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Empowering children's social ecology: Reenvisioning postconflict reconstruction and education in rural Liberia

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EMPOWERING CHILDREN'S SOCIAL ECOLOGY:
REENVISIONING POSTCONFLICT RECONSTRUCTION AND EDUCATION IN
RURAL LIBERIA

An Abstract of a Thesis
Submitted
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

Kristen N. McNutt
University of Northern Iowa
May 2019

ABSTRACT

Despite the Accra Comprehensive Peace Agreement calling the end to Liberia's back-to-back civil wars in 2003, Liberia's peace remains fragile with a high number of out of school children, especially in rural communities. As an indicator of state fragility, rural education needs to be a priority in post-conflict reconstruction. This thesis emerged to support the nongovernmental organization, Supporting Programs in Community Empowerment (SPICE), an emerging Liberian-based nongovernmental organization.

The methodologies for this action research project was a needs assessment, which resulted in the development of the *Needs Assessment Report: Paving the Way for the Future of Liberian Children*. Through open-ended interviews of governmental and nongovernmental organization leaders and community forums held at rural schools, the needs assessment identified programming goals, objectives, and strategies for SPICE's programming. This thesis reviews a brief history of Liberia as a fragile state; needs assessment methodologies; and the development of SPICE's programming with an emphasis on the development of the Child-Centered Social-Ecological Model for Postconflict Reconstruction.

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This Study by: Kristen N. McNutt

Entitled: Empowering Children's Social Ecology, Reenvisioning Postconflict

Reconstruction and Education in Rural Liberia

has been approved as meeting the thesis requirement for the

Degree of Master of Arts

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DEDICATION

Firstly, I dedicate this thesis in the memory of my dear friend Eweka Seville's brother, Martin Z. Seville. Martin, born on August 8, 1989, died on May 8, 2016, during my second trip to Liberia from malaria. Martin was one of my drivers during my first trip to Liberia. He drove my Liberian colleagues and me to rural communities to conduct research for this project. He was a clever young man and had a bright future in front of him. My trips to Liberia will never be the same without seeing his smiling face.

Secondly, as one of my greatest advocates, I dedicate this project to my mother, Debra D. McNutt for her commitment to my education. I would not be achieving my second master's degree without her. She has helped me to overcome my dyslexia and visual learning disabilities. Even when my ninth-grade high school counselor said I did not have what it takes for college, she unconditionally supported my goal of attending university and pursuing graduate studies. I am so lucky to have a mother that has fought for my educational rights. I would not be here without her.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Looking up, the tallest and the shortest person will see the skies at the same time.

-Liberian Proverb

Michelle Obama, the former First Lady of the United States, at the launch of her initiative, Let Girls Learn, passionately proclaimed:

As I've traveled the world, I've seen time and again how our girls are pushed to the very bottom of their societies. I can't accept the barriers that keep them from realizing their promise. And I just can't walk away from them... These girls are our change makers, our future doctors and teachers, and entrepreneurs. They're our dreamers and our visionaries who could change the world as we know it (as cited in Adams & Gerber, 2018).

In the CNN documentary, *We Will Rise: Michelle Obama's Mission to Educate Girls Around the World* documented Obama's commitment to educating girls and the struggles that girls face in attaining an education.

The call to educate girls is vital for women's and girl's rights throughout the world, especially in post-conflict states, such as Liberia. The international community has proclaimed:

- "If you educate a woman, you educate a family, if you educate a girl, you educate the future," stated Queen Rania of Jordan, (cited by Global Peace Foundation, 2014).
- "Educate a girl, and good things happen to the family." declared, Isha Sesay, CNN correspondent in the documentary, *We Will Rise: Michelle Obama's Mission to Educate Girls Around the World* (Adams & Gerber, 2018).
- "If you educate a girl you educate a whole nation," asserted CARE International (Abbas, 2017).
- "When given the chance, girls can change the world" announced PLAN

International (n.d.) on their girls' education campaign webpage.

The calls to educate girls for the betterment of their families, nations, and the future has brought attention to the global pattern of girls' limited access to education.

Liberia's postconflict reconstruction has responded to these calls, which was seen in the Girls' Education National Policy was passed. In 2006, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf introduced the policy when she declared, "The education of the girl child in Liberia is a critical and an urgent matter. It is actually about human rights and human dignity. It is about peace and the development of the country. That's why achieving universal primary education for all girls and boys is one of the Millennium Development Goals set forth by the member states of the United Nations" (United Nation Girls' Education Initiative, 2006, para 3). UNICEF summarized the policy, which called for:

- Meeting Millennium Development Goal 2 by providing free and compulsory primary school;
- Reducing secondary school fees by 50 percent;
- Recruiting and training more female teachers;
- Providing counseling in schools for girls;
- Ending the impunity of teachers who commit sexual abuse and assault of students;
- Offering life skills education at schools to raise self-esteem so girls can say no to sexual abuse;
- Increasing the availability of small-scale scholarships for girls;
- Strengthening health systems in schools;
- Opening new parent teacher associations and girls' clubs;
- And promoting adult literacy. (United Nation Girls' Education Initiative, 2006, para 3).

The National Policy, like the calls of the international development community, reflects the rights of the girl child that is granted through Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention of the Rights of the Child.

However, within calls and policies, girls' education is seen to be the answer to many societal ills. The education of girls is seen as a solution that can bring betterment to girls and their families, communities, nations, and futures. These are big claims that have left me asking: Does girls' education initiatives place the onus of gender equity on the shoulders of girls? What happens to girls when they leave the safety of school and enter back into patriarchal environments? What and how are social changes taking place that sustain women's and girl's equality and equity? Lastly, where does this leave boys?

While this project will not seek to answer all the above questions, they do open a space to critically examine the "to educate a girl" ethos and offer alternative approaches to girls' equity in education in Liberia that are inclusive of both girls and boys. Liberia's current educational system is challenged by obstacles that prevent access to education that are amplified by the violence of prolonged armed conflict. The emphases on the education of the girl child in Liberia and the passage of the Girls' Education National Policy emerged through the postconflict reconstruction of Liberia after fourteen years of two consecutive civil wars.

Beginning in 1989, the civil wars left Liberia in shambles and without a functioning government. The political, economic, social, and physical infrastructures were in tatters and the educational sector virtually ceased to exist. The signing of the Accra Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2003, laid the foundation of Liberia's reconstruction and supported the mandate of the United Nations Mission in Liberia to institute a transitional government. Shortly afterward, Liberia had its first sustainable postconflict democratic election which peacefully heralded in a new government with the

election of Africa's first woman president, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. President Sirleaf and the new government faced reestablishing a new government, addressing the basic needs of a traumatized population and displaced persons, and rebuilding almost all of its infrastructures, such as roads, governmental buildings, medical clinics, and schools.

Rebuilding the educational sector was and is still one of the greatest challenges left as a result of the civil wars. The wars destroyed most of the school buildings and displaced teachers. Reynolds (2015) pointed out that “the number of trained and qualified teachers has dropped dramatically since the war, with a huge proportion of them fleeing to seek work and safety elsewhere” (p 265). However, Liberia did not only have to rebuild its educational sector, but it also had to rebuild the whole country and the new government of Liberia has struggled to provide education.

Today, Liberia’s peace has stabilized; however, education has remained one of Liberia's greatest post-conflict challenges. Within the postconflict reconstruction of Liberia, the international community has classified Liberia as a fragile state. State fragility has many different definitions and is not a one-size-fits-all concept. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development defines a state as fragile once “state structures lack the political will and/or capacity to provide for the basic functions, needed for poverty reduction, development and to safeguard the security and the human rights of their populations” (as cited in Grotenhuis, 2016, p. 46). In the case of Liberia, the state does not have the capacity to currently provide education.

However, Liberia has the will and desire to provide equal access to education.

The educational will of Liberia is seen in Article 6 of Liberia's 1986 constitution, which reads:

The Republic shall, because of the vital role assigned to the individual citizen under this Constitution for the social, economic and political wellbeing of Liberia, provide equal access to educational opportunities and facilities for all citizens to the extent of available resources. Emphasis shall be placed on the mass education of the Liberian people and the elimination of illiteracy (UN Women, 2016).

Unfortunately, there is a gap between Liberia's constitutional ideal and the ability to provide education. This gap is leaving many children behind and creating a divide between those with the economic means to go to school, as well as, between the urban population where more educational resources are available and the rural population with significantly more limited resources and infrastructure. The gap between the will to provide education and the capacity to provide education is creating an educational fragility.

Moreover, Liberia's educational fragility is seen in a continuous pattern of Liberia's government struggle to provide education. In 2003, when the war came to an end, The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reported that "general educational levels are poor: 80% of students in schools are in classes below those appropriate for their ages and 70% of the population are illiterate" (Kamara, 2003, p. 12). Conversely, a study conducted by UNICEF (2017) reported that "51% (441,025) of children between ages six and 11 years were not in age-appropriate grades, and that approximately 34 per cent (214,024) were out of school." (p. 8). Fourteen years after the end of the conflict, Liberia's education statistics have slightly improved; however, more

than half of students are over-aged for their grade and a significant number of children are not attending school.

Recently, Liberia democratically elected their second President, George Weah since the Accra Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2003. However, in the second term of her presidency, former President Sirleaf called the educational system “a mess” (Africa News Service, 2013, para. 1). Three years later after Sirleaf’s comment, UNICEF ranked Liberia as having one of the highest proportion of children missing out on primary school (Migiro, 2016, para. 1). Migiro (2016) reported that "nearly two-thirds of [Liberian] children never step inside a classroom" (para. 1). In addition, UNICEF cites that the situation is bleaker with 76% of rural children not in school (Education Policy and Data Center, 2014, p. 1).

The complexity and inequity of education in Liberia's rurality emerged in an interview that I conducted with Mr. Isaac William (2015), from the Daniel Town Public School in rural Grand Bassa County, he expressed that "families struggle to afford education costs. Students are exhausted from traveling up to five miles and sometimes more by foot through the bush on empty stomachs. This stops students from coming to school." Teachers such as Mr. William have a 200-to-one-student teacher ratio without walled school buildings, books, and basic school supplies. The gap between the rural and urban communities and the Ministry of Education's struggle to provide the educational resources increases Liberia's fragility.

As a postconflict state, Liberia is a fragile country with a high youth population and unless education becomes a priority in rural areas it could become a recipe for

disaster. UNESCO asserted that “when large numbers of young people are denied access to decent quality basic education, the resulting poverty, unemployment and sense of hopelessness can act as forceful recruiting agent for armed militia” (as cited in Reynolds, 2015, p. 265). Liberia’s stability and continued peace hinges on the education of rural children.

Rural children, particularly boys, are susceptible to being recruited into armed militia if Liberia returned to armed conflict, because warring factions tend to occupy rural communities. Catherine Wiesner, an emergency child protection specialist with the International Rescue Commission explained that “[children are] cheap, malleable, they obey orders and they don’t have the same fears as adults” (as cited in Pan, 2005, Why are child soldiers used?). Rural children are left vulnerable to recruitment. The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers (2008) reported that “when hostilities are ongoing, poverty, social dislocation, and other environmental factors create conditions of extreme vulnerability to recruitment. Children in refugee camps, the internally displaced, children separated from their families and children among the rural poor and in urban slums are at higher risk” (p. 26). The emphases on boy inclusion in education cannot be overlooked by the needs of girls in postconflict settings. An equitable balance of educational programming is required to sustain peace.

As a result, Liberia's educational fragility served as the major catalyst for this project and how programming through nongovernmental organizations can respond to education fragility. This project explores the development of the Liberian based organization, Supporting Programs in Community Empowerment’s (SPICE) program

development and the corresponding needs assessment I conducted with SPICE to address the educational gap in rural communities. SPICE is an emerging, Liberian-based nongovernmental organization that was started with a specific objective of increasing access to education in rural Liberia with a specific focus on assuring girls right to education and creating equitable gender norms by engaging boys.

Knowing that educating girls is significant for the wellbeing of rural communities and knowing that rural boys are at risk of being recruited into armed factions if Liberia should return to armed conflict, the goal of this project was to develop programming that balances the unique need of girls and boys that support equitable access to education in rural communities. To accomplish this objective, this thesis research project developed comprehensive programming that will enhance girls' access to education without disenfranchising boys to help stabilize Liberia's fragility. To establish strategies that will support this project's goal, a needs assessment was conducted to identify the needs of rural communities and offers programming approaches to SPICE.

Overview of the Needs Assessment Approach

The methodology of this thesis project was a needs assessment. This needs assessment, like other research methods, used a "systematic set of procedures that are used to determine needs, examine their nature and causes, and set priorities for future actions" (Office of Migrant Education, 2001, p. 2). Upon completion, the end product of the needs assessment produced a needs assessment report that incorporated the findings to serve as a road map for programming development that can support rural education.

Within a needs assessment, a need is defined as the “discrepancy or gap between what is and what should be (Office of Migrant Education, 2001, p. 2). For this project, the “what is” is the inability of the government of Liberia to provide rural schools with resources and infrastructure to educate children. The “what should be” is the ability of the government of Liberia to provide equal and equitable access to education to all Liberian children in line with constitutional objectives regardless of geography. The outcomes of the research methods were used to find approaches to bridge the gap between the *what is* and the *what should be*.

Before the methodologies chapter, chapter two, the literature review explores the history and theoretical building blocks of the social-ecological model, which serves as the foundation of the programming approach. Moreover, the chapter provides further backgrounding of state fragility research, community development theory, and explores the limited existing literature on rural education in Liberia. In chapter three, the needs assessment methodology is outlined and the three phases of the assessment are discussed in detail. The conclusion contextualizes and operationalizes the programming recommendations of the needs assessment report, which is the final product of the needs assessment that was given to SPICE.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review covers the breadth of subjects needed to develop programming for Liberia's educational fragility. To help bridge the research gap of Liberia and its rurality to current research, this literature review contextualized the literature within the scope of Liberia and the program development for SPICE. Because the social-ecological model emerged as the theoretical building block of this project, this review first explores the social-ecological model being with the seminal work of Bronfenbrenner (1977) set the stage for this thesis. Second, due to the limited literature on rural education in Liberia, this review also focused on texts that are closely related to education in Liberia and Africa and that represent patterns of similar needs. As a result, the literature review introduces research on gender and education, defines fragile states, and explores community development theory.

Social-Ecological Model

In order to determine the community's, families', and individual's needs within the specific perimeters of Liberia, a needs assessment was critical. Bronfenbrenner's (1977) seminal work in human ecology theory or ecological systems theory presented as most effective to meet the specific requirements of Liberia. The social-ecological model emerged from human development studies and was then embraced by public health theory. Specifically, the social-ecological model catalyzed from Bronfenbrenner's (1977) research on experimental ecology of human development, which disrupted the dichotomy of naturalistic and experimental approaches to the theoretical expansion of the

natural sciences. Bronfenbrenner introduced what he refers to as the ecology of human development. Bronfenbrenner (1977) explained that "the ecological environment is conceived topologically as a nested arrangement of structures, each contained within the next" (p. 414). Bronfenbrenner's research on the ecology of human development has contributed to the interpretation of human development and the impact of environmental factors within the social-ecological model.

Bronfenbrenner's (1977) five system theory included a delineation of the stages of life experience as microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem. Bronfenbrenner's (1977) straightforward description of microsystems as "the complex relations between the developing person and environment in the immediate setting containing that person" (p. 414). He asserted that the mesosystem is concerned with the interrelations of a setting at a point in the life of a person. However, Bronfenbrenner (1977) believed that the exosystem was built upon the mesosystem that engages social structures that are not a part of the person's setting, but can have direct and indirect influence. The macrosystem was described by Bronfenbrenner (1977) as blueprints.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) explained that "a macrosystem refers to the overarching institutional patterns of the culture or subculture" (p. 515). Within the paradigm of the social-ecological model for this researcher's needs assessment, the intersectionality of all five systems modalities served to efficiently examine and identify specific needs at the various levels of influence within the full spectrum of impact.

Social-ecological theorists and researchers have delineated and defined an individual or specific situation for quantifying the elements that construct the social-

ecological model. Supporting the acquisition of the social ecological model.

Additionally, researchers such as White, Stallones, and Last (2013) pointed out that “the essence of the ‘social-ecological model’ is that, while individuals are often viewed as responsible for what they do, their behavior is determined largely by their social environment e.g., community norms and values, regulations, and policies” (p. 91).

Social-ecological models provided insight into how social environments shape the individual, as well as, how the individual interacts with his or her social environment.

The social-ecological model has served as a set of public health blueprints to help change behaviors by considering the interconnected multiple settings of the individual.

Research within the public health applications of the social-ecological model are outlined within the research conclusions of McLeroy, Bibeau, Steckler, and Glanz (1988) and the following analysis deconstructs the tenets as part of an ecological model for health promotion, which included the following:

- Intrapersonal factors: characteristics of the individual such as knowledge, attitudes, behavior, self-concept, skills, etc. This includes the developmental history of the individual.
- Interpersonal processes and primary groups: formal and informal social network and social support systems, including the family, work group, and friendship networks.
- Institutional factors: social institutions with organizational characteristics, and formal (and informal) rules and regulations for operation.
- Community factors: relationships among organizations, institutions, and informal networks within defined boundaries.
- Public policy: local, state, and national laws and policies (p. 355).

The integration of these interdependent impacts or ecological units came together to construct and form the social-ecological model and its impact on social research.

As seen above, McLeroy et al. (1988) used Bronfenbrenner's (1977) insights that were incorporated to define ecological units. These ecological units are not random, but serve to structure social-ecological model. Additional contributions by the social researchers, Lounsbury and Mitchell (2009) expanded the concept that “ecological units comprise the setting, which could be physical, social, biological, or behavioral” (p. 91). As Lounsbury and Mitchell (2009) explained “a valid ecological unit is: (1) self-generated (i.e., occurring naturally without involvement of the investigator), (2) given a specific time-space locus, and (3) internally constrained (i.e., has internal forces that impose patterns on their own internal components)” (p. 213). The ecological units layer together to map out the unique experiences of the individuals that comprise the central ecological unit. Lounsbury and Mitchell (2009) ascertained, “an atom, a person, a family, a classroom, and a town are each examples of possible ecological units of analysis” (p. 213). The ecological units are flexible enough to reveal how systems function together to support a social or public health issue or problem. Conversely, the ecological units can also help to identify strategic places to implement programming to prevent a social issue from reoccurring.

The social-ecological model's units or levels have the flexibility and adaptability to provide a bigger picture of issues and problems. The social-ecological model has the ability to detect and map out sites for intervention. However, current literature is limited in the multiplicity of possible applications. For the purpose of this paper, the intent is to

document and quantify the impact of war on children growing up during the time of conflict and during the reconstruction period. Within the context of developmental norms and the impact of nonnormative events, researchers Boothby, Strang, and Wessells (2006) applied a social-ecological lens to study the development of children growing up in war-zones. Boothby et al. (2006) explained that "we have found 'systems'—such as the family, school, peer groups, in which children are involved in continuous, face-to-face interactions with familiar people—to be key determinants of war-affected children's developmental outcomes" (p. 5). By delineating the systems of interaction networked into war-affected children lives, the social-ecological model serves as a means to deconstruct the impact of war on children.

Boothby et al. (2006) identified the agency children have in war-zones. They asserted that "the social-ecological perspective also portrays children as actors rather than as passive victims" (p. 5). By comparing and contrasting ecological frameworks with individualized approaches, Boothby et al. (2006) argued that children's experiences of war are negotiated by social structures and support psycho-social and holistic collaboration through family and community-based supports. Boothby et al. (2006) also found that the social-ecological model can help establish the resiliency of children.

Within the context of social-ecology, Walker et al. (2006) explained, "resilience is the capacity of a system to experience shocks while retaining essentially the same function, structure, feedbacks, and therefore identity" (Five Preliminary Heuristics). By understanding resilience, Boothby et al. (2006) identified sites of strengths and areas to support within the social-ecology of children in war zones. By making connections

between the individual's social environment, the social-ecological model paints a picture of how other actors, stakeholders, and institutions engage or influence the individual.

It is the ability of the social-ecological model to outline the big picture of an issue or problem that makes it a tool for understanding complex issues that may have or not have unseen influences. Consequently, Lounsbury and Mitchell (2009) asserted that "A social-ecological approach is systems-oriented and defines research problems in terms of structures and processes, generating research outcomes that give insight into the dynamic interaction of individuals with their environment across time and space" (p. 213). Moreover, the social-ecological model allows there to be a focus on programming, while being abreast of other actors or influences that might have future sway within the different levels of the model, as well as, being aware of the systems operating within social issues.

Education in Africa and Liberia

The literature on Liberia and education is also scant. The literature tends to focus on gender and education in Africa, which includes the following themes associated with gender inequity and inequality: political instability, violence from conflict, poverty, negative cultural values, traditional harmful practices, early marriage, and school-based sexual violence. In Liberia, there has been a focus on gender mainstreaming and women and girl's empowerment in post-conflict reconstruction, which is reflected in the available literature and includes a focus on post-conflict education, girls' education and early marriage, gender-based violence and abuse in schools, and school choice.

Gender and Education in Liberia and Africa

In Liberia, gender plays a distinct role in access to education which is impacted by social, economic, and political factors. Ombati and Ombati (2012) posited that gender education in sub-Saharan Africa is marked by inequity and inequality that is fostered by what they described as socioeconomic and political factors (p. 116). The constraints to education that have been identified by Ombati and Ombati (2012) included political instability and armed conflict, both of which have affected Liberia. Their research found that political instability destroyed educational infrastructure and, during armed conflict, schools become shelters for refugees or barracks for armed forces, which was also the case in Liberia. Many of the rural schools were destroyed and have not been rebuilt despite the end of the civil wars. Additional impacts of conflict included destruction and theft of textbooks and curricula, displacement of teachers, and food insecurities (Ombati & Ombati, 2012, p. 117).

At this point in the research and mitigation protocols, the constraints of limited family and community resources and the subsequent impacts to access and equity of girls to education in Liberia is examined. Ombati and Ombati (2012) argued that “poverty is the single largest factor that causes disparities in education” (p. 118). The limited financial resources of parents influenced whether sons or daughters were chosen to attend school. Moreover, complicating the education sector for African nations, even more, was the decline in international donor funding. Ombati and Ombati (2012) explained that “the decline of donor funding is making it harder for many of the low-income countries to pay their teachers and keep the school doors open for 32 million out-of-school African

children returning to school” (p. 123). While Liberia has received support from international donors as part of their postconflict reconstruction, Liberia does not have the economic capabilities to fund its educational sector. Unfortunately, unless there is a change in educational funding or Liberia's approach to education in conjunction with the high levels of poverty in its population, these economic issues will continue to impede education.

Within the context of girls' access to education examination of how social and cultural constraints create a gender gap in sub-Saharan Africa. Ombati and Ombati (2012) summarized that “in most of sub-Saharan Africa countries, access to education continues to be limited because of traditional practices that prevent some children from going or staying in school” (p. 126). The authors examined how cultural and social construction of gender roles had an impact on access to education. Ombati and Ombati (2012) pointed out that in countries or areas such as Kenya, Nigeria, Mali, Upper Volta, Ivory Coast, Mozambique, and Sudan, where female genital mutilation (FGM) is practiced, there are higher rates of teenage pregnancy and school drop outs (p. 126). While not discussed in this article, FGM or female genital cutting occurs in Liberia as part of the *sande*, the traditional education systems for girls and circumcision in the *poro*, the traditional education is for the boys. To address FGM, the article suggested using public policy to outlaw FGM in conjunction with the delivery of educational programs.

Another, factor affecting girls and their education is early marriage. Ombati and Ombati (2012) explained:

Poor families may regard a young girl as an economic burden and her marriage as a necessary survival strategy for her family. They may think that early marriage

offers protection for their daughter from the dangers of sexual assault, or more generally, offers the care of a male guardian. Early marriage may also be seen as a strategy to avoid girls becoming pregnant outside marriage. (p. 124)

Early marriage as presented by Ombati and Ombati (2012) is consistent with practices in Liberia. Cultural practices of early marriage and genital cutting are seen as a way of preserving girls' virginity, protecting girls from violence, and providing economic security.

Complicating social, cultural, economic and political factors, the institutional and instructional factors identified by Ombati and Ombati have a wide range. Ombati and Ombati (2012) found that girls' access to education is impacted by "the lack of gender responsiveness among the teachers, in the curriculum, teaching methodology, teaching and learning materials, school management systems and the overall school environment" (p. 117). In addition, other factors such as poor-quality schools, violence and harassment in schools, lack of role models, and gender biased curriculums were identified by the authors. In addition, Ombati and Ombati argued that violence and harassment in schools caused girls to not realize their right to education because girls faced sexual harassment and abuse in schools.

Ombati and Ombati's article provided a general overview of the complications that children and families faced in attaining education. The article offered many suggestions of how to solve some of the issues affecting education. However, the suggestions were very broad and did not offer concrete and tangible solutions. For example, Ombati and Ombati (2012) wrote, "developing instructional and learning methodology that are child-friendly and gender-sensitive is an important element of

gender and child-friendly schools” (p. 130). Mirroring other suggestions in their paper, the authors provided a direction; however, it does not provide how to overcome the challenges of attaining the suggestions.

Literature is very scant regarding post-conflict recovery and the application of the social-ecological model in program planning and development. The social-ecological model has focused on single public health issues, such as smoking prevention and bullying prevention. Throughout the review of the literature, I have not been able to find research on the use of the social-ecological model to solve complex issues, such as access to education in postconflict states. The next chapter will outline the methodologies of this project and the adaption of the social-ecological model to address postconflict educational fragility through the programming of SPICE.

School-Based Sexual Violence

There is a pattern of girls facing violence while attending school. Postmus et al. (2014) researched school-based gender violence in Liberia, and their article sought to understand experiences of sexual violence by Liberian students in four counties, which included Montserrado, Bong, Grande Gedeh and Grand Bassa. Postmus et al. (2014) summarized that “the purpose of this article is to uncover the extent of sexual violence experienced by a sample of students from select counties in Liberia and to understand the disclosure behaviors of those victims willing to come forward” (p. 77). In addition, the author’s study included a review of policy, reports, and respective gender-based violence literature regarding Liberia in conjunction with interviews of key stakeholders.

Within the field research on gender-based violence against girls and boys, Postmus et al. (2014) included anonymous student surveys that were completed by 1,236 boys and 930 girls (p. 84). The results of the research indicated that both boys and girls can be victims of some form of gender-based violence. Postmus et al. (2014) found that there was a very high prevalence of sexual violations experienced by both boys and girls. Sexual violations were defined as actions, such as peeping or inappropriate touching. Postmus et al. (2014) also explained that “both sexual coercion and transactional sex were reported by more girls than boys, yet threats of sexual violence (i.e., sexual coercion) were high for both girls (30%) and boys (22%)” (p. 84). The comparison between girl’s and boy’s experiences of sexual violence challenges the perception of sexual violence being only against girls. While sexual violence affects more girls, boys experienced school-based gender violence that often remains unseen in research.

In addition, gender played a role in students telling others about school-based sexual violence. Postmus et al. (2014) reports the study also found that 38% of students reported the experience of gender-based violence and 61% of students reported gender-based violence to their friends. However, girls were more likely than boys to report school-based sexual violence to adults, such as parents, teachers, medical professionals and police (p. 84). On the other hand, boys were more afraid and ashamed to report instances of school-based sexual violence. Postmus et al. (2014) concluded that types of victimization rather than gender influenced the reporting of school-based sexual violence (p. 84).

School Choice

Within the limited research of education and rural Liberia, Dixon and Humble (2017) conducted quantitative research regarding parental preference of education in urban Liberia and how parents make choices in providing education in the Doe Community, Monrovia, Liberia. While this study is urban-focused, school choice provided insight into how parents see and construct expectations of schools.

In Liberia and other developing countries, Dixon and Humble (2017) explained, parents have to choose between sending their children to public schools or low-cost private schools (p. 95). Their research focused on two aspects of school choice. Dixon and Humble (2017) investigated “how school choice is framed by parental preference including any gender differences” and “how school choice is framed by household characteristics” (p. 15). While this study engaged parents and explored the gender dimensions of access to education, the study was very limited in scope. Dixon and Humble only included parents that could choose from all types of schools, which included government, private, faith-based, and community schools. Dixon and Humble (2017) explained that “only those who indicated that it was an option for them to choose between all of the school management types were included in this data set” (p. 15). As a result, this study precluded many urban families that did not have the economic capabilities to have a choice of school and may only be able to choose the public system.

Dixon and Humble’s (2017) study found that Liberian parents in the Doe Community prioritized affordability of education over the quality of education. Surprisingly, Dixon and Humble found that reputation and strong disciplinary

environment were indicated as a priority. Dixon and Humble (2017) explained that “until now strong disciplinary environment had not been identified as a significant identifier in other contexts apart from one study from another postconflict area” (p. 21). However, an explanation of why disciplinary environment was important to parents was not included in this article.

Household characteristics also influenced school choice. One characteristic was child birth order because the oldest child was more likely to attend a government school (Dixon & Humble, 2017, p. 22). Gender of the child also influenced school choice. Dixon and Humble (2017) found that parents tended to send their girl children to community-based schools and boys most often attended government schools. Dixon and Humble (2017) explained that “However as in the Liberian context, a child’s gender increases the likelihood of attending different school management types over others” (p. 22). The economics of the family also impacted parent choice. Families with more income often chose non-government schools. Lastly, Dixon and Humble (2017) pointed out that “The policies implemented by the government in Liberia, especially around the introduction of free primary and compulsory education, do not seem to have limited parental choice to free fee government schooling” (p. 22). Overall, Dixon and Humble’s findings indicated that parents in the Doe Community are active choosers. However, the study conducted by Dixon and Humble (2017) represents a limited population and only focuses on urban education.

What emerges from the education literature is a trend of focusing on the limited access to education of girls, school-based sexual violence, and education in urban areas.

While research is limited it does provide a context of trends within Liberia that are present in both urban and rural areas. Girls safety, the economic ability of families, gender-based school violence, cultural norms that support gender-based violence, gender norms that privilege boys over girl are seen within the scope of education literature. What is missing, I argue, is the inclusion of rural communities within research. The need for research in rural education instrumental, because education is seen as a remedy to state fragility and is critical to Liberia's sustained peace.

State Fragility

As discussed in the Introduction, Liberia is a designated fragile state. State fragility is a new term that is being used within international postconflict and development lexicon. There are many different definitions of what fragility is and explanations of circumstances that create and maintain fragile states. This review includes an overview of fragility theories that relate to the scope of Liberia's fragility.

To begin, Menocal (2011) examined the new paradigm of international presence in nation-building. The author's thesis supported the ideology that both state building and peace development were necessary for the stability of fragile states. She also asserted that a nation's fragility is instinctive to situations where the state has an absence of sovereignty or jurisdiction and/or domination over the totality of its territory (Menocal, 2011, p 1716). Furthermore, Menocal (2011) defined fragile states as inherently weak government systems and institutions which encompass a lack of dominion over its legitimate use of violence. Within this context, Menocal (2011) emphasized the construction of the fragile state in direct correlation to the absence of legitimacy within

the perception of the population. Menocal (2011) clarified that fragile states have a fundamentally insubstantial state capacity or political will to provide efficacy in the functioning of the state, particularly in providing services to the underprivileged (pp. 1716-1718). Liberia's position as a fragile state was exemplified by the fragmentation of governmental focus on urban development and the marginalization of the needs and lack of governmental attention of the rural areas.

Menocal's (2011) conclusion in securing fragile states encompassed a reevaluation of past failures, that is, "state-building founded on a model of quick elections followed by establishing a market-orientated economy" (p. 1722). Menocal (2011) asserted that the stabilization of fragile states could only be achieved through the implementation of new institutions which support the development of peace, reinforce new freedoms, and stabilize the new government. Fragility is conquered when its institutions can effectively meet the population's new demands and expectations. Currently, the government of Liberia is not able to meet the demands of its citizens especially in the area of education.

The inclusion of an examination of state fragility is imperative in producing a sustainable intervention for access to education for all children in Liberia. Researchers, Bertocchi and Guerzoni (2012) examined the fragility of sub-Saharan Africa through several means. Bertocchi and Guerzoni collected empirical data from a wide range of economic, institutional, and historical variables, including research through the World Bank Country Policy and Institutional Assessment. Bertocchi and Guerzoni's (2012) comprehensive study identified first, Liberia's development and economic activity such

as per-capita income, natural resources, private investment, and investment in human capital through the development of education. Secondly, they ascertained the impact of Liberia's economic policies, such as open trade and inflation. And third, they clarified Liberia's demographic impact such as the youth bulge and life expectancy that can disrupt peace (Bertocchi & Guerzoni, 2012, pp. 773-774).

Additionally, Bertocchi and Guerzoni (2012) focused on institutional factors which often are the linchpin for attaining stability and sovereignty; such as, ethnic fracturing, civil liberties, civil or regional conflict, number of revolutions, and historical impact such as influences from past colonization, which they observed could be either a strength or a risk factor (p. 770). Finally, they included a study of the geographical impacts such as access to the sea and fragile destabilized neighbors. They presented several baseline specifications. Their research indicated that a strong Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is the most significant factor in economic stability.

Bertocchi and Guerzoni's (2012) findings indicated that investment may be a positive factor if it offsets the effects of capital accumulation. However, they developed the argument that institutional variables had a significant impact on the success of fragile states and asserted that restricted civil liberties and frequency of revolutions increased fragility (p. 775). Political structures such as autocracy over democracy, acute political unrest, and ethnic fracturing constituted the highest potential for fragility. Liberia has been successful in holding democratic elections and policy-making has prevented civil unrest and ethnic fracturing. However, in rural Liberia, communities, which make up several ethnic groups, feel cut off from urban Liberia especially in the area of education.

Other contributions to the understanding of state fragility have been presented in Carment, Samy, and Prest's (2008) article, *State fragility and implications for aid allocation: An empirical analysis*, which examined state fragility through the context of aid by constructing an empirical analysis through the rubric of the state's stability. The authors' research supported the thesis that the state's stability is determined through three fundamental needs: authority, legitimacy, and capacity. The authors identified authority as the ability of the state to execute binding legislation and to provide its citizens with stability and safety.

Additionally, Bertocchi and Guerzoni (2012) characterized legitimacy as the extent that the government receives public loyalty, has support for legislation, and has international recognition of their sovereignty. They classified capacity as the ability of the government to congregate public resources (Bertocchi & Guerzoni, 2012, p. 773). The authors determined that the failure of any one of the three tenets could have an impact on the state's fragility. Their research alluded to previous assertions that success is not achievable unless the right institutions and incentives are present. They maintained that donor directed aid has a high probability of being misallocated and instead may serve to fund corrupt and weak governments and therefore keep them in power.

In the case of many fragile states, underfunding and the volatility of aid increased dependency and results in creating long term reliance on outside aid. However, Carment et al. (2008) concluded:

On the one hand, our examination of the aid-growth relationship showed that aid 'works' independent of whether countries are fragile or not. On the other hand, even if we were to assume that aid has a positive impact, one still needs to think

about the types of intervention that can take place in fragile environments, beyond just increasing aid flows or increasing authority and capacity structures (p. 367).

Conversely, the authors were vague in determining if aid dependency harmed or benefited fragile states.

On a different note, Englebert and Tull (2008) saw fragility pertaining to reconstruction in post-war Africa that were derived from the disconnect between African conditions and Western perceptions. They asserted that it is important to understand why modern states had not existed in Africa. Englebert and Tull (2008) examined the impact created when donors failed to anticipate Africa's historical record, which was due in part to the fact that western colonization, for the most part, was not fully developed (p. 111). The indirect rule administered by Brittan co-opted the local elites to administrate colonial rule; therefore, there is no strong pre-existing Western bureaucratic model from which to return. Englebert and Tull (2008) examined why, at best, most African states only have a previously failed system to draw upon. It is their conclusion that the lack of historical precedent contributed to Africa's inability to create and maintain the rule of law or an effective governmental bureaucracy.

Englebert and Tull (2008) established a series of impacts which they asserted destabilized Africa: this included the pressure by international organizations to implement democracy and historical evidence that many African leaders only implemented partial reforms in an effort to retain their power in spite of donor incentivized elections (p. 114). In addition, manipulation by African political elites tended to exploit the state's public resources for their own benefit rather than for the public good (Englebert & Tull, 2008, p. 122). This viewpoint complicates the

understandings of fragility by ignoring the legacy of colonialization. Moreover, they have argued that the colonial histories must be included within the context of understanding how fragility manifests and how to respond to fragility.

Liberia's peace reflected indicators of state fragility especially in regard to legitimacy. Prior to the first outbreak of civil war in Liberia, the minority rule of the Americo-Liberians repressed the majority of the indigenous tribes throughout the country. Today, the postconflict government is maintaining a thin legitimacy; however, the history of Liberia's governmental legitimacy has faltered when groups become majority marginalized.

Emerging from the literature on state fragility is the concern of ethnic fracturing and authority over a state's territory. The marginalizations of rural Liberian communities is a concern and can become emblematic if they continue to be left out of development projects. The rural community could fracture away from the state and disrupt the current peace. The application of community development theories can seek to engage rural communities by helping communities to feel part of the postconflict reconstruction process.

Community Development Theory

Phillips and Pittman (2009) analyzed and presented descriptions of the interrelationships between community development and economic development. Therefore, they examined the subsequent juxtaposition and connection between processes and outcomes that cannot be seen as separate entities, but as equal contributing factors in community and economic development. Phillips and Pittman (2009) defined the concept

of process as “the connection of individuals to the social and psychological ties that bind them” as well as their geographical and geopolitical location (p. 7). Phillips and Pittman (2009) also developed the thesis that community development has an interdisciplinary quality which gives rise to social advocacy and social action and is fundamentally built on securing equality through social reform and social justice (p. 5). Subsequently, Phillips and Pittman (2009) concluded that the community development process evolves into a means of collaboration that serves to solve the problems that affect their community.

Phillips and Pittman (2009) stressed that the idea of the process is often discounted by researchers and is often not seen as an effective practice in developing strategies for community development. They countered this ideology as less effective and less sustainable. Phillips and Pittman (2009) defined outcomes from within the community development spectrum as “(1) taking collective action and (2) the result of that action for improvement in a community in any and all realms: physical, environmental, cultural, social, political, economic, etc.” (pp. 7-8). They made the argument that more effective outcomes are produced when people learn to come together through social action, social advocacy, and social reform, which produces actions that can strongly influence the practice of instituting social justice procedures and outcomes.

Phillips and Pittman (2009) also examined the relationship between social capital and social capacity to effectively promote community development. Phillips and Pittman (2009) defined social capacity as the community’s ability to sustainably work together to make collaborative decisions, plans, and goals (p. 8). Moreover, Phillips and Pittman

(2009) further recommended maintaining strong bonds within their homogeneous community groups and stressed the importance of implementing bridging capital with other alliances within the broader community (p. 8). They affirmed that community capital is strongly dependent on the community's social capital and social capacity.

Phillips and Pittman (2009) established that the stronger the social capital and social capacity held within the community, the more likely the community is to succeed (p. 8). In addition, Phillips and Pittman (2009) identified four modes of community capital that can serve to enhance successful community development:

- Human capital: labor supply, skills, capacities, and experience, etc.
 - Physical capital: buildings, streets, infrastructure, etc.
 - Financial capital: community financial institutions, micro-loan funds, community development banks, etc.
 - Environmental capital: natural resources, weather, recreational opportunities, etc.
- (p. 8)

Understanding how these forms of social capital work together and support one another is instrumental in the sustainability of community development. Phillips and Pittman maintained that community development has an exponential nature, which reinforced their theory that the interrelationship of process and outcomes had evolved full circle.

In addition, Phillips and Pittman (2009) proposed that if the members of a community had the opinion that their situation was beyond their control and saw themselves as victims, they were far more likely to fail to act to revitalize their community. On the other hand, they found that communities that were proactive and were able to evaluate their community's weaknesses and strengths and worked as a group for a common goal were capable of initiating new community development. Phillips and Pittman (2009) affirmed, "community development is the process of teaching people how

to work together to solve common problems” (p. 7). They concluded that successful community development was determined by the perspective held by the community itself.

On the other hand, Mattessich (2009) challenged the notion of community development as described by Phillips and Pittman. Mattessich argued that there also has to be an examination between individual capacity and community capacity. Moreover, Mattessich (2009) illustrated, for example, that “gangs or a network of organized criminals that lives and operates within a community but uses its close interconnections to commit crimes and to engage in acts that detract from the livability of the community” (p. 58). Moreover, Mattessich examined the variables that can exist between individual capacity/capital as opposed to the elements of social capital at the community level. Mattessich contended that social capital and very often financial capital do not serve the community as a whole. Mattessich (2009) stressed that wealthy elites can “in fact, those who have such capital might actually use it to exploit others in the same locality” (p. 58). Mattessich (2009) concluded that if the individual capital is not integrated with the social capital of others within the community, social capital does not produce significant improvement for the community (p. 58).

Mattessich (2009) also drew a distinction between community development and community building. He asserted, "Community building refers to activities pursued by a community in order to increase the social capacity of its members" (Mattessich, 2009, p. 62). Additionally, Mattessich (2009) defined capacity building as “the practice of building connections among residents, and establishing positive patterns of individual

and community behavior based on mutual responsibility and ownership” (pp. 62-63). Also, Mattessich clarified that community building through the lens of appreciative inquiry, which focuses on “how what we think and talk about determines what we care about and do” (Mattessich, 2009, p. 63). Appreciative inquiry is respectful of the community, its history, and its knowledge. This breaks away from Phillips and Pittman’s (2009) argument for the need to teach people through the process of community development. Mattessich's appreciative inquiry begins by utilizing the existing capacity and knowledge of the community; rather than, assuming that capacity needs to be taught.

For example, Mattessich (2009) identified the importance of framing perspective and goals utilized by appreciative inquiry:

- The power of storytelling;
- recognizing the wisdom of others;
- the importance of curiosity in our quest for doing better;
- the value of hearing stories;
- and the primacy of conversations and dialogue. (p. 63)

Within his framing perspectives, Mattessich stressed deliberative collaboration and invoked the premise that individuals need to see their situation from a “glass half full” perspective, as well as empower the epistemic agency of both individuals and the community in order to allow space for creative problem-solving.

Binswanger-Mkhize et al. (2010) follow a similar argument made by Mattessich by deconstructing the system of top-down management of community development that continuously failed to produce the outcome that left communities still in poverty and without their needs met. Binswanger-Mkhize et al. (2010) analyzed the failure of sustainable community building through the lens of existing power structures. Several

truths emerged. Binswanger-Mkhize et al. (2010) factored in the resistance of politicians and bureaucratic institutions, who were not readily in favor of granting power and control to communities at the grassroots level (p. 48). Secondly, Binswanger-Mkhize et al. (2010) identified that a preconceived notion was held by researchers, administrators, fieldworkers, and scientists that the elite's authority and knowledge superseded that of the local community (p. 75).

Binswanger-Mkhize et al. (2010) recounted the seminal work done by Charles Chambers in his 1983 book, *Rural Development: Putting the Last First*. Chambers focused his examination on the viability of local and community sourced development. Chambers asserted, "The problem was related not to project preparation, but to attitudes, power relations, and principal-agent issues" (as cited in Binswanger-Mkhize et al., 2010, p. 39). Chambers grasped that failure was often precipitated through "top-down, often patronizing approaches [that] viewed communities as passive recipients to be led, not economic actors whose energies could be harnessed through empowerment" (as cited in Binswanger-Mkhize et al., 2010, p. 39). Binswanger-Mkhize et al., also asserted that the top-down approach failed to produce the intended outcomes because it failed to recognize the value of local knowledge, in part due to elitism.

Binswanger-Mkhize et al. recognized that the perception of the problems associated with rural poverty were often misinterpreted, and therefore were improperly mitigated by outside elites. The authors recognized the depth and legitimacy of rural individual's and community's knowledge. Successful community development worked when challenges of rural poverty were understood and accepted by the local community.

Similarly, Lazarus, Seedat, and Naidoo (2017) built on the tenants of community building. In the review of specific key concepts of community building, they noted that “there are different approaches, reflecting different paradigms, which inform the operationalization of community building” (Lazarus et al., 2017, p. 215). The authors determined that different approaches or lenses influenced the construction of research and the installation of practice.

To mitigate outside power or power over the local community, Lazarus et al. (2017) suggested a process for building local power through community participation.

Participation strategies included:

- Setting up local community structures (research team and advisory committee), which have had the responsibility of managing the project.
- The delegation of responsibilities to members of the local research team to develop and implement plans of action, and to take responsibility for the project.
- The use of workshops to facilitate discussions and interactive activities such as action planning activities. (p. 229)

The inclusion of the community at a grassroots level helped the community to feel a part of the change. Moreover, when the agency for the process of development was only held by the outsiders, community development failed.

In addition, Lazarus et al. (2017) focused on the person-in-context, on interdependency, and how the developing community affected individual advancement. Lazarus et al. (2017) asserted that “the social structures and social practices contribute to the development of groups, organizations, and communities” (p. 219). Lazarus et al. (2017) determined that social structures are defined as “personal resource potentials, social system resources, social settings, and system boundaries, whereas process includes reciprocity, networking, boundary spanning, and adaptation” (p. 219). The authors

asserted the need for a broad and holistic perspective that examined systems through an all-inclusive multi-level approach. To overcome power structures, Lazarus et al. (2017) advocated for the use of critical perspectives through active listening and critical examination as initiated by the local leaders in the process of community building (p.219).

Illustrated throughout the literature is the transition from community development to community building. The focus on appreciative inquiry, bottom-up approach, and all-inclusive multi-level approach create an empowered approach to community building. However, a specific strategy for engaging a wide-ranging network of actors needed for community building in postconflict construction was not clearly articulated. This project sought to remedy this by drawing upon the social-ecological model to develop a community based multi-level stakeholder approach to programming.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter further lays out and defines a needs assessment. In addition, this chapter outlines my role as the researcher and operationalizes the needs assessment approach presented by Witkin and Altschuld (1995) in the book, *Planning and conducting needs assessments: A practical guide*. Secondly, the two qualitative methods that were used are discussed, which included open-ended interviews and community forums. Next, the three needs assessment phases, preassessment, assessment, and post-assessment presented by Witkin and Altschuld (1995) are each analyzed and discussed. Lastly, this chapter served to prepare for the final outcome of this project, a needs assessment report by identifying the programming goals, objectives, and objectives that can be utilized by SPICE for future strategic planning.

Role of the Researcher

As the co-founder and Board Chair of SPICE, I have a close relationship with the outcomes of this thesis project. This needs assessment approach was chosen because it bridged my two roles as researcher and board chair. Witkin and Altschuld (1995) explained that “[Their] book is intended mainly as a guide for people (usually within an organization) who have the responsibility for designing needs assessments as an integral part of short- and long-term planning” (p. 8). This method allowed me to be able to blend my two roles to be an effective needs assessor for the project.

What is a Needs Assessment?

A needs assessment is an action research approach that provides a road map to program development that specifically addressed the needs of a set of programming recipients. Witkin and Altschuld (1995) further explained:

[A needs assessment is] a systematic approach that progresses through a defined series of phases. It gathers data by means of established procedures and methods designed for a specific purpose...Needs assessment sets priorities and determines criteria for solutions. (p. 10)

To identify the needs, the defined series of phases in this project included: the preassessment, assessment, and post-assessment to achieve the purpose, objective, and goals of the needs assessment.

Research Purpose, Objective, and Goals

The purpose of this needs assessment study was to discover what issues and/or challenges that hamper access to education in rural Liberian communities. Access to education was defined as the ability of a state, such as Liberia to provide all children regardless of gender, ethnicity, religion, and/or geography equitable educational opportunities supported by effective learning curriculums in secure school structures. The objective of this study was to develop program recommendations that can be implemented by SPICE to create equitable access to education. Furthermore, the goals were to (1) identify needs of rural schools and the communities in which they reside, (2) identify challenges or obstacles impacting the needs, and (3) identify recommendations to address the needs.

Research Questions

To support the purpose and objectives of this needs assessment, the primary research questions were as followed:

1. What are the needs of children that are preventing them from pursuing their education in rural Liberia?
2. What are the barriers that are creating the needs?
3. What are programming approaches that can help remove or mitigate the barriers to education?

These questions were chosen because, as seen in the Literature Review, there is very little research specifically addressing barriers to education in rural Liberia. Each question is connected to one another and builds upon each other. To answer the research questions, the needs assessment provided a systematic means to develop answers and propose solutions.

Needs Assessment Committee

To answer the research questions, the first step prior to the start of the needs assessment that was identified by Witkin and Altschuld (1995) was to form a Needs Assessment Committee. For the purpose of this study, the Needs Assessment Committee was formed by the SPICE Board of Directors. The role of the Needs Assessment Committee was “to set up planning and management groups, define obligations of all parties, and develop ownership of the needs assessment process and outcomes” (Witkin & Altschuld, 1995, p. 25). Moreover, the Needs Assessment Committee under my leadership took an active role in conducting research, which is explored below.

Research Methods

To answer the research questions, this needs assessment utilized two qualitative research methods: open-ended interviews and community forums. These two methods were chosen because they would best yield the desired information from the sources that this needs assessment had access to during the time of the study. The primary sources for this needs assessment were educational stakeholders, which included government and nongovernmental leaders, rural school teachers and administrators, and members of rural communities.

Open-Ended Interviews

The open-ended interview method was selected because it created the opportunity for the interviewee to provide a quick description of the needs being assessed. As a result, open-ended interviewing created the opportunity for the interviewee to have the agency to express needs more openly. However, one critique of open-ended interviewing was a large amount of information presented and documented during the interview, which was mitigated by having a consistent set of questions asked to all interviewees. Turner (2010) explained that “this open-endedness allows the participants to contribute as much detailed information as they desire and it also allows the researcher to ask probing questions as a means of follow-up” (p. 756). Furthermore, this style of interview complemented the needs assessment by allowing the interviewee to use their expertise to answer the questions.

In addition, to plan for the interviews, I worked with the Needs Assessment Committee to determine three consistent questions that were asked to all of the

interviewees. To begin, Witkin and Altschuld (1995) suggested answering the following question, “what information is desired” (p. 146). To determine the information desired, the Needs Assessment Committee and I brainstormed as a group and determined the information that SPICE needed to address. Three questions were then developed to ask all interviewees, which included:

- What are the needs of children that are preventing them from pursuing their education in rural Liberia?
- What are the barriers that are creating the needs?
- What programming approaches do you feel can help remove or reduce the barriers to education?

These three questions were chosen because the Needs Assessment Committee and I felt they would help stakeholders to use their knowledge and experience to identify educational challenges in rural communities and reflected the research project questions discussed above in the Introduction.

Stakeholder open-ended interviewees were identified through their proximity to the issue of rural education. Individual interviewees were selected based on their expertise and/or position within government ministries or nongovernmental organizations (NGO) in Liberia. SPICE board members used their contacts to schedule interviews with governmental and NGO leaders. Board members were able to schedule interviews with key stakeholders in the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Gender, and the House of Representatives. To interview NGO stakeholders, SPICE placed a request to interview Nobel Laurette, Leymah Gbowee, however, she was out of the country. Even so, the

Gbowee Peace Foundation did extend an invitation to conduct an interview with the Foundation's Executive Director, W.E. Saydee-Tar. In addition, an interview was arranged with Dr. Christine W.O. Sadia, the Chief Executive Officer of the Kenyan-based NGO, Health Concerns, who was in Liberia conducting research for AIDS International in rural areas.

Community Forums

The purpose of the community forums was to find a more nuanced understanding of the issues concerned with providing education in a post-conflict and rural context. Moreover, the Needs Assessment Committee believed that the forums would offer opportunities for the parents, teachers, and communities to have a voice in the needs assessment. As Witkin and Altschuld (1995) argued, "a community forum is used to gather stakeholder concerns or perceptions of need areas, opinions about quality or delivery of service, information on the cause of present need, and exploration of community values" (p. 161). As a result, SPICE believed that the candidness of community forums could also offer insights into the issues affecting rural communities that may not be seen or addressed by governmental leaders.

To identify rural community stakeholders, the needs assessment used a snowball sampling method. Through word-of-mouth, SPICE board members began with a single contact of a rural school in Grand Bassa County which led to a total of six community forums. During the forums, each community was asked the same set of questions as the interviewees in the open-ended interviews, as well as time to express concerns that stakeholders had that were not addressed by the interview questions. This flexibility of

the forums allowed community members to identify issues that they thought were important but not addressed by the three research questions.

Documentation of Open-Ended Interviews and Community Forums

The documentation of the interviews and community forums were conducted in a note-taking consensus approach. As the above questions were asked during each interview and forum, each committee member in attendance took their own notes as stakeholders answered questions. After each interview or forum, the Needs Assessment Committee and I would meet to discuss the answers provided by the interviewee or community to identify issues that were creating the needs. I recorded a comprehensive summary that would be utilized during the end of the Assessment Phase.

Phase One: Preassessment

After the identification of the research methods, the first phase of the needs assessment served to lay the foundation of the whole assessment from beginning to end.

Witkin and Altschuld (1995) explained:

The purpose of the Preassessment Phase is to investigate what is already known about the needs of the target group; to determine the focus and scope of the assessment and to gain commitment for all stages of the assessment, including the use of the findings for program planning and implementation” (p. 20.)

As a result, the Preassessment Phase sets the stage for the assessment phase.

Witkin and Altschuld (1995) outlined the three objectives of the preassessment, which included:

1. To find out what is known about the target group;
2. To determine the focus and scope of the assessment; and
3. To gain commitment for all stages of the assessment. (p.20)

These objectives were undertaken by the Needs Assessment Committee and myself. To find out what is known about the target group of rural children, I organized the research of political, economic, educational, health, and gender trends in Liberia. The different research trends were divided and the outcomes of which can be found in Appendix C.

Next, the scope of the assessment was determined by a list of questions that were provided by Witkin and Altschuld (1995). After answering the questions, it was determined by The Needs Assessment Committee that the scope of the needs assessment was to develop an understanding of the complexity of providing education to rural children and the challenges faced by rural children, their families, and communities. The results will be used by SPICE to develop innovative programming to increase access to education. The information gathered will then be used to inform program development that is holistic and assure a nuanced understanding of the challenges impeding access to education in rural communities.

The rationale for the scope of the needs assessment was that education in rural schools and communities operates through a vast system of interconnected actors that all impact access to education. Lastly, a commitment to participate in all phases of the assessment was agreed upon by all the SPICE board members and the plan and schedule of the Assessment Phase was approved by the Needs Assessment Committee on June 26, 2015. The schedule of the needs assessment can be found in Appendix D.

Phase Two: Assessment

After the Preassessment Phase was completed, the Assessment Phase was able to commence. Witkin and Altschuld (1995) explained that “the task of the assessment

phase is to document the status, the “what is” of the issue, to compare the status with the version of “what should be” (p. 40). To determine the gaps between the "what is" and the "what should be," the stakeholder interviews were conducted and the community forums were held. The finding summaries are available in Appendix E for the interviews and Appendix F for the community forums.

Establishment of Key Issues and Statements of Need

After the interviews and forums were all completed, the data attained could then be examined by the Needs Assessment Committee. This began by identifying the patterns of needs that emerged from the research of trends completed in the Preassessment Phase and the data revealed by the open-ended interviews and the community forums. To identify the "what is," I began by having the Needs Assessment Committee review their notes and identify three issues that each member believed was of greatest concern to preventing children from attending school. Each of these issues were documented on separate index cards—one issue per card. After each member identified and introduced their rationale for the issues they selected, I asked that each issue be categorized with like issues. Then the Needs Assessment Committee and I looked at the issues that were in four different piles or categories and labeled each category. The key issues can be found in Appendix H. From these results, it was then established that SPICE’s programmatic themes would be Education, Health and Social Welfare, and Gender and Violence Prevention.

After the establishment of the key issues, the Needs Assessment Committee and I then identified three needs statements that prioritized the issues for each programming theme. The statements included the following:

Education Need Statements

1. Create positive environments that promote learning in rural and underserved Liberian communities created through the building and improvement of schools.
2. Develop the capacity of early childhood and primary school teachers in rural and underserved communities fostered through training and mentorship.
3. Facilitate the psychosocial support for school going children and coaching of parents, teachers and school administrators.

Health and Social Welfare Needs Statement

1. Promote the healthy development for early childhood and primary school children in underserved communities.
2. Assure access to safe drinking water, hygiene and sanitation (WASH) services on early childhood and primary school campuses, improved to prevent the spread of disease.
3. Create opportunities for access to professional health care and psychosocial services in rural and underserved villages.

Gender & Violence Prevention Needs Statement

1. Establish community dialogues to address cultural and social norms that normalize discrimination and violence based on a person's gender.

2. Transform gender, cultural, and social norms that support gender-based violence and gender inequity and inequality.
3. Develop the capacity of future leaders to transform gender, cultural, and social norms.

Each needs statement transformed the issues into active statements that served as the initial step in developing programming and led to what Witkin and Altschuld (1995) referred to as casual analysis (pp. 239-240).

Casual Analysis and Establishment of Programming Goals

By drawing upon the need statements, a casual analysis was then conducted. Witkin and Altschuld (1995) explained that “a casual analysis [refers] broadly to techniques that describe or analyze factors or conditions that contribute to the existence or perpetuation of the need or unsolved problem” (pp. 239-240). To employ an analysis, the Needs Assessment Committee identified each needs statement as a goal for programming. Each goal was then supported by the research conducted earlier in the assessment, which is explored below.

Education Goals

The first goal was to create a positive environment that promotes learning in rural and underserved communities. During the Stakeholder Assessment, stakeholders expressed a pattern of concern over the deplorable conditions of the school buildings and campuses. A majority of schools operate in dilapidated and/or makeshift structures. The concern for educational stakeholders is that school buildings lack walls and buildings are not secured to produce a safe educational environment for learning. Additionally, the

looting of education materials and furniture does not promote a positive learning environment. When asked how to remedy insecure learning environments, Stakeholders suggested that schools need to be repaired or remodeled and that communities need to develop ownership of their school campuses. Lastly, stakeholders expressed the need for school supplies and materials, textbooks, and learning materials for which students could relate. Many donated school textbooks are from the West and students are unable to relate to the pictures and subject matter.

Goal Two was to create opportunities for teachers, parents, and students to learn to build their full potential because factors limiting access to education in Liberia occurs at many levels within rural communities. The first concern within the Needs Committee was that rural schools often have few trained teachers. Due to lack of funding, lack of civilian infrastructure, and housing, teachers do not want to take positions in rural areas. Moreover, the national budget does not prioritize funding and salaries of rural teaching posts. Some communities have pooled resources to support having a community teacher to help in school. However, community teachers often do not have formal training. During the stakeholder assessments, there was a consistent request for teacher training by administrators, teachers, and parents.

Another concern of educational stakeholders is the enrollment of over-aged students in early childhood and grade one classrooms. Goal Two was directed to support early learning and enrollment of children in preschool by age three and first grade by age six, the Committee felt it was critical to have student enrollment included as part of this goal. They believed that it was important to have students enrolled in schools at the

appropriate age of six. Moreover, promoting the enrollment of children in school will help to remedy the over-aged enrollment of students. Another "what is" was the request for adult literacy classes by stakeholders. It was believed by the Committee that adult literacy classes would help the parents to support the education of their children.

Goal Three was developing psychosocial support for school going children and the coaching of parents, teachers, and school administrators was the third goal. Schools in rural areas are very understaffed, and teachers managed classrooms with a high student-to-teacher ratio. An example is one teacher to 125 students as seen in the rural schools in Grand Bassa County. Moreover, the Committee felt that schools needed to cultivate the support of parents to help with the management of the classroom and the school functions. It was believed by the Committee that a strong Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) could help with the school management challenges. Additionally, PTAs could provide an opportunity for SPICE to provide programming that could help parents to learn more about their child's education and development.

Health and Social Wellbeing Goals

Goal Four was the healthy and nutritional development of early childhood and primary school children in underserved communities. Rural areas face food insecurity and parents struggle to provide their children with three healthy meals per day. As a result, children face many effects of malnutrition which include developmental delays, illness, and death.

Goal Five was to assure access to safe drinking water, hygiene, and sanitation services on school campuses to prevent the spread of disease. Children and their families

in rural communities face a myriad of illnesses and diseases caused by the lack of civilian infrastructure. Rural areas do not have access to clean water or sanitation facilities, and most schools do not have running water or modern toilets.

Opportunities for access to professional health care and psychosocial services in rural and underserved communities comprised Goal Six. Due to the lack of civilian infrastructure and public transportation, rural community members have to travel far distances without modern transportation for emergency response services or health care clinics. The stakeholder assessment revealed that the ill or injured face further obstacles for travel because there are a limited number of clinics in rural areas. Patients could be required to travel five or more miles by foot to seek medical care.

Gender and Violence Prevention

Goal Seven was facilitating community dialogs to address cultural and social norms that normalize discrimination based on a person's gender. Concern about harmful traditional practices by stakeholders was revealed in the stakeholder assessment. These harmful cultural practices prohibit the attendance of girls in schools. Girls that attend traditional schools, such as the Sande, may face female genital cutting. In addition, cultural practices promote early marriage and pregnancy of girls. Many stakeholders felt that early marriage and pregnancy can lead to intimate partner violence and abuse. Complicating the situation for girls is that they do not complete formal education and may lack the skills to provide support for their families such as literacy and basic mathematics.

Transforming gender based cultural and social norms that support gender-based violence and gender inequity and inequality was Goal Eight. As with all cultures of the world, women face cultural and social norms that support gender-based violence, abuse, and exploitation. The stakeholder assessment identified the need to address gender-based violence. The prevention of gender-based violence and sexual exploitation and abuse requires more strategies than placing the onus on girls and women. Transformation of cultural and social norms requires participation by both men and women. The Committee felt that violence prevention was needed to create opportunities for men to participate and become engaged in violence prevention, which they felt would help to transform social and cultural norms that support violence.

Lastly, Goal Nine was to develop the leadership capacity of students to transform gender, cultural, and social norms. The development of leadership of girls emerged as a topic in the stakeholder assessment. The Committee felt that the leadership development of girls can create opportunities for girls to develop into leaders. In addition, leadership development can also transform gender norms. The participation of both girls and boys in leadership development can challenge gender norms that support gender-based violence and gender inequity and inequality.

Formation of Objectives

After the goals were set, the Needs Assessment Committee and I reviewed each goal and corresponding issues. As a group, we brainstormed objectives that would help create the "what should be." During this final step of the Assessment, I presented each goal and why that goal was identified. The Committee was then asked to identify

objectives that provided routes to create the “what should be” for each goal. The following outlines the objectives that were established during this culminating step of the Assessment Phase.

Education Objectives.

Goal 1: Positive environment that promotes learning in rural and underserved communities.

Objective 1.1: To promote a positive learning environment for schools through engaging in strong community partnerships.

Objective 1.2: To enter into partnerships with individuals and organizations in improving school campuses.

Goal 2: Opportunity for teachers, parents, and students to learn to build their full potential.

Objective 2.1: To enhance the capacity of teachers in rural and underserved communities through training and mentorship.

Objective 2.3: To support adult literacy within rural and underserved communities.

Goal 3: Psychosocial support for school going children and coaching of parents, teachers, and school administrators

Objective 3.1: To promote child development education through the support of Parent-Teacher Associations (PTA).

Health and Social Welfare Objectives.

Goal 4: Healthy and nutritional development for early childhood and primary school children in underserved communities.

Objective 4.1: To support the nutritional development of children within partner community schools.

Objective 4.2: To promote healthy hygiene habits of children and schools.

Goal 5: Access to safe drinking water, hygiene, and sanitation (WASH) services on early childhood and primary school campuses that would serve to prevent the spread of disease.

Objective 5.1: To support the reduction of water-borne diseases among school-aged children.

Goal 6: Opportunities for access to professional health care and psychosocial services in rural and underserved villages.

Objective 6.1: To provide access to health services in hard-to-reach communities.

Objective 6.2: To reduce the psychological burden of poor parenting on rural children.

Gender & Violence Prevention Objectives.

Goal 7: Community dialogue to address cultural and social norms that normalize discrimination and violence based on a person's gender to be opened up and promoted in rural communities.

Objective 7.1: To establish a relationship with tribal leaders through the construction or remodeling of schools in villages.

Goal 8: Transform gender, cultural, and social norms that support gender-based violence and gender inequity and inequality.

Objective 8.1: To engage men in dialogs and practices of gender-based violence prevention.

Objective 8.2: To reduce gender-based violence and sexual exploitation of women and girls.

Goal 9: Develop the leadership capacity of future leaders to transform gender, cultural, and social norms.

Objective 9.1: To encourage adolescent and teenage children in engendering reduction of gender-based violence and sexual exploitation and abuse.

After completion of the casual analysis to establish goals and their objectives, the Needs Assessment Committee was able to take the "what is" and determine the "what should be." With the establishment of goals and objectives, the committee could then move into the Post-assessment Phase, which will map out how SPICE plans to accomplish the goals and objectives.

Phase Three: Post-Assessment

Phase Three is what Witkins and Altschuld (1995) described as “the bridge from analysis to action” (p. 75). Phase Three produced the foundation for the needs assessment report for SPICE that provided a direction for future strategic planning.

Central to SPICE's strategic planning was the desire to have holistic programming. This section will present the approach taken to assure a holistic approach, which drew upon the social-ecological model. In addition, I will outline the process that I used to set priorities with the Needs Assessment Committee and explore each goal and its objectives to develop strategies that can be used or built upon by SPICE.

Application of the Social-Ecological Model

To "bridge from analysis to action" it is instrumental to know how the bridges are going to be built and where the bridges need to be located. As discussed above, the Board of Directors agreed that SPICE's programming must be holistic. Knowing that the social-ecological model's units or levels have the flexibility and adaptability to provide a bigger picture of issues and problems, the Needs Assessment Committee began to brainstorm strategies that can help SPICE to achieve its goals and objectives. The social-ecological model provided the Needs Assessment Committee with the ability to identify strategies. Moreover, the Committee was able to map out sites for intervention and engagement of stakeholders by addressing intrapersonal factors, interpersonal processes and primary groups, institutional factors, community factors, and public policy that interconnect or impact access to education. To begin to define social-ecological units, the Committee identified the following units: child, family, school, community, and government/public policy. The following discusses the programming strategies in each programming themes and begins to the map out the social-ecology of postconflict rural education in Liberia.

Education Strategies

Creating positive environments emerged from stakeholder concerns that the civil wars destroyed the educational infrastructure, which was a critical aspect to Goal 1. Currently, the government has not had the financial resources to rebuild the damaged school buildings. The stakeholders felt that damaged and make-shift buildings created an uninviting and uninspiring learning environment for students, as well as, deterred student attendance. The first concern of the Needs Assessment Committee was the "how" to enter communities to support education. As a result, the Committee asserted that a community council needed to be formed to represent the community needs and to help implement programming.

Further building upon creating a positive environment, the Needs Assessment Committee felt that we must address the school stakeholder's concerns of theft within schools. As a result, the Committee believed that it was imperative to build a sense of community ownership of schools within the communities to prevent further damage through the theft of school materials and furniture. In addition, the Committee believed that community ownership would also support the creation of a welcoming learning environment.

Another aspect of creating a positive learning environment for students is having a curriculum of which the students can relate. The Assistant Minister of Early Childhood Education expressed the need to contextualize learning materials to Liberia. Moreover, teachers expressed that books and learning materials needed to reflect the students' lives. Many schools receive donated materials and books that are directed toward white

American and European students with subject matters that are unrelatable and images that are unrecognizable to Liberian students. As a result, the strategy that emerged was to produce and distribute locally contextualized teaching materials and textbooks.

Table 1: Goal 1 strategies and proposed social-ecological unit(s)

Educational Strategies	Social Ecological Unit(s)
Establishment of community council needed to be formed to represent the community needs and to help implement programming.	Community
Develop community ownership that would also support the creation of a welcoming learning environment.	Family, school, and community
Produce and distribute locally contextualized teaching materials and textbooks.	Schools and Government

Goal 2 focused on the capacity for early childhood and primary school teachers in rural and underserved communities to receive training and mentorship. During the stakeholder assessments, there was a consistent request for teacher training by administrators, teachers, and parents. Through discussion, the Needs Assessment Committee determined that SPICE needed to develop a training or professional development program for teachers or connect teachers to training programs. This led to the strategy to enter into partnerships with educators to conduct training for teachers.

Another primary concern of educational stakeholders was the enrollment of overaged students in early childhood grade one classrooms. There are several reasons why students are entering school at older ages. One of the primary reasons is the distances that children have to walk to school because parents are afraid to let young children travel of lengthy distances to school. In addition, parents cannot afford school

costs and fees to enroll their children or maintain their enrollment in school. The resulting strategy was to create platforms for dialogue between schools, parents, and community structures encouraging them to enroll children at 3 years of age in line with government enrollment guidelines for early childhood education. The hope for this strategy is that SPICE and each community can find ways to overcome the challenges that parents are facing.

The last strategy for Goal 2 was to create opportunities for parents to participate in literacy classes in partner communities. This emerged as a priority because many parents have requested literacy classes to help support their children. The educational stakeholders felt that literacy programs would not only benefit families financially but would also provide students support at home to do homework. Moreover, educational stakeholders believed that adult literacy could help to reestablish education norms that were lost during the civil war.

Table 2: Goal 2 strategies and proposed social-ecological unit(s)

Educational Strategies	Social Ecological Unit(s)
Enter into partnerships with educators to conduct training for teachers.	School and community
Create platforms for dialogue between schools, parents, and community structures encouraging them to enroll children at 3 years of age in line with government enrollment guidelines for early childhood education.	Family, school, and community
Establish adult literacy which could help to reestablish education norms.	Family, school, and Community

Goal 3 signaled a high priority because schools in rural areas are very understaffed. For example, teachers managed classrooms with a high student-to-teacher

ratio. An example is one teacher to 125 students in rural Grand Bassa. The first strategy suggested was the development of Parent Teacher Associations (PTA) within each community. This would allow SPICE to provide educational programming in schools to cultivate the support of parents to help with classroom management and other school functions. The Committee felt that PTAs could remedy school management challenges with support from the parents and the community. Furthermore, PTA meetings could help parents to learn more about their child's education. Educational stakeholders also indicated that parents tended to not understand child development. PTA meetings could also create the opportunity for parents to understand child development and encourage parents to support their children and their education.

Table 3: Goal 3 strategies and proposed social-ecological unit(s)

Educational Strategies	Social Ecological Unit(s)
Support the development of PTAs within each community where SPICE provides educational programming.	Family and school
Develop partnerships that can support parents with understanding child development to support the completion of grade six.	Family
Engage parents and community volunteerism to support teachers with classroom management and curriculum lessons.	Family, school, and community

Health and Social Wellbeing Strategies

Goal 4 addressed health and nutritional development of early childhood. The needs assessment revealed that one of the greater challenges to students is that they face food insecurity. Parents struggle to provide their children with three healthy meals per day. As a result, children face many effects of malnutrition including developmental

delays, illness, and death. Without addressing hunger, students will continue to fall behind in learning expectations.

Addressing food insecurity among children is critical to the health and wellbeing of all school-aged children. This is even more critical in rural communities. During the needs assessment, many Needs Assessment Committee members reported that some rural children, in particular in Grand Bassa County, had visible signs of malnutrition. Many children had very noticeable indicators such as very small arm circumference and distended stomachs, both of which signal food insecurity and malnutrition. The resulting strategy was to develop meal programs to support healthy nutrition for early childhood and primary school children in underserved and rural communities.

Table 4: Goal 4 strategies and proposed social-ecological unit(s)

Health and Social Wellbeing Strategies	Social-Ecological Unit(s)
Develop meal programs to support healthy nutrition for early childhood and primary school children in underserved and rural communities.	School
Develop healthy hygiene habits lessons for teachers to present to students.	School

Goal 5 strived to increase the access to safe drinking water, hygiene, and sanitation (WASH) services on early childhood and primary school campuses as a means to prevent the spread of disease. Children and their families in rural areas faced a myriad of illness and disease caused by lack of civilian infrastructure. Rural areas do not have access to clean water or sanitation facilities. Many rural schools do not have running water or hygienic toilets that can help to contain the spread of illness and disease. It is

critical, the Committee felt, to have SPICE support the construction of latrines and water pumps on school campuses. Lastly, to support the health of communities, SPICE needed to work with school teachers to develop healthy hygiene habits lessons of the students.

Table 5: Goal 5 strategies and proposed social-ecological unit(s)

Health and Social Wellbeing Strategies	Social-Ecological Unit(s)
Support construction of latrines and water pumps on school campuses.	School and community
Work with school teachers to develop healthy hygiene habits of the students.	School

Goal 6 addressed the need for health care and psychosocial services. This goal led to the need to establish mobile health services or clinics to provide services to rural and underserved communities. Due to the lack of civilian infrastructure and public transportation, rural community members have to travel far distances without modern transportation or emergency response services to health care clinics. The stakeholder assessment revealed that the ill or injured face further obstacles for travel because there are a limited number of clinics in rural areas.

As mentioned in Goal 3 and also addressed in Goal 6, education stakeholders had concerns about family violence and the safety of children. The stakeholders believed that the civil wars disrupted family norms and the stress of surviving war led to increased violence. In addition, a generation of Liberians grew up during the chaos and violence of war, which may have led to the loss of social norms that prevented or mitigated violence. As noted in the literature review, parents in Liberia valued the use of punishment in school. In addition, during the needs assessment, the Needs Assessment Committee

witnessed abusive parenting practices. While not all parents use abusive discipline, the needs assessment revealed a pattern of expressed need for the development of parenting skills. As a result, engaging parents in enhancing their parenting skills to ensure the protection of the rights of children was determined as a strategy.

Table 6: Goal 6 strategies and proposed social-ecological unit(s)

Health and Social Wellbeing Strategies	Social-Ecological Unit(s)
Establish mobile health services or clinics to provide services to rural and underserved communities.	Community
Engage parents in enhancing their parenting skills to ensure the protection of the rights of children.	Family, school, community, and government/public policy

Gender & Violence Prevention Strategies

Concern about harmful cultural practices was identified by governmental and NGO stakeholders in the open-ended interviews. These cultural practices can prohibit the attendance of girls in schools. Girls that attend traditional schools, particularly the Sande, may face female genital cutting. Practices of discrimination, gender-based violence, and sexual abuse and exploitation promote early marriage and pregnancy of girls. Both early marriage and pregnancy can lead to intimate partner violence and abuse. The strategies for Goal 7 included the need to develop incentives that can support the education of girls, as well as all children in each family.

The next two strategies included: Engage Zoes, female village leaders, and rural communities in reforming the harmful effects of harmful Poro and Sande cultural practices, while still maintaining respect for local culture and tradition. Plus, work with Zoes to establish a complementary relationship between public education and traditional

education. The Needs Assessment Committee placed this objective as a high priority because the establishment of a relationship with tribal leaders and Zoes can be developed to reform practices with respect to local culture and tradition. To accomplish these strategies, the strategies were developed to foster trusting relationships between SPICE and rural communities.

Table 7: Goal 7 strategies and proposed social-ecological unit(s)

Health and Social Wellbeing Strategies	Social-Ecological Unit(s)
Engage Zoes and traditional people in reforming the harmful effects of harmful Poro and Sande cultural practices, while still maintaining respect for local culture and tradition.	Family and community
Work with Zoes to establish a commentary relationship between public education and traditional education.	Family and community

In almost all cultures of the world, women face cultural and social norms that support gender-based violence, abuse, and exploitation. Goal 8 seeks to address gender-based violence as it was defined by educational stakeholders. It was determined that the following strategies would help mitigate gender-based violence, abuse, and exploitation:

- Engage with domestic and international networks in order to engage men and boys in violence prevention.
- Form men's support groups within Partner Communities that can introduce and establish non-confrontational dialogues of masculinity, gender-based violence, and violence prevention.
- Form women's support groups within Partner Communities to support women's empowerment.

While violence is not unique to Liberia, there was a concern by governmental and NGO stakeholders that gender-based violence has become normalized by the violence of armed conflict, which reflected the need for the above strategies.

The stakeholder assessment identified the need to address gender-based violence in schools. High levels of sexual exploitation and abuse are experienced by not only girls but also by boys at school, which indicated a high level of need by the Committee. The prevention of gender-based violence and sexual exploitation and abuse requires more strategies than educating girls on prevention. The transformation of cultural and social norms requires participation by both men and women. Opportunities for men to participate and become engaged in violence prevention can transform the social and cultural norms that support violence. The resulting strategy was to create awareness activities, campaigns, and interventions that educated about the impact of gender-based violence within schools and communities.

Table 8: Goal 8 strategies and proposed social-ecological unit(s)

Health and Social Wellbeing Strategies	Social-Ecological Unit(s)
Engage with domestic and international networks in order to engage men and boys in violence prevention.	School, community, and government
Form men's support groups within Partner Communities that can introduce and establish non-confrontational dialogues of masculinity, GBV, and violence prevention.	Community
Form women's support groups within Partner Communities to support women's empowerment.	Family and community

Lastly, the development of the leadership of girls emerged as a topic in the stakeholder assessment, which is reflected in Goal 9. Leadership development can also

transform gender norms. Sexual exploitation and abuse can prevent girls from completing their education. Moreover, girls face sexual pressures from boyfriends that can lead to early pregnancy. The engagement of boys and girls in leadership development that supports gender equity and equality through the adaptation of the Mentors in Violence Prevention or similar violence prevention programs to address the social and cultural needs of Liberia was the final strategy determined by the committee.

Table 9: Goal 9 strategies and proposed social-ecological unit(s)

Health and Social Wellbeing Strategies	Social-Ecological Unit(s)
Engage boys and girls in leadership development that supports gender equity and equality through the adaptation of the Mentors in Violence Prevention program to address the social and cultural needs of Liberia.	School

The needs assessment methodology allowed the Needs Assessment Committee to identify the “what is,” and to determine the “what should be,” and bridge the two into strategies that can be used by SPICE for strategic planning. To accomplish this, I led the Committee through the preassessment, assessment, and post-assessment phases. By completing each phase, the Committee and I were able to identify the needs of rural schools and communities, address challenges or obstacles impacting access to education, and present recommendations of strategies that can be used to address the needs. This led to the establishment of goals, objectives, and strategies within each programming theme, which is summarized in Appendix I. Lastly, the needs assessment phases set the stage for the development of the needs assessment report, which is discussed in the concluding chapter.

CHAPTER 4

DEVELOPING THE NEEDS ASSESSMENT REPORT

This chapter summarizes the programming choices that were included in the Needs Assessment Report. The final step of the needs assessment includes the action planning or programming development that can be implemented by SPICE's Board of Directors. During this step, Witkin and Altschuld (1995) clarified that "the needs assessor acts as an adviser to decision makers regarding an action plan to guide installation and implementation of one or more solutions" (p. 87). The needs assessment report drew upon goals, objectives, and strategies to develop programming to provide to the SPICE Board of Directors. To compile the report, this chapter discussed the use of the social-ecological model and its role in developing the pilot project for rural communities; sketched out short-term programming for underserved communities; and expanded on SPICE's approach to gender violence prevention.

Social-Ecological Approach

Throughout the stakeholder interviews and within the discussions by the Needs Assessment Committee, there was the expressed need for a holistic approach to programming. Because holistic programming can be a daunting task with many programming actors and recipients, I suggested the use of the social-ecological model to serve as the foundation of SPICE's programming. Moreover, the social-ecological model mapped out where issues emerge and where to implement programming that focused specifically on the target population of the needs assessment, which was rural children. After review of the post-assessment and the identification of the social-ecological units

that emerged from the needs assessment findings, I proposed the Child-Centered Social-Ecological Model for Postconflict Rural Reconstruction to serve as the foundation for program development. The rationale for centering children within the model was instrumental, because the Needs Assessment Committee realized that children live in complex social networks which influence their development. Moreover, the Committee and I realized that it is not a singular cause that prevents children from attending school. While children have different life experiences based on gender, socio-economic background, age, and personal history, children interact and are impacted by multiple levels of social influences. As a result, I believed that the child's social ecology needs to be empowered to support children in reaching their full potential.

In addition, the praxis of the social-ecological model serves to change how post-conflict community development is approached. Noted within the literature review, Phillips and Pittman (2009) concluded that community development is a means of collaboration that serves to solve the problems that affect their community (p. 17). In addition, Bronfenbrenner's (1977) definition of ecological environment visualized structures "topologically as a nested arrangement of structures, each contained within the next" (p. 414). By mapping the topology of the nested structures, the social-ecological model identifies points of collaboration between actors in the different social-ecological units that can work together to increase access to education. The child-centered social-ecological approach addresses a multitude of factors from the child's family to the inability of Liberia to adhere to its public policy structures that affect children's access to education. Figure 1 visually illuminates the numerous issues influencing access to

education in rural communities. To remedy the multiple challenges faced by children, I identified the social-ecology units that comprise a child's life: child, family, school, community, and government.

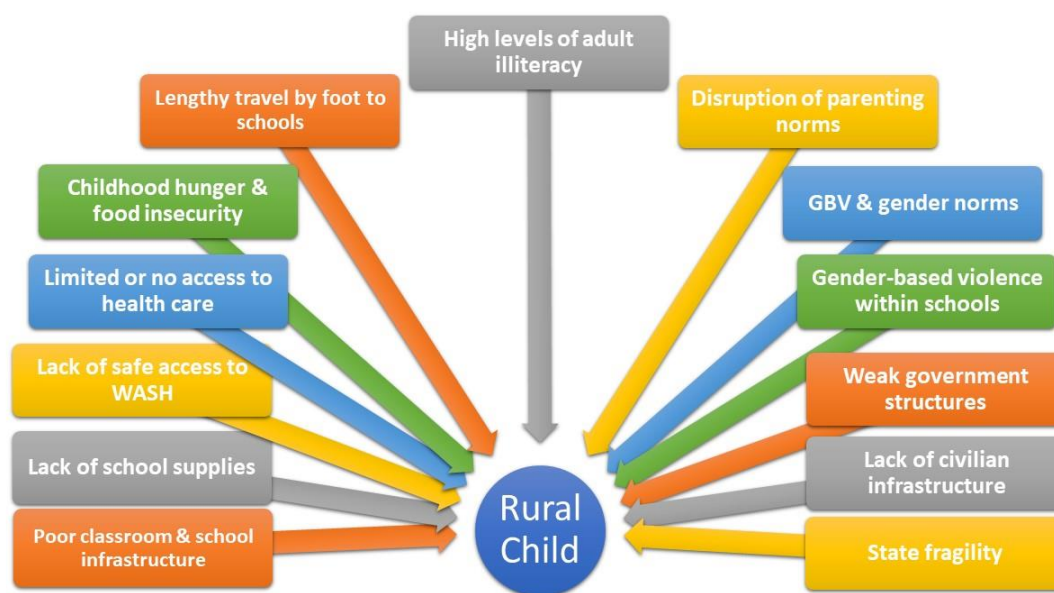


Figure 1: Intersection of issues impacting access to education in rural Liberia

The Child-Centered Social-Ecological Model for Postconflict Rural Liberia

Within the child-centered social-ecological model that places the emphasis on reconstruction starting with the needs of the child. This shifts the locus of community development to the child. Typically, community development does not begin with children as the starting point for development. The social-ecological model clearly positions children within the center of the system and can reveal intersections that might go unseen within traditional approaches to development. The Child-Centered Social-Ecological Model for Postconflict Rural Reconstruction is illustrated in Figure 2.

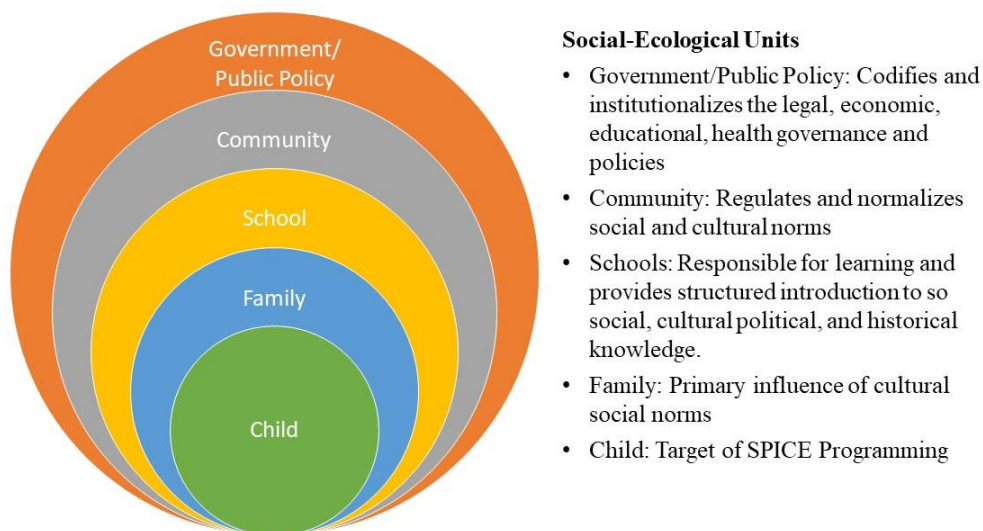


Figure 2: Child-Centered Social-Ecological Model for Postconflict Rural Reconstruction

Furthermore, the Child-Centered Social-Ecological Model for Postconflict Rural Reconstruction is inclusive of the elements of an ecological model for health promotion as outlined by McLeroy et al. (1988), which included intrapersonal factors for the child and parent; the interpersonal processes between different actors within a child's life; the institutional factors of social institutions; community factors that influence a child's development; and, the impact of public policy on children's access to education (p. 356). As a result, I applied the child-centered model to develop SPICE's initial pilot program, the Sustainable Education, Empowerment & Development (SEED) program. The developmental and organizational structure of the SEED program began by incorporating the Child-Centered Social-Ecological Model within the three intersecting thematic areas of SPICE's programming in (1) education, (2) health and social welfare, and (3) gender

and violence prevention. The SEED program identified specific locations of intervention to support access to education. Moreover, the social-ecological model mapped out multilevel intervention mechanisms to support the development of children and to increase access to education.

The Child-Centered Social-Ecological Model for Postconflict Rural Liberia

Reconstruction allows for the programming to be thoroughly mapped to identify the influencing actors within a child's life. The actors may have direct or indirect influence. For example, the direct actors are family members, teachers, and the community, and the indirect actors are governmental actors, such as policymakers and the ministry of education. Regardless of whether an actor is direct or indirect, the decisions regarding children and education impact their lives. As children, decisions are made on their behalf at many levels and the decision-making processes can exclude the child's agency. For example, a family may want to educate all of their children, but the best investment for the family may be to provide education for the oldest son. Or, the government may want to provide education to all children but does not have the financial and infrastructural resources to do so. As a result, SPICE believes that the child's social ecology needs to be empowered to support children in reaching their full potential.

To manage the complexity and scope of the vast needs of Liberian children, I identified one primary pilot project and two secondary pilot projects. The differentiation between primary and secondary projects was based on need. For the purposes of the Needs Assessment Report, a primary project is defined as a high level of critical need and requires long-term intervention. The critical need is determined by geographical

isolation, ability to attract NGO intervention or international institution programming, community infrastructure, the condition of the school buildings, school resources, and teacher to student ratio. Secondary, pilot programs addressed a lower level of need and/or required short-term intervention. I created an Assessment of Need, which can be found in Appendix J that determines whether a school or community qualifies for primary or secondary programming. The Assessment of Need is not intended to be set in stone. Rather, the assessment should be used as a gauge to identify critical levels of need.

The Assessment of Need was used to determine which schools that participated in the community forums would be able to participate in the SEED program. After using the assessment tool to evaluate each school, it was determined that the Vaneholor Public School, Daniel Town Public School, and Kargban Town would qualify for primary programming. With all three schools on the Rally Road in rural Grand Bassa, the primary pilot project was then titled the Rally Road Empowerment Initiative. The assessment also qualified the remaining schools as part of the secondary programs, which were the School Support Program and the Violence Prevention Youth Leadership Program. Each program is discussed below.

The Rally Road Schools Initiative

The three schools on Rally Road are the targets of SPICE's first pilot project using the adapted social-ecological model approach to rural postconflict reconstruction. The project would be a collaborative project between the schools, their communities, and SPICE. The schools were selected because, all three schools scored a 100 on the

Assessment of Need, which indicated a high level of need. Moreover, all three schools were rural and geographically isolated from the main roads in Grand Bassa County.

Rally Road is poorly maintained and the communities have built makeshift bridges to cross the creeks along the road. The first two schools (Vaneholer Public School and Daniel Town Public School) can be reached during the dry season by car; however, the third school (Kargban Town Public School) required a motorbike to reach. During the rainy season, all three schools can be hard to access due to flooding.

In addition, the three schools have not received any direct support from nongovernmental organizations or international institutions, such as the United Nations. Neither of the schools or the communities have access to electricity, drinking water, and sanitary latrines. The needs assessment also indicated that the communities do not have access to medical facilities. If a community member is injured, they must travel on foot or by motorbike, that is if gas is available. The community has systems of governing through tribal traditions, however formal governance structures that would provide an inclusive representation of the community were not identified during the community forums.

Lastly, the school infrastructure and access to resources are minimal. None of the three schools had a secure building with locking doors and windows. During the community forums, the teachers indicated that they could not leave teaching materials or desks and chairs at the school, because they would be stolen. In combination with the school's insecurity and the high rates of poverty among their families, students do not have textbooks, notebooks, or writing utensils. In addition, the schools have high pupil to

teacher ratios. On average, there is one teacher for 100 to 200 students. The classrooms themselves are not walled nor do they have desks. The three schools have representatives leading parent-teacher associations (PTA), however, they struggle to have meetings and operate with little resources.

Mapping the Child-Centered Social-Ecological Model for Postconflict Rural Reconstruction.

Revealed by the needs assessment, children face many challenges and obstacles that limit access to education. Figure 4 outlines the challenges faced by rural children within the Child-Centered Social-Ecological Model for Postconflict Rural Reconstruction. To increase access to education, the full needs of children must be addressed. Identifying the wide range of social, economic, and political issues affecting children has helped me to identify root causes that prevent children from attaining an education. SPICE believes that programming cannot provide surface solutions to education; rather, the root causes of the needs have to be identified and addressed through programming.

Furthermore, Figure 4 illustrates the different issues that are impinging access to education in the Rally Road schools. Some issues are clearly identifiable as barriers to education and some of the issues are not so clear. SPICE sees the programming themes as intersectional. SPICE's intersectional programming allows the organization to address multiple needs that interconnect throughout the lives of children, families, schools, communities, and Liberia.

Figure 4 provides a few examples of the need for social-ecological programming. For example, gender norms affect the full aspects of the daily lives of children. Due to limited family incomes, boys are shown educational preference. Socialized gender roles prescribed to women and girls assume that they do not need the education to do domestic duties. Moreover, social norms can condone domestic or intimate partner violence.

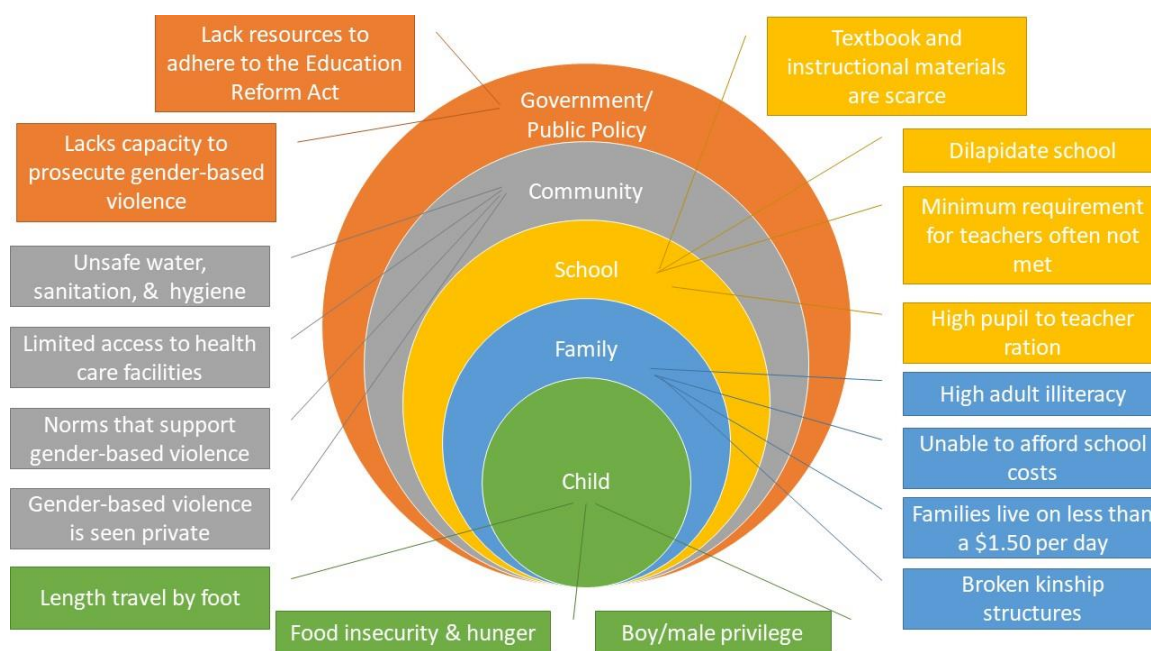


Figure 3: Mapping the Child-Centered Social-Ecological Model for Postconflict Rural Reconstruction.

Childhood hunger and food insecurity can also affect children throughout their social ecology. Many families live below a dollar a day in Liberia, which makes it difficult for parents to provide food for their family. Many children often attend school without having breakfast or lunch, which distracts them from learning. Food insecurity can also cause malnutrition, which can impact development or the ability to fight off infection or illnesses.

Liberia also faces high rates of adult illiteracy. UNICEF (2013) reported that the adult literacy rate from 2008-2012 was 42.9 percent (Basic Indicators). The concern about adult illiteracy was expressed both in open-ended interviews and community forums. Stakeholders explained that the civil war prevented many children from going to school. As a result, many parents and young adults did not learn to read and the social and family norms that were developed during peacetime have become lost. Parents, who were children during the civil war, did not have the opportunity to develop norms during their childhood that normally would support education for the next generation of children. For example, parents may not know when to send children to school. Illiteracy can also privilege education for the boy child, which can also leave many women and girls remaining illiterate.



Gender Norms: Gender norms affect the full aspect of the children's daily lives. Due to limited family incomes, boys are shown education preference. The prescribed gender role and domestic of girls within the family often prevent investment in girls education.

Childhood Hunger and Food Insecurity: Many families live on less than a \$1.50 a day. This makes it difficult for parents to provide food to their families. Many children often attend school without having breakfast or lunch, which distracts them from learning. Also, food insecurity can impact healthy brain development of children.

Adult Illiteracy: Because of the civil wars, many parents were unable to attend school. Parents are often illiterate and can not help children with homework.

Gender-based violence: Girls and boys both experience school-based sexual violence. In addition Gender norms also support early marriage, which often leads to early pregnancies and domestic violence.

Figure 4: Intersection of gender norms within the three programming themes

In regard to gender-based violence, its manifestations in school can affect the confidence of girls in the classroom. Social norms that privilege men and boys over girls and women can make girls feel less smart or inferior. Moreover, sexual harassment will be faced by girls throughout their life without addressing the causes of violence. Furthermore, if girls reach junior and senior high school, they can face sexual harassment by male teachers, administrators, and students. Sexual harassment in the school setting can cause students to drop out and not finish their schooling. By seeing programming as intersecting and not limiting programming to specific areas, SPICE will be more able to build a more complete picture of issues and challenges faced by children living in the Rally Road communities.

The Rally Road Schools Initiative Programming Goals Alignment

Based on the findings of the needs assessment, the Needs Assessment Committee and I identified the goals, objectives, and strategies for the Rally Road Schools Initiative. The Initiative consisted of Goals 1 through 8 which can then be mapped out by the social-ecological units.

Goal 1: Positive environment that promotes learning in rural and underserved Liberian communities created through the construction and improvement of school buildings.

The schools on Rally Road have been classified through the Project Assessment of Need as communities of high need. The current infrastructure of the school cannot foster an environment that promotes learning. Children that attend the Rally Road schools face high levels of poverty and food insecurity. Parents in the community cannot

afford to send their children to school because the cost of uniforms, books, and supplies are too costly. Some families can only afford to send one child to school; however, the family has to choose which child to invest their money. This leads to the privileging of the oldest male child. The daughters are often not seen as a good investment because they will marry into a new family. In addition, the cost or burden of feeding a daughter can lead to early marriage. Moreover, the length of travel by foot can prevent parents from sending young children and girls to school, because they feel that the journey is too long and unsafe for children. By creating a positive learning environment, SPICE can help to create mechanisms to address parents' concerns and increase regularity in student attendance.

Goal 2: Capacity for early childhood and primary school teachers in rural and underserved communities built through training and mentorship.

The Rally Road Education Initiative meets SPICE's Goal 2 initiative because the current mechanisms that can provide access to education do not have a stable foundation to support the Government of Liberia's goals. As indicated in the above Assessment of Need, the schools on Rally Road do not have enough teachers to produce a positive learning environment. The mentoring of community teachers can facilitate better classroom management and increase achievements in learning by the students.

Goal 3: Psychosocial support for school-age children and coaching of parents, teachers, and school administrators.

The needs assessment of the Rally Road Education Initiative reflects the qualifications of SPICE's Goal 3 because there was an expressed need by the teachers

and the Ministers in the Ministry of Education that conveyed concern about parenting skills. SPICE believes that the PTA could serve as an empowering vehicle to approach teaching positive parenting skills. Parenting skills could be interwoven within the PTA meetings or workshops sponsored by the PTA. In addition, the PTA provides an opportunity for parents to address challenges that may prevent children from completing the sixth grade. Furthermore, the schools in the Rally Road Education Initiative also face a high pupil to teacher ratio. By engaging parents to participate in the child's education through volunteerism, teachers will have more assistance in managing classes. The goal is to increase opportunities for teachers to concentrate on curriculum and instruction, rather than focusing on classroom management.

Goal 4: Healthy and nutritional development of early childhood and primary school children in underserved communities.

During the needs assessment, there was a high level of expressed need for addressing malnutrition and food insecurity, which was expressed by all stakeholders throughout the needs assessment. Governmental leaders, NGO stakeholders, teachers, and parents were very concerned regarding the impact of malnutrition on children. Children living along Rally Road had visual signs of acute malnutrition. While the needs assessment did not measure acute malnutrition, the overwhelming concern by stakeholders through the needs assessment led me to include nutritional development as a programming goal.

Goal 5: Access to safe drinking water, hygiene, and sanitation (WASH) services on early childhood and primary school campuses improved to prevent the spread of disease.

The needs assessment was conducted just after the height of the Ebola epidemic in Western Africa where Liberia was at the epicenter. The concern for the spread of disease was at the forefront of the minds of all stakeholders. In addition, the Needs Assessment Committee and I witnessed communities collecting water from sources that could be an incubator of waterborne illness. In addition, diseases can be spread by poor sanitation practices and the mishandling of human waste that can increase the risk of childhood illness and death. As a result, it was imperative to provide WASH resources to prevent the spread of disease not only for children but for the community as a whole.

Goal 6: Opportunities for access to professional health care and psychosocial services in rural and underserved communities.

The three communities on Rally Road do not have access to medical facilities or psychosocial services. Based on the expressed concern of stakeholders, children do not receive preventative care or vaccinations to protect children from childhood illnesses. Children and the communities on Rally Road are also at high risk of malaria without access to prophylactic medications and other precautions, such as mosquito nets. In addition, as survivors of the civil wars, communities have not had access to psychosocial services to cope with the remains of trauma. In addition, community members and children may also require support or counseling.

Goal 7: Community dialogue to address cultural and social norms that normalize discrimination and violence based on gender.

In Liberia, rural communities are typically a part of larger tribes. During the interviews with governmental and NGO leaders, concern was indicated that the traditional practices of tribal customs prevented students, primarily girls from attending school. The biggest concern was the girls' participation in traditional education practices of the Sande. The Sande traditions can include female genital cutting; however, this was not a concern within the community forums held at the schools. The concern by governmental and nongovernmental leaders was so great that it cannot be ignored by the Needs Assessment Committee.

Goal 8: Transform gender-based cultural and social norms that support gender-based violence and gender inequity and inequality.

It was indicated by stakeholders that gender norms can prevent access to education for girls. The preference for privileging boys or the eldest son to receive an education was indicated in the open-ended interviews and by Rally Road teachers. SPICE also has a dedication to empowering all genders including men and boys. SPICE believes that women's and girls' empowerment cannot be achieved and sustained without the healthy development of masculinities. In addition, the literature review indicated that boys in Liberia also experience high levels of gender-based violence. To respond to high levels of gender-based violence, SPICE has made violence prevention a facet of all programming and a must to include boys.

The goals' programming alignment illustrates the complexity and challenges faced by families, schools, and communities. It is understood by the Needs Assessment Committee that the goals set within SPICE's programming require time to develop and refine in practice. In addition, the social change required as outlined by the goal's initiative requires a long-term commitment.

Community Empowerment and Advocacy Approach

As discussed above, the needs assessment recommended that a holistic approach be taken. Moreover, the Literature Review's discussion of community development theory indicated that for their needs to be met it was imperative that the plan included community buy-in and the efficacy within the outcome is dependent on the community's potential, as well as, access to take an active role in community building. To facilitate community involvement, community partnerships that support outreach and advocacy are required.

Within the SEED program, the Community Empowerment and Advocacy Approach will blend a para-social worker model and a public health community volunteer model. In this approach, at least two people, one male and one female will be identified to serve as Community Empowerment Advocates. The Community Empowerment Advocates will serve as the bridge between the community and SPICE to advocate for and oversee the implementation of programming within their community.

Moreover, SPICE also recognized that communities are not homogenous. SPICE found that the Community Empowerment Advocates can help to direct programming to address the nuances of each community. Furthermore, SPICE adapted its programming

to meet the needs of its partner communities. SPICE depends on the Community Empowerment Advocates' local knowledge to generate feedback to improve and adapt programming as needed. SPICE also challenged Community Empowerment Advocates to address social issues in their communities. Community Empowerment Advocates promoted dialogue and program implementation to help families participate in SPICE programming. It is suggested that SPICE work with Community Empowerment Advocates and their communities create a praxis between community goals and SPICE programming.

Long-Term Commitment to Communities

The 2015 stakeholder assessment revealed that development digresses as projects are implemented over short periods of time (i.e. 2–3-year time period). Moreover, SPICE's approach to addressing rural education in postconflict states cannot be implemented all at once. The needs assessment report offers many goals, objectives, and strategies that cannot, at this point in SPICE's development, be developed and implemented all at once. A central feature of SPICE's programming is addressing social norms to create social change. Social change cannot realistically be expected to change quickly. Social change of norms will require a long-term commitment to communities. Moreover, the destruction created by the civil war and Liberia's slow recovery requires a long-term commitment to communities to promote sustainability.

SPICE will make a commitment for two, five-year terms with partner communities. However, before the implementation of the second five-year term, an evaluation will be made that will measure the progress and assure that the expected

results are being achieved by both SPICE and the partner communities. If the community is not participating fully, SPICE retains the right to not commit to the second term of programming. The second term will focus on developing the ability of the community and schools to be more self-sufficient within the second phase of the SEED program.

Secondary Programming

As much as SPICE would like to provide programming to all rural and underserved schools in Liberia, it does not have the resources to do so. However, SPICE does believe that short-term support projects can help schools and communities. As a result, I have identified two secondary programs: The School Support Program and the Gender Empowerment and Violence Prevention Program.

School Support Program

The School Support Program is designed for communities and schools that score between 79 and 35 on the Assessment of Need tool to qualify for secondary programming. The goal of the School Support Program was to work with rural and underserved schools to address the needs that may prevent access to education. The School Support Program will not provide a long-term approach and this program is for schools that do not qualify for the SEED program. School Support Program projects can include rehabbing a school in both Monrovia and rural counties, providing donations to students, digging a well for a school campus, building hygienic latrines, as well as other projects as needed.

Gender Empowerment and Violence Prevention Approach

The last facet of programming that I have suggested was a commitment to violence prevention. As a result, violence prevention was an instrumental part of SPICE's programming approach. Violence affects most Liberian's lives in a variety of forms, and SPICE is committed to violence prevention throughout Liberia. SPICE believes that youth leadership development can transform social norms and create a Liberia free of violence. As a result, I suggested a Violence Prevention Youth Leadership Program that will serve this purpose. The program will work to develop Liberian youth leadership while transforming social norms that normalize violence. It was suggested that the youth leadership program adapt the Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) program. MVP was the first bystander-based violence prevention program developed by Dr. Jackson Katz. The Needs Assessment committee believes that the adaptation of the MVP can address the specific cultural needs of Liberia through bystander-based violence prevention.

In addition, I advocated for the need to address gender-based violence and sexual exploitation and abuse throughout all programming. SPICE deemed that gender-based violence and sexual exploitation and abuse cannot end through the sole empowerment of women and girls alone. SPICE challenges the current approach to violence prevention by working for the engagement of society as a whole through empowerment. Empowerment involves unraveling the power structures that produce gender inequalities and inequities.

SPICE contends that men and boys must be engaged to interrupt social norms that maintain violence. Furthermore, it needs to come to light that unhealthy masculinity and

manhood can be harmful to not only women and girls, but other men and boys. Inequalities between men also support a culture of violence. While dedicated to working to empower women, SPICE also works to support the development of healthy and empowered masculinity. As a result, SPICE promotes the empowerment of women, girls, men, and boys in order to create communities free from violence, exploitation, and oppression.

This chapter resulted in the development of the report, *Needs Assessment Report: Paving the Way for the Future of Liberian Children*, which can be found in Appendix K. Moreover, the goals, objectives, and strategies of the needs assessment were operationalized providing context to the development of programs that are within the Needs Assessment Report. These programs included: the SEED Program for rural communities, the School Support Program for underserved schools, and the Violence Prevention Youth Leadership Program. The Gender Empowerment and Violence Prevention Approach outlined how violence prevention was integrated throughout SPICE programming.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The three phases of the Needs Assessment helped to identify the current shortcomings of providing access to education in rural Liberia. First, Liberia's postconflict reconstruction focused on rebuilding the government with a policy-focused approach to education. The focus on educational policy indicated Liberia's desire to provide education; however, the post-conflict economy of Liberia is unable to provide the needed budget to support its policy goals. As a result, the gap between the will to provide education and the capacity to provide education fosters fragility.

Second, within the international community, the focus on girls' education has encompassed the latest trend in international rights and development. SPICE believes that social change needs to occur throughout children's social ecology for change to be sustainable. Rather than creating girls only approaches, SPICE believes that both girls and boys need to be empowered to engender equity. In addition, the "to educate a girl" ethos overlooks the violence experienced by boys. As seen in the Literature Review, Postmus et al. (2014) found that "threats of sexual violence (i.e., sexual coercion) were high for both girls (30%) and boys (22%)" (p. 84). These findings indicated that boys are experiencing sexual violence, which is often overlooked within international gender-based violence prevention approaches. Understanding that girls and boys can experience violence and realizing that the "to educate a girl" ethos cannot protect girls once they leave the walls of the school, SPICE's programming sets out to transform social norms

that oppress girls and women and to prevent gender-based violence by engaging boys and men within children's social ecology.

As a result, the *Needs Assessment Report: Paving the Way for the Future of Liberian Children* changes the orientation of post-conflict educational programming in Liberia by placing children as the centralized targets of postconflict programming by adapting the social-ecological model. By moving the locus of post-conflict reconstruction to focus on rural children, SPICE can galvanize a network of actors to support access to education. In addition, the social-ecological approach can help to establish social norms that support community development and peace through reestablishing education opportunities and infrastructures that were lost during the two civil wars. The findings of the needs assessment resulted in three programming themes: education, health and social wellbeing, and gender and violence prevention. The three themes illustrated the complexities of issues that intersect to create obstacles to have equitable access to education.

Guided by the three programming themes, The Needs Assessment Report applies the Child-Centered Social-Ecological Model for Postconflict Rural Reconstruction through the development of stratagems that address fragility by using education as an organizing tool to address multiple intersecting issues that prevent access to education. The Needs Assessment Committee identified specific locations of interventions. The social-ecological units of child, family, school, community, and government/public policy allow for SPICE to also identify direct and indirect actors that are strategic to

education. To this end, SPICE will be able to achieve the goal of developing holistic programming.

Lastly, this report will be given to the SPICE Board of Directors to serve as a road map for strategic planning. In the development of the Needs Assessment Report, the Needs Assessment Committee developed the programming strategies realizing that as an emerging nongovernmental organization it does not have the resources to implement programs strategies all at once. Rather, this report will serve to help guide the Board in both short-term and long-term programming development. Furthermore, to set the stage for initial programming by SPICE, the three communities on Rally Road were selected to participate in the SEED program based on the Assessment of Need. In addition, the Needs Assessment Committee left space for the inclusion of secondary programming by including the School Support Program and the Violence Prevention Youth Leadership Program. The programming goals, objectives, and strategies revealed by the needs assessment provides SPICE with a foundation and direction for program development.

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APPENDIX A

BRIEF HISTORY OF LIBERIA

To understand the rurality gap in education, it is important to understand the history of Liberia and how it was susceptible to two civil wars. Liberia has been painted as a West African country that was founded out of the American antislavery movement. In 1822, the American Colonization Society resettled freed American slaves in Liberia. Coined the “land of the free.” the freed slaves, called Americo-Liberians, dominated Liberia and took a grip of the country politically and economically. Modeling the civilizing ideologies of the United States, the Americo-Liberians saw the indigenous tribes as inferior and set up Christian missions. Dennis (2006) explains that “comprising less than 3 percent of the population [Americo-Liberians] maintained economic, social, and political control of the country until a coup d’état in 1980” (p. 2). The Americo-Liberians focused on coastal lands and marginalized the indigenous tribes in the interior. The political ideology of the Americo-Liberians created a dichotomy in Liberia between elite, urban Monrovia and the marginalized rural interior. This dichotomy laid the context for the 14-year long impact of two civil wars.

In 1979, President William R. Tolbert and his administration increased the cost of rice, the staple food of Liberia, by fifty percent. In April 1979, Liberians comprising the ethnic minority groups, unable to afford rice, mobilized to protest the cost of rice. Now known as the Rice Riot, the protest became violent and turned deadly as police fired upon protesters. The Rice Riot is thought by some historians to be a turning point in Liberia’s history. At the very least, Dennis (2006) argues that “the ensuing 'rice riots' severely

damaged Tolbert's credibility and increased the administration's vulnerability" (p. 3). In 1980, the dominance of the Americo-Liberians came to a halt when President Tolbert was overthrown by Sergeant Samuel Doe.

Samuel Doe and his political party, the People's Redemption Council (PRC), asserted Doe as president. The presidential leadership of Doe was tumultuous even within the PRC as Doe executed PRC members and other essential key positional holders left in Liberia. This included Charles Taylor, the Head of the General Service Agency, and Prince Yormie Johnson, the Aide to the Commanding General of the Armed Forces of Liberia. Additionally, Doe, an ethnic minority himself, did not incorporate diverse indigenous participation in his government. Instead, Doe's ethnic group, the Krahn, maintained a monopoly of governmental positions. The indigenous population of Liberia became disenfranchised by Doe's presidential leadership. Doe's presidency served to maintain a political dichotomy within Liberia. Rather than the Americo-Liberians/Indigenous Liberians dichotomy, the dichotomy became Krahn/non-Krahn indigenous peoples.

President Doe was overthrown in Liberia's second coup. Taylor, Johnson, and the rebel group, the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) entered Liberia from Côte d'Ivoire sparking the first civil war. Later, Johnson split from Taylor creating his rebel group, the Independent National Patriotic Front (INPFL). Van Der Kraaij (n.d.) narrated that "A year after the start of the civil war President Samuel Doe was captured by rebel leader Prince Y. Johnson" (Section 3). The first civil war lasted from 1989 to 1996 and grew into several faction groups. Despite the Abuja Peace Accords of 1995, fighting

continued until 1996. However, elections took place in 1997 as agreed upon in the Abuja Peace Accord and heralded Taylor as President. Dennis (2006) pointed out that “some have speculated that Taylor won because many citizens believed that electing him was the only way to end the war” (p. 5). The election of Taylor as the president did not end the civil war, but ushered in another one.

Taylor’s support of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone and the opposition groups, Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) and Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) would ignite and sustain a second civil war. LURD and MODEL battled Taylor and the Armed Forces of Liberia taking control of the majority of rural Liberia. The second civil war lasted from 1997 to 2003. In 2003, through the demands of Liberia’s women, the LURD, MODEL, and other Liberian delegates came to a peace agreement in Accra, Ghana.

Emerging from the historical narrative of Liberia is a dichotomous pattern of a ruling minority group and marginalized majority group and the urban population and the rural population. Both of these dichotomies kindled civil war. Prior to the civil war, the rural interior had limited access to modern and civilian infrastructure. The destruction created by the civil wars cut rural communities off from postconflict reconstruction programs. Today, the rural communities feel cut off from urban Monrovia and the epicenter of humanitarian aid and governmental programming. The current urban-rural divide could easily rekindle war if the rural communities are continued to be ignored. As a result, education is seen as a pillar to support Liberia's peace and stability.

APPENDIX B

FOUNDING AND HISTORY OF SPICE

Responding to the need for Rural Education and the Founding of SPICE

The founding of SPICE was in response to the critical need for education throughout all of Liberia with a specific focus on rural communities. SPICE was the vision of David Tekasuah, a former child refugee of the wars in 2010. While Tekasuah drove through a rural community in Liberia, he noticed the need to help rural children attend school. With rural schools, far and few between, he learned that school children may have to walk as far as five to ten miles by foot. Moreover, many rural schools were destroyed during the civil wars and many schools are made of dirt floors, two-inch timber walls, leaky tin roofs, and chalkboards without chalk. Schools and families were also unable to provide textbooks, copybooks/composition books, or pencils. It was from this point that Tekasuah decided to develop an organization that will help communities and rural children rebuild their future and prepare to be leaders.

In 2012, Tekasuah launched SPICE as a community-based organization. SPICE's humble beginnings started by helping the community of Paynesville, which is outside the capital city of Monrovia. Lacking the funding to incorporate and operate as a nongovernmental organization (NGO), Tekasuah used his own income to donate school supplies and materials to local schools. However, Tekasuah wanted to do more for rural schools that were in critical need of help. In 2014, Tekasuah who was employed as a Senior Database Administrator at Liberia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs received a scholarship for continuing education in computer information technology in New Delhi,

India. During his studies in India, Tekasuah never forgot his vision for SPICE and his desire to help rural communities. He worked from his New Delhi hotel trying to find a way to keep SPICE alive.

In a chance meeting, while sightseeing in New Delhi in November 2014, I crossed paths with Tekasuah. In a short conversation, Tekasuah shared his vision for SPICE and I shared with Tekasuah my graduate background in women's and gender studies and nonprofit management. I believed that my background could help support Tekasuah's vision. While still completing my M.A. in Women's and Gender Studies at the University of Northern Iowa (UNI), I redirected my studies to include SPICE's desire to increase access to education, which became the research subject for this thesis project. With the support of a Global Opportunities Grant from UNI's Provost, I traveled to Liberia for three months to conduct a needs assessment in Liberia and to establish SPICE as an NGO registered in Liberia in June 2015.

Before my departure to Liberia, Tekasuah and I worked to lay the foundation of SPICE. To structure the founding board of directors, Tekasuah took on the role of Country Director for SPICE and I became the Chair of the Board of Directors. As the Country Director, Tekasuah recruited: Alphonso Quenneh with a background in accounting; Archievego Doe with years of teaching experience; Vivian Thomas the founder of Eagle Nest Academy, a rural-based private school; and Julius Togba with vast experience in Liberia's NGO sector Liberia Institute of Statistics and GIS et al., 2013, p. 202). To round out the Founding Board of Directors, Tekasuah and I were able to add three additional board members that could offer expert guidance using their professional

experience. The first was N'Chung Eben, a nurse operating a maternal health clinic. Dorothy Jackson, a veteran teacher in rural communities and an instructor at Cunningham College and Andrew Kanasuah, an economist joined the board. With the board having an array of different academic and professional backgrounds, the Board was established and could move forward with the needs assessment.

APPENDIX C
RESEARCHED TRENDS

Political Trends

United States Agency of International Development (USAID) described Liberia as a fragile state, which means the government of Liberia is unable to provide its citizens with safety and security, good governance, and poverty reduction. In 2009, USAID reported that “the fragile conditions in [Liberia] risk a return to violent conflict... [that could] produce serious development and humanitarian costs.” (p. ix). Liberia’s fragility persists despite efforts by the government and international partners. The government with support from international partners has created key strategic reconstruction and development documents aimed at mitigating poverty, weak governance, and violence. These strategic documents include the Peace Building Priority Plan, the Poverty Reduction Strategy, and the Agenda for Transformation; however, they have not sufficed in providing a reduction of vulnerability for the majority of the people.

Unfortunately, Liberia's national budget does not reflect the priorities set in the strategic reconstruction and development documents. Liberia operates a consumer budget rather than an investment budget. The government dedicates resources toward vehicles, salaries, and travel as opposed to the construction of schools, health facilities, and roads. An example of the scenario is indicated in the Education Reform Act of 2011 which states: “In addition to the recurrent budgetary appropriation for education all concession agreements for investment in the extractive mineral and other non-renewable resource sectors, as well as in the agriculture sector and in major privatization contracts,

shall require that 60% of any signature fees realized shall be allocated to the educational budget” (Ministry of Education, 2011, Chapter 9.1a). If this statement was to be upheld between 2011 and 2014, the government would have built schools in all parts of the country especially in suburban and rural communities where the need for education and health facilities remains acutely perverse.

Economic Trends

Prior to the two civil wars, Liberia was known for its iron ore mining and rubber industry, which comprised the bulk of the Liberian economy. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) of the U.S. (2012) explained, “In the 1970s and 1980s, iron ore mining accounted for more than half of Liberian exports earnings” (Section Economy). But, the combination of the dwindling iron demand of the world market in the 1980s and the civil wars severely halted mining of iron ore. Liberia’s civil wars devastated its economy, which had a direct impact on Liberian livelihoods. With the war leaving the economy in shambles, Liberia is still struggling to recover from years of war. The civil wars damaged infrastructure, in particular, road connectivity, which prevents Liberia from bolstering its economy through export of its plentiful natural resources (CIA, 2011, Section Economy). As of 2012, the CIA reports, “The economy is heavily dependent on the infusion of funds made available by international donors, the presence of the [United Nations Mission in Liberia] peacekeeping force, and international NGOs. Foreign assistance (\$425 million) still exceeds the national budget” (CIA, 2011, Section Economy). Moreover, much of Liberia’s economy is rooted in the informal economy and

subsistence agriculture, as well as foreign imports of goods. (International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP), 2011, p. 23).

The struggle to recover from the war has led to an estimated 63.8% (1,725,806 of 3,500,000) of the country's total population to fall below the poverty line (International Monetary Fund, 2012, p. 8). The CIA (2011) reports, "Only about 15% of the workforce is employed in the formal sector" (Section Economy). Moreover, IIEP reports that "80% of Liberians live on less than \$1USD per day, and 40% are highly or moderately vulnerable to food insecurity" (p. 23). The rampant poverty and high unemployment limits parent's abilities to provide food, let alone pay for school and health care. The economic struggles of Liberia create an environment of insecurity and can threaten its peace.

Educational Trends

The educational system in Liberia has been described as having characteristics of "fragility and structural weakness" prior to the 14-year civil war (IIEP, 2011, p. 17). The post-civil war environment has compounded the challenges faced by the educational system. The education sector faces many challenges as a whole generation was left virtually uneducated due to the war. The IIEP explains (2011):

Liberia's youth, aged 15-35, constitute 28 percent of the country's population, around 1 million people. An estimated 45 percent is illiterate. Many young people have not completed basic education, and most have little training in vocational or technical skills. Within this group, females, in particular, have been less educated and are less skilled, and therefore more socially constrained ...Left

largely uneducated, unemployed, disengaged, and economically and socially marginalized, this is widely perceived to be one of the country's greatest risk factors for renewed tension and conflict...The lack of youth livelihood training, in particular, has been recognized by many as a major contributor to fragility. (p. 36)

The risk of fragility remains in Liberia and a decade later the sector is still struggling to function.

The National Inter-Sectoral Policy on Early Childhood Development reports, "The war destroyed many schools, as a result, there are inadequate facilities for early learning opportunities, particularly in the rural areas. Most of the [early childhood development] services are concentrated in urban areas especially in the Montserrado, Nimba, and Bong Counties" (Ministry of Education, 2011). There is also significant damage to schools providing basic education where many early childhood education classes take place.

Today, a child's geographical location can impact the quality or availability of resources. Schools in rural locations face poor or no building facilities and seating, the limited number of trained teachers, high pupil to teacher ratio, lack of necessary school supplies and textbooks, and lengthy travel by foot to schools. Moreover, parents are struggling to educate their children. Due to high unemployment and slow economic growth in Liberia, parents struggle to provide the basic needs—food, water, and shelter—for their children. Education is an expense that parents either struggle to afford or cannot afford at all. The continued failure of the educational sector could maintain Liberia's fragility.

The Ministry of Education has recently outsourced a portion of its teaching to private, for-profit organizations that are technology dependent. The New York Times reported that "when the school year starts in September, private operators — for-profit companies and charitable organizations — will take charge of 120 government primary schools, 3 percent of the total" (Rosenberg, 2016, para. 3-4). What is significant is that for-profit models are using computer technologies via internet data and tablets which is currently unavailable in rural communities. Many rural communities do not have electricity or cell phone reception. The focus on using technologies within the educational system will further widen the urban/rural divide within Liberia, which could foster further fragility.

Health Trends

Health, nutrition, education, protection, and safety are among the overarching conditions that children face in Liberia. These conditions are largely attributed to poverty, which creates high levels of deprivation and destitution for many children in the country. In Liberia, poverty is defined as "a condition characterized by severe deprivation of basic human needs, including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education, and information. It depends not only on income but also on access to services" (Ministry of Education, 2011).

Child wellbeing and development has been compromised due to the effects of the war on the country's productivity. A significant portion of the population, 63.3% of the poor in Liberia are children under 10 years old (International Monetary Fund, 2008, p.

26). Liberia has been able to reduce child mortality from 117 deaths per 1000 live births to 72 deaths per 1000 live births (International Monetary Fund, 2008, p. 30).

While the child mortality rate has been reduced, it still remains high in keeping with international standards. Despite reductions, the mortality rate for children under five years also remains high. Liberia has reduced from 194 to 111 deaths per 1000 births (IMF, 2008, p. 30). Leading causes of morbidity and mortality are still neonatal conditions, ARI-pneumonia, malaria, diarrhea, measles, and malnutrition. Maternal mortality rates are 994/100,000 live births (UNICEF, 2013). Significantly, 60% of childbirths occur outside of health facilities under unskilled birth attendants, particularly in rural areas resulting in unnecessary neonatal deaths and complications (IMF, 2008, p. 30). Though most children do not complete their vaccination regimes, there is an indication that about 89% of children aged 12 to 23 months received some of the recommended vaccinations (UNICEF, 2003). Breastfeeding is still prevalent and extended. The IMF (2008) reported that “Poor breastfeeding and a lack of optimum complementary feeding practices are the key reasons for the high level of malnutrition. Anemia in young children (60%) and pregnant women (39%) remains very high” (p.30). The use of bottles is not widespread, which is good as it reduces the spread of diseases as a result of unhygienic bottle care.

About 42% of Liberia’s population is food insecure, this results in various forms of malnutrition-related health problems such as severe stunting, severe wasting, and developmental delay among young children (Ministry of Agriculture & World Food Program (WFP), 2010, p. 15). An estimated 41% of children in Liberia experience

stunted growth. There are also concerns about the level of wasting and malnutrition (Ministry of Agriculture and WFP, 2010, p. 15). HIV and AIDS statistics are controversial, but it is estimated that the prevalence rate in the general population rose from 1.5% in 2007 to 1.9% in 2013 (Liberia Institute of Statistics and GIS, Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, Liberia National AIDS Control & ICF International, 2013, p. 202).

Gender Trends

Within the Agenda for Transformation, the government of Liberia has set forth goals for improving gender equality. The Agenda has set the goal to “Improve the socio-economic and political status and capacity of women in Liberia” (Government of Liberia, 2013, p. 126). However, the Agenda points out the paradox in which women live. The government of Liberia has many women leaders from the president to assistant ministers; and women operate many small businesses within the markets and on the roadside to support their families. However, the gender mainstreaming that has taken place at a state level has not trickled down to average Liberian women or within families. The Agenda explains:

The paradox in Liberia is that women have weaker influence in the marketplace and the political arena, although they constitute the majority of the active labor force in agriculture—particularly in food production—and form extensive networks in the informal sector, where they are noted for their entrepreneurial abilities and creative skills. The culture of patriarchy pervades Liberian society, beginning in the family with men as

heads of households, and serves as the model for organizing society—economy, politics and socio-cultural life (Government of Liberia, 2013, p. 126).

The post-civil war culture of patriarchy marginalizes women and maintains gender-based violence against women and children. The country's customary history places women with many disadvantages due to a strong myth concerning women as properties to their husbands. Highly entrenched in every part of the country, this belief puts women in a disproportionate position where their male counterparts are at the top of the social ladder (education, governance, economy, health, etc.). Females are at the lowest social rung; they are objects of violence and far from injecting their opinion into decisions that affect the common good of society. Post-colonial customs equate women to housewives. As a result, girls are seen as the future properties of their husbands and families choose to educate their sons over their daughters. Longtime failure to educate girls has put women at a disadvantage. Because girls are seen as the property of their future husbands, girls are forced into early marriage and pregnancies. Moreover, early marriage prevents girls from pursuing social advancement.

Many adolescent girls drop out of school due to early pregnancy without parental preparation. School-based sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) is reported to be on the increase (Ofori, 2012, p. 7) in many rural and urban communities. Teachers and male students are said to be sexually assaulting girls thus creating a sharp decline in school-age girl's enrollment. National AIDS Commission's (NAC) Ebola Virus Disease Impact Assessment on HIV Service Assessment has shown an increasing decline in enrollment of girls than boys. Responses on School Health Club aspect of the assessment indicates

disproportionate girl's enrollment is mainly contributed to harsh economic realities and pregnancies despite pronounced restrictions on abstinence from sex due to Ebola.

In most parts of the country, traditional education systems are the *Sande* and *Poro*. The *Sande* is for girl's and the *Poro* is for boy's socialization into the traditional society. The *Sande* traditionally includes the practice of female genital mutilation (FMG). FMG is said to be a way of ensuring that the children especially girls do not renege their marital responsibilities. *Sande* is said to be a form of education by its promoters, but it adversely contributes to the number of children not registered to attend public school.

APPENDIX D

TIMELINES FOR THE COMPLETION OF PHASE TWO TASKS

June 18: Kristen's Arrival in Liberia.
June 23 to June 26: Completed Preassessment Steps in Preparation for the assessment phase.
June 26: Approved Assessment Plan.
June 29 to July 3: Conduct Interviews. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Met with the House Committee Chair on Education. b. Met with the Senate Committee's Chair on Education. c. Met with authorities at the Ministry of Education. d. Met with the Minister of Gender and Development. e. Met with authorities at the Gbowee's Foundation.
July 6 to Friday, July 10: Conducted Community Forums and interviews with school administration with the schools in Grand Bassa County.
July 13 to July 17: Conducted Community Forums and interviews with school administration with the schools in Margibi County.
July 20 to July 24: Conducted Community Forums and interviews with school administration with the schools in Bong County.
August 3 to August 7: Commencement of the development of the five years strategic plan.
August 10 to September 10: Began Phase Three of the needs assessment and drafted report of findings from the needs assessment.
Tuesday, September 15, 2015 Kristen's departure to the USA

APPENDIX E

OPEN-ENDED INTERVIEW NOTES FOR ASSESSMENT PHASE

Interview	Issues Emerging from Interviews
Meeting with Gbowee Foundation, W.E. Saydee-Tarr	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Adolescent pregnancy. 2. Families have limited financial resources to send children to school. Thus, families favor sons' education over daughters' education. 3. Lack of academic stimulation/inspiring learning environment to foster excitement for learning.
Meeting with the Assistant Minister of Early Childhood Education, Yukhiko Amnon	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Overaged children entering at the preschool level. 2. Students in need of age-appropriate supplies, such as larger grip pencils and crayons, lined paper for learning how to write. 3. Teacher training is also needed. Teachers need more than just teaching methodologies. Teachers need training in creative thinking and improvising to improve each child's learning experience.
Meeting with House Committee Chair on Education, Hon. Matthew Zarzar	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Need for trained teachers. 2. Poor learning environment. 3. Few incentives to teach in rural areas. 4. Impact of government not felt in rural areas thus weakening education priorities.

	<p>5. Since 2006 some of those districts in South Eastern Liberia have not received any development opportunities.</p>
<p>Meeting with the Founder and CEO of Health Concern, Dr. Christine W.O. Sadia</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Gender based violence (GBV) has become worse after the civil wars. 2. Movement from rural to urban has disrupted family structures and created a division between boys and girls in the family. 3. The family believed it will be more beneficial to send boys to school rather than girls. 4. Girls stay within the home due to early marriage and pregnancy. 5. Abortion is illegal in Liberia resulting in procedures by untrained practitioners and high mortality rates. 6. School dropout rates of girls increases as girls progress through their education. 7. Women work in alternative economic markets. 8. Traditional systems: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Knowledge of laws is there, but are not practiced. b) There is a conflict between traditional beliefs and public policy. c) Traditional practices supersede laws. 9. Gender roles are very defined.

	<p>10. The rigid definition of masculinity.</p> <p>11. Families take pride in daughters getting married at a young age.</p> <p>12. HIV creates stigma and discrimination.</p>
<p>Meeting with the Assistant Minister of Basic and Secondary Education, Felicia Sackey Doe-Sumah</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Doe-Sumah addressed the following concerns: 2. Currently, there are too many interventions and the Ministry of Education needs to map out where intervention is needed. 3. Lack of female participation in school administration. 4. Overage students within pre-school. 5. Insufficient space in urban classrooms. 6. Attracting teachers to teach in rural areas. 7. Not a reading-friendly culture. 8. GBV and sexual harassment of girls. 9. Gaps in the development of parenting skills and education due to war. 10. Needs identified by Ms. Doe-Samah: 11. More female participation in school administration. 12. Scholarship program for girls. 13. Incentives for teachers to teach in rural areas. 14. Housing for teachers.

	<p>15. Awareness campaign to encourage families to start children in school at the age of five to prevent overage students in elementary schools.</p> <p>16. Teachers need life skills training to breakdown gender role/norms.</p>
<p>Meeting with the Deputy Minister for Gender, Sieane Abdul-Baki</p>	<p>1. Challenges for adolescent girls in rural areas include sexual gender-based violence (SGBV,</p> <p>a) self-esteem, HIV/AIDS, FGM, early marriage, and fistulas.</p> <p>2. Traditional beliefs and practices affect the economic empowerment of girls.</p> <p>3. When asked, what is the Ministry of Gender doing to support girls' education? The reply was scholarships, boarding for girls at schools, and excellence awards for vocation and higher education.</p>

APPENDIX F

COMMUNITY FORUM & INDICATORS OF NEED

Community Forum	Open-Ended Responses
<p>Full Gospel Mission School, Gbarnga, Bong County</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Educational concerns of community stakeholders <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teachers expressed concern that the church did not provide classrooms. 2. Families struggle to afford school fees and to provide school uniforms, shoes, and school supplies (Copybooks and pencils). 3. Many parents are illiterate cannot help their children with homework. 4. The school does not have trained teachers with a teaching certificate; however, the teachers holds bachelor degrees from Liberian universities. 5. Many over aged children are entering kindergarten. 6. The school does not have funds to provide textbooks and other learning materials. ❖ Health and Social Welfare Concerns of Stakeholders <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Many families live below the poverty line and survive on less than \$1.50 a day.

	<ol style="list-style-type: none">2. Food insecurity is faced by many families, which leads to childhood malnutrition.3. Few health care facilities are available in rural areas leaving children and their families susceptible to illness and injury.4. Children and their communities, including schools, do not have safe drinking water or sanitation facilities. Drinking water sources such as creeks can become contaminated by human feces, which leads to an outbreak of perennial diseases.5. The civil war broke up kinship structures and left many Liberian children to raise themselves. As a result, parents lack parenting skills and do not understand child development. <p>❖ Gender and Violence Prevention Key Issues</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. A culture of patriarchy pervades in Liberia normalizing violence against women and the subjugation of women.2. Violence is normalized within society because it is seen as a private issue and the perpetrators are left unpunished.
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	<p>3. Cultural and traditional beliefs in Liberia are marginalizing women and girls. As a result, girls are not provided the same opportunity to education as boys.</p> <p>4. Girls face early marriage that can lead to high levels of intimate partner abuse and violence.</p> <p>5. Early pregnancy before the body is mature enough to support healthy and safe pregnancies, endangers girls.</p> <p>6. Liberia lacks the criminal justice infrastructure to prosecute perpetrators of gender-based violence, which include sexual violence, molestation, intimate partner violence, and sexual exploitation, and other forms of abuse.</p>
<p>Daniel Town Public School, Daniel Township Clan, Rally Road, Grand Bassa County</p>	<p>1. Type of School</p> <p>a. Public School</p> <p>2. Geographical Location</p> <p>a. School is located in rural Bassa County and is not near the capital city.</p> <p>b. The school is located on an unmaintained dirt road with bridges that have been constructed by community members.</p>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none">3. NGO and International Programming<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. The school has not received any support of the international institution or NGO.b. Ministry of Education does oversee the school; however, the Ministry does not have the resources to provide the school with a functioning building, education materials, or desks and chairs.c. Community Infrastructure Community does not have access to electricity and there is not any electrical infrastructure within the community.d. The community nor the school have access to safe WASH.e. The school does not have sanitary latrines or toilets.f. School is not accessible by maintained gravel road.4. Access to Medical Facilities.<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. The community does not have access to medical facilities.5. Community Governance
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">a. The community does have tribal governance. <p>6. Condition of School Buildings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. The school is made from mud bricks without doors or windows.b. The building is unable to be secured by locks.c. School is making their own bricks to build new school building with classrooms <p>7. School Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. The school does not have textbooks.b. School has 4 chalkboards for 206 students.c. School is not provided chalk by the Ministry of Education.d. School has 1 teacher that comes to work as expected. <p>8. Pupil to Teacher Ratio</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. The pupil to teacher ratio is 206 students per 1 teacher. <p>9. Classroom Condition</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Classrooms do have an opening for a door and windows; however, the schools are dank and dark. b. The school does not have desks or chairs. Students can bring their own if the family can afford to purchase a chair. c. The school does not have electricity.
<p>Eagle's Nest Academy, Boys Town, Margibi County</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Type of School <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Private School 2. Geographical Location <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Eagle's Nest is located in Margibi County in the community of Boys Town. b. School is located off the highway to the Monrovia international airport. 3. NGO and International Programming <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The school has not received any support from the Ministry of Education, international institutions, or NGOs. <p>Community Infrastructure</p> <p>Community does not have access to electricity.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">b. Despite being located near the capital city of Liberia, the school nor the community have access to safe WASH.c. The school does have sanitary latrines or toilets.d. School is accessible by maintained gravel road. <p>4. Access to Medical Facilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. The community is located close enough to Monrovia and does have access to medical facilities; however, the facilities may be too costly for families. <p>5. Community Governance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. The community does not have a community governance structure. <p>6. Condition of School Buildings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. The school does have 2 classrooms in a building with a cement brick construction with a tin roof and pressed mud floor.b. The school has 4 classrooms in a building with a cement reinforced brick construction with a tin roof and cement floor.
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	<p>c. Four classrooms are located in the founder's home. Classrooms in the home have access to flushing toilets connected to a septic tank.</p> <p>7. School Resources</p> <p>a. The school does have some textbooks, but not enough for all students.</p> <p>b. The school does have one chalkboard per classroom.</p> <p>c. School can provide chalk for chalkboards.</p> <p>d. School has 6 teachers that come to work as expected.</p> <p>8. Pupil to Teacher Ratio</p> <p>a. The pupil to teacher ratio is 42.6 students per 1 teacher.</p> <p>9. Classroom Condition</p> <p>a. Classrooms do have walls.</p> <p>b. Classrooms do not have access to electricity but through a generator requiring gas. Gas cannot be afforded regularly.</p>
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	<p>c. School is able to provide desks and chairs to students.</p>
<p>Kargban Town Public School, Dunwen Clan, Rally Road, Grand Bassa County</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Type of School <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Public School 2. Geographical Location <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. School is located in rural Bassa County and is not near the capital city. b. The school is located on an unmaintained dirt road with bridges that have been constructed by community members that can be traveled on halfway to the school. c. School is accessible by motorbike on a dirt path. 3. NGO and International Programming <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. The school has not received any support from the international institutions or NGOs. b. Ministry of Education does oversee the school; however, the Ministry does not have the resources to provide the school with a functioning building, education materials, or desks and chairs.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">c. Community Infrastructure Community does not have access to electricity and there is not any electrical infrastructure within the community.d. The community nor the school have access to safe WASH.e. The school does not have sanitary latrines or toilets.f. School is not accessible by maintained gravel road. <p>4. Access to Medical Facilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. The community does not have access to medical facilities. <p>5. Community Governance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. The community does have tribal governance. <p>6. Condition of School Buildings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. The school is made from mud bricks without doors or windows.b. The building is unable to be secured by locks.
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	<p>c. School is making their own bricks to build new school building with classrooms</p> <p>7. School Resources</p> <p>a. The school does not have textbooks.</p> <p>b. School has 2 chalkboards for 215 students.</p> <p>c. School is not provided chalk by the Ministry of Education.</p> <p>d. School has 1 teacher that comes to work as expected.</p> <p>8. Pupil to Teacher Ratio</p> <p>a. The pupil to teacher ratio is 215 students per 1 teacher.</p> <p>9. Classroom Condition</p> <p>a. Classrooms do have an opening for a door and windows; however, the schools are dank and dark.</p> <p>b. The school does not have desks or chairs. Students can bring their own if the family can afford to purchase a chair.</p> <p>c. The school does not have electricity.</p>
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<p>Mariah Wreh School, VOA Gulf, Margibi County</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Type of School <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Private School 2. Geographical Location <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. This located in Margibi County in the community of VOA Junction. b. School is located off the highway to the Monrovia international airport. 3. NGO and International Programming <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. The school has not received any support from the Ministry of Education, international institutions, or NGOs. 4. Community Infrastructure <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. The community does not have access to electricity. b. Despite being located near a capital city of Liberia, the school nor the community have access to safe WASH. c. The school does not have sanitary latrines or toilets. d. School is accessible by maintained gravel road. 5. Access to Medical Facilities.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">a. The community is located close enough to Monrovia and does have access to medical facilities; however, the facilities may be too costly for families. <p>6. Community Governance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. The community does not have a community governance structure. <p>7. Condition of School Buildings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. The school does have 4 classrooms in a building with a cement brick construction with a tin roof and pressed mud floor. <p>8. School Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. The school does have some textbooks, but not enough for all studentsb. The school does have one chalkboard per classroom.c. School can provide chalk for chalkboards.d. School has 4 teachers that come to work as expected. <p>9. Pupil to Teacher Ratio</p>
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	<p>a. The pupil to teacher ratio is 39 students per 1 teacher.</p> <p>10. Classroom Condition</p> <p>a. Classrooms do have walls.</p> <p>b. Classrooms do not have access to electricity.</p> <p>c. School is able to provide desks and chairs to students.</p>
<p>Vaneholor Public School, Dunwen Clan, Rally Road, Grand Bassa County</p>	<p>1. Type of School</p> <p>a. Public School</p> <p>2. Geographical Location</p> <p>a. School is located in rural Bassa County and is not near the capital city.</p> <p>b. The school is located on an unmaintained dirt road with bridges that have been constructed by community members.</p> <p>3. NGO and International Programming</p> <p>a. The school has not received any support from international institutions or NGOs.</p> <p>b. Ministry of Education does oversee the school; however, the Ministry does not have the resources to provide the school with a</p>

	<p>functioning building, education materials, or desks and chairs.</p> <p>4. Community Infrastructure</p> <p>a. The community does not have access to electricity and there is not any electrical infrastructure within the community.</p> <p>b. The community nor the school have access to safe WASH.</p> <p>c. The school does not have sanitary latrines or toilets.</p> <p>d. School is not accessible by maintained gravel road.</p> <p>5. Access to Medical Facilities.</p> <p>a. The community does not have access to medical facilities.</p> <p>6. Community Governance</p> <p>a. The community does have tribal governance.</p> <p>7. Condition of School Buildings</p> <p>a. The school is made from mud bricks without doors or windows.</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">b. The building is unable to be secured by locks.c. School is making their own bricks to build a new school building with classrooms. <p>8. School Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. The school does not have textbooks.b. School has 4 chalkboards for 206 students.c. School is not provided chalk by the Ministry of Education.d. School has 1 teacher that comes to work as expected. <p>9. Pupil to Teacher Ratio</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. The pupil to teacher ratio is 198 students per 1 teacher. <p>10. Classroom Condition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Classrooms are made of small timber to create walls; however, the school does not have secure walls. There is a tin roof, however it leaks. The school building is open to weather elements.
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	<p>b. The school does not have desks or chairs. Students can bring their own if the family can afford to purchase a chair.</p> <p>c. The school does not have electricity.</p>
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School	Indicators of Need
Full Gospel Mission School, Gbarnga, Bong County	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Type of School <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Public School 2. Geographical Location <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Full Gospel Mission School is located on the outskirts of Gbarnga, the capital city of Bong County. 3. NGO and International Programming <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. The school has not received any support from the Ministry of Education, international institutions or NGOs. 4. Community Infrastructure <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. The community does have access to electricity. However, gaining access is too costly for the school.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">b. Despite being located near a capital city, the city does not have access to safe WASH.c. The school does not have sanitary latrines or toilets.d. School is accessible by maintained gravel road. <p>5. Access to Medical Facilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Gbarnga has medical facilities, however, the facilities may be too costly for families. <p>6. Community Governance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. School is located in county capital with governing structures.b. County government has regular meetings and formal structure. <p>7. Condition of School Buildings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. The school is currently operating out of a large one-room facility.b. The building is secure and has locking windows and doors.c. School is making their own bricks to build a new school building with classrooms. <p>8. School Resources</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The school does not have textbooks. b. The school has two chalkboards for 75 students. c. School can provide chalk for chalkboards. d. School has 2 teachers that come to work as expected. <p>9. Pupil to Teacher Ratio</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The pupil to teacher ratio is 35.5 student per 1 teacher. <p>10. Classroom Condition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The church does not provide classrooms to create a quiet learning environment. Grades are divided up throughout the church, however, the noise distracts students from learning. b. The school has plastic molded chairs, but only 3 tables. c. The church does not have electricity.
Daniel Town Public School, Daniel Township Clan,	<p>10. Type of School</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Public School. <p>11. Geographical Location</p>

<p>Rally Road, Grand Bassa County</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. School is located in rural Bassa County and is not near the capital city. b. The school is located on an unmaintained dirt road with bridges that have been constructed by community members. <p>12. NGO and International Programming</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The school has not received any support from international institutions or NGOs. b. Ministry of Education does oversee the school; however, the Ministry does not have the resources to provide the school with a functioning building, education materials, or desks and chairs. <p>13. Community Infrastructure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The community does not have access to electricity and there is not any electrical infrastructure within the community. b. The community nor the school have access to safe WASH. c. The school does not have sanitary latrines or toilets.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">d. School is not accessible by maintained gravel road. <p>14. Access to Medical Facilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. The community does not have access to medical facilities. <p>15. Community Governance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. The community does have tribal governance. <p>16. Condition of School Buildings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. The school is made from mud bricks without doors or windows.b. The building is unable to be secured by locks.c. School is making their own bricks to build a new school building with classrooms. <p>17. School Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. The school does not have textbooks.b. School has 4 chalkboards for 206 students.c. School is not provided chalk by the Ministry of Education.
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	<p>d. School has 1 teacher that comes to work as expected.</p> <p>18. Pupil to Teacher Ratio</p> <p>a. The pupil to teacher ratio is 206 students per 1 teacher.</p> <p>19. Classroom Condition</p> <p>a. Classrooms do have an opening for a door and windows; however, the schools are dank and dark.</p> <p>b. The school does not have desks or chairs. Students can bring their own if the family can afford to purchase a chair.</p> <p>c. The school does not have electricity.</p>
<p>Eagle's Nest Academy, Boys Town, Margibi County</p>	<p>10. Type of School</p> <p>a. Private School</p> <p>11. Geographical Location</p> <p>a. Eagle's Nest is located in Margibi County in the community of Boys Town.</p> <p>b. School is located off the highway to the Monrovia international airport.</p> <p>12. NGO and International Programming</p>

	<p>a. The school has not received any support from the Ministry of Education, international institutions or NGOs.</p> <p>13. Community Infrastructure</p> <p>a. The community does not have access to electricity.</p> <p>b. Despite being located near a capital city of Liberia, the school nor the community have access to safe WASH.</p> <p>c. The school does have sanitary latrines or toilets.</p> <p>d. School is accessible by maintained gravel road.</p> <p>14. Access to Medical Facilities</p> <p>a. The community is located close enough to Monrovia and does have access to medical facilities; however, the facilities may be too costly for families.</p> <p>15. Community Governance</p> <p>a. The community does not have a community governance structure.</p>
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	<p>Condition of School Buildings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. The school does have 2 classrooms in a building with a cement brick construction with a tin roof and pressed mud floor.b. The school has 4 classrooms in a building with a cement reinforced brick construction with a tin roof and cement floor.c. Four classrooms are located in the founder's home. Classrooms in the home have access to flushing toilets connected to a septic tank. <p>16. School Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. The school does have some textbooks, but not enough for all students.b. The school does have one chalkboard per classroom.c. School can provide chalk for chalkboards.d. School has 6 teachers that come to work as expected. <p>17. Pupil to Teacher Ratio</p>
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	<p>a. The pupil to teacher ratio is 42.6 students per 1 teacher.</p> <p>18. Classroom Condition</p> <p>a. Classrooms do have walls.</p> <p>b. Classrooms do not have access to electricity but through a generator requiring gas. Gas cannot be afforded regularly.</p> <p>c. School is able to provide desks and chairs to students.</p>
<p>Kargban Town Public School, Dunwen Clan, Rally Road, Grand Bassa County</p>	<p>10. Type of School</p> <p>a. Public School</p> <p>11. Geographical Location</p> <p>a. School is located in rural Bassa County and is not near the capital city.</p> <p>b. The school is located on an unmaintained dirt road with bridges that have been constructed by community members that can be traveled on halfway to the school.</p> <p>c. School is accessible by motorbike on a dirt path.</p> <p>12. NGO and International Programming</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">a. The school has not received any support from international institutions or NGOs.b. Ministry of Education does oversee the school; however, the Ministry does not have the resources to provide the school with a functioning building, education materials, or desks and chairs. <p>13. Community Infrastructure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. The community does not have access to electricity and there is not any electrical infrastructure within the community.b. The community nor the school have access to safe WASH.c. The school does not have sanitary latrines or toilets.d. School is not accessible by maintained gravel road. <p>14. Access to Medical Facilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. The community does not have access to medical facilities. <p>15. Community Governance</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">a. The community does have tribal governance. <p>16. Condition of School Buildings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. The school is made from mud bricks without doors or windows.b. The building is unable to be secured by locks.c. School is making their own bricks to build a new school building with classrooms. <p>17. School Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. The school does not have textbooks.b. School has 2 chalkboards for 215 students.c. School is not provided chalk by the Ministry of Education.d. School has 1 teacher that comes to work as expected. <p>18. Pupil to Teacher Ratio</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. The pupil to teacher ratio is 215 students per 1 teacher. <p>19. Classroom Condition</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Classrooms do have an opening for a door and windows; however, the schools are dank and dark. b. The school does not have desks or chairs. Students can bring their own if the family can afford to purchase a chair. c. The school does not have electricity.
<p>Mariah Wreh School, VOA Gulf, Margibi County</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 11. Type of School <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Private School 12. Geographical Location <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. This located in Margibi County in the community of VOA Junction. b. School is located off the highway to the Monrovia international airport. 13. NGO and International Programming <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The school has not received any support from the Ministry of Education, international institutions or NGOs. 14. Community Infrastructure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The community does not have access to electricity.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">b. Despite being located near a capital city of Liberia, the school nor the community have access to safe WASH.c. The school does not have sanitary latrines or toilets.d. School is accessible by maintained gravel road. <p>15. Access to Medical Facilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. The community is located close enough to Monrovia and does have access to medical facilities; however, the facilities may be too costly for families. <p>16. Community Governance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. The community does not have a community governance structure. <p>17. Condition of School Buildings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. The school does have 4 classrooms in a building with a cement brick construction with a tin roof and pressed mud floor. <p>18. School Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. The school does have some textbooks, but not enough for all students.
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	<p>b. The school does have one chalkboard per classroom.</p> <p>c. School can provide chalk for chalkboards.</p> <p>d. School has 4 teachers that come to work as expected.</p> <p>19. Pupil to Teacher Ratio</p> <p>a. The pupil to teacher ratio is 39 students per 1 teacher.</p> <p>20. Classroom Condition</p> <p>a. Classrooms do have walls.</p> <p>b. Classrooms do not have access to electricity.</p> <p>c. School is able to provide desks and chairs to students.</p>
<p>Vaneholor Public School, Dunwen Clan, Rally Road, Grand Bassa County</p>	<p>11. Type of School</p> <p>a. Public School</p> <p>12. Geographical Location</p> <p>a. School is located in rural Bassa County and is not near the capital city.</p>

	<p>b. The school is located on an unmaintained dirt road with bridges that have been constructed by community members.</p> <p>13. NGO and International Programming</p> <p>a. The school has not received any support from international institutions or NGOs.</p> <p>b. Ministry of Education does oversee the school; however, the Ministry does not have the resources to provide the school with a functioning building, education materials, or desks and chairs.</p> <p>14. Community Infrastructure</p> <p>a. The community does not have access to electricity and there is not any electrical infrastructure within the community.</p> <p>b. The community nor the school have access to safe WASH.</p> <p>c. The school does not have sanitary latrines or toilets.</p> <p>d. School is not accessible by maintained gravel road.</p> <p>15. Access to Medical Facilities.</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">a. The community does not have access to medical facilities. <p>16. Community Governance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. The community does have tribal governance. <p>17. Condition of School Buildings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. The school is made from mud bricks without doors or windows.b. The building is unable to be secured by locks.c. School is making their own bricks to build new school building with classrooms <p>18. School Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. The school does not have textbooks.b. School has 4 chalkboards for 206 students.c. School is not provided chalk by the Ministry of Education.d. School has 1 teacher that comes to work as expected. <p>19. Pupil to Teacher Ratio</p>
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	<p>a. The pupil to teacher ratio is 198 students per 1 teacher.</p> <p>20. Classroom Condition</p> <p>a. Classrooms are made of small timber to create walls; however, the school does not have secure walls. There is a tin roof, however it leaks. The school building is open to weather elements.</p> <p>b. The school does not have desks or chairs. Students can bring their own if the family can afford to purchase a chair.</p> <p>c. The school does not have electricity.</p>
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APPENDIX G

PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Why is the needs assessment being undertaken?

The Needs Assessment Committee concluded that the needs assessment is being undertaken to develop an understanding of the complexity of providing education to rural children and the challenges faced by rural children and their families and communities.

Who will use the results?

The results will be used by the Needs Assessment Committee /Board of Directors to develop innovative programming to increase access to education.

What decisions will be made on the basis of the information?

The information gathered by the needs assessment will be used to inform program development.

Will the needs assessment first cover a whole system or one of the subsystems?

The needs assessment will cover the whole system, which was outlined by the social-ecological model to develop a nuanced understanding of the challenges of creating access to education in rural communities.

What is the rationale for the scope?

The rationale for the scope of the needs assessment is that education provided to rural schools operates through a vast system of actors that all impact access to education.

APPENDIX H
KEY STRATEGIC ISSUES

Education Key Issues

- The Education Reform Act of 2011 is not providing allocated funding to reconstruct education facilities and school operations.
- Lack of civilian infrastructures, such as road networks that prevent the transport of school materials and supplies.
- Young children face lengthy travel by foot to school, which in most parts of the country takes as long as two hours.
- Families may succeed in enrolling their children in school; however, they lack of clothes, footwear, copybooks, etc. hamper attendance and learning ability.
- Many adults that were children during the civil wars did not receive formal educations, which results in high adult illiteracy rates.
- Rural areas lack teachers meeting the minimum teaching credentials. Many trained teachers do not wish to manage the many challenges in rural areas. These challenges include the lack of roads, facilities, housing, electricity, and water.
- Overaged children contribute to overcrowding in lower grades in rural schools, because many parents do not know to register or cannot afford school fees to register their children in the first grade by age six.

- Also contributing to overcrowded classrooms, Liberia has not been able to keep up with the demand for school enrollment.
- Textbooks and other instructional materials are scarce in rural schools.

Health and Social Wellbeing Key Issues

- Many families live below the poverty line and survive on less than \$1.50 a day.
- Food insecurity is faced by many families, which leads to childhood malnutrition.
- Few health care facilities are available in rural areas leaving children and their families susceptible to illness and injury.
- Children and their communities, including schools, do not have safe drinking water or sanitation facilities. Drinking water sources such as creeks can become contaminated by human feces, which leads to an outbreak of perennial diseases.
- The civil war broke up kinship structures and left many Liberian children to raise themselves. As a result, parents lack parenting skills and do not understand child development.

Gender and Violence Prevention Key Issues

- A culture of patriarchy pervades in Liberia normalizing violence against women and the subjugation of women.
- Violence is normalized within society because it is seen as a private issue and the perpetrators are left unpunished.

- Cultural and traditional beliefs in Liberia are marginalizing women and girls. As a result, girls are not provided the same opportunity to education as boys.
- Girls face early marriage that can lead to high levels of intimate partner abuse and violence.
- Early pregnancy before the body is mature enough to support healthy and safe pregnancies, endangers girls.
- Liberia lacks the criminal justice infrastructure to prosecute perpetrators of gender-based violence, which include sexual violence, molestation, intimate partner violence, and sexual exploitation, and other forms of abuse.

APPENDIX I

OUTLINE OF GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES

❖ Education Objectives.

- Goal 1: Positive environment that promotes learning in rural and underserved communities.

Objective 1.1: To promote positive learning environments for schools by engaging in strong community partnerships.

- Strategy 1.1a: Establish a community council to represent needs within their community and implement community programs.
- Strategy 1.1b: Build a sense of community ownership for the school campuses.
- Strategy 1.1c: Produce and distribute locally contextualized teaching materials and textbooks
- Objective 1.2: To enter into partnerships with individuals and organizations in improving schools.
 - Strategy 1.2a: Facilitate partnerships with organizations and individuals in improving school campuses.
- Goal 2: Opportunity for teachers, parents, and students to learn to build their full potential.
 - Objective 2.1: To enhance the capacity of teachers in rural and underserved communities through training and mentorship.

- Strategy 2.1.1: Enter into partnerships with educators to conduct training for teachers in partnership communities and school support programs.
- Objective 2.2: To promote child enrollment in schools within the guidelines of the Ministry of Education.
 - Strategy 2.2.1: Create platforms for dialogue between schools, parents, and community structures encouraging them to enroll children at 3 years of age in line with government enrollment guidelines for early childhood education.
- Objective 2.3: To support adult literacy within rural and underserved communities.
 - Strategy 2.3.1: Create opportunities for parents to participate in literacy classes in partner communities.
- Goal 3: Psychosocial support for school going children and coaching of parents, teachers, and school administrators.
 - Objective 3.1: To promote child development education through the support of Parent-Teacher Associations (PTA).
 - Strategy 3.1.1: Support the development of PTAs within each community where SPICE provides educational programming.
 - Strategy 3.1.2: Develop partnerships that can support parents with understanding child development to support the completion of grade six.
 - Strategy 3.1.3: Engage parents and community volunteerism to support teachers with classroom management and curriculum lessons.

- ❖ Health and Social Welfare Objectives.
 - Goal 4: Healthy and nutritional development for early childhood and primary school children in underserved communities.
 - Objective 4.1: To support the nutritional development of children within partner community schools.
 - Strategy 4.1.1: Develop meal programs to support healthy nutrition for early childhood and primary school children in underserved and rural communities.
 - Objective 4.2: To promote healthy hygiene habits of children and schools.
 - Strategy 4.2.1: Develop healthy hygiene habits lesson for teachers to present to students.
 - Goal 5: Access to safe drinking water, hygiene, and sanitation (WASH) services on early childhood and primary school campuses that would serve to prevent the spread of disease.
 - Objective 5.1: To support the reduction of water-borne diseases among school-aged children
 - Strategy 5.1.1: Support construction of latrines and water pumps on school campuses.
 - Objective 5.2: To promote healthy hygiene habits of children and schools.
 - Strategy 5.2.1: Work with school teachers to develop healthy hygiene habits of the students.

- Goal 6: Opportunities for access to professional health care and psychosocial services in rural and underserved villages.
 - Objective 6.1: To provide access to health services in hard-to-reach communities.
 - Strategy 6.1.1: Establish mobile health services or clinics to provide services to rural and underserved communities.
 - Objective 6.2: To reduce the psychological burden of poor parenting on rural children.
 - Strategy 6.2.1: Engage parents in enhancing their parenting skills to ensure the protection of the rights of children.
- ❖ Gender & Violence Prevention Objectives.
 - Goal 7: Community dialogue to address cultural and social norms that normalize discrimination and violence based on a person's gender to be opened up and promoted in rural communities.
 - Objective 7.1: To establish a relationship with tribal leaders through the construction or remodeling of schools in villages.
 - Strategy 7.2.1: Engage Zoes and traditional people in reforming the harmful effects of harmful Poro and Sande cultural practices, while still maintaining respect for local culture and tradition.
 - Strategy 7.2.2: Work with Zoes to establish a commentary relationship between public education and traditional education.

- Goal 8: Transform gender, cultural, and social norms that support gender-based violence and gender inequity and inequality.
 - Objective 8.1: To engage men in dialogs and practices of gender-based violence prevention.
 - Strategy 8.1.1: Engage with domestic and international networks in order to engage men and boys in violence prevention.
 - Strategy 8.1.2: Form men's support groups within Partner Communities that can introduce and establish non-confrontational dialogues of masculinity, GBV, and violence prevention.
 - Strategy 8.1.3: Form women's support groups within Partner Communities to support women's empowerment.
 - Objective 8.2: To reduce gender-based violence and sexual exploitation of women and girls.
 - Strategy 8.2.1: Create awareness activities, campaigns, and interventions that educate about the impact of gender-based violence within communities.
- Goal 9: Develop the leadership capacity of future leaders to transform gender, cultural, and social norms.
 - Objective 9.1: To encourage adolescent and teenage children in engendering reduction of gender-based violence and sexual exploitation and abuse.
 - Strategy 9.1.1: Engage boys and girls in leadership development that supports gender equity and equality through the adaptation of the Mentors

in Violence Prevention program to address the social and cultural needs of Liberia.

APPENDIX J
ASSESSMENT OF NEED

The Project Assessment of Need determines the level of intervention provided by SPICE. The assessment helps to determine if a community or issue has a primary or secondary level of needs. The finding helped the board of directors and/or the Director of Programs to determine how SPICE can support communities and issues.

Directions: Read each question and score the answers according to the directions within each question. The score will determine the level of programming.

1. Geographical Location _____

If the community/school is located in Monrovia or Montserrado County, provide a score of 0.

If the community is located in within 5 miles of the county capital city or has easy access to main paved highways or roads, indicate a score of 5.

If the community is rurally located, provide a score of 10.

2. NGO and International Programming _____

If the community has received programming intervention from NGOs, other than SPICE, or International Institutions, such as the UN or USAID, within the last two years, indicate a score 0.

If the community has received programming intervention from NGOs or International Institutions within the last 3 or 4 years, provide a score 3.

If the community has received programming intervention from NGOs or International Institutions within the last five years, indicate a score 5.

If the community has received programming within the last six or more years, provide a score of 7.

If the community has never received programming from an NGO or International Institution, provide a score of 10.

3. Community Infrastructure _____

Give 2 points if the community does not have electricity.

Give 2 points if the community does not have safe access to drinking water.

Give 2 points if the community does not have access to sanitary latrines or toilets.

Give 2 points if the community does not have paved or well-maintained gravel or dirt road.

Give 2 points if the community has access to medical facilities.

Add up the points and indicate the score above on the bolded line.

4. Community Governance _____

Does the community or village have a governing structure that meets regularly?

Give 0 points for yes and 5 points for no.

5. Condition of School Buildings _____

Does the community have a secure school building with locking doors and windows?

Give 0 points for yes or 10 points for no.

6. School Resources _____

Can the school provide textbooks to its school? Give 0 points for yes, give 3 points for some books, or 5 points if the answer is no.

Give 5 points if the school has chalkboards for all of its classrooms.

Give 5 points if the school has chalk for each day of instruction.

Give 5 points if the teacher regularly comes to work as expected.

7. Pupil to Teacher Ratio _____

If a school has a ratio of 40 students to 1 teacher, the score is 0.

If a school has a ratio of 41+ students to 1 teacher, the score is 5.

8. Classroom Condition _____

Give 0 points if the school has secure walled classrooms for each level.

Give 10 points if the school has secure walled classrooms, but class are shared.

Give 0 points if classrooms all have enough desks for students.

Give 5 points if classrooms have desks, but not enough for all students.

Give 10 points if classrooms do not have desks for students.

Give 0 points if classrooms have electricity.

Give 5 points if classrooms do not have electricity.

9. PTA _____

Does the school have a PTA that meets regularly?

Score 0 points for yes and 5 points for no.

APPENDIX K
NEEDS ASSESSMENT REPORT



***NEEDS ASSESSMENT REPORT:
PAVING THE WAY FOR THE FUTURE OF LIBERIAN CHILDREN***

***NEEDS ASSESSOR: KRISTEN N. MCNUTT
PREPARED FOR SUPPORTING PROGRAMS IN COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT***

NEEDS ASSESSMENT REPORT

Presented to: Supporting Programs In Community Empowerment

Needs Assessor: Kristen N. McNutt, MNM



Needs Assessment Committee:

- N'Chung Eben, BSN
- David C. Tekasuah, BA
- Eweka Seville, BA
- Alphonso T. Quenneh, BA
- Archievego M. Doe, BA
- Dorothy Jackson, MA
- Andrew Kanasuah, MA
- Vivian Thomas, BA.
- Julius J. Togba, MA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Supporting Programs in Community Empowerment (SPICE) is an international nongovernmental organization (NGO) operating in rural and underserved Liberian communities. SPICE was incorporated in 2015 by the founding Board of Directors from Liberia and the United States. The goal of the board is to implement holistic and intersectional programming to engage children, parents, schools, and government in increasing access to education by addressing the root causes that prevent children from attending school. During June and July of 2015, the Board members served as a the Needs Assessment Committee to conduct a needs assessment. The needs assessment consisted of open-ended interviews with government and NGO stakeholders and community forums with parents, teachers, and school administrators. Through this process, the Needs Assessment Committee accomplished the following:

- Developed the Child Centered Social-Ecological Model for Postconflict Rural Reconstruction;
- Identified three programming areas: education, health and social wellbeing, and gender and violence prevention;
- Identified the pilot project, The Rally Road Education Initiative.

ABOUT SPICE

Mission Statement

The mission of SPICE is to empower children and their communities through holistic programming that builds a strong foundation for growth into the next generation of leaders.

Vision Statement

SPICE envisions a world that provides all children educational opportunities to fulfill their true potential in a society free from violence.

FOUNDING OF SPICE

Originally founded by David Tekasuh as a community based organization

Incorporated in 2015 as a international nongovernmental organization in Liberia to increase access to education in rural and underserved communities.

- Establishment of board of directors
- Development of programming

Needs Assessment conducted by the Board of Directors in 2015.



HISTORY OF LIBERIA

The American Colonization Society resettled formerly enslaved African-Americans in Liberia.

The resettlement project created a minority rule by the Americo-Liberians over the majority native Liberians that used civilizing ideologies of the United States.

Disenfranchisement of the native Liberians lead to two back-to-back civil wars

- **First Civil War: 1989-1997**
 - Abuja Peace Accord of 1997
- **Second Civil War: 1997-2003**
 - Accra Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2003



POSTCONFLICT LIBERIA

State Fragility

- Liberia as a fragile state.
- Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development defines a state as fragile once “state structures lack the political will and/or capacity to provide for the basic functions, needed for poverty reduction, development and to safeguard the security and the human rights of their populations” (as cited in Grotenhuis, 2016, p. 46).

Liberia has the will to provide education; however it does not have currently have the full capacity.

- The reconstruction of economic & physical infrastructure is needed to support to support its educational goals.

POSTCONFLICT LIBERIA

- Destruction of the Educational Sector and Infrastructure
- Teachers shortage
 - “The number of trained and qualified teachers has dropped dramatically since the war, with a huge proportion of them fleeing them to seek work and safety elsewhere” (Reynolds, 2015, p 265).
- Diminished economic capacity of the government to fund education
- Destruction of schools and infrastructure during the civil war



EDUCATION IN LIBERIA

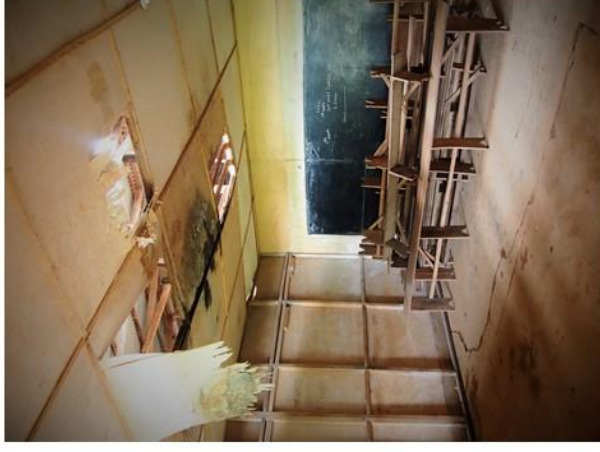
Education impacted by 14-years of civil war.

President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf calls Liberia's education system "a mess." (African News Service, 2013)

In 2014, Liberia had significant proportions of children without basic education:

"51% of children between ages 6 and 11 years were not in age-appropriate grades, and that approximately 34% were out of school" (UNICEF, 2017, p. 2).

76% of rural children not in school (Education Policy and Data Center, 2014, p. 1).



POLITICAL TRENDS IN LIBERIA

- USAID described Liberia as a fragile state, which means the government of Liberia is unable to provide its citizens with safety and security, good governance, and poverty reduction.
- Liberia's fragility persists despite efforts by the government and international partners.
- The government with support from international partners has created key strategic reconstruction and development documents aimed at mitigating poverty, weak governance, and violence; however the Peace Building Priority Plan, the Poverty Reduction Strategy, and the Agenda for Transformation have not sufficed in providing a reduction of vulnerability for the majority of the people.
- Liberia's national budget does not reflect the priorities set in the strategic reconstruction and development documents.
- **Example:** The Education Reform Act of 2011 states: "In addition to the recurrent budgetary appropriation for education all concession agreements for investment in the extractive mineral and other non-renewable resource sectors, as well as in the agriculture sector and in major privatization contracts, shall require that 60% of any signature fees realized shall be allocated to the educational budget" (Ministry of Education, 2011, Chapter 9.1a). If this statement was to be upheld between 2011 and 2014, the government would have built schools in all parts of the country especially in suburban and rural communities where the need for education and health facilities remains acutely perverse.

ECONOMIC TRENDS IN LIBERIA

- The civil wars damaged infrastructure, in particular road connectivity, which prevents Liberia from bolstering its economy through export of its plentiful natural resources (CIA, 2011, Section Economy).
- As of 2012, the CIA reports, “The economy is heavily dependent on the infusion of funds made available by international donors, the presence of the [United Nations Mission in Liberia] peacekeeping force, and international NGOs. Foreign assistance (\$425 million) still exceeds the national budget” (CIA, 2011, Section Economy).
- Much of Liberia’s economy is rooted in the informal economy and subsistence agriculture, as well as foreign imports of goods. (International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP, 2011, p. 23).
- An estimated 63.8% (1,725,806 of 3,500,000) of the country’s total population fell below the poverty line (International Monetary Fund, 2012, p. 8).
- IIEP reports that “80% of Liberians live on less than \$1USD per day, and 40% are highly or moderately vulnerable to food insecurity” (p. 23).



Business Center Market in Monrovia, Liberia

EDUCATION TRENDS IN LIBERIA

- The educational system in Liberia has been described as having characteristics of “fragility and structural weakness” prior to the 14-year civil war (IIEP, 2011, p. 17).
- “Liberia’s youth, aged 15-35, constitute 28 percent of the country’s population, around 1 million people” (IIEP, 2011, p. 36).
- Approximately 45 % of the youth are illiterate. (IIEP, 2011, p. 36)
- “Females in particular have been less educated and are less skilled, and therefore more socially constrained” (IIEP, 2011, p. 36).
- “The lack of youth livelihood training, in particular, has been recognized by many as a major contributor to fragility” (IIEP, 2011, p. 36).
- “The war destroyed many schools as a result there are inadequate facilities for early learning opportunities, particularly in the rural areas. Most of the [early childhood development] services are concentrated in urban areas especially in the Montserrado, Nimba, and Bong Counties” (Ministry of Education, 2011).



Christian Community College, Garnerville,
Montserrado County

RURAL EDUCATION TRENDS IN LIBERIA

- Geographical location can impact the quality or availability of resources.
- Schools in rural locations face poor or no building facilities and seating.
- There are limited number of trained teachers and a high pupil to teacher ratio in rural schools.
- Rural schools lack necessary school supplies and text books.
- Rural children face lengthy travel by foot to schools.
- The Ministry of Education has recently outsourced a portion of its teaching to private, for-profit organizations that are technology dependent. The New York Times reported that "when the school year starts in September, private operators — for-profit companies and charitable organizations — will take charge of 120 government primary schools, 3 percent of the total" (Rosenberg, 2016, para. 3-4). Many rural communities do not have electricity or cell phone reception. The focus on using technologies within the educational system will further widen the urban/rural divide within Liberia, which could foster further fragility.



Kargban Town Public School, Dunwuen Clan, Rally Road, Grand Bassa County

HEALTH TRENDS IN LIBERIA

- A significant 63.3% of the poor in Liberia are children under 10 years old (International Monetary Fund , 2008, p. 26).
- The mortality rate for children under five years also remains high. Liberia has reduced from 194 to 111 deaths per 1000 births (International Monetary Fund , 2008, p. 30).
- Leading causes of morbidity and mortality are still neonatal conditions, ARI-pneumonia, malaria, diarrhea, measles and malnutrition. Maternal mortality rates are 994/100,000 live births (UNICEF, 2013).
- 60% of child births occur outside of health facilities under unskilled birth attendants, particularly in rural areas resulting in unnecessary neonatal deaths and complications (International Monetary Fund , 2008, p. 30).
- About 42% of Liberia's population is food insecure, this results in various forms of malnutrition related health problems such as severe stunting, severe wasting, and development delay among young children (Ministry of Agriculture and World Food Program (World Food Program), 2010, p. 15).
- An estimated 41% of children in Liberia experience stunted growth. There are also concerns about the level of wasting and malnutrition (Ministry of Agriculture and World Food Program, 2010, p. 15).
- HIV and AIDS statistics are controversial, but it is estimated that the prevalence rate in the general population rose from 1.5% in 2007 to 1.9% in 2013 (Liberia Institute of Statistics and GIS, et al., 2013, p. 202).



Community water pumps in Kakata, Margibi County

GENDER TRENDS IN LIBERIA

- “The paradox in Liberia is that women have weaker influence in the marketplace and the political arena, although they constitute the majority of the active labor force in agriculture—particularly in food production—and form extensive networks in the informal sector, where they are noted for their entrepreneurial abilities and creative skills. The culture of patriarchy pervades Liberian society, beginning in the family with men as heads of households, and serves as the model for organizing society—its economy, politics and socio-cultural life. (Government of Liberia, 2013, p. 126)
- Many adolescent girls drop out of school due to early pregnancy without parental preparation. School based sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) is reported to be on the increase. (UN Women, 2012, para. 1)
- Teachers and male students are said to be sexually assaulting girls thus creating a sharp decline in school age girl enrollment.
- National AIDS Commission’s (NAC) Ebola Virus Disease Impact Assessment on HIV Service Assessment has shown an increasing decline in enrollment of girls than boys (Togba, 2015).
- In most parts of the country, traditional education systems are the Sande and Poro. The Sande is for girls and the Poro is for boys socialization into the traditional society. The Sande traditionally includes the practice of female genital cutting and male circumcision.

METHODOLOGY

Needs Assessment

- A needs assessment is a “systematic set of procedures that are used to determine needs, examine their nature and causes, and set priorities for future actions.” (Office of Migrant Education, 2001, p. 2).
- Consists of three phases:
 - Preassessment
 - Assessment
 - Postassessment
- This needs assessment provides a road map for developing and implementing the programming goals, objectives, and strategies of SPICE.



METHODOLOGY

What is a need?

- The discrepancy or gap between *what is* and *what should be*.

Research Questions

- What are the needs of children that are preventing them from pursuing their education in rural Liberia?
- What are the barriers that are creating the needs?
- What are programming approaches that can help remove or mitigate the barriers to education?

Research Methods

- Open ended Interviews
- Community Forums

OPENED-ENDED INTERVIEWS

Governmental Stakeholders

- Ministry of Education
- Yukhiko D 'Lovette Annon, Assistant Minister, Bureau of Early Childhood Education
- Felicia Sackey Doe-Sumah, Assistant Minister, Bureau of Basic & Secondary Education
- Ministry of Gender & Development
- Sieane Abdul-Baki, Deputy Minister for Gender
- Deddeh Kwekwe, Assistant Minister of the GBV Unit

House of Representatives

- Rep. Matthew Zarzar, Chair, House Committee on Education

NGO Stakeholders

- Dr. Christine W.O. Sadia, Founder & CEO of Health Concern, Kenya
- W.E. Saydee-Tarr, Executive Director, Gbowee Peace Foundation, Monrovia, Liberia



COMMUNITY FORUMS

The community forums were conducted at rural schools located outside Monrovia, Liberia's capital

School Stakeholders (Including parent representatives)

- Full Gospel Mission School, Gbarnga, Bong County
- Victoria Island Public School, District 2, Montserrado County
- Daniel Town Public School, Daniel Township Clan, Rally Road, Grand Bassa County
- Eagle Nest Academy, Boys Town, Margibi County
- Kargban Town Public School, Dunwen Clan, Rally Road, Grand Bassa County
- Mariah Wreh School, VOA Gulf, Margibi County
- Vaneholer Public School, Dunwen Clan, Rally Road, Grand Bassa County



INTERVIEWS & COMMUNITY FORUM QUESTIONS:

1. What are the needs of rural children that are preventing them from pursuing their education in rural Liberia?
2. What are the barriers that are creating the needs?
3. What programming approaches do you feel can help remove or reduce the barriers to education?



EDUCATIONAL STRATEGIC ISSUES

1. Lack of civilian infrastructures, such as road networks prevent the transport of school materials and supplies.
2. Young children face lengthy travel by foot to school, which in most parts of the country takes as long as two hours.
3. Families may succeed in enrolling their children in school, however lack of clothes, foot wear, copybooks, etc., which hampers attendance and learning ability.
4. Many adults that were children during the civil war did not receive a formal education, which results in high adult illiteracy rates.
5. Rural areas lack teachers meeting the minimum teaching credentials. Many trained teachers do not wish to manage the many challenges in the rural areas, which include the lack of housing, electricity, sanitation, and water.
6. Over aged children contribute to overcrowding in lower grades in rural schools.
7. Many parents do not know how to register or cannot afford school fees to register their children in the first grade by age six.
8. Liberia has not been able to keep up with the demand of school enrollment.
9. Textbooks and other instructional materials are scarce in rural areas.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL WELL-BEING STRATEGIC ISSUES

1. Many families live below the poverty line and survive on less than \$1 a day.
2. Food insecurity is faced by many families, which leads to childhood malnutrition.
3. Few health care facilities are available in rural areas leaving children and their families susceptible to illness and injury.
4. Children and their communities, including schools, do not have access to safe drinking water or sanitation facilities. Drinking water sources such as creeks can become contaminated by human feces, which leads to outbreak of perennial diseases.
5. The civil war broke up kinship structures and left many Liberian children to raise themselves. As a result, parents do not understand child development.

GENDER & VIOLENCE PREVENTION STRATEGIC ISSUES

1. Many families live below the poverty line and survive on less than \$1 a day.
2. Food insecurity is faced by many families, which leads to childhood malnutrition.
3. Few health care facilities are available in rural areas leaving children and their families susceptible to illness and injury.
4. Children and their communities, including schools, do not have access to safe drinking water or sanitation facilities. Drinking water sources such as creeks can become contaminated by human feces, which leads to the outbreak of perennial diseases.
5. The civil war broke up kinship structures and left many Liberian children to raise themselves. As a result, parents do not understand child development.

SEED PROGRAM

The SEED (Sustainable Education, Empowerment & Development) Program applies the Child Centered Social-Ecological Model for Postconflict Rural Reconstruction that identify locations of intervention to support access to education. SPICE designed the social ecological model to map out multilevel intervention mechanisms to support the development of children and to increase access to education. Children live in complex social networks that influence their development. Working to increase rural children's access to education, SPICE realized that there is not a singular cause that prevents children from attending school. To remedy the multiple challenges faced by children, SPICE carries out programming within the social ecology that comprises a child's life—family, school, community, and country. As a result, SPICE believes that the child's social ecology needs to be empowered to support children in reaching their full potential.

CHILD CENTERED SOCIAL-ECOLOGICAL MODEL FOR POSTCONFLICT RURAL RECONSTRUCTION

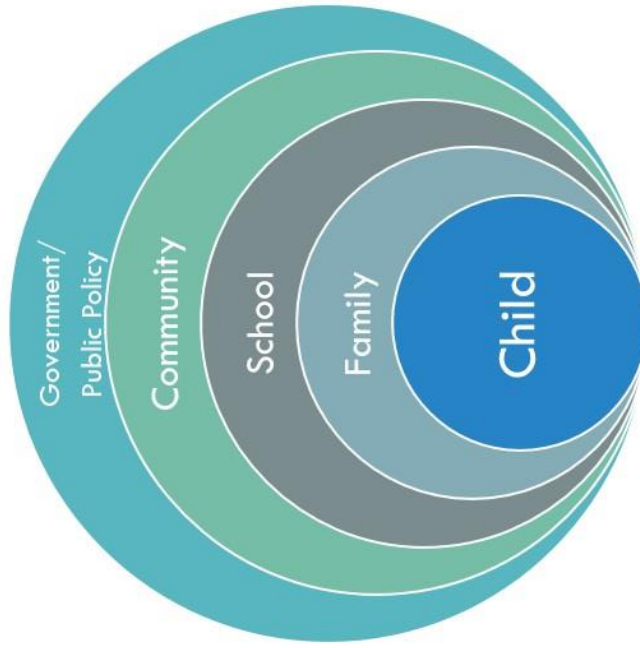
The social-ecological model maps out where issues emerge and where to implement programming that focused specifically on the target population. The Child Centered Social-Ecological Model for Postconflict Rural Reconstruction serves as the foundation for program development. The rationale for centering children within the model was instrumental, because the Needs Assessment Committee realized that children live in complex social networks which influence their development. While children have different life experiences based on gender, socio-economic background, age, and their personal history, children interact and are impacted by multiple levels of social influences. As a result, SPICE believes that the child's social ecology needs to be empowered to support children in reaching their full potential.

The child centered social-ecological approach addresses a multitude of factors from the child's family to the inability of Liberia to adhere to its public policy structures that affect children's access to education. To remedy the multiple challenges faced by children, SPICE identified the social-ecology units that comprises a child's life: child, family, school, community, and government.

CHILD CENTERED SOCIAL-ECOLOGICAL MODEL FOR POSTCONFLICT RURAL RECONSTRUCTION

To increase access to education, the full needs of children must be addressed. SPICE believes that programming cannot provide surface solutions to education. As a result, SPICE developed the Child Centered Social-Ecological Model for Postconflict Rural Reconstruction.

- Government/Public Policy: Codifies and institutionalizes the legal, economic, educational, health governance and policies.
- Community: Regulates and normalizes social and cultural norms.
- Schools: Responsible for learning and provides structured introduction to so social, cultural political, and historical knowledge.
- Family: Primary influence of cultural social norms.
- Child: Target of SPICE Programming.



LONG-TERM PROGRAMMING

The needs assessment revealed that development digresses as projects are implemented over short periods of time (i.e. 2–3-year time period). Due to the nature of the destruction created by the civil war and Liberia's slow recovery, SPICE believes that programming in Partnership Communities (PC) has to be a long-term commitment to promote sustainability. SPICE will make a commitment to two five-year terms within the PC. Before the implementation of the second five-year term, an evaluation will be made that will measure the progress and assure that the expected results are being achieved by both SPICE and the PC. If the community is not participating fully, SPICE retains the right to not commit to the second term of programming. The second term will focus on developing the ability of the community and school to be more self-sufficient.

To qualify as a PC, a community must meet the following:

- ✓ The community must be in a rural location without easy access to urban areas or a county capital.
- ✓ The community should not be receiving support from another NGO or international institution in education within the last two years other than from the Ministry of Education.
- ✓ The schools must be lacking infrastructure and resources, which includes but is not limited to the lack of secure school structure, dirt floors, no or limited seating, lack of classroom supplies, no running water, no hygienic latrine, limited books and teaching materials, high pupil to teacher ratio, and other qualifications to be determined.
- ✓ There must be a commitment by the schools, teachers, and community members to fully participate.

GENDER EMPOWERMENT & VIOLENCE PREVENTION APPROACH

Gender-based violence prevention requires the engagement of society as a whole. Empowerment involves unraveling the power structures that produce gender inequalities and inequities. Men and boys must be engaged to interrupt social norms that maintain violence. Women and girls have the right to live in a society free from violence and exploitation. However, it needs to come to light that violent masculinity and manhood can be harmful to not only women and girls, but other men and boys. Inequalities between men also support a culture of violence. While dedicated to working to empower women, SPICE also works to support the development of healthy and empowered masculinity. SPICE promotes the empowerment of women, girls, men, and boys to create communities free from violence, exploitation, and oppression.

PILOT PROJECT: THE RALLY ROAD EDUCATION INITIATIVE

Comprised of three schools on Rally Road in rural Grand Bassa, SPICE has identified these three schools and their communities as our first pilot project. The Rally Road Schools Initiative will be a collaborative project between the schools, their communities, and SPICE. This project will consist of Goals one through eight, which are outlined below.

The Schools

District #1 A, Vaneholor Public School, Dunwen Clan, Rally Road, Grand Bassa County, Liberia

District #2B, Daniel Town Public School, Daniel Township Clan, Rally Road, Grand Bassa County, Liberia

District #3B, Kargban Town Public School, Dunwen Clan, Rally Road, Grand Bassa County, Liberia



Daniel Town Public School, Daniel Township Clan, Rally Road, Grand Bassa County

SCHOOL SUPPORT PROGRAM



Christian Community College, Garnerville, Montserrado County

The School Support Program (SSP) is to provide rural and underserved schools with short-term or quick impact projects. This program is for schools that do not qualify as a partner community. SSP projects can include rehabbing a school in both Monrovia or rural counties, providing donations to students, digging a well for a school campus, building hygienic latrines, as well as other projects as needed.

PROGRAMMING GOALS

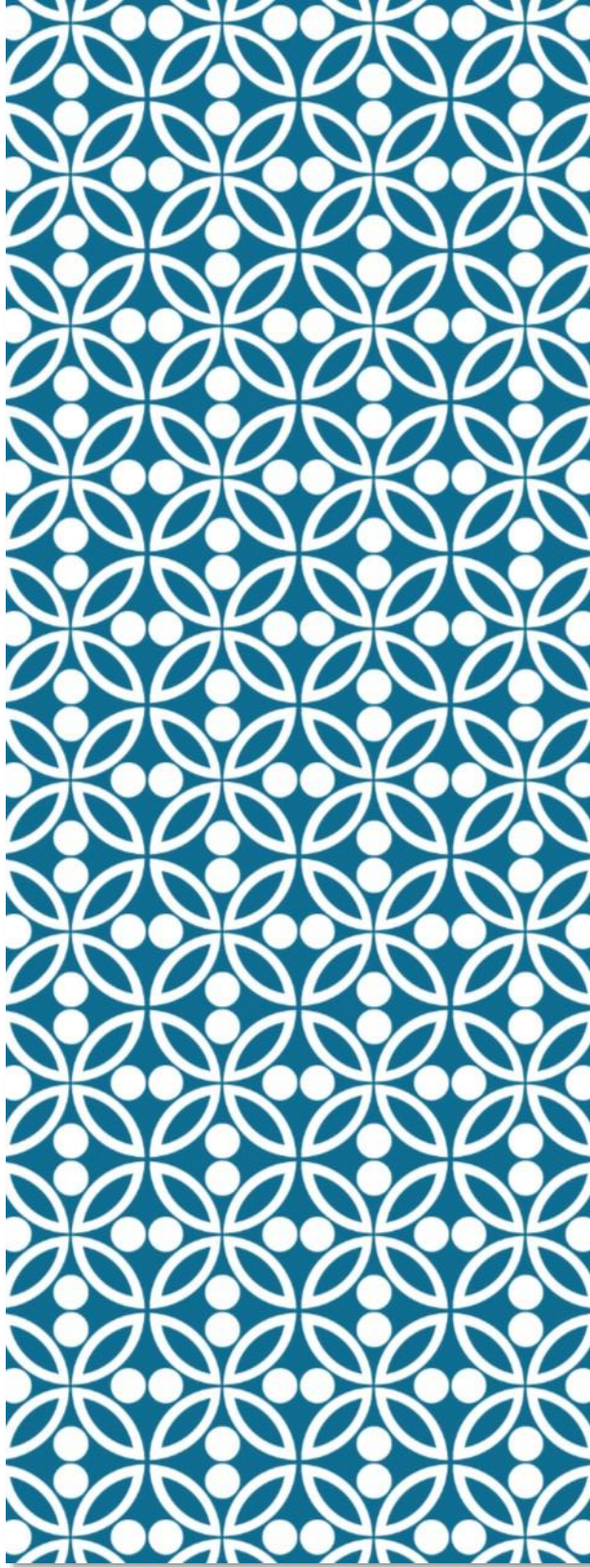
The goals are a roadmap that guides SPICE in achieving its mission and future strategic planning.

Three Programming Themes

1. Education
2. Health and Social Well-being
3. Gender and Violence Prevention



Stakeholder interview with Yukihiko D' Lovette-Annon, Assistant Minister, Bureau of Early Childhood Education



EDUCATION |
GOALS, OBJECTIVES & STRATEGIES

Goal 2: Positive environment that promotes learning in rural and underserved Liberian communities created through building and improvement of schools

Stakeholders expressed a pattern of concern over deplorable conditions of the school buildings and campuses. A majority of schools operate in dilapidated and/or makeshift structures. The concern for educational stakeholders is the lack of walled classrooms or secured buildings does not produce an educational environment for learning. Additionally, the looting of education materials and furniture does not promote a positive learning environment. When asked how to remedy the dismal learning environment, stakeholders suggested repairing or remodeling schools and developing a sense of community ownership of the school campus. Lastly, stakeholders expressed the need for school supplies, textbooks, and other learning materials. Many donated school textbooks are from the West; and, young students with little exposure to western culture are unable to relate to the pictures and subject matter. Students need to relate to the educational materials to be fully engaged in the learning process.

1.1: To promote positive learning environments for schools through engaging in strong community partnerships.

Strategy 1.1a: Establish a Community Council to represent needs within their community and implement community programs.

Strategy 1.1b: Build a sense of community ownership for the school campuses.

Strategy 1.1c: Produce and distribute locally contextualized teaching materials and textbooks.

Objective 1.2: To enter into partnerships with individuals and organizations in improving schools.

Strategy 1.2a: Facilitate partnerships with organizations and individuals in improving school campuses. Goal 2: Opportunity for teachers, parents, and students to learn to build their full potential.

Goal 2: Capacity for early childhood and primary school teachers in rural and underserved communities built through training and mentorship

Children in rural and underserved communities have limited access to education in Liberia. Rural schools often have few trained teachers. Due to lack of funding, lack of civilian infrastructure, and housing, teachers do not want to take positions in rural areas. Moreover, the national budget does not prioritize funding and salaries of rural teaching posts. Some communities have pooled resources to support having a community teacher to help in school. However, community teachers do not have teacher education training. During the stakeholder assessments there was a consistent request for teacher training by administrators, teachers, and parents. Another, concern of educational stakeholders is the enrollment of overaged students in early childhood and grade 1 classrooms. Parents have also requested literacy classes to help support their children.

Objective 2.1: To enhance the capacity of teachers in rural and underserved communities through training and mentorship.

Strategy 2.1.1: Enter into partnerships with educators to conduct training for teachers in partnership communities and school support programs.

Objective 2.2: To promote child enrollment in schools within the guidelines of the Ministry of Education.

Strategy 2.2.1: Create platforms for dialogue between schools, parents, and community structures encouraging them to enroll children at 3 years of age in line with government enrollment guidelines for early childhood education.

Objective 2.3: To support adult literacy within rural and underserved communities.

Strategy 2.3.1: Create opportunities for parents to participate in literacy classes in partner communities.

Goal 3: Psycho-social support for school going children and coaching of parents, teachers and school administrators

Schools in rural areas are very understaffed. Teachers manage classrooms with a high student-to-teacher ratio. An example is 1 teacher to 125 students in rural Grand Bassa. Schools need to cultivate the support of parents to help with classroom management and other school functions. A strong Parent-Teacher Association can help remedy school management challenges. Additionally, PTA meetings help parents to learn more about their child's education. PTA can help parents understand child development and encourage parenting that support children and their education.

Objective 3.1: To promote child development education through the support of Parent-Teacher Associations (PTA).

Strategy 3.1.1: Support the development of PTAs within each community where SPICE provides education programming.

Strategy 3.1.2: Develop partnerships that can support parents with understanding child development to support the completion of grade six.

Strategy 3.1.3: Engage parents and Community Volunteerism to support teachers with Classroom management and Curriculum lessons.



**HEALTH & SOCIAL WELL-BEING
GOALS, OBJECTIVES, & STRATEGIES**

Goal 4: Healthy and nutritional development of early childhood and primary school children in underserved communities

Rural areas face food insecurity. Parents struggle to provide their children with three healthy meals per day. As a result, children face many effects of malnutrition including developmental delays, illness, and death

Objective 4.1: To support the nutritional development of children within partner community schools.

Strategy 4.1.1: Develop meal programs to support healthy nutrition for early childhood and primary school children in underserved and rural communities.

Objective 4.2: To promote healthy hygiene habits of children and schools.

Strategy 4.2.1: Develop healthy hygiene habits lesson for teachers to present to students.



Beans cooking on a coal pot

Goal 5: Access to safe drinking water, hygiene and sanitation (WASH) services on early childhood and primary school campuses improved to prevent spread of disease

Children and their families in rural areas face a myriad of illness and disease caused by lack of civilian infrastructure. Rural areas do not have access to clean water or sanitation facilities. Many rural schools do not have running water or hygienic toilets.

Objective 5.1: To support the reduction of water borne diseases among school aged children.

Strategy 5.1.1: Support construction of latrines and water pumps on school campuses.

Objective 5.2: To promote healthy hygiene habits of children and schools.

Strategy 5.2.1: Work with school teachers to develop healthy hygiene habits of the students.



Christian Community College, Garnerville, Montserrat County

Goal 6: Opportunities for access to professional health care and psychosocial services in rural and underserved villages

Due to the lack of civilian infrastructure and public transportation, rural community members have to travel far distances without modern transportation or emergency response services to health care clinics. The stakeholder assessment revealed that the ill or injured face further obstacles for travel because there are a limited number of clinics in rural areas. Patients could be required to walk five or more miles by foot to seek medical care.

Objective 6.1: To provide access to health services in hard-to-reach communities.

- Strategy 6.1a: Establish mobile health clinics to provide services to rural and underserved communities.

Objective 6.2: To reduce the psychological burden of poor parenting on rural children.

- Strategy 6.2a: Engage parents in enhancing their parenting skills to ensure the protection of the rights of children.



Parents & children at Daniel Town Public School, Daniel Township Clan, Rally Road, Grand Bassa County



**GENDER & VIOLENCE PREVENTION
GOALS, OBJECTIVES, & STRATEGIES**

Goal 7: Community dialogue to address cultural and social norms that normalize discrimination and violence based on a person's gender

Concern about harmful cultural practices was revealed in the stakeholder assessment. These cultural practices prohibit the attendance of girls in public or private schools. Girls that attend traditional schools, Sande may face female genital mutilation (FGM). Practices of discrimination, GBV, and SEA promote early marriage and pregnancy of girls. Both early marriage and pregnancy can lead to intimate partner violence and abuse. Moreover, girls who do not complete formal education and may lack skills to provide support for their family such as literacy and basic mathematics.

Objective 7.1: To establish a relationship with tribal leaders through the construction or remodelling of schools in Villages.

Strategy 7.2.1: Engage Zoes and traditional people in reforming the harmful effects of harmful Poro and Sande cultural practices, while still maintaining respect for local culture and tradition.

Strategy 7.2.2: Work with Zoes to establish a complementary relationship between public education and traditional education.

Goal 8: Transform gender, cultural, and social norms that support gender-based violence and gender inequity and inequality.

Objective 8.1: To engage men in dialogs and practices of gender-based violence prevention.

Strategy 8.1.1: Engage with domestic and international networks in order to engage men and boys in violence prevention.

Strategy 8.1.2: Form men's support groups within Partner Communities that can introduce and establish non-confrontational dialogues of masculinity, GBV, and violence prevention.

Strategy 8.1.3: Form women's support groups within Partner Communities to support women's empowerment.

Objective 8.2: To reduce gender-based violence and sexual exploitation of women and girls.

Strategy 8.2.1: Create awareness activities, campaigns, and interventions that educate about the impact of gender-based violence within communities.



Maniah Wrenh School, VOA Gulf, Marsjibi County

Goal 9: Leadership capacity of future leaders to transform gender, cultural, and social norms that support GBV

The development of leadership of girls emerged as a topic in the stakeholder assessment. Leadership development can also transform gender norms. Girls in Liberia face being sexually propositioned or harassed as part of their educational experiences. SEA can prevent girls from completing their education. Moreover, girls face sexual pressures from boyfriends that can lead to early pregnancy. The participation of both girls and boys in leadership development can challenge norms that support gender based violence and gender inequity and inequality.

Objective 9.1: To encourage senior high school students in engendering reduction of GBV and SEA.

- Strategy 9.1a: Engage boys and girls in leadership development that supports gender equity and equality.
- Strategy 9.1b: Adapt the Mentors in Violence Prevention program to address the needs of Liberia.



Eagle Nest-Academy, Boys Town, Margibi County

FUTURE PLANNING

This needs assessment was conducted to serve as a tool for strategic planning for the Board of SPICE. The needs assessment report outlines programming goals that can be used to develop a five-year strategic plan.



Daniel Toun Public School, Daniel Township Clan, Rally Road, Grand Bassa County



Kangban Toun Public School, Dunuen Clan, Rally Road, Grand Bassa County

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