



SUCCESS STORY

First Post-War Teachers Graduate

A new approach to teaching and to training teachers revives Liberia's education system



Photo: LITP/AED

New teachers beam with pride on Graduation Day in June 2009 at Kakata Rural Teaching Trainer Institute.

“The aim is to move away from the old ways of teaching. Hopefully more effort can go into recruiting women,” said Stanley Feika, Kakata Rural Teacher Training Institute Class of 2009, student president.

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While assessing the status of teacher training in Liberia, USAID found three badly war-damaged Rural Teacher Training Institutes in Kakata, Zorzor, and Webbo. None were fully operational and the number of staff was virtually non-existent. None had functioned as operational institutions delivering “C” certificates for elementary school teacher training for almost two decades.

In 2007, USAID infrastructure renovation activities began at the three campuses. USAID also worked with the Ministry of Education to develop a set of professional standards for the Liberian teacher and to guide curriculum development in teacher education. By mid-2008, USAID and the Liberian Ministry of Education had developed a national certificate curriculum for primary teachers that would serve both pre- and in-service teachers.

Recruitment and training of staff and students for the 2008-2009 academic year residential programs began. Sixteen of the more than 400 candidates were found in a refugee camp in Ghana. All faculty received up to eight intensive weeks of training in the new curriculum.

In July 2009, the Rural Teacher Training Institutes graduated the first post-war elementary level teacher trainees. Four hundred and forty nine trainees earned the “C” Certificate in the presence of the country's President, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf.

New cohorts of trainees have been recruited for the 2009-2010 year: 548 trainees have initiated pre-service training, and 632 teachers have begun in-service training.

Teaching in Liberia is a predominantly male-dominated profession. Family care, income-earning obligations, and traditional cultural constraints have limited women's involvement in teaching. A gender-focused orientation of county and district-based education officers who do trainee recruitment for the teacher trainings, as well as links with local women's organizations have helped increased women's participation, albeit slowly. Female teacher trainees rose from 8% in the first year to 15% in the 2009-10 academic year.

Kakata Rural Teacher Training Institute's 2009 class president Stanley Feika said he hopes more female teachers can be trained in Liberia. “The aim is to move away from the old ways of teaching. Hopefully more effort also can go into recruiting women,” he said.