



Efficient Research and Development Institute (ERDI)

ERDI SP Implementation Project Monitoring & Evaluation Report 2024

Project Name	Supporting community structures in Nimba and Lofa Counties to lead community health governance, monitoring, and decision-making. ERDI is increasing awareness within rural communities to monitor their drugs stock out and take ownership of their health facility.
Title of the Report	The overarching goal of this SP is to improve the living conditions of communities in the target counties.
Date of the Report	<i>December 25, 2024</i>
Executive Summary	<i>This report presents the findings of the monitoring and evaluation exercise conducted on Efficient Research and Development Institute's (ERDI) Strategy Plan 2024 implementation. The plan focuses on four project pillars: Education for Vulnerable Students, Health Education, Land Rights for Women and Youth, and Access to Justice and Rule of Law in Nimba and Bong counties.</i>
Introduction and Background	<i>ERDI's Strategy Plan 2024 aims to promote sustainable development and improve the well-being of communities in Nimba and Bong counties. This report assesses the progress made in implementing the four project pillars.</i> <i>This Strategic Plan (SP) provides a roadmap and direction that the Efficient Research Development Institute (ERDI) intends to head for the next five years (2023-2027) in responding to the needs of communities in the selected target counties as well as developing the ERDI's institutional capacity. The implementation of this SP for the five-year period is estimated to be \$US1,394,000 and an annual projected expenditure to be between US\$ 250,000 and US\$300,000.00. The SP is composed of five distinct yet interrelated pillars. The SP has an overarching strategic goal and strategic objectives per pillar. These strategic objectives are supported by broad actions and an articulated strategy to achieve them, expected results, and an operational plan for</i>

implementation. The contents of the SP represent the collective views of staff of ERDI, management and the Board of Directors.

Since its establishment in 2012 as a research and development NGO, ERDI's interventions have been guided by a five-year Strategic Plan (2018-2022) with articulated vision and mission statements. The SP contained five thematic areas:

- *Strengthening Research for participatory and sustainable development.*
- *Alleviation of poverty.*
- *Curbing the barriers of human rights and social justice.*
- *Rebuilding basic agricultural services; and*
- *Strengthening good health and wellbeing.*

With the expiration of the SP, the institution made a strategic decision to review the document so that it is strategically situated to be responsive to the needs of communities. In developing this SP, ERDI used a broad-based external and internal consultative approach. As a first step, the Board of Directors endorsed the decision of the management team to revise the SP. To solicit the views of communities on issues that affect them and their relationship with ERDI, the Country Coordinator of All We Can, conducted an assessment in communities where ERDI worked.

Unlike the previous SP that was developed by a few people within the organization due to the lack of resources, the formulation of this SP was done in a participatory manner involving the Board, management team, field staff members, and partners from other CSOs. This engendered collective ownership of the final product. As part of the participatory process, a five-day working session was held in Ganta, Nimba County from January 31-February 4, 2023. This process was followed by the conduct of an Organizational Capacity Assessment (OCA) workshop from February 6-9, 2023, in the same location. This SP document is the outcome of these combined efforts and processes.

The SP contains a contextual analysis developed from the application of the problem tree analysis and the Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Environmental and Legal (PESTEL) tool. This was further supported by the conduct of a SWOT Analysis to understand the organizational dynamics. These analyses set the pace for a revision of the organization's vision and mission statements and core values. Informed by the outcome of these processes, a programmatic framework was developed which included identification of themes and the formulation of a goal, strategic objectives per theme, expected results and indicators. This SP contains five themes including Education, Health Education, Land Rights, Rule of Law and Agriculture. These themes are slightly different from the ones highlighted in the previous one that included health and education, agriculture and environmental protection, land rights and gender-

based protection, rule of law, peacebuilding and governance, and water sanitation hygiene and livelihood. The SP also contains an overall strategic approach that outlines how the program will be implemented, a monitoring plan as well as an operational plan with a corresponding budget that outlines the cost for implementation.

Project Background: Liberia has announced the provisional results of its 2022 National Population and Housing Census. According to the report, the population stands at 5.2 million (5,248,621). The total population increased by 1,772,013 (50 percent) when compared to the 2008 census. Overall, the male population makes up 50.4 percent (2,644,450) of the people, and the female population accounts for 49.6 (2,604,171), given a national sex ratio of 101.5 males for every 100 females.”

The country has a youthful population with 65% of citizens under the age of 35 years. According to the UNDP Human Development Index Report of 2021/2022, Liberia remains in the low human development category, and is ranked 178 out of 191 countries, one-point improvement over the previous rank in 2020. This ranking implies rising poverty and the existence of forms of social and economic inequalities which polarize society and contributes to fragility. Furthermore, a *World Bank 2021 news feature estimates that in 2020 more than half of the Liberian households have fallen into extreme poverty (compared to 38.6 % in 2014), while two out of three households are found to be food insecure (World Bank 2021). Most of Liberia’s citizens remain highly vulnerable and are affected by widespread poverty. Rural communities experience 71.8% poverty as compared to 31.5% in urban areas.*

In 2021, unemployment rate for Liberia was 4.1 % and it increased from 2.1 % in 2002 to 4.1 % in 2021 growing at an average annual rate of 4.11%. Based on a collection of development indicators, the World Bank reported that employment to population ratio, 15+, total % in Liberia was reported at 73.46% in 2021. The World Bank further reported that the % of female labor force in Liberia was 2.991% in 2021.

Agriculture, including forestry, is the primary livelihood for more than 60 percent of Liberia’s population and accounted for 31 percent of Liberia’s 2021 real Gross Domestic Product (GDP). It provides income for many households engaging in cassava, rubber, rice, oil palm, cocoa, or sugarcane production. Cassava and rice are the primary staple food crops. More households engage in cassava production than any other food crop. At the same time, there are barriers and constraints that hinder access to livelihood opportunities in the formal sector. Some of the barriers include lack of technical skills particularly among the youthful population, limited private sector investment, limited access

to energy, poor road infrastructure (roads) in rural areas and limited income generating opportunities.

The majority of Liberians work in the informal economy and women still comprise most of these laborers. Seventy-four percent of all female workers in Liberia are informal laborers, and 41 percent of university-educated women work informally, compared to 24 percent of university-educated men. The most significant challenges faced by female informal workers, such as market sellers and street vendors, include a lack of access to credit and banking services, limited financial literacy and business training, few social protections or childcare options, harassment from citizens and local authorities, and poor sanitation within marketplaces.

Despite a strong legal and policy framework, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) remains a major issue facing the country. The 2022 US State Department Human Rights Report on Liberia quotes a report from the Independent National Commission on Human Rights (INCHR) that perpetrators of rape enjoyed widespread impunity, in part because bureaucratic obstacles restricted the number of cases that could be heard in each judicial term, as well as institutional weaknesses of government agencies tasked with combating sexual violence. An inefficient justice system prevented timely prosecutions, and delays caused many survivors to cease cooperating with prosecutors. Authorities often dropped cases due to a lack of evidence. Survivors' families sometimes requested money from perpetrators as a form of redress; perpetrators sometimes offered money to prevent matters from going to court.

One of the main factors that contribute to GBV is that it is often seen as a private or family matter. The true number of rape cases in Liberia is not available because quite often cases are not reported and are compromised. According to the Sexual Gender Based Crimes Unit (SGBCU) of the Ministry of Justice (MOJ), total new cases from January to June 2020 indicated: 107 cases tried in court, leading to 44 convictions and 42 acquittals. This includes all cases received from the Liberian National Police (LNP) and have or being adjudicated by the SGBVCU at the MOJ. The Data covered Montserrado, Bong, Nimba, Lofa, Maryland, Grand Gedeh, River Gee and Grand Kru.

Domestic violence is outlawed but the practice is widespread. According to the 2019-2020 Liberia Demographic and Health Survey, 60% of women age 15-49 have experienced physical violence and 9% have experienced sexual violence. Less than half (42%) of women who have experienced physical or sexual violence have ever sought help. The maximum penalty for conviction of domestic violence is six months' imprisonment. According to the US State Department Human Rights Report, the government did not enforce the law effectively and that civil

society observers suggested that lack of speedy trials led some survivors to seek redress outside the formal justice system.

Liberia has not law that prohibits the practice of Female Genital Mutilation/Circumcision (FGM/C) and there is little political will within the legislature to address the issue. According to the 2019-20 LDHS, the most recent data available, 38 percent of girls and women between ages 15 and 49 had undergone FGM/C, with a higher prevalence in the northern regions of the country.

In the meantime, Liberians will go to the polls in October 2023 to elect their president, senators and members of the House of Representatives. This will be the country's fourth consecutive multi-party elections since the end of the civil war in 2003. The conduct of these elections will create the opportunity for the country to consolidate its peace and democratic efforts. The consolidation of peace and democracy will depend largely on the quality of the elections and how the political contenders and state institutions will respond to the outcome.

Elections, however, do not guarantee democracy, good governance and inclusive development that reduces poverty and inequalities which are drivers of societal conflicts. The expected years of schooling in 2021 were 10.4 years up from 9.6 years in 2019. Liberia's Gross National Income (GNI) per capita increased by about 2.5%. Life expectancy, however, dropped by 3.4 years from 64.1 years in 2019 to 60.7 years in 2021. Food insecurity and poverty are inherently linked to life expectancy. 49% of Liberians are considered food insecure with approximately 83% living below the poverty line on less than US\$1.25/day.

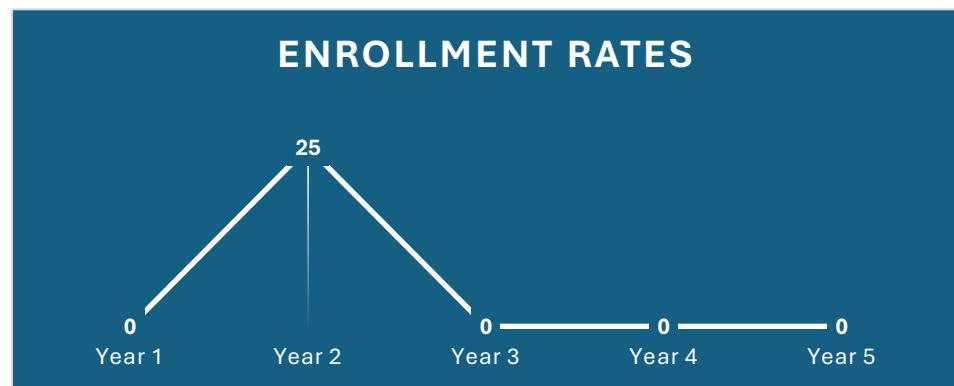
The Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD) 2018–2023 is the second of a series of national development plans under the Liberia 2030 vision framework. Pillar 1 of the PAPD - Power to the People - involves provision of education, health, youth development, and social protection, with the planned education-related outcome of achieving more inclusive and higher quality education. Access to inclusive and quality education remains a challenge due to inadequate infrastructure, low incentives and salaries for teachers, inadequate provision of teaching and learning materials, and limited qualified and skilled teachers. These problems are compounded by limited budgetary allocation which undermines the quality of monitoring and supervision which is more widespread in the counties.

According to the PAPD, the government aims to have equitable safe, affordable and sustainable water and sanitation services for all Liberians. The WASH national policy aims to increase to 85% the access to equitable, safe, affordable and sustainable water supply for the population of rural communities and small towns in Liberia. The policy also seeks to eliminate open defecation nationwide

	<p><i>and provide a minimum standard WASH package to 100% of the population, particularly targeting communities, schools and health centers.</i></p> <p><i>Meanwhile, the country's economy slowed in the first half of 2022, even when mining and construction continued to perform well. In agriculture, rubber and cocoa production dropped by 13.5 percent and 27 percent, respectively. In the industrial sector, iron ore, gold, and cement production all increased, reflecting firmer international prices and an uptick in construction activity. The World Bank indicated that in 2020, the human capital gap in Liberia was mainly driven by poor education (contributing 50 percent), poor health (12 percent), and survival (7 percent). The underlying factors contributing to the country's low human capital outcomes are multiple and complex. They include weak institutions, ineffective service delivery, demographic pressures, and low and inefficient social spending. In addition, poor coordination among government agencies responsible for human capital development often results in unresponsive or suboptimal service delivery.</i></p> <p><i>Under the rule of law sector, access to justice remains a challenge due to multiple factors including low incentives for judges and court officials, long processes for the adjudication of cases and cost. Other factors include limited presence of public defenders in the counties to provide legal to individuals accused of committing crimes. This contributes to prolonged detention and violation of the rights to fair and speedy trials.</i></p>
Methodology	<p><i>Location, survey instrument and data collection:</i></p> <p><i>The M&E exercise employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis methods.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>1. Surveys: Conducted with key project stakeholders, and community members.</i> <i>2. Interviews: Held with program staff, HFDC members, vulnerable students, justice chain actors, survivors, key project stakeholders, and healthcare providers.</i> <i>3. Focus Group Discussions: Conducted with community members, community health structures, community members, local leaders.</i> <p><i>The information contained in the report was analyzed using coding of responses from the various community members difference sectors.</i></p>

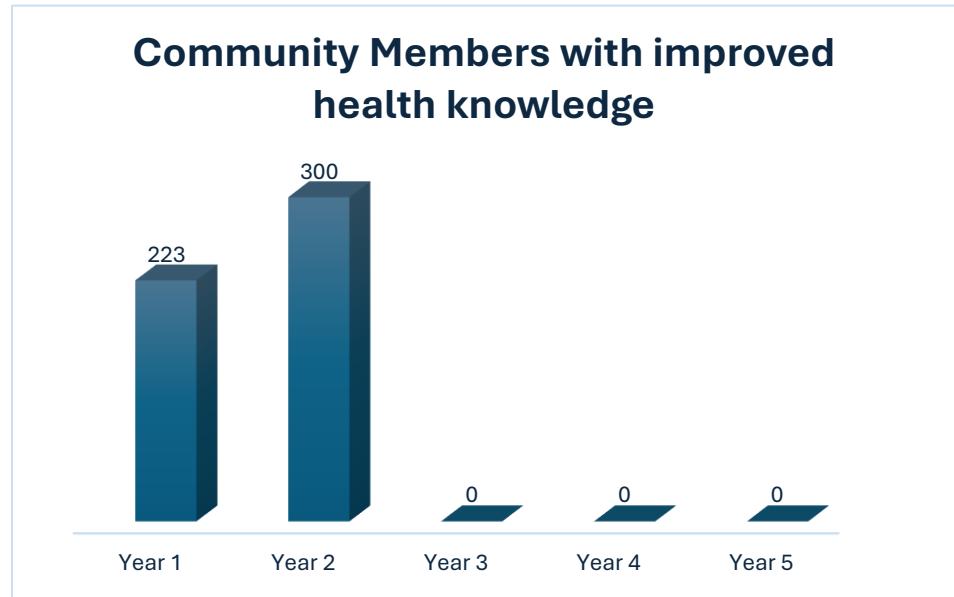
Findings	<p><i>The M&E exercise revealed the following key findings:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>1. Education for Vulnerable Students</i> <p><i>-Increased Access to Education: The program has increased access to education for vulnerable students, with a significant increase in enrollment rates.</i></p> <p><i>- Improved Learning Outcomes: The program has improved learning outcomes, with students demonstrating better academic performance.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>2. Health Education</i> <p><i>- Improved Health Knowledge: The program has improved health knowledge among community members, with a significant increase in awareness about health issues.</i></p> <p><i>- Behavior Change: The program has promoted behavior change, with community members adopting healthier practices.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>3. Land Rights for Women and Youth</i> <p><i>- Increased Awareness: The program has increased awareness about land rights among women and youth, with a significant increase in knowledge about land ownership and control.</i></p> <p><i>- Improved Land Ownership: The program has improved land ownership and control among women and youth, with a significant increase in land ownership rates.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>4. Access to Justice and Rule of Law</i> <p><i>- Improved Access to Justice: The program has improved access to justice for community members, with a significant increase in the number of cases resolved.</i></p> <p><i>- Increased Awareness about Rule of Law: The program has increased awareness about the rule of law, with community members demonstrating better understanding of their rights and responsibilities.</i></p>
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Graph 1: Enrollment Rates



This graph shows the increase in enrollment rates among vulnerable students.

Graph 2: Health Knowledge



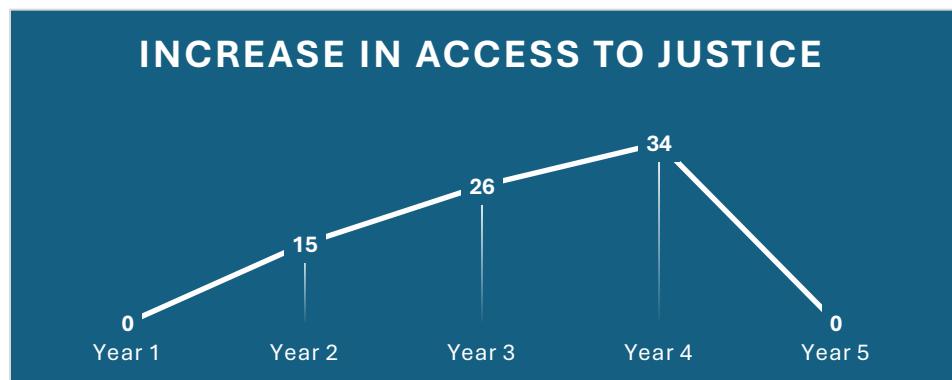
This graph shows the improvement in health knowledge among community members.

Graph 3: Land Ownership Rates



The graph shows the increase in land ownership rates among women and youth.

Graph 4: Access to Justice



This graph shows the increase in access to justice for community members.

Lessons Learned

Lessons Learned:

Challenges and Lessons Learned

Despite the progress made, the program faced several challenges, including:

1. Limited Resources: Insufficient funding and resources constrained program implementation.

2. Cultural Barriers: Deep-seated cultural norms and practices hindered program implementation.

Conclusion	<p><i>Conclusion</i></p> <p><i>ERDI's Strategy Plan 2024 implementation has made significant progress in promoting sustainable development and improving the well-being of communities in Nimba and Bong counties. With continued support and efforts to address challenges, the program can make a lasting impact on the lives of community members.</i></p>
Recommendations	<p><i>Recommendations</i></p> <p><i>Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>1. Scale Up Program: Expand the program to reach more communities and populations.</i> <i>2. Capacity Building: Provide additional training and support to program staff and community members.</i> <i>3. Partnerships: Strengthen partnerships with local organizations and government agencies to ensure sustainability.</i>
Annexes	<p>Photos Gallery:</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;">   </div> <p>Figure 1: During tuition payment and school materials distribution to selected vulnerable students by Mr. Gary K. Dolosie, ERDI Finance Manager.</p>



Figure 2: Pictorial view of participants after Focus Group Discussion at Duo-Tiayee Clinic



Figure 3: Pictorial view of group photos in Zorzor City, Lofa County during HFDC members training.



Figure 4: Pictorial view of physical medicines counts at Flumpa Clinic in Saclepea-Mahn Health District



Figure 5: Photographs of Network of Women CSOs conducting awareness in the communities in Sanniquellie City and Tappita City, respectively in October 2024.



Figure 6: Pictorial view of joint Monitoring and Evaluation of Women and Youth Land Rights Project in Cavalla and Tchien Districts in Grand Gedeh County.

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