

Universal Periodic Review

(22nd session)

Contribution of UNESCO to Compilation of UN information

(to Part I. A. and to Part III - F, J, K, and P)

Liberia

I. BACKGROUND AND FRAMEWORK

A. Scope of international obligations: Human rights treaties which fall within the competence of UNESCO and international instruments adopted by UNESCO

1. Table:

<i>Title</i>	<i>Date of ratification, accession or succession</i> <i>dd/mm/yyyy</i>	<i>Declarations /reservations</i>	<i>Recognition of specific competences of treaty bodies</i>	<i>Reference to the rights within UNESCO's fields of competence</i>
Convention against Discrimination in Education (1960)	17/05/1962, Ratification	<i>Reservations to this Convention shall not be permitted</i>		Right to education
Convention on Technical and Vocational Education (1989)	Not the state party to this convention			Right to education
Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972)	23/03/2002, Acceptance			Right to take part in cultural life
Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003)	Not the state party to this convention			Right to take part in cultural life
Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005)	Not the state party to this convention			Right to take part in cultural life

II. Input to Part III. Implementation of international human rights obligations, taking into account applicable international humanitarian law to items F, J, K, and P

Right to education

Constitutional Framework:

2. Under chapter II on General Principles of National Policy of the **Constitution of the Republic of Liberia (1986)**¹, **Article 6** provides that “The Republic shall, because of the vital role assigned to the individual citizen under this Constitution for the social, economic and political well-being 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.” Besides, **Article 8** states: “The Republic shall direct its policy towards ensuring for all citizens, without discrimination, opportunities for employment and livelihood under just and humane conditions, and towards promoting safety, health and welfare facilities in employment”.

Legislative Framework:

3. The legislative framework of Liberia is composed of the followings:

- a) “The Education Law of 1973 recognizes the right of every Liberian child to education.”²
- b) “The School Health Division of the Ministry of Education, which is part of the Bureau of Primary Education, was mandated by an **Act of the National Legislature in 1975** to regulate, coordinate and implement all school-based health related programs within Liberia and to perform the following functions:
 - a. Ensure that all policies related to school health, nutrition and HIV prevention are promulgated to provide legal framework/standard and structural guidance in the delivery of all school-based health related programs and service
 - b. Ensure that all schools within the Republic of Liberia have safe water and sanitation facilities
 - c. Develop and produce skills based health instructional materials for all schools within Liberia
 - d. Ensure that skills-based health education is taught in all schools
 - e. Ensure that school based health and nutrition services are provided in all schools in Liberia
 - f. Coordinate and establish networks with all entities that are implementing school-based health related activities”³
- c) The **Education Law OF A.D. 2001**⁴ was approved on January 2002 and repealed the Education Law of 1973 and all Education laws amendatory thereto. [...] It recognizes

¹ Constitution of Liberia

<http://www.unesco.org/education/edurights/media/docs/b44afef7784488d06fa2de3378063c23be582c20.pdf>

² World Data on Education, 7th Edition, 2010/11, pp. 2-3, accessible at:

http://www.ibe.unesco.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Publications/WDE/2010/pdf-versions/Hungary.pdf
(Accessed on 6 March 2014)

³ MOE website,

<http://www.moe.gov.lr/pages1.php?pgID=52>

that Basic Education for all citizens have to be prioritised and provided. According to Education Law OF A.D. 2001, primary education is free and compulsory between the ages of 6 to 11.

- d) “[...] the **New Education Reform Act**, which became law in **2011**, [...] regulates the delivery and management of the educational system. It encompasses the provision of quality education to all citizens, protects and promotes the concept of human rights, promotes equal access to educational opportunities, and promotes decentralization.”⁵
- e) The **Children’s Law of Liberia of 2011**⁶, Article III, section 9.1 states that: “Every child shall have the right to education”. It also makes the State responsible for ensuring free and compulsory primary education (section 9.2) and for progressively developing free access to secondary education (section 9.4). It also ensures inclusive education for children with disabilities (Article VII, section 4.4).

Policy Framework:

i) General information

4. “The EFA FTI CF [Education For All-Fast Track Initiative Catalytic Fund] project is for a period of 3 years (2010 - 2012) and will support the MoE 10 year **Liberian Educational Sector Plan (2010 -2020)**, with a long term development objective of implementing the national education policy and developing an institutional framework to achieve quality primary education by 2015. The EFA FTI CF project aims to improve access to quality basic education and to strengthen the institutional capacity of the MoE. This will be achieved via three components: (i) Increasing access and equity for all Liberian children (especially girls, individuals with special needs, street children, children with manageable emotional behavioural disorders and learning disabilities) to quality education; (ii) Improving the quality of teaching and learning; and (iii) Strengthening management capacities and developing a framework for institutional capacity building with a focus on monitoring and evaluation”⁷.

ii) Teachers

5. “The Ministry has partnered with USAID/LTTP to improve the quality of teaching and learning in Liberia by building its capacity through technology. When EMIS is fully functional, the Ministry will have unprecedented access to information to use as the basis for its policy and programmatic decisions.”⁸

⁴ Education Law OF A.D. 2001,

http://portal.unesco.org/education/fr/files/27676/10721043541Loi_Liberia.doc/Loi+Liberia.doc

⁵ Liberian Ministry of Education website,

<http://www.moe.gov.lr/pages1.php?pgID=30>

⁶ The Children’s Law of Liberia of 2011,

<http://www.unesco.org/education/edurights/media/docs/c9a0bff7ffbe595d2c02ffb5ca03cdb60a16833d.pdf>

⁷ Education For All Fast Track Initiative (EFT-FTI) Catalytic Fund Project, Final Report, Republic of Liberia, February 2010, p. VIII, accessible at: http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2010/03/11/000334955_20100311030441/Rendered/PDF/RP9320P117662011CP1RPF1Final1Report.pdf (Accessed on 7 March 2014)

⁸ Liberian MOE website,

<http://www.moe.gov.lr/pages3.php?pgID=46>

6. “Liberia was born out of the poor results in **Liberia’s Early Grade Reading Assessment**, which found that around one-third of grade 2 students were unable to read a word. In 2008, the Ministry of Education, with USAID support, launched the programme to improve reading skills through evidence-based reading instruction and assessment. EGRA Plus: Liberia was designed to investigate the impact of the programme on learning outcomes for grade 2 and 3 pupils.”⁹

iii) Curriculum

7. “In Liberia, an assessment funded by a USAID project highlighted the low reading ability of children in early grades, prompting the Ministry of Education to institute reforms. These include revising the national curriculum to provide reading as a separate subject and strengthening capacity to train and support teachers in early grade reading approaches.”¹⁰

iv) Gender equality

8. “The Government of Liberia launched its **National Girls’ Education Policy** in April 2006, [...] [that] aims to provide universal, free and compulsory primary school and reduce secondary school fees by 50 per cent. It outlines activities to recruit and train more female teachers, provide counselling for girls and life skills education in schools, increase the availability of scholarships for girls and strengthen health systems in schools. And it calls for ending the impunity of teachers who sexually abuse and assault students. The policy encourages the formation of parent-teacher associations and girls’ clubs, and it promotes adult literacy.”¹¹

9. “The Girls’ Education Division (GED) of the Bureau of Basic and Secondary Education has provided additional access to girls through **the Special Girls Education Initiative (SGEI)**. [...] The USAID **Liberia Teacher Training Program** provides scholarships to female students attending the Teachers College at the University of Liberia. In addition, Girls Clubs and mentoring programs have been established at the RTTIs to provide a stable learning environment for female students. In support of girls’ education, the **Girls’ Opportunities to Access Learning (GOAL) Project**, supported by the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) has improved primary school girls’ retention, attendance, and enrollment in 40 schools in Bong, Lofa and Grand Bassa counties. [...] **ECOWAS Gender Desk** supported five female students through its “**Scholarship for Excellence of Girls’ Program**.” The Secondary School (BWI) beneficiaries are studying agriculture and drafting whereas the tertiary beneficiaries are studying civil and construction engineering and biology (medicine) at Stella Maris University and United Methodist University. [...] The Ministry has initiated the development of the Liberia School Feeding Policy, in partnership with the World Food Program (WFP) which has been approved and is operational. This is in conjunction with the Agenda for Transformation to achieve universal free and compulsory basic education, as well as the promotion of girl’s education.”¹²

Cooperation:

⁹ Education For All, Global Monitoring Report 2013-2014, p244

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002256/225660e.pdf>

¹⁰ Education For All, Global Monitoring Report 2013-2014, p90

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002256/225660e.pdf>

¹¹ “Key girls’ education initiatives”, United Nations Girls’ Education Initiative, accessible online at:

<http://www.ungei.org/infobycountry/liberia.html> (Accessed on 7 March 2014)

¹² MOE website,

<http://www.moe.gov.lr/pages1.php?pgID=67>

10. Liberia is **party** to the 1960 UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education since 17/05/1962.

11. Liberia did **not report** to UNESCO on the measures taken for the implementation of the 1960 UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education within the framework of the:

- a) **Sixth Consultation** of Member States (covering the period 1994-1999)
- b) **Seventh Consultation** of Member States (covering the period 2000-2005)
- c) **Eighth Consultation** of Member States (covering the period 2006-2011)

12. Liberia did **not report** to UNESCO on the measures taken for the implementation of the 1974 UNESCO Recommendation concerning Education for International Understanding, Co-operation and Peace and Education relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms within the framework of the:

- a) **Fourth Consultation** of Member States (covering the period 2005-2008)
- b) **Fifth Consultation** of Member States (covering the period 2009-2012)

13. Liberia did not report to UNESCO on the measures taken for the implementation of the 1976 UNESCO Recommendation on the Development of Adult Education within the framework of the **First Consultation** of Member States (1993). However, it reported within the framework of the **Second Consultation** of Member States (2011).

14. Liberia is **not party** to the 1989 UNESCO Convention on Technical and Vocational Education.

Freedom of opinion and expression

Constitutional and Legislative Framework:

15. Freedoms of speech, opinion, and expression are protected under Chapter III, Article 15 of the Liberian Constitution (1986).¹³

16. Defamation is considered a criminal offence under Section 11.11 (Criminal libel against the President), Section 11.12 (Sedition), and Section 11.14 (Criminal Malevolence) of the Penal Law published on 3 April 1978¹⁴ which is punishable by up to ten years of imprisonment.

17. Liberia passed the Freedom of Information Act in 2010¹⁵.

Media Self-Regulation:

18. Despite the presence of professional organization such as the Press Union of Liberia, the country lacks a fully developed self-regulatory mechanism in the media.

¹³ https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Liberia_1986

¹⁴ Penal Law at <https://www.unodc.org/tldb/pdf/Liberia-PenalLaw%20A.pdf>

¹⁵ Freedom of Information Act at

<http://www.liberianembassyus.org/uploads/documents/Liberia%20Freedom%20of%20Information%20Act%202010x.pdf>

Safety of Journalists:

19. UNESCO recorded no killing of journalists in Liberia between 2008 and 2013. However, UNESCO notes the sporadic report of journalists being intimidated, harassed and even detained while carrying out their professional work¹⁶.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

Right to education

20. Recommendations made within the framework of the first cycle of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, considered on (please check the date on the following web site: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/Documentation.aspx>)

21. In the Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review of 1 November 2011,¹⁷ various recommendations were made to Liberia.

22. The recommendations listed below enjoyed its support:

- i) A - 77.16. Continue to **reinforce its national programmes** in the area of education and to seek the necessary technical and financial assistance to accompany it in its integration of **human rights education** and training into its programmes (Morocco);
- ii) A - 77.25. Strengthen its Professional Standard Division within the Liberian National Police to investigate and prosecute all allegations of professional misconduct in accordance with international standards, and implement extensive human rights education and training programmes for law enforcement personnel (Slovakia);
- iii) A - 77.31. Develop and implement **education campaigns aimed at preventing sexual violence** and addressing the attitudes and **stereotypes** which perpetuate such violence (Canada);
- iv) A - 77.57. Pursue the effort to increase the standard of living of all Liberians with specific programmes in the areas of accommodation, health, education and other basic social services (Algeria);
- v) A - 77.58. Encourage stronger **promotion of the rights of women and children** by meeting their immediate post-conflict needs. These include, for example, the elimination of gender inequalities, the promotion of equal educational opportunities as well as equal opportunities for socio-economic and political participation, and the elimination of violence against women and children (Thailand);
- vi) A - 77.59. Expand its **School Feeding Programme** and integrate it with local agricultural production (Brazil);
- vii) A - 77.60. Take appropriate steps, with the **help of the international community**, to ensure for the Liberian people an adequate standard of living, and the rights to food, health and education (Egypt);

¹⁶ According to the following news sources: Radio Netherlands Worldwide (dated [1 November 2011](#)), New Dawn (dated [14 February 2012](#)), National Chronicle Liberia (dated [12 February 2014](#)), and Frontpage Africa (dated [7 February 2014](#) and [12 August 2014](#)).

¹⁷ http://www.upr-info.org/IMG/pdf/recommendations_to_liberia_2011.pdf

- viii) A - 77.63. *Continue the implementation of programmes and plans for the enhancement of **education in Liberia at all levels**, as well as earmarking **more financial resources** for this purpose (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya);*
- ix) A - 77.65. *Take steps to effectively **guarantee the right to education** (Italy);*
- x) A - 77.66. *Make accessible to the general public and teach **human rights in school and university** establishments, as well as in the professional sector (Congo);*

23. The recommendation below is still pending:

- xi) R - 78.41. *Continue to regard maintaining social stability as its first priority, and make efforts to improve the people's living standards, providing necessary housing and medical care and **increased educational opportunities**, and improving electricity services, drinking water and the road network; and streamline the relationship between its domestic legislation and the international human rights instruments that it has signed by bringing its domestic legislation into line with the requirements of international law (China).*

24. Analysis

Liberia has made efforts to further promote the right to education with the help of the international community. It has allowed improving the right of children and women adopting a human right perspective and improving the budget allocation for education. However, Liberia did not take sufficient measures to promote human rights education.

25. Specific recommendations for the second UPR cycle

25.1. Liberia is encouraged to continue to submit state reports for the periodic consultations of UNESCO's education related standard-setting instruments.

25.2. Liberia could be encouraged to strengthen the implementation of compulsory primary education.

Freedom of opinion and expression

26. Liberia is recommended to decriminalize defamation and place it within a civil code that is in accordance with international standards¹⁸.

27. Liberia is encouraged to develop self-regulatory mechanism in the media.

28. Liberia must ensure that journalists and media workers are able to practice the profession in a free and safe environment as part of their fundamental human rights in accordance with international standards¹⁹. It must investigate all attacks on journalists and media workers, and ensure full implementation of the rule of law.

¹⁸ See for example, General Comments No 34. of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), 2006 Recommendation of the 87th Session Human Rights Committee, the recommendations of the UN Special Rapporteurs on the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression, and Resolution 1577 (2007) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

¹⁹ See for example, UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/68/163 and Human Rights Council Resolution A/HRC/21/12

Cultural rights

29. Liberia is encouraged to ratify the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003) and the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005). UNESCO's cultural conventions promote access to and participation in cultural heritage and creative expressions and, as such, are conducive to implementing the right to take part in cultural life as defined in article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and article 15 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. In doing so, Liberia is encouraged to facilitate the participation of communities, practitioners, cultural actors and NGOs from the civil society as well as vulnerable groups (minorities, indigenous peoples, migrants, refugees, young peoples and peoples with disabilities), and to ensure that equal opportunities are given to women and girls to address gender disparities.

30. As a State Party to the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972), Liberia is encouraged to fully implement the relevant provisions that promote access to and participation in cultural heritage and creative expressions and, as such, are conducive to implementing the right to take part in cultural life as defined in article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and article 15 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. In doing so, Liberia is encouraged to give due consideration to the participation of communities, practitioners, cultural actors and NGOs from the civil society as well as vulnerable groups (minorities, indigenous peoples, migrants, refugees, young peoples and peoples with disabilities), and to ensure that equal opportunities are given to women and girls to address gender disparities.

Freedom of scientific research and the right to benefit from scientific progress and its applications

31. With regard to contribution of science and technology to development, Liberia is encouraged to report to UNESCO within the framework of the on-going consultations with Member States on the monitoring of the implementation and the proposed revision of the 1974 Recommendation on the Status of Scientific Researchers, in particular on the measures undertaken in the country to implement such principles of the Recommendation as the obligation of state authorities to ensure that scientific researchers have the responsibility and the right to work in a spirit of intellectual freedom; to participate in the determination of the aims, content and methods of research, which should be compatible with respect for universal human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as ecological and social responsibility; to creativity, occupational mobility, international cooperation for furtherance of international peace, cooperation and understanding, etc.