management decision than by any empirical evidence that it was relevant to cease. Hence even though the IPs had timeframes for the implementation of ALP, they did not have exit strategies.
- ✓ The evaluation identifies a contradiction in the policy guidelines regarding learner-enrolment. While the guidelines allow enrolment of dropouts from the elementary schools, it prohibits learners who have attended formal school or completed first grade to join the ALP. While the reason for the latter prohibition may have been valid, its unclarity could have created confusion to the school-based implementers, especially the principals.
- ✓ Screening of learners before entering different ALP levels was done during the first two years only for those who had not been in schools or who did grade 1 and for those that wished to enter levels II and III.
- ✓ Monitoring and supervision of the ALP implementation carried out by the IPs worked well but on phasing out, the activity has been erratic.
- ✓ Anecdotal evidence informs the evaluation that at some point, a misunderstanding ensued because of efforts to remove learners above the official school age from the formal school and send them to the ALP. This was put to a stop because of the intense organisation involved
- ✓ Teacher incentive pay has been erratic due to absence of updated records compounded by the discontinuation of support to the ALP by some IPs. Unrecorded transfers and reassignment of teachers has made payment of incentives a challenge to the ministry.
- ✓ While the ALP did an excellent job in raising awareness at community level and among the learners, the case was not the same with the MOE leadership as there was minimum communication between the MOE management and other desk staff and between the ministry and the IPs and EDPs.

Outputs from the ALP

- ✓ The ALP effectively, reached out to an age group which if not in school may never – as defined by the World Bank (2010) – have received education in Liberia (the 15 year olds). The ALP also reached a good proportion of the ALP officially-defined age group of the 10 to 18 year olds.

- ✓ The 3% only annual increase of primary school NER between 2008/2009 and 2009/2010 may have been caused by the drastic 51 % annual decrease of the ALP learner enrolment during the same time.
- ✓ Results of the grade 6 WAEC of the ALP implementing schools were not very different from those of the conventional schools.
- ✓ Erratic or irregular attendance has been cited as common in ALP implementing schools. (IBIS) Only the NRC-supported schools had a daily attendance record
- ✓ Teachers that were trained on the ALP indicated general compliance with the training and the teacher manuals than those who were not trained and the PTR generally complied with the requirements of the ALP guidelines
- ✓ The more the learners and the longer the period of support to the ALP ; the less the costs. This and the finding on the extent that the ALP has contributed to the primary NER and subsequent education subsystems – JHS and SHS- qualifies the ALP as cost effective. See table 20.

Outcomes and Impact

- ✓ ALP has demonstrated the invaluable role of government and partners in a post-war situation, of providing NFE in a formal setting and not as a side delivery mode of education.
- ✓ The ALP provision of education free of tuition and other costs meant tremendous increase in the quantitative effectiveness of the programme and the internal efficiency of education. The ALP planned to reach 300,000 but has reached at least 250,000 learners to-date - missing the target by 50,000 learners only.
- ✓ Even though the ALP covered all the 15 counties an indicator of programme sustainability it was operating in 54 per cent only of all the 106 education districts countrywide.
- ✓ That in its initial stages, the ALP did not put any restrictions to age of entry, proved responsiveness to the multiple interruptions of the schooling of children and adolescents experienced in Liberia.
- ✓ The ALP expedited the reinstatement in Liberia, of the education system in the process instilling great senses of sustainability and ownership.
- ✓ The ALP expedited the re-employment of teachers in Liberia and instilling interest in the teaching profession.

Conclusion

- ✓ ALP as a mode of education would still be relevant in Liberia provided it is transformed for relevance to the current situation in particular as: i) the GOL is implementing nine years of free and compulsory basic education in Liberia; ii) for the speedy provision of education to children and adolescents who are still above school age in Liberia; iii) for alleviating massive costs of free primary education and speeding up the achievement of the NER in the education system.
- ✓ Positioning of the ALP in formal primary system and in the same MOE institutional and governance structures, was very efficient academically and economically as it ensured trust from both parents and learners of the quality of teaching and learning. However, the short-term vision for the ALP as a short-lived programme, affected the certainty of the programme's existence
- ✓ In terms of efficiency of the ALP as an education sub-system: i) ALP learners performed the same at times better than the conventional primary learners; ii) Until the latest

announcement of the phasing out of the ALP in 2002, most times ALP dropout was low and completion rate was good; iii) the ALP contributed to increased access to basic education countrywide. In the foregoing, the evaluation concludes that the ALP was effective and worth an education endeavour in Liberia.

- ✓ The ALP, was effective in providing a rapid education safety net and learning spaces for children and adolescents affected by the war, who were above the official school age - of between 8 and 25 years and beyond. It was effective in that it managed albeit for a short period; to access to education children above the official school age by removing obstacles such as: i) official age requirement for enrolling in primary education; ii) having been to stay in primary school for six years; iii) direct fee paying; ii) paying for the non-fee costs including examination fees; iii) shortened learning cycle for catching up with schooling and employment; iv) embarrassment of the older learner to sit with the younger learners; v) non-acceptance of the CAFFs by society and parents and vi) non-acceptance in primary schools, of the learner-mothers.

Selected Recommendations

How the ALP was implemented

- ✓ Given the satisfaction expressed by both the ALP and ex-ALP learners in different evaluation including this one; there is need to link link ALP teacher training content and organisation to the mainstream teacher training in Liberia
- ✓ Translate the ALP policy guidelines into standing orders
- ✓ ALP should have had have separate textbooks with synthesized content reflecting 100% content of the content of the regular primary school textbooks as dropping some topics deprived the ALP learners of knowledge of those topics
- ✓ If ALP is to continue the curriculum needs to be reviewed to be equivalent with the current primary education one which has since 1999 changed twice; and textbooks special for ALP should be developed
- ✓ If the ALP has to continue it has to be on scale and within a short period of time. To realize the latter, financial support from all the key players in ALP in Liberia would need to be synchronized with the speed of building the capacity of the GOL.
- ✓ The solution to a more effective accelerated learning programme does not lie in the content of the programme and the age of the learners only but on the way the programme was managed with multiple and parallel hierarchies, once these are streamlined, it is still possible to quickly address the problem of learners above the official primary school age in Liberia without compromising quality;
- ✓ MOE to make it mandatory for the IPs to have exit strategies for education programmes such as the ALP;

Impact, outcome and Cross Cutting Issues

- ✓ Since youth are not socially, economically and demographically not monolithic, their education must not be left to individual efforts at this time when the Liberian education delivery system is still weak and hence is unable to provide diverse post-primary education modes that youth may access through individual efforts. (Source: World Bank; 2010.)

- ✓ Any a catching-up education programme must establish the expectations of the youth and the experiences of those youth that benefitted from the programme before making terminal management decisions of phasing a mass-education programme as the ALP;
- ✓ The education fraternity in Liberia should take stock of socio economic obstacles that have continued to produce children and adolescents that are above the official school age in the country since the inception of the ALP in 1998 to establish whether they are still in place or not before deciding on how to address the problem
- ✓ The wider the coverage and the longer the period, the more cost-effective the ALP has been. Implemented in 54 per cent of all the education districts in Liberia, the annual unit cost of the UNICEF-supported ALP was \$7, it is recommended that for cost-effectiveness of the programme, if the ALP is continuing it should scale up fast that way it will also in a very cost-effective way alleviate massive costs for implementing 9 years of free education in Liberia at the same time minimize the education inefficiency in the system manifested by the high presence of children above the official school age in the country.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

The Liberia Ministry of Education, with support from the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), commissioned a consultancy to evaluate the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and impact of the Accelerated Learning Programme (ALP) in the country. Results from the evaluation are expected to be utilised for policy and programme related discussions on two planned initiatives: the Non-Formal Education (NFE) programme in the Education Sector Plan (ESP) and the Comprehensive Education Policy.

1.2 The Context

Geography

Located on the west coast of Africa, Liberia has a population of about 3.5 million people with an annual growth rate of 4.6 percent. Urbanization is growing rapidly with an estimated one-third of the Liberian population located in Monrovia, the capital city. At least 55 percent of the population is below 21 years of age. Divided into three main zones (North-Central; South-East and South-West), the country comprises 15 administrative counties.

Socio-Economic Situation

Despite the economic potential manifested by the presence of minerals, timber, rubber production and agriculture, the war in Liberia changed the country’s status from a regular developing economy into a fragile state. The service delivery structures of the government nearly collapsed thus weakening its capacity to deliver goods and basic services such as education to the Liberian people.

Many aspects of life of the Liberian society were affected, making the country a home to some of the worst socio-economic indicators in the world. Currently, the gross domestic product (GDP) per capita is USD 160, Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) is 157 per 1,000 live births, Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) is 1,200 per 100,000 and the Life Expectancy at birth is 45.3 years. Since the end of the war, the average household size has been 5 and the Total Fertility Rate 6.8 children per woman .

Access to sanitation nationally is a mere 39.4 percent. Life threatening medical conditions such as malaria, tuberculosis and HIV spread with minimal control and health services are unaffordable to most of the Liberian population. The general HIV prevalence rate is estimated at 1.7 percent while that of the youth aged 15–24 years is estimated at 0.5 percent (0.7 percent for females and 0.3 percent for males) (UNICEF, 2010). The presence of HIV and the dismal life expectancy could potentially increase the orphans, child-headed and female-headed households in Liberia.

Meanwhile, employment prospects of young persons are closely related to the education they receive. A study by the International Labour Organization (ILO)² in 2011 found that youth in Liberia (defined as persons aged between 15 and 35 years), constituted 53percent of the unemployed despite the high employment potential in the agricultural, mining and banking sectors in the country. Overall, at least 85 per cent of the productive

² ILO and ECA; African Youth Report 2011: Addressing the Youth Education and Employment Nexus in the New Global Economy”, 2011

population in the country belonged to the vulnerable employment category (defined by ILO as comprising individuals who are either self-employed with no employees of their own or unpaid family workers). The study also noted a serious lack of basic and other practical skills among newly recruited Liberian employees, especially skills which comply with contemporary technology. The study also found that more than half of the Liberian workforce had not attended primary education, with women being two-thirds of this group. Furthermore, only about 15 per cent of the country's labour force had completed secondary education (ILO and ECA; 2011).

Other adverse post-war experiences included sexual exploitation and abuse of girls and women, which remains a serious problem. Many children have been engaged in labour activities and 35 per cent of households have either foster children or orphans³ in their care. Care institutions or orphanages increased by more than 10 times, from 10 in 1989 to 114 in 2008 countrywide (UNICEF, 2010). These adverse situations and others, affected the participation of children and young people in education, and subsequently in the labour market.

At least 80% of all schools were totally destroyed during the war and many children and adolescents were displaced thus failing to go to school because of the unsafe environment. Many teachers either left the country or were killed during the war. This contributed to the low capacity of the education system in the country to provide education to children who had outgrown school to catch up with the appropriate education cycles.

Policy Context

Given this situation, in 2006, the Government of Liberia declared its commitment to promoting free and compulsory basic education in the country. Even though the government did not have a comprehensive education policy, it made reference to, or produced, overarching and education-specific policy and strategy documents which were in line with the Education For All (EFA) goals and Millennium Development Goals (MDG) frameworks to guide the achievement of this commitment. The documents included *The Liberian Constitution* of 1986, as amended in 2002, which commits the government to guarantee the right to basic education to all school-age children in the country and the *Poverty Reduction Strategy of Liberia of 2008* which identified the ALP and the role it is playing in the education development in the country by addressing the problem of children whose primary schooling was delayed by the war.

Education-related documents⁴ which advocate for universal access to education in Liberia include: *Liberia's Plan of Action For Children Framework (2000–2015)* which emphasises gender-responsiveness and skills-education for gainful employment and the *National Policy on Girls' Education of 2005* which advocates for the removal of barriers to girls' access and participation in education through formal and non-formal education delivery approaches.

Meanwhile, the government has produced documents to guide the implementation of the above policies. They include the following: the *Liberian Primary Education Recovery Programme of 2007* which aimed to fast-track primary education, "after years of functioning on an ad-hoc emergency basis..."⁵ after the war and the ALP implementation guidelines

³Here the term "orphan" is used to refer to a child under 18 years who is not living with either of his/her natural parents.

⁴Sources: respective documents.

⁵Ministry of Education; Republic of Liberia: *Liberian Primary Education Recovery Programme*, Prepared for Fast Track Initiative; 2007.

produced in 2008. In addition, the *National School Census* reports produced in 2009 and 2010 provided key national education data necessary for planning, monitoring and evaluation. The data includes that on the ALP. The *Education Sector Plan of Liberia* (ESP) is also a Ministry of Education document which has translated the contents of the above policies into education delivery programmes. In terms of managing these programmes, the ministry is currently decentralizing and devolving authority and resources down to school level in order to enhance accountability and transparency. District education boards are currently in place and are being oriented on their roles.

Finally, the *Liberia Education Reform Act of 2011* provides the legal framework for reforming the education sector. It reaffirms the government's commitment to provide equal access to educational facilities for all citizens and residents of the country, with emphasis on mass education and elimination of illiteracy. The Act also articulates the structure of education to be implemented in Liberia, namely: (i) Two years of early childhood education (3–5 years age cohort); (ii) Nine years of basic education (6–18 years of age cohort); (iii) Three years of senior secondary education or three years of technical or vocational education; and (iv) Four years of university or other tertiary education.

1.3 Need for Changed Ways

Liberia was devastated by civil wars for 14 years between 1989 and 2003. As with all wars,⁶ productive activities, provision of basic services and governance systems in the country collapsed. Most aspects of life in the Liberian society were devastated, including the education system. Six years into the first democratic government after the war, the effects of the war on the education sector are still evident. These effects compelled the Government of Liberia to change the way the sector was delivering education in order to catch up with both national and international commitments to EFA. The ALP was one of the unconventional options the government adopted to accelerate delivery of primary education in the country after the war.

The ALP is a homegrown programme, conceptualized and designed by Liberians with support from UNICEF. Two Liberian ministers traveled to Uganda to learn how an accelerated learning programme, COPE, was being implemented after the civil war there. COPE was an alternative education programme targeting children who were above the official school age who either dropped from school or never enrolled due to war in that country.

After the visit to Uganda, the Liberia Ministry of Education introduced ALP in 1999 as an interim education programme for: i) Children Associated with the Fighting Forces (CAFFs) ii) Returnee children; and iii) Internally displaced children whose schooling was disrupted by the war. The ALP is a three- year primary school programme compressed from the six (6) years of the primary school cycle. It is based on the Liberian primary school national curriculum. The objectives of the programme are to:

- (i) facilitate school participation of older children who would otherwise stay out of school;
- (ii) integrate in and out of school children of 10 to 18 years into their age appropriate grades in the regular school system through an accelerated learning approach; and

⁶ Watch list on Children and Armed Conflict: 2004; Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children; Help Us to Help Ourselves in Liberia; 2006; Justino P Et Al; Education and Conflict Recovery: The Case of Timor Leste; The World Bank; 2011.

- (iii) mainstream gender, life skills and HIV and AIDS education into the school programme.

Since its inception, ALP has evolved to respond to the changing environments of children and young persons who were above the official age for schooling. Currently, ALP is being implemented in all the 15 counties and 57 out of the 96 (59 per cent) of the education districts countrywide. Equivalence of the ALP to the regular primary school is described below.

Table 1: Equivalence of the ALP with the regular primary school in Liberia

| ALP | REGULAR PRIMARY SCHOOL |
|------------------|-------------------------------|
| Level I | Grades 1 and 2 |
| Level II | Grades 2 and 3 |
| Level III | Grades 4 and 5 |

Initially, ALP suffered from the twin problems of fragility and uncertainty due to the recurrent conflicts in 2000/2001 and 2003/2004 and at least two Ministry of Education policy decisions to end the programme in 2006 and in 2009/10. Following the decisions to end the programme, some of the ALP implementing partners immediately withdrew their support for the programme. However, UNICEF and a few other implementing partners such as IBIS, Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) continued to support the programme (Nicholson, 2007). This uncertainty prompted UNICEF to support the Ministry of Education to conduct an assessment of ALP in 2007. Findings from the assessment were to inform both the ministry and its implementing partners on the most effective way for ALP to meet the needs of children and adolescents whose education had been disrupted. The assessment recommended that ALP should continue for a minimum of five years before re-assessing its utility and relevance in the country. In response to this recommendation, the Ministry of Education reversed its earlier decision to end the programme during 2006/2007 and instead let it run to 2012.

In 2009, selected ministry officials and representatives of some education development partners (EDPs) and implementing partners (IPs) embarked on an exercise to re-assess the actual and the expected role of the Ministry of Education in ALP and propose the way forward for the programme. The ministry noted the need to re-consider its decision to end the ALP in 2012 and identified challenges which needed to be validated with empirical evidence, before it could decide on the most appropriate policy options for the future utility of the ALP (MOE; 2009).

The above consultations notwithstanding, some implementing partners ended their support to ALP while others, such as IBIS, started to phase out their implementation plans. USAID, however, continued implementing what it termed as regular ALP and extended this to include skills training referred to as ALP-Plus. USAID's support to the regular ALP ended on 30 September 2011. UNICEF support to the ALP, on the other hand, is included within the current UNICEF/Government of Liberia Country Programme which ends in 2012 and preparations for the next one are underway. It is against this background that UNICEF

supported the Liberia Ministry of Education to carry out this evaluation. The evaluation focused on the extent to which the intended objectives of the ALP were achieved. It reviewed the documented information on the evolution of the programme from 1998 to date in order to highlight factors that may have influenced the programme's effectiveness and current status. However, the evaluation focused on the latest period of the ALP implementation, namely, 2007/2008 to 2011.

1.4 Description of the Accelerated Learning Programme

The goal of quality basic education being made available for all is enshrined in the 1990 Jomtien Declaration adopted by the World Conference on Education for All. This goal was reaffirmed at the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal, in April 2000. Efforts by Liberia to fulfil its obligation to implement these and the other international conventions to guarantee the right to basic education for all children in the country were, however, affected by the 14-year civil war. Despite this, the Constitution stipulates:

“there shall be equal access to educational opportunities and facilities for all citizens and residents to the extent of available resources”
(Liberian Constitution of 1986, repealed in 2000)

However, as a result of the war in Liberia, many children and adolescents were unable to participate in education in general and to join school at the right age in particular. At least six cycles of pre-primary education, two cycles of primary education, and three cycles of high school were lost due to the war. Only about 50 percent of the boys and 32 percent of the girls of school going age had access to primary education at the time. The remaining children were out of school (Watch List; 2004; Nicholson, 2007).

Efforts by the country to provide accelerated education to all children after the war started in 1998, immediately after the conclusion of the initial peace processes. Two Liberian ministers traveled to Uganda to learn how an accelerated learning programme, COPE, was being implemented there. After this trip ALP was conceived. The ALP has features that are slightly different from those of the conventional primary education in order to facilitate catching up with education by learners whose basic education was delayed due to the war. Table 2 below compares the main features of the ALP to the conventional primary school.

Table 2: Comparison of the main features of the ALP to the conventional primary school, Liberia.

| | Conventional Primary School | ALP Schools |
|---|---|--|
| Location status | Conventional Primary School | ALP Schools |
| Official learners' entry age | 10 years | 6 years |
| Official learners' maximum exit age | 18 years | 11 years |
| Length of the school cycle | 3 years | 6 years |
| Learners' placement | By academic transcripts and placement test results | By age qualification and academic transcripts |
| Learners officially qualifying to enrol | Multivariable: Male and female (including mothers and fathers) who were out of school; elementary school dropouts; those who have never enrolled in schools and are above the official school age; children whose education was disrupted by war, including ex-combatants; and learners attending life skills programmes supported by NGOs. | 6–11 year olds enrolling in primary schools or transferred from other conventional primary schools |
| Tuition fees | None | De facto payments |
| No-fee costs (e.g., provision of free teaching and learning materials) | Minimal | Mainly for copy books, uniforms |
| Presence of ALP curriculum and teacher materials | Available | Not available |
| Teacher qualifications | Post-high school graduates who will be willing to be tested and score at least 80%; trained on the ALP; or serving teachers willing to be trained on new methodologies, serve double shifts. Female teachers were more encouraged. Teachers for language arts required ability to speak 'standard English. | Certified teachers only. Teachers for language arts were not required to have the ability to speak "standard" English. |
| Memoranda Of Understanding (MOU) with Parents/ Teachers Association (PTA) | Yes | No |
| Time of classes | Afternoons | Mornings and afternoons |
| Direct support by IPs/EDPs | Yes | Through the Ministry of Education |
| Extra professional incentive | Yes | No |
| Learners' uniform | Optional | Compulsory |
| Number of required teachers | 2 teachers per level regardless of total number of learners |teachers per grade depending on the total number per learners |
| In-service teacher training | Available | Not available |

Table 1 above compares the different features of the ALP to those of the conventional primary education. While most ALP schools operated from the conventional primary schools; some of the features of the two modes of education delivery in Liberia, were different as demonstrated in the table

Documented evidence of ALP achievements and resilience

The ALP started as a phase-in pilot initiative. Two pilot phases were implemented between 1998 and 2001. The first pilot (1999–2000) implemented level I only of the ALP education delivery while the second pilot implemented levels I to III concurrently (2000–2001). Two academic evaluations were conducted before scaling up the ALP in 2000 and in 2001. The results of these evaluations indicated that academic achievements of the ALP learners and the ex-ALP learners at junior high school were comparable to those with the relevant formal education levels. Subsequent academic evaluations were administered by USAID (2008 and 2010) and results were the same as from the pilot phase (Nicholson, 2007; USAID, 2008; CESLY, 2010). In terms of reach, the pilot phase enrolled a total of 4,173 learners of whom 3,524 (84 percent) completed; 2,691(64 percent) were promoted to

subsequent levels and only 656 (16 percent) dropped out of the programme. The pilot phase covered a total of 9 out of 15 counties and 50 schools. (Nicholson; 2007)

Unfortunately, these achievements were interrupted by sporadic civil conflicts between 2000 and 2004. Many schools were closed and the 50 percent that did not remained insecure.⁷ The attrition rate of the learners in ALP increased, especially for girls (Nicholson, 2007). Many education records including those on ALP were lost, leaving the programme operating in a highly fragile environment and only in areas where peace had been restored. This compromised the implementation speed of the programme and the quality of its deliverables (Reported by Tokron Wayne and Patrick Davies⁸ Deputy ALP Coordinator, Ministry of Education, 2011; Nicholson, 2007)

The peace talks of 2004 ushered in the 2005 elections which in 2006 resulted in the first democratic government under the leadership of President Ellen Sirleaf. The new government embarked on promoting free and compulsory education as stipulated in the Education Law of 2001, approved in 2002, which advocated for free and compulsory education for six years of primary education. Evidence suggests that the implementation of free and compulsory education using this law was not enforced adequately due to the challenges the government was facing in reinstating the education system (ALP Coordinator). This meant many children and adolescents who were above the official age were still not in school; ALP, therefore, had to continue (Nicholson, 2007; USAID, 2008)

Amidst the interruptions, ALP continued to expand during the period 2006 to 2009. At least 12 implementation partners⁹ including the education development partners continued to implement the programme. However, because of the different mandates, the partners implemented the ALP in different ways (Nicholson, 2007) which posed a threat to the quality and efficiency of the programme (UNICEF, 2011). During this period the Ministry of Education announced it would end the programme. This announcement resulted in a withdrawal from ALP by 10 implementation partners in 2009, leaving only 3: UNICEF, USAID and IBIS. Despite the volatile situation, the withdrawal of the implementation partners and the decision of the ministry, 60,000 learners participated in ALP during this period, and the demand for the ALP increased to beyond the original age limit of 18 years set for the programme.

During the period 2006–2007, UNICEF supported the Ministry of Education to assess the status of ALP in order to determine its relevance before ending it. The assessment recommended the programme to continue for at least five years subject to the reduction of the adverse post-war education indicators in the country. This period culminated in the ministry proposing 2012 as the conclusion of ALP. At least two evaluations of the ALP that followed (2007 and 2008), recorded significant achievements from the programme. Reference to this period coincides with the great achievements recorded in the National School Census report of 2010, that between 2007/2008 and 2008/2009 primary education realized an overall

⁷Watch List on Children and Armed Conflict; 2004.

⁸The current Deputy ALP Coordinator; MOE Liberia

⁹Ministry of Education; UNICEF; The World Food Programme (WFP); The United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL); the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); the Children Assistance Programme (CAP); the Community and Human Development Agency (COHDA); Save the Children-UK; the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC); Creative Associates (CAII); IBIS; and Vision In Action (VIA).

increase of children in school that are within the official age- the (NER) of 28 percent The conclusions of all the evaluations, therefore, were that the ALP made a useful overall contribution to improving access to education for children who would have otherwise missed school; had been successful in maintaining equivalence with the formal education curriculum; and had shown resilience by surviving interruptions from war and mixed messages from the ministry.

1.5 Purpose of the assignment

Previous assessments and evaluations of ALP (Dr. Gbegbe; Dr Saydee and A. K Tarway-Twalla, 2000/2001; USAID, 2008; UNICEF, 2007; IBIS, 2008) indicated that the programme had been effective in terms of its impact on learner access to basic education and academic achievement. When tested, ALP learners performed similarly to those from the conventional primary school, in some cases even better. This evaluation will provide an updated situation regarding the extent that the ALP was relevant, efficient and effective to realize progress.

In addition, the timing of this evaluation is very important because while access to basic education is improving in Liberia the number of young people above the official school age in the education system in Liberia is very high. At least 63 percent in pre-primary education, 93 percent in Junior High School (JHS) and 94 percent in Senior High School (SHS) learners were above the official school age in Liberia in the 2008/2009 academic year. Hence a policy decision on the future utility of ALP should be guided by empirical evidence that includes the expectations of the young people. The results of the evaluation will therefore be widely disseminated for policy and related discussions at the national and, if possible, county levels in order to determine the future of ALP.

1.6 Evaluation Approach and Methodology

Management of the Evaluation

An ALP Evaluation Technical Committee comprising Ministry of Education officials, a representative of the implementing partners; UNICEF, and Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Systems (LISGIS) as created. This committee worked closely with the UNICEF consultant, in carrying out the day to day activities of the evaluation. The role of the committee was to: (i) design and oversee implementation of the field work; (ii) contribute to the preparation of research instruments; (iii) recruit and train the research assistants; and (vi) contribute to the validation of the findings from the evaluation.

Data Collection

This evaluation was based mostly on secondary evidence. Hence both quantitative and qualitative data were drawn from documents in the form of databases, plans, reports and related tools. To validate data from secondary evidence data was collected from at least 120 respondents from institutions and from the 5 sampled counties (33% of all the counties in Liberia). Field data was collected between 19 and 25 September 2011. Structured and semi-structured interviews were administered to establish the extent to which the ALP education was equivalent to the conventional primary education; and analysis of previous learner tests was carried out also to establish equivalence of the two education delivery modes. The evaluation had planned to carry out a comparative Content Analysis (CA) of the ALP and the

conventional primary education curriculums. This was later not done because the national curriculum had changed twice since the ALP was incepted in 1998. The national had changed in 2009 and most recently while that of the ALP had not changed. Hence the evaluation relied on results from previous assessments which were derived from secondary sources.

Area of study

This was a decisive evaluation of the implementation of ALP in Liberia. Hence, the study assessed the effectiveness of ALP as a strategic intervention to be considered for addressing the education and skills-need of children and young persons above the official school age in Liberia. To support secondary evidence, the study covered 5 of the 15 counties or 33 per cent of the total number. Accordingly, care was taken that the schools that were selected provided urban, peri-urban and rural representation. The technical committee went through a rigorous exercise of selecting the counties by using the criterion displayed table 2 below.

Table 2: Counties involved in the study

| S/N | Count | Criteria for selection |
|-----|-------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. | Bomi | Low ALP enrolment |
| 2. | Grand Bassa | Low girls and general ALP enrolment |
| 3. | Maryland | Low ALP enrolment |
| 4. | Montserrado | High ALP enrolment |
| 5. | Nimba | Highest ALP enrolment |

Initially, the evaluation had planned to sample 11 out of 15 counties. However, we later decided that 5 counties (33%) were sufficient to provide the needed information since, being summative, the study relied more on past documentary information. Data from the field were used to validate findings from the secondary sources.

Basic statistics of the sampled counties

Table 3: Distribution of population 10–18 years and the 10–18 years by sample counties, 2008

| County | Distribution of population 10-18 years by county | | | Distribution of 10-18 years out of school people | | | |
|-----------------------|--|----------------|---------------|--|--------------|--------------|-----------------|
| | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total | % out of school |
| Bomi | 7,696 | 6,772 | 14468 | 302 | 458 | 760 | 5 |
| Grand Bassa | 19,269 | 17,829 | 37098 | 875 | 1057 | 1932 | 5 |
| Maryland | 18,927 | 16,400 | 35327 | 535 | 599 | 1134 | 3 |
| Montserrado | 117,681 | 133,799 | 251480 | 5227 | 7246 | 12473 | 5 |
| Nimba | 51,611 | 45,495 | 97106 | 1337 | 1725 | 3062 | 3 |
| TOTAL | 215,184 | 220,295 | 435479 | 8276 | 11085 | 19361 | 4.4 |
| % of the total | 49% | 51% | 100% | 43 | 57 | 100 | - |

Source: National Population Census, Liberia; 2008

As per the above distribution, the proportion of the 10-18 year olds (the official ALP age range) in 2008 in the five sampled counties combined was 49 per cent male and 51 per cent females of the total population of the age range. The proportion of the 10-18 year olds who were out of school in the sampled counties ranged between 3 and 5 per cent of the total population of the 10-18 year olds in the county. The proportion of the 10-18 out of school people in two (Maryland and Nimba) out of the five sample counties was 3 per cent while in the remaining three sampled counties (Bomi, grand Bassa and Montserrado) was 5 per cent.

Selection of the respondents

To further validate the findings from the documentary evidence on ALP information was sought from people who were involved with ALP in some way - who included: i) Ministry of Education headquarters officials; ii) County education officers; iii) County education officers; iv) District education officers; v) PTA chairpersons PTA members/parents/guardians; vi) Regular primary school/ALP principals; v) ALP Teachers Regular primary school; vi) ALP teachers; vii) ALP learners; viii) Regular primary school learners; ix) Ex-ALP learners in the JHS grade 7 and x) Grade 7 JHS teachers xi) officials from the education development partners (EDPs) and from the ALP Implementing partners (IPs) .

Researchers

Eight researchers were recruited and where necessary they used locally based interpreters to translate information from local languages to English. The researchers went through two days of orientation during which they pre-tested and revised the questionnaire. The team of research assistants comprised four men and four women. We did this deliberately to ensure that interviews with female learners and the other female respondents would be more relaxed. Follow-up discussions with various government,

implementation partner and education development partner officials were also conducted. This helped further validate the findings obtained from the field.

Sources of information and Methods of Data Collection

A combination of methods was used to gather primary and secondary data (information):

- ✓ Documentary review/desk study
- ✓ Observations
- ✓ Focus group discussion with SWOT analyses by the learners, PTA members; representatives of the CBOs and local leaders; Ex-ALP learners; Ministry of Education officials; and representatives of the implementation partners
- ✓ SWOT analysis of the ALP by the implementation partners
- ✓ Interviews with CEOs; DEOs, Principals; ALP teachers; regular primary school teachers; MOE officials
- ✓ Questionnaires with CEOs and principals; representatives of the implementation partners
- ✓ The over 30-year experience in education delivery and programming proved useful in analysing data and making recommendations

Limitations of the Study

During fieldwork some ALP schools were no longer operational without the knowledge of both UNICEF and the MOE. Hence, researchers had to go to several schools before getting those that were operational. This took more time than planned. In a county such as Nimba where schools were sparsely distributed, researchers reached only 50 per cent of the sampled schools.

Secondly, the national curriculum had been reviewed twice while the ALP curriculum had not been reviewed since it was incepted in 1999. This limited the analysis to that of the proportion of reference to textbooks in the ALP teachers' guide adopted from an earlier assessment.

Finally; the evaluation received WAEC examination results of 2007 and 2008 in order to make a comparative analysis of the ALP implementing schools with the regular primary schools. Only a few schools from two populous sample counties (Nimba and Montserrado) were identified for analysis instead, as the exercise to identify ALP implementing schools from the 2007/2008 and 2008/2009 hard copies of the School Census Reports needed more time and personnel to get a wider coverage of schools. However, since the evaluation derived most data from documentary evidence the above limitations did not affect the validity of the findings. The randomly selected exam results of the schools that could be identified (as ALP and non-ALP) were consistent with the previous comparative assessments of the ALP and the regular primary school learners.

CHAPTER 2: NATURE OF THE PROBLEM AND RATIONALE FOR THE EVALUATION

2.1 The Problem

The primary school official age

The Education Reform Act of 2011 was launched by President Ellen Sirleaf in August 2011. The Act provides for an education legal framework in Liberia and defines the Liberian basic education of nine years of primary education as free and compulsory. It specifies the starting age of basic education as 6 years and that a child starting school above this age should be eligible for “special” lower education opportunities such as accelerated learning programmes. This provision also applies to children who would enrol aged above the 5 years officially stipulated for entry into pre-school (Government of Liberia; The Education Reform Act of 2011; Chapter 4, 4.5 a & b).

“Have right to education, but too old to fit easily in conventional education and too young to fit easily in adult education”

Before the launch of the Act, the official age range for primary school enrolment in Liberia was 6–11 years. However, introduction by the government of free education in 2006 saw a sharp increase in the number of children and adolescents of all ages in primary education after the war and by 18 percentage points of learners above the official age in primary education between 2005/2006 and 2006/2007. A sharp reduction (10 percentage points) of learners, was experienced in primary education between 2006/2007 and 2007/2008; and minimal annual reduction (7%) of children above the official school age in primary school between 2007/2008 and 2008/2009. (Source: Help ourselves; Nicholson; USAID: 2008; World Bank Status Report: 2010) If the trend of about 10 percentage points-increase of the NER is maintained annually, it will take Liberia 5 to 6 years to realize 100 NER. Table 4 is a statistical presentation of the contribution of ALP to the reduction of children above the official school age in Liberia from 2005/2006 to 2009/2010.

Table 4: Learner enrolment in ALP Classes in 2007/2008; 2008/2009 and 2009/2010

| 2005/06 | 2006/2007 | | | 2007/08 | | | 2008/09 | | | 2009/2010 | | |
|---------------|-----------|--------|---------------|---------|--------|---------------|---------|--------|---------------|-----------|--------|---------------|
| T | F | M | T | F | M | T | F | M | T | F | M | T |
| 47,668 | 24,762 | 28,935 | 53,697 | 35,575 | 40,245 | 75,820 | 31,282 | 37,331 | 68,613 | 15,518 | 17,764 | 33,282 |

Sources: Nicholson, 2007; EMIS-MOE 2008; 2009; 2010

According to the above table, the ALP has contributed to providing access to education to several children who would have gone without schooling. In 2007/2008 the programme managed to capture at least 5 per cent of children and young people above the official age who should have been in pre-schools, primary schools, JHS and SHS in Liberia. (2007/008 School Census Report)

However, despite these achievements, evidence reveals the presence of many children in Liberia enrolling well above the official age starting at pre-school and grade one. The alarming education situation in Liberia can be best presented by the wide discrepancy between the proportion of children and adolescents who are in school regardless of age, the gross enrolment ratio (GER), and the proportion of children in school who are not within the official school age for the levels, net enrolment ratio (NER), in 2008/2009 of 146 per cent

GER and 42 per cent NER.¹⁰ The situation reproduces itself in the higher education levels. In 2009, of the total number of learners in the Liberian schooling system (from pre-school to SHS including ALP) 56 per cent were above the official school age (Ministry of Education, School Census Report; 2010). In 2007 an almost equal number of the 6 year olds were in pre- and primary school; only 6 per cent of the 6 year olds were in grade 1.

Learner-dropout from school from reasons other than the exclusively war-related

Many children in Liberia, even those who have enrolled in primary school, drop out of school. Those who are enrolled in primary school drop out for various reasons such as: lack of school and examination fees; failure to proceed to JHS; failing the ad hoc grade one entrance literacy tests; pregnancy; and preferring boys to schooling. These factors contribute to the presence of children above the school age in and out of school.¹¹ Yet it is the youth in the post-war Liberia who comprise the majority and a group that due to lost literacy skills and knowledge acquisition during the war was hardest hit by unemployment. Evidence further reveals that between 2006 and 2008 for a cohort of 100 children who started grade one, left school before reaching grade six (Ministry of Education; The Education Sector Plan, 2011). Meanwhile, at least 53 per cent of children who were supposed to be in pre-primary in 2009 were not in school (54 per cent of these were girls) and 58 per cent of those who were supposed to have been in primary school (of whom 60 per cent were girls) were not in school either. During the same year 2009, of the total number of learners at JHS 93 per cent were not in school (93% girls), and 94% of the 15-17 year olds (94% girls) were not in school. Among the 6 to 14 year olds who were not attending primary and JHS/SHS (combined) in 2009, half (50 per cent) were girls (Ministry of Education; School Census Report, 2010).

TABLE 5: Distribution of children and young peoples 10 years and over by school attendance, single years of age, and sex, Liberia: 2008

| AGE | NEVER ATTENDED | | COMPLETED | | DROPOUT | | TOTAL PERSONS AT AGE | |
|----------------------|----------------|--------|------------|--------|------------|--------|----------------------|---------|
| | BOTH SEXES | FEMALE | BOTH SEXES | FEMALE | BOTH SEXES | FEMALE | BOTH SEXES | FEMALE |
| 10 | 32,888 | 1,6015 | 565 | 286 | 1,681 | 798 | 109,332 | 53,214 |
| 11 | 16,958 | 8,336 | 401 | 174 | 1,237 | 582 | 69,642 | 34,169 |
| 12 | 22,096 | 10,724 | 572 | 267 | 1843 | 947 | 90,873 | 44,034 |
| 13 | 15,354 | 7,798 | 454 | 226 | 1,780 | 914 | 72,411 | 36,385 |
| 14 | 17,011 | 8,452 | 497 | 247 | 2508 | 1,280 | 79,408 | 39,005 |
| 15 | 18,999 | 9,695 | 556 | 275 | 3,432 | 1,861 | 82,098 | 39,719 |
| 16 | 16,571 | 9,039 | 550 | 284 | 4,054 | 2,358 | 72,428 | 36,135 |
| 17 | 14,992 | 8,593 | 588 | 288 | 5,198 | 3,113 | 64,152 | 31,402 |
| 18 | 24,998 | 14,747 | 1,135 | 524 | 8,549 | 5,246 | 89,467 | 44,809 |
| TOTAL LIBERIA | 179,869 | 93,399 | 5,318 | 2,571 | 30,282 | 17,099 | 730,071 | 318,872 |

¹⁰ Ministry of Education; A case For Transformation: The 2008/09 National School Census Report; 2011.

¹¹ Ministry of Education, The Education Sector Plan; 2011.

Inequities in the problem of children and adolescents above the official school age in Liberia

Table 5 above presents data on the official age group for the ALP 10–18 years. The table indicates that at least that 56 per cent of all children and young people aged 10–18 years in 2008 never attended school and of this group 52 per cent were girls. Of all the children of the same age category that completed their education in the same year (2008) only 2 per cent had completed the appropriate education level; of these only 40 per cent were girls. At least 9 per cent dropped out of school, 56 per cent of whom were girls. The low completion and dropout rate of this age group indicates the low enrolment of this age group at the appropriate level. Children and young people of the same age category who were not in their education levels of school in 2008 (i.e. a combination of those who never attended and those who had dropped out at the time of the national population census) were 67 per cent, of whom 52 per cent were girls. This means that in 2008 only 33% of children aged 10 to 18 years were in their appropriate levels of education (Republic of Liberia, 2009). These children are present in a situation which the adult education and the vocational education systems are too weak to absorb the group.

All the above-described national issues manifest themselves differently within the equity framework. Evidence suggests geographical disparities regarding the presence of children and adolescents who are above the official age in Liberia. The highest net enrolment rate (NER) in 2008/2009 which reflects the proportion of children in school within the official age in Liberia was in Grand Kru and Montserrado each at 56 per cent while the lowest was in River Cess at 20 per cent. Evidence indicates that in 2008/2009 the national NER for male learners was 44 per cent and for the female learners it was 40 per cent. The GER was 112 per cent for male and 99 per cent for female learners indicating the male preference in primary education.

Underfunding of education

The ALP had by 2007/2008 been financed almost exclusively by the implementation partners. The proportion of the primary education budget in the overall education budget was only 29 per cent. This figure is much lower than the Fast Track Initiative (FTI)-recommended benchmark of 50 per cent (Ministry of Education; Education Sector Plan, 2011), and ALP does not feature at all in the budget except in the Pooled Fund at a proportion ofper cent of the Fund's budget. This underfunding of ALP jeopardizes the sustainability of the programme.

Absence of empirical evidence on the magnitude of the problem of children and adolescents above the school age, in and out of school in Liberia against the potential to address it

To meet the target of ensuring that by 2015 all children in Liberia, particularly girls and the other children in especially difficult circumstances, have access to and complete the nine-year free and compulsory primary education of good quality (EFA Goal No. 2), concerted efforts should be made to carry out in depth consideration of possible consequences, risks and opportunities for implementing the ALP or a similar programme, as evidence suggests that effects of war are long lasting.¹² The Education Sector Plan and the Education Reform Act

¹² Sixty years after the end of WWII, children in Germany who missed school then, had between 0.4 and 1.2 fewer years of schooling on average in adulthood. Source: Justino P Et al, **Education and Conflict Recovery: The Case of Timor Leste**, The World Bank; 2011.

2011 are comprehensive documents which provide feasible implementation and legal frameworks for continuing the efforts to provide children and adolescents with quality education in Liberia. The ongoing school mapping exercise and the UNICEF-supported national study on out-of-school children will provide data on the future utility of the ALP. Implementation of the new policy on compulsory and free basic education, introduced by the Education Reform Act 2011, will have implications on the future utility of ALP.

For these reasons the ALP had to be evaluated in 2011 to provide feedback on effectiveness of programme as a strategic intervention to ensure access to basic education equivalent to the mainstream primary education in Liberia.

2.3 Rationale for the evaluation

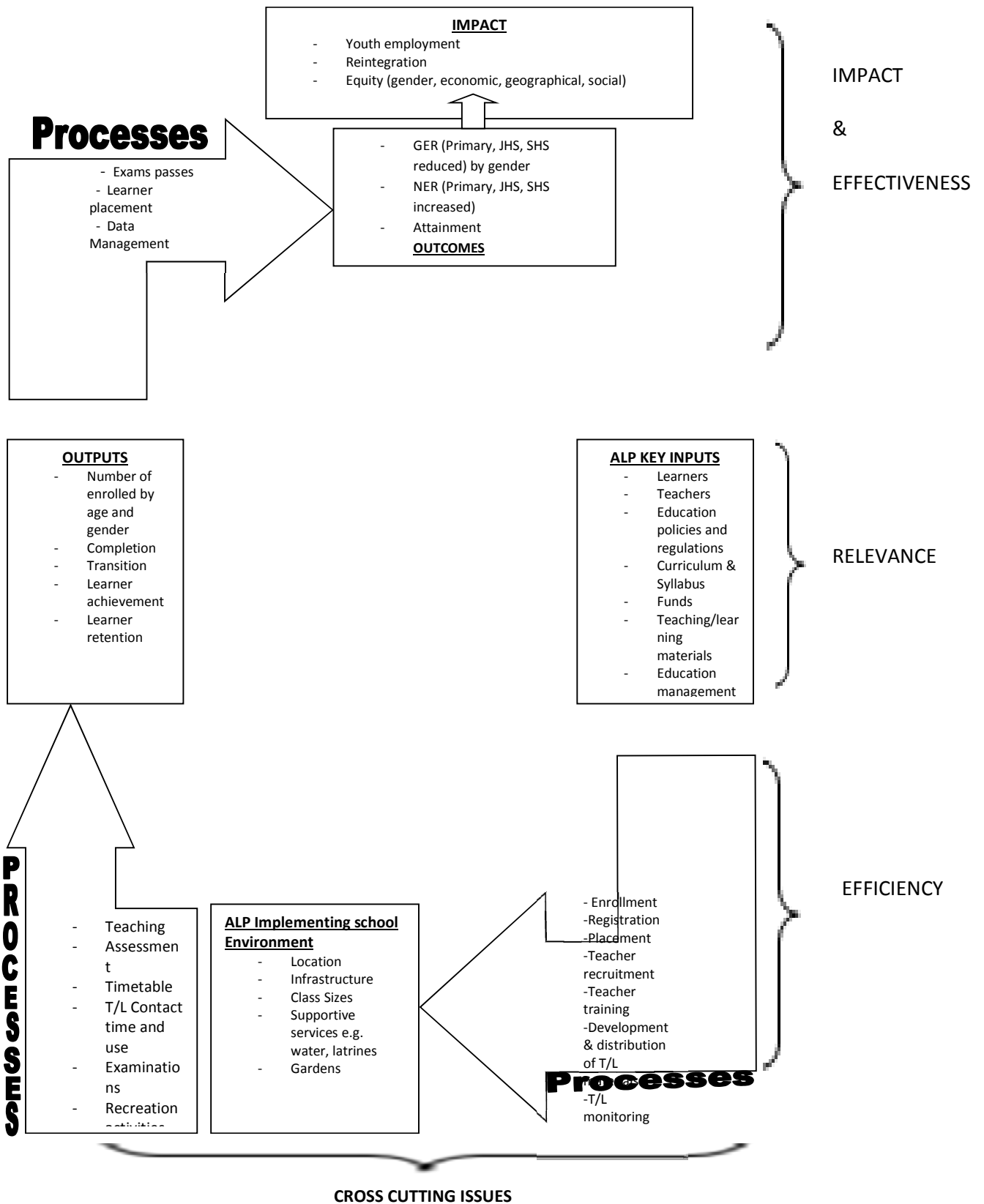
Since its inception, the Government of Liberia, in partnership with development partners, has been working on different policy, strategic and legal instruments and on activities which would graduate Liberia from a fragile to a regular development country. Several of these documents have been launched for implementation. These include education-related ones such as but not limited to: i) The Liberian Primary Education Recovery Programme aimed at getting the Liberian primary education back on track; ii) The Education Reform Act 2011; iii) The Education Sector Plan; and iv) The Girls' Education Policy. The relevant institutions are working on the implementation plans. This evaluation therefore is expected to provide information to these institutions including the MOE, on the relevance of ALP. The outcomes of these activities, combined with those from this evaluation, will concretise the sector's policy direction regarding equity-promotion as well as vulnerability and disparity reduction in education in Liberia (UNICEF, 2011). Such activities are: i) the on-going school mapping-for-micro-planning activity currently being undertaken by LISGIS; ii) UNICEF-supported study on Out of School Children (OOSC) in Liberia; and ii) the UNICEF/GOL country programme 2013–2018.

To fulfil the above task, the evaluation had to address fundamental questions such as: i) how the ALP was implemented; ii) whether it was the right thing to do in Liberia; iii) whether it was done the right way; (iv) if not, how it could have been implemented better; v) whether the country still needs the programme; and vi) if so, whether Liberia needs the programme as a whole or just some of its components for adaptation. To respond to these questions the evaluation investigated: i) the extent to which ALP was relevant to the country situation overtime in terms of the profile of the beneficiaries the programme was trying to serve and how the programme contributed to addressing inequities in education by providing children and adolescents in and out of school with access to quality basic education. To do this, the study assessed the relevance, availability and the use of different materials, methodologies and approaches to facilitate effective teaching and learning. The evaluation also reviewed the ALP planning and management of data and resources; and investigated the extent to which the Alp was a worth education programme. The evaluation had to establish the overall impact of the ALP on the key education constituencies: the government, the learners, and the families.

2.4 The Conceptual Framework

The objectives of the ALP were to: (i) facilitate school participation of older children who would otherwise stay out of school; (ii) integrate in and out of school children of 10 to 18 years into their age appropriate grades in the regular school system through an accelerated learning approach; and (iii) mainstream gender, Life Skills and HIV and AIDS education into the school programme. Hence, the following chapters present the analysis and discussion of the findings as per the following conceptual framework:

Evaluation of the ALP: Liberia: The Conceptual framework of the Effectiveness of the ALP



Discussion on the Findings

Guided by the ALP Policy Guidelines, the subsequent chapters consist of analysis and discussion on findings on the extent to which the ALP has been functioning. How the ALP implementing schools have been organised and what has been the profile of learners and their characteristics in terms of their age, educational and occupation backgrounds, and life experiences in general. The chapters further present the assessment of the teaching/learning inputs into the programme and the organisational processes that were applied to deliver the ALP; the environments the programme was operating at different levels of its delivery; the education outputs the programme achieved and the expected and unexpected outcomes that were attained by the programme. The chapters further describe the achievements made by the programme as derived from the literature review and perceived by the ALP learners and ex-learners themselves, teachers, education officials at different levels and other stakeholders. Along the lines with the ALP guidelines the analysis will also assess the extent to which the learning outcomes specified in the ALP guidelines were achieved. These include: i) Health and Life Skills ii) Readiness to enter the formal education system; or iii) Readiness to enter the workforce; iv) Agricultural skills demonstrated by school gardens and school animal husbandry; v) Physical education through sports and games; vi) Peace and Human Rights Education. Main findings are presented in bold in the beginning of the paragraphs.

CHAPTER 3: WHAT WENT INTO THE ALP

3.1 Introduction

The evaluation identifies the key inputs to the ALP as: i) the ALP learners; ii) the ALP teachers; and iii) Principals; iv) DEOs and CEOs. The second category of the inputs includes: i) curricula; ii) policies and regulations; iii) textbooks; and iv) teaching manuals by level and by subject as well as iv) the teachers' training manuals. No ALP-specific data was collected on the third category of inputs which includes: i) Copy books; ii) Desks and iii) textbooks and others. Most inputs in the third category were found to be the same as those for the regular primary school. The last major category comprises of funds that were injected into the ALP.

3.2 The learners

Profile

ALP learners were very heterogeneous in terms of age, gender, social status as well as educational and occupational backgrounds. This situation explains the complexity of the ALP delivery overtime. According to the ALP guidelines produced in 2008, children who qualified for admission into the programme had to include the out-of-school 10 – 18 year olds. Learners aged 19 years and above were to enrol in the adult education programmes. In setting the official age range for the ALP learners the policy guidelines, were attempting to institutionalise the ALP delivery which earlier had been enrolling learners of multiple ages. The 10 different age cohorts participating in the ALP between 1999 and 2009 indicated the very high demand for education by learners of different ages in Liberia in a situation of grave lack of school places which were destroyed by war. The different age cohorts participating in the ALP included: i) 8-10; ii) 8-14 ; iii) 7-18; iv) 8-16; v) 8-18; vi) 8-24; vii) 9-18; viii)10-17; ix) 12+; x) 19-35. These cohorts further indicate the presence of very young children and very old learners sitting in the same classrooms. This situation continued even after the production of the ALP guidelines due to among other reasons: the absence of any other elementary school in different locations; ALP was free; ALP had good teachers; and teaching and learning supplies was regular.

The 2007 assessment noted that:

“One aspect of the ALP that has not been adhered to is the age range for students in the programme. This has aggravated the mixed communications on student age throughout official project documents.....” (Nicholson; 2007 pg 30)

Learners above 18 years of age are instructed by the ALP policy guidelines, to join adult education which is still weak in Liberia unable to provide learners with the literacy; numeracy and vocational skills required by the labour market in the country (FYA; ESP; IBIS; USAID; ILO). Hence, while the intention of the guidelines was good, they were not in harmony with the situation on the ground. Strict adherence to these guidelines may have left some children and young persons aged below 8 and above 18 years of age who wanted to go to school to dropout from the ALP adding to the number of young people above the school age being out of school. The trend however is that learners above 18 years of age are phasing out of the ALP gradually. A review of ALP enrolment data indicate that 10-18 year

olds comprise over 70% while those below 10 years of age comprise 10% and those 19 and above years old comprise between 24 and 36% percent. Fifteen year olds identified by the World bank status report as critical in education comprise about 10 % of the totla ALP enrolment in the years 2007/2008, 2008/2009 and 2009/2010.

By targeting counties most affected by war when it was being incepted, the ALP reached out and provided a forum for social reintegration of children and young people who were most affected by the war in one way or the other including girls. They included: i) Children Affected by Fighting Forces (CAFFs); ii) returnee children; iii) internally displaced children; and iv) young mothers many of who were victims of war-associated sex crimes. According to the DHS women of ages 15 and 19 would have begun child bearing with rural areas most affected. This also contributed dropout of regular primary school. Out of 8 UNICEF-supported counties which were implementing the ALP in 2006 namely Bong; Bomi; Grand Gedeh; Lofa; Maryland and Montserrado the first four were from the border areas within which schools were concentrated in the rural areas which accounted for the most Liberian refugee children returning from Cote D’Ivoire, Guinea and Sierra Leone. These facilitated coverage of 81% of all children above the school age in 2006. Strategic targeting of the Montserrado county followed the effects of the .war which saw many people including children moving to Monrovia for safety. The evaluation concludes that the design of the ALP was rightly so, guided by economies of scale as they were directed to areas with the most quantitative need. This resulted into significant enrolments in both the ALP and conventional primary school during the initial implementation period of the ALP.

ALP accomodated young mothers whose numbers could not be established. However considering that immediately after the war enrollment of girls was only 32% (Help us Hep ourselves) table 7 below provides proportions of female enrolment in ALP which inturn indicate reducation in gender disparites in accessing basic education between boys and girls in in Liberia.

Table 7: ALP enrolment in 2006/2007; 2007/08; 2008/09 and 2009/2010¹³

| 2005/06 | 2006/2007 | | | 2007/08 | | | 2008/09 | | | 2009/2010 | | |
|---------|-----------|--------|--------|---------|--------|--------|---------|--------|--------|-----------|--------|--------|
| T | F | M | T | F | M | T | F | M | T | F | M | T |
| 47,668 | 24,762 | 28,935 | 53,697 | 35,575 | 40,245 | 75,820 | 31,282 | 37,331 | 68,613 | 15,518 | 17,764 | 33,282 |

Living with the mother only in Liberia has been identified as a possible driver of children not accessing school. (W Bank the Opportunities stuy) Of....ALP learners interviewed.....% were living with mothers only. Hence the ALP managed to reach out to shildren who might have missed education. Data on educational and occupational backgrounds of the ALP learners was not readily available as well as data on ALP learners those who had never enrolled in schools, CAFFs and learners who were attending life skills programmes supported by NGOs, even though the data are important for establishing the effectiveness of the programme

Ex-ALP learners in JHS and in community in the four sample counties reported to have had occupations such as teaching; bookkeepers; small business. Since evidence suggest that learners’ individual and collective profiles and experiences have a significant role in determining their motives to enrol in an accelerated programme as the ALP; when asked what prompted to join the ALP most of the m said because it was free followed by the fact that they needed to get good education and others just to be literate. The IBIS baseline study of 2008 recorded that some ALP students in the southwest of the country dropped out as soon as they acquired literacy and numeracy skills.

¹³ Data on 2006/2007 was extracted from Nicholson; 2007 and data on 2007/08 and 2008/09 is from the School Census Report while that on 2009/2010¹³ is from the MOE EMIS Officer.

Box 1: Sample reasons of some ALP students from southwest Liberia, for joining the ALP

Main reasons for which the ALP learners, Ex-ALP learners in community and in JHS enrolled in the ALP:

- ✓ No money to pay for regular primary school fees
- ✓ ALP provides good education
- ✓ Learn faster
- ✓ No space in the regular school
- ✓ Continue with education in JHS
- ✓ Above the official age for the regular primary education
- ✓ ALP had better teachers

Source: Field Data (Bomi, Grand Bassa; Maryland; Montserrado and Nimba); 2011

ALP Enrolment

The ALP facilitated in an expeditious fashion; access to primary schooling by children and young people in Liberia in a situation of 80 percent of school buildings were destroyed by the war and contributed to the reduction of children who were above the official school age in the regular primary school in Liberia. The influx of learners into the ALP resulted in developing partners embarking on construction ALP schools and/or rehabilitating damaged schools (NRC, UNICEF; IBIS). This saw a 5% points increase of primary education GER with the ALP from 103% in 2005/2006 to 108% and an increase of primary education NER from 37% in 2005/2006 to 45% in 2009/2010 (Sources: World Bank – 2011 and MOE-EMIS: 2008; 2010; 2011).

Table 8: Contribution of the ALP to the GER and the NER of the regular primary education

| RATIO/YEAR | 2005/06 | 2007/08 | 2008/09 | 2009/2010 |
|-------------------------|---------|---------|---------|-----------|
| NER Primary | 37 | 33 | 42 | 45 |
| GER Primary without ALP | 45 | 89 | 106 | 98.63 |
| ALP Enrolments | 47,668 | 75,820 | 68,613 | 33,282 |
| GER Primary with ALP | 103 | 108 | 100 | 99 |

Source: World Bank; Liberia Education Status Report; 2010; MOE, EMIS, 2011

Even though a high GER is undesirable in an education system, given the very high presence of children and adolescents that were above the official age in Liberia during the referenced time period, we can conclude that the ALP increased access to education by children and adolescents in this group. By accommodating learners who were above the official school age, the ALP also contributed to the increase of children within the school official school age range in the regular primary school. Meanwhile, the narrow age range of 10-18 specified in the ALP guidelines while geared to mitigate inefficiency in the basic education system by minimising learners above the official school age; may have barred prospective learners who were above 18 to benefit from the programme. We further note that the absence of a viable post-primary education system to provide post-primary school education to the ALP graduates. Many ex-ALP learners in community who were interviewed recently said in Lierian English they were “just sitting down” with their parents at home. There was no quantitative data to verify the responses.

3.3 Principals

That ALP operates in public schools; its principals are the same as those of regular primary school. Professional qualifications of the principals vary from those holding grade C teaching certificates to those with Bachelors' degree as presented below from the five evaluation sample counties:

Table 8: Distribution of the ALP principals in the sample counties by sex and academic/professional qualifications

| COUNTY | SEX | | | PROFESSIONAL/ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS | | | |
|--------------|-------|------|--------|--------------------------------------|---|---|-----------|
| | TOTAL | MALE | FEMALE | C | B | A | BACHELORS |
| BOMI | 5 | 4 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| G/BASSA | 6 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| M/LAND | 7 | 6 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 0 |
| MONTSEERRADO | 8 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 5 |
| NIMBA | 11 | 10 | 1 | 9 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| TOTAL | 37 | 31 | 6 | 15 | 7 | 9 | 5 |

Overall, Nimba had the least qualified principals with the more urban Montserrado having had the highest qualified principals. Most principals were male (31/37).

3.4 Teachers

The default use of conventional primary school teachers facilitated equivalent and even higher quality of teachers with that of conventional primary schools. Most (99%) of the the ALP teachers were from the conventional primary education. Hence the shortage of teachers in the regular primary school has been mirrored in the ALP too. (Nicholson; 2007; DevTech Inc.; 2008; FYA 2009).

This section provides findings on the profile of teachers in terms of: i) the presence of ALP teachers through the use of the PTR; ii) trained or not; an iii) male and female) Before the production of the ALP guidelines, the ALP programme design was to have at least 500 grade C or B teachers who were to be exclusive for the ALP. However the programme could not find that many because they had not yet returned from the internal and external refugee camps hence the use of the conventional primary school teachers in the ALP. teachers (Source: Separate interviews with Tokron Wayne and John Summo; Pioneer Educationists for the ALP; 2011).

According to the School Census report of the total number of teachers in primary schools in the system in 2007/2008, only 40 per cent were trained of whom 14% were women. Similarly, in 2008/09 of the 48% primary teachers who were trained only 15% only were female, a similar proportion as in the ALP. This necessitated specific training on ALP teaching methods. Specifically in the ALP 22% had teaching qualifications in 2006 (Nicholson) while in 2007, 46% had teaching qualifications which was an improvement by 24% points within one year. ALP teachers however are also expected to undergo specialized training on the ALP methodologies. ALP teachers had to have at least a high school certificate or a grade C certificate to teach. Government schools however restricted ALP teaching to certified teachers only.

Table 9: PTR in ALP

| 2006/2007 ¹⁴ | | | 2007/08 | | | 2008/09 | | |
|-------------------------|----------|-----|----------|----------|-----|----------|----------|-----|
| Learners | Teachers | PTR | Learners | Teachers | PTR | Learners | Teachers | PTR |
| 53,697 | 2,585 | 21 | 75,820 | 3099 | 24 | 68,613 | 2632 | 26 |

The ALP has had low Pupil Teacher Rate (PTR). Table 9 above indicates a slight annual increase in the ration due to the increase of the ALP learners. This situation may have been attributed to the presence of volunteer teachers. Since the recommended ALP class size is 30 learners; the ALP actual PTR is below the recommended one. Considering the investments made on the ALP teacher training, supervision; material production and incentive-payment to teachers, this can be translated as an underutilization of teachers in the ALP. A separate study may be carried out on the effectiveness of teachers in primary school and the potential of the ALP volunteer teachers. Meanwhile the gender distribution of female ALP teachers is almost similar o that of the regular primary school. Table ...below indicates a consistnt 15% female teachers of the total ALP teachers which is higher by 1% than that of the regular school.

Table 10: Gender distribution of the ALP teachers in 2007/2008 and 2008/2009.

| 2007/08 | | | 2008/09 | | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Total number of ALP Teachers | Total number of ALP Female teachers | % of the ALP Female teachers | Total number of ALP Teachers | Total number of ALP Female teachers | Total % of the ALP Female teachers |
| 3,099 | 474 | 15 | 2,632 | 398 | 15 |

Source:

A worrisome situation however is that of decrease of female ALP teachers from 18% in 2003 to 14% in 2008/2009. (UNICEF annual Report 2009; MOE, School Census Report 2008/2009)

3.5 Policies and regulations

The ALP has been operating without de jure guidelines for ten years (1998- 2008). However, lately the ALP has been operating in a policy context which provides for its legitimacy following recognition by the Education Reform Act of 2011, of the accelerated education as a delivery mode for learners above the official school age in Liberia; its inclusion in the Primary Education Reform Programme and in the ESP, as well as the presence of the ALP guidelines the latter since 2008. The ALP was developed in consideration of this age of the age limit set by the Education Law of 2000 which 6-11 as the official age for primary education. The ALP guidelines highlight the official age range of 10-18years of age for the delivery mode. Before the war in the absence of ALP guidelines, the IPs were simply responding to the demand of the time by admitting all the children above the official school age. From the child-rights' point of view age was not a barrier to accessing primay education to all who missed it uring the war. However; ALP policy guidelines issued the 10-18 age range, guidelines on how to address potential learners who were below 10 years of age but were above 6 years of age in a situation which in some areas conventional primary schools were either non-existent or scarce. This may have contributed to the slow progress of the primary NER as compared to the GER trends. Another impact of

¹⁴ Source Nicholson 2007

the absence of the guidelines was the adhoc manner the ALP was being implemented in some areas. Some implmenters were initiating schools in premises that were not allowed by the MOE and did not have the right qualifications to deliver education. (Separate interviews with Stella Kaabwe; and Bernard Batidzirai; Chief and Deputy Chief o Education respectively; UNICEF Liberia; 2011). This resulted into some ALP learners being categorised as “unofficial” by the 2008/09 School Census Report and accounted for the decline of the ALP learners recorded between 2007/08 and 2008/09 by 10%.

3.6 ALP Curriculum

The content of the ALP curriculum has been reflecting that of the conventional education, however it is set in a way that it is only responsive to the school dropout and not the never enrolled because level I has few content on literacy and numeracy skills and even though the national primary curriculum was revised in the ALP has not been done so. (Source; IBIS Baseline study; ALP Coordinator – MOE). As the conventional primary, the ALP curriculum delivers four core subjects namely: i) language Arts; ii) Science; iii) Mathematics and iv) Social Studies; and four complementary subjects: i) agriculture; ii) physical education; iii) peace/human rights; iv) HIV prevention. According to the ALP policy guidelines, after the delivery of the above subjects, learners would realise the following outcomes: i) Health and Life Skills; ii) Readiness to enter the formal education system, and iii) Readiness to enter the formal education system.

An attempt was made by the consultant to carry out Content Analysis (CA) of the curriculum in general and the core subjects in particular starting with the HIV Skills education. However, in view of the fact that the ALP dates back to 1999 while the conventional curriculum has changed from the one developed in 1980 to the one developed in 2009 to the latest developed in 2011 and the rigourous nature of the exercise involving a review of the curriculums, textbooks and teaching manuals needed a team to carry out. It would require a separate exercise which would result in updating the ALP curriculum in line with those of conventional primary education. Meanwhile, selected evaluations overtime assessed learners from both the ALP and the conventional primary schools. In some cases teachers were asked to rate their learners’ performance. The following table summarises the key findings.

Table 11: Summary of key findings on equivalence of ALP and conventional primary school education in Liberia

| Name/source of Test/Testing institutions | Year | Subject/s | Learners tested | | Results/Comments |
|--|-----------|--|---|-----|--|
| | | | Regular | ALP | |
| Academic 2000-2001 Achievement Exams results . | 2001-2001 | 04 core subjects | V | V | Overall ALP learners did slightly better than regular primary learners. Source: Nicholson 2007 |
| Evaluation of the ALP by Dr Saydee and A. K Tarway-Twalla. | 2001 | 04 core subjects | V | V | 53.2% of tested learners found academically good; 31.05% very good; 7.6% found excellent and fair. Source: Nicholson 2007. Extracted from the report: The Accelerated Learning Programme Activity 1998-2003 |
| Examination of the students' scholarstic report. | 2007 | - | - | V | 'Mean scores relatively good' Source: Nicholson 2007 |
| DevTech Systems, Inc; Accelerated Learning Programme-PLUS USAID. | 2008 | Mathematics & Language Arts for Level II & III and grade 3 & 5 | 806 | | '...students in general are performing at least as well as those younger students who are following a conventional six year primary cycle of education. ALP learners score higher in mathematics than conventional learners but lower in language. Source: DevTech Systems Inc; Mid Term review: ALP regular and ALP-PLUS, 2008 |
| RTI assessment of reading and numeracy skills acquisition in CESLY ALP schools; | 2011 | Letter naming Fluency, Unfamiliar Word Fluency & Listening Comprehension | V | V | Letter naming Fluency, and Listening Comprehension for CESLY students were nearly equivalent – over 70 for both. However, reading comprehension and other two skills (reading and math skills), scored 17 and below – by implication this status was for both. Source: Cummins P and Sheriff F; Core Education Skills For Liberian Youth Project: Mid Term Evaluation; June 2011 |
| UNICEF/MOE evaluation of the ALP, Liberia; 2011 Questionnaire to...grade 7 JHS teachers views on the performance of ex-ALP learners in their classe | 2011 | Generally | Teacher ratings of the ex-ALP learners in JHS grade 7 | | 90% of the interviewed teachers had ex-ALP learners in their classes. 9% of the interviewed teachers rated these learners as excellent, 46% as very good; 36% as good and 9% did not respond. |
| UNICEF/MOE evaluation of the ALP, Liberia; 2011 Comparative analysis of the WAEC examination results: 2007 and 2008 | 2011 | School pass rate | V | V | To demonstrate equivalence of achievement of the ALP and conventional schools' WAEC grade 6 examinations' candidates; the evaluation randomly adopted 2007 WAEC results from 5 ALP implementing schools and 5 non-ALP implementing schools in Montserrado and 4 ALP implementing schools and 4 non-implementing schools in Nimba that had more than 100 candidates each. The two counties were selected due to the high learner population. The results were consistent with the |

| | | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|---|
| | | | | | earlier comparative academic assessments of learners from the ALP and from the regular primary schools that: the performance was the same in some cases the ALP was better. |
|--|--|--|--|--|---|

In addition to the analysis of the content of the ALP and the regular primary school curriculum, the evaluation reviewed literature on results from tests which were carried out in earlier evaluations for both the ALP and students in the regular primary school in 2000/01, 2007, 2008¹⁵, and 2010.

All the above evaluations noted that the ALP learners performed at the same level with - in some cases better - than those in the conventional primary schools in the four core subjects (Language Arts; Science; Mathematics and Social Studies). A major finding from the test conducted by the Mid-term evaluation of 2008 to selected learners however, revealed that students were not encouraged to read to reinforce literacy skills that they would have acquired. The evaluation also noted deficiency in cognition skills of the ALP learners:

“...the students of level II and grade 3.....solved even the simplest problems by counting their fingers or using hash marks on paper...” USAID; 2009)

The above may also be a reflection of the low academic levels of the ALP teachers and inadequacy among them in teaching skills.

3.7 Teachers’ manuals; Textbooks and other teaching/learning materials

The use of the same text books as of the conventional primary education albeit by default was inevitable. However, since the ALP curriculum content was collapsed and the content of the textbooks was not; some topics from the latter were left out and as with the curriculum, the manuals were developed in 1999 while some of the textbooks were developed/ updated much later. Hence the evaluation probed the extent to which the content of the materials (books and manuals) were consistent with the objectives of the programme. According to the ALP policy guidelines the programme was expected to use existing primary education textbooks. Information from pioneers of the ALP in Liberia informed the evaluation that between 1999 and 2000 the ALP committee had considered to develop teachers’ manuals, curricula and textbooks specific for the ALP. It was possible for the former two while for the latter it was never to be. It was however decided to adapt the national textbooks which were in place before the war because as at the time of the inception of the ALP, the country was still very fragile and had not fully graduated into a national state. The evaluation identifies this as one indicator of the resilience of the ALP which continued above the national disintegration then.

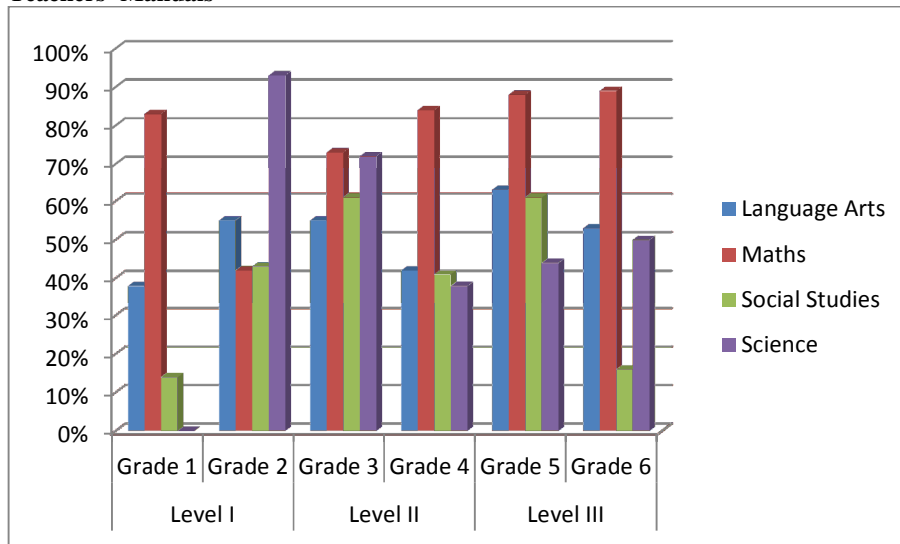
Regarding the availability of teaching and learning materials, the MOE has with the support of UNICEF, been printing the ALP curriculums, sets of teachers’ manuals and textbooks for the IPs to distribute. The availability of the textbooks was erratic and hence textbooks were not always available in the ALP schools just as was the case in the regular primary schools. (Interview with Stella Kaabwe: Chief of Education; UNICEF, Liberia. 2007-2011). Of the 35 principals interviewed in the field only 5 (14%) indicated that their schools used textbooks regularly. Considering the collapsed nature of the ALP curriculum and the participatory, learner-centered nature of the ALP periods, textbooks were a necessary

¹⁵ DevTech Systems, Inc. for USAID, Accelerated Learning Programme – PLUS Mid Term Review; 2008

tool in order to maximise on the instructional time as well as to facilitate self-study for the usually older learners in the ALP.

In the process of condensing the regular primary education curriculum; a significant proportion of the content was skipped in the teachers’ manuals as indicated in the diagram. This aspect compromised the amount and type of primary knowledge the ALP learners were missing as a result of non-synthesis for the ALP textbooks which would reflect the condensation of its curriculum. Of interest was that some officials from some of the long-time ALP providers had all long taken it that the ALP was using different textbooks from those of the regular programme – which is supposed to be the case. Teachers’ manuals ALP teachers had used teachers’ manuals for step-by-step guidance to teach contents of a subject in individual lessons. For each lesson the manuals provide teachers with: i) lesson objectives; number of periods and duration for a particular topic; ii) key learning points; iii) expected outcome from the lesson; iv) teaching and learning materials to be used; v) key steps to be followed in delivering the lesson; and vi) questions to pupils at the end of the lesson to check if the lesson has been understood.

Diagram 1: Proportion of pages in the textbooks for the regular primary schools, referred to by the ALP Teachers’ Manuals



Adapted from: Nicholson; 2007

As per the above status: the foundation of literacy in English is compromised by the adoption of 38% coverage only of the subject at level I. On the other hand this was strategic especially for learners in rural areas who barely speak even Liberian English. Researchers in Nimba had in most cases had to find local language interpreters during interviews with learners. Mathematics on the other hand has substantive adoption from grade 1 content of 83% but leaving out 68 per cent of the content in grade 2. However Mathematics is the only subject that adopted content from the textbooks mostly of not less 80. An independent study to check this against the performance of ALP learners in this subject would be of interest.

Adoption of topics from the social studies textbooks was minimal- from grade 1 and 6 contents gravely so. This is worrying given the multi-subject nature of this subject. The science subject adopted mostly at least 50% of the textbook content with absolutely no adoption of grade 1 science content. We made a brief analysis of the proportion of topics referred to in the manuals at level three. Preparedness for grade six examinations and further formal education is one of the key learning outcomes specified in the ALP guidelines and

THE teacher's manual for Social Studies level III clearly instructs teachers in bolded capital letters that:

“DO NOT FORGET THAT PUPILS MUST BE FULLY READY TO TACKLE THEIR SEVENTH GRADE SCIENCE BY THE END OF THE LEVEL” (MOE; Social Studies Teachers' manual, level II, 1999)

A review of the Language Arts subject manuals did not show the presence of a unit “Writing Skills” for the crucial levels I and II even though it has a unit on “Written Communication”. The latter can be better taught after learners know the skills of writing before applying the concept of written communication. Due to limited time available the evaluation could not do a comparative analysis of topics in the regular primary school textbooks against those in the ALP teachers' manuals to identify which ones were dropped to determine possible effect on the scope of knowledge and skills acquired by the ALP learners in comparison to what the regular acquired.

3.8 Teachers' training manuals

The ALP master teacher training concentrated more on imparting to the ALP teachers, pedagogical skills and not so much on subject mastery. The ALP curriculum delivery is learner-centred requiring teachers to receive special training albeit briefly. Teachers were initially trained for 8 – 10 days and re-trained for 2-5 days. However the evaluation did not find any information regarding whether mastery of the ALP core subjects was a criterion for hiring the ALP teachers. A review of the master training manual and as noted by both the UNICEF supported ALP assessment of the 2007 and the USAID of 2009 indicated that Out of a total of 68¹⁶ topics that have been taught to ALP teachers (including introductions to the topics and Wrapup preview and Feedback) of the Accelerated Learning Programme master Trainer manual (2005 edition) to orient teachers, only 5 topics or 7% have subject content in: History of ALP in Liberia (topic number 5); What is Accelerated Learning? (topic 6); ALP Key Principles (topic 10) and HIV/AIDS (topic 31). And out of 29 reference source materials appended to the master training manual; only 4 provided some content on the subjects: i) History of ALP; ii) Girls' Education; iii) Accelerated Learning Principles and Learning Styles; and iv) Sexual Exploitation and HIV. Following a rapid needs assessment of 2008, IBIS embarked on improving ALP teachers' mastery of subject contents through academic upgrading of these teachers. (Surce; One-on-one interview; Baseline Report 2008). Generally, the content of the master trainer manual was found to be too high for the unprofessional teachers. Inconsistency between the participatory methodologies proposed for the ALP class teaching with the predominantly lecture methods in teacher training due to large teacher training classes and few trainers was noted in earlier evaluations. (Nicholson 2007)

3.9 Education Officials

During the ALP implementation the MOE provided the institutional framework for operationalizing the ALP; by contributing to the ALP, in-kind costs especially by providing staff and institutional structures for delivering the programme. The ALP has a national coordinator assisted by a deputy. The two are fulltime officers for the ALP fully paid by the MOE – a demonstration of its commitment to the programme. Assistant minister managing the programme; Fifteen (15) County Education officers; recently up to 106 District

Education Officers (DEOs); vi) School Principals; vii) teachers some of whom trained by the GOL; Curriculum developers and developers of the teaching and learning materials. The monetary value of the MOE contribution to the ALP overtime could not be established due to the limited time available for the evaluation; this might have to be investigated further. However, given that the scheme of work for the MOE has not been finalised yet, payment in salaries especially that of teachers is flat thus compromising teacher morale (IBIS; FYA; USAID).

3.10 Funds

Free education

Through the IPs’ financing of the fee and non-fee expenditures, the ALP provided access to primary education by learners from poor families who otherwise they would have missed school at the time the conventional schools were paying fees. During the war, many Liberians including parents lost property. Shelters were burnt down and property seized. Productive activities and provision of basic services also collapsed thus eroding the income sources of most Liberians consequently their ability to send their children to school. Evidence suggests that only those most able to pay for public education in Liberia, were likely to attend a public school and reducing non-fee expenses from households increased opportunities for access to education. (World Bank (2011, Opportunities) study) Further households would not have afforded to pay for both the official and the non-official school age children. (World Bank; Status Report; 2011). In the situation it was founded, full funding of the ALP was therefore critical. This explains the fact that ALP was a stand-alone project within the UNICEF-supported education programme and within programmes of the other IPs such as SAVE and IBIS. The financial support was predictably, attractive to both learners and parents who did not have to pay tuition fees, and if they had to the non-fee costs that they paid were usually minimal. Most of the ALP and ex-ALP learners interviewed in the five sample counties cited the main reason for joining the programme was because it was free.

Government contribution

At government level, at 2.9% of GDP in 2007/8, public spending on education in Liberia is lower than in other conflict countries in the region and well below the share of public spending in Sub-Saharan Africa (13% vs. 20% of public spending, respectively). However, spending on education has since 2005/06 increased in Liberia due to GOL’s raising public spending and increases in education financing by international donors. (World Bank 2010).

Support from the Communities

Box 2: Indirect costs of communities within which the ALP was being implemented

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Fix hand pumps ✓ Counsel learners ✓ House-to-house learner enrolment ✓ Supervising peace clubs ✓ Pay volunteer teachers ✓ Keep school gardens |
|--|

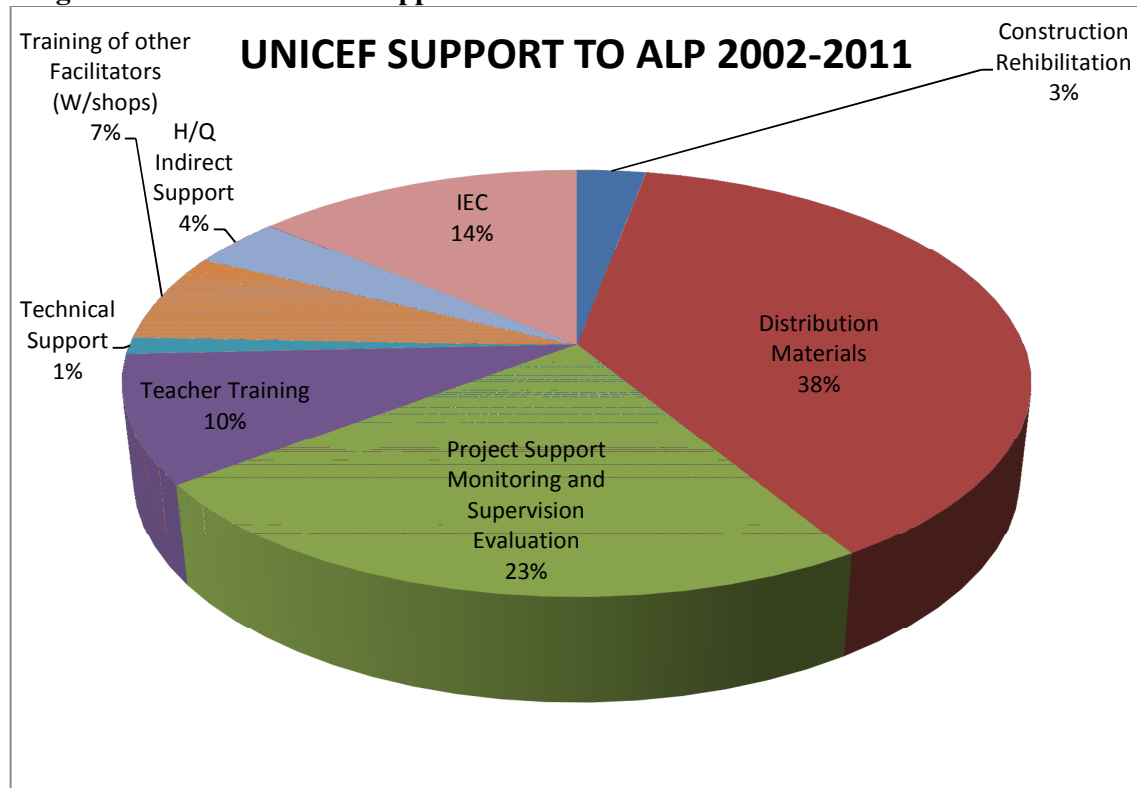
Support from the other key players

The EDPs and the IPs paid for the overall management of their ALP schools and for: i) teacher incentives; ii) production and distribution of the teaching learning materials; iii) teacher training; iv) supervision and monitoring of teaching and learning; v) community awareness creation; vi) uniforms; viii) school construction and rehabilitation; ix) data management through, monitoring, data collection storage and reporting; x) sports and games; xi) school meals and xii) learners' examination fees; . (Nicholson; 2007.....USAID) Other costs were for: project support which included staff salaries, consultancies, monitoring and visitations. With the withdrawal of the IPs from the ALP, the Education Pooled funding has taken over these costs. UNICEF has been a major funder of the ALP in Liberia and the main catalyst for the Education Pooled Fund. Contribution into the pooled fund by UNICEF has been in three installments: \$2.2 million; \$12 million \$ and \$3 million in 2010. (UNICEF Liberia, 2011) Through the pooled fund the MOE could pay teacher incentives directly. Before teacher incentives were being paid by UNICEF through IPs CODHA and CAP. Details of the pooled fund will be discussed in the ALP processes. The evaluation finds these costs albeit many (and high), as inevitable considering the situation then because as stated in the UNICEF donor report to the DFID PBA SC/2005/0506 (2006) if these costs were not met:

“...ALP would likely have fallen apart.....” page 4

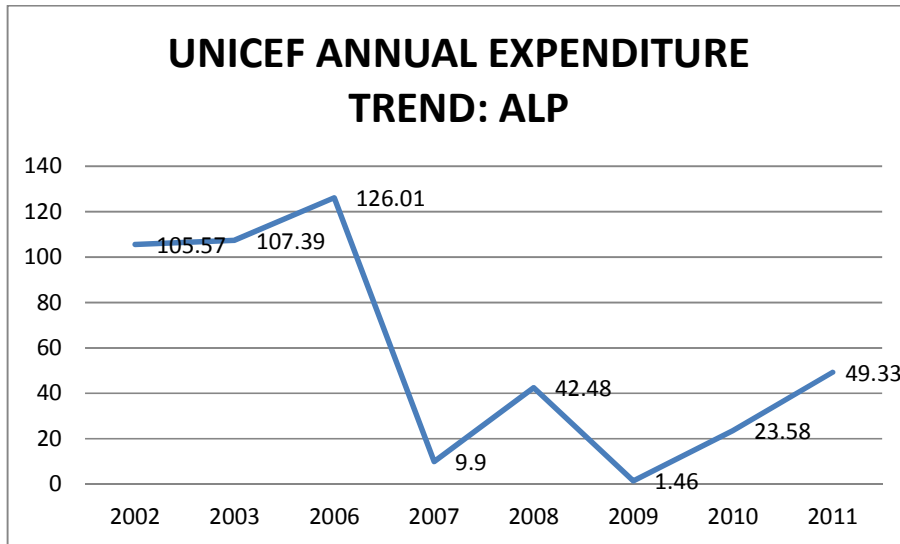
-supported USAID calculated the unit costs of the ALP and the ALP+ found it high considering the number of learners it was reaching. The per capita cost of the CAII supported learners was \$200; THINK Inc it was \$124 and Talking Drums it was \$14. The evaluation could not fully get budgets and expenditures for the ALP of all the IPs. Below is a presentation of the direct cost by UNICEF between 2002 and 2011. The figures represent direct costs to supporting the ALP but exclude UNICEF staff costs:

Diagram 2: UNICEF direct support to the ALP: 2002-2011



For the period of nine years (2002 – 2011) UNICEF invested directly to the ALP at least \$ **4,657,225.17**. Funds allocation appears more or less evenly distributed most of committed to the production and distribution of teaching and learning materials such as teachers’ manuals; school-in – a box and learners copy books. Project support which included sub-contracting of national implementing institutions came second. Given the weak supervisory systems in the MOE the allocation was inevitable. The 14 percent expenditure in IEC demonstrates the role that IEC played in enrolling and maintaining ALP learners.

Diagram 3: Annual trend of direct UNICEF financial support to the ALP



The above chart indicates the annual direct support to the ALP from UNICEF. The highest expenditures were experienced in 2006 the year of the inception of the first democratically-elected government after the war. A sharp decline of funds into the Alp may have been a result of a change of implementation modalities from providing support through IPs to direct funding to MOE. The latter change resulted to an increase in expenditure between 2007 and 2008 to fall again in 2009. The rise in expenditure in 2010/2011 may be attributed by the expansion to the four last counties to join the ALP (Sinoe, River Cess, Grand Bassa and).

The evaluation deduces that the per capita costs would decrease with MOE direct management of the programme; and wider reach of the ALP as with the latter some operational costs such as the EDPs and the MOE staff salaries would remain the same regardless of the numbers of the ALP learners to be reached. If we were take the total expenditure of US **4,657,225.17** taking the number of learners in ALP 2005/2006 to 2010/2011 who were receiving UNICEF (totaling 225,183) the unit cost of UNICEF support to ALP would be \$**21**. Compared to the per capita costs of CAII (\$ 200) and THINK Inc (\$124) the evaluation observes that the less the learners the higher the pre-capita income.

3.11 School meals

Albeit by default, the WFP in the process of supporting attendance and retention in the public conventional primary schools also supported the ALP learners with school meals especially the young mother-learners as they (WFP) could not:

“Draw a line between the ALP and the conventional primary school”
(Fued Adem, programme officer WFP; Interview)

In 2010 WFP supplied a total of 11972.663 to 1415 schools in Liberia.¹⁷ Since WFP only provide meals in public school the assumption would be that ALP learners benefitted from the school feeding. The UNICEF assessment of ALP implementation noted increase in school attendance and retention of learners-especially learner-mothers in the ALP classes. Young/teenage mothers that the WFP had been providing dry rations for taking home. However 24 out of 35 principals of regular schools from the five sample counties interviewed during the evaluation reported that their Alp streams did not receive school meals and rations during the past year.

¹⁷ WFP; A Review of the WFP Supported School Feeding Programme in Liberia; April 2011

Box 3: Recommendations: What went into the ALP

Enrolments

- ✓ Link ALP enrolment with the implementation of free education by transferring those below 10 year olds into formal education.
- ✓ Any accelerated programme to link learners above the official age with school should create three age cohorts in ALP 10- 14 and 15-18; 19-23 year olds.
- ✓ Add in the learners' data background-at-entry information on learner occupation; latest level of exit from the formal school; data on parental status

Teachers

- ✓ Need to carry out a teacher effectiveness study to also establish the potential that the former volunteer teachers provide for primary education in Liberia.
- ✓ Given the satisfaction expressed by both the ALP and ex-ALP learners in different evaluations including this one; there is a need to link ALP teacher training content and organisation to the mainstream teacher training in Liberia

Policies and regulations

- ✓ Translate the ALP policy guidelines into standing orders

Curriculum and T/L materials

- ✓ ALP should have had separate textbooks with synthesized content reflecting 100% content of the content of the regular primary school textbooks as dropping some topics deprived the ALP learners of knowledge of those topics
- ✓ The Language Arts Subject syllabus for level I and II could include and start with a whole unit on "Writing Skills" before "Oral Communication" and teacher manuals could have instructions on the same
- ✓ If ALP continues, the open-ended age cohort needs to be revised to have three age cohorts with a stream at each level. And the ALP should continue to be recognised as basic education which will enable its graduates to join different modes of secondary school education if they so wish.
- ✓ If ALP is to continue the curriculum needs to be reviewed to be equivalent with the current primary education one which has since 1999 changed twice; and textbooks special for ALP should be developed

Funds

- ✓ If the ALP has to continue it has to be on scale and within a short period of time. To realize the latter, financial support from all the key players in ALP in Liberia would need to be synchronized with the speed of building the capacity of the GOL.
- ✓ In order to establish whether ALP can be maintained or adapted in Liberia as an alternative basic education to children and adolescents above the official primary school age, in-depth analysis of the funding modalities used by the IPs to enable smooth implementation of its activities; would provide invaluable lessons for the future.

School meals

- ✓ The number of ALP has decreased not because the demand is low. Hence since Liberia is graduating from a post-conflict situation (Quote the fragility statement), the transformed ALP should be better prepared by drawing lessons from the previous ALP

CHAPTER 4: ALP OPERATING ENVIRONMENT

4.1 Introduction

The evaluation investigated the appropriateness/relevance of the ALP design to the problem the programme was trying to address and how the problem was identified, qualified and quantified to justify the choice of the ALP. It further probed the extent to which the ALP design articulated clearly the problem on the ground, of the presence of children above the school-age who were not in school in Liberia; what informed the responses to the problem; and whether the design was appropriate for the actual situation/environment in which the programme was being implemented.

4.2 The Key finding

While the inception of the ALP was informed by logic, experience of the ALP designers and empirical evidence; later on the programme continued without being adequately informed by empirical evidence to justify its existence. No empirical evidence was sought or used regarding: i) whether the post-war obstacles to learning opportunities had been mitigated or not; and ii) the magnitude of the problem of young people above the official school age in Liberia by age; gender; and geographical coverage and key drivers of the presence of children above the official school age other than the post-war conditions; and iii) the extent to which the education system in Liberia was ready to deliver primary education as a development programme. This influenced the back-and-forth decisions by the MOE “to end” and “not to end” the programme.

4.3 The Programme

The evaluation found the following:

Logical reasoning and experience from the initial pilots, the educators and the Development Partners (DPs) at the time of erratic school availability and after the war meant many children who had missed school needed to go back to school urgently. Discussions with the pioneers of the ALP - John Sumo and Tokron Wayne - indicated that in some cases no demographic assessments were done to initiate the ALP as the country was still at war mode. Hence ALP received learners of multiple ages without age restrictions. Given the grave absence of physical and institutional education infrastructures to accommodate the many children and adolescents whose school was either interrupted or delayed due to the war, it was appropriate at the time to admit these learners. Consequently, learners within wide age-ranges were put together in same classes. This explains the high speed within which the ALP achieved its results during the first and the second ALP pilots (Nicholson; 2007; Tokron, 2011; John Sumo; 2011). Despite the intermittent conflicts in Liberia between 1999 and 2005; the ALP had reached at least 50,000 learners and had in place: relevant institutional structures; teaching/learning materials; ALP-trained teachers; more ALP implementing counties and corresponding schools; more ALP-IPs¹⁸ and EDPs; and the programme increased to well beyond the original age limit of 18 years set for the programme (Nicholson; USAID). Regarding geographical targeting, coverage of the ALP was also determined by whether the area was peaceful or not due to uneven occurrence of conflict in the country at the time. In particular, the initial ALP implementing schools were incepted near urban areas where it was safer and supervision was easier and in areas with the highest displacements such as Nimba, Bong; Lofa and Grand Gedeh (UNICEF; 2008).

¹⁸ The Ministry of Education (MOE); United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF); The World Food Programme (WFP); The United Mission in Liberia (UNMIL); The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR); The Children Assistance Programme (CAP); Community and Human Development Agency (COHDA); Save the Children-UK; Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC); Creative Associates (CAII); IBIS; Vision In Action (VIA).

However, the reliance on logic and experience mis-informed some components of the ALP design to be short-term able to quickly solve the problem faced by many children above the official school age who required education (FGD and FYA). For example, very initial plans were to run for one ALP cycle only of three years at the time which the team expected the education system in Liberia would be back on track for delivering conventional primary education in three years only. (Interview with John Sumo, and Tokron Wyne Pioneer, ALP later, UNICEF Programme Officer 1992-2010). This expectation was documented in the EFA 2000 Assessment of Progress Liberia Country Report of November 1999 which noted that:

“As a result of the 7-year war, progress toward specific EFA goals and targets were shattered. However, with the commitment of donor agencies, bilateral organizations etc. in assisting the Ministry of Education, there exists the likelihood that most of the difficulties encountered in the delivery of basic education will be abolished by the year 2001.” (Emphasis is mine; 1999 EFA Liberia Report; 2000)

The reality, however, has been that the ALP has now been in operation for over twelve years and the problem of children above the official school age is still persistent.

Some DPs, however, were guided by rapid assessments that were carried out after the war. SAVE: ALP emerged following a situational analysis for the purposes of disarmament (DDR process in 2004-2005 for economic and social reintegration of persons and children associated in the armed forces as well as that of all the displaced persons) which revealed that many children were not in school, and hence illiterate. Getting CAFFs back to school was the best way to integrate them. Hence SAVE started supporting ALP in 2006. Earlier UNICEF in 2004 supported the Learning Spaces Assessment which provided data for the running of the ALP.

Meanwhile, EDPs/IPs (e.g. UNICEF; SAVE; NRC; IRC) initiated ALP as a result of experience gained from their education relief programmes. UNICEF-supported ALP partly evolved from the War Affected Youth programme – WAYS (1995-1999); the Rapid Education Response Education Pilot programme (2002) and the Education Revitalization Programme of 2003. The latter had a strong recreation component including the learning component which was being facilitated by the School in a Box. WAYS emphasised on imparting on the learners Life, literacy and numeracy skills. On the other hand, NRC - which started education response in internal camps - built schools for ALP implementation. Target learners included: teenage mothers and their children; learners above the official school age; and children in conflict with the law.

During its design, the programme had an **explicit purpose of providing education opportunities to children above the official age** *but its implicit purpose was welfare-oriented of providing a rapid response to many children* that could not learn well due to absence of school systems and buildings. This explains why NRC embarked on building ALP schools as its initial intervention for the programme.

4.4 Selection of geographical Areas

The centralised nature of education made it inevitable to use the county as the lowest level in the education management system to plan, coordinate and monitor the implementation of the ALP. However, **due to** the incremental establishment of the ALP implementing schools, ALP was not always located in the counties and/or districts where it was most needed. Hence, even though ALP has covered 100 per cent of the counties, it has only covered 54 per cent of all the education districts in Liberia. The UNICEF-supported Out of School study will further reveal intra-district disparities in access to education, while the school mapping will reveal areas in the districts without conventional primary schools but

have children and adolescents with the official school age not accessing education due to its absence there. The evaluation found that more often there were education access disparities between the urban and rural areas and among districts within the counties. (World Bank Education Status Report; School Census). Referring to Liberia, the World Bank notes that:

“..... The country is still far from universal primary education and there are clear gender, regional and income disparities in access to education (World Bank 2008). (Emphasis mine)

Table 12 below, demonstrates the inter-county disparities in NER. Please note the dismal NER in red.

Table 12: Primary Education (6-11 year olds), NER estimates, Number of ALP Schools and ALP Enrolment by County 2007/2008

| County | NER % 2007/2008 | | No: ALP Schools 07/08 | ALP enrolment 07/08 | NER 2008/2009 | |
|---------------------|-----------------|-----------|-----------------------|---------------------|---------------|-----------|
| | Male | Female | | | Male | Female |
| 1. Bomi | 19 | 17 | 43 | 2,808 | 25 | 24 |
| 2. Bong | 37 | 30 | 83 | 12,321 | 38 | 35 |
| 3. Gbarpolu | 32 | 30 | 29 | 2,552 | 56 | 43 |
| 4. Grand Bassa | 32 | 28 | 5 | 642 | 30 | 25 |
| 5. Grand Cape Mount | 21 | 19 | 70 | 5,198 | 31 | 26 |
| 6. Grand Gedeh | 19 | 18 | 81 | 7,795 | 30 | 26 |
| 7. Grand Kru | 42 | 30 | 22 | 728 | 62 | 48 |
| 8. Lofa | 46 | 40 | 65 | 10,539 | 48 | 43 |
| 9. Margibi | 38 | 36 | 11 | 715 | 43 | 40 |
| 10. Maryland | 24 | 17 | 30 | 2,738 | 38 | 33 |
| 11. Montserrado | 38 | 42 | 98 | 12,416 | 60 | 53 |
| 12. Nimba | 33 | 30 | 118 | 16,295 | 40 | 39 |
| 13. River Cess | 22 | 17 | 2 | 139 | 22 | 18 |
| 14. River Gee | 17 | 17 | 18 | 934 | 22 | 21 |
| 15. Sinoe | 26 | 22 | 0 | 00 | 28 | 25 |
| NATIONAL | 34 | 30 | 675 | 75,820 | 44 | 40 |

Source: MOE; “A system in Transition; The 322007/2008 National School census Report; 2008

A review of the NER by county, indicate inconsistencies between the need on the ground and the indicators identified by the programme to inform the inception of the ALP implementing schools. Some IPs such as IBIS prioritized the South Eastern part of the country which in 2007 had primary school NERs of between 17 per cent (River Gee) with the highest 24 per cent. The period 2006 when many IPs initiated ALP and UNICEF spent the highest on the ALP, started to see an effect of primary school NER positively for some counties. The above table indicates some counties registered increase of primary education NER of boys and girls while other did not. The four counties that formally introduced ALP in 2011 were Sinoe; Rivercess; River Gee and Grand Bassa. Except for Grand Bassa primary school NER for the remaining three was dismal in 2007/2008 of between 17 per cent and 26 per cent. The reason could be absence of the ALP resulted in the status.

Table 13: Annual primary school NER against per cent increase and decrease of ALP male and female learners between 2007/2008 and 2008/2009

| County | NER primary school increase in % points | | Annual % incr/decrease of ALP enrolment | Analysis |
|--------------|---|------|---|---|
| | M | F | | |
| Gbapolu | + 24 | + 13 | -45% | |
| Grand Bassa | -2 | -3 | +123% | The NER decrease in a situation of increased ALP enrolment might indicate the magnitude of the need in the county as a result of being one of the latest counties to introduce ALP but also district coverage might be low. |
| Grand Gedeh | + 11 | + 8 | -18% | Targeted high-impact geographical support and scarcity of children within the official age in the county, might explain the NER increase despite the decrease in Alp enrolment. |
| Grand Kru | + 20 | + 18 | -69% | As above |
| Lofa | +2 | +3 | -28% | Decrease in ALP enrolment mirror the minimal annual primary education annual NER in a populous county as Lofa county |
| Maryland | + 14 | + 11 | +25% | Increase in ALP enrolment was consistent with the increase in primary education NER |
| Monteserrado | + 22 | + 11 | +1% | Given the large numbers of children in Monteserrado, the 1% raise in Alp enrolment may have contributed to the primary education annual NER increase. |
| Nimba | +7 | +9 | -181% | Decrease in ALP enrolment mirror the minimal annual primary education annual NER in a populous county as Nimba county |
| River Cess | 0 increase | +1 | +1063% | The static and minimal primary NER could have been attributed by absence of the ALP the introduction which may have contributed to drastic annual increase of ALP enrolment. |

The above table indicates disparities among counties some of which despite low primary school enrolment started ALP only in 2010 the time it was supposed to be phasing out. These counties include Grand Bassa, River Cess and Sinoe.

4.5 The programme environment

Education in Liberia still operates in a rather fragile environment. Scores contained in the FYA for patterns of Fragility in education in Liberia indicated out of 15 education fragility indicators: eight (8) scored high; two (2) scored medium and five (5) scored low. Interview with different respondents reported that post-war effects have not disappeared completely. The Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) identifies four types of fragile states¹⁹ which the evaluation in turn identifies with the environment within which the ALP as a programme in Liberia evolved in a linear way. The period 1999- 2001 in Liberia

¹⁹ Refugee Studies Centre; Forced Migration Review; July 2006. "Learning to deliver education in fragile states" by M Greeley and Pauline Rose

was of deteriorating environment where it was neither feasible nor appropriate to work with the state but only with communities and the IPs as there was no national government. This way the ALP continued and was sustained during the highly volatile period. In 2002-2005 the ALP evolved and worked into an environment identified by DAC as: arrested development which saw more government involvement with some EDPs such as UNESCO, SAVE and NRC. ALP further evolved into an early war recovery environment from 2006 within which more donor and government support was evident in its implementation which this evaluation identifies as the entire period of the first democratically elected government after the war, when according to DAC, many more donors (10) implemented the ALP in collaboration with the government. Suffice it to say that the ALP is now graduating into what DAC calls a post conflict environment in which the government is set to take a greater role having initiated with the support of the EDP's, a sector-wide approach which is well articulated in the Education Sector Plan of Liberia. In this sector plan, there is more focus on teacher training; the education pooled fund is in place which if fully implemented will ensure predictable fund availability for education; and part of the ALP has evolved into a skills-based education programme for youth in Liberia in the form of the ALP-Plus. (USAID) (Source: DAC)

4.6 The ALP Schools' environment

At least 80 per cent of the ALP implementing schools has been in the public conventional primary schools.²⁰ Due to shortage of teachers and teaching and learning resources, some principals merged the conventional and the ALP schools. Occasionally ALP schools were established in church buildings, public institutions, and principal's house or in a building donated by the community. Selection of host schools was jointly done by the IPs, CEOs, DEOs and communities. Public schools comprised 57 per cent of all primary schools in Liberia in 2007/2008; 56 per cent % in 2008/2009.

The ALP shares the same teaching and learning resources with the conventional primary schools. Some principals had the opinion that the two (ALP and conventional) should be separated because of the competition for resources such as school meals, textbooks, latrines, kitchen facilities, staff-room and others, and that ALP was undermining conventional primary schools. In 2007/2008 out of 675 ALP implementing schools 548 (81 per cent) were in public schools.

The 2007 assessment observed that some young children left conventional primary school to join the ALP where there were school supplies and better teachers. In some cases ALP was the only available school. The evaluation however found that the idea of running the ALP from the conventional school premises as an excellent starting point for unifying basic education system. This is consistent with the recommendation of the 2007 assessment of the ALP that "Both the conventional and the ALP schools should share the available teaching aids, text books and resources" (Nicholson; 2007; pg 25). Being in the same premises makes it efficient in that it can make transfers from the ALP to the conventional primary education and vice versa efficient in terms of time resources.

²⁰ Other types are: community; public, mission, and private primary schools.

The average size of the conventional primary school was 145 in 2007/2008 and 149 in 2008/2009; while that of the ALP was between 112 and 105 respectively. Hence in terms of physical space and some physical facilities the ALP required almost as much space as the conventional schools. However as per the county variations, in some counties the ALP did not need as much as the conventional primary schools. Liberia has very small conventional and ALP school sizes, which in itself is an opportunity. The fact that most of the ALP have been conducted at separate times from the conventional ones; that the differences in school sizes are not significant; the measures of space and number of facilities the ALP uses fit in the conventional primary school are advantages. ALP uses the same text books and the status of facilities (availability and need) of the public primary schools reflects that of the ALP to a great extent.

The condition of the host schools varied from disrepair to good state of repair. The school census report indicates that in 2007/2008 the ratio of learners (including ALP) to: usable building ratio was 582 to one, with counties like Grand Gedeh and Lofa having ratios exceeding 1000:1. By 2008/2009 only 40 per cent of school buildings were considered as being in good condition. (World Bank). Some schools had adequate furniture while others did not. (Nicholson; 2007). Evidence, however, suggests heavy investments by the EDPs in renovating school buildings and providing furniture. Despite WFP commitment to supporting school feeding in the ALP, some processes were not implemented efficiently. Recent field observation indicated poor environmental water and sanitation condition in the ALP implementing schools. Learners and teachers had to help themselves in the nearby bushes. In 2007 access to a functioning toilet in private and mission schools was 60 and 50 per cent respectively while in public and community schools it was only 35 per cent. (MOE; 2007).

According to the FYA most (87 per cent) learners who were interviewed perceived schools in Liberia as very safe. Principals and teachers would need to be congratulated for this. However the mix of old and young learners in one premise at the same time can prove a security issue. Anecdotal evidence revealed rather unsafe environment for girls especially the younger ones. The evaluator found in one school boys (in blue trousers) aged 18 in the same school play grounds as girls aged 6, 7, and 10 (in blue skirts)²¹. UNICEF observed that GBV in Liberia has been unleashed on children aged 10-14. This mix of young and old learners might make ALP schools rather unsafe especially for the younger girls. (UNICEF Annual Progress report 2007). Leaving older learners to co-exist along with the younger ones might reverse the role of safe havens that school normally play by institutionalising vulnerability of girls to sexual abuse by the older boys.

²¹ Blue is for elementary school learners; green for junior high; and ...for senior high

CHAPTER 5: HOW THE ALP WAS IMPEMENTED IN LIBERIA

5.1 ALP Management and Coordination

That it was mostly managed and funded by the IPs within the weak ministerial capacity, it is plausible to assert that the ALP has been operating in a fragile environment. Before the launch of The Education Reform Act of 2011, there was no education policy to guide strategic education delivery in Liberia and a scheme of service for the sector are under development. Information flow and record keeping in the ministry in general, and on ALP in particular, need improvement, as well as quality human capacity to fully manage education. (FYA; USAID; Nicholson).

ALP accountability and decision-making structures have been a blend of IPs and government, at times running parallel to each other. At the national level, the overall coordination of the ALP has been carried out by the MOE headquarters. Initially ALP was in the MOE under the bureau of Curriculum which was central for initiating an accelerated curriculum. When ALP started being implemented on scale, it was moved to primary education for it to benefit from the delivery and supervision of the formal primary education. More recently the ALP has been moved to the bureau of basic education where it is expected to operate in a unified education subsystem. The evaluation identifies the latest positioning of the ALP as strategic in that basic education according to the Education Reform Act of 2011 includes primary education of 9 years and SHS of three years in which the ALP needs to be if it has to be effective.

During the ALP implementation, the MOE provided the necessary institutional framework for operationalising the programme. The ALP has a national coordinator assisted by a deputy. The two are full-time officers for the ALP which the evaluation identifies as a MOE demonstration of its commitment to the programme. other human resource inputs include; i) one (1) assistant minister; ii) one (1) ALP coordinator; iii) one (1) Deputy ALP coordinator; iv) (15) CEOs; v) ()DEOs; vi) () Principals; vii) teachers some of whom trained by the government; viii) Curriculum developers ix) trained and untrained teachers; x) developers of the teaching and learning materials; and xi) PTA/SMC.

EDPs and IPs also managed the ALP from their national headquarters outside the country each with hierarchies cascading down to the school level alongside the same hierarchy as that of the MOE. EDPs who at some point worked with yet other implementing partners include UNICEF (COHDA and CAP); CESLY; IBIS (Wethungerlife – WHH-Medica Mondiale and Right to Play). The IPs' FGD noted this had resulted into problems regarding predictability of financial and teaching and learning resources for the ALP. Hence, ALP experienced several concurrent and at times overlapping management hierarchies manned by different staff members who were in turn being remunerated. The cascading management structure is presented as follows:

Donor--- →EDP--- →IDP--- →MOE--- →CEO--- →DEO--- →Principal--- →Level Teacher.

Meanwhile, coordination of some of the IP support has been run from Monrovia and others from the field. While this facilitated efficiency it had financial costs. As one agency observed:

“When working with national partners it is important to be sure that they are represented locally, and not just sitting in Monrovia speaking on behalf of the rest of the country.....it is important to be out where education is actually taking place.....” (IBIS).

The staff-to-ALP learner ratio could not be calculated because of the limited scope of the evaluation. The processes that these officials were implementing the ALP had costs, which added on to the high aggregate operational costs for running the programme. Most EDPs further subcontracted partners to implement the ALP. And these EDPs were not the first source of funds. (FGD, Individual interviews)

Due to limited time, the evaluation could not establish the definite operational costs at every stage of ALP management by different EDPs/IPs. Separate in-depth study is hereby recommended to establish realistic cost of managing the ALP in order to identify costs that would be released if the programme were to be coordinated in a more streamlined way by the MOE.

EDPs subcontracted IPs to perform different managerial functions such as paying teacher incentives; teacher and PTA training and overall supervision. This practice albeit necessary at the time was costly. Ideally the information flow, and in some cases finances, had to pass this route. All the above strategies have not had only operational (supervision and implementation) financial costs but also impacted on time utilization. (Nicholson; 2007). Information from the IPs’ focus group discussion highlighted the weak effectiveness of the CEOs and the DEOs to supervise and report the ALP because they would at times participate in the exercise without some remuneration. In particular the IP representatives identified DEOs as having problems in the smooth implementation of the ALP. On the other hand, interviews with the CEOs and DEOs indicated difficulties they experienced of having to report in different formats to different IPs in addition to the ministry of education. With the on-going decentralisation process and the inception of the district education management boards, this situation is expected to improve.

IP coordination at national level was recorded as harmonious in 2007/08 when they jointly developed the following in a harmonised fashion: ALP policy; framework for teacher training; unified teaching calendar; resolving issues for school feeding; revision of the ALP report card; and questionnaires for collecting ALP data. This notwithstanding, IP coordination at county level was weak, and the evaluation is informed by anecdotal evidence that over time, the IP coordination phased out meeting together very rarely. (FGD, individual interviews). Even though IPs were supporting the presence of the ALP focal points at the county level, none of the five sampled counties had a functional FP. At the MOE headquarter, the ALP national coordinator was expected to be calling weekly meetings of the key ALP stakeholders. However, the evaluation established that the ALP unit last conducted an interagency meeting on the ALP in the first half of 2010.

Box 4: The Liberian Ministry of Education Management Structure of the ALP

| |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Minister; Education✓ Assistant Minister; Basic Education3. ALP National Coordinator✓ Overseeing the operation of the IPs✓ Coordinate partners with the relevant MOE management units/levels✓ Report on ALP activities✓ Works closely with the UNICEF ALP Specialist4. The CEO✓ Monitoring and supervising the ALP schools (T/L attendance, T/L performance, Instructional supplies, IPs activities);✓ School selection;✓ Community sensitization;✓ Organising teacher training;✓ Teacher recruitment;✓ School feeding programme;✓ Coordinating the IPs.✓ Prepare ALP implementation reports5. The DEOAs above6. The Principal✓ Monitoring learner attendance✓ Supervising all the school activities✓ Managing T/L supplies✓ Monitoring teacher attendance and performance7. The PTAs✓ Identifying ALP learners✓ Identifying an ALP school✓ Sensitising community members✓ Following up learners' dropout8. The level teacher✓ Monitoring and recording learner attendance and performance;✓ Participatory and child-friendly teaching;✓ Recording learner data and submitting it to the principal |
|--|

5.2 Programme response: Involvement of partners

The evaluation finds relevance between the situation on the ground in Liberia in 1998- when the ALP was initiated - and the almost exclusive involvement of development partners in initiating the programme. In 1998 there was an almost total absence of a functioning government system in general and that of education in particular. At least 80 percent of all primary schools had been destroyed by war and 20 percent needed major repairs. Hence the EDPs filled the leadership and institutional void for initiating the ALP, which would have otherwise been filled-in by the government which, due to the war, was not yet stable. UNICEF is recorded as the most consistent partner in implementing the ALP from its support to the programme visit to Uganda to date when, apart from the Open Society, is the only EDP contributing to the pooled funding mechanism. The evaluation further notes the value added due to involvement of the IPs in the ALP who will continue to be relevant as noted by a representative of an IP:

“..even after 25 years the government cannot do it alone in education. International partners are key...provided their support is coordinated to minimise ALP delivery costs”.

Before the phasing out of the ALP, the distribution of the IPs was as displayed in table 14 below.

Table 14: Distribution of IPs in the Counties, Liberia 2007 - 2009

| COUNTY | NUMBER OF PARTNERS |
|-------------|--------------------|
| Bomi | 01 |
| Bong | 04 |
| Gbarpolu | 01 |
| Grand Gedeh | 03 |
| Grand Kru | 01 |
| Lofa | 04 |
| Maryland | 03 |
| Montserrado | 06 |
| Nimba | 03 |
| River Gee | 01 |

Source: Nicholson; 2007; UNICEF donor reports; IBIS; 2008; SAVE-UK; 2011

Presence of IPS/EDPs in counties was unevenly distributed. River Gee had the lowest NER and yet only one IP operating while Sinoe, despite the very low NER, ALP only went there this year – had only one IP. River Cess too has the one of the lowest NER but by 2007 it had no IP as well as Grand Bassa; Bomi and Grand Cape Mount. IP interventions in the ALP however, indicate impact in Grand Kru and Montserrado. One IP in Grand Kru indicated in an interview that fewer IPs notwithstanding if they implemented the ALP as required could realise great results. Since Montserrado has one third of the country’s population including youth, the presence of 06 (six) IPs was inevitable. On the other hand, use of a county as a unit for planning can be misleading in terms of targeting. The envisaged decentralization will highlight more realities at district level regarding the management of learners above the official school age for further action.

5.3 ALP Implementation approaches

The evaluation noted that some IPs also contributed to the uncertainty of the sustainability of the ALP schools they were supporting due to unfulfilled promises, disharmony between the school calendar and the IPs’ fiscal and project timeframes and inadequate information among themselves and with the government. The evaluation discovered diverse approaches IPs used to implement the ALP to reflect their institutional mandates, organisational structures, and history of their presence in Liberia. The diversity of the IPs’ programme implementation approaches, to both the efficiency and inefficiency of basic education in Liberia, is illustrated table 15 below.

Table 15: At-a-glance IP implementation approaches of delivering the ALP and their impact on education efficiency²² as analysed from secondary evidence

| APPROACH | IMPACT ON EDUCATION EFFICIENCY |
|---|---|
| 1. Initiated three levels at once but not within the MOE academic year; | That learners above the official primary age were admitted was an appreciated intervention. However, since they (learners) commenced at a different time from that of the MOE school calendar meant a delay of an alternative education for children who could not enrol in the conventional primary education due to age; and for the ALP graduates who would have made to grade 7. This resulted in yet another reproduction of older learners in the conventional education system, as it created room for non-enrolment; attrition and dropout from school. |
| 2. Started level one only and increased the other levels incrementally; | This approach while convenient for the implementer, delayed older learners who wished to join the ALP at level II or III. They had to wait until the IP was ready to incept level II and later level III. This defeated the main principle of such type of programmes which have to be multi-entry and multi-exit. |
| 3. Replaced the formal primary school with the three ALP levels at once; | This was a realistic response to the presence of over 70% learners in the conventional primary in 2006/2007. However, the move undermined the rights of the 30% learners who were in the conventional schools at the right age, by subjecting them to the ALP pedagogy and content which was not suitable for younger learners (Nicholson; 2007). This move removed an option for the younger learners living in the vicinity who wished to join primary education at the right age. |
| 4. Started three levels at once following the same school calendars as of the MOE (September – June); | This was the right way to have implemented the ALP in harmony with the MOE school calendar – an example of a unified system in that it provided timely options for children who could not be enrolled in conventional primary school because they were above the official school-age; and ALP graduates who would have qualified to join JHS to do so in a timely manner for them to catch up with the official age. |
| 5. Started the three levels at once but developed school calendars to suit the outreach communities. (Nicholson, S; 2007); | This approach responded to the need in place. It allowed for community participation in the development of a school calendar. While the approach was participatory, it was not adequately informed of the institutional arrangements in place for efficient education delivery. This had an effect of delaying learners wishing to join the ALP; and on ALP graduates wishing to join JHS to catch up with the official school age. |
| 6. Conducted all the three levels in a community (away from the formal system setting) but follow MOE calendar | This approach was a desperate response to the absence of any conventional school in a neighbourhood. While younger children also joined the ALP the absence of an alternative necessitated this approach. With the completion of the school mapping exercise for micro education planning, which will in turn facilitate the appropriation of a unified education system; this approach is bound to be addressed. |
| 7. Conducted only one level at a time which gets promoted up to level III (IBIS between 2006 - 2008); before a new level is started at the time which children wishing to join had to wait for three years; | Even more serious was a situation where only the lucky children who were admitted in level I would benefit from the ALP. The rest had to wait for three years to be admitted to the programme. “First Come First Served”. An 11 year old child who wished to join the ALP had to wait until he was 14 before enrolling – at a time which officially he/she could be disqualified even from joining the ALP |

Table 15 above indicates that the speed at which children above the official school age in and out of school in Liberia had to be accommodated in the ALP was compromised by the way some ALP calendars were not in harmony with that of the formal education system. In other cases the initiation of the ALP especially before the development of the policy guidelines was

²² Efficiency in education means learners must enter at the officially determined age; they must not repeat a class; they must not dropout; they should complete their designated levels; they should be promoted to the subsequent education levels

haphazard hence exposing learners to sub-standard education prompting the MOE, with the support of UNICEF, to close such schools. (Individual interviews).

Inter-stakeholder collaboration inn/efficiency

On the other hand, the IPs contributed massively to the achievement of the ALP by: producing and distributing textbooks, copybooks, teaching aids and recreational materials; payment of WAEC fees; furniture; menstrual management hygiene kits; agricultural tools; uniforms; cooking utensils; ID cards; teacher incentives; reporting. Implementation of the ALP demonstrated how collaboration in which different partners brought in niches which if appropriated in a complementary manner they would add tremendous value to the quality of the ALP and its speedy delivery. However, we observed that most times these niches were appropriated by the IPs in a fragmented fashion as the IPs had different mandates and had different project timeframes: UNICEF (5 years); IBIS (3 years); SAVE –UK (3 years); and NRC (3 years). A good practice however was recorded when the NRC and IBIS developed and implemented an integrated system of in-service and monitoring support of their teaching staff – which also served as the road towards sustainability.

Table 16: Selected niches/ strengths of different partners brought into the ALP

| IP | Strengths/Niche |
|----------------|---|
| CAII | Life Skills; paying teacher incentives |
| CAP | Total supervision of the ALP |
| COHDA | As above |
| IBIS | Teacher training; strengthening of community involvement through strengthening of the PTAs |
| NRC | Construction of schools, community based support to education |
| SAVE-UK | Child protection, rehabilitation, furniture; PTA strengthening; child rights; water and sanitation; child care centres for mother learners; provision of uniforms |
| UNHCR | Building schools; distribution of materials |
| UNICEF | Overall technical and financial support to developing, production and distribution of the ALP curriculum and related teaching and learning materials; Teacher training; school construction; managing teacher incentive; data generation and articulation |
| UNMIL | Security in general; distribution of examinations and invigilators; support to community radios. |
| USAID | Teacher training, Learner Resource Centres, learner performance monitoring; integration of Life Skills |
| WFP | School feeding with a focus to mother-learners |
| IRC | Skills training |

5.4 Management of the School Meals

Access to the school meals for the ALP learners was rather erratic due to: i) the serious lack of proper records of ALP and regular primary school learners; ii) the need by the school administrations to improve the WFP meals thus charging learners what was called “pepper” fees; iii) non-compliance by many schools to the hygiene requirements for implementing school meals; and iv) reluctance of some principals to provide ALP learners with meals.

Many schools did not have adequate latrines and running water. Where principals chose to provide school meals to the regular primary school learners only, attendance in the ALP was affected (Nicholson; 2007; and interview with Fued; WFP, 2011). Many complaints were raised following this situation. The MOE was however responsive to the issue of pepper fees by providing small grants for improving the school meals. The WFP Guide for School feeding in Liberia clearly identifies the ALP as one type of schools eligible for school meals.

5.6 Funding modalities

The evaluation observes that inclusion of the ALP in the Education Pooled Fund is a key step towards harmonising IPs' funding with a potential for minimising operational costs of the programme. Exclusion of the ALP from the grants on the other hand, would leave many potential learners above the official school age out of the Liberian education mainstream. Supported by UNICEF in 2007, the MOE created the Education Pooled Fund, the only source of government funding for the ALP. Since then UNICEF became the biggest pooled fund donor followed by the Open Society Foundation. (Annual Report 2007). The fund was launched by the President of Liberia Ellen Sirleaf in 2008. A total of 16.25 million USD, which will evolve into General/Sector Budget Support, has so far been injected in the fund for sector-wide activities. In 2008 the pooled fund disbursed 8 million of the 16.25 million USD. To date the fund has disbursed 1.2 million USD for the ALP for paying teacher incentives, production of teaching and learning materials and supervisory equipment through purchase of one vehicle and repair of the other. (Source: MOE Comptroller). The evaluation could not, however, establish the low presence on the development partners in the pooled fund. IPs which continue to support the ALP do so outside this fund. Another opportunity for funding the ALP that the evaluation identified, was the FTI managed primary school per capita grants of 61 USD cents, which because of the message that the ALP was phasing out, would not include the ALP learners. (Source: Interview with the MOE Comptroller)

5.7 Teacher recruitment

Evaluation of the efficiency of the ALP cannot be complete without a close examination of how teachers were recruited. **Recruitment to teach in the ALP was not considered as necessarily longterm or permanent, notwithstanding investments that may have been made in training these teachers.** Before the inception of the ALP policy guidelines the adhoc guidelines directed that the ALP-IPs had to identify at least six MOE trained teachers – two teachers per level regardless of the number and the age range of learners in a class. This was problematic in counties with high demand for ALP. Some classes soared so much that it was difficult for one teacher to manage a level. Evidence suggests that the IPs, and in some cases school managements, addressed the situation by: i) involving more than six teachers from the conventional primary school teachers; ii) recruiting teachers exclusive for the ALP; iii) providing school-based guidelines on maximum sizes of one class per teacher and hiring additional teachers for additional classes; iv) employing teaching assistants and/or volunteer teachers, especially female, to assist the teachers. A combination of the foregoing interventions may have influenced the low PTR.

Meanwhile, the ALP policy guidelines instruct that in selecting teachers the following need to be considered: i) possession of post high school experience, willing to be trained on the ALP and not yet MOE employees; ii) serving teachers willing to be trained on new

methodologies; iii) characteristics of learners; iv) trained teachers willing to serve double shifts; v) female teachers were more encouraged; vi) teachers for language arts required ability to speak ‘standard English, vii) all teachers possessing high school diploma will be subjected to tests by the Curriculum division and must score at least 80 percent; viii) certified teachers would not take the test. The evaluation, however, did not find evidence of systematic selection of teachers. Most teachers were identified by the principals in collaboration with the PTAs. Some of the ALP teachers did not even have the WAEC primary leaving certificate and have been teaching in the ALP for years; and the evaluation did not find any information regarding whether mastery of the ALP core subjects was a criterion for hiring the ALP teachers (FYA).

With the announcement of closing the ALP, there has been ‘mass’ exodus of ALP teachers. Since they had not been receiving certificates for teaching ALP classes, volunteer teachers- a potential teaching force in the Liberian primary schooling system – especially with the implementation of the nine-year free basic education - would be lost. In all the previous evaluations and reviews (2007; 2008 and the current ones) ALP teachers expressed the need for certification on completion of the ALP teachers training.

5.8 Teacher Training

Given the multi-age nature of ALP learners, the condensed nature of the ALP curriculum, and the low education of some volunteer teachers, ALP teachers need specialised training. Evidence suggested that teacher training was effective. In addition, the evaluation did not find any information regarding whether mastery of the ALP core subjects was a criterion for hiring the ALP teachers (FYA). A team of master trainers were trained by institutions such as the LTI; then these in turn went to teach the ALP teachers. In 2007, the IPs developed a Teacher Training Framework to provide for standardised content of the ALP teacher training and agreed on a unified teacher training calendar.

The master training team has been functioning erratically and is no longer functioning as a national team. A discussion with the Master Trainers co-chair revealed absence of data base on the master teacher trainers and the last time the team officially met was in 2009. There has been an element of allegiance of the team members to the IPs and territoriality of the latter. The 2007 assessment report an incident when master trainers who conducted master teacher training using “their own trainers” (Nicholson; 2007 pg. 47) were sponsored by the IRC could not attend a training session called because the IRC had closed down “its” ALP schools and the master trainers were reassigned other roles.

Despite the rich experience acquired by the ALP master teacher trainers they have neither been institutionalised in the ministerial system in general nor in teacher training institutes in particular. Lack of funds saw the master trainers conducting very few teacher training sessions. Only 10 per cent of the ALP teachers interviewed by the evaluation had been trained in the past twelve months. The evaluation has further established that some ALP teachers were either transferred or re-assigned to other teaching roles. These were replaced with other ALP but untrained teachers many of whom due to the suspension of the ALP, have not been trained. Compounding the problem was the absence of records of these changes of the ALP teachers.

Box 5: Summary Description of the ALP Teacher Training

Sponsor: The IPs

Duration: 10 days for PRESET; 2-5 days for refresher course.

Teacher selection: Jointly by the IPs, CEOs and DEOs.

Content: Harmonised allowing additional IP-focused topics.

Mode: Face-to-face; radio (UNMIL – the teaching of English and Let’s Learn Together)

Calendar: Unified among the IPs

Venues: Low cost boarding schools which provided meals and accommodation;

Certification: None

Key topics: i) Principles and Practices of accelerated learning; lesson planning; ii) ALP organisation, record keeping and administration; iii) Classroom management, multi-grade teaching and use of teaching aids; iv) Relationships among the school, community and PTA, HIV/AIDS Life Skills; vi) Demonstration lessons; vii) ALP core subjects; and viii) 14 opportunities for micro teaching.

Follow-up of the newly trained: Minimum

5.9 ALP teaching methods and classroom management

The child-centred teaching methods have proved to be popular among the current and the ex-ALP learners. However, most ALP teachers manage to teach for half the required duration per period. The latest field interviews validated observations from the earlier assessments (Nicholson; 2001, IBIS, 2008; USAID/CESLY, 2010) regarding the general satisfaction of the incumbent and ex ALP learners with teaching as compared to that in conventional schools (JHS and primary) . The evaluation also found that the ministry requires all primary schools to use English as the language of instruction. However, experience during the conduct of the field research indicated some use of local languages (e.g. Mano in Nimba) to elaborate on points to the learners. Time-on-task by teachers was recorded by the evaluation as an issue.

Teacher absence from school and classes and teacher/learner contact time was recorded by the evaluation as a problem. ALP Teacher manual requires 30 periods of 40 minutes each per week, which is four hours instructional time per day. However, the ALP teachers have been finding it hard to complete lesson plans in 40 minutes and to complete syllabuses within the required time. (Nicholson; 2007). Of the 28 principals who responded to the question in the five sample counties reported as follows: 61 per cent (17) reported that ALP teachers teach for 20 minutes per period; 32 per cent (9) reported that ALP teachers teach for 30 minutes while only 7 per cent (2) reported that the ALP teachers teach for the required 40 minutes per period. Meantime, teacher availability in school has been inconsistent. In 2007 teachers could be absent up to two weeks for fetching salaries from Monrovia. Lately teacher absence has been caused by erratic availability of teacher

incentives. (IBIS; ALP Unit, MOE). This seemed to affect learners who cited this as one of the problems in schools. (IBIS, 2008; Field learners' interviews).

5.10 Data management and storage

Crucial ALP data have not always been readily available in schools. Accurate records of both ALP learners in schools and teachers have been hard to find. Absence of records on learners was cited by the WFP as problematic as they distributed food rations to the schools. (Nicholson, 2007; USAID 2008; IBIS, WFP). This reality is however not consistent with the level of teachers' and principals' knowledge on the need to keep records. In self-structured questionnaires, principals and teachers in the five sampled counties were able to list down the type of data they were supposed to collect. At different levels of managing the ALP, keeping records of learners, teachers and activities was of essence. Teacher attendance was normally monitored and recorded by the principals. Teachers were trained on, and expected to keep records on learner attendance, achievement and promotion. Similarly, the principals are expected to keep these records for the school.

Over time, data has been collected of learner enrolment, teacher attendance, learner attendance, learner dropout by reason, school supplies and on the school environment. However, evidence suggests that when data was available, it was usually not desegregated by gender and other crucial indicators and was not used for planning. In the absence of a work plan, it was not clear the extent to which the MOE ALP unit has been using data from the IPs to plan its support to the programme. In particular data on dropout by reason was rare despite the UNICEF –designed form for the purpose. No data on the WAEC registered learners was available at school level. The only reporting tool that was being filled in was the report card which was mandatory for sitting for the 7th grade examination.

Most data was sent to the IPs' headquarters, making community dimension of the ALP delivery start and end at the enrolment of learners. Some IPs too were not keeping data. A major achievement of the ALP IPs however, was the inclusion of the ALP data in the MOE EMIS. The national school census report provided for reporting of common data collection. However, the evaluation noted that data which would be useful to inform programmes such as the ALP, is yet to be included in the EMIS. Such data includes but is not limited to: (i) school dropout by age, gender and reasons; and (ii) movement of learners between the ALP and the formal school; (iii) the ALP transition rates between the levels and into JHS; (iv) the ALP completion rates and others. Additionally, the ALP is yet to have common reporting formats and common reporting timeframes at different levels of its implementation. Generally, the education data management as an on-going activity is compromised by the weak capacity at the sub-national level of education management because education is still being managed from the headquarters in Monrovia (MOE; Education Sector Plan, 2011).

5.11 “To Exit Or not To Exit” was (Not) the Question

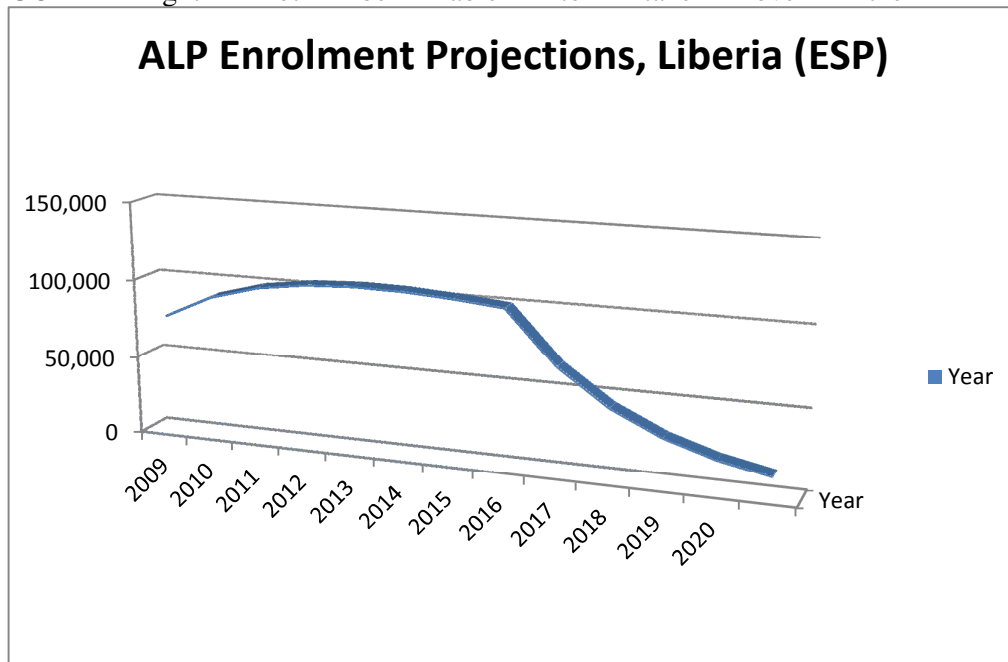
Phasing out of the ALP has been driven more by a management decision than by any empirical evidence that it was relevant to cease. Hence even though the IPs had timeframes for the implementation of ALP, they did not have exit strategies. IP respondents that participated in the evaluation, said they stopped the ALP classes to abide by the announcement of the MOE to end the programme, and not because the ALP has outlived its worth. When the latest directive to immediately stop the ALP classes was issued later in 2009 during the joint education review the question was not to quit or not. The question was 'how'. Many IPs whose information was the ALP would end in 2012, were taken by

surprise. Some started preparing hurriedly, exit strategies. They, therefore, decided to stop as drastic as the directive had come. One respondent observed that: “MOE first announced to end the programme in 2004, later pushed it to 2006 but announced the end of ALP in 2009”.

Data from the field indicated that level I and level II had almost phased out, and there were no records regarding where neither the learners nor the teachers went to as mass exodus of the ALP teachers was also reported. Of the 37 ALP implementing schools’ principals in the five sample counties (Bomi; Grand bassa; Maryland; Montserrado and Nimba) that were interviewed in September 2011, only 2 (5 per cent) reported to have had level I in their schools; 3 (8 per cent) had level II, 23 (62%) had level III; and the remaining 7 (18 per cent) schools had phased out ALP totally. Some IPs on the other hand, did not want to be part of the back and forth decision at the expense of the learners. They, therefore, decided to end the programme in phases. “We did not want to abandon the learners” (SAVE UK, NRC, UNICEF, USAID and IBIS). They programmed it to end in 2009, 2011, 2012 and 2013 respectively. A few IPs ‘felt’ that they have supported the ALP enough and it is high time they stopped. Given the nature of the problem the ALP was trying to address, the evaluation proposes that the programme be left for a natural phasing out rather than by a pronouncement. As noted by the 2008/2009 MOE School Census Report, the success of the ALP is its own demise. The report went further to observe that:

“.....the magnitude of work necessary to get schools established and regularly supervised in some difficult to access areas suggests that the ALP may be needed in Liberia for some more years.”

As some of the IPs (IBIS) are proposing to the government to take over the ALP, the programme has been integrated in some key government such as the ESP which calculated ALP enrolment projections up to the year 2020, while the MOE Liberian Primary Education Recovery Programme allocated 15 per cent of its three-year budget to ALP. (Source: MOE; 2007) It is not clear how much of the amount has been utilised by the ALP. The evaluation observes that if the ALP will continue, the ESP is implemented in its entirety; in a situation of the small government education budget for the entire sector, the GOL might not be able to take over the ALP solo.



Even though the above projections for the year 2008 to 2020 were done, the ESP did not calculate the primary enrolment projections by age leaving GER as the only indicator that would be used to monitor primary enrolments. This raises the question regarding the yard stick used to calculate the above ALP enrolment projections. And even though exit plans from the ALP had been considered by some of the IPs; the drastic announcement by the MOE to end the ALP found many IPs unawares resulting in most of them ceasing their ALP implementing roles without any exit plans. UNICEF; NRC; USAID; SAVE and IBIS indicated the appropriation of an informed exit plan. IRC for example stopped ALP in 2007 in 20 schools after implementing two ALP levels leaving the learners with no alternative but to fend for themselves individually as there were neither guidelines nor guidance from the MOE regarding the fate of learners in such happening.

5.12 Pupils' registration procedures; attendance monitoring

The evaluation identifies a contradiction in the policy guidelines regarding learner-enrolment. While the guidelines allow enrolment of dropouts from the elementary schools, it prohibits learners who have attended formal school or completed first grade to join the ALP. While the reason for the latter prohibition may have been valid, its unclarity could have created confusion to the school-based implementers, especially the principals.

According to the ALP policy guidelines, learners to be enrolled were the out-of-school, never-been-to-school and older children to be enrolled in grade one and the elementary school dropouts. Learners enrolled from other schools or programmes had to submit academic transcripts and do placement tests. Learner enrollment in general had to involve community leaders through the PTAs/SMCs. Level I learners had to be 10 or above, should not have attended formal school or completed first grade. Entry to level II and III was expected to be based on passing of standard tests in Mathematics and English as appropriate.

Screening of learners before entering different ALP levels was done during the first two years only for those who had not been in schools or who did grade 1 and for those that wished to enter levels II and III. This was followed by an exercise to remove children above the official age from elementary schools, an exercise which was stopped in 2007. From then onwards, the exercise was done erratically and arbitrarily. However for transfers from one ALP implementing schools to the other, learners had to submit academic transcripts. Since most ALP were following the conventional primary school calendar, registration of the ALP learners was done along with that for the elementary school. When enrolment was from communities, community awareness preceded enrolment. CAII, IBIS and SAVE deliberately created community awareness on the importance of enrolling children into the ALP through the community-based youth groups who were trained on leadership skills. Meanwhile, school meals by WFP played a role of boosting learner-attendance of the ALP hosted in public and community schools. Many current and the ex-ALP learners interviewed during the evaluation cited availability of free meals in the ALP schools as what prompted them to attend the schools.

5.13 Learner Promotion

The evaluation notes that the report card for promoting the ALP learners from one level to the other and from the ALP to the JHS, authenticated and institutionalised the ALP as a recognised primary education delivery mode in Liberia, which may be replicated by the other NFE programmes for youth in Liberia. However, the card was used more for joining JHS than for intra-ALP promoting of learners. Inadequate production of these tools which was not only a process but a cost, proved a problem. Thus, learner –

promotion has not been carried out in a systematic way as also indicated by the absence of data on the same. The IP facilitated readiness of the ALP learners to join formal education by paying Liberian dollars 415 per learner as examination fees. The intervention of the IPs in this regard, put some ALP learners at an advantage over the conventional learners most of whom could not afford paying examination fees.

5.14 Class/school timetable,

Due to the heterogeneous socio-economic status nature of the ALP where there has been varied preferences of when ALP sessions should be run, younger learners seemed to prefer morning sessions as the most used time for going to school. Older learners had mixed experiences. Some wanted morning sessions to finish chores by early afternoon before going back home to assist parents with farming and other chores. The MOE publishes an academic school calendar every year. As indicated earlier except two, different IPs operated within different school calendars. Harmonisation of the ALP with the conventional primary school calendar is efficient. This guaranteed transfers of ALP learners from the ALP to formal school without delay and vice versa. The calendar for 2011/12 clearly provided an instruction to school not to test grade one children before admission as it delayed prospective learners to catch up with the official ages at times. The MOE academic year starts in September of every year and lasts up to July. It has 170-190 school days. The ALP policy is clear that the ALP calendar year must reach 180 days. Information from the principals and teachers indicated that it varied from 140 to 150 days due to some unplanned activities involving schools and teachers. When implementing the ALP NRC continued to run classes during a calendar year in the process they have 238 instructional days.

Being hosted in public schools, the latter provide for double shifts with the majority of the ALP classes (55% in 2007) running in the afternoons. Where ALP replaced conventional primary classes they would run in the morning. Almost all ALP and ex-ALP learners indicated that they supported their families' economic activities. But older female students especially mothers preferred afternoon sessions as they used mornings to complete their assignments and to do some business for the day. (Nicolson 2007; field research; 2011). Given the demographically fluid nature of the ALP learners, some schools had to change their timing on the basis of students' requests and following high learner dropout in the afternoons. (IBIS, CAII, NRC). Findings from the field indicated a fifty/fifty preference of the morning and the afternoon sessions. However, most ALP classes have been conducted in the afternoons. (Nicholson; 2008; USAID, 2008; IBIS, 2008)

5.15 Monitoring and supervision of teaching and learning

Monitoring and supervision of the ALP implementation carried out by the IPs worked well but on phasing out, the activity has been erratic. Data from the field indicated minimal supervision from one level to the other due to lack of transport in cases of the CEOs and the DEOs. UNICEF had in 2008/2009 supported CEOs and DEOs with vehicles and motorcycles most of which have broken down and the MOE has not been able to repair them including one vehicle for the national ALP unit. Where vehicles and motorcycles were working, availability of fuel allocation from the HQ was erratic and insufficient. The MOE headquarters ALP unit vehicle, for example, was being allocated 10 to 20 gallons per month. Given 2 gallons of fuel are consumed on average by a four-wheel car; it means the fuel would be sufficient for 5-10 miles which the officers using the car have been facilitated to do.

Assessment of administrative and pedagogical performance at the ALP school depended on the experience of the monitor and discretion of the principals despite the presence of monitoring tools. As noted above, there was a dire shortage of staff and facilities in the MOE to monitor the provision of supplies but also teaching and learning and the school organisation. At times due to lack of teachers, some principals would turn conventional schools into ALP and vice versa without the authorisation of the headquarters. While some PTAs as close as within Montserrado reported to not have met since 2001, notwithstanding the fact that PTAs, and by extension community based organisations, played a major role in monitoring the running of the ALP implementing schools. Hence EDPs as UNICEF subcontracted NGOs whose exclusive roles were to collect data on the key process and output indicators on learners, teachers, school facilities and others. NGOs used to collect data in some cases providing volunteer teachers who received token incentives for the services. (UNICEF; USAID, 2011)

Hence while the shortage of staff and transport affected the effectiveness of supervision by the MOE, the IPs invested heavily on administrative and pedagogical monitoring and supervision of teaching and learning; distribution of school supplies and support to record keeping. The evaluation noted that this helped to maintain teacher morale and student attendance. (Nicholson, 2007; USAID 2011). However, the evaluation further noted the absence of a checklist to carry out this assignment. While successful delivery of education depends heavily on efficient monitoring, it is much more for a non-conventional programme like the ALP in which the survival rate attendance is not consistent. From the field, teachers and principals had differing responses regarding the frequency of monitoring. The latter indicated they monitor teachers while teachers reported minimal supervision from the principals. This was noted in previous evaluations. (Nicholson; 2007/IBIS, 2008; USAID/CESLY, 2010).

5.16 Learning Assessment

Due to the absence of records on the ALP learners, assessments were mainly among examinations from one level to the other with the WAEC primary examinations as the most definite learners' assessment tools, which the ALP learners sat without being identified as ALP learners and receive certificates like the conventional primary graduates. Assessment of the ALP learners was guided by (i) regular class attendance; (ii) passing the final grade average at a level which is testS and examinations divided by 2 to be not less than 70 percent; (iii) passing all the subjects for which they took examinations and tests. However, independent assessment major was the EGRA conducted by the USAID, ...and by IBIS have been able to inform the academic performance of selected ALP learners. These have been presented in chapter 3.

5.17 Linkage with the formal education system

Because of the unclarity of the ALP guidelines regarding how multiple entries and multiple exits into and from the ALP respectively could be implemented to allow children to catch-up with appropriate formal school levels through acceleration within the ALP, this process was not done in a systematic way. The evaluation probed ALP student placements and exit arrangements in and from different levels (I, II, III). Initially, the ALP captured children above the school age in grade one and moved them to the ALP level I and returned them to grade two while others stayed with the ALP up to level II before returning them to grade five. The acceleration was more linear than lateral. A learner who entered ALP or the elementary school respectively would most likely complete within the

same mode regardless of the ‘inappropriate’ age for the level. This saw a situation where placing of older learners together with the younger learners was happening in both education delivery modes – the ALP and the conventional primary education.

Anecdotal evidence informs the evaluation that at some point, a misunderstanding ensued because of efforts to remove learners above the official school age from the formal school and send them to the ALP. This was put to a stop because of the intense organisation involved. However, the most needed action of removing learners who had – to some extent- caught up with the conventional primary education from the ALP or were too young for the ALP and place them in the appropriate primary school levels was not effected, despite the recommendation in the 2007 assessment that:

“..children younger than 10 years old should be screened out of ALP” (Nicholson,; 2007 pg 31).

The reasoning for putting a halt to removing older learners from the conventional primary schools to place them in the ALP and leaving learners younger than the ALP minimum age of 10 years to remain in the ALP was not established by the evaluation. However, we can only deduce that the complexity of the movement in a situation with inadequate staff and record keeping at the school level, may have contributed to this situation. As well as what was noted by the MOE ALP coordinator that “ ...if we are to remove all children above the official school age from the conventional primary education in Liberia, the elementary school sub-system would be replaced by the ALP”. (Thomas Clarke)

Towards the above, the evaluation asserts that while the ALP managed to provide education to learners who would have otherwise missed it, it could not effectively rectify the problem of the children above the official school age in primary education with more speed because of its inaction to accelerate the transfer of learners into appropriate conventional primary school levels and vice versa.

5.18 Preparation of the ALP learners for formal schooling

This section investigated how much the ALP has been able to provide the equivalent of six primary school years and to enable ALP learners cope with formal primary school and the JHS. As mentioned in chapter 3 of this report, previous evaluations which assessed learners from both the ALP and the conventional primary schools found ALP learners had performed the same as those from the conventional schools, and at times better. Teachers of the ex-ALP learners rated them as excellent and “very good” with a few “good”. The ex-ALP learners in grade 7 reported that they could cope with the JHS subjects. One of them said:

“The ALP helped me too much. JHS not tough”

(A learner from Nimba; 2011)

5.19 Management of the teacher-incentive

This was recorded by the 2007 Assessment as an emotive issue. ALP teachers were given monthly incentives for delivering the curriculum. UNICEF was in 2007 paying 15 USD per month through the MOE. The rate has been changing, the latest was by MOE through pooled funding paid teachers 25 USD per month. Teacher incentive pay has been erratic due to absence of updated records compounded by the discontinuation of support to the ALP by some IPs. Unrecorded transfers and reassignment of teachers has made payment

of incentives a challenge to the ministry. The evaluation further established from the individual interviews with the DEOs that it still is a concern because: i) information on the same was hazy especially that many EDPs/IPs apart from UNICEF, USAID and IBIS, had withdrawn from implementing the ALP. The evaluation has however established that the drastic discontinuation of the ALP left a number of ALP teachers unpaid. (MOE; ALP unit, 2011) . A situation where some teachers who no longer taught in the ALP received the incentives against those that taught but did not receive the incentive. No actual examples could be obtained and a special audit of ALP teachers in place is hereby recommended. A discussion with one CEO supported by a DEO – who was a principal in an ALP school before, revealed that even though some ALP teachers had been re-assigned other roles and new teachers assigned to teach ALP classes, the list of the ALP teachers never changed and former ALP teachers were continuing to receive the incentive. Updating of data was either minimal or non-existent.

Uncoordinated closure of the ALP in some schools coupled with near absence of teacher-monitoring and supervision compounded the problem of paying teacher-incentives. One of the schools in Montserrado which was visited during the evaluation reported that the MOE cashiers had to go back without paying the teachers because the ALP classes had long been closed. Furthermore there were issues as follows: i) teacher incentive had been unregulated as some IPs paid according to the class size the teachers teach, others according to the contact hours covered and the rates differed too; ii) unclarity whether the monthly incentive was to be paid during the academic year only or throughout the calendar year; iii) in schools where the principal rotated all teachers between the ALP and the conventional school. ALP learners reported in the FGD that lack of teacher incentives has resulted into some teachers stopping teaching altogether while another FGD reported a go-slow by ALP teachers due to erratic payment.

5.20 Behaviour Change Communication (BCC) for the ALP

While the ALP did an excellent job in raising awareness at community level and among the learners, the case was not the same with the MOE leadership. IPs and the MOE invested time and finances on BCC for ALP. The MOE has an IEC department headed by a director. The department links the MOE management with the rest of the sector staff, the community and the media. The ALP has demonstrated excellent strategies for encouraging learners to enrol in school and remain there. They included: i) orienting community leaders including PTA/SMCs who would in turn mobilise learners; ii) encouraging teachers during ALP PRESET training to sensitise parents, potential learners and the general public about the ALP; iii) girls and young mothers sensitized by some teachers in washing places; iv) providing mother-learners with small loans to encourage female enrolment in the ALP; v) providing mother-learners with dry food rations distributed by the WFP; vi) peer sharing of information through the registered ALP learners; vii) sports events where ALP was promoted for enrolment; and viii) including in the ALP curriculum, messages on the importance of education in Liberia; ix) use of community radios; ix) press releases and tailored programmes by the MOE IEC directorate; x) use of traditional channels such as Coad in Nimba. The latter are groups of 25- 50 male and female youth who “opened their eyes to war”, who farm for their families in turns and free of charge to ensure household food security. FGD with PTA members and representatives of the CBOs confirmed this fact that they used to mobilise learner enrolment including house-to house ALP enrolment.

On the other hand, internal communication within the MOE on the ALP in the MOE leadership and between the latter and the IPs needed improvement. Representatives of the IPs and the MOE officials that participated in the FGD indicated that the back-and forth decisions by the MOE managements of ceasing the ALP emerged from their (MOE management’s) lack of understanding, of the role that the ALP played in communities and inadequate consultations and knowledge sharing

within the MOE, among the IPs, and between the latter and the MOE. These strategies need to be institutionalised in the MOE.

5.21 Decision making and governance structures

Most of the decision-making structures for the ALP are the same as those of the conventional schools. However, given the heavy support to the ALP by the EDPs and the IPs, decisions on the ALP were mainly done by the EDPs and the IPs as well as within the ALP interagency technical committee coordinated by the MOE ALP unit. However, during the last one and a half years the technical committee on the ALP never met and hence decision-making on the ALP at national level was uncoordinated. As indicated earlier, the evaluation found weak intra-ministerial consultations regarding the ALP. With regards to the MOE decisions to cease the ALP in 2006 and 2009, some IPs reported that the MOE never issued official communication regarding the end of the programme in 2009 but others said they did receive the official communication in 2010 signed by the MOE minister that the ALP was not strategic and had to come to the end. In 2009 the MOE management sat with some IP to reflect on the ministry's indecisions about the ALP. This was a clear communication breakdown at the national level. In response to the 2006 pronouncement to cease the ALP, some IPs started to withdraw in 2008 and by 2009 they had stopped paying for the teachers and suspended the monitoring activities.

We therefore conclude that, the first MOE pronouncement to end ALP was not informed by an evaluation. The second one was informed by the UNICEF –supported Assessment but not exclusively as the MOE adopted the recommendation to consider ending ALP after five years, without heeding to the second part of the recommendation that ‘if adversities of the post-conflict situation would have been mitigated’. (SAVE). Also in 2009 MOE simply carried out internal consultations with a few IPs but never undertook wider consultations regarding suspending the programme or not. The dated document of the consultations does not provide names of the officers that participated in the meeting and some high placed officials were not aware of the same.

Box 6: Recommendations: How ALP was implemented

- ✓ The solution to a more effective accelerated learning programme does not lie in the content of the programme and the age of the learners only but on the way the programme was managed with multiple and parallel hierarchies, once these are streamlined, it is still possible to quickly address the problem of learners above the official primary school age in Liberia without compromising quality;
- ✓ As necessary, the exit of the ALP should be undertaken in consideration of multi-dimensional empirical evidence for its future utility in Liberia, including from the potential beneficiaries of the programme.
- ✓ The evaluation proposes that urgent implementation of the ESP will better harmonise the different IPs, including all the education and other inputs into the ALP;
- ✓ Create an ALP common assessment system, curriculum, teacher and learner materials;
- ✓ By building the capacity of the MOE and implementing sector-wide approaches and pooled fund mechanisms within the Education Sector programme, some of the multi-IP management costs would be averted.
- ✓ In all the previous evaluations and reviews (2007; 2008 and the current ones) ALP teachers expressed the need for certification on completion of the ALP teachers training.
- ✓ MOE to make it mandatory for the IPs to have exit strategies for education programmes such as the ALP;
- ✓ The school calendar could make explicit how it applies to the ALP as well.
- ✓ Data on learner and teacher attendance; dropout; school feeding; promotion from one level to the other and moving from, and to, the ALP /conventional primary school was not apparent should be captured.

CHAPTER 6: KEY OUTPUTS FROM THE ALP IN LIBERIA

6.1 Introduction

The main outputs discussed in this section were drawn from the ALP policy guidelines and the traditional education outputs. The outputs were analysed by gender and by county from within the ALP and between the ALP and the formal education system in terms of: i) Access to the ALP; ii) Access to primary education by strategic age-groups iii) Contribution of the ALP to GER; iii) ALP NER according to its officially defined age of 10-18; iii) Dropout in the ALP; iv) Proportion of grade 6 WAEC passes (by subjects) in ALP in comparison with the conventional primary schools; v) Transition from the ALP; vi) Attendance in the AP; vii) Proportion of ALP trained teachers.

6.2 Access: Total ALP enrolments:

ALP contributed to increased access to basic education countrywide. The decrease of ALP enrolment was in response to the directive to close rather than because the programme had outgrown its usefulness. This was evidenced by the presence of at least 60% learners that are above the primary school age and at least% learners above the official age for JHS. Between 2005 and 2006; ALP national enrolment increased by 11%. While between 2006/07 and 2007/08 the ALP increased by 29%. However, between 2007/08 and 2008/09 enrolment declined by 10 %. Drastic decline of the ALP enrolment was experienced between 2008/09 and 2009/2010 by 54.4%. Part of the reasons for the sharp decline has been closure of the ALP schools following the decision to do so. Most of the ALP in public schools that were visited during the evaluation had level II and III only. ALP reached maximum enrolment of over 75,000 in 2007/2008 when most of the IPs were supporting the programme. It was during the same year when the reduction of the primary NER was the highest. Primary education NER increased from 33% in 2007/2008 to 42% in 2008/2009. ALP enrolment also indicated a quantum leap during its inception. As shown in table 17 below, primary school started declining as shown in 2008/09 with a drastic decline in 2009/2010.

Table 17: ALP enrolment in 2006/2007; 2007/08; 2008/09 and 2009/2010²³

| 2005/06 | 2006/2007 | | | 2007/08 | | | 2008/09 | | | 2009/2010 | | |
|---------|---------------|---------------|--------|---------------|---------------|--------|---------------|---------------|--------|---------------|---------------|--------|
| T | F | M | T | F | M | T | F | M | T | F | M | T |
| 47,668 | 24,762 46% | 28,935 54% | 53,697 | 35,575 47% | 40,245 53% | 75,820 | 31,282 46% | 37,331 54% | 68,613 | 15,518 47% | 17,764 53% | 33,282 |

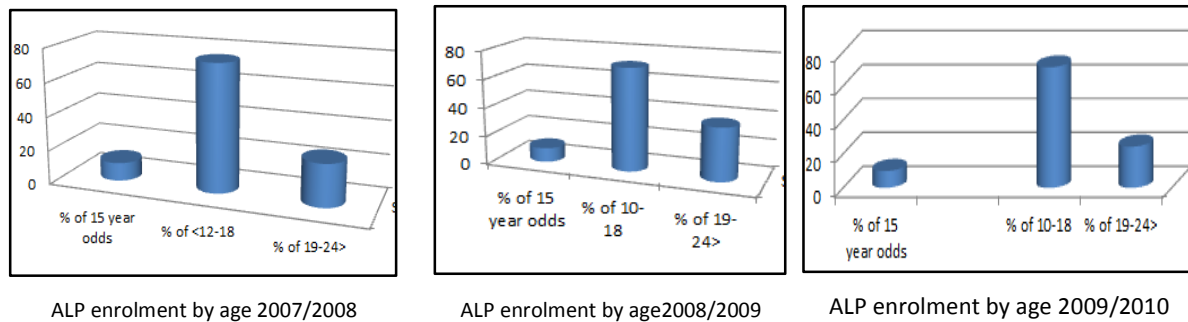
The above figures indicate no significant gender bias in enrolment, although IPs have been implementing affirmative actions of recruiting learner-mothers, providing them with the dry food rations. Exclusive data on the CAFFs was not available even though the UNICEF forms for school data included requirement for such data. (Nicholson; 27; USAID; 2008; FYA

²³ Data on 2006/2007 was extracted from Nicholson; 2007 and data on 2007/08 and 2008/09 is from the School census Report while that on 2009/2010²³ is from the MOE EMIS Officer.

6.3 Strategic targeting of the 15 year-olds and proportion of learners within the ALP officially defined age of 10-18 by sex nationally²⁴

The ALP effectively, reached out to an age group which if not in school may never – as defined by the World Bank (2010) – have received education in Liberia (the 15 year olds). The ALP also reached a good proportion of the ALP officially-defined age group of the 10 to 18 year olds. A review of the ALP enrolments over the past three school years indicated the effectiveness of the ALP as an education programme. According to the Liberia national Census Report of 2008; 56 per cent (22,431) of all the 15 year olds in Liberia (82,098) were not in school, and the proportion of the 10 – 18 year olds that were not in school was 29 per cent (210,151) of all persons (730,071) in that age range which is also the official age range for the ALP.

Diagram 5: Proportions by age groups, of ALP enrolment 2007/2008; 2008/2009; 2009/2010



As per the diagrams above, between the school years 2007/2008 and 2008/2009 a total of 14,779 fifteen year olds were enrolled in the ALP , reaching at least 66 per cent of the out-of-school 15 year olds in only half (54%) of the education districts in Liberia during the period. Again between 2007/2008 and 2008/2009, the ALP enrolled a total of 105,926 learners or 15 percent of all the potential learners within the10-18 age range of children who were not in school in 2008. As a delivery mode in its own right, the ALP enrolled at least 60 per cent of the 10 to 18 year olds who were not in school between 2007/2008 and 2009/2010 in Liberia.

Table 18: Contribution of the ALP to the GER and the NER of the regular primary education and JHS

| RATIO/YEAR | 2005/06 | 2007/08 | 2008/09 | 2009/2010 |
|-------------------------|---------|---------|---------|-----------|
| NER Primary | 37 | 33 | 42 | 45 |
| GER Primary without ALP | 45 | 89 | 106 | 98.63 |
| ALP Enrolments | 47,668 | 75,820 | 68,613 | 33,282 |
| GER Primary with ALP | 103 | 108 | 100 | 99 |
| GER Junior High School | 95 | 40 | 48 | 57 |
| NER Junior High School | - | 5 | 7 | 10.7 |

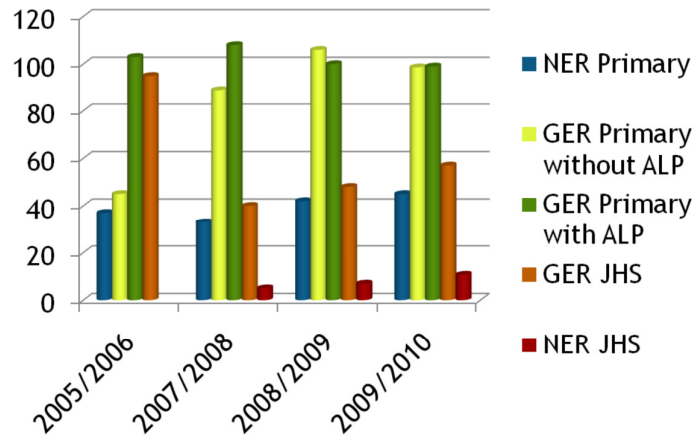
Source: World Bank; Liberia Education Status Report; 2010; MOE, EMIS, 2011

The 3% only annual increase of primary school NER between 2008/2009 and 2009/2010 may have been caused by the drastic 51 % annual decrease of the ALP learner enrolment during the same time. The annual 9 % points NER increase in the previous year – 2007/2008 and 2008/2009 of 9% points correspond with the steady number of ALP enrolment between 2007/2008 and 2008/2009 which decreased by 4% percentage points only. Albeit minimal, the NER and the GER trends of the JHS indicated some relationship with the ALP enrolment trends. Along with 37% ALP increase between 2005/2006 and 2007/2008 was an increase of the GER by 3% which even though undesirable from the education efficiency-point of view; indicated increased access to primary education by the

²⁴ Analyses from the MOE School census Reports 2007/2008; 2008/2009; 2009/2010

out-of-school children in Liberia regardless of age. Meanwhile, the increase of the ALP enrolment during the same period may have influenced the GER reduction for JHS from 95% in 2005/2006 to 40% in 2007/2008 and an increase in the NER for SHS from 5% in 2007/2008 to 10.7%. Summary of the contribution of the ALP to the GER and the NER of the education system in Liberia is presented in diagram 5 below.

Diagram 5: Contribution of the ALP to primary school and JHS GER and NER, Liberia



6.4 Dropout rates

Dropout rates were generally low in the ALP. During the ALP pilot phase for level I in 1999, out of the 685 learners who completed Level one only 93 or 12% of them dropped out while another 13% were either retained or transferred to grade two. (Nicholson: 2007). A review of IBIS data for the quarter of April-June 2011 indicated that only 1.1 per cent learners dropped out, even though, at least 12 per cent of the ALP learners' attendance was irregular. Due to absence of data on the ALP dropout by reason; it was not possible for the evaluation to compile the same. During the evaluation, there was no evidence that the form which was created by UNICEF for recording dropouts was being used at different levels of education data collection.

6.5 Grade 6 WAEC examination results

Results of the grade 6 WAEC of the ALP implementing schools were not very different from those of the conventional schools. A comparison of WAEC results between the ALP and the conventional primary school graduates did not indicate grave disparities between those of the ALP and the ones of the conventional primary schools. Meanwhile, in the absence of academic tests for the learners, the evaluation adopted WAEC results to analyse the extent to which the ALP has been able to provide the equivalent of six years of primary schooling in three years. The World Bank (2010) notes that overall, primary pass rates in Liberia between 2005 and 2007 improved reaching 85% and 98%. A discussion with the Acting Registrar of WAEC indicated that primary school learners have in the recent past been doing better than JHS and SHS. In 2006 of the 25,819 ALP learners registered in NPSCE throughout Liberia; 3,778 (14.6%) were from UNICEF supported schools which supported 52% of all registered students in the counties of Bomi, Bong, Grand Gedeh, Lofa, Maryland, and Nimba. In 2007 UNICEF registered 8,100, IRC 515 and SCF 150 ALP learners for the NPSCE.

To demonstrate equivalence of achievement of the ALP and conventional schools' WAEC grade 6 examinations' candidates; the evaluation randomly adopted 2007 WAEC results from 5 ALP implementing schools and 5 non-ALP implementing schools in Montserrado and 4 ALP implementing schools and 4 non-implementing schools in Nimba that had more than 100 candidates each. The two counties were selected due to the high learner population. The results were consistent with the earlier comparative academic assessments of learners from the ALP and from the regular primary schools that: the performance was the same in some cases the ALP was better. Limited time available could only allow the above stated sample of schools for analysis.

Diagram 6: A comparison of WAEC passes in 4 (four) schools each ALP implementing schools and regular primary schools by gender, attained in 2007 : NIMBA

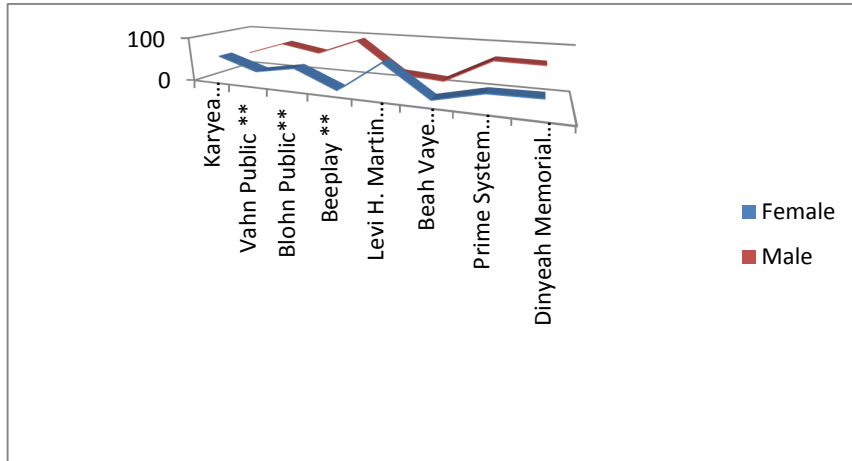
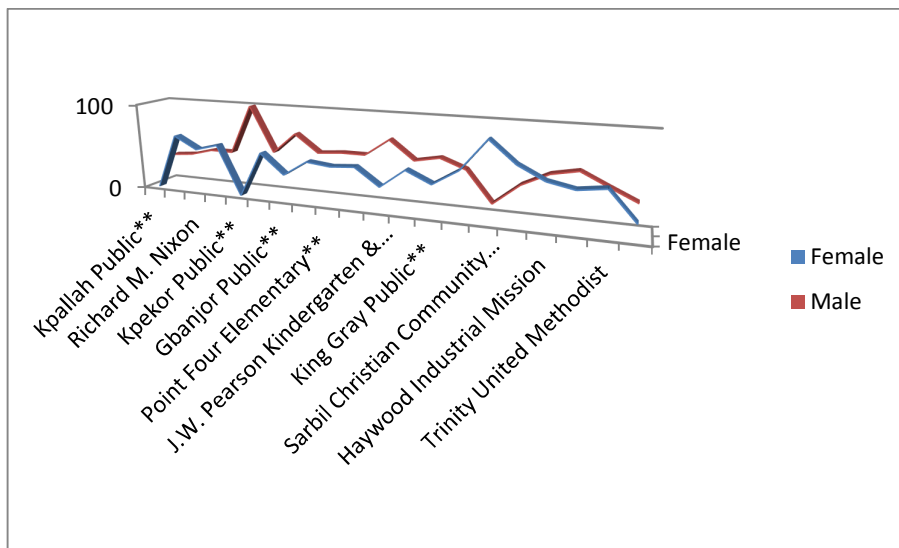


Diagram 6 above, indicates that there is no much difference in the WAEC grade 6 results between the ALP and the non-ALP implementing schools in 2007. The highest proportion of girls per school, from the ALP implementing schools that passed the WAEC examinations in Nimba was 55% while that of girls in the non-ALP implementing schools was 72 per cent. However the proportion of girls who passed in the remaining 3 ALP implementing schools was between 3.57 per cent and 42.86 per cent; while that of the non-ALP schools was between 5.56 per cent and 31 per cent.

Diagram 7: WAEC grade 6 passes between ALP and non-ALP schools: Montserrado



Sources for diagram 6&7: WAEC Results

In Montserrado, the highest proportion of girls per school, who passed in ALP implementing schools in 2007 was 54.14 while in the non-ALP schools it was 61.1 per cent. The remaining proportions of girls who passed in the ALP implementing schools per school ranged from 27.27 per cent to 52.63 per cent, while in the non-ALP schools, they were between 17.05 and 50 per cent.. Generally, girls in the non-ALP schools did slightly better than those in the ALP schools. The highest proportion per school, of boys who passed in the ALP schools in Montserrado was 100 per cent while that in the non-ALP schools was 64.1. The proportion of boys who passed the exams in the remaining ALP schools ranged from 33.33 per cent and 72.73 and in the non-ALP schools it ranged from 17.05 per cent and 64.1 per cent.

6.6 Transition from the ALP

A number of the ALP learners have joined the JHS where it was within a walking distance and were doing well. (IBIS; 2008) The evaluation was unable to get data on ALP learners who joined the JHS as this information was not available in schools. Before the removal of the examinations fees at primary level, fees was an issue. Many ALP learners who joined JHS struggled to support their education and had to work to support their fees. Evidence from the field during the evaluation suggested that after ALP learners had difficulties attending JHS during the normal schooling hour. Over 80% of the interviewed ex-ALP learners in grade 7 JHS recorded their hope regarding the initiation of evening courses. (Structured interviews with the grade 7 Ex-ALP learners; Bomi; Grand Bassa; Maryland; Montserrado and Nimba)

6.7 Attendance

Erratic or irregular attendance has been cited as common in ALP implementing schools. (IBIS) Only the NRC-supported schools had a daily attendance record. According to responses from the principals that were interviewed in the five sample counties, the lowest daily attendance rate of the ALP was recorded as 30% while the highest was above 80%. Since no data was available on the same, we could only rely on information reported by the principals. Erratic attendance was due to: the market days; heavy rainfall; and teacher-absence. Other drivers of attendance include: weather, distance to school, helping parents with chores, cultural ceremonies, pregnancy and marriage, premature satisfaction of education level achieved; migration, absence of school feeding, absence of female teachers. Older learners were found to be more motivated to learn and attend school than were the young learners. (Nicholson: 2007; IBIS: 2008).

6.8 Effectiveness on teacher availability

Teachers that were trained on the ALP indicated general compliance with the training and the teacher manuals than those who were not trained and the PTR generally complied with the requirements of the ALP guidelines. (Nicholson: 2007; USAID, 2008; IBIS, 2008). Out of a total of 20 classroom teaching observations made in the 2007 assessment only 4 indicated poor teaching by way of: poor lesson timing; ii) encouragement of rote learning; iii) use of vernacular language²⁵; and iv) factual mathematics error. The most popular component of the ALP implementation that was articulated by the FGD for the ALP and ex-ALP learners was **good teaching** by the ALP teachers. Part of the reason was the small ALP classes. Between 2007/2008 and 2008/2009 school years except for Grand Bassa and Montserrado, the ratio of one teachers to learners was consistently below the number stated in the ALP guidelines of 1 teacher per 30 learners maximum. A summary of the ALP PTR for the years 2007/2008 and 2008/2009 is presented in table 19 below.

²⁵Even though slippage into vernacular to explain a point at lower education levels is permissible (Check)

Table 19: ALP Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR), by county. 2007/2008 and 2008/2009, Liberia

| ALP PTR | | | | | | |
|--------------|--------------|---------------|-------------|--------------|---------------|-------------|
| County | 2007/2008 | | | 2008/2009 | | |
| | Teachers | Learners | PTR | Teachers | Learners | PTR |
| Bomi | 126 | 2,808 | 1:22 | 125 | 4,432 | 1:35 |
| Grand Bassa | 5 | 642 | 1:128 | 59 | 1,429 | 1:24 |
| Maryland | 116 | 2,738 | 1:23 | 157 | 3,435 | 1:22 |
| Montserrado | 484 | 12,416 | 1:27 | 308 | 12,531 | 1:41 |
| Nimba | 583 | 16,295 | 1:28 | 574 | 13,433 | 1:23 |
| Total | 1,314 | 34,899 | 1:27 | 1,223 | 35,260 | 1:29 |

Source:

6.9 The ALP Cost-effectiveness

The more the learners and the longer the period of support to the ALP ; the less the costs. This and the finding on the extent that the ALP has contributed to the primary NER and subsequent education subsystems – JHS and SHS- qualifies the ALP as cost effective. Cost – effectiveness analysis of the ALP was rather problematic because of the overlapping use of resources between the ALP and the regular schools. The evaluation carried out a quick cost comparison of the following costs calculated at different times and using different cost benchmarks but indicating costs per an ALP at some point in time²⁶.

Table 20: Summary of selected ALP annual unit costs; Liberia

| ALP PROVIDER | Duration as ALP supporter | ALP ANNUAL UNIT COST |
|---------------|---------------------------|----------------------|
| CAII | 3 years | \$ 200 |
| IBIS | 5 years | \$ 108 |
| TALKING DRUMS | years | \$ 14 |
| THINK INC | 3 years | \$ 124 |
| FTI | Projected | \$20 |
| UNICEF | 13 years | \$ 7 |

Source: USAID: 2008; UNICEF BPAs 2002-2011

The evaluation calculated the annual unit cost for UNICEF support to ALP for the period 2002 to 2011. Since the school year in Liberia, starts in September and UNICEF financial year starts in January every year; the evaluation calculated one third ALP costs of the previous year and two thirds of the subsequent year and added them together to get UNICEF support for one ALP school year. The evaluation then used the total cost per one school year (1/3 costs of previous + 2/3 of subsequent UNICEF FY) to divide it by the number of learners in a school year to get an annual unit cost. The evaluation calculated the UNICEF unit costs for the years 2006/2007 and 2007/2008 the period which the ALP was assessed by UNICEF, UNICEF ceased supporting ALP through IPs and the period with the highest number of the ALP learners in the history of the ALP in Liberia.

The total UNICEF direct support to ALP in 2006 was \$ 1,396,243.02, while in 2007 it was \$ 99,049.91. One third of the total expenditure in 2006 was \$ 465414 and two thirds of total UNICEF expenditure in 2007 was \$ 66033.27. The total UNICEF expenditure for the school year 2006/2007 school year total UNICEF expenditure \$531,447 divided by the number of ALP learners in the 2006/2007 school year: 53,697 the unit costs comes to: \$ 10. On the other hand, the total UNICEF

²⁶ Sources: USAID, 2008; UNICEF CRQs 2002 – 2011; IBIS data; 2011

direct support to ALP in 2007 was \$99,049.91 while in 2008 it was \$ 424,764.00 . One third of the total expenditure in 2007 was \$ 33,016.7 and two thirds of total UNICEF expenditure in 2008 was \$ 283,176 respectively. The total UNICEF expenditure for the school year 2007/2008 therefore was: \$ 316,192.7. Divided by 75, 820 ALP learners enrolled in the 2007/2008 school year, we get an annual unit cost of \$ 4 displayed in table 21 below.

Table 21: Annual unit costs for UNICEF direct support to ALP, 2006/2007; 2007/2008 and unit costs from cumulative UNICEF support to ALP from 2002 to 2011

| Year | Total cost per/in school years | Number of ALP learners enrolled | Unit cost |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|-------------|
| 2006/2007 | \$531,447 | 53,697 | \$ 10 |
| 2007/2008 | \$ 316,192.7 | 75, 820 | \$ 4 |
| 2002 to 2011 | \$ 4,657,225.2 | ²⁷ 250,000 (reached nationally to-date) | \$19 |
| Average annual unit cost | | | \$ 7 |

To get an indication of the UNICEF – supported annual unit costs the evaluation adopted the average of the unit costs for the two school years 2006/2007 and 2007/2008 which came to: \$ 7. The above table demonstrates the slightly higher annual ALP unit cost of \$10 when UNICEF was implementing through IPs in 2006/2007 as compared to when it was supporting the ALP through the MOE in 2007/2008 when the annual unit cost was \$4. The annual unit cost for a primary learner calculated in 2007 (LPERP) was \$ 26 and for the ALP it was \$20. Hence the cumulative unit costs of UNICEF support indicated in table 21 above is less than the ALP unit cost calculated by LPERP by 1 USD.

Box 7: Recommendations: Outputs from the ALP

- ✓ The wider the coverage and the longer the period, the more cost-effective the ALP has been. Implemented in 54 per cent of all the education districts in Liberia, the annual unit cost of the UNICEF-supported ALP was \$7, it is recommended that for cost-effectiveness of the programme, if the ALP is continuing it should scale up fast that way it will also in a very cost-effective way alleviate massive costs for implementing 9 years of free education in Liberia at the same time minimize the education inefficiency in the system manifested by the high presence of children above the official school age in the country.
- ✓ The national EMIS should capture school data on dropout rates and report ALP contribution to NER.

²⁷ Source: UNICEF,2011

CHAPTER 7: OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

FROM THE ALP

The evaluation probed the contribution to education in Liberia overtime of the ALP in its own right, as well as achievements which made impact on the formal education system of the same and the subsequent education levels: primary, JHS and SHS. The ALP has contributed to the increase in number of learners' enrolment in basic and in the subsequent education systems. More learners with the appropriate age are accessing the different levels of education in Liberia.

7.1 Cross Cutting issues

ALP has demonstrated the invaluable role of government and partners in a post-war situation, of providing NFE in a formal setting and not as a side delivery mode of education. Consultations with respondents through FGDs and individual interviews, informed the evaluation on the role that education and the ALP could play in either removing or creating inequalities in access to quality education by all in Liberians based on age, gender, geography, socio-economic; ethnicity etc.. Many ex-Alp learners were “just sitting” with their parents as expressed in Liberian English. Meaning, individual efforts to access education by children and young persons above the official school age during the ALP implementation, could not work because of the weak education delivery environment without yet a fully functional unified education system in Liberia. (FYA; USAID, 2007; FTI LPERP).

Late entry in pre and primary schooling in Liberia, age and by extension order of birth in a post-conflict country as Liberia have been is equity issues (World Bank; 2010) With very low primary school NER of 45% in 2010, late entry in school is a common phenomenon in Liberia like in many post-conflict countries. Efforts of the government and development partners have seen an improvement of primary school NER from 27% in 2004 to 45% in 2010. Evidence suggests that if not arrested in a timely and innovative manner, age and by extension order of birth of people would in a post-conflict country as Liberia affect some part of the population for a long time²⁸. The ALP provided some youth with an education which made them enter in the employment quickly to be consistent with the age of a youth expected to be employed. Some youth interviewed during the FYA indicated the need to finish education quickly for them to join money making activities quickly too.

ALP mitigated the war- related vulnerability of girls. Young mothers who would never have gotten education received it. Culturally in Liberia, girls have had a heavy workload at home – child care, gathering firewood and selling goods in the market. (ESP; 2011) When parents could afford to send all their children to school because of school fees, girls are more likely to miss out because parents did not see educating girls as an advantageous long-term investment. Culturally, girls in Liberia were seen as less intelligent than boys and are therefore less likely to receive long-term education support from their parents. (Help us Help

²⁸Sixty years after the end of the WWII, children in Germany who missed school then, had between 0.4 and 1.2 fewer years of schooling on average in adulthood. Source: Justino P Et al, **Education and Conflict Recovery: The Case of Timor Leste**, The World Bank; 2011

Ourselves; 2004) The Liberian war as all wars exacerbated the above gender roles leading to inequalities in general and in education in general (UNICEF 2007; Education in Emergency booklet). When the ALP was initiated in 1998, only about 50% boys and 32% girls of school age, were accessing primary education. (Watch List on Children and Armed Conflict; 2004; Nicholson, 2007). By 2009, primary education the enrolment was 46% girls and 54% boys.

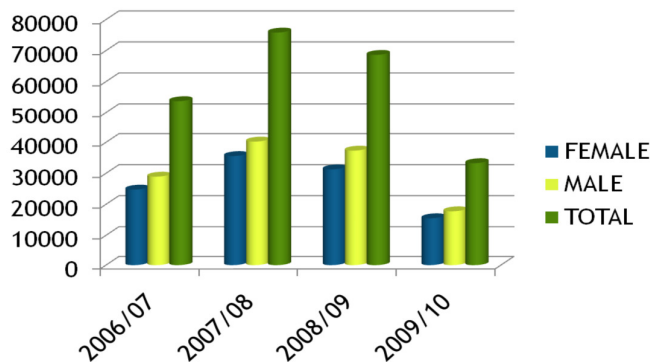
Table 22: Percentage of girls accessing primary education and the ALP 1998, 2007/08 and 2008/09

| 1998 | 2007/08 | | 2008/09 | |
|------|------------------|-----|------------------|-----|
| | Regular. Primary | ALP | Regular. Primary | ALP |
| 32% | 47% | 47% | 46% | 46% |

Source: Help us Help ourselves; MOE

Table 22 above indicates increased access to education by girls since the ALP was incepted. The table above indicate a quantum leap of access to education by girls between 1998 and 2007/08 and a steady participation then-after, calling for more efforts for promoting girls’ education in Liberia. However, participation of girls in the two modes of education indicates decrease in girls’ enrolment. The general picture from the evaluation was that of slightly less access to education by girls than for boys and more dropouts from primary education. UNICEF has developed a comprehensive girls’ quality education programme which is geared to promoting aspects which will strengthen girls’ learning and remove school/classroom based barriers to effective learning by girls; which could benefit the ALP too. (Source: UNICEF, 2011)

Diagram 7: ALP enrolment by year, by gender, Liberia



As indicated above, the ALP has been providing education regardless of the marital status of its learners – male and female. In particular, the ALP accommodated young mothers who would never have received education. Affirmative actions by the ALP for promoting female education included: i) Communities through PTAs paying for girls education to attend the ALP up to JHS; ii) Establishing girls clubs in and out of the ALP; iii) selection of female teachers to act as role models for girls; iv) Providing dry food rations to the mother-learners; v) Providing extra rations for babies of the mother-learners; vi) Providing menstrual hygiene kits to female students; and vii) providing baby care services to mother-learners. (Nicholson; 2007)

7.2 Learners' access

The ALP provision of education free of tuition and other costs meant tremendous increase in the quantitative effectiveness of the programme and the internal efficiency of education. The ALP planned to reach 300,000 but has reached at least 250,000 learners to-date - missing the target by 50,000 learners only. ALP provided access to education by children from poor households; learners and adolescents above the official school age; girl mothers; CAFFs, children who never enrolled and those that dropped out of school. Many children who missed the opportunity to enrol in education as a result of the war, managed to do so. During the volatile period of erratic conflicts 2000-2004, it was only the non-formal education delivery including the ALP, which were allowed to (and could) continue due to absence of a national government. (Watch List on Children and Armed Conflict; 2004; Nicholson, 2007).

Even though the ALP covered all the 15 counties an indicator of programme sustainability it was operating in 54 per cent only of all the 106 education districts countrywide thus compromising equitable provision of education to all. That the last four counties which were un-served by the ALP before, was done only in 2010 is a sign that ALP is being institutionalised.

7.3 Integration and multi-sectoral engagement

ALP schools brought in a sense of normality and safety to the children and young persons including the CAFFs. No figures were obtained regarding the number of reintegrated CAFFs. Further, the ALP contributed significantly to reintegrate CAFFs into their families. Documentary evidence (UNICEF, USAID) indicated the satisfaction of parents regarding how the ALP had succeeded in restoring good social behaviours of their children such that they could receive back even those that were made independent due to forced conscription to the war. Targeting CAFFs demonstrated and created awareness of communities regarding the presence, the significance of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC). There was evidence that the three years in the ALP were sufficient to regularise the CAFFs by self and by members of the community:

“Principals and teachers report that these CAFFs initially were aggressive and ‘bullied’ others. They demonstrated a sense of entitlement and were disruptive in many schools. After attending ALP they always settled down” (DFID donor report 2006)

The CESLY KAP review report informs the evaluation that some ALP learners admitted to have had changed behaviours for the better as a result of the education obtained from the ALP. The Liberian war exacerbated gender inequalities and indeed saw the participation of women as combatants (UNICEF 2007). The ALP reached to young mothers – combatants and non-combatants who would never have received education thus mitigating the war-related vulnerability of girls especially pertaining GBV. Deliberate inclusion of mothers in the ALP contributed to narrowing the gap in education, albeit insignificant between male and females in Liberia. Their inclusion in the ALP increased individual and institutional awareness on the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The Liberian MOE is currently running baby and child care centers or some of its mother-learners as a result. Information from the Director of ECE of the MOE; was that the MOE is implementing at least two of such centers in Montserrado. The WFP action to provide dry rations for learner-mothers in the ALP is another example of institutional gender-responsiveness to education.

7.4 Responsiveness to learners' situation

The fact that in its initial stages, the ALP did not put any restrictions to age of entry, proved responsiveness to the multiple interruptions of the schooling of children and adolescents experienced in Liberia. The ALP became handy by allowing learners to enter at any level of the ALP after placement tests with any age. ALP also assisted in alleviating

embarrassment of the older children having to share classrooms with the younger children. The SAVE programme officer noted that:

“The ALP contributed to the reduction of the number of years learners well above the official school age would have suffered from the embarrassment of having to sit with the much younger children in the same classroom”. (Programme Officer, SAVE).

The accommodation of children and young people with their demographic and socio-economic heterogeneity did expose the education sector to experience of working with the other sectors which needed to be strengthened. Other sectors such as: school meals, sanitation, child care, child protection and the others.

7.5 Readiness for Work

The ALP was a primary education programme which was not expected to provide learners with skills for entering the Liberian labour market. However, readiness for work constitutes part of the outcomes outlined in the ALP guidelines for the ALP to be part of a unified education system in Liberia. **Even though the ALP has provided young people with an avenue to further education, several ex-ALP learners seemed to have remained at subsistence livelihood level due to absence of JHS and SHS**

“Young persons’ employment prospects are closely related to the education received. Well-educated young people provide efficient and effective productive labour.....essential for translating economic growth into human development”

ECA; African Youth Report 2011: Addressing the Youth Education and Employment Nexus in the New Global Economy”, 2011

Many ex-ALP learners that were interviewed from the five sample counties indicated that the income that they have been getting after graduating from the ALP has been for buy food and clothes. However, very few of the graduates from the ALP joined high school leaving them with no option but to join the vulnerable employment sub-sector which is a soaring 85 percent of the total workforce in Liberia.

7.6 Learning outcomes

Level two learning outcomes articulated in the ALP guidelines are: i) Agricultural skills demonstrated by school gardens and school animal husbandry; ii) Physical education through sports and games; ii) Peace and Human Rights Education. Most of the schools that were visited during the evaluation recreational facilities. Relating to life skills the FGD noted improvement in the characters of the ALP learners who demonstrated more than before a sense of responsibility regarding conflict resolution and decision making which consequently mitigated issues of public and domestic violence. (IBI S 2008, 2011; CESLY, 2010).

7.7 Parents

Literature informs us that immediately after the war, some parents did not wish to take back their children who were CAFFs but since ALP took them on, parents were encouraged to gradually accept these children. Focus group discussions (USAID; 2009) inform the evaluation about the gratification of communities regarding the newly acquired skills of the ALP graduates in literacy and numeracy skills especially in the English language and in carrying out basic numerical transactions in their daily lives. Some parents went to the extent of enrolling their children in both the ALP and the conventional primary schools, resulting to double counting of children enrolled in the two modes of education delivery. In several evaluations (USAID; NUICEF; IBIS) most ex-ALP learners indicated satisfaction with what they acquired from the ALP especially in terms of literacy, numeracy and English language skills.

7.8 Programme sustainability and ownership

The evaluation probed whether the ALP was implemented in a manner that if needed, it could be sustained.

Activities and Institutions

The ALP expedited the reinstatement in Liberia, of the education system in the process instilling great senses of sustainability and ownership. A number of activities and institutions for making efficient delivery of education in Liberia were put in place. These included: i) teacher supervision and monitoring; ii) institutionalisation of the school/community relations through the PTAs and the School Management Committees; iii) Strengthening of the School Management Committees; iv) Inception of resource learning centers; v) strengthening of the EMIS . Furthermore, the ALP provided for the institutionalisation of community participation in basic education in Liberia which need to not only be sustained, but strengthened further. This was done through MOUs which were signed between communities and the IPs such as NRC; SCF-UK and CAII. Communities in the MOU, were represented by the PTAs/SMCs. Through the latter institutions community members played the roles of: i) identifying schools for ALP implementation; ii) sensitising community members to the ALP and asking for thier support to the programme; iii) identifying children in the community that had to enrol in the ALP; iv) registering learners in the ALP schools; v) verifying the ages of learners for the ALP registration.

Teachers

The ALP expedited the re-employment of teachers in Liberia and instilling interest in the teaching profession. Until recently, ALP helped in retaining teachers who also taught in the regular elementary schools due to the incentive even though this has a negative side. Some of the former ALP teachers continue to receive incentives even though they had long ceased to teach ALP classes either because the classes were no longer operational or the teachers themselves had been moved away from teaching the ALP learners. Unfortunately, wherever the evaluation teams went for data collection, they found mass exodus of the ALP teachers of the cession of the IP support to paying teacher incentive. The volunteer teachers in the primary school system, who would have had some “dose” of teaching methodologies, acquired teaching skills as well as cultivated some interest in the profession, could form the initial teacher trainees for the basic education system in Liberia. In a discussion with selected education actors the evaluation was informed of the unpopularity of the teaching profession in Liberia only viewed as a stepping stone to greener pastures.

Teaching and learning environments

Support to the ALP strengthened the physical primary education structures in Liberia. At its inception in 2006, the current Government of Liberia (GOL) with the help of the EDPs – especially UNICEF started rehabilitating primary schools in some cases building new ones. As indicated earlier, when the ALP was introduced in 1998, there were a mere 20 percent of the buildings required for primary schools. Today 40% of all primary schools are of brick and mortar. (World Bank....) Since over 80% of the primary public school have been the ALPs, and that it was mostly the ALP that were targeted for the teaching and learning supplies immediately after the war, the primary schools that housed the ALP benefited in terms of supply inputs such as renovation of buildings and the others.

The evaluation further identified use or positioning of the mainstream education system’s resources, systems, institutions; policies and regulations by the ALP budget as indicators of catalysed ownership and subsequently programme sustainability is indicated in the table below.

Table 23: Key areas which indicated movement towards ownership and sustainability of the ALP programme in Liberia

| OWNERSHIP/SUSTAINABILITY ASPECT | HOW/WHERE THE ALP WAS INTEGRATED/RELEVANT |
|--|--|
| 1. Sector policies and strategies | ✓ ESP; PERP; Girls Education Policy; School fees abolition policy; ALP implementation Guidelines; inclusion in the MOE work plan |
| 2. National Coordination | ✓ Fully managed ALP unit in the Basic Education Department of the MOE ✓ MOU between the MOE and the IPs ✓ Allocation and appropriation of funds within the Education Pooled Fund |
| 3. Sub-national coordination | ✓ CEO and DEOs responsibilities of identifying and managing ALP implementing schools ✓ Use of the Learning Resource Centers |
| 4. School level management | ✓ MOE principals, PTAs and SMCs ✓ MOUs between the PTAs and the IPs |
| 5. EMIS | ✓ Inclusion in the MOE School census data including GER (World bank) |
| 6. Teachers | ✓ 99% of the ALP teachers are the mainstream MOE primary school teachers |
| 7. Physical premises | ✓ Most ALP schools are hosted in government primary schools and many were rehabilitated |
| 8. Curriculum | ✓ The same mainstream national primary school curriculum with a focus on the fore core subjects |
| 9. Textbooks | ✓ Use of the same conventional primary school textbooks |
| 10. School calendar | ✓ Operating within the same government primary school curriculum |
| 11. Examinations | ✓ ALP learners sitting the same primary school leaving examinations |
| 12. Promotion/transition | ✓ Applying the general rule of cut-off marks for transition from one level to the other. ✓ ALP learners may, on passing the statutory tests, join the mainstream formal education |
| 13 Funding | ✓ Budgeted in the pooled fund |
| 13. Institutionalised multisectoral responses to education | ✓ Child care; school meals, sanitation; child protection; private sector |
| 14. Geographical coverage | ✓ Coverage of all the 15 counties nationwide the latest four counties having been reached in 2010 |

Source: Multiple documents

7.9 What needs to improve

Different perceptions

Perceptions towards the ALP have been an area requiring improvement, especially regarding who owns the ALP. As noted in the UNICEF 2007 ALP assessment that many ALP teachers see the ALP and conventional school system as separate entities and not complementary. (Nicholson; 2007). And perceptions of people running the programme influence actions towards the inception of such institutions. For an example the USAID of the ALP (2009) refers to conventional elementary schools as “of the MOE” while the ALP as “of the partners”.

“Partners’ lessons vs MOE conventional lessons” (USAID, USAID page 5; 2009)

Inevitably, the ALP was initiated with heavy donor presence and hence was being coordinated from MOE Headquartes. At least 13 years after the inception of the ALP there the programme is still mostly being supervised by the MOE H/Q. Interviews with the CEOs subscribed to the observation that much as they had authority on the running of the regular elementary schools, they were distant from running the ALP, compromising ownership of the programme at that critical level. (Interview with CEOs)

As noted earlier, some EDPs and MOE staff perceived and implemented the ALP as a short term emergency programme which would quickly solve the problem to the many learners above the official school age who had no primary education, after which the education system in Liberia would quickly be back in place. Thirteen years after its inception the ALP is still in place with neither a nationwide exit plan nor a similar scaling up or adaptation strategy. Except the challenge before all who care about the problem of children and young persons above the official school age who are in and out of school is: whether and if the ALP is still relevant as Liberia is moving from the emergency to a developmental phase.

From literature, FGD and individual interviews indicated that in particular the earlier decisions to phase out the ALP had not taken the perceptions of the young people in Liberia that they would like to go back to school. The Facility Youth Assessment of 2009, recorded 54% of youth (aged 15-19; 20-25; 26-35) identified as their short-term expectation: “going back to school or continuing school”. School, connotes a formal institution school providing education. Only 17% of the same youth selected learning a trade. Most of the same youth (91%) expressed in the same assessment that they hoped their lives would get better, indicating high expectations by these youth from the education planners in Liberia.

Donor Coordination

Harmonisation of the IPs processes such as the master trainers manual, teacher training calendar; rates of the ALP teacher incentives; a common monitoring framework and others created a ground for donor coordination in education which would need to be revitalised and strengthened for implementing the ESP and the ERP, PRSP, and the GBS. UNICEF clearly phased into sustaining the ALP in Liberia by initially using nationally-based IPs, implementing through the MOE through direct funding and lately through the MOE Education pooled fund. .

Partial or Full adaptation of the ALP

The evaluation was assigned to probe the extent to which the ALP achieved either partial or full adaptation. The evaluation concludes that the programme achieved both partial and full adaptation. Following a mid-term review of the ALP BY USAID in 2008, CESLY supported the initiation of two versions of the programme: ALP –regular and the ALP plus. Classes for the former took place in the mornings and afternoons while those for the latter took place in the evenings. With the absence of electricity in most areas where ALP classes were taking place, the USAID supported ALP to introduce Taa Bora lamps for reading. These additional inputs were to improve the efficiency of teaching and learning. However an externality emerged as some ALP plus learners were teachers. engaged in producing a likeness of the Taa Bora lanterns. The CESLY project and several of its features/activities can be identified as an unintended but inevitable result from the ALP. The LP regular was officially closed in September 2011.

Box 7: Recommendations: Impact and Cross Cutting issues

- ✓ If well tapped, the presence of volunteer teachers would sustain the Liberian primary education system;
- ✓ As donors and implementing partners are closing down 'emergency' education programmes, the funding for the ALP has been decreasing. Yet the problem of children above the official age still exists and ALP and hence, the evaluation is informed by literature and interviews of the need for the ALP to continue.
- ✓ Since youth are not socially, economically and demographically not monolithic, their education must not be left to individual efforts at this time when the Liberian education delivery system is still weak and hence is unable to provide diverse post-primary education modes that youth may access through individual efforts. (Source: World B; 2010.)
- ✓ Any a catching-up education programme must establish the expectations of the youth and the experiences of those youth that benefitted from the programme before making terminal management decisions of phasing a mass-education programme as the ALP;
- ✓ Since free education of nine years begins 2011 and substantially in 2012, the natural demise of the ALP could be planned alongside an incremental abolishment of basic education school fees and/or non-fee payment by starting the exercise one grade per year and by age as done in Lesotho, Southern Africa and India in Asia: (World bank; UNICEF, ADEA; UNESCO; IIET; Fast Track Initiative: Six Steps to Abolishing Primary School Fees: Operational Guide; World bank/UNICEF, 2009)
- ✓ The education fraternity in Liberia should take stock of socio economic obstacles that have continued to produce children and adolescents that are above the official school age in the country since the inception of the ALP in 1998 to establish whether they are still in place or not before deciding on how to address the problem.
- ✓ Considering the grave inequities in access to education and in particular the ALP coverage, the district should be the unit for planning, monitoring and record keeping

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

The fact that the ALP was initiated to address a generation which outgrew its school levels by collapsing a primary education curriculum from 6 years to 3 years helped children and adolescents above the school age in Liberia, them to get closer to their education school levels after the war had interrupted their education for 14 years. Furthermore, the ALP operated above the civil conflicts and the universal definition of primary education of at least seven years of primary education by tailoring its response to the need on the ground, and without much restriction as indicated by ten different age cohorts of learners that ALP served. Hence, we conclude that as an education mode the ALP would still be relevant in Liberia provided it is transformed for relevance to the current situation in particular as: i) the GOL is implementing nine years of free and compulsory basic education in Liberia; ii) for the speedy provision of education to children and adolescents who are still above school age in Liberia; iii) for alleviating massive costs of free primary education and speeding up the achievement of the NER in the education system.

Positioning of the ALP in formal primary system and in the same MOE institutional and governance structures, was very efficient academically and economically as it ensured trust from both parents and learners of the quality of teaching and learning. However, the short-term vision for the ALP as a short-lived programme, affected the certainty of the programme's existence. The way the ALP was phased in after the pilot phase where some most disadvantaged counties such as Sinoe and River Cess started ALP in 2010 late in time to phase out, was unfortunate. The ALP phase-out has not been very efficient either because it was based on a management decision which was not informed by empirical evidence. If done in depth, analysis of the economical costs of the back-and forth decisions might be found high. We therefore conclude that ALP learner attendance has deteriorated not because the ALP is no longer needed but because of the announcement to end the programme. The absence of a national ALP exit plan and the weak internal communication on the ALP within the MOE and between the latter and the IPs added to the volatile governance environment the programme was operating within.

In terms of efficiency of the ALP as an education sub-system: i) ALP learners performed the same at times better than the conventional primary learners; ii) Until the latest announcement of the phasing out of the ALP in 2002, most times ALP dropout was low and completion rate was good; iii) the ALP contributed to increased access to basic education countrywide. Between 2005 and 2006 ALP national enrolment increased by 11% and between 2006/07 and 2007/08 it increased by 29%. The ALP further contributed to reduction of the primary NER. ALP enrolment reached maximum enrolment of over 75,000 in 2007/2008 during the same year when the reduction of the primary NER was the highest from 33% in 2007/2008 to 42% in 2008/2009. Generally, the fact that ALP provided education free of tuition and other costs meant tremendous increase in the quantitative effectiveness of the programme and the overall internal efficiency of education. However transition to JHS could not be established as there were no records on the same.

In the foregoing, the evaluation concludes that the ALP was effective and worth an education endeavour in Liberia. The ALP, was effective in providing a rapid education

safety net and learning spaces for children and adolescents affected by the war, who were above the official school age - of between 8 and 25 years and beyond. In particular, the programme was effective in that it managed albeit for a short period; to access to education children above the official school age by removing obstacles such as: i) official age requirement for enrolling in primary education; ii) having been to stay in primary school for six years; iii) direct fee paying; ii) paying for the non-fee costs including examination fees; iii) shortened learning cycle for catching up with schooling and employment; iv) embarrassment of the older learner to sit with the younger learners; v) non-acceptance of the CAFFs by society and parents and vi) non-acceptance in primary schools, of the learner-mothers.

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ANNEX 1: SWOT ANALYSIS

| WEAKNESSES | STRENGTHS |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ No national exit strategy ✓ ALP national strategy in the ESP not yet actualised ✓ Weak content in numeracy and literacy skills at level I ✓ Inadequacy of assignment teachers ✓ Reading was not emphasized in ALP ✓ Newly developed Alternative Education is unclear and not explicit ✓ Political will to the programme is low ✓ Many IPs (except NRC had no exit strategies) UNICEF never exited ✓ The ALP policy did not take advantage of some experiences from ALP implementation. E.g. gender is completely absent from the guidelines yet the ALP had gender responsive interventions some of which were unintentional. ✓ The mixing of very young and very old learners ✓ Curriculum never having skills' content? (SAVE) ✓ Record keeping is poor at all levels of the ALP implementation ✓ Crowded multi-age classrooms ✓ Teacher training and qualifications concentrated more on methodologies than on teacher subject mastery ✓ No LEARNER follow-up and tracking ✓ At the design of the ALP was not informed by assessments of the ALP within the wider socio-economic context of a post war situation to determine how long the programme would be needed. ✓ Few trained teachers ✓ The IPs were delivering the Alp with varied quality benchmarks hence exposing children to differing education. ✓ Few volunteer teachers developed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Did not allow political interference ✓ Launch of the Education Reform Act of 2011 which recognises the role of accelerated learning for children above the official age ✓ ALP potential role of shortening the period for the government needing huge financial resources for free basic education ✓ Has speeded up education for all in Liberia ✓ Introduced participatory learning at primary level ✓ Teacher skills development as per the above ✓ Re-institutionalised community involvement in Liberia – the use of the MOUs ✓ Teachers training was standardised and consistent than for primary education ✓ Higher parent involvement ✓ Learners finished faster to extent some parents registered their children twice – double counting ✓ Over-aged caught up with the others. ✓ -Parental involvement higher ✓ ALP is popular ✓ ALP has managed to highlight in an expeditious manner areas of teaching; learning and general basic education management which need strengthening e.g. record keeping ✓ Community participation ✓ Affirmative action for girls' education through supporting mother learners ✓ Learner-centered teacher methodologies ✓ Shortened school cycle for older learners ✓ Closely linked with the formal school system laterally and vertically ✓ It was free including from the non-fee costs ✓ Flexible regarding the age of the learners ✓ Inculcated interest in teaching among the volunteer teachers ✓ Presence of institutions which can support other education modes e.g. the Learning Resource Centers ✓ Maintained equivalence with the conventional primary education ✓ Institutionalised IEC for education ✓ Provided for inter-agency coordination ✓ Presence of volunteer teachers |
| THREATS | OPPORTUNITIES |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ In case the elected government would not attract adequate donors ✓ Possible post-election violence ✓ Announcement of 9-year free and compulsory education. ✓ The scars of war are still prevalent in Liberia manifested by appalling condition of the country's infrastructure hindering easy movement for monitoring purposes. ✓ Removing ALP from the stronger formal primary school to the weaker adult and vocational education ✓ The vacuum in education management created by war will take long to heal | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Presence of young people above the official school age ✓ Donor funding is available and donors are committed to address the problem ✓ Presence of the ESSP and the FTI catalytic fund, Pooled fund ✓ MOE is decentralising itself and education boards are in place ✓ Abolition of school fees is an opportunity for mitigating the number of children in the school system who are above the official age. ✓ The policy, strategic and funding framework in the form of the Education Reform Act of 2011; the ESP of Liberia and the Education pooled funding mechanism ✓ Decentralisation of education launched |

| | |
|--|---|
| | ✓ Liberian economic set up fertile for PPP (e.g. ALP+) |
|--|---|

ANNEX 2: THE TERMS OF REFERENCE

Summary

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| Title | Evaluation of the Accelerated Learning Programme (ALP) |
| Purpose | To evaluate the effectiveness, efficiency, efficacy and impact of the ALP in order to inform the new Non-Formal Education (NFE) programme planned (in the Education Sector Plan) by the Ministry of Education (MOE); to contribute to evidence on Out of School Children (OOSC) in Liberia and contribute to equity focused education policy for vulnerability and disparity reduction |
| Location | Monrovia and other ALP implementation sites nation-wide |
| Duration | 80 days (June 22 nd to October 10 th 2011) |
| Start Date | 22/05/2011 |
| Reporting to | Chief, Education |

Background

The Liberia Accelerated Learning Programme (ALP) was introduced in 1999 to give children displaced by the civil war and those whose schooling was disrupted an opportunity to complete their primary education in a short space of time. The programme therefore targeted both groups of children – those that had been in school and those that had not started school at the time of the civil conflict in Liberia. The ALP is based on a curriculum which accelerates learning so that the primary school cycle can be completed in three rather than the stipulated 6 years. It was meant for older than the official primary school age children (of 6 – 11 years of age). The learners that pass the national examinations at the 6th grade can proceed to secondary school and beyond. The programme emphasizes learner-centred learning, shifting the responsibility from the teacher to the learner for keeping up to date in lessons. Selected primary school teachers receive special training in the accelerated teaching methodology and are also given a small pay incentive a month for teaching in the ALP in addition to their formal school classes. The ALP was developed by the Ministry of Education with support from UNICEF.

The ALP has grown since then and as with other programmes, over time, many of the initial dimensions have changed. The programme grew beyond the planned numbers and the learner target group shifted from 8 – 14 years of age to beyond 20. In the 2006/7 school year, there were approximately over 60,000 learners enrolled in schools in 11 of the 15 counties in Liberia.

Although the MOE had planned to discontinue the programme once the 2006/2007 cohort had completed the programme it became obvious that there were very large numbers of older children in the primary school sub-sector. In that same school year (2006/2007) 73% of the children enrolled in the programme were over the age of 11 with more than half being 15 years or older. As such the programme was already becoming internally inefficient as young children cannot effectively learn together with adults whose cognitive skills are more developed. The envisaged double shifting did not help as formal schools could not cope with the enrolled numbers for primary schooling. This essentially allowed the ALP to take place only in the afternoon, even for small children, another undesirable aspect. For some of the implementers of the ALP, the programme provided the only education support and was therefore not conducted at a school. This, too distorted the intended operation of the programme since ideally, children should have been placed in a level according to their performance on some assessment tests. Another complication was the double counting that went on where children wishing to move faster in the primary sub-sector supplemented formal classes with ALP lessons, further compromising the quality of teaching at this level and making assessing the effect of the programme difficult.

To address some of these issues, the MOE planned to revamp the ALP for children older than 15 years of age or above. The revamping was to be preceded by a comprehensive evaluation of the ALP in late 2007; results would inform the new programme. The new programme would be supported by many partners but the MOE would develop a clear policy and play a more active role in regulating the many providers. By the following school year (2007/2008), the number of enrolled learners had gone beyond 75,000.

Justification

Not all the MOE plans indicated above were implemented. The ALP continued to grow in popularity and in some places replaced formal schools as providers obtained funding only for this programme rather than for the formal schooling. In 2007, the programme was streamlined with the MOE appointing a National Coordinator with responsibility for coordinating all ALP actors and their activities as well as to enhance the collaboration among these actors and the MOE representatives in the field. In 2008 UNICEF supported the MOE to develop the ALP Policy Guidelines to assist in standardising programme provision. Up to 10 providers continued to support the ALP till 2009 when the MOE announced the final end of the programme with the cohort enrolled in that year. In the same year, UNICEF assisted the MOE to take coverage of the programme to the remaining four counties that were not covered. UNICEF continued its role of supporting the MOE to coordinate the programme and took on many of the learners supported by NGOs but whose funding was drying out due to the MOE pronouncement. At the time of writing there are no officially known ALP Level 1 learners registered in Liberia as no partner assessed learners for this level in the 2010/2011 school year. The programme will therefore formally end in June/July 2012 when the current Level 2 learners complete their Level 3 ALP studies. As per Education Sector Plan (2010 - 2020) the MOE is planning a new Non-Formal Education (NFE) programme with a skills component to replace the current ALP.

In 2007, UNICEF supported the MOE to conduct an assessment of the ALP in order to obtain data that would be used to strengthen the programme. An evaluation was avoided due to the rigour expected of such studies. The results of the 2007 assessment informed the ALP Policy Guidelines developed with UNICEF support but the programme remained essentially the same. Given that the programme is coming to an end in 2012 and the fact that an evaluation of the programme has not been done except for level 1 learners in 2000, it is essential that this is done in 2011. The results will inform MOE decisions concerning education programming for adolescents and UNICEF support to this group of children not enrolled in formal school. The ALP evaluation will be complemented with the results from the global Out of School Children study (in which Liberia is participating) to inform policy related to both supply and demand for schooling in Liberia especially for adolescents and young people.

Specific Tasks

The consultant will:

- ✓ Develop a concept note on the understanding of the assignment, including a work-plan for the assignment;
- ✓ Review the complementary or alternative education literature for an understanding of the background to such programmes; review specific ALP Liberia literature to identify the gaps to be filled by additional data;
- ✓ Use the knowledge gained to develop a methodology for collecting additional data (decide on research approach; develop instruments for additional data collection, identify respondents);
- ✓ Identify and train research assistants for collecting additional data, pre-test tools, finalise;
- ✓ Conduct field work for additional data;
- ✓ Analyse primary and secondary data, present preliminary report, revise using feedback from presentation;
- ✓ Submit final report by the due data

Methodology

The research methodology, sampling size and instruments will be determined by the consultant and agreed by UNICEF and key stakeholders once the desk review of existing literature and studies has been completed.

Scope and Focus

In line with programme evaluation requirements the scope of the study will involve answering the fundamental evaluation questions in this case relating to the ALP: **Did we do the right thing? Did we do it right? How could we have done it better?** The consultant's approach will specifically address questions on the following aspects:

- **Relevance:** Considering the background to the development of the Liberia ALP, how appropriate was the programme design to meet the given objectives? Was there enough analysis of the problem of out of school children or those with interrupted schooling to justify the choice of the ALP? To what extent were lessons learned from similar programmes elsewhere concerning factors that facilitate or impede success incorporated into the ALP design? What is the relevance of the programme to Liberia, the target group, methods used in the programme?
- **Effectiveness:** To what extent has the ALP contributed to increasing access to education for children and young people whose schooling was disrupted or those who would otherwise not have gone to school? To what extent has the ALP contributed to raising primary school enrolments/completion rates? To what extent have the learning objectives of the programme been achieved in the different subject areas? To what extent has the ALP been effective in reducing the number of out of school children? To what extent has the programme served the marginalized groups of children? To what extent has the ALP contributed to raising enrolment rates at other levels as a result of accelerating the completion of primary school level? To what extent are the materials (books and manuals), pedagogy, assessment procedures been effective in meeting the objectives of the programme? To what extent are the programme sites appropriate and effective in delivering the programme outputs?
- **Efficiency:** To what extent has the ALP been able to provide the equivalent of six years of schooling in three years with low costs? What has been the cost of providing ALP in comparison to providing formal schooling (cost per output)? What if any has been the value added to providing the ALP (externalities) in communities, among other learners? What proportion of the education resources have been used to provide the ALP? To what extent do the numbers of learners reached justify the expenditures on the programme? To what extent is the ALP a valid investment of education resources?
- **Impact:** What have been the positive and negative impacts of the ALP on the participants, the families, the communities in the original 11 and the subsequent 4 counties? Is there a difference in the impact? What has been the programme's impact on education development in Liberia generally? Has the ALP made any significant difference to the lives of those who participated in it that can be attributed in some way to the programme? What impact on the education system can be reasonably attributed to the ALP?
- **Sustainability:** What is the adaptability of the ALP to other programmes such as the planned NFE programme? Can the ALP be implemented as part of the Youth Employment Programme? To what extent can the ALP exit into a skills development programme? What is the degree of ownership of the programme by MOE, the counties, the districts and schools and communities implementing it? What has been the degree of ownership among the donors to the programme? To what extent have the PTAs/SMCs been engaged in the management of ALP implementing schools?
- **Cross-cutting issues:** What has been the effect of the programme on girls' and boys' participation in education? To what extent did the programme contribute to meeting the right to education / to gender parity? To what extent did the organization and management of the ALP contribute to good practice in governance/coordination of education programmes? To what extent did the ALP contribute to HIV&AIDS prevention

among participants? To what extent has the partnership among the MOE, UNICEF, and other ALP providers been functionally effective?

Expected Deliverables/outputs

The consultant will deliver the following:

- Concept note (on the understanding of the assignment) and work-plan;
- Brief summary of literature review identifying data gaps;
- Outline of research methodology including sites, tools assistants;
- Data collection tools pre-tested and used to collect data;
- Draft summary report identifying major findings;
- Power-point presentation of major findings for verification and validation with key stakeholders;
- Final report containing results of the analysis, conclusions, recommendations derived from the findings for effective end of programme strategy, incorporating comments from the review by stakeholders