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**COUNTRY REPORT ON INVESTMENT IN SKILLS AND  
COMPETENCIES ACQUISITION  
FOR YOUTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT**

**REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA**

SEPTEMBER, 2015

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## **ACRONYMNS**

**TVET**-Technical Vocational Education and Training

**GDP**-Gross Domestic Product

**IMF**-International Monetary Fund

**USD**-United States Dollar

**AfT**-Agenda for Transformation

**ICQN/TVSD**-Technical Vocational Skills Development (English)

**ESP**-Education Sector Plan of the Ministry of Education, Republic of Liberia

**MYS**-Ministry of Youth and Sports

**TREE**-Training for Rural Economic Empowerment

**UNIDO**-United Nations Industrial Development Organization

**TRANSTEC**-A Belgian Consultancy Company

**YREs**-Youth Run Enterprises

**TEP**-Transition Enterprise Plan

**GOL**-Government of Liberia

**UNJPYEE**-United Nations Joint Programme for Youth Employment & Empowerment

**ILO**-International Labour Organization

**CFs**-Community Facilitators

**NEET**-Not in Employment, Education or Training of any kind

**SWTS**-School to Work Transition Survey

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# COUNTRY PROFILE



source:

<b>Region:</b>	<b>Sub-Saharan Africa</b>
<b>Income:</b>	<b>Low income</b>
<b>GNI Per Capita (US\$):</b>	<b>370 (WB/IFC 2013)</b>
<b>GDP per capita (US\$):</b>	<b>\$700 (2012 est.)</b>
<b>GDP growth:</b>	<b>8.1% (WB/IFC 2013)</b>
<b>GDP PPP:</b>	<b>\$2.719 billion (2012 est.)</b>
<b>Population:</b>	<b>3,753,067 (WB/IFC 2009)</b>

Source: (2014 Liberia Country Report and Liberia Country Profile online)

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Liberia is a post-conflict country which is grappling with many political, economic, social, and demographic problems in the aftermath of a prolonged civil war that destroyed the economy, including basic social services and educational infrastructure. However, since the end of the war in 2003, the country has been on the path of peace, democracy and economic development. Youth unemployment, which includes underemployment and vulnerable employment, is a major issue that has negative implications for social stability and national security. Liberia is a youthful country with 79% of the total population of 3,476,608 below the age of 36 years. This significant youth bulge coupled with a growing youth unemployment crisis has consequences for the education and training system as well as job creation. Addressing the challenge of youth unemployment requires that the youth are equipped with employable skills as a fundamental pre-requisite. Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) provides an important avenue for the acquisition of employment-oriented and life coping skills and attitudes. Consequently, a systematic examination and overhaul of the nation's TVET system in order to position TVET as an effective response to youth unemployment and underemployment is required.

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

The major weakness of the TVET system has been the absence of a comprehensive national TVET policy and legal framework and coordinating agency to guide, direct and oversee TVET for the country. As a result, the TVET delivery system is fragmented among several government ministries and agencies – notably, Youth and Sports, Education, Health, and Agriculture – each with different governance and management practices. The lack of a regulatory framework coupled with poor coordination and

identification of roles and responsibilities of sector stakeholders, including government and non-governmental organizations, is a major problem for the sector. Other weaknesses include the poor public perception and low social status of TVET, the multiplicity of testing and certification standards, poor articulation and credit transfer mechanisms between training institutions, and the weak linkages between the formal TVET system and the world of work. The TVET delivery system has remained largely supply-driven and not demand-driven or aligned to the needs of the employment sector. The obsolescence of training equipment and tools, the inadequacy of teaching and learning facilities and instructional support systems, to the poor quality of TVET delivery. Finally, the TVET system lacks effective career guidance, counseling and job placement advisory services and adequate number of suitably qualified system managers and professionals to drive the entire TVET system.<sup>1</sup> (Republic of Liberia: National Policy on TVET)

## **Introduction**

The Liberian economy is heavily dependent on agriculture (including forestry and fisheries) contributing 64% to the GDP in 2009, compared with manufacturing (production of goods) at 6%, industry (mining and quarrying) at 1%, and the services sector (construction, hotels, restaurants, trading, banking, financial, and government services) at 29%. In the same year, the country's GDP per capita was only USD 2233. However, according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Liberian economy has been growing at around 7% annually over the past several years. The GDP growth rate in 2011 was 7.1%. Unemployment and vulnerable employment remains a serious socio-economic concern in the country. According to the 2008 population census, of the 2.8 million Liberians of working age, only 37.5% were in formal employment with the rest unemployed, or in inactive or irregular and insecure occupations. The Liberia Labour Force Survey of 2010 estimates that 68% of the persons employed work in the informal sector without regular wages. The quality of the workforce is low, with more than half of those employed described as "uneducated". This has implications for productivity and innovation in the workplace. Low wages and low productivity are characteristic of a low quality, poorly-skilled workforce that is unable to adapt to modern technology and production systems. The national vision document, *Liberia*



*Rising 2030*, which articulates the national blueprint for attaining middle-income status by 2030, and the Government's *Agenda for Transformation (AfT)* both emphasize the need for equipping the youth with employable skills. The human development pillar of the *AfT* recognizes that "Liberia's youth are the country's most valuable asset." Indeed, the *Government's Employment Policy (2009)* and *Industrial Policy (2011)* documents clearly identify skills development for all categories of young people (including young women and girls, persons with disability, rural folks and the urban poor, the marginalized and other vulnerable groups) as a key strategy for poverty reduction and rapid industrialization of the Liberian economy.<sup>2</sup> (Source: Republic of Liberia: National Policy on TVET, p.11)

### **Purpose of the 2015 Event on Promoting Investment in Skills and Competencies acquisition by Trainers and Entrepreneurs in African countries**

The purpose of the 2015 event on promoting investment in skills and competencies acquisition by trainers and entrepreneurs in African countries is to primarily focus on trainers and entrepreneurs involved in the training of youth both in and out of the formal technical and vocational system.

Therefore, and on the one hand, the Conference should focus on the **training of trainers** in both public and private training centers that are faced with the task of imparting skills and competencies needed by their training staff to adapt to the evolving trades and professions as they train the youth. This entails that these centers should ensure that their training staff develop a very close relationship with enterprises in both the formal and informal sectors and be aware of the new realities in the labor market. This also means that they may have to resort to hiring trainers directly from enterprises, more specifically in areas where qualified trainers are missing. The recourse to this new type of trainer seems to be the way of the future as the training models that are emerging tend to favor "sandwich courses", meaning a system of training that entails alternating between a training center and a private or public enterprise, over residential training.

On the other hand, the Conference should also focus on the training of entrepreneurs. Based on the 25 national reports submitted by the ICQN/TVSD countries during the July 2014 Ministerial Conference, all of them are confronted with a situation whereby the vast majority of the youth entering the labor market lacks appropriate qualification and learns most of the skills and competencies on the job. Those who impart these skills and competencies are the entrepreneurs who hire the youth. Given that these entrepreneurs are doing the on-the-job training, it is very important to support them in their task by ensuring that their competencies to impart the training are strengthened through acquisition of pedagogical skills. This will ultimately benefit the youth and the skills and know-how of the entrepreneurs themselves. In a few countries, the training of entrepreneurs will necessarily entail the strengthening of the training competencies of artisans as they are masters within traditional apprenticeship or the renovated/modernized traditional apprenticeship.<sup>3</sup>

(Source: Concept Note: 2015 event on promoting investment in skills and competencies acquisition by trainers and entrepreneurs in African countries)

## **The Technical Vocational Education and Training System**

As a subset of the country's education and skills training system, the TVET sector suffers from a paucity of information and data. As the appraisal report of the Education Sector Plan (ESP) by the country's Development Partners acknowledges, there is "much greater knowledge of issues in primary and secondary education than in TVET and tertiary education<sup>5</sup>." The Ministry of Education offers pre-vocational education at the senior high School level (Grades 10 to 12) alongside the general academic program, the objective being to expose the students to technical and vocational education. Some private polytechnics offer technical courses up to the Bachelor degree level in specializations like Electronics Engineering, Civil Engineering, and Building Construction Technology.

The Ministry of Youth and Sports (MYS) on the other hand operates vocational training centers which offer TVET courses at the basic and intermediate levels. Typically, MYS institutions target students who have

dropped out of high school at or before Grade 10 for training at the basic skills level while students who have completed at least the 10th grade qualify for training at the intermediate level. However, almost 80% of the students at the intermediate level are senior high school graduates who are unable to proceed to the tertiary level. Intermediate level programs are generally of 18 months duration, including 6 months of on-the-job training. Basic formal TVET courses are also organised for boys and girls who have completed 7th Grade. Other programs run by MYS include Youth on the Job Training for disadvantaged youth who are apprenticed to master artisans in their communities. The master trainers benefit from donations of training materials and equipment while the learner or apprentice is paid a stipend. These programs are administered in consultation with community based organizations. The Youth Agricultural Training Centre of the Ministry, as the name suggests, provides training in cash crop development (palm, cocoa, rice, etc.) and in vegetable production, poultry production, piggery production and fishing. TVET provision in Liberia is dominated by private providers. Only 18 of the 132 TVET institutions in the country are public or stateowned<sup>7</sup>. Although the number of training institutions has increased from 113 in 2006 to 132 in 2012, enrolments have decreased by about 7% from 18,032 to 16,884 during the same period. Private providers are mainly NGOs and Church or Faith-based Organizations. The absence of a credible institutional accreditation system and standardized TVET curricula has prevented the development and implementation of a nationally certified qualifications system. In some cases, TVET programs having virtually the same title, have different course durations in different institutions. Often, the level at which the program is delivered is not specified.

Consequently, the certificates delivered alone are not enough to evaluate the skills competence level attained by the trainee or certificate holder.

The courses offered in the formal TVET institutions are mainly in the traditional areas or fields, such as carpentry, masonry, plumbing, cookery, tailoring, soap making, and secretarial services. However, it is worth noting that 26% of learners are enrolled in computer studies<sup>8</sup>. But because the curricula are not standardized across training institutions, it is difficult to compare qualifications obtained in the same field from different TVET institutions. Private TVET providers target mainly basic skills

acquisition for different categories of learners, including the urban poor, rural dwellers, early school leavers, and other vulnerable groups such as girls and young women with no livelihood skills. The courses offered by the private TVET institutions are generally of shorter duration and relate more to the business and service sectors<sup>9</sup>. Almost all the TVET institutions have serious human and financial resource constraints.

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

In summary, the TVET system in Liberia operates in a socio-economic environment characterized by policy deficits, labor market constraints, systemic challenges, and social prejudices, including Socio-economic challenges typical of a post-conflict environment, Damaged infrastructure and inadequate specialized human resources, Growing youth unemployment and underemployment, Absence of a TVET policy and legal framework, A fragmented and uncoordinated delivery system, Unregulated, low-performing informal apprenticeship system, Poor quality, supply-driven TVET programs, Multiplicity of testing and certification standards, Obsolete or inadequate training equipment and learning facilities, Weak linkages with the productive sectors of the economy, Very few market-oriented TVET programs in the emerging and growing economic sectors of the economy such as mobile telephony, solar technology, oil and gas technology, media technology, and hospital equipment technology, Inadequate financing, Low prestige and poor public perception of TVET, Absence of effective career education and job placement advisory services, Inadequate provision of skills development opportunities for females, PWDs, and other vulnerable groups, and Poor articulation of TVET with the general education and training system.<sup>4</sup> (Source: Republic of Liberia: National Policy on TVET, p.11 )

## **Percentage of TVET/TVSD students of total students enrolled in secondary education**

Out of 217,335 enrolled in secondary school (both junior secondary and senior secondary), 16,122 are enrolled in Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) (Source: 2014 Education Statistics of the Republic of Liberia).

**Table 1: Student Enrollment**  
**Number of students by county and school levels offered, 2014**

County	Total	ECE	Primary	JuniorHgh	SeniorHgh	ALP	ABE	TVET
Bomi	34,647	15,587	12,968	2,394	1,270	982	617	829
Bong	89,089	40,740	34,251	7,582	3,687	998	1,548	283
Gbarpolu	22,124	11,921	8,806	1,041	264	0	91	0
Grand Bassa	61,146	28,558	24,531	4,337	2,279	283	785	373
Cape Mount	37,420	19,236	14,936	2,086	736	0	94	331
Grand Gedeh	29,560	11,162	13,129	3,225	2,034	11	0	0
Grand Kru	21,851	9,286	10,462	1,657	445	0	0	0
Lofa	83,509	32,402	35,411	8,084	4,827	358	2,255	171
Margibi	83,348	26,191	35,761	9,981	6,087	70	571	4,688
Maryland	41,992	15,194	19,169	4,068	2,823	511	165	62
Montserado	421,327	117,149	173,216	69,554	50,428	682	3,057	7,241
Nimba	162,565	67,308	67,289	15,220	7,761	973	2,219	1,796
River Cess	17,304	9,207	7,348	519	152	78	0	0
River Gee	20,887	8,423	10,258	1,617	589	0	0	0
Sinoe	26,546	12,088	11,426	1,723	863	98	0	348
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,153,316</b>	<b>424,452</b>	<b>478,962</b>	<b>133,089</b>	<b>84,246</b>	<b>5,044</b>	<b>11,401</b>	<b>16,122</b>

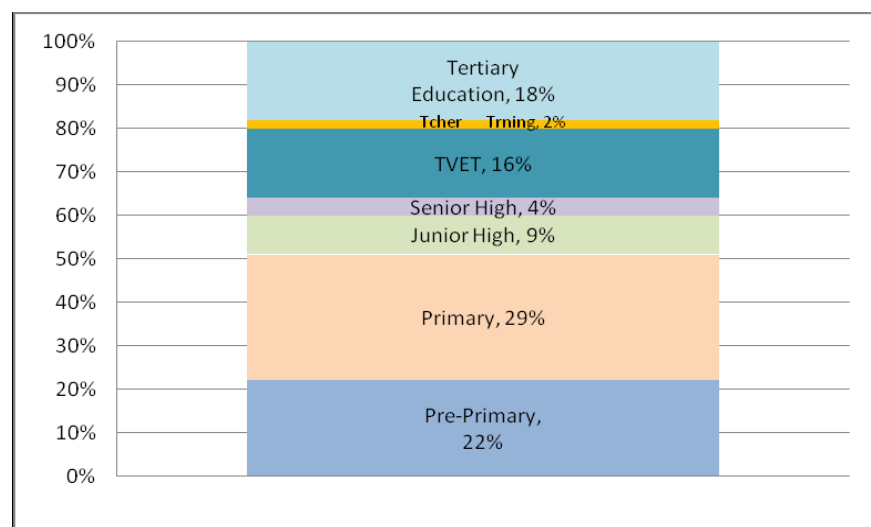
(Source: 2014 Education Statistics of the Republic of Liberia, pg. 17, Fig. 5.3).

### Percentage of total national budget devoted to TVET

Overall, the expenditure on education in 2007/08 corresponded to between 2.6% and 2.9% of GDP. Distribution of the funds allocated to education by level tends to vary from year to year in a seeming ad hoc manner as shown in the Country Status Report on Education in Liberia. For the

2007/08 financial year the estimated approximate distribution was as shown in the chart below.

**Fig.2: Distribution of Total Public Spending on Education by Level - 2007/08**



(Source: Liberian Education Sector Plan)

From the chart above, the percentage of funds allocated to Technical Vocational Education and Training was 16% in 2007/08. The relative expenditure on the various levels in unit costs is indicated in the table below.<sup>5</sup> (Source: Liberian Education Sector Plan)

**Table 2: Public Recurrent Unit Cost by Level - 2007/08 Level**

	Recurrent Cost (US\$)	Unit Recurrent Cost as % of GDP Per Capita	Ratio of Unit Cost to Primary
Pre-Primary	<b>13</b>	7.1%	0.8
Primary	<b>17</b>	9.4%	1.0
Junior High	<b>40</b>	21.0%	2.4
Senior High	<b>51</b>	25.9%	3.0
Teacher Training	<b>1,148</b>	504.7%	67.5
TVET	<b>752</b>	330.7%	44.2
Tertiary Edu.	<b>224</b>	98.5%	13.2

According to the table above, the unit costs of teacher training and TVET stand out. This clearly reflects government's commitment to development of the sector. (Source: Liberian Education Sector Plan)

### **Integration modalities for TVET/TVSD graduates into the labour market**

There are indeed many integration modalities currently being used within the sector. However, given the fragmented state of affairs of the sector operation, the integration modalities are equally disorganized. The ministries and agencies of government on the one hand are implementing one set of integration modalities and the private sector, local and international non-governmental organizations operating in the sector are, on the other hand, using entirely different integration modalities, and even among them, these modalities vary from organization to organization.

But with the government involved in a comprehensive reform of the sector, these challenges with time will be overcome. The sector reforms no doubt will proffer solutions to the monumental constraints confronting the sector. Meanwhile, the sector will continue to face this and many other constraints until comprehensive integration modalities are put in place.

### **Percentage of graduates of TVET/TVSD integrated in the labor market after 6 months or a year of training**

*"Investment in internship and apprenticeship programmes (formal or informal) that provide some young people with an entry point into public or private enterprises could help to ease the transition from school to work of some young people. Likewise, raising the capacity of enterprises in the area of human resource management and offering subsidies for investments in*

*basic on-the-job training programmes for new employees are other policy options to ease the experience mismatch.”*

(Source-Labour Market Transitions of Young Women and Men in Liberia 2013)

The labour market transition of young people concerns not only the length of time between their exit from education (either upon graduation or early exit without completion) to their first entry into any job, but also qualitative elements, such as whether the job is stable (measured by contract type).

According to the School to Work Transition Survey (SWTS) that was conducted in Liberia in 2012, a person has not “transited” until settled in a job that meets very basic criteria of stability, as defined by the duration of the employment contract. If this SWTS analytical framework new quality element is used as a standard definition of labour market transitions, then only a very small share of youth in Liberia generally attains stable employment.

The ILO also looks at job satisfaction and builds it into the concept of labour market transition. More specifically, labour market transition is defined as the passage of a young person from the end of schooling (or entry to first economic activity) to the first stable or satisfactory job. Stable employment is defined in terms of the contract of employment (written or oral) and the duration of the contract (greater than 12 months).

Satisfactory employment is therefore a subjective concept, based on the self-assessment of the jobholder. It implies that the jobholder considers the job to be a good “fit” with their desired employment path at the moment the moment [of his/her employment]. The contrary is termed non-satisfactory employment, implying a sense of dissatisfaction with the job.

Based on the definition of labour market transition, and given that the focus here is on TVET graduates integrating into the labour market after completing training, the stages of transition vary and are classified as follows:

**Transited** – A young person who has “transited” is one who is currently employed in:

- a stable job, whether satisfactory or non-satisfactory; or



- a satisfactory but temporary job; or
- satisfactory self-employment.

**In transition** – A young person still “in transition” is one who is currently:

- unemployed (relaxed definition); or
- employed in a temporary and non-satisfactory job; or
- in non-satisfactory self-employment; or
- inactive and not in school, with an aim to look for work later.

**Transition not yet started** – A young person whose “transition has not yet started” is one who is currently:

- inactive and not in school (inactive non-student), with no intention of looking for work.

Two elements of this classification are noteworthy. First, the stages of transition span across the boundaries of economic activity as defined in the standard labour force framework. The “transited” category includes a subset of youth classified as employed; the remaining employed fall within the category of “in transition”, which includes also the strict definition of unemployed and portions of the inactive (namely, those without work, available for work but not actively seeking work and inactive non-students who have stated an intention to join the labour force at a later stage). The “transition-not-yet-started” category is the residual of the inactive population.

Second, the stages of transition are not intended to be a normative framework. Because of the inclusion of youth in satisfactory self-employment and satisfactory temporary employment, one cannot say that all young people in the transited category have transited to a “good” job. In fact, a majority of young people in self-employment – the own-account workers...are among the poorly paid workers in the informal economy and thus are included in the “low” work quality segment. This group of young people which includes graduates from informal TVET trainings, make up the bulk of the country’s share of irregularly employed. Yet they have expressed a degree of satisfaction with their job, and they are likely to have finished their transition in the sense that they will remain in the self-employed classification for the remainder of their working lives.

It is important to note that the stages of transition classification are intended to offer a flow concept. A person is “in transition” until they have reached a stable position in the labour market; they have a job they are likely to maintain, regardless of whether it is good or bad.

Given the foregoing development, and considering the market competitiveness, the general job scarcity in the country and the absence of modalities to gauge the overall rate of integration, it is therefore worthy to note that it is not possible at this time to put a comprehensive figure on the integration of TVET graduates into the labour market from all over the country. However, the SWTS report reveals an estimated school to work TVET transition rate for a sample group of young people randomly selected and interviewed in the country as 39.6% ( for TVET graduates who have “transited”) and 5% (for TVET graduates who are still “in transition”-see Table below). These estimates exclude those whose transitions have not yet started.

### **Stages of transition by sex, education level, age group and area of residence**

The table below (Table 3) shows the breakdown of the young population by stages of transition according to sex, age-band, and level of completed education. From the table, it is clear that many of the youth who have completed school, whether it is TVET graduates or other, stay a very long time in transition from school to work (46.8 per cent), followed by those who had transited (38.2 percent) and those who had not yet started transition (14.9 per cent).

**Table 3: Stage of transition by sex, age group, area of residence and level of completed education (%)**

	Transited	In transition	Transition not yet started	Total
<b>Total</b>	38.2	46.8	14.9	100
<b>Sex</b>				
Female	34.7	50.6	14.6	100
Male	42.1	42.6	15.1	100
<b>Age group</b>				

15 – 19	24.0	5.9	24.2	100
20 – 24	29.9	57.9	12.2	100
25 –29	3.9	2.	7.8	100
30 – 35	51.9	46.0	2.2	100
<b>Education (only completed education)</b>				
None	48.7	46.9	4.5	100
Primary	43.4	5	2.	100
Secondary	46.5	53.5	0.0	100
Vocational/TVET	39.6	5	0.0	100
University & above	66.4	33.6	0.0	100

Note: The distribution of stage of transition by level of completed education excludes current students whose final education level is still unknown. (Source: SWTS-Liberia, 2012).

## **Ratio of young people (in 15-24 and 15-35) age groups entering the labor market with vocational qualifications**

The table above (Table 3) shows the breakdown of the young population by stages of transition according to sex, age-band, and level of completed education, including vocational/TVET graduates who are transitioning from school to work. According to the table, 39.6% survey participants who were TVET graduates transitioned, followed by 5% who were still in transition to work. Again, those whose final education level was not known during the time of the survey are not captured in the table.

## **The different types of training modalities**

The Ministry of Education offers pre-vocational education at the senior high school level (Grade 10 to 12) alongside the general academic program, the objective being to expose the students to technical and vocational education. Some private polytechnics offer technical courses up to the bachelor degree level in specializations like Electronics Engineering, Civil Engineering, and Building Construction Technology. The Ministry of Youth and Sports (MYS) on the other hand operates vocational training centers which offer TVET courses at the basic and intermediate levels.<sup>6</sup>

## **Training and integration mechanisms/modalities**

As pointed out previously, one of the major weakness of the TVET system has been the coordinating agency to guide, direct and oversee TVET for the country. This has left the TVET delivery system fragmented not only among several government ministries and agencies such as the Ministries of Youth and Sports, Education, Health, and Agriculture but also the private sector as well as local and international non-governmental organizations, each one with different governance and management practices. This lack of a regulatory framework coupled with poor coordination and identification of roles and responsibilities of sector stakeholders, including government and non-governmental organizations, continue to pose a major problem for the sector. Not only that, but there is also the problem of the multiplicity of testing and certification standards, which has been made worse by weak linkages between the formal TVET system and the world of work.

As a consequence of this fragmentation, the current absence of a regulatory body, and lack of coordination among sector stakeholders, the training and integration mechanisms are equally disjointed. The ministries and agencies of government on the one hand are implementing one type of training and integration mechanism and the private sector, local and international non-governmental organizations operating in the sector are, on the other hand, using entirely different training and integration mechanisms, and even among them, these mechanisms vary from organization to organization.

But the government is currently engaged in the process of a comprehensive reform of the sector. The overhauling which began with the formulation of a comprehensive sector policy that is now firmly in place, is continuing. The sector reforms are intended to proffer solutions to myriad of challenges that have been identified. But while the overhauling

initiative is ongoing, the sector will continue to be faced with shortcomings such as the absence of well defined national training and integration mechanisms. In short, the current state of affairs where the sector stakeholders are using divers training and integration mechanisms will regrettably go on until the reforms are completed and become operational.

### **Current policies and practices in the training of trainers (in both public and private institutions)**

Skills training and technical education are more expensive than normal schooling and are difficult to sustain because of the ever-increasing maintenance and replacement costs of machines and technical equipment. Notwithstanding the foregoing, the potential cost of not providing skills training vocational and technical education far outweigh the cost of making some provision, hence the increasing emphasis on this sub-sector by the Government.

The contents of the Education Law explicitly indicate that insufficient attention had been given to TVET in the past by stating that “more serious attention” shall be given to vocational and technical education...” However, the law restricts **‘serious attention’ to attracting “specialist” teachers** and special students as well as encourages and enhances the professional preparation of female teachers into specialized secondary technical, vocational and science education.<sup>7</sup>

(Source: Liberia Education Sector Plan).

In view of the foregoing, and given the fragmented manner in which the sector stakeholders are operating, there are various trainers training schemes currently being utilized by both public and private TVET institutions in the country.

This trend is likely to continue until a coordinating body is put into place that will properly regulate activities of institutions operating in the sub-sector.

### **The key determining recruitment criteria for trainers**

As a result of the current state of affairs of the sector as indicated above, the recruiting criteria for trainers also vary from one TVET institution to another, including those within the public sector; and these criteria are based on the categories of the subjects and the kinds of skills and competencies desired by the recruiting institutions.

### **The different types of training of trainers being used**

As already indicated elsewhere in this report, the fragmentation, the current absence of a regulatory body, and the lack of coordination among sector stakeholders, has opened up the sector to a multiplicity of diverse actions by the sector stakeholders. These actions include the types of trainers' training under utilization by these stakeholders. It is worthy to mention here that because of the disorganization of the sector, stakeholders are using trainers' trainings that differ widely from one institution to the other. For example, if the public sector, comprising ministries and agencies of government, is using upgrading of professional competences as trainers' training, the private sector to include local and international non-governmental organizations operating within the sector, might be using upgrading of competences in the design of training and certification schemes as well as pedagogical design or training for statutory promotion or another type of training. This is why the ongoing reforms are very critical for the sector. And government is committed to ensuring within the shortest possible time that the sector is fine-tuned and put on a proper functioning trajectory that will bring maximum benefits to the young people in particular and the nation at large.

### **Recommendations on new reforms in the recruitment and the training of trainers:**

1. That there should be a clear and comprehensive plan for regular upgrading of the skills and competencies of

Trainers in the sector

2. That modalities be established by government whereby TVET graduates from formal and non-formal trainings who want to go into business can be provided the needed resources to start up their own enterprises
  
3. That given that many formal and non-formal TVET graduates most times are not able to compete in the labor market, it would be wise to establish a revolving fund scheme with a trained management structure at community to support and supervise graduates who would like to enter the world of business

### **Current policies and practices in the area of training of entrepreneurs**

In her special message on the Policy, President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf acknowledged that there were “convolutions surrounding TVET in a postwar country and... knew that it was a weighty task. She observed that fixing a broken system or largely a nonexistent framework for technical and vocational education would have been a perplexing one. There was little information on the stats and even where they existed, the numbers were dismal; only 19% of all school-leavers were accounted for in the job market, less than 10% of instructors in our vocational institutions were trained amongst several other unpleasant data. Moreover, training equipment in our vocational training centers were outdated and the teaching curricula were inadequate and archaic.

She also pointed out that over the last 9 years, a lot of interventions have been made in the sector, including subsidizing training programs and providing better incentives for instructors, opening new technical schools and making them tuition-free, but even as the government intervened in the sector, the current structure of the country’s Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) delivery system is still wanting.”<sup>8</sup>

(Source: Republic of Liberia: National Policy on TVET)

For his part, the Minister of Youth and Sports, Hon. Eugene Lenn Nagbe pointed out that “the major weakness of the TVET system has been the absence of a comprehensive national TVET policy and legal framework and coordinating agency to guide, direct and oversee TVET for the country. As a result, the TVET delivery system is fragmented among several government ministries and agencies – notably, Youth and Sports, Education, Health, and Agriculture – each with different governance and management practices. The lack of a regulatory framework coupled with poor coordination and identification of roles and responsibilities of sector stakeholders, including government and non-governmental organizations, is a major problem for the sector. Other weaknesses include the poor public perception and low social status of TVET, the multiplicity of testing and certification standards, poor articulation and credit transfer mechanisms between training institutions, and the weak linkages between the formal TVET system and the world of work. The TVET delivery system has remained largely supply-driven and not demand-driven or aligned to the needs of the employment sector. The obsolescence of training equipment and tools, the inadequacy of teaching and learning facilities and instructional support systems, and **inadequately trained instructors** contribute to the poor quality of TVET delivery.”<sup>9</sup>

(Source: Republic of Liberia: National Policy on TVET)

Given the above observations which clearly point out the long-standing fragmentation and other ills that have characterized the sector up to now, the TVET institutions both in the public and private sectors are therefore implementing a mosaic of policies and practices. For example, in the formal TVET institutions, the entrepreneur/trainee is a traditional student who sits and listens to lecture. On the other hand, in the TREE Methodology which is geared towards entrepreneurship skills development intervention at community level and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) which on the other hand is geared towards exposing students/school-based potential entrepreneurs to entrepreneurship development training in the schools, the students/potential entrepreneurs are involved in a “learning by doing”<sup>10</sup> situation, “emphasizing participatory training”.<sup>11</sup> This clearly indicates that at the moment, there is a variety of policies and practices going on and will



continue as such until a coordinating body is put in place to harmonize policies and practices of the sector.

(Source: Reintegration of Liberian Returnees through Skills Training and Job Creation Project-Entrepreneurship Development Training Programme: Module on Establishing and Managing A Business)

## **Training modalities that include an active participation of entrepreneurs**

Training modalities involving the active participation of entrepreneurs is in existence in Liberia. However, most of these trainings involve non-governmental organizations working in the sector. For example, in the TREE Methodology that was implemented by the Belgian TRANSTEC Consultancy Company in Nimba, Bong and Grand Cape Mount County, the youth entrepreneurs were actively involved in the trainings administered in their various chosen vocations. The trainers served as facilitators to guide the trainees on the use of the relevant materials, tools and equipment.

## **Modern apprenticeship**

Modern apprenticeship is one of the most active mechanisms now in use for youth entrepreneurship development. The government through the Ministry of Youth and Sports is currently implementing this scheme. This is how it works. The responsible unit within the Ministry goes into selected communities and identifies vulnerable and disadvantage youth. The identified young women and men are listed for possible deployment to non-formal TVET training institutions working in vocations such as motorbike repairs, tailoring, community-based motor vehicle repairs, welding, computer operation and hardware repairs, typing, mobile phones repairs, satellite ditch installation, plumbing, carpentry, masonry, concrete products production, laundry soap production, weaving, palm oil production, etc.

The employees of the responsible unit in the Ministry then go out into the communities, identify and negotiate with owners of institutions working in the above vocations to take in these community young women and men for training. Upon reaching a common understanding, a memorandum of understanding is signed with the operators of the various institutions and the young people are deployed to the different institutions based on their chosen vocations. These young people then remain with these institutions until they acquire the necessary knowledge and skills within these vocations before disengaging to go back to their communities to either search for employment or set up their own enterprises.

### **Traditional apprenticeship**

Traditional apprenticeship is also a mechanism used for youth entrepreneurship development. But this is not wide-spread. It is concentrated within the rural parts of the country. The visible vocations that use this mechanism are blacksmith works, traditional fishing net production, traditional cotton tread production, weaving, traditional African cloth production, to name a few. The way this works is that parents who want their children to learn trade place them with trainers within these vocations as apprentices. These young people, most of whom are illiterate young men between the ages of 7 and 25, remain apprentices within these vocations until they acquire professional knowledge and skills before leaving their bosses to set up their own enterprises.

### **On the job modalities of integration into the labor market**

This mechanism is now being actively employed by many, many institutions involved in skills development, particularly within the private sector. The way this works is like this. For example, an institution is running a nursing school and has a batch of students who are in their last year for

graduation. What the institution does is contact various public or privately-run clinics, community health centers, or hospitals and request them to take these young people as interns for a period of time. During this period of their internship, these institutions supervise the trainees. At the end of the internship period, based on performance, many of these students remain and are employed within these medical facilities.

### **Entrepreneurship training**

The training of entrepreneurs is a part of the overall Technical Vocational Skills Development program, but this is mainly a part of the entrepreneurship development package under the new ILO-introduced Training for Rural Economic Empowerment (TREE) Methodology that is yet to be officially endorsed and institutionalized. Under this new Methodology, the young women and men beneficiaries who are set up in their various youth-run enterprises (YREs) are required to avail themselves to a trainers' training in small business management skills after six months of operation of their businesses. This training imparts to these young people skills that enable them to confidently carry on as managers of their enterprises.

### **Training schemes to upgrade the skills and competencies of entrepreneurs**

Under the new TREE Methodology, the young entrepreneurs who have benefited from this TVSD program and have also gone through business management skills training are organized into an association of young entrepreneurs within the locality/county. Once this is done, the next step is the establishment of a revolving fund scheme by these entrepreneurs to provide capital support to their businesses (if need be) or to emerging new businesses. Some members selected by these young entrepreneurs from

their rank and file of are put through another trainers' training to equip them with knowledge and skills they need to manage their revolving fund. But in addition to running the revolving fund, these revolving fund scheme managers also serve as trainers, with the responsibility to regularly upgrade the skills and competences of members of the association or new members who are joining the association from time to time.

### **Type of training initiated, how and with whom**

After more than one year of pilot testing the TREE methodology in Liberia, enough experience and lessons had been learned and translated into tools and guidelines. From such lessons the TREE Methodology then moved to another stage and continued with the capacity upgrading of young entrepreneurs/stakeholders, partners and the MYS Staff so that they could be able to utilize the tools and institutionalize these tools in the Ministry of Youth and Sports and in the planning and development system of the local government and partners.

In view of the above, the TREE Project conducted a training of trainers' workshop in Grand Cape Mount and Grand Bassa Counties to train local partners as trainers on the tools and implementing guidelines in organizing, managing and conducting skills and enterprise development training of the TREE Methodology.

### **Specific Objectives of the training**

The training was specifically designed to train the participants on the tools and implementing guidelines in organizing, managing and conducting enterprise development training of the TREE Methodology, including the Adapted TREE process, Duties of the TREE Trainer before and after training, Enterprise development through the Transition Enterprise Project planning (TEP) scheme, Managing the Business, Entrepreneurship skills, Marketing skills and strategies, Production processes, and Business strategies.

## **Recommendations on reforms geared towards giving more room for entrepreneurs in training schemes and professional qualification of young people**

1. That the TREE Methodology be institutionalized in the country
2. That a comprehensive program be put in place that will employ the active and continuous use of this Method for rapid entrepreneurship development, particularly for the unemployed young women and men in the country
3. That a survey be conducted to establish the level of capacity of TVET trainers in the private and public sectors with the view of establishing a comprehensive database of these training providers in the country for easy reference if need be.

## **A particular significant experience in the area of training of trainers and/or training of entrepreneurs**

The experience that is being referenced here dates back six years to 2009 and emanates out of a collaborative initiative between the Government of Liberia (GOL) and the United Nations Group operating in Liberia. The initiative was the GOL/UN Joint Programme for Youth Employment and Empowerment (UNJPYEE).

### **Context of the experience**

The Training for Rural Economic Empowerment (TREE) project was a pilot initiative implemented jointly by the Government of Liberia (GOL) and the United Nations through the International Labour Organization (ILO) both in Grand Bassa and Grand Cape Mount Counties. This intervention was

undertaken to introduce the Training for Rural Economic Empowerment (TREE) concept for the first time in West Africa, to provide disadvantaged youth with Skills Training for Employment or Self-employment under the Government of Liberia/United Nations Joint Programme for Youth Employment and Empowerment (UNJPYEE).

The programme was aimed at giving young people skills for employment, self-employment and enterprise development since the fourteen (14) years of civil war in Liberia caused them to become school-dropouts and unemployed young women and men in communities all over the country. The intervention involved a comprehensive methodology that comprises of skills training, entrepreneurial skills development, credit technology, marketing and post- training support services. The activities were undertaken during the TREE Project 44 months of pilot implementation from January 2009 to August 31, 2012. Activities introduced in the country the well-tested ILO Training for Rural Economic Empowerment (TREE).

### **Introduction of a new type of training scheme: for new trades**

The TREE Methodology focuses on self-employment or income-generating activities in community-based enterprises for poor and disadvantaged groups (young women and men-75% female/25% male) who due to limited capacity are not able to join and compete in the labour market. Self-employment or income-generation is assured through three stages of the TREE methodology where enterprise identification, prioritization, business viability and profitability are determined from **community planning, training implementation and transition enterprise plan (TEP)** implementation.

### **Need for upgrading of skills and competencies of trainers**

Given that the TREE methodology was and pretty much still is a new TVET approach to self-employment or income-generation that involved three

stages where enterprise identification, prioritization, business viability and profitability are determined from community planning, training implementation and transition enterprise plan implementation, their tools and procedures with which training providers in the country are not familiar, the need for upgrading of skills and competencies can hardly be overemphasized; it is very much necessary that the regular upgrading of skills and competencies of various training providers is done for efficient and effective training delivery using this new methodology.

### **Beneficiaries of the training**

The pilot intervention using the methodology was carried in two counties, so beneficiaries of the training were in two categories:

1. **Grand Bassa County beneficiaries** - the beneficiaries of enterprises identified in 2009 and who commenced training briefly were reorganized. Following their regrouping, they submitted skills upgrading together with small enterprise planning and management proposals for further assistance to make operational their enterprise projects, as common service facilities were assessed with the active participation of the Local Advisory Committee. These proposals were approved by the Ministry of Youth and Sports as part of the exit strategy process and funds were released to the beneficiary groups. The skills upgrading together with small enterprise planning and management trainings were given in Buchanan, Grand Bassa County. At the end of project activities in August 2012, all assets procured by the Project for the training of the 7 beneficiary groups were turned over to these groups so that they could continue their enterprise operations.
2. **Grand Cape Mount County beneficiaries** – following reactivation of the stakeholder structures in the county, fifteen out the thirty (30) trained Community Facilitators (CFs) went into the five districts and successfully completed the conduct of **participatory community**

**planning meetings** in the five target project sites/districts, with the generation of training proposals using the newly adapted tools and templates of the TREE methodology. Ten out of fifteen of the proposals submitted were implemented by the beneficiaries. At the end of project activities in August 2012, all assets procured by the Project for the training of the 10 beneficiary groups were turned over to these groups so that they could also continue their enterprise operations which are spread out in the five districts of the county.

### **The trainers concerned**

The trainers were a mixture of local non-governmental organization and community-based enterprises who have served time and again as training providers in their localities. There were a total of seven (7) training providers for the various trade areas in Grand Bassa County and ten (10) for the enterprises in Grand Cape Mount County. There also eight (8) additional training providers to include Bong and Nimba Counties.

### **Type of trainings implemented**

The trainings implemented were trainings that were relevant to the businesses identified by beneficiaries and that imparted the requisite skills to them for the commencement of new small enterprises by the beneficiaries using the Training for Rural Economic Empowerment (TREE) concept, which involved a comprehensive methodology that comprises of skills training, entrepreneurial skills development, leadership training, credit technology, marketing and post-training support services. Some examples of trainings implemented and relevant enterprises established respectively are fishery; motorcycle repair and garage management; tailoring; coconut oil, coconut shell charcoal & door mat production; cassava processing;



laundry soap production; palm oil production; Liberian garment production; mineral water production and concrete products production.

### **Entrepreneurs concerned**

The entrepreneurs involved in the training were a mixed group of school-drop-outs, disadvantaged, marginalized, war-affected young women and men from various communities/villages in the target counties who were not in any form of employment or in education or training (NEET category) and were just roaming their communities in idleness.

### **Their role in the training scheme and number**

The role of these young people was three-fold. Firstly, each enterprise group had the responsibility to identify the trade or business it would like to venture into. Secondly, the various enterprise groups had the freedom to identify their own training provider from within their localities and recommend such training provider to the contracting party for hiring. Finally, the beneficiaries were to attend without miss all the theoretical and practical hands-on sessions and be full participants of the trainings in their chosen vocations for the entire duration of the trainings administered by the contracted training providers. All of the interventions were carried out on the training sites within the selected communities in the target counties.

### **Objectives sought**

The programme was aimed at giving young people skills the need to make informed decision as to the career opportunities the desire for employment or self-employment and enterprise development. It was also intended to sufficiently equip young women and men with business development and management skills that would enable them to sustain themselves in their different businesses.

### **Specific objectives**

Specifically, the TREE trainings were geared towards training the youth for paid employment, self-employment in new trades, enterprise development, bringing the training system closer to the world of enterprises and to qualify and integrate the numerous youth in the country that, though without marketable skills, are frantically in search of jobs.

### **The results achieved**

The outcome of this experience is that the beneficiaries are today equipped with business skills, materials and tools that have enabled them to establish twenty-five thriving youth-run enterprises (YREs) in four counties, benefiting a total of 1,250 young women and men. The initiatives by these young people have dramatically changed their lives for the better, turning them into good managers of their own businesses in the intervention areas. Additionally, these young women and men are today contributing meaningfully to the economic life of their localities rather than being the bystanders they were before entering the trainings.

### **The main impact of this experience**

The main impact of the experience at the level of the skills and competencies of the trainers and entrepreneurs is that the corps of training providers who participated in the action in the country today have gained added skills that will continue to enhance their usefulness to their people and nation; for the beneficiaries, the knowledge, skills, tools and materials that they have received, if used wisely, has no doubt radically transformed their lives and lifted them and their families out of abject poverty.

### **The impact of this experience at the level of the training received by the youth and their capacity to integrate labor market**

For the beneficiaries, the knowledge, skills, tools and materials that they have received, if well internalized and used wisely, there is no doubt that those who desire to go into paid employment will be competitive in the labour market; for those young women and men who chose to enter the

world of business, their lives have been radically transformed and, they and their families, are now out of abject poverty

### **The future of the experience**

This experience looks very bright simply because it is the answer to the staggering problem of unemployment facing the whole of Africa, particularly as it relates to the unskilled, unemployed and marginalized youth on the continent. It is wise for the whole of Africa to take a keener look at this new experience with the view of employing and expanding it aggressively everywhere in the continent in order to put an end to unemployment and sufferings of our people and change the living conditions of the poor majority for the better and bring economic, social and political stability not only to our societies but also contribute to the peace and tranquility of our one world.

To the government of my country, Liberia, and to governments everywhere on the continent of Africa, I wholeheartedly recommend the institutionalization and expansion of this new and valuable experience which was abandoned just after its pilot phase. It is the long awaited solution to Africa's unemployment problem, especially for the out-of-school unemployed youth of our generation. It should form a strong part of TVET Policies everywhere and part of programs for training of trainers and training of young people to become entrepreneurs in all countries on the continent of Africa.

### **Experience sharing with another countryh**

This experience is an ILO concept that was introduced in Liberia which yielded fruitful results. I am not if Liberia has shared it with any country. But sharing and promoting such action would be a wise thing to do to ensure strong collaboration among countries confronted with the problem of unemployment, particularly of the youthful population, so as to form a united front in tackling and resolving this problem.

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