Assessment of the effect of Ebola on education in Liberia

February 2015

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Aliyu*, 13, washes his hands before entering school on 16 February,
the first day of school after a 7 month closure because of Ebola

Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

List of Acronyms

AFL	Armed Forces of Liberia
EMIS	Education Management Information System
F	Female
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
ID	Identification
INEE	Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
KII	Key Informant Interview
M	Male
MoE	Ministry of Education
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PSS	Psychosocial Support
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
TLS	Temporary Learning Spaces
UN	United Nations
UNMEER	United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response
UNMIL	United Nationals Mission in Liberia
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WFP	World Food Programme

Executive summary

Following the Ebola outbreak, schools in Liberia were ordered closed in July 2014. They remained closed for more than 7 months, until the start of the school year 2014/2015, from 16 February onwards. In order to determine the impact of Ebola on education in Liberia, the Ministry of Education and partners agreed to conduct a Joint Education Needs Assessment aimed at informing a) The reopening of the schools at the national, county and district level, and b) The upcoming education sector review.

The assessment covers 9 counties that represent different levels of Ebola prevalence. Key informant interviews were conducted at 351 schools, 40 focus group discussions were held with students, and 40 with parents/PTA members. Both public and private schools are included. Findings can be generalized for the assessed 9 counties as a whole, but not for the individual counties, the entire country, or any of the counties not assessed.

This report presents the key findings of this assessment, and the recommendations that are intended to guide the work of the Education Cluster. The below summarizes the key findings.

School closure and reopening:
- Respondents agree that most children did not continue learning while schools were closed. The second most common response was self-learning, while radio education was not very common. According to parents, few learning opportunities were being provided in the community during school closure. Learning is actually what students missed most while schools were closed.
- At the time of data collection 66% of the assessed schools had already undertaken activities to prepare for the reopening of their schools, mainly maintenance and repairs, followed by Ebola prevention and awareness.
- Communities are willing to contribute to the safe reopening of schools particularly by cleaning the school before reopening and mobilizing parents to send their children back to school.
- 98 % of all the participating students and parents said they will return/send their children back to school when schools reopen. Temperature checks and hand washing are, by far, the measures parents find most important to be in place.
- More community members seem to have preferred for schools to remain open, but there is also a substantial group that does support the school closure.
- Both students and school administrators propose to revise last year's learning during the first two weeks of the new school year, followed by informal tests and quizzes.
- The provision of learning materials is defined as the most helpful intervention to support the return of students. For teachers, school administrators prioritize textbooks and stationary when it comes to materials, while for training, they focus on Ebola awareness before pedagogical training.
- In terms of messages to share with children and youth, Ebola awareness is the top priority, followed by other health, nutrition and hygiene messages.

Barriers and risks:
- A total of 42 students contracted Ebola in the assessed schools, 28 of whom died. 97 students have members of their household who contracted Ebola.
- When asked which efforts the community has implemented to prevent Ebola infections, the most common response is that communities are implementing regular hand washing practices, followed by raising awareness by putting up posters.

- School fees/costs were consistently identified as the primary barrier to education pre-Ebola, followed by work for boys and early pregnancy for girls.
- Corporal punishment is the top reason given by students and parents for not feeling safe at school. For parents, bullying/harassment by other students is as important. For students, this is followed by the fear of recruitment into Poro/Sande.
- For school reopening, the different target groups agree that contracting Ebola and fees/costs are their biggest worry. School administrators also identify traffic on the way to and from school as a major risk.

Infrastructure, school furniture and teaching/learning materials:
- While average class sizes are below the MoE standard, 23% of the assessed schools have an average class size of 45 or higher.
- None of the assessed schools were used as Ebola treatment or holding centers, but 24% of the schools were used for Ebola-related purposes while they were closed.
- 61% of the schools report being damaged since the beginning of the Ebola crisis, mainly damages to classrooms and latrines.
- 74% of the schools report damage or lost materials since the beginning of the Ebola crisis, mainly furniture and teaching and learning materials.
- Findings indicate that in public schools, cleaning is done primarily by students (43%), followed by unpaid cleaning staff. In private schools, cleaning is mostly done by staff paid by the school (38%), followed by students (17%).

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) facilities:
- 31% of the assessed schools report they do not have functional latrines, while schools that do have functional latrines have an average of 1 latrine for every 123 students.
- 70% of the students say they do not feel comfortable using the latrines at school, because they are damaged, full, dirty or unsanitary.
- 44% of the assessed schools report that their WASH facilities were used while the school was closed. In the large majority of the cases, this was the latrines.
- 60% of the assessed schools have safe drinking water within 500 meter, 40% of the schools have soap and water for hand washing, and 39% of the schools have functional hand washing facilities.
- Prior to school closure because of the Ebola crisis, 62% of the assessed schools have hygiene promotion, 30% of the schools have a health or WASH Club, and in 42% of the schools, the PTA/school administrator maintain WASH facilities.

Nutrition, health and psychosocial support (PSS) services:
- Both school administrators and students report buying food at the school as the most common means for children to obtain food during the school day. This differs significantly from the parents, whose most common response is the school feeding program.
- 52% of all assessed schools have a recreational facility or a space where learners can play.
- The overall average time it takes to walk from the school to the nearest health facility is 46 minutes.
- 24% of all the schools have first aid facilities, mostly staff with additional health training, and a first aid kit.

- 45% of the schools report that, before schools closed, they had a health identification system in place to ensure sick children could receive care, while 55% had a system in place to refer sick children to the appropriate facilities.
- Both students and parents are well aware about Ebola symptoms and how to avoid getting Ebola. Surprisingly, in both target groups, vomiting and fever were volunteered the least as symptoms. Both target groups learned most of what they knew from the radio and community mobilisers.
- Before Ebola, it was common for children to stay at home when they are sick, although there seems to be a practice in some schools where sick students have to go to school first to check in, before being referred.
- Approximately two thirds of both boys and girls would report a teacher or the school principal when they noticed someone who was sick, others would tell their parents.
- 34% of the assessed schools have some sort of provision of PSS for students, and 24% for teachers.

Teachers and other education personnel:
- In the assessed schools, 18 teachers contracted Ebola, of whom 15 died. 18 teachers had members of their household who contracted Ebola.
- Since the Ebola crisis, about 37% of the assessed schools had been visited by a local education official.
- 19% of the schools report not only visits but also other types of concrete support, like training, materials, financial and moral support.
- 75% of the schools report having a PTA at their school, and 54% of them report that they are satisfied with the level of activity of the PTA.
- While most of the regular activities of the PTAs stopped when schools closed, in about one out of ten schools, PTAs have been involved in Ebola-related school safety activities.

1. Introduction

Starting in March 2014, West Africa has faced an outbreak of the Ebola Virus Disease, in this report referred to by its most commonly used name Ebola. While this outbreak has been declared an international public health emergency, it is clear that Ebola has implications far beyond the health sector.

In Liberia, on 30 July 2014, in response to the severity of the crisis, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf ordered all schools closed. Since July and August are school holidays in Liberia, this implied the postponement of the start of the school year 2014/2015. Originally, this postponement was indefinite, while in January 2015, the Liberian government decided that schools would reopen from 16 February onwards.

With schools closed, and school staff, students and parents dispersed, it was difficult to determine the impact of Ebola on education in Liberia. The Ministry of Education (MoE) and partners agreed, therefore, to conduct a Joint Education Needs Assessment aimed at the following:

- At the national level:
    - Inform the reopening of the schools, including both the safe reopening of schools and the learning aspect
    - Inform the upcoming education sector review, postponed in order to be able to include the results of this assessment
    - Provide an evidence base for education planning
    - Inform the overall Ebola response, covering other sectors, on the impact of Ebola on education
- At the county and district level:
    - Provide the MoE and partners with a better idea of how physical school infrastructure has been affected by Ebola, and will impact schools' ability to reopen
    - Give the MoE and partners a better idea of how communities, including teachers, students and parents, feel about school closure and reopening
    - Inform the localized implementation of the MoE's *Protocols for Safe School Environments in the Ebola Outbreak in Liberia* (in this report referred to as 'the Protocols')

2. Methodology

2.1. Sampling

This assessment targets 9 out of the 15 total counties in Liberia: Bomi, Bong, Grand Bassa, Grand Gedeh, Lofa, Margibi, Montserrado, Nimba, and River Cess. These 9 counties were selected based on the prevalence of Ebola in the county. The 9 counties represent counties that have been highly affected by Ebola, moderately affected and lightly affected. Within these 3 categories, the presence of education partners in the county was used as a secondary criterion, as this was considered a prerequisite for the successful implementation of the assessment.

A total of 351 schools were sampled for this assessment using a stratified-random sampling methodology with a confidence interval of 95% (5% margin of error). A list of all 5,181[1] schools in the country was provided by the Ministry of Education; all schools within the 9 selected counties (4,198) were then extracted and used to calculate the required total number of schools needing to be assessed in order to provide the desired confidence interval. All schools on the list were first stratified by county and school type (public and private) before being randomly selected. In order to have an accurate representation, the number of schools selected for each county and school type was determined by the appropriate, proportional percentage calculated from the list of all schools[2].

2.2. Data collection and analysis

A two-day assessment training was held in Gbarnga (Bong county) during which 66 data collectors from 21 different members of the Education Cluster (including the 27 collectors from the MoE) were trained on the collection tools and methodologies[3]. The collectors were grouped by county into assessment teams and provided with the list of their assigned schools. Due to the large number of schools needing to be assessed in Montserrado, 16 university students from the University of Liberia were later hired and also trained.

Data collectors conducted 351 key informant interviews (KIIs) and 80 focus group discussions (FGDs) from 12-19 January. For the KIIs, collectors interviewed a school administrator (e.g. principal or vice principal) at all schools. The FGDs took place at 40 schools with two FGDs at each school: one with learners and one with learners' parents/PTA members. From the 351 randomly selected schools, convenience sampling was used to select the sites for the FGDs (i.e. willing cooperation from the principal, availability of learners/parents, etc.). Collectors tried to keep FGDs to 6-12 participants; however, as additional parents and learners became curious about the process and interested in talking about their experiences, some of the groups had more.

A total of 485 students participated in the learner FGDs (average of 12/FGD) with 48% female students and ranging from grades 1-12. 471 parents/community members participated in the PTA FGDs (average of 12/FGD) with 49% being female.

Once collected, data was entered at the MoE by six Education Management Information System (EMIS) staff and four of the university students. The Education Cluster's information management specialist analyzed the data using Microsoft Excel and basic, quantitative analysis methods. Although FGDs were conducted, the nature of the collection tool required data collectors to quantify most of the information provided by discussion participants; qualitative analysis was therefore very small and is integrated into the findings below. The results and key findings presented in this report will be shared with all Education Cluster members, including the Ministry of Education, for planning and implementing appropriate responses and interventions.

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[1] 5,181 was the official number of schools (private and public; pre-primary, primary and secondary; tertiary institutions were not considered in this assessment) provided by the MoE at the time of data sampling/collection. Currently, this number is being revised and is thought to be approximately 700 schools less; however, this decrease has a very small impact on the confidence interval of this assessment.

[2] As some of the schools sampled were closed or no longer existed, a 'Replacement list' of stratified, randomly selected schools was drawn from where needed.

[3] For a list of all agencies participating in and supporting the assessment, refer to Annex A; a complete set of data collection tools can be found on the Liberia Education Cluster webpage.

# of schools assessed

	Counties not assessed
	11 - 15
	16 - 50
	51 - 75
	76 - 138

100 Kilometers
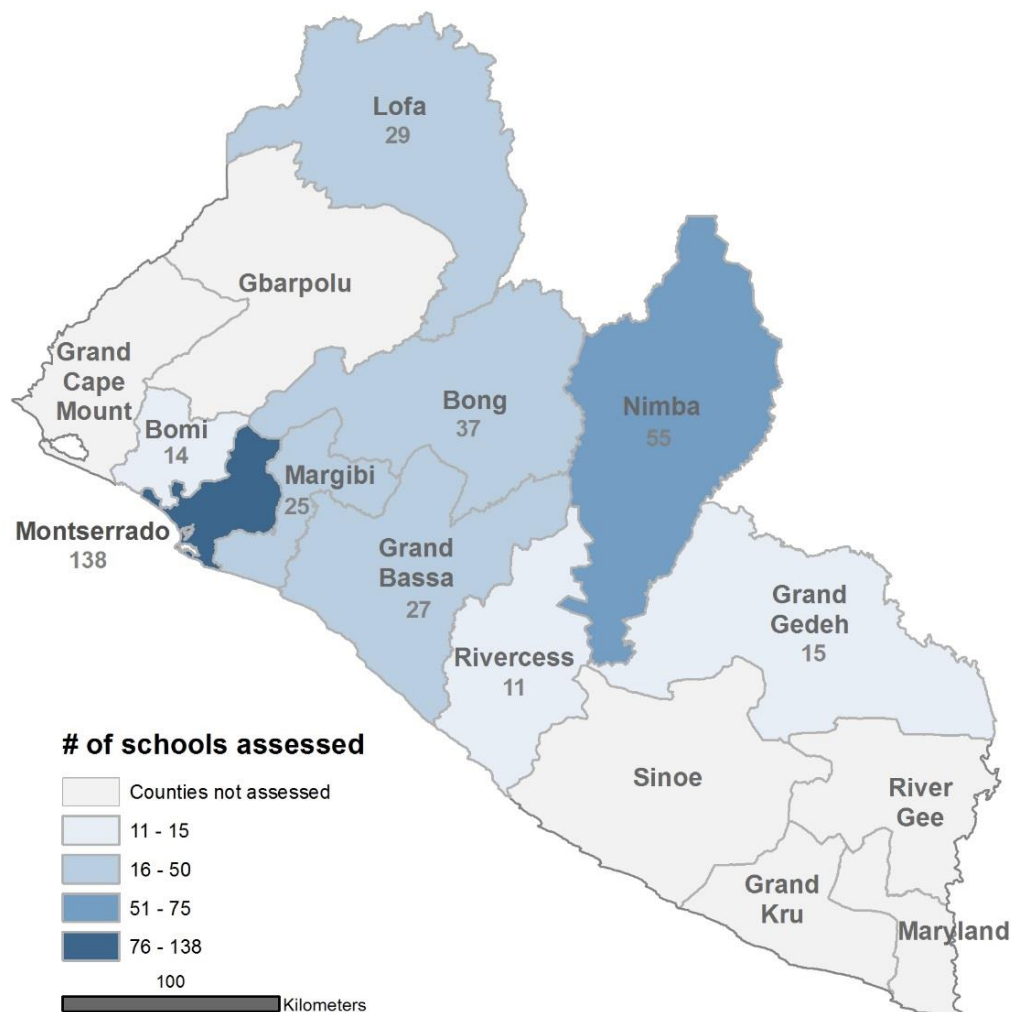
Table 1: KII school sampling by county and type

County	Private	Public	Total
Bomi	4	10	14
Bong	11	26	37
Grand Bassa	7	20	27
Grand Gedeh	3	12	15
Lofa	3	26	29
Margibi	12	13	25
Montserrado	121	17	138
Nimba	16	39	55
River Cess	1	10	11
Total	178	173	351

Table 2: KII school breakdown by school level[4]

County	Pre-primary	Primary	Secondary
Bomi	7	13	1
Bong	37	37	4
Grand Bassa	25	26	5
Grand Gedeh	11	12	5
Lofa	27	28	3
Margibi	24	25	4
Montserrado	105	127	38
Nimba	49	54	7
River Cess	2	11	0
Total	287	333	67

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[4] Totals for Tables 2 and 4 do not sum to 351 and 40 respectively because many schools in Liberia are multiple school levels at the same time (e.g. pre-primary *and* primary; primary *and* secondary).

Table 3: FGD school sampling by county

County	# Schools	# of FGDs
Bomi	2	4
Bong	4	8
Grand Bassa	3	6
Grand Gedeh	2	4
Lofa	3	6
Margibi	3	6
Montserrado	15	30
Nimba	6	12
River Cess	2	4
Total	40	80

Table 4: FGD school breakdown by county and level

County	Pre-Primary	Primary	Secondary
Bomi	0	2	0
Bong	2	2	2
Grand Bassa	3	3	1
Grand Gedeh	1	1	0
Lofa	2	3	2
Margibi	3	3	0
Montserrado	8	15	4
Nimba	4	5	1
River Cess	0	2	0
Total	23	36	10

2.3.   Limitations

Since schools in only 9 out of Liberia's 15 counties were assessed, findings cannot be generalized to the entire country or any of the counties not assessed. Furthermore, although this report will often present findings at the county level, it should be noted that the 95% confidence interval and therefore the generalizability of the findings, only applies to these 9 counties as a whole; it does not apply at the individual county level.

3. Findings[5]

The findings for this assessment are presented below. Specific recommendations can be found in blue boxes at the end of each sub-section; Section 4 of this report contains a summary of all recommendations.

3.1. School closures and reopening

3.1.1. Learning during school closures

Schools in Liberia completed the 2013/2014 school year in June 2014. Due to the Ebola outbreak, schools did not officially reopen for the 2014/2015 school year until the time of this writing (16 February 2015). Even though the general school reopening has officially begun, it is recognized that the reopening will be a gradual process as schools must meet the MoE *Protocols for Safe School Environments in the Ebola Outbreak in Liberia* before they are allowed to begin holding classes. Although officially closed, 6 (2%) schools have been holding classes during the closures; all six are private schools, two of which are orphanage/boarding schools.

All groups (school administrators, learners and PTAs[6]) were asked to identify what they felt were the most common ways in which students had continued learning while schools have been closed.

- The most common response in all three groups was that students did not participate in any learning activities during the closures
- While many people in the 3 groups selected self-learning as the most or second most common way of learning while schools were closed, notably more children selected this option.
- The use of the Teach-by-Radio program is not very common, as is illustrated further in the next table.

Table 5: How students continued learning during school closures

	Most common			2nd most common			3rd most common		
	KIIs	Learner FGDs	PTA FGDs	KIIs	Learner FGDs	PTA FGDs	KIIs	Learner FGDs	PTA FGDs
No learning	46%	50%	73%	5%	5%	3%	1%	3%	3%
Self-learning	25%	28%	20%	12%	25%	13%	3%	3%	
Learning with guardian	12%	5%	8%	15%	18%	18%	1%	5%	
Learning with teachers	9%	15%	3%	4%		3%	1%	10%	3%
Teach-By-Radio Program	4%	3%		10%	13%	5%	2%	5%	3%
Informal study classes	1%			1%			1%		

The figure below shows the use of Teach-By-Radio programs per county. Percentages are highest in Grand Bassa, where according to about one in three school administrators, the Teach-by-Radio programs were

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[5] Findings from the 351 assessed schools are presented in this section aggregated at the nine-county level or disaggregated at the county level; should further disaggregated data by district or school level be needed please contact the Liberia Education Cluster. However, please note that all data was collected in confidentiality which will be maintained when sharing data.

[6] Unless otherwise stated, FGD data will be presented as percentages of FGDs and *not* percentages of overall learners or PTA members (most data was aggregated at the time of collection); e.g. 50% of learner FGDs for 'No learning' as the Most common response means that 20/40 *FGDs* gave 'No learning' as their combined response (it does not mean 50% of the total learner participants).

used by students when schools were closed. These programs are reportedly not used at all in schools assessed in Grand Gedeh and River Cess.

Figure 1: % of assessed schools where students learned via Teach-By-Radio program

Region	Percentage
Grand Bassa	33%
Nimba	25%
Lofa	17%
Margibi	16%
Bong	14%
Montserrado	13%
Bomi	7%
River Cess	0%
Grand Gedeh	0%
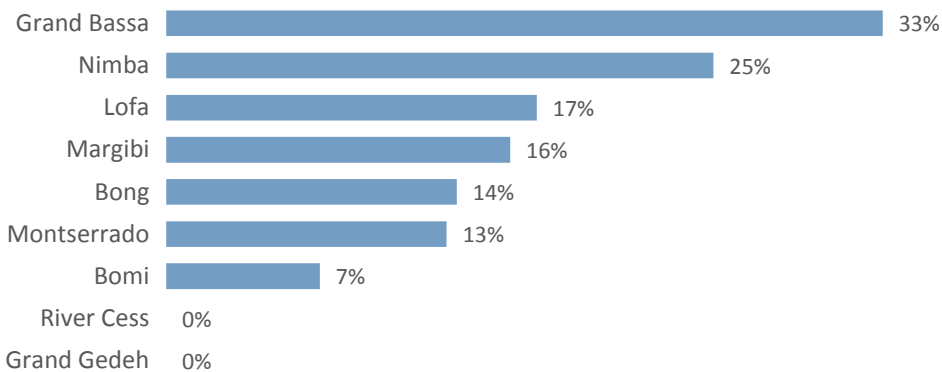
According to PTA FGDs, in terms of the types of groups in communities providing learning opportunities for students:

- 78% report that no groups in the community have been providing learning opportunities
- 15% report that there have been UN agencies/International non-governmental organizations (INGOs) providing learning opportunities mostly in the form of Ebola awareness/prevention and Gender awareness training; one FGD did report that there was one INGO conducting private study classes

Figure 2: Groups in community providing learning opportunities for students during closures

Group	Percentage
None	78%
UN/INGOs	15%
Local NGOs or religious groups	5%
Community education committees (e.g. PTAs)	3%
Other government authorities	3%
Government education authorities	0%
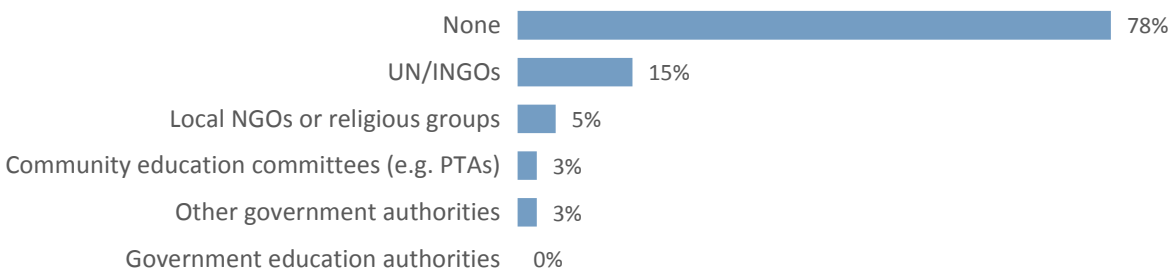
During the FGDs, students (male and female individually) and PTA members (as a group) were asked to identify what students miss the most about going to school.

- The most common response given by boys, girls and PTA members is that students miss learning/attending classes
- Seeing friends is also a very common reason cited by respondents

Table 6: What students miss most about going to school

	Most common			2nd most common			3rd most common		
	Learner FGD		PTA FGD	Learner FGD		PTA FGD	Learner FGD		PTA FGD
	M	F	Both M/F	M	F	Both M/F	M	F	Both M/F
Learning/classes	63%	53%	71%	5%	10%	18%		3%	3%
Seeing friends	25%	20%	29%	25%	33%	34%	13%	8%	13%
Teachers	3%	10%		23%	28%	26%	15%	10%	18%
Recreation activities	3%	8%		25%	10%	3%	8%	13%	3%

This underlines that, while going to school is important because it creates a sense of normality and routine which is crucial to the healing process following distressing experiences, students themselves stress the significance of the learning itself.

3.1.2. Students' and Parents' readiness to return

All students and PTA members were asked if they will go back to school or if parents will be sending their children back to school after the reopening[7]:

- 98% from both groups said they will return/send their children back to school
- 6 out of the 9 students who said they will not be returning to school came from Grand Bassa, while only two out of the nine PTA members saying they would not send their children back were from Grand Bassa; unfortunately, data does not exist as to the exact reason why these nine students and nine different parents say they will not be returning to school

Although 98% of all PTA members present for the discussion indicate that they are ready to send their children back to school, when asked what measures would need to be put in place first:

- Temperature checks for students upon arrival at school and the Creation/improvement of hand washing facilities were the top priorities for parents

Table 7: Measures PTA want met before sending students back to school

Measures	Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 3
Temperature checks in the morning	43%	18%	5%
Hand-washing facilities	33%	53%	8%
Teaching on Ebola at school	13%	13%	10%
Latrines (More constructed, improved)	8%	5%	18%
Health worker assigned to schools	3%		3%
Additional classrooms	3%		8%

Obligatory temperature checks and hand washing when entering the school are two key components of the Protocols. This confirms that the Protocols indeed address important community concerns, and the

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[7] Unlike most FGD questions, data for this question was collected at the individual level, not the aggregated, group level.

data also gives an indication of the support communities are ready to provide with the implementation of the Protocols.

PTA FGDs provide the following insight into community members' reactions to the school closures:

- The majority of responses indicate that community members feel that they would prefer that the schools had remained open (several groups reported that they and the community did not see any reason why schools should have closed at all)
- 40%, however, indicate that communities do support the closure

Figure 3: PTA reported reactions of community members regarding school closures
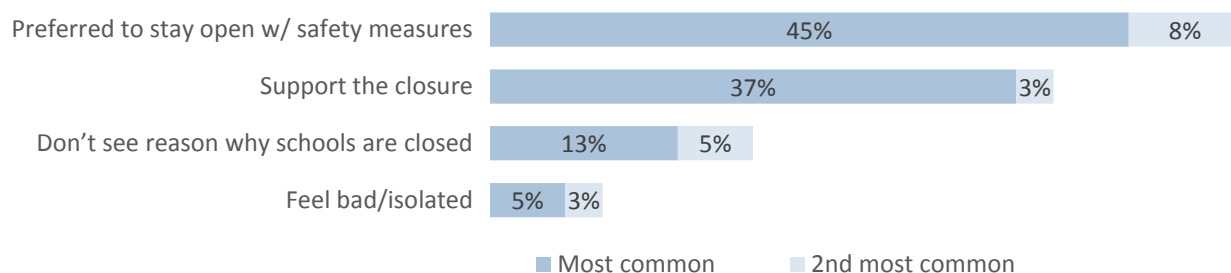
Due to the long period of school closure, students will need some kind of review of last year's content in order to be prepared for a new grade's curriculum. Administrators and learners were asked to suggest and prioritize what they felt would be the most effective way to do this:

- The most common suggestion from both groups is to use the first two weeks of the new school year to review last year's learning
- The second most common suggestion is to give learners informal tests/quizzes to assess where students are in their understanding
- Less common, but still prioritized by some respondents, is to allow students to give presentations about what they learned last year and to hold additional afterschool classes
- 'Other' suggestions include encouraging students to study harder, enforcing teacher punctuality and providing more practical exercises for students

Table 8: Proposed methods for reviewing last year's school content

	Priority 1		Priority 2		Priority 3	
	KII	Learner FGDs	KII	Learner FGDs	KII	Learner FGDs
2 week review	61%	68%	12%	20%	1%	
Informal tests/quizzes	20%	30%	35%	45%	5%	3%
Student presentations	9%	3%	13%	15%	7%	3%
Additional/after school classes	6%	3%	6%	5%	1%	3%
Other	3%		5%			5%

3.1.3. Preparations for school reopening

- At the time of data collection (mid-January 2015), 66% of the assessed schools (230) report that the school or local community have already undertaken activities to prepare for the reopening of their schools

The following table summarizes the various types of activities that schools or local communities are already undertaking to prepare for school reopening:

- The most common activity being undertaken is that of school maintenance and repairs. As schools have been closed for so long, many have undergone various level of damage to their infrastructures[8]
- Community mobilization, information sessions and workshops regarding Ebola awareness and prevention is the second most common activity
- Other common activities include establishing temporary learning spaces (TLS) for additional classroom space, cleaning the school grounds, acquiring and providing school materials, conducting registration of students for reopening, providing psychosocial support for students and teachers, holding small study classes for group learning and providing food to the school to begin a school feeding program.

Table 9: Types of activities schools/communities are undertaking to prepare for reopening

County	School repairs	Ebola awareness/ prevention	Establishing TLS	Cleaning	Providing school materials	Registration	PSS students/ teachers	Small group learning	School feeding
Bomi	21%	29%	21%	7%				21%	
Bong	41%	14%	16%	5%	5%	3%	3%		
Grand Bassa	37%	33%	7%	7%	7%		4%	4%	4%
Grand Gedeh		13%		27%	7%	7%			
Lofa	38%	7%	10%	14%		3%		3%	
Margibi	24%	8%	8%	4%		24%			
Montserrado	49%	31%	11%	2%	17%	7%	8%	4%	3%
Nimba	36%	15%	5%	18%		2%	2%	2%	
River Cess	9%		9%	27%					
Total	38%	21%	10%	9%	8%	5%	4%	3%	1%

It is encouraging that about two thirds of the assessed schools were already preparing for school reopening at the time of the data collection, particularly since some of the activities conducted, like Ebola awareness, clearly address important community concerns linked to school reopening (see below). Considering that the start of the data collection coincided with the official start of student registration, it is surprising that less than one out of ten schools had done any cleaning of the school grounds.

PTA FGDs report the following in terms of what they and their communities would be willing to contribute to the safe reopening of schools:

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[8] For more on reported infrastructural damages see Section 3.3.3.

- The most common activity PTAs report is the cleaning of school grounds and buildings before reopening
- Secondly, PTAs indicate that they could be involved in community mobilization to encourage parents to send their children back to school
- Some suggest they and the communities could help measure the temperature of children in the morning or conduct Ebola awareness/prevention campaigns
- 'Other' activities suggested include: Providing incentives for teachers and Monitoring schools

Figure 4: Activities PTAs report willing to contribute to safe reopening

Clean the school before reopening — 73% 15% 5%
Community mobilization: parents to send children to school — 20% 30% 20%
Measure the temperature of children in the morning — 8% 23% 3%
Ebola awareness/prevention — 5% 8% 8%
Other — 5% / 3%

■ Most common   ■ 2nd common   ■ 3rd common
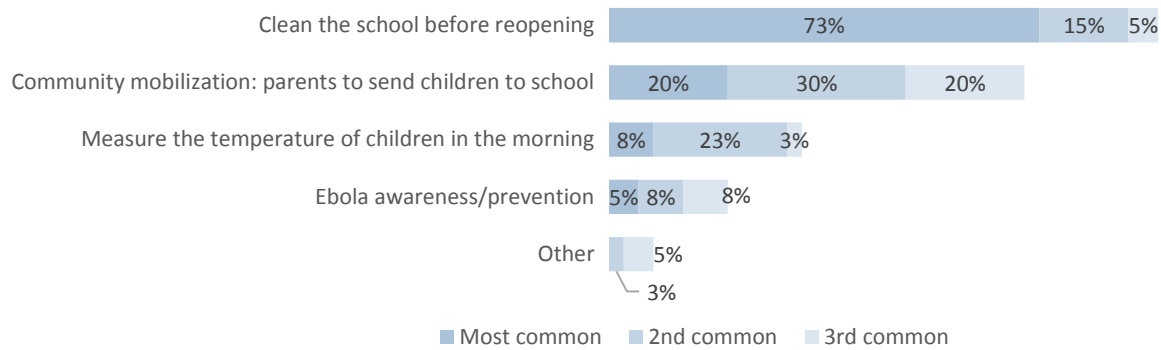
3.1.4. Supporting the reopening

Key informants were asked to identify what they felt were the top two priorities in terms of essential support for education right now:

- Responses indicate a strong prioritization on provision of learning and instructional materials to the schools
- Also strongly prioritized is assistance in repairing damaged infrastructure and promoting Ebola awareness/prevention practices

Figure 5: School administrators' priorities for support for reopening

Providing learning materials (exercise book, pens, textbook) — 42%
Providing instructional materials (chalk, teachers guides) — 36%
Repairing damaged school buildings or facilities — 33%
Promoting healthy practices to prevent Ebola in learners & teachers — 29%
School feeding — 14%
Cleaning/disinfecting of the school, grounds, and facilities — 9%
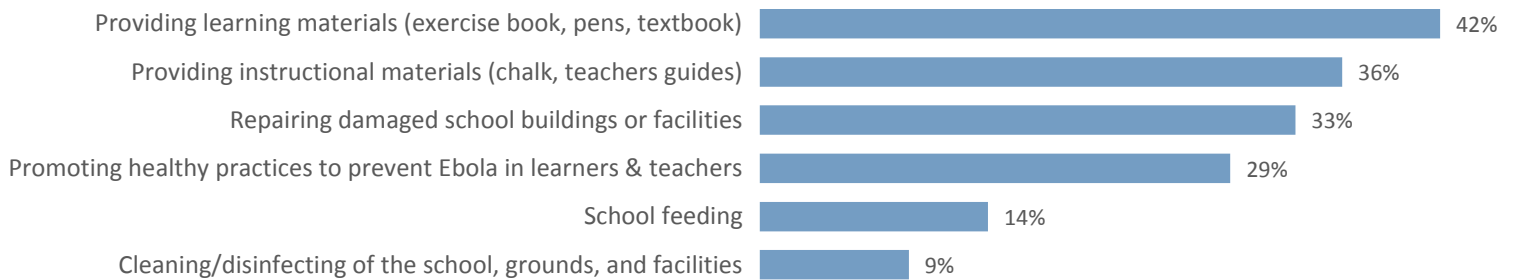
Table 10: Learners' and PTAs' priorities for support for reopening

Most helpful interventions for return of students	Most helpful		2nd most helpful		3rd most helpful	
	Learner FGDs	PTA FGDs	Learner FGDs	PTA FGDs	Learner FGDs	PTA FGDs
Provide learning materials	35%	32%	35%	16%	13%	21%
Provide food	15%	16%	13%	37%	5%	21%
Provide uniforms	15%	11%		21%	20%	8%
Provide/improve quality of WASH facilities	15%	5%	20%	8%	13%	13%
Improve quality of education	5%	5%	8%	8%	10%	3%
Financial assistance/School fee reduction	5%		5%		10%	
More teachers	3%					
Provision of school furniture	3%		8%		3%	
Rehabilitation	3%					
Temperature checking	3%					
Create more learning spaces		13%	3%	5%	3%	5%
Make schools safe for learning		5%	5%		8%	3%
Sensitize parents		8%		3%		5%
Provide school furniture		3%				3%

When school administrator key informants were asked what support would best help learners return to class once schools have reopened:

- Provision of teaching materials was indicated as the most important form of support to help learners return to school; this coincides with the findings presented immediately above and the apparent need for/emphasis on teaching and learning materials
- Community sensitization to allow children to participate in school and financial assistance were also strongly highlighted as important
- Of the 30 respondents who indicate 'Training for teachers', only 12 suggested a specific training topic ('Classroom management' and 'Ebola awareness/prevention') being the most popular

Figure 6: School administrators' priorities for helping students return to school after reopening
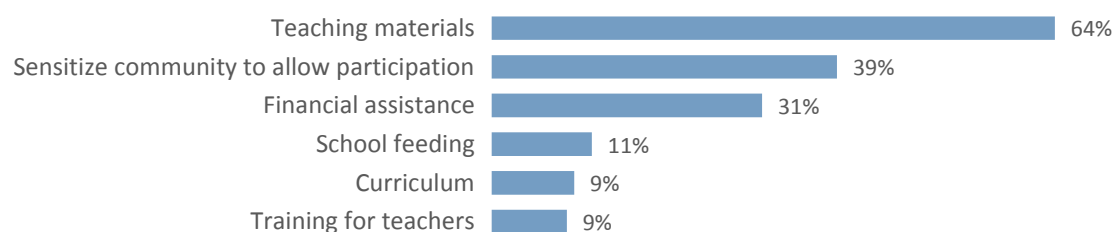
In terms of the specific type of materials that teachers will need most when schools reopen:

- School administrators prioritize Textbooks and Stationary the most, followed by Hygiene materials and Ebola Awareness materials

Table 11: Type of materials teachers need most when schools reopen

Type of materials	Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 3	Priority 4	Priority 5
Textbooks	34%	26%	11%	3%	1%
Stationary	22%	28%	14%	4%	0%
Hygiene materials (buckets, soap, thermometers, etc.)	17%	14%	5%	3%	1%
Ebola Awareness materials	16%	10%	9%	3%	1%
Curriculum/Syllabus	11%	9%	7%	3%	3%

Administrator informants also indicated what type of teacher training is most essential right now[9]:

- Ebola awareness (47%) and Pedagogical training (39%) were the definite priority trainings identified by respondents
- PSS as well as WASH trainings were also identified as important
- Other were topics such as: Computer training, classroom management and first aid

Figure 7: Most needed type of teacher training
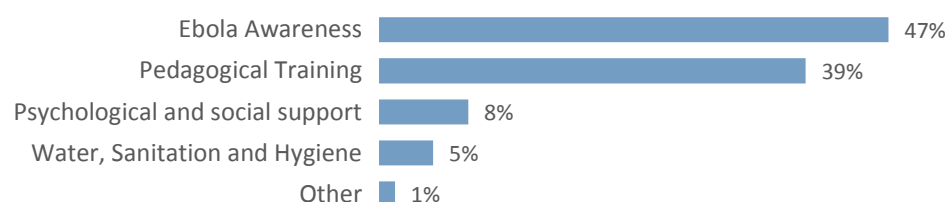
Key informants were also asked to identify the most urgent messages or information needed by children and youth to protect them when schools reopen:

- Ebola awareness raising was the top priority message for most respondents, followed by messaging regarding awareness of health, nutrition and hygiene issues (which could potentially be seen as very closely related)

Figure 8: Urgent messages or information are needed by children and youth in this site to protect them when schools reopen
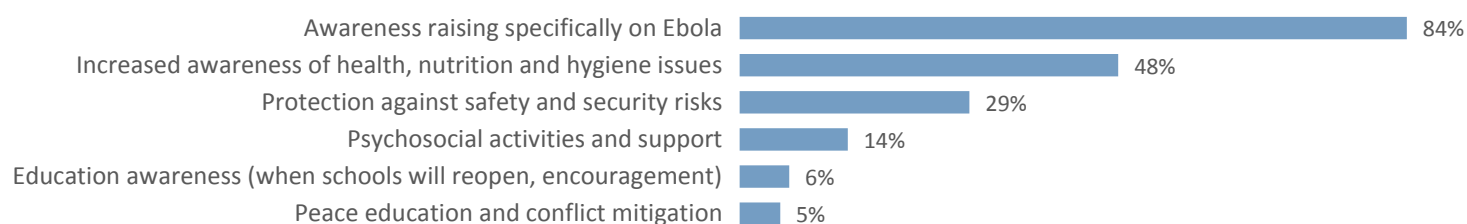
The continued awareness raising on Ebola, both among communities and students and school staff, is clearly considered crucial around the country. While this should be part of the implementation of the Protocols, it might require specific follow up. School administrators also stress the need for teaching and

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[9] Most of the questions in this assessment allowed participants to provide multiple answers (e.g. top two, prioritization, etc.); this question only allowed for one response.

learning materials for quality teaching, which is indeed planned as part of the second phase of the Ebola response in the education sector.

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Recommendations
- As part of the preparedness measures in the education sector:
    - In collaboration with the Ministry of Health and other relevant partners, agree on a plan in case of new Ebola cases or a new outbreak, including an agreement on the need (or not) for schools to close, in which circumstances, and what has to be in place for schools to be able to remain open. This should include an evaluation of the use of the Protocols in the current crisis.
    - Prepare a plan for nationwide radio coverage in case schools are closed, and to reach out of school children and youth, including which radio stations to include to have the widest coverage possible, and agree on a set of programs to be used.
    - Revise and/or prepare MoE guidelines on the responsibilities of public school staff during periods of school closure (while still being paid) in terms of maintenance, cleaning, the use of schools for non-education purposes etc.
- Address the need for review of last year's content in the planned pedagogical trainings.
- Continue awareness raising on Ebola in schools, linked to monitoring the implementation of the Protocols, as this is a clear concern among communities, both in terms of children staying safe at school, and children being allowed to go to school.
- Supply teaching and learning materials in the second phase of the Ebola response, with clear accountability for safe storage at the school level (see below).
- As part of the second phase of the Ebola response, develop school improvement plans, addressing the need for repairs expressed by one third of the assessed schools.

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3.2.   Barriers and risks[10]

3.2.1. Ebola and students[11]

Unfortunately, some schools did report incidents of students contracting Ebola:

- 22 schools from 4 out of 9 counties assessed[12] report a total of 42 students (0.04%[13]) having contracted Ebola
- 76% of the reported cases and 71% of the deaths were within Montserrado

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[10] While it is felt that the school administration does have an accurate understanding of what has happened pertaining to their students, it is important to recognize that the schools have been closed for over seven months and they may not have all the information until schools reopen.

[11] For information on Ebola and teachers, see Section 3.6.1.

[12] Remember: this assessment only considers a *sampling* of schools; although incidents of students infected with Ebola were only found in four out of nine counties, there are surely incidents in other schools that were not assessed.

[13] All student percentage calculations have been made using the total enrollment figures provided by the school administration (99,496 is the total enrollment reported for the 351 schools assessed).

Table 12: # Learners who contracted Ebola

County	Pre-Primary		Primary		Secondary		Total
	M	F	M	F	M	F	
Bomi					1		1
Bong		1	1				2
Margibi	1		5	1			7
Montserrado	4	2	6	6	8	6	32
Total	5	3	12	7	9	6	42

- 14 of the 42 reported cases (33%) survived while 28 (67%) died
- 11 secondary school students died from Ebola; while this is the same number as primary students, secondary students only made up 17% of the sampled school enrollment (while primary school made up 52%); this seems to suggest a disproportionate number of secondary student deaths
- Most of 22 schools (77%) only had 1 or 2 cases of Ebola; 4 schools however, report having 3 or more incidents (3 in Montserrado and 1 in Margibi).

Table 13: # Learners who contracted Ebola and **survived**/died (e.g. **1**/3 = **1 survivor** and 3 deceased)

County	Pre-Primary		Primary		Secondary		Total
	M	F	M	F	M	F	
Bomi					0/1		0/1
Bong		0/1	0/1				0/2
Margibi	1/0		1/4	0/1			2/5
Montserrado	1/3	0/2	3/3	4/2	2/6	2/4	12/20
Total	2/3	0/3	4/8	4/3	2/7	2/4	14/28

- 97 students (0.1%) have had members of their family/household contract Ebola; 58% of these in Montserrado

Table 14: # learners with someone in household contracting Ebola

County	Pre-Primary		Primary		Secondary		Total
	M	F	M	F	M	F	
Bong		1	1				2
Grand Bassa	1		1	1	1	1	9
Lofa		1	1	2		1	6
Margibi	1	1	2	3			9
Montserrado	6	7	9	7	5	4	56
Nimba	2	2	2	2			15
Total	10	12	16	15	6	6	97

In schools that have lost students to Ebola, or where students have lost family members to Ebola, reopening will require a particular effort from school administrators to ensure that students who need it receive psychosocial support. As indicated in the Protocols, when required, in a confidential manner, students should be referred to the teacher-counsellor, and if necessary, to child protection services.

The PTA FGDs were asked what efforts the community has made to prevent Ebola infections:

- Responses vary widely for this question between the groups; the most common response is that communities are implementing regular hand washing practices, followed by raising awareness by putting up posters

Table 15: Efforts community made to prevent Ebola infections

Efforts	Most common	2nd most common	3rd most common
Regular hand washing	38%	23%	10%
Raising awareness by putting up posters	20%	13%	8%
Measures in own home (like ensuring there is soap)	18%	13%	10%
Setting a good example	10%	13%	10%
Following safe burial procedures	10%	10%	13%
No touch policy	5%	13%	3%
Banning visitations/avoiding strangers	5%	3%	3%
Construction of a fence/gate around community	5%		
Animal sacrifice	3%		
Other[14]		5%	8%

3.2.2. Barriers and risks pre-Ebola

All three respondent groups were asked to identify the two most common reasons for not enrolling in school *prior to the Ebola crisis*:

- School fees/costs was identified consistently as a primary, overall barrier to education pre-Ebola
- Early pregnancy was identified by all three groups as a primary reason why girls were not enrolling
- The second most common reason boys do not enroll is for work-related purposes; the most common forms of work cited were motorcycle taxiing and street selling
- While not the most common response from any group, Early marriage for both boys and girls is seen as a significant barrier to education
- Fear of contracting illness pre-Ebola was low

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[14] 'Other' includes activities such as: Avoid visiting strangers and public gatherings, Not eating bush meat, Organized community task force, Report sick people

Table 16: Reasons why students were not enrolling in school pre-Ebola

Reasons for not enrolling	KII		Learner FGDs		PTA FGDs	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
Fees or costs	70%	47%	65%	53%	76%	61%
Early pregnancy		53%	5%	65%	3%	45%
Street selling/working	39%	11%	35%	10%	63%	24%
Early marriage	16%	26%	30%	28%	32%	53%
Helping at home	11%	8%	13%	13%		3%
Distance to school	8%	5%	5%	3%	5%	3%
Fear of being recruited/abducted to Poro/Sande[15]	6%	6%	8%	5%	5%	8%
Fear of contracting illness	6%	5%	8%		3%	
Illness	3%	2%	5%	5%		
Death of caregiver/head of household			3%	3%		

37% of the learner FGDs report that they do not feel safe at school, while 24% of the PTA FGDs report that their children do not feel safe at school. The following are the prioritized reasons why learners do not feel safe at school:

- By far, the top reason learner FGDs report feeling unsafe at school is because of corporal punishment followed by fear of being recruited into the Poro or Sande societies
- Participants in the PTA FGD also highlight corporal punishment as a top reason for their children feeling unsafe at school as well as bullying and harassment from other students

Table 17: Reason for learners not feeling safe at school[16]

Reason for feeling unsafe	Most common		2nd most common		3rd most common	
	Learner FGDs	PTA FGDs	Learner FGDs	PTA FGDs	Learner FGDs	PTA FGDs
Corporal punishment	48%	23%	13%	8%	4%	23%
Bullying/harassment by other students		23%	9%	23%		8%
Fear of recruitment into Poro or Sande	22%	8%				8%
Exploitation (unauthorized fees, corruption)	13%	8%	9%	23%		8%
Fear of getting Ebola	9%	8%	4%	8%	4%	
Emotional abuse	4%	15%	9%	8%	13%	8%

3.2.3.   Current barriers and risks

In addition to these pre-Ebola barriers, administrator informants also identified the following risks that teachers and students face while at or travelling to/from school:

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[15] Sande (for girls) and Poro (for boys) are so-called 'traditional bush schools', which are widespread in Liberia. They were created to prepare young people for adult life, including marriage. Today, participants should officially be at least 18 years old, but much younger children often participate, which interrupts their formal schooling.

[16] 'Other' responses prioritized by only one or two various PTA groups include: Stigmatization from adults, Dirty school environment, Lack of Security, Lack of teachers/teachers absent, No fence, No safe drinking water and latrines, No school feeding, Stigmatization from children

- While 'Fear of contracting illness' was not considered a common barrier to education pre-Ebola, 'Fear of contracting Ebola' is now *the* top risk identified by key informants; this finding may suggest, therefore, a future, potential barrier if Ebola awareness/prevention measures are not put into place
- 'Being hit by cars/motorbikes' was also highly prioritized as a top risk facing students and teachers

Figure 9: Risks while at or travelling to/from school

Risk	Percentage
Fear of contracting Ebola	67%
Being hit by cars/motorbikes	61%
Schools potential site for recruitment/abduction	11%
Snakes	5%
Long distance for walking to school	4%
Kidnap/rape	3%
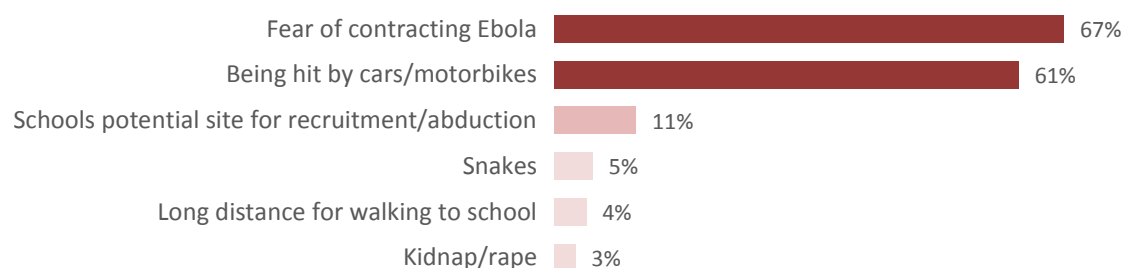
Both student and PTA FGDs were asked about whether they had any concerns about schools reopening and returning to school:

- As was found with the school administrator findings above, both learners and PTA groups indicate Fear of contracting Ebola as a major concern about returning to school
- Financial constraints in the form of school fees as well as school materials is also a major concern, especially amongst the parents

Table 18: Concerns about schools reopening

	First concern		Second concern		Third concern	
	Learners	PTAs	Learners	PTAs	Learners	PTAs
Fear of contracting Ebola	35%	33%	30%	35%	3%	15%
Cannot pay school fees	25%	35%	25%	28%	15%	5%
Don't have materials (uniform, books, etc.)	25%	18%	25%	23%	15%	20%
Insufficient WASH facilities (latrines, water, etc.)	5%	3%	5%	3%	10%	5%
Lack of classrooms	5%					
Lack of teachers	5%	3%				
Responsibilities at home (younger siblings, chores, marriage, raising own child, etc.)						3%
Worried about safety/security		5%		8%	5%	15%
Working to earn income						8%
Stigmatized because I/my family had Ebola				3%		
Parents will not allow me to return to school					10%	
Lack of school furniture		3%				3%

Costs related to going to school were and remain a major concern linked to school enrollment. In the current Ebola crisis, many students and parents are at least as concerned about the possibility of contracting Ebola at school. For school administrators, this is closely followed by the risk of traffic accidents while travelling to and from school. This assessment further shows that students and parents do not consider the learning environment secure and safe, as the protection and the psychosocial well-being of students is not sufficiently being promoted.

Recommendations
- Explore the official Ebola statistics to see if secondary school aged children and youth were affected more than other age groups; if so, explore possible explanations as to why this is and plan programming/interventions accordingly
- Prioritize interventions (psychosocial support, anti-stigma awareness, etc.) in schools that have had a higher rate of Ebola infection amongst the students, staff and their households
- Address the hidden costs of education in public schools
- Encourage school enrollment and attendance, particularly for girls, by developing and implementing a life skills program including topics like self-esteem, psychosocial well-being, protection and reproductive health.
- Considering the fear of contracting Ebola at school, ensure a high quality monitoring system for the implementation of the Protocols, involving communities.
- Work towards making going to and from school safer, for example by organizing a system which allows children to walk to and from school in groups, leaving from marked assembly points at agreed times, if required accompanied by older boys/girls from the community who have received training in road safety, first aid and child protection
- Address violence at school by:
    - Developing a reporting system on verbal and physical violence for teachers and students, linked to the Teachers' Code of Conduct
    - Including positive discipline and non-violent classroom management in teacher training,
    - Implementing other initiatives like a Violence/Harassment Free Week, a competition for the most innovative student initiatives to address violence/harassment/bullying at school, etc.

3.3. Infrastructure, furniture and materials

3.3.1. Class size

The total, pre-Ebola average class size as reported by school administrator key informants is 34 students per class; schools assessed in River Cess indicate the smallest average at 29 students per class, while Nimba reports the highest at 36.

Figure 10: Average students per class

District	Ratio
Nimba	1:36
Lofa	1:34
Bong	1:34
Margibi	1:34
Grand Gedeh	1:34
Bomi	1:34
Montserrado	1:33
Grand Bassa	1:30
River Cess	1:29
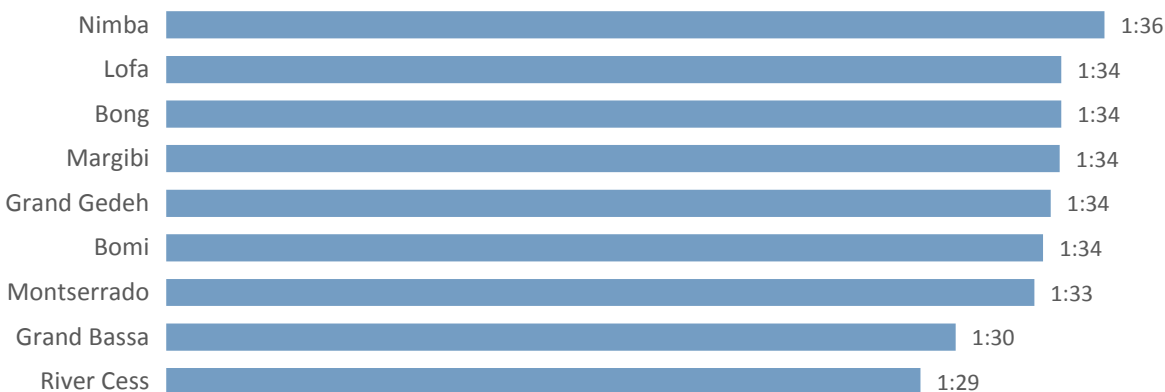
While these are impressive averages which are below both the MoE's standard of 44 students per class[17] and even INEE Minimum Standards recommendation of 40 students per class[18], 79 of the assessed schools (23%) do have an average class size of 45 or higher[19].

Figure 11: # Schools with average students per class of 45 and greater

District	Count
Montserrado	27
Nimba	13
Lofa	10
Bong	9
Margibi	6
Grand Bassa	6
Bomi	4
Grand Gedeh	3
River Cess	1
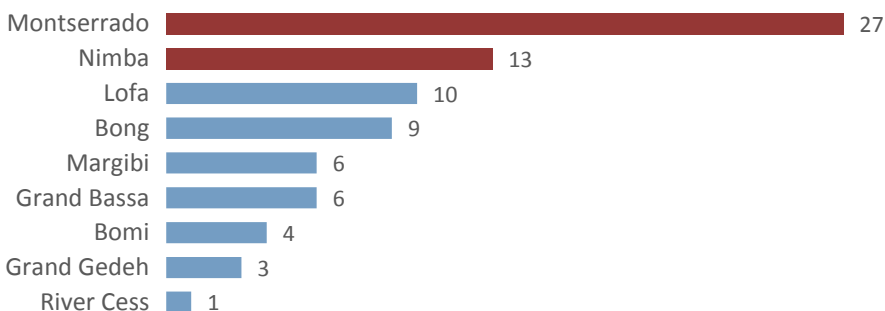
3.3.2. Infrastructural usage and damages

The most recent, official numbers from the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) and the United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response (UNMEER) indicate that 12 schools in the entire country were used as Ebola treatment or holding centers; decontamination of these schools is ongoing. Out of the 351 schools assessed, no school is currently or was ever used as such. One school did report, however, that an individual squatting at the school did contract and die of Ebola, and that nobody had been back since to clean or decontaminate the school[20].

Assessed schools report the following Ebola-related usages of their facilities:

- 23% used as a space in which to hold Ebola community awareness/prevention workshops and coordination meetings

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[17] Liberia Education Administrative Regulations, Liberian Education Administrative and Management Policies (2011): vol 24, pg. 24
[18] INEE Minimum Standards (2010): pg 97
[19] 45 of the 79 (57%) are public schools
[20] The Education Cluster has followed up to ensure relevant authorities are informed for appropriate action

- 3% used as a storage facility for Ebola-related materials
- 1% used as distribution sites for food and Ebola-related materials
- 0.3% (1 school), near the border with Guinea, used by Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) soldiers as sleeping quarters; the school has now been vacated.

Figure 12: Ebola-related school usages

Meeting space	23%
Storage facility	3%
Distribution site	1%
AFL occupied	0.3%

As schools have been closed and largely vacant during the past seven months, this has left school infrastructure and materials vulnerable. Most reported damage is either from the local population (theft, vandalism, etc.) or the harsh weather/elements (schools, especially schools not constructed with permanent building materials like concrete, need constant upkeep and maintenance).

- 61% of the schools assessed (213) report being damaged since the beginning of the Ebola crisis
- Bomi, Lofa, River Cess, Grand Gedeh and Bong report the highest percentages of schools being damaged

Figure 13: % of assessed schools reporting damages since the beginning of the Ebola crisis

Bomi	93%
Lofa	83%
River Cess	82%
Grand Gedeh	73%
Bong	73%
Nimba	67%
Grand Bassa	52%
Montserrado	50%
Margibi	36%
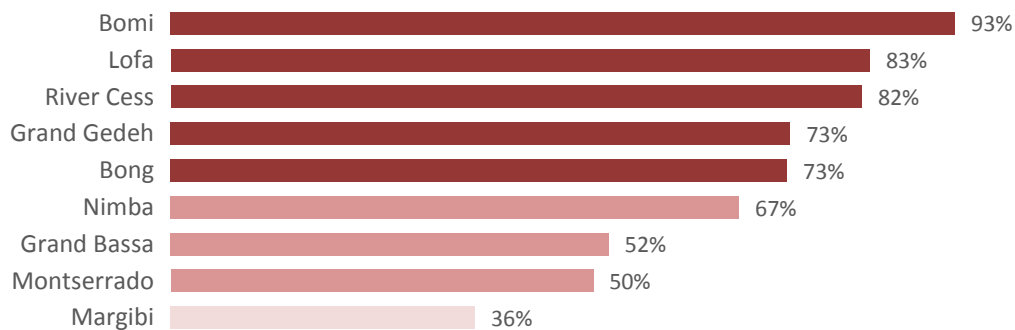
- Of the 213 schools reporting damage, 82% report damages to classroom buildings, 52% to latrines, 23% to water points, and 9% to hand washing stations.

Figure 14: Type of infrastructural damages to school since the beginning of the Ebola crisis

Classrooms	82%
Latrines	52%
Water points	23%
Hand washing stations	9%
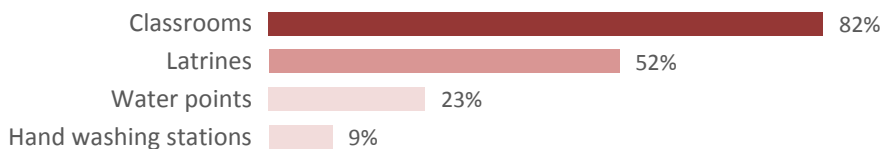
The reason why WASH facilities have been particularly damaged is because local communities often used the school's WASH facilities during school closures[21]:

- 44% of the assessed schools (155) report that their WASH facilities were used
    - Of these 155 schools, 79% (123) indicate that their latrines were used, 43% (66) that their water point was used and 32% (50) that their hand washing station was used

3.3.3. Damages to furniture and materials

Teaching and learning materials as well as school furniture were also heavily hit since the beginning of the Ebola crisis:

- 74% of assessed schools (53% public) report having had some type of school material lost/stolen or damaged since the beginning of the Ebola crisis
- Although Montserrado has a lower percentage when compared to other counties, the number of schools reporting lost/stolen or damaged school materials is still higher than all other counties which should be taken into consideration when planning a response

Figure 15: % of assessed schools reporting damaged, lost or stolen materials since the beginning of the Ebola crisis

County	% (count)
River Cess	100% (11/11)
Bong	92% (34/37)
Bomi	86% (12/14)
Lofa	79% (23/29)
Nimba	78% (43/55)
Grand Bassa	74% (20/27)
Margibi	72% (18/25)
Montserrado	66% (91/138)
Grand Gedeh	60% (9/15)
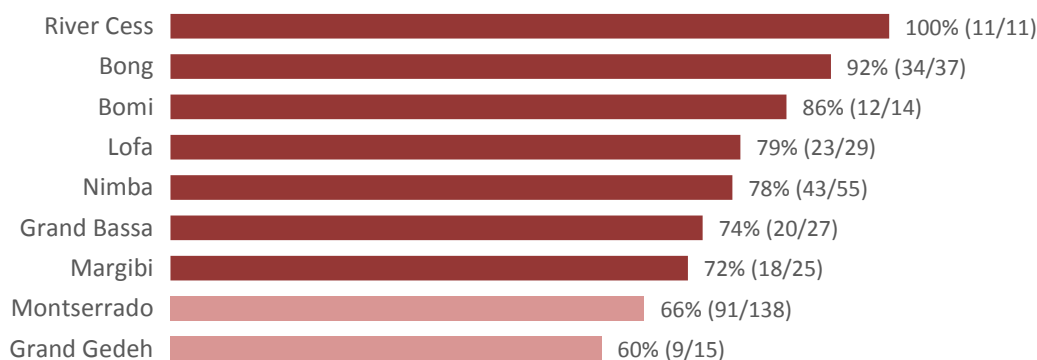
The following breakdown shows the type of materials and supplies schools report as being lost/stolen or damaged:

- Furniture (such as desks, chairs, benches): 62% of all assessed schools (218)
- Teaching and learning materials: 54% (191)
- Official school documents: 28% (99)
- Recreation supplies (such as sports equipment): 27% (95)
- Other[22]: 3% (11)

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[21] For more on Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) facilities see Section 3.4.
[22] Other includes materials such as computers, generator, kitchen and maintenance supplies, etc.

Table 19: Types and degree of materials lost/stolen or damaged

Lost/stolen or damaged	A few (1-25%)	Some (26-50%)	Many (51-75%)	(Almost) all (76-100%)	Total
Furniture	12%	15%	19%	16%	**62%**
Teaching and learning materials	14%	19%	9%	13%	**54%**
Official school documents	10%	9%	3%	6%	**28%**
Recreation supplies	7%	7%	3%	11%	**27%**

Some of the damage to school infrastructure and equipment is hard to avoid, for example when semi-permanent schools are damaged because of the weather. In most cases, however, preparedness measures can avoid or reduce this type of damage. This includes rotational plans for school staff to check on school property, plans for the safe storage of school equipment during school closures, etc.

3.3.4. School cleaning

For schools to be reopened and maintained, school cleaning will definitely have to take place at all schools. Administrator key informants were asked to indicate by whom their schools were typically cleaned prior to the school closure:
- Findings indicate that in *public* schools cleaning is done primarily by students (43%), followed by unpaid cleaning staff[23]
- In *private* schools, however, most of the cleaning is done by staff paid by the school (38%), followed by students (17%)

Figure 16: School cleaning pre-Ebola

Students: Private 17%, Public 43%
Staff paid by school: Private 38%, Public 4%
Unpaid staff: Private 5%, Public 12%
Staff paid by PTA: Private 2%, Public 5%
Staff paid by government: Public 2%
Not cleaned regularly: 1%, 1%

■ Private   ■ Public
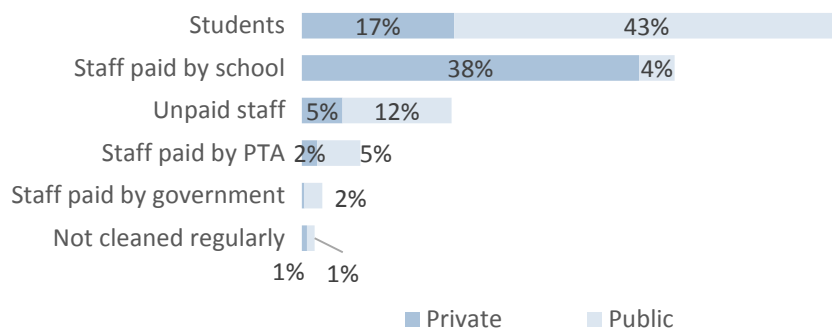
Recommendations
- Schools with high class size averages to be prioritized for the construction of additional learning spaces as part of the school improvement plans.
- Revise and/or prepare MoE guidelines on the responsibilities of public school staff during periods of school closure (while still being paid) in terms of maintenance, cleaning, the use of schools for non-education purposes etc.
- MoE at the national level to develop/adapt generic guidelines on the storage and protection of school materials, for every school to contextualize. These guidelines should include safe storage in terms of weather and theft/vandalism, accountability of those involved etc.

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[23] Unpaid cleaning staff is typically PTA members, community volunteers and teachers/school administrators. While teachers and school administrators are paid, they are not paid *cleaning* staff.

- The Ebola crisis has shown that schools in many communities are used for non-education related purposes. This has to be taken into account in the above mentioned guidelines on the responsibilities of public school staff during periods of school closure.
- Address the practice of students cleaning the school, particularly in terms of safety linked to Ebola.

3.4. Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) facilities[24]

3.4.1. Water

- The following table shows percentages of schools that reported having safe water for drinking available within 500 meters of the school, soap and water for hand washing and functional hand-washing facilities:

Table 20: % of schools with indicated WASH facilities

County	Safe drinking water within 500m	Soap and water for hand washing	Functional hand washing facilities
Bomi	57%	21%	14%
Bong	43%	19%	11%
Grand Bassa	48%	26%	22%
Grand Gedeh	73%	7%	7%
Lofa	62%	31%	34%
Margibi	56%	32%	44%
Montserrado	75%	70%	67%
Nimba	44%	20%	16%
River Cess	9%	0%	0%
Total	60%	40%	39%

3.4.2. Latrines

- 31% of the schools assessed (108) report that they do not having functional latrines
- Bong, Bomi, River Cess and Nimba all have particularly high percentages of schools reporting to have no functioning latrines

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[24] For usages of and damages to school WASH facilities during the closures, see Section 3.3.2.

Figure 17: % of assessed schools that do NOT have functional latrines

District	%
Bong	59%
Bomi	50%
River Cess	45%
Nimba	44%
Grand Bassa	37%
Margibi	36%
Lofa	34%
Grand Gedeh	27%
Montserrado	12%
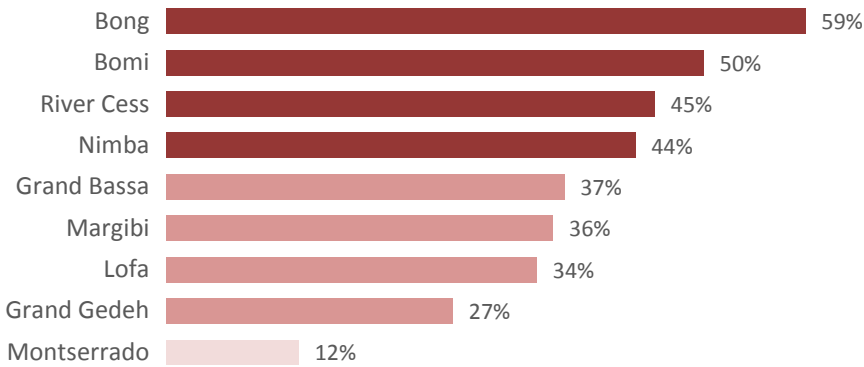
- For the 243 schools that did report having functional latrine(s) the average latrine-to-student ratio is 1 latrine for every 123 students[25]

Figure 18: Average latrine-to-student ratio

District	Ratio
Lofa	1:188
Nimba	1:145
Bong	1:136
Bomi	1:120
Montserrado	1:120
River Cess	1:95
Grand Gedeh	1:93
Grand Bassa	1:90
Margibi	1:81
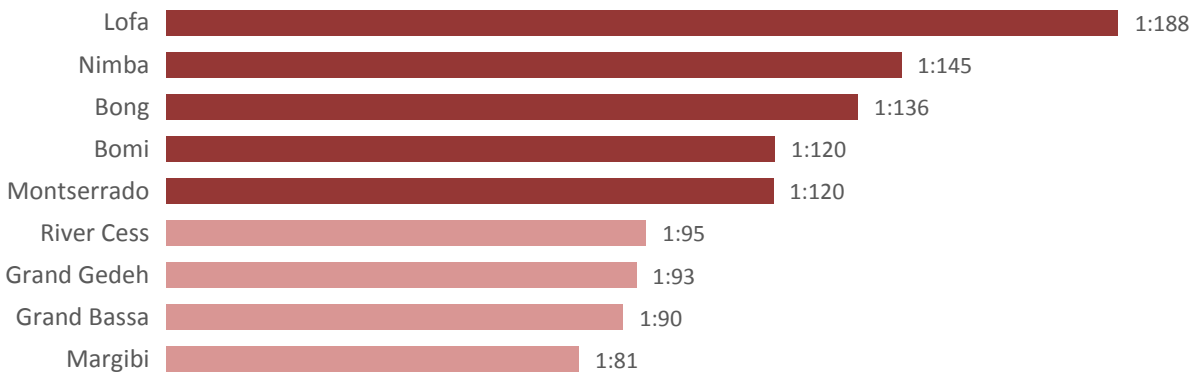
- When asked about whether students felt comfortable using the school latrines before schools closed, 70% of students in the FGDs report they did not feel comfortable using the latrines at their schools, while 61% of the PTA members report that their children did not feel comfortable using the latrines[26]
- 43% of the learner FGDs report not feeling comfortable because the latrines are damaged or full; another 29% because they feel the latrines are dirty or unsanitary
- These are also the top two reasons PTA members provide for why their children do not feel comfortable using the latrines

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[25] The Sphere minimum standards for schools in disaster situations is 1 toilet to 30 girls and 1 to 60 boys: The Sphere Handbook, Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards (2011): Appendix 3, pg. 130.
[26] This is for all students and PTA members individually; it has been disaggregated from the group level.

Figure 19: Reported reasons (from learners and PTAs) as to why learners do not feel comfortable using latrines at school

Legend: PTA FGDs | Learner FGDs

Reason	PTA FGDs	Learner FGDs
Damaged/Full	32%	43%
Dirty/Unsanitary	42%	29%
No latrines exist	21%	19%
Unsafe	5%	5%
Snakes		5%
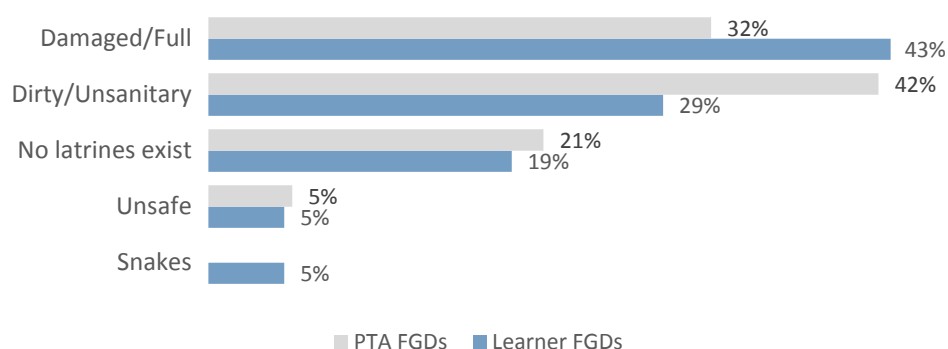
3.4.3. WASH pre-Ebola

- School administrators were asked to indicate which WASH activities were occurring at the school prior to the closures for the Ebola crisis

Table 21: WASH activities taking place at schools pre-Ebola

County	Hygiene promotion	Health/WASH Club	PTA/School admin maintaining WASH facilities
Bomi	36%	29%	50%
Bong	16%	16%	24%
Grand Bassa	59%	37%	37%
Grand Gedeh	73%	60%	47%
Lofa	79%	31%	34%
Margibi	60%	20%	32%
Montserrado	80%	33%	51%
Nimba	56%	29%	51%
River Cess	9%	9%	0%
Total	62%	30%	42%

This assessment illustrates that the availability of latrines and hand washing facilities does not just depend on construction. In a number of cases, the facilities are available at school, but cannot be used because they are damaged or dirty, or children do not feel safe using them. This stresses the importance of sex-disaggregated facilities than maintain privacy, dignity and safety. In addition, the construction of any facilities should be accompanied by the development of cleaning and maintenance plans.

Recommendations
- Include latrines in school improvement plans, as more than 1/3 of the schools assessed does not have functional latrines, and the average number of students per latrine is far too high in all of the counties.
- Prioritize the availability of hand washing facilities in school improvement plans, particularly in terms of preparedness.
- All schools to develop clear guidelines on the maintenance of WASH facilities.

3.5. Nutrition, health and psychosocial support (PSS) services

3.5.1. School feeding and recreational facilities

- The most common means for children to obtain food during the school day according to school administrators and the Learner FGDs is to buy food at the school
- This differs significantly from the PTA FGDs most common response which is that they feel children obtain food the most through a school feeding program
- 10 school administrators and 2 PTA FGDs do report some children not eating during the school day is common[27]

Table 22: Means by which children obtained food during the school day pre-Ebola

Means for food	Most common			2nd most common			3rd most common		
	KII	Learner FGDs	PTA FGDs	KII	Learner FGDs	PTA FGDs	KII	Learner FGDs	PTA FGDs
Buy food at school	41%	43%	18%	21%	10%	26%	1%	5%	3%
School feeding	29%	23%	53%	3%	8%	11%		5%	
Buy food off campus	15%	18%	8%	28%	23%	24%	8%	3%	8%
Bring food from home	14%	10%	13%	14%	23%	11%	3%	8%	8%
Eat at home	2%	8%	8%				1%	3%	5%
Could not afford food/ Stayed hungry	2%					5%			

- 52% of all schools assessed (183) have a recreational facility or space where learners can play

Figure 20: % of assessed schools with a recreational facility

River Cess	27%
Lofa	38%
Grand Gedeh	40%
Bong	41%
Margibi	48%
Grand Total	52%
Nimba	53%
Montserrado	64%
Bomi	86%
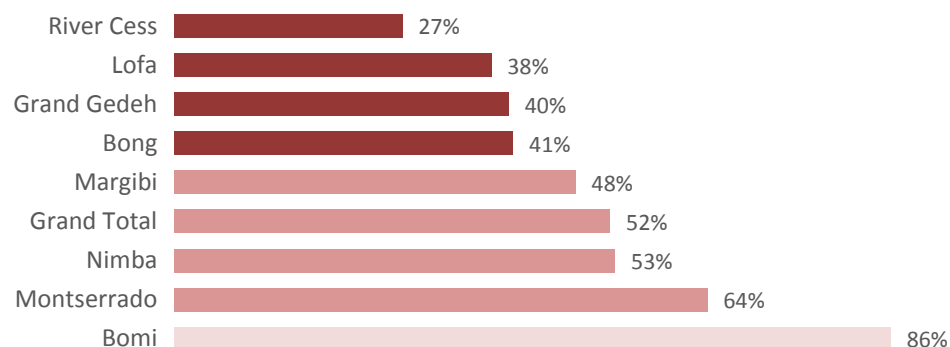
3.5.2. Health and first aid

Proximity to nearest health facilities:

- Based on school administrator key informant reports, the approximate, overall average amount of time to walk from the assessed schools to the nearest health facility is 46 minutes

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[27] 6 of these schools were in Lofa

- Schools in Grand Gedeh, Nimba, Bong and Lofa report being the furthest away from health facilities

Figure 21: Average time to walk to nearest health facility (in minutes)

District	Minutes
Grand Gedeh	95
Nimba	78
Bong	75
Lofa	67
River Cess	48
Bomi	38
Grand Bassa	37
Margibi	35
Montserrado	20
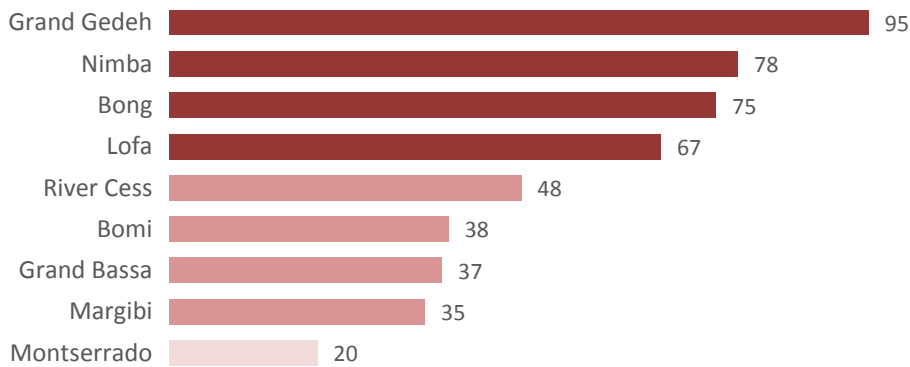
In terms of first aid services at the schools themselves:

- 24% of all schools assessed (84) report having first aid facilities

Figure 22: % of assessed schools with first aid services

District	%
Grand Gedeh	7%
Bong	8%
Lofa	14%
Bomi	14%
River Cess	18%
Nimba	18%
Margibi	32%
Montserrado	33%
Grand Bassa	33%
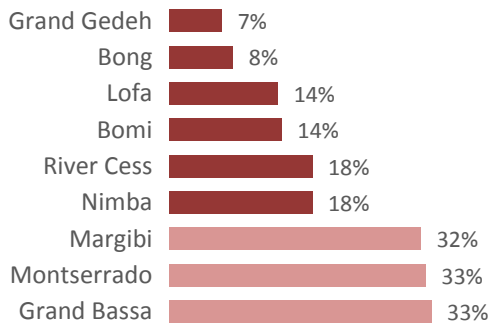
- The following table summarizes what schools report having in terms of first aid materials and personnel:

Table 23: Types of first aid materials schools currently have

County	Infrared / no-contact thermometer	Isolation room or tent	First aid kit	Ebola related instructional materials	A school nurse	A teacher who has received additional health training
Bomi	43%	7%	14%	14%	14%	21%
Bong		3%	8%	8%	3%	24%
Grand Bassa	4%		37%	33%	4%	22%
Grand Gedeh			7%	7%		7%
Lofa	3%	3%	14%	14%	7%	41%
Margibi	12%		24%	4%		48%
Montserrado	15%	14%	28%	19%	20%	33%
Nimba	7%	2%	16%	4%	11%	25%
River Cess			9%			9%
Total	10%	7%	21%	14%	11%	29%

With 6 out of 14 schools having a no-contact thermometer, it is clear that the education sector in Bomi has taken initiatives to ensure schools were equipped to reopen.

- When asked if they saw any potential challenges to the school receiving and using thermometers to check the temperature of every student and staff when they arrive at school, 37% (131) of key informants report they did not see any major potential challenges
- 45% (158) indicate the challenge will be that this activity will take a lot of time away from teaching
- 25% (87) indicate that the school does not have a fence or gate so it is hard to control where children and staff enter the school
- 17% (58) report 'Other' potential challenges, including the lack of trained staff on using the thermometers (as well as paying these staff extra) and the challenges that will arise from parents and students themselves when a child does have an elevated temperature and does not want to be sent home or to the clinic[28]

Figure 23: Potential challenges to school using thermometers prior to class (according to school administrators)

A number of the concerns raised above are addressed in the Protocols. The Protocols encourage school administrators to ask students and school personnel to come to school earlier, or to stagger the start of classes for different age groups to avoid taking away time from teaching. Because many schools do not have a fence, the Protocols encourage schools to agree on 'a clearly defined entry point' where temperatures are checked and hands washed. Also, parents are requested not to send sick children to

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[28] Thermometers can be faulty and give an inaccurate reading and there is a concern/fear about the stigma facing children should they be sent away from school with a high temperature.

school. These different issues are raised during the trainings on the implementation of the Protocols with school staff and PTA members as well.

3.5.3. Health identification and referral systems

- 45% of the schools assessed report that prior to school closures, they had a health identification system in place to ensure sick children could receive care in a timely and safe manner
- 55% also report that prior to school closures, they had a health referral system in place to refer sick children to the appropriate facilities

Table 24: % of assessed schools with Health ID and referral systems

County	Health ID system	Health referral system
River Cess	36%	27%
Nimba	40%	51%
Montserrado	53%	70%
Margibi	36%	27%
Lofa	59%	62%
Grand Gedeh	20%	40%
Grand Bassa	33%	44%
Bong	38%	35%
Bomi	43%	64%
Total	45%	55%

3.5.4. Ebola-related perceptions and practices

During the discussions, learners and PTA members were asked to list the symptoms of Ebola and then ways in which they can avoid catching it:

- Student and PTA FGD participants appear to be well-informed about Ebola symptoms and were able to identify most of them with little problem
- A few groups mentioned other symptoms such as: Sore throat, Lack of appetite, Weakness, Bleeding and Coughing
- In terms of avoiding Ebola, participants are very aware that they should wash their hands and avoid touching people with signs of Ebola

Table 25: % of FGDs listing symptoms of Ebola

Symptoms	Learner FGD	PTA FGD
Pain	98%	98%
Diarrhoea	98%	90%
Red Eyes	93%	98%
Headache	90%	88%
Rash	85%	95%
Vomiting	63%	75%
Fever	58%	65%

Table 26: % of FGDs listing ways to avoid Ebola

Ways to avoid Ebola	Learner FGD	PTA FGD
Frequent hand washing	98%	95%
Don't touch people with signs of Ebola	85%	88%
Do not eat bush meat	73%	60%
Do not touch body fluids of people with signs of Ebola	68%	70%
Don't touch people who have died from Ebola	65%	93%
Don't touch clothes/bed cloths of people who have died of Ebola	60%	63%
Do not play with monkey and baboons	58%	78%

Learner and PTA FGDs were also asked where they learned what they know about Ebola:

- Learner and PTA FGDs report that the most common source of learning about Ebola was the radio, followed next by community mobilisers

Table 27: How learners and parents learned what they know about Ebola

	Most common		2nd most common		3rd most common	
	Learner FGD	PTA FGD	Learner FGD	PTA FGD	Learner FGD	PTA FGD
From the radio	55%	48%	20%	30%	10%	5%
From community mobilisers	43%	48%	48%	40%		3%
Government ministries	3%	3%				
From traditional leaders	3%		5%			10%
From sms/mobile	3%				3%	3%
From TV		3%	3%	5%		5%
From religious leaders			3%	15%	8%	3%
From town chiefs			3%		5%	
From teachers			10%		13%	3%
At clinics			3%		3%	
Parents					8%	

The fact that radio is the most common source of learning about Ebola also shows the potential radio has in terms of education, both during school closure and for out of school children.

When asked "Before Ebola, when you were sick, did you usually stay at home?" 73% of the student FGDs replied yes, while 27% (11) FGDs indicate that they typically will go to school even when sick. Of the groups that do go to school when sick:
- 50% say it is because they do not want to miss any school
- 40% explain that they have to go to school first to check in, get a 'sick slip' and a referral to go to the clinic; sometimes the school will also be able to help pay for the visit to the clinic
- 10% say it is because they get food while at school

Students were also asked who they would tell if they saw or heard of another student or an adult who is sick and unable to seek care:

- The majority (approximate two-thirds) of both boys and girls report that they would inform a teacher or the school's principal; one-third of both boys and girls would tell their parents
- Male and female responses are almost identical except when it comes to informing gender-specific teachers (boys favor telling male teachers and girls favor telling female teachers)

Table 28: Who students would inform if they knew of someone who is sick

Person students would inform	Male	Female
Teacher or principal	66%	64%
Parents	33%	34%
Female teacher only		18%
Health worker	15%	14%
Friend	10%	13%
Male teacher only	19%	6%
School's Ebola Awareness Group	7%	6%
Community Leader	4%	6%
Emergency number (4455)	2%	1%
Police	4%	0.4%

3.5.5. Psychosocial support (PSS) and well-being

- 34% of the schools assessed (119) report having some sort of provision of PSS for students and 24% (84) have provision for teachers
- As for the type/form of PSS provided by these schools:
    - 45 report that 'One or more school staff are trained in psycho-social support'
    - 51 report that 'One or more school staff have been given the explicit responsibility to follow up with students who behave differently and/or have problems'

Recommendations
- The planned distribution of First Aid kits and First Aid training to draw on experiences learned by schools that already have First Aid facilities in place.
- Consider the implementation of a pilot project where school nurses are hired for schools further away from the closest health facility, provided that they have a minimum number of students
- Consider fencing of schools as part of school improvement plans, particularly since there are many child protection issues linked to schools being open to enter for all.
- Consider awareness raising focusing specifically on not sending sick children to school, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and partners.
- Address the issue of sick students having to go to school first to get a 'sick slip' and a referral to go to the clinic
- Pass on the information on Ebola awareness to the Community Mobilization Cluster.

- The planned PSS training for teachers to build on what is already being done in terms of PSS in schools around the country.

3.6. Teachers and Other Education Personnel
3.6.1. Ebola and teachers
- 14 schools from 3 out of 9 counties assessed report a total of 18 teachers (0.4%) having contracted Ebola
- 72% of the reported cases and 73% of the deaths were within Montserrado
- 3 of the 18 reported cases (17%) survived while 15 (83%) died
- 17 out of the 18 schools (94%) only had 1 or 2 cases of teachers infected with Ebola; 1 school in Montserrado, however, reports having had 4 case.

Table 29: # Teachers who contracted Ebola and **survived**/died (e.g. **1**/3 = **1 survivor** and 3 deceased)

County	M	F	Total infected
Margibi	**0**/2	**0**/1	3
Montserrado	**0**/5	**2**/6	13
Nimba	**0**/1	**1**/0	2
Total	**0**/8	**3**/7	18

- 18 teachers (0.4%) have had members of their family/household contract Ebola; 72% of these in Montserrado

Table 30: # teachers with someone in household contracting Ebola

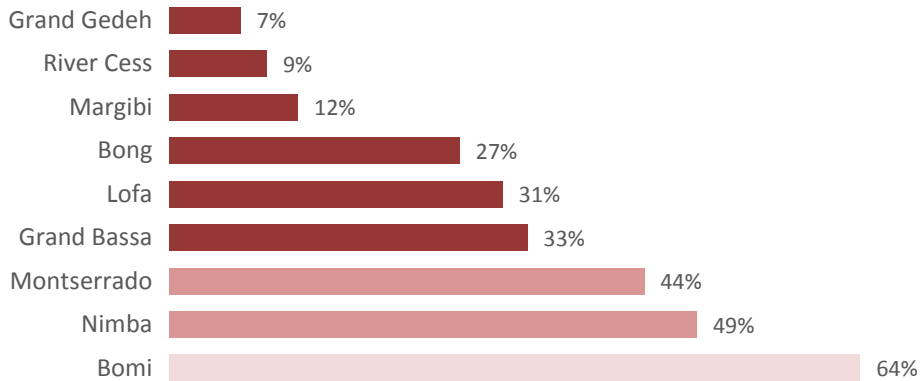| County	M	F	Total
Lofa	3		3
Margibi	1	1	2
Montserrado	6	7	13
Total	10	8	18

Recommendations
- Information on deceased teachers in public schools to be passed on to the MoE to ensure replacements can be organized as soon as possible.
- Provide psychosocial support in the schools where this is required

3.6.2. Support from local education offices
- Since the Ebola crisis, only 37% of the schools assessed had been visited by their local education officials

- Of schools reporting visitations from their local education officials, approximately 75% visit less than once per month while 25% visit once a month or more
- Schools assessed in Grand Gedeh, River Cess and Margibi report the lowest percentages of schools visited

Figure 24: % of assessed schools visited by their local education officials since the beginning of the Ebola crisis

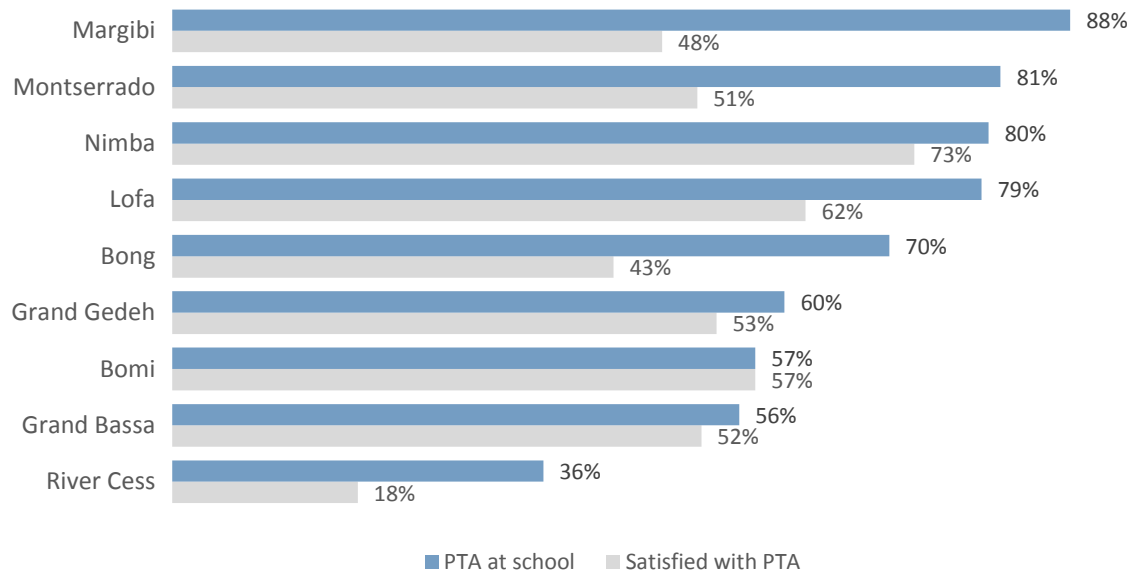| Region	%
Grand Gedeh	7%
River Cess	9%
Margibi	12%
Bong	27%
Lofa	31%
Grand Bassa	33%
Montserrado	44%
Nimba	49%
Bomi	64%

- 65 schools (19%) report to have not only been visited by local education officials, but also having received specific support from them
    - 44 out of these 65 (68%) report that the support came in the form of Ebola awareness/prevention training[29]
    - The other forms of miscellaneous support include: provision of Ebola materials, financial assistance, moral support, etc.

3.6.3. Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) and Local community activities
- 75% of school administrator key informants (263) report having a PTA at their school
- 54% (189) of the school administrator key informants report being satisfied with the PTA level of activity

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[29] And 27 out of these 44 reporting to have received Ebola awareness/prevention training were all from Nimba

Figure 25: % of schools with PTAs and % of school administrators who are satisfied with the PTA's level of activity

	PTA at school	Satisfied with PTA
Margibi	88%	48%
Montserrado	81%	51%
Nimba	80%	73%
Lofa	79%	62%
Bong	70%	43%
Grand Gedeh	60%	53%
Bomi	57%	57%
Grand Bassa	56%	52%
River Cess	36%	18%

The following table summarizes the various PTA activities as reported by school administration key informants. Each cell has two numbers; the first is the number of schools where a PTA was doing that activity *before schools closed*, and the second is the number of schools where a PTA has done/is doing that activity *since schools closed*.

Table 31: % of schools with PTAs performing indicated activities (pre-Ebola/since closures)

County	Repairs in school	Mobilizing finances	Mobilizing resources	Mobilizing community participation	Managing the school	Decision-making	Harmonizing relationships between teachers and schoolchildren	Engaging children in school activities	School safety during Ebola outbreak
Bomi	21%/21%	43%/29%	50%/36%	43%/36%	29%/14%	36%/0%	21%/0%	21%/14%	14%/7%
Bong	22%/22%	35%/5%	35%/16%	41%/14%	14%/5%	24%/3%	43%/0%	27%/3%	3%/0%
Grand Bassa	30%/19%	30%/4%	15%/4%	41%/19%	15%/4%	19%/4%	26%/0%	19%/0%	4%/30%
Grand Gedeh	13%/0%	20%/0%	0%/0%	40%/7%	20%/0%	47%/13%	40%/0%	33%/0%	0%/33%
Lofa	21%/0%	45%/0%	38%/7%	34%/28%	31%/7%	45%/17%	28%/0%	17%/3%	7%/10%
Margibi	16%/8%	44%/8%	28%/4%	28%/4%	28%/0%	36%/4%	32%/0%	8%/4%	4%/8%
Montserrado	15%/4%	22%/1%	19%/1%	17%/6%	23%/2%	43%/8%	28%/4%	30%/1%	7%/6%
Nimba	18%/9%	16%/7%	40%/9%	55%/27%	20%/11%	11%/4%	36%/4%	15%/4%	2%/16%
River Cess	0%/0%	9%/0%	0%/0%	36%/9%	9%/0%	27%/9%	9%/0%	9%/0%	0%/0%
Grand Total	18%/8%	27%/4%	26%/6%	32%/14%	22%/5%	33%/7%	30%/2%	23%/3%	5%/10%

Recommendations
- Draw lessons learned from the good examples provided in this assessment on support provided to schools in an emergency situation (training received, moral support etc.)
- Assess the functioning of PTAs, in normal times, and define their role in emergencies, as part of preparedness measures

4. Summary of recommendations

The below summarizes the recommendations from this report in relevant categories. These recommendations are not meant to present quick fix solutions for the issues raised by school administrators, students and parents. Rather, they are intended as a starting point for discussion for the Ministry of Education, Education Cluster and development partners, to agree on priorities and who will take forward which activities.

Issues for immediate action:

- Pass on information on deceased teachers in public schools to the MoE to ensure replacements can be organized as soon as possible.
- Prioritize interventions like psychosocial support and anti-stigma awareness in schools that have had a higher rate of Ebola infection amongst the students, staff and their households
- Address the need for review of last year's content in the planned pedagogical trainings.
- Pass on the information on Ebola awareness to the Community Mobilization Cluster.
- Supply teaching and learning materials in the second phase of the Ebola response, with clear accountability for safe storage at the school level.
- The planned PSS training for teachers to build on what is already being done in terms of PSS in schools around the country.
- Address the practice of students cleaning the school, particularly in terms of safety linked to Ebola.

Implementation and monitoring of the Protocols:

- Continue awareness raising on Ebola in schools and in communities, linked to monitoring the implementation of the Protocols, as this is a clear concern among communities, both in terms of children staying safe at school, and children being allowed to go to school.
- Considering the fear of contracting Ebola at school, ensure a high quality monitoring system for the implementation of the Protocols, involving communities.
- Consider awareness raising focusing specifically on not sending sick children to school, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and partners.

Encourage school enrollment and attendance by:

- Addressing the hidden costs of education in public schools.
- Developing and implementing a life skills program including topics like self-esteem, psychosocial well-being, protection and reproductive health.

Prepare the education sector for potential future crises:

- In collaboration with the Ministry of Health and other relevant partners, agree on a plan in case of new Ebola cases or a new outbreak, including an agreement on the need (or not) for schools to close, in which circumstances, and what has to be in place for schools to be able to remain open. This should include an evaluation of the use of the Protocols in the current crisis.
- Prepare a plan for nationwide radio coverage in case schools are closed, and to reach out of school children and youth, including which radio stations to include to have the widest coverage possible, and agree on a set of programs to be used.

- Revise and/or prepare MoE guidelines on the responsibilities of public school staff during periods of school closure (while still being paid) in terms of maintenance, cleaning, the use of schools for non-education purposes etc. Take into account that schools in many communities are used for non-education purposes in times of crisis.
- MoE at the national level to develop/adapt generic guidelines on the storage and protection of school materials, for every school to contextualize. These guidelines should include safe storage in terms of weather and theft/vandalism, accountability of those involved etc.
- Assess the functioning of PTAs, in normal times, and define their role in emergencies, as part of preparedness measures.
- Draw lessons learned from the good examples provided in this assessment on support provided to schools in an emergency situation (training received, moral support etc.)

School improvement plans:

- As part of the second phase of the Ebola response, develop school improvement plans, addressing the need for repairs expressed by one third of the assessed schools.
- Schools with high class size averages to be prioritized for the construction of additional learning spaces as part of the school improvement plans.
- Include latrines in school improvement plans, as more than 1/3 of the schools assessed does not have functional latrines, and the average number of students per latrine is far too high in all of the counties.
- Prioritize the availability of hand washing facilities in school improvement plans, particularly in terms of preparedness.
- All schools to develop clear guidelines on the maintenance of WASH facilities.
- Consider fencing of schools as part of school improvement plans, particularly since there are many child protection issues linked to schools being open to enter for all.

Strengthen child protection at schools by:

- Developing a reporting system on verbal and physical violence for teachers and students, linked to the Teachers' Code of Conduct
- Including positive discipline and non-violent classroom management in teacher training
- Implementing other initiatives like a Violence/Harassment Free Week, a competition for the most innovative student initiatives to address violence/harassment/bullying at school, etc.
- Working towards making going to and from school safer, for example by organizing a system which allows children to walk to and from school in groups, leaving from marked assembly points at agreed times, if required accompanied by older boys/girls from the community who have received training in road safety, first aid and child protection

School health:

- Address the issue of sick students having to go to school first to get a 'sick slip' and a referral to go to the clinic
- The planned distribution of First Aid kits and First Aid training to draw on experiences learned by schools that already have First Aid facilities in place.
- Consider the implementation of a pilot project where school nurses are hired for schools further away from the closest health facility, provided that they have a minimum number of students.

Annex A: Assessment participating agencies

This assessment could not have been possible without the support and incredible efforts of the Education Cluster members:

Organization
ACAPS
Africa Development Corps (ADC)
Advancing Youth Project (AYP)/ Education Development Centre (EDC)
Carrier of Life Liberia (CALL)
Childfund
Center for Justice and Peace Studies (CJPS)
Concern Worldwide
Coalition for Transparency and Accountability in Education (COTAE)
Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE)
Girls' Opportunities to Access Learning Plus (Goal +)/American Institute for Research (AIR)
IBIS
Liberia Environmental Care Organization (LECO)
Liberia Teacher Training Program (LTTP)/ FHI360
Ministry of Education (MoE)
National Adult Education Association of Liberia (NAEL)
National Youth Movement for Transparent Elections (NAYMOTE)
Plan International
Right to Play
Save the Children
Street Child
UNICEF
USAID
Winrock International
YES Liberia
Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA)