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# Liberia Girls' Opportunities to Access Learning (GOAL) Plus Project Final Report



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# **Liberia Girls' Opportunities to Access Learning (GOAL) Plus Project**

## **Final Report**

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American Institutes for Research

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The author's views expressed in this document do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government.

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## Acronyms

AIR	American Institutes for Research
ASRH	Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health
AYP	Advancing Youth Project
CEC	Community Education Counselor
CEO	County Education Officer
DEO	District Education Officer
DQA	Data Quality Assessment
EAC	Qatar Education a Child Foundation
ESDC	Education Sector Development Committee
EVD	Ebola Virus Disease
FAWE	Forum for African Women Educationalists
GAP	Girls Assistance Package
GBV	Gender-based Violence
GED	Girls' Education Division
GOAL	Girls' Opportunities to Access Learning
GRP	Gender Responsive Pedagogy
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
L-MEP	Liberia Monitoring and Evaluation Program
LTTP	Liberia Teacher Training Program
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MOE	Ministry of Education
NGO	Non-governmental organization
PMP	Performance Monitoring Plan
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
SEA	Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
SGBV	School Gender Based Violence
SIP	School Improvement Plan
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infection
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Program
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USD	United States Dollar
WASH	Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene

## I. Executive Summary

The Girls' Opportunities to Access Learning (GOAL) Plus project was a 2.3 year<sup>1</sup> United States Agency for International Development (USAID)-supported activity implemented by a partnership comprised of the American Institutes for Research (AIR) and the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) Liberia. The GOAL Plus project built on the success of the previous Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC)-USAID/GOAL project to improve primary school girls' enrollment, attendance, retention, and completion in 60 schools in Bong, Lofa, and Grand Bassa counties. To this end, GOAL Plus provided: (1) a scholarship program and associated activities to improve girls' access; (2) Parent Teacher Association (PTA) capacity building and community grants to improve the learning environments of schools; (3) an outreach awareness campaign to create support among parents and communities for girls' education and appropriate age enrollment<sup>2</sup>; (4) support to the Ministry of Education (MOE) on topics related to girls' education; and (5) capacity building support to FAWE to strengthen their finance, administration, logistics, and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) activities. Research and evaluation generated evidence concerning the performance of key interventions and issues that impact girls' success in education informed the policy dialogue and programming related to girls' education.

GOAL Plus continued the work of GOAL under the USAID Results Framework. The Development Objective was *Better Educated Liberians* as defined in the USAID/Liberia 2010 Country Development Cooperation Strategy.<sup>3</sup> The primary Mission level Intermediate Results (IR) that GOAL Plus fulfills are:

- IR 4.1: Improved Basic Education Opportunities; and
- Sub IR 4.1.2: Increased Equitable Access

GOAL Plus also contributes to:

- IR1: Increased Quality of Basic and Higher Education; and
- IR3: Strengthened Enabling Environment for Basic and Higher Education

GOAL Plus was largely successful in meeting its targets. By the end of the project, 7,752 girls were enrolled at schools benefitting from GOAL Plus interventions, up from 6,097 girls enrolled in 2014. Girls' attendance in GOAL Plus-supported schools rose from 66% in 2014 to 72% in 2015. Three hundred fifty six girls went on from GOAL Plus schools to enroll in 7<sup>th</sup> grade. Over the life of the project, GOAL Plus distributed 20,427 scholarship packages, 1,815 textbooks, and 27,777 reading books.

GOAL Plus conducted research to examine the effects of the project's interventions on girls' education, as well as communities' ability to recover from the EVD epidemic. A quantitative analysis of enrollment, attendance, completion, and promotion data found that schools that received additional services under GOAL Plus improved these outcomes for

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<sup>1</sup> GOAL Plus received a no-cost extension of four months.

<sup>2</sup> To address the high proportion of overage students in the primary school grades.

<sup>3</sup> USAID. (2010). *Country development cooperation strategy: Liberia, 2013–2017*. Retrieved from <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1870/liberia-cdcs.pdf>



girls at those schools. Schools that had not received supports under the previous GOAL program showed the greatest gains in outcomes—as they saw the greatest change in the supports they were receiving—whereas schools that had received scholarship support under GOAL and received grant support under GOAL Plus showed smallest gains.

An important finding is that the gains in student outcomes that were realized before the outbreak of EVD were sustained once schools reopened and were not lost as a result of the outbreak. Enrollment and attendance for both girls and boys were as high as they were before the outbreak for most (about 75 percent) of the schools included in GOAL Plus. The most noticeable increases in enrollment of girls relative to boys were at schools that received more supports under GOAL Plus than they had under GOAL, as would be expected. Growth in the attendance followed similar patterns. Completion of grade improved more for girls than for boys, and increases in completion for girls relative to boys were observed in all types of schools other than those which had provided the most comprehensive package of supports under GOAL. Promotion data were very similar to completion data. The gender gap, or the gap in outcomes between girls and boys, decreased for most grades and most outcomes. The gap narrowed most at the schools that received the largest increase in supports from GOAL to GOAL Plus, supporting the association between GOAL Plus supports and improved students' outcomes.

In addition to examining the impact of GOAL Plus on student outcomes at the school and grade level, we also examined the change in school characteristics, specifically physical condition of the school and availability and quality of school water and hygiene infrastructure. Most schools appeared to have improved school conditions over the period covered by GOAL Plus, with the largest changes at the comparison schools under GOAL that had not previously received supports.

Qualitative research identified key gaps that hindered students' reenrollment after the EVD epidemic, including damage to school infrastructure, inconsistently implemented health protocols, financial constraints, the transformation of social norms, and a continued fear of EVD. Factors that helped school communities build resiliency and recover included (1) GOAL Plus interventions that provided a mechanism through which the community organized disaster recovery efforts; (2) government-mandated health protocols that allayed fears about returning to school; and (3) community members who valued education enough to contribute their time, labor, and money to repair schools and disseminate information about school reopenings.

The lessons learned from implementing GOAL Plus interventions during an epidemic can be used to facilitate meaningful change in other countries that have experienced similar external public health related challenges to an education system.

GOAL Plus provided its final supports to the 60 participating schools in December 2015. At that time, GOAL Plus staff held closeout meetings with the schools and PTAs to set the stage for PTAs to take ownership of their school improvement plans while maintaining quality and momentum of changes achieved under GOAL and GOAL Plus. PTAs shared what they had learned and what they plan to continue, and developed their plans for sustainable and continued school improvement without GOAL Plus.

## II. Program Description

### Introduction

The USAID/ GOAL Plus project implemented by AIR and FAWE Liberia began operations in September 2013 with a two year period of performance through October 2015. In the first year of the project, GOAL Plus supported 60 schools in Grand Bassa, Bong, and Lofa, increased its engagement with the Ministry of Education (MOE) at each level, confirmed its research agenda, and worked more closely with FAWE on operational capacity development.

The second year of GOAL Plus was designed to further solidify these components for continued improvements in girls' opportunities to access learning. However, the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) outbreak in 2014 required a complete response from the Government of Liberia (GOL), including indefinite closure of the schools by August 2014, while a skeletal staff at the MOE continued to plan and organize with support from donor and implementing partners. While schools were closed, GOAL Plus staff continued preparations for schools' re-opening, such as procurement and readying of the scholarship packages and the back-to-school/appropriate age enrollment campaign messages and materials, as well as participating in MOE technical working groups to develop and implement the MOE's Emergency Response Plan and the GOAL Plus role within the plan.

As conditions improved in the country over late 2014 and early 2015, GOAL Plus staff visited project-supported schools to assess conditions in each location and to re-engage with communities, school leaders, and PTAs. The results were promising and the project re-engaged with schools to provide its program supports as schools re-opened in February and March 2015. The 2014-2015 school year ended in July after only a few months of instruction.

Given the short school year, GOAL Plus received a four-month, no-cost extension until February 2016 to support students' re-enrollment in the following semester, in August 2015. This allowed sufficient time for the completion of all project activities given the additional semester of support, including final school data collection, analysis and reporting; presentation to the Ministry of Education, USAID/Liberia and other project stakeholders; the closure of the field office; and the final financial and programmatic reporting.

#### A. Scholarship Program and Associated Activities to Improve Girls' Access

At the beginning of GOAL Plus, the project renewed the relationship with 40 schools that had received supports from the GOAL project. GOAL Plus also introduced the support program to 20 schools that had not had GOAL supports via community meetings. The 40 original GOAL schools that received the separate intervention models under GOAL were introduced to the whole package of interventions to be provided under GOAL Plus. Agreements were signed with these schools for two years of GOAL Plus assistance to support girls' education. The project continued to develop these relationships throughout the period of performance. At the outset of the project, one school was dropped from the original 40 GOAL- supported schools for a demonstrated lack of commitment and a new school was added in its place.

### Girls Assistance Packages

The first activity after the signing of the school agreements in 2013 was the procurement and distribution of scholarship packages and teachers' kits. Girls enrolled in grades 1 to 6 continued to receive in-kind Girls Assistance Packages (GAP, also known as scholarships), and GOAL Plus reimbursed their school-related fees (actual amount or up to the limit of USD 5.00 at a public school and USD 15.00 at a community school as prescribed by the MOE) in February 2014 after confirmation of enrollment. The full scholarship package contains a uniform, a book bag, school supplies, and basic hygiene items. Principals were advised of the January distribution of school fees and uniforms and agreed not to turn any girl students away in the absence of these before the GOAL Plus distribution.

In March 2014 the team distributed second semester scholarship packages to 6,073 girls including uniforms (measurements were taken previously), school supplies, and basic hygiene items. GOAL Plus also paid fees for the second semester of the school year for 5,973 eligible girl students. GOAL Plus worked with school administrations and PTAs to establish and use their bank accounts for transfer of the fees payments, although some schools had difficulties due to banking fee requirements.

Along with the scholarship packages, GOAL Plus provided a basic teacher's kit to all teachers in the pre-primary and primary school grades at the beginning of each semester. The teacher's kit included a book bag with a lantern and batteries for teachers to work on lesson plans and correct homework at night, lesson planning books, chalk, copybooks, pens, and pencils. GOAL Plus also distributed a complete set of textbooks for each grade and blackboard paint to all schools to enhance classroom teaching practices during the September 2013 re-introduction of GOAL Plus to schools described above.

**Figure 1: Number of Students and Teachers Receiving Scholarship Packages & Teachers' Kits in GOAL-Plus Supported Schools (Semester I, 2013-2014)**

County	Scholarship Packages	Teachers Support Kits		
	No. of Grades 1-6 girls receiving packages	Male	Female	Total
Grand Bassa	2,439	134	38	172
Bong	1,335	162	13	175
Lofa	2,263	146	9	155
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,037</b>	<b>442</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>502</b>

**Figure 2: Administrative Supplies to 60 GOAL-Plus Supported Schools (Semester I, 2013-2014)**

County	Blackboard Paint (pcs)	Plan book (pcs)	Dusters (pcs)	Pens (red+blue)	Teachers' Bag (pcs)	Ledger (pcs)	Batteries (pcks)	Lamps (pcs)	Chalk (bxs)
Grand Bassa	126	344	126	1,032	172	172	172	172	126
Bong	168	350	168	1,050	175	175	175	175	168
Lofa	126	310	126	930	155	155	155	155	126
<b>Total</b>	<b>420</b>	<b>1,004</b>	<b>420</b>	<b>3,012</b>	<b>502</b>	<b>502</b>	<b>502</b>	<b>502</b>	<b>420</b>

No materials distribution took place when the school term beginning August 2014 was canceled due to the Ebola outbreak. In January 2015, as schools prepared for reopening in February, GOAL Plus completed the procurement and preparation of the scholarship packages and teachers' kits and school supplies to be distributed to all 60 schools. In preparation, an assessment visit was made in February, after the height of the EVD crisis, to determine enrollment figures and examine the condition of the warehouses after they were left unattended during the school closure.

Based on the data collected, the scholarship items were purchased, delivered, packaged per school, and stored in a warehouse in Monrovia until it was time for distribution when they were shipped to the county warehouses. All girl students were measured and uniforms were especially tailored for GOAL Plus, assuring that the girls received the appropriate uniforms for their particular schools. From March to April 2015, these in-kind scholarship packages, which included a uniform, a book bag, school supplies, and basic hygiene items were distributed to 6,508 girls enrolled in grades 1 to 6, and to 134 appropriate-age boys in grade 1.<sup>4</sup>

**Figure 3: Summary of scholarship packages and teaching/learning materials distributed in March 2015**

County	No. of Students Served		No. of Teachers Served		
	Girl 1-6	Appropriate age boy grade 1	Male	Female	Total
Grand Bassa	2426	13	153	67	220
Bong	1567	26	170	29	199
Lofa	2515	95	146	25	171
<b>Total</b>	<b>6508</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>469</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>590</b>

GOAL Plus also paid for school-related fees after confirmation of enrollment numbers, reimbursing schools for a total of US\$35,748.51. While payments varied from school to school, on average GOAL Plus paid US\$6.00 on behalf of each child to cover mandatory fees for PTA, school maintenance, physical education T-shirts, sports activities, student handbooks, report cards, and grade sheets. The GAP payment took place two to three weeks after the in-kind distribution so that enrollment rosters could be verified and fee amounts confirmed.

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<sup>4</sup> That is, boys enrolled in grade 1 who were the appropriate age for grade one.



*Two primary school girls sign for their Girls` Assistance Package (GAP)*

GOAL Plus had originally planned to have one scholarship distribution per academic semester, or twice a year. However, schools did not reopen in September 2014 due to EVD and only re-opened in February and March 2015. The MOE decided to curtail the year after one semester and ended it in July 2015. Therefore, with only one semester in this truncated academic year, GOAL Plus distributed one semester of GAP packages and fees payment rather than its usual two per year.

In 2014, Mrs. Sulenteh, the wife of the Liberian Ambassador to the United States, served as a role model for girls and their parents by telling her own life story growing up in Liberia, in a set of videos shown in Grand Bassa County. In 2015, Mrs. Sulenteh wrote two letters encouraging girls to attend and stay in school, which were distributed to students in March 2015 during the scholarship distribution and in August 2015.

Along with the scholarship packages, GOAL Plus provided a basic teacher's kit to all teachers in the primary school grades at the beginning of each semester. The teacher's kit included a lantern and batteries for teachers to work on lesson plans and correct homework at night, lesson planning books, chalk, blackboard paint, copybooks, pens, and pencils. All teachers received a book bag with basic supplies. Pre-primary teachers, who are predominately women while other teachers are mostly men, also received teachers' kits during the distribution to support females in the teaching field. In the second year of the project, 590 teachers received the scholarship packages/teaching and learning materials at the 60 GOAL Plus supported schools (Figure 3).



*USAID Education Team Leader delivers GAP to a primary school girl*

USAID/Liberia Education Team Leader and Education Specialist, Patrick White and Miriam White, respectively, as well as the GOAL Plus Home Office Project Manager, Matthew Murray and COP, Leesa Kaplan, participated in the distribution at David Fejue Public School (incidentally, constructed by the US Government in 1964), handing out scholarship items to the girls and interacting with the students, teachers, principals, parents and county education officers. Ms. White also traveled with the GOAL Plus distribution teams to other schools in both Bong and Lofa. The USAID/Liberia Deputy Team Leader, Simone Brown, also visited two GOAL Plus schools in Lofa County, Bokeza Public Schools and Zuwulo Public School, during the distribution period.

### **Additional Supplies**

Through partnership with the International Book Bank (IBB), GOAL Plus provided \$400,000 worth of reading materials as mini-libraries and awards and incentives to girls and parents for achievements, including high academic performance and on time and appropriate age enrollment. These awards increased the availability of personal reading materials and at-home libraries and supplemented the early grade reading activities of the Liberia Teacher Training Program (LTTP). GOAL staff reviewed the book inventory provided by IBB and selected books that were appropriate for basic education basic subjects like reading and math as well as youth-friendly literature in English. Teachers and students benefited from the increased availability of high quality materials to supplement their classroom teaching practices for individual professional development and classroom use. GOAL Plus received a donation of 27,777 books from the IBB as part of the project's cost-share. A librarian and six students from the University of Liberia (UL) categorized the books for each GOAL Plus school, including stamping each book on its spine and front and back pages with IBB and USAID. The schools received the books in June 2014 in specially made, locking tin trunks that also served as bookshelves. When a school received its



*Students helping to stock mini-library*

trunk, it also received (1) an MOU, (2) a one-hour library training, (3) a Guide to Managing a Library, which was also provided as a handout, (4) proposed Library Rules and Regulations, and (5) a laminated inventory of the books included. The training involved discussions with 12 persons from each school including two PTA members, five teachers, two Girls' Club leaders, one mentor and two boy leaders. The training included a discussion regarding how to manage a library and the system of control. It also provided the considerations and steps involved in setting up a library if one did not exist.

After delivering 60 trunks to its project schools in 2014, GOAL Plus had one extra a mini library. The project donated this in 2015 as the "Think Trunk" or book box to Youth Exploring Solutions (YES), a not-for-profit local non-governmental organization that holds a Saturday program offering reading enrichment in three schools in Liberia. GOAL Plus also conducted a one-day training for 15 of the project volunteers, including project staff, principals, teachers, and students, on the usage and maintenance of the resource library. Topics included approaches for borrowing and returning books, the structure of a library and the maintenance, storage and safety of books. Collaboration with the YES project had begun in early 2014, prior to the outbreak of EVD in Liberia.

In addition to the regular in-kind items, GOAL Plus procured and distributed to all 60 schools equipment and materials to clean the learning environment - wheel barrow, rake, dust bin, gloves, and soap – all donated by AIR. Staff developed and delivered training messages and handouts on school cleanliness and hygiene.

Through its relationship with the USAID-funded Liberia Teacher Training Project (LTTP), GOAL Plus received a consignment of 10,146 assorted Early Grade Readers, teachers' manuals, and student activity books for reading and math and also distributed these to all 60 schools in year two.

### ***Activities to Improve Access and Girls' Academic Performance***

GOAL Plus carried out a number of activities to improve education access and the academic performance of girls with the goal of keeping girls in school by providing training, organizing clubs, offering mentoring and tutoring and other activities.

### **Award to Best Performance Girls and Age Appropriate Enrollees**

During the second semester of year one, 323 girls scored 85 percent or above in their grade point average; these girls were awarded certificates of recognition as "Best Performance." Seventy-five girls' and 35 boys' parents received certificates of recognition for enrolling their children in school at the appropriate age (age 6 or 7 for grade 1). Parents and PTA members participated in the presentation of certificates to the "Best Performance" girls and age appropriate enrollees in the schools. Key stakeholders such as District Education Officers (DEO), other parents and students, teachers, and school administrators participated in the ceremonies.

During the 2015 abbreviated academic year, GOAL Plus supported girls in various ways, with tutoring, girls’ clubs, GAP payments and scholarship materials. These project components contributed to high marks for some girls. Girls attending GOAL Plus supported schools who obtained a semester average of 85% and above were given special recognition each school semester. They received certificates and a small educational gift such as books during a public gathering with their families and the community to show appreciation for their performance. This exercise has served as a motivating force, inspiring positive competition among students and parents to achieve academically. Two hundred and forty-four girls were identified and awarded in the 2015 academic year.

**Figure 4: Number of best-performed girls in USG supported schools receiving award**

County	2014	2015
Grand Bassa	113	112
Bong	79	40
Lofa	131	92
<b>Total</b>	<b>323</b>	<b>244</b>

### Girls’ Clubs

Girls’ Clubs were established or re-established in all three counties at the beginning of the project. The girls elected their own leaders. After the completion of the Girls’ Club elections, the leaders from the clubs from all 60 project-supported schools convened for a leadership conference.

The membership of the Girls’ Clubs varied but particularly targeted girls aged 10 and above, especially older girls who are likely to drop out from school. Membership also included some girls who had dropped out of school and then returned, who in turn encouraged other dropouts to go back to school.

### Girls’ Clubs Leadership and Life skills Training

In the first year of the project, GOAL Plus trained 335 Girls’ Club Leaders for a period of four days each in the three project counties. The purpose of the Girls’ Club Leadership Training was to (1) empower the girls by building their skills to become decision makers in their school and communities; (2) to help them understand the importance of the clubs and how they can manage it in the absence of their mentors; and (3) to encourage the girls to become role models for their



peers thereby motivating other girls who are out of school to enroll again. The trainings were facilitated using the ‘Girls’ Club Handbook’, the ‘Girls’ Supervisor Six Days Training Manual’, ‘My Life! My Choice! My Future!’ and a SEA/HIV/AIDS manual produced by FAWE/Liberia in collaboration with Children in Crisis UK. During the final evaluation, many of the girls indicated that they were familiar with the topics covered during the training but the examples gave them a broader understanding of these issues. They also stated that they now know what to do if they are confronted with the issue of abuse and exploitation in their community and schools. The mentors were also pleased that these topics were



discussed and that girls participated so openly.

Shortly after the re-opening of schools after EVD in February and March 2015, the GOAL Plus Girls' Clubs were re-established in all 60 schools in the three counties, with more girls interested than ever before. The total number of Girls Club membership attending regular meetings in the second year of the project was 1,745, as detailed in the chart below. Some Girls Club activities included live drama and cultural performances during market days, home visits to girls in and out of schools, awareness talks on the importance of girls' education and meetings to discuss exploitation and harassment.

**Figure 5: Girls regularly attending GOAL Plus supported Girls Club meetings in 2015**

<b>Location</b>	<b>Total Number of Girls</b>
Lofa	561
Bong	612
Grand Bassa	572
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>1,745</b>

Annual Girls' Club Assemblies were held in each county, with a total of 402 participants, including 67 Girls' Club mentors and 335 girls. During each assembly, guest speakers related their own stories about how they managed to persevere and succeed and how other girls could follow their example. These presentations served to motivate the girls to make good decisions for their life. The Girls' Club Assemblies included competitions, in areas such as Spelling Bees, contests in Math, Social Studies, General Science, and Language Arts, and singing. Outdoor activities included games such as jumping rope, bag races, eggs race, and kick ball. Clubs presented on the successes and challenges they encountered in running their clubs. During each Girls' Club Assembly in the three counties, a winning school was recognized and given a prize of a kick ball and a ludo board. The winners were Zaggida Public School in Lofa County, William R. Tolbert Public School in Bong County, and Tubmanville Public School in Grand Bassa County.

### **Mentoring**

GOAL Plus completed the training and signing of contracts for 68 Girls' Club Mentors in the three project counties. The training was conducted in Grand Bassa, Bong and Lofa counties in the spring of 2014, bringing together Mentors from 60 schools in the three counties. The general objective of this training was to build the capacity of the female teachers and community members who are serving as Girls' Club Mentor. The specific objectives were to give guidance on:

- using the different activity books and taking responsibility as mentors/supervisors for Girls' Clubs in project schools and communities;
- meeting with parents to motivate them to support their girls to go to school;
- establishing and managing Girls' Clubs in Grand Bassa, Bong and Lofa counties;
- working with principals of schools to address issues faced by girls that might stop them from attending school.

Tips for traditional story writing were developed and shared with the FAWE Literacy Specialist. Tips focused on how the students hear stories from their elders, the steps involved in writing traditional stories and the importance of background in a traditional story, especially as it relates

to cultural history. Traditional story telling under the GOAL Plus project is intended to develop the listening, writing, and reading skills of Girls' Club members in schools. Key objectives for traditional story writing were developed and include the following:

- To motivate girls to listen to traditional stories from their parents and elders and write the stories based on their own understanding;
- To encourage reading comprehension and improve girls' writing skills;
- To connect community members to girls' learning activities; and
- To keep traditional stories alive with the younger generations.

A sample of a traditional story was developed as a model for the students to see and relate to as they develop their own stories from their parents and elders in their communities. The theme of the sample story is about a greedy spider and an old woman, the moral of which is to accept yourself as you are, rather than to be pretentious.

GOAL Plus also piloted the video from Mrs. Sulunteh described in the GAP section above with Girls' Clubs and parents to encourage them in their education and to complete their schooling. Girls and their parents received the video with enthusiasm and committed to themselves to pursuing further education.

**Girls Club Mentor Refresher Training.** After schools re-opened in February and March 2015, GOAL Plus conducted a refresher training for 67 Girls Club Mentors in all 60 project schools. The training was aimed at enhancing and building the capacity of the female teachers and community members serving as Girls Club Mentors. Participants were introduced to topics included in the Girls Club Activity Books related to health, physical and psychological growth, and the overall development of the female child. Additional training content consisted of details on the purpose of forming a girls club, how to run a club in a school, the appropriate ages for club members, and various activities to carry out during club time, addressing the plight of girls. The manual was written at an appropriate level so that females with primary level education could become club mentors with basic training. The manuals included illustrations to enhance understanding of each activity.

All of the sessions during the trainings were held in a participatory manner, giving the mentors the opportunity to brainstorm and reflect. Training methodology included group work, case studies, role play activities, and group presentations.

**Figure 6: Girls Club mentors trained in Year Two**

Location	Total Number of Mentors (all female)
Lofa	20
Bong	24
Grand Bassa	23
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>67</b>

During GOAL Plus visits to the communities, girls club members that were interviewed expressed that the support they received from their mentors positively impacted their lives and that they are using their skills to help other girls in their communities in becoming good role models and taking on leadership responsibilities. They also said that the younger girls in the clubs are changing their behavior and are becoming self-reliant in their schools and communities.

## Tutoring

At the beginning of the project, staff identified tutors from the pools of teachers already teaching in the schools as well as follow-up with tutors who previously served in the GOAL project schools. In cases where a previously serving tutor was transferred or otherwise left the school, he or she was replaced. Under GOAL Plus, only students faced with difficulties in meeting the right marks were encouraged to attend the tutoring class, which focused on four core subjects, math, English, science and social studies.

Sixty tutors from the three GOAL Plus project counties attended a training in year one which lasted for two days in each county. The training was based on information gathered from the Girl's Club Handbook, detailing the purpose of tutoring classes and how to establish them in the clubs, and the roles and responsibilities of the parents, mentors, principals and the tutors themselves. It also highlights the expected characteristics and behavior of the girls and teachers.

The goal of these interactive training sessions was to strengthen the capacity of the tutors and to assess how they were conducting their classes. In each training, a pre-test was conducted to identify how well the tutors understood the tutoring program and whether they were liaising with the principal and mentors in running the classes. The pre-test results indicated that the majority of the tutors were conducting the classes according to the way they were designed.

During each of the interactive and participatory training sessions, discussions included the timing of the tutoring classes, and the manner in which principals, mentors, and parents were involved in them. The tutors indicated that the class schedules were planned with the principals and with some of the parents and mentors. The tutors also commented that some mentors made sure that girls who were not performing well were part of the classes and attended every session.

No tutoring was held while schools were closed, and activities resumed after the first grading period in 2015. Many of the tutors from year one continued to participate in year two. All 64 tutors for year two were trained again to provide support to the girls after classroom hours.

Tutorial classes help students to understand their current lessons better and also provide guidance on the overall improvement of academic skills with the aim of eventually having the girls do well without additional tutorial support.

As shown below, 1,273 girls attended the tutorial classes in year two.

**Figure 7: Girls participating in tutorial classes**

Location	Total Female
Lofa	418
Bong	477
Grand Bassa	378
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>1273</b>

## Gender Responsive Pedagogy

Gender Responsive Pedagogy (GRP) training for teachers in GOAL Plus supported schools was intended to improve the quality of education. GRP training was aimed at providing classroom teachers, who are predominantly male, with the knowledge, skills and attitudes to create a gender-friendly teaching and learning environment for girls and boys. The preceding GOAL project conducted GRP training for teachers in 40 schools. GOAL Plus introduced the four-day GRP training to the 20 schools that did not receive supports under GOAL, as shown in Figure 8 below.

**Figure 8: Gender responsive pedagogy training participants**

Location	No. of schools	Female	Male	Total
Lofa	6	4	65	66
Bong	8	2	64	69
Grand Bassa	6	4	45	49
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>184</b>

Because teachers are central to both teaching and learning processes, their understanding and awareness of gender responsiveness is key to the effective participation of the girls and boys in the classroom. Gender responsive teachers understand and respond to the specific needs of girls and boys by being aware of the different psychological and physical maturation issues, by encouraging equal participation and involvement of boys and girls in class activities and by having the same expectations from the girls as they do for the boys.

#### **Comments from participating teachers:**

- From now on, I will always make girls participate in all activities in class.
- This GRP will really be useful in my school.
- I never knew the difference between gender and sex until I sat in the GRP workshop.
- When I go back to my school, I will change my teaching approach towards students by giving time for feedbacks and time off to attend to both girls and boys.
- I will always be mindful of the language I use in class: not to use bad language on students to discourage them.
- I will work with other teachers in my school to make sure that girls do not drop out.
- In making the school's rules and regulations, I will involve both girls and boys to participate.
- I will try in my own weak way as Principal of my school to provide a safe and healthy environment for all students, especially girls.
- The GRP Training, when practiced, will make me a professional teacher
- We know the importance of female teachers. From this workshop, we will encourage females to join the teaching field.

#### **Comments from a District Education Officer following the training :**

“Many times, trainings are carried out but this GRP surpassed them all. When I am visiting schools, I would like to see a gender responsive school and teachers who will use all the skills and techniques acquired from this training. This training will only have impact if we start to practice what we have learned.”



*Primary school girls that received GOAL Plus GAP*

As a result of the GRP training, GOAL Plus field staff has witnessed that teachers have already embarked on developing gender responsive lesson plans and that they continue to have conversations about creating a girl friendly classroom environment, for example, by encouraging girls to speak in class. GOAL Plus has suggest to the Ministry of Education that GRP training be part of the teacher training program.

### **Gender Based Violence (GBV) and the Community Education Counselor**

Gender-based Violence (GBV) was actively used as a tool of war during the 14-year civil war as social order broke apart. A lingering acceptance of GBV as a part of life for many young people continues to disrupt young people’s safe access to education and their well-being and resilience needed for academic success. GOAL Plus introduced a role for counseling for GBV prevention and response as part of a partnership with the MOE, to support girls’ access and success in primary school. As GOAL Plus better understood the sensitivity of the GBV prevention and response issues at the community level, and the trauma that has been effected on many communities by the Ebola crisis, the role for a “Community Education Counselor” was developed and introduced at the school-community level to complement and link with the MOE’s initiative to develop a role for “Gender Focal Persons” at the District and County Levels and mobilization for the re-opening of schools. GOAL Plus and the MOE developed these roles to activate the revised Policy on Girls’ Education (2013) and the Teachers’ and Administrators’ Code of Conduct (2014).

In year one, GOAL Plus staff conducted a series of consultations to develop the approach and role. GOAL Plus worked with a GBV Consultant to research the problem and develop training materials

that would help in the preparation of community volunteers who could possibly assist in dealing with issues as they arise after receiving the training. The consultant conducted a survey on GBV in six project schools and communities, to analyze the data, and use it in the development and implementation of a Training of Trainers workshop, based in part on the USAID Doorways program. Participants from the Training of Trainers workshop in turn trained the selected 65 Community Education Counselors in all three counties (23 from Bong, 22 from Grand Bassa, and 20 from Lofa Counties). Training topics included: Definition of key gender terms, GBV evidence in the communities, CEC response to incidences of violence and abuse to children in schools and communities, causes and consequences of GBV, addressing perpetrators, GBV as a violation of human right, prevention strategies, confidentiality and respect, and the role of community stakeholders.

**Figure 9: Number of Community Education Counselors trained by county**

County	Number Trained
Bong	23
Grand Bassa	22
Lofa	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>65</b>

In coordination with the GOAL Plus team, the consultant developed a Community Education Counselors' (CEC) Handbook on Gender Based Violence Prevention and Response which can be used a guide for the CECs in the field.

Participants were unmistakably motivated and asked questions to clarify doubts on how to follow cases that occur in their homes, schools and communities, especially since they have never known the steps to take in such cases in the past. Armed with knowledge on how to recognize symptoms of a victim and to try and help him or her, the CECs returned to their respective communities to help address GBV-related barriers that have prevented girls' enrollment, retention and completion of primary education in local schools.

When they returned to their communities, GOAL Plus followed up by putting together a CEC startup kit for each counselor, which contains the counselor training handbooks, training certificates, flashlights, batteries, notebooks, pen and pencils, megaphones, box files, phones, plaster folders, and backpacks.

## B. Outreach Awareness and Community Mobilization

To support and increase enrollment, attendance, retention and promotion rates of girls in primary schools, the team conducted a number of activities.

### *Back to School Campaign*

Due to the long civil war in Liberia, an entire generation of children were unable to attend school. The result today is that there are students attending first grade who range anywhere from 6 to 20 years of age, and there is no longer any established expectation or norm for a child to enter first grade at the appropriate age of 6 or 7. This wide age range understandably affects teaching and learning and leads to a greater dropout rate, especially among girls.

In August 2013, the MOE, with support from MCC GOAL, conducted an enrollment campaign that asked parents to enroll their child in school at the right age – and at the right time. GOAL Plus continued that effort with its Back-to-School Campaign on the theme “*Keep Winning at age 6 for grade 1,*” again encouraging parents to have their children start school at the right age. In order to increase awareness at the national level, GOAL Plus distributed assorted materials with this campaign message in the three counties and in Monrovia. The materials included postcards, stickers, calendars, t-shirts, posters and billboards in the counties with photos of prominent local Liberian women. Two more billboards were maintained in Monrovia to promote the appropriate age enrollment campaign. The campaign also included messages in English and the local languages broadcast on national and local radio stations in the three counties and Monrovia.

Just after the major campaign efforts, GOAL Plus made a visit to the Liberia Broadcasting System (LBS) to show its appreciation to the management for its support in the “Starting School at the Right Age” campaign. Afterwards, on March 3 – 4, 2015, the LBS prime time national radio and television news aired a 60-second spot featuring the USAID-funded GOAL Plus project and promoted its objectives to increase girls’ access, retention and completion rates in 60 primary schools in Bassa, Bong and Lofa counties. The LBS Deputy Director General, Patrick Hannoni, thanked the GOAL Plus team for working to promote education for girls in Liberia, something he referred to as the bedrock for development.

### **Radio Talk Shows**

In order to increase coverage of the campaign, GOAL Plus organized and conducted one radio talk show on April 3, 2015 on the national radio station of the Liberia Broadcasting System. The Director for Girls Education at the Ministry of Education was co-host with the GOAL Plus Gender and Education Specialist for an hour-long program. This medium was used to convey the campaign’s message to a wide audience. The presenters discussed the many advantages of enrolling girls in school and having them stay in school – advantages not only to the girls themselves but to the entire family and community. ELBC is the nation’s largest media company with the widest national coverage and a listening audience in rural areas.

### **Town Hall Meetings**

Another approach to stress the importance of girls’ education has been through town hall meetings. GOAL Plus took the lead in holding town hall meetings in the school communities at various times throughout the year. Parents, students, other family and community members, school and other local government administrators attended the meetings. GOAL Plus prepared talking points to lead community discussions on enrollment and attendance in school. The team provided answers to the many objections stated by parents for not registering their children in school or not sending them to school at the right age. For example, some parents said that schools are too far away; others said the high costs of PTA and other fees prevent them from registering their children. Some said that their children are too small and/or too young to enroll in school even though in some cases some children are more than 10 years of age and have never sat in classrooms. After stating all these objections by parents, the team began the discussion on the importance of girls’ education by asking parents who they think will take care of them when they are old. The parents answered their children. The team discussed with parents the benefits of educating girls and boys as well.

The mobilization team provided specific and targeted enrollment and retention campaign messages to parents that might help to motivate them in registering their children in school and sending them

to school at the right age. Many parents at the end of the town hall meetings made commitments to register their children in school and continue to support them.

#### *Additional Campaign Messages for the 2015-2016 School Year*

Just as schools were opening again in September 2015, GOAL Plus returned to the field to promote the enrollment of girls. Town hall meetings were held to encourage parents to enroll their children, especially girls. Town criers were contracted to spread messages on school enrollment and attendance at market places, rock crushing sites and mines, targeting parents whose children are not registered and/or not usually attending school. GOAL Plus also aired live messages on girls' enrollment, attendance and the benefits of girls education on five different community radio stations: Radio Gbehzon and Radio Wee in Grand Bassa, Radio Life in Lofa, and on Radio Gbartata and Radio Zota in Bong. Key discussion points included addressing parents concern of cost, distance and the right age to begin school. During the talk show, GOAL Plus staff stressed the need for parents who have not registered their children in school to begin registering their children at the right age. Parents were advised not to wait until it is too late.

### C. Parent Teacher Association (PTA) Capacity Building School Improvement Grants

#### **PTA Grants**

A substantial component of the GOAL Plus project was to build the capacity of the PTAs to improve the learning environment.

**2014 PTA School Improvement Grants** - During the first year of the project, thirty-one (31) PTAs that did not previously receive support from the GOAL project received first-time school improvement grants in the amount of \$1000 under GOAL Plus. A substantial component of the GOAL Plus project was to build the capacity of the PTAs to improve the learning environment, and to that end, PTAs that did not previously receive support from the GOAL project were assessed on their current capacities in order to receive tailored training, onsite technical assistance, peer mentoring, and participation in experience-sharing workshops. The PTAs were provided with opportunities to engage in *learning by doing* through school improvement project implementation and other activities. Trainings included basic operations, SIP development, grant proposal writing, financial management, and project implementation as well as strategies to monitor student and teacher attendance. Thirty-one (31) school PTAs across six districts in the three counties that were eligible to receive first-time school improvement grants assistance were assessed. Two-day proposal development trainings for school improvement grants were held for these 31 PTAs to assist the PTA members in accessing school improvement grants to make improvements to their schools with an expected positive effect on girls' enrollments, retention, and promotion rates. The two-day trainings concentrated on the relationship of grants to the School Improvement Plans (SIP) that they developed in the previous quarter and the basics of financial management and grant project implementation, including how to open PTA bank accounts for the grant fund transfer and the expected type and level of community contribution, e.g., 15-20% of the total amount of the grant.



**Figure 10: PTA Proposal Development Training Participants in 2014**

County	No. of Training	Number of Participants		County Total
		Male	Female	
Bong	1	45	7	52
Grand Bassa	1	26	8	34
Lofa	1	31	5	36
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>122</b>

**Figure 11: Number of participants in the grants financial and management training workshops in 2014**

County	Number of participants		County Total
	Females	Males	
Bong	7	45	52
Grand Bassa	5	31	36
Lofa	5	30	35
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>123</b>

GOAL Plus' first phase of school improvement grants, US\$500 of grant support per school, was deposited in the schools' PTA bank accounts in Grand Bassa and Bong. In Lofa, some schools had difficulties with opening bank accounts and received checks.

As part of the grant implementation process, the Community Mobilization and Grant Team visited 31 grant implementing schools in the GOAL Plus project Counties. The purpose of the trip was to host community resource mobilization meetings with the school communities that were implementing grants in Year 1 of the GOAL Plus Project. The team first contacted the County Education Officers (CEO) or District Education Officers (DEO) depending on availability. The purpose of these county or district meetings was to remind the CEOs and DEOs about the rollout of the community mobilization and grant activities. The Small Grants Manager provided an overview of the grant program and described the status of the grant process. The Community Mobilization and Scholarship Officer provided a brief summary of the scholarship and community mobilization components of the project. In all cases, the district or county representative promised support.

During the community mobilization and grant meetings, the roles and responsibilities of the DEOs, CEOs, PTAs' leadership, parents, girls and boys, district authorities, clan authorities, town chiefs, elders, and all other stakeholders in the project were clearly defined. This activity provided a comprehensive description for everyone involved with the GOAL Plus project. The meetings were interactive whereby the participants made suggestions, provided comments and made meaningful decisions. All of the communities agreed in principle to work with the PTA sub-committees on the grant project implementation. The participants in the meetings expressed appreciation for the process and committed themselves to cooperating with the PTAs and school administration to complete this first half of the school improvement project work in the allotted time frame, i.e., three weeks. Some community leaders committed to ensuring that the school development project would be implemented by all community members through collective efforts, since all of the community will benefit from better schools where more children attend and complete their education. In some cases, participants requested that follow-up meetings be held to ascertain the community's cooperation in the process. The project assured them that this was already in the plans.

**Students.** The team invited students during the evening and after school hours to attend the community meetings in Grand Bassa, Lofa, and Bong Counties. The students were invited to participate in the meetings and to serve as a reminder to their parents whenever their parents became lax in making their contributions to the grant work in the community. Students were also told to serve as role models in the community by conducting themselves well at all times.

**Outcomes.** All of the PTA chairpersons and principals indicated that the meetings were worthwhile, in part because they provided clarification and definitions to the roles and responsibilities of each project stakeholder in the implementation of the grant. Furthermore, they expressed their appreciation that necessary information was passed on to the community from the GOAL Plus grant trainings, such as the community’s responsibility for identifying the workforce for the grant work; to pay for the workmanship, and the importance of mobilizing local resources. The community leadership also embraced the idea of having this important meeting at the community level and would like GOAL Plus to continue providing similar meetings in the future.



*One of the new floors  
Willie C. Peters Community School, Buchanan, Grand Bassa*



*The Principal supervising the grant work*

Attendance at the community resource mobilization meetings across the three counties (Bong, Grand Bassa, and Lofa) was 993 participants, shown in Figure 12.

**Figure 12: Attendance at Community Resource Mobilization Meetings**

County	Male	Female	Total
Bong	291	210	501
Grand Bassa	99	108	207
Lofa	152	133	285
<b>Total</b>	<b>542</b>	<b>451</b>	<b>993</b>

**Delayed Implementation Due to School Closure.** With the onset of the EVD crisis and the continued closure of schools, the implementation of some grant-funded work was delayed. Some PTAs had not even withdrawn the funds from their bank accounts; the principals of the schools that did withdraw the funds, kept them secure until able to use them. Though schools had not officially opened, some PTAs were able to initiate their projects, taking great care as they worked in the vacant schools. When the schools re-opened in February and March 2015, all 31 PTAs were implementing their projects using the funds and the training that they had already received.

As soon as schools were back in session in February 2015, the GOAL Plus team returned to the field to carry out experience sharing meetings for the 59 PTAs and to support the 31 of these schools as they resumed the implementation of their grants.

Project staff brought together representatives from all schools to share their experience with grants. An important finding of these meetings was that PTAs without the 2014 grants still developed School Improvement Plans and carried out successful projects even in the absence of GOAL Plus funding. Some sought funds elsewhere; others found support within the community itself. This is evidence that the training GOAL Plus conducted on School Improvement Plans, PTA Leadership and Management resulted in schools working independently.

In the months that followed, the 31 PTAs completed their grant-funded projects and the close-out for 2014 school improvement grants was concluded in June 2015, when all 31 schools submitted their financial and narrative reports.

**2015 PTA Grants.** In May 2015, GOAL Plus announced to all 59 PTAs the beginning of the application process for the 2015 school improvement grant proposals. All PTAs were provided technical assistance on the application requirements and procedures. This year, due to the limited number of months to implement the grants, GOAL Plus added new criteria for selection. Only PTAs which were able to complete their previous grants in three months or less were eligible for grants in the second round.

Fifty-nine proposals were received for the Year Two School Improvement Grants. Each proposal package included the application, past grant financial reports, records from each school and the School Improvement Plan. Three representatives from the Ministry of Education Girls' Education Division and the PTA Department and three GOAL Plus staff members participated in the competitive review and selection process. The committee met on June 5, 2015 to review all proposals and select the successful applications.

The committee reviewed all PTA proposals and provided a score based on the evaluation criteria. Proposals were examined in terms of the relevance for enrollment, retention and completion rate of primary school girls in all schools. The committee assessed the feasibility of the project submitted, looking at cost, cost share, human resources, and time for completion. Also considered was the past grant implementation of the schools (from GOAL and GOAL Plus) and the completion time required.

After this rigorous competitive process, school improvement grants were awarded to 21 schools. Before schools were awarded the school improvement grants, each school signed an agreement letter which detailed the commitment between GOAL Plus and the PTA in support of the school improvement project. It indicated the specific GOAL Plus contribution in cash value for the school improvement project as well as the cash or in-kind contribution from the PTA and community. The school improvement grant was disbursed in two installments to the schools. The first installment was made to all 21 schools and the second installment was made after a mid-term review to verify that the first installment was used for the intended purpose, and all financial reports of the first installment are liquidated by the schools. School improvement grants in Grand Bassa and Bong schools were deposited in PTA accounts and schools in Lofa school improvement grants were made through bank transfer.

### *PTA Strengthening*

**PTA Strengthening.** The GOAL Plus community mobilization and grants team conducted a three day training in 2014 for five PTAs leaders from each of the 31 new GOAL Plus schools targeted to receive school improvement grants based on information learned from the PTA pre- assessment. The training focused on PTAs becoming aware of their roles and responsibilities and at the same time acquiring basic knowledge and skills in developing SIPs. The SIPs were developed to create a supportive learning environment for girls (and boys) and help parents to become more involved in overcoming obstacles and barriers that keep children, especially girls, from enrolling, attending, and completing school.

During the initial PTA training, two PTA strengthening modules were used that included the MOE PTA Operational Training Module and the GOAL Plus SIP training module. The MOE PTA training module spells out the roles and responsibilities of the PTA, and their leadership structure, along with their day-to-day operational function in the school. The SIP training module operationalizes the MOE module by applying PTA operations to planning for school support. This PTA training was conducted jointly by AIR and FAWE staff.

The topics included PTA organization, structure and function, leadership, formation of PTAs sub-committees, team and relationship building, advocacy by the PTA, planning and conducting PTA meetings, advocacy and resource mobilization, conflict management, PTA by-laws and constitution, and promoting girls' education.

School Improvement Plan (SIP) training is hands-on and a part of the GOAL Plus capacity development model that helps build PTAs' knowledge and skills using existing resources to improve the school environment, expand their understanding of the use of data for decision making, and become more thoughtful about what they can do to keep girls enrolled and attending school. Based on the experience gained from the GOAL project, about 90% of SIP resources come from within the school communities.

The SIP touches on the whole school environment: academic, hygiene and sanitation, school/community relationship, the learning environment, and more. The SIP includes short, medium, and long-term activities. When PTAs identify their priority needs, they are classified by their short, medium, or long-term timeframe. Short-term priority needs are usually visible, quick win projects that motivate the PTA to do more in improving its school environment. Many short-term needs, such as fixing broken student chairs or roof repair, are implemented using GOAL Plus school improvement grants. PTA implementation of middle and long-term priority needs have tended to be based on their own resources.

School improvement planning was held in community-wide meetings with the participation of community members, parents, students, and school administrators. This participation brings about a greater understanding of issues and likelihood of change. Given the different factors that affect children's enrollment, attendance, and academic success and their decision to stay in school or drop out early, there is a greater chance that community-wide meetings will allow participants to identify and discuss what really affects students and their decision to stay or drop from school. The process also fosters wider community participation in school oversight by helping community members to observe and discuss their school's operations and progress.

PTA leaders at the training participated in group work practice sessions on how to facilitate the development of SIPs in wider community meetings in their individual school communities. They were trained on ways to identify priority needs and categorized them according to short, medium and long-term perspectives. Each school PTA leader produced a draft SIP to serve

as a guide to the school community in the development of a complete SIP, reflecting the views and aspirations of the teachers, students, school administrators, parents, and local leaders. The PTA leaders at the training reached a consensus agreement to submit their final school improvement plans no later than the second week of January, 2014. The PTA training lasted for three days: PTA roles and responsibilities for 1½ days and the SIP development session for another 1½ days. A total of 154 PTA leaders participated in the training along with six District Education Officers (DEOs) and three MOE county planning officers.

**Figure 13: Number of participants attending PTA operational training workshops by county in 2014**

County	No. of participants		Total
	Females	Male	
Bong	21	43	64
Grand Bassa	15	30	45
Lofa	18	27	45
<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>154</b>

Additionally, the GOAL Plus Community Mobilization and Grants Team provided a two-day refresher training for 29 GOAL Plus-supported PTA leaders from Lofa, Bong and Grand Bassa counties from January 20-30, 2014. The purpose of the refresher training was to reinforce and sustain PTA leaders' interest to better perform their roles and responsibilities according to MOE PTA operational policy, and to facilitate and lead the development and implementation of SIP to improve the learning environment for girls and boys in all the 60 schools. School community PTA representatives participating in the training had previously received at least one round of similar but more extensive training during the GOAL project.

### **Restructuring PTA Leadership**

PTA leadership is critical to sustaining project gains in the schools. After the Ebola crisis lessened, GOAL Plus staff noticed that PTA leadership seemed fragmented and disorganized, most likely due to a change in PTA members and school principals on account of individual and family migration and relocation. While only a few PTA members usually do the bulk of the work, the emergence of Ebola further reduced the number of people actively participating in school improvement with some PTAs neglecting their responsibilities altogether. With only a few participants, there is less community buy-in and ownership of the school improvement plan (SIP) and its implementation often resulting in delays in SIP implementation.

To motivate PTA leaders and members to continue their efforts, GOAL Plus included this topic in the Town Hall meetings to provide coaching sessions to communities on leadership knowledge and skills.

### **PTA Leadership Refresher Training**

EVD affected PTAs in late 2014, as it did all sectors of life in Liberia. Many PTA members moved from their communities, leaving a gap in PTA leadership. In some communities, new but untrained and unskilled leaders took their places. Given these circumstances, in 2015 GOAL Plus repeated cycles of PTA leadership refresher training which had been offered in the past. These trainings focused on the tools to help them to improve school management and governance, increase PTA commitment to school improvement, and help them effectively perform their duties and responsibilities as a community of practice. Training session topics include the collective development of a school improvement plan, effective communication, promotion of gender and

inclusive participation and the use of local resources for school improvements. The PTA Leadership Refresher Training was held in all three counties in May 2015. A single two-day training was conducted in each county, and each of the 59 PTAs selected five representatives to participate.

**Figure 14: Participants attending PTA Leadership Refresher Training, May 2015**

County	Number of Schools	Number of Males	Number of Females	Total Participants
Lofa	18	65	25	90
Bong	24	84	36	120
Grand Bassa	17	67	18	85
<b>Total</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>216</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>295</b>

GOAL Plus facilitators began the trainings by leading the PTAs through a self-assessment exercise using a tool developed by GOAL Plus. The assessment tool highlights several performance and measurement indicators for PTAs and participants from each school discussed their own PTA capacities. Each PTA was better able to examine their individual organizational capacity and specify practices and procedures to strengthen their organizations by identifying their starting points.

The MOE PTA Operational Manual and the GOAL Plus How-To Manual were used as facilitation guides on the following key topics.

- Encouraging and supporting girls education
- Organizing successful PTA meetings
- Participating in school improvement planning and implementation
- Mobilizing community resources for school improvement
- Practicing good governance in schools
- Forming and managing PTA sub-committees
- Increasing women`s participation in PTAs meetings

Participants discussed organizing successful PTA meetings which can lead to successful school improvement planning, implementation and resource mobilization. They came up with key motivating factors necessary to influence parents to attend PTA meetings - flexibility in meeting time and date, easily accessible venue, effective and efficient use of time, and participatory meetings which are not dominated by one or two individuals.

Participants also had a session on how to encourage and support girls` education and they identified and described four key levels which can adversely impact girls` education - the home, the school, the classroom, and the community. At the home level, girls must perform domestic duties including cooking and babysitting, are oftentimes expected to contribute financially, and can be forced into early marriages. Parents have a preference of educating their boys rather than girls, especially when parents have little money and must limit education to only certain children. In the classroom, girls, especially those overaged for their grade, are confronted with offering sex and/or money for grades, sexual harassment and bullying. At the school level, the girls are also confronted with sexual harassment and exploitation and are forced to share latrines with boys. In the community, girls are also confronted with attending the traditional society schools and traditional norms, sexually based violence and peer pressure. The PTA response to addressing these challenges was

a commitment to regularly monitor school campuses, hold open discussions with students, expose teachers and school administrators who abuse students, and support boys and girls clubs.

In-depth discussions were also held on school improvement planning and implementation, women's participation, resource mobilization, good governance and the formation of PTA sub-committees. One topic that repeatedly surfaced was the need for parents to attend PTA meetings regularly. According to one PTA leader, "When people do not come to meetings, they do not get information and they do not know what to do."

The training methodology was highly interactive using participatory approaches such as facilitator presentations, brainstorming sessions, micro teaching, discussions, feedback, and group work. At regular intervals, participants returned to plenary to share their experiences including solutions to problems discussed within small groups. Everyone was given equal opportunity to participate, to identify the problems and the conditions affecting them, and then to take the necessary actions to solve them.

### **PTA Grants Financial Management Refresher Training**

In June 2015, GOAL Plus facilitated a two-day refresher training on "School Improvement Grants Financial Management" for PTA leaders in the three counties. A total of 84 PTA leaders attended the training, four from each of the 21 schools eligible to receive school improvement grants for 2015.

The purpose of this training was to provide participants with the skills to manage the school improvement grants, utilizing the GOAL Plus PTA grant manual as a facilitation guide. This manual provides specific information to the PTAs on how to manage the grant and offers the tools needed to enhance quality and accountability of grant implementation. The manual also shares templates and forms to be used in management and reporting.

All 21 schools were previous holders of GOAL and/or GOAL Plus school improvement grants; therefore, during the refresher training, topics included addressing and resolving any past challenges. This training built upon the existing skills and knowledge of the PTAs on school improvement grants management and implementation. Key deliverables required of the PTAs include drafting and submitting a proposal that addresses school short-term needs, the timely withdrawal of grant money and its implementation, proper documentation of all financial and in-kind contributions provided by the grant and the community members, and the timely submission of all financial documents for the purchase of goods and services covered by the grant. In order to effectively and efficiently implement the school improvement grants, the facilitators highlighted the need for good communication, community participation, proper documentation, good record keeping, accountability and transparency.

### **School Progress Cards**

GOAL Plus facilitated a process called "Measuring what Schools Value" using the School Progress Card as a tool for measurement. The purpose of the School Progress Card is for the school community to assess themselves and to know exactly where they stand in terms of school management and improvement. It is a motivation tool for school improvement and gives a clearer picture to school community members on what is working and what is not. All GOAL Plus 59 school communities participated in the School Progress Card evaluation exercises, which occurred in a community-wide meeting. Participants came from the school community and included

principals, teachers, parents, students, and other community members. The School Progress Card activity was conducted in each individual school community and school community participants themselves evaluated their own school.

The School Progress Card itself is comprised of nine categories: Sanitation and Safe Drinking Water; School-Community Relations; Support for Teaching; Supportive Learning Environment; Security, Safety, and Psycho-Social Wellbeing; Recreational Activities; Healthy School Environment; School Record Keeping; and Opportunity to Learn that contribute to school improvement. Under each category, there are several indicators and each indicator received a specific score from a range of score options as agreed upon through consensus by participants at the meeting. After scoring all the indicators under each category, the sum total of the actual score of all categories was recorded as the total actual progress card score for a school community. The total actual progress card score for each school community was further associated with a particular color code. There are five color codes: red, yellow, green, purple and blue. Each color code has a specific definition and a range of score options. According to the definition of the color code, the red level is a danger zone and mark ranges from 0-50. At the red level, a school fails to maintain and promote academic excellence and a healthy learning environment. The yellow level mark ranges from 51-99. At this level, the school is slowly moving from the danger zone and has just stated understanding the concept of what it takes to create the basics for learning opportunities. A school is qualified to be at the green level if it is marked in the range from 100-139. At this level, the school PTA, parents and students understand what it takes to create the basics for opportunities to learn, but have not yet taken adequate action to bring about change. The purple level mark ranges from 140-179. At this level, schools are practicing basic hygiene, the school is receiving support from the PTA and school management is coordinated in a good manner. There is also high enrollment, attendance and completion rates of girls and boys. At the blue level, the school is promoting academic excellence and promoting healthy learning environment and is a model school. The blue level mark ranges from 180-201.

### **School Progress Card findings**

Findings from the school progress card evaluation show that none of the GOAL Plus 59 school communities in Bong, Lofa and Grand Bassa counties fall into the red or yellow categories. In Bong County, 15 schools fall in the Green Category and 9 schools fall in Purple Category. In Grand Bassa 9 schools fall in Green Category and 8 schools fall in Purple Category. In Lofa, 8 schools fall in Green Category and 10 schools fall in Purple category.

### *Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health Training*

The adolescent sexual and reproductive health (ASRH) training conducted by GOAL Plus focused on increasing the knowledge of primary school girls and boys about basic hygiene and health issues in the GOAL Plus school communities. The training enables girls and boys to understand their own body and its functions. It also strengthens their decision and communication-making skills in order to make the right choices regarding sexual activities.

Adolescents need to be able to make informed choices regarding their health. Students may encounter many confusing issues as they enter into puberty and begin to experiment with a myriad of practices, including sex. They can then become vulnerable to STIs, including HIV/AIDS, and teenage pregnancy all of which may jeopardize their educational performance or attainment by affecting their attendance and completion rates in school. The adolescent health training



interventions can play an important role in helping to improve students' academic achievements, well-being and quality of life by preventing health problems.

Through this refresher training, GOAL Plus helps to build the skills and knowledge of girls' clubs' leaders, boys, science teachers, PTAs, community health volunteers, and mentors in the schools to address students' health needs. Two girls, one boy, one science teacher, one community volunteer health worker, one mentor, and one PTA member from the former 40 GOAL project schools participated in the ASRH training.

The adolescent health training was initiated by GOAL Plus as a component to its life skills education. Its purpose is to reinforce the ability of the participants to understand:

- Female and male reproductive health
- Physical emotional and psychological changes associated with adolescence and puberty
- The menstrual cycle
- Hygiene promotion
- Safe Sex Practices

The training was two days and participatory in nature, e.g., role plays, small group discussions, and storytelling that relates to real life situation and demonstrations. The first day of the training consisted of presentations of the various topics that were covered during the previous ASRH training. The second day covered each topic through demonstrations and role-play so the participants could show what they have learned. Boys were also included since they have a major role to play when it comes to sexual reproductive health and the retention of girls in school.

When participants were not conducting role plays or demonstrations they would return to a plenary format and share their experiences, challenges, and success stories. At the end of each day's training, these discussions provided an informal assessment of what they had retained from the training. This training also included a segment on Ebola contraction and prevention due to the recent outbreak. All attendees had opportunities to participate. Additional topics from the Doorways Training Manual were also covered. As mentioned above, in most cases, seven participants from the schools attended the trainings. Overall, 259 participants from the GOAL Plus schools received the Adolescent Health Training.

**Training for the 21 new schools.** GOAL Plus in collaboration with the MOE School Health Division conducted adolescent health training for 21 GOAL Plus Project schools that were previously comparison schools under the GOAL Project. This training was the first of its kind provided to these schools since the inception of the GOAL Plus project. The training focused on providing a basic understanding of sexual and reproductive health knowledge to the participants, and how to serve as coaches and peer educators in schools and communities.

Both boys and girls shared some negative behavior patterns such as peer pressure, drugs and alcohol use, having multiple sexual partners, having unprotected sex which put them at risk of contracting STIs or teenage pregnancy, a major reproductive health problem faced by adolescent girls in primary schools, and early marriage. The facilitators introduced appropriate skills' building topics such as decision making, problem solving, refusal skills, goal setting, obtaining help and negotiation skills that adolescents can practice to keep safe and protected.

#### D. Support to the Ministry of Education (MOE) on Topics Related to Girls' Education

GOAL Plus support to the MOE has contributed to key achievements outlined below. GOAL Plus continued its close support relationship with the MOE, particularly the Girls' Education Division (GED). GOAL Plus staff met with the GED Director to develop a strategy for dissemination of the revised National Policy on Girls' Education to all counties and schools. To facilitate the use of the revised National Policy on Girls' Education Policy at the school level, GOAL Plus developed a summary of the Policy to be used in the training and given to the principals to take back to share with their schools and communities.

#### **Support for the Three-Year Operational Plan for the MOE**

GOAL Plus contributed to the 2014-16 MOE Operational Plan, which includes the following commitment from the MOE to girls' education:

**Objective 2:** To increase access, enrolment, transition, retention and completion at all levels

**Specific objective 2.2:** Increased enrollments at each level

**Output 2:** Support for Girls' Education (enrolment) is continued until parity is achieved in upper primary.

**Activity 2.1:** Disseminate and implement the MOE National Policy on Girls' Education

**Activity 2.2:** Ensure that INGO/NGO activities supporting girls' education are in alignment with and supportive of the National Policy on Girls' Education

**Activity 2.3:** Encourage INGO/NGO collaboration to ensure continuity of support for girls' enrolment, completion and transition to the next level of education

**Activity 2.4:** Solicit and study information on cost-effectiveness of girls' education support

programs for possible replication in counties with continuing large disparities between girls' and boys' enrollment, performance, completion and/or transition rates.

GOAL Plus was represented in numerous meetings at the MOE that included the senior leadership, USAID, UNICEF, the Education NGO Forum, the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), and the European Union, which saw the completion and presidential approval of a costed 1 and 3 Year Operational Plan for the MOE. The MOE held a public launch of the Three-Year Operational Plan that had been completed in April with technical support from GOAL Plus and other Donor and Implementing Partners. The launch led by the President and the Minister of Education, with presentations by the MOE and the U.S. Ambassador.



*Madam President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf (l) and Honorable Minister Ms. Etmonia Tarpeh (r) at the launch of the Ministry of Education Three-Year Operational Plan*

During the development of the Operational Plan, a two-person GPE Mission was conducted to review their support program to the MOE. As part of that process, GOAL Plus participated in an Education NGO Forum meeting with the GPE Mission to discuss our (NGOs) role in the GPE/MOE process. It was agreed that the MOE should encourage the Education NGO Forum to meet with them on common issues to better understand the field issues and to find common solutions where possible. As a result, the GPE encouraged the MOE to convene task forces with NGOs partners to tackle common issues.



*Madam President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf speaking at the launch of the Three-Year Operational Plan*



*U.S. Ambassador to Liberia Ms. Deborah Malac speaking at the launch of the Three-Year Operational Plan*

## **Sharing of GOAL Plus-produced documents with the MOE**

In the course of working closely with the GED and other MOE units, GOAL Plus has had very productive discussions and exchanges with the MOE its partners, including sharing of training and reference materials, plans and reports. In light of the MOE's Operational Plan approval discussed above and our collective support for implementation, GOAL Plus agreed with the MOE/GED to present our approach to supporting girls' education. GOAL Plus transferred drafts of our training and reference materials to the MOE and interested implementing partners on key aspects of the project, including the provision of scholarship packages to over 6,000 girls and training 60 PTAs on their basic functions, SIP development and accessing grants to implement key activities to improve access and the learning environments. Information on developing Girls' Clubs, including mentoring and tutoring, and providing supplemental teaching and learning materials also were included.

## **Piloting of INEE CSE Pack**

In February 2014, the International Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) requested UNICEF and USAID, through GOAL Plus, to pilot its newly developed Conflict Sensitive Education (CSE) Pack. GOAL Plus co-hosted, organized, and issued communications for the pilot with budget support from INEE (from a UNICEF grant). The two-day pilot training took place at the MOE in Monrovia on February 12-13, 2014. This pilot training was INEE's first on CSE and will serve as a model for trainings worldwide on the CSE Pack.

## **Joint Assessment in Bong**

In year two of the project, GOAL Plus staff participated in the Ministry of Education Joint Education Assessment, led by IBIS and funded by UNICEF, to assess the impact of the EVD on schools and communities in Liberia. The assessment was intended to determine the impact of Ebola on Education in Liberia for the reopening of schools at the national, county and district levels and the upcoming Education sector review.

Data collection tools were developed and teams were sent throughout the country to collect information. The GOAL Plus M&E team coordinated all efforts in Bong County, served as lead data collectors there. The assessment was carried out in 37 schools (public and private) in November 2014 in Bong using the following tools: Key Informant Interview for School Administrators, Focus Group Discussion for Learners, and Focus Group Discussion for Parents. Responses were submitted to IBIS for analysis. At the national level, the assessment covered nine counties that represented different levels of Ebola prevalence, with total of 351 schools participating across the country.

## **Education Cluster Ebola Response and leading the WASH distribution in Grand Bassa**

As part of the Education Cluster's activities to respond to EVD, GOAL Plus provided input on the MOE's Emergency Response Plan and volunteered to coordinate the distribution of WASH materials and training to all schools in Grand Bassa, amounting to more than 300 primary and secondary schools. UNICEF led the efforts in the entire country. In Grand Bassa, GOAL Plus took the lead to see that the WASH materials were delivered to all schools there and trained the School Safety Committee members at five our program schools and ten other schools in Grand Bassa. The WASH materials included hand-washing barrels, buckets, brooms, soap, chlorine, and other like items to be used in cleaning and preventing the spread of the EVD.

GOAL Plus continued to participate in weekly Education Cluster meetings, which later became bi-weekly, as the Ebola crisis subsided. In September 2015, the Cluster official disbanded and all education in emergency issues will now be part of the Education Sector Development Committee (ESDC).



*GOAL Plus staff delivers hand washing buckets and hand washing soap during Ebola response*

### **Education Sector Development Committee (ESDC)**

GOAL Plus participated in the monthly ESDC meetings examining topics of interest to the sector in Liberia. The most prominent and pressing topic was addressing the prevention of the spread of Ebola and its affects and impact on schools and communities.

### **Joint Education Sector Review**

Beginning in April 2015, the Chief of Party and the Gender and Education Specialist began their weekly participation in the Primary and Secondary Education Technical Working Group for the Joint Education Sector Review which culminated in August 2015 in the Education Roundtable, “Getting to Best,” chaired by H. E. Madam Ellen Johnson Sirleaf.

### **Education NGO Forum**

GOAL Plus participated in Education NGO Forum meetings throughout the project, meeting to discuss common issues among all organizations and the MOE to better understand the field issues and to find common solutions where possible.

As part of the Education NGO Forum objectives, GOAL Plus staff simplified the Teachers’ Code of Conduct into a reader-friendly version and distributed both the abbreviated version and the policy document to all GOAL Plus schools. The same was done for the Girls Education Policy also distributed to all GOAL Plus schools. During the scholarship distribution activities, GOAL Plus also spoke to students, teachers, school administrators and parents creating an awareness of these two policy documents, their content and implementation.

### **Validation of the PTA Policy**

The Ministry of Education (MOE) planned four workshops – three regional workshops and one final session - to have local participation in the validation and roll out of the PTA Policy. GOAL Plus participated the PTA Policy validation workshop in Tubmanburg, Bomi County, organized

by the renamed Ministry of Education PTA Division, now the Division of Parents, Community Engagement and National Dropout Prevention (PCENDP). Its revised aim and objective is to promote community ownership of school improvement. During this regional validation, participants from the Ministry of Education at the county level - DEOs, CEOs, PTA County Focus Persons – joined three Education NGO partners (GOAL Plus, Save the Children and UNICEF).

The intent of the validation activity was to decentralize the PTA operations and to have input into the document from the people at the rural, community level. They are the ones who will ultimately implement and benefit from policy. Having their input incorporated into the PTA policy enhances community-level ownership of it. The meeting facilitators presented the objectives and overview of the workshop and participants reviewed the policy. Participants were divided into four working groups for the day, with each group assigned chapters in the policy to carefully review, analyze, delete and/or provide recommendations that could make the policy viable in the Liberian context. The most prominent among the recommendations was that the PTA should work along with the school administration to ensure that the Teachers' Code of Conduct is implemented to the letter at both the school and community levels.

At the end of deliberation, the PCENDP was strongly encouraged by participants to implement the PTA policy so that the PTAs would be functional and effective in their work as regulatory bodies of parents and community in the school improvement/development at the community, district and county levels.

### **Support on Other Policy Documents**

In addition to the above, GOAL Plus stored the National Girls Education Policy for the MOE until it was ready to distribute to all MOE schools. Additionally, GOAL Plus provided its expertise through input on the draft Educators Management Policy which was developed in collaboration with education stakeholders and the MOE with LTTP taking the lead.

### **Back-to-School Campaign**

As mentioned above, GOAL Plus carried out a communication campaign in Bong, Lofa, and Grand Bassa titled 'Keep Winning' to remind parents to enroll their children in school when they reach the appropriate age, continuing the theme of last year's communication campaign titled "B. A. Winner," which focused on getting children into pre-school at the age of three. The campaign launched prior to the re-opening of schools and included t-shirts, banners, stickers, radio spots billboards, fliers, posters and town hall meetings. Non-political role models were identified from the three counties of Bong, Lofa, and Grand Bassa to aid with the promotion.

### **Community Education Counselors**

As mentioned previously, GOAL Plus designed, developed, trained and began to implement the MOE program to provide Community Education Counselors to schools and to initiate services to girls and communities on addressing gender based violence and providing support to its victims.

### **Support to M&E**

This year, GOAL Plus began to plan a training for both central and county-level MOE staff on M&E and using data for decision making. Additional, AIR is in discussion with the Ministry of Education regarding providing support on the MOE development and implementation of an Monitoring and Evaluation System for the MOE Operational Plan. This activity is separate from the GOAL Plus project yet contributes to this objective.

### **On-going Update and Partner Meetings**

GOAL Plus staff frequently met with representatives from the central and county MOE staff on an ongoing basis as we work in collaboration on all project activities. GOAL Plus participated in the MOE retreat to discuss challenges and successes with school reopening. Towards the end of the project year, a meeting was held with MOE Assistant Minister Felicia Doe-Sumah to provide an update on project accomplishments, share plans and solicit input on future project activities, with special consideration for sustainability once GOAL Plus comes to a close. Also attending were USAID/Liberia AOR, Miriam White; MOE Girls' Education Director, Lorpu Mannah; Director for Secondary Education, Ruben Duo; and Regional Supervisor, Nageh Wesseh.

## **E. Capacity Building Support to FAWE**

### **Ongoing Mentoring and Coaching**

AIR continued its collaborative and productive working relationship with its GOAL Plus partner, FAWE. FAWE addressed and built relevant capacities for project implementation, including responsive financial budgeting and reporting, and the planning and implementation of field activities. Planning between AIR and FAWE for GOAL Plus field activities changed slightly this year as a result of new project leadership. AIR and FAWE leadership coordinate overall plans and AIR programming staff meets more regularly with FAWE programming staff to plan, coordinate and implement activities and to improve the flow of communication among field staff, program staff, and the FAWE office. AIR and FAWE financial teams continued to meet to facilitate budgeting, expenditures and reporting. Representatives of FAWE staff will also join the AIR GOAL Plus weekly meetings.

Before the scholarship distribution in March 2015, the GOAL Plus Scholarship Manager led a one-day workshop to prepare the FAWE staff for the field activities. Workshop topics included strict adherence to the national EBOLA preventive protocols; school-level strategies for distribution; strategies to identify age appropriate boys (such as use of school registration record book); appropriate completion of signature sheets; data consistency; mobilization and promotion to encourage all targeted students to come to school and benefit from this round of distribution; and the use of term Girls Assistance Package (GAP) and its meaning. In addition, the workshop facilitators shared ideas for a strategy aimed at improving the flow of communication among the field staff, the GOAL Plus FAWE coordinator, and the GOAL Plus program staff.

The GOAL Plus M&E Officer has provided his M&E counterpart at FAWE with regular tutoring and coaching on database management, field monitoring, data analysis, reporting and the use of data to measure project progress.

Training was carried out to improve the institutional capacity of FAWE staff in logistics. Three specific topics were identified: procurement, transportation and warehouse management. Nine FAWE staff members (6 male and 3 female) participated in the training. As part of this activity, the consultant team also reviewed FAWE's logistics manuals, identify gaps and make recommendations for improvement.

At the end of 2015, GOAL Plus also arranged for additional training for FAWE in proposal writing and monitoring and evaluation.

## Closeout

At the end of GOAL Plus, AIR worked closely with FAWE on the disposition of project assets, closeout of the field offices, transitioning of project activities to AIR, scale down of staffing, and financial and program reporting.



*Arm chairs from GOAL Plus School Improvement grants support*

## Project Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E), Research, and Other Evaluation Activities

Monitoring and evaluation activities provide evidence concerning the performance of key interventions and issues that impact girls' success in education in order to measure project performance and results, inform the policy dialogue, and contribute to programming related to girls' education.

### *Monitoring and Evaluation*

GOAL Plus used the rigorous M&E system developed under GOAL to track girls' enrollment, attendance, completion, and retention at an individual level for use in decision-making at the program and school levels. GOAL Plus collected enrollment data for girls and boys in pre-primary and junior high grades associated with GOAL Plus-supported schools. The objective was to use the data to analyze GOAL Plus' school programming and to better understand transition patterns. GOAL Plus also collected additional cohort data on boys in the GOAL Plus supported schools to explore any effects and unintended consequences of the GOAL and GOAL Plus interventions on boys and across the schools holistically.

### **Preparation and Facilitation of the Data Quality Assessment (DQA) Process**

Consistent with USAID regulations regarding the collection, management and reporting of data, the USAID/Liberia Monitoring and Evaluation Program (L-MEP) conducted a Data Quality Assessment for GOAL Plus in 2014. This exercise was intended to ensure quality control throughout the project; the exercise focused on the verification of GOAL Plus documentations, consistency of information, data collection procedures, and filing system measures and locations in the central office in Monrovia. The exercise was also extended to the field at four schools in Grand Bassa County.



LMEP submitted a report on its findings and GOAL Plus was given the opportunity to respond. GOAL Plus made the appropriate adjustments to documentation and record keeping given LMEP's recommendations.

### **M&E Training**

GOAL Plus staff attended LMEP M&E Training on Understanding and Using the Performance Indicator Database System (PIDS) and Web Mapping System (WMS), on Success Stories and on Managing for Results. LMEP staff also made a separate presentation to the incoming COP who as a result requested maps that plotted GOAL Plus and nearby schools as well as the overlapping Ebola-hit areas, useful in the research design for the investigation carried out later in the year.

In addition to receiving training, GOAL Plus began to develop its own training which will be conducted for FAWE and MOE partners. Additionally, throughout the project the GOAL Plus M&E Officer presented staff, partners and donors with project statistics to give an understanding of project progress towards reaching its targets, enabling better planning and implementation of project activities.

### **Data Collection and Spot Checks**

The collection of student enrollment data from GOAL Plus project schools is usually carried out two months into the beginning of each academic semester year. The names of the girls at the 60 schools benefiting from GOAL Plus interventions are recorded in hard copy for subsequent entry into GOAL Plus designated spreadsheets upon the team's return from the field. The entering of scholarship beneficiaries' names was done systematically into the project database (Master Tracking Database) by a short-term Data Entry Clerk. After the process of entering the names, a verification process was carried out to ensure that the data in the Master Tracking Database were clean, correct, and reliable.

### **Spot Check to GOAL Plus Supported Schools**

The GOAL Plus M&E team conducted spot checks in June 2015 and collected the final enrollment data from program schools. The spot check was conducted to collect reliable data on students' and teachers' attendance, 2015 final enrollment, number of student enrolled at an appropriate age (6 or 7 years) in grade one and number of 2013/2014 grade 6 girls who passed their grade and transitioned to grade 7 of the 2015 academic year. The percentage of girls attending school on the day of the visit was 78.9%, (attendance/enrollment) and the percentage for boys was 74.9%.

### **Completion and Promotion Data for the 2015 Truncated Academic Year**

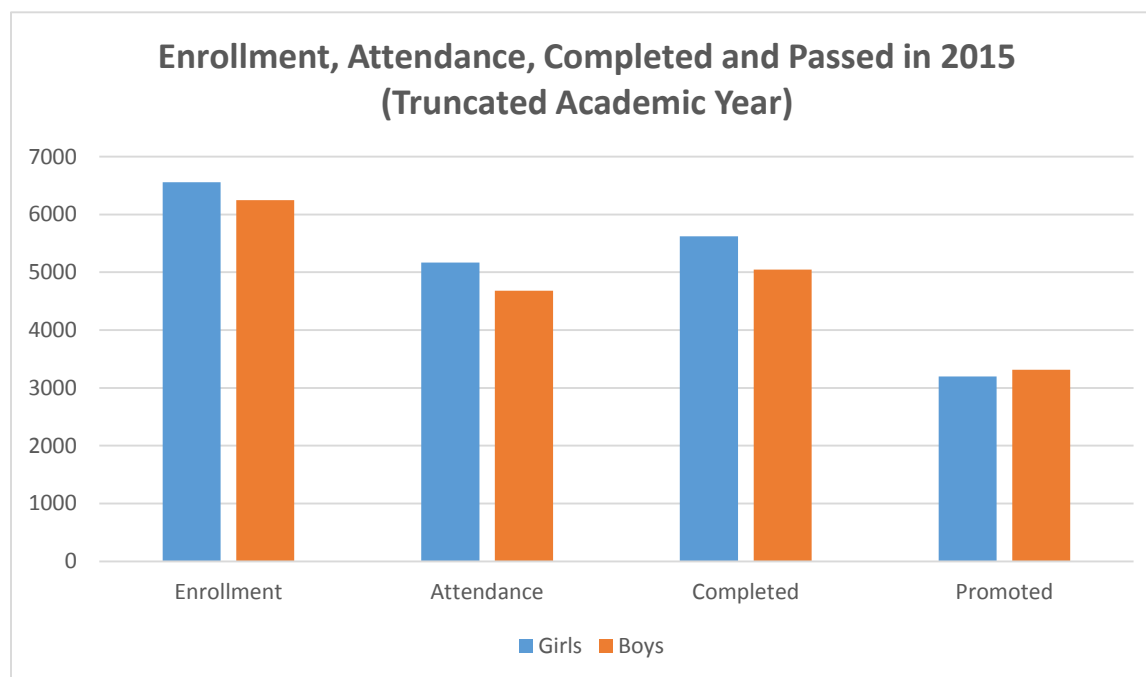
During the data collection process in June 2015, it was observed that the MOE pronouncement that the academic year was to be cut short and to end in June (later extended to July) caused many parents and students to see the rest of the school year a useless effort and students stayed home from class. As a result, we suspect that our Completion and Promotion rate to be low. The MOE announced that promotions after an academic year of only five or six months were to be a decentralized decision, made at the school level, without exams. Schools that promoted students did so using a collective negotiation process through a series of meetings and consultations among principals, teachers, and parents. Some schools thought students with an average grade of 80% and above should pass; others thought the average should be 85%. The following three GOAL Plus schools opted not to promote students at all:

- Gbokew Kollie in Bong County did not promote any students because all of them left school after they heard the MOE pronouncement.
- Yowee in Bong County did not promote any students because no one met the eligibility criteria agreed upon by the parents, teachers and principal.
- Barseegiah in Grand Bassa County did not promote students also because students did not meet the criteria.

**Figure 15: Summary of Enrollment, Attendance, Completed and Passed Grade for Girls and Boys in 2015 Academic Truncated Year**

Outcome	Girls	Boys
Enrollment	6555	6248
Attendance	5169	4681
Completed	5622	5047
Promoted	3200	3316

**Figure 16: Enrollment, Attendance, Completed, and Passed in 2015**



**Teacher Data**

In addition to data collected on students, GOAL Plus collected data on the teacher roster (deployment) and teacher attendance during the spot check.

**Figure 17: June 2015 1-6 grade number of teacher deployed, teacher's attendance and percent attendance, spot check results by county**

County	Number of teachers			Total school days in month of May 2015			Total days attended by teachers in month of May 2015			Average teacher's attendance rate for the month of May 2015		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Grand Bassa	132	29	161	2534	565	3099	1939	435	2374	76.5	77.0	76.6
Lofa	140	9	149	2754	177	2931	2102	126	2228	76.3	71.2	76.0
Bong	154	7	161	2865	122	2987	2151	81	2232	75.1	66.4	74.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>426</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>471</b>	<b>8153</b>	<b>864</b>	<b>9017</b>	<b>6192</b>	<b>642</b>	<b>6834</b>	<b>76.0</b>	<b>74.3</b>	<b>75.8</b>

*Note: calculation of average teacher's attendance rate for the month of May 2015 is total days attended by male or female teacher divided by total school days in month of May 2015 multiplied by one hundred*

### Students Transitioning from 6<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> Grade

During the spot check activities, GOAL Plus tracked 2013/2014 grade 6 girls who were in GOAL Plus supported schools that passed their grade and transitioned to grade 7 of this academic (2015) current schools. There are a number of challenges associated with girls continuing their education after primary education. Some of the major factors hindering girls are:

- Pregnancy
- Students who are mothers of small children with no daycare options
- Lack of support and motivation by parents to go elsewhere when home community does not have a secondary school
- Lack of financial support to pay school fees and provide necessary school materials

The total number of girls that transitioned to grade 7 from 2013/2014 academic year is 204.

**Figure 18: Girls transitioned to grade 7 in 2015**

County	2013/2014 grade 6 girls promotion to grade 7	Grade 6 girls that got promotion from 2013/2014 and re-enrolled in grade 7 of 2015	% transition to grade 7
Grand Bassa	184	94	51.1
Lofa	170	68	40.0
Bong	89	38	42.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>443</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>45.1</b>

### III. Challenges and Lessons Learned

#### Challenges

- Reaching students and their families and teachers with health messages and re-engaging them in healthy and supportive practices required re-programming some GOAL Plus activities, especially to focus on Ebola-related health messaging.
- The most significant challenge was the impact of the EVD and school closure on schools and communities. Some challenges to project implementation and the achievement of targets were related to the effects of the Ebola Virus Disease and its impact on the MOE, schools and communities. The late start in the school year caused a rescheduling of activities, delaying the tutoring and mentoring programs. It is suspected that EVD has affected enrollment and attendance.
- An ongoing challenge that hindered students' academic attendance and achievement was teachers' absenteeism. Not only is this a result of the disruption and dislocation resulting from the Ebola crisis, absenteeism is also a consequence of teachers having to travel far and spend a considerable amount of time to receive their pay.
- Re-mobilizing communities around schools and education requires a different approach than the mere announcing of schools re-opening. The concept of a Community Education Counselor, trained and supported by the project, was in part intended to address this need.
- Some fear of further spreading EVD remained when schools opened and some communities were hesitant to re-open their schools; similarly, some parents were hesitant to send their children.
- The data collection team encountered numerous challenges during the spot check activities in the field. The student and teacher absences from class on certain days left uncertainties as to true attendance. Students' departure at recess created a situation in which data collectors could not complete a head count during some site visits, despite the early morning arrival of the data collectors.
- There were unanticipated changes in this year's school calendar – the original new end date (schools finally re-opened in February/March 2015 after the EVD crisis) was in November; then it was changed (unofficially) to June 30 and finally to July 31. GOAL Plus staff learned through field visits that student and teacher morale and thus student enrollment, retention and completion has declined, negatively affecting school and project performance. In rural communities where GOAL Plus works, the reaction of parents to the school closing in July, without grade completion, was to have their children remain home to help with household chores. Public perception of the MOE and a disbelief in its decisions due to frequent conflicting information provided to parents and students has resulted in parents' refraining from participating in educational matters on behalf of their children.
- Given that the months of June – August are usually a time for school vacation, parents were used to having their children work on the farms. With the MOE decision that there would be no grade promotion in July 2015, some parents preferred to have their children work in the fields now and wait until September to send them back to school. The June 2015 GOAL Plus data collection and school visits show a reduction in school attendance.

- The lack of timely and accurate communication from the MOE around the academic calendar during the EVD crisis created mistrust in the minds of many parents and school authorities.
- Poor roads, heavy rains, and lack of network coverage posed obstructions to collecting data from the field.

### Lessons Learned

- GOAL Plus worked closely with the MOE in the implementation of the Ebola Emergency Response Plan, the Joint Education Sector Review and related activities. This close working relationship allowed the project to leverage its technical staff into directly supporting the MOE during this crisis period, meeting immediate needs, supporting the re-opening of schools, and resuming GOAL Plus support for girl students.
- Continuous communication and timely information sharing between the GOAL Plus Monrovia and county field offices is critical for successful program implementation.
- When community stakeholders are engaged in every aspect of the project, they can work more independently to achieve project goals.
- Many PTAs trained in School Improvement Plans with experience in implementing Grants, plan to use that training to develop their own SIPs and seek their own funding, even without the direct support of the project.
- Formal recognition of girls who are performing well in their studies is not only an incentive for those girls and their parents but for other girls and their families to encourage attendance and learning.
- Experience Sharing Meetings were held with representatives from all schools. An important outcome of these meetings was the fact that even without GOAL Plus funding, the PTAs without the 2014 grants still developed their School Improvement Plans and carried out successful projects. Some sought funds elsewhere; others found support within the community itself. This is evidence that the training GOAL Plus conducted on School Improvement Plans, PTA Leadership and Management resulted in schools working independently.
- Classes are disrupted when teachers go to collect salary in the provincial capitals.
- Data on students' enrollment and attendance collected from the field should be verified at the field level before they are reported.
- In order for a field-based activity to be implemented on time, information about such activity should be disseminated at least one month prior to its planned implementation date.
- Overaged students per grade are more likely to drop out of school than students enrolled at the appropriate age
- Communities report that girls often become pregnant when schools are closed and less so when schools are in session.

## Recommendations

The key finding from the quantitative analysis of the GOAL Plus research discussed below is that schools that received additional services under the GOAL Plus project improved their student outcomes for girls at those schools. The effects of additional supports on girls are largest when scholarships are provided to girls that help their families overcome financial constraints and also provide them with needed school supplies. This finding suggests the need for financial and material support to remove barriers to primary education.

Another key finding from the quantitative data is that both boys and girls returned to schools after they reopened following closure due to EVD, and in about three quarters of the GOAL Plus schools enrollments and attendance did not decline from pre-EVD levels. We do not have data for other schools in Liberia over this time, and recommend that additional data be collected to evaluate the effectiveness of different education interventions at building the resiliency of communities to respond to national education disruptions.

Qualitative data highlighted damage to school property during school closures as a challenge that decreased students' motivation to attend school and contributed to low morale. This finding suggests the recommendation to assess the condition of schools and make appropriate investments in repair and rehabilitation.

Research also found the supports provided by GOAL Plus to engage the community through activities such as PTA provided the framework to sustain interest in education during the time of school closure and to disseminate information on health protocols that encouraged parents to reenroll their children. The supports provided by GOAL Plus also helped schools repair damage and assure that adequate supplies were available. We recommend continuing community engagement in education, particularly through the PTAs, Community Education Counselors, mentors, and Girls' Clubs.

Participants in the PTA validation workshop recommended that the PTA should work with school administrations to ensure that schools and communities strictly adhere to the Teachers' Code of Conduct. We also recommend the Ministry of Education integrate gender-sensitivity pedagogy training as part of all pre-service and in-service teacher training.

## IV. Research Results

### Introduction

The team implemented a research design that combined quantitative and qualitative methods. The research covers a 2-year intervention with special attention paid to GOAL Plus's efforts to promote reenrollment after the EVD epidemic. The quantitative component of the study tracks and analyzes student enrollment and attendance through the life of the project, along with completion of a grade and promotion to the next grade. The qualitative component answers questions on community resilience and factors that facilitated community reengagement in education after months of closure during the EVD epidemic. These two components complement each other to portray a chronological picture of the GOAL Plus schools over 2 years.

The quantitative analysis of enrollment, attendance, completion, and promotion data found that schools that received additional services under GOAL Plus improved these student outcomes for girls at those schools. Schools that had not received supports under the previous GOAL program showed the greatest gains in outcomes—as they saw the greatest change in the supports they were receiving—whereas schools that had received scholarship support under GOAL and received grant support under GOAL Plus showed smallest gains. This is consistent with earlier findings for GOAL that scholarships were associated with greatest increases in girls' outcomes and that grants had relatively small effects.

An important finding is that the gains in student outcomes that were realized before the outbreak of EVD were sustained once schools reopened and were not lost as a result of the outbreak. Enrollment and attendance for both girls and boys were as high as they were before the outbreak for most (about 75 percent) of schools included in GOAL Plus.

The qualitative research suggests that key gaps that hindered students' reenrollment after the EVD epidemic were damage to school infrastructure, inconsistently implemented health protocols, financial constraints, the transformation of social norms, and a continued fear of EVD. School community activity helped schools overcome these challenges, and factors that helped this resiliency included (1) GOAL Plus interventions that provided a mechanism through which the community organized disaster recovery efforts; (2) government-mandated health protocols that allayed fears about returning to school; and (3) community members who valued education enough to contribute their time, labor, and money to repair schools and disseminate information about school reopening.

The analysis of enrollment, attendance, promotion, and completion data at the GOAL Plus schools presented here is the first known quantitative research conducted on education in post-EVD Liberia, and the qualitative data were gathered soon after schools reopened in Liberia. The lessons learned from implementing GOAL Plus interventions during an epidemic can be used to facilitate meaningful change in other countries that have experienced similar external public health related challenges to an education system.

### Research Objectives and Methodology

Under both GOAL and GOAL Plus, the research team employed regular data collections at schools to track enrollment over time, along with attendance, completion, and promotion rates at schools by grade. This provided a set of trend data for schools that allowed us to track changes in these outcomes by model type over the life of GOAL project, and then to further track changes under GOAL Plus as schools received a common set of supports. These data spanned the period covered

by the EVD epidemic and allow us to describe the extent to which schools recovered in terms of enrollment and attendance.

The data on student outcomes were augmented by additional information collected via a school observation form and an EVD questionnaire. Both data collection tools helped determine how equipped and capable schools were of serving as safe learning spaces for students and provided information about EVD's impact on schools as well as the community's response to and implementation of the health protocols as schools reopened.

Quantitative research was structured around four key research questions:

1. **Trends in outcomes:** How did trends in student outcomes at schools change with adoption of GOAL Plus and the supports that GOAL Plus provided?
2. **Differences between boys and girls:** Did observed trends in outcomes differ between boys and girls, or did they affect all students similarly?
3. **Outcomes after EVD:** Did outcomes return to where they had been before closure of schools for EVD?
4. **Trends in school and classroom conditions:** Did indicators of the school physical environment and learning change over time and did change differ by type of school?

Qualitative research was structured around three key research questions:

1. **Patterns of reenrollment:** What factors facilitated or hindered female students' reengagement in their education in GOAL Plus schools?
2. **Community resiliency:** What factors in communities that received GOAL Plus interventions are associated with quick recovery and restoration of education as a centerpiece of their community?
3. **School community assets and gaps after the EVD crisis:** How do they (for example PTAs as assets, damaged infrastructure as gaps) relate to enrollment, attendance, retention, and completion rates in GOAL/GOAL Plus schools?

Quantitative data included enrollment, attendance, and promotion data collected for students in all 60 GOAL Plus schools and disaggregated by grade and gender. The GOAL Plus team collected student enrollment and attendance data during both the beginning and end of each year in order to have a more complete picture of student attendance as the year progressed. As schools were closed in the fall of 2014, there are no data during this term; however, the research team collected data in the fall of 2013, the spring of 2014, the spring of 2015, and November 2015. In addition, school completion and promotion data were collected in July 2014 and July 2015 by the GOAL Plus team.

The M&E officer also completed a School Observation Form in all 60 schools during February 2011, May 2013, and April 2015, which examined school characteristics across 42 observational variables. The items from the observation forms were used to create scales that were tracked over time by type of school. Schools also completed an Ebola Virus Disease Supplemental Questionnaire, a one-page supplement to the School Observation Form, in April 2015.

Qualitative data included 24 focus group discussions and 48 semistructured interviews with PTA members; (2) non-PTA members; (3) teachers and principals; and (4) students mixed in age and



gender. In February 2015, soon after the schools in Liberia reopened, AIR reviewed the list of GOAL Plus schools and purposively selected a sample of six schools out of 60 GOAL Plus schools with the primary objectives of selecting two schools each of the three intervention counties, with variation of districts within the counties and variation of EVD impact.

## Quantitative Findings

### Trends in Student Outcomes

Including the period covered by the pre-GOAL baseline, there were 10 data points for each school for enrollment and attendance (four for completion and promotion): one baseline before GOAL, five in GOAL (two for completion and promotion), and four in GOAL Plus (one for completion and promotion). The pre-GOAL baseline data (the first data point) were from spring 2011, and GOAL data cover fall 2011 to spring 2013. GOAL Plus data collection started in fall 2013. The second wave of data was collected in spring 2014. Due to the outbreak of EVD, the 2014–2015 school year was cut short, and the schools reopened in spring 2015. The final wave of the data collection was conducted in fall 2015. Enrollment data were collected at the beginning of each semester, attendance was collected in mid-semester, and completion and promotion was collected at the end of the school year.

Figures 19 to 22 show trends in enrollment, attendance, completion, and promotion outcomes over the time before GOAL to the final report period under GOAL Plus. The figures show the average enrollment at schools separately for boys and girls in Grades 1 to 6 and attendance, completion, and promotion in Grades 2 to 6. The GOAL schools included 40 project schools—which received the different types of supports previously described—and 20 comparison schools. In this section, we categorize the schools in terms of the type of primary support they received under GOAL: grants only (10 schools), scholarships only (10 schools), or both grants and scholarships (20 schools), and comparison (20 schools).

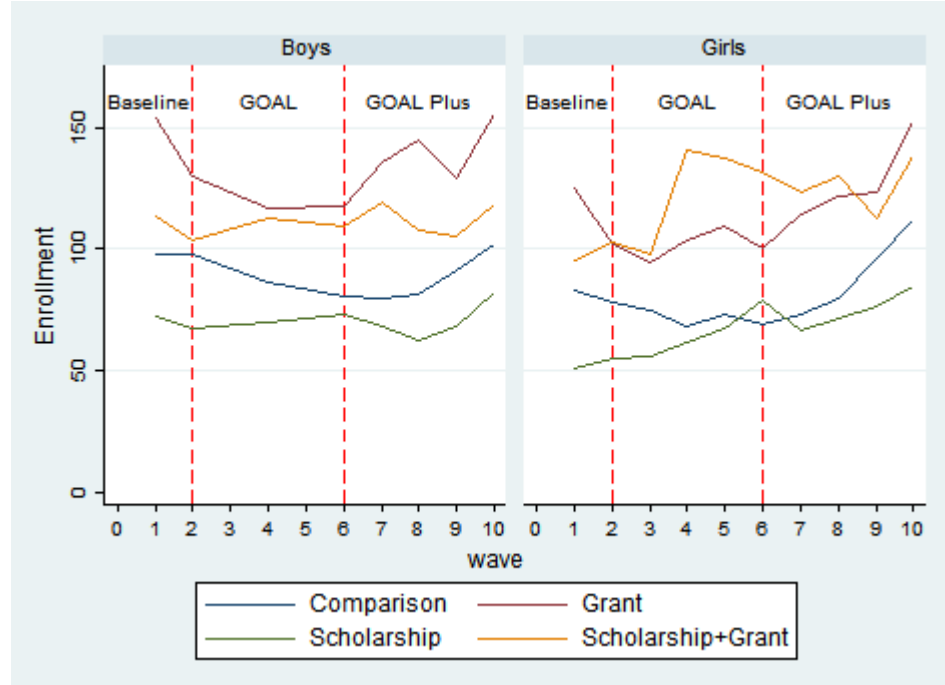
During GOAL (labeled as waves 2 to 6 in the figures below), there was a steady increase in the number of girls enrolled and number of girls attending school in GOAL project schools. The numbers of girls enrolled and attending classes in comparison schools was relatively stable during the same time. During GOAL Plus (waves 7 to 10), the trends for girls appeared to continue.

The trends under GOAL Plus for each type of school can be summarized as follows:

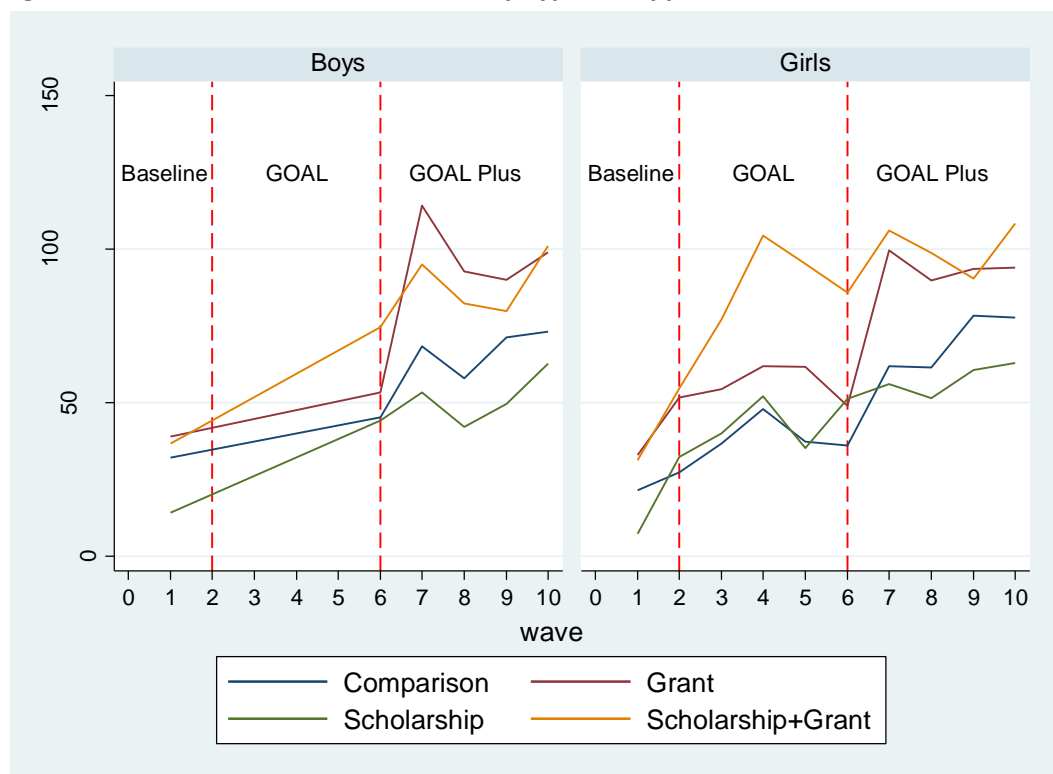
- Scholarship plus grant schools: There was little or no change in the numbers of enrollment and attendance for both boys and girls as schools continued to provide these supports;
- Grant schools: Enrollment and attendance appeared to increase in schools, most notably for girls but also to a degree for boys as scholarships were provided;
- Scholarship schools: The increasing trend in attendance and enrollment under GOAL appeared to continue under GOAL Plus, though not as much as grant schools; and
- Comparison schools: The most noticeable difference from GOAL to GOAL Plus periods were for comparison schools. There was little change in the enrollment and attendance numbers for comparison schools throughout GOAL, but the numbers started increasing across all periods during GOAL Plus.

Figures 19 and 20 also show the changes in enrollment and attendance before and after the EVD outbreak (the epidemic began after period 8 in the figure and schools reopened in period 9). For both boys and girls, there was a small decrease in the number of enrollments and attendance in grant and scholarship plus grant schools after schools reopened (wave 9), then reached or surpassed the pre-EVD levels at the GOAL Plus endline (wave 10). The figures show the average number of students across all schools, but further analyses shows that enrollments of girls and also boys increased at 77 percent of schools at the GOAL Plus endline (again November and December of 2015) from the corresponding terms a year before, before the outbreak of Ebola. Similarly, attendance increased for girls from the period before Ebola at 73 percent of schools and for boys at 70 percent of project schools.

**Figure 19. Enrollment Trend Over Time by Type of Support Provided to School**



Source: Liberia GOAL and GOAL Plus projects (2011 to 2015).

**Figure 20: Attendance Trend Over Time by Type of Support Provided to School**

Source: Liberia GOAL and GOAL Plus projects (2013, 2014).

Note. Attendance data for boys during GOAL for were available only at baseline (wave 1) and endline (wave 6).

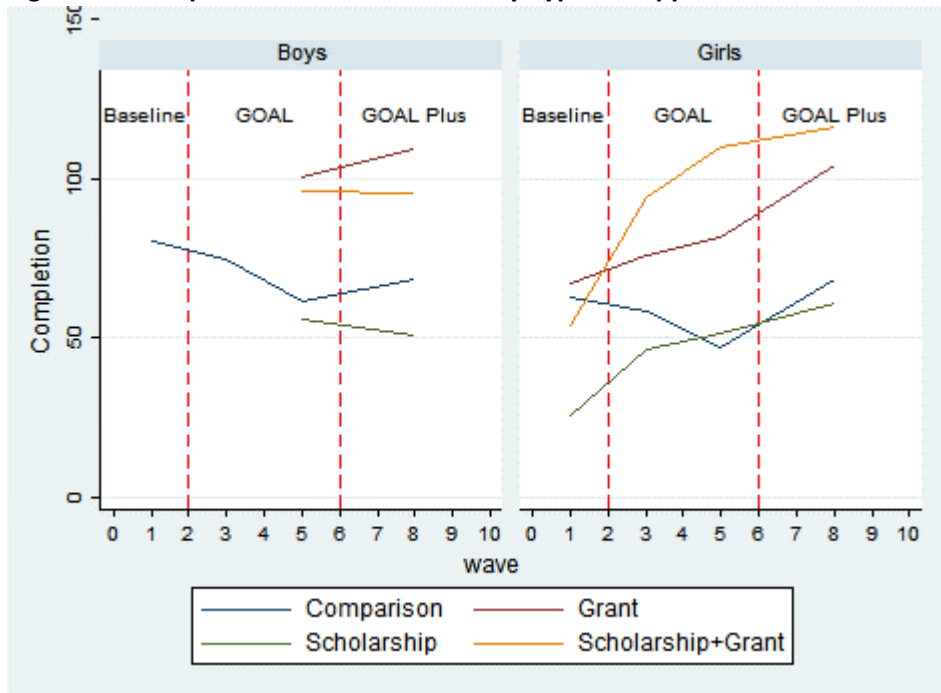
Completion and promotion outcomes followed a similar pattern for girls, though data on completion and promotion are shown only up to period 8, the period before the EVD epidemic. We restrict data to this period because in the truncated 2015 school year, in which schools opened late in February and March 2015 and closed early in July 2015, decisions on completion and promotion were made in a decentralized way at the school level without exams. Schools that promoted students did so using a collective negotiation process through meetings and consultations among principals, teachers, and parents. Some schools passed students with an average grade of 80%, others set the average at other levels, and three GOAL Plus schools opted not to promote students at all.

The trends in completion and promotion outcomes with improvements for girls observed during GOAL were continued with GOAL Plus up to the cutoff period. Specifically, the changes during GOAL Plus for different types of schools were as follows:

- Scholarship plus grant schools: There was relatively little change over time in the completion and promotion outcomes for both boys and girls under GOAL Plus.
- Grant schools: Similar to enrollment and attendance outcomes, the numbers of completions and promotions appeared to increase for girls but also to a lesser degree for boys.

- Scholarship schools: The increasing trend for girls in completions under GOAL appeared to continue under GOAL Plus. However, there was little or no change in the promotion outcomes for either boys or girls.
- Comparison schools: Again, the greatest change in outcomes between periods covered by GOAL and GOAL Plus were for comparison schools. There was a decline in completion and attendance both for girls and boys throughout GOAL, but there was an increase in these outcomes during GOAL Plus, especially for girls.

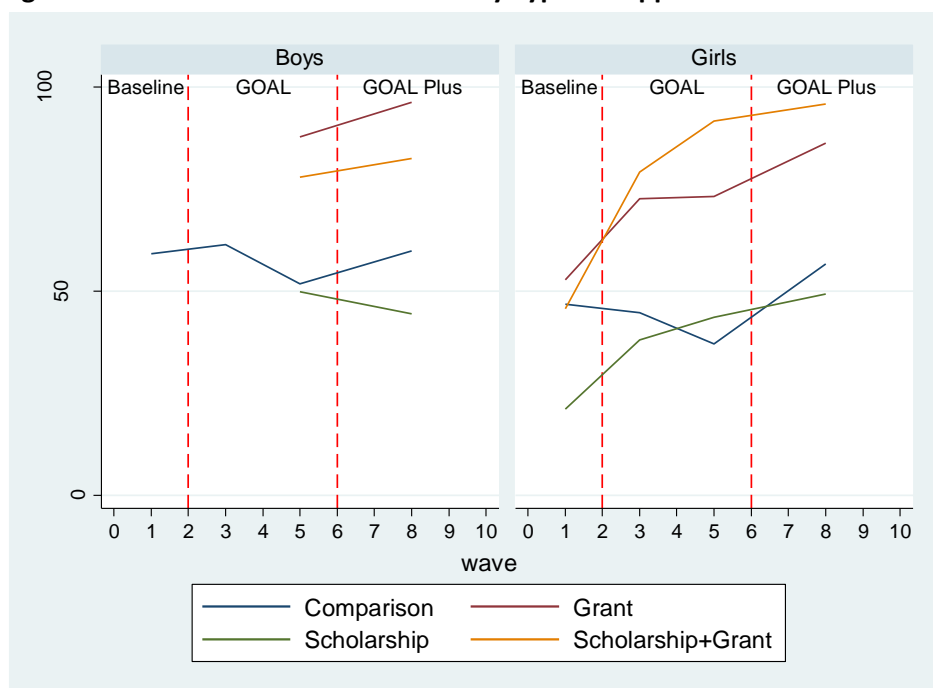
**Figure 21: Completion Trend Over Time by Type of Support Provided to School**



Source: Liberia GOAL and GOAL Plus projects (2013, 2014).

Note. Completion data for boys during GOAL were available only at endline for project schools.

**Figure 22: Promotion Trend Over Time by Type of Support Provided to School**



Source: Liberia GOAL and GOAL Plus projects (2013, 2014).

Note. Promotion data for boys during GOAL were available only at endline for project schools.

To numerically summarize changes in outcomes over the period covered by GOAL Plus, we compare the student outcomes just before GOAL Plus and at the end of GOAL Plus period for each outcome; Figure 23 shows the number at the two points.<sup>5</sup>

A measure of the overall effect of GOAL Plus on girls relative to boys can be computed by dividing the value of outcome at the endline for either boys or girls by its value in the period just before GOAL Plus began. These values are shown in Figure 23. If the endline value is equal to the pre-GOAL Plus value, it will have a value of 100. If the outcome increases by 20%, it will have a value of 120. For example, if the average enrollment of boys in schools increased from 150 to 210 students (a 40% increase), then the standardized endline value would be 140. If average enrollment decreased from 150 to 120, then the measure would take the value of 80. To the extent that outcomes increased more for girls than boys over the time, the red bar (rightmost in pair associated with model type) will be longer.

<sup>5</sup>The GOAL endline data for all outcomes come from spring 2013 (at wave 6 in the figures). The enrollment and attendance data at GOAL Plus endline are from fall 2015, whereas the completion and promotion data for GOAL Plus endline come from spring 2014—the end of first full year of GOAL Plus implementation.

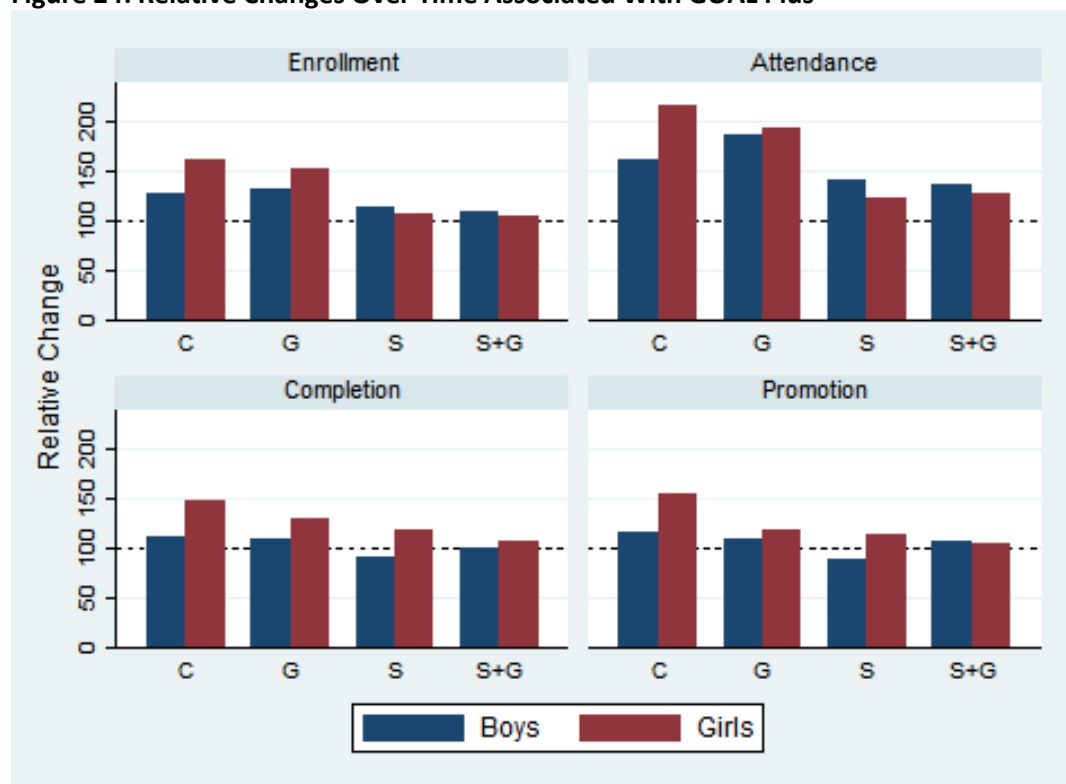
**Figure 23: Average Number of Students at Schools Before and After Intervention**

		GOAL Endline				GOAL Plus Endline			
Outcome	Group	Comparison	Grant	Scholarship	Scholarship and grant	Comparison	Grant	Scholarship	Scholarship and grant
<b>Enrollment</b>									
	Boys	80.55	117.50	73.20	109.05	101.90	155.25	82.50	118.61
	Girls	69.40	100.30	78.60	131.60	112.00	151.88	84.90	138.22
<b>Attendance</b>									
	Boys	45.30	53.40	44.20	74.50	73.25	99.00	62.70	101.11
	Girls	36.10	49.00	51.20	85.75	77.70	94.00	63.00	108.44
<b>Completion</b>									
	Boys	61.65	100.30	56.00	96.05	68.57	109.30	51.00	95.55
	Girls	47.05	81.60	51.80	109.95	68.71	104.70	60.80	116.40
<b>Promotion</b>									
	Boys	51.80	87.80	49.90	77.85	59.90	96.20	44.50	82.55
	Girls	37.05	73.20	43.60	91.70	56.67	86.20	49.30	95.85

Source: Liberia GOAL and GOAL Plus projects (2013, 2014, 2015).

Note. Data before and after intervention for Grades 1 through 6 by gender and types of support the schools received. The GOAL endline data for all outcomes come from end of spring 2013. Enrollment and attendance data at GOAL Plus endline come from 2015, whereas the completion and promotion data for GOAL Plus endline come from spring 2014—the end of first full year of GOAL Plus implementation.

**Figure 24: Relative Changes Over Time Associated With GOAL Plus**



Source: Liberia GOAL and GOAL Plus projects (2013, 2014, 2015).

Note. Changes in enrollment, attendance, completion, and promotion of boys and girls by type of support provided to school. Enrollment and attendance data come from GOAL Plus endline in 2015, whereas the completion and promotion data come from end of first full year of GOAL Plus implementation.

The results from Figures 23 and 24 complement the observations from trend lines for GOAL Plus. The findings for GOAL Plus can be summarized for each outcome as follows:

The enrollment of girls appears to be stable or increasing for each groups of schools. The most noticeable increases in enrollment of girls relative to boys were at comparison and grant schools.

- Attendance increased in all schools, and the relative increases for girls were higher than boys at comparison schools and slightly higher at grant schools. Growth in the attendance of boys was somewhat higher than girls at schools that had been scholarship schools or scholarship and grant programs under GOAL.
- Completion improved more for girls than boys, and increases in completion for girls rather than boys were observed in all but schools that had provided both scholarships and grants.
- Promotion data were very similar to completion data, increases for girls rather than boys in all but schools that had provided both scholarships and grants.

The increases in enrollment of girls and boys under Goal Plus for schools that served as comparison schools were similar (in percentage terms) to those increases observed under GOAL for schools that had received scholarships and grants, This provides corroboration across two sets of schools across two separate time periods of the effects associated with providing grants and scholarships.

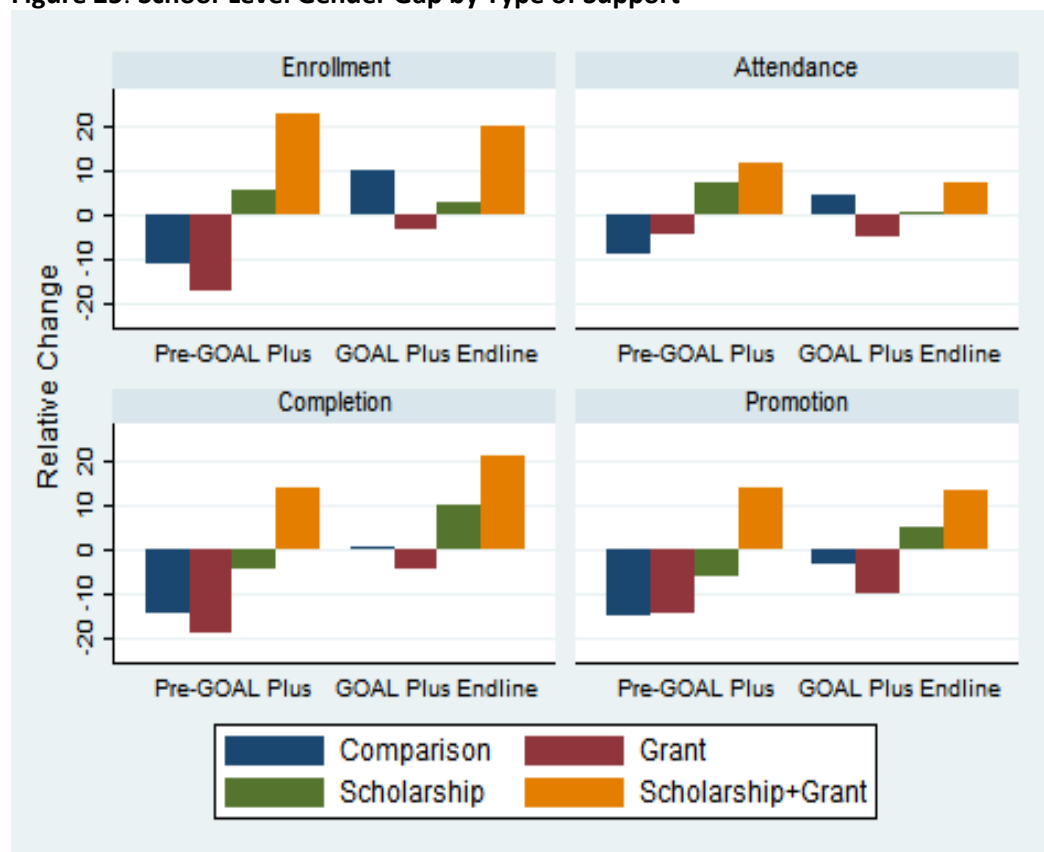
The pattern is similar for attendance measures, though there was greater growth in attendance than enrollment, indicating there was also an increase in attendance rate at these schools under GOAL Plus.

Another way to look at these data is to directly examine the numerical gap between girls and boys for each outcome in terms of the average number of students at a point in time and compare the change over time in this gap between girls and boys. In this way, the difference in outcomes between boys and girls can be directly compared in terms of the average number of students at schools shown as a gap between girls and boys. A negative number (bars in the figure below zero) indicates that there were more boys than girls on average at school, and a positive number (bars above zero) means that there were more girls than boys. Figure 25 displays this school-level gap before GOAL Plus (at wave 6) and at GOAL Plus endline for enrollment, attendance, completion, and promotion. The changes in the gender gap from pre-GOAL Plus to GOAL Plus endline can be summarized as follows by type of model:

- **Scholarship plus grant schools:** The gender gaps in favor of girls in scholarship plus grant schools observed for all outcomes at these schools were stable over the period covered by GOAL Plus.
- **Scholarship schools:** The gender gaps did not change from pre-GOAL Plus to GOAL Plus endline for enrollment and attendance and but were reduced for completion and promotion – i.e., there were greater increases for girls for both completion and promotion.
- **Grant schools:** The negative gender gap (more boys than girls at schools) in enrollment and completion appeared to diminish by the GOAL Plus endline as girls received scholarships. There was little change for the attendance and promotion gender gaps from pre-GOAL Plus to GOAL Plus endline.
- **Comparison schools:** The negative gender gap (in favor of girls) at the end of GOAL in attendance and promotion changed little over GOAL Plus, with small changes (in favor of boys) in enrollment and completion of a few students. These schools largely maintained their status quo from the end of GOAL over GOAL Plus.



Figure 25: School-Level Gender Gap by Type of Support



Source: Liberia GOAL and GOAL Plus projects (2013, 2014, 2015).  
 Note: Gender gap by type of support provided to school for GOAL and GOAL Plus.

### Regression Analyses

To examine whether the observed changes in outcomes over time were attributable to GOAL Plus and to assess whether these changes were statistically significant, we used regression analysis to compare changes in outcomes for girls and boys at schools that received different kinds of support under GOAL relative to what was observed between girls and boys at scholarship plus grant schools. The regression includes data for the period just before GOAL Plus was implemented (i.e., the GOAL endline; wave 6 on the figures above), through the final time for which data were available for analysis (wave 10 for enrollment and attendance; point 8 for completion and promotion).

We estimated the effect of GOAL Plus on student outcomes with the following regression model:

$$Y_{git} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Treatment + \beta_2 Girls + \beta_3 Intervention + \beta_4 Girls * Treatment + \beta_5 Girls * Intervention + \beta_6 Treatment * Intervention + \beta_7 Girls * Treatment * Intervention + \beta_8 Trend + \beta_9 County$$

In this model  $Y_{git}$  represents the grade-level enrollment in grade  $g$ , school  $i$ , and time  $t$  expressed as a number of students in a school. The grade can cover all grades within a school or an individual grade.  $Girls$  is a binary indicator for whether the data covered boys or girls, treatment is a

categorical variable with 4 levels (scholarship, grant, scholarship plus grant, and comparison) where scholarship plus grant schools serve as the reference group. *Trend* is an indicator for the time when the data were collected only for enrollment and attendance outcomes.<sup>6</sup> Intervention is a binary variable indicating whether data reference an outcome at GOAL Plus or before (i.e., Intervention = 1 if wave > 6). *County* refers to indicator variables that identify which of the three counties the school was located in. The standard errors of these models are corrected for the clustering of observations within schools over time.

The key element of this regression is the coefficient  $\beta_7$ , which measures the change in an outcome between the girls and boys (the “gap” described above) in schools over the time of GOAL Plus measured as the number of students at a type a school, relative to the difference over time for the outcomes between girls and boys in scholarship plus grant schools. It is a direct measure of impact of the GOAL project in a regression framework. An estimated coefficient of zero for a given type of school indicates that the change in girls’ outcomes relative to boys’ in other schools was not different from the change in girls’ outcomes relative to boys’ in scholarship plus grant schools. A positive value of  $\beta_7$  indicates there was an additional impact of the GOAL Plus project in favor of girls on the outcome of interest. For example, if the number of girls enrolled in grant schools increased by 15 and the number of boys increased by 10, there would be a reduction in the gap of 5 students favoring girls.

Regression analysis is useful in that it summarizes a large amount of data and enables us to account for differences across schools other than their GOAL Plus status, including their location in terms of county. In addition to providing a summary across all grades (similar to the graphs above), it also allows us easily to summarize the effects of GOAL Plus for each grade. The overall effects across all grades necessarily add up to the sum of effects for individual grades; thus grade-level effects provide information on grades in which there were the largest effects within schools.

One reason to use regression analysis is that it allows us to assess whether estimated differences in outcomes observed between groups are externally valid, that is, whether it is likely that they would be observed beyond the immediate sample of 60 schools included in this study. Such external validity is captured by the statistical significance of the estimates. For this study, our ability to declare that observed differences in outcomes across schools are statistically significant is quite limited, in that data are available only at the level of the school, and the total number of schools is limited to 60 schools. Most of the differences observed between different school types were not statistically significant but can be considered as a summary measure of impact across models for these schools when we control for general trend and location in terms of county.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Because there are only two data points for completion and promotion outcomes, the *trend* variable cannot be included in the model along with the *intervention* indicator. Therefore, completion and promotion models do not include the *trend* variable.

<sup>7</sup> The minimum detectable effect size was at least 0.642 standard deviations in the student outcomes. That is, only effects larger than 0.642 standard deviations are statistically significant. All of the effects are smaller than 0.642 in our analyses and therefore do not reach statistical significance. The standard deviations in the outcome variables are relatively large, reflecting variability across schools. With larger samples of schools, it would be more likely that effects would be statistically significant.

## Results from Regression Analysis

Figure 26 presents estimated impacts on girls’ enrollment for schools as a whole and by grade, with the regression coefficients ( $\beta_7$ ) for individual grades adding up to the coefficient across all grades considered together. In terms of overall enrollments in schools, the number of girls enrolled in Grades 1 through 6 differentially increased by between 8.1 and 21.9., depending on the type of support GOAL provided originally. The pattern of results matches that presented in the figures above, namely estimates are largest for the GOAL comparison schools, followed by grant schools (which received scholarship support under GOAL PLUS), followed by scholarship schools (which received grants as additional support under GOAL Plus). Neither the grade level results nor all-grades results were statistically significant, in part reflecting variability across schools. However, in the majority of the cases, the estimates of effects were positive, meaning that that the pre- to post-GOAL Plus gender gap differences in comparison, grant, and scholarship schools decreased more than those at scholarship plus grant schools. The results specific to different type of schools were as follows:

- Comparison schools: Across all grades, the gender gap changed by 21.9 points in favor of girls relative to the change in scholarship plus grant schools. This increase was mostly due to differential increases in Grades 1 and 3, where the gender gaps improved by 8.7, and 6.1 points.
- Grant schools: The gender gap decreased by 12.9 points across all grades. Most of the changes were observed at Grades 2 and 3, where the gap was decreased by 6.1 and 4.9 points.
- Scholarship schools: Relative to the change in scholarship plus grant schools, the gender gap was decreased by 8.1 points. The changes in Grades 1 and 3—2.9 and 4.3, respectively—were the biggest contributor to this result.

**Figure 26: Impact Estimates per School for Enrollment by Type of Support**

Grade	Comparison	Grant	Scholarship
All grades	21.873 (16.557)	12.917 (20.590)	8.098 (20.256)
Grade 1	8.724 (5.479)	0.849 (6.812)	2.924 (6.702)
Grade 2	1.828 (4.090)	6.134 (5.085)	1.366 (5.003)
Grade 3	6.138 (3.700)	4.876 (4.601)	4.288 (4.527)
Grade 4	3.933 (3.457)	3.303 (4.297)	0.628 (4.227)
Grade 5	2.024 (3.123)	-3.126 (3.884)	1.462 (3.821)
Grade 6	-0.885 (2.716)	0.790 (3.378)	-2.660 (3.323)

Source: Liberia GOAL and GOAL Plus projects (2011–2015).

Note. Impact estimates are the coefficients of the parameter ( $\beta_7$ ) of interest from the analysis; standard errors are in parentheses. Bolding shows significance at .05 level (note: there are no significant results in the table above).

Figure 27 summarizes the estimated impacts of GOAL Plus on attendance at the school level and by grade. In terms of overall attendance in schools, the number of girls attending schools in Grades 2 through 6 differentially increased only for comparison schools but was close to zero overall or other schools. Although there were gains in first grade, they were largely offset by other grades. None of the results were statistically significant. The results specific to different type of schools were as follows:

- **Comparison schools:** Across all grades, the gender gap in attendance is improved by 11.2 points in favor of girls relative to the change in scholarship plus grant schools. This improvement was mostly due to differential increase in Grade 1, where the gender gap improved by 7.6 points.
- **Grant schools:** The gender gap increased by 0.5 points across all grades. The gap decreased only in Grade 1 by 5.8 points.
- **Scholarship schools:** Relative to the change in scholarship plus grant schools, the gender gap decreased by 1.4. The gender gap for attendance is decreased by 5.3 points in Grade 1.

**Figure 27: Impact Estimates for Attendance per School by Type of Support**

Grade	Comparison	Grant	Scholarship
All grades	11.198 (12.504)	-0.527 (15.550)	-1.402 (15.298)
Grade 1	7.622 (3.988)	5.753 (4.959)	5.347 (4.879)
Grade 2	1.204 (3.622)	-0.458 (4.504)	-0.708 (4.432)
Grade 3	-0.627 (2.931)	-2.809 (3.645)	-3.840 (3.586)
Grade 4	0.822 (2.907)	-1.135 (3.615)	-2.478 (3.557)
Grade 5	0.528 (2.666)	-2.334 (3.315)	0.878 (3.262)
Grade 6	1.650 (2.315)	0.456 (2.879)	-0.600 (2.832)

Source: Liberia GOAL and GOAL Plus projects (2011, 2015).

Note. Impact estimates are the coefficients of the parameter ( $\beta_7$ ) of interest from the analysis; standard errors are in parentheses. Bolding shows significance at .05 level (note: there are no statistically significant results in the table above).

Figure 28 summarizes regression results for completion and promotion outcomes. The top panel of Figure 28 presents the estimated impact of GOAL Plus on the number of girls who completed a grade by the type of support their school received. In terms of overall completion in schools, the number of girls who completed the school year differentially increased by about 10 students (in favor of girls) for each type of school relative to the scholarship and grants schools. The overall results indicate that gap between girls and boys was reduced at all types of schools when extra support was provided in terms of total number of students. The fact that the overall coefficient is positive for each type of school model (relative to scholarship and grant schools) reflects the fact that the gap between girls and boys decreased under GOAL Plus, whereas it remained unchanged at scholarship and grant schools over the period of GOAL Plus. The results were only statistically

significant for comparison school at the overall level, but none of the remaining grade-level results nor all-grades results were statistically significant.<sup>8</sup>

However, across all grades, the majority of the estimates were positive, meaning that gender gap differences over the course of GOAL Plus in comparison, grant, and scholarship schools decreased more than at scholarship plus grant schools. The results specific to different type of schools were as follows:

- Comparison schools: Across all grades, the gender gap significantly decreased by 10.2 points in completions relative to the change in scholarship plus grant schools. At Grade 1, the gender gap in completion decreased by 8 points.
- Grant schools: The gender gap decreased by 10.2 points in completions across all grades. The biggest decreases in completions gap were observed at Grades 1 and 6 by about 6 points.
- Scholarship schools: Relative to the change in scholarship plus grant schools, the gender gap in completion was decreased by 10.9 points. The biggest decrease in completion gap was observed in Grade 1 by 9.9 points.

The bottom panel of Figure 28 presents the estimated impact of GOAL Plus on the number of girls who were promoted by the type of support their school received. The results are similar to those for completion, in that there was greater growth in girls' completion than boys' for all types of schools relative to the scholarship and grant schools. Neither the grade-level results nor all-grades results were statistically significant. However, across all grades, the majority of the estimates were positive, meaning that over the course of GOAL Plus, the gender gap differences in comparison, grant, and scholarship schools decreased more than of scholarship plus grant schools. The results specific to different type of schools were as follows:

- Comparison schools: Across all grades, the gender gap was decreased by 7.8 points in promotions relative to the change in scholarship plus grant schools. At Grade 6, the gender gap in promotions increased by 12.1 points.
- Grant schools: The gender gap increased by 7.2 points in promotions across all grades. The biggest decrease in promotions gap was observed in Grade 6 by 5.2 points.
- Scholarship schools: Relative to the change in scholarship plus grant schools, the gender gaps in promotions were decreased by 7.1 points. The biggest decrease in promotion gap (i.e., in favor of girls) was observed in Grade 6 by 11.7 points.

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<sup>8</sup> There are more comparison schools than grant and scholarship schools; therefore estimates are more precise and results are more statistically significant for comparison schools.

**Figure 28: Impact of Intervention on the Completion and Promotion of Girls by Grade**

Grades	Comparison	Grant	Scholarship
<b>Completion</b>			
All grades	<b>10.243 (5.219)</b>	10.150 (6.430)	10.850 (6.430)
Grade 1	7.986 (6.052)	5.950 (7.456)	9.850 (7.456)
Grade 2	-1.893 (5.326)	-1.100 (6.562)	0.300 (6.562)
Grade 3	3.686 (4.631)	3.600 (5.706)	1.400 (5.706)
Grade 4	-0.210 (4.657)	-3.250 (5.737)	-3.950 (5.737)
Grade 5	-4.083 (3.473)	-4.500 (4.279)	-1.400 (4.279)
Grade 6	2.307 (2.915)	5.830 (3.634)	0.850 (3.592)
<b>Promotion</b>			
All grades	7.793 (21.997)	7.150 (27.102)	7.050 (27.102)
Grade 1	-1.481 (4.651)	-1.205 (5.723)	1.995 (5.723)
Grade 2	4.333 (4.169)	2.900 (5.137)	3.000 (5.137)
Grade 3	0.143 (4.145)	-6.550 (5.107)	-3.750 (5.107)
Grade 4	-2.036 (3.096)	-3.669 (3.809)	-0.069 (3.809)
Grade 5	1.686 (2.764)	3.716 (3.445)	0.450 (3.405)
Grade 6	12.062 (18.928)	5.150 (23.321)	11.650 (23.321)

Source: Liberia GOAL and GOAL Plus project (2011–2015).

Note. Impact estimates are the coefficients of the parameter ( $\beta_7$ ) of interest from the analysis; standard errors are in parentheses. Bolding shows significance at .05 level.

### Impacts of GOAL Plus on School Conditions

In addition to examining the impact of GOAL Plus on student outcomes at the school and grade level, we examined the change in school characteristics from GOAL endline to GOAL Plus endline across schools. Using questions from school observation instruments developed for GOAL, we created two scales to summarize school conditions across 16 individual observational variables. One scale (nine items) summarized the overall physical condition of the school and the other (seven items) summarized the availability and quality of its water and hygiene infrastructure.<sup>9</sup> In addition, we also created summary statistics for individual questions for academic outcomes for whether (1) students have notebooks to write on, (2) students have pencils to write with, and (3) textbooks were visible during visits from data collectors.

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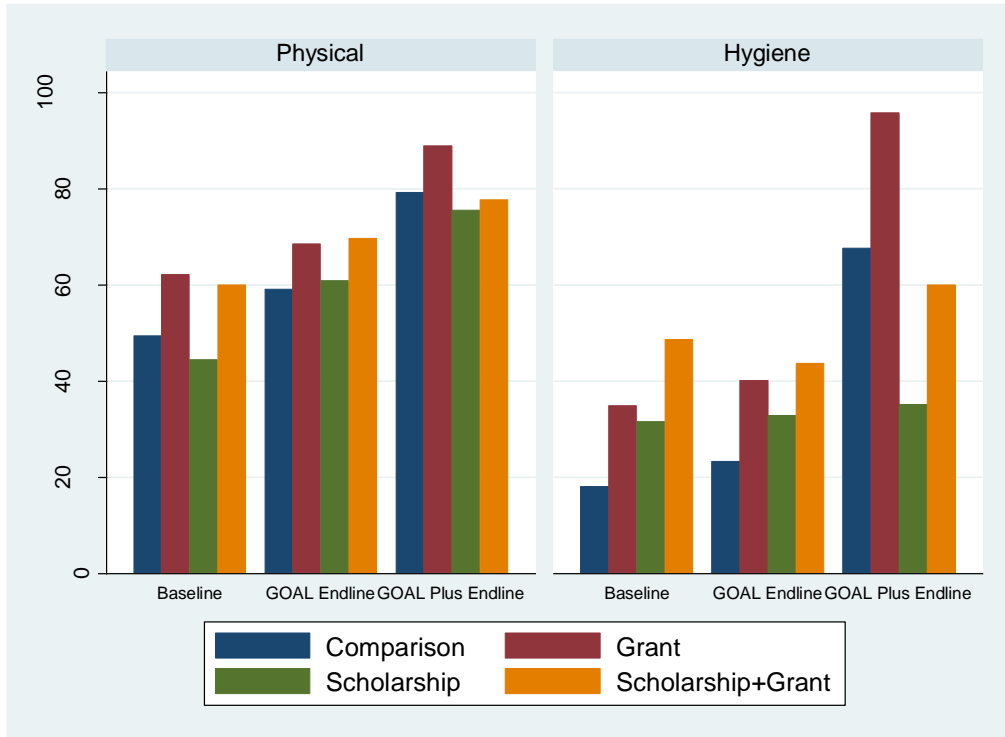
<sup>9</sup>We assessed the reliability of the two composite scales and found them to be sufficiently reliable with Cronbach’s alphas of 0.74 and 0.66 for the “physical condition” and “water and hygiene” scales, respectively, at the GOAL endline. At GOAL Plus endline, the Cronbach’s alphas were 0.61 and 0.89, respectively.

Figure 30 displays the mean of the two scales (which were on the range of zero to 100) at GOAL and GOAL Plus endline periods, along with the percentage of schools in which observers found that students had notebooks to write on and pencils to write with, and textbooks were visible in the classroom. Figures 29 and 31 show the same information starting from GOAL baseline. The results show that compared with the GOAL Plus endline, most schools appeared to have improved school conditions over the period covered by GOAL Plus, with the largest changes at the comparison schools under GOAL that had not previously received supports. There also seemed to be increases in the availability of materials and supplies in classrooms across schools over this time, with specific exceptions noted below. Caution should be taken in interpreting the indicators of resources in a school in that they are based on a very small number of scale (1–4) responses averaged together for small numbers of schools; therefore they are sensitive to small changes at only a few schools.

The changes specific to each type of schools were as follows:

- Scholarship plus grant schools: Scholarship plus grant schools had higher physical school quality and water and hygiene scores at GOAL Plus endline than GOAL endline. However, there were little or no improvements in terms of notebook, pencil, and visible-textbook (which showed decline) availability during school visits.
- Grant schools: Grant schools had improvements in all school conditions measures. The most notable differences were observed in water and hygiene scores and the availability of notebooks, pencils, and textbook visibility.
- Scholarship schools: Scholarship schools showed some improvement on physical school quality and larger improvements in the availability of notebooks, pencils, and textbook visibility.
- Comparison schools: Comparison schools appeared to have improvements in all school quality measures. The highest improvements were observed water and hygiene scores and textbook visibility.

**Figure 29: Average Scale Scores for Physical School Quality and Water and Hygiene by Type of Support**



Source: Liberia GOAL and GOAL Plus projects (2011, 2013, 2015).

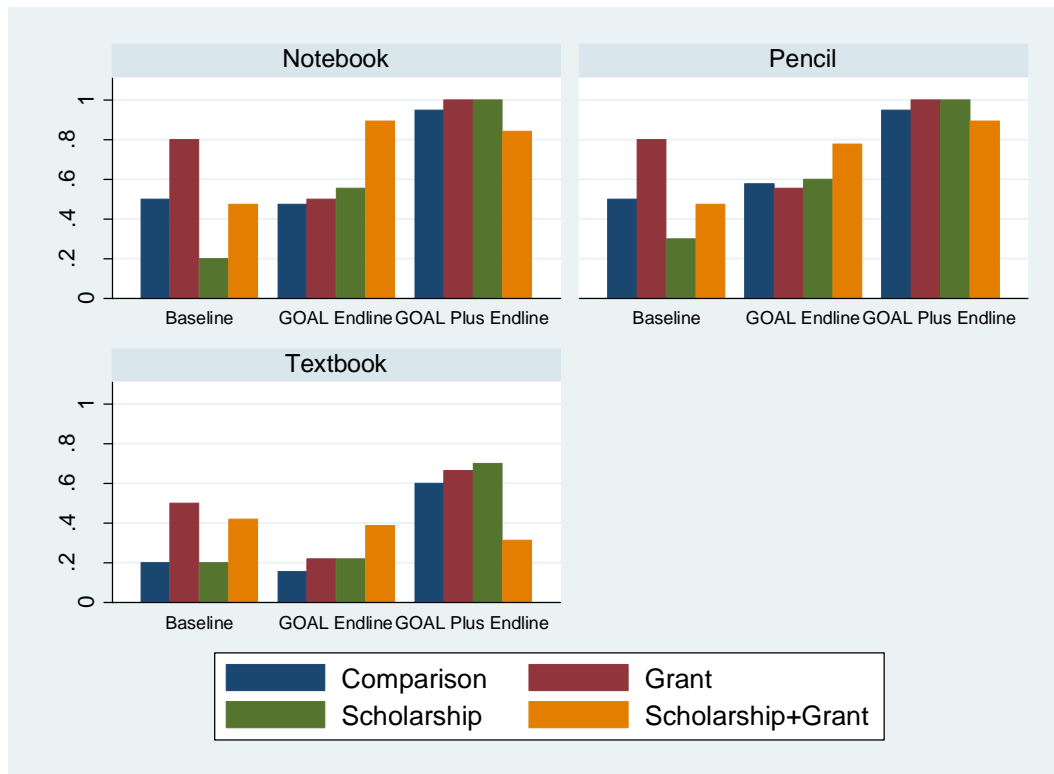


**Figure 30: Average School Characteristics at the Endline by Type of Support**

Variable	GOAL Endline				GOAL Plus Endline			
	Comparison	Grant	Scholarship	Scholarship and Grant	Comparison	Grant	Scholarship	Scholarship and Grant
Physical School Quality scale	59.2	68.6	61.0	69.6	79.29	88.89	75.56	77.78
Water and Hygiene scale	23.3	40.2	32.9	45.8	67.73	95.83	35.24	60.03
Notebook	47%	50%	56%	90%	95%	100%	100%	84%
Pencil	58%	56%	60%	78%	95%	100%	100%	89%
Textbook visible	16%	22%	22%	42%	60%	67%	70%	32%

Source: Liberia GOAL and GOAL Plus projects (2013, 2015).

**Figure 31: Percentages of Schools with Different Characteristics by Type of Support**



Source: Liberia GOAL and GOAL Plus projects (2011, 2013, 2015).

Next, we tested whether these differences across type of treatment were statistically significant by estimating the following regression model:

$$Y_s = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Treatment + \beta_2 Intervention + \beta_3 Intervention * Treatment$$

where  $Y_s$  represents one of the outcomes in schools at GOAL Plus endline. *Treatment* is a categorical variable with four levels (scholarship, grant, scholarship plus grant, and comparison) where scholarship plus grant schools serve as the reference group, and *Intervention* is an indicator for whether data come from GOAL Plus endline or GOAL endline. The key element of this regression is the coefficient  $\beta_3$ , which measures the difference in outcome between the GOAL project schools over time relative to the difference between scholarship plus grant schools. A positive value of  $\beta_3$  indicates that the set of schools showed greater increase over time covered by GOAL Plus in a measure than schools receiving scholarship plus grants.

Figure 32 show the results from these models.

**Figure 32: The Effect of GOAL Plus on School Conditions**

Outcome	Comparison	Grant	Scholarship
Physical School Quality	12.036 (10.532)	12.195 (13.105)	6.501 (12.871)
Water and Hygiene	26.109 (13.574)	<b>37.385 (17.437)</b>	-15.909 (16.781)
Notebook	<b>0.521 (0.167)</b>	<b>0.545 (0.207)</b>	<b>0.489 (0.207)</b>
Pencil	0.249 (0.171)	0.322 (0.215)	0.278 (0.208)
Textbook visible	<b>0.481 (0.214)</b>	0.483 (0.269)	0.517 (0.264)

Source: Liberia GOAL and GOAL Plus projects (2013, 2015).

Note. Impact estimates are the coefficients of the parameter ( $\beta_3$ ) of interest from the analysis; standard errors are in parentheses).

The results show that the pre- to post-GOAL Plus changes in schools relative to the changes in scholarship plus grant schools were not statistically significant in terms of physical school quality. However, there were statistically significant changes over time in terms of water and hygiene, notebook availability, and textbook visibility on the day of school visit. The changes from GOAL endline to GOAL Plus endline can be summarized for each type of school as follows:

- Comparison schools: Relative to scholarship plus grant schools, the increase in the share of comparison schools that had notebooks to write on and textbooks visible during school visits were 52.1% and 48.1%, respectively. Comparison schools also increased their physical school quality and water and hygiene scores by 12 and 26.1 points from GOAL endline to GOAL Plus endline relative to scholarship plus grant schools, but these changes were not statistically significant.
- Grant schools: Grant schools increased their water and hygiene scores about 37.4 points more than scholarship plus grant schools from GOAL endline to GOAL Plus endline. Grant schools also had about 12.2 points higher increase in physical school quality, but the difference was not statistically significant.
- Scholarship schools: Relative to scholarship plus grant schools, the increase in numbers of scholarship schools that had notebooks to write on was about 49% at GOAL Plus endline.

## Qualitative Findings

### Introduction

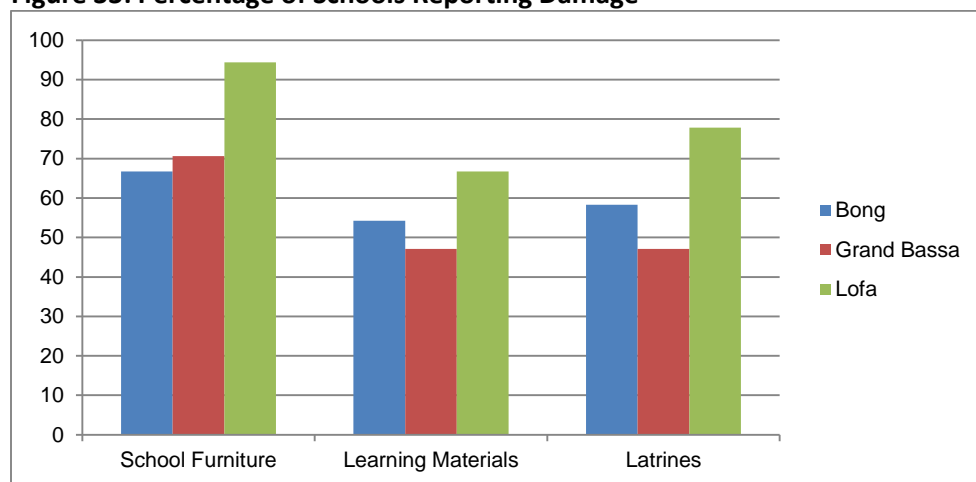
In interviews and focus groups, respondents from the GOAL Plus study schools discussed a range of challenges that both schools and individual community members faced while schools were closed due to the EVD outbreak. Investigating the challenges and the activities that communities took to overcome them informed the research team's understanding of each community's recovery efforts as schools reopened. As schools reopened, significant gaps existed that hindered students' reenrollment, including extensive damage to school infrastructure, inconsistently implemented health protocols, financial constraints, the transformation of social norms, and a continued fear of EVD. Fortunately, despite the immense challenges facing communities in the wake of the EVD epidemic, school communities were resilient in their recovery. PTA and community members contributed their time, labor, and money to repair schools and disseminate information about school reopening; furthermore, both students and community members discussed the numerous reasons that education is important. GOAL Plus activities also resumed once schools reopened, easing the financial burden many families faced in sending their children to school. This support as well as the capacity building GOAL Plus conducted prior to the EVD outbreak were critical to restoring education as a centerpiece of the community as students returned to school.

### *Challenges in Schools Post-EVD*

In the aftermath of the EVD epidemic, schools throughout the study area faced new sets of challenges. The most common challenges reported by respondents in Bong, Lofa, and Grand Bassa included damages to school infrastructure, deficits in teaching staff, and gaps in students' learning.

***Damages to School Infrastructure.*** Respondents reported that extensive damage took place to school property during school closures, despite the fact that none of the schools were used for EVD-related activities. Damage to school infrastructure also decreased students' motivation to attend school and contributed to low morale. The most common occurrences of damage reported by students and educators were to latrines and building doors. Over half of GOAL Plus schools responding to the EVD supplemental questionnaire in Bong and Lofa Counties reported that furniture, learning materials, and latrines were damaged while schools were closed during the outbreak. Lofa County reported the most damage to school infrastructure; all but one school responded that furniture had been damaged or stolen/removed during the outbreak, two thirds of its schools reported learning materials had been damaged or stolen/removed, and latrines at over three quarters of schools in this county were altered or damaged during the outbreak. Fortunately, only six GOAL Plus schools reported having classrooms that were no longer usable due to the outbreak (four of them located in Lofa County). One parent from Grand Bassa discussed the impact of poor school infrastructure on students in their community, "School infrastructure were not in good condition and students had problem with that which discourage them from going to school, classrooms were not special." This sentiment reveals the potential influence that damage to school infrastructure can have on student motivation to attend school.

**Figure 33: Percentage of Schools Reporting Damage**



Across counties, schools' response to damaged infrastructure was varied and inconsistent in providing replacement furniture and materials. The largest gap in addressing damaged infrastructure was the lack of response in renovating damaged latrines; less than a third of schools in Bong and Lofa County where latrines were damaged during the outbreak had been renovated at the time of this study.

In addition to the damage done to schools' infrastructure, schools also reported damage to and losses of learning materials. Learning materials were replaced in three quarters of affected schools in Bong and Lofa Counties, but only slightly more than a third of schools in Grand Bassa County. However, new or replacement furniture was provided to a larger portion of affected schools in Grand Bassa than to those in Bong and Lofa Counties.

**Deficits in Teaching Staff.** Despite the Liberian government's decision to continue to pay government teachers during school closure, schools still faced challenges in maintaining adequate teaching staff. Decreases in teaching staff and increases in student enrollment due to migration created teacher deficits across districts. Volunteer teachers played an important role in alleviating the teacher deficit. Although volunteer teachers were in high demand to staff schools as they reopened, they were not compensated by the government during school closure, and this lack of compensation was a significant factor motivating their weak commitment to their positions. Numerous non-volunteer teachers also reported inconsistent payment schedules or not receiving payment at all for their work as teachers, which affected their willingness to attend school and teach class. Furthermore, the existence of volunteer teachers as a critical component of the school represents a larger barrier to schools, as it presents a temporary solution for understaffed schools with increased enrollment rates.

**Learning Challenges.** Educators and students reported several challenges in reengaging students in their education as a result of the EVD-related school closures. The majority of students reported that their ability to learn and the teaching instruction were relatively unchanged. However, several students reported increased challenges in learning since they had reenrolled in school. Of the

students that mentioned experiencing learning challenges, the majority said that they had “issues understanding, lessons were taught too quickly, or there was trouble remembering from last year.” Educators also experienced difficulty in teaching as a result of the EVD school closures. Several teachers also mentioned that they had an increased workload, often having to teach two or more subjects.

### ***Inconsistencies in Schools’ Implementation of Health Protocols***

Inconsistencies regarding the frequency of temperature checks and hand washing in schools existed between EVD questionnaire answers and information gathered from FGDs. The health protocols were designed and issued by the Liberian government to school communities in order to ensure that schools be safe spaces of learning for students and that they protect students from EVD. They consisted of daily procedures that needed to be established for all who entered the school property along with instructions for designating specific people as responsible for enforcing them. When asked about health protocols in the EVD questionnaire, responses revealed that schools were uniformly complying with the daily requirements. In fact, 100% of schools indicated that EVD-specific cleaning materials were available and that students had temperature checks before entering schools. Additionally, all but one school (in Bong County) responded that they enforced hand washing before entering schools, and well over three quarters of schools stated that they displayed information about EVD awareness.

Across all three counties, participants had different ideas about who was responsible for temperature checks and hand washing. Often, participants at the same school would name different individuals responsible for ensuring the implementation of health protocols. Examples of responsible individuals named include school administrators, teachers, PTA members, janitors, or older students. Discussions about these roles revealed to the research team that schools were inconsistently following the protocols, not only in terms of designating responsible administrators, but also in following the protocols with regularity.

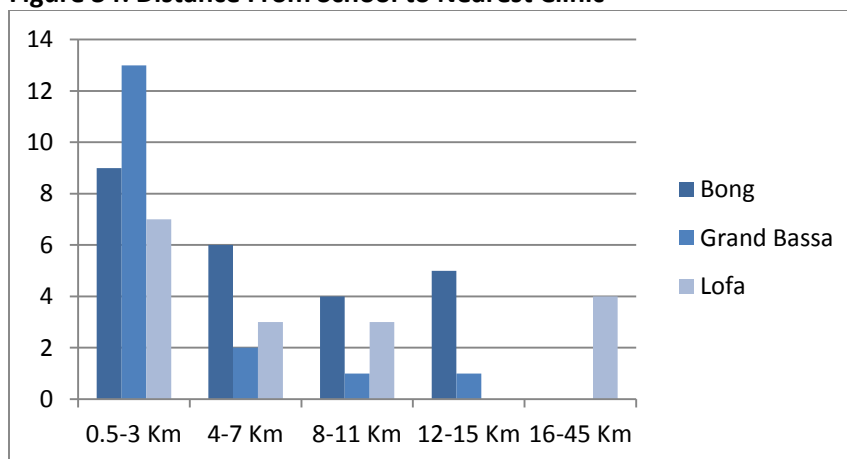
Students and participants in FGDs provided conflicting information about the regularity of these procedures. Several respondents in a Grand Bassa County focus group discussion remarked that “it was being done before but our temperature is not checked anymore,” but others in this county stated that the checks occurred every day, with one female student telling researchers that temperatures were checked during roll call. In Lofa County, a PTA focus group highlighted that although they followed the rule requiring two-person teams of safety administrators, they did not follow the protocols consistently:

Yes, all students get their temperature checked two times a week. Two persons are trained to do the temperature checks, the principal and the vice principal, sometimes we are absent or have busy schedule, and we only do it two times a week.

Other focus groups and interviews in this county were mixed in their description of health protocols. One student stated that “our temperature is not check[ed] and I do not know the reason for which our temperature is not check[ed]. We only wash our hands.” However, most others affirmed that schools followed the safety procedures.

According to the Safe School Protocol, schools were supposed to have a referral system with a nearby health facility, including a transport arrangement. For three quarters of schools in Lofa County, children were consequently required to get a sick slip from school before accessing healthcare. Schools in Grand Bassa County were split in requiring this slip, and in Bong County, just a quarter of schools required sick slips. The EVD questionnaire also inquired as to whether schools had a dedicated health worker. Just six of 59 schools had a health worker, with four of these workers present at the schools every day. Unfortunately, the schools with health workers were not those that were located the furthest from clinics. Schools thus improvised in their response to students that need medical assistance. One student in Bong explained “no, the school does not have a health worker, but a teacher helps to treat students if there is medication on campus.” While just under half of all the schools surveyed had a health clinic in their community or up to 3 kilometers away, a third of schools were located 8 or more kilometers away; schools in Bong and Lofa Counties fare particularly badly in terms of their access to a health facility, with four schools in Lofa located between 16 and 45 kilometers from a clinic.

**Figure 34: Distance From School to Nearest Clinic**



### **Financial Constraints to Reenrollment**

Students and families consistently cited financial constraints as a significant challenge in reenrolling girls in schools. Despite families’ preexisting financial situations, EVD caused undue financial stress on students’ families by disrupting their livelihoods. Students and parents mentioned the inability to pay school fees and buy school materials as major challenges to reenrolling in school. One parent from Bong explained their difficulty in paying school fees, “[The] EVD crisis affected us financially. We were not doing any business or any activity to really make money. To send children to school is costly.” Students also mentioned the challenges associated with obtaining school fees after the EVD outbreak:

I will need school materials to come back to school. My parents were helping to provide them before but during the Ebola break her market broke down, she spent her market money to take care of the family. This year she does not have money to buy my school materials.

The GOAL Plus interventions directly addressed this critical challenge many families found themselves in post-EVD.

### ***Changes in Students' Interpersonal Relationships***

Many changes occurred in students' physical environments that extended beyond their experience in school. One student from Lofa stated, "Yes, we are doing things that we didn't do last year; we are sitting on armchairs. Also because of Ebola, we do not have a general drinking bucket, because we don't want to use the same cup." Numerous students across the three districts also mentioned changes in how teachers allowed students to interact in schools. A handful of students referenced that their relationships with friends also changed, one female student in Bong explained, "We do not play as we use to last year because of Ebola. Some of my friends stopped me from touching them, I feel bad about that sometimes."

Beyond EVD's impact on modifying health practices and typical behaviors, many respondents referenced the toll it took on their home lives. Multiple students mentioned that they had family members who had died of the disease. In several instances, a family member's death strained families not only emotionally, but also financially, as one person stated "Ebola killed people that others are depending on for support." Several students mentioned that they had friends who did not return to school when it reopened either because they were afraid of EVD or because they had relocated to different towns.

Students living with their parents who had long-standing ties to the community were more likely to reenroll in school after the EVD crisis, as their parents and other community members could successfully provide these students with the resources needed to reenroll. Most of the girls who did not reenroll in school described significant changes in their lives during school closure that impacted their ability to reenroll in school. Family members who previously provided financial support passed away. Girls were forced to move to new communities in search of financial security. Others became pregnant, which presented a different set of financial challenges. One of the girls who decided not to reenroll in school shared her experiences during school closure:

Yes, my living situation changed recently, my uncle died from Ebola. He left Lofa for Monrovia, and we received news that he died from Ebola. He was [the one] that provided [money] for the house, and to send us to school.

Many students faced increased challenges to reenrollment in the wake of the EVD epidemic because of their exacerbated financial hardships. The epidemic negatively impacted social cohesion by changing social habits and affecting familial support systems. The epidemic further weakened the community by causing migration and internal displacement, as discussed in the following section.

### ***Fear of EVD and Effect on Reenrollment***

Many students mentioned the possibility of contracting EVD was a major barrier to their reenrollment in school. Students' fear of EVD acted as a major challenge in school reenrollment efforts. One student referenced the contagious nature of EVD: "I'm worried every day about me



or my family getting Ebola, because when one person gets Ebola, everybody else will also get it.” Additionally, students believed that they were more likely to come in contact with EVD at school because of the large number of children who could unknowingly be spreading the disease. One student pointed out that at school children, “play together and eat together,” which increased their likelihood of coming in contact with a person infected with EVD.

Because of the increased risk of exposure to themselves and their families, some students chose not to reenroll. Others were traumatized by the recent loss of friends and family members to EVD, and found it difficult to return to school. One female student from Lofa aptly summarized students’ worries surrounding close contact with EVD in school:

People can get Ebola from anywhere, but school worries me more because I have less contact at home and more at school. At school we sit with each other, at the house I don’t have to touch anybody. I was told that Ebola is spread from touching.

Initially, parents prevented their children from reenrolling in school because of their own fears of EVD. The PTA described the challenges that they faced when encouraging parents to send their children to school after the EVD outbreak. A handful of parents did not trust the schools and the protocols they had put in place to prevent the spread of the disease. A few PTA members mentioned that, “parents refused to send their children to school because they believed that the Ebola preventive materials are used to infect their children.” Some parents refused to send their children back to school because they feared that government schools were being used to spread EVD and that the EVD vaccine was being used to infect children. One female student from Grand Bassa described these fears:

People told us that, at school, the supply of things like bulgur wheat, hand wash buckets are used to spread the Ebola, they also told us the water in the hand wash buckets are mixed with something; if we wash our hands with it we will catch the virus. At the house the water is safe. But since school reopened I haven’t seen anyone catch Ebola from washing hands. I think the house is safer than the school.

While many parents named EVD as one of the reasons that prevented their children from returning to school, few parents mentioned that they had been directly affected by EVD in their local community. The EVD epidemic caused many Liberians to travel or relocate, which changed the composition of local communities. This meant that some communities witnessed an influx of newcomers. Parents feared outsiders in their communities and often described outsiders as the ones most likely to spread EVD.

## Factors Facilitating Student Reenrollment

*This section primarily addresses the second research question regarding community resiliency: What factors in communities that received GOAL Plus interventions are associated with quick recovery and restoration of education as a centerpiece of their community? In this section we will discuss:*

1. GOAL Plus interventions and how they provided a mechanism through which the community organized disaster recovery efforts;
2. How implementation of government-mandated health protocols allayed fears about returning to school; and
3. How community members valued education, which motivated them to restore education as a community centerpiece.

While there were certainly numerous obstacles to student reenrollment in schools as Liberia recovered from the EVD outbreak, many factors ultimately facilitated students' reentry into schools and demonstrated strong community resiliency. As schools reopened, GOAL Plus resumed its distribution of scholarships, grants, and school materials, all of which helped ease financial constraints to schooling. Perhaps most notable was the role that the PTA played in assisting with health protocol implementation and mobilizing communities to contribute to school reopenings, whether through donating labor or funds to rebuild damaged infrastructure. Finally, data revealed that the communities themselves placed a premium on the value of education, and their encouragement motivated students to continue their studies.

### ***GOAL Plus Interventions Supporting Reenrollment***

#### **Primary Activities of the GOAL Plus Project**

4. Combined scholarship plus grant program
5. PTA capacity building
6. Supplemental tutoring
7. Gender-sensitive pedagogy training
8. Outreach awareness campaign re: girls' education

In addition to conducting EVD prevention and awareness activities while schools were closed, GOAL Plus continued to implement three interventions as they reopened: (1) a scholarship program, (2) PTA capacity building and community grants to improve the learning environments of schools, and (3) an outreach awareness campaign to create support among parents and communities for girls' education and appropriate age enrollment.

**Scholarships.** In March 2015, GOAL Plus initiated its distribution of scholarship items, school supplies and teachers' kits in all 60 schools. The distribution was carried out in close collaboration with the MOE Girls' Unit, local MOE offices, and PTA leadership of each school. GOAL Plus distributed book bags to girls and supplies to teachers; additionally, boys who enrolled in Grade 1 at an appropriate age of 6 or 7 also received school supplies. Teachers and principals also benefitted from this distribution and received school materials. At the end of one focus group with school teachers and principals, the participants deviated from the structure of the discussion and shared the following statement:

We want to thank GOAL Plus for their assistance. GOAL is doing more than Ministry of Education in our school. GOAL please don't leave. If you do, we will be finished. Because of GOAL more girls are in school. The books that GOAL provided the school is in line with curriculum, but the books that the Ministry issued are not. Sometime last year, we did not even have a chalk, GOAL provided it.

In EVD's wake, GOAL Plus helped schools overcome the financial challenge of procuring school supplies, which provided teachers with the tools that they needed to teach effectively.

The EVD epidemic financially strained many families in the GOAL Plus communities, making it difficult for parents to cover the costs of enrolling and attending school. The scholarship program GOAL Plus implemented helped girls reenroll in school in situations where they otherwise would not have been able to. One girl who did not reenroll said that she could not afford the L\$500 that it cost to register. Interview and focus group participants consistently mentioned that more girls were able to attend school because of GOAL Plus's financial assistance: "The school materials from GOAL Plus encourage me to continue school, because our mothers can't afford to buy the school materials we get from GOAL Plus." The scholarship program's effect on girls' reenrollment was clearly highlighted by parents in focus group discussions who, at the same time, pointed out the disparity of treatment by the project of girls and boys. When asked what differences existed between enrolling their son and enrolling their daughters, one respondent stated "For boys, lack of finance to provide school materials for them," while "for girls GOAL Plus provided school materials for them." Thus, while the scholarships successfully contributed to the goal of raising girls' reenrollment, families emphasized that their sons also faced hurdles to reenrollment that the project could not address.

**Grants.** The first round of school improvement grant implementation began in May 2014 but was interrupted due to the EVD outbreak. The grants program recommenced in January 2015, coinciding neatly with school reopenings in the following month. Of the six schools that the GOAL Plus team visited, five participated in the school improvement grant implementation. The schools that received the grants used the money to prepare the school for reopening through activities such as plastering classrooms and floors; purchasing desks, tables, and chairs; replacing essential infrastructure such as doors, windows, and bookshelves; and installing fences and renovating latrines. School PTAs and administrators worked together and dedicated a significant amount of time to ensuring that schools were safe learning spaces when they reopened.

The PTA used the grant money to repair damaged infrastructure, such as the floors and doors. Some of the repairs were carried out to ensure proper implementation of the health protocols, and many created a sense of safety for students. For example, two schools used their grants to construct a fence, creating a single entry point that made it easier for Safety Management Committees to ensure compliance with hand washing and temperature check protocols. In another school, the PTA used their money to repair armchairs, which replaced benches and provided students with more space. One student explained,

It is easy to get Ebola at school, because in school we sit next to each other. Before we were sitting 3–4 persons on benches, but now GOAL Plus provided us with armchairs so we don't have to sit close to each other.

By procuring armchairs, the PTA obeyed the MOE regulations to create space between seats in the classroom and eased student fears of EVD. Finally, in a different school, the PTA used the money to renovate the latrines. This renovation was critical because a number of participants expressed concerns about getting sick while using school toilets. The toilets had been so dirty that some students used the bush instead of the school toilet. All of these measures created a sense of safety among students and parents.

***PTA Capacity Building.*** GOAL Plus had a PTA capacity building component, which included training sessions on effective communication strategies, promotion of gender and inclusive participation, and the use of local resources for school improvements. The PTA leadership changed significantly during school closure, as many PTA members moved from their communities, leaving a gap in PTA leadership. In some communities, new but untrained leaders took their place. In spite of significant turnover, the PTA continued to employ the skills acquired from trainings to overcome the challenges associated with school reopening. Before the EVD epidemic, the PTA had used monitoring as a tool to ensure proper use of expenditures and to ensure regular teacher and student attendance. During the discussions, most PTAs said that they regularly monitor schools, but there were two PTAs that specifically named monitoring as a tool to identify challenges at school or to ensure that school operations were running smoothly: “The PTA visits the school regularly, sometimes two times a week to check student’s attendance, teacher’s attendance, illness, and hand wash and temperature checks.” This example highlights how the PTA built on their GOAL Plus training to address a new challenge.

The existence of GOAL Plus interventions prior to the EVD epidemic, particularly PTA capacity building, facilitated communities’ effective recovery efforts to ready schools for reopening. The project’s intervention structures also provided a mechanism through which key actors could address challenges posed in the post-EVD environment. The school community used grants to make much-needed repairs at school; students received financial support through scholarships; and the PTA employed tools that they learned in GOAL Plus training to solve EVD-related challenges. Each of these interventions demonstrated unintended utility in the months following the EVD outbreak.

### ***PTAs and Community Members***

The activities that the PTA took part in as communities recovered from EVD were critical to school reopening and student reenrollment. PTAs contributed their time and money to ready schools for reopening and engaged in community outreach to ensure that children returned to the classroom. Most parents interviewed by the research team were members of the PTA, while several others were among the PTA leadership and responsible for managing and directing the organization. The terms “PTA members” and “community members” were often used interchangeably, and discussions with the research team highlighted that no clear boundary in differentiating PTA members and community members existed. Both the PTA and the community provided their labor to clean, repair, and expand school infrastructure; in-kind and monetary donations; and community engagement to reenroll students and to ensure that school operations ran smoothly.

***Labor.*** Labor was the most common and visible way in which PTAs contributed to the school community. The school community worked to create awareness in communities regarding school reopening and conducted cleanup exercises on school grounds to ready them for opening. Preparing schools for reopening proved challenging, as during the EVD epidemic, people weren’t allowed to congregate or perform any kind of activity on school grounds; this left grounds in disrepair. After months of closure, the schools endured damage, vandalism, and theft, leaving them in need of significant renovation prior to students entering the classroom. Furthermore, all schools were required to comply with safety protocols before they were allowed to reopen. The protocols included disinfecting school infrastructure and materials with chlorine and constructing a single entry point where administrators would implement temperature check and hand washing protocols. To prepare the school for opening, parents and other community members repaired damaged school infrastructure such as classroom floors, doors, and toilets, cut the grass, and cleaned the school yard. The PTA and community members built additional school infrastructure such as new buildings and fences, which helped schools accommodate new students and implement the Ministry of Health’s safety protocols.

***Donations.*** PTA and community members contributed both materials to repair or construct school infrastructure and money to pay volunteer teachers. They provided sticks for building school fences and blocks for renovating school buildings. To address the challenges posed by the EVD epidemic, the Liberian government ensured that all government teachers were paid during school closure. Discussions with teachers and principals confirmed that all teachers on the government payroll were indeed paid during the closure. However, many schools also had volunteer teachers who were not paid by the government. Some communities rectified this issue by collecting money through the PTA and paying volunteer teachers a small monthly stipend. In one instance, the PTA provided volunteer teachers with labor as compensation: “The volunteers were maintained by the PTA through helping them with labor on their farm work and cash.” The PTA’s use of alternative means to ensure that schools reopened and were staffed highlights their effectiveness in building relationships and morale within their community.

***Community Engagement.*** The PTA became a primary actor during this period to engage in community outreach regarding updates related to school. Once key leaders learned that school

would reopen, they convened the PTA and organized communication efforts through its members. “Yes, the PTA did announce to the community that school was opening. We did this by calling a general meeting, and participants of the meeting were tasked to spread the news in their communities.” When the government announced that the schools were reopening, the communities leveraged the PTA to spread information throughout the school communities alongside school administrators.

The PTA worked with school administrators to encourage students to enroll and to ensure school operations ran smoothly. PTA members were largely responsible for spreading the news of school reopening and encouraging student enrollment. As one participant shared, this was not easy: “The students’ recruitment process was challenging because we had to walk from long distances between villages to preregister students for the new school year.” Community resilience and recovery efforts were organized through the PTA. Key community actors leveraged the PTA to implement tasks such as preparing school for reopening and organizing various resilience and recovery efforts, all of which were vital to community well-being.

### ***Importance of Health Protocols in Supporting Reenrollment***

The health protocols that were put in place in schools across Liberia to ensure the safety and security of students were key drivers of school reenrollment. In January 2015, *Protocols for Safe School Environments in the Ebola Outbreak in Liberia* were published, defining minimum requirements that must be administered at every school to ensure that schools were safe places for all students and personnel. In following these requirements, all but three GOAL Plus schools created an emergency plan in the event of a future EVD outbreak. In addition, the protocols required that there be a single entry to schools that could be controlled in order for school administrators to enforce temperature checks and hand washing prior to entry. The temperature checking team was supposed to consist of two people, and the school administration was responsible for making hand washing facilities available on school grounds. Initially, when schools reopened and followed new safety protocols, many parents and students were afraid or suspicious of the thermometers and other equipment being used to conduct these health checks. In order to address their concerns, in Bong one focus group participant explained, “we demonstrated the use of the materials (hand wash buckets, thermometers) in front of the families to show them that they were not harmful.” Demonstrating these procedures calmed fears that the health protocols would spread EVD and encouraged parents to send their children to school, complementing the efforts of the safety committees established at schools.

### ***Community Encouragement***

A wide range of community members, friends, and family played a significant role in motivating students to return to school. Indeed, the majority of students interviewed mentioned that their teachers, parents, and other families had encouraged them to reenroll in school once the schools opened. And in many cases, students themselves also valued their education and were committed to returning to school.

**Family.** Interviews and focus group discussions revealed that many parents and family members valued and recognized the importance of having an education. Their desire for their children to achieve an education was critical to facilitating students' return to schools after they reopened. Many parents reiterated to the research team that "education is the key to success." Respondents during interview and focus groups held high expectations of what an education can ultimately provide for their families.

Parents were invested in their children's education in part because they counted on their children for future support. Respondents explained that if their children became educated, they could embark on successful careers that would enable them to take care of the family: "Everybody wants to win; when your child is educated, you win. They will care for you in your old age." At the same time, many parents described wanting a better life for their child as the main justification for encouraging their children to return to school. One member of the PTA in Lofa described her reasons for encouraging her children to reenroll in school:

I want my children to have a good future, to be able to do something better for themselves. I want them to complete college. The bush (Farm work) work is hard, you see my body now? It's weak. I want them to learn and live a better life.

Parents described that education opens doors for both their children and their families. One parent cited education as the reason for Ellen Johnson Sirleaf's ascension to the Liberian presidency, which encouraged her to send her children to school. Parents encouraged their daughters to study by telling them that they could be like President Sirleaf.

**School Groups and Administrators.** Numerous students reported that the Girls' Club and PTA also played a key role in encouraging students to reenroll in school. Many students mentioned receiving visits from members of their local Girls' Clubs encouraging them to return to school. Parents also mentioned "PTA members calling meetings [with parents] to encourage students to return to school." A handful of students and parents also stated that they had received visits from teachers and principals reassuring them that it was now safe to return to school. One student mentioned that her school had formed a special committee of teachers and administrators to conduct at home visits with students and their families.

**The Community.** The broader communities of the GOAL Plus schools held high expectations of their children, and their perceptions of what constitutes success also played a role in reenrolling students in school. School community members valued and prioritized academic success, and most expressed the expectation that their children would finish school through Grade 12. They also subtly spread the message that attending school at a younger age is better. A student expressed her concern over the closure's impact on her education: "This year I am happy, because the more I sit and wait for school my age is increasing." GOAL Plus reinforced this message through a media campaign and through providing scholarship materials to boys in school at a certain age. School community members perceived education to be the prerequisite for a successful career and prioritized education for their children because they saw it as a necessary prerequisite for a career that provides economic stability.

**Students.** Most important of all, students themselves remained motivated to return to school after schools reopened. Many expressed sentiments similar to those of their families and other community members, explaining that finishing their education would propel them toward valuable careers. One girl said, “I want to graduate from 12 grade. If I am educated, I could become a Nurse, or a Doctor or a Minister, or a Vice President.” Students believed that if they did not receive a full education, they were likely to remain in positions that they perceived to be of poor standing. In interviews, they described that if they were educated, they could occupy important roles, and that conversely, if they did not receive an education, they would not: “I want to complete my education. I want to reach 12 grade, because I don’t want to suffer, live here in the bush.”<sup>10</sup> The girls who dropped out of school were viewed as examples of people who will not have successful careers. By far, most of the girls who dropped out said that they were doing farm work, and several of them expressed how difficult it was to see their friends in school without them: “I feel bad that I’m not in school. My friends are going forward and were promoted to the next classes and I’m leaving behind.” Multiple students echoed this feeling, explaining that seeing their friends return to school ultimately motivated them to return as well.

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<sup>10</sup> *Bush* refers to rural areas. If a participant says she does not want to be a bush girl, it is the equivalent of saying that she does not want to be a village girl.



## V. Results and Performance on Key Indicators

GOAL Plus school-based activities were suspended while schools were closed during the Ebola outbreak. When schools re-opened in February and March 2015, GOAL Plus was able to return to the three counties and working towards achieving its key targets. Only months later, the announcement by the MOE on the closure of schools in July also affected project achievement. In past project years, data were collected twice in an academic year (first and second semesters), but data were collected only once in the 2015 academic year, which ended early after a single semester, and once in the first semester of the 2015/2016 academic year, which is the final semester of GOAL Plus-provided support to schools.

### Key indicators and final results:

- **Number of learners enrolled in primary schools and /or equivalent non-school based setting with USG support (Indicator 3.2.1-14):** An increase in enrollment by 10 percent over baseline (6,097) which targeted 6,707 for 2015/2016; the actual result for this period (first semester 2015/2016) was 7,752. This indicator was overachieved in the final 2015/2016 school year as the result was equivalent to +28% over baseline instead of +10%.
- **FAWE's organizational capacity in targeted areas developed (Indicator 0.6):** Improved technical and managerial capacity of FAWE in logistics, finance and contracts management, and M&E, as measured by number of dedicated trainings held. This indicator is a context indicator and therefore has no target for both years 1 and 2. Six trainings were held over the life of the project.
- **Number of textbooks and other teaching and learning materials (TLM) provides with USG assistance (Indicator 3.2.1-33):** This is an F indicator with target of 600. This indicator was achieved because for the final 2015/2016 school year, GOAL Plus provided 908 teaching and learning materials to our 60 GOAL Plus supported schools in the three counties. Over the life of the project, GOAL Plus distributed 1,815 TLM.
- **Percentage of enrolled girl students in targeted grades attending school (Indicator 1.4):** An increase in the rate of primary school girls' attendance by 2 percent over baseline (66.5%) which targeted 68.5% for 2015/2016. The actual result for the first semester of 2015/2016 was is 80%, equivalent to +13.5% over baseline instead of +2%.
- **Number of girls enrolled at an appropriate age in grade 1 (Indicator 1.5):** An increase in the number of girls enrolled at an appropriate age in the lowest primary class (grade 1) in GOAL Plus schools from September 2013 to September 2014 was targeted at 110, and the actual result was 107.

### **Other indicators and final results:**

- **Number of in-kind scholarship awards distributed in USG supported schools (Indicator 1.1):** Number of in-kind scholarship awards distributed in USG supported schools, which is usually done twice an academic year (once in each of the first and second semesters), but for this academic (2015/2016) only the first semester is supported. The actual result is 7,712, greatly exceeding the target of 7,172.
- **Number of trainings for MoE on using data for decision Making (Indicator 3.2):** This target for 2015/2016 was three trainings, but only one training was conducted.
- **Number of grant-supported PTA school improvement projects completed (Indicator 2.3):** This indicator had a target of 25 projects for 2015/2016, but after a competitive selection, only 21 applications met the criteria set in advance for grant award. These 21 PTAs received grants, implemented, and completed the PTA projects.

## VI. Results towards activity objectives

## Performance Data Reporting Table

*Indicates \*F Framework Indicator*

Indicator	Indicator Type	Unit of Measure	Disaggregation	Baseline Year	Baseline Value	2014 Target	2014 Actual)	2015 Target	2015 Actual	2015/2016 Target	2015/2016 Actual	End of Project Target	End of Project Actual
<b>Overall Objective: Improved Education Opportunities for Girls in Selected Communities of Lofa, Bong, and Grand Bassa Counties</b>													
*Number of learners enrolled in primary schools and /or equivalent non-school based setting with USG support	*F Indicator	Number	Continuing vs New, Grade, Age, School, County, and District	2013	6,097 (f) 6,216 (m)	+5% 6,402 (f) 6,527 (m)	6,401 (f) 6,165(m)	+10% 6,707 (f) 6,838 (m)	6555(f) 6248(m)	+10% 6,707 (f) 6,838 (m)	7,752 (F) 7,122 (M)	+10% 6,707 (f) 6,838 (m)	7,752 (F) 7,122 (M)
Percentage of girls and boys who complete their grade	Custom	Percentage	Grade, Age, School, County, and District	2013	77% (f) 78% (m)	(+5%) 82% (f) 83%(m)	(+10%) 87% (f) (+6%) 84% (m)	(+7%) 84% (f) 85%(m)	+9% 86%(f) +3% 81%(m)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Percentage of girls and boys who pass their grade	Context	Percentage	Grade, Age, School, County, and District	2013	83.4% (f) 84.3% (m)	-	82% (f) 87% (m)	-	57%(f) 66%(m)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Number of girls from 6 <sup>th</sup> grade in USG supported schools who transitioned to 7 <sup>th</sup> grade	Context	Number	Grade, Age, School, County, and District	2013	0	N/A	4	N/A	200	N/A	152	N/A	356
Average teacher attendance rate	Context	Percentage	School, County, District, Gender	2013	68%	N/A	80%	N/A	75.8%	N/A	81.5%	N/A	81.5%
FAWE's organizational capacity in	Custom	Number	Central	2013	0	N/A	2	N/A	3	N/A	1	TBN	6

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Indicator	Indicator Type	Unit of Measure	Disaggregation	Baseline Year	Baseline Value	2014 Target	2014 Actual)	2015 Target	2015 Actual	2015/2016 Target	2015/2016 Actual	End of Project Target	End of Project Actual
targeted areas strengthened													
<b>IR 1: Increased Access to School for Girls in Targeted Communities of Bong, Lofa, and Grand Bassa Counties</b>													
Number of in-kind scholarship awards distributed in USG supported schools	Custom	Number	Grade, Age, School, County, and District	2013	6,097	6,237	6,073	7,172	6,642 <sup>11</sup>	7,172	13,409	13,409	20,427
*Number of textbooks and other teaching and learning materials (TLM) provides with USG assistance	*F Indicator	Number	Grade, Sex, School, County, and District	2013	0	454	625	454	590 <sup>12</sup>	600	908	908	1,815
Number of teachers who receive gender responsive pedagogy training	Custom	Number	Grade, Gender, School, County, and District	2013	0	180	0	180	10(f) 174(m) 184(t) <sup>13</sup>	0	0	180	184
Percentage of enrolled girl students in targeted grades attending school	Custom	Percentage	Grade, Age, School, County, and District	2013	66%	(+1%) 67%	(+14%) 80%	(+2%) 68%	(+13%) 79%	+2% (68%)	+6% (5572/ 7752= 72%)	+2%	+6% (5572/ 7752= 72%)
Number of girls enrolled at an appropriate age in grade 1	Custom	Number	Grade, Age, School, County, and District	2013	13	75	79	200	96 <sup>14</sup>	110	107	275	282
<b>IR 1.1: Improved Academic Performance for Girls in Targeted Grades in Targeted Schools</b>													

<sup>11</sup> Final statistics for scholarship packages distribution in 2015 truncated academic year were 6642 beneficiaries (girls grade 1-6=6434, appropriate age Girls=74, Boys=134)

<sup>12</sup> Final statistics for teaching and learning materials distribution for teachers in 2015 truncated year

<sup>13</sup> Total number of male and female teachers that attended the Gender Responsive Pedagogy training

<sup>14</sup> Final appropriate age girls' enrollees in grade 1 as for 2015 truncated academic year

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Indicator	Indicator Type	Unit of Measure	Disaggregation	Baseline Year	Baseline Value	2014 Target	2014 Actual)	2015 Target	2015 Actual	2015/2016 Target	2015/2016 Actual	End of Project Target	End of Project Actual
Number of girls attending tutoring classes	Custom	Number	Grade, Age, School, County, and District	2013	1,120	600	862	600	1,273	1000	1,017	1,200	3,152
Number of girls participating in Girls' Club activities	Custom	Number	Grade, Age, School, County, and District	2013	985	1,000	1,367	1,500	1,745	1800	826	1,500	3,938
<b>IR 2: Improved Learning Environment for Girls in Selected Communities of Bong, Lofa, and Grand Bassa Counties</b>													
*Number of PTAs or similar school governance structures supported	*F Indicator	Number	School, Community, County, and District	2013	30	60	59	59	59	59	59	59	59
Number of PTAs that prepare school improvement plans (to be confirmed in final PMP as some PTA's support two schools)	Custom	Number	School, Community, County, and District	2013	29	56	49 <sup>15</sup>	56	59	0	0	59	59
Number of grant-supported PTA school improvement projects completed	Custom	Number	School, Community, County, and District	2013	0	30	0 <sup>7</sup>	0	31 <sup>16</sup>	25	21	55	52
Number of schools that present school progress card	Custom	Number	School, County, and District	2013	40	60	58	59	59	0	0	59	59

<sup>16</sup> This represent the total number of schools that have completed the 5 grant cycles for 2015 truncated academic year

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Indicator	Indicator Type	Unit of Measure	Disaggregation	Baseline Year	Baseline Value	2014 Target	2014 Actual)	2015 Target	2015 Actual	2015/2016 Target	2015/2016 Actual	End of Project Target	End of Project Actual
results to their communities													
<b>IR 3: Increased Awareness of the Importance of Educating Girls in Selected Counties, Districts, and Communities</b>													
Number of participants at town hall meetings on girls' education	Custom	Number	Community, Gender, County and District		0	1,500	1121(f) 1259(m) 2,380	1,500	801(f) 868(m) 1667 <sup>17</sup>	0	0	3,750	4,049
Number of trainings for MOE on using data for decision making	Custom	Number	National, County and District		0	1	0	1	0	2	1	4	1
Number of individual trained on National Policy on Girls' Education and role as Community Educational Counselor (CEC)	Custom	Number	School, County and District	-	0	60	0	60	65	0	0	67	65

<sup>17</sup> This is the total participants that attended town hall/community engagement for re-opening of schools to promote girls' education up to date in year 2 (2015 truncated academic year)

## VII. List of Submissions to the Development Experience Clearinghouse (DEC)

GOAL Plus Quarterly Report, Year 1 Quarter 1  
GOAL Plus Quarterly Report, Year 1 Quarter 2  
GOAL Plus Quarterly Report, Year 1 Quarter 3  
GOAL Plus Annual Report, Year 1  
GOAL Plus Quarterly Report, Year 2 Quarter 1  
GOAL Plus Quarterly Report, Year 2 Quarter 2  
GOAL Plus Quarterly Report, Year 2 Quarter 3  
GOAL Plus Annual Report, Year 2  
GOAL Plus Quarterly Report, Year 3 Quarter 1  
GOAL Plus Final Research Report  
GOAL Plus Final Report

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