

Policy Brief on Budgeting Tracking in the Girls' Education Division

Over the last decade, Liberia has made commendable efforts to reform its education sector. Key national frameworks, including the Education Reform Act 2011, the Children's Law (2011), and the National Policy on Girls' Education, were adopted alongside international commitments such as the Dakar Framework for Action, the Incheon Declaration, and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. To operationalize these commitments, the Ministry of Education (MoE) launched initiatives, including the Education Sector Plan (ESP) 2022–2027, the Alternative Basic and Accelerated Learning Programs, the TVET Program, and the Tuition-Free Policy, aligned with Pillar 3 of the ARREST Agenda for Inclusive Development.

Despite these efforts, Liberia's education system continues to struggle with poor access, low quality, and underfunding. Budget allocations in FY2024 and FY2025 remain insufficient to meet national and global targets, particularly those related to the Education Sector Plan and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In response to these persistent gaps, ActionAid Liberia has supported PAYOWI since 2023 to monitor budget allocations and expenditures with emphasis on the SPAII programme and counties: Montserrado, Bong, and Gbarpolu. The budget analysis employs the Promoting Rights in Schools (PRS) and Girls' Rights to Education Programming Strategy (GRPS). This analysis did not capture off-budget spending to the education sector—rather, it examined the FY2024-2025 National Education Budget, focusing on girls' education. This policy brief aims to increase policymakers and stakeholders' understanding of the gaps in budget allocation for girls' education and provide concrete policy recommendations for improving budgeting practices to promote gender equity in education.

A deeper review of the Liberia fiscal year (FY) 2025 national budget shows that 87.9% is spent on recurrent costs (primarily salaries), leaving just 12.1% for public investment. This imbalance limits the government's ability to address long-standing infrastructure deficits, teacher training gaps, and equity issues. The education budget trends reveal both progress and concern. In FY2024, the national budget was US\$738.86 million, with 15.1% (US\$111.33 million) for education, of which US\$48.58 million went to the Ministry of Education (MoE), while the overall national budget increased to US\$880.66 million in FY2025, education's share dropped to 13.6% (US\$119.7 million) across 24 spending entities, with US\$53.24 million allocated to the MoE. Comparatively, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire allocate 20–22% of their national budgets to education, highlighting a regional investment gap. In terms of equity, SPAII counties saw varied allocations: Montserrado increased from US\$101,969.00 in 2024 to US\$414,034.00 in 2025; Bong increased to US\$187,332.00 in 2025, while Gbarpolu dropped to US\$56,674.00, reflecting uneven priorities across counties.

The PRS analysis of the education budget reveals challenges in realizing the **right to free and compulsory education**—despite legal frameworks supporting fee-free basic education, actual funding has been inconsistent—whereas the Tuition-Free Policy is implemented in higher institutions like the University of Liberia and several community colleges, the MoE allocated zero funds for free and compulsory primary education in 2024 and 2025. Moreover, informal fees persist in public schools, creating barriers for underprivileged families.

Rights to quality-trained teachers are undermined by the fact that over 40% of teachers are unqualified (MOE, ESP 2022–2027). In FY2024, there was no budget for teacher education under the MoE; however, in 2025, US\$3.2 million was allocated across four rural teacher training institutes—a modest but important step.

The right to a safe, protective, and non-violent environment remains unmet. Reports of school-based sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) persist, yet the 2025 budget provides no dedicated funding for SGBV prevention in schools. The Ministry of Gender allocated US\$518,400.00 to broader gender programs, but these lack specificity for school safety.

Right to adequate infrastructure—school infrastructure remains inadequate, with over 60% of schools lacking proper WASH facilities and gender-sensitive amenities (MoE, EMIS 2022). While the Public Sector Investment Program (PSIP) includes US\$2.9 million for facility renovation (MoE, MCSS, and BWI), there is no national line-item for school WASH; these services remain reliant on external actors (UNICEF, WaterAid, etc).

Right to non-discrimination is weakly addressed, despite an inclusive education policy, the 2025 budget allocates only US\$50,000.00 to the Liberia School for the Blind and US\$210,000.00 to special and vocational education; such allocation remains insufficient to meet the needs of children with disabilities, 63% of whom have never attended school (LiberiaCensus2022Report.pdf).

Right to quality learning—Limited investments in inclusive materials, teacher development, and classroom resources constrain the right to quality learning. On a positive note, US\$1 million was allocated in 2025 to strengthen school feeding programs, which promote nutrition and school retention. In addition, the “Support A Child, Save the Future” project, launched in 2024, allocated US\$500,000.00 (MGCSP) to address the education of Liberia’s 366,584 street children.

The 2025 budget includes, for the first time, a US\$100,000.00 allocation for **girls’ education**, reflecting incremental progress. However, this represents just 5% of what is recommended under the National Policy on Girls’ Education. Investments in **early childhood education** doubled from US\$10,000.00 to US\$20,000.00 in 2025, though still low. Meanwhile, **basic and secondary education** saw a significant cut, from US\$1.8 million in 2024 to US\$1.15 million in 2025. **Primary education** increased from US\$306,250.00 to US\$417,785.00.

Finally, several rights remain underfunded or unsupported: the **right to know your rights** (no explicit funding for rights or sexuality education); the **right to participate** (no line for child-led initiatives or school governance); and the **right to accountability** (no direct support for PTAs or County School Boards, though US\$300,000 was allocated for national school monitoring).

Challenges in ensuring educational equity	Recommendation to reduce inequities in education
<i>The lack of school fees and other related indirect costs,</i>	<i>Eliminate or subsidize school fees, transportation, uniforms, and examination costs for low-income families;</i> <i>Expand school feeding programs to improve attendance and learning outcomes.</i>
<i>Low budget for education and insufficient allocation of resources</i>	<i>Increase the education budget to 20% or above and prioritize funding to underserved schools.</i> <i>Reduce recurrent expenditure and increase spending on public investment (PSIP);</i> <i>Increase funding support to girls’ education by at least 5% of the MOE budget (NPGE Indicator)</i>
<i>Lack of adequate expenditure reporting by the spending entity to the public hinders understanding of the inputs to education. Development partners’ off-budget spending is currently not adequately tracked.</i>	<i>Provide an adequate expenditure report on domestic and external investment in the education sector</i>
<i>Lack of adequate learning environment, including limited seating capacity and insufficient WASH facilities.</i>	<i>Allocate sufficient funding within the education budget to strengthen (upgrade) schools’ infrastructure and WASH facilities (gender-sensitive) across the country</i> <i>Enforce minimum infrastructure standards across all schools.</i>