

The excerpt below describes the context of the low capacity of teachers.

USAID Liberia

Request for Proposals (RFP) # 72066920R00010 Transforming the Education System for Teachers and Students in Liberia (TESTS)

Attachment J-1

Statement of Objectives

Excerpt pp. 1-3

#### 4. BACKGROUND

Liberian ECE and primary school teachers struggle not only with inadequate pedagogical training, but also with lack of basic content knowledge of the subjects that they teach. The current Liberian MOE system and structures for teacher professional development could use additional or complementary support to improve the quality of professional development programs that prepare these teachers for the classroom. Liberian teacher training institutions, such as private or faithbased universities, community colleges, and faith-based organizations, need support to increase their ability to create flexible programs that address teacher needs for both improved pedagogical skills and content knowledge.

**Teacher quality.** In 2015, the MOE considered only 49.2 percent of ECE and 62.3 percent of primary teachers to be “qualified”, meaning that they possessed the minimum educational credentials necessary to be a primary school teacher<sup>1</sup>

. Seventy-six percent of the “qualified” primary school teachers have a C-Certificate, the minimum required qualification<sup>2</sup>

. Poor teacher content knowledge is demonstrated in data from a national teacher testing exercise conducted by the MOE in all 15 counties from 2015-2017<sup>4</sup>

. The MOE administered two exams, one for Language Arts and one for Mathematics. The troubling results are summarized in **Table 1** below.

# of Test Results Recorded	Average English Score	Average Math Score	Average combined score	% Passing (70% and above)	% Conditionally Passing (40 – 69%)	% Failing (below 40%)
Total – 16,014	38	44	41	5%	44%	51%
Male – 13,971	38	44	41	6%	44%	50%
Female – 2,043	33	43	38	3%	41%	56%

Of the 16,014 teachers, principals, vice principals and volunteers who sat the exam, only five percent achieved a passing mark for their combined average score. Fifty-one percent failed the examination, and six percent received a score of 15 percent or below and were categorized as “untrainable.” Nationwide, the combined average score was only one point above the failure threshold. This raises serious concerns about the literacy and numeracy skills of Liberia’s teachers and their ability to educate students in core skills that they themselves lack. Since the majority of “qualified” teachers have only a high school degree plus the nine-month C-Certificate training, the low level of content knowledge and the dismal performance on the MOE teacher exams are not surprising. The number of males tested out-numbered females tested by a ratio of almost 7:1, reflecting the male-female disparity in overall numbers of primary teachers.

Table 1: Results of National MOE Teacher Testing Exercise 2015-2017

*[could not copy; results summarized above]*

**Teacher training.** While the C-Certificate mechanism is widely used by the MOE to accredit teachers, the mid-term evaluation of USAID's Liberia Teacher Training Project (LTTP) Phase II

stated strongly that it is time to end the C-Certificate emergency strategy<sup>3</sup>

. The evaluation recommended exploring teacher training institutions outside of the government-run Rural Teacher Training Institutes (RTTIs) and using new models for training teachers. A report by the MOE and UNESCO also argued that the C-Certificate program is inadequate for in-depth content area coverage and knowledge

. Despite the findings that cast doubt on the accelerated training strategy, the MOE is continuing to train both ECE and primary school teachers using C-Certificate training.<sup>4</sup>

1-World Bank Group/Global Partnership for Education (GPE)/Ministry of Education Republic of Liberia, Liberia Education Sector Analysis, November 2015.

2-Ibid., pg. 80. Prior to the Liberian civil war, C-Certificate programs were 18-months in duration, equivalent to two academic calendar years of

study. During the post-war reconstruction era, efforts were made to certify a large number of teachers quickly. An abbreviated, nine-month CCertificate program was developed to address this urgent need.

3-Testing statistics are from Ministry of Education Republic of Liberia, National Teaching Testing Initiative Report, September 2018. The goal of the testing was to understand the quality and capacity of the existing teacher workforce, to inform future training and professionalization efforts.

4- Bassie, Mark, et.al, Mid-term Assessment of the Liberia Teacher Training Program Phase II, 2013, pg. 58.

The excerpt below describes the context of low reading levels among Liberian school children

USAID Liberia Request for Proposal (RFP) # SOL-669-17-000004, Read Liberia!

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Excerpt pp. 11-12

C.1.3. Problem Statement and Development Hypothesis

Many Liberian students, both in schools assisted by USAID and in the control schools to which USAID interventions were compared, have not been able to learn to read with sufficient fluency to comprehend text in order to become literate. The Liberia Teacher Training Program (LTTP) midline assessment measured student oral reading fluency in the USAID-supported schools at 14 words per minute, far below the international standard of 45 words per minute. Students also scored poorly in reading comprehension, answering, on average .7 of 5 reading comprehension questions correctly.

This data suggest that during the process of scaling a successful pilot program (Early Grade

Reading Assessment Plus 2008 -2010), the intensity of support for implementation became insufficient to generate the strong results expected. This could be due to a number of reasons including a lack of fidelity of implementation in the classroom, lack of highly skilled coaches, a shortage of appropriate materials available to all schools, insufficient teacher training, and a lack of community support. When a successful pilot is scaled, it is important to identify program features that are most likely to contribute to successful student learning and concentrate on rigorous implementation fidelity. The formulation of the Read Liberia! problem statement highlights the multiple, interrelated factors that must work together in order for a cost-effective, scalable, Government-approved model for early grade reading instruction to be developed. The problem statement can be found below:

#### PROBLEM STATEMENT: EARLY GRADE READING

Liberian students in grade one and two are not learning to read with fluency and comprehension because:

1. Children in kindergarten are not being exposed early to oral vocabulary needed for

emergent literacy.

2. Time allocations for reading instruction in the early grades during the school day are

insufficient

4. An evidence-based reading curriculum, with accompanying materials appropriate for reading instruction in the early grades, exists, but has not been incorporated into the primary grade comprehensive curriculum
5. Teachers' levels of literacy are very low. More time and resources are needed to coach teachers to become better readers.
6. Teachers receive insufficient training in reading instruction.
7. Monitoring and coaching systems for early grade reading instruction are under-developed.
8. Students' reading skills are not routinely assessed in the early grades.

The Read Liberia! development hypothesis is the corollary of this problem statement.

USAID/Liberia hypothesizes that,

IF:

1. Kindergarten students are taught the oral vocabulary lexicon needed for emergent literacy in English;
2. Official time allocations for reading instruction in the early grades are increased and enforced;
4. Reading intervention is refined and simplified with the key components needed for children to learn to read words and to understand what they read are preserved and improved if necessary;
5. Texts appropriate for early grade reading instruction are improved and additional leveled texts created;
6. Teachers receive intensive training and systematic coaching in effectively teaching the early grade reading curriculum;
7. Trained teachers receive evidence based, scripted reading lessons and materials to support reading improvement in the early grades;
8. Teachers are monitored and supported in their classrooms;

THEN: Students will be able to read with fluency and comprehension at the end of second grade.

PS – this excerpt was made by LR