

Effect Of Covid 19 On Teaching Method in Monrovia (Montserrado), Liberia

Ishmael K. Washington,

Kalinga University, Naya Raipur, MA Education 4th Semester
ishmaelk1989@gmail.com

Dr. Shraddha Verma,

Associate Professor, Faculty of Education, Kalinga University, Naya Raipur
shraddha.verma@kalingauniversity.ac.in

About Liberia

The Republic of Liberia is a country located on the West African Coast. With a population of nearly 5 million and a land area of 43,000 square miles (111,369 square kilometers), Liberia is bordered by Sierra Leone to its northwest, Guinea to its north, Côte d'Ivoire to its east, and the Atlantic Ocean to its southwest. Monrovia, with a population of over 1.5 million, is the country's capital and largest city. While English is the official language, there are 16 ethnic groups that make up Liberia's indigenous population. Indigenous African tribes 95% (including Lorma, Kpelle, Bassa, Gio, Kru, Grebo, Mandingo, Mano, Krahn, Gola, Gbandi, Kissi, Vai, Dei, Mende and Belle), America-Liberian 2.5% descendants of immigrants from the U.S. Montserrado County is a county in the northwestern portion of the West African Nation of Liberia containing its national capital, Monrovia. One of 15 counties that comprise the first-level of administrative division in the nation, it has 17 sub political districts.

Fast Facts: Liberia

Official Name: Republic of Liberia

Location: West Africa coast between Sierra Leone, Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, and the Atlantic Ocean

Population: 5,057,681 (as of 2020)

Land Area: 43,000 square miles (111,369 square kilometres)

Capital: Monrovia

Official Language: English

Form of Government: Unitary presidential constitutional republic

Date of Foundation: January 7, 1822

Date of Independence: July 26, 1847

Current Constitution Adopted: January 6, 1986

Main Economic Activity: Mining

Major Exports: Gold, passenger and cargo ships, crude oil, iron ore, and rubber

Along with Ethiopia, Liberia is considered to be one of the only two African countries never to have been colonized by European powers during the Scramble for Africa from 1880 to 1900. However, this is disputed as the country was founded by free

Black American immigrants in the 1820s and governed by these Americo-Liberians until

1989. Liberia was governed by a military dictatorship until the 1990s and then suffered two lengthy civil wars. In 2003, the women of Liberia helped bring an end to the Second

Civil War, and in 2005, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, the first elected female head of state in Africa, was elected President of Liberia. The current president, George Weah, was elected in 2017.

Histories of Liberia generally begin with the arrival of the Portuguese traders in the mid-1400s, and the rise of the trans-Atlantic trade. Coastal groups traded several goods with Europeans, but the area became known as the Grain Coast, because of its rich supply malagueta pepper grains.

In 1816, the future of Liberia changed dramatically due to the formation of the American Colonization Society (ACS) in the United States. Looking for a place to re-settle free-born Black Americans and formerly enslaved people, the ACS chose the Grain Coast. In 1822, the ACS founded Liberia as a colony of the United States of America. Over the next few decades, 19,900 Black American men and women migrated to the colony.

On July 26, 1847, Liberia declared its independence from America. Interestingly, the United States refused to acknowledge Liberia's independence until 1862, when the U.S. government ended the practice of enslavement during the American Civil War. **Monrovia**, Capital, largest city, and chief Atlantic port of Liberia, located on Bushrod Island and Cape Mesurado. It was founded during the administration of U.S. Pres. James Monroe (for whom it was named) by the American Colonization Society as a settlement for freed American slaves.

What is the culture of Liberia?

Liberia's culture draws from the southern U.S. heritage of its Americo-Liberian settlers and the people of the country's 16 indigenous and migratory groups. English remains the official language of Liberia, though the languages of the indigenous people are widely spoken in the country.

Covid in Montserrado

The effect of Covid 19 disrupted many lives of households in Monrovia, the household hunger scale, and the food consumption score. Market activity was severely disrupted and we observe large declines in income among market vendors, but we find no evidence of declines in food security for households in the short run. We also observe no adverse effects of the lockdowns on food security among the control group.

Status of schools during Covid 19 epidemic in Montserrado

The Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic rapidly impacted all aspects of life across the world, including education service delivery. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected over 2 million learners' nation-wide at all levels as schools were closed, private school teachers have lost their income as parents are not paying school fees in the wake of school closure. The total number of active confirmed COVID-19 cases as of May 5, 2020 was 178. Female accounted for 60 while male 118. 20 deaths were reported and 850 contacts are being followed. These figures were evolving daily and were undermined by limited testing in the country.

A national address by the President of Liberia, **His Excellency Dr. George Manneh Weah**, on March 16, 2020 provided

for several initial behavioral-change measures to keep the public safe. In response, the Minister of Education (Prof. Ansu Dao Sonii) ordered the closure of all schools as a step to curtailing large congregation of people at one time in one place while contact tracing was conducted for the first identified patient of COVID-19.

The announcement anticipated a 2-week closure in response to a temporary health crisis, but by the end of that period official communications recognized that school closures would continue indefinitely; Which resulted in students losing out on their regular academic activities since.

In an effort to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on Liberian students, the Ministry of Education (MoE), seek to work with stakeholders and partners to implement an emergency plan that draws from the experiences of the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) epidemic of 2014.

In response to the Corona virus outbreak, the Government of Liberia closed schools. In order to prevent and control its spread. Considering the indefinite nature of this outbreak and the uncertainty as to when schools will reopen, the Ministry of Education, like the rest of the world, has made an informed decision that education cannot wait. Over 2 million learners are at home with limited access to learning continuity. School feeding, which serves as a major factor for improving nutrition and school enrolment, has been discontinued. Hygiene and health practices in communities is compromised as schools are points for enhanced WASH practices. Additionally, many poor families are faced with huge

social-economic burdens due to lockdown including limited access to income. The interventions are needed in the education sector for the short, medium and long term based on three implementation scenarios.

It is expedient that children continue learning and parents and caregivers are engaged to support children while they remain home. Parents will need psycho-social support to care for children and relevant interventions to reduce social-economic burdens are needed especially for the vulnerable and poor. At some point in time, schools will have to reopen and systems will have to recover and be strengthened to ensure access to quality education for all.

As the health system continues to work toward curbing the virus, it is critical that the Ministry of Education remains engaged with the student population, communicating key health and education messages, especially in rural communities which are often underserved in national response. This communication will need to continue through the lifespan of the pandemic through to recovery and resumption of regular school activities.

The issues highlighted serve as the basis for this plan. This plan intends to address the issues highlighted in a coordinated manner involving all partners and stakeholders and ensuring accountability at all levels through four policy priorities:

Policy Priority 1: Activation and Operationalization of the education cluster

Policy Priority 2: Protection of lives and learning continuity for all students

Policy Priority 3: Psycho-social, health and well-being, child protection and nutrition support for parents and children

Policy priority 4: Recovery, school re-opening and system strengthening

Effects of Covid 19 on Education in Montserrado

COVID-19 has had far reaching effects across all sectors including education. Some of the effects are visible while others are being considered based on lessons from the Ebola Virus outbreak in 2014. Below are some of the effects of the COVID-19 on the Education System in Montserrado:

1. In Montserrado, the same students whose entry to secondary school was delayed by the 2014-15 West African Ebola epidemic now find their final year disrupted by the pandemic. But education officials in the country have learned from Ebola and were able to deliver better content, faster. Indeed, soon after schools across Montserrado closed on March 16, when the country's first coronavirus case was confirmed, authorities launched a radio schooling initiative to bridge an education gap. The Ministry of Education (MoE) developed a series of radio programs designed to keep students engaged and learning while schools were closed due to Ebola. In March 2020, when students once again found themselves at home, the Ministry of Education, (MOE) was able to immediately pivot to those existing structures to launch a **“Teach by**

Radio” program. Within two weeks, the first lessons were aired on radio stations nationwide. Several prerecorded lessons were taught a day, each lasting half an hour, catering to different educational levels. Senior officials from the Ministry of Education devise and recorded their own lessons. Other classes were produced by private education providers, including Rising Academies.

Lessons thought cover subjects from literature to maths and science to social studies, interspersed with health tips and messages promoting the wellbeing of students and their families. Many of the lessons feature the ubiquitous sound of President George Weah's coronavirus awareness song, in which the head of state informs listeners about the symptoms of COVID-19, the highly infectious respiratory disease caused by the pathogen, and measures to prevent its spread.

Through this approach, radio broadcasts guided parents, teachers, and students through radio-based activities, with students and their families actively participating in lessons by singing, reading, writing, answering questions, and solving problems in ways that reflect active listening and learning.

In direct support of this radio-based approach, Read Liberia, United States

Agency for International Development (USAID) funded education program implemented by RTI International (RTI) in collaboration with the Ministry of Education (MOE) developed and recorded radio-based lessons in language in language arts for grade 1 and 2. The lesson were aired by the MOE on national and local radio programs in Montserrado.

Read Liberia has worked with community-based community mobilizers who encourage parents to be active in their local schools, to create space and time in the home for students to read and do homework, and during school closures to tune into Teach by Radio virtual lessons. Liberian public schools closed in March 2020 and the



Findings suggest that, while many families did not have radios, students who did were motivated to listen to the Teach by Radio lessons and benefited from them. Through these interactions, parents reported giving their children more time to read at home

(between 20-30 minutes a day during school shutdowns).

Read Liberia community mobilizers also provided virtual support to members of parent-teacher association (PTA) groups, who committed to supporting children's learning during school closures, and many community leaders used their existing communication channels to broadcast Read Liberia messages encouraging children to spend more time at home reading.

The Government of Liberia's attempt to use radio in an innovative way to support ongoing student learning during school closures. Furthermore, it is important to understand the factors that prevented most parents from tuning into the MOE's Teach by Radio program. Many parents interviewed explained that, they did not have a radio, and because of the social distancing required to prevent the spread of COVID-19, families were discouraged from gathering to share radios. Lack of access to even this basic type of communication challenges any type of program a government might employ. However, there is reason to believe that MOE efforts to develop such a program, and Read Liberia's support to raise awareness of it, resulted in positive impacts for many students and their families. Moreover, because Montserrado was able to quickly make this happen, these students were able to benefit before their school year ended in June.

1. . **Interruption of learning and Assessment:** School closures interrupts learning, presents a challenge for curriculum implementation and impact negatively on learning outcomes. The

most vulnerable and marginalized students are the most affected. Poor and rural communities have fewer opportunities to learn at home. Girls have limited access to home learning as they, in many communities, are to be involved in home chores and childcare. Young pre-school aged children are also likely to miss out given that their social and play-based learning style is not easily supported through distance learning. In additions, assessments associated with evaluating learning and determining progression are more difficult to implement.

2. **Reduced access to school feeding:**

The provision of school meals is the world's largest social protection measure and sustains the nutrition of millions of children and partially alleviates poor families' burden to feed their children. For children who were used to school meals who are now at home, there is a significant impact on their nutritional wellbeing. Many children and youth rely on free meal provided at schools by World Food Programed (WFP), Save the Children and Mary's Meal, ZOA and other partners for food and healthy nutrition in Montserrado. Since schools are closed, nutrition is being compromised.

3. **Reduced access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene practices:**

Access to quality WASH services is already a challenge in most schools

and closure of schools exacerbates the situation. Schools are frequently a hub for children and their families to have reliable access to clean water and sanitation. Schools are critical system nodes for educating children about positive healthy behaviors and information on how students can protect themselves and their families. As schools are closed, many children especially the under privileged, have very limited access to safe WASH facilities. Clean water is important for promoting hand washing to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

4. **Loss of income for teachers and potential decrease in the number of available teachers:**

Many teachers in public education systems are not formally on the government payroll (volunteer teachers) and are being supported directly by communities through the PTAs. This support is likely to stop, and there will be no financial incentives to ensure that these teachers facilitate distance learning. There is a risk that these teachers (many who are undergoing training) will be lost to the system as they are likely to identify alternative sources of income. Private school teachers are also being affected as the school closure led to disruption in school fees collection leaving teachers at the losing end.

5. **High economic and social burden for parents:**

When schools close, parents are often asked to facilitate

the learning of children at home and can struggle to perform this task. Increased responsibilities of care, provision of food and lack of stable income is a potential burden to face many families. Most parents will not be around to help their children as they have to go to work and seek income for livelihood support. In addition most parents lack a steady income flow. Illiterate parents have challenges supporting their children's learning while schools are closed.

- 6. Probability of increased teenage pregnancy, sexual abuse and exploitation and Gender Based Violence (GBV):** During emergencies, poverty deepens and children's idleness, and the disruption of organized routines of social behavior may lead to significant increases in sexual behavior among teenagers. This includes transactional sex and even sexual exploitation by emergency relief workers as was seen during the Ebola emergency.

As a result, teenage pregnancy rates reportedly increased. Sexual abuse and exploitation can also increase in communities where children are idle and vulnerable. Learning from Ebola, this is a potential crisis that the system will need to look out for. Additionally, sexual and gender-based violence is also pervasive in Montserrado and include violations such as rape, incest and other forms of sexual as well as psychological forms

of violence. While children are home and sometimes, unsupervised, these might increase and the response plan will have to consider a coordinated approach between the Ministries of Education, Health, Justice Gender Children and social protection in order to enhance child protection mechanisms and prevent sexual exploitation and abuse.

School Reopening

The Ministry of Education (MoE) in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and the National Public Health Institute (NPHIL) completed comprehensive guidelines for safe school measures, and the activity timeline for the reopening of schools across Liberia.

It follows a consensus by West African Examination Council (WAEC) member countries and President George M. Weah. The President on June 5, 2020, mandated the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health to put in all mechanisms by June 22, to ensure that the 12 graders resume classes to adequately prepare them for the West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examinations. Followed by grades 6–9 and then grades 10–11. The government decided that early childhood education through Grade 5 would reopen only with the new academic year in November 2020. In the interim, the Ministry tasked early childhood and primary school teachers with preparing materials for children to use at home. Ultimately, young children did not return to school until December 2020.

The state of emergency was lifted on July 12, 2020. After the seizure of the epidemic from

July to December, the Ministry of Education introduced the School health kit that include Water barrier, Clorox, thermo flash, bar soap, first aid kit, locally produced face and nose mask for teachers and staff, rubber gloves, mop for floor or wash room, cleaning brush for toilet, insect repellent and buckets for use etc.

After the finalization of school re-opening guidelines based on rapid assessment findings by the Ministry of Education, Liberia. The Government decided to institute the following measures;

- Interventions for safe school opening including community mobilization, parental engagement, repair of WASH facilities, provision of soap for hand washing, fumigation of schools, repairs and maintenance of classrooms and janitorial services.
- Distribution of curriculum, teaching-learning materials, school health and hygiene kit and other supplies through county and District Education offices
- Providing of school feeding with a focus on the most vulnerable.
- Training of school administrators, PTAs and teachers around psycho-social support, stigma, health protocol, curriculum implementation, lesson planning, content knowledge, gender sensitive and accelerated learning, learner-based pedagogical approaches, accountability, ethics etc.

- Ensuring student assessment guidance and school calendar adjustment for catch-up and remedial instruction.
- Provision of resources for minor repairs, teacher and staff orientation and implementation of school health and wellbeing as well as WASH protocols.
- Disbursement of subsidy to universities, TVET and teacher training institutions for preparation of school re-opening to include interventions around WASH, hand washing, psycho-social support, health and well-being, and establishment of learning continuity platforms.
- Back to school campaigns targeting out of school children who were previously not in school or those at risk of not returning to school through community awareness and mobilization.

National governments, school administrators and educators have been struggling to deliver curriculum content using alternative method; meet the emerging educational, economic and psychosocial needs of students, households and teachers; plan how school might re-open during the pandemic. The cost of inaction is high and we cannot afford to let children and young people become the COVID generation' and bear the brunt of this pandemic. Education is key to recovery, including economic recovery.

Children and young people need to be able to resume in person schooling as soon as possible and when they walk through those school doors they must be offered a full range of remedial and support services, including complimentary work class digital learning, with teachers given resources to empower them to support children's needs holistically and bring them back on track.

School closures during COVID-19 pandemic affected teachers and changed their role significantly many early childhood education (ECE) teachers were engaged in children's early learning during school closure through communication with their parents and families in Montserrado County.

It was recorded that, by using mobile phone surveys and key informant interviews, it investigate the support pre-primary teachers received during school closures and how they were able to support children's home based learning and prepare for school reopening.

Many teachers were in contact with children and families during school closure.....

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