



Mapping of National Education Policy and Decision-Making Forums & Platforms

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

Care-Found	Care-Found Liberia
CEO	County Education Officer
CENTAL	Center for Transparency and Accountability in Liberia
COTAE	Coalition for Transparency and Accountability in Education
CSB	County School Board
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
ESA	Education Sector Analysis
ESDC	Education Sector Development Committee
ESP	Education Sector Plan
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
HOPE	Helping Our People Excel, Incorporated
HoR	House of Representatives
IDI	Helping Our People Excel
LEG	Local Education Group
LMAs	Line Ministries and Agencies
JESR	Joint Education Sector Review
MFPD	Ministry of Finance & Development Planning
MOE	Ministry of Education
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NAPTANOL	National PTA Network of Liberia
NPGE	National Policy on Girls' Education
NGPL	National Gender Policy of Liberia
NTAL	National Teachers Association of Liberia
PAYOWI	Paramount Young Women Initiative
PTA	Parents Teachers Association
SMT	Senior Management Team
SMTM	Senior Management Team Meeting

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We remain committed to defending and protecting the right to education of all school-going persons in the country. As a key stakeholder in the educational sector of Liberia, the Educate HER Coalition and partners look forward to a continued mutually-benefiting relationship and partnership with the Global Partnership for Education, Ministry of Education and other stakeholders to work towards full realization of the Right to Education in the country, particularly for women, girls, and marginalized groups and individuals.

¹ [-Education- MOE Receives Vehicles to Enhance Outreach activities - Knewsonline](#)

Background and Introduction

The Government of Liberia has demonstrated some level of political commitment to ensure access, equality and equity in the educational sector. Key among these efforts is the passage of the Education Reform Act (ERA, 2011), Children's Law (2011), the National Gender Policy (2009, 2018), and development of the Education Sector Plan (2010-2020), National Sexual & Reproductive Health Policy (2010), National Gender Policy of Liberia; and the National Policy on Girls' Education (2006, 2009, 2013). Notably, the National Policy on Girl's Education (revised in 2013) includes provisions to improve girls' access to quality education (3.2); increase girls' retention and completion rates (4.2); and enhance rights and protection for girls (5.2). Additionally, the policy sets out the institutional framework for policy implementation (6.1); the mechanisms for monitoring, evaluation and reporting (7.1, 7.2); and the overall strategies for resource mobilization (8.1).

Meanwhile, an additional framework has been proposed: Liberia National Girls' Education Strategy 2021-2026, which is currently being validated and finalized by the Government of Liberia and partners. Overall, the Strategy re-affirms national commitment to achieve the vision set out in the NPGE of 2013 by focusing on addressing social-cultural and demand-side barriers to girls' education; mainstreaming gender in education programs and strengthening MoE capacity for gender-responsive education management and accountability. Meanwhile, the National Policy on Girl's Education (revised in 2013) includes provisions to improve girls' access to quality education (3.2); increase girls' retention and completion rates (4.2); and enhance rights and protection for girls (5.2). Also, it sets out the institutional framework for policy implementation (6.1); the mechanisms for monitoring, evaluation and reporting (7.1, 7.2); and the overall strategies for resource mobilization (8.1).

However, the overall impacts of this political commitment, largely manifested by development of these laws, policies, and strategies, has not been satisfactory. Access to education, especially for women, girls and vulnerable groups and populations remains significantly hindered, in part due to financing, coordination, and implementation challenges. For example, national budgetary support to education in Liberia has not attained the minimum 20% benchmark required by the Dark Framework of 2000 and Incheon Declaration of 2015, thus impairing effective implementation of these policies and strategies. This has claimed the attention of national and international stakeholders in education, who continue to partner with state and non-state actors to promote and defend the right to education, guaranteed by international, continental, and national instruments.

Consequently, in 2021, through Oxfam IBIS, the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) awarded a three-year grant to the Educate HER Coalition, a network of three national women-led organizations working on women and girls' economic empowerment, sexual and reproductive health rights, education, and other pertinent issues in Liberia. Helping Our People Excel Inc. (HOPE), Paramount Young Women Initiative (PAYOWI) and Care-Found Liberia have formed a partnership for an advocacy campaign: Educate HER: Promoting Gender Equity and Equality in Education in Liberia.

The overall objective of the project is to contribute to the effective implementation of the National Policy on Girls' Education (NPGE) in Liberia by 2023. The specific objectives are:

1. that the education sector budget will be increased to promote gender equity in education in Liberia; and
2. that education stakeholders' capacity and coordination will be enhanced for the effective implementation and monitoring of the NPGE.

Mainly, the Coalition will collaborate with other stakeholders to advocate for effective implementation of policies that will advance Girls' Education in Liberia, particularly girls school attendance, retention and completion (GARC) in secondary schools.

The project focuses on three key strategies:

1. Coalition building and policy engagement
2. Research and policy review
3. Awareness and civic participation

Earmarked activities under these strategies aim to build the necessary momentum and mobilize stakeholders' support to push for more budgetary allocation and meaningful participation in education decision-making processes. We believe that if we strengthen civil society roles and citizen participation at both local and national levels, and if we increase monitoring, capacity, and coordination among education stakeholders, then at the end of the project, education stakeholders' will more effectively implement and monitor the NPGE.

As part of the project, key strategies and tools will be developed to mobilize a cohort of diverse actors at various levels and sectors to effectively advocate for the full implementation of the policy. We will leverage strategic partnerships with Government of Liberia line ministries, and civil society organizations, national networks, and community-based organizations. We will also target, women's rights groups, autonomous social movements, and media institutions. The planned strategies will ensure geographic and social outreach to regular citizens, including marginalized people. Thus, this document has been developed to map, analyze and present key education decision-making platforms and forums in Liberia. **Development of the document will enable the Educate HER Coalition and its partners to know, access, and influence decision-making at these meetings and forums, especially girls' right to education issues.** Also, the document has been developed in pursuit of specific and broad strategic engagements and partnerships aimed at leveraging available resources and expertise to rally stakeholders' support to address cultural, economic, social, and other barriers and threats to girls' school attendance, retention, and completion in Liberia.

Methodology

This document was developed through mixed approach: desk review of existing information, key informant interviews with key stakeholders in education in Liberia, and information gathering session involving the Educate HER Coalition Members and Partners. Key findings were identified from internal resources of the Coalition (Educate HER Project documents and past advocacy materials), national education documents, including but not limited to the New Education Reform Act of 2011, National Policy on Girls' Education

(2013), and Education Sector Plan (2017-2020); and interviews conducted with state and non-state actors. Additionally, it draws its findings from a sharing session conducted involving the Educate HER Coalition members and partners as well key informant interviews conducted with key players at the Ministry of Education, including but not limited to the Girls' Education Department, Secondary Education Division, as well the Research and Planning Department.

Rationale

Civil society is a critical partner to government, especially in the field of education. They have been and continue to engage policy makers and other stakeholders at different levels, promoting reforms and advocating for redress to equality, equity, financing, and other issues related to education in the country. A classic example is engagement with policy makers to mainstream gender in education to address inequality and equity concerns that mostly affect girls and vulnerable persons and groups. This is in line with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 seeking to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”, Also, it is reinforced by two key objectives of the Education Reform Act of 2011 (section 1.5) are to: 1) Promote equal access to education opportunities for all Liberians, without discrimination of any kind and 2) Promote gender equity and equality through the educational system and opportunities for education.

However, such engagement cannot be successful and impactful if the right decision makers (policy makers and stakeholders) are not identified and engaged at the right time and in the right spaces (forums, meetings, conferences, etc.) in the sector. This is particularly so for new and emerging advocates who need adequate information on happenings and trends in the sector to make informed decisions.

This is where this National Education Policy and Decision-making Forum mapping document comes in. It's a key tool and strategy intended to help the Educate HER Coalition and other partners to identify and fully utilize strategic forums and platforms in the sector to enable them influence decision-making in citizens' interest. Also, the document presents a unique opportunity to collaborate with key actors to amplify girls' education, economic empowerment, and other pertinent issues to public officials, development partners and other state and non-state actors participating in these forums and meetings.

Objectives

The specific objectives are:

1. To identify, analyze, and present strategic decision-making platforms and forums in Education for the Educate HER Coalition and other civil society actors to access and influence decision making in citizens' interest;
2. To facilitate building of strong and mutually-benefiting partnership between civil society and government officials to influence decision making in favor of girls' education in Liberia; and

3. To ensure that civil society organizations have the information and tools required to engage, influence, and mobilize meaningful and broad-based support for girls' education advocacy and other related efforts in Liberia, especially the Educate HER Project

Legal Framework for National Education Policy and Decision-Making

Education is one of the fundamental human rights guaranteed by global and local legal frameworks.² The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Convention on the Right of the Child, African Youth Charter, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Sustainable Development Goal 4, and Abidjan Principles of 2019 are notable examples. Nationally, Article 6 of the 1986 Constitution of the Republic of Liberia, the New Education Reform Act of 2011, National Gender Policy of Liberia (NGPL), and National Policy on Girls' Education (NPGE) are among important instruments guaranteeing the right to education.

Combined, these global and national legal frameworks promote strong partnership and decision making around key educational policies and issues. Consequently, international players such as the World Bank, European Union, United State Aid Agency for International Development, UNICEF, and the Global Partnership for Education have funded varying programs and activities in Liberia.³ Planning and implementation level engagements around government funded programs as well as partners' supported initiatives do occur through sectoral, thematic, and partner level meetings, from time to time. Formal sectoral meetings such as the Local Education Group (LEG) and Education Sector Development Committee Meetings (ESDC) are examples of sectoral level meetings that periodically bring state and non-state actors together to discuss and make key decisions on education related matters and issues in the country.

² [Understanding education as a right | Right to Education Initiative \(right-to-education.org\)](https://www.right-to-education.org/)

³ [Liberia gets \\$250,000 World Bank grant to bolster education - Apanews.net](https://www.apanews.net/)

International and National Frameworks/Commitments on the Right to Education

Liberia has not been short of verbal and written commitments to address the educational needs of its citizens. To date, when it comes to commitments to address gender inequality, equity concerns, and other long-standing hurdles affecting women and girls' access to education, especially at the secondary level, several exist. The below matrix highlights key international frameworks and conventions as well as national laws, policies, and strategies guaranteeing the right to education, especially for women, girls, and other groups in Liberia to inform stakeholders' decisions.

Table 1: Highlights of International and National Right to Education Commitments

#	Name	Brief Summary	Provisions on Right to Education
Key International Instruments/Commitments			
1	Universal Declaration of Human Rights ⁴	A United Nations General Assembly document of 1948 that sets out fundamental human rights to be universally protected.	Article 1: All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood. Article 26: Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.
2	Convention on the Right of the Child ⁵	Adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1989 and came into force in 1990. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is an international human rights treaty which sets out the civil, political, economic, social, health and cultural rights of children. The Convention defines a	Article 28 Section 1 through 3. 28.1; States Parties recognize the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity, they shall, in particular: (a) Make primary education compulsory and available free to all; (b) Encourage the development of different forms of secondary education, including general and vocational education, make them available and accessible to every child, and take appropriate measures such as the introduction of free education and offering financial assistance in case of need; (c) Make higher education accessible to all on the basis of capacity by every appropriate means; (d) Make educational and

⁴ [Universal Declaration of Human Rights | United Nations](#)

⁵ [Microsoft Word - Document1 \(ohchr.org\)](#)

		child as any human being under the age of eighteen, unless the age of majority is attained earlier under national legislation.	<p>vocational information and guidance available and accessible to all children; (e) Take measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and the reduction of drop-out rates.</p> <p>Article 29 1. States Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to: (a) The development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential;</p>
3	Sustainable Development Goal 4	Sustainable Development Goal 4 is about quality education and is among the 17 Sustainable Development Goals established by the United Nations in September 2015.	<p>Goal 4 Targets 1 through 7</p> <p>4.1: By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes</p> <p>Goal 4.2: By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education</p> <p>Goal 4.5: By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations</p>
4	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990)	It was adopted by the 26th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the OAU in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia - July 1990 and entered into force on 29 November, 1999. It seeks the physical and mental development of the child with regard to health, physical, mental, moral and social development, and requires legal protection in conditions of freedom, dignity and security.	<p>Article 11 counts 1 through 7</p> <p>11.1: Every child shall have the right to education.</p> <p>11.2: States Parties shall: (a) provide free and compulsory basic education: (b) encourage the development of secondary education in its different forms and to progressively make it free and accessible to all; (c) make the higher education accessible to all on the basis of capacity and ability by every appropriate means; (d) take measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and the reduction of drop-out rate; and (e) take special measures in respect of female, gifted and disadvantaged children, to ensure equal access to education for all sections of the community.</p>

5	Convention on Elimination of All Violence Against Women (1979)	On 18 December 1979, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly. It entered into force as an international treaty on 3 September 1981. The Convention establishes not only an international bill of rights for women, but also an agenda for action by countries to guarantee the enjoyment of those rights.	<p>Article 10 Counts A (1) to H (8)</p> <p>States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in order to ensure to them equal rights with men in the field of education and in particular to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women:</p> <p>(d) The same opportunities to benefit from scholarships and other study grants; and</p> <p>(f) The reduction of female student drop-out rates and the organization of programmers for girls and women who have left school prematurely;</p>
6	Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA)	In 1995, at the Fourth World Conference on Women, government representatives worked on producing a document of agreed written targets towards achieving gender equality.	<p>Strategic objective B.1. Ensure equal access to education.</p> <p>Strategic objective B.2. Eradicate illiteracy among women.</p> <p>Strategic objective B.3. Improve women's access to vocational training, science and technology, and continuing education.</p> <p>Strategic objective B.4. Develop non-discriminatory education and training.</p> <p>Strategic objective B.5. Allocate sufficient resources for and monitor the implementation of educational reforms.</p> <p>Strategic objective B.6. Promote lifelong education and training for girls and women.</p>
7	ECOWAS Protocol on Education and Training (2003)	The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Regional Protocol on Education was adopted in 2003 within the framework of the Decade of Education adopted by the Africa Union in the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) initiatives; Education for All as	<p>Article 2 (Principles) N (14): Elimination of all discriminatory measures against women in order to ensure equity in all areas of education at all levels.</p> <p>Article 3 (Objectives) G (7): To promote the education of girls and ensure girls' full access to and achievement in all levels of the educational system</p>

		well as Millennium Development Goals. This was an outcome of First conference of ECOWAS Ministers of Education which was held in Dakar Senegal on 24-26 September, 2002.	
8	African Union Strategy 2063 (The Africa We Want) ⁶	Agenda 2063 is the blueprint and master plan for transforming Africa into the global powerhouse of the future. It is the strategic framework for delivering on Africa's goal for inclusive and sustainable development and is a concrete manifestation of the pan-African drive for unity, self-determination, freedom, progress and collective prosperity pursued under Pan-Africanism and African	Aspiration 6 (An Africa whose development is People-driven) 51. All forms of gender-based violence and discrimination (social, economic, & political) against women and girls will be eliminated and the latter will fully enjoy all their human rights. All harmful social practices (especially female genital mutilation and child marriages) will be ended and barriers to quality health and education for women and girls eliminated. 72. (Call to Action) C – Education • Expand universal access to quality early childhood, primary and secondary education; • Expand and consolidate gender parity in education.
9	Incheon Declaration of 2015 ⁷	The Incheon declaration is a declaration on education adopted at the World Education Forum in Incheon, South Korea on 15 May 2015. It is the logical continuation of the Education For All Movement and the Millennium Development Goals on Education, and many of its goals were based on a review of progress made	Target 4.1: By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcome 106. Increasing and improving domestic financing for education: As domestic resources will remain the most important source for funding education, there must be a clear commitment by governments to provide equitable financing commensurate with national educational priorities, needs and capacities to advance the progressive realization of the right to education. Countries will need to: • Increase public funding for education: This requires widening the tax base (in particular, by ending harmful tax incentives), preventing tax evasion and increasing

⁶ [agenda2063.pdf \(aau.org\)](#)

⁷ [FFA_Complet_Web-ENG.pdf \(unesco.org\)](#)

		since the 2000 World Education Forum in Dakar.	the share of the national budget allocated to education. · Prioritize those most in need: Disadvantaged children, youth and adults, as well as women and girls and people in conflict-affected areas, typically have the greatest education needs and financing should therefore be targeted towards them.
Key National Instruments/Commitments			
1	Constitution of the Republic of Liberia (1986)	The 1986 Liberian Constitution is the organic law of the country. Among others, the constitution recognizes and guarantees the right to education by mandating the State to educate all its citizens and people.	Article six (6): 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.
2	Education Reform Act of 2011	The Education Reform Act of 2011 replaces the Education Law of 2001. It is the foremost legal framework for implementing relevant provisions of the Liberian Constitution as well international frameworks guaranteeing the right to education of all. The Laws sets the agenda for providing, coordinating, supersizing, monitoring, and reforming educational services in Liberia.	Objectives 1, 5 and 7: 1; Ensure the provision of quality education to all at every level of the educational strata 2; Promote equal access to education opportunities for all Liberians, without discrimination of any kind; and 3; Promote gender equity and equality through the educational system and opportunities for education. Chapter 4.4.1 This level of education (Primary or Lower Basic), which consists of full-time formal schooling that is provided for children from age six (6) to age twelve (12) and constituting grades 1-6, shall be free and compulsory for all children of the age range for such school level, and shall be free for all pupils within the public school system Chapter 4.4.2 Education at this level (Upper Secondary or Upper Basic), which comprises the first three years of schooling at the secondary level (7th, 8th, and 9th grades), shall be compulsory for all children, and shall be free for all pupils within the public school system.

3	National Gender Policy of Liberia	The policy was developed by the Liberian Government in 2009 and revised in 2018. It seeks to eliminate all forms of gender based discrimination in order to achieve equity and gender equality.	<p>Chapter 1.3 (Vision): A just society where girls and boys, women and men enjoy their human rights equally on the basis of non-discrimination</p> <p>1.5 (Objectives): To serve as a framework and guideline in mainstreaming gender and empowering women and vulnerable groups in the national development processes. Other objectives are to enhance women and girls ‘empowerment for sustainable and equitable development; create and strengthen gender responsive structures, processes and mechanisms for development in which both women and men participate equally, have access to, and benefit from all the country ‘s resources.</p>
4	National Policy on Girls’ Education	The Policy was developed by the Government of Liberia in 2006 and revised in 2013 and 2018 respectively. Generally, its seeks to minimize gender disparities in education and supports adequate financing, implementation, and evaluation of specific and strategic interventions to curtail gender imbalances and barriers to Girls’ education in Liberia. Also, it seeks to create and strengthen structures, processes and mechanisms in which women participate equally and that ensure that women and men can equally access, control, and benefit from the country’s resources.	<p>Chapter 1.5.1 (General Objective): To guide and promote affirmative actions aimed at the progressive reduction of gender disparities in education and training as well as in management structures.</p> <p>1.5.2 (Specific Objectives): A) To establish a legislative and institutional framework to initiate, coordinate, monitor and evaluate programs aimed at promoting gender equality in education, training, and management; B) To integrate gender and girls’ education issues into national, district, and community programs and plans; and C) To stimulate collective and concerted efforts, at all levels to eliminate gender disparities in education, training, and management.</p> <p>(Section 4.1.7): Vulnerable Groups including the Girl Child and Youth, among others</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Promoting girls’ development and advancement 2. Eliminating and addressing violence and sexual abuse 3. Training policymakers and communities on eliminating discrimination against girls to generate awareness among policymakers, men, boys, families, and communities 4. Ensuring access to appropriate education and skill-training for children with disabilities, especially girl children, and increasing awareness of the needs of people with disabilities, especially women with disabilities

			<p>Section 4.1.15: Education and Training This section focuses on mainstreaming gender in all sectors and levels of education, and closing gender gaps in the education sector. It calls for:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reviewing school curricula with the aim of incorporating changing gender roles. 2. Testing and implementing revised curricula on changing gender roles and reviewing their impact. 3. Disseminating the National Gender Policy widely across schools <p>8.1 (Resource mobilization): The Ministry of Education shall commit at least 5 percent (5%) of its Fiscal Year Budget to projects and programs promoting girls' education. --- The Ministry of Education and its partners shall ensure at all times that the allocation of funds, including school grants, and decision making concerning projects are gender sensitive.</p>
5	<p>Pro Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD)</p>	<p>The Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development 2018 to 2023 (PAPD) is the second in the series of 5-year National Development Plans (NDP) anticipated under the Liberia Vision 2030 framework. It follows the Agenda for Transformation 2012-2017 (AfT). In terms of Education, it recommits the Government of Liberia to full realization of citizens right to good quality, inclusive, and gender sensitive education of all levels</p>	<p>Pillar 1 (Power to the People) *Human Capital Capacity and Knowledge Economy – Expanding universal access to quality, relevant Education and Technical and Vocational Training *Gender Inequality -Enhancing inclusiveness of women and girls to reduce inequalities in political, social, and economic life</p> <p>Primary Level: Raise Net Enrollment Rate by 65% by 2023; Ensure all students achieve basic literacy and numeracy by Grade 6 Secondary</p> <p>Girls Education: Out of school rate reduce to 10%; retention rate increase to >80%; completion rate rise by 20% by 2023</p>

		and kinds (primary, secondary, tertiary, vocational, etc.).	Out of school children: Reduce proportion of out-of-school children to less than 10% nationwide
6	Children’s Act of Liberia	The Children’s Act of Liberia came into being 2011 through Legislative enactment. Generally, it seeks to protect and fulfill the fundamental human rights of all children by forbidding all forms of violence and discrimination against them.	Article 3 Sections 9.1: Every child shall have the right to education. Article 3 Section 9.2: The Government of Liberia shall ensure that primary level education is free and compulsory in line with the Education Law of Liberia
7	Gender Policy on Gender Responsive Planning and Public Budgeting	The Policy on Gender-responsive Planning and Public Budgeting (GRPB) was developed by the Government of Liberia in 2019. It provides guidance to the planning and budgeting processes of the Government of Liberia for advancing gender equality to contribute to equitable service delivery and inclusive growth. As such, the Policy outlines the tools and actions necessary to make the Public Finance Management (PFM) reforms gender responsive for a more gender equal outcome.	Section 3.4.1 (Long-Term Strategic Objectives) : (2) Sectoral level - mainstreaming of Gender Responsive Budgeting components into the planning and budgeting activities of the State-owned Enterprises (SEs) and capacity development of implementing officials of government, and (3) Impact level - gender-differentiated impact assessments of public expenditure. 3.4.2 (Immediate Objectives): (2) Providing guidance and communicating guidelines for the planning and budget processes to integrate gender analysis into policies, plans and budgets of the Spending Entities in order to address the gender-differentiated needs of the different social groups.

Education Policy Decision Making Value Chain

Decision-making in education in Liberia takes different shapes and forms and involves diverse players, from time to time. The New Education Act of 2011⁸ identifies the Government of Liberia, through the Ministry of Education as the body overseeing and administering all educational programs in Liberia, the only exemptions being Security training centers and institutions and military training institutes (Article 2.4.1 of the New Education Reform Act of 2011). Also, the Act identifies the Legislature, Parents, Students, Private School Operators, Teachers, Parents Teachers Association, and other bodies as important players and partners in the education space. On top of this is the fact that Liberia's democratic form of government allows for citizens' engagement and participation in key processes and activities and their right to be duly informed about happenings in sectors such as education and health, in line with the Freedom of Information Law (2010)⁹ and other frameworks.

To this end, major policy decisions reached and implemented in the Liberian Education Sector involve key forums and platforms, highlighted below for informational, educational, advocacy, and other related purposes. Some of these decision-making meetings, forums and platforms are routine/regular, while others are temporary, but very useful in bringing stakeholders together to discuss governance, accountability, supervision, and other policy level and service delivery issues in the sector, with girls' education and school attendance being key components.

⁸ [MoE – Liberia – Show The Light, The People Will Find The Way \(moeliberia.com\)](http://moeliberia.com)

⁹ [FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT \(rti-rating.org\)](http://rti-rating.org)

National Education Policy and Decision-Making Forums and Platforms

The table below displays key national and formal decision-making forums and platforms in the Liberian Education Sector. The aim is to aid stakeholders, especially CSOs with the right and updated information to access and fully utilize these platforms to influence national policies and decisions in public interest, especially women, girls, persons with disabilities and other marginalized groups in society.

#	Name	Brief Description	Participants	Comments/Remarks
1	Local Education Group (LEG) Meetings	The Local Education Group meeting is a higher-level monthly meeting that takes place at the offices of the Ministry of Education. The Meeting is chaired by a coordinating agency, often a non-government partner/stakeholder. Its main objective is to facilitate in-depth discussion and make decision (s) on key policy issues, including endorsement of the Education Sector Plan (ESP), Education Sector Analysis (ESA), and other key national documents and policies.	MOE, World Bank, UNICEF, EU, USAID, (COTAE/CENTAL, NTAL, and NGO Education Forum, and Liberia Education for All Technical Committee (LETCOM)	This is one of the leading decision-making meetings and forums in the education sector. The ESP, ESA, and Proposals to the Global Partnership for Education and other donors (if not all) are endorsed by this group, online and during physical meetings. Knowing and engaging with the group members will be important to somehow influence their discussions and decisions. The Educate HER Coalition and other CSOs can also seek opportunity to present their work and issues at LEG meetings for review and possible action(s).
2	Education Sector Development Committee (ESDC) Meeting	ESDC Meeting takes place at the Ministry of Education once monthly and involves a larger body of Education partners and stakeholders. It runs for 2 hours from 10AM to 12PM and takes place every last Tuesday in a month, but the time may be mutually adjusted based on need. It's overarching objective is to promote and facilitate information sharing, coordination and joint planning of major activities and decisions in the sector.	Participants include MOE, civil society, NAPTANOL, NTAL, and all traditional and non-traditional donors in education, and other line ministries and agencies (Civil Service Agency, Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, Ministry of Youth and Sports, etc.)	As an open and broader platform for engagement in the sector, CSOs and other stakeholders must seek to participate in the ESDC meetings and communicate their issues for possible discussion and actions. Strategically aligning with other meeting attendants can help to push key issues and claim stakeholders and policy makers' attention. This is a key forum for pushing budget advocacy, girls' education, anti-corruption, and other critical issues linked to the right to education in the country.

**Educate HER: Promoting Gender Equity and Equality in Education
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3	Senior Management Team (SMT) Meeting	The Senior Management Team (SMT) Meeting involves top officials of the Ministry of Education. This includes the Minister, the Principal Deputies, and other senior officials. It takes place Once weekly but could be held twice or more based on need. Key policy and other related issues are discussed, and decisions made on key matters before being presented to partners and stakeholders at the ESDC, LEG and other meetings. Among other things, reports and other deliverables produced by independent consultants and the Ministry’s staffs are endorsed and approved in the SMT Meeting.	The Minister of Education; Deputy Ministers for Administration, Planning and Research, and Instruction; Assistant Ministers; and Directors, etc.	As this is a closed meeting internal to senior managers at MOE, access maybe an issue for CSOs. However, CSOs can engage with individual participants and officials to highlight their issues during called meetings. Also, possibility could be explored, following prior arrangement and engagement, to make a presentation at the meeting around critical issues, girls’ education, and education financing inclusive.
4	Joint Education Sector Review (JESR) Conference	JESR is an open annual and week-long conference with rotational locations and venues. It is the biggest education decision making forum in terms of the number of participants and stakeholders involved (international, national, and local). The objective is to holistically review activities of the sector, considering progress made against implementation of the education sector plan, challenges experienced, lessons learned, and to plan for the future. The Conference is convened by the Ministry of Education and partners and presided over by the Minister, aided by his principal deputies. The Ministry of Education sends out official invitations to participants, including those whose participation are	Attendees at the JESR are: MOE and relevant line Ministries and Agencies (MFDP, Ministry of Agriculture, Civil Service Agency, Ministry of Youths and Sports etc.), National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE), Education Committees of the Legislature, Donors and development partners, civil society organizations and coalitions, media, local education officials, PTAs, Students, Teachers, etc.	This is the biggest meeting of the sector in terms of the scope and the number and diversity of participants involved. So, it is important for civil society, especially the Educate HER Coalition to access and make its voice heard/somehow influence proceedings at this platform. Civil society needs to strategically plan, mobilize resources, and plan side meetings as well as actively participate in the main event to ensure that girls education, education financing, and other related issues are adequately discussed and prioritized in any outcomes derived.

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		funded through resources mobilized for the event.		
5	Cabinet Meeting	The Cabinet Meeting is a restricted Executive-level meeting presided over by the President of the Republic of Liberia. The Director of Cabinet, a senior appointed official, presides over the meeting in the absence of the Presidency or based on authorization even if the President is around. It is mainly intended to receive updates, discuss and make key policy decisions, including those related to the Education Sector. The Cabinet, which comprises of heads of line ministries and agencies and other designated by the President to attend, reviews and endorses key suggested policies and decisions from various government ministries and agencies, especially the Ministry of Education, National Commission on Higher Education and other sector important players.	President of Liberia; Vice President; Heads and Deputies of Miniseries and Agencies of Government; others invited by the Presidency to attend.	CSOs do not have access to this meeting as it is exclusive to the Executive. However, CSOs can indirectly or directly engage with those who attend. If a solid partnership and advocacy at sectoral level leads to a development of a concept, strategy, or proposal, it could be presented at the cabinet meeting for discussion and possible endorsement by the government. Therefore, the Educate HER Coalition can engage with and make presentations to the Minister of Education and other players, who will then make similar presentations to their colleagues, if permitted and or given the space to do so. Exploring all avenues to influence decisions at this level is extremely critical.
6	Budget Formulation Meeting at the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning (MFDP)	This meeting takes place during preparation of the Draft National Budget by the Executive, especially MFDP. The timeline for appearance is not definite, but the leaderships of all Spending Entities (Ministries and Agencies, and Commissions) appear to defend their draft budgets and discuss other matters, including possible increment.	MFDP and various spending entities, especially funded by and through the national budget.	This meeting cannot easily be accessed by CSOs and advocates. Also, the timing is not definite for line ministries and agencies. However, prior engagement with MOE and Ministry of Finance may lead to information on details that could help to influence decision making at this level. A good strategy will be to remain engaged with the sector ministry and agency, education in this case, to know when they will make their

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				appearance (s) at MFDP to defend their budget and make case (s) for increment.
7	Girls Education Stakeholders Meeting at Ministry of Education	This meeting takes place at least once monthly, but can take place multiple times based on need. It is mainly internal to the Ministry of Education officials working around girls' education related issues. The objective is to discuss and make recommendations to senior management and the larger education body and stakeholders about the need to adequately fund and prioritize girls' education related issues through full implementation of the National Policy on Girls' Education	The Division on Girls' Education at MOE; UNCEF and other donors and partners; Youth Movement, KEEP, etc.	This meeting is partially open to stakeholders external to MOE, but those working on the subject (girls' education). Although the meeting is more informational, details shared can inform advocacy and other efforts at the broader sectoral level. So, it might be useful to access such meeting to influence the agenda and subsequent higher-level internal and external meetings held, from time to time.
8	NGO Education Forum	This is a monthly meeting involving key education stakeholders, especially non-state actors. The meeting venue is rotational, but often takes place at the Chair's offices. Its main objective is to facilitate information sharing, coordination, and joint planning and implementation of programs, projects, and activities in pursuit of the right to education in Liberia. The meeting agenda is derived through suggestions from members, received through email, telephone calls and other permissible means.	International and national non-governmental organizations; civil society, non-traditional education players, PTA, Teachers Association, Students, etc.	The meeting is exclusively for Non-Governmental Organizations working in Education. It might be useful to engage with this body, as it could help to discuss and lift issues at national forums and meetings, since the members do participate in high-level meetings and conferences in the sector such as the LEG, ESDC and JESR.
9	Legislative Education Committees' Meetings	The Education Committees of the House of Representatives (HORs) and Senate do meet, but the meeting dates are not specific. The Chairperson and other leaders convene meetings from time to time to	The Chairperson and other members of the Education Committees of both Houses (House of	These meetings are internal to the Legislature; they do not take place regularly, and not time-specific. This makes them somehow difficult to access and influence. However, if the required engagement strategies are deployed, it is

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		discuss key issues. The need for such increases if key issues are trending in the education sector that require the involvement and oversight role of the Legislature. For example, during debates of the draft national budget, the Education Committees could meet to discuss possibility of engaging with their colleagues to increase support to education.	Representatives and Senate)	possible to influence members to convene or include key matters on the agenda for deliberation. Building and sustaining cordial working relationship with the leadership and individual Committee members will be a good way to begin efforts aimed at fully understanding, accessing, and influencing their decisions.
10	Legislative Education Committees' Hearings	This is another layer of meeting or forum for decision making of the Legislature, especially the Committees on Education. This meeting is on a case by case basis, as it is often held to discuss and make decisions on critical issues in the sector. The Ministry of Education, National Commission on Higher Education, and other players are often cited at this Hearing to present on key issues requiring the Legislature's oversight and intervention. The Hearings are often open to the public, but can be behind closed doors based on the nature of issues to be discussed at a given time.	Senators and Representatives, Representatives of the Ministry of Education, National Commission on Higher Education, University of Liberia and other institutions supporting different activities and programs in education in Liberia	The meeting is partially accessible to civil society, as the hearings are sometimes public and even aired on the radio or carried live by online media institutions. This is an excellent opportunity for civil society to seek audience and somehow shape decision making at this level. The right approaches and strategies can be adopted to make the most impact in terms of engaging with this platform and the actors involved.
11	Plenary Discussions of the Senate and House of Representatives	Plenary Meeting is the highest decision-making platform/forum of the Legislature. These meetings do take place from time to time, twice weekly, on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Issues discussed at Committee Levels are presented and finalized/voted upon during Plenary Sessions of the Legislature. Decisions reached, especially	The Leadership and Members of the Legislature (Representatives and Senators)	This is a really important forum (partially education related) to discuss and make key decisions on education. As it is closed to civil society in terms of participation in proceedings, the individual lawmakers and leaderships of the Legislature (Senate and House of Representatives) can be engaged to somehow influence their actions and decisions. But this

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		around Education, are communicated to the Executive and relevant line ministries and agencies for appropriate action (s). The National Budget is also reviewed and passed on by the Legislature during Joint Plenary Session (s) involving senators and representatives.		will require adopting key strategies for effective communication and engagement. Mapping influential law makers and engaging with them could help to pave the way for higher level engagements in terms of somehow influencing decisions at this level.
12	County Level Education Coordination Meeting	According to some key informants interviewed, Education Related Coordination Meetings do take place at the local level. The monthly Meetings are called by the County Education Officer and other education officials. The objective is to share key information, provide updates, highlight challenges, lessons learned, and make recommendations on how to improve education at the local level. Key issues discussed are sometimes communicated to national leadership of the Ministry of Education for further discussion and redress. The meeting takes place monthly in some counties, but irregular and non-existent in most Counties and locations.	County Education Officer; Resident District County Education Officer, County School Board Chairpersons and Members, District Education officer, NGOs working in Education, Development Partners, Teachers, PTAs, Local Groups and Community Based Organizations, etc.	CSOs working in Education, especially at the local level, should access these meetings and make their voices count at this level. Why this may be local, it is important as it may influence how local resources are allocated, especially in favor of education and girls' education. So, engaging with the platforms and the actors involved, through appropriate strategies and tools, will help in somehow shaping the direction of key decisions, efforts, and actions, especially in favor of girls' education. Issues from the local level could also help to inform national level engagements to influence decisions and policies in favor of education.
13	County Sittings	These are annual meetings convened by the Caucuses and Leaderships of various Counties. The objective is to discuss how local resources and funds (County development funds and county social development funds) will be allocated and utilized. The sittings are held once year, but has been irregular in some counties. It is	County Legislative Caucus (Representatives and Senators); Superintendents, Development Superintendent and other local officials, traditional	Civil Society organization sometimes attend these meeting, but as observers. They do not have voting rights, but could engage with the voters to shape their decisions. Largely, the process is politically motivated, so much so that delegates selected are influenced by politicians. But it will be important to know the date, time, and venues of these meetings to

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		presided over the Chairperson of the County Legislative Caucus and Superintendent of the County, with participants drawn from different parts of the County.	leaders; Women and Youth Groups, etc.	somehow positively influence decisions reached and how they are implemented, especially in favor of education and girls' education.
14	More 4 Education Coalition Coordination Meeting	The More 4 Education Coalition is a network of seven national civil society organizations mainly advocating for full implementation of the new education reform act of 2011 and more national budgetary support to the Education Sector. The objective of the meeting is to facilitate and promote coordination and joint planning, information sharing, as well as learning among members. The meeting takes the last Friday of every month and lasts for 2 hours from 10 to 12PM. The venue is CENTAL/COTAE's offices, but could be rotated based on need.	The More 4 Education Coalition Members and partners: CENTAL/COTAE; NTAL; HOPE; Inclusive Development Initiative (IDI); Youth Coalition in Education in Liberia (YOCEL); Youth Movement; and National Parents-Teachers Network of Liberia (NAPTNOL)	This is a formidable group comprised of the major education stakeholders, especially teachers, parents, and civil society organizations. The Group's core objective aligns with that of the Educate HER Coalition. So, engaging with and leveraging the individual and collective expertise of the membership will be extremely important to success of any well-meaning project/initiative/campaign in the sector.
15	Educate HER Coalition Coordination Meeting	The Coalition is a network of national civil society organizations mainly advocating for full implementation of the National Policy on Girls' Education and national budgetary support to the gender equity in education. The objective of the meeting is to facilitate and promote coordination and joint planning, information sharing, as well as learning among members. The meeting takes the 3 rd Friday of every month and lasts for 2 hours from 10 to 12PM. The venue is HOPE's offices, but could be rotated based on need.	The Educate HER Members and partners: CENTAL/COTAE; NTAL; Helping Our People Excel (HOPE); Inclusive Development Initiative (IDI); Youth Coalition in Education in Liberia (YOCEL); Youth Movement; and National Parents-Teachers Network of Liberia (NAPTNOL), Kids Educational Engagement	The Educate HER Coalition builds strategic partnerships with government line-ministries, civil society organizations, donors women's rights groups, autonomous social movements, and media institutions to align technical resources to invest the capacity of education stakeholders, leverage access to local, national and international networks to build sustainable partnerships to promote girls' education, influence humanitarian actors' policy and practices and advocate for the effective implementation of the National Policy on Girls' Education.

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			Project (KEEP), LIFT Liberia, Educate the Future, Paramount Young Women's Initiative (PAYOWI), CareFound-Liberia	
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Challenges CSOs faced in Accessing/Participating in National Education Decision Making Forums

There are 1,500 formal CSOs registered under the umbrella of the National Civil Society Council of Liberia (NCSCCL) with countless informal organizations. These civil society organizations have developed added capabilities overtime. However, many still felt that their work rarely influences local and national policies and decisions. From just few staffs, some have teams leading on and engaging with different activities and processes in different sectors and fields. In other words, civil society organizations, local and national, have established networks and coalitions in some sectors and are collectively advocating for reforms and attention to pertinent issues, including girls' education. They are well placed to hold government and stakeholders accountable as they have forged relationships with communities and gained their trust and are well positioned to bridge the state-citizen divide and influence policy. For instance, CSOs often produce reports for donors and thus have influence – or potential influence – on donors' perceptions on critical national and sectoral issues.

However, they still have enormous challenges/weaknesses that must be addressed if they must succeed and make the desired impacts, especially in the Education Sector. According to the 2018 Civil Society Sustainability Index Report, produced by USAID, Liberian CSOs have weaknesses in the areas of internal governance and accountability, financial management, strategic planning and engagement, resource mobilization, and marketing and visibility.¹⁰ This was corroborated by civil society leaders spoken to during interviews and a brainstorming session conducted while gathering information for this work.

These challenges tend to undermine their individual and collective abilities to effectively and efficiently play their advocacy, monitoring, capacity building, awareness-raising and other pertinent roles. More so, they are likely to affect their work and engagement with education related activities, thus undermining effectiveness, robustness and overall impact of their advocacy for increased financing, gender mainstreaming, gender responsive programming and budgeting, transparency, and inclusive decision-making endeavors in the sector. Furthermore, it undercuts their ability to represent and mobilize citizens for influencing policy decisions and accountability measures at national and subnational levels¹¹.

The below table highlights and analysis key challenges faced by civil society, especially around accessing and influencing national education decision-making forums and platforms.

¹⁰ [resource-csosi-2018-africa-report.pdf \(fhi360.org\)](https://www.fhi360.org/resource-csosi-2018-africa-report.pdf)

¹¹ Oxfam in Liberia. 2019. Liberia Political Economy and Power Analysis. Funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark.

Key Broad and Specific Challenges Faced by CSOs in Accessing and Influencing Education Decision-Making Forums/Meetings in Liberia		
#	Challenge/Issue	Recommendations/Way forward
Internal Challenges/Issues		
1	Limited technical capacity (strategic communication, monitoring and evaluation, research, policy advocacy, stakeholders' management, etc.)	Develop capacity in key areas such as research, policy advocacy, strategic communication, resource mobilization/fundraising, and stakeholder's management. These and many more are important areas of capacity building and strengthening for CSOs, which will help them to develop the required capacity to constructive engage with policy makers and influence relevant decisions and policies, where necessary.
2	Limited coordination and strategic partnership	There's a need to build and sustain mutually-benefiting relationships with strategic partners and allies around critical issues, including but not limited to education financing and girls' education and economic empowerment. Individual CSOs, Networks, and Coalitions need to do more to leverage internal resources and expertise as well as increasingly collaborate with those working on similar issues and subjects. Strategic partnerships should be built and sustained to work on girls' school attendance, retention, and completion issues as well the need for more national budgetary support to education in Liberia.
3	Limited sustained evidence-based engagement and advocacy	Conduct research and develop key advocacy and engagement tools and strategies to strategically engage with and influence the decisions of policy makers and other stakeholders/actors. Policy briefs, summary and full versions of research reports, good quality and relevant audio-visual materials, etc. are among key materials that can be produced and used for informed and evidence-based engagement and advocacy. And of course, such efforts and engagements will have to be sustained and routine if any meaningful impacts must be made.
4	Limited and weak fundraising capacity and expertise	Build increased technical capacity and explore diverse means to mobilize financial and non-financial resources to sustain and scale up work and activities. This includes developing resource mobilization plan and strategy, recruitment of a dedicated fundraising officer or team, and strategic mapping and engagement with potential donors and partners. Consolidation of resources by like-minded organizations, networks, and coalitions can also be an important way to plan for, fund, and undertake key advocacy and other efforts.

5	Weak internal governance system and accountability mechanisms/frameworks	CSOs' accountability is key as they demand same of government and other stakeholders in society. That's why they need to have adequate systems and controls in place to prevent and deal with corruption and other unethical conducts. This is a key area to address, as it has implications for the effectiveness of resource mobilization, advocacy, capacity building, and other critical efforts. Having adequate measures in place, including checks and balances to prevent and control corruption and other unethical practices will help CSOs to be stronger, win the trust and confidence of donors and partners, as well as members of the public. In part, this will help to give them the moral ground to speak to societal ills, including gender inequality, sexual and gender-based violence, corruption, and other related issues in Liberia.
6	Weak learning and sharing culture	Too often, CSOs do not thoroughly review their work and performance, especially through independently facilitated sessions and processes and with inputs from external stakeholders. This is extremely necessary to identify successes, challenges encountered, lessons learned and recommendations that can help to inform and improve upon the scope and impact of existing and future initiatives. So, adopting and sustaining strong learning and sharing culture can help civil society, especially the Educate Her Coalition and partners to review their work and make the necessary adjustments to make the most impact (s).
Some Key External Challenges		
7	Misconception of CSOs Roles by Some Policy Makers and poor relationship with state actors	Misconstruing CSOs' roles is mainly responsible for the largely adversarial relationship between and among CSOs and policy makers. Addressing this will require constructive engagement from CSOs, evidence-based advocacy, and education of policy makers about the independence and relevance of civil society and the nature of their work. Also, this will require open-mindedness from policy makers and state actors about the roles of civil society as critical partner to government in planning and implementing the Country's development plan and agenda. Additionally, their work will can help to increase donors and other stakeholders' trust and confidence in the governance process and system, which can go a long way in helping government to mobilize resources to fund her programs and activities.
8	Shrinking funding space and limited access to reliable funding sources	Funding sources for civil society are largely unreliable and inadequate to address their immediate, short-term, and long-term needs. The smallness of funds and non-financial resources received and short-term nature of most projects and programs affect sustained advocacy that may lead to the desired impacts. Therefore, donors and partners need to pay keen attention to capacity building and adequate support to CSOs, which will help them to undertake multi-year and long term initiatives that

		that will enable them to access and influence key policies and decisions in public interest. And of course, work around women empowerment and addressing gender inequality challenges in education to increase girls' school attendance, retention, and completion is a key part of the process.
8	Resistance of Some Policy Makers to Reforms	Not everyone, especially policy makers and state actors are really happy about the independent-minded and constructive work and efforts of civil society organizations. This is manifested by the level of resistance and pushbacks CSOs receive from time to time, especially when dealing with anti-corruption, sexual and gender-based violence, women and girls' rights to education, and other related issues. This affects how policy makers view CSOs and the space and access they give them to meaningfully participate in key forums, meetings, and discussions. While things might somehow be changing, challenges still exist around this that must be timely addressed. Constructive engagement by CSOs and other partners can help to address this situation and address misconception of CSOs' role by state actors.
9	Competing priorities and Demands of Government	Why argument around competing priorities of government may somehow be justified for other issues, Education, a fundamental and multiplier human right, cannot be one. A service as critical as education, evidenced by its clear reference in Article 6 of the 1986 Liberian Constitution, should be adequately funded and supported. So, CSOs should push Government to invest more in Education, especially to address girls' education related challenges and issues to empower them as critical partners and major contributors to reforms, development, and other well-meaning efforts of society.

Conclusion

There can be no better time to vigorously campaign for full protection and fulfilment of the right to education in Liberia, especially for women and girls who are affected by multiple and multi-faceted cultural, social, economic, and other barriers. The increasing wave of advocacy and constructive engagements around women's right issues, which appear to be gaining traction, is an important opportunity that Civil Society Organizations and Coalitions, especially the Educate HER Coalition and Partners can leverage. Hence, they should push for more funding to education and deliberate efforts to adequately fund and fully implement national and sectoral policies and strategies on gender mainstreaming and girls' economic, educational, and political empowerment.

It is expected that this document mapping and analyzing key education policy and decision-making forums and meetings will be fully utilized by civil society organizations and other actors to facilitate their constructive engagements to influence national decisions and policies in favor of increased girls' educational empowerment and advancement in Liberia. Also, it is expected that the stakeholders and key decision makers in different segments of the document will be engaged to leverage their expertise and other resources to push for increasing education financing and implementation of programs and activities that increase and sustain women and girls' presence and meaningful participation in the education sector. The challenges may be enormous, but forging mutually-benefiting collaborations and partnerships at national, local, and sectoral levels can play important roles in enhancing and sustaining efforts of the Educate Her Coalition and other partners working on Girls' Education and other gender inequality and mainstreaming issues in Liberia.

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