Teaching Well?
Educational reconstruction efforts and support
to teachers in postwar Liberia

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Mission Statement

Founded in 1933, the IRC is a global leader in emergency relief, rehabilitation, protection of human rights, post-conflict development, resettlement services and advocacy for those uprooted or affected by conflict and oppression.

Acknowledgments

All statements of facts and expressions of opinion contained in this publication are the sole responsibility of the author.

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Acronyms

ECOMOG	Economic Community of West African States, Monitoring and Observing Group
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
GER	Gross Enrollment Rate
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
INEE	Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies
IRC	International Rescue Committee
LURD	Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy
MODEL	Movement for Democracy in Liberia
MOE	Ministry of Education (Liberia)
MPS	Mother Pattern School of Social Work (Monrovia)
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
NTAL	National Teachers Association of Liberia
UL	University of Liberia
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNMIL	United Nations Mission in Liberia
WCRWC	Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children

Preface: Introducing And Framing The Study

Introduction

The IRC is happy to present the following study written by Janet Shriberg, a doctoral student at Teachers College, Columbia University. The IRC has supported Ms. Shriberg's research on teacher well-being in Liberia through both field placement and technical assistance. At a time when the development of a robust and relevant education system for Liberia is so critical, and the IRC's education interventions are being scaled up with a particular focus on teachers, teacher support and development, this study provides important insight on teachers' lives and the conditions in which they work. This introduction briefly situates the study in relation to the IRC's work in education in humanitarian contexts of different types—emergency, refugee, chronic crisis, reintegration and post-conflict or post-disaster development—as well as to the IRC's global Healing Classrooms Initiative.

IRC and Education in Fragile and Post-conflict Contexts

Founded in 1933, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) is a humanitarian aid organization working with populations victimized by oppression or violent conflict, from the outset of an emergency through protracted crises or refugee contexts on to post-conflict reconstruction and development. At work in 25 countries and serving a population of over 10 million persons, the IRC seeks to help communities save lives, strengthen institutions and promote social cohesion. This is done through multi-sector interventions in three main areas: namely, social services (health, water and sanitation, education, child and youth protection, gender-based violence), governance and rights (rule of law, civil society and community development, good governance) and economic development. The IRC has special expertise in working with conflict-affected children and youth and has long been on the forefront of developing culturally relevant approaches to supporting their psychological, social and physical well-being. Access to quality education is seen as an important part of supporting the overall well-being of children and youth in these contexts.

Education is one of the IRC's largest sectors, and currently the IRC supports education programs for refugee and war-affected children, youth and adults in more than 20 countries. The major types of interventions in the IRC's education strategy include: formal primary and secondary schooling; vocational education; accelerated learning; alternative delivery, such as community-based schools and emergency nonformal education; literacy, numeracy and adult education; and peace education and conflict resolution. To ensure effective program implementation in each of these areas, the IRC focuses on several key approaches: teacher development and training; community mobilization and capacity building to support education, such as the formation of community education committees; youth development and leadership; capacity building of local partners, such as government authorities and civil society; curriculum development, especially supplementary curriculum to address the special needs of students and teachers affected by conflict; provision of teaching and learning materials; and education infrastructure support, such as school rehabilitation and construction. Globally, the IRC's major education program strategy is to support access to relevant, high-quality education for displaced and war-affected children, youth and adults, based on good practices in the education in emergencies field, including:

- A flexible and innovative approach in program design and implementation, which allows full respect for contextual and cultural factors

- Special attention to the cross-cutting issues of gender and child and youth protection and well-being

- Ongoing evaluation of program effectiveness and incorporation of best practices and standards

In post-conflict development contexts such as Liberia—but also Afghanistan, for example—the IRC recognizes the critical role that education plays in the stabilization of a nation and the development of a skilled and competent human resource base, as well as in the cognitive development and social and emotional well-being of children and youth who are meaningfully engaged in future-oriented, stimulating learning activities. In these contexts, the IRC seeks to support the government in its efforts to establish such a system and to provide technical support for policy and program development, as well as to provide direct assistance in the form of programs such as community-based schooling, teacher training, community mobilization and PTA development, all of which extend the reach and the impact of the country's Ministry of Education strategy.

The IRC recognizes the critical role that teachers play in the lives of children and youth affected by conflict and disaster, and the importance of the establishment of a well-trained and well-supported teaching force as an element of the "peace dividend" of the post-conflict period. The IRC is also very aware of the challenges that resource-poor governments face in establishing such a teaching force, especially in meeting the demands for regular, decent salaries, let alone the other supports that might be required to attract and retain quality teachers, such as housing, health care and opportunities for professional development. While the mobilization of community support for teachers—financial, in-kind and moral—may be considered as an approach to fill some of the gaps left by the government's limited capacity, this may not be possible for communities who are themselves struggling to reestablish their lives and livelihoods.

IRC Liberia: Education and Child Protection Programs

Since 1992, the IRC has worked closely with the Liberian community to support access to quality education for their children and youth. What initially started as a response to Liberian refugee parents' request for school materials for their children grew over the years to a strong working relationship both inside and outside Liberia. In 1998, the IRC worked closely with a fragile Liberian Ministry of Education to both rebuild the education system and provide access to quality schooling for more than 40,000 Liberian children. Today, the IRC is again working closely with Liberian partners in the newly elected government of President Johnson-Sirleaf to help rebuild the education system through building the capacity of Parent Teacher Associations and national teacher training institutions, as well as supporting communities to rebuild their schools and to provide their children and teachers with learning materials. Throughout this effort, the IRC is committed to highlighting and addressing the protection concerns—whether physical, psychological, or social—of the most impoverished and underserved children and youth. The IRC works with government counterparts to make sure that children and youth who are or were exploited by the worst forms of child labor, heading households, formerly involved in fighting, and living without any family support also have access to education opportunities.

IRC's Healing Classrooms Initiative

The IRC Healing Classrooms Initiative is a global organizational learning initiative, using participatory action research to find ways to better understand and improve teacher support and development processes in fragile states' contexts, with a particular focus on student well-being. The initiative is generating new knowledge by identifying and documenting promising existing practice and developing and piloting new innovations within different IRC programs.

There are numerous studies on the lives and experiences of teachers in North American and Western contexts, and this sort of research has been integrated into many teacher education programs. However, there has been very little research on teachers and teaching in emergency, chronic crisis and early reconstruction contexts. The focus

of such education programs tends to be on the practical issues relating to recruiting enough teachers, on providing basic teacher training for unqualified teachers and on trying to address the thorny issue of teacher salaries. Where the trend has been to provide teachers in emergency contexts with separate trainings on the psychosocial well-being of children, the Healing Classrooms Initiative is taking a more holistic and integrated perspective, working with the principles of psychosocial well-being and the "healing" of children and teachers and integrating these with culturally appropriate notions of "good teaching." The initiative is developing models of good pedagogy that are grounded in principles of child protection and child well-being. It is also developing new ways of thinking and talking about "becoming and being a teacher" that are grounded in the responsibilities of being an agent of child protection.

The Healing Classrooms Initiative initial assessments in four countries (Ethiopia, Afghanistan, Guinea and Sierra Leone) and subsequent pilot projects are providing us with further insights into teachers' lives and their experiences of teaching in emergency situations. They are also generating learnings related to appropriate and effective ways of supporting teachers' professional development that are being translated into program tools and documentation, in addition to shaping new content for staff development.

The IRC is committed to working with academics in university departments around the world to advance knowledge and understanding of the field of humanitarian action and support to post-conflict and post-disaster development. The Healing Classrooms Initiative focuses attention on teacher identity, motivation and well-being and the interconnected, context-specific ways in which these issues may impact the nature and quality of students' learning and development. It is hoped that the in-depth study of Liberia's teachers, presented here, will shed light on the serious impacts of limited government and community support for teachers on educational quality in early post-war contexts.

Study Purpose and Background

Introduction

Teachers are on the forefront of rebuilding educational systems in early reconstruction programs. While schools can provide safe environments where structure, stimulation and opportunities for learning healthy socialization with peers and adults can help mitigate the trauma of war, it is teachers who determine the availability and quality of these programs daily.

As part of recovery efforts from war and/or disaster, teachers are able to offer care, leadership and opportunities to promote the learning and well-being of their students. Teachers can also foster academic and social skills and prepare the future generation for the challenges ahead.[1] The Education for All Global Monitoring Report (UNESCO, 2005), for example, asserts that "teachers are the strongest influence of learning" (p. 18). Teachers therefore have a direct impact on the quality of education offered and are key actors able to contribute both directly and indirectly to student achievement.

Furthermore, with the protection and psychosocial needs of children in mind, teachers can create a climate in their classrooms that helps to support children's healing from traumatic events. Many teachers have been trained to communicate critical lifesaving messages to children that can protect them from the threats of recruitment into fighting forces, sexual or economic exploitation and increased risks of contracting HIV/AIDS and other diseases. However, despite their central role in the implementation and sustainability of early reconstruction educational programs, teachers' own well-being is often left unaddressed. Teachers are rarely consulted in the policies and program development that have a direct impact on their own lives and on the education they provide.

The Liberia Education Master Plan 2000–2010(15), revised in 2005 during Liberia's transitional government, states that "the education and training of teachers has always received attention from the government…the critical issues and problems have tended to remain persistent over the past 40 years" (p. 56). These issues, including low interest in teacher training, low salary and status and unevenness of supply and demand of teachers (p. 57), are discussed in relation to Liberia's educational situation and its goal to improve its quality of education in the following decade. In short, improving teacher quality is seen as paramount to overall improved educational quality (Ministry of Education [MOE], 2005, p. 57). In the MOE's important efforts to progress in both these specific areas and overall educational quality in postwar Liberia, it follows that the recent experiences and perceptions of teachers about these realities may help inform future educational planning and system development.

The aim of this research paper is to inform Liberian educational stakeholders and international policymakers of the significance of support for teachers in early reconstruction efforts by examining recent impacts on teachers themselves and the quality of education they provide. This case study of Liberia draws on eight months of field research (February through September, 2006) with more than 700 teachers from nine counties. Recognizing the heterogeneity among teacher populations in Liberia and, more widely, early reconstruction programs worldwide, the findings illuminate similarities and differences of teacher experience with relation to their sex, geographic location, training and teaching experience. The findings also demonstrate the broad social-organizational realities confronted by Liberian teachers, the impact of these on their own well-being and their perceptions of the quality

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1   For information about teacher training and teacher activities in education in emergency and early reconstruction programs, see, for example, the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children's Global Survey on Education in Emergencies report (2004), which summarizes findings in documents from international nongovernmental organizations.

of education they provide. Specific policy recommendations are then suggested to address the findings. Ultimately, this report provides impetus to the new Liberian government MOE's interest in improving teacher support; it uses recent data to argue that without attention to the on-the-ground practice of teacher support, it is unlikely that reconstruction programs will effectively advance.

Conceptual Understanding of Teacher Well-being and Support

Definitions of Teacher Well-Being and Teacher Support:

This study seeks to examine how teachers themselves understand their own well-being with relation to the important jobs they perform. The study recognizes the social roles and status of "teachers" and does not confine their role only to content delivery. While someone can be recognized as a "teacher" in diverse positions and situations, a teacher in this study refers to a person who occupied an organizational position labeled "teacher" and who at the time of the study was working as such within a formal school in Liberia.

Broadly stated, this study examines the psychosocial well-being of teachers. For the purpose of the study, physical and psychological health, as well as social and economic factors, were conceived as important influences on the well-being of teachers.

Definitions of *well-being* have varied across time and disciplines. Ahearn, in his edited book that examines research issues with communities affected by war (2000)—having reviewed a range of definitions of psychosocial well-being—states the following: "It is interesting to observe that there is little agreement to what constitutes psychosocial well-being. It is much easier to describe factors associated with well-being, especially negative factors that connote a lack of well-being" (p. 5). In this study, teacher well-being in Liberia was conceptualized as that which Liberian teachers defined themselves in relation to this concept during the initial stages of the study. Using data collected during preliminary focus groups with teachers, teacher well-being was conceptualized as a positive state of physical and psychological health among teachers, and presumed that basic human needs—such as food, shelter and clothing, were met.

Teacher support was understood as the influences that promoted teacher well-being. These influences, for example, may have included learning materials, compensation, social activities, peer "support" groups and/or spirituality. Conversely, nonsupport indicated those influences teachers viewed as weakening their well-being.

The concept of *well-being* in this study is aligned with those social justice researchers who challenge Western and Eurocentric "medicalized" models to explain the mental health consequences of war on communities by focusing on illness and decline (for example, Ahearn, 2000; Farmer, 2003; Kleinman, 1998; Omidian, 1996; Wessells, 2001). Ahearn further asserts, in his discussion of the research studies on psychosocial well-being among populations displaced by war, that definitions may run the risk of focusing too heavily on the negative factors associated with well-being. Therefore, in keeping with his suggestion, teacher well-being in this study includes positive influences and behaviors—such as coping with, and in some cases overcoming, situational barriers in service of the students— that teachers themselves demonstrated. In contrast to trauma-focused models, teacher well-being in this study is built upon the concept of psychosocial well-being (wellness) because it permits an analysis for strength-based qualities such as ability, agency and coping of its participants to emerge. This approach does not discount the important advances in trauma research. Instead, this study seeks to delimit this approach by re-viewing individual (teachers') experiences through a wellness lens. As an example, information about how teachers are coping with the challenges they face, including the traumatic events they have survived and their contributions to community recovery, is highlighted. In this way, teachers are recognized for their strengths and capabilities as war survivors and important actors in community reconstruction.

In addition, the research draws heavily on social psychological insights that include how organizational practices affect daily living among groups. In accordance, teacher well-being was examined with a focus on how the social and organizational influences teachers confront daily affect their own perceptions of their well-being. The study findings then suggest a conceptual framework for understanding—and ultimately addressing—teacher well-being in the early reconstruction processes underway in Liberia.

A Brief Review of the Literature on Teacher Well-being

Lack of systematic studies of teacher well-being

Although there are references made in existing literature to the impacts of conflict on teachers within education systems, there is little literature that examines the psychosocial consequences of war on teachers themselves or the broader social roles that teachers might play in reconstruction efforts. Teachers live with the same insecurities about armed conflict as their students. Frequently seen as leaders in their communities, teachers are also specific targets of further violence by rebel forces. In 2004, the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children (WCRWC) reported that in Colombia 83 teachers were killed and that teachers continue to be targets of murder, threats and displacement. Similarly, Wayman (1999) found that, during the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, teachers were routinely killed and books were burned. And, in conflict-affected Nepal, where children and adults routinely witnessed killings from bombing and landmines, Parajuli (2005) found that teachers expressed intense fear and anxiety for their own and their students' safety.

Studies of teacher education programs in postwar contexts have found that, in addition to ongoing threats to their personal security, teachers working in (post)conflict regions are also faced with myriad occupational challenges (WCRWC, 2004). The lack of teacher training and support can have a direct impact on the well-being of teachers. For example, in his research that examined social studies teachers in 13 African countries, African education scholar Asimeng-Boahene (2003) used an ecological perspective to examine teacher burnout and teacher motivation among social studies teachers in post-secondary education schools in postcolonial Africa. He reported that, overall, teachers are at risk of developing negative feelings about themselves and their jobs, but not because they lack internal motivation. Rather, he found that the African teachers felt restricted by *extraneous* occupational and social factors: "(Teachers are) locked into a limited range because of lack of resources or administrative support, large class size, inadequate professional training, an unfavorable political climate and few opportunities to grow professionally" (p. 58). He argued that this can lead to feelings of powerlessness and frustration—often called "burnout" in the education literature. Asimeng-Boahene warned that burnout has the potential of creating a dangerous cycle for teachers working in low-resourced schools: teachers with burnout may leave their jobs, thereby increasing the scarcity of trained teachers.

Sinclair (2001) provides an overview of psychosocial initiatives within education in emergency and early reconstruction programs[2] and reports a breadth of approaches. She discusses the different ways that teachers have been trained to infuse psychosocial pedagogy and curriculum into their classrooms. Often, however, these initiatives can bring up painful stories and experiences for students and for the teachers managing the classroom. As one of her key examples, she cites the importance of "including materials to help teachers deal with their own post-traumatic problems" (p. 22). Similarly, international educational scholar Lynne Davies, in her book *Education and Conflict* (2004), provides a comprehensive analysis of the available research on education and conflict, including the psychological consequences on education in postwar contexts. As part of her conclusion, she states that "it has to be remembered that teachers too need psychological support" (p. 100). However, specific research or practice materials for providing psychosocial support to teachers remain limited.

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2   Education in emergency programs is defined in this way as education in contexts of crisis, early reconstruction or transition as a result of human-made and/or environmental disasters.

Teachers are also frequently left out of policymaking in international educational development efforts, even though they are central actors in the design of education in emergency settings. Citing a study by Volunteers Services Overseas, a nongovernmental organization that provides education in emergency programs internationally, Kirk (2004) argued that teachers are often left out of the policy-making processes of the organizations for which they work. She states that "this failure to involve teachers and the apparent lack of interest in teachers' opinions are major factors in the 'fragile' and 'wavering' levels of teacher motivation in development contexts" (p. 374).

Issues of teacher support and teacher well-being among teachers working in contexts affected by war and/or disasters are slowly being examined internationally using a comparative approach. In a prior survey (2004) that combined education in emergency and early reconstruction programs in the Americas, Asia and Africa, the WCRCW compiled the following list of occupational challenges to teachers: expanded classroom responsibilities, unequal incentives, larger student populations and unclear policies regarding teacher qualification and teacher certification (p. 5). Concerns for local teacher participation are further underscored in Kagawa's scholarly review of literature in education in emergencies (2005), in which she concludes by stating that there is a need for improving the quality of education in part by "participation of locals in decision-making processes" (p. 499).

Finally, although not specific to conflict or reconstruction contexts, recent reports do highlight teacher support in relation to educational quality. Using data from a multi-country comparison study, the *Education for All Global Monitoring Report* (UNESCO, 2005) highlights how specific barriers commonly faced by teachers in developing nations today, such as low salary and/or incentives, inadequate training and teacher qualification, overcrowded classrooms and poor teacher health, significantly impact a country's overall ability to provide quality education. The UNESCO report also recognizes that the durability of programs and policies designed to advance quality learning and support student well-being must be informed by the situation of those implementing the programs—local teachers.

In sum, although the importance of teachers is generally acknowledged with regard to educational quality, there is limited literature and much less empirical data to inform policy and program development about the consequences of limited support to teachers working in emergency and early reconstruction programs.

Liberia: A Brief Country Background

Geography and Population

Liberia is situated north of the equator on the west coast of Africa and covers an area of approximately 38,250 square miles. The country shares its borders with Guinea, Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone and the Atlantic Ocean. There are two major seasons in Liberia, the dry season (November through April) and a wet season (May through October). The land in Liberia is rich in minerals including gold and diamond, and the soil is fertile for timber, a number of tree crops, rice and cassava production. The population of Liberia is estimated at 3.4 million.[3]

Armed Conflict and Perpetuated Displacement in Liberia: 1989 to the Present

For more than 14 years, Liberia struggled in interrelated conflicts with its West African neighbors and in its own civil unrest. In 1989, Charles Taylor, leading the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), headed an armed rebellion in the northern part of the country against then-president Samuel Doe and his regime. Fighting ensued and spread to Montserrado County and into the capital city of Monrovia. This confrontation caused thousands of people to flee Liberia and seek refuge in Guinea, Sierra Leone and Ivory Coast.

In 1990, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) deployed a Nigerian-led peacekeeping mission (ECOMOG) to Liberia to restore order. The ECOMOG mission, however, did not extend its protection to civilians beyond Monrovia. While peacekeepers were able to secure Monrovia from rebel warfare, the remainder of the country struggled against fierce fighting backed by Charles Taylor's leadership (NRC, 2005). The fighting caused many more thousands of people to flee the rural areas of Liberia and seek refuge and asylum in West Africa and other places. In 1997, after nine years of instability, Liberia experienced a short period of peace when another peace agreement was signed. This agreement demanded the disarmament of warring factions. Presidential and parliamentary elections followed, and Charles Taylor was elected by a landslide victory.

Soon after he took office, Taylor led Liberia into more brutal fighting. By 2001, Taylor had amassed a personal fortune and engaged rebel groups both in Sierra Leone and Ivory Coast in the illicit trade of diamonds, lumber and weaponry. Two groups in opposition with each other and against the Taylor government, the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) and the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL), fought fierce battles over the rights to the gold and diamond riches near northern Lofa, where the borders of Guinea and Sierra Leone and Liberia meet. These armed conflicts caused entire villages to empty, and tens of thousands of Liberians sought refuge outside Liberia or in internally displaced camps in Monrovia and its nearby coastal areas. Large numbers of residents of Montserrado County were also displaced because of attacks from the north and insurgent government uprisings inside the city.

In the summer of 2003, civil war between the LURD and the MODEL escalated, and fighting engulfed Monrovia for three weeks. Following international pressure to leave, Taylor departed into exile in Nigeria, and the United Nations' (UN's) peacekeeping forces in Liberia (UNMIL) arrived. UNMIL continues to be the largest peacekeeping mission worldwide. Overall, the fighting resulted in one quarter of a million deaths, one million internally displaced persons (IDP) and 500,000 refugees (IRC, 2005).

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3   Liberia's estimated population is taken from http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2006/71309.htm

Postwar challenges to Liberian education and teachers

Poverty, Destruction and Unemployment

Overall, Liberia is recovering from over a decade of poor governance, conflict and economic collapse, from which the education sector has particularly suffered. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Country Report (2006), the GDP has fallen by 90 percent as compared to 1980, and Liberia "today is among the poorest and least developed countries in the world" (p. 1). The report further estimated that unemployment in Liberia is as high as 85 percent, with nearly half of the population existing on less than US$.50 per day.[4]

Education seen as a priority but faces myriad challenges

In October 2005, Liberia held its first national elections. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf was elected and is in office today; she is Africa's first woman president. According to President Johnson-Sirleaf (2005), after electricity (Liberia was without consistent electricity for a decade), schooling was declared a national priority in the country's post-conflict recovery.[5] However, years of bitter wars left myriad challenges to Liberia's abilities to rebuild its educational systems.

Off-track to meet Goals of UPE

According to the Human Development Index Report (2006), Liberia is off-track in meeting the Millennium Development Goal of Universal Primary Education by 2015 due to low levels of school completion, high costs of school fees and difficulties assessing schools for reasons such as lack of school buildings and lack of sufficient teachers (p. 15). An area of particular concern highlighted in the HDI report is Liberia's high illiteracy rate—it is nearly 80 percent, with youth accounting for over half, thereby foreshadowing a decrease in literacy over the years. Further, gender disparities in the Gross Enrollment Rate (GER) reveal much lower rates of enrollment for girls: according to the Education for All, National Action Plan for Liberia, 2004–2015, the GER is 69.1 percent for boys and 39.9 percent for girls.

Collapsed educational infrastructure

Liberia's educational infrastructure suffered in many ways due to the long period of conflict. During the years of war, the Ministry of Education could no longer support and implement its education programs. Between the years 1989 and 1997, close to 80 percent of Liberia's estimated 2,400 schools were destroyed.[6] After 1997, international and community organizations helped to restore more than half of the destroyed schools. However, with subsequent conflicts lasting eight more years, many of these schools were later burned, looted or abandoned by 2003. As a result of devastation to the capital city of Monrovia, almost all of the government structures collapsed. Over 75 percent of the educational infrastructure was either destroyed or damaged. In fact, some of the school buildings themselves were turned into military warehouses and war rooms (HDI, 2006). At the time of this study, the MOE lacks regular electricity and computers, and its personnel are housed in a rented building where it is uncertain how long they will be allowed to stay.

Changing Student Population

Teachers, students, educational personnel and educational development staff are now faced with the new challenges of integrating and reintegrating large and diverse groups of students into schools with little training and support for teachers. Students enrolled in school have had different schooling experiences due to the war. Education for refugee children was available through refugee education programs in Guinea, Sierra Leone and Ivory Coast. But differences in language—French is the official language in both Guinea and Ivory Coast—and accreditation posed challenges for English-speaking Liberian students and teachers to receive the credentials they needed when they returned home (Sinclair, 2001). (As one approach to the credentials problem, refugee education programs that were run by the IRC in Guinea gave early priority to producing a curriculum that incorporated Liberian requirements.) Children and youth who lived in Liberia during the decades of its civil war were left with limited educational opportunities. For example, during the years of wars, children living in IDP camps were often denied access to schooling (NRC, 2005). For those who did not live in IDP camps, schooling was also disrupted for long periods due to insecurity and lack of opportunity.

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4   Data taken from the United Nations Common Country Assessment, Liberia (2006), http://www.lr.undp.org.

5   President Johnson-Sirleaf has been quoted in numerous media articles as saying, "Education is key to Liberia's future." To reference her statement regarding the need to restore schooling in Liberia's post-conflict efforts, see http://www.irinnews.org/report.asp, November 2005.

6   Information taken from the Inter-Press Service Agency News (IPS). Education: Liberia: Poverty, war drives 800,000 children out of school, 2002, http://www.ipsnews.net/Africa/interna.asp.

Changes in demographics pose significant challenges to education in Liberia today. In post-conflict Liberia, tens of thousands of people who were displaced are now returning to their homes and are being assisted by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Since 2003, hundreds of thousands of young people who could not attend school before have begun to enroll. However, fewer schools are open and functioning. In addition, the student age-grade profile has changed. Today, the ages of the students are disproportionately older than the traditional age-grade level system for Liberia, as older children enter school at lower grade levels (MOE, 2004). In the north, children and youth have long been out of school because of access problems, and child combatants who lost years of schooling due to war are now integrating, or reintegrating, into schools. Some of the largest reintegration programs are in Lofa and Nimba Counties, where the majority of children, demobilized from fighting forces, are returning to their homes.7

During the years of conflict, children and youth from all over Liberia were routinely abducted from their homes, drugged and trained to be soldiers in fighting forces. The LURD, the MODEL and government forces widely used girls and boys 18 years of age and younger in their militias and forcibly recruited them during government round-ups or during raids on IDP camps. While there are no precise figures to estimate how many children were used in warfare, the United Nations agencies estimated that, in the years 2000–2004, approximately 15,000 children were involved in the fighting.8 The children who were conscripted into fighting forces were then denied access to health care, protection and education. In response, schools are trying to respond to changes in curriculum that will be appropriate for older students learning at lower levels. Educational personnel are also trying to develop training and curriculum that helps support the psychosocial needs of students, such as conflict resolution and mediation classes.

Unqualified teachers

The majority of teachers working in Liberia are under-qualified. According to the Education for All National Action Plan for Liberia (2004), about 65 percent of children in primary schools in Liberia are taught by unqualified teachers, and about 41 percent of teachers have not completed high school (UNICEF, RALS Report, 2004 in UNDP, 2006). Similarly, the *Liberia Education Sector Master Plan 2000–2015* (MOE, 2000) states that "one of the most critical issues in Liberian education relates to the quality of teachers" (p. 57). This report estimates that nearly 75 percent of teachers in the school system were unqualified (p. 58). Due to years of war and low resources, data available on precise statistics of Liberian education and teacher education policies remains limited; however, using the estimated numbers reported in 1999 (MOE, 2000), only 24 percent of primary teachers and only 17 percent of secondary teachers were female (p. 58). Given the mounting gaps between teacher numbers and qualifications and increasingly large and diverse student populations,9 there continues to be a significant need for more trained teachers—especially female teachers.

Teacher welfare was not being addressed

Finally, an important aspect of an education system—that is, its ability to attract, retain and foster the personal and professional development of teachers—remains a challenge in Liberia. Given, for example, the low salary earned and the difficult school environment (overcrowded classrooms, lack of school materials, inaccessible roads), the Liberian education system is confronted with problems attracting qualified teachers, and especially female teachers. Moreover, it is unable to provide professional development for its existing teachers, including promotion of teachers' long-term welfare, such as retirement and health benefits.

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7   For a description of new educational programs for former child combatants, see www.theirc.org/Liberia.

8   This number is taken from the Human Rights Watch report *How to Fight, How to Kill: Child Soldiers in Liberia*; www.hrw.org/reports/2004.

9   See for example the UNIS (UNESCO Institute for Statistics) report Teachers and Educational Quality: Monitoring Global Needs for 2015. Liberia is expected to have a projected school-age population growth between 2005 and 2015 of 37 percent. This will make it difficult for Liberia to reach UPE (Universal Primary Education by 2015), given that the MOE report (2005) states "there are even more untrained teachers today."

Barriers to Teacher Compensation

The process of payment in Liberia is fraught with procedural difficulties. According to the system setup, the government is supposed to pay teachers based on recorded names of teachers registered as civil servants. The actual checks are then to be carried by district education officers and distributed to teachers who are unable to reach Monrovia themselves to cash them. However, with years of war and limited to no resources for administrative oversight as a consequence, the lists of teachers slated for pay remain incomplete and outdated. Names of teachers working are often left out, and names of teachers who are no longer teachers (sometimes who had even left Liberia) remain on the list. This causes confusion for those distributing and receiving the pay. Often referred to as the problem of "Ghost Lists," this was observed for decades before the recent wars (Chapman, 2002). In addition, amid a changing environment from war to postwar, the system of pay according to qualification is muddled by these outdated lists of working teachers and wavering policies surrounding teacher accreditation.

Study Methodology: An Overview

Diverse Sample and Mixed Methodology

The purpose of this study was to examine Liberian teacher well-being, including the lack of support for teachers as understood by teachers themselves, and to explore the consequences of this on the quality of education provided in Liberia's recent early reconstruction period. Data collection for this project was conducted over a period of eight consecutive months beginning in February 2006. This study was designed to capture the diversity among Liberian teachers with respect to their age, sex, geographic residence, linguistic preference and teaching experience. In this way, both female and male teachers were included, with varying ages and with diverse backgrounds in teacher training, qualification and years of teaching experience. The sample draws from public, private and missionary schools from nine counties in Liberia, both urban and rural. English was the primary language used with participants, although a translator was used in cases where another language (for example, Grebo, Kissi, Lomo, Mandingo, Mende, Kpelle) was preferred. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected and combined the use of in-depth interviews, focus groups, semi-structured questionnaires and document review.

The brief survey and interviews were conducted among private and public school teachers. Survey I was conducted in coordination with the International Rescue Committee Education Officers (EO) and includes teachers working in IRC-affiliated schools only. This questionnaire was semi-structured—both closed and open questions were included.[10] Survey II was co-written with the National Teachers Association of Liberia and specifically Margaret Flomo, who was then acting president of the NTAL. This survey was also semi-structured, with both open and closed questions. Ms. Flomo and her team of NTAL county officers distributed, as evenly as possible, questionnaires throughout all 15 counties and among private and public school teachers (both female and male).

As noted above, data was analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative approaches in a "mixed methods" design. For closed questions, descriptive statistics were calculated (that is, frequencies, means) and responses stratified by demographic variables of interest (sex, ages and geographic locations). Responses to open-ended questions were analyzed by employing a content analysis of all responses to find emergent categories (that is, the most important themes, such as "feels physically threatened"). All individual responses were coded into these categories based on set criteria for each category.[11] Frequencies of response in each category (and, where appropriate, means) were then calculated. Finally, descriptive-quantitative methods (frequencies, means) were employed to characterize and group data.

As a part of this broader study on teacher well-being, a brief questionnaire on teacher experience in refugee and/or IDP camps was also completed. Liberian education officers (EOs) working for the IRC helped to develop and conduct a semi-structured questionnaire to query all IRC school teachers about their experiences with teacher training during the war. Responses were received from a total of 408 teachers: 75.1 percent from Lofa County, 16.9 percent from Nimba County and 8.1 percent from Montserrado County (see Table 2).

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10 All of the responses were self-reported and self-written. Due to the varying levels of comfort surrounding speaking and writing in English, in some cases IRC EOs assisted by interviewing teachers and writing teachers' oral responses into the questionnaires.

11 It should be noted that for open-ended questions, categories were named by the investigator based on meeting criteria for that category (for example, mentions the word "bribery" to fit in category of "corruption"). While the investigator attempted to remain as neutral as possible, the categories are subjective as understood by this investigator's qualitative analysis.

Table 1: Sample population of Liberian teacher study participant by data collection method

Demographic Item	Brief Demographic Survey	Brief Demographic Survey In-depth Interviews*	Survey 1 Teacher Training Survey	Survey II Survey co-written with NTAL on teacher welfare and benefits	Total
N (total)	195	68	408	106	709
Sex m/f (%)	83.2%/16.8%	73.5%/26.5%	87.3%/12.2%	66%/34% N=106	83%/17% N=710
Total mean age (range)	43.2 (15–75) N=188	42.9 (20–63) N=68	Not reported	40.5 (16–73) N=103	42.3 (15–75) N=291
Counties (N)	Lofa (75) Nimba (65) Monterrado (43)	Lofa (24) Nimba (22) Montserrado (22)	Lofa (306) Nimba (69) Montserrado (33)	Montserrado (42) Bong (43) River Gee (10) Lofa (3) Bomi (1) Grand Gedeh (1) Gbarpolu (1) Maryland (1) Nimba (1)	Lofa (385) Nimba (203) Montserrado (118) Bong (43) River Gee (10) Bomi (1) Gbarpolu (1) Grand Gedeh (1) Maryland (1)
Type of school	Public: 9 Private: 3	Public: 9 Private: 3	All IRC supported (Public: 33)	Public: 43 Private: 60	Public: 85 Private: 67
Total mean years of teacher training (range)	2.1 (0–7) N=161	2.4 (0–15) N=61	Not reported	2.1 (0–18) N=105	2.1 (0–18) N=266
Total mean years of teaching (range)	13.8 N=181	13.8 (1–45) N=64	Not reported	13.6 (2–45) N=106	13.6 (0–45) N=287

*Note that the in-depth interviews are a subset of the brief demographic sample; therefore the numbers from the in-depth interview are not counted in the total column to avoid double-counting teachers.

Study Limitations

The findings from this study highlight the specific and more general ways that Liberian teachers working today perceived their well-being with respect to their jobs. This study was limited by several factors. First, the research aimed to estimate a representative sample of teachers in the counties sampled; however, the schools were chosen using convenience sampling. Because there is a dearth of systematic studies on schools in Liberia due to the long years of wars, it was not possible first to characterize the teacher population in order then to reach an estimated representative sample. Second, while teachers from throughout Liberia were invited to participate, the preponderance of the study sample was drawn from three counties. Therefore, this study is not meant to exercise its general findings beyond those recorded among the study participants. Third, all data is limited by small samples; therefore, descriptive data analysis was conducted in order to best describe teachers' own perceptions of the impact of well-being on themselves. And, due to the heavy use of qualitative data, analysis of statistical significance was not performed but instead focuses on trends identified through detailed qualitative data analysis.

Finally, it should be noted that this study was exploratory and interested in teachers' notions of their own well-being in light of the institutional practices with which they were confronted. Using data from interviews and surveys, unsupportive influences were clearly identified and described by teachers in relation to their jobs. Unmet basic needs—particularly the lack of teacher compensation, for example—was the overwhelming concern among the teacher respondents. As it turned out, findings revealed there were hardly any teachers who found their compensation to be "supportive." Overall, there were few marked differences observed in developed institutional policies and procedures (this was a study in early reconstruction efforts following a country-wide collapse of the Liberian educational system). Therefore, comparison data (for example, support vs. nonsupport) was not the focus of this study. A future study following changes in institutional policies (increased salary, teacher training, and so on), for example, is warranted to perform a comparative analysis of the impact of teacher support within the country across time.

Study Findings

Conceptualizing Teacher Well-being in Liberia

Overview of findings

- There is a reciprocal–synergistic relationship between perceived areas of well-being affected negatively and impact on quality of education (needs unmet; psychosocial well-being, corruption; pedagogy and content).

- Teachers are coping with obstacles and committed to being teachers.

- Teachers who worked in refugee education programs are sharing their knowledge and skills with teachers today (at time of study) in important ways (lesson planning, pedagogy, classroom management).

- Teacher welfare is a concern among all teachers.

- Teacher survival and quality of education appeared to be impacted negatively by lack of attention and response to teacher welfare.

- Attention to protecting female teachers and students is critical.

- Corruption is seen as related to low resources/low salary.

- Teachers' psychosocial well-being is impacted (negatively) by low resources; particularly in relation to their ability or inability to provide for their family.

Proposed Conceptual Diagram

Diagram 1. **The impact of low resources on Liberian teachers' perceived well-being and ability to provide quality education**

A
UNMET BASIC NEEDS — CONSEQUENT BRAIN DRAIN

B
POTENTIAL TO INCREASE CORRUPTION AND PROFESSIONAL MISCONDUCT

C
INABILITY TO SUPPORT ONE'S FAMILY AND TO INVEST IN PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

D
LOW TEACHER PARTICIPATION IN POLICY AND CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

COPING AND RESILIENCY
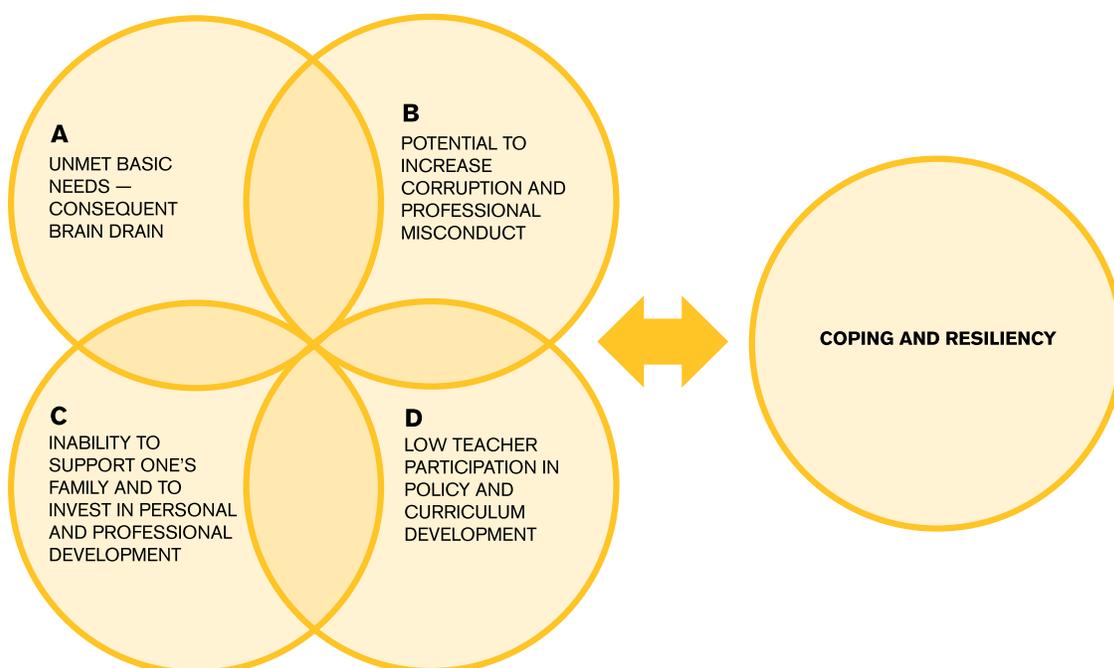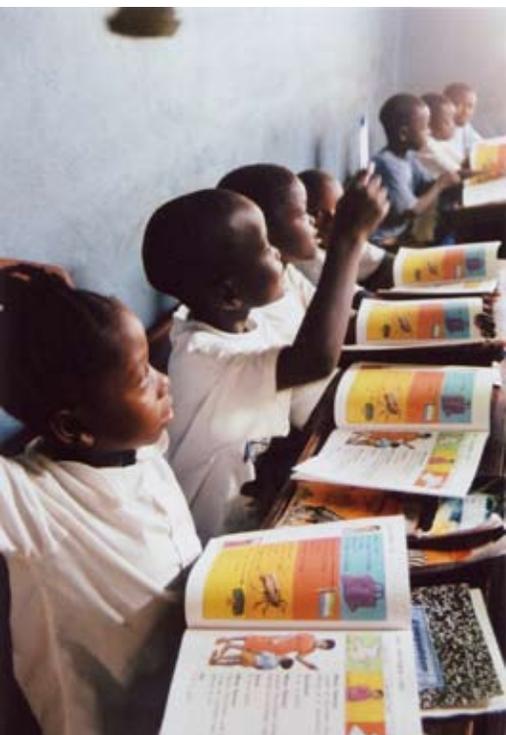
Overlapping Areas with Reciprocal Influences

Diagram 1 displays a proposed model that emerges from the data for understanding teacher well-being as seen by Liberian teachers themselves. Four different leading issues that teachers see as affected by low resources are represented. The data collected indicates that the areas affected by low resources interact and create reciprocal influences that have the potential to synergistically work against teachers' efforts to fulfill their jobs. For example, because teachers' basic needs are unmet (such as the ability to find housing after being displaced by war and the ability to afford rent), teachers accrue debt and worry about repayment. This then may lead to a decrease in teaching or the desire to teach, even for qualified teachers, because they find it simply "not worth it" (the majority of females in focus group discussions described this) and/or it may lead to corruption in order to earn needed funds. With teachers then using corrupt activities like "flexible fees" and asking students to essentially buy their grades, the quality of education is decreased: because grades are not earned, the grading system is "unfair," and students are discriminated against and exploited based on their ability to pay.

A second example may be the following: Teachers who are under-qualified in terms of certified teacher training, partly because they cannot afford further training, might struggle with their lesson plans, feel disrespected by their colleagues and feel disrespected by their students because they are not able to afford proper dress. They therefore may experience higher anxiety and lower self-esteem, ultimately affecting their psychosocial well-being.

A third example might be the following: Recently being displaced by the war, a teacher who returns home finds that there is no housing and that he cannot afford to pay rent. Because his salary cannot provide for his family, he must work additional jobs, which leads to less time for lesson preparation. Therefore, he is under prepared for his lessons.

Coping and Resiliency

The proposed model describes the consequences for teachers when they receive limited institutional support. While the issues that teachers described are detailed in the findings, at the same time, this study of well-being reveals the important ways that teachers were coping with these challenges. In addition, it also demonstrated how teachers contributed effectively to helping their students amid a period of widespread change following years of war. Therefore, attention to the ways that teachers promoted their own wellness and directly or indirectly helped their students and communities is also an important component to the conceptual model.

Throughout the interviews, focus group discussions and questionnaires, teachers described their own psychosocial well-being in relation to their jobs. *"Teachers were affected in every way,"* stated one former teacher who at the time of the survey was working as a principal at a missionary school. As survivors of war, these adult caregivers were, like their students, tortured, robbed and kidnapped, and like their students they lost loved ones and property in the wars. Accounts of walking weeks at a time to reach safety while hiding in the bush, often carrying young children and lacking footwear, revealed courageous human stories that otherwise are rarely highlighted in the postwar history of educational development and reconstruction. Teachers shared their stories demonstrating remarkable resilience when forced to run from rebel forces or when they were used as forced labor for their skills in reading and writing. For example, a male teacher from Lofa explained: *"We could write, so we were sometimes forced to be servants to rebel forces…we were forced at gunpoint"*.

"It is a sacrificial job but we do it to move the minds of our youth…for a peaceful future"

When asked why they became teachers, the teachers interviewed overwhelmingly responded with answers related to their commitment to education, and their wish to improve their future. As many stated, *"(I) want to move the minds of the children"*. When probed further, teachers explained that they viewed education as a critical

step toward peaceful development in Liberia. Nearly all of the teachers interviewed talked about the decision they made to become a teacher in terms of its importance to Liberian growth and development. Responses that reflected interest in social and economic development, such as, *"We can help our country grow this way"; "it is our hope for a better future for (our) children"* and *"we do it for the children"* were mentioned frequently. Many teachers used the example of their new president proudly to show how *"education works". "Look at our president, with an education (like President Johnson-Sirleaf), you can become anything you want!"* The majority of teachers interviewed underscored that despite myriad challenges, they were committed to helping to educate the youth and when asked what they imagined to be doing in the future, they answered "teaching".

Teachers trained in Refugee/IDP programs are "Filling the gap":

Teachers trained in the education programs of camps for displaced persons (refugee and/or IDP camps) who have now returned and are working in Liberian schools are making an important contribution to education in postwar Liberia. Overall, 191 (46.6 percent) of the teachers surveyed who are now working in IRC-supported schools had taught while they lived as refugees or IDPs. Of these, 79.7 percent reported that they are sharing their knowledge, skills and training with their fellow teachers. When probed in what ways they are helping their current colleagues, the most frequent responses were as follows:

76 (44.4%) teachers said they were helping their fellow teachers now, particularly those under-trained, with lesson planning (medium and long range)

39 (22.8%) teachers said they were offering mini-workshops and tutoring to other teachers for additional help

35 (20.5%) teachers were helping their colleagues with classroom management skills

30 (17.5%) teachers were specifically helping their fellow teachers learn about pedagogical and teaching skills

Four Overlapping Areas Impacted by Limited Support for Teachers

A. Unmet basic needs and consequent "brain drain"

A1. Frustration with salary procedures including distribution

Teachers report feelings of frustration and distrust toward the process of being paid because the lists used to pay teachers have been unreliable. First, the salary is distributed in Monrovia, so teachers outside the capital—in particular rural teachers—must either travel to Monrovia or have their salary "brokered" by district education officers. For teachers, the costs associated with collecting their salary often were higher than the salary itself, as they had to find reliable transport, food and housing while traveling to Monrovia. Female and older teachers expressed particular fears of this system due to treacherous road conditions during the rainy season and the insecurity of staying outside their homes.

To defray these costs and efforts, the MOE had created a system of distributing salary monitored by the district education officer; however, teachers interviewed reported that the salary distributed by the DEOs was often delayed or did not arrive at all. In many cases, the delivery of their salary was coupled with an additional "broker's fee," charged to the teacher. This fee was reportedly often charged by the DEO for his/her efforts in collecting and distributing the salaries, despite this being included in the DEO job responsibilities.

Salary was also reported as not based on qualifications—in short, teachers stated that no consistent salary scale or regulated system of benefits was used. Of the teachers surveyed (Survey II), 81.2 percent reported that the salary teachers receive does not correspond to their qualifications. Teachers noted that instead of being based on qualifications, the salary was determined by "who you know," "favoritism," "who you are related to," and "whoever is in charge." Among those who responded "no" to whether salary was based on qualifications, private school teachers said "yes" (that salaries were based on qualifications) more frequently than public school teachers (38.9 percent to 27.8 percent, respectively).

The situation of benefits is of concern among Liberian teachers. Teachers interviewed expressed discontent that, despite the long hours they worked, their medical and transportation costs were not supported by the government. For example, in Survey II, 100 percent of teachers indicated "no" in response to whether they thought government provided housing for teachers. Additionally, 96.2 percent of teachers responded "no" when asked if transportation is provided by the government to teachers, and 99 percent responded "no" to whether medical benefits are provided by the government to teachers. In interview data, rural teachers often expressed distrust over the medical benefit deducted on their paychecks. When probed about their specific worries about the lack of benefits, some of the rural teachers, for example, shared that they had little to no knowledge about what health benefits were available. This was confirmed by members of the NTAL, who explained that without the resources available to travel they were unable to reach the rural teaching sites to explain in detail which benefits teachers may have an opportunity to elect.

A2. Low salary affects their abilities to find adequate food and shelter

The results from 68 in-depth interviews with teachers in Lofa, Montserrado and Nimba Counties revealed that teachers identified low resources—either low salary or difficulties with housing—as the biggest challenge to their well-being (see Table 3).

"The salary is small, cannot allow us to meet up with today's life"

Low salary alone was the area that teachers most frequently cited as the biggest challenge to their well-being (65.3 percent). This was then supported by the larger sample of teachers in Survey II. When asked about how their salary affects their teaching, 91.5 percent of the teacher-respondents answered that it affected their teaching in negative ways. Specifically, they attributed their low salary to their inability to meet their basic needs, such as costs for housing and food. The average income for a teacher in Liberia is US$20 per month (UNDP, 2006). Yet this amount is less than the cost of buying a bag of rice—the staple food of Liberia. A bag of rice was reported to cost US$23.00 (2006). Even if a teacher could afford an entire bag of rice, one bag would be insufficient to feed the teacher and his or her family. As one teacher stated, "The salary is very little in that it can't even stay for two days."

The majority of the teacher sample interviewed were married (55/68; 80.9 percent) and also parents (63/67; 94 percent). As adult caregivers, they served as providers for their immediate family and for their extended families. Among the teachers interviewed, for example, the average household size was eight (0–25, N=67), and the average number of children was four (0–12, N=43). Table 4 displays the demographics by county for the teachers interviewed in Lofa, Nimba and Montserrado Counties.

"Finding housing is one my greatest problems… I am not sure where my family will live"

In regard to low resources, the inability to afford housing was specifically discussed as a significant challenge to teachers' perceptions of their well-being. Because teachers are earning on average US$20 per month, they stated that they are required to then spend a disproportionate amount of their earnings on housing (at least 25 percent of their income per month), and "there is no money for family."

Teachers also express concern that the housing they are renting is not reliable. For example, they may be told to vacate without warning if the landlord is able to find a renter to pay a higher price. Further, teachers state they have trouble renting rooms because, by virtue of the reputation of their profession, they are "unappealing to rent to." Finally, they state that the homes where they have rented are overcrowded and "hectic," making it difficult for them to prepare their lessons.

They also reported that because there was no electricity in their homes and they often did not return home until after dark, there was no time to work during daylight hours. While some teachers do use candles to help them read and write at night, they are unable to do this regularly and have stated that this is often frustrating because, as one rural Lofa teacher stated, "There is no money for this." This caused direct consequences on their lesson preparation because "we are left to read and write in the dark…how you can do that?" This situation also added to what they called "eye pain," due in part to the strain of preparing lessons without light and also an accumulation of chalk dust in their eyes from teaching with old blackboards.

Of Survey II respondents, 10.4 percent (11/106) indicated that one trauma experienced by teachers was hunger. Teachers reported that the lack of food often resulted in having to teach while hungry. At the time of this study, teachers in Liberia were not included in the World Health Organization's school feeding program. Participant observation data suggested that teachers did not have enough money to purchase food to eat during the day. During one observation at a rural private school in Lofa County, for example, a teacher demonstrated where teachers sit while the students eat lunch. She remarked, *"We make sure the students are watched, but we don't eat, we are not allowed to eat the food, it is brought in for students only."* It also affected the way they were able to teach. Distracted and weakened, teachers discussed how hunger impacted their ability to endure the long hours standing, as well as their abilities to concentrate and deliver a lesson. A male teacher wrote, "Sometimes I feel reluctant in teaching the subject properly because I am hungry, weakened in the classroom." *"sometimes I feel reluctant in teaching the subject properly because I am hungry, weakened in the classroom".*

A3. Lack of qualified teacher-colleagues

The third most frequent concern among teachers interviewed (29.5%) related to the lack of trained teachers who were then working in Liberia. Teachers who did not have training and therefore did not hold teacher certification expressed desire to further their education and receive "proper professional training." "How can we teach without learning ourselves?" questioned a rural teacher whose high school education was "not enough to keep me up to things."

Many teachers who had obtained formal teacher training and held certification were concerned that having unqualified teachers without even basic training in the classrooms might pose difficulties with parents and affect how their profession is viewed overall. As an example, a 38-year-old Gola-speaking teacher from Montserrado County with a certificate to teach high school students wrote about the challenges of having untrained teachers:

"The (untrained) teacher, they don't plan, because they cannot even go into the curriculum and they find it really difficult…they don't have control over the materials…and that embarrasses the teachers and us teachers too, see if you are working with such people in the institution (that) automatically makes people see you in the same line…. (Even if) you are a trained teachers, they see you all in the same line…it embarrasses you…they (the parents) all see you the same way."

A4. Concern for the future and profession of teaching

The "brain drain" of Liberia's teaching force was a serious concern among teachers and other educational staff. Key informant interviews with ministers, principals and teacher training staff revealed that the bulk of trained teachers have left the field for what teachers describe as "greener pastures." According to teachers interviewed, many teachers have left teaching or even Liberia to find better-paying jobs elsewhere. This is particularly the case in higher education. While no specific data exists to determine how many teachers have left the teaching field in recent years for better-paying positions, interviews with university and teacher training institute staff reveal that the number of teachers pursuing higher education has decreased. It was reported that the number of university-level students training to become teachers at the Teachers College, University of Liberia (Liberia's only public university) was among the lowest enrollment in comparison to the other academic colleges.

"Our field (teaching) is a dumping ground" Over 90 percent of teachers interviewed reported that they felt respected by parents and their community members for being teachers. However, almost all teachers interviewed stated that they felt teaching as a profession is not respected in Liberia overall. The difference was articulated by an experienced teacher in rural Lofa County:

"The community regards us very highly knowing that they are taking care of their children… but (in terms of national respect) no teacher has that good feeling. Teaching as our career now, the younger ones are leaving the teaching field because the salary is not impressive".

For this alone, they demonstrated concern that the teaching field has a precarious future: *"Just look at our low salaries"* one teacher argued, *"does that look like respect?"* A Monrovia teacher explained the situation of teachers leaving the field as follows:

"Let's focus on one point. Teachers are people who work very hard and at the end what they earn cannot sustain and serve food for their family. The job they do, it is causing some to not specialize in teaching" (Male teacher, Montserrado county)

Often the phrase "if you want die poor, be a teacher" was stated in interviews with teachers about the status of teachers in Liberia today. While teachers feel that the teaching field has not been respected for a long time, they are hopeful that the new change in government will bring on changes for teachers:

"We are looked down upon. The Liberian government did not care about teachers in the country. I do not know why they are not respected, teacher salary is small… still we are looking to this new government for this change" (Male teacher, Lofa County)

Combined with these concerns from teachers were wavering policies surrounding qualifications and teacher training standards. As a result of the wars, both formal and informal training institutes were set up to help train teachers. Now in the reconstruction phase, there is debate about which degrees "count." It was widely agreed in meetings and in teacher interviews, however, that the field of teaching must be held to professional standards. *"We are professionals, just anybody should not become a teacher... we need to train a teacher and then hold that teacher to professional standards"* (male teacher, Montserrado County). In discussion groups with principals, teacher trainers, university faculty and ministry members, there was serious concern for the future of the teaching profession if these standards were not met. As a female teacher from Bong County asked, *"Who will our future teachers be if we don't show the professional respect for the job?"*

B. Potential to increase corruption and professional misconduct

B1. Bribery and "flexible fees"

In the in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, teachers, education staff, ministers and faculty members report that corruption and severe professional misconduct in schools are a problem throughout Liberia. Examples of these include passing a student in exchange for sexual favors, making exams too difficult and then charging students to take a make-up exam, charging students fees for teachers' time, and bribing students for answers on national exams.

Although there are clearly other contributing factors, the lack of professional support and adequate financial compensation for teachers appears related; 11.3 percent of the 106 questionnaire respondents talked directly about how the low salary was affecting their teaching with relation to corruption. Teachers stated the following:

"The salary I earn affects the way I teach by not making me to be effective and I don't want to teach well. Because, if (a teacher is) teaching well, more students will make a pass and then (a teacher) wouldn't be able to collect money for grades"

"It affects the teaching as a trained teacher because of low salary. [A teacher] make the lesson so hard that the students can not understand (the teacher) so (they) give them make-up. You have to pay for the make-up".

B2. Professional misconduct and abuse of female students and teachers

Again, although it is only one contributing factor, the teachers interviewed made linkages between low salary and professional support and the abuse and exploitation of female students by teachers. Examples were given of teachers exchanging "sex for grades." One teacher states, for example: "The low salary cannot make you feel

like an educator. The reason is beyond control that teachers can be encouraged to take money from students or make love with female students."

Interviews with principals and education officers supervising teachers revealed that they found it difficult to enforce a school's code of conduct because they were worried about teacher retention. Further, during focus group discussions female teachers reported that sexual bribery was not limited to student–teacher relationships, but happens too among teacher–principal relationships. Females reported that female teachers sometimes are approached by male superiors and coerced into sexual favors in return for retaining their jobs.

B2.1 Risks to female teachers

Interviews and focus groups, along with participant observation in meetings with MOE officials, the NTAL staff and leaders of teacher training institutes, all revealed concern related to the protection of female students and teachers. The importance of protecting female students cannot be overstated given documented risks (see, for example, Healing Classrooms, IRC, 2006) and continues to be of prime concern in Liberia overall. This study was specifically concerned with issues directly impacting teachers, and the focus of questions and discussion was therefore about teachers. This data highlights that the protection needs of women teachers in schools is an important, yet under-explored, issue.

B2.2 Protection from sexual abuse seen as the biggest risk to female teachers

The majority of teachers in Survey II reported that the greatest risks to female teachers were related to protection. This included sexual harassment, sexual abuse and sexual bribery. Similar issues were reported by both males and females (see Table 5). Teachers explained that sexual abuse and/or harassment against female teachers might come from male colleagues, such as fellow teachers or principals, or sometimes older male students. For example, a male teacher from Nimba wrote the following:

"there are risks for beautiful female teachers…the principal would like to love teachers (like them) before employing them".

As further examples, female teachers, both also from Nimba, wrote:

"they (female teachers) are intimidated by the male students and sometimes sexually harassed by administration at school"; and

"female teachers are overlooked and when they talk they are attacked".

Notably, the second most frequent response, also from both males and females, was that female teachers were subjected to being disrespected and/or insulted by parents and students. This was often discussed in focus groups and interviews. Male and female teachers both overwhelmingly stated that the females possess attributes that are "caring and motherly," qualities they believed were important for early childhood classes, and they stated that older students showed disrespect to female teachers. For example, a male teacher surveyed from Montserrado County wrote the following: "The female teacher(s) are most of the time insulted by students and not respected by students." The data does not imply that all female teachers are disrespected by their students, nor that efforts should not be made to increase the numbers of women teachers; as highlighted earlier, most data revealed that it was important to all teachers to increase the number of female teachers employed.

B2.3 Male teachers reported higher concerns for risk of falling into bribery than female teachers

In response to questions about the risks to male teachers, the answers were quite different than regarding the risks to female teachers. From the data collected in Survey II, only a few male and no female teachers considered disrespect and/or insults as a risk to male teachers. Instead, the second highest responses (23/106; 21.7 percent) among males were of physical threats from parents, students and/or school staff. Interestingly, while both female and male teachers were concerned about protection

from sexual abuse for female teachers, many male teachers and few female teachers were concerned about being physically threatened.

Of note is that some male teachers themselves reported a risk to male teachers is being "tempted" or "falling into" acts of corruption. This category was broadly conceived and included acts ranging from sexual abuse to charging students money for grades. Upon further explanation in interviews and focus groups, it might be interpreted that because male teachers teach higher grade levels in Liberia, there may in fact be more opportunities for corruption in higher levels in terms of "negotiating" with students by charging them "flexible fees." This is one possible explanation; however, this study did not generate data to substantiate this relationship.

B3. Female teachers may protect against corrupt behavior in schools

Of the teachers interviewed, 100 percent (68/68) believed there was a need to employ more female teachers, and 84 percent of those surveyed (Survey II) answered "yes."[12] When probed, they explained that females, more than males, possess the attributes needed to care for younger students. "They are mothers, they know better, how to care for our (kindergarten) children," said one male teacher from Nimba County. Interestingly, Survey II revealed that male teachers (10/70; 14.2 percent) more often than female teachers (1/36; 2.8 percent) believed that with the presence of female teachers there was a potential to decrease corruption in school. For example, male teachers from Montserrado and Lofa, respectively, stated the following:

"Yes, there is a need to employ more female teachers. Some reasons is that female teachers are strong and hard workers when it comes to disciplinary training on the student mostly the boys students are afraid to even go around that persons to paid money for grades than the man."

"Yes, I think it is necessary to employ more female teachers. I do believe these female teachers are mothers who know about their children better than male teachers. Female teachers are also people that don't receive money for grades. Like most male instructors, I believe if these females are employed the act of many payments to teachers will be cut off or minimized."

It was clear and encouraging to hear that male and female teachers recognize the importance of the contributions of both male and female teachers to the education of Liberian youth. At the same time, the gender stereotypes and assumptions that were articulated by many of the teacher-respondents may suggest a pattern of gender "norms" particular to the Liberian context at the time of the study. In many cases, for example, the common perception of women as nurturing and caring was used in explanations to describe the importance of their roles as teachers, rather than, for example, their professional and intellectual capacities. The inauguration of the country's first woman president, as well as a significant number of high-level women ministers and state officials, is likely to help challenge such problematic stereotypes, which fail to account for women's professional and leadership abilities. However, there is clearly important work to do in the context of teacher education and professional development to help to generate new understandings of the complementary—but equal—roles that male and female teachers can play in schools.

C. Inability to support one's own family and to invest in personal and professional development

C1. Inability to provide for family members, especially children's school fees

Of the Survey II teacher-respondents who expressed how the low salary was affecting (their) lives, most frequently answered in relation to their ability to provide for their families. Of the teachers surveyed, 48.1 percent answered that the low salary affected their life negatively specifically because they were not able to

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12 Among the four who responded "no" were men who explained that women "would leave teaching for the medical field" because the incentive for teaching was low, thereby underscoring the inverse relationship between low salary and motivation among female teachers.

"The salary that I earn affect(s) my life in so many ways… no money to pay my children's school fees even in sickness and transportation"

provide for their family and especially because they were not able to pay their own children's school fees. As selected examples among many: one female teacher reported that her children "do not attend (school) properly because of little money," and a male teacher wrote that "because we are teachers, we cannot take good care of our children, we cannot educate our children."

Teachers also referred to the consequence of debt accrual associated with low pay in their profession. They explained that because their salary did not provide enough to buy food and pay rent, they were often caught in a cycle of debt where they had to borrow money in the community to meet their needs and caused them to have to sell important family property. To compensate for their low salaries and/or to pay back debts, teachers also reported that they were working multiple jobs. Most of the teachers interviewed from the rural communities were engaged in subsistence farming outside teaching hours. In Lofa County, for example, over 90 percent were also farmers, spending at least five hours in school teaching and then another four to five hours in the afternoon and early evening farming in order to survive. Most of their farming involved cultivating swamp rice to help feed their families rather than raising products for profitable sales, such as in a marketplace.

C1.1 Low salary affects female and male teachers similarly with relation to inability to provide for families

Female teachers also stated that given the low salary, they would be wise to earn more by "making business" (selling goods in the community markets). Female teachers felt that given their responsibilities maintaining their households, their time was better spent managing household jobs such as childcare and meal preparation and selling in the marketplace, which involved fewer hours and more profit, than by meeting the responsibilities required for teaching. In addition, rural female teachers shared that the dangerous travel conditions, particularly during Liberia's six-month rainy season, caused them to question whether—given the low salary—working in schools far from their homes was worth their efforts. Overall, both male and female teachers provided similar explanations when surveyed about how low salary affects their lives. In Survey II, both responded most frequently 74.8 percent (77/103) in relation to their inability to provide the basics (food, shelter, children's school fees) for their families. Within the female survey respondents, this accounted for 77.8 percent (28/36), and within males it accounted for 63.6 percent (49/77).

C.2 Institutional influences negatively affected teachers' notions of their own psychosocial health

Teachers are war survivors

Teachers suffered from the long years of war in ways both similar to and distinct from their students. Like their students, they survived frequent death threats, abduction, burning and looting of their homes and starvation. "Some of the ways that teachers experienced trauma was the way our husbands were killed and all of (our) things went away," stated one female teacher. Similar to their students' vulnerabilities to intrusive memories of their losses, teachers too reflected that it was important to address their psychosocial well-being, for their own sake and for the sake of their students:

"(Teachers) are traumatized too… yes, yes they are. Especially some of them, they lost their family, they lost their properties. Even sometimes they may be in class, all of their mind can reflect on those things they lost. While you are explaining the class you are thinking on different things and look (you) forget. While you look forgetting, the students are forgotten, so they are (then) traumatized more." (male teacher, Nimba County)

By virtue of their teacher identities, they were often specifically targeted. "Former students might have recognized us because we gave them a grade, if it was bad, well we could have been shot right away," explained one male teacher from Monrovia. "After this war we were faced with trauma students it took long time to work with the children to be de-traumatized."

When interviewed, teachers unanimously stated that workshops on conflict resolution, trauma healing and peace education would be of benefit to teachers themselves. However, when they were asked about their

well-being, the majority of teachers emphasized that it is the lack of financial resources in their current lives that negatively affects their well-being.

Data from the self-reported, semi-structured questionnaires revealed that 91 percent of the teachers stated the salary they earn negatively impacts their well-being. Of these, 52 percent reported worry, anxiety, fear and anger with relation to their jobs because they are unable to provide for their family and, in particular, pay for their children's school fees. When asked, "What are some of the ways that teachers have experienced trauma?" 26 percent of the teachers responded with "low salary," and these were among answers such as death of a family member, homes burned and property looted.

Interview data also revealed that teachers felt demoralized and embarrassed because they did not have enough money to buy "proper clothing" to "look like a teacher should look." Without the financial means to buy clothes, including shoes, teachers felt that they did not represent themselves as teachers well, and this often made them feel badly. "Students make fun of us, they call us names because we don't look good," said one teacher. One female teacher stated that, rather than appear in the same clothes daily, she would rather not come to class at all. "It is not right, that as employed teachers we cannot even dress properly."

D. Impact of low resources to pedagogy and learning content—further exacerbated by lack of teacher participation in policy and curriculum development

D1. Lack of teacher participation in curriculum and policy development

Interviews with teachers, principals and education professionals at the teacher training institutes and at the NTAL revealed that there existed little opportunity for teachers to participate in the very policies developed for them to follow. The NTAL was conceived by the Liberian government to act on behalf of the interests of the teachers, such as to explain benefit (medical) packages. The NTAL is also tasked with lobbying for teacher issues, such as teacher compensation, teacher training and the promotion of teacher development throughout Liberia. The NTAL's ability to function and perform daily operational responsibilities, such as to reach out to teachers throughout Liberia, however, were limited by the lack of resources available. Without the transport to travel to rural Liberia, for example, NTAL staff were unable to explain health benefit opportunities to the teachers or to hear teachers' issues with these policies in order to relay information back to the MOE. "The war has kept us down," stated one NTAL administrator, "how can we operate without any budget?"

D2. Lack of teacher participation in curriculum development affects "buy-in"

Teachers also spoke about their lack of participation in the policies and procedures that directly impacted their lives. One very experienced male principal in Lofa County, for example, remarked that "getting us and our points of view heard about what we teach, well that really doesn't happen." He further explained that for many years he had been interested in "giving us teachers a voice in things"; however, these efforts proved problematic given years of disruption and unclear mechanisms for how to include teachers' involvement in curricula and policy development during, after and in Liberia's early reconstruction phase.

"Why would I teach that curricula?"…

"That (Human Rights Curricula) makes no sense to us teachers!"

It was also observed that the incorporation of teacher experience into new curricula varied. For example, during the time of this study, a new Human Rights Curriculum was being developed, which was intended to be tailored to Liberia's postwar context. This was seen as an important part of the postwar efforts toward peace building and child protection, particularly against abuse, including the worst forms of child labor. As part of this effort, many international nongovernmental organizations were also advocating for programs to help students and teachers learn specifically about Children's Rights.

During the in-depth interviews, teachers were asked about the importance of including new curricula, such as HIV/AIDS prevention curricula, and the Human Rights Curriculum in their classrooms. The majority of teachers interviewed regarded HIV/AIDS curricula as important for upper primary and secondary students to learn about. However, by contrast there was divided opinion about the relevance of the Human Rights Curriculum,

particularly as it related to child rights. Many educational staff, including principals, administrators and teachers throughout Liberia, expressed discontent with the implementation of the Human Rights Curriculum in their classrooms because they felt it did not make sense.

"The Human Rights/Child's Rights curriculum makes things harder, Many times children ask for rights, 'this is my right,' 'that is my right,' (but) if they are (taught) this, they will begin to disrespect them (teachers); at times we don't teach in detail." (male teacher, Monrovia).

"…The Child Rights Curriculum makes things harder for us, many times children ask for rights, If (we) teacher them they will begin to disrespect them…(therefore) at times we don't teach in details." (male teacher, Lofa)

In a focus group discussion with 26 teachers and principals living in a rural district in Lofa County, teachers expressed their discomfort with the implementation of the Human Rights Curriculum in their classrooms. As one principal stated, "This is harmful because it ignores that children have duties." Another principal said that teachers should have the right to teach children duties and that "this Children's Rights is getting in the way." About six teachers raised their hands to comment that they found this movement bad and that it was not good for teachers. They spoke about how the Children's Rights movement was not helpful to teachers and caused them a problem in terms of teaching children about discipline. Without their participation in the design of the program, many teachers felt that this was an imported curriculum, made no sense in their classrooms and was in fact causing them more difficulties in the classroom: "This is not how we do things, how we teach things," stated one male teacher. However, there were also many teachers who supported the use of human rights and the particular focus on child rights in the classroom.

At the time of these interviews, there was a large meeting of various international and national actors interested in Liberian education. During the formal introductions at the commencement of the meeting, the acting president of the NTAL introduced herself by telling the "participatory meeting of curricula developers" about how the NTAL had not initially been invited. She explained that development of a new curriculum must take into account the views and realities of teachers. She reiterated that the teaching community is central to a project like the one proposed. She stated that she supported human rights education and believed this was part of creating a "new day" in Liberia (March 14, 2006). While it is only one example, this scenario may help to illustrate how teacher participation in the development of curricula can contribute directly to the "buy in" from teachers, as well as to the relevance of the curriculum to teachers implementing it in their classrooms.

D3. Lack of resources decreased teachers' time to adequately prepare lessons

Teachers described how the lack of resources had profound impact on their ability to successfully plan and deliver their material. As teachers explained, they had little time to prepare for their classes because they were busy "trying to get enough money to live." As was previously mentioned, to increase their earnings, the majority of teachers held multiple jobs. In the urban areas, this included private tutoring or working in multiple schools. Most of the rural teachers reported that they worked in school during the mornings and early afternoons, and engaged in farming in the late afternoons and early evenings.

Citing the often six-hour day at a single school, compounded with either a second job tutoring or teaching for two hours, or farming "after school" for hours, teachers stated that their full schedules did not permit them time for lesson planning until the late hours. Without the money to purchase candles, or in situations where teachers lived in crowded rooms with more than four family members, finding light and space for lesson preparation posed further challenges. One teacher, for example, wrote in relation to his ability to teach: "The

salary I earn affects the way I teach in that the time I have to make a lesson plan, I have to take that time to do other works to earn money and take care of the family." As a second example, another teacher wrote, "The salary I earn affects the way I teach. Because at the time I am to do my lesson plan for the next day, I will be doing something else for money."

Differences existed in explanations between males and females with relation to the issue of low resources and time to prepare lessons, in part because of their different work responsibilities. Urban male teachers were busy working at two or three schools, and rural male teachers were often splitting their time between school and their farms. Female teachers, as described earlier, were busy with their teaching jobs and carrying out multiple family responsibilities, such as food preparation, childcare, marketing and financial management of family income.

D4. Lack of teaching materials affected teachers' abilities to prepare and teach lessons

Teachers interviewed stated that the lack of teaching materials negatively affected their well-being, and it can be seen that both cause and effect (lack of teaching materials and negative well-being) impact negatively on the quality of education for Liberian children and youth. Following low resources, this was the second most frequent area (28.1 percent interviewed rated this as affecting their well-being). This included books, paper and reference materials that were available to teachers. Significant differences between public and private schools were noted during participant observation and in interview discussions with teachers and principals. Private schools, including missionary schools, appeared to have more reference materials and teaching supplies for the teachers. Overall, however, the long years of fighting resulted in the destruction of school texts and halted development of new curriculum and teaching materials. Liberian teachers from both public and private schools expressed concern that the materials they were using were outdated and that the books needed to be updated. According to teachers, the lack of materials affected their teaching in their subject. Specifically, they were concerned that the math, science and language arts that they were teaching did not account for current and relevant information. As one example, a secondary education history teacher, when referring to his lack of materials on current world events, asked the following: "How can I teach with something that is no longer the case?"

School furniture was a further concern among both urban and rural teachers. School supplies and school furniture varied according to each school's support from its community and from outside donors. In a district in Lofa County, for example, one public school had no chairs, and teachers had to stand from between three to five hours at one time. These teachers taught in overcrowded classrooms of more than 70 students who, lacking chairs, shared logs; the teachers talked about their concern for the health of their students and themselves. "Nobody (students) can sit very long…we are tired, our students are tired, it hurts us everywhere." In a public school in urban Monrovia, teachers shared desks and chairs with each other. "We take turns sitting," stated one teacher. She described the difficulty that ensued when she and another teacher had both stood for long hours and were tired.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study was based on a relatively small sample of Liberian teachers and was primarily a qualitative study that did not aim at large-scale generalizability. However, the findings do warrant attention from policy makers and program developers because of the insights and policy directions they can provide. These may be relevant not only to the Liberian context, but also to other fragile, post-conflict contexts in which the IRC and other agencies are supporting educational development.

The following recommendations have been generated through discussion of the data and the findings with education specialists in the field. The recommendations also reflect the overarching guidelines for education in post-conflict and fragile states articulated in the INEE Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies, Chronic Crises and Early Reconstruction. Overall, the recommendations are proposed in the spirit of the study's overall aim to somehow make a difference for teachers in Liberia and beyond.

Recommendation 1: Advocacy and Support for Policy Development on Teacher Compensation

The 1966 UNESCO/ILO Recommendation Concerning the Status of Teachers[13] highlights the right of teachers to decent compensation for their work, and this commitment to adequate remuneration of teachers is reiterated in the INEE Minimum Standards. The data of the study indicate the extent of the impact of the low levels of support provided to teachers, and especially the impacts on the provision of quality education for Liberian children. The study provides impetus to all education actors to construct policies, identify resources and develop implementation plans to ensure professional recognition to deserving teachers. Coordinated efforts have to be made from different agencies; the government, and especially the MOE, has to take the lead on policy development and ensure that the structures and channels through which the resources will flow are clear. In the long term, sustainable government financing is required for the recurrent costs of teacher salaries—a budget line that should be set to increase as more teachers can be absorbed into the system to meet the Education for All targets to which Liberia is committed. However, in the shorter term, donor and international finance institution support may also be required. NGOs have an important role to play in terms of technical support for policy development, as well as for support in implementation. Although it is clear that communities—parents, PTA members and others—are already struggling to survive, they too may be able to contribute financially and/or in kind to supporting teachers as a means toward ensuring that quality teachers are secured for their children's education. Policy dialogue is required among these actors—as well as teachers themselves—in order to develop acceptable packages of support that do attract and retain well-qualified teacher candidates to the profession.

Recommendation 2: Professional development and orientation

As highlighted in the Healing Classrooms Initiative framework, teacher motivation is not only financial; professional development and opportunities for personal learning and growth also play an important role. Efforts should be made to ensure that teachers are able to benefit from quality in-service training, as well as with ongoing follow-up through supportive monitoring and supervision. Establishing systems for school-based professional development is particularly important in today's Liberia, where transport and communications are challenging and teacher training institutions are only gradually reestablishing their staff and programs. Training and supporting head teachers and mentor teachers to provide pedagogical leadership in schools is one strategy that can be supported by NGOs, but optimum sustainability requires the commitment of the MOE to the official recognition of nominated mentors within a graduated career and pay structure for teachers.

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13 http://www.unesco.org/education/information/nfsunesco/pdf/TEACHE_E.PDF.

Recommendations 3: Recruitment and Support of Women Teachers

Strategies to recruit and retain women teachers should be developed to promote gender equality in education and to contribute toward creating safe, protective and conducive learning environments for girls and boys. Again, government policy development may be supported by donor funding allocations, as well as by the technical support and possible initial implementation (and piloting) by NGOs. Teacher training institutions are also critical stakeholders that need to ensure that their learning environments and training programs are gender responsive and meet the needs and perspectives of women as well as men. The IRC, for example, is working on complementary strategies with the recruitment and capacity building of female teaching assistants, with options for them to complete education and enter teacher training, as well as reaching out to female secondary school graduates to attract them to the profession. Building on the attention that is focused on women's leadership in Liberia, media and communications initiatives to raise awareness of the critical role of women in education constitute another possible strategy.

Recommendation 4: Further Research on Teachers and Teacher Support

Such a limited study is bound to raise many new questions, and it is clear that further research on the topic of teacher well-being and its impact on quality education is warranted.

For example, with specific regard to the issues of sexual abuse and exploitation, the findings suggest that much is to be learned from further exploration of male teachers' perceptions of the factors that "tempt" them into behaviors such as exchanging sex for grades. A theoretical and conceptual lens of "masculinities" may generate significant insights relevant to teacher trainers and policy makers.

This study sample was comprised of teachers working in Liberia at the time that the research was conducted, and it does not include teachers who had left their jobs earlier. A future study, for example, might investigate both teachers who are currently employed and those who used to teach but are no longer employed in the profession.

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Annex: Data Tables

Annex 1: Data Tables

Table 2. Teacher profiles by three counties (IRC-supported schools); Survey I respondents

	Lofa	Nimba	Montserrado	Total
Sex				
Male N (%)	276 (90.2)	59 (85.5)	23 (69.7)	358 (87.7)
Female N (%)	30 (9.8)	10 (14.5)	10 (30.3)	50 (12.3)
Total N (%)	**306 (75.1)**	**69 (16.9)**	**33 (8.1)**	**408**
County Taught while Displaced				
IDP/Liberia	94 (51.9)	0	1 (50)	95 (49.7)
Guinea	66 (36.5)	4 (50)	1 (50)	71 (37.2)
Sierra Leone	20 (11)	0	0	20 (10.5)
Ivory Coast	1 (.6)	3 (37.5)	0	4 (2.1)
Ghana	0	1 (12..5)	0	1 (.5)
Total	**181 (94.8)**	**8 (4.2)**	**2 (1.0)**	**191**
Liberian teaching certificate				
Yes	128 (47.2)	34 (59.6)	14 (43.8)	176 (48.9)
No	143 (52.8)	23 (40.4)	18 (56.3)	184 (51.1)
Type of certificate				
Bachelor (BSc)	0	0	1 (7.7)	1 (.6)
Associate's (AA)	10 (8.6)	1 (3)	1 (7.7)	12 (7.4)
A	0	1 (3)	1 (7.7)	2 (1.2)
B	26 (22.4)	11 (33.3)	5 (38.5)	42 (25.9)
C	78 (67.2)	20 (60.6)	4 (30.8)	102 (63)

Table 3. Results of Card Sort activity for areas affecting well-being, ordered by most to least*

AREA (card) Affecting well being	Ordered (from most challenging to least)	% Rated
Low Salary	1	(32/48) 65.3
Housing	2	(12/40) 30.0
Lack of Teacher Training/ Unqualified Teachers	3	(13/44) 29.5
Lack of Classroom Materials	4	(11/43) 17.1
Difficulties Managing Classroom	5	(10/37) 28.6

* Note, The card sort activity was optional and resulted in differences for the totals for each card. Teachers who completed the card sort activity were always given the option of using blank cards so they could write in their own responses of other areas, etc. Therefore, the N and % rated reflects the frequency of responses for that ordered position for the five cards most frequently selected; further, teachers may have only chosen to order two or three cards so not every card was always included in their ordering

Table 4. Household demographics of Liberian teachers interviewed by county: Large households surviving on average salary of $20 per month.

	Lofa	Nimba	Montserrado	Total
Sex N(%) Male Female	N=24 21 (87.5) 3 (12.5)	N=22 17 (77.3) 5 (22.7)	N=22 12 (54.5) 10 (45.5)	N=68 50 (73.5) 18 (26.5)
Average Age of teacher (x, range)	N=24 46.4 (26-63)	N=22 42.5 (33-53)	N=22 39.5 (20-62)	N=68 43 (20-63)
Marital Status N(%) Married Widowed Single Divorced	N=24 21 (87.5) 0 2 (8.3) 1 (4.2)	N=22 19 (86.4) 0 1 (4.5) 2 (9.1)	N=22 15 (68.2) 1 (4.5) 2 (9.1) 4 (18.2)	N=68 55 (80.9) 1 (1.5) 5 (7.4) 7 (10.3)
Number of Children (x, range)	N=23 5 (0-12)	N=22 5 (1-10)	N=22 3 (0-9)	N=67 4 (0-12)
Number of Household Members (x, range)	N=23 7 (1-18)	N=22 10 (3-25)	N=22 7 (0-17)	N=67 8 (0-25)

Table 5. Survey II teacher responses to risks to female teachers

Risks to Female Teachers (Survey Question: What are some of the risks to female teachers?)	Mentioned in Female Responses N=36	Mentioned in Male Responses N=70	Total N=106
Protection (sexual harassment, abuse, sexual bribery)	13 (36.1)	15 (21.4)	28 (26.4)
Disrespected or Insulted by Parents and Students	4 (11.1)	5 (7.1)	9 (8.5)
Low Resources (basic needs left unmet, no future earning potential)	2 (5.6)	4 (5.7)	6 (5.7)
Forced to Leave Children at Home (unaccompanied)	2 (5.6)	0	2 (1.9)

Table 6. Survey II responses to reasons why more female teachers should be employed

Reasons Why More Female Teachers Should Be Employed (Survey Question: Why should more female teachers become employed?)	Mentioned in Female Teacher Responses N=36	Mentioned in Male Teacher Responses N=70	Total N=106
Females have attributes that are helpful especially to younger children (caring, patient, "motherly")	18 (50)	31 (44.3)	49 (46.2)
To encourage young females to go or stay in school	5 (13.9)	9 (12.9)	14 (13.2)
To decrease corruption	1 (2.8)	10 (14.0)	11 (10.3)
To encourage gender balance, gender equity	4 (11.1)	5 (7.1)	9 (8.5)

Table 7. Survey II responses to risks to male teachers

Risks to Male Teachers (Survey Question: What are some of the risks to male teachers?)	Mentioned in Female Responses N=36	Mentioned in Male Responses N=70	Total N=106
Low Resources (basic needs left unmet, no future earning potential)	5 (13.9)	19 (27.1)	24 (22.6)
Physical threats by parents and/or students	6 (16.7)	17 (24.3)	23 (21.7)
Tempted into corruption (abuse, bribery)	2 (5.6)	17 (24.3)	19(17.9)
Insulted or disrespected by school administrators, parents, students	0	5 (7.1)	5 (4.7)

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