



REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Equitable Funding Policy

FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND PRIMARY EDUCATION

POLICY DOCUMENT

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FOREWORD

Equitable Funding Policy



Public policy reflects a nation's priorities, but public financing reveals them in practice.

How resources are distributed across an education system shows exactly which learners a country is determined to reach and which challenges it is prepared to confront. In Liberia, the resources available to support our students have not always reflected their actual circumstances. Schools serving communities with the greatest disadvantages, remote rural areas, pockets of concentrated poverty, and children with disabilities, have historically received the fewest resources to address their unique challenges. This is not merely a failure of intention; it is a failure of the funding mechanisms meant to translate intention into allocation.

The Equitable Funding Policy addresses this structural flaw. It establishes a transparent, predictable framework for financing public early childhood and primary education through a per-student model that links resource allocation directly to learner needs and school contexts. While ensuring a baseline allocation for every student, the policy directs additional, targeted support to schools based on verified equity lenses: poverty, remoteness, disability, and gender-related barriers. By moving away from a "one-size-fits-all" model, this system directs public resources precisely where they are needed most.

This approach reflects the Ministry of Education's unwavering commitment to evidence-based, transparent, and aligned financing. It provides a unified framework through which the Government, development partners, and civil society can coordinate investments to improve learning conditions, dismantle barriers to participation, and raise academic achievement; particularly in historically underserved communities.

Equally important, this policy champions institutional accountability. School leaders, communities, and education authorities will now have absolute clarity on how allocations are determined, what resources to expect, and how those funds must be utilized to support classroom instruction. This transparency fosters civic trust and gives schools a reliable foundation for multi-year planning and sustained improvement.

The development of this policy aligns with Liberia's broader national commitments, including the ARREST Agenda for Inclusive Development, the Education Reform Act, and the Education Sector Plan. It acknowledges a fundamental truth: achieving quality education for all requires a financing system that balances adequacy with equity. Financial equity is not a separate conversation from educational quality; it is a prerequisite for it.

I extend my deepest gratitude to the technical teams of the Ministry of Education, our development partners, and the stakeholders whose rigorous, collaborative efforts shaped this policy. They have produced not just a policy document, but a practical instrument for systemic change.

Ultimately, the success of this policy will not be measured by the sophistication of its formula, but by its impact in the classroom; in the barriers it breaks down and the doors of opportunity it opens for children across Liberia. As implementation begins, our collective responsibility is to ensure these principles translate into measurable, lasting improvements for every Liberian child.

Dr. Jarso Maley Jallah
Minister of Education
Republic of Liberia



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Equitable Funding Policy



The Education Reform Act of 2011 affirms the Government of Liberia's commitment to free and compulsory basic education. However, despite investments by government and development partners, the absence of a clear and equitable funding framework has contributed to disparities in resource allocation. Consequently, children from poor and vulnerable households continue to face significant financial barriers to accessing and completing their education. This policy addresses that gap by establishing a transparent and needs-based approach to education financing.

In our quest to ensure that no child is left behind, we recognize that access to quality education in Liberia is often shaped by factors beyond a child's control, including poverty, gender, disability, and geographic location. The Equitable Funding Policy (EFP) is therefore more than a financing framework, it is a national commitment and advocacy tool designed to ensure that every child has a fair opportunity to learn, thrive, and contribute meaningfully to Liberia's future, regardless of their circumstances.

This policy reflects the Ministry of Education's determination to move beyond historical patterns of resource allocation toward a transparent, needs-based approach that places learners at the center of education financing. By establishing a clear funding formula that prioritizes both adequacy and equity, the policy seeks to address long-standing disparities and strengthen the foundation for a more inclusive and effective education system.

The development of this policy was guided by the Ministry of Education's Technical Working Group (TWG), established to provide strategic direction and technical oversight throughout the process. The Ministry extends its appreciation to the members of the TWG, including Mr. Klayjue N. Tukon, Technical Assistant to the Deputy Minister for Planning, Research and Development, who led the process; Mr. Alfred George, Director of EMIS; Mr. Abdallah Housseini, Director of Planning; Ms. Evelyn Kandakai, Director of Education Funding; Mr. Varney Kamara, Administrative Assistant to the Assistant Minister for Planning; Mr. Theophilus McIntosh, Officer-in-Charge of the Division of Policy; Mr. Isaac Binnay of LISGIS; Mr. Eddie M. Faijue, Comptroller; Ms. Dabrat Quiwonkpa, Donor Coordinator, and my principal deputy, Mr. Oscar G. Flomo, Assistant Minister for Planning. Appreciation is also extended to the World Bank Group and the consultancy firm, Montrose for their technical support and contributions in developing this policy.

We acknowledge the leadership of Hon. Dr. Jarso Maley Jallah, Minister of Education, whose guidance and commitment have been instrumental in advancing this important reform agenda. We also appreciate the contributions of the Local Education Group (LEG), the Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services (LISGIS), County and District Education Offices, School Management Committees, Parent-Teacher Associations, and our development partners for their consultations and feedback. Special recognition is extended to the World Bank, through the Excellence in Learning in Liberia (EXCEL) Project, for its technical support and partnership in promoting equitable and quality education for all Liberian children.

Thomas Momo Parker

Deputy Minister for Planning, Research and Development, Ministry of Education

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ABBREVIATIONS

AAID	ARREST Agenda for Inclusive Development
ASC	Annual school census
CEO	County education officer
DEO	District education officer
ECE	Early childhood education
EFP	Equitable Funding Policy
EMIS	Education management information system
ESP	Education Sector Plan 2022/23 – 2026/27
EXCEL	Excellence in Learning in Liberia Project (World Bank)
G2B	Getting to Best in Education Project (World Bank)
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
IG	Implementation Guidelines
IRISE	Improving Results in Secondary Education Project (World Bank)
JESR	Joint Education Sector Review
LACC	Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission
LAYS	Learning-adjusted years of schooling
LEG	Local Education Group
LISGIS	Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services
MFDP	Ministry of Finance and Development Planning
MoE	Ministry of Education
NPHC	National Population and Housing Census 2022
PSIP	Public Sector Investment Plan
PTA	Parent teacher association
SIP	School improvement plan
SMC	School management committee
SMT	Senior management team – Ministry of Education
TWG	Equitable Funding Policy Technical Working Group
USD	United States Dollars
WASH	Water, sanitation and hygiene

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

'Free and compulsory' education is a central pillar to Liberia's position on primary education as per the Education Reform Act (2011) – although this has not been implemented fully due to fiscal challenges. Households still contribute a significant proportion of the overall costs associated with education, at both the primary and early childhood education (ECE) levels. These financial burdens are felt the most by the poorest children and households, who can face insurmountable financial barriers to accessing and fully participating in learning.

The Equitable Funding Policy ("the Policy") formalises the Ministry of Education's financing approach based on the principles of adequacy and transparency – targeting all students enrolled in public ECE and primary education. Allocations are made on a per-student basis, using a systematic approach for financing, to ensure equitable distribution of the education budget to public schools. Increased financing is not a panacea to the challenges faced by Liberia's education system, but a school having the resources it needs must be the starting point. The Policy establishes an approach to achieving this.

The Policy provides coverage of both horizontal and vertical equity for all students. Allocations are composed of a 'Base Amount', which provides coverage of a student's basic needs at school, to ensure equitable distribution of key resources, including teaching and learning materials across all public schools. An additional component provides targeted 'Equity Top-Ups', which seek to remove additional barriers faced by some students. These include individual- and location-based barriers, spanning gender, disability, remoteness and poverty. Teacher allocation, salaries and major infrastructure projects are excluded from the allocations, with their management being under other approved Ministry policies – the Teaching Workforce Management Strategy 2023 – 2032 and the upcoming Civil Works Strategy to be developed under the Excellence in Learning in Liberia (EXCEL) project.

The Policy sets a target of USD 60 for the Base Amount per primary student per annum, and USD 15 per ECE student per annum. These mark very substantial increases from the baselines established in the Education Sector Plan 2022/23 – 2026/27, at USD 6 and USD 0.5, respectively. Noting the magnitude of the proposed increase, the Policy adopts an incremental approach to increasing financing until 2029/30, where the targets should be reached. It is expected that the Policy will significantly reduce financial burdens for households and increase access to and participation in a full cycle of education for children in Liberia, especially for children from low-income households.

Equity Top-Ups are considered similarly, with initial financing targeting challenges, such as the provision of hygiene products for girls at the primary level, and later training for teachers for school-related gender-based violence. All eligible schools will receive the Equity Top-Ups from the first year, with these allocations set to increase incrementally by 2029/30; it is expected the Equity Top-Ups will account for approximately 15 per cent of the total allocation once the Policy is fully funded, with the remainder allocated to the Base Amount providing system-wide coverage.

The Ministry of Education commits to progressively increasing the volume of domestic financing to foundational learning, ensuring the equitable distribution of funds so that all students in Liberia can access quality learning experiences. Strong domestic financing facilitates the Policy's sustainability, with support provided during the initial implementation period until 2029/30 by the Government's Excellence in Learning in Liberia (EXCEL) project for a total of USD 18.5 million. The majority of financing in the first two years is provided through EXCEL, allowing a period where the Ministry can continue and strengthen advocacy efforts across domestic sources, supported by members of the Local Education Group (LEG).

Implementation and monitoring of the Policy will involve a range of stakeholders across the education sector, from schools, communities, district and county-level administrators, as well as policymakers and technicians from the Ministry of Education. The implementation of the Policy will be aligned to the Government's *'EXCEL School Grant Manual'*, which sets out the operational rules of the policy. This includes defining the eligibility of schools, requirements regarding usage and reporting of funds, school-level governance structures, approaches to managing fiduciary risk and the consequences of misuse. The Policy represents a drastic change in the way the Ministry of Education considers student-level financing – and it expects that every dollar provided to schools is used to benefit students directly.

Lastly, acknowledging the ever-changing needs of students and schools, the Policy is to be reviewed annually through the Joint Education Sector Review process for relevance, with a full update of the policy to be conducted in alignment to each new Education Sector Plan (or every four years, whichever is sooner). This process ensures the Policy remains a living document, allowing for the incorporation of new data sources to enhance identification of needs, and the updating of per-student funding depending on inputs from the students, families and schools of Liberia.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

The volume, efficiency and equity of financing in the education sector is one of the key bottlenecks to supporting equitable and quality learning for all children in Liberia.

The Education Sector Plan 2022/23 – 2026/27 (ESP), led by the Ministry of Education and supported by members of the Local Education Group (LEG) identified large disparities in access to education for children from differing socioeconomic backgrounds. The primary gross enrolment rate is reported to be 56 per cent higher for the wealthiest quintile than for the poorest, with further challenges faced by students with additional equity considerations, such as disabilities.¹ Beyond access, the quality of education remains a challenge as well – with children receiving 2.2 learning-adjusted years of schooling (LAYS), negatively impacting their future progress through Liberia’s education system.²

In response to this challenge, the Ministry of Education commissioned the development of the Equitable Funding Policy ('the Policy'), as one of a number of strategies to increase funding to education, and to ensure that resources are used efficiently and directed to where they are needed most.

Developed through a transparent process of consultation and dialogue, the Equitable Funding Policy establishes a transparent framework in which the Republic of Liberia, through the Ministry of Education, will determine and allocate financing per student at the levels of early childhood education and primary education for public schools.³ The allocation focuses on student-level financing and excludes teacher and staff salaries and major infrastructure investments, which are governed by other Ministry of Education policies.

The Policy supports implementation of the Education Reform Act (2011)⁴ and is in alignment with the ARREST Agenda for Inclusive Development 2025 – 2029⁵ and Education Sector Plan 2022/23 – 2026/27. Linkages to existing strategies and policies are provided in Annex 2.

1.2. Purpose of the policy

Whilst financing is a major constraint, the Policy acknowledges that financing alone cannot and does not address all the issues faced by students, teachers and schools on a daily basis. However, tackling those everyday challenges relies on having adequate resources as a starting point – which can then facilitate and empower schools to deliver improved education services.

With the above, the Policy has three main purposes: drastically improving the availability of financing for students; coordinating financing for Liberia's education sector; and advocating for increased financing from domestic and external sources.

1. **Increased financing for students:** the Policy creates a systematic approach to distribute financing, accounting for individual equity needs. The allocations described by the Policy

¹ Ministry of Education, Republic of Liberia. (2022). *Education Sector Plan 2022/23 – 2026/27*.

² World Bank. (2021). *Liberia Human Capital Assessment: From Constraints to Opportunities*.

³ The allocation excludes teacher and staff salaries and major infrastructure projects.

⁴ Republic of Liberia. (2011). *Education Reform Act of Liberia*.

⁵ Republic of Liberia. (2025). *ARREST Agenda for Inclusive Development (AAID): National Development Plan 2025–2029*.

balance ambition with the realities of the fiscal space in Liberia, aiming for tangible improvements at the school level.

2. **Coordinated sector financing:** the Ministry of Education benefits from the support of a range of longstanding and new partners. The Policy sets out a clear framework to guide and govern the allocation of domestic resources and external financing to support one singular goal: improving the effectiveness and equitable distribution of sectoral spending to improve the quality of public education.
3. **Advocacy and accountability of financing:** the Policy provides transparency for the Ministry of Education, the Local Education Group and interested stakeholders. The highlighting of the magnitude of the financing gap is deliberate – reflecting that any funding gap has a real-world impact on students. The Policy intends to facilitate stronger engagement with decision-makers, stakeholders such as the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning (MFDP), and the general public, paving the way for discussions around domestic and external financing.

The Policy is centred on a core principle: ensuring students enrolled at public schools at the ECE and primary education levels are supported by improved financing, such that all students nationally have an equal opportunity to succeed. The Policy provides all students with a baseline amount of financing covering core materials and in addition, delivers top-ups to address barriers a student may face – whether those arise from factors at the individual, school or community level.

1.3. Legal and strategic frameworks

Liberia's commitment to education is clearly established across its national frameworks, spanning the constitutional, legislative and strategic levels. The Policy provides a tool with which those ambitions can be realised:

1. **The Constitution of the Republic of Liberia (1986)⁶ Article 6**, highlights the responsibility to 'provide equal access to educational opportunities and facilities for all citizens to the extent of available resources'.
2. **The Education Reform Act (2011)** indicates the need to promote equal access to educational opportunities for all Liberians without discrimination, and states that basic education should be 'free and compulsory' for all Liberians.
3. **The Education Sector Plan 2022/23 – 2026/27**, alongside related sectoral strategies such as the National Policy on Girls' Education (2021)⁷ and the Inclusive Education Policy (2018)⁸, all indicate a policy direction aimed at improving equitable financing to strengthen all Liberian children's access to quality education.
4. **The ARREST Agenda for Inclusive Development (2025)** includes education at the heart of Pillar 6: Human Capital Development, highlighting ambitions to increase budget allocation to education, reduce drop-out rates, and increase access for students with special needs.

1.4. Current realities of education financing in Liberia

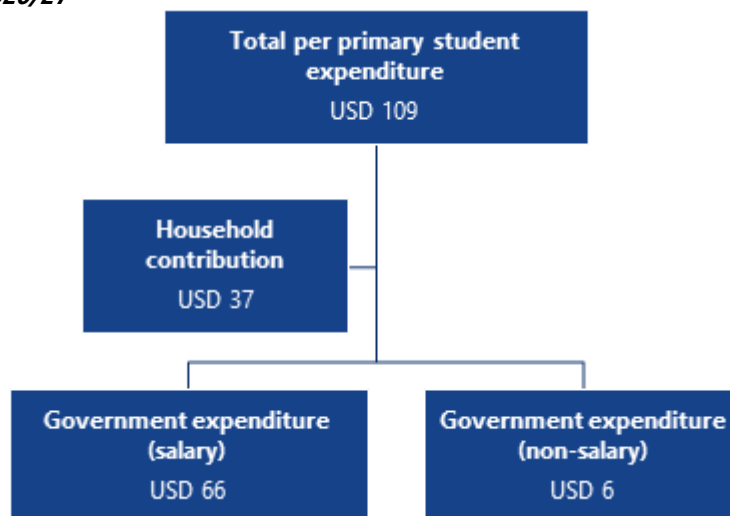
The ESP estimated that the total cost per student enrolled at the primary level stands at USD 109 per annum. Of this amount, USD 37 was contributed by households, with households generally responsible for school uniforms, examination fees and informal school fees. These burdens fall most heavily on the poorest families, exacerbating inequities experienced by students from the most challenging backgrounds.

⁶ Republic of Liberia. (1986). *Constitution of the Republic of Liberia*.

⁷ Ministry of Education, Republic of Liberia. (2021). *National Policy on Girls' Education*.

⁸ Ministry of Education, Republic of Liberia. (2018). *Inclusive Education Policy*.

Figure 1: Disaggregation of Annual Per-Student Financing for Public Primary Education, Education Sector Plan 2022/23 – 2026/27



At current financing levels, the commitment to 'free and compulsory' primary education cannot, and does not, occur in practice – as is evidenced by the scale of household expenditure on education. The Policy aims to provide sufficient financing to reduce the household contribution and simultaneously increase the non-salary aspect of government financing to help support improved learning environments.

For ECE, the challenges are similar. At the ECE level, the ESP estimates non-salary government expenditure per student is just USD 0.50 per annum.

To ensure the ambitions set out in the Education Reform Act (2011) are fully realised, there must be a tangible change in both policy direction and domestic financing. Without this change, dropout rates for girls and boys will continue to be high, large proportions of girls in rural areas will continue to face barriers to participation in education, and those with disabilities will remain unable to access quality education services.

As highlighted, financing does not in itself alleviate barriers to equity. However, ensuring that schools have adequate resources to address constraints in their community is a foundational step to advancing equity and inclusion as part of a broader approach to addressing inequity through sector/policy reform.

2. POLICY FRAMEWORK

2.1. Vision

The Republic of Liberia through the ARREST Agenda for Inclusive Development has proudly committed to “ensure access to equitable, gender-responsive, and disability-inclusive education, improved quality and relevant teaching and learning, and enhanced efficiency and management capacity of all education stakeholders”.⁹

How resources are distributed across an education system shows exactly which learners a country is determined to reach and which challenges it is prepared to confront. In the quest to ensure that no child is left behind, the Ministry recognises that access to quality education in Liberia is often shaped by factors beyond a child's control. The Equitable Funding Policy is therefore more than a financing

⁹ Republic of Liberia. (2025). *ARREST Agenda for Inclusive Development*.

framework, it is a national commitment and advocacy tool designed to ensure that every child has a fair opportunity to learn, thrive, and contribute meaningfully to Liberia's future, regardless of their circumstances.

The Equitable Funding Policy establishes a transparent, predictable framework for financing public early childhood and primary education through a model that links resource allocation directly to learner needs and school contexts. This reflects the Ministry of Education's unwavering commitment to improving learning conditions, dismantling barriers to participation, and raising academic achievement - particularly in historically underserved communities, through evidence-based, transparent, and aligned approaches to financing.

2.2. Policy overview

The Equitable Funding Policy introduces a per-student, needs-based funding formula allocating non-salary financing to public ECE and primary institutions to improve learning conditions and support equity and inclusion in public education. Over the next four years, by 2029/30, the Policy will incrementally close the financing gap between current financing and the fully financed targets.

2.3. Policy objectives

The Policy has four specific objectives:

1. To establish a needs-based and transparent system to determine and allocate non-salary financing for students enrolled in public ECE and primary education.
2. To incrementally increase the per-student financing to USD 60 for primary education, and USD 15 for ECE, moving towards these targets by 2029/30 whilst strengthening school-level and sub-national level capacity.
3. To direct targeted financing to students and schools facing the most challenges – both individual and location-based. This includes supporting girls, students with disabilities, difficult-to-reach schools, and those in communities where deprivation is high.
4. To reduce the financial barriers for households, particularly for the poorest communities, where additional costs for education create the largest burdens.

2.4. Scope of the policy

The Policy introduces equitable financing for students enrolled in public education institutions across all fifteen counties in Liberia, specifically targeting ECE and primary education, where current financing for public schools is most challenging¹⁰. The framework is transferable to other levels of education in future.

The Policy provides a comprehensive framework for a school's financing needs, delivering financing through a decentralised grant – realising the ESP's ambition to 'fully implement a decentralization plan to equitably distribute national resource packages based on identified development needs'. With this mechanism addressing both horizontal and vertical equity, underserved regions will receive financing proportional to their needs. However, it should be noted that equity and inclusion remain cross-cutting considerations, which can only arise as a result of increased financing combined with the successful implementation of the Ministry's other activities, such as teacher training and professional development.

¹⁰ Ministry of Education, Republic of Liberia. (2022). *Education Sector Plan 2022/23 – 2026/27*.

The Policy is designed to be complementary to existing strategies. It does not provide guidance on the deployment of newly qualified and serving teachers, equitable distribution of teacher salaries or the financing of major capital projects, which are governed by the Teaching Workforce Management Strategy and the Civil Works Strategy¹¹, respectively. Beyond these two restrictions, the Policy is designed such that schools and sub-national levels are empowered to have more autonomy in deciding the best use of their funding to promote decentralised planning and implementation. This is aligned with the Ministry of Education’s strengthening of the annual planning cycle, including the development of county education operating plans.

The Policy does not govern non-public institutions – private, faith-based and community-based schools – which are to be regulated under a forthcoming Subsidy Policy to be produced by the Ministry.

The Policy will be implemented from 2026/27, with a four-year running period to reach the point of adequacy. It is subject to review through the Equitable Funding Policy Technical Working Group (TWG) at the Joint Education Sector Review (JESR) annually, with a full update in alignment with each new Education Sector Plan, or at least every four years to re-assess the suitability of equity factors, and the potential of new data (for example, through the Household Income and Expenditure Survey or an updated National Population and Housing Census).

2.5. Guiding principles

The Policy has been developed with the following guiding principles:

Principle	Description
Adequacy	The starting point is an assessment based on need at the student level, rather than a top-down distribution of available resources. All students should have sufficient financing to ensure their success at school.
Equity	Both horizontal equity (all students have the same basic resources) and vertical equity (additional resources for additional needs) are addressed. Equity does not necessarily mean equality. Where students face intersecting barriers to access and participation, schools will receive additional financing to allow school leaders to address multiple barriers to inclusion. Both individual- and location-based equity are considered.
Transparency and accountability	The Policy is published on the Ministry’s website and distributed to sub-national levels. The formula is clearly set out so that school principals, teachers, parents and students understand what funding the school receives to support their children. Monitoring is to take place frequently to ensure financing is being used as intended.
Predictability	A multi-year financing schedule is published to allow school leaders to plan effectively. Per-student values are subject to review at the Joint Education Sector Review, with a set timeline for revisions published in advance.
School-level and sub-national autonomy	Grants support greater autonomy at the school level, with school leaders making decisions on their greatest needs. The broad financing framework and ring-fenced equity expenditures are to be followed, although school leaders and communities have autonomy to determine exactly what would benefit their schools and children the most.
Progressive increases	Incremental financing increases over the four-year period allow the Ministry, schools and the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning (MFDP) to progressively move toward the medium-term adequacy goals. The increases also allow the Ministry and schools to demonstrate its progress year-on-year, building confidence in the sector’s ability to deliver.

¹¹ At the time of writing in June 2026, the Civil Works Strategy is being developed under the EXCEL project.

3. THE EQUITABLE FUNDING FORMULA

3.1. Structure of the formula

The per-student allocation is comprised of two components:

1. a 'Base Amount' (horizontal equity – all students have equal access to core materials) and
2. intersectional 'Equity Top-Ups' for gender, disability, remoteness and poverty (vertical equity – students with additional needs receive additional support).

The structure applies to both ECE and primary schools, with varying funding amounts for the two levels based on identified needs. The school-level allocation is calculated as follows:

$$\begin{aligned}
 &\textbf{School Allocation} = \\
 &(\text{Number of Students} \times \text{Base Amount}) + \\
 &(\text{Number of Girls} \times \text{Gender Top-Up}) + \\
 &(\text{Number of Students with Disabilities}^{12} \times \text{Disability Top-Up}) + \\
 &(\text{Number of Students} \times \text{Remoteness Top-Up}) + \\
 &(\text{Number of Students} \times \text{Poverty Top-Up})
 \end{aligned}$$

3.2. The Base Amount

3.2.1. Rationale and overview

The Base Amount is the first component of the per-student formula and the main mechanism to ensure an equal level of financing for all students nationally, addressing horizontal equity. This financing, determined by the Technical Working Group (TWG), is available for all students, regardless of the students' circumstances – and this financing represents the majority of funding to be distributed through the Equitable Funding Policy, given the currently low baseline of funding across Liberia. It is a necessary enabling factor, facilitating schools to operate as envisioned.

The purpose of the funds is to increase access, attendance and participation in public primary schools in Liberia, and to support the quality of teaching and learning. This is directly aligned to Liberia's goals to increase the learning-adjusted years of schooling (LAYS) for students, which currently stands at 2.2 years despite students being expected to complete 4.2 years of schooling. The Ministry of Education recognises that this is an opportunity, and the system must improve in both of these aspects.

Through decentralised planning processes, schools are able to decide how funding should be used to address their highest priorities. By targeting and improving aspects of schooling that are important to the students, teachers and households in their community, it is expected that the Base Amount will support effective interventions and support students to achieve increased years of schooling – and importantly, increased learning-adjusted years of schooling.

¹² Areas of disabilities, as recorded by the Annual School Census span five categories: i) visual impairment; ii) hearing impairment; iii) physical/mobility impairment; iv) intellectual/learning impairment; v) communication impairment. These are the same categories of disabilities as identified by the Inclusive Education Plan (2018).

For ECE, the funding allows for the same flexibility, whereby institutions are able to utilise funding in ways that matter to them – for example, the procurement of materials to support students to explore, build, pretend and create.

3.2.2. Composition

The Base Amount has been determined on the basis of eight areas of expenditure by the TWG, although it is not a prescriptive procurement plan. Schools retain autonomy to determine how best to use their allocation within the framework of eligible expenditures outlined in the EXCEL School Grant Manual (the implementation of the Policy through the manual is explored in Section 5).

Table 1: Base Amount for primary education and ECE¹³

Areas of Expenditure	Primary Base Amount	ECE Base Amount
School feeding	Baseline: USD 6 (ESP) Target: USD 60 by 2029/30	Baseline: USD 0.5 (ESP) Target: USD 15 by 2029/30
Teaching and learning materials		
Dress code (uniform and shoes)		
School and examination fees		
Services (electricity, basic WASH)		
Play, sports and extra-curricular materials		
Minor repairs		
School administration		

3.2.3. Incremental phasing towards full financing targets

The medium-term target for the Base Amount is established at USD 60 for primary education and USD 15 for ECE. Recognising that current baselines are USD 6 and USD 0.50 respectively, a phased approach to increasing financing levels is adopted to ensure the targets can be achieved.

The proposed schedule is presented below. The incremental approach adopts annual increases to reach the full medium-term amount by 2029/30, with the Policy acknowledging this represents a partial contribution towards the overall target in the short-term. These targets are subject to review annually as part of the Joint Sector Review process, based on the budget execution and domestic funds secured in the previous year.

Table 2: Incremental increases to the base amount for primary education and ECE

Period	Primary Base Amount (USD)	ECE Base Amount (USD)
ESP baseline	6	0.50
2026/27	12	4
2027/28	20	7
2028/29	35	10
2029/30	60	15

¹³ Due to rounding total shares in percentages may not add up to 100 per cent.

3.3. The Equity Top-Ups

3.3.1. Selection of equity factors

The second component addresses vertical equity – ensuring schools receive adequate financing to support the inclusion of students facing intersecting barriers to attendance and full participation. Underpinning this component is the Ministry’s commitment to the fundamental principles of equity, gender equality and inclusion, and the social justice goals of reducing disparities wrought by gender, disability, and geographical location. Many of these factors have been identified by the Ministry’s existing Inclusive Education Policy (2018) as key considerations for equity.¹⁴

The Policy selects four factors, each of which has been linked by evidence to tangible barriers to access or learning in Liberia; is easily understood by the community; is measurable using available evidence; and does not overlap with other factors to create unintentional duplicative funding. While the Policy allocates financing across four discrete equity areas, it is expected that these factors work in conjunction – schools are encouraged to use the combined Equity Top-Ups holistically to address the intersecting challenges faced by students in their care.

The four factors balance student-level considerations (gender and disability) with location-based equity considerations (remoteness and community poverty), developing a holistic profile of needs per student. Data is drawn from the Annual School Census (ASC)¹⁵ and the National Population and Housing Census (NPHC) and will be updated annually when new data is available.¹⁶

Liberia’s Equitable Funding Policy is one part of a broader approach to advancing equity and inclusion across the education system. The Ministry will continue to mainstream equity and inclusion across all its work, including professional development, teacher training and more. Appropriate training will be provided to ensure that school leaders and stakeholders have the knowledge and skills required to address barriers to equity meaningfully in their community.

3.3.2. Gender top-up

Gender has implications for a student’s ability to access and participate fully in education. Gender-based barriers to inclusion impact children of all genders in different ways. While these barriers are constantly evolving, at the time of writing, evidence from Liberia demonstrates that girls are disproportionately impacted by gender-based barriers in Liberia compared to boys. For example, barriers to accessing primary school for girls include: i) higher risks of school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV); ii) inadequate Water, Sanitation and Hygiene facilities; iii) lack of support for menstrual hygiene management. These barriers are further compounded by the prevalence of overage enrolment across Liberia’s primary education system.

As a starting point, the Equity Top-Up provides resources to schools to help alleviate barriers for girls by, for example, providing sanitary supplies, improving WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) facilities, and creating safe spaces with privacy. However, supporting gender requires more than just physical interventions: to address SRGBV, support is also scheduled for gender-responsive training and improved safeguarding, with the Ministry set to provide further guidance, adopting a whole-school approach. The

¹⁴ Ministry of Education, Republic of Liberia. (2018). *Inclusive Education Policy*.

¹⁵ Ministry of Education, Republic of Liberia. (2025). *Annual School Census 2024/25* [Final report, draft].

¹⁶ Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services (LISGIS). (2024). *2022 National Population and Housing Census: Thematic Report on Non-Monetary Poverty*.

proposed allocation would contribute towards the 5 per cent budget commitment to girls' education under the National Policy on Girls' Education.¹⁷

Data on the number of girls will be drawn from the Annual School Census.

3.3.3. Disability top-up

Liberia's Inclusive Education Policy (IEP) 2018 recognizes a wide range of learning needs and categories of persons with disabilities, including, "persons who are blind or have low vision; persons who are deaf or hard of hearing; persons with intellectual disability; persons with mobility-related disabilities; persons with learning disabilities; persons with speech, language and communication disabilities as well as persons with multiple disabilities"¹⁸. Schools are envisaged to play an important role in the early identification and referral of children with potential disabilities, under IEP Strategy 2.5.

Disability is a critical barrier for affected students, and in Liberia, disability is significantly under-reported. Large proportions of children with disabilities are out of school or face additional challenges whilst enrolled. Financing is often not available to make the necessary adjustments, such as the provision of assistive materials or adaptations for accessibility. The Equity Top-Up is intended to support students with disabilities based on their individual needs.

Disability is challenging to capture in a single top-up given the breadth and varying complexity of disabilities and support needs, but the top-up aims to provide schools with substantial funding to support students effectively and flexibly. As part of a broader approach to embedding inclusive education in public schools, this top-up also may incentivise schools to support early identification of students with disabilities, so that children can receive the support they need and the Ministry of Education can plan more effectively for learners with disabilities based on more accurate data.

Data on the number of students with disabilities will be drawn from the Annual School Census. Whilst it is expected that the number of students with disabilities will increase with time due to improved reporting, spot-checks at the school level will be implemented to avoid perverse incentives.

3.3.4. Remoteness top-up

Remoteness is another core pillar of inequity, for which the Policy provides targeted support for the hardest-to-reach children and schools. Remote schools may face additional challenges such as having more limited access to banking and face higher costs to procure and transport materials from the nearest markets – a disadvantage that is based upon location.

Schools in very remote areas are also those that are most exposed to climate-related risks, such as flooding and storm damage, particularly as Liberia is one of the world's most climate-vulnerable countries. The most remote schools, which are open-air or make-shift, will be more directly exposed to climate challenges, which a solid or semi-solid building might withstand.

The top-up is intended to support schools to make minor changes and to act as a buffer to facilitate learning continuity in times of difficulty. Major capital investments are to be implemented following the Ministry of Education's Civil Works Strategy, which sets out the broader strategy for long-term infrastructure improvements.

¹⁷ Ministry of Education, Republic of Liberia. (2021). *National Policy on Girls' Education*.

¹⁸ Ministry of Education, Republic of Liberia (2018). *Inclusive Education Policy*.

However, one major issue is the lack of school-level remoteness data, though efforts to improve it are in progress. At present, the Policy uses school conditions from the Annual School Census as a proxy. This adopts the logic that remote schools – the ones that are most isolated – also generally happen to be the ones where it is harder to build a solid structure, whether that is due to funding or to procurement of resources. In future iterations of the policy, the identification of remote schools could be improved upon through a more direct measure, for example through the Ministry of Education’s school mapping exercises.

Currently, school condition is determined by the school’s construction material through the Annual School Census, classified as: open-air, make-shift, semi-solid, or solid (worst to best). Condition is recorded on a per-classroom basis in the ASC, and for the purpose of this Policy, the school is assigned the category of its worst-conditioned classroom.

3.3.5. Poverty top-up

The final equity consideration is community-level poverty and deprivation – a direct representation of households’ ability to manage the costs associated with education.

The purpose is to distribute more funds to communities with the highest levels of household deprivation, where children from the poorest backgrounds face the greatest barriers to accessing and remaining in education. The poverty component is intended to be the most flexible component with a broad remit to support students’ needs, and it will be for the school to determine the most pressing needs for its students. It can also support a quality learning environment, providing schools with the funding they need to make the school more attractive to students and their households.

Counties are classified into four categories by deprivation. Deprivation is measured by the percentage of households in a county that are over an hour away from their nearest primary school, drawn from the National Population and Housing Census Non-Monetary Poverty Thematic Report.

Table 3: Classification of counties by household deprivation

Household deprivation	County
Under 10%	Montserrado, Nimba, Maryland
10 to 20%	Bomi, Bong, Gbarpolu, Grand Cape Mount, Grand Gedeh, Grand Kru, Lofa, Margibi, River Gee, Sinoe
20 to 30%	River Cess
Over 30%	Grand Bassa

Currently, reliable data is available at the county level, although it is expected in future updates of the Policy, district-level poverty data – from the Household Income and Expenditure Survey as one example – will be explored to provide more detailed disaggregation.

3.3.6. Summary of equity top-up values

To ensure the feasibility of the Policy, the Equity Top-Ups are determined based upon need, although they also consider the target population size impacted by the top-up. Gender, for example, is expected to constitute a large proportion of the Equity Top-Ups, with all girls eligible for the top-up. However, for disability, whilst the need is high, the proportion of the student population identified as having a disability is very small (due to challenges with both identification and enrolment).

The Equity Top-Ups for primary education and ECE are presented in Tables 4 and 5.

Table 4: Equity top-up values, primary education (USD per year)

Factor or band	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Gender (per girl enrolled)	7.5	10	12.5	15
Disability (per identified student)	50	70	90	110
Remoteness – solid schools	0	0	0	0
Remoteness – semi-solid schools	1	1	1	1
Remoteness – make-shift schools	2	2	2	2
Remoteness – open-air schools	3	3	3	3
Poverty – under 10% deprived	0	0	0	0
Poverty – 10 to 20%	2	2	2	2
Poverty – 20 to 30%	4	4	4	4
Poverty – over 30%	6	6	6	6

Table 5: Equity Top-Up values, ECE (USD per year)

Factor or band	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Gender (per girl enrolled)	2	2	2	2
Disability	25	35	45	55
School Condition - Solid	0	0	0	0
School Condition - Semi	1	1	1	1
School Condition - Make-Shift	2	2	2	2
School Condition - Open Air	3	3	3	3
Deprivation - 10% or Less	0	0	0	0
Deprivation - 10% - 20%	1	1	1	1
Deprivation - 20% - 30%	2	2	2	2
Deprivation - 30%+	3	3	3	3

3.4 Worked example

School A is a primary school based in Grand Bassa, a county with the highest levels of deprivation for education, with an open-air school environment. The formula would expect to allocate more financing to such a school through the equity component, with the aim of better resourcing it to meet national standards.

Table 6: School A – characteristics

School	County	Remoteness by condition	Total enrolment	Girls	Students with disabilities
A	Grand Bassa	Open-air	150	60	3

Using 2026/27 as a starting point, the Base Amount and four equity components are calculated below. In 2026/27, the Base Amount is proposed at USD 12, with the intention of scaling to USD 60 by 2029/30.

Table 7: School A – short-term allocation by component (2026/27)

Component	Calculation	Amount (USD)
Base Amount (starting year)	USD 12 × 150 students	1,800
Gender top-up	USD 7.5 × 60 girls	450
Disability top-up	USD 50 × 3 students	150
Remoteness top-up (open-air school)	USD 3 × 150 students	450
Poverty top-up (Grand Bassa, over 30%)	USD 6 × 150 students	900
Total		3,750

By 2029/30, the base amount will have scaled to its full amount, and equity components will have also reached their medium-term targets. For School A, this means a substantial increase to the Base Amount, with the equity component increasing in monetary terms but reducing proportionally. By 2029/30, equity is projected to represent 22.3 per cent of total financing, compared to 52.0 per cent in 2026/27.

Table 8: School A – medium-term allocation by component (2029/30)

Component	Calculation	Amount (USD)
Base Amount (Final Year)	USD 60 × 150 students	9,000
Gender top-up	USD 15 × 60 girls	900
Disability top-up	USD 110 × 3 students	330
Remoteness top-up (open-air school)	USD 3 × 150 students	450
Poverty top-up (Grand Bassa, over 30%)	USD 6 × 150 students	900
Total		11,580

3.5 System-level financing requirement

The Annual School Census 2024/25 identifies a total of 202,238 students enrolled in public primary education and 148,492 students enrolled in public early childhood institutions. Considering the Base Amount and Equity Top-Ups, Table 9, Table 10 and Table 11 present an estimated schedule of financing required for the levels of primary education, ECE, and combined.¹⁹

Table 9: Total system financing requirement, primary education (USD '000s)

Component	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Total Base Amount Allocation	2,427	4,138	7,408	12,991
Total Equity Top-Up Allocation	1,139	1,528	1,818	2,121
Total Financing Required	3,565	5,665	9,226	15,112

Table 10: Total system financing requirement, ECE (USD '000s)

Component	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Total Base Amount Allocation	594	1,063	1,554	2,385
Total Equity Top-Up Allocation	384	418	432	447
Total Financing Required	978	1,482	1,986	2,831

Table 11: Total system financing requirements, ECE and primary combined (USD '000s)

Levels of Education	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
ECE Financing Needs	978	1,482	1,986	2,831
Primary Education Needs	3,565	5,665	9,226	15,112

¹⁹ Please note that individual values are rounded to the nearest 1,000 in Tables 9, 10 and 11, and totals are calculated with the rounded values.

Total Financing Required	4,543	7,147	11,212	17,943
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4. FINANCING THE POLICY

4.1. Financing strategy

The Policy presents a significant change in the Ministry of Education's approach to providing school funding. Securing sustainable funding up to and beyond 2029/30 is critical for the successful implementation of the Policy.

The Ministry has identified three main sources of funding for the policy:

1. **Domestic resource mobilisation** is the primary source, with annual increases required to meet the growing financing requirement.
2. **Excellence in Learning in Liberia (EXCEL)** incorporates a school grant sub-component for USD 18.5 million, which is planned for allocation through the Equitable Funding Policy in the initial years of implementation.²⁰
3. **Development partner/external financing**, both existing and new, will now have a mechanism to contribute towards a multi-donor trust fund. The funds will be utilised in full alignment with the Ministry's priorities and will support decentralisation efforts and schools directly.

The financing provided by the EXCEL project is intended to initially support the implementation of the Policy, although over time, the relative share of financing being contributed from each source will fluctuate, with domestic financing accounting for a heavier proportion of the overall financing requirements (particularly after the first two years of implementation).

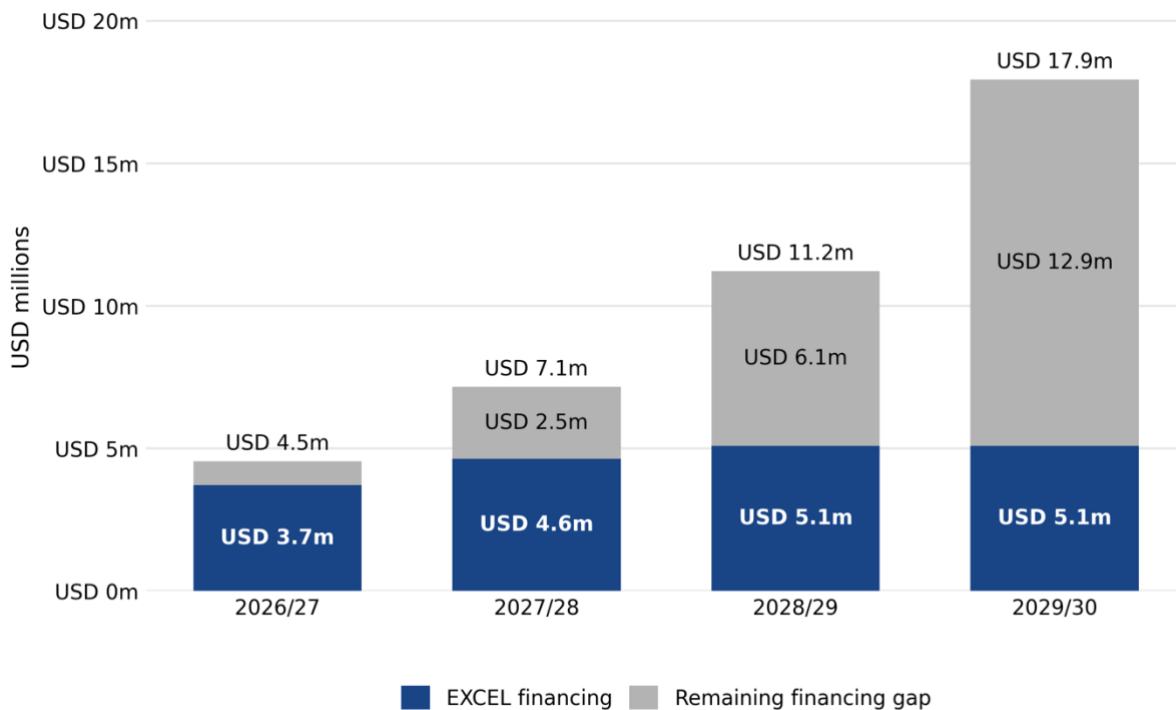
The Policy's intention is to focus the education sector's financing efforts for the primary and ECE levels into a single distribution. For schools, this means a singular, more predictable allocation at set periods throughout the year so school leaders can plan better, with increased transparency for the local community and families.

4.2. EXCEL project anchor financing

The EXCEL Project includes USD 18.5 million for school grants, providing a stable foundation for the Policy's implementation in the initial period. Table 12 highlights the financial support through the EXCEL project, where 81 and 65 per cent of total needs are met in 2026/27 and 2027/28 respectively. The monetary contribution also increases across the implementation period, rising from USD 3.7 million in the first year to USD 5.1 million by 2029/30.

The financing schedule set out for EXCEL provides a balance of strong support during the first years of implementation, allowing the Ministry to further strengthen advocacy efforts, whilst providing continued investment as the Policy reaches its medium-term ambitions.

²⁰ World Bank. (2025). *Liberia – Excellence in Learning in Liberia (EXCEL) Project: Project Appraisal Document*.

Figure 2: Equitable Funding Policy financing needs, with EXCEL financing**Table 12: Planned EXCEL financing contribution (USD '000s)**

Costings	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Total policy needs	4,543	7,147	11,212	17,943
Planned EXCEL financing	3,700	4,625	5,088	5,088
Proportion funded by EXCEL	81%	65%	45%	28%
Remaining financing gap	843	2,522	6,125	12,856

The financing from EXCEL is intended to operate identically to that of financing from domestic sources and other sources. All funding for the Policy will follow the allocation process as established by the Equitable Funding Policy, without parallel systems in place.

4.3. Domestic budget allocation

The Ministry recognises that domestic financing of education will require large annual increases to meet the financing requirements of the Policy, beyond that of the contribution from the EXCEL project. These increases are ambitious – but they are necessary for students across Liberia to succeed.

The 2026 National Budget of USD 1.25 billion represented a 41.9 per cent increase on the 2025 National Budget (marking an increase of USD 369.0 million at the national level²¹). However, education financing has remained stagnant – Early Childhood Education received a total budget of USD 20,000 for non-salary activities, and the sub-national allocation through the Primary Education Project stood at USD 593,785 across all 15 counties combined.

The Policy serves as an advocacy tool to support domestic resource mobilisation, establishing the financing required per annum for engagement with the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning.

²¹ Of the total increase, USD 200 million of the increase was due to a one-off payment from ArcelorMittal Liberia.

The Policy sets out a schedule of incremental budget increases for the Base Amount, although the Ministry of Education policymakers will seek to secure higher budget allocations to meet the medium-term financing goals more rapidly, should the fiscal landscape allow. The annual review of the Policy and its implementation provides an opportunity for the Ministry to assess its positioning, and make adjustments to the Policy as required.

Table 13 explores testing scenarios which focus on increases in non-salary Primary/ECE financing, as funding for salaries is likely to remain stable until the Teacher Workforce Strategy 2023 – 2032 has been fully implemented, and other major categories of expenditure such as the Public Sector Investment Plans (PSIPs) are not recurrent in nature. Scaling up of 5 per cent, 10 per cent and 15 per cent of the ECE and primary-related financing has been explored.

Table 13: Domestic financing scenarios, focusing on primary and ECE (USD '000s)²²

Costings	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Ministry of Education (MFDP projection)	53,868	49,013	50,391	N/A ²³
Non-salary (MFDP projection)	15,909	9,915	9,729	N/A
Of which, primary/ECE-related ²⁴ (MFDP Projection)	2,203	1,755	1,805	N/A
Primary/ECE (5% increase scenario)	2,203	2,313	2,429	2,550
Primary/ECE (10% increase scenario)	2,203	2,423	2,665	2,932
Primary/ECE (15% increase scenario)	2,203	2,533	2,913	3,350

These calculations highlight a major gap – one that cannot be resolved through linear budget increases, whether at 5, 10 or 15 per cent year on year, because of the low base from which the education system currently starts. EXCEL financing provides a path to transition although practically, the Policy can only be realised through a substantial step-change in financing within a single year, rather than gradual annual growth from the current baseline.

Table 14: Financing requirements and gaps, minus EXCEL financing (USD '000s)

Financing gaps	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Total Financing Needs Minus EXCEL	843	2,522	6,125	12,856
Gap: Primary/ECE (MFDP Projection)	0	767	4,320	N/A
Gap: Primary/ECE (5% increase scenario)	0	209	3,696	10,306
Gap: Primary/ECE (10% increase scenario)	0	99	3,460	9,924
Gap: Primary/ECE (15% increase scenario)	0	0	3,212	9,506

4.4. Domestic advocacy and resource mobilisation strategy

The Equitable Funding Policy framework will be a key tool in the Ministry's ongoing advocacy to increase the proportion of national budget expenditure allocated to support education, in alignment with student need. In the same way as the Policy itself, discussions surrounding budget allocations must start from a baseline of need, rather than from the status-quo levels of financing. It is apparent that historical allocations have been insufficient to deliver a quality education for Liberian students, particularly at the

²² It should be noted that budget years operate on the timeline of a calendar year (January through December), whilst the academic year operates on a separate timeline (September through June).

²³ Budgets for 2029/30 onwards are not yet available from the National Budget 2026.

²⁴ From the Approved FY 2026 National Budget, the budget lines utilised are: 30107 – Primary Education Project and 30117 – Early Childhood Education and Basic and Secondary Education.

primary and ECE levels: especially for girls, students with disabilities, students in remote communities and students from low-income households.

Given the historical, current and forecasted fiscal position of education funding as highlighted in Table 15, the approach to financing must go beyond the Equitable Funding Policy to address broader sectoral declines in funding. The Ministry of Education will therefore strengthen its overall strategy for budget proposals with the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, advocating for increased financing for Liberia's education sector – specifically targeting the schools under the remit of the Ministry of Education.

Table 15: Ministry of Education and national budgets (USD '000s), MFDP actual/projections²⁵

Budget	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
National budget	730,986	880,662	1,249,665	1,023,022	1,022,779
Education sector	106,295	119,722	136,326	114,675	117,722
<i>% of National budget</i>	<i>14.5%</i>	<i>13.6%</i>	<i>10.9%</i>	<i>11.2%</i>	<i>11.5%</i>
Ministry of Education	43,830	53,183	53,868	49,013	50,391
<i>% of National budget</i>	<i>6.0%</i>	<i>6.0%</i>	<i>4.3%</i>	<i>4.8%</i>	<i>4.9%</i>

In monetary terms, funding to the education sector and the Ministry of Education peak in 2026/27, although as a proportion of the National Budget, they have seen significant declines. This is increasingly a concern, particularly with forecasted declines in the budget allocation for the Ministry of Education in 2027/28, and an allocation in 2028/29 that is below the 2026/27 levels (in nominal, and very likely real terms).

The Ministry commits to continue to advocate for education among MFDP and other external stakeholders, with the aim to secure a collective agreement across the Republic of Liberia and stakeholders that education financing needs to increase, before specific targets are discussed. The Equitable Funding Policy is one of a number of tools which will support the Ministry in its advocacy for education financing.

4.5. Development partner contributions

Following the introduction of the Policy, existing and new development partners in the Local Education Group and beyond will be encouraged to consider financing through this single mechanism.

The Policy aims to strengthen coordination from a budgeting perspective, including the streamlining of other activities such as monitoring and evaluation, where a single set of financial expenditures can be assessed. Furthermore, utilising a single policy to determine the allocation of school funding will allow development partners to align more closely with the strategic direction of the Republic of Liberia and support schools in improved planning.

4.6. Pathway to sustainable financing

The Policy has been developed with sustainability in mind – with implementation occurring in three incremental phases.

1. **Phase 1, between 2026/27 – 2027/28:** EXCEL financing acts as the anchor to ensure there is sufficient financing to initiate implementation of the Policy.

²⁵ Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, Republic of Liberia. (2026). *National Budget 2026*.

2. **Phase 2, between 2028/29 – 2029/30:** domestic financing begins to take over the majority of financing, with EXCEL and other development partner financing helping to smooth out the transition.
3. **Phase 3, after 2029/30:** the Ministry of Education and development partners adopt the responsibility for the financing of the Policy, without further contributions from the EXCEL project.

Continued engagement of the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning remains critical for the Policy, as well as the broader operations of the Ministry of Education. A key priority for the Ministry of Education and development partners is to demonstrate the impact of increased funding and how better-resourced schools are performing. Evidence from monitoring and evaluation will support increasing budget proposals, creating a self-reinforcing cycle.

In any given year, where financing requirements have not been met, the per-student allocation will be provided with pro-rata reductions to ensure that the Base Amount and the Equity Top-Ups retain their respective weighting. As part of the Joint Education Sector Review annually, targets will be reviewed based on the progress in previous years to ensure the Policy remains relevant and reflective of the financing landscape.

5. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

Equitable Funding Policy and the EXCEL School Grant Manual

To ensure alignment and ease of understanding at the school level, the Equitable Funding Policy is operationalised through the Ministry's EXCEL School Grant Manual. The responsibilities for implementation are as follows:

- **The Equitable Funding Policy sets the direction:** the Policy has responsibility for the establishment and updating of the funding formula, and the selection of equity considerations to ensure school-level needs are addressed.
- **The EXCEL School Grant Manual governs operational activities:** the manual sets out how the grants, described by the Policy, are delivered at the school level. Topics include the establishment of a School Management Committee (SMC) to oversee funds, and the development of a School Improvement Plan (SIP) to ensure activities support the school's short- and medium-term strategic objectives.
- **The EXCEL School Grant Manual establishes steps to manage fiduciary risk and address misconduct:** the increases in financing at the school level mark significant opportunities for students. Proportionally, steps towards managing risk, and correctional measures for misuse are also introduced by the manual to guarantee that every dollar of the valuable funding will be mobilised to support the Liberian children.

A summary of implementation guidelines is provided in Section 5; for detailed guidance, please refer to the EXCEL School Grant Manual.

5.1. Institutional framework

The Policy is to be implemented across the four levels of the education system – school, district, county and national. Responsibility for the successful implementation of the Policy relies on the coordination and execution of all stakeholders. This is the process set out by the EXCEL School Grant Manual.

The foundation of the Policy's implementation process is based upon previous grant programmes, which all levels of the governance structure are familiar with – primarily, the Getting to Best in Education (G2B) project and the Improving Results in Secondary Education (IRISE) project.^{26 27} The implementation is based on the principles of a shared administrative structure, decentralised management of funds, and school and community-led planning processes to drive implementation.

5.2. School and community levels

A School Management Committee (SMC) is to be established for managing and providing direction over the expenditures at the school level on a day-to-day basis. This includes the production of a School Improvement Plan (SIP), explicitly identifying how funds received will support the advancement of equitable financing for inclusive education.

The SMC is comprised of the following seven members:

1. School Principal (Fiduciary Co-Signatory)
2. PTA Chairperson (Primary Fiduciary Signatory)
3. Primary Teacher Representative (SMC Document Secretary)
4. Community Elder / Town Chief
5. Women's Group Leader
6. Inclusion / Disability Advocate
7. School Guidance Counsellor / Safeguarding Focal Point

The broad range of members' backgrounds is a requirement to ensure that the allocated grant is utilised effectively, including the consideration of equity factors. The breadth of members of the SMC also serves a key purpose of increasing accountability beyond the school itself, and a way of increasing engagement with parts of the community which otherwise may have been underrepresented in their views.

5.3. County and district levels

County Education Officers (CEOs) and District Education Officers (DEOs) are responsible for the administration and monitoring of the grants allocated through the Policy, at the sub-national level. Schools manage the day-to-day operations, although the rules regarding the distributions are overseen by the district- and county-level officials, supported by the Ministry.

The District Education Officer will provide direct supervision of funds at the school level across all schools in their respective area. Responsibilities include the review and verification of individual School Improvement Plans, conducting audits to ensure expenditures are aligned to the SIPs. DEOs must document and report to the CEO any instances of misuse. Lastly, DEOs are the entry point for localised complaints, acting as an external member of the school whom communities can engage.

²⁶ Ministry of Education, Republic of Liberia. (2019). *Liberia – Getting to Best in Education Project: ECE School Grant Guidelines for Schools*.

²⁷ Ministry of Education, Republic of Liberia. (2021). *The IRISE School Improvement Grant Manual*.

The County Education Officers are responsible for the production of a semi-annual and localised market pricing index, as a reference point to standardise budgeting across schools. CEOs also provide formal sign-offs to clear schools for fund release subject to an approved School Improvement Plan and produce a grant execution report that reviews the progress of their respective county for review at the national level.

5.4. National level

At the national level, the Policy is owned and updated by the Ministry of Education. The Senior Management Team will provide strategic oversight, ensuring that equity considerations are accurately captured by the Policy and reflect the Liberian context. Updating of the Policy will be conducted by the Equitable Funding Policy Technical Working Group (TWG), which will meet on a regular basis following initial implementation.

Engagement and advocacy will be scheduled and conducted by the Ministry of Education with the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, with frequent reporting of achievements of the Policy. This is to ensure that the impact of financing provided to schools, and the tangible improvements experienced by schools can inform future allocations.

Furthermore, the Local Education Group will continue to be engaged by the TWG on the Policy, to provide updates on grant implementation, as well as to highlight opportunities for co-funding of the grant.

Lastly, the national level through the TWG has responsibility for leading the review of the Policy, to be conducted at the Joint Education Sector Review (JESR) annually, with changes made published on the Ministry of Education's website for all schools and citizens to access.

5.5. School eligibility

In alignment with the EXCEL School Grant Manual, to be eligible for the grant, a school must meet the following criteria:

1. The school must be registered as a public primary or community ECE institution, with a valid Education Management Information System (EMIS) code.
2. The school must have a full and active seven member School Management Committee as per Section 5.2.
3. At least three core members of the SMC – including the Principal and the PTA Chairperson – must have completed training identified by the EXCEL School Grant Manual.
4. The school must have a School Improvement Plan, that is approved by the DEO and CEO.
5. The school must have an active and verified commercial bank account.

If a school does not meet the above criteria, it cannot receive financing through the Equitable Funding Policy. Further guidance is available within the EXCEL School Grant Manual.

5.6. Risk management

The Policy introduces large sums of funds to schools directly, and alongside such a change, there needs to be proportionate management of risk. The EXCEL School Grant Manual sets out a series of Financial Management Guidelines, alongside a set of Environmental, Social and Safeguarding Standards to manage operational risks.

The financing is provided with a zero-tolerance approach towards financial misconduct – with referrals made to the Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission (LACC) for criminal prosecution if funds are misused.

At a policy level, the TWG is responsible for ensuring that risks are catalogued and frequently updated in a risk register. The register should consider risk as well as mitigation strategies, giving consideration to feasibility and practicality:

1. **Financing risks:** insufficient domestic financing or external macroeconomic shocks: to be supported by consistent advocacy efforts and adjustments of the formula at the annual JESR as required.
2. **Fiduciary risks:** financing is misappropriated and is not spent on its intended purpose. Grievances are to be managed through the processes set out by the EXCEL School Grant Manual, which provides redress mechanisms at the community, district and national levels depending upon severity.
3. **Implementation risks:** the budget is not distributed to schools in a timely manner, or monitoring cannot be conducted successfully; the Ministry is to create a work plan that considers the timing implications of feedback from schools back to the national level. The distribution of the allocation by two tranches ensures schools receive a larger proportion of funding up front, providing coverage until the mid-year review.
4. **Capacity risks:** DEOs and CEOs are expected to take on additional administrative work from oversight of the Policy, with a risk of backlogs. Whilst the work should be complementary to a school's planning processes, the recruitment of further DEOs may be explored, as required.
5. **Data risks:** the Annual School Census does not accurately represent enrolment or school condition as a proxy for remoteness: to the extent possible, verification and monitoring will occur at the school level by District Education Officers to verify enrolment and that the appropriate financing is being provided. Spot-checks on enrolment or children with reported equity needs (for example, disabilities) can be conducted by the Ministry at any point during the year, to avoid purposeful over-reporting.

6. MONITORING, EVALUATION AND REVIEW

6.1. Monitoring and evaluation framework

Monitoring and evaluation are central to the success of the Policy, addressing four main considerations:

1. Ensuring alignment with policy intentions, with funds used as intended per the SIPs;
2. Systematically assessing the results of the financing, ranging from tangible improvements in the school environment to learning outcomes by the Ministry;
3. Assessing cost-effectiveness of funds, with inter-county comparisons to be conducted;
4. Consulting communities to understand the broader impact of the financing allocated to schools and any spillover effects for the local area (such as improved economic activity).

The intention of monitoring and evaluation is to verify whether the intended results have been achieved and if not, how adjustments can be made to improve outcomes with the valuable resources allocated to it. Detailed steps for monitoring and evaluation are set out in the EXCEL School Grant Manual.

Indicators for monitoring and evaluation are identified at three levels – current progress, outputs and realised outcomes:

1. **Progress measures** will assess whether the implementation and operations of the grants have been effective, for example, whether the allocation of funds has been made in a timely manner.

2. **Outputs** will assess what has been purchased with the money, and whether there has been compliance with the Policy's direction and ringfencing of equity funds.
3. **Outcomes** will assess whether there have been tangible improvements for students nationally and children facing equity challenges – for example, whether the drop-out rates for girls have reduced by the end of primary education.

The financing allocated through the grant to schools aims to support a wide range of activities, and as such, the impact at the school level is expected to be broad. Table 16 presents a general list of indicators assessed at the school level, at the process, output and outcome levels. The general targets set out below are ambitious, yet still leave space for improvement – this is to acknowledge that whilst financing has a large role in the improvement of the education system, other non-monetary factors play an equally important part – such as the quality of teachers and the engagement of the households and the broader community.

Beyond the indicators in Table 16, further monitoring will be conducted within each individual school, as the usage of funds will vary depending on the needs, objectives, priorities and the existing conditions of the school, which will be determined by its School Management Committee through its SIP.

Table 16: Monitoring and evaluation indicators

Level	Indicator	Baseline	Target 2029/30
Progress	Proportion of eligible schools receiving funds from the Equitable Funding Policy	n/a	>85%
Progress	Number of eligible schools operating with a School Improvement Plan (SIP)	n/a	>85%
Output	Baseline non-salary financing per primary student per annum (ESP 2022/23 – 2026/27)	6	>USD 60
Output	Baseline non-salary financing per ECE student per annum (ESP 2022/23 – 2026/27)	0.50	>USD 15
Output	Equity Top-Up funds used as planned in SIPs	n/a	>85%
Output	Primary student to textbook ratio (StexR) (Annual School Census 2024/25)	12:1	Improvement towards 1:1
Outcome (Base Amount)	Improved retention at the lower primary level (ESP 2022/23 – 2026/27)	74% (2019/20)	>85%
Outcome (Gender)	Enrolment reaching gender parity in primary (Annual School Census 2024/25)	47.0%	50%
Outcome (Gender)	Enrolment reaching gender parity in ECE (Annual School Census 2024/25)	47.5%	50%
Outcome (Disability)	% Primary children with special needs enrolled (Annual School Census 2024/25)	2.4%	Increase by 10%
Outcome (Disability)	% ECE children with special needs enrolled (Annual School Census 2024/25)	2.7%	Increase by 10%
Outcome (Remoteness)	Proportion of rural children aged 6-12 who have never attended school (National Population and Housing Census 2022)	40.0%	Decrease
Outcome (Poverty)	Household share of total spending per student in primary (ESP 2022/23 – 2026/27)	USD 37	Decrease
Outcome (Poverty)	Household share of total spending per student in ECE (ESP 2022/23 – 2026/27)	USD 23	Decrease
Outcome (Education financing)	% of national expenditure allocated to education and training (National Budget 2026)	10.9%	Increase towards 20.0%

6.2. Equity protection and verification

The purpose of the Policy is to enhance resources available at the school level, but in particular for those facing additional disadvantages. The Equity Top-Up component of the formula is intended to distribute financing to those most in need, so barriers for enrolment and remaining in school are reduced for those most vulnerable.

Implementation of the Policy must maintain the focus on equity, and ring-fence the Equity Top-Up, rather than repurposing the financing provided for other activities. Three steps are implemented to ensure this rule is followed.

1. The School Improvement Plan (SIP) should clearly highlight how the financing allocated to equity will be used, which is a prerequisite of receiving any funds.
2. The District Education Officer will be required to review and approve the School Improvement Plan, and to assess whether the measures target equity improvements.
3. Post-expenditure reviews of school spending during the monitoring and evaluation phase will determine if the usage of financing has followed the approved School Improvement Plan and is appropriate.

If at any given stage there has been misuse of funds or equity funds have been redistributed, funding to the school will be paused to assess the severity of the issue.

6.3. Policy review and amendment

An annual review of the Policy will be conducted in alignment with the Joint Education Sector Review, to assess progress, output and outcome measures.

The review will produce recommendations for the Senior Management Team regarding technical adjustments that may be required. This will also form the basis of the budget advocacy process to understand what the financing provided has achieved. During the initial implementation period, areas of improvement are expected, and the TWG is encouraged to pursue honest reviews of the policy – both its successes and challenges.

A full review of the Policy is to be conducted in alignment with the Education Sector Plan schedule or at least every four years (whichever is the sooner), such that financing requirements can be embedded into the broader sectoral strategy. This will include whether the Equitable Funding Policy's structure at the time is still fit for purpose, whether new equity considerations need to be introduced and whether the needs-based per-student adequacy standards should be updated.

ANNEX 1: NOTES ON TECHNICAL COSTING

The current reality

Financing is acknowledged as one of the main barriers to Liberia's education system, and this is particularly the case for early childhood education and primary education.

As per the Education Sector Plan 2022/23 – 2026/27, the non-salary expenditure provided by the state stood at USD 0.5 for ECE, and USD 5.7 per student, per annum. By comparison, junior secondary, senior secondary and further levels of education are much better funded (albeit still with financing gaps). In junior secondary education, just one year beyond primary education, financing increases almost ten-fold to USD 56.8 per student, per annum.

Table 17: Financing for various levels of education, ESP 2022/23 – 2026/27

Level	Salary expenditure	Non-salary expenditure	Average
Pre-primary	26.5	0.5	26.9
Primary	66.2	5.7	71.9
Junior secondary	205.3	56.8	262.1
Senior secondary	171.1	47.1	218.2
Technical and vocational	872.6	324.7	1,197.2
Higher education	201.7	789.4	991.0

In addition, the ESP identified that households contribute a significant proportion of total costs even in public schools – USD 23 per annum for ECE students, and USD 37 for primary education students. These costs create additional barriers to access and participation, exacerbating equity issues for children from the most vulnerable families.

The ideal case for financing

Given the aforementioned financing landscape, the Technical Working Group (TWG) began policy discussions with a singular aim – to ensure that all students can access quality education, regardless of their socioeconomic background or personal circumstances. Adequate financing is one of the key contributors to achieving this vision.

Through a workshop held between 13-15 April 2026, the TWG, consisting of members from the Ministry of Education, representatives from the county and district education offices, in addition to Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services (LISGIS), participated in a bottom-up costing exercise to estimate the cost of teaching a primary school student. The estimates ranged between USD 115 and USD 347 per primary student per year. It was acknowledged that even towards the high-end of the estimates, not all of a student's needs could be met. Further estimates were provided through the same collaborative approach for the equity factors included in the Equitable Funding Policy, across gender, disability, remoteness, and community poverty.

In combination with the TWG's knowledge and insights, a range of independent research was considered to support the determination of financing needs, across ECE and primary education. These research pieces included:

- 1. Liberia Education Advancement Program (LEAP):** the LEAP Program worked towards an allocation of USD 50 per primary education student, beyond salary costs which were provided by the Ministry of Education. In the initial years, the program operated at USD 304 per student

in 2017, and reached the programme’s sustainability funding target of USD 45 per student by 2024.²⁸

2. **The Early Learning Partnership (ELP):** for early childhood education, the pilot evaluation of the programme estimated a better quality ECE offering would cost USD 70 per student per annum, and one of a preferable standard would cost USD 223 per student per annum. Please note these costs are inclusive of teachers’ salaries.²⁹
3. **Getting to Best in Education (G2B):** the school grants provided through G2B allocated USD 10 per student in selected ECE institutions, to support a reduction of fees charged to parents, in addition to better resourcing of the ECE institution itself.

Considering the results from the pilots, evaluations and the TWG’s own estimates, no single figure represented what adequacy is for a student at the primary or ECE level. For many TWG members, adequacy meant the provision of different services and resources; what was agreed upon was that the current levels of financing are insufficient to support a quality education for Liberia’s children, and increases are needed.

The policy direction

Liberia currently operates in a challenging fiscal landscape – both in terms of domestic resources, as well as the resourcing available in the context of donor support. Therefore, it is with this in mind, that the TWG has attempted to balance the ideal financing to be provided to students, in conjunction with the current realities.

Through an iterative process, the TWG decided upon a medium-term goal for the Base Amount of USD 60 per primary student per annum and USD 15 per ECE student per annum – both by 2029/30. These costs are exclusive of salaries and major capital projects. These targets mark significant increases compared to current levels – a ten-fold increase for primary education financing, and a thirty-fold increase for ECE financing in the medium term. The Base Amount targets horizontal equity, ensuring that all students across Liberia have access to the same resources as a foundation for equity. Vertical equity is addressed through targeted allocations for students with further individual or location-based needs as per the Policy, although the Base Amount accounts for most of the financing given current financing levels.

In the short-term (2026/27 and 2027/28 academic years), the allocations will be primarily supported by the EXCEL programme with USD 18.5 million of financing, as the Ministry of Education strengthens advocacy efforts for increased financing.

The Policy is also intended as a long-term living document, such that adjustments can be made to reflect evolving needs across the sector. The Policy has set the first set of Base Amount and Equity Top-Up targets for primary and ECE students, although through the annual review process, the Policy may be updated according to the availability of data sources, or the identification of additional needs which have arisen.

²⁸ LGT Venture Philanthropy. (2024). *Reviewing the Liberia Education Advancement Program (LEAP): Celebrating Eight Years of Impact for Children through Public-Private Partnership*.

²⁹ Oxford Policy Management. (2021). *Assessing the Quality of Early Learning Systems in Liberia*.

ANNEX 2: ALIGNMENT TO EXISTING POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

Strategic Document	Policy or Program
ARREST Agenda for Inclusive Development 2025–2029	Pillar 6: Human capital formation Strategic Priority 19: Education Ensure access to equitable, gender-responsive, and disability-inclusive education, improved quality and relevant teaching and learning, and enhanced efficiency and management capacity of all education stakeholders.
Education Sector Plan 2022/23 - 2026/27	Component 1.1: Early childhood education Sub-component 1.1.1 Increase access to ECE through the provision of child-friendly, disability inclusive, and gender-sensitive safe learning space for learners
	Component 1.2: Access to basic education Sub-component 1.2.1 Build and upgrade education facilities that are child-, disability-, and gender-sensitive and provide safe, nonviolent, inclusive, and effective learning environment for all Sub-component 1.2.4 Reduce the cost of learning at basic education level to increase access to and retention in school, especially for girls, out-of-school children and students with disabilities.
	Component 2.4: Promoting student wellbeing programmes Sub-component 2.4.4 Strengthen community engagement to support the delivery of quality education services
	Component 3.1: Participatory sector planning for improved educational governance, management, and policy implementation Sub-component 3.1.4 Improve financial management at centralized and decentralized levels
Inclusive Education Strategy 2018	Chapter 8. Institutional Framework The [Ministries, Departments and Agencies] will make annual budgetary provisions for carrying out set of activities defined in the annual work plans. They will also ensure provision of adequate financial resources and ensure compliance of mandatory financial commitment.
National Policy on Girls' Education 2021	Chapter 8: Resource Mobilisation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Ministry of Education shall commit at least 5 percent (5%) of its Fiscal Year Budget to projects and programs promoting girls' education. • The Ministry of Education and its partners shall always ensure that the allocation of funds, including school grants, and decision-making concerning projects are gender sensitive.