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LIBERIA COUNTRY REPORT FOR THE 2014 MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

How to Improve, Trough Skills Development and Job Creation, Access of
Africa's Youth to the World of Work

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***COUNTRY REPORT ON POLICIES AND
MECHANISMS FOR INTEGRATION INTO THE
WORKFORCE
AND JOB CREATION***

REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA

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Saku S. Dukuly

Director

Technical Vocational Education and Training

Ministry of Education

Monrovia, Liberia

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

1. ABE	Alternative Basic Education
2. AFT	Agenda For Transformation
3. AYP	Advancing Youth Project
4. ECOWAS	Economic Community for West African States
5. ECSEL	European Commission Support to Education in Liberia
6. EU	European Union
7. FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
8. GDI	Gross Domestic Income
9. GNI	Gross National Income
10. HIPIC	Highly Indebted Poor Income Countries
11. ILO	International Labor Organization
12. IFC	International Finance Corporation
13. LEAP	Liberia Emergency Employment Program
14. LECBS	Liberia Emergency Capacity Building Support
15. MNEs	Multinational Enterprises
16. MoYS	Ministry of Youth & Sports
17. MoE	Ministry of Education
18. MSMES)	Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises
19. NFE	Non Formal Education
20. PPP	Public Private Partnerships
21. PRS	Poverty Reduction Strategy
22. SES	Senior Executive Service
23. SEZ	Special Economic Zones
24. SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
25. SMEs	Small Medium Enterprises
26. SOE	State Owned Enterprises
27. SWTS	School to work Transition
28. TVET	Technical Vocational Education and Training
29. TVSD	Technical Vocational Skills Development
30. TOKTEN	Knowledge through Expatriate Nationals
31. UNICEF	United Nations International Children Educational Fund
32. USA	United States of America
33. USAID	United States Agency for International Development
34. WAPP	West Africa Power Pool
35. WB	World Bank
36. WFP	World Food Program

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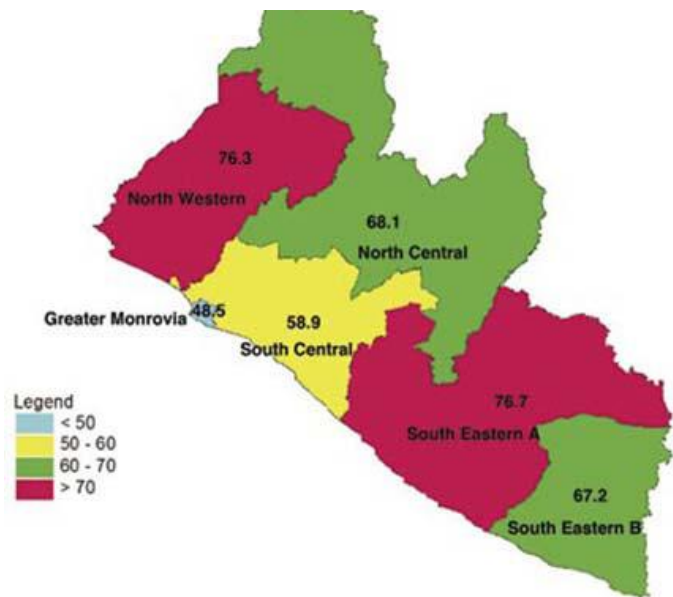
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COUNTRY PROFILE



Region:

Sub-Saharan Africa

Income:

Low income

GNI Per Capita (US\$):

370 (WB/IFC 2013)

GDP per capita (US\$)

\$700 (2012 est.)

GDP growth:

8.1% (WB/IFC 2013)

GDP PPP:

\$2.719 billion (2012 est.)

Population:

3,753,067 (WB/IFC 2009)

Year-on-Year inflation:

8.5% (2013)

Agriculture:

70%

Industry:

8%

Youth ages 15-24:

5.1%

Male:

3.4%

Female:

6.6% (2010)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Liberia is a post conflict country. One third of the population is between the ages of 15 and 35. It is also a country where poverty continues to constrain the number of people who can stay in education. Far too many Liberians still face a future of struggling against a precarious existence, earning money through occasional informal employment. Youth unemployment and underemployment represent a major cost to Liberia in economic, political and social terms. One in every three young persons in the labour force is unemployed in the country. The quality of employment is often low, which does not allow young people and their families to make the most of their economic potentials. The high share of labour underutilization means a loss of investment in education and training, a reduced potential tax base, high costs for social assistance and bottleneck in fuelling the economic transformation of the country. Furthermore, high levels of unemployment and underemployment among young people can be a source of social instability.

Examination of the TVET sector in the country reveals both strengths and weaknesses. The strengths include the existence of a thriving informal economy and a newly drafted National TVET Policy structured for formal skills development programs, the availability of indigenous master craftsmen and artisans with varying levels of skills competence, the existence of a variety of TVET training institutions both in the rural and urban areas, and a strong political commitment to the revitalization of TVET as a response to the challenge of unemployment.

To characterize the specific youth employment challenges and support policy-makers in designing the adequate policies and programmes to support the transition of young people into employment, this report pin points strategic and innovative measures and draws attention to the path and length that young people's transition from school to work takes and characteristics or experiences that makes for a smooth transition.

The report looks at six key areas and provides strategic and innovative measures:

- Basic information on the employment situation of young people (quantitative data)
- Basic information on the labour market (quantitative data)
- Difficulties experienced by young people in gaining access to employment
- Planned or implemented measures concerning TVSD
- Measured planned or in progress to promote job creation
- A highly significant experience involving the school-to-work transition or youth employment

Basic information on the employment situation of young people

A Labour Force Assessment conducted by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 2010 found that formal employment remains extremely low, with 68 per cent involved in the informal economy and 77.9 per cent in 'vulnerable employment'. More than half of the employed are without any form of education, they are self-employed and live in rural areas. The percentage of people in wage employment is 16.5 and that in non-wage employment is 83.5. The goal of the human development pillar of the Agenda for Transformation is to improve the quality of life by investing in quality free and compulsory basic education and a variety of post-basic education and training opportunities that lead to an improved livelihood and/or tertiary education.

The Liberia Labour Force Survey of 2010 estimates that 68% of the persons employed work in the informal sector without regular wages. The quality of the workforce is low, with more than half of those employed described as "uneducated".

This has implications for productivity and innovation at the workplace. Vocational schools or vocational tracks should be modernized and complemented with phases of practical work experience through internships or passing the final year with an employer. Employers should also be consulted regarding the design of vocational schooling curricula. This requires a systematic coordination with

networks or associations of employers. Furthermore, in order to avoid a negative perception of vocational education as a dead-end option, transition to further education, including tertiary education, should be facilitated. Informal apprenticeships are dominant, but mainly confined to traditional crafts; these apprenticeships should be articulated better with the schooling system and the formal sector. Special efforts should be made to develop and utilize the human resource potential of persons with disabilities. These efforts should include early identification and assessment prior to occupational training, ensuring access to basic education, incorporation of the needs of people with disabilities into architectural design of TVET facilities, development of curriculum, and the publication of guidelines and manuals for special needs populations.

School to work Transition

Policy makers should aim at providing basic skills to every young person by compulsory participation in support classes and intensified personal support. This implies stronger emphasis on individualized, tailored support to young people at risk, educational guidance and job search assistance. To minimize dropout rates, this should be done taking into account differences in motivation, ability and opportunity costs of schooling. Education and training are hence considered a core factor in determining the chance of a successful transition into work. Also, Policies should be designed to create more enterprises in the formal sector which offer formal jobs. This can be addressed by economic policy reforms such as the abolition of bureaucratic business registration procedures, tax reforms, stimulating investment in the private sector and creation of formal companies start-up support.

Furthermore, my personal experience shows that ensuring skills recognition outside the local community by some sort of official skills testing open to informal apprenticeship graduates raises the attractiveness of these training courses and enhances mobility on the job market. Transition to further education, including tertiary education, should be facilitated. Reducing vocational education fees can help boost enrolment. Also, some elements of dual vocational training can be implemented in a simple form starting with existing sectorial or regional clusters of firms with a shared interest in a specifically skilled labour force in particularly relevant occupations.

Disparities in education regarding gender, access and quality, urban and rural differences are serious problems. While the gender gap in education has improved, as more girls are enrolling in the early grades, the gap increases at successive levels, especially at lower secondary. More girls than boys drop out of school, amongst other reasons because of pregnancy. Advocacy and policy support to institutionalize gender-sensitive life skills and education, in and out of school, is essential to improve the educational opportunities for girls.

A major step of the government in addressing these youth related problems is the promotion of productive employment ensuring the wellbeing of the youth through strengthening of labour policy and administration, creation of job opportunities in the private sector and setting up a labour market information system. These measures are on-going with some tangible results, especially community-based job creation through labour-intensive public works.

The report argues in favour of promoting vocational education and training tailored to labour market needs, but taking into account peculiar conditions found in a given national or local context. While good education and training can contribute to economic productivity and social cohesion, vocational education and on-the-job-training with young workers and companies also need to involve governments, social partners or other societal actors to be stable and effective.

1. Introduction

Liberia's post conflict environment has led to several socio-economic situations and problems in the Liberian society including; high unemployment especially of the youth populace, poor infrastructure, poor health facilities and programs, a struggling education sector, etc.

In view of the prevailing circumstances, the Government of Liberia designed a development strategy: the Agenda for Transformation in 2012 with the goal to transform the economy so that it meets the demands of Liberians through development of the domestic private sector, using resources leveraged from FDIs in mining and plantations; providing employment for a youthful population; investing in infrastructure for economic growth; addressing fiscal and monetary issues for macroeconomic stability; and improving agriculture and forestry to expand the economy for rural participation and food security. This strategy encompasses several components including the human development component of which TVET is a major section. This section emphasises that the success of a technical and vocational educational and training (TVET) program should be measured by how its participants transit smoothly into the job market. To ensure this, there are several factors other than participation in vocational education programs that impact upon an individual's ability to work. Ultimately, the goal of TVET is to support participants' inclusion into the labor force. Given this fact, the need to link TVET programming to economic opportunities within the local context cannot be over-emphasized.

The goal of the human development pillar of the Agenda for Transformation is to improve the quality of life by investing in quality free and compulsory basic education and a variety of post-basic education and training opportunities that lead to an improved livelihood and/or tertiary education. The human development component of the Agenda includes pragmatic economic priorities for human development as well as rights-based imperatives, in order to have an impact in the short term and set the stage for medium- to long-term improvements. The pragmatic priorities for economic growth and transformation concern building human resources in knowledge and skills that people need to be productive citizens.¹

The Ministry of Education on the other hand has, with the endorsement of the legislature published a Five-Year (2012–2017) Medium-term Plan for Education Reform and Development in Liberia which focuses on restoring basic education (grades 1-9) through expanding access and improving the quality of education by rebuilding facilities, providing learning materials, training teachers, and introducing accelerated learning for older learners. The 2009 Education Sector Plan calls for a free and compulsory nine-year basic education, comprising six years of primary and three years of junior secondary education. In addition, the Education Reform Act of 2014 and the draft Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Policy of 2011 provide a framework that includes pre-primary/early childhood education as well as post-basic education and skills development. Currently, a high percentage of children and adolescents are not in school, having either dropped out or never started. Liberian schools have a high percentage of over-aged learners (60%) and low efficiency in terms of repetition and poor learning achievement. A high percentage of the population is illiterate and unskilled, and the programs for adult basic education and training have been weak.

The constraints of the education sector are inadequate resources and lack of capacity (both teachers and managers) to provide basic education services to all communities, especially remote rural ones; a centralized system that is inequitable, inefficient and unaccountable to beneficiaries; lack of school readiness for many children, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds; a challenging backlog of out-of-school children and adolescents who need alternative education services; a fragmented and dysfunctional TVET subsector that does not address the skills required by young people in Liberia; weak provision of adult literacy or adult basic education and training programs; and a higher education subsector that needs reform in order to provide appropriate leadership.

¹REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA AGENDA FOR TRANSFORMATION: STEPS TOWARDS LIBERIA RISING 2030, pg. 102

Liberian youth are the country's most valuable asset. Thus, a key objective is to develop skills among youth that make them increasingly employable and productive. Investments in technical and vocational education, as well as other secondary and tertiary education can ensure that Liberians have the skills to respond to job opportunities, including those arising from foreign investment. Investments that nurture business acumen, managerial training, and entrepreneurship skills will equip people with the capabilities to create their own small businesses.

The Government carried out the National Jobs Creation Plan, launched during the 150 Days, and embarked to build the capacity of Liberian workers by collaborating with the private sector on demand driven skills training and development. It will create incentives for businesses to provide employment and training to Liberian staff in technical areas. The Government also conducts regular dialogue with private sector representatives concerning their labor needs and supply constraints, and ensure that graduates have the skills needed by the market.

1.1. Purpose of the 2014 Event on Youth Employment in Africa

The purpose of the 2014 event on youth employment in Africa is to identify participating countries' most significant experiences of facilitating young people's access to employment and to analyse the factors determining the efficiency and success of the mechanisms used for this purpose. The end goal is to initiate a process of sharing and pooling these experiences so as to give each country and all participating countries a better idea of which pathways actually enable young people to acquire the skills they need to join the labor market and allow economic and business agents to develop their activities and to create jobs².

1.2. Overview of Youth Unemployment

Liberia is a post conflict country. One third of the population is between the ages of 15 and 35. It is also a country where poverty continues to constrain the number of people who can stay in education. Far too many Liberians still face a future of struggling against a precarious existence, earning money through occasional informal employment and being left behind as the country and its growing middle class harvest the benefits of economic development.

Youth unemployment and underemployment represent a major cost to Liberia in economic, political and social terms. One in every three young persons in the labor force is unemployed in the country. Although about half of young Liberians are working, the quality of employment is often low, which does not allow young people and their families to make the most of their economic potentials. The high share of labor underutilization means a loss of investment in education and training, a reduced potential tax base, high costs for social assistance and bottleneck in fuelling the economic transformation of the country. Furthermore, high levels of unemployment and underemployment among young people can be a source of social instability.

Examination of the TVET sector in the country reveals both strengths and weaknesses. The strengths include the existence of a thriving informal economy and a structure for formal skills development programs, the availability of indigenous master craftsmen and artisans with varying levels of skills competence, the existence of a variety of TVET training institutions both in the rural and urban areas, and *a strong political commitment* to the revitalization of TVET as a response to the challenge of unemployment³.

To characterize the specific youth employment challenges and support policy-makers in designing the adequate policies and programmes to support the transition of young people into employment, this

²Concept Note: 2014 event on youth employment in Africa

³Draft National TVET Policy for Liberia pg.4

report pin points strategic and innovative measures and draws attention to the path and length that young people’s transition from school to work takes and characteristics or experiences that makes for a smooth transition.

2. Basic information on the employment situation of young people (quantitative data)

Employment in agriculture takes the largest share (33.5 per cent) of employment by sector among youth, followed by employment in the wholesale and retail trade at 27.1 per cent and employment within private households at 10.8 per cent (with the latter two sectors showing a higher share for young women than men). The dominance of the agricultural sector is also evident in the distribution of young workers by occupation, with one-third (33.0 per cent) of young people working as skilled agricultural or fishery workers. Service workers and shop and market sales workers make up 28.8 per cent of total employment and 18.1 per cent of young workers are engaged in elementary occupations. Young men are much more likely to work at the higher-skilled occupations as professionals (9.4 per cent) and as technicians and associate professionals (4.2 per cent) than young women⁴.

2.1. Percentage of Unemployed and Discouraged Young People

No information is available on discouraged youth. Unemployment and vulnerable employment amongst the youth population remain a serious socio-economic concern in the country. According to the 2008 population census, of the 2.8 million Liberians of working age, only 37.5% were in formal employment with the rest unemployed, or in inactive or irregular and insecure jobs. The Liberia Labor Force Survey of 2010 estimates that 68% of the persons employed work in the informal sector without regular wages⁵. The quality of the workforce is low, with more than half of those employed described as “uneducated”. This has implications for productivity and innovation at the workplace.

In spite of robust economic growth during 2007-2012, where GDP growth averaged over eight per cent, a Labour Force Assessment conducted by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 2010 found that formal employment remains extremely low, with 68 per cent involved in the informal economy and 77.9 per cent in ‘vulnerable employment’. More than half of the employed are without any form of education, they are self-employed and live in rural areas. The percentage of people in wage employment is 16.5 and that in non-wage employment is 83.5.

Figure 1. Employment Profile of Liberians

Sectorial Employment		Those Employed		Income from Employment	
Informal	Vulnerable sectors	With Education	No Education	Waged	Non-Waged
68%	78%	51%	49%	16.5%	83.5%

Source: ILO 2010

2.2. Percentage of Young People not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs)

Data on the number of young people in this category is difficult to find. However, according to ILO School to Work Transition Survey of 2012 indicates that 28.3 per cent of Liberians are unemployed

⁴Labor Market Transitions of Young Women and Men in Liberia 2013

⁵ Liberia Labour Force Survey, 2010

(relaxed definition) and 5.4 per cent are neither in the labor force nor in education or training⁶. There is no uniform group of people who fall in this category. Some of the risk factors identified with this group are poor educational achievement, low socio-economic status, lack of family support, lack of information on various professions and others include young people not seeing the benefits of being in employment, education and training.

2.3. Percentage of Young People in Vocational Training or TVET

Only a small share of Liberian youth (5.1 %) participates in TVET/TVSD. A survey of 300 youth in urban and rural Liberia found that while most view vocational training as a major source for increasing the probability of employment, they remain concerned by the poor quality of trainers, infrastructure and out-dated curricula⁷.

As a subset of the country's education and training system, the TVET sector suffers from a paucity of information and data. As the appraisal report of the Education Sector Plan (ESP) by the country's Development Partners acknowledges, there is "much greater knowledge of issues in primary and secondary education than in TVET and tertiary education. The Ministry of Education offers vocational education at the senior high school level (Grade 10 to 12) alongside the general academic program, the objective being to expose the students to technical and vocational education. Some private polytechnics offer technical courses up to the bachelor degree level in specializations like Electronics Engineering, Civil Engineering, and Building Construction Technology⁸.

The Ministry of Youth and Sports (MYS) on the other hand operates vocational training centres which offer training at the basic level. Typically, MYS institutions target students who have dropped out of high school at or before Grade 10 for training at the basic skills level while students who have completed at least the 10th grade qualify for training at the intermediate level. However, almost 80% of the students at the intermediate level are senior high school graduates who are unable to proceed to the tertiary level. Intermediate level programs are generally of 18 months duration, including 6 months of on-the-job training.

The Ministry of Youth and Sports also offers basic TVET courses in tailoring, cookery and beautician trades for girls who have completed 7th Grade. Other programs include *Youth on the Job Training* for disadvantaged youth who are apprenticed to master artisans in their communities. The master trainers benefit from donations of training materials and equipment while the learner or apprentice is paid a stipend. These programs are administered in consultation with community based organizations. The Youth Agricultural Training Centre of the Ministry, as the name suggests, provides training in cash crop development (palm, cocoa, rice, etc.) and in vegetable production, poultry production, piggery production and fishing.

TVET provision in Liberia is dominated by private providers. Only 18 of the 132 TVET institutions in the country are public or state-owned⁹. Although the number of training institutions has increased from 113 in 2006 to 132 in 2012, enrolments have decreased by about 7% from 18,032 to 16,884 during the same period. Private providers are mainly NGOs and Church or Faith-based Organizations. The absence of a credible institutional accreditation system and standardized training curricula has

⁶SWTS-Liberia 2012 pg. 15

⁷SWTS-Liberia 2012 pg. 15

⁸ Stella Maris Polytechnic, Monrovia

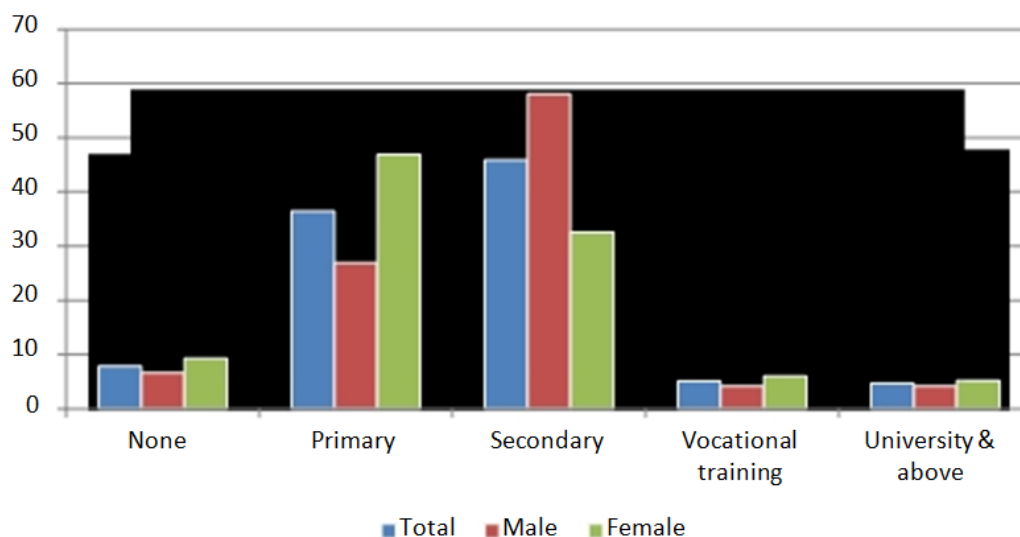
⁹ UNESCO Desk Review Report on Capacity Assessment of TVET sub-sector in Liberia (Jan 2013)

prevented the development and implementation of a nationally certified qualifications system. In some cases, courses and training programs having virtually the same title, have different course durations in different institutions. Often, the level at which the training is delivered is not specified. Consequently, the certificates delivered alone are not enough to evaluate the skills competence level attained by the trainee or certificate holder.

The courses offered in the formal TVET institutions are mainly in the traditional areas or fields, such as carpentry, masonry, plumbing, cookery, tailoring, soap making, and secretarial services. However, it is worth noting that 26% of learners are enrolled in computer studies¹⁰. But because the training curricula are not standardised across training institutions, it is difficult to compare qualifications obtained in the same field from different TVET institutions. Private training providers target mainly basic skills for different categories of learners, including the urban poor, rural dwellers, early school leavers, and other vulnerable groups such as girls and young women with no livelihood skills. The courses offered by the private training institutions are generally of shorter duration and relate more to the business and service sectors.¹¹

Almost all the institutions have serious human and financial resource constraints. There are not enough adequately qualified instructors with practical or workplace experience, and funding levels are low. The public institutions rely heavily on government funding, whilst the other providers are financed mainly through tuition fees, donations from external benefactors, and production and sale of goods they produce¹².

Figure 2. Distribution of completed education level of youth by sex (%)



Source: SWTS-Liberia, 2012.

¹⁰ Assessment Report of TVET institutions in Selected Counties (Aug 2013)

¹¹ Such courses include secretarial studies, tailoring, soap making

¹² Draft National TVET Policy for Liberia pg. 8

2.4. Percentage of Young People who find Employment on Completing Vocational Training or TVET

Only 3.1 per cent of working youth had completed vocational training.¹³ Because of the inadequacies of training provided. The percentage of young people who find employment after completing vocational training is minimal. The competencies of those trained do not meet the needs of employers. The formal economy is very narrow, and only accounts for 22 per cent of all the employed, the predominant employer being the public sector¹⁴.

2.5. Percentage or number of Young People in Traditional or Modern Apprenticeships

There are no available data of number of Young People in Traditional or Modern Apprenticeships. In Liberia traditional and informal apprenticeships are practically oriented, with apprentices learning through observation of the master craftsmen at work in their trade and skills applied. The learning process may be restricted to specific operation which may leave the apprentice with only a partial knowledge and skills at the end of the training period.

The duration of the training varies and depends on the ability of the apprentice. The cost of the training could be in cash or kind which is borne by the apprentice or guardian. Modern apprenticeship takes the form of organizing groups of youth and assigning them to mentors in SMEs at various locations under special arrangements through the Ministry of Youth and Sports. These youth undergo practical training in carpentry, masonry, and metal fabrication and vehicle repairs and are given basic literacy and numeracy periodically by designated teachers.

2.6. Percentage of Young People Joining the Formal Economy

Figure 3 below presents some key labor market indicators for the working-age population (15 years and over) in Liberia by area of residence and sex. In 2010, the labor force participation rate was 62.8 per cent, the employment-to-population ratio was 60.5 per cent, and the unemployment was only 3.7 per cent. The labor force participation rate in urban areas at 54.9 per cent is lower than the corresponding rate in rural areas (71.2 per cent). The male labor force participation rate is higher than the female rate (66.1 and 59.9 per cent respectively), but the unemployment rate of women is higher than that of men (3.1 and 3.4 per cent respectively). The vulnerable employment rate—the share of own-account workers and contributing family workers in total employment is high at 77.9 per cent as is the share of workers engaged in the informal economy (68.0 per cent)¹⁵.

Figure 3. Key Labor Market Indicators for working age population (15+) by Area of Residence¹⁶ and Sex

	Labor Force Participation Rate(%)	Employment-to-Population Rate(%)	Unemployment Rate (%)	Vulnerable Employment Rate (%)	Informal Employment Rate (%)
Liberia	62.8	60.5	3.7	77.9	68.0
Male	66.1	63.8	3.4	68.3	61.3
Female	59.9	57.5	4.1	87.3	74.7
Urban	54.9	52.0	5.5	67.5	59.3
Rural	71.2	69.6	2.3	86.1	75.0

¹³ SWTS- Liberia 2012 table 10

¹⁴ SWTS –Liberia 2012

¹⁵ Labor Market Transition of Young Women and Men in Liberia 2013

¹⁶ Note: Employment to population ratio is the proportion of a country's population that is employed. Ages 15-24 are generally considered the youth population, and vulnerable employment is unpaid family workers and own-account workers as a percentage of total employment.

2.7. Percentage of Young People Joining the Informal Economy

There are almost three-quarters of a million people engaged in informal employment in Liberia. There are no accurate data on the number of young people in the informal economy. The only available data on the informal economy is the statistics available from the Labor Force Survey of 2010. The data indicates that the Informal employment accounts for 68 per cent of all employment. There are more women than men in informal employment, and informal employment is more common in rural areas, where 75 per cent of employment is informal¹⁷.

Figure 4. Number of persons aged 15 and over in Informal Employment, by sex and locality

	Informal Employment	Total Employment	Informal Rate (%)
Liberia	742,000	1,091,000	68.0
Male	332,000	542,000	61.3
Female	410,000	549,000	74.7
Urban	287,000	484,000	59.3
Rural	455,000	607,000	75.0

Source: Liberia Labor Force Survey 2010 pg. 49

3. Basic information on the Labor Market (quantitative data)

About 68 per cent of the employed are estimated to be in the informal economy, in low productivity and meagre income work, in trading and petty production, largely regarded as the working poor. Only two per cent of the participants in the formal economy are women. Women predominate in subsistence agriculture and in the informal economy in activities that depend directly on the processing of agricultural produce. As such, women producers are the stronghold of food security at any given time. However, women's returns in these sectors are very low. The key economic sectors are agriculture, timber, mining tourism and hospitality This projected figure of less than a million people in formal employment out of a 3.4 million population is very low. In the absence of national labour market information, the ILO estimates the labour force participation rate for the population above 15 years, at 68.8 per cent in 2005 and 62.8 per cent in 2010. The situation is worse in the urban areas, where less than 55 per cent of over 15 year olds are engaged in economic activities.

Figure 3. Labour force participation rates, by sex, age group and locality

	Age group	5-14	15-24	25-34	35-54	55-64	65+	Total	15+	15-64
Urban	Male	7.8	24.4	69.0	85.8	70.4	54.8	42.1	57.6	57.8
	Female	6.0	25.1	64.9	76.7	57.3	32.9	38.4	52.6	53.3
	Total	6.8	24.8	66.6	81.1	64.1	44.2	40.1	54.9	55.4
Rural	Male	29.6	50.5	81.1	90.6	82.0	65.0	59.1	74.9	75.8

¹⁷Liberia Labor Force Survey 2010

	Female	24.6	49.4	76.1	79.6	72.0	43.2	55.3	67.8	69.5
	Total	27.3	49.9	78.3	84.9	77.1	55.0	57.2	71.2	72.5
Liberia	Male	19.3	35.2	74.9	88.3	76.7	61.4	50.6	66.1	66.4
	Female	14.6	35.1	70.3	78.2	65.3	39.2	46.5	59.9	61.0
	Total	17.0	35.1	72.3	83.1	71.2	51.0	48.5	62.8	63.5

Liberia LFS 2010

4. Difficulties Experienced by young people in gaining access to employment in Liberia

A lack of qualified youth creates a bottleneck in the supply of labour in the professional occupations sought by employers. There are “hard-to-fill” vacancies identified by employers mainly in the area of higher skilled professionals, including secondary education teachers, business service providers, administrative managers, and managing directors that youth have no skills and competence to occupy. For professional occupations, there is an expectation on the part of employers for job applicants holding tertiary education. This preference is slightly less for production workers. Also lack of entrepreneurial training and the weakness of entrepreneurial culture within the system make limited access to gaining jobs.

4.1. Diagnosis of the Youth Employment Situation and Difficulties faced by them in finding Employment

A large share of (47.8 per cent) of young workers in Liberia are uneducated for the work they do. At least eight in ten young professionals and technicians do not hold the level of qualifications that is required for the jobs they do¹⁸. There is a clear shortage of young people seeking work as professionals an area of that shows a huge growth potential among workers.

After the 2005 presidential elections and the installation of the new Government in early 2006, Liberia embarked on a programme of recovery, reconstruction and sustained economic development. The country faced all the challenges of a post conflict society. Shattered basic infrastructure (roads, electricity, water supply and sanitation, etc.) and essential social services (health, education, communication and transport, food security, etc.), out-dated laws with limited application, and absence of statistic, labour market analysis, inoperative production sectors, with negative saving savings patterns, with low productivity and wages, precarious working conditions. In addition to the difficult national context, the government is handicapped by limited financial resources to implement programmes.

Child labour is another problem that Liberia is facing, as is the case for many other post conflict countries. The situation of the population, especially children was worsened by 10 years of conflict leading to the displacements of thousands, lack of education and disrupted delivery of other social services, including the disruption or destruction of household production capacities. This has led to extreme poverty, hunger, HIV/AIDS pandemic and other diseases, and increased the vulnerability of a majority of the population, especially women and children. Although no child labour figures are available for the country, the above combined effects of conflict, poverty, and HIV/AIDS have

¹⁸ILO Labor market Transitions of young Men and Women in Liberia 2013-Sajith de Mel, Sara Elder and Marc Vansteenkiste

certainly led to increased numbers of child labourers, especially those involved in its worst forms. For example youth serving as domestic servants deprived of the opportunity of attending school.

The post war era has also seen an increase in children getting involved in hazardous agricultural occupations, such as those in rubber growing plantations. In order to tackle the specific dangerous situation of those involved in the worst forms of child labour, such as former child soldiers, child trafficking, mining, etc, the Government of Liberia has ratified the ILO Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour in 2003. The Government has also created a Commission on Child Labour within the Ministry of Labour to start with advocacy and awareness raising on child labour issues in the country.

In Liberia's post war development context, the youth have the greatest potentials to contributing meaningfully to the country's peace, reconstruction and development. therefore the need to give the young women and men the skills, opportunities and access to the emerging job market is required to enable them contribute to the nation building process and also to sustain themselves as a mechanism for ensuring the sustained peace and preventing further conflict. This can be done by empowering and equipping youth to engage in productive and decent work.

For a country that has emerged from prolonged internal conflict, skills training and technical/vocational education are very important. Very large numbers of young adults, without much or any schooling and marketable skills can be a strong destabilizing force for Liberia's nascent government and recovering system, economic, social and political. The risk of this large number of unemployed young adults is a menace and destabilizing factor in the already fragile society.

The need for significant investments in some form of skills development is imperative. USAID studies have noted the important and reciprocal relationship between education, economic growth and stability. Economic growth and development are the most important factors influencing regime transition and democratic survival. Improvements in average per capita income increase the probabilities of democracy and democratic survival. Inequitable, poor quality education can directly contribute to factors that cause conflict in countries, like Rwanda, Kosovo or Nepal¹⁹.

Education in Liberia faces enormous challenges. The participation of girls in education declines considerably as they go up the education ladder from primary the level. They are also conspicuously absent from scientific and technological programmes and careers, commonly referred to as STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics).

4.2. Proportion of the difficulties that are due to problems

Some of the difficulties experienced by youth in gaining access to employment are associated with young women. Young women have a harder time finding employment than young men due to the physical nature of jobs that are most times available and skills required for the jobs.

¹⁹Source: USAID global strategic priorities 2010-15

- **The inappropriate nature of young people’s skills and particularly the lack of connection between the training sector and the working world**

Considering the demand for skilled workforce in Liberia, almost all training providers are offering the same type of courses with varying quality and duration. This has resulted in an oversupply of graduates of whom many are ill-prepared for entering the labor market. Some of the difficulties faced by young people in finding employment are the following:

- a) Lack of relevant skills and qualifications;
- b) Poor attitudes and behaviours of youths;
- c) High cost of training;
- d) Low levels of economic diversification and productivity;
- e) Mismatch between the skills needs of industry and what is supplied.

- **Poor information about the labor market**

Absence of a functional labour market information system poses a handicap for youth especially for those in rural communities.

- **Lack of investment in sectors that generate jobs**

Currently Multinational Enterprises (MNEs) are returning to Liberia and Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) is expected to bring job creation opportunities and many more through their value chain operations especially in mining, agriculture, and the service industries in the country. However, less investment is made in the Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs) where many youth could have the potential to grow and be able to employ other youth across the country.

- **Absence of mechanisms for monitoring young job-seekers and facilitating their access to employment**

Youth consistently expect that participation in skills development programs will increase their capacity to find employment or self-employment opportunities and achieve greater self-reliance. However, the disconnect between participant expectations and program objectives, compounded by differing levels of comprehensiveness, frequently lead to disappointment and frustration on the part of the youth participants. Youth program managers and donors agree that training tends not to be innovative in its core skills offering and fails to respond to dynamic markets. For youth in skills training, accurate market information will inform curriculum development and determine course offerings, shape the complementary services offered during training and provide information on post-training linkages necessary to improve youths’ prospects for a sustainable livelihood. Information about current and emerging market needs is essential to making more informed decisions and selecting an appropriate marketable vocation.

- **Absence of other means and resources**

Other means and resources that have prevented the adequate training of the youth populace are: trained vocational technical education personnel to impart the requisite technical knowledge,

- lack of training facilities and
- overall budgetary allocation for the science and vocational technical education program.

4.3. Mechanisms planned or in progress to improve the processes of school-to-work transition for young people

The formation of a Presidential Task Force to restructure TVET/TVSD delivery to meet the Twenty First Century labor market demand in the country has been put in place. The Task Force has supervised the harmonization of a national TVET/TVSD Policy and the preparation of a National Action Plan. The inclusion of a Social Corporate Responsibility clause in all concession agreements emphasises contribution and participation in relevant human resource development required for the operation of the concessionaires and that of the country. Mining concessions provide on an annual basis, a number of scholarships to deserving Liberian youth to study abroad at degree levels (Bachelor and Masters) in various fields of engineering. There is an on-going in-plant training of Liberian employees to become supervisors and foremen by concession companies in the country.

However, these investments alone will not be sufficient to diversify the Liberian economy, nor create jobs for the roughly 500,000 Liberians who will graduate from secondary and post-secondary institutions in the next 5 to 10 years. Therefore, the Government has worked out a plan to establish a competitive business environment for firms in Liberia. It has reformed the Tax Code and the Investment Code, making them more competitive and beneficial to growth. It has streamlined business registration processes; established a one-stop-shop for customs clearing; and started implementing proactive industrial policies as a way of facilitating the growth of local micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMES).

The Government also made it a priority to achieve a stable macroeconomic environment, which is necessary for growth. Further, it maintained a cash-based balanced budget; significantly increased government revenue; moved toward multi-year financial planning; and achieved US\$4.9 billion of cumulative debt relief under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative. These and follow-up actions are creating the right incentives for further growth in employment, GDP, and public and private investment.

5. Planned or implemented measures concerning TVSD

Government has launched several targeted programmes. These include skills training by expanding traditional apprenticeship and short term programmes in the informal economy; launched opportunities for women through a Women's Entrepreneurship programme which accesses microfinance and trains in business skills; and launched a Liberian National Youth Employment Plan (LEAP) under the Ministry of Youth.

5.1. Reforms planned or in progress to modernize existing training systems and pathways to align them with the skills required by the economy

Given the inability of the education system to provide quality and relevant education, with skills required for their social integration, youths who complete secondary education as well as secondary school drop-outs and those out-school loiter the streets, with no chance of securing meaningful livelihoods.

The Ministry of Education strategy for youth development recognizes the importance of this time bomb and seeks to promote actions that could lead to increased employability and social integration of the youth, as a means to contributing to peace building and sustainability, with the view to strengthening the post-conflict development agenda of the county. The importance attributed to actions targeting youth is further echoed in the Agenda for Transformation (AFT) with one of its expected results focusing on addressing youth empowerment.

Under the current situation, the Government of Liberia considers the adoption and adequate implementation of a Technical and Vocational Education and Training Policy as key to improving the quality and relevance of education and to contributing to peace sustenance through providing skills that may increase youth employability or promote self-employment or income-generating schemes. The first in achieving this is the availability of trained teachers with the requisite pedagogical and technological skills needed to impact the learners.

5.2. Strengthening Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)

The institutions for education and vocational and technical training (TVET) will be strengthened to equip young people and other opportunity seekers with the education, knowledge and skills necessary to effectively compete in the labor market. In addition to competition, skills development is needed for workers to achieve greater levels of productivity once they have successfully secured employment.

The challenge of equipping workers with the skills and attitude needed to work with productivity and competitiveness is shaped by Liberia's legacy of conflict and low investment in equitable human capital development. As a result, many Liberians are not currently capable of productive work due to lack of technical skills and/or the lack of understanding the requirements of work in terms of discipline, professionalism, and basic life skills needed to cooperate in a work environment. These circumstances have translated into missed opportunities for Liberians to secure jobs in professional/office environments as well as the vocational/manual labor market.

The Ministry of Education, USAID supported Advancing Youth Program (AYP) and Alternative Basic Education (ABE) sponsored by UNICEF and MOE's Adult Learning programme are actively addressing the backlog of over-aged youth who need education and training, primarily through an accelerated learning programme and core education programmes for youth. The new Education Act of 2011 has created the policy space for the development and implementation programmes and policy administration of NFE and programmes for young adults involving all role players. A key strategy of government and development partners has been the Accelerated Learning Programme established in 1998

5.3. Training systems planned or in progress to train young people in the trades and jobs required by strategic or growth sectors

In addition to the MoE and MoYS NFE programs, there are numerous privately supported programmes of various duration and skill orientations. These trainings are approved by the MoE but accreditation and certification is not standardized. There is some debate on the target age for this group, as some address learners of less than 15 years old.

5.3.1. A better alignment of the provision to the demand

While there is wide appreciation for the critical role TVET education plays in promoting these opportunities, greater internal organization is needed among TVET institutions to adhere to standards for training, better tracking of students, better alignment of activities to needs in the market place and improved coordination among TVET institutions. These investments are guided by the vision within the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the Ministry of education, and numerous TVET Institutions to strengthen the quality and accessibility of vocational training. In line with this vision, the MoYS, MoE, and numerous TVET institutions are investing in better coordination and organization of training programs within a national policy on TVET, which will guide additional capacity development investments in the TVET arena. The government will promote equal opportunities in skills development programs in line with the National Gender Policy.

TVET institutions are being coordinated to achieve the described alignment of training programs to meet the demand for skills in the labor market. This necessitates a well-coordinated working

arrangement among TVET institutions. The effort of MoY and MoE to define a national policy on TVET is an important step in coordinating training services and standards.

5.3.2. Traditional and modern Apprenticeships

The Ministry of Youth and Sports conducts Youth on the Job Training Programs, supported by USAID and the World Bank. It is a 9-18 months internship that places students under Mentors who work in different sectors of the job market. Students choose their area of interest in various disciplines, at the end of the program they are certified and most cases are hired by their mentors. The Ministry of Education conducts an accelerated vocational training program for high school graduates who cannot gain admission to tertiary education. These students are enrolled in various occupations for a period of two years to acquire relevant market skills in their respective occupation which will enable them to either get started with self-initiative or be able to find employment. The informal type of skills training is considered to improve the chance of being promoted inside informal businesses from unskilled to skilled worker and earn a higher wages. Comparing this type of training to vocational training in a formalized school, which most times relies on outdated curricula and lacks connection with employers, the traditional or modern apprenticeships are associated with current skill demands and work practices in the informal sector thereby making apprenticeship graduates are more likely to be employed than graduates from vocational schools. Since going into apprenticeship do not require any formalized entry requirement, it becomes the best opportunity for school drop-outs to acquire some form of skills training for the job market.

5.4. Measures taken to build the skills of informal sector entrepreneurs and apprenticeship managers so that they can better train the young people under their responsibility

A significant portion of demand for skilled labor arises from the private sector and community or individual enterprises, and these business dynamics will continue to drive demand for specific skills. As such, the private sector will be a driving force for Liberia's capacity development agenda, by helping to define the skills needed in the market place and by sharing good practices for building individual capabilities as has been done in companies that successfully employ many Liberians. As the business environment for private ventures improves, entrepreneurship will be increasingly supported as a capacity development strategy.

5.5. Partnerships that exist or are planned to involve economic agents more closely in the design, implementation and operation of training tracks targeting the skills required by the labor market

The Government of Liberia carried out the National Jobs Creation Plan, launched during the 150 Days (2012 – 2013), with the purpose to build the capacity of Liberian workers by collaborating with the private sector on demand driven skills training and development. This would create incentives for businesses to provide employment and training to Liberian staff in technical areas. The Government also conducted regular dialogue with private sector representatives concerning their labor needs and supply constraints, and ensured that graduates have the skills needed by the market. This plan reflects an important link with the education sector in the Human Development pillar (AFT) and with the cross-cutting issue of labor and employment. (AFT pg. 78)

5.6. Defining the paradigm shift needed in Liberia to make access to employment one of the leading priorities of education and training systems

Currently the training programs on offer are not in line with market demands. The training is fragmented with little or no coordination. The President of Liberia did set up a Presidential Task Force comprising a cross-section of stakeholders from the public and private sectors, and Non-Governmental Organizations to partnership in formulating and executing a demand-driven TVET/TVSD system where all will play key roles in the financing, curriculum development and management of this sub-sector of the education system of the country. Emphasis is placed on entrepreneurial skills development, closer link with industries in terms of youth on the job training.

The introduction of career guidance to increase acceptance and awareness among youth and their parents of the increased number of opportunities in TVET/TVSD and to give convincing information that can remove traditional misconceptions on the payoffs of the TVET track, as TVET is often considered inferior education with a dead-end.

5.7. What other measures are being prepared

Defining terms for human capital investment in concession agreements – Liberia is poised to further capitalize on business partnerships across its productive industries, such as mining, rubber, timber, agriculture, tourism and hospitality to not only promote economic growth but also to harness investments in human capital in recognition of the role concessionaries will play in promoting sustainable human capacity, the terms of these agreements will reflect the national interest in cultivating human capacity. Specifically, concession agreements will outline minimum requirements for hiring and training local labor as well as mandatory investments in the educational/training institutions in Liberia.

In exploring these terms, a balance will be struck between the need to create an attractive environment for investment while asserting requirements for doing business in Liberia, which are beneficial for growing a skilled labor force.

6. Measures planned or in progress to promote job creation

The government has implemented cash-for-work programs and other labor-intensive local development projects that will create thousands of jobs in public constructions projects. Emphasis is also placed on skills acquisition through enhancing Technical Vocational Education and Training. All of the programs on job creation and youth employment are gender inclusive, however female youth tend to shy away from skills acquisition that are male dominated.

6.1. Measures that have been taken to build the occupational skills of economic agents in order to help them expand their activities and thus create more jobs

There are efforts made to strengthen the dialogue and partnership building between the private companies and the government institutions that regulate and promote investments in private sector development to position capacity development as an issue of shared interest. Many skills development programs may be accelerated and scaled up to encourage entrepreneurship and or working with small and medium enterprises. These programs, if well designed and effectively implemented, may create additional employment opportunities for individuals currently working in the informal sector

6.2. Incentives planned or in place to encourage businesses to hire young people and, if necessary, to train them

Government is reviewing the investment and tax code, fostering the development of credit markets and improving access to finance for micro, small and medium size enterprises and reducing unnecessary business costs. The government is also reviewing current and future concession agreements to ensure the fair distribution of profits between investors and the country.

6.3. Investments targeted on the development of occupations and jobs in sectors that are considered strategic, and if so, what resources are mobilized to train young people in these occupations?

The Government has undertaken and launched several emergency capacity building initiatives which provide a demand for the recovery of governance and management capabilities. Three of such initiatives are: the Liberia Emergency Capacity Building Support (LECBS) Project; the Transfer of Knowledge through Expatriate Nationals (TOKTEN); and the Senior Executive Service (SES), with an aim to help identify and deploy competent Liberians into the civil service. To further ensure a long-term capacity development program, the Government initiated the National Capacity Development Strategy with an aim to integrate effective approaches to assessing current capacities, identifying required capacities and investing in collaborative initiatives to capitalize upon and further develop capacities in a sustainable manner across the core work of all sectors in Liberia. In essence, efforts to educate and train Liberians need to better target professions and vocations for which jobs are currently available and will become available in the future. While the need for alignment is obvious, both for the individual seeking employment and the employers seeking a skilled workforce, the path for getting to this level of synchronization requires investment, institutional collaboration, integrated information management, and specific interventions that will guide such alignment. The emphasis placed on aligning the supply and demand of capacity is driven by an appreciation for.

The PRS outlines a three-pronged growth strategy emphasizing the need to invest resources in:

- Basic infrastructure and roads,
- Restoration of production capacity, especially in rubber, timber, mining, and harvesting of cash crops, and
- Realizing policy changes to drive increased competition and diversification in markets, especially through reducing barriers to productive enterprises.

A collaborative effort between the Ministry of Planning and economic Affairs, the Ministry of Labor, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the National Investment Commission, and the Office of the President will serve to invite private sector partners into the planning process for human capital development. Specifically, the labor market analysis and targeted assessment of growth sectors in Liberia's economy, performed by the Ministry of Labor are valuable inputs to the determination of what skills and capabilities are needed within the workforce. Simply stated, this dialogue will help to discern the demand for skills in the market place, which guide the investments made on the supply side.

6.4. Financial or human support provided to help young people start up or develop an activity, and if so, the nature of this support

The Ministry of Youth and Sport is operating a Youth empowerment fund. The objectives of the fund are: foster the active participation of the youth in social-economic development, train out- of- school youths and drop outs to participate into viable income generating activities, and encourage youth self-initiated enterprises or economic ventures in rural communities.

6.5. Does your country have clusters of innovation or expertise such as business incubators for young people and/or management and coaching centres for businesses created by or employing young people?

Rugie Barry, the CEO of one of the largest construction supply companies launched a business incubator for women in Monrovia on November 3, 2010. The incubator will receive initial funding from Ms. Barry personally, and will house up to a dozen start-up female entrepreneurs, providing them with office space, computer and office supplies, and business development services. The incubator will team with Liberia Enterprise Development Finance Corporation (LEDFC) and the Goldman Sachs 10,000 Women program to introduce the entrepreneurs to training opportunities, mentoring services and potential access to finance.

6.6. Highly labor-intensive construction projects that have taken or are taking measures specifically concerned with jobs for young people, and if so, how extensive are these measures?

To revitalize the economy, the three-pronged economic strategy of the PRS focused on (i) rebuilding critical infrastructure; (ii) reviving traditional resource sectors; and (iii) establishing a competitive business environment. Initial actions in these areas have set the stage for near-term growth. Infrastructure and basic services saw more than US\$500 million of direct investment, with key components of infrastructure (including airports, ports, and roads) renovated or reconstructed. During the PRS, nearly 2,500 kilometers of paved and laterite roads were reconstructed or rehabilitated; electrical generation capacity increased from practically zero to 23 megawatt (MW); 48 kilometers of power transmission and distribution lines were constructed or renewed; and implementation began on the regional West Africa Power Pool (WAPP) cross-border electrification project. To revive traditional economic sectors, Liberia attracted leading global firms that have begun to reinvest in forestry, rubber, and mining.

As a result, exports have increased from US\$175 million in 2006 to US\$295.2 million in 2011. In addition, Liberia has attracted foreign direct investment (FDI) in several non-traditional sectors including petroleum, oil palm, hotels, finance, industry, and infrastructure. In total, FDI is poised to reach roughly US\$16 billion and create more than 100,000 jobs over the next several years. Public road constructions, community works involving side brushing, culvert making for drainages, construction and rehabilitation of public infrastructures around the country. These projects have involved several thousand youths on short and medium term basis.

6.7. What other measures being prepared

In order to transform and diversify the economy, one of the Government's key objectives is to improve infrastructure—including energy, roads and bridges, sea and air ports, post and telecommunications, public buildings and affordable housing. Together with strategic partners, the Government will continue to finance and assist in the procurement and management of infrastructure projects, including year-round power production and distribution; the rehabilitation of the Mount Coffee Hydro Plant; expanded access to piped water and sewer systems in high density areas; and pavement of main roads.— To transform the power sector and improve critical infrastructure, this strategy utilizes partnerships with donors, PPPs, appropriate investments in state-owned enterprises (SOE) and the Government, investments along development corridors, special economic zones (SEZ), regional partnerships, and other arrangements. Whenever feasible, infrastructure investments will be labor-intensive to provide jobs.

7. A highly significant experience involving the school-to-work transition or youth employment

The Government of Liberia's priority intervention in its labor force is to carry out the National Jobs Creation Plan, launched during the 150 Days deliverable program, and build the capacity of Liberian workers by collaborating with the private sector on demand driven skills training and development. The plan will coerce the creation incentives for businesses to provide employment and training to Liberian staff in technical areas. The Government will conduct regular dialogue with private sector representatives concerning their labor needs and supply constraints, and ensure that graduates have the skills needed by the market. This reflects an important link with the education sector in the Human Development pillar of the Agenda for Transformation and with the cross-cutting issues of labor and employment.

In alignment with the African Union Action Plan, the National Industrial Development Financing Organization (NIDFO) will provide support services to nascent industries through a combination of business incubation, incentives, financing, training, and information/outreach programs.

The Government will implement regulations to assure that the NDIFO and other industrial support arrangements are not captured by political or patronage interests and do not subsidize enterprises that are inefficient or persistently lose money. It will complete the regulatory framework for bank and non-bank leasing operations, and expedite information flows and institutional processes to enable investors to start leasing.

The Central Bank has worked with the Liberian Bankers' Association and others to fast-track full implementation of the Commercial Code and Commercial Court, reduce loan defaults to near zero, end informal payments to bank employees for faster service, introduce publicized "fast-lane" fees to expedite loan processing, and develop a training curriculum for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) to help them prepare their projects for appraisal by banks.

The Government has also identified linkages between local industries and other priority sectors (such as agriculture); examined how Liberian industries can fit into local, regional, and global value chains; and provide corresponding services. The Government has developed and is implementing a Competition Law to prevent monopolistic and restrictive trade practices that could damage the overall

economy; to ensure more competitive prices; and to help improve the quality of products. To mitigate the problems of land property rights and infrastructure provision while working on longer-term solutions, the Government is working on a policy to establish and expand areas for industrial Production and processing, such as export processing zones, industrial estates, and special economic zones. It will track and measure the impact fiscal incentives have on industries and adapt them accordingly.

Furthermore, in commerce and small businesses, MSMEs are at the heart of our country's private sector. Local traders, welding shops, and market women generate economic opportunities for themselves, their families, and their local communities and make a significant, but often unaccounted for, contribution to the Liberian economy. MSMEs will most likely be the main entry point to the labor market for the youth and disadvantaged, especially those who lack formal education. MSMEs grew in employment and output between 2008 and 2011, but not as rapidly as hoped. Because of the establishment of a One-Stop-Shop for business registry and other measures, MSME registrations in the formal sector have accelerated, especially for Liberian-owned businesses, although they remain a minority of businesses in the country. Government assistance seems to have helped some firms, but not all. In the 2011 Stakeholder Survey, 49 percent of respondents answered "Yes" and 42 percent answered "No" when asked "Have government policies in the last three years enabled you or members of your community to set up and operate small business?" The number of microfinance lenders increased from three (3) in 2006 to eight (8) in 2010, including Access Bank Liberia Ltd.; the number of deposits and borrowers grew from 300 to 50,000 over the same period²⁰.

The major constraint in this venture is that MSMEs often stay out of the formal sector because excessive regulations and a rigid fiscal regime far outweigh the perceived benefits of formality.

But then these enterprises face more difficulty in getting credit and receive less protection of their property rights. Their workers are left unregulated and often face unhealthy conditions. Staying in the informal sector thus traps the enterprises in a low equilibrium of small-scale and low returns, creating a "hand-to-mouth" existence. Further, some of the banks are inexperienced in lending to MSMEs (typically not in the formal sector) and are reluctant to lend because legal claims for loan repayment are difficult to enforce.

Without deposit mobilization schemes, banks have no history established with potential borrowers, and such borrowers have insufficient equity to absorb normal income fluctuations that may otherwise lead a solvent enterprise to loan default due to temporary illiquidity. MSME owners and managers typically lack knowledge of the technology and business practices that are needed to expand and create more jobs and wealth. Some of them lack access to markets and information.

7.1. The target group

The Ministry of Education is conducting a two year post high school TVET programs designed to further the labor market attachment of disadvantaged youth. In particular, those who failed to enter and complete general education and vocational training and those who failed admission exams to tertiary institutions. The objective is to build the capacity of youth to become gainfully employed.

²⁰REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA AGENDA FOR TRANSFORMATION: STEPS TOWARDS LIBERIA RISING 2030, pg.77

The stakeholders concerned (public, private sector, civil society, central level, local and regional levels, etc.)

Institution/Country	Target	Activity	Cost (USD)	Funding Source
ECOWAS	75	Training in curriculum development	180,000.00	ECOWAS
UNESCO	Youth skills development	TVET Teacher training, curriculum, development, Life skills, TVET Policy	Not identified	UNESCO
World Bank	4,500 youth	Youth employment skills development, TVET curriculum and policy development (YES Project)	7,000,000.00	World Bank
USAID	1 TVET institution and 3 Community Colleges	Capacity building, training of agriculture teachers, linking youth to jobs	Not identified	USA
4-H Liberia, World Food Program, Ministry of Agriculture, and the Ministry of Education	3,200 youth	Agri jobs for young people	Not identified	United Nations (WFP)
SIDA	5,000 youth	Informal skills training and job creation	Not identified	Sweden

7.2. The mechanisms implemented (within the framework of existing institutions or through means that are specific to the target group and objectives)

Some of the activities are school-based while others are through apprenticeships that are supervised by the Ministry of Youth and Sports.

In quantitative terms, these projects have created more than 20,000 jobs for youth of which about 30% are women. Approximately 200km of roads are being paved and several public infrastructures constructed or rehabilitated. In qualitative terms, the jobs have created a means of income for thousands of youth workers, thus making them economically productive citizens.

7.3. Potential for scaling up and/or a cascade approach

Road construction project has already been scaled up. Two major highways of about 500km are to be constructed linking the west and Northeast of the country (Monrovia to Ganta and Gbarnga to Voinjama Highways Project).

7.3. Partnership with other countries and areas

At Present, Monrovia hosts 17 embassies. There are also several honorary consuls resident in Monrovia such as that of Finland, India, and Norway. Liberia is working in partnership with several African countries in a wide range of areas which include education and health. The United States of America is regarded as our traditional friend

United States of America (USA)

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) implements the U.S. Government's development assistance program. USAID's post-conflict rebuilding strategy focuses on reintegration and is increasingly moving towards a longer-term development focus. Rehabilitation efforts include national and community infrastructure projects, such as building roads, refurbishing government buildings, and training Liberians in vocational skills. USAID also funds basic education programs, improving education for children, focusing on girls, and training teachers. In the health area, USAID programs include primary health care clinics, HIV/AIDS prevention, and a large malaria program. USAID supports rule of law programs, establishing legal aid clinics and victim abuse centers, training judges and lawyers, community peace building and reconciliation efforts, and anti-corruption projects to promote transparency and accountability in public sector entities. USAID is also providing support to strengthen the legislature and other political processes. USAID is strengthening civil society's role in delivering services and advocating good governance. Total USAID funding program for these programs in FY 2007 was \$65.9 million.

Switzerland

Diplomatic relations between the two countries are not very intensive. Switzerland and Liberia have concluded various bilateral agreements. Since 2003, when the civil war ended, Switzerland has supported the reconstruction of the country and the reintegration of refugees. In 2011, an agreement on the cancellation of Liberia's debts to Switzerland was signed. In 2006, Switzerland opened an office for cooperation and consular affairs in Monrovia that coordinates humanitarian missions.

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China

China is involved with Construction of public infrastructures, roads, bridges. From 2000 to 2011, there are approximately 68 Chinese official development finance projects identified in Liberia These projects range from renovating and constructing the Fendell Campus of the University of Liberia, the construction of a 100 bedroom hospital in Nimba County in 2008 among others. About 20,000 youth are provided temporary jobs in the various projects.

The bi-lateral relationships that exist between Liberia and the various countries must take on new dimensions. Emphasis must be placed on transfer of technology and investing in the human resource to take on the task of the industrialization of the country through local manufacturing and production. The transformation of local raw materials into finished goods. All of these can create thousands of jobs that can enhance the living standard of the people.

7.4. Expectations regarding possible cooperation and pooling of experience between countries

Efforts have been made by the government to foster bi-lateral relations with friendly countries in the areas of capacity building of TVET teachers, ICT development, improving the governance and management of the TVET system.

Cooperation areas:

- Capacity development of TVET teachers/trainers
- Business development services
- Setting up of a National Qualification Frameworks
- Management information system specially in data compilation and dissemination,
- Public Private Partnerships
- Joint management of selected TVET Institutions (private and Public collaboration)

Conclusion

The economy and the labour market will need to grow at a very fast pace in order to absorb the backlog of unemployed and new entrants. Developing basic literacy and numeracy skills is a priority which has to be addressed. In parallel, the need to increase productivity and incomes of the working poor will require special attention to continuing training. The low level of educational attainment among the working population, and especially among women, reduces productivity and the earnings potential of the population. Government alone cannot fund skills development programs in the country. In order to mobilize more resources to fund TVET, skills development institutions would need to have more autonomy in order to be able to forge partnerships with industries. It is necessary to establish a TVET Development Fund with the support of stakeholders in skills development to provide a demand-driven response to the private sector's need for adequately qualified labor, and the need to provide new entrants in the labour market with gainful and employable skills. The fund would finance pre-employment and in-service training needs for both the formal and informal sectors. Priority sectors and industries would need to be identified. The focus will be on employment and employability, capacity gaps and productivity, and public private partnership and innovation. The establishment of labour market information system will help identify and adjust the priorities.

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