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EVALUATION

ACCELERATED QUALITY EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN IN LIBERIA

Midterm Performance Evaluation

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ABSTRACT

USAID/Liberia’s Accelerated Quality Education for Liberian Children (AQE) activity, implemented by the Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC), is a \$33.9 million, four-year activity from March 2017 to 2021, established to increase access to education for approximately 48,000 out-of-school children. Social Impact, Inc. (SI), conducted this midterm performance evaluation of AQE through Liberia Strategic Analysis (LSA) from May to August 2019, examining the following: (1) AQE’s development hypothesis, which centers on institutionalization leading to improved teaching and safety and in turn supporting learners’ transitions to conventional schools; (2) access to education; (3) safety; (4) effects of class time allotted on learning; and (5) local actors, including government, that can support alternative education (AE) over the long term.

AQE demonstrates several successes, particularly in developing high-quality teaching and learning materials. However, facilitators experienced challenges covering lessons from the “packed” AQE curriculum. To address this, the evaluation recommends that AQE extend literacy and numeracy sessions, while reducing science and life skills. Despite AQE’s effective community engagement, hunger, farming, and many other factors still inhibit access to education. AQE schools also face barriers to safety, including unsafe roads and limited facilities. To support both access and safety, AQE can further engage Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) and foster linkages with outside resources such as the police. Finally, collaboration with government is central to the AQE approach, yet this work is inconsistent; moving forward, AQE must share resources, jointly implement activities, and work with government to develop a comprehensive sustainability strategy.

ACCELERATED QUALITY EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN IN LIBERIA (AQE)

MIDTERM PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

A USAID/LIBERIA PROJECT TO PROVIDE ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION FOR LIBERIAN CHILDREN AGES EIGHT TO FIFTEEN

USAID/Liberia

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ACRONYMS

AE	Alternative Education
ALP	Accelerated Learning Program
AQE	Accelerated Quality Education for Liberian Children
CDCS	Country Development Cooperation Strategy
CEO	County Education Officer
COR	Contracting Officer's Representative
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DEO	District Education Officer
EDC	Education Development Center, Inc.
EQ	Evaluation Question
EU	European Union
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GOL	Government of Liberia
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
ICA	Institutional Capacity Assessment
IRB	Institutional Review Board
KII	Key Informant Interview
LICOSESS	Liberian Cooperative Standard Education School System
LSA	Liberia Strategic Analysis
MGCSP	Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection
MOE	Ministry of Education
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PTA	Parent-Teacher Association
SI	Social Impact, Inc.
SLE	Safe Learning Environment
SRGBV	School-Related Gender-Based Violence
TCOC	Teacher Code of Conduct
TTI	Teacher Training Institute
TWG	Technical Working Group
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND AND METHODS

This document outlines the results of the midterm performance evaluation of the United States Agency for International Development in Liberia (USAID/Liberia) Accelerated Quality Education for Liberian Children (AQE) activity. Social Impact, Inc. (SI), conducted this evaluation through Liberia Strategic Analysis (LSA) from May to August 2019. Implemented by Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC), AQE is a \$33.9 million, four-year (March 2017–2021) activity established to increase access to education for approximately 48,000 eight-to-fifteen-year-old out-of-school children. AQE aims to provide these learners a safe, high-quality learning environment, using a curriculum that consolidates six years of primary school into three levels and, upon graduation, offering a pathway to the formal junior secondary level.

This evaluation identifies early results and lessons learned from the activity's implementation and provides concise, actionable recommendations to guide midcourse correction. The evaluation's purpose is to inform ongoing AQE programming, the design of new activities, and USAID/Liberia strategy documents such as the Project Appraisal Document. Primary audiences include USAID/Liberia and EDC.

The evaluation employed a mixed-methods approach, with primary data collected from education officials (at the national, county, and district levels), principals, facilitators, learners, parent-teacher associations (PTAs), USAID, and EDC via key informant interviews (KIIs), focus group discussions (FGDs), and source material verification. All FGDs employed participatory methods. The evaluation also examined secondary quantitative data and included a desk review of relevant reports and studies. During the analysis stage, the evaluation team held validation meetings with AQE stakeholders, as well as a participatory data analysis workshop with USAID/Liberia, EDC, and Ministry of Education (MOE) officials. The evaluation team used these discussions, along with notes from fieldwork, to develop a codebook and then coded and entered qualitative data into an Excel spreadsheet. The evaluators employed data triangulation to analyze findings, with qualitative and quantitative data examined independently and then cross-verified for validity. The themes generated from this analysis informed the key findings highlighted in this report.

As with all evaluations, this report must be read with limitations in mind, specifically (1) non-random sample selection, (2) limited geographic scope of sites visited by the evaluation team, and (3) incentives given to children FGD participants. The evaluation team worked to mitigate many of these limitations by seeking a diverse sample and triangulating findings. By combining data from multiple sources, the evaluators ensured that any one piece of information provided by a respondent could not skew the analysis.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The evaluation uncovered several findings and conclusions across five evaluation questions (EQs) examined under the criteria of appropriateness, performance, and sustainability:

EQ 1: What early indications are there that the development hypothesis leading to more accelerated learning program (ALP) learners transitioning to the formal education system is true? What additional avenues for change have appeared?

The AQE development hypothesis centers on institutionalization of the ALP regulatory framework leading to improved teaching and safety, which in turn supports learners' transitions to conventional schools. At the midterm of AQE, the Technical Working Group (TWG) curriculum sub-committee represents the

most prominent example of institutionalization: by developing the curriculum through a process that allowed for dialogue and joint problem solving (with FGDs, reflective retreats, etc.) between AQE and the Ministry of Education (MOE), the sub-committee promoted greater education system engagement and ownership. The AQE curriculum has in turn been very well received, as have AQE’s facilitator trainings.

Despite the successes of the curriculum sub-committee, further institutionalization of the regulatory framework has been slowed by bureaucratic delays (e.g., meeting cancellations and the ongoing vacancy of the TWG agenda leader), lack of internal GOL resources, and AQE’s narrowly scoped engagement with government. Currently, AQE collaboration is primarily targeted toward achieving specific contract deliverables, with insufficient follow-up on implementation. For example, AQE and the MOE developed the AQE curriculum jointly but did not include key government officials (e.g., Girls’ Education Department) were not included in classroom monitoring. Furthermore, a lack of transportation or materials such as computers prevents education officials from carrying out activities discussed during AQE trainings.

Given these challenges, adoption of ALP framework components beyond the curriculum is uneven, and AQE’s work on safety is still in its infancy. While additional opportunities for institutionalization have emerged via engagement with the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and others working on Alternative Education (AE), ALP has yet to fully explore these opportunities.

At present, there is little data demonstrating whether learners successfully transition—AQE has not been in existence long enough for children to graduate and enroll in conventional schools. However, KIs and FGDs with education officials, facilitators, principals, learners, PTAs, USAID, and EDC overwhelmingly cite the curriculum and trainings as preparing children for junior secondary schooling. Thus, preliminary evidence points to these as the strongest components to date of the AQE development hypothesis.

EQ 2: To what extent has progress been made to increase access for out-of-school children in education? How well are AQE’s community engagement efforts improving perceptions to attend and enroll in ALP? Is this contributing to improved enrollment and retention rates?

AQE has made progress toward increasing access to education by providing low-cost schooling that incorporates high-quality teaching and learning materials. In fact, the evaluation found evidence of cross-pollination between conventional and ALP classrooms; several facilitators reported using AQE lesson plans to supplement their teaching in conventional schools, while in one site, some of the conventional school children are voluntarily sitting in on ALP classes for further enrichment. As noted above, AQE trainings are well regarded by participants; along with the provision of a stipend, these are a key source of support for facilitators. The majority of AQE schools therefore have facilitators who feel equipped to teach and consistently attend class, which is central to children’s learning.

AQE’s community engagement efforts, particularly mass meetings and house-to-house mobilization, encourage parents to send their children to ALP. In places where AQE dialogues with traditional leaders, this has helped to better integrate ALP into the community. Incorporating principals, PTAs, and facilitators in community engagement also increases the effectiveness of these activities, since these stakeholders, particularly the PTAs, are key community members who can be influential in generating support for AQE.

Nevertheless, there remain a range of broader factors (hunger, farming, early marriage, bush schools, etc.) that inhibit access to education. While these affect both boys and girls, families often pull girls out of ALP at an earlier age to contribute economically to their families or to attend bush schools in preparation for marriage. While many AQE schools have high enrollment numbers initially, these issues result in learner

dropouts over the course of the school year, leading to lower retention and promotion to the next ALP level. Providing recreational opportunities, aligning ALP with the conventional school calendar, and (most critically) school feeding can help address these challenges.

EQ 3: What continue to be barriers to the safe learning component? What opportunities exist to improve the implementation procedure for identifying and filing school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) cases?

The evaluation identified several persistent barriers to safe learning: children walking long distances from their homes on unsafe roads; lack of water pumps, uniforms, and functioning latrines for males and females; lack of fences for physical protection of children and to ensure that community members do not overuse school resources; a low number of female facilitators and principals; and acceptance of corporal punishment among some facilitators. However, these varied even among the subset of AQE sites visited by the evaluation team. Thus, significance of safety barriers is school- and community-specific, and solutions will depend on location and environment.

Currently, principals play a major role in identifying and handling SRGBV, particularly for bullying or minor issues between facilitators and learners. For more serious cases, referral systems are weak. The evaluation found gaps in awareness of specific actors outside of schools who can help manage instances of sexual violence. Few facilitators, principals, or PTA members indicated knowledge of local and national SRGBV resources such as referral centers or Women and Children Protection Units within the police.

Engagement with education officials and the PTA represents an opportunity to improve safety. Education officials can serve as a connector to SRGBV resources beyond the school level, while PTAs can play a role in monitoring in-school safety. As AQE works to enhance overall safety procedures by strengthening linkages with outside resources, the Teacher Code of Conduct (TCOC) is a key place to communicate this (e.g., contact information for SRGBV referral centers can be provided in the TCOC). No other document has such a high level of awareness among stakeholders both within and outside schools.

EQ 4: To what extent has the reduction in facilitator teaching time affected learning outcomes for ALP learners?

For the 2018–19 school year, the MOE instituted a policy to extend conventional school class times until three in the afternoon, which would in theory reduce the number of hours for ALP. In response, AQE conducted Saturday School pilots in six sites to explore this approach to compensate for shortened ALP school days. However, various data sources disagreed on the impact of the policy change. Among the 41 KIIs and FGDs that discussed this issue, eleven described how the ALP school day differs from previous years, while fifteen emphasized that there have been no changes since the institution of the MOE policy. In general, AQE schools visited by the evaluation team (most double-shifts) end conventional classes around 12:30pm, with ALP start times varying from 1:00-2:00pm and closing hours between 4:30-5:30pm.

Nevertheless, the ALP class time is not enough to fully cover the “packed” curriculum. The AQE curriculum is heavily scripted and requires facilitators to deliver four lessons per day. While this helps ensure that the curriculum is completed over the course of the school year, it does not account for lessons that need more than one class period to implement or reinforcement of critical subjects such as numeracy and literacy. Additional adjustments are necessary to better respond to learner needs, namely: creation of two streams for Level I (for learners with some prior schooling and those with no previous

school experience) and integration of vocational activities for Level 3 learners who do not wish to transition to conventional schools.

Lessons learned from Saturday School pilots represent an opportunity to address these issues. The most effective elements of Saturday Schools can be transferred to enrich the overall ALP approach, including: increased focus on literacy (specifically the “library in a box” activity, which allowed learners to select books for independent reading they could take home to share with their families), greater flexibility in the lesson script, morning start times (when possible given teaching constraints), and integration of extracurricular activities.

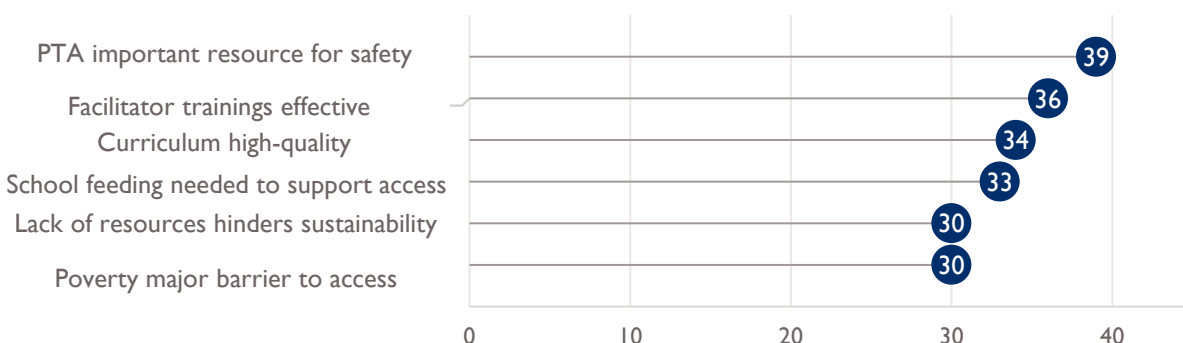
EQ 5: What local systems exist that can help expand, improve, and sustain Alternative Education opportunities and promote Liberia’s journey to self-reliance? What is the role of government and to what extent has AQE contributed to government ownership of ALP programming?

At the community level, PTAs are a key actor that can sustain ALP over the long term. In several schools, PTAs are already working to ensure quality of teaching and learning through direct monitoring and are contributing financially to ALP through farming and other fundraising. Thus, sustainability of AQE after funding from USAID ends can be supported by building the capacity of PTAs across sites to continue and expand existing initiatives. Traditional leaders, who play a critical role in encouraging community acceptance of ALP, must also have a role in these efforts. Nationally, Liberian universities and Teacher Training Institutes (TTIs) can serve as resources for training professionals to develop instructional materials and implement ALP in classrooms. Coordination among these institutes can also help link pre-service and in-service professional development for ALP, especially in the area of reading methodology.

Sustainability of any education program is premised on government ownership. Ultimately, “the goal is to consolidate the accelerated model within the MOE one school [approach]” (USAID/EDC) and have a national vision with ALP curricula, tools, and processes driven by the MOE. However, this level of institutionalization has yet to be achieved, owing to bureaucratic challenges, lack of resources, and gaps in how government is engaged (see EQ 1 discussion). National, county, and district education officials have been left out of AQE decision making on areas such as workplan development and facilitator recruitment. Thus, reflecting on how AQE works with the education system at all levels to integrate ALP activities and provide further opportunities for government ownership is key at this midway programmatic point.

FIGURE I. DATA COLLECTION KEY THEMES

Curriculum and trainings, PTAs, and resources were the most frequently discussed themes (out of 63 total KIIs and FGDs) across all EQs



RECOMMENDATIONS

In the next two years, AQE must build on its successes—trainings, curriculum sub-committee engagement, teaching and learning materials, and community mobilization—and expand work on initiatives that are still at the beginning stages, namely safe learning environment (SLE). Most critically, AQE must address issues that impede institutionalization. To ensure a stronger and more sustained delivery of AQE and similar activities moving forward, the evaluation recommends the following:

GOVERNMENT

AQE should broaden its collaboration with government at the national, county, and district levels. Working more closely with MOE officials, particularly on implementation and monitoring of AQE, will help foster government ownership. Specific approaches include:

- Share AQE resources (e.g., curriculum), jointly implement activities (e.g., workplan development, PTA trainings), and work with government (supported by USAID) to develop a sustainability strategy that identifies which program elements can realistically be maintained and how AQE can best build capacity within the education system in the next two years.

PTA

AQE should expand its current activities with PTAs and community leaders. As demonstrated by the evaluation findings, PTAs are key stakeholders that can support access to education, safety in schools, and sustainability of ALP. Over the next two years, AQE should focus on building capacity of PTAs via:

- Increased number of trainings and sharing of AQE resources for monitoring (e.g., curriculum, TCOC), with an emphasis on planning for sustainability; in addition, AQE should maintain its “person-to-person” community engagement strategy that draws on PTAs to mobilize.

ALP STRUCTURE

AQE should revisit the structure of weekday ALP class time, incorporating lessons learned from Saturday Schools to use these hours more effectively:

- Extend literacy and numeracy sessions, separate Level I classes into at least two tiers, integrate the “library in a box” and recreational activities, and offer ALP in the morning.

LINKAGES

AQE, working closely with USAID, should coordinate with universities, TTIs, other USAID activities, donors, multilateral organizations, and NGOs to reduce barriers to access and enhance sustainability. These efforts should center on school feedings and collaboration with other AE implementers:

- Link AQE with GPE and EU planning to ensure that the existing curriculum is utilized for upcoming ALP programming; engage Save the Children, Mercy Corps, and other relevant organizations to bring school feeding programs into additional AQE sites; and connect school- and community-level actors (principals, facilitators, PTAs, etc.) to stakeholders that impact safety such as the MGCSP via trainings and the development of a clearer SRGBV referral pathway (with the TCOC used to communicate relevant information).

INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW

Through Liberia Strategic Analysis (LSA), the United States Agency for International Development in Liberia (USAID/Liberia) requested Social Impact, Inc. (SI), to conduct a midterm performance evaluation of the Accelerated Quality Education for Liberian Children (AQE) activity. Implemented by the Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC), AQE is a \$33.9 million, four-year contract from March 2017–2021.

This evaluation identifies early results and lessons learned and provides concise, actionable recommendations to guide midcourse correction. The evaluation’s purpose is to inform ongoing implementation, as well as the design of new activities and USAID/Liberia strategy documents such as the Project Appraisal Document. The evaluation findings may also help guide decisions relating to broader USAID strategies on access to education and how to continue supporting the Government of Liberia (GOL) to increase Alternative Education (AE) opportunities for out-of-school children.

The primary audiences for the evaluation include USAID/Liberia, specifically the Mission Director, the Education Office Director and the Contracting Officer’s Representative (COR), and EDC. Key secondary audiences include EDC partners such as Search for Common Ground and School-to-School, along with activity participants such as Ministry of Education (MOE) staff, County Education Officers (CEOs), District Education Officers (DEOs), principals, facilitators, and community members.

ACTIVITY BACKGROUND

Fifteen years of civil war and a devastating Ebola epidemic have exacerbated the challenges faced by the education system in Liberia, including poor infrastructure, limited government resources, undertrained teachers, and a significant number of out-of-school and overage learners. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), more than 572,000 children and adolescents in Liberia are out-of-school.¹ In response to these issues and in support of the GOL’s mission to “provide all Liberians with the opportunity to access and complete affordable education of a quality, relevance and appropriateness that meets their needs and that of the nation,” USAID/Liberia established AQE to increase access to education for approximately 48,000 eight-to-fifteen-year-old out-of-school children in six target counties: Bong, Grand Bassa, Nimba, Lofa, Montserrado, and Margibi.² AQE aims to provide learners with a safe, high-quality learning environment, utilizing a curriculum that consolidates six years of primary school into three levels and provides a pathway, upon graduation, to the formal junior secondary level.

The Theory of Change for AQE hypothesizes that **if** the ALP regulatory framework is institutionalized, **then** the safety of the ALP centers will improve and teachers’ instruction will improve, leading to more ALP learners transitioning to the formal education system. Thus, the activity has two main result areas: First, that the ALP framework be institutionalized, and second, that eligibility of ALP learners to transition to formal education be increased. Under Result 1, AQE supports the MOE via the Technical Working Group (TWG) to develop and adopt the national ALP Regulatory Framework. In addition, AQE has

¹ UNESCO Institute of Statistics, 2016, “Liberia,” <http://uis.unesco.org/en/country/LR>.

² AQE defines out-of-school children in accordance with the UNICEF and UNESCO five dimensions of exclusion. See UNICEF and the UNESCO Institute of Statistics, 2011, *Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children: Conceptual and Methodological Framework*, https://www.unicef.org/supply/files/LRPS_OS_2015_9117512_ANNEX_B_CME.pdf.

designed a training cycle for CEOs, DEOs, and Parent Teacher-Associations (PTAs), which include parents of ALP learners and community members. Facilitator trainings are led by Master Trainers, who are first trained by AQE and then charged with leading workshops. Training topics range from implementation of the AQE curriculum to use of the Teacher Code of Conduct (TCOC) for school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) prevention and response.

Under Result 2, the activity has hired full-time staff to work on rehabilitation and furnishing of ALP centers with the aim of improving their safety and making them accessible for boys, girls, and children with disabilities. AQE is also undertaking a communication campaign, including participatory theater and radio programs focusing on messages encouraging enrollment, retention, and community support to ALP.

AQE plans to establish 260 ALP centers (roughly defined as a physical site, typically located within existing government schools, with approximately three classes: Level 1, Level 2, and Level 3). The actual number of classes per level at each site will be determined by placement testing and enrollment numbers. The first year of implementation (September 2017-September 2018) started with 100 ALP sites in Bong, Grand Bassa, and Montserrado counties. Implementation at an additional 100 sites in Lofa, Margibi, and Nimba counties started in October 2018. In Year 3, AQE will add 60 new sites from all six target counties.

METHODOLOGY OVERVIEW

The evaluation utilized a **mixed-methods** approach, with **qualitative** primary data collected via key informant interviews (KII), participatory focus group discussions (FGD), and source material verification. The evaluation also examined secondary **quantitative** data (primarily AQE monitoring data) and included a desk review of AQE studies and reports, as well as independent research on education in Liberia. The evaluation examined the criteria of **appropriateness, performance, and sustainability**.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

Appropriateness involves whether activity design is well tailored to participant needs; performance examines results thus far, and sustainability focuses on continuation of the approach beyond current funding cycles. Table I below outlines the evaluation questions (EQs) addressed under each criterion:

TABLE I: EVALUATION CRITERIA AND QUESTIONS

APPROPRIATENESS

1. What early indications are there that the development hypothesis leading to more ALP learners transitioning to the formal education system is true? What additional avenues for change have appeared?

PERFORMANCE

2. To what extent has progress been made to increase access for out-of-school children in education? How well are AQE's community engagement efforts improving perceptions to attend and enroll in ALP? Is this contributing to improved enrollment and retention rates?
3. What continue to be barriers to the safe learning component? What opportunities exist to improve the implementation procedure for identifying and filing SRGBV cases?
4. To what extent has the reduction in facilitator teaching time affected learning outcomes for ALP learners?

SUSTAINABILITY

5. What local systems exist that can help expand, improve, and sustain Alternative Education opportunities and promote Liberia's journey to self-reliance? What is the role of government and to what extent has AQE contributed to government ownership of ALP programming?

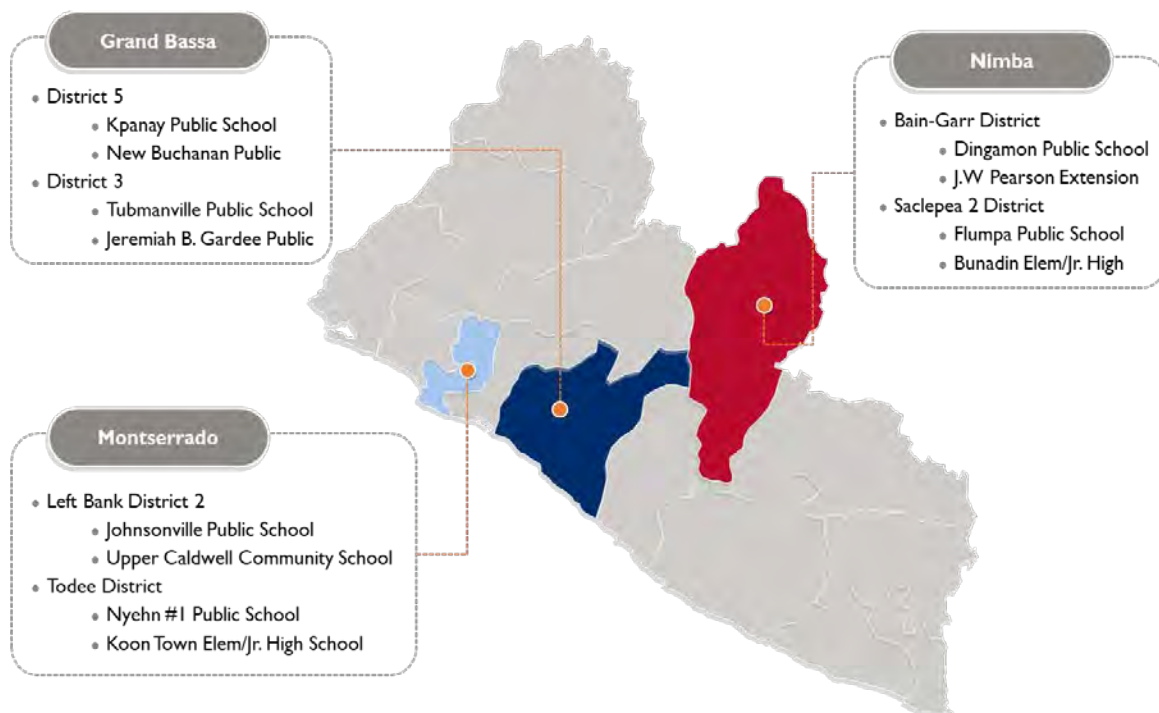
DATA COLLECTION

The evaluation team conducted fieldwork May 20–June 19, 2019. During this time, the evaluation team visited sites in three of the six counties of AQE implementation: Grand Bassa, Montserrado, and Nimba. The team selected these counties to reflect the range of experiences of AQE implementation. The evaluation team visited four schools in each targeted county, for a total of 12 school sites. During the initial desk review and planning meetings, EDC provided the evaluation team with a list of AQE schools; from this list, the team selected a **purposive sample** of schools to visit according to the following criteria:

1. Location: Rural versus urban and peri-urban
2. School activities: Schools that have implemented Saturday School, Safe Learning Environment (SLE) pilots, and schools with feeding programs versus schools without these activities
3. Schools with high versus low learner promotion and repeat rates

Figure 2 below outlines the counties, districts, and schools visited by the evaluation team:

FIGURE 2. AQE DATA COLLECTION SITES



SI's Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed all data collection tools and processes to ensure the safeguarding of evaluation participants, particularly children. Prior to data collection, the Team Lead trained facilitators on these tools and procedures. The evaluation team obtained informed consent from all respondents; for FGDs with children, the evaluation team obtained both consent and *in loco parentis* consent from principals at the schools where data collection was held.

DESK REVIEW

The evaluation team conducted a comprehensive desk review of key documents to provide background knowledge on the processes and decisions that went into designing the AQE activity, as well as up-to-date information on implementation progress and results. A full list of documents reviewed is included in Annex A. The team also reviewed quantitative data collected by EDC, including relevant output monitoring results and baseline data on learning outcomes. As the team did not collect primary quantitative data during fieldwork, this review was critical in ensuring triangulation with findings from qualitative data.

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

The evaluation team spoke with key informants using semi-structured interview protocols tailored by respondent type (see Annex C). Where relevant, source material verification checklists were integrated into KII protocols.³ The evaluation team conducted a **total of 29 KIIs** with a variety of participants, including MOE officials, principals, and USAID/Liberia and EDC staff.

During the initial desk review and planning meetings, EDC provided the evaluation team with a list of AQE participants, staff, and stakeholders, disaggregated by location and role. From this list, the team selected a purposive sample. For DEOs and principal KIIs, team members applied additional criteria in selecting schools (see above). The team requested that the principal at each school take part in an interview, along with the DEOs of the districts of the selected schools.

Table 2 below details the number of KIIs targeted and conducted by respondent type; the evaluation team met or exceeded targets for all participant groups.

TABLE 2. KII PARTICIPANT CATEGORIES AND SAMPLE SIZE		
PARTICIPANT CATEGORY	# TARGETED	# REACHED
Education Officials	12–14	14
MOE/TWG	3-5	5
County Education Officers	3	3
District Education Officers	6	6
Principals	8–10	11
USAID/Liberia	1	1
EDC	3	3
Acting Chief of Party	1	1
M&E Manager	1	1
Senior Technical Advisor (within Ministry)	1	1
Total	24–28	29

³ The evaluation team reviewed materials such as SRGBV resources and AQE workplans; Annex C includes checklists for all items requested.

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

The evaluation team conducted **34 total FGDs** with facilitators, learners, and PTA members at AQE schools. Learner FGDs were conducted in sex-separated groups, while males and females participated together in facilitator and PTA discussions. As with KIIs, the team used semi-structured discussion protocols (see Annex C). For facilitators, school selection determined participation (there are two or three AQE facilitators at each school, and the team aimed to speak to all of them). For PTA and children learner FGDs, the team obtained lists of ALP learners and PTA members and randomly selected six to eight FGD participants from these lists.

Table 3 below outlines FGD participant groups and the total number of discussions targeted and reached; the evaluation team met or exceeded targets for all participant groups.

PARTICIPANT CATEGORY	# TARGETED	# REACHED
Facilitators	8–10	12
PTA (parents and community members)	8–10	12
Learners	8–10	10
Total	24–30	34

To increase accessibility of discussions, all FGDs used participatory methods. For facilitator and PTA FGDs, this included an interactive voting exercise; children FGDs were designed around a “body mapping” exercise, a tool commonly used in evaluation with children and youth to facilitate discussion via an engaging activity (i.e., drawing and coloring).⁴ In addition, children took part in an informal most significant change (MSC) exercise designed to capture any unanticipated outcomes among this respondent group.

ANALYSIS AND LIMITATIONS

For qualitative primary data collected during fieldwork, team members first input raw notes into an aggregated Excel spreadsheet and then organized a matrix categorizing findings, conclusions, and recommendations by evaluation question (FCR Matrix). Following fieldwork, the evaluation team held a participatory data analysis workshop with USAID/Liberia, EDC, and MOE officials to engage these audiences in “sense-making” of data. The team shared preliminary findings at the workshop, with participants taking part in structured discussions on patterns and themes, unexpected or surprising findings, etc. The Liberian evaluation team members also shared findings with AQE stakeholders (CEOs, DEOs, principals, etc.) via validation meetings.

The fieldwork FCR Matrix, participatory data analysis workshop discussions, and validation meetings provided the evaluation team with themes used to generate a codebook for data analysis. Team members

⁴ For explanations and examples of the use of body mapping in children and youth evaluations, see Save the Children Norway, 2008, *A Kit of Tools for Participatory Research with Children, Youth and Adults*, https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/sites/default/files/documents/kit-of-tools_1.pdf, 18; and Global Partnership for Children & Youth in Peacebuilding, 2015, *Evaluation of Children and Youth Participation in Peacebuilding*, <http://unoy.org/wp-content/uploads/3M-Evaluation-Global-report-Child-and-Youth-Participation-in-Peace-building.pdf>, 43.

and research support staff entered and coded all primary qualitative data in Excel. The evaluation team then employed data triangulation, a strategy in which qualitative and quantitative data are first analyzed independently, in parallel, and then cross-verified for validity. The team used the themes generated through this analysis to identify the key findings highlighted in this evaluation report.

Table 4 below describes the major limitations and mitigation strategies for the evaluation:

TABLE 4. EVALUATION LIMITATIONS AND MITIGATION STRATEGIES	
LIMITATIONS	MITIGATION STRATEGY
<p>Sampling: Sample selection was based on consultation with USAID/Liberia, EDC, and other stakeholders (e.g., MOE officials). This can lead to bias, as stakeholders might be more likely to guide evaluators toward those who have had positive experiences.</p>	<p>The team mitigated this bias by seeking a sample that included a variety of locations (urban, peri-urban, and rural), respondent types (CEOs, principals, learners, etc.), and activities (Saturday School, SLE pilot, etc.) to reflect the range of AQE experiences. The team also used triangulation; by combining information from multiple sources of data, any one piece of information would be balanced against findings across multiple sources.</p>
<p>Scope: The team visited three AQE counties and four schools per county. Implementation may vary across counties; there may be sites not sampled that are more or less successful than others, potentially impacting results.</p>	<p>The selection of a sample that included a wide variety of locations, types, etc., of data sources helped to mitigate the limits imposed by a narrowed geographic scope.</p>
<p>Incentivizing Participation: Children FGD respondents were given a small incentive (one coloring pencil), which could have influenced feedback.</p>	<p>To minimize the impact of this incentive, the pencils were distributed (and only referenced) at the conclusion of FGDs.</p>

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

EQ 1: DEVELOPMENT HYPOTHESIS

What early indications are there that the development hypothesis leading to more ALP learners transitioning to the formal education system is true? What additional avenues for change have appeared?

FINDINGS

AQE engagement of the MOE, particularly via the TWG curriculum sub-committee, has contributed to institutionalization of ALP.

A critical component of AQE is its collaboration with government at the national, county, and district levels. Nationally, AQE works with MOE officials in Monrovia to institutionalize⁵ the ALP Regulatory Framework, which is centered on three key policy documents: (1) the ALP curriculum framework, (2) Guidelines for Standards Based Accreditation of ALP Centers, and (3) Guidelines for Learner Eligibility, Assessment, and Certification. To move these forward, AQE and the MOE created and operationalized a TWG with four sub-committees on policy, curriculum, teacher professional development, and rehabilitation and community engagement.

Respondents discussed the effectiveness of this approach, particularly highlighting the **curriculum sub-committee**. With a working process centered on piloting and feedback via FGDs, classroom observations, and reflective retreats, the committee serves as an example for engaging with government. Both AQE representatives and education officials noted strong collaboration between AQE and the TWG curriculum sub-committee.

While this “came at a cost in that it took more time” (USAID/EDC)—i.e., deliverable development took longer than the AQE contractual timeframe—the result was greater education system engagement leading to a high-quality curriculum (see below and EQ 2 findings on “teaching and learning materials”). To date, the ALP curriculum framework has achieved the greatest degree of institutionalization success

The AQE development hypothesis states that: if the ALP regulatory framework is institutionalized, then the safety of the ALP centers will improve and teachers’ instruction will improve, leading to more ALP learners transitioning to the formal education system.

“The key strengths of the TWG are its breadth, the representation on the TWG from a lot of different departments. Members of the TWG understand ALP; when you go to meetings with the TWG, you aren’t spending time giving background on things—you can go straight to the point. It’s been institutionalized with the TWG.” USAID/EDC

⁵ AQE defines institutionalization as: “Establishing something as a convention or a norm in an organization or culture. Institutionalization includes building or initiating a regulatory framework of policies, practices, standards and curriculum, understanding the home for each policy, and identifying and building the knowledge, skills and process to establish the policies and practices as routines” (AQE FY 2019 Quarter 2 Report, page 15).

(developing, piloting, and revising the curriculum) and has been implemented since January 2018 in AQE sites with professional development workshops for facilitators, principals, and education officials.

While AQE has made progress towards institutionalization, this has yet to be fully realized due to bureaucratic challenges and narrowly scoped cooperation with the GOL.

Some TWG work has been delayed: MOE, USAID, and EDC respondents cited, for example, meeting cancellations, limited or inconsistent engagement by government officials, and the ongoing vacancy of a TWG agenda leader. AQE sent the Guidelines for Learner Eligibility, Assessment, and Certification to the MOE Senior Management Team for final approval during the evaluation and have received verbal approval; formal written approval is still pending. AQE is currently evaluating the Guidelines for Standards-Based Accreditation of ALP Centers to see how they may “make a contribution” (USAID/EDC) to the MOE’s current quality standards.

In addition, several respondents described the “limited” nature of AQE collaboration, which is mainly targeted toward achieving key contract deliverables. Despite successful collaboration with the curriculum sub-committee at the policy level, there was **insufficient follow-up on implementation**: “When we develop a curriculum, it is necessary for us to follow the curriculum to the classroom to see how it is implemented. For the AQE curriculum, we have not followed it down to the classroom” (Education Official). While specific government officials (e.g., Girls’ Education Department) were invited to participate in the dry run and initial facilitator workshops, they have not been included in ongoing curriculum monitoring at schools.

Similarly, education officials at the district level are expected to monitor ALP classrooms but a few reported not having copies of the AQE curriculum—materials that are critical for their supervisory work. Several education officials also commented on not being involved in textbook development: “It would have helped with monitoring if I was more aware of what was in the textbooks” (Education Official).

Lack of internal GOL resources also inhibits institutionalization of ALP.

“You can be trained to cut the palm nuts, but you can’t do it without the cutlass.” EDUCATION OFFICIAL

While respondents largely agreed that AQE trainings are effective, they emphasized the **lack of resources** to carry out activities discussed during trainings. Many education officials do not have basic tools to do their work (including their ongoing duties for conventional schools), such as computers, printers, and internet access. Especially pressing is the lack of transportation for monitoring and supervision, which was a consistent challenge noted across education official KIIs.⁶ AQE activities are considered part of education workplans (in the “one school approach,” activities that are part of conventional school support include ALP), but MOE officials, DEOs, and CEOs do not have dedicated ALP budget lines.⁷ Implementation of the AQE curriculum depends on monitoring by DEOs; however, each DEO must monitor multiple schools, and the distance between them, coupled with a lack of mobility (no personal transportation and/or little or no budget for school monitoring), makes this difficult. For

⁶ Among 30 (of 53 KIIs and FGDs, excluding ten learner FGDs that did not cover sustainability) mentions of lack of resources, ten came from education officials, followed by PTAs (seven mentions), and principals (six).

⁷ Education officials do not have line-item budgets for either the conventional or ALP schools; rather, these are lump sums. The MOE has requested that the GOL allow it to do line-item budgeting.

respondents, this presented a stark contrast to AQE offices: “We are good friends with [AQE]. However, they have more materials in their offices than we do. We want to work but we don’t have the same logistics to do that. It’s hard here, some DEOs don’t have bikes or have to buy their own gasoline. [The] government gave out some bikes five years ago . . . these are worn down, and the new DEOs don’t have these. We also need to pay for gas ourselves” (Education Official).

Despite delays in development, the AQE curriculum is “rich” and well received across respondent groups.

“Any student that adequately completes [AQE] Level 2 can compete with primary grade 7 learners.”
FACILITATOR

The designers of the AQE curriculum assumed that many of the tools developed for a previous AE activity, the Alternative Youth Program (AYP), could be readily transferred to AQE. However, this assumption was challenged almost immediately; respondents noted that the AYP curriculum, designed for a youth program focused on social skills and livelihoods, was not suitable for an accelerated learning primary school population. The AQE curriculum therefore needed to be rewritten, delaying rollout to schools (delay in AQE materials was noted as negatively impacting attendance in a few KIIs and FGDs; see EQ 2’s discussion of “teaching and learning materials”).

Nevertheless, respondents from the MOE and principals, facilitators, and PTAs highlighted improvements made to the basic education curriculum through development of the AQE curriculum; they described the curriculum as rich and helping to prepare students to transition to conventional school: “My daughter would not know how to read without ALP. She couldn’t read before, but by second semester she was reading and writing, and now she feels like she can go to [conventional school] classes” (PTA).

AQE trainings equip facilitators to deliver the curriculum.

AQE has conducted facilitator trainings in a variety of formats. Originally, facilitator professional development workshops were envisioned as a 10- to 11-day residential program. However, this became unsustainable due to the associated costs, and the training pattern was changed to three- to four-day workshops, with one-day cluster-based trainings. Respondents indicated that AQE and the MOE are currently moving toward school-based training centered on a mentoring and coaching model—a more manageable approach in terms of cost.

According to performance monitoring data, AQE trained 710 facilitators in 2018 and 2019 (as of March 2019). Among various AQE initiatives, these trainings were most frequently cited as a key component that supports access to education; as outlined in Figure 3 below, this was mentioned in 36 of 63 KIIs and FGDs, followed closely by the curriculum, with 34 citations. Taking part in trainings helps facilitators feel equipped to implement the AQE curriculum, leading to effective teaching and learning.

EQ 2 further discusses the linkages between access to education for out-of-school children and AQE’s teaching and learning materials, as well as AQE training and support for facilitators.

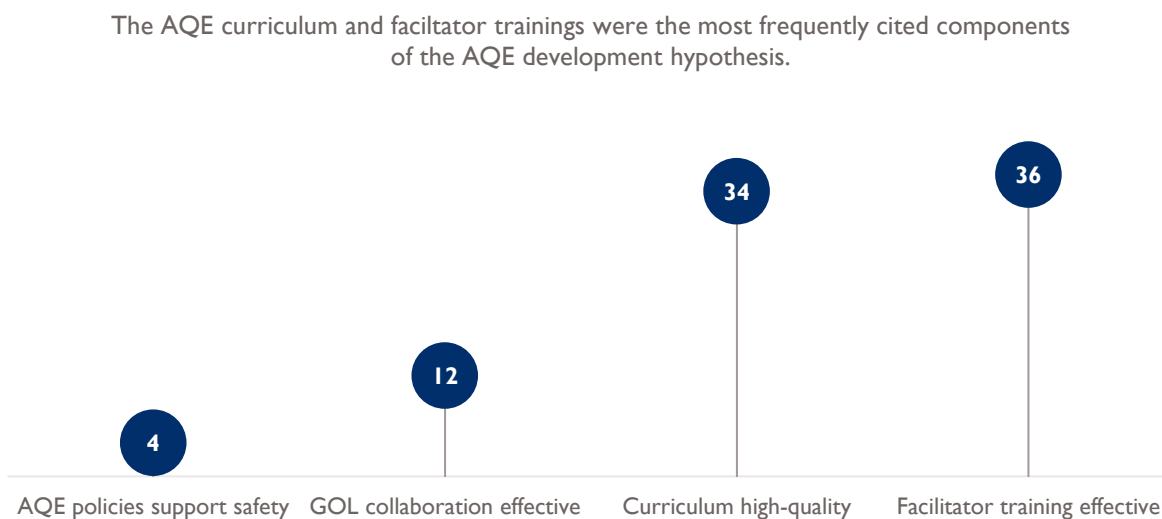
It is too early to determine results of AQE work on safety in schools.

The April 2019 AQE **SLE baseline assessment** outlines perceptions around safety in schools, as well as major risks to safety for both learners and school staff. The study found that learners feel safer once they are in school versus walking on the road to and from school (see EQ 3 discussion of “walking distance”). Forty percent of students (and 33 percent of school staff) reported that there are places in or

near the school where it is not safe for girls or boys to go alone.⁸ AQE is using the results of this study to inform AQE training materials for education officials and PTAs.

While a few respondents mentioned that components of SLE were discussed in AQE trainings (e.g., latrines, water pumps, etc.), this was not a core data collection theme. Overall, safety was cited infrequently as a key AQE initiative (mentioned in only four of 63 total KIIs and FGDs; see Figure 3 above). AQE is still establishing its SLE policies as the activity works to determine the most effective means of implementing the recommendations of the SLE baseline: “The overwhelming reaction to the Safe Learning Environment study is how to scale up” (USAID/EDC).

FIGURE 3. KII AND FGD CITATIONS OF THE AQE DEVELOPMENT HYPOTHESIS



Other multilateral and donor activities offer potential avenues for collaboration on ALP.

Much of AQE’s efforts to promote institutionalization have targeted national, county, and district education officials. In addition, several multilateral organizations and international donors are currently engaged in or planning upcoming AE interventions in Liberia. For example, the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) program, led by the World Bank, will begin implementation of an accelerated learning program in Southeast Liberia in 2019–2020. Several education officials interviewed mentioned the upcoming GPE work; however, no official was able to confirm what curriculum the GPE schools will use in classrooms. The European Union (EU) is also undertaking a program design focusing on the use of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to implement ALP activities.

⁸ From the SLE Baseline Study, page 32.

CONCLUSIONS

The work of the TWG **curriculum sub-committee** is the most prominent example of institutionalization thus far. The development of the curriculum through a process (with FGDs, reflective retreats, etc.) allowing for reflection, dialogue, and joint problem-solving between AQE and the MOE promoted greater education system engagement and ownership. A core lesson learned from this experience is around the benefits (a high-quality, institutionalized curriculum) of working collaboratively at the pace of government, even if this might delay activity timelines.

Despite the successes of the curriculum sub-committee, further institutionalization has been slowed by **bureaucratic delays** and **uneven engagement** of the MOE by AQE. **Lack of resources** is also a major issue impacting institutionalization; county and district officials cannot effectively monitor ALP generally and the curriculum specifically without appropriate materials (e.g., motorbikes, gas).

Nevertheless, the **AQE curriculum** has been very well received, as have **trainings** of facilitators. Institutionalization of other components of the ALP framework is uneven, and AQE's work on safety is still in its infancy. While additional avenues for ALP institutionalization have emerged via engagement with GPE, the EU, and other organizations working on AE, AQE has yet to fully explore these opportunities.

At the midterm of AQE, there is little data demonstrating whether learners successfully transition; the activity has not been in existence long enough for children to graduate and enroll in conventional school. However, KIIs and FGDs with education officials, facilitators, principals, learners, PTAs, USAID, and EDC overwhelmingly cite the curriculum and facilitator trainings as preparing children for junior secondary schooling. As illustrated in Figure 3 above, discussions of these were much more frequent than other elements of the AQE development hypothesis. Thus, preliminary evidence points to improved perceptions of teaching quality as the strongest component to date of the development hypothesis.

EQ 2: ACCESS TO EDUCATION

To what extent has progress been made to increase access for out-of-school children in education? How well are AQE's community engagement efforts improving perceptions to attend and enroll in ALP? Is this contributing to improved enrollment and retention rates?

FINDINGS

AQE provides low-cost schooling, which is critical for families that might otherwise have difficulty paying education fees.

Unlike the conventional school, AQE does not require enrollment, uniform, or other related fees. Thus, for learners whose families cannot pay the conventional school costs, AQE provides a welcome alternative: "My parents feel happy about ALP. There's no school fees for ALP so they feel relieved that there's a free school" (Learner). In KIIs and FGDs, "**free schooling**" offered by AQE was cited (mentioned in 23 of 63 total KIIs and FGDs, most frequently among PTAs and learners) as a key driver of learner enrollment.

At the same time, some respondents cautioned that AQE must review how information about "free" ALP is presented to community members, particularly parents. Currently, AQE is perceived as an entirely cost-

free initiative, which creates issues in getting parents to make small contributions such as purchasing bookbags (i.e., parents assume everything is free and thus do not plan for spending additional funds on ALP schooling). This may later present a challenge as children graduate from AQE and transition to the conventional school, which has associated fees: “When a person is used to having something free, and when the free thing is no longer available, [that person] is let down” (Principal).

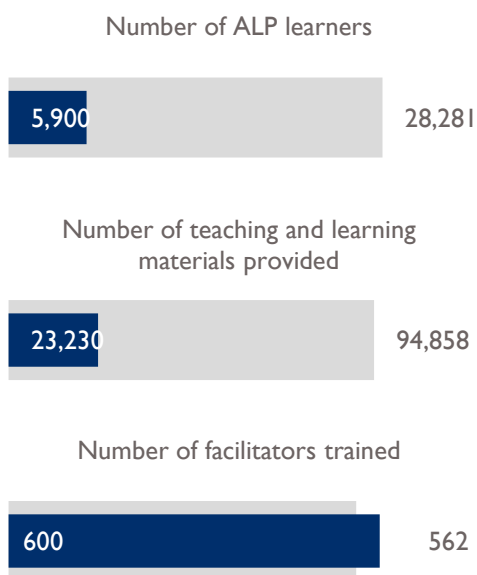
Respondents frequently discussed the high quality of AQE teaching and learning materials.

As noted above, the effectiveness of the AQE curriculum was highlighted in 34 of 63 total KIs and FGDs (a much higher number in comparison to other AQE components such as SLE). In particular, respondents remarked on the clarity and cohesiveness of the **AQE teacher guide**. As one facilitator explained, the AQE curriculum has a “relationship between lessons,” with lessons building upon previous information and skills imparted. Facilitators also valued the completed exercises provided in the teacher guide, which help ensure correct interpretation of materials.

Respondents noted the usefulness of the **formative assessment** section that accompanies each unit; this helps facilitators during the learning process to better understand student attainment. In fact, several education officials suggested that future ALP promotion scores be based on a combined formative and summative assessment score rather than solely on the summative learning assessment, as is current practice. Additionally, facilitators recommended that instead of a communal class grading sheet, an individual grading sheet be developed in order to provide report cards to learners.

**FIGURE 4: AQE MONITORING DATA
TARGET VS. ACTUAL**

AQE actuals (in gray) exceeded targets (blue) for learners reached and materials provided



Finally, principals and facilitators commended the **learner workbooks** provided to the children, noting the fact that these can be written in. The interactive nature of these workbooks helps increase learning and offers concrete evidence of children’s progress. Principals interviewed by the evaluation team provided examples of parents reviewing the workbooks in the evening and noting completed assignments. While the evaluation team did receive reports of misalignment between the teacher guide and learner workbooks, materials not arriving on time, and some materials wearing down (e.g., many children do not have bookbags, and workbooks get wet during the walk to school in the rainy season), overall feedback on AQE teaching and learning materials was positive.

The evaluation notably found evidence of **cross-pollination** between the conventional and ALP classrooms. Several facilitators are drawing on lesson plans and skills learned in the residential and cluster-based trainings to support their teaching in conventional schools. In one school, some of the conventional school children are voluntarily sitting in on ALP classes for further enrichment.

AQE effectively supports facilitators, helping to ensure that children are engaged.

During participatory FGDs, facilitators were asked to vote on the question: “Do you have the training and support needed to teach ALP classes?” Eighty-eight percent agreed with this statement, remarking that AQE **trainings** are clear and provide information that can be applied in the classroom: “We have all the skills we need when we come to ALP” (Facilitator). A few facilitators also noted wanting additional training in phonetics, decoding, and assessment of students who enroll late for appropriate level placement.

Feedback from learner FGDs highlighted the importance of well-trained facilitators. Quality of teaching impacts whether children come to school; children are motivated to attend when they like the facilitator and feel as though they are making progress in class. AQE learners frequently remarked on learning to read and write and on the support they receive from facilitators: “The thing I like the best of all about ALP is the teaching!” (Learner).

Thus, facilitator trainings are a key AQE activity; in fact, some respondents advocated expanding the frequency and number of trainings to address issues of facilitator turnover. For example, in one school, respondents reported learner dropout due to a facilitator falling ill. As only a small number of facilitators per school are trained by AQE—and conventional schoolteachers who are not trained by AQE are not permitted to fill in for AQE facilitators—there was no one available to substitute for that facilitator. In the absence of a facilitator in class, the children stopped coming.

AQE facilitators (who generally teach both conventional school and ALP) are also subject to transfer by the MOE to fill vacancies in other schools. AQE quarterly reports document the issue of staff **transfers** and the need to conduct **refresher trainings** for new ALP facilitators, as well as principals and education officials. This was noted in three KIs: “It is difficult to make a long-term plan to sustain our ALP school if I don’t know if I will be here next year” (Principal). One education official interviewed indicated efforts to counter staff mobility. However, no official guidance has been issued to retain ALP-trained staff.

Finally, AQE supports facilitators by providing a **stipend** for teaching ALP. Although many respondents highlighted issues with the AQE stipends arriving late, they acknowledge the importance of the stipend for both facilitators and learners. Many facilitators receive low or inconsistent payments from the government to teach in the conventional school; thus, the AQE stipend represents a critical source of additional income. When facilitators are consistently paid for their time, they are also more likely to consistently come to school and teach (teacher absenteeism was not frequently cited in KIs and FGDs as an issue in AQE schools), which in turn encourages learner attendance.

Learner FGDs included a most significant change (MSC) exercise designed to capture any unanticipated outcomes among learners; data analysis workshop participants voted the following story from the learner FGDs as “most significant of all”:

“I never used to go to school before, and I would see my friends going to school, and it made me sad. Now I’m in school, and I’m reading and writing. When I’m educated, I can help support my family.”

“Person-to-person” mobilization improves community perceptions of ALP.

The AQE mobilization team recruits out-of-school children via **mass meetings** and **house-to-house mobilization**. During these activities, AQE staff explain the benefits of ALP to parents and the larger community, encouraging parents to send children to class. Respondents noted the importance of this particularly for parents who may not have received extensive formal education: “When kids haven’t gone to school before, it takes time to reach them. You have to get the parents to understand the importance of education. . . . house-to-house mobilization has been the most important means of recruiting children because you have to sit with parents and explain to them the importance of education” (Principal).

In some areas, these meetings also include engagement with **traditional leaders** (e.g., women’s leadership, heads of traditional “bush” schools), which respondents cited as crucial to ensuring acceptance of AQE and coordination of the AQE calendar with community activities (e.g., bush school, market days). At one Grand Bassa school, respondents described how AQE meetings with bush school leaders led to a formal agreement that children would not be pulled out of ALP to attend bush schools.

In addition to AQE staff, **principals, PTAs, and facilitators** play a critical role in ALP recruitment. Once trained by AQE, these stakeholders conduct house-to-house visits and informally serve as advocates for ALP within their communities. For example, one learner described enrolling in ALP after a facilitator pulled her aside (while she was selling goods near the school) to encourage her to attend. AQE trainings of the PTA were highlighted as important to encouraging access, as they equip this stakeholder group to take on a leadership role: “AQE tells the PTA to take ownership of the program, to fully support the program. That works” (Education Official).

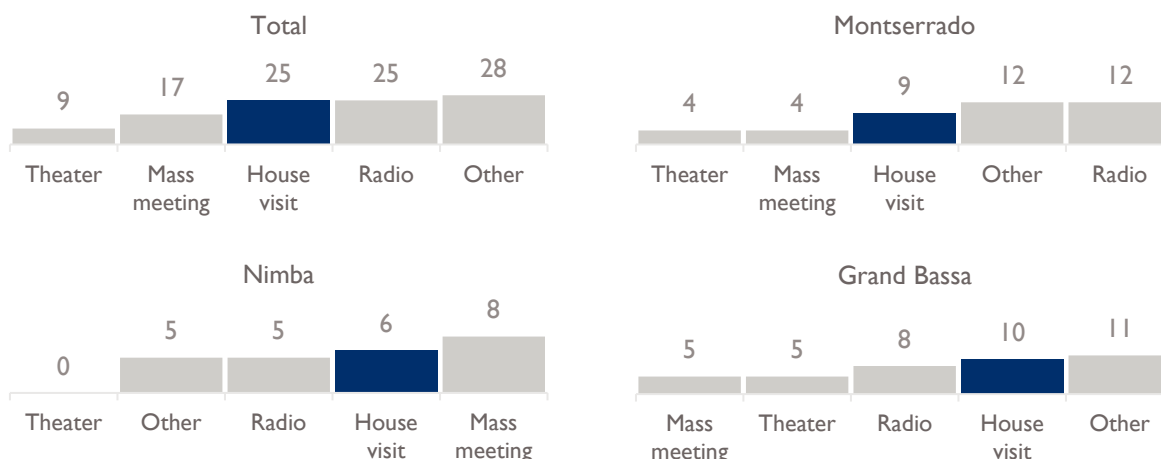
Radio and participatory theater activities were well received.

Radio and **participatory theater** are also used to recruit ALP participants. Awareness of radio advertisements was relatively high among respondents (25 mentions out of 63 KIIs and FGDs), though this varied somewhat by location. For example, radio was mentioned more frequently in Montserrado (12 mentions) versus Nimba (five); see Figure 5 below. Some respondents in Nimba also conflated AQE and AYP radio. While exposure to participatory theater was not as widespread (mentioned in only nine KIIs and FGDs), feedback on this was positive in communities where it had taken place. Respondents emphasized that the success of this activity was linked to understanding of community needs; specifically, participatory theater sessions were held on market days, which enabled AQE to reach a wider audience.

Figure 5 outlines KII and FGD mentions of ALP recruitment activities in Montserrado, Nimba, and Grand Bassa (“other” primarily focused on engagement of traditional leadership).

FIGURE 5. KII AND FGD CITATIONS OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

While some AQE strategies were consistently mentioned across counties (house-to-house visits), the importance of others (mass meetings, radio) varied.



Nevertheless, AQE communities face several persistent barriers to access.

In communities of AQE implementation, **poverty** and associated factors represent a major barrier to accessing education.⁹ Respondents discussed having high ALP enrollment numbers at the beginning of the school year but then struggling to retain learners (according to AQE monitoring data, the average learner repeat rate is 66 percent). During participatory FGDs, facilitators and PTA respondents overwhelmingly agreed (93 percent, or 78 of 84 total respondents, voted “yes”) that ALP prepares learners to transition to conventional schools; similarly, 92 percent of PTA members (47 of 51 respondents) affirmed that their community supports ALP. Nevertheless, agreement dropped when asked about learner retention: only 67 percent of facilitators and PTA respondents believe that children consistently stay in ALP.

“No matter how we try to address issues of access and retention, hunger always comes back.”
EDC/USAID

Hunger strongly contributes to dropout; one facilitator recounted the story of going to the house of a child who was not coming to class and discovering that the child was weak from hunger and thus not attending, owing to a lack of energy. The facilitator then gave the family some money to purchase food. In Montserrado and Nimba schools without **school feeding** programs, respondents highlighted the need for this, while schools in Grand Bassa with school feeding discussed the benefits: “When school feeding started, enrollment increased. The school feeding helped the parents because some of them can’t afford to feed the children in the morning” (Principal). These programs also support **girls’ access to education** by allowing them to take rations home. In some cases, girls are considered a primary breadwinner and pulled out of school to sell at the market; by bringing food home, girls can stay in school while still contributing to the family income.

⁹ Poverty (general) was cited as a barrier to access in 30 out of 63 total KIIs and FGDs; hunger was also specifically mentioned in 25 KIIs and FGDs.

Pressures from poverty mean that **economic activities** (selling goods at the market, motorbike driving, farming) can take precedence over education. Several respondents discussed how children leave school to work: “Parents can come and listen to what you say [about ALP], but when they go back, things change because of the financial aspect” (Principal). In particular, market days were mentioned as disrupting ALP attendance. **Early marriage** and **teenage pregnancy** also cause girls as well as boys (who start working to financially support their young wives) to drop out of school.

Finally, in some communities, children are pulled out of ALP to attend **bush schools**. This typically impacts girls more, as they can be sent to bush schools starting at 12 years old to prepare for marriage and caring for a home (while boys also attend, this generally happens at a later age). This was cited as an issue much more frequently in Montserrado and Grand Bassa KIs and FGDs than in Nimba. Nevertheless, in all counties, respondents emphasized the importance of AQE engaging with bush school leaders to coordinate the ALP schedule (see the Grand Bassa example above).

Respondents suggested several adjustments to better support access to education.

KI and FGD participants advocated that **recreational opportunities** (sport and play, music, art, cultural activities, etc.) be provided in order to increase learner retention. As explained by one facilitator, “children need to play a little” to refresh for learning. In many schools, recreational opportunities are available for conventional school students, with clubs meeting in the afternoon immediately following the end of classes. However, because this conflicts with ALP class time, AQE learners are largely excluded from conventional school extracurricular activities.

Additionally, facilitators, principals, and PTA respondents highlighted **alignment of the ALP calendar** with the conventional school as a strategy for retention. Many of the children attending ALP have siblings or friends in conventional schooling; when the conventional school finishes, families consider this the official end of the school year. Thus, some ALP learners stop coming even though classes are still ongoing.

CONCLUSIONS

AQE has made progress toward increasing access to education by providing **low-cost schooling that incorporates high-quality teaching and learning materials**. The AQE teacher guide is well structured, while workbooks allow for interactive learning. In addition, the activity supports facilitators to implement ALP via trainings and the provision of a stipend. The majority of AQE schools therefore have facilitators who feel equipped to teach and consistently attend class, which is critical to children’s learning.

Furthermore, AQE’s community engagement efforts, particularly **mass meetings and house-to-house mobilization**, encourage parents to send their children to ALP. In places where AQE has engaged with traditional leaders, this has helped to better integrate ALP into the community. Incorporating **principals, PTAs, and facilitators** into community engagement also increases the effectiveness of these activities; these stakeholders, particularly the PTAs, are key members of the community and thus are influential in generating support for AQE.

Despite these contributions to access, there are several **broader environmental factors**—all generally tied to poverty—that cause children to drop out of ALP. These include hunger, selling at the market, farming, early marriage and teenage pregnancy, and bush schools. While both boys and girls are affected, girls are often pulled out of ALP at an earlier age to contribute economically to their families or to attend

bush schools in preparation for marriage. While many AQE schools have high enrollment numbers initially, these issues result in learner dropout over the course of the school year, leading to **lower retention and promotion** to the next ALP level.

In short, access to education in Liberia can be considered what design theorists Horst Rittel and Melvin Webber describe as a “wicked problem” that has several **complex contributing factors** beyond what is targeted by AQE: “We are all beginning to realize that one of the most intractable problems is that of defining problems (of knowing what distinguishes observed condition from a desired condition) and of locating problems (findings where in the complex causal networks the trouble really lies).”¹⁰

EQ 3: SAFETY

What continue to be barriers to the safe learning component? What opportunities exist to improve the implementation procedure for identifying and filing SRGBV cases?

FINDINGS

Walking distance from children’s homes to school was noted as a major safety barrier, particularly in Montserrado and Grand Bassa.

At many AQE implementation sites, children walk **long distances** to arrive at school. The roads used are frequently unsafe, with heavy traffic and fast drivers in some areas, flooding during the rainy season, and harassment by older children or adults. In one extreme case encountered by the evaluation team, the majority of children dropped out of AQE classes following a ritualistic kidnapping and killing of a child (not from the AQE school) that took place on the road to the school. At this and other schools visited, road safety was linked to afternoon ALP class times, as children released from class around 5pm then had limited daylight left for the walk home.

While in Montserrado and Grand Bassa distance was frequently cited as discouraging AQE attendance, this was less of an issue in Nimba (of the 23 KII and FGD mentions of distance, ten were in Montserrado, nine in Grand Bassa, and four in Nimba). At some of the sites visited in Nimba, the school was located in or near the village where children lived, so walking distances to school were much shorter. In addition, respondents in several Nimba schools described solutions for ensuring student safety on the road; for example, one school developed a system of older learners walking with younger children to school and facilitators escorting all students across the busiest sections of the road.

The AQE Safe Learning Environment (SLE) baseline study identifies **bullying, corporal punishment, and sexual violence** as three critical elements of School-Related Gender-Based Violence (SRGBV). The evaluation team focused on these aspects of SRGBV in both data collection and analysis.

¹⁰ As explained by Rittel and Webber: “We use the term ‘wicked’ not because these properties are themselves ethically deplorable. We use the term ‘wicked’ in a meaning akin to . . . ‘vicious’ (like a circle) or ‘tricky.’” Horst W.J. Rittel and Melvin M. Webber, “Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning,” *Policy Sciences* 4 (1973), http://urbanpolicy.net/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Rittel+Webber_1973_PolicySciences4-2.pdf, 159–60.

The school environment, including physical space, facilities, and uniforms, is an important factor in safety.

“Community members use the facilities, and when it is spoiled, it is the school’s responsibility to repair.”
EDUCATION OFFICIAL

Fences, access to clean water, and toilets for both males and females are critical to students’ well-being while in school. In sites where these are not present or not properly maintained, many safety issues arose. For example, respondents discussed children drinking unclean water from nearby streams because of broken water pumps or children going to the bathroom outside, which attracts flies and can spread disease. Other schools lack desks, chairs, and rooms for ALP

classes; in one school, children sat on cement blocks during class, which resulted in the injury of a girl who dropped the block on her foot while trying to move it. Fences impact the physical safety of students and help prevent abuse of school infrastructure. In some sites without fences, community members easily access school water pumps and toilets, which then wear down and break more quickly due to overuse.

At several schools, respondents remarked on the issue of **uniforms** for ALP learners. While uniforms can affect safety on the roads (respondents felt that children who are visibly identifiable as going to school are less likely to be harassed), the more significant issue is bullying: many ALP learners are bullied by children in their community or in the conventional school for not having “real” school signifiers such as uniforms. Respondents discussed having ALP children wear some type of identifying clothing in order to increase safety (for example, one respondent suggested that children wear t-shirts of the same color).

Safety is also impacted by gender imbalances among school staff and attitudes toward corporal punishment.

Many schools have a **higher percentage of male versus female facilitators**. Respondents noted the significance of this problem in rural areas, where “there are not enough female teachers—more men than women are educated in the interior areas, so you see more men become teachers. It’s safer when you have more female [facilitators]” (Education Official). While only a small number of schools visited by the evaluation team reported cases of sexual harassment, the lack of female staff raised concerns in terms of the schools’ ability to handle future SRGBV issues. Girls that do experience SRGBV, particularly in terms of sexual violence, often feel more comfortable confiding in female school officials. In one school, a female staff member recounted an incident of rape where the child did not come forward for a long period of time but was eventually able to discuss what happened directly with that female staff member; this respondent highlighted that the child likely would not have come forward if there had been no female staff member present at the school.

Although not frequently encountered by the evaluation team, respondents at a few schools described facilitators’ use of **corporal punishment**. For example, one principal discussed encountering behavioral issues among AQE learners that are more severe than those typically seen in conventional school classrooms: “The children in AQE are from different backgrounds . . . these are more vulnerable children.” This principal worked with facilitators in the school, who advocated for the use of corporal punishment, to develop alternative approaches for disciplining the children. This respondent also noted that male learners are more often subject to corporal punishment versus females.

The TCOC is a well-known source of guidance on SRGBV.

Among CEOs, DEOs, principals, PTAs, and facilitators, there is a high level of awareness of the **TCOC**, which contains policies and procedures for addressing SRGBV in schools.¹¹ Out of 49 total KIs and FGDs conducted with these groups, 26 directly referenced the TCOC. At schools visited, respondents described similar processes for responding to SRGBV issues:

1. Principals, working with the PTA in some cases, use the TCOC as a basis for disciplinary action;
2. Depending on the severity of the incident, principals reach out to the DEO, CEO, or national MOE officials; and
3. As needed, outside authorities such as the police are contacted.

Throughout the various steps of this process, the **principal** is a key actor in identifying and handling SRGBV (see Figure 6 below). Particularly for bullying or more minor issues between facilitators and learners, the principal is typically responsible for resolving the issue and relies on the TCOC for guidance. For example, one principal described using the TCOC to address an issue of corporal punishment; after a facilitator hit a learner, the principal read TCOC guidelines to that facilitator (who did not believe he had done anything wrong) to explain why disciplinary action was needed. As emphasized by the principal, “having the code in writing helped me to support my point.”

In a small number of schools, respondents also mentioned the School Handbook or Student Code of Conduct as a resource for addressing SRGBV, especially in terms of bullying. As with the TCOC, these are currently targeted toward the conventional school and do not address any ALP-specific policies or safety issues; it is unclear to what extent these documents have been distributed to AQE learners.

Outside of schools, connections with resources that can help address serious SRGBV incidents are weak.

In general, reporting of SRGBV in Liberia is low; as detailed in the AQE Gender Analysis Report, only about a third of students who experience gender-based violence report it (34 percent of girls and 37 percent of boys). This is strongly linked to taboos around sexual violence, as “victims of violence are often considered partly responsible, especially if the victim is female. The belief that girls sometimes cause the abuse is common, as well as the perception that men and boys have good reason to use violence against women and girls.”¹²

Weak referral systems also contribute to this problem. While processes exist for addressing certain SRGBV issues (bullying and corporal punishment) within schools, the evaluation found gaps in awareness of and connections to resources outside of schools that can help manage more serious incidents—particularly cases of sexual violence. For example, while some principals and facilitators mentioned the police as a key SRGBV actor, few indicated knowledge of specific resources such as Women and Children

¹¹ Source material verification checks found that TCOC copies were in all DEO, CEO, and principal offices. Other SRGBV resources were also present; for example, one education official had an SRGBV referral pathway poster (produced by the MGCSP) hung up visibly in the office.

¹² AQE Gender Analysis, page 15.

Protection Units within the police.¹³ While national SRGBV referral guidelines and referral centers exist in Liberia, these were never mentioned in school-level KIs or FGDs with principals, facilitators, or PTAs.

Education officials, PTAs, and other community groups play a critical role in ensuring safety of learners.

Awareness of SRGBV resources was somewhat higher among education officials, presenting an opportunity for these stakeholders to serve as **connectors** between schools and the broader referral system. For example, one education official noted having personally distributed copies of the TCOC to the Women and Children Protection Unit of the police, the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection (MGCSP), Ministry of Health, and Ministry of Internal Affairs, in order to increase awareness among these actors of school-level SRGBV policies and procedures.

In addition, respondents frequently described PTA contributions to safety in schools (see Figure 6 below). In one site, the PTA pays for janitors to clean the latrines. In another, the PTA arranged a system of escorting children to address the issue of unsafe roads; each learner in that school was also given facilitators' phone numbers and told to go to the nearest village to ask someone to call for assistance if any problems arose. As described by one respondent: "Where PTAs and community members are active and supportive of ALP, there are more opportunities to address certain risks. Teachers can be transferred, but at the end of the day, it's the community who owns the school and the ALP program" (USAID/EDC).

"There is a need to get parents involved and create awareness among the community and PTA about their responsibility. [It's] important to have the PTA and community involved in monitoring . . . should include in the TCOC the PTA as a resource for where children can report issues."
EDUCATION OFFICIAL

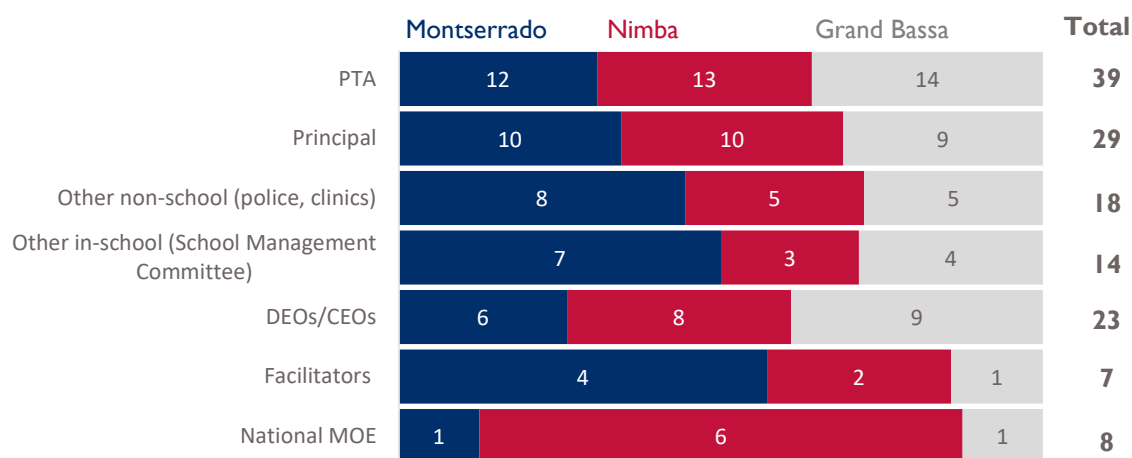
In KIs and FGDs, the PTA was the most frequently cited stakeholder (after principals) that can help in identifying and addressing SRGBV. In many schools, the PTA has oversight responsibilities; however, **not all PTAs have been properly equipped** to incorporate safety considerations into their ongoing monitoring. Specifically, some do not have copies of the TCOC; the PTAs also have action plans, but many do not yet include safety monitoring. Several respondents emphasized the need for AQE to continue providing tools and trainings to support the PTA in ensuring safety in schools.

Finally, a few respondents emphasized involvement of the School Management Committee. While these should exist in all schools, they have not been fully brought into AQE safe learning initiatives. Respondents also noted local civil society organizations (CSOs) or similar groups as potential SRGBV resources. In one village, respondents suggested involving the Women's Initiative Group, which consists of female community members.

¹³ Among the 12 FGDs conducted with facilitators, only four mentioned non-school stakeholders when discussing processes for handling SRGBV cases.

FIGURE 6. KII AND FGD CITATIONS OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Across AQE counties, PTAs and principals were highlighted in KIIs and FGDs as key contributors to SLE.



CONCLUSIONS

The evaluation identified several persistent barriers to safety in schools: children walking long distances from their homes to school on unsafe roads; lack of water pumps, uniforms, and functioning latrines for males and females; lack of fences for physical protection of children and to ensure that community members do not overuse school resources; a low number of female facilitators and principals; and acceptance of corporal punishment among some facilitators.

However, these **barriers varied (often significantly)** even among the subset of AQE schools visited. As described above, in one school in Nimba facilities functioned relatively well, the school had a fence, and the school was located in the village where children lived; in another school in Montserrado, the issue of road safety was so severe that it caused the entire AQE class to drop out. Thus, the significance of various safety barriers is highly dependent on location and school.

Procedures for improving safety can be strengthened via engagement with **education officials, the PTA, and other local CSOs and community groups**. Education officials can help increase linkages to SRGBV resources outside the school level (e.g., Women and Children Protection Unit of the police, MGCSP, etc.); this lack of linkages currently represents a major gap inhibiting schools from addressing incidents of sexual violence. PTAs can play a role in monitoring school safety, while community groups can support these processes as appropriate. For example, female members of groups similar to the Women’s Initiative Group mentioned above could serve as a resource for female learners in schools with low percentages of female staff.

As schools work to enhance overall safety procedures by strengthening linkages with outside resources, the **TCOC is a key place to communicate** this to principals and facilitators. For example, the TCOC could provide contact information for SRGBV referral centers or the Women and Children Protection Unit. No other document has such a high level of awareness both within and outside schools.

EQ 4: CLASS HOURS AND STRUCTURE

To what extent has the reduction in facilitator teaching time affected learning outcomes for ALP learners?

FINDINGS

Despite an official change that reduced ALP class time by thirty minutes per day, repercussions at the school level are unclear.

Prior to the start of the 2018-2019 school year, MOE policy prescribed three-and-a-half-hours of ALP class time per day. With the current extension of conventional primary school to 3:00pm, AQE negotiated with the MOE Deputy Minister of Administration an official three-hour ALP school day (reducing class time by thirty minutes each day, with two and half hours total lost over the course of the week).

However, various data sources **disagreed on the impact** of the policy change on schools. Among the 41 KIIs and FGDs that discussed this issue, eleven described how the ALP school day differs from previous years, while fifteen emphasized that there have been no changes since the institution of the MOE policy: “[The policy] did not shorten the school day, it remains at four hours” (Principal). In general, AQE schools visited by the evaluation team (most double-shifts) end conventional classes around 12:30pm, with ALP start times varying from 1:00-2:00pm and closing hours between 4:30-5:30pm. As summative learning assessment scores for 2018-2019 were not available during the evaluation period, the team was unable to determine any major shifts in testing results from the previous year.

Nevertheless, the ALP class time is not enough to fully cover the “packed” AQE curriculum.

While education officials, principals, and facilitators expressed appreciation for how AQE condensed and identified key points of the basic education curriculum for ALP, many also noted **challenges in completing lessons** within the prescribed timeframe (see Figure 7). The AQE curriculum is heavily scripted and requires facilitators to cover four lessons every day. While this helps ensure that the entire curriculum is completed over the course of the school year, it does not account for lessons that need more than one class period to implement or—depending on the level of learners in the classroom—reinforcement of critical subjects such as numeracy and literacy. Even during the field-testing phase of the AQE curriculum, facilitators and learners indicated wanting more time for numeracy.¹⁴

For the 2018–19 school year, the MOE instituted a policy to **extend conventional primary school** class times from 1:00pm-3:00pm, reducing the number of hours for ALP. In response, AQE conducted six-week **Saturday School** pilots in six AQE sites (one per county) to explore use of this approach to compensate for a shortened ALP school day. For Saturday Schools, AQE provided lesson plans designed around enrichment activities and “library in a box” literacy materials.

¹⁴ AQE Annual report Year 2, pages 14–15.

In addition to being packed, the curriculum is not well adapted to the **varying experiences and abilities of learners**. For some children, AQE represents their first time in the classroom, while others enter with prior schooling. There are often significant differences between these groups, even if they both test into the same ALP level. For example, one school had good attendance but high Level I repeat rates; facilitators at this school described how many of the children with no prior schooling failed the end of year exam, leading to low promotion to Level 2.

During FGD discussions, facilitators suggested creating two streams for Level I to accommodate learners with some schooling (e.g., can write their name) and learners with no previous school experience. While the evaluation saw evidence of this happening ad hoc (with Level IA, IB, etc., created by facilitators and principals), this is not a standardized feature of AQE. To better respond to differing learner needs, some education officials also discussed integrating vocational courses (sewing, baking, etc.) into Level 3. While the ultimate goal of AQE is for children to transition to conventional school upon graduation, some (particularly the “older,” i.e., teenage, learners) will voluntarily choose not to enroll. Thus, AQE can support these learners by offering training that enhances their capacity to find employment post-ALP.

“Instruction hours are too short to cover everything. For Level 2, every day we are supposed to cover math, English, social studies and science. It's difficult to get through this. Saturday Schools are a good solution; children need more numeracy and literacy, but we have to go quickly through the curriculum during the week, so the Saturday School is an opportunity to reinforce the skills that they need.” FACILITATOR

FIGURE 7: FACILITATOR FGD VOTING ON ALP CLASS HOURS



The Saturday School pilot was well received because of its flexible lessons and focus on literacy.

The Saturday School program was an unexpected success: “Teachers had more fun. Learners had more fun. Master Trainers had more fun. They could literally see change happening” (USAID/EDC). Many respondents at pilot sites highlighted the program’s focus on literacy via the “library in a box” activity, which allowed learners to select books for independent reading and then take these home to share with their families (this was the most frequently mentioned aspect of Saturday Schools in KIs and FGDs).

Additionally, more flexible lesson plans and an earlier start time led to more energetic Saturday School classrooms. The pilot schools employed a more general lesson script than what is used during the week, which allowed for more varied classroom interactions. Earlier-than-usual start times (compared to around 2:00pm in the afternoon during the week) meant that both facilitators and learners arrived fresh—not tired from teaching other classes or performing chores at home or on farms. Several facilitators noted that children were better able to concentrate on classwork during Saturday Schools. Finally, some pilot sites used Saturday Schools as an opportunity to integrate extracurricular activities to increase retention: “We did sports after the Saturday School classes, and the children loved it” (Facilitator). However, a few facilitators cautioned against widespread expansion of Saturday Schools in its current format, which requires facilitators to teach for six days each week. Over the long term, this might cause burnout and harm quality of teaching during the week, as Saturdays are often reserved for lesson planning.

CONCLUSIONS

While various data sources differed on how the MOE policy change affected ALP, respondents widely agreed that there are **not enough hours** for facilitators to properly cover what is currently required by the AQE curriculum. A concise, streamlined basic education curriculum is one of the most identified successes of AQE, yet implementation of that curriculum presents a challenge for facilitators.

Lessons learned from **Saturday School** pilots represent an opportunity to address some of these concerns. The most effective elements of Saturday Schools can be transferred to enrich the overall ALP approach, including increased focus on literacy, greater flexibility in the lesson script, morning start times (when possible given teaching constraints), and integration of extracurricular activities.

EQ 5: SUSTAINABILITY

What local systems exist that can help expand, improve, and sustain Alternative Education opportunities and promote Liberia’s journey to self-reliance? What is the role of government and to what extent has AQE contributed to government ownership of ALP programming?

FINDINGS

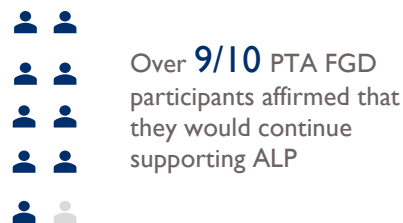
PTAs are key to sustainability of ALP sites.

At all 12 schools visited, respondents cited PTAs as the most **constant source of support for ALP**: “In most of our schools, if the PTA was not there, the school would collapse...they are our backbone in this county” (Education Official). PTAs undertake a wide range of activities, from planting cassava, to sponsoring in-school feeding, to raising funds for classrooms and materials (chalk, copy books, etc.).

During KIIs and FGDs, principals, facilitators, and PTA representatives noted the role of the PTA in school **monitoring**. At several sites, PTA representatives regularly come to the school to check on the work being undertaken by ALP, review lesson plans, and look into classrooms to confirm that teachers are present. In some cases, this support extends beyond the immediate school environment. For example, the County Education Office in Nimba was built with funds from parents and community members, who are also currently helping to construct a guest house behind the existing office.

The evaluation applied **USAID’s local systems** definition: “Those interconnected set of actors—governments, civil society, private sector, universities, individual citizens and others—that jointly produce a particular development outcome . . . the “local” in local systems refers to actors in a partner country. As the sectors jointly produce outcomes they are “local” to it. As development outcomes may occur at many levels, local systems can be national, provincial or community wide.” *USAID Local Systems: A Framework for Supporting Sustained Development*, 4.

FIGURE 8: PTA FGD VOTING ON SUSTAINABILITY



Other community stakeholders, along with CSOs, universities, and teacher training institutes (TTIs), can play a role in further developing AE in Liberia.

Traditional leaders (women’s leadership and heads of bush schools) are crucial education advocates. Respondents noted the importance of further cultivating support for ALP from these groups: “We have not involved traditional people to the extent we should, for example with the school calendar, protection issues, early marriage. We should start with traditional leaders at the community level and then bring it to Monrovia, not impose it on the local traditional leadership” (Education Official).

Several education officials, principals, and facilitators also suggested integrating the AQE facilitator professional development training into both pre-service (universities) and in-service (TTI) programs. A small network of educators outside the MOE have initiated a new national technical working group, with AE as one of the topics currently under discussion. An AE course developed by this network is now being piloted at higher education institutions, including Stella Marie Polytechnic, William Vs. Tubman Teachers College, University of Liberia (College of Education), and African Methodist Episcopal University.

Education officials also cited the Liberian Cooperative Standard Education School System (LICOSESS), a mobile TTI, as a resource for training professionals to develop ALP instructional materials. As one education official explained, it is “good to make use of what you have locally.” **LICOSESS** is an example of a private Liberian TTI currently focusing on the development of locally constructed teaching and learning materials. Other, less frequently cited potential sources of support for ALP include (1) Liberian diaspora (one community noted the existence of a diaspora organization that could be engaged), (2) faith-based schools (e.g., approaching these schools about integrating ALP classes), and (3) local politicians (one community noted an example of a politician who visited the school and then donated money for supplies).

Partnerships with NGOs and donors can strengthen and sustain ALP.

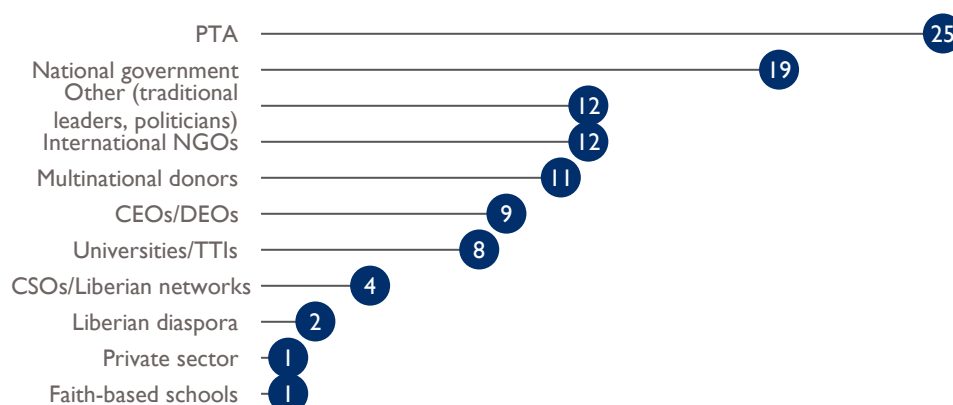
The EQ 2 discussion of “persistent barriers to access” highlights the multitude of interconnected factors that impact access to education. Many of these tie back to poverty, including hunger—a major problem that affects retention of learners in the AQE schools sampled. In Liberia, there are several international NGOs (respondents noted Save the Children and Mercy Corps) and multilateral donors that work on these issues; thus, one potential avenue for improving ALP is via **linkages** with these actors. Where these relationships exist, feedback is positive. For example, KII and FGD respondents from sites in Grand Bassa with in-school feeding programs discussed how these help lower dropout, particularly among girls.

In addition to tackling barriers to access, linkages with NGOs and donors support continuation of specific AQE components such as the curriculum. As noted under EQ 1 (see “multilateral and donor activities”), the World Bank (via GPE) and the EU, among others, are currently designing and implementing AE initiatives that will include a curriculum, facilitator trainings, etc. Education officials and USAID/EDC respondents emphasized that a “harmonized approach,” where AQE works with the MOE to coordinate activities among AE stakeholders, will help expand ALP in Liberia over the long term.

Figure 8 below outlines actors mentioned in KIIs and FGDs as critical to sustainability. While **PTA and national government** were the most frequently highlighted, traditional leaders, international NGOs, multinational donors, educational officials, and Liberian universities and TTIs also play a central role.

FIGURE 9: KII AND FGD CITATIONS OF KEY STAKEHOLDERS FOR ALP SUSTAINABILITY

The PTA and national government were cited most frequently in KIIs and FGDs as important for sustainability.



Gaps in government ownership of ALP remain because of inconsistent engagement by AQE.

AQE has aimed to institutionalize ALP programming, particularly via the work of the TWG curriculum sub-committee (see EQ 1 discussion of “engagement of the MOE”). However, this engagement is not always consistent, particularly regarding district- and school-level ALP implementation. Several education officials discussed having a **peripheral role in ALP**, where they are excluded from key decisions.

For example, one official reported being involved in school mapping but then having no input on ALP **site selection**. This respondent provided an example of a school that was selected for the program but then dropped when AQE learned that its PTA was inactive. The education official advocated for retention of this school, but it was not reinstated because it did not meet site selection criteria determined (solely) by EDC, including PTA attendance, latrines, female teachers, etc. The respondent recommended targeting relevant schools in the same district rather than scattering AQE sites across multiple districts: “In one area [AQE] only chose one school and left other primary schools in the same area [that did not meet EDC selection criteria] without the program. If you are going to solve the problem, you should target all the schools in the area. Don’t select just one and leave the others” (Education Official).

Additionally, AQE does not include education officials in testing or **selecting ALP facilitators**; respondents reported being unaware of criteria used for choosing facilitators. They noted wanting greater involvement in **learner testing** and placement into ALP levels and in AQE **workplan development**. Currently, AQE sends a list of pre-planned activities to counties and districts, requesting that these be included as-is in CEO and DEO workplans. AQE also calls workshops and meetings with limited prior information. For future workshops, education officials would like to be given agendas and a list of participants in advance and to be involved in notifying participants.

Finally, respondents advocated that AQE work within, rather than parallel to, government systems. Currently, AQE hires staff to implement and monitor ALP; the government could take on some of these responsibilities. For example, the MOE has a pool of trainers that AQE could engage as **Master Trainers**. Instead, AQE independently recruits these trainers. Thus, when the Master Trainers’ contracts end, this skill set is lost to the education system. Education officials highlighted a lack of understanding of how

activities such as trainings will be transferred when AQE ends, as there have been no discussions with government at the county or district levels of a sustainability plan for AQE.

Without sufficient resources, schools may struggle to maintain ALP activities.

“Beautiful programs come, but then the problem is the way to sustain. The same thing happened—when AYP finished, schools closed down activities. No one can work without resources.” EDUCATION OFFICIAL

In KIs and FGDs, respondents repeatedly emphasized the positive effects of AQE thus far and expressed an interest in continuing ALP activities. However, the most frequently cited challenge to AQE sustainability was **lack of resources** (mentioned in 30 of 53 KIs and FGDs with education officials, principals, facilitators, PTAs, and USAID/EDC; capacity building was the second most frequently cited, garnering 14 mentions).

Lack of resources limits institutionalization (see EQ 1 discussion “lack of internal GOL resources”), which in turn inhibits sustainability. AQE currently covers costs associated with running ALP, including facilitator stipends. Respondents were unsure of how to pay for these moving forward: “When we look through the whole program, we don’t see any sustainability factor built in. There is a likelihood the program will die. Right now, our own economy has problems, and we cannot afford AQE” (Education Official).

CONCLUSIONS

At the community level, PTAs are a key actor that can sustain ALP over the long-term. PTAs are embedded in communities, and (as they largely include parents of children enrolled in ALP) are invested in the success of the program. In several schools, PTAs are already working to ensure quality of teaching and learning through direct monitoring and are contributing financially to ALP through farming and other fundraising. Thus, sustainability of AQE after funding from USAID ends can be supported by **building the capacity of PTAs** across sites to continue and expand existing initiatives. Traditional leaders, who play a critical role in encouraging community acceptance of ALP, must also be part of these efforts.

Nationally, Liberian **universities** and **TTIs** represent an opportunity to increase the pool of professionals qualified to develop materials and implement ALP in schools. Coordination among these institutes can also help link pre-service and in-service professional development training for ALP, especially in the area of reading methodology (phonetics and decoding). **NGOs** and **multilateral organizations** are another important macro-level actor; in particular, partnerships with organizations examining ways to create sustainable models for in-school feeding will improve AE by addressing a major issue (hunger) that impedes access to education. Linkages between AQE and AE stakeholders such as the World Bank will also help ensure that core AQE components (e.g. the curriculum) are integrated into future ALP programming.

Finally, sustainability of any education program is premised on **government ownership**. Ultimately, “the goal is to consolidate the accelerated model within the MOE one school [approach]” (USAID/EDC) and have a national vision with ALP curricula, tools, and processes driven by the MOE. However, this level of institutionalization has yet to be achieved due to gaps in how the GOL is engaged in AQE implementation. National, county, and district education officials have been left out of AQE decision making on key areas such as workplan development and recruitment of facilitators. Thus, reflecting on how AQE works with the education system at all levels to integrate ALP activities and provide further opportunities for government ownership is key at this midway programmatic point.

RECOMMENDATIONS

AQE demonstrates several clear successes, particularly in its engagement with the TWG curriculum sub-committee leading to the development of high-quality teaching and learning materials. The AQE teacher guide and learner workbooks represent a significant improvement on previous AE curricula; they are “rich,” well structured, and support interactive learning among children. AQE materials help prepare learners to transition to the conventional school system.

Trainings and the ALP stipend ensure that facilitators come regularly to class and are well equipped to teach. Effective facilitators in turn motivate children to attend. Other AQE activities encourage children to enroll, particularly in-person awareness raising and mobilization conducted by AQE staff, PTA, principals, and facilitators. As AQE operates in communities where parents may not have had access to primary education themselves, these initiatives are critical in communicating the benefits of ALP.

However, alongside these core successes, several challenges limit broader institutionalization of the activity. AQE has been inconsistent in its engagement of the MOE: while the curriculum sub-committee serves as a model for partnering with government, MOE officials have been left out of key AQE processes. AQE offices are well funded and equipped, yet government partners struggle to access the resources (e.g., motorbikes, gas) necessary to carry out work requested by AQE during trainings (e.g., monitoring of schools by DEOs). As a result, there are significant gaps in government ownership of AQE, which threatens long-term sustainability.

In the next two years of the activity, AQE must build on its successes—trainings, curriculum sub-committee engagement, teaching and learning materials, and community mobilization—and expand work on initiatives that are still at the beginning stages, namely SLE. Most critically, AQE must address issues that impede institutionalization. To ensure a stronger and more sustained delivery of AQE and similar activities moving forward, the evaluation recommends the following, focused around four main programmatic areas: government; PTAs; ALP structure; and linkages with stakeholders.

GOVERNMENT

AQE should broaden its collaboration with GOL at the national, county, and district levels. Working more closely with officials, particularly on implementation and monitoring of AQE, will help foster government ownership. Specific approaches include:

1. **Share AQE resources with education officials**, including those not involved in direct implementation of the relevant initiative. For example, officials who do not participate in monitoring of schools should nevertheless have access to the AQE curriculum.
2. **Implement AQE activities jointly** with education officials. AQE can execute school monitoring, workplan development, workshop planning, PTA training, community engagement, etc., in partnership with the MOE, particularly CEOs and DEOs.
3. Work with the MOE to **develop a comprehensive sustainability strategy** for AQE. This should include identification of areas where AQE can build capacity within the education system—for example, by training select MOE staff as Master Trainers, who can then continue training additional ALP facilitators after activity closeout. In addition, AQE and the MOE should begin to determine programmatic elements that the MOE can maintain over the long term (where there is both MOE will and a reasonable expectation of covering costs) and aim to strengthen these areas. If there are specific aspects of AQE that will be too cost prohibitive to continue, AQE should reduce these, with funding

redirected toward equipping education officials to monitor schools. USAID should play a key role in developing the sustainability strategy; in particular, the agency can support the GOL at the policy level and in developing linkages with private sector organizations, international donors, and national partners that can contribute to ALP both financially and programmatically (see *linkages* below).

PTAs

AQE should continue and expand its current activities with PTAs and community leaders. As demonstrated by the evaluation findings, PTAs are a key stakeholder that can support access to education, safety in schools, and sustainability of ALP. Over the next two years, AQE should focus on building capacity of PTAs via the following:

4. As with education officials, **PTAs should have access to ALP resources**, including the AQE curriculum and the TCOC. Where appropriate, AQE should communicate information on programming (e.g., results from the SLE baseline) with PTAs. This will better equip PTAs to monitor ALP implementation and safety.
5. **Increase the number of PTA trainings.** AQE should also explore applying the in-person mentorship model being considered for facilitator trainings to the PTA (e.g., AQE staff or GOL officials with expertise on SLE can conduct “mini-trainings” for the PTA during regular visits to school communities). This would reduce both costs and required logistics of PTA members leaving their own work to travel to AQE workshops for an extended period. In addition, PTA engagement should include planning for sustainability; for example, AQE can strategize with PTAs on how to support ALP long term (e.g., through activities like farming or other fundraising). After trainings, AQE should work with PTAs to integrate relevant follow-up items into PTA action plans.
6. **Maintain the current AQE community engagement strategy that centers on in-person awareness raising.** This approach effectively engages PTAs (along with principals and facilitators) to communicate the benefits of ALP to families. This should also include deeper dialogue with traditional leaders in sites where bush schools impact ALP attendance; as appropriate, AQE can bring in national-level actors such as the MOE and the Ministry of Internal Affairs (supported by USAID as needed) to discussions of how to coordinate bush school activities with the ALP calendar.

ALP STRUCTURE

AQE should revisit the structure of weekday ALP class time, incorporating lessons learned from Saturday Schools to use these hours more effectively:

7. Literacy and numeracy are core subjects that need consistent reinforcement, particularly for children with limited prior schooling. ALP facilitators should have additional time for these subjects (at least one hour per day for each), with the number of science and life skills lessons reduced. As suggested by FGD facilitator respondents, instead of covering four lessons every day, the ALP curriculum should have two **extended literacy and numeracy sessions** and alternate between one science or life skills lesson. More time for numeracy and literacy should also allow for greater flexibility in lesson plans, so that facilitators can adapt classwork to the specific needs of learners.
8. Issue formal guidance to schools to **separate Level I classes into at least two tiers**, IA (for learners without prior schooling) and IB (those with school experience who have basic literacy and numeracy competence). This will more accurately group children with similar skillsets into the same class, allowing facilitators to appropriately pace lessons.

9. **Implement the “library in a box” initiative in additional ALP schools**, allowing children to take home books for supplemental reading. This activity was a highly successful element of Saturday Schools that supported literacy and engaged families in their children’s schooling.
10. Where possible (in coordination with facilitators’ schedules for the conventional school), **hold ALP classes in the morning**. Both learners and facilitators are fresher in the morning, and earlier class times help ensure safety as children are not walking long distances home in the dark.
11. **Integrate recreational (sport, art, music, etc.) activities** into AQE programming in order to increase retention of learners. These can be held immediately preceding ALP class time, or in the afternoon if ALP class times are switched to the morning (in this case, ALP learners can be invited to join existing extracurricular clubs offered by the conventional school). This is also an opportunity to integrate vocational training (e.g., sewing clubs, soap making, baking, beekeeping, etc.) for older learners who may not desire to transition to conventional schools.

LINKAGES

AQE, working closely with USAID, should coordinate with TTIs, universities, other USAID activities, donors, multilateral organizations, and NGOs to reduce barriers to access and enhance sustainability. These efforts should center on school feedings and collaboration with other ALP implementers:

12. **Link AQE with GPE and EU planning** to ensure that the existing curriculum is used in upcoming ALP programming. This is critical to prevent future ALP initiatives from duplicating work. A high-quality AQE curriculum is already in place; thus, financial and human resources from other programs are better spent on addressing ALP gaps, such as government engagement. USAID should drive the relationship-building aspect, with support from EDC in sharing AQE materials and lessons learned.
13. Engage Save the Children, Mercy Corps, and other relevant organizations to **bring school feeding programs into additional AQE sites**. This directly addresses hunger, a major barrier to accessing education.
14. Implement initiatives that **connect school- and community-level actors (principals, facilitators, PTAs, etc.) to stakeholders** that impact safety such as the Women and Children Protection Unit of the police or the MGCSP. This can be achieved through a combination of activities, including:
 - **Trainings:** AQE should hold community-based SLE workshops at schools (inviting PTAs as well as general community members) that discuss the TCOC and additional resources for addressing SRGBV.
 - **Referral pathway:** AQE should collaborate with the MOE to develop a clearer SRGBV referral pathway. The MOE should then **update the TCOC** with information for these contacts and distributed to national MOE officials, county and district education offices, schools, and PTAs.

ANNEX A: FULL LISTING OF REFERENCES AND REPORTS UTILIZED

Listed below are documents reviewed by the evaluation team:

1. AQE quarterly and annual progress reports
2. AQE Activity Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Plan
3. AQE Work Plan Narratives
4. AQE Technical Approach to SRGBV
5. SRGBV Activities Mapping
6. AQE Gender Assessment
7. AQE Operational Research Report
8. AQE Rapid Education and Risk Analysis
9. AQE Saturday School Pilot Report
10. SFCG Community Scorecard Report
11. SFCG National Communication Strategy Draft
12. SFCG Participatory Theatre Tour Activity Report (Year 1/Year 2)
13. SFCG Support Report Visit
14. STS FGD Report
15. USAID AQE Institutional Capacity Assessment (ICA) Plan FY17 and FY17 ICA Report
16. USAID AQE ICA FY18 Plan and Report
17. MOE Getting to Best Strategy 2015
18. Education Systems Strengthening USAID Africa
19. UNICEF/UNESCO Liberia OOSCI Country Report 2012
20. Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) USAID Liberia 2019
21. 2010-2020 Liberia Education Section Plan
22. AYP Out-of-School Youth Literacy Assessment
23. CDCS Stakeholder Consultations Report
24. AQE Performance Indicator Database System (PIDS) data
25. AQE Safe Learning Environments Baseline

ANNEX B: FULL LISTING OF PERSONS INTERVIEWED

The full listing of persons interviewed was submitted separately in line with data de-identification policies. Please contact Carla Trippe, ctrippe@socialimpact.com, to request the data.

ANNEX C: DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS AND INFORMED CONSENT

Included below are the protocols for seven respondent groups to be consulted for the evaluation: children learners, MOE officials, principals, EDC and USAID/Liberia, CEOs and DEOs, ALP facilitators, and PTA members.

PROTOCOL I: LEARNERS

I. FGD Tracking Information

FGD ID Number: _____ Date: _____ Facilitator: _____ Notetaker: _____

Location (District, County, School): _____

School Program(s): Saturday Schools School Feeding Program SLE Pilot School

2. Introductions and Informed Consent

See insert: Learner assent and principal in loco parentis consent

3. Participant Demographic Information

Number of females: _____ Number of males: _____

ACTIVITY INTRODUCTION

Preparation and materials needed:

- Time: 1 hour
- Large paper with pre-drawn “body” outline
- Crayons/markers

Each participant receives one piece of large “body map” paper and markers: “This outline is just any person, but over the course of this activity you will use markers/drawing to transform the person into you!” The facilitator will start by introducing a body part (e.g., head, ears, heart, etc.). For that body part, participants should color it in to reflect who they are—draw the hair on their head, their ears, the clothes they wear, etc.

Important that the facilitator goes one body part at a time and be clear about what participants are coloring (e.g., First we will start with the head; color in the hair on your head and anything else that makes your head unique, like a hat, bow or ribbon you might wear.)

Then, the facilitator will read a statement (below in bold) that matches up with that specific body part. After reading each statement, the facilitator should go around the group and ask participants their opinions; ask any follow-up questions as indicated before proceeding to the next statement.

NO.	FGD QUESTIONS		EQ
1	HEAD	<p><i>The head is for thinking: Do you think that one day you can go to regular (normal) school?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Probe(s): If yes, why? If no, why not?) • What are some things that might stop you from going to regular (normal) school? • What can adults like your parents, teachers, or community leaders (town chief, paramount chief, etc.) do to help you go to regular (normal) school? 	2
2	EARS	<p><i>The ears are for hearing: How did you hear about ALP (afternoon/evening school/extra classes)?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Probe(s): Did you hear from your friends, parents, or someone else?) • Have you ever heard about radio or community theater sessions about ALP (afternoon/evening school/extra classes)? If yes: What, if anything, did you like about them? 	2a
3	HEART	<p><i>The heart tells you how you feel: How do you feel when you are at ALP (afternoon/evening school/extra classes)?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Probe(s): Do you feel happy? If so, why? If not, why not?) • What is your favorite thing about ALP (afternoon/evening school/extra classes)? What is the hardest thing about being in ALP (afternoon/evening school/extra classes)? • How do adults like your parents, teachers or community leaders (town chief, paramount chief, etc.) feel about ALP (afternoon/evening school/extra classes)? 	2,2a
4	FEET	<p><i>The feet help you go where you want to go: Will you keep going to ALP (afternoon/evening school/extra classes) every day until you graduate (you are ready to go to regular school)?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Probe(s): If yes, why? If no, why not?) • What are some things that could help you keep coming to ALP (afternoon/evening school/extra classes) until you graduate (you are ready to go to regular school)? • What are some things that might stop you from coming to ALP (afternoon/evening school/extra classes) until you graduate (you are ready to go to regular school)? 	2
<p>Closing question: What has been the most significant (biggest) change in your life since joining ALP (afternoon/evening school/extra classes)? Why was this change significant (important) for you? <i>Each participant should provide a short “change” story</i></p>			

PROTOCOL 2: NATIONAL EDUCATION STAKEHOLDER (MOE/TWG)

1. Interview Tracking Information

Interview ID Number: _____ Date: _____

Interviewer: _____ Notetaker: _____

Location (County, District, School): _____

2. Introductions and Informed Consent

See insert

3. Participant Demographic Information

Please ask the interview participant to provide the following information:

Name: _____ Title: _____ Sex: Male Female

Length of time in current position: Less than one year 1-2 years 3-5 years 6-8 years 8-10 years 10+ years

NO.	KII QUESTIONS	EQ
1	<p>In your opinion, what are the key components of AQE and what have been the impacts, if any, at the national, county, district and school levels?</p> <p>(probe(s): negative impacts; impacts on teaching quality and school safety)</p>	1
2	<p>Please describe how your office works with AQE to develop specific policy implementation guidance or other key ALP documents and the key results, if any, of that work.</p> <p>(probe(s): successes and challenges of Technical Working Group (TWG))</p> <p>Source material verification: Do MoE workplans (or similar documents) incorporate AQE activities? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____</p> <p>Source material verification: Do MoE budgets dedicate funding to AQE activities (identify specific budget lines)? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____</p>	1,5

3	How can AQE support of your office be improved? What other key actors should play a role in supporting implementation of ALP?	1
4	In your opinion, what are the main issues that prevent children from both enrolling in and consistently attending ALP? To what extent does safety impact this, and what are the challenges in providing a safe learning environment for children? (probe(s): differences between males and females, children of different ages and children with disabilities)	2,3
5	What, if any, AQE activities or other initiatives have been most effective in addressing these issues? What else can be done to support ALP learners so that they are successfully transitioning to the formal school? (probe(s): radio and community theater campaigns; school feeding programs; Safe Learning Environment (SLE) programming, teacher code of conduct, trainings, etc.)	2,2a,3
6	When the policy decision was made to extend the formal primary school day, how, if at all, has this impacted AQE? What work was done with AQE at the national, county, district and school levels to accommodate the shorter ALP school day? How successful have these activities been in supporting ALP learners after this change? (probe(s): Saturday School programming, curriculum adjustments, etc.)	4
7	In your opinion, how does the current management and operational structure of AQE impact sustainability of the program? What can AQE do to better ensure sustainability? (probe(s): Senior Technical Advisor embedded at MoE, separate offices at county and district levels, etc.)	5
8	Thinking into the future when AQE has ended, do you think that the MoE can continue to implement ALP activities supported by AQE? What about CEOs, DEOs and schools? Why or why not? Are there specific activities that you think will continue and others that will not continue, and why? (probe(s): political will, integration into MoE workplans, budget lines)	5,5a
9	Thinking into the future when AQE has ended, who else can provide support to the MoE to implement ALP activities? What about support to CEOs, DEOs and schools? (probe(s): civil society organizations; universities; private sector; individuals such as Liberian diaspora; community leaders; other actors)	5,5b
10	Please provide any additional thoughts or feedback on the AQE program. What, if any, changes would you make to strengthen the program moving forward?	All

PROTOCOL 3: PRINCIPALS

1. Interview Tracking Information

Interview ID Number: _____ Date: _____ Interviewer: _____ Notetaker: _____

Location (County, District, School): _____

2. Introductions and Informed Consent

See insert

3. Participant Demographic Information

Please ask the interview participant to provide the following information:

Name: _____ Sex: Male Female

Length of time in current position: Less than one year 1-2 years 3-5 years 6-8 years 8-10 years 10+ years

ALP start and end time/total number of hours (e.g., 9:00am-3:00pm/6 hours): _____

School Program(s): Saturday Schools School Feeding Program SLE Pilot School

NO.	KII QUESTIONS	EQ
1	<p>In your opinion, what are the key components of AQE and how have these impacted your school (including teachers, learners and others such as parents and community leaders), if at all?</p> <p>(probe(s): negative impacts; impacts on teaching quality and school safety)</p>	1
2	<p>Besides AQE, have you received other sources of support for ALP at your school? Do you have any suggestions for strengthening the support you receive?</p>	1
3	<p>In your opinion, what are the main issues that prevent children from both enrolling in and consistently attending ALP? To what extent does safety impact this, and what are the challenges that your school faces in providing a safe learning environment for children?</p> <p>(probe(s): differences between males and females, children of different ages and children with disabilities)</p>	2,3

4	<p>What, if any, AQE activities or other initiatives have been most effective in addressing these issues? What else can be done to support ALP learners so that they are successfully transitioning to the formal school?</p> <p>(probe(s): radio and community theater campaigns; school feeding programs; teacher code of conduct, trainings, etc.)</p> <p>SLE Pilot ONLY: Are you aware of Safe Learning Environment (SLE) programming? If yes, please describe these different components (school plan, student activities, PTA, etc.) and how effectively these are being implemented.</p>	2,2a,3
5	<p>At this school, what are the current processes for identifying and filling school related gender-based violence (SRGBV) cases? Who is the focal point for this? What, if any, student activities contribute to these processes?</p> <p>Source material verification: School has an SRGBV plan or similar documents (e.g. Teacher Code of Conduct)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____</p>	3a
6	<p>Are these processes that you have identified typically followed? Why or why not? What improvements can be made to strengthen these processes and to ensure they are followed?</p> <p>(probe(s): expansion of student activities; linkages with DEO, CEO or other government; linkages with formal primary and AE Centers)</p>	3a
7	<p>In your school, how many hours each day do learners spend in ALP classes? Is this the same as the previous year?</p> <p>If no: Is this change due to the policy decision made last year extending the formal school day? What work has been done with AQE to accommodate the shorter ALP school day and how successful has this work been in supporting ALP learners?</p> <p>Saturday School Pilot ONLY: In your opinion, has Saturday School programming been successful, why or why not? What type of support would you need and from who to implement Saturday Schools year-round? (probe: MoE, CEOs, DEOs, community leaders, etc.)</p>	4
8	<p>Thinking into the future when AQE has ended, do you think that your school can continue to implement ALP activities supported by AQE? Why or why not? Are there specific activities that you think will continue and others that will not continue, and why?</p> <p>(probe: national MoE/CEO/DEO political will; current school budget lines and plans to acquire additional funds)</p>	5,5a
9	<p>Thinking into the future when AQE has ended, who else can provide support to your school to implement ALP activities?</p> <p>(probe: civil society organizations; universities; private sector; individuals such as Liberian diaspora; community leaders; other actors)</p>	5,5b
10	<p>Please provide any additional thoughts or feedback on AQE. What, if any, changes would you make to strengthen the program moving forward?</p>	All

PROTOCOL 4: EDC/USAID

1. Interview Tracking Information

Interview ID Number: _____ Date: _____ Interviewer: _____ Notetaker: _____

Location (County, District, School): _____

2. Introductions and Informed Consent

See insert

3. Participant Demographic Information

Please ask the interview participant to provide the following information:

Name: _____ Title: _____ Sex: Male Female

Length of time in current position: Less than one year 1-2 years 3-5 years 6-8 years 8-10 years 10+ years

NO.	KII QUESTIONS	EQ
1	<p>To what extent has AQE been effective in supporting the introduction of the Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) regulatory framework? What have been the impacts, if any, of the framework at the national, county, district and school levels and what AQE activities contribute most to this?</p> <p>(probe(s): negative impacts; impacts on teaching quality and school safety; Technical Working Group (TWG) successes and challenges; mobility of ALP staff; Institutional Capacity Assessments (ICAs))</p> <p>USAID ONLY: To what extent is there political will at the Ministry of Education (MoE) to support a national ALP program?</p>	1
2	<p>How can AQE support be improved? What other key actors should play a role in supporting implementation of ALP?</p>	1
3	<p>In your opinion, what are the main issues that prevent children from both enrolling in and consistently attending ALP? To what extent does safety impact this, and what are the challenges in providing a safe learning environment for children?</p> <p>(probe(s): differences between males and females, children of different ages and children with disabilities)</p>	2,3

4	<p>What, if any, AQE activities or other initiatives have been most effective in addressing these issues? What else can be done to support ALP learners so that they are successfully transitioning to the formal school?</p> <p>(probe(s): radio and community theater campaigns; school feeding programs; Safe Learning Environment (SLE) programming, teacher code of conduct, trainings, etc.)</p>	2,2a,3
5	<p>In general, how effectively are processes for identifying and filling school related gender-based violence (SRGBV) cases implemented at schools where AQE operates? What improvements can be made to strengthen these processes and to ensure they are followed?</p> <p>(probe(s): expansion of student activities; linkages with DEO, CEO or other government; linkages with formal primary and AE Centers)</p>	3a
6	<p>When the policy decision was made to extend the formal primary school day, how, if at all, has this impacted AQE? What work did AQE do with the MoE and other key education system actors such as CEOs, DEOs and principals/schools to accommodate the shorter ALP school day? How successful have these activities been in supporting ALP learners after this change?</p> <p>(probe(s): Saturday School programming, curriculum adjustments, etc.)</p>	4
7	<p>In your opinion, how does the current management and operational structure of AQE impact sustainability of the program? What can AQE do to better ensure sustainability?</p> <p>(probe(s): Senior Technical Advisor embedded at MoE, separate offices at county and district levels, etc.)</p>	5
8	<p>Thinking into the future when AQE has ended, do you think that the MoE/TWG, CEOs, DEOs and schools can continue to implement ALP activities supported by AQE? Why or why not? Are there specific activities that you think will continue and others that will not continue, and why?</p> <p>(probe(s): political will, integration into MoE workplans, budget lines)</p>	5,5a
9	<p>Thinking into the future when AQE has ended, who else can provide support to MoE/TWG, CEOs, DEOs and schools to implement ALP activities?</p> <p>(probe: civil society organizations; universities; private sector; individuals such as Liberian diaspora; community leaders; other actors)</p>	5,5b
10	<p>Please provide any additional thoughts or feedback on AQE. What, if any, changes would you make to strengthen the program moving forward?</p>	All

PROTOCOL 5: COUNTY/DISTRICT EDUCATION OFFICER (CEO/DEO)

1. Interview Tracking Information

Interview ID Number: _____ Date: _____ Interviewer: _____ Notetaker: _____

Location (County, District, School): _____

2. Introductions and Informed Consent

See insert

3. Participant Demographic Information

Please ask the interview participant to provide the following information:

Name: _____ Title: _____ Sex: Male Female

Length of time in current position: Less than one year 1-2 years 3-5 years 6-8 years 8-10 years 10+ years

NO.	KII QUESTIONS	EQ
1	<p>In your opinion, what are the key components of AQE and what have been the impacts, if any, at the national, county, district and school levels?</p> <p>(probe(s): negative impacts; impacts on teaching quality and school safety)</p>	1
2	<p>Please describe how your office works with AQE and the key results, if any, of that work. How can AQE support of your office be further improved, and what other key actors should play a role in supporting implementation of ALP?</p> <p>(probe(s): successes and challenges of trainings/technical support from AQE)</p> <p>Source material verification: Do CEO/DEO workplans (or similar documents) incorporate AQE activities? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____</p> <p>Source material verification: Do CEO/DEO budgets dedicate funding to AQE activities (identify specific budget lines)? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____</p>	1,5

3	In your opinion, what are the main issues that prevent children from both enrolling in and consistently attending ALP? To what extent does safety impact this, and what are the challenges in providing a safe learning environment for children? (probe(s): differences between males and females, children of different ages and children with disabilities)	2,3
4	What, if any, AQE activities or other initiatives have been most effective in addressing these issues? What else can be done to support ALP learners so that they are successfully transitioning to the formal school? (probe(s): radio and community theater campaigns; school feeding programs; Safe Learning Environment (SLE) programming, teacher code of conduct, trainings, etc.)	2,2a,3
5	In this (county, district), what are the current processes for identifying and filling school related gender-based violence (SRGBV) cases? Who is the focal point for this? What, if any, student activities contribute to these processes? Source material verification: Does the CEO/CEO have available documentation on procedures for identifying and filing SRGBV cases? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	3a
6	Are these processes that you have identified typically followed? Why or why not? What improvements can be made to strengthen these processes and to ensure they are followed? (probe(s): expansion of student activities; linkages with CEO/DEO or other government; linkages w/formal primary/AE)	3a
7	In your (county, district), how many hours each day do learners spend in ALP classes? Is this the same as the previous year? If no: Is this change due to the policy decision made last year extending the formal school day? What work has been done with AQE to accommodate the shorter ALP school day and how successful has this work been in supporting ALP learners? (probe(s): Saturday School programming, curriculum adjustments, etc.)	4
8	Thinking into the future when AQE has ended, do you think that your (county, district) can continue to implement ALP activities supported by AQE? Why or why not? Are there specific activities that you think will continue and others that will not continue, and why? (probe(s): political will, integration into MoE workplans, budget lines)	5,5a
9	Thinking into the future when AQE has ended, who else can provide support to your (county, district) to implement ALP activities? (probe(s): civil society organizations; universities; private sector; individuals such as Liberian diaspora; community leaders; other actors)	5,5b
10	Please provide any additional thoughts or feedback on the AQE program. What, if any, changes would you make to strengthen the program moving forward?	All

PROTOCOL 6: FACILITATORS

I. FGD Tracking Information

FGD ID Number: _____ Date: _____ Facilitator: _____ Notetaker: _____

Location (District, County, School): _____

School Program(s): Saturday Schools School Feeding Program SLE Pilot School

2. Introductions and Informed Consent

See insert

3. Participant Demographic Information

Number of females: _____ Number of males: _____

ACTIVITY INTRODUCTION

Preparation and materials needed:

- Time: 1 hour
- 5 large sheets of paper labeled 1-5, red, green and yellow post-its or stickers

The FGD facilitator will read 5 statements about the ALP program (below in bold). For each statement, FGD participants use green, yellow and red post-its/stickers to indicate to what extent they agree or disagree. Post-its/stickers are placed on the numbered paper that corresponds to the statement being read (e.g. stickers for the first statement are placed on the paper marked “1”).

- Green=Yes; Yellow=Somewhat; Red=No

After each statement is read, the facilitator should pause to allow participants to place their post-its/stickers. Once all participants have voted, the facilitator should ask participants to describe why they selected a particular sticker color. Finally, the facilitator should ask the sub-questions underneath each main statement before moving on to the next statement.

NO.	FGD QUESTIONS	EQ
1	<p>Do you have the training and support you need to teach ALP classes?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who provides you with training and support to teach ALP classes? (probe(s): principals, EDC/AQE, national/county/district MoE) What additional training and support, if any, do you need to teach ALP classes? 	1
2	<p>Are children enrolling in and consistently attending ALP classes?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If no, what are the main issues that prevent children from enrolling in and attending ALP? What, if any, activities have been most effective in helping children enroll and attend ALP classes? (probe(s): radio and community theater campaigns; school feeding programs) 	2
3	<p>Are ALP classes preparing children to go to regular (normal) school?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If yes, why? If no, what can be improved so that children are better prepared to go to regular (normal) school? 	2
4	<p>Do children feel safe to go to and from school, and while they are at school?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If no, what the main reasons that children do not feel safe? Are there plans in place at your school to address school related gender-based violence (SRGBV) cases? If yes, please describe. What is the role of teachers? What is the role of principals and community members such as the PTA? What can be done to improve this, and who should be involved (probe(s): principals, teachers, learners, parents, community leaders, national/county/district MoE) 	3, 3a
5	<p>Is there enough instruction time given for ALP classes?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Last year, there was a policy decision made to extend the formal primary school day, which made the ALP school day shorter. Has this had an impact on ALP learners? Why or why not? What, if anything, has been done to help ALP learners after this change? <p>Saturday School Pilot ONLY: In your opinion, has Saturday School programming been successful, why or why not? What type of support would you need and from who to implement Saturday Schools year-round? (probe: MoE, CEOs, DEOs, community leaders, etc.)</p>	4
<p>Closing question: What do you think have been the most successful parts of ALP? What are the main challenges? What, if any, changes would you make to improve ALP in the future?</p>		

PROTOCOL 7: PTA (PARENTS AND COMMUNITY LEADERS)

I. FGD Tracking Information

FGD ID Number: _____ Date: _____ Facilitator: _____ Notetaker: _____

Location (District, County, School): _____

School Program(s): Saturday Schools School Feeding Program SLE Pilot School

2. Introductions and Informed Consent

See insert

3. Participant Demographic Information

Number of females: _____ Number of males: _____

ACTIVITY INTRODUCTION

Preparation and materials needed:

- Time: 1 hour
- 5 large sheets of paper labeled 1-5, red, green and yellow post-its or stickers

The FGD facilitator will read 5 statements about the ALP program (below in bold). For each statement, FGD participants use green, yellow and red post-its/stickers to indicate to what extent they agree or disagree. Post-its/stickers are placed on the numbered paper that corresponds to the statement being read (e.g. stickers for the first statement are placed on the paper marked “1”).

- Green=Yes; Yellow=Somewhat; Red=No

After each statement is read, the facilitator should pause to allow participants to place their post-its/stickers. Once all participants have voted, the facilitator should ask participants to describe why they selected a particular sticker color. Finally, the facilitator should ask the sub-questions underneath each main statement before moving on to the next statement.

NO.	FGD QUESTIONS	EQ
1	<p>Does your community support the ALP school?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you aware of the ALP radio and community theater campaigns? If so, do you think these have helped increase community support for ALP? Why or why not? • Have there been any other activities that helped increase community support for ALP? What else should be done? 	2a
2	<p>Are children enrolling in and consistently attending ALP school?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If no, what are the main issues that prevent children from enrolling in and attending ALP? • What, if any, activities have been most effective in helping children enroll and attend ALP classes? (probe(s): school feeding programs) 	2
3	<p>Are ALP classes preparing children to go to regular (normal) school?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If yes, why? If no, what can be improved so that children are better prepared to go to regular (normal) school? 	2
4	<p>Do children feel safe to go to and from school, and while they are at school?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If no, what the main reasons that children do not feel safe? • Are there plans in place at your school to address school related gender-based violence (SRGBV) cases? If yes, please describe. What is the role of the PTA? What is the role of principals, teachers and other community members? • What can be done to improve this, and who should be involved (probe(s): principals, teachers, learners, PTA/other community members, national/county/district MoE) 	3, 3a
5	<p>Thinking into the future, do you think that the PTA (and community leaders) will continue to be active in supporting ALP?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there specific activities that you think the PTA (and community leaders) will continue to do and others that will not continue, and why? • Thinking into the future, who else can provide support to the PTA (and community leaders) to continue its activities (probe: civil society organizations; universities; private sector; individuals such as Liberian diaspora; community leaders; other actors) 	5, 5a, 5b
<p>Closing question: What do you think have been the most successful parts of ALP? What are the main challenges? What, if any, changes would you make to improve ALP in the future?</p>		

KII Informed Consent Form (USAID, EDC, SFCG, MOE/TWG, CEOs, DEOs, Principals)

Hello my name is _____ and I am with Social Impact, a US-based research organization working under contract with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). We are conducting research on how we can support out-of-school children in accessing the formal education system in Liberia. We are focusing our research particularly on the Accelerated Quality Education (AQE) program (describe AQE activities as needed), funded by USAID and implemented by the Education Development Center (EDC).

Today we would like to hold a discussion to better understand your experiences and the experiences of others in your community related to accessing formal education. You have been selected for involvement in this research because you are currently participating in or have a family member participant in the AQE program. In total, our research will involve speaking with about 150 other people who are also participants in AQE.

The discussion today is expected to take 45-60 minutes, though you can stop participating or leave the room at any point without consequences. Your decision to take part in this interview, or to leave at any point, will not affect your involvement in AQE. There is no payment or direct benefit to you for participating in this interview. We do not anticipate any major risks to you for participating other than losing time you could spend on other things. While there are no major known risks, some of the questions we will ask may be about sensitive topics. If during this interview we ask any questions that you do not wish to answer, you don't have to respond. For any of the questions we ask, you are not expected to speak about your own personal experiences if you do not feel comfortable; rather, you may choose to speak more generally about experiences related to access to education in Liberia.

Your involvement in this interview is completely voluntary and you are under no obligation to participate. If you agree to participate, I want to assure you that all the responses you provide during this interview will be kept confidential to the furthest extent possible under local and U.S. Government policy. With your permission, we would like to audio record our conversation and take notes. The recordings and the notes we take will not be shared with anyone outside the evaluation team.

We will ask you for your name and contact information in case we would like to follow-up with any additional questions, but only the people on the evaluation team will have access to your personal information and this will not be shared outside of the team. For reports we write about the research, your answers will be combined with those of other people and presented in a summary format, so that none of the interview answers you give can be linked back to you.

If you have any concerns, you may contact Carla Trippe at ctrippe@socialimpact.com +231 888 106 151, Julie Younes at jyounes@socialimpact.com or +1 703 465 1884, or Social Impact IRB at irb@socialimpact.com or +1 703 465 1884 with questions about the study or results. I will leave a copy of this form with you.

Agreement to Participate: I have read the above information, have had the opportunity to ask any questions and agree to participate in this study. Please mark one: Yes, I agree to participate and consent to be recorded Yes, I agree to participate but do not consent to be recorded

_____ (Printed name) _____ (Date) _____ (Signature)

Informed Consent Script for Focus Group Discussions with Parents and Facilitators

Hello, my name is _____ and I am with Social Impact, a US-based research organization working under contract with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). We are conducting research on how we can support out-of-school children in accessing the formal education system in Liberia. We are focusing our research particularly on the Accelerated Quality Education (AQE) program (describe AQE activities as needed), funded by USAID and implemented by the Education Development Center (EDC).

Today we would like to hold a discussion to better understand your experiences and the experiences of others in your community related to accessing formal education. You have been selected for involvement in this research because you are currently participating in or have a family member participant in the AQE program. In total, our research will involve speaking with about 150 other people who are also participants in AQE.

The discussion today is expected to take 60 minutes, though you can stop participating or leave the room at any point without consequences. Your decision to take part in this discussion, or to leave at any point, will not affect your participation or other's participation in AQE. If during this group discussion we ask any questions that you do not wish to answer, you don't have to respond. For any of the questions we ask, you are not expected to speak about your own personal experiences if you do not feel comfortable; rather, you may choose to speak more generally about experiences related to learning and access to education in Liberia.

Your involvement in this discussion is completely voluntary and you are under no obligation to participate. If you agree to participate in the discussion, we will not be writing down your name or recording what you say – though I will be taking notes so that I can remember later what you tell us. Neither my notes nor any other materials will include your name or any other information that would make it possible to identify you. For reports we write about the research, your answers will be combined with those of other people and presented in a summary format. Any information you provide that might identify you will be kept confidential to the fullest extent under local law and U.S. Government policy.

There is no payment or direct benefit to you for participating in this interview. We do not anticipate any major risks to you for participating other than losing time you could spend on other things. While there are no major known risks, some of the questions we will ask are about sensitive topics. Due to the private and confidential nature of this research and the conversation we are about to have, we ask that all focus group participants agree not to share anything that is discussed with anyone outside of this group once this conversation ends.

If you have any concerns, you may contact Carla Trippe at ctrippe@socialimpact.com +231 888 106 151, Julie Younes at jyounes@socialimpact.com or +1 703 465 1884, or Social Impact IRB at irb@socialimpact.com or +1 703 465 1884 with questions about the study or results. I will leave a copy of this form with you.

Do you have any questions?

Do you understand that your participation is voluntary? Yes _____ No _____

Do you understand that you can stop participating at any time? Yes _____ No _____

CONSENT STATEMENT: I understand and agree to participate in this study.

Respondent provided consent: Yes _____ No _____

In Loco Parentis Consent Form for Children Learner Participation

Hello my name is _____ and I am with Social Impact, a US-based research organization working under contract with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). We are conducting research on how we can support out-of-school children in accessing the formal education system in Liberia. We are focusing our research particularly on the Accelerated Quality Education (AQE) program (describe AQE activities as needed), funded by USAID and implemented by the Education Development Center (EDC).

As part of our research, we would like to speak with children learners at your school who attend Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) courses. We would like to ask their opinions on ALP learning, and the accessibility of the formal education system in Liberia. They have been selected for involvement in this research because they are ALP learners at a school taking part in the AQE program. In total, our research will involve speaking with over 150 other people who are also involved in AQE.

Our discussion with children learners is expected to take 60 minutes, though they will have the option to stop participating or leave the room at any point without consequences. Their decision to take part in our discussion, or to leave at any point, will not affect their involvement in AQE, or the relationship between your school and AQE.

The involvement of children learners in our discussion is completely voluntary and they are under no obligation to participate. If they do agree to participate, we will not be writing down individual names or recording what they say – instead we will have a notetaker who records notes so that we can remember later what was discussed. Neither these notes nor any other materials will include children’s names. For reports we write about the research, children’s answers will be combined with those of other people and presented in a summary format. Any information they provide that might identify them will be kept confidential to the fullest extent under local law and U.S. Government policy.

If you have any concerns, you may contact Carla Trippe at ctrippe@socialimpact.com +231 888 106 151, Julie Younes at jyounes@socialimpact.com or +1 703 465 1884, or Social Impact IRB at irb@socialimpact.com or +1 703 465 1884 with questions about the study or results. I will leave a copy of this form with you.

Agreement to Participate:

I have read the above information, have had the opportunity to ask any questions and agree to allow children learners at my school to participate in this study.

(Printed name)

(Date)

(Signature)

Youth FGD Assent Script

Hello my name is _____ and I am with a company from the United States that does research about different activities and programs that people take part in, like health programs, sports programs, or education programs. We are currently visiting Liberia because we want to learn more about a program called Accelerated Quality Education, or AQE, which is funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and run by the Education Development Center (EDC). The courses that you do at school, your principal and the teachers that you learn with, are all part of this program (further describe AQE activities as needed).

As a learner at this school, we would like to hear more about you and your experiences. In particular, we want to better understand what you think about what you are learning, and we want to hear your opinions on formal education. You have been chosen to take part in this discussion because you are a learner at this school so your thoughts will be very helpful for us. We will also be speaking to lots of other learners at different schools in different counties across Liberia—we will speak to about 50 different learners.

Our discussion today will take about one hour, though you can stop participating or leave the discussion at any point. If you decide to take part in this discussion, or if you prefer to not take part in this discussion, it's ok either way and this will not affect your learning at school, your principal or your teachers. If during this discussion we ask any questions that you do not wish to answer, you don't have to respond. Only answer the questions that you feel comfortable answering.

This is not a test, so there are no right or wrong answers—we just ask that you tell us what you think. Your answers will remain confidential, which means that they will not be shared with anyone else who is not in this group—not other children, your teachers, your parents or the principal. During our discussion we will have someone taking notes so that we can remember later what you tell us. However, we will not put your names on our notes or anywhere else, so no one will be able to see what you said. Later, we will make a report that tells about the AQE program, but when we make this report we will put everyone's answers together so no one can tell which person said what about AQE.

Just like we will not share what you said with other people, we ask you to please not share what other learners say during our discussion. We want to make sure that everyone feels like they can talk openly and honestly. If you have any questions at any point in our discussion, just raise your hand and ask!

Do you have any questions?

Do you understand that you are not required to participate if you don't want to? Yes _____ No _____

Do you understand that you can stop participating at any time? Yes _____ No _____

ASSENT STATEMENT: Please raise your hand if you understand and agree to participate in this study.

Respondent provided assent (all hands raised): Yes _____ No _____

ANNEX D: EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The evaluation used a **mixed-methods** approach, with **qualitative** primary data collected via key informant interviews (KIs), participatory focus group discussions (FGDs), and source material verification. The evaluation also examined secondary **quantitative** data (primarily AQE monitoring data) and included a desk review. Evaluation design and implementation followed the following key principles:

- The evaluation adopted a **participatory, utilization-focused** approach,¹⁵ based on the principle that an evaluation should be judged on usefulness to intended audiences. Thus, Social Impact engaged USAID, EDC, and stakeholders in both data collection and analysis. All FGDs applied participatory methods (see “Data Collection”); in addition, the evaluation team held a participatory data analysis workshop and validation meetings (see “Analysis”).
- The evaluation applied a **gender perspective**, seeking gender balance among respondents to the fullest extent possible during data collection. Gender segregation of learner FGDs encouraged active participation of all respondents, ensured safety, and limited the potential for one gender to dominate the conversation. The evaluation also sought to be **inclusive of children**, recognizing that their “participation is vital for effective programs.”¹⁶ Thus, the evaluation team collected data with children ages eight to fifteen. The team also purposefully included one Liberian youth (i.e., under 35) member, who led the majority of data collection with children.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The evaluation examined the criteria of **appropriateness**, **performance**, and **sustainability**. Appropriateness links to activity design and whether it is well tailored to participant needs; performance examines results thus far, and sustainability focuses on continuation of the approach beyond current funding cycles. The evaluation questions (EQ) for each criterion are outlined below:

EVALUATION CRITERIA AND QUESTIONS

APPROPRIATENESS

1. What early indications are there that the development hypothesis leading to more ALP learners transitioning to the formal education system is true? What additional avenues for change have appeared?

PERFORMANCE

2. To what extent has progress been made to increase access for out-of-school children in education? How well are AQE’s community engagement efforts improving perceptions to attend and enroll in ALP? Is this contributing to improved enrollment and retention rates?
3. What continue to be barriers to the safe learning component? What opportunities exist to improve the implementation procedure for identifying and filing SRGBV cases?
4. To what extent has the reduction in facilitator teaching time affected learning outcomes for ALP learners?

SUSTAINABILITY

5. What local systems exist that can help expand, improve, and sustain Alternative Education opportunities and promote Liberia’s journey to self-reliance? What is the role of government and to what extent has AQE contributed to government ownership of ALP programming?

¹⁵ See *BetterEvaluation*, “Utilization-Focused Evaluation,” https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/plan/approach/utilization_focused_evaluation.

¹⁶ See USAID, 2012, “Youth in Development: Realizing the Demographic Opportunity,” https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1870/Youth_in_Development_Policy.pdf.

DATA COLLECTION

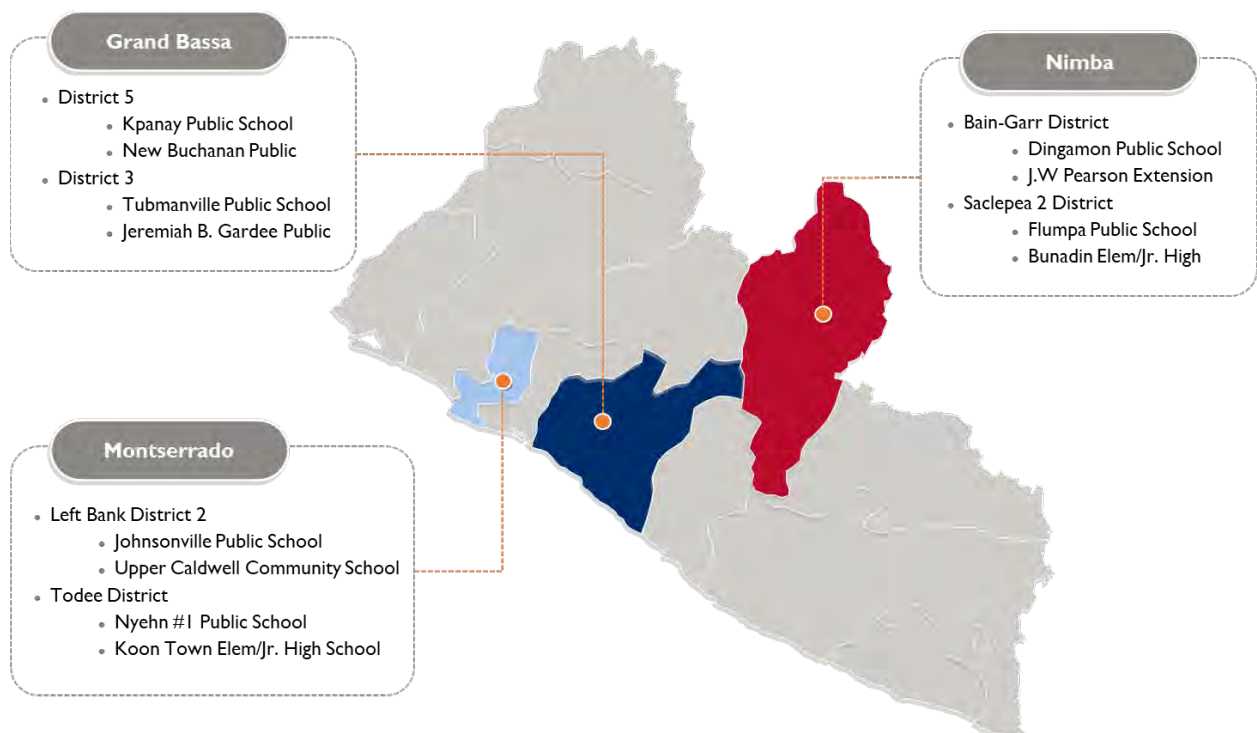
During fieldwork conducted May 20–June 19, 2019, the evaluation team visited AQE sites in three of the six counties of AQE implementation: **Grand Bassa, Montserrado, and Nimba**. The evaluation team selected these counties following planning meetings with EDC and USAID/Liberia to reflect the range of experiences of AQE implementation. Grand Bassa and Montserrado are both original AQE sites, with the activity in place for almost three years in these counties at the time of the evaluation; in contrast, AQE began in Nimba less than one year ago. Thus, selection of these three counties offered an opportunity to explore potential differences in AQE implementation and results not only across various geographic locations, but also at different stages of AQE intervention.

In addition to conducting KIIs in Montserrado, the evaluation team visited four schools in each targeted county, for a total of 12 school sites. During the initial desk review and planning meetings, EDC provided the evaluation team with a list of schools participating in AQE. From this list, the team selected a **purposive sample** of schools to visit according to the following criteria:

1. Location: Rural versus urban and peri-urban
2. School activities: Schools that have implemented Saturday School, Safe Learning Environment (SLE) pilots, and schools with feeding programs, versus schools without these activities
3. Schools with high versus low learner promotion and repeat rates

The map below outlines the counties, districts, and schools visited by the evaluation team:

AQE DATA COLLECTION SITES



SI's Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed and approved data all collection tools and processes to ensure the safeguarding of evaluation participants, particularly children. Prior to the start of data collection, the Team Lead trained facilitators on these tools and procedures. Only trained members of the evaluation team collected data from respondents. Evaluators obtained informed consent from all respondents; for FGDs with children, evaluators obtained both their consent and *in loco parentis* consent from their school principals.

DESK REVIEW

The evaluation team conducted a comprehensive desk review of key documents to provide background knowledge on the processes and decisions that went into designing the AQE activity, as well as up-to-date information on implementation progress and results. A full list of documents reviewed is included in Annex A. The team also reviewed quantitative data collected by EDC, including relevant output monitoring results and baseline data on learning outcomes. As primary quantitative data was not collected during fieldwork, this review was critical in ensuring triangulation with findings from qualitative data.

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

The evaluation team spoke with key informants using semi-structured interview protocols tailored by respondent type (see Annex C). Where relevant, source material verification checklists were integrated into KII protocols.¹⁷ The evaluation team conducted a **total of 29 KIIs** with a variety of AQE participants, partners, and stakeholders who were purposively sampled, including:

1. MOE officials, including members of the TWG;
2. Principals at sampled schools implementing ALP via the AQE activity; and
3. USAID/Liberia and EDC staff.

During the initial desk review and planning meetings, EDC provided the evaluation team with a list of AQE participants, staff, and stakeholders, disaggregated by location and role. From this list, the team selected a **purposive sample** for KIIs prioritizing interviewees according to the following criteria: (1) Identified as key informants by USAID/Liberia and/or EDC; (2) Engaged in the activity across a range of roles (e.g., TWG, CEO, DEO, AQE staff, etc.) and locations (at least two different districts in Montserrado, Nimba, and Grand Bassa counties); and (3) Inclusion of female interviewees to the fullest extent possible, given a gender imbalance among respondent groups (i.e., there are more male MOE officials, principals, etc., versus female). For DEO and principal KIIs, the evaluation team applied additional criteria in the selection of schools (see above). The evaluators asked the principal at each school and the DEO of each school's district to participate in interviews.

KIIs took place individually, except when the evaluation team was requested to hold small group interviews (these requests were primarily for logistical reasons, to accommodate participants' schedules or the space available). Of the 29 total KIIs conducted, 25 were individual interviews, and four were small group interviews. The team conducted all KIIs in teams of two, with one team member facilitating the interview and one taking notes. For all interviews, the interviewers recorded electronic audio with consent from

¹⁷ The evaluation team reviewed materials such as SRGBV resources and AQE workplans; Annex C includes checklists for all items requested.

the participant and for sole use by the evaluation team to ensure backup in case the team needed to later revisit or elaborate on notes taken.

The table below details the number of KIIs targeted and conducted by respondent type; the evaluation team met or exceeded interview targets for all participant groups:

KII PARTICIPANT CATEGORIES AND SAMPLE SIZE		
PARTICIPANT CATEGORY	# TARGETED	# REACHED
Education Officials	12–14	14
MOE/TWG	3-5	5
County Education Officers	3	3
District Education Officers	6	6
Principals	8–10	11
USAID/Liberia	1	1
EDC	3	3
Acting Chief of Party	1	1
M&E Manager	1	1
Senior Technical Advisor (within Ministry)	1	1
Total	24–28	29

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

The evaluation team conducted **34 total FGDs** with facilitators, learners, and PTA members at AQE schools. Learner FGDs were conducted in sex-separated groups, while males and females participated together in facilitator and PTA discussions. As with KIIs, semi-structured discussion protocols guided FGDs led by two-person teams (a facilitator and a note-taker; see Annex C).

For facilitators, school selection determined participation (i.e., there are two or three AQE facilitators at each school, and the team aimed to speak to all of them). For PTA and children learner FGDs, the team obtained a class list of ALP learners and a list of PTA members and **randomly selected** six to eight FGD participants from these lists. In cases where PTA members and children learners selected from the lists were not present at the school (e.g., children absent that day, PTA members busy at home, etc.), the evaluators invited available PTA members and children to participate instead. In either case, the evaluation team (and not, for example, the principal or AQE staff) selected FGD respondents.

The table below outlines FGD participant groups and the total number of discussions targeted and reached; the evaluation team met or exceeded targets for all participant groups:

FGD PARTICIPANT CATEGORIES AND SAMPLE SIZE		
PARTICIPANT CATEGORY	# TARGETED	# REACHED
Facilitators	8–10	12
PTA (parents and community members)	8–10	12
Learners	8–10	10
Total	24–30	34

To increase accessibility of discussions, all FGDs involved participatory methods. For facilitator and PTA FGDs, this included an interactive voting exercise; children FGDs centered on a “body mapping” exercise, a tool commonly used in evaluation with children and youth to facilitate discussion via an engaging activity (i.e., drawing and coloring).¹⁸ In addition, children took part in an informal most significant change (MSC) exercise designed to capture any unanticipated outcomes among this respondent group.

ANALYSIS

For qualitative primary data collected during fieldwork, the evaluation team conducted iterative analysis, holding internal working sessions to triangulate new data and discuss emerging findings. Team members first input raw notes in an aggregated Excel spreadsheet and then organized a matrix categorizing findings, conclusions, and recommendations by evaluation question (FCR Matrix).

Following fieldwork, the evaluation team held a participatory data analysis workshop with USAID/Liberia, EDC, and MOE officials to engage these audiences in “sense-making” of data. After the evaluation team shared preliminary findings in the workshop, participants took part in structured discussions on patterns and themes, unexpected or surprising findings, etc. The Liberian evaluation team members also shared findings with AQE stakeholders (CEOs, DEOs, principals, etc.) via validation meetings.

The fieldwork FCR Matrix, participatory data analysis workshop discussions, and validation meetings provided the evaluation team with themes used to generate a codebook for data analysis. Team members and research support staff oriented to the coding process in order to ensure inter-coder reliability entered and coded all primary qualitative data in Excel; inter-coder reliability calculations also helped determine reliability of the coding scheme. To capture any divergences, coders disaggregated qualitative data by participant type, location (county, district, school), and sex.

¹⁸ For explanations and examples of the use of body mapping in children and youth evaluations, see Save the Children Norway, 2008, *A Kit of Tools for Participatory Research with Children, Youth and Adults*, https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/sites/default/files/documents/kit-of-tools_1.pdf, 18; and Global Partnership for Children & Youth in Peacebuilding, 2015, *Evaluation of Children and Youth Participation in Peacebuilding*, <http://unoy.org/wp-content/uploads/3M-Evaluation-Global-report-Child-and-Youth-Participation-in-Peace-building.pdf>, 43.

The evaluation team employed data triangulation, a data analysis strategy in which qualitative and quantitative data are first analyzed independently, in parallel, and then cross-verified for validity. This allowed the team to thoroughly assess which elements of AQE contributed to achievement of expected outcomes, which elements did not, and, most importantly, why. Triangulation also served as a key strategy in mitigating potential biases in the evaluation (see “Limitations”). The team used the themes generated through this analysis to identify and present the key findings highlighted in the evaluation report.

LIMITATIONS

The table below describes the major limitations and mitigation strategies for this evaluation:

EVALUATION LIMITATIONS AND MITIGATION STRATEGIES	
LIMITATIONS	MITIGATION STRATEGY
<p>Sampling: Sample selection was based on consultation with USAID/Liberia, EDC, and other stakeholders (e.g., MOE officials). This can lead to bias, as stakeholders might be more likely to guide evaluators toward those who have had positive experiences.</p>	<p>The team mitigated this bias by seeking a sample that included a variety of locations (urban, peri-urban, and rural), respondent types (CEOs, principals, learners, etc.), and activities (Saturday School, SLE pilot, etc.) to reflect the range of AQE experiences. The team also used triangulation; by combining information from multiple sources of data, any one piece of information would be balanced against findings across multiple sources.</p>
<p>Scope: The team visited three AQE counties and four schools per county. Implementation may vary across counties; there may be sites not sampled that are more or less successful than others, potentially impacting results.</p>	<p>The selection of a sample that included a wide variety of locations, types, etc., of data sources helped to mitigate the limits imposed by a narrowed geographic scope.</p>
<p>Incentivizing Participation: Children FGD respondents were given a small incentive (one coloring pencil), which could have influenced feedback.</p>	<p>To minimize the impact of this incentive, the pencils were distributed (and only referenced) at the conclusion of FGDs.</p>

ANNEX E: EVALUATION STATEMENT OF WORK

ACCELERATED QUALITY EDUCATION FOR LIBERIAN CHILDREN (AQE) ACTIVITY

MIDTERM PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

STATEMENT OF WORK

I. Background

This Statement of Work (SOW) describes the conditions of work and terms of reference for an external midterm evaluation of USAID's Accelerated Quality Education for Liberian Children (AQE) activity. Implemented by Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC), AQE is at a \$33.9 million, four-year contract from March 2017 – 2021. AQE aims to increase access to education for approximately 48,000 out-of-school children ages 8 to 15 in targeted 6 counties of Liberia (Bong, Grand Bassa, Nimba, Lofa, Montserrado, and Margibi).

The purpose of this evaluation is to provide an independent and in-depth examination of the overall progress of the AQE activity in Liberia. The evaluation will measure results, examine avenues for sustainability, and identify best practices for the remaining implementation period. The Mission will use findings from the evaluation to not only improve performance in the remaining implementation period but also to inform more strategic USAID investment in the sector in the future.

Overview of AQE

Activity: Accelerated Quality Education for Liberian Children

Contract Number: AID-669-TO-17-00001

Activity Dates: March 2, 2017 – March 1, 2021

Funding: \$33.98 Million

Implementing Partner: Education Development Center, Inc.

Subcontractors: School-To-School and Search for Common Ground

Contracting Officer's Representative: Miriam White

Alternate Contracting Officer's Representative: Mardea Nyumah

Results Framework:

Increase access to education for approximately 48,000 out-of-school children ages 8-15 in targeted counties

Result 1. ALP regulatory framework institutionalized

Result 2. Eligibility of ALP learners to transition to formal education increased

IR 1.1: MOE adopts national ALP policies	IR 1.2: CEOs' use of ALP monitoring data improved	IR 1.3: DEOs accredit ALP centers	IR 2.1: ALP sites selected	IR 2.2: ALP centers readied for use	IR 2.3: ALP centers' safety improved	IR2.4: Sufficient ALP materials provided
IR 1.4: DEOs certify ALP level completion	IR 1.5 School principals supervise ALP instruction	IR 1.6: Communities have stronger relationships with education authorities	IR2.5: Adequate teacher ALP instruction provided	IR 2.6: Teachers administer ALP leveled exams	IR 2.7: Community members identify out-of-school children	

Geographical focus: Bong, Grand Bassa, Nimba, Lofa, Montserrado, and Margibi

The goal of AQE is to increase access to education for approximately 48,000 out-of-school children¹⁹ ages 8 to 15 in six target counties. The development hypothesis for this activity is – **if** the Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) regulatory framework is institutionalized, **then** the safety of the ALP centers will improve and teachers' instruction will improve, leading to more ALP learners transitioning to the formal education system.

This project is designed to enable USAID/Liberia to do the following:

- Contribute to USAID/Liberia's Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) Development Objective 4, *Better-Educated Liberians*;
- Meet its targets under Goal 3 of the 2011 USAID Education Strategy, *increased equitable access to education in crisis and conflict environments*, achieving direct outcomes in education access for out-of-school children;
- Provide relevant, flexible and quality education opportunities for out-of-school children in Liberia giving them the opportunity to pursue onward education and training;
- Provide technical assistance and build partnerships with key Ministry of Education (MOE) counterparts and host country systems; particularly to institutionalize a nation-wide legitimate and credible accelerated education program;

¹⁹ AQE defines out-of-school children in accordance with the UNICEF and UNESCO five dimensions of exclusion. **Dimension 1:** Children of pre-primary school age who are not in pre-primary or primary school. **Dimension 2:** Children of primary school age who are not in primary or junior high school. **Dimension 3:** Children of junior high school age who are not in primary or junior high school. **Dimension 4:** Children who are in primary school but are at risk of dropping out. **Dimension 5:** Children who are in junior high school but are at risk of dropping out.

- Strengthen the policies, systems, and resources that are available to the MOE, particularly in the area of accelerated education;
- Foster positive gender norms, including a highlighted attention on girls and female teachers, who are the least likely to have access to education in Liberia;
- Promote stability during a key transition in post-war and post-Ebola Liberia through engagement of out-of-school children in activities that advance conflict resolution and key life skills.

To link the AQE results framework to the overall USAID/Liberia objectives, refer to the USAID/Liberia results framework. The USAID/Liberia Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) can be accessed on this web site (<https://www.usaid.gov/liberia/cdcs>).

The activity has two main result areas: first, that the ALP framework be institutionalized, and second, that eligibility of ALP learners to transition to formal education be increased.

Result 1: ALP regulatory framework institutionalized

Under Result 1, AQE will support the MOE to adopt national ALP policies, including accreditation policies for centers, learner eligibility policy, certification policy, and a national curriculum. The activity will train County Education Officers (CEOs) on the usage of ALP Education Management Information System (EMIS) monitoring data for decision making and budgeting, support District Education Officers (DEOs) to visit centers and oversee their accreditation and certification, and train school principals in supervising their ALPs. Finally, the activity will strengthen community awareness of ALP policies and opportunities, train Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) on the ALP framework, and create regular feedback loops between communities and the local education authorities.

Result 2: Increased eligibility of learners to transition to formal education

Under Result 2, the activity will rehabilitate and furnish ALP centers with the aim of readying them for use, improving their safety, and making them accessible for boys, girls, and children with disabilities. The activity will mobilize communities to identify out-of-school children for enrollment in ALPs, as well as create a code of conduct around school-related gender-based violence to which communities will be sensitized. The activity will train teachers in the ALP curriculum and summative assessment tools and produce and distribute curriculum materials to schools.

ALP instruction will begin with learners at the beginning of the 2017-2018 school year. It is anticipated that the scale up of the activity will take three years, with four years of ALP implementation to reach a total of 48,000 children enrolled over the life of the activity, 32,400 whom are new entrants, across six target counties. Approximately half of these will be girls. The number of ALP centers (roughly defined as a physical site with approximately three classes – one Level 1, one Level 2, and one Level 3) to be supported is projected at 260 for the life of the activity, though actual number of classes per level at each site will be determined by placement testing and enrollment numbers. The first year of implementation started with 100 ALP sites in Bong, Grand Bassa, and Montserrado counties. Implementation at additional 100 ALP sites in Lofa, Margibi and Nimba counties started in October 2018. Finally, in Year 3, an additional 60 sites from all the six target counties will make the total number of sites 260.

For the 2018-2019 school year, MOE instituted a policy to extend school to 3:00pm. In effect, this reduced the amount of time facilitators have in ALP classrooms from three and half hours to two hours. AQE conducts summative testing each year and has data available from Year 1 when facilitators had three and

half hours to instruct. In July 2019, AQE will conduct summative testing again, this time collecting data in a context where facilitators have two hours to instruct.

2. Purpose of Evaluation

To ensure that AQE's activities are strategically contributing to the goal in the most effective way, this midterm evaluation will examine the appropriateness, performance, and sustainability of the implementation approach.

By measuring the effectiveness and sustainability of the intervention, the evaluation will identify early results and lessons learned from implementation and will provide succinct, actionable recommendations to guide midcourse correction for AQE and inform the new activity, project, and CDCS design. It will help guide decisions relating to broader USAID strategies on access to education and how to continue supporting the GOL based on its commitments. Evaluation findings and recommendations will be shared and discussed with USAID/Liberia, the implementing partner, and other relevant partners.

3. Evaluation Questions

Design

1. What early indications are there that the development hypotheses leading to more ALP learners transitioning to the formal education system is true? What additional avenues for change have appeared?

Implementation Progress

2. To what extent has progress been made to increase access for out-of-school children in education?
 - How well are AQE's community engagement efforts improving perceptions to attend and enroll in ALP? Is this contributing to improved enrollment and retention rates?
3. What continue to be barriers to the safe learning component?²⁰
 - What opportunities exist to improve the implementation procedure for identifying and filing SRGBV cases?
4. To what extent has the reduction in facilitator teaching time affected learning outcomes for ALP learners?²¹

Sustainability

5. How well are AQE's Result I efforts contributing to government ownership of ALP programming?
 - For CDCS design, what role can civil society play in increasing government commitment to implement the ALP regulatory framework?

²⁰ Baseline data to help answer this question will come from the Gender Assessment.

²¹ Because the data will not be available until after the field work of the evaluation takes place, this question will be answered by the Team Leader in a separate annex after evaluation report is complete. To help USAID understand the impact of MOE changing guidelines, the Team Leader will have 5 days of LOE allotted to review AQE annual assessment data on learning outcomes when it becomes available. The quantitative data may also need to be supplemented with data collected from KIIs/FGD during the evaluation.

4. Evaluation Methods

The evaluation is expected to apply both quantitative and qualitative methods for data collection and analysis. Based on best practice, the evaluation should explore the possibility to incorporate youth in the evaluation process – design, collection, and analysis – in a meaningful way where possible. The evaluation team will conduct a desk review of available literature including activity and project documents. The evaluation team will also look at sectoral assessments that were used to determine interventions. Site visits will provide qualitative data for analysis through methods such as in-depth and key informant interviews, focus groups, and direct observation. The qualitative data collection can be supplemented through quantification of qualitative information, especially through participatory ranking exercises that will provide numeric insight on respondent priorities.

It is expected that the evaluation team will use secondary quantitative data provided by the implementing partner in regular quarterly and annual reports, performance reporting, and assessments for most of the quantitative data required. For example, AQE conducted a Rapid Education Risk Assessment and Gender Assessment, among other baselines, which will help the evaluation examine levels of change for evaluation questions. The team will also draw on datasets from EMIS. Primary collection of quantitative data and large-scale structured surveys are beyond the scope of this evaluation.

Criteria to consider for site sampling include (1) retention and transition to formal school rates; (2) rural and urban schools; (3) and pilot schools that have Saturday School sessions and non-pilot schools. Year 1 and Year 2 schools should be producing same quality of learning so this was not included in the criteria. Ten schools in Grand Bassa began school feeding at the beginning of 2019 academic year so the team can consider including one of these schools in the sample to gauge whether it is improving learning.

The USAID/Liberia Education team will provide documents for the desk review, as well as contact information for prospective interviewees. The evaluation team will be responsible for identifying and reviewing additional materials relevant to the evaluation, as well as additional contacts. Illustrative data sources include but are not limited to:

1. AQE Contract/Award
2. Annual Work Plans
3. Activity Monitoring and Evaluation Plan
4. Quarterly and annual progress reports
5. Performance Indicator Database System data
6. DQA report
7. Operational Research Assessment
8. School Quality Assessment
9. Gender Assessment
10. Perception Study for Community Engagement
11. Rapid Education Risk Assessment
12. USAID/Liberia CDCS
13. USAID Education Strategy 2018
14. EMIS datasets
15. AYP Evaluation
16. AYP Instructional Report

17. AYP Learning Event Report
18. LTTP Evaluation
19. Agenda for Transformation
20. UNESCO/UNICEF Liberia Country Study: Profiles of Children Out of School 2012
21. Other related national data and reports

5. Deliverables and Timeline

Evaluation deliverables include:

- a. Evaluation Team Planning Meetings
- b. Inbrief with USAID/Liberia, Implementing Partner, and GOL
- c. Inception Report with work plan and data collection instruments
- d. Participatory analysis workshop with USAID/Liberia, Implementing Partners, and GOL - Session that allows for stakeholders to engage with the preliminary evaluation findings and help shape the recommendations prior to report drafting.
- e. Formal Debrief – Presentation to USAID/Liberia prior to team departure.
- f. Draft Evaluation Report - A draft report should be submitted to LSA for review, and LSA must submit the draft report to USAID/Liberia within three weeks after the in-country work is conducted. The written report should clearly describe findings, conclusions, and recommendations and conform to USAID requirements outlined below. USAID will provide comments on the draft report within five working days of submission. Then, LSA will submit the draft report to the Implementing Partner for another five working days to provide comments and disclose a statement of difference, if applicable.
- g. Final Report - LSA will submit a final report that incorporates USAID and Implementing Partner comments no later than ten days after final, written comments on the team’s draft report have been submitted by all parties.
- h. Learning Event – LSA will facilitate a learning event one to two months after the report has been finalized to engage USAID/Liberia, the Implementing Partner, GOL, and other relevant stakeholders in the utilization of recommendations. The Team Leader will support the event by developing tailored dissemination products. This event will be combined with an After-Action Review, prescribed as good learning practice per ADS 201, to support USAID in the incorporation of recommendations into work plans, project or activity design, and the next Country Development Coordination Strategy.

The draft evaluation report should meet the following criteria:

- i. The report should be in line with USAID Evaluation Policy (see Appendix I – Criteria to Ensure the Quality of the Evaluation Report) and USAID Secretariat Style guide.
- ii. The report should be no longer than 30 pages, excluding executive summary, table of contents, and annexes.
- iii. The report should include a three to five page Executive Summary highlighting findings and recommendations.
- iv. The report should represent a thoughtful and well-organized effort to objectively respond to the evaluation questions.
- v. The report shall address all evaluation questions included in the SOW.

- vi. Evaluation methodology shall be explained in detail and all tools used in conducting the evaluation such as questionnaires, checklists and discussion guides shall be included in an Annex in the final report.
- vii. Limitations to the evaluation shall be disclosed in the report, with particular attention to the limitations associated with the evaluation methodology (selection bias, recall bias, etc.).
- viii. Evaluation findings should be specific, concise and supported by strong quantitative or qualitative evidence.
- ix. Recommendations should be action-oriented, practical, specific, and evidence-based.
- x. The final report should be edited and formatted.
- xi. Liberia Strategic Analysis must submit the final evaluation to the Development Experience Clearinghouse.

The report will be submitted electronically. The final report will be edited/formatted by the contractor and provided to USAID/Liberia five working days after the Mission has reviewed the content and approved the final revised version of the report. The final evaluation report must be 508 compliant and comply with the USAID Evaluation Policy: <http://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1868/USAIDEvaluationPolicy.pdf>

6. Team Composition

The evaluation team will be composed of four individuals: team leader, two technical experts, and an evaluation specialist.

1. **Team Leader/Senior Evaluation Specialist:** S/he will be responsible for coordinating the overall activities of the evaluation team. The Team Leader will approve the final evaluation design, oversee the development of evaluation instruments, integrate the findings of different team members, and coordinate the preparation of the final report. The Team Leader should have at least ten years of experience in the implementation and evaluation of multi-faceted education interventions in developing countries. Knowledge of ALP approaches in the education sector is required. S/he should have experience in managing multi-disciplinary teams and developing and conducting qualitative evaluations. It is essential that the candidate has the ability to conceptualize and structure evaluation activities and produce high quality evaluation reports in English. Liberia experience is strongly preferred. An advanced degree in education administration, planning, research or similar field is required.
2. **Alternative Education Systems Uptake Advisor:** S/he will have at least eight years of experience working with education interventions for out-of-school children in developing countries, preferably in West Africa. S/he will provide technical guidance on MOE uptake of ALP regulatory frameworks, curricula, teacher training, and safe learning environments as they contribute holistically to improved learner outcomes. The candidate will hold an advanced degree in Education Administration, Educational Research, Statistics, or related field and have extensive experience in evaluating educational programs. Knowledge of USAID rules, regulations, and procedures in this sector is highly desirable.
3. **Liberian Education Context Specialist:** The candidate should have experience and knowledge about the education context in Liberia, particularly on enrollment, attendance, and school-

related gender issues. S/he must have strong gender and social analytical skills, specifically in designing and evaluating education programs. The consultant must have demonstrated logistics and planning skills and will serve as the main logistical coordinator for the performance evaluation. The consultant will work with local partners to plan travel, data collection, and interviews and work with the team to conduct these evaluation activities. The consultant must be able to conduct interviews and focus group discussions and analyze the resulting data. Strong American English speaking and writing skills are required.

4. **ALP Specialist:** The candidate should have at least five years of experience working with education interventions for out-of-school children in Liberia and have understanding of the ALP regulatory framework being institutionalized by the MOE. The consultant must have experience evaluating education programs through qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. The consultant must be able to conduct interviews and focus group discussions and analyze the resulting data. Strong American English speaking and writing skills are required.

Collectively the team members must have experience in conducting both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. Prior to their arrival in Liberia, all team members are required to familiarize themselves with USAID’s Evaluation Policy, with USAID’s publication outlining a good evaluation report, and with USAID’s checklist for assessing an evaluation report. Additionally, all team members should possess a strong familiarity with the political, economic, policy and educational context in Liberia.

USAID may propose internal staff from USAID/Liberia or from Washington to accompany the team in this evaluation as observers. As observers, their role will be to provide, when asked, background information and to reply to the external evaluators’ questions. They will review and comment on the report for accuracy, but evaluators may accept or reject comments. The final report should reflect the opinions of the external evaluators and is the sole responsibility of the selected evaluation team.

7. Logistics and Level of Effort

The evaluation team is anticipated to visit and conduct consultations and data collection visits in Monrovia and implementation counties. LSA is responsible for making meeting and logistical arrangements for the evaluation team including hotel, air travel, and local transportation arrangements.

Evaluation team members are authorized and expected to work a six-day week. Travel over weekends may be necessary. The evaluation should commence as soon as practical, but field work must take place no later than beginning June 2019 to ensure facilitators and learners are still in session and data collection does not interfere with learner testing. For planning purposes, contractors should be aware of Liberian and US holidays during the evaluation time frame. The current academic year runs from September 3, 2018 to July 19, 2019.

The evaluation should follow the illustrative level of effort given below.

Task/Deliverable	Estimated time (Days)		
	Team Leader	Int’l Team Member	Nat’l Team Member


Review background documents & preparatory work (offshore)	5	5	4
Travel to and from Liberia	2	2	0
Team Planning Meetings in Monrovia with USAID/Liberia and IP	2		
Inbrief with USAID/Liberia, IP, and GOL and prepare for field work Submit Inception Report	3		
Field work: Data collection and on-going data analysis	20 (including field travel)		
Participatory analysis workshop with USAID, IP, and GOL	2		
Debrief presentation with USAID/Liberia	1		
Analysis and report drafting	12	9	6
LSA performs quality assurance check and edits draft report	5		
LSA submits draft report to USAID/Liberia	1		
USAID/Liberia and IP provide comments on draft report	10		
Team Leader revises draft report to incorporate comments and submit final report	5	1	0
Team Leader reviews EDC annual testing data and prepares annex to answer EQ4	5	0	0
LSA performs quality assurance check and submits final report	5		
LSA facilitates learning event	2	0	2
Total time required	80		
Working days for consultants	59	45	40

ANNEX F: EVALUATION TEAM DISCLOSURES OF ANY CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Disclosure of Conflict of Interest for USAID Evaluation Team Members

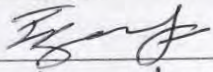
Name	Julie Younes
Title	Senior Technical Specialist
Organization	Social Impact
Evaluation Position?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Team Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Team member
Evaluation Award Number (contract or other instrument)	AID-669-C-16-00002
USAID Project(s) Evaluated (Include project name(s), implementer name(s) and award number(s), if applicable)	USAID Accelerated Quality Education for Liberian Children (AQE)
I have real or potential conflicts of interest to disclose.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If yes answered above, I disclose the following facts: <i>Real or potential conflicts of interest may include, but are not limited to:</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Close family member who is an employee of the USAID operating unit managing the project(s) being evaluated or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 2. Financial interest that is direct, or is significant though indirect, in the implementing organization(s) whose projects are being evaluated or in the outcome of the evaluation. 3. Current or previous direct or significant though indirect experience with the project(s) being evaluated, including involvement in the project design or previous iterations of the project. 4. Current or previous work experience or seeking employment with the USAID operating unit managing the evaluation or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 5. Current or previous work experience with an organization that may be seen as an industry competitor with the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 6. Preconceived ideas toward individuals, groups, organizations, or objectives of the particular projects and organizations being evaluated that could bias the evaluation. 	

I certify (1) that I have completed this disclosure form fully and to the best of my ability and (2) that I will update this disclosure form promptly if relevant circumstances change. If I gain access to proprietary information of other companies, then I agree to protect their information from unauthorized use or disclosure for as long as it remains proprietary and refrain from using the information for any purpose other than that for which it was furnished.

Signature	
Date	June 21, 2019

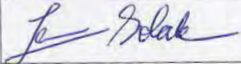
Name	EVELYN F. BARRY	
Title	ALP SPECIALIST	
Organization	SOCIAL IMPACT	
Evaluation Position?	<input type="checkbox"/> Team Leader	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <u>Team member</u>
Evaluation Award Number(contract or other instrument)		
USAID Project(s) Evaluated(Include project name(s), implementer name(s) and award number(s), if applicable)		
I have real or potential conflicts of interest to disclose.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <u>No</u>
<p>If yes answered above, I disclose the following facts:</p> <p><i>Real or potential conflicts of interest may include, but are not limited to:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Close family member who is an employee of the USAID operating unit managing the project(s) being evaluated or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 2. Financial interest that is direct, or is significant though indirect, in the implementing organization(s) whose projects are being evaluated or in the outcome of the evaluation. 3. Current or previous direct or significant though indirect experience with the project(s) being evaluated, including involvement in the project design or previous iterations of the project. 4. Current or previous work experience or seeking employment with the USAID operating unit managing the evaluation or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 5. Current or previous work experience with an organization that may be seen as an industry competitor with the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 6. Preconceived ideas toward individuals, groups, organizations, or objectives of the particular projects and organizations being evaluated that could bias the evaluation. 		

I certify (1) that I have completed this disclosure form fully and to the best of my ability and (2) that I will update this disclosure form promptly if relevant circumstances change. If I gain access to proprietary information of other companies, then I agree to protect their information from unauthorized use or disclosure for as long as it remains proprietary and refrain from using the information for any purpose other than that for which it was furnished.

Signature	
Date	13/05/2019

Name	Laura Golakeh
Title	Education Context Specialist
Organization	Social Impact
Evaluation Position?	Team Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Team member <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Evaluation Award Number (contract or other instrument)	
USAID Project(s) Evaluated (Include project name(s), implementer name(s) and award number(s), if applicable)	
I have real or potential conflicts of interest to disclose.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If yes answered above, I disclose the following facts: <i>Real or potential conflicts of interest may include, but are not limited to:</i>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Close family member who is an employee of the USAID operating unit managing the project(s) being evaluated or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 2. Financial interest that is direct, or is significant though indirect, in the implementing organization(s) whose projects are being evaluated or in the outcome of the evaluation. 3. Current or previous direct or significant though indirect experience with the project(s) being evaluated, including involvement in the project design or previous iterations of the project. 4. Current or previous work experience or seeking employment with the USAID operating unit managing the evaluation or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 5. Current or previous work experience with an organization that may be seen as an industry competitor with the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 6. Preconceived ideas toward individuals, groups, organizations, or objectives of the particular projects and organizations being evaluated that could bias the evaluation. 	

I certify (1) that I have completed this disclosure form fully and to the best of my ability and (2) that I will update this disclosure form promptly if relevant circumstances change. If I gain access to proprietary information of other companies, then I agree to protect their information from unauthorized use or disclosure for as long as it remains proprietary and refrain from using the information for any purpose other than that for which it was furnished.

Signature	
Date	May 13, 2019

U.S. Agency for International Development – Liberia

502 Benson Street

Monrovia, Liberia