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STRUGGLING FOR QUALITY IN EDUCATION IN WAR-RIDDEN LIBERIA

A Review of the Educational Activities of
the Salvation Army in Liberia

Øystein Lund Johannessen

SIK-rapport 2006 :2



Senter for interkulturell kommunikasjon
Centre for Intercultural Communication
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ISBN: 82-7721-101-5	Title: Struggling for Quality in Education in War-Ridden Liberia: A Review of the Educational Activities of the Salvation Army in Liberia.
ISSN: 1500-1474	Authors : Øystein Lund Johannessen
Project number: 284108	Editor: Centre for Intercultural Communication
Completion date: 19.05.2006	Publisher: Misjonshøgskolens forlag

Abstract:

The aim of the evaluation was to describe the present situation at two Norad financed schools; the William Booth and the New Len Millar, both combined elementary/high schools, as well as the latest developments in the project of building a teachers training college (TTC) in Monrovia. All three projects are run by the Salvation Army in Liberia (SA/L). Further the evaluation aimed at assessing the effects and impacts of the two school projects and the teacher training project. Finally, the aim was to recommend further actions and changes in the project in order to strengthen the positive effects of the projects on the target group and on education in general, both regionally and nationally.

The activity at the two schools in question was “impressively normal” in an economic, political and infra-structural situation which has been far from normal during the last few years. The schools run by SA/L and other private school owners/operators, contribute to maintaining a minimum level of education in a country where public education in more or less non-existent. However there are several great challenges confronting SA/L as well as other actors and stakeholders in the educational sector in offering good, affordable education and still be able to pay a decent salary to skilled teachers. In the present situation, the two schools have virtually no pedagogical aids or equipment to actualise the content, except for the blackboard, and there is almost a complete lack of textbooks both for the teachers, the pupils and in school libraries. What the SA/L schools can count on, is very dedicated and well qualified teachers. However, the danger is real that even this resource can be gradually lost if the school sector in a near future fails to improve teacher salaries to a level where they can feed a family.

Due to the difficult situation in the country, the building of the teacher’s training college has been delayed, but in October 2005 it was still scheduled to be completed in 2006. However, the marked situation for teacher training colleges has been radically altered the last few years. Despite a great need for qualified teachers around the country, there has been a severe decrease in applicants to existing TTC’s the last few years, probably due to low income prospects. The advise is therefore that NORAD and SA look into alternative ways of supporting the education sector in the country and an alternative use of the TTC building that is under construction.

Since the evaluation was completed, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf won the elections. In her presidential program, she has emphasized the importance of education for all as a means of getting Liberia up and going again. Hopefully, this means a substantial increase in the budget for education in the nearest future. EU and the World Bank have signalled that they may be willing to contribute heavily, in the event of political and social stability in the country. This may lead to new opportunities and challenges for the Salvation Army as a respected and important actor in the educational sector.

Key words: teacher training, elementary school, high school, education policies, quality in education, West Africa, Liberia, Salvation Army

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Key words :

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List of Abbreviations

ALP	Accelerated Learning Program
BN:	“Bistandsnemnda”- The Norwegian Interdenominational Office of Development Cooperation
CEO:	County Educational Officer
DEO:	District Educational Officer
IDP	Internally dispersed People
INGO	International Non Governmental Organization
MCSS	Monrovia Consolidated School System
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
NORAD:	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
NRC:	Norwegian Refugee Council (Flyktningerådet)
NTGL:	National Transitional Government of Liberia
PRSP:	Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers
SA:	Salvation Army
SA/L	Salvation Army in Liberia
SA/N	Salvation Army in Norway
TTC:	Teacher Training College
UNHCR:	United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees
UNMIL	United Nations Mission in Liberia
WAEC:	West Africa Examinations Council

Executive Summary

Background for the evaluation

In May 2005, in accordance with agreements between The Salvation Army in Norway (SA/N), The Salvation Army in Liberia (SA/L) and the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD), the Centre for Intercultural Communication was asked to lead an evaluation team to Liberia. The objective was to carry out a review of four projects within the education sector in the country where the Norwegian Government through BN/NORAD has been a major financial contributor.

All four projects are run by the Salvation Army in Liberia as the local partner organization. The Salvation Army in Norway is the external partner organization. Two of the projects - the establishment of two new combined elementary and high schools in and near the capital Monrovia - have been concluded and concerning those, the review should focus on the *impact* of the projects in a somewhat longer perspective and on *relevance* and *sustainability*.

Concerning the third project - the construction of a new School in Zwedru – it soon became evident that this project had been severely hampered by the unstable situation in both Liberia during the civil war and in the Ivory Coast. Since there was no new information available in Monrovia concerning the Zwedru project in addition to what SA/N and BN had already got, it was decided to leave the Zwedru project out of the review.

The fourth and most recent project included in this review is the construction and putting into operation of a new Teacher Training College in the city of Monrovia.

Liberia: the socio-political situation

In August 2003, a comprehensive peace agreement ended 14 years of civil war and prompted the resignation of former president Charles TAYLOR, who was exiled to Nigeria. The National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL) - composed of rebel groups, government and civil society groups - assumed control in October 2003. Chairman Gyude BRYANT, who was given a two-year mandate to oversee efforts to rebuild Liberia, headed the new government. The United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), which maintains a strong presence throughout the country, completed a disarmament program for former combatants in late 2004, but the security situation is still volatile and the process of rebuilding the social and economic structure of this war-torn country remains sluggish.

The result of the presidential elections, announced the 11th of November 2005, was that Mrs Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf became the first Woman in the History of Africa to win a Presidential election. Mrs. Johnson-Sirleaf, a former University lecturer in economy, business woman and Minister of Finance in William Tolbert's government in the 1970-ties, got 59.4 % of the votes. As this report is being written, it is still too early to say whether the result will be acknowledged by the many losing parties or whether the peace can be kept.

Monrovia is Liberia's largest city, its capital and its administrative, commercial, and financial center with a population of 572,000 (2003 census). The overall impression of the

city is a place tormented both by the massive destruction of civil war but also of years of neglect and misrule with huge ghostlike structures which were planned as public works and government buildings but were never finished. The city was severely damaged during the Civil War along with much of its industry. The unemployment rate is very high - 85% in the country as a whole - a fact that is visualized both by groups of men, especially the young, hanging around street corners in the centre of town during working hours. Another legacy of the war is a large population of homeless children and youths, either having been involved in the fighting or denied an education by it.

The Educational Structure in Liberia

Today the great majority of schools in Liberia are private. Most of these schools were established and are still run by a variety of church organizations or religious NGOs. Many of these school owners - as is the case also with the Salvation Army in Liberia - managed to get started on the basis of substantial foreign donations and cooperation.

Only in the City of Monrovia there are around 500 elementary schools, high schools and combined elementary/high schools. Of these, only 7 high schools and 15 elementary schools are public. Of all the private ones, the majority are owned and run by non-profit, mostly religious organizations, while up to as much as 50 may be private schools established as business enterprises with a profit motive as part of their *raison de être*.

The fact that the private schools to such an extent outnumber the public ones, may in part explain why the government schools are organized as so called "system schools" with a central office having the same function as the centralized Secretary for schools office in SA/L. The "owner" when it comes to the government schools is the Central office of the Monrovia Consolidated School System (MCSS).

General Conclusions

Although it is an encouraging fact that the schools function despite this difficult social and economic crisis, the general picture - as seen from the outside and compared to other countries in development - is still a school system in a severe crisis. The list below sums up the findings from a 10 day visit to Monrovia in September 2005. Most bullet points are true also for the Salvation Army schools in question - Len Millar Elementary and High School in Monrovia, and William Booth Elementary and High School in Painsville.

- In the average school, teachers have to teach and pupils have to learn in classrooms with no pedagogical aids or equipment what so ever, except for the blackboard. The average group of students per classroom/teacher counts 50 and more in classrooms often no bigger than 20m².
- If there are special aulas such as laboratories, libraries or workshops, these aulas don't have equipment and cannot be used as intended. Instead they are being used as ordinary classrooms.
- The average school does not have text books for the main subjects available for the students during classes. Most schools don't even have a library with appropriate textbooks for each grade or for that matter - comprehensive textbooks of any kind.
- Most pupils cannot afford to buy the textbooks they need.

- If they had the financial resources, textbooks for the main subjects at any level from kindergarten to 12th grade are almost impossible to come by in Monrovia or anywhere else in the country.
- For economic reasons there is a constant drain of the more experienced and best educated teachers out of the school system. This is mainly due to the extremely low wages but also to the conditions of work which demonstrate little respect for the teaching profession and threatens to take away any incentive to stay in the school system. Only a great dedication and love of the profession make highly qualified teachers keep on working despite such humiliating conditions of work.
- When the more experienced and qualified teachers quit, the gap is filled with less experienced teachers.
- At the same time, as a result of these discouraging conditions of work, all regular teacher training programs at universities, colleges and institutes, are experiencing a recruitment crisis. While there are long lists of applicants and severe competition to be admitted at the faculties and departments of health studies, technical studies and economic-administrative studies, the teacher training colleges hardly have any applicants at all.
- The only explanation to the fact that pre-service and in-service teacher training courses of different duration are being started up, is because they are subventioned by UN programs or mother institutions abroad.
- The Salvation Army Schools are run by a rather typical school owner - the Salvation Army in Liberia and as such a non-governmental, non-profit organization and a Christian Church / organization. Other similar school owners, but much bigger, are The Catholic, The Methodist and the Baptist Churches of Liberia. The Salvation Army and their Secretariat for Schools find themselves involved in all the above mentioned problematics.
- Still, the SA schools stand out as schools that in a relatively short time span and mainly in times of great social and political turbulence have managed to gain a reputation as good schools with high quality teaching and good discipline – the last issue being highly valued by all parents and students interviewed. William Booth and Len Millar are in fact among the best schools in the country, despite the fact that their admittance fees are in the middle of the scale.

Specific conclusions on the Salvation Army school system and schools.

Organizational and administrative strength

Most administrative tasks of importance for the SA schools are taken care of integrally as part of the systems established to cover the whole SA organization in Liberia. This centralized system may be cost-saving, but it also puts a lot of responsibility and time consuming burdens on the National Headquarters, and especially, it seems, on the Secretary for schools.

Despite the cost and effort involved, investing in the strengthening of the education office with one more person should still be considered. Either SA could employ a deputy

secretary with broad administrative competence to take over a part of the present secretary's administrative responsibilities, or they could employ another secretary with independent responsibilities. With two secretaries in place, one post should be defined as mainly policy- and strategy-oriented focusing on strategic planning and networking with national and international contacts. By strengthening the education office in this way, the important task of successfully completing the ongoing teacher training project with NORAD/BN/the Salvation Army in Norway, would become much more realistic.

It is recommended that sufficient economical resources are allocated to the installation of electricity in the schools or at least the administrative departments. Further it is recommended that sufficient resources are allocated to the acquisition of one or two computers for the administrative departments of each of the SA schools and that the administrative personnel get the computer training necessary for using the most common administrative computer programs.

Integration and interaction with the education sector and educational discourses

To start from the top level, the organization is both properly registered as a school owner and operator. It is also well known and well recognized as a serious private operator in the school system both in the Ministry of Education, among government school authorities and among fellow private school operators such as the Catholic dioceses and the Methodist synods.

The acute shortage of text books which reflect the present situation in Liberia and the content as agreed upon in national syllabuses, is an example of a pedagogical challenge that needs to be addressed by professionals working within or in close cooperation with the educational institutions. To the evaluator it illustrates the need for a common *Forum for education in Liberia*. Here school principals and teachers with long teaching experience within different subjects could meet with lecturers at the university and teacher training colleges as well as government officials from the Ministry of Education in order to coordinate efforts and expertise needed to solve such issues.

SA could play different roles in establishing such a forum. Due to the good reputation of the SA schools, the dedication of its teachers and principals and the seemingly good networks of the Secretary for schools, one of its roles could be to take initiative and form the interim board of a Forum – together with for instance secretaries for education in other major school owner organizations, deans and directors at universities.

At the district level the principals were well integrated in a network for pedagogical leaders, meeting regularly to discuss both practical and political / pedagogical issues. For example this Association of Principals share progress reports and information about students repeating class. This is being done to prevent pupils from “solving” their problem of being expelled from one school - for instance because of repeated failures in tests or irregular attendance – by simply applying at an other school *without presenting a leaving certificate* from the former.

From the point of view of securing students the right to privacy and the obligation of the school administration to maintain professional secrecy, we suggest that focus should be set on the establishment of common requirements regarding documentation from each new student applying for inscription.

Local rootedness and neighborhood support

At the local, neighborhood level, both the SA schools visited seemed well rooted in their local community. A majority of the pupils came from the “natural catchment area” around the school - that is the local neighborhood. There are other schools situated nearby both Len Millar and William Booth that offer education at the elementary and high school levels and that take lower student fees. Both SA schools in Monrovia were situated in quite poor areas, and parents were struggling hard to raise enough money to be able to give each of their children “at least some good years” at a Salvation Army school. Interviews with parents revealed that the SA school nearby was both their personal and their children’s first choice, and the main reason given for this was the *teaching quality* and the *discipline* maintained.

None of the schools nor SA as a school owner count on an elected or appointed school board. Seemingly William Booth school in Painesville now have started the process of involving the community and the parents on a lower level of involvement in the administration of the school.

The point to be made here is that the establishing of an advisory *forum* or *committee*, could be helpful in activating or transforming a lot of positive attitude which is already there, into specific action and support. Such a forum or committee will be a place for learning for those elected, and experiences drawn and competence gained from such work, could in a longer time perspective form the basis for the establishment of an *advisory board* or even *executive board* with more influence and responsibility to the community concerning the development of their schools.

School fee policy

All basic education in Monrovia is financed by student fees and levies of different kinds. This is the case both for private schools and government schools.

The evaluator’s impression after field visits and conversations with parents, is that SA with its present fee policy is striking a fairly good balance between quality and affordability. Their policy takes into consideration both the general economic situation in the country, the aspirations of pupils and parents, the market situation (fee policy of other schools in the region) as well as national and international policies in offering good quality education for all.

However, it remains an important challenge for SA in Liberia – both as a Christian organization with a special reputation, and as a receiver of Norwegian Government support explicitly aiming at the poorest, to find a way to solve the problem of *practical* exclusion from good, affordable schooling for children from the poorest layers of society in the geographical catchment areas of the SA schools.

Teacher qualification

The impression after visiting the two combined schools on two different occasions, was that the Salvation Army as a school operator attracts good teachers and manages to maintain high quality instruction despite a severe scarcity of pedagogical equipment and ordinary teaching materials. The problem for Len Millar School and William Booth then, seems not to be that of attracting good teachers, but of keeping them.

The problem with giving low priority to teaching material in the budgets, might be that it makes Len Millar and William Booth more vulnerable to a rapid turnover of their best teachers. The leadership of The Salvation Army in Liberia together with the Secretary for schools should discuss the possibility for a substantial increase in the budgets for pedagogical equipment and teaching materials, if not permanently, at least for a period of one to two years.

If improvements of the pedagogical equipment will have a stimulating and satisfying effect on the teaching personnel and improve stability, this also applies to investments in professional courses. The assumption is that such actions will be well invested money – both cheaper and more effective than trying to compete with more prestigious schools in salaries.

The average teacher salary in Liberia today, including the private sector, is simply not decent. Of course this is first and foremost a government responsibility, but it is also a challenge for SA and all other non-profit private school operators to bear in mind the teachers rights to an income that can support them and their families.

Quality of teaching

It is fair to say that observations, interviews with pupils, teachers and principals gave the clear impression that the Salvation Army schools offer well structured instruction in a calm and pleasant atmosphere. All teachers demonstrate well planned instruction and pedagogically recognized methods such as well arranged use of blackboard, memorizing techniques and alternation between teacher and pupil activity. Due to very good discipline in class, it was possible to maintain good conditions of work despite a teacher – pupil ration of 1 : 50. That the overall assessment of the quality of teaching ends up being so positive despite a critical lack of teaching aids and equipment, confirms what has already been said above about very competent teachers and administrative staff in the SA schools

Results - quality of learning

The Salvation Army schools are competing on the absolute top level among the best private schools in Liberia - in academic achievements as well as in sports and music.

However, all educational officials the evaluator met and interviewed agreed that the lack of opportunities for a vocational training is a major problem and a challenge that Liberian politicians and educationalists have to address in the years to come. Liberia is in desperate need for professionals in all kinds of crafts and technical vocations. The professionalism, organizational potential and the international relations of SA makes it a competent and natural partner in the effort to develop a functional vocational training within the high school system in the years to come.

SA in Liberia and SA in Norway should cooperate to propose a NORAD/BN-financed pilot project of introducing vocational courses in Len Millar school, in coordination with the investments that have to be done in the new SA Teacher Training College.

Specific conclusions on Salvation Army Teacher Training College

It seems clear that the premises of The Salvation Army, close to the Tubman University and not far from Stella Maris Polytechnic, when finished some time in the course of 2006,

can become a very important factor in the struggle to restore the prestige and popularity of the teaching profession. But to achieve this, cooperation with colleges and universities already offering good quality teaching is a core precondition. The problem of offering affordable studies with the prospect of having a decently paid job afterwards must be met through cooperation and a certain degree of specialization.

To indicate a possible course ahead for SA's project on teacher training, the evaluator would like to point to the severe lack of vocational training in today's high school system of Liberia as discussed above.

The role of a Salvation Army vocational training centre in Monrovia could be twofold. With the high cost of machinery and equipment needed to furnish for instance carpentry, tailoring or car mechanic workshops, one should make use of the workshops both for 1) training high school students in different vocations, 2) for training skilled artisans in pedagogy and the didactics of vocational training and 3) for income generation.

Finally, as was also discussed with the deans of the Tubman University and the Stella Maris Polytechnic, the chemistry, physics and biology laboratories that should be found in a combined teacher training and high school / vocational centre, should also be made available for these two institutions.

In turn they have a lot of competent university lecturers in sciences. This gives a unique opportunity for mutual interchange and combination of resources.

If SA/Liberia want to play an important role in developing the education sector in the country, something which their TTC plans indicate, they should coordinate their activities in the teachers training and or vocational training field with other NGOs and institutions, both national and international.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background for the evaluation

In accordance with agreements between The Salvation Army in Norway, The Salvation Army in Liberia and the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD), the Centre for Intercultural Communication was asked to lead an evaluation team to Liberia¹. The objective was to carry out a revue of four projects within the education sector in the country where the Norwegian Government through BN/NORAD has been a major financial contributor.

It was decided that the team should carry out its field visit from 19th to the 29th of September 2005. The team was supposed to include one representative from SIK and two representatives from Liberia/West Africa. All four projects are run by the Salvation Army in Liberia as the local partner organization. The Salvation Army in Norway is the external partner organization. Two of the projects - the establishment of two new combined elementary and high schools in and near the capital Monrovia - have been concluded and concerning those, the review should focus on the *impact* of the projects in a somewhat longer perspective and on *relevance* and *sustainability*.

Concerning the third project - the construction of a new School in Zwedru to the south-east of the capital and not far from the border to the Ivory Coast – it soon became evident that this project had been severely hampered by the unstable situation in both Liberia during the civil war and the continuous unrest in the bordering regions between Liberia and the Ivory Coast. Since transport between Monrovia and Zwedru is difficult due to very bad roads, the plan had been to buy construction material in the Ivory Coast and transport them across the border to Zwedru instead of using the more hazardous and expensive route from the capital. In effect none of these solutions could be effectuated, and the school in Zwedru is still not more than a construction site. Due to this fact and in addition to this, that the rainy season had made the roads in the countryside very bad, it was decided not to go to Zwedru. Since there was no new information available in Monrovia concerning the Zwedru project in addition to what SA/N and BN had already got, it was decided to leave the Zwedru project out of the revue.

The fourth and most recent project included in this review is the construction and putting into operation of a new Teacher Training College in the city of Monrovia. According to the project documents, the construction of the new premises was supposed to be completed by the end of 2005, and consequently the terms of reference therefore points at effectiveness and efficiency related to the construction of the school buildings as an issue to be dealt with in the review. More important, however, SA/N and BN emphasized issues like management, administrative and pedagogical competence / resources as well as the establishing of effective institutional structures that are functional in achieving the overarching project goals, since the project now was supposed to enter the important phase of starting up teaching and training.

Again according to the terms of reference, the three main purposes of the review were to

¹ The agreements between the Salvation Army in the two countries and the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation were originally made with The Norwegian Interdenominational Office of Development Cooperation (BN) as handling agent.

1. In an independent and objective manner describe the present situation in the two schools William Booth and New Len Millar and in the running project of the SA Teacher Training College, to assess outcomes as well as impacts that are likely to be linked to the input of means and resources through SA/N and BN.
2. Develop relevant and clear inputs and recommendations concerning further actions and changes that ought to be made in order to strengthen the positive impact of the projects locally and on higher levels within the education sector, and finally to
3. Initiate a process of collaboration between the evaluation team on one side and leaders and co-workers in each school and in SA Liberia on the other to allow for local and institutional participation so that the evaluation process is experienced as a constructive learning experience.

1.2 Methodology and approach

As indicated in the Terms of Reference, the methodology used in the Review included a study of relevant documents, informant interviews and observation of activities at the project sites.

At arrival in Monrovia, it became clear that due to some probable misunderstanding and short time limits for preparation, the two experts that were suggested during initial conversations between SA / Norway and SIK in May 2005 and later communicated to SA/Liberia, had not been found². Consequently the consultant from SIK ended up being the only external evaluator to take part in the review and in fact the only member of the evaluation “team”. However, to support the consultant from SIK in his work, it was agreed that a former director of Len Millar high school, Mr. Taweh Johnson would help in putting together a work plan and make arrangements with government institutions, other school communities and people to be interviewed. Mr Johnson is now working as an independent consultant and one of his clients are SA / Liberia for whom he is working on the teacher training college project. Mr. Johnson was very helpful in this respect and managed to arrange meetings with for instance the directors at the Tubman University and the Stella Maris Polytechnic and the deputy Minister of Education Mr. Ben – all very busy people.

The Secretary for schools in SA / Liberia, Mr Ernest Suah, on request by the evaluator, arranged meetings with directors, deputy directors and other staff at the two combined elementary / highs schools of SA / Liberia. In addition he was helpful in arranging meetings with personnel at other private and public schools in the Monrovia area as well as parents and other guardians of SA School pupils.

On request, the education office was also helpful in arranging interviews with local people in the neighborhood of the SA schools as well as with parents sending their children to other schools. The schools and catchment areas to be visited were selected in accordance with the following criteria: 1. To limit the time spent on traveling. 2. To visit schools in different types of socio-economic contexts. 3. To visit different types of

² See terms of reference, Appendix 1: “...one on the national context and with good knowledge of the Salvation Army in Liberia and one on the national and regional discourse on education and development.”

schools present in the Liberian school sector: private schools – profit and non-profit, religious and non-religious foundation – as well as government schools.

The Norwegian consultant was also able to identify additional informants and institutions during fieldwork. For instance, to strengthen the perspective of cooperation with other NGOs, the consultant made contact with the Norwegian Refugee Councils mission to Liberia where he got valuable information from the Project Manager for Education, Eva Andree. He also made a visit to the National Office of West African Examinations Council in Monrovia (WAEC/Monrovia) who at present has the most thorough and updated statistical material on schools in Liberia. Their knowledge of the situation in the education sector in general and in SA schools in particular was of great help in establishing an external, independent assessment of the educational achievements of SA / Liberia.

It is the Norwegian consultant's opinion that government education officials, principals and staff of all schools as well as parents and other locals interviewed freely expressed their opinion, both negative and positive, concerning the role of the Salvation Army's schools and activities. The SA Secretary for schools along with Mr. Johnson made appointments and performed initial introductions to institutions and individuals that would have been difficult to approach, if the evaluator had been working independently of the local SA office.

A rough checklist for interviews was drafted, tested and improved as the work progressed. A preliminary list of contents for the report also functioned as a checklist for discussion topics. It was not felt necessary to prepare detailed questionnaires. The SA representative, when present in an interview, did not affect the form or content of the discussion.

In general, the methodology was similar to that used in most reviews/consultancies, where time and resources are the main constraints. Findings and recommendations were developed in dialogue with both the consultant Mr. Johnson, the Secretary for schools Mr. Ernest Suah and the Officer commanding of SA Liberia, Mr. Robert W. Dixon. Conversations with them were based on experiences, observations and information gained in interviews during the day that triggered thoughts, questions and hypothesis' which in turn were commented and discussed with the SA personnel. However, the conclusions and recommendations presented in this report are the sole responsibility of the author of this review and represent the opinion of him alone.

In addition to a literature review and interviews, observation was an important method. Among the aspects observed were, quality of children's clothes, their general state of health and whether they appeared safe, confident and content. Number of students in the classroom, how desks were organized, condition of the room (its cleanliness and state of maintenance, etc., and other factors such as acoustics, heat, availability of toilets etc, were also noted. Particular attention was paid to observing the gender balance and relationship between boys and girls in the classrooms in all the schools visited. These observations were supported by a study of the school enrolment figures and daily attendance registers.

School visits and classroom observations provided the evaluator with an impression of both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the schools visited and issues such as student/teacher relationships.

Statistical as well as qualitative data on changes in the patterns of enrolment, drop-outs and graduation are also important information to assess quality of education and relevance of education in the more formal sense. Such information was hard to come by – that is Len Millar offered the consultant to view handwritten statistics on enrolment and graduation, and some of it was taken down in notes. It was promised that this information would be made available from the education secretariat, but unfortunately this was not achieved during the stay. However the statistics presented at the principals office confirms the general picture given in interviews and field conversations, so the lack of statistical figures is not regarded a major weakness in the report.

Concerning *relevance* - the extent to which there is a need for “constructing and starting up new schools” in the present national situation of Liberia – the consultant finds information given in interviews with government officials and professionals in the education sector so clear and unanimous that it can be regarded as sufficient evidence on which to base a conclusion: There definitely is a need for schools like the ones constructed, but equally important are all the problems that should be addressed within almost all aspects of quality in education.

Concerning *sustainability* - at a certain level of functioning which will be discussed below - the consultant certainly finds it a problem that in fact no written material on budgets and accounts so far have been offered by the headquarters of SA³. But still the picture concerning this assessment criteria seem quite clear, since the schools count on almost no other economic resources than student fees. So what could be observed in the schools every day was pretty much what could be obtained from student fees, varying basically according to grade. Still – for a discussion of strategic planning, the lack of such written documentation was felt as a limiting factor in the assessment.

1.3 Scopes and limitations

The focus of the review originally was the Salvation Army Schools in Liberia which have been supported by Norwegian government money. However, the Norwegian consultant for reasons mentioned above decided not to travel to Zwedru. Therefore only three out of four projects have been visited and assessed. The financial aspects of the cooperation SA/Liberia and BN/NORAD were excluded from the assessment of the three projects in and near Monrovia for two reasons. *Firstly*, there is the above mentioned problem of lack of access to written accountance documents. *Secondly*, concerning the two combined elementary/high school projects in and near Monrovia, they are both concluded in terms of Norwegian economic support, and the terms of reference state that the efficiency and effectiveness assessment criteria will not be focused in those two projects.

The Zwedru school and the Teacher Training College (TTC) in Monrovia are still under construction and Norwegian investments are still to be accounted for. This report gives information on the present status of the projects in relation to project goals and plans, but does not comment on the financial aspects.

³ Part of the problem seem to be that not all accounts and budgets have been computerized. Many of the details asked for are therefore not easy to produce.

SA in Norway handed over the project applications, and most of the yearly reports to NORAD/BN from 1997 till 2004, but here only some main figures and accounts are presented.

Concerning the Zwedru project, the Norwegian consultant can say very little about project goals / results achieved since Zwedru was not visited. Concerning the Teacher Training College, however, the consultant visited the building site and can confirm that two out of three floors were constructed by September 2005, that there was activity at the building site but that there was still a lot to be done to make the building ready for use.

2 Characteristics of the local context

2.1 Liberia: some political-economical aspects and main local and regional problems

Richly endowed with water, mineral resources, forests, and a climate favorable to agriculture, Liberia before the civil war used to be a producer and exporter of basic products - primarily raw timber and rubber. Local manufacturing, mainly foreign owned, was small in scope. However, both the civil war and government mismanagement throughout many years, have destroyed much of Liberia's economy, especially the infrastructure in and around Monrovia. Also continued international sanctions on diamonds and timber exports will limit growth prospects for the foreseeable future. Many businessmen have fled the country, taking capital and expertise with them. Some have returned, but many will not.

In August 2003, a comprehensive peace agreement ended 14 years of civil war and prompted the resignation of former president Charles TAYLOR, who was exiled to Nigeria. The National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL) - composed of rebel groups, government and civil society groups - assumed control in October 2003. Chairman Gyude BRYANT, who was given a two-year mandate to oversee efforts to rebuild Liberia, headed the new government. The United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), which maintains a strong presence throughout the country, completed a disarmament program for former combatants in late 2004, but the security situation is still volatile and the process of rebuilding the social and economic structure of this war-torn country remains sluggish.

The reconstruction of infrastructure and the raising of incomes in this ravaged economy will largely depend on generous financial support and technical assistance from donor countries. The newly held presidential elections are important in this respect, since extensive and sustained economic support from UN, The World Bank and the EU commission to rebuild and further develop public service institutions and basic infrastructure (roads, power plants and current, running water and sewers, industrial plants and transport system), is dependent on democratic elections, a government generally accepted as legitimate by the citizens and internal peace and stability.

The result of the presidential elections on the 11'th of October 2005, first announced the 11'th of November, was that Mrs Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf became the first woman in the History of Africa to win a Presidential election. Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf has been a University lecturer in economy, a business woman, Minister of Finance in William Tolberts government in the 1970-ties, opponent to Samuel Doe's military rule in the 1980-ties and exiled and in resent years a high ranking officer in the UN –system and the World Bank. Mrs Johnson-Sirleaf got 59.4 % of the votes. Despite her highly relevant experience and qualifications for the presidency, she was disliked by many because of her allegedly too close political relationship with former dictator Charles Taylor – now charged with accusations of crimes against humanity. She has also been accused of corruption while serving as a Minister. If the result is accepted by the loosing side, however, and the outbreak of a new civil war is avoided, the international community has promised substantial and long term economical and professional support to the country. As this report is being written, it is still to early to say whether the result

will be acknowledged by the many losing parties and the peace be kept - both by the supporters of the many presidential candidates who were former warlords with a regional and ethnical following - and the supporters of former football hero, now a successful businessman, Mr. George Weah (40, 6% of the votes) who came second in the election.

Although Liberia's domestic fighting among disparate rebel groups, warlords, and youth gangs was declared over in 2003, civil unrest persists, and in 2004, 133,000 Liberian refugees remained in Guinea, 72,000 in the Ivory Coast, 67,000 in Sierra Leone, and 43,000 in Ghana. Liberia, in turn, shelters refugees fleeing turmoil in the Ivory Coast and Sierra Leone. There is also a fairly high number of IDP's in the country – internally displaced persons from all over the 15 counties in Liberia now housed in refugee camps and sheltered by UNHCR units. Several UN organizations and NGOs are now involved in projects of relocation and reintegration of these people -. especially the young and the young former child soldiers. Since 2003, the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) has maintained about 18,000 peacekeepers in the country. UN sanctions ban Liberia from exporting diamonds and timber

Chart 2.1.1 Demographic basic data.-

Demographic basic data	
Population	3 482 211 (July 2005 estimated)
Population 0-14 years:	43,6 %
Population 15-64 years	52,8%
Population 65 years and over	3,7%
Growth	2,64 % (2005 estimated)
Urban Population	
Net Migration	0% at present, but there are at least 200.000 refugees in surrounding countries (2005 estimate)
Density	36 pr km2
Indigenous African Ethnic Groups, including Kpelle, Bassa, Gio, Kru, Grebo, Krahn, Gola, Gbandi,Loma, Kissi, Vai, Dei, Bella, Mandingo and Mende	95 %
Americo-Liberians (descendants of immigrants from US who had been slaves)	2,5 %
Congo People (descendants of immigrants from the caribbean who had been slaves)	2,5 %
Religion – indigenous beliefs	40 %
Religion – Christian	40 %
Religion – Muslim	20 %
Illiteracy (aged 15 and over who cannot read and write)	42,5 % (Male: 26,7 % Women 58,4 %)
Average of Study years	
Economically active population	
Unemployment	85 %
Self employment	
Agriculture occupied	70 % of economically active population (2000 estimate)
Industry occupied	8 % of economically active population (2000 estimate)

Commerce occupied	
Service and other occupied	22 % of economically active population (2000 estimate)
Annual increase of PEA	
Minimum real salary	
Population under poverty line	80 %
Total fertility rate	6.09 children born pr. woman (2005 estimate)
Births/1000 inhabits.	44.22 births pr. 1000 population (2005 estimate)
Total death rate	17.87 births pr. 1000 population (2005 estimate)
Infant Mortality rate	128.87 deaths /1000 live birhts
Mortality	
Life expectancy when born	47.69 years

2.2 Monrovia – the urban setting

Monrovia is Liberia's largest city, its capital and its administrative, commercial, and financial center with a population of 572,000 (2003 census). The city's economy used to be dominated by its harbor activities. The main exports were latex/rubber and iron ore. The harbor also had extensive storage and ship repair facilities. Manufactures included cement, refined petroleum, food products, bricks and tiles, furniture and chemicals.

The city was severely damaged during the Liberian Civil War when many buildings and much of its industry were destroyed. The unemployment rate is very high - 85% in the country as a whole - a fact that is visualized both by groups of men, especially youth, hanging around street corners in the centre of town during working hours and by all the street traders who have set up their market stalls of all shapes and sizes all along the main roads selling chewing gum, cigarettes and trifles. Another legacy of the war is a large population of homeless children and youths, either having been involved in the fighting or denied any opportunity of education.

The overall impression of the city is a place tormentet both by the massive destuction of war but also of years of neglect and misrule with huge ghostlike structures which were planned as public works and government buildings but where never finished. The fighting in the city destroyed all infrastructure such as electricity, water supply. and sewers. Any building functioning as it would have done before the Civil War, does so because it has a diesel generator in the basement and a water tank and a mobil/satelite antenna on the roof.

The exeption to this rule was the city blocks where the UN and NGO offices had lumped together downtown. Here the infrastructure had been more or less repaired and urban life functions more or less as expected in a big city. The presence of the UN was also evident because of the UNMIL forces spread all over town in armoured observation posts manned by mostly Nigerian but also some NATO and EU troops.

The presence and dominant function of the UN troops and UN organizations was also evident in the sence that the economy was strictly divided in two with a western consumer economy using US dollars and marked by western salaries and western prices on one side and a local economy using Liberian Dollars on the other. The local

economy is marked by a complete mismatch between peoples salaries and the cost of living. A typical example is the relation between the cost of rice pr month for a family of five, being of around 1750 LD and the average teacher's salary in government schools of around 1150 LD. If you are part of the US Dollar economy, two super markets and a handful of high standard hotels and restaurants run mostly by the Libanese and Indian communities, will offer you all you would expect to find in a strong western urban economy. Everything within this economy is priced in US Dollars and US Dollar bills are the expected currency. A well renomated young driver working for one of NGOs could earn 200 US\$ a month while a skilled secretary or medium level functionary could earn from 300 – 500 US dollars⁴. By contrast, a months salary for a trained and formally competent teacher working in a private school is around 45 - 50 US dollars a month at best. The contrasts are big between the squatter house residence of a middle class family in Monrovia with no electric light after dark or running water, and the facilities of the Norwegian consultant at his hotel a few blocks away.

⁴ Personal information from Mr. Per Bjerre, Country Director for The Norwegian Refugee Council, Liberia.

3 Organizational and political-administrative structures

3.1 The Salvation Army Organizational Structure

The Salvation Army has a relatively short history in Liberia. It was established as a Religious Community and got its legal status in 1988. It is organized on the National level as *one* Command.⁵ So far the Liberia Command has not been subdivided into smaller self-governing geographical units. In the SA administrative system such smaller units within a Command would have been called divisions⁶.

As Officer commanding, Major Robert W. Dixon is the employer and immediate superior to all the division leaders, corps within them (the congregations), hostel headmasters, school principals, administrative personnel at headquarters as well as temporary project personnel. The National Headquarters in Monrovia literally also handles all personnel matters, funds, bank-accounts, accounting and auditing, contracts, project administration as well as communication with national authorities and international contacts and superiors. It is also the Officer commanding who is the executive and responsible leader for all educational activities and projects within SA /Liberia. Concerning the day to day administration of the schools, major responsibilities has been delegated to the Secretary for schools at the National Headquarters, Mr. Ernest Suah. He organizes registration of new students and the collecting of annual fees, further handling of entrance and placement tests (to decide admission and in what grade) and is involved in severe disciplinary cases. The Secretary for schools is also involved in interviewing and nominating applicants for new teacher posts and for contracting in collaboration with the Officer commanding.

Administration of the WAEC exams at SA schools is also coordinated from the secretariat for education.

On the basis of the above description, it is fair to say that the Salvation Army school system is a fairly centralized one, where the bulk of financial tasks, personnel matters and general administrative tasks are being taken care of by the SA Secretary for schools in close cooperation with the Officer commanding of SA Liberia. The Secretary for schools reports directly to the Officer commanding and is responsible for keeping him informed about all important matters in the schools sector. Administrative matters that remain in the schools under the responsibility of the principal and his/hers vice-principals of instruction(VPI) and administration (VPA) are:

- all issues related to putting together classes
- appointing teachers for specific tasks when contracted

⁵A command is an organizational unit within one of the SA zones which is too big to be part of a territorial command but too small to be regarded as a territory. Both Territorial commanding officers and commanding officers of Commands are appointed by and report to the international secretary of its zone, whose office is at the International headquarters of SA in London. The nearest superior to the commanding officer of the Liberia Command is the International secretary of the Africa Zone.

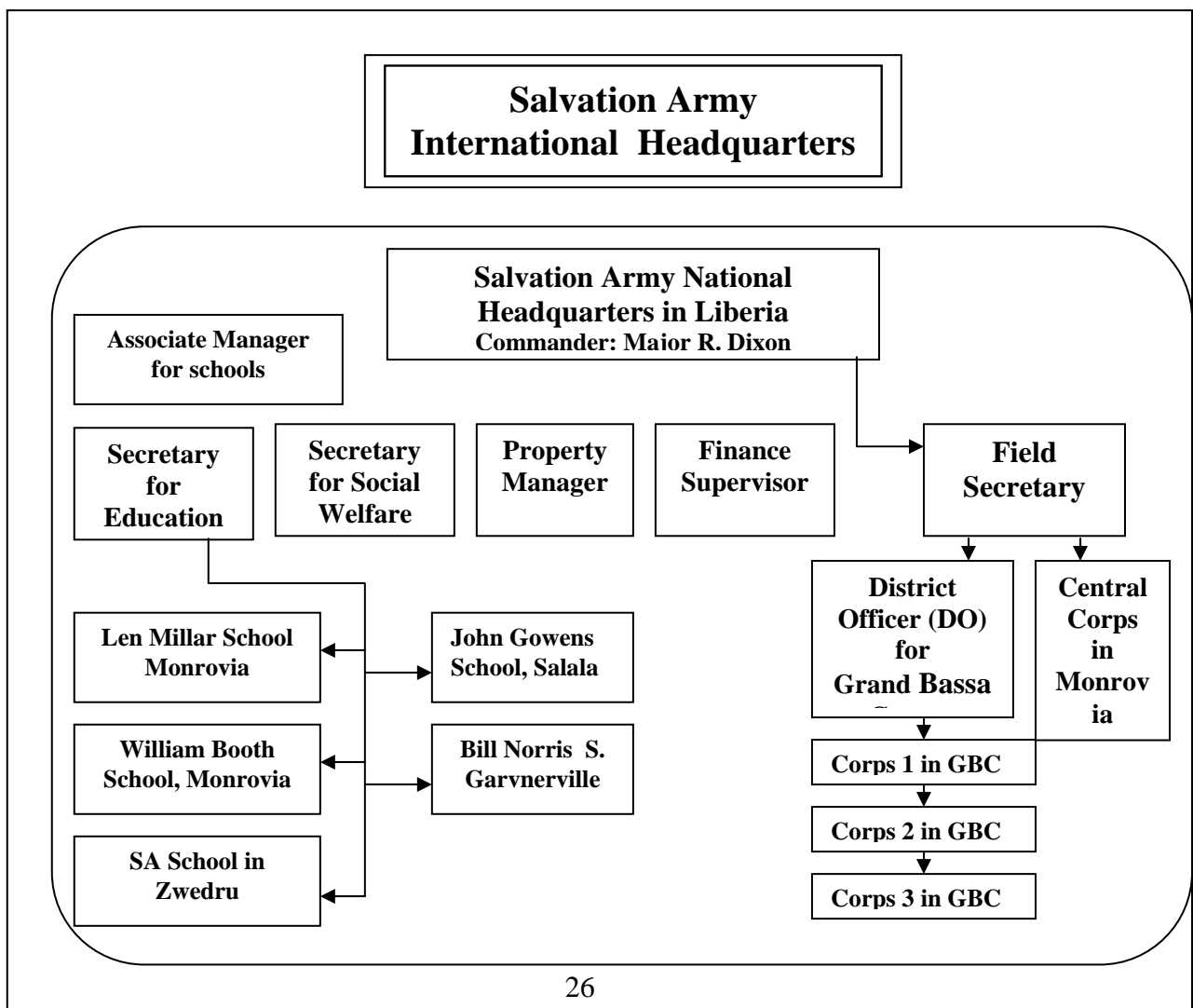
⁶The issue of establishing divisions within the country is most of all related to having enough qualified personnel within the organization to fill the major posts of commanding officers on for instance a county level - with all the economical, administrative and clerical responsibilities that follow.

- internal exams and tests
- promotion and repetition
- quality of teaching,
- guidance and correction of pupils
- contacts with individual parents and
- all issues related to the curricula – syllabus, instruction material, textbooks and other teaching equipment.

The principal maintains one external professional contact since he or she participates in, and regularly houses the Principals Association – a pedagogical forum for all principals and vice-principals in a sub region (approx 25 members). The principal handles a small cash account for immediate expenses. All investments in school equipment must be discussed with the secretary of education.

The main argument for keeping a quite centralized administrative structure, according to Officer commanding Dixon, is mass corruption in the country.

Chart 3.1.1: The organizational structure of SA/Liberia



3.2 The Educational Structure in Liberia

The Liberian Educational System is based on the principal of free and compulsory elementary education for all. However, the 14 years of civil war has eroded most of the economical-administrative structures and important parts of the physical infrastructure, to the extent that today no school in the country - be it private or public - can function without taking substantial student fees or levies of different kinds. Teachers in public schools get paid very low salaries – down to 20 US\$ a month⁷ – and for a long time now, the payment of salaries in government schools have been irregular. In Monrovia teachers have been waiting up to 6 months for their salary. Therefore it is registration fees, instruction fees, certificate levies and so forth paid to the *system educational offices* that make things go round at all.

On the other hand, freedom to establish any private schools on religious, humanistic or pedagogical grounds is also an established principal. You could also establish a private elementary school or high school on a purely commercial basis as long as you comply to the rules and regulations and quality criteria set by the Government and apply to the Ministry of Education for the necessary licenses. According to facilities offered and the formal qualifications of the teachers, you could offer education at

- **Elementary level** (ABC, Kindergarden I and II and up to 6'th grade) which requires teachers with C-Certificate (1 ½ years course at Teacher Training College)
- **Junior High Level** (7'th up till 9'th grade) which requires teachers with B-Certificate (2 ½ years course at Teacher Training College with one year of specializing in one major and one minor subject of content)
- **Senior High Level** (10'th up till 12'th grade) which requires teachers with Bachelor of Science Degree (3 ½ - 4 years at Teacher Training College).

Most schools in Monrovia cover the whole spectrum from Kindergarden up till 12'th grade. Some schools however are specialized high-schools, and in many of the rural communities there will only be elementary and junior high schools available, if any school at all. It must also be noted that even though a school recently was certified by the Ministry of Education and is operating today, this does not mean that its teachers are certified according to the regulations given by the Ministry of Education. In Salvation Army schools some teachers don't have a teachers certificate, but instead they might have another academic degree.

Neither is it so that a recent certification of a school means that it disposes of textbooks for all grades and all subjects in their school library, nor that it has a functioning science laboratory to do the physical and chemical experiments that the curriculum requires.

As said above, all formal education in Liberia must be approved by and certified by the Ministry of Education. Applications, documentation and certification are channeled

⁷ the market price for the monthly consumption of rice for a family of 5 persons was reported to be 30US\$ during the time of the review

through the County Education Officer (CEO). The CEO and the District Education Officer (DEO) are also in charge of supervision of all formal educational activities within their administrative unit.

Today, as confirmed by the national office of the WAEC⁸, the great majority of schools in Liberia are private. Since long, most schools in Liberia were established and have been run by a variety of church organizations or religious NGOs. Many of these school owners - as is the case also with the Salvation Army in Liberia - managed to get started on the basis of substantial foreign donations and cooperation. Partly they have also been maintained and run by the help of international NGOs or mother churches abroad such as the Catholic Church, The Methodist Church, several Pentecostal churches and so forth.

Only in the city of Monrovia there are around 500 elementary schools, high schools and combined elementary/high schools. Of these only 7 high schools and 15 elementary schools are public. Of all the private ones, the majority are owned and run by non-profit, mostly religious organizations, while up to as much as 50 are private schools established as business enterprises with a profit motive as part of their *raison de être*.

The fact that the private schools to such an extent outnumber the public ones, may in part explain why the government schools are organized as so called “system schools” with a central office having the same function as the centralized Secretary for schools office in SA/L. The CEO and DEO who otherwise would have had the coordinating functions for these schools, are so busy serving and cooperating with a lot of specialized education offices, that the public schools probably are better served by being organized as one entity with one single “owner” as well. The “owner” when it comes to the government schools is the Central Office of the Monrovia Consolidated School System (MCSS).⁹

3.3 The Monrovia Consolidated School System – A public school owner

The central office of the MCSS is headed by a superintendent who is assisted by a deputy. These are recommended by the Board of Directors of the MCSS and appointed by the President of Liberia. The office has its own personnel director and other support staff.

The office regulates academic and other leadership activities in the government run elementary, junior and senior high schools in Monrovia. It also formulates administrative and academic policies for these schools and monitors the performance of these policies. The office hires its own staff, teachers, school administrators and support staff for the schools it controls. It sets, collects and manages the registration fees and

⁸ The National office of the West African Examination Council is probably that centralized administrative unit in Liberia which at present has the most thorough and updated statistics on the education sector. This is because they are extending their services to all schools in Liberia – the centralized WAEC exams and the WAEC certificates for all who pass – and receive information from each school from which a lot of statistical information can be extracted or inferred.

⁹ In fact the history of the MCSS goes back to the beginning of the 1980'ies when the US government donated funds to renew the school sector of Monrovia. Several equal high schools were built and handed over to the local authorities on the precondition that they remained free and public. Therefore these schools got their own , separate administrative structure which eventually became the MCSS.

other fees generated from these schools. However, it is the National Government through the Ministry of Education and not this office that pays the teachers – according to payrolls prepared by the MCSS central office

But apart from the procedures for paying teachers their salaries, the Central Office of MCSS functions in the same way as the Secretary for schools in the SA headquarters.¹⁰

3.4 Teacher Training and Higher Education

The first steps towards a standard teacher training in Liberia were taken in the 1940-ies when the government started to give 3 months courses in fundamentals of pedagogy and content. The courses were gradually expanded throughout the 1950'ies. From 1951 and onwards, a Bachelor of Science Certificate that could be obtained at the University of Monrovia, also functioned as a teacher certificate. In 1961, the University of Liberia for the first time offered a complete teacher training program as the Teacher Training College (TTC) was established.

During the 14 years of Civil War, most of Monrovia's infrastructure was destroyed and the whole public sector was severely affected by corruption and misrule. The university - and with it the TTC - lost much of its prestige and quality in this period. But also before the war period, the prestige and popularity of the teacher training education had started its decline. As well trained young teachers graduated from the teacher training colleges in the 70-ies and 80-ties, they soon experienced that there were other, less demanding ways to get a license to teach. With the right contacts and the right name, you could get a steady job as a teacher in a popular school without having one single teaching certificate!

During the last decades several private TTC's have been established. In the present situation teacher training certificates at different levels are offered by the following institutions:

The Catholic Stella Maris Teachers College	Offer full BSC – degree as well as lower degree certificates
The William Tubman University (Univ. of Liberia)	Offer full BSC – degree as well as lower degree certificates
The Ka-Ka-Ta Rural Teachers Training Institute	Today offers mostly 3 months programs for in-service-teachers
Webo Institute	At present seemingly inactive (not confirmed)
Don Bosco Polytechnic	Offers academic, technical and professional programmes. Said to offer teacher training, but this has not been confirmed

¹⁰ A system, by the way not very unlike the former Norwegian system (till 2003) where teachers where government paid but county employed and where schools are county property.

Before and partly during the Civil War several private universities and institutes in addition to the mentioned have offered teacher training and teacher certificates in Liberia. According to informants at the Tubman University and in the Ministry of Education, however, no other than the mentioned institutions offers teacher training at the moment.

4 The Present Situation in the SA Schools and the Role of SA in the development of the Liberian Education Sector – some main parameters

4.1 Organizational strength

As shown in illustration 3.1 and explained above, the Salvation Army Headquarters in Monrovia in most respects operates as the school administration for all Salvation Army Schools. Most administrative tasks of importance for the school sector are taken care of integrally as part of the systems established to cover the whole organization. For example there is no sub-level administration in charge of the recruitment and employment of new teachers for SA schools, and the department of accounting in the Monrovia Headquarters takes care of paying teachers their salaries. The same office also receives student fees and registers new students for the two primary- and secondary schools in the City of Monrovia¹¹. Since the headmasters of each school only handle a very small amount of cash every month, most smaller payments as well have to be arranged through the headquarters.

Such a centralized system may be cost-saving, but it also puts a lot of responsibility and time consuming burdens on the Secretary of Education. The Secretary of Education, Mr Suah is involved in everything from interviewing applicants for vacant teacher posts, paying individual teachers their salary, receiving fees from and registering new pupils, to the handling of severe disciplinary issues concerning individual pupils. In addition to these everyday administrative tasks, the Secretary for schools also has important strategic functions within his field of operation, such as

- defining a policy for the organization within the education field
- making policy documents
- the general planning and budgeting on the basis of these documents
- networking and building of relationships with other NGOs, politicians and government institutions within the education field.

In the case of the Salvation Army in Liberia, it seemed that the Secretary for schools would have needed one deputy with broad administrative competence to take over a part of his administrative responsibilities, at least if the present organizational structure is to continued. An alternative, of course, would be a more decentralized system, where some main administrative tasks and responsibilities were handed over to the principals and deputy principal at each school. This would liberate more time for the Secretary for schools to concentrate on the important issues of developing a good professional network with other actors in the same “market” and not least to dedicate himself to the important task of defining the profile of the Salvation Army School System and its contribution to the education field in general. More

¹¹ The problems the headquarters had in presenting budgets and accounts for the education branch and for each school at short notice seem to be a consequence and an illustration of this.

specifically, the SA in Liberia at the moment faces very important challenges in *defining the profile and scope of a new teacher training college* which is under construction in Monrovia with NORAD support, and to *integrate this new institution* in both a national and Salvation Army strategic plan for education.

However, with the present shortage of both economical, technical and human resources available to deal in a safe way with the economical-administrative tasks of running a private school enterprise, the decentralization of these tasks is not at all an easy matter. Just to mention one of the obstacles the organization has to face in Liberia today, there is the cost of computers and computer maintenance and the lack of user skills among academically trained personnel. The absence of a safe banking system for the payment of salaries and student fees etc seems to be another time consuming obstacle for the school administration of the Salvation Army. **But despite the cost and effort involved in strengthening the administration, it should still be considered to invest in the strengthening of the education office by defining a post that is mainly strategic and oriented towards policy making, planning and networking nationally and internationally.** By strengthening the education office in this way, the important task of successfully completing the ongoing teacher training project with NORAD/BN/the Salvation Army in Norway, would become much more realistic.

4.2 Integration and interaction with the education sector and national educational discourses

The educational activities, the educational institutions as such and the administrative and pedagogical personnel of the Salvation Army seem well integrated in the education sector, from the national level down to the community level.

Recognition by The Ministry of Education, national and regional educational authorities and fellow private actors in the education field

To start from the top level, the organization is both properly registered as a school owner and operator. It is also well known and well recognized as a serious private operator in the school system both in the Ministry of Education, among government school authorities and among fellow private school operators such as the Catholic dioceses and the Methodist synods.

Through the former Principal of Len Millar high school, now an independent consultant working for the SA, and through the personal networks of the Secretary for schools, the SA headquarters was quite easily able to arrange for the evaluator to meet with Government officials at all levels - from the Deputy Minister of Education and downwards and with directors and deacons of university faculties and teacher training seminars.

The West African Examinations Council (WAEC)

One important relation that should be mentioned in particular, is the regular cooperation between the SA schools and the West African Examinations Council (WAEC). WAEC is a non-profit-making organization, with its headquarters in Accra, Ghana It was established in 1952 by the Governments of Ghana (then the Gold Coast), Nigeria, Sierra Leone and the Gambia. Liberia became the fifth member of the Council in 1974. The

original idea was to set up a regional examining board to harmonize and standardize pre-university assessment procedures in the then British West Africa.

The main objectives of WAEC today as a modern transnational institution are still to conduct examinations in the public interest and to award certificates that are accepted for admission to any school, college or university in the 5 member countries. In addition to facilitating the process of getting admission to and making transfers between schools throughout the whole region, the aim is also to improve the reputation and recognition of high school certificates outside of West Africa.

The member countries are all committed to harmonizing their respective national curricula to the regulations and syllabuses of the WAEC. Then the Test Development Division – situated in Monrovia – make the yearly promotion exams for the 6th grade (leaving elementary school), the 9th grade (leaving junior high) and the 12th grade (leaving senior high school – required for admission to university studies) for all five countries.

The work of the test development division in Monrovia is highly appreciated among principals and school owners in Liberia. **At SA headquarters and in each SA school the WAEC system was appreciated for offering a solid basis for self-evaluation. In a very market-driven pedagogical situation as the Liberian, good results from WAEC also give recognition by pupils and parents and helps to maintain professionalism and “clean competition” among private schools which are in obvious need of a good reputation to “sell” their services.** Also for this reason the WAEC tests are used by all SA schools, even though they are expensive¹².

Integration and interaction at the district level

The headquarters at SA - through the mentioned independent consultant – seemingly did not have any problems in activating a broad network of institutions and professionals within the education sector when needed. This was demonstrated through the capability of SA to present the evaluator for a good number of private and public institutions and projects.

At the district level the principals were well integrated in a network for pedagogical leaders, meeting regularly to discuss both practical and political / pedagogical issues. For example this Association of Principals share progress reports and information about students repeating class. This is being done to prevent pupils from “solving” their problem of being expelled from one school - for instance because of repeated failures in tests or irregular attendance – by simply applying at an other school *without presenting a leaving certificate* from the former.

From the point of view of securing students right to privacy and the obligation of the school administration to maintain professional secrecy, one would suggest that focus would be set on the establishment of common requirements regarding

¹² On the other hand, interviewing the head of WAEC, the evaluator learned that the costs involved in running the test development and processing division in Monrovia by far exceeds the income they can generate from selling the tests at an affordable price. Therefore they are in constant shortage of money, not least to renew and develop their computer quality and capacity (scanning, processing, printing etc)

documentation from each new student applying for inscription, instead of keeping a kind of “black list” of students with a history of failure and irregular attendance. Such common rules could be the requirement of presenting leaving certificates and student diplomas / official transcriptions of marks from the protocols of the former school. A system like this would probably require common practice, not only within each Association of Principals, but on a district or ideally even a national level as well. **It would be an important contribution by the SA secretariat to the development of the school sector if such an initiative was taken. The problem also illustrates the need for a National Forum for Education as a meeting place for private and public stakeholders in the education sector – see below.**

Integration and interaction at a local level

At the local, neighborhood level, each school seemed well rooted in its local community. A majority of the pupils came from the “natural catchment area” around the school - that is the local neighborhood . Even though both SA schools in Monrovia were situated in quite poor areas, parents were struggling hard to be able to raise enough money to be able to give each of their children “at least some good years” at a Salvation Army school. Interviews with parents revealed that the SA school nearby was both their personal and their children’s first choice, and the main reason for this was because of *teaching quality* and the *discipline* maintained. This issue will be treated more in detail below.

Limitations, possibilities and challenges

A problem that seems to be experienced in all elementary and high schools throughout Monrovia and which requires common action above school level, is the notorious shortage of text books in practically all subjects¹³.

The acute shortage of text books which reflects the present situation in Liberia and the content as agreed upon in national syllabuses, is an example of a pedagogical challenge that needs to be addressed by professionals working within or in close cooperation with educational institutions. To the evaluator it illustrates the need for a common *Forum for education in Liberia*. Here school principals and teachers with long teaching experience within different subjects could meet with lecturers at the university and teacher training colleges as well as government officials from the Ministry of Education in order to coordinate efforts and expertise needed to solve such issues.

SA could play different roles in establishing such a forum. Due to the good reputation of the SA schools, the dedication of its teachers and principals and the seemingly good networks of the Secretary for schools, one of its roles could be to take initiative and form the interim board of a Forum – together with for instance secretaries for education in other major school owner organizations, deans and directors at universities and higher ranking officers at the Ministry of education. Officer commanding of SA/Liberia comments as follows to this challenge:

“The Salvation Army is very interested in a Forum for Education in Liberia. However, in light of the past political climate and the newness of the present administration, the door to such a forum has to be ...(opened)... and....(the

¹³ see a more detailed discussion on this issue in subsection 4.6

idea)... embraced by the government and the Ministry of Education. I believe that this will happen in the next school year when normality comes to the country. We are also confident that the Army will be approached to take a vital part of the leadership based on our track record and the reputation of our school system.”¹⁴

In this specific case one or several *text book committees* formed by members of a forum could work on a permanent basis to raise funds, contract authors and publishers and serve as a resource group and coordinator for different contributors. Conversations with university teachers and administrators confirm that they definitely see it as their obligation to participate in such joint ventures. Again it is the acute lack of resources within public and private higher education that has prevented them from starting the process of text book production already.

4.3 Local rootedness and neighborhood support

The Salvation Army Schools visited were Len Millar School in the centre of Monrovia and William Booth School in the suburb of Painsville in the south-eastern outskirts of the capital. Both schools are the preferred local schools in their “natural” catchment area, ranked even with or beyond for instance the Methodist School in Monrovia ¹⁵ and the Baptist School in Painsville¹⁶. **There are more schools nearby to choose between, but the impression the evaluator got from interviews in the neighbourhood nearby Len Millar School was that those who could afford it, felt they got more in return from sending their kids to an SA school than any other school.**

This positive attitude among students, parents and relatives, however, has not led to a marked involvement on the part of the community in running and developing the school. In that respect, the positive feelings and opinions towards the SA schools so far cannot be said to be more than a *potential* resource - as it is not yet manifest in the administrative structure of the schools.

None of the schools nor SA as a school owner count on an elected or appointed school board. Seemingly, William Booth school in Painesville has now started the process of involving the community and the parents on a lower level of involvement in the administration of the school. They will not yet establish a school *board* with parent representatives, but the principal, while interviewed, said that they have got the approval to go ahead and develop an *advisory committee* of parents and local citizens. At the first meeting with the parents after the vacations this semester, they will inform the parents about this new initiative, and start the process of finding candidates to be appointed or elected for a committee.

On the other hand there are also aspects of both the local and national context surrounding the two SA schools that hamper the project of linking community and school. One is the predominantly private school structure that creates a pattern where pupils walk or travel by bus long distances to attend the best school their parents can afford. A school board would in this situation not be the link between an SA school and representatives of a local community, but rather between the school and representatives of the parents. **The point to be made here is that the establishing of an *advisory forum or committee*, could be helpful in activating or transforming a lot of positive**

¹⁴ Comment given in response to an earlier draft of the present report

¹⁵ Methodist Elementary School and High school in Monrovia situated nearby Len Millar School

¹⁶ Baptist Elementary School and High school situated nearby William Booth School

attitude which is already there, into specific action and support. Such a forum or committee will be a place for learning for those elected, and experiences drawn and competence gained from such work, could in a longer time perspective form the basis for the establishment of **an advisory board or even executive board with more influence and responsibilities concerning the development of the school community.**

4.4 School fee policy

Despite the fact that Liberia has signed the declarations from Dakar on free and compulsory education for all¹⁷, all basic education in Monrovia is financed by student fees and levies of different kinds. This is the case both for private schools and government schools, since the government budgets for teachers salaries and running costs are very far from covering real costs.

Teachers salaries are paid directly from the Ministry of Education, that is - if they are being paid at all. The payment of salaries has been very irregular the last few years. Frequently there has been several months delay in payments. The teachers therefore depend on extra student levies – paid in addition to the official semester fee. In addition most of them teach in more than one school or they run their own little business to be able to make a living. In fact, teaching full time in more than one school seems to be the rule rather than the exception also among teachers in private schools.

In government schools, parents go to the bank and pay the semester fees directly to the bank account of the Systems Schools Headquarters. A portion of the student fees paid to this office is redistributed to each system school for purposes decided by the principal and the teachers. At the G.W. Gibson Senior High School this money has been used partly for maintenance, partly for sports equipment.

In private schools, student fees cover all expenses *as well as* salaries. Such expenses could be construction, maintenance, electricity, water, equipment, books and teaching material. That is – if the school does not count on regular or occasional donations from partners abroad. The Catholic schools in Monrovia for instance - all belonging to the same diocese – are supported on a regular basis by the German Catholic Church.

In the case of Len Millar and William Booth, the student fee is the main income post in the working budget, financing most expenses. In the present Liberian situation, therefore, the policy of student fees is an important strategic issue, touching upon the whole issue of sustainability policy for the school owner. The level of the student fees reflects the complex issue of *what level/quality of instruction for what social class/ segment of society.* Student fees must be balanced against the economic capacity of the target group which has been chosen. There is probably competition among schools operating on the same socio-economic level. The competition will partly evolve around school fees as an issue in it self, partly on different quality parameters such as social environment, facilities, teaching aids, instruction and discipline. **On the socio-economic level where the SA schools are competing at the moment, the SA schools are the preferred schools for pupils living in acceptable distance from the premises. One could say that the costumers feel they strike a good bargain even if the fees are high. Anyhow, student fees must**

¹⁷ Personal conversation with Deputy Minister for Education Mr. Ben

be balanced against the objective, minimum cost of running a school. This minimum cost is first and foremost based on some *professional* criteria set by the educational authorities, teachers unions or the organization itself, maybe in mutual understanding with a donor organization. A list of criteria may include minimum qualifications – formal and practical – of teachers, the maximum number of pupils pr. teacher/classroom, minimum access to textbooks, notebooks, teaching aids and facilities. If the income of the school-owner is too low, and/or the balancing of accessible resources between different factors in the teaching process is wrong, the overall quality of instruction will suffer. If access to teaching aids and facilities or the environment of teaching drops below a critical minimum, not even the best teacher can manage to maintain a satisfactory quality of instruction. In turn this may lead to a loss of market position or that the schools end up competing on a lower socio-economic level.

In a situation where good quality education has become a market commodity, economical and professional support from the international development community becomes more difficult to target. A school, a district or an organization that receives international support, helping them to improve notably the quality of their education, will in a context like Monrovia today easily attract the best leaders, the best teachers - and then “the better off” children whose parents will use their money and influence to secure their offspring the best education available in the market. Of course such a trend can be halted or slowed down if the community, the organization or the school itself decide to keep fees “artificially” low (compared to what “the market is willing to pay”) and if they take the necessary administrative steps to keep on offering good education to children of all economic backgrounds in a given catchments area.

The point here is that the SA schools, both because they represent a religious group well known for always supporting the poorest and most marginal groups in society, but also because the two schools have been constructed and equipped by the help of NORAD, ought to be very conscious about the socio-economic profile of the educational institutions they run. Interviews with parents living in the vicinity of Len Millar showed that the present level is close to the maximum of what the majority are able to pay. In fact observations and field conversations indicated that SA fees at the moment have already reached a level where some very faithful “lower middleclass” families are no longer able to pay.

Case 4.4.1

A lady who has children owns a two-story adobe / concrete house. She rents one room to a mother and her child and houses her own mother. She herself produces pastry for the market and to sell in schools. She tells the evaluator that her strategy at the moment is to “...try and give each of her children at least a few years each of good quality education in Len Millar”. Her eldest son has just graduated from high school, but now she can’t afford to help him with further studies. In between she now will have to send her younger children to a cheaper nearby school to save money.

Case 4.4.2

A nurse and her husband educated as a pharmacist who run a Pharmacia in Monrovia said:

“We send all our children to Len Millar School. We want good education for our children. They give good instruction and they help with good forming of our children’s character. But school fees at Len Millar are very high. So we are doing a great sacrifice to keep them there. Very much of what we earn go to their education.”

From the point of view of development agencies like BN and NORAD, a decisive point is whether the policy of student fees in schools they support is sensitive to the economical situation in the country and makes it possible for low income and literally “no income groups” to start or keep on sending their children to school.

The evaluator’s impression after field visits and conversations with parents, is that SA with its present fee policy is striking a fairly good balance between quality and affordability. Their policy takes into consideration both the general economic situation in the country, the aspirations of pupils and parents, the market situation (fee policy of other schools in the region) as well as national and international policies in offering good quality education for all.

Says Officer commanding Major R. W. Dixon:

“We have tried to maintain a reasonable and affordable fee scale. In fact we charge less than other private schools. We must also take into account the need to improve teacher salaries and the cost to provide a curriculum that will prepare our students for the workforce in this country.”¹⁸

However, it remains an important challenge for SA in Liberia – both as a Christian organization with a special reputation, and as a receiver of Norwegian Government support explicitly aiming at the poorest, to find a way to solve the problem of *practical* exclusion from good, affordable schooling for children from the poorest layers of society.

One could argue that Len Millar and William Booth should lower their fees to a level where everybody in their catchment area could afford to send their children there. The immediate result, however, could be that the schools either became overcrowded or would have to start a “lottery of admission”. In both cases the result in a medium long range certainly would be a loss in prestige since the more resourceful and prestigious families would drop out. But eventually the quality would also fall, since there would be no budgets to keep good teachers and help maintain good quality teaching.

An alternative solution could be continuous donor support, for instance from NORAD, strictly to be allocated for general reduction of fees. This could be a viable solution according to some quality criteria, but it would collide with the criteria of sustainability of educational institutions. Consequently, for NORAD and other potential donors, it is important to clarify whether they should target their educational support exclusively towards the most marginal socio-economic groups or whether they should do “two things simultaneously”:

¹⁸ Comment given in response to an earlier draft of the present report

To avoid some of the most negative consequences of a prolonged operational support, a solution could be to design a program of *especially destined support* to the lowest income groups. Such a program should for practical reasons be delimited to the natural catchments area of the two SA schools (distance from the school and maximum income as main criteria). Finally it should include budgets for a gradual upgrading of didactical material to the schools over a limited period of time and some pedagogical training/upgrading for the teachers involved¹⁹.

A way to strengthen the local responsibility for such a socio-economic profile in the SA schools in a longer perspective, could be to support the establishment of a Salvation Army fund that offer grants to students from poor backgrounds, and to teachers for their further education as well as support to the professional teams in each school for renewal of teaching aids, laboratory instruments and literature.

Student grants, youth homes and other helping measures.

The Salvation Army is well aware that not every family in Liberia can afford to send their children to SA schools. Partly this is something the organization has to face – they can't help all – partly it is something they try to cope with from case to case when the situation becomes very dramatic for an individual child they know.

In some cases then, the youth home is the right place for such a child, where she or he will live together with other children in an orphanage close to Len Millar School. The Salvation Army will take custody of the child, it will go to an SA school and the organization will carry all costs for food, housing, clothes, student fees and books.

In some cases SA offers grants to exceptionally gifted students whose parents can't afford to pay ordinary fees. The organization can also be helpful in accepting postponed payment if there are special, temporal reasons why fees can't be paid.

For some students leaving high school, especially students from the SA orphanages with good grades, SA will help to look up grants in Liberia or internationally, assist in making a good application and supporting the student economically, practically and morally throughout their university years if they are accepted.

One way of supporting young men and women just graduated from SA high schools and who can't afford to enter university immediately, is to offer them jobs in the organization. The evaluator met both school guards, drivers, cleaners and personnel at the orphanages who were SA high school graduates.

4.5 Teacher qualifications and teaching competence

Reputation of Salvation Army teachers

The assessment of teacher qualifications and competence in SA schools is based on interviews with parents of children in elementary and high school age, both in SA schools and others, teachers and school leaders in other private and public schools as well as information from principals in SA schools and the Secretary for schools. There is of course no direct connection between *reputation* and *de facto teaching competence*.

¹⁹ Such support to the teachers could be helpful in avoiding that teaching pupils from the marginal groups loss associated with loss of social /professional prestige.

Neither is it possible to infer directly from *salaries paid, formal qualifications and similar objective criteria* to the *practical qualifications* of the teachers. But all these factors together - especially if they all point in the same direction - give a fairly good indication of where a defined group of teachers places itself compared to other groups as a whole.

It is a fact that all people interviewed during the evaluation gave positive assessments both of the quality of teaching and of the teacher qualifications. So there is no doubt that SA schools have a good reputation for offering high quality teaching. Parents in particular were interested in the teachers' capability to maintain *classroom discipline* and a good communication with them as guardians, and this was demands that the SA schools were able to meet. Especially they mentioned the need for rapid notice when there were discipline problems and when pupils began to achieve below what was expected of them at home.

Recruitment and criteria for recruitment

The teachers at Len Millar and William Booth schools are recruited on the open labor market for teachers in Monrovia. The schools advertise broadly when they have a vacant post or need to increase the number of teachers. Adversely, SA schools are regarded by teachers as a normal work place where your formal qualifications and teaching experience are the important criteria for employment. Some teachers are members of one of the Salvation Army corps' in Monrovia, but such membership is generally not a criteria for employment. An exception is the teaching of doctrine, where SA membership and training is required.

The Secretary for schools confirms that all SA teachers have courses, certificates or academic degrees above high school level. Exceptions are some of those who teach doctrine who are still high school graduates. Teachers in the junior high and senior high levels of Len Millar and William Booth schools, all teach their specialties from university or teacher training school. Some teach only one subject at all levels in junior and senior high as did one math teacher. Others teach two or three related subjects such as biology, physics and chemistry, or geography and history.

Len Millar school has a sports director, Mr. Eliah K. Sowen, who is also a teacher in doctrine. As a sports director he is responsible for organizing all kinds of sports activities at the school – partly during the sport period on Fridays after the lunch break where all pupils participate, partly as a voluntary activity on afternoons. He is responsible for forming basketball, kickball and football teams and organizes interclass leagues. Mr. Eliah K. Sowen is also Len Millars representative in the planning of interschool matches and leagues.

Mr. Julius E. Fayiah is head of the Musical department at Len Millar School. He directs a choir for the students from 7th to 12th grade two days a week after school hours. He also organizes training in different musical instruments, but as the school cannot afford to buy instruments, they are dependant on the possibility of borrowing instruments for these lessons.

Salvation Army as an employer

Interviews with teachers and principals from other schools, gave the impression that SA schools have a good reputation as an employer. Among the specific characteristics mentioned was that SA schools are paying good or average salaries compared to other private schools - See table no 4.5.1 – *but that salaries are paid regularly and on time*. More important therefore becomes the fact that SA schools are known for maintaining good discipline and being well organized.

Qualifications and competence of SA teachers

On the basis of this, it is safe to assess that SA teachers as a group, are among the best qualified in Monrovia County and among the groups with the highest formal qualification in the county and probably in the country as a whole.

The problem for Len Millar School and William Booth, seems to be not that of attracting good teachers, but more of keeping them. If this is true, the explanation could be that in a tough labor market for younger, trained teachers, the two SA schools are winners when it comes to getting the best qualified. But because of the good reputation of the schools, to have a few years of experience from LM and WB on your CV makes you even more attractive on the teacher labor market, and the SA schools therefore become good stepping stones for a permanent post at schools that pay the highest salaries. As the director of Len Millar Elementary school, Mrs. Egbinda F. Brima, put it:

“3 out of 18 teachers have quit after this summer and has been replaced. They go to greener pastures due to low salaries here in Len Millar.”

The impression after visiting the two combined schools on two different occasions, was that the Salvation Army as a school operator attracts good teachers and manages to maintain high quality instruction despite a severe scarcity of pedagogical equipment and ordinary teaching materials. The problem with giving low priority to teaching material, might be that it makes Len Millar and William Booth even more vulnerable to a rapid turnover of their best teachers. The leadership of The Salvation Army in Liberia together with the Secretary for schools should discuss the possibility for a substantial increase in the budgets for pedagogical equipment and teaching materials, if not permanently, at least for a period of one to two years. Each well planned investment in equipment will have a long term positive impact on the professional environment and the experience of teaching. The effect can be prolonged by keeping a lower but sufficient budget for maintenance, repair and replacement.

If improvements of the pedagogical equipment have a stimulating and satisfying effect on the teaching personnel and improve stability, so will also investments in professional courses – for instance in the use of computer technology or further education in different specializations within special education. The assumption is that such actions will be well invested money – both cheaper and more effective than trying to compete with more prestigious schools in salaries: There will always be schools who pay better no matter how much salaries are increased. Investments in equipment and the theoretical and practical competence of the personnel is well invested money even if it cannot totally prevent a certain drain of good teachers with opportunities.

The salary issue – a question of decency

All this, though, is not to say that a certain increase in teachers and principals salaries would not be well invested money. But the evaluator regards this not so much a strategic necessity in the present “teacher market situation” as simply a moral and political one. **Teachers who have invested so much time, money and effort in their education and who are doing an important job every day under very difficult working conditions for Liberia’s young generation, simply deserve a decent salary. The average teacher salary in Liberia today, also in the private sector is simply not decent. Of course this is first and foremost a government responsibility, but it is also a challenge for SA and all other non-profit private school operators to defend workers rights and take a global look at the functioning of the education sector.** At the moment, both *teachers*, who need to double their salaries at least²⁰ and *parents* who should pay half of what they do to keep their children in school, will need the solidarity of influential public actors like school owners to be able to influence the new governments education politics.

4.6 Pedagogical leadership

While discussing the issues above of *classroom discipline, flow of information* between the school and the home and the *quality of instruction*, we see that all these aspects of quality in education are closely interlinked. This means that the full effect of one positive factor, such as “good teachers” can only be achieved if the other factors also maintain a certain level. The responsibility of balancing the investments in each factor and keeping all factors above their minimum functional level, ultimately rests with the school owner. However, depending of the degree of autonomy of each school, the administrative and pedagogical competence of the principal and the deputy principals is also a decisive factor in building a well functioning school community.

The two schools each have 2 principals – one for elementary school and one for high school – and 4 deputy principals – one for administration and one for instruction at each level. This makes a total of 12 pedagogical leaders altogether in the SA schools. The principals of the elementary branches were women while the high school principals were men. There were 6 male deputy principals and two women – the latter both working at the elementary branch of Len Millar school in Monrovia.

To the degree that the professional profile of the principals was mapped, they can be characterized as pedagogues with an A level teachers certificate and several years of practice – both as teachers and as principals or deputy principals. Some were active, uniformed members of a Salvation Army corps, others were members of other congregations.

The general impression of the evaluator after the visits and interviews with principals and deputy principals was that the schools have dedicated, well qualified principals and vice principals and that the schools seem well administered despite a very difficult situation in terms of electronic equipment, working space and working environment. There were no computers or photocopy

²⁰ based on very simple calculations of for instance the market price of rice necessary for a family of 5, which in September 2005 was approximately 30 US\$ pr month. An average SA teacher earns between 43,5 US\$ and 51 US\$, the SA principals earn 73 US\$ while an average teacher in a government school earns 20 US\$ pr month “pr. course” (full time job).

machines, lists were made by handwriting and the offices did not have electric current and electric light. Even at noon, it was so dark in the principals office at Len Millar that the evaluator had difficulties in reading from a document.

It is recommended that sufficient economical resources are allocated to the installation of electric current in the schools or at least the administrative departments. Further it is recommended that sufficient resources are allocated to the acquisition of one or two computers for the administrative departments of each of the SA schools and that the administrative personnel get the computer training necessary for using the most common administrative computer programs.

4.7 Quality of teaching

Several frame factors determining the quality of teaching have already been discussed above. Now we will discuss more in detail some of the factors that are directly at work in the classroom during lessons and which therefore directly influence the everyday learning outcome for the pupils.

Severe lack of textbooks in all schools, private and public

A problem that seems to be experienced in all elementary and high schools throughout Monrovia, including the SA schools, is the notorious shortage of textbooks in practically all subjects. This problem is a complex one, since it is not only a question of school budgets and economic capacity of the student households. **Information given by principals in several schools, confirms that books in most subjects are simply not for sale anywhere in Monrovia at present. If they were, they would anyhow not be Liberian, since there was no text book production in Liberia during the civil war or after.** They would therefore not be specially designed to support the national syllabuses and/or the WAEC syllabuses. The exception is the series of textbooks (pupils books) and teachers manuals that have been produced for the Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) run by the Refugee Council of Norway's Mission to Liberia in cooperation with UNICEF. But these books are exclusively distributed through the UNICEF system to IDP-camps in Liberia where ALPs have been established.

When asked about the general situation in the Liberian education sector, the deputy Minister of Education Mr. Ben also stressed the urgent need for all kinds of teaching equipment and especially text books. Access to affordable, good quality text books in all subjects which in a good way reflect the life and challenges of today's Liberia is one of the main priorities of the Government. Again this is both an economical and a technical/professional problem. Because of the civil war and the social and economical crisis in Liberia the last decade, professionals of all kinds, also within the education sector have either fled the country or been forced to take up other income generating work. To find and pay for instance authors to take the challenge of writing a new generation of textbooks in all subjects and for all grades in the primary and high school system, is quite a challenge. But the deputy minister maintained that the biggest problem was the economical one. **The same is the case when it comes to developing new and modernized national curricula.** However, interviews with the deans of the Pedagogical faculties of Tubman University and Stella Maris Polytechnic revealed that there are still many dedicated and competent professionals working in the education

sector who are willing to take on these challenges if they are offered a decent salary and project resources.

Special aulas, laboratories and workshops

One point we have already mentioned is the severe scarcity or total lack of instruments and other equipment in the aulas for physics, chemistry and biology. Other schools, both the Catholic Cathedral High School and the government school G.W.Gibson, had insufficient or no such equipment. But while Cathedral High School had quite a lot of instruments to demonstrate both physical and chemical experiments²¹, **William Booth did not have any equipment or chemical substances at all and were using the lab as an ordinary classroom.**

Cathedral High School and G.W. Gibson Senior High School both had libraries. At Cathedral it was well equipped and in use with a librarian to help the pupils. It was open for pupils to do their homework and study a couple of hours after school. At G. W. Gibson, the library needed repair after flooding, but there were a lot of books there and they already had a schedule of fixed hours every week for each class to visit the library to study and do projects. **Len Millar had a small but well functioning library while at William Booth they were using their very small library as an ordinary classroom.**

Pedagogical aids

Maps, demonstration charts showing famous places and phenomena, charts showing birds, animals and plants, illustrations to stories or photos of important historical events; none of these pedagogical aids were anywhere to be seen in the two Salvation Army schools. Neither did the pupils have their own textbook with pictures of any such phenomena as mentioned.

Observation 4.6.1

A teacher in the fourth grade at William Booth primary school taught his class natural science. The theme was energy and sources of energy. He lectured about types of batteries, generators running on fuel, hydroelectric energy and atomic energy, renewable and not renewable sources of energy. His pupils were listening carefully and responded well to his control questions. There were no batteries in the classroom, no hand driven generator to induce electricity, no picture of the huge (now damaged) oil based power plant outside Monrovia or for instance the Aswan dam in Egypt. Neither did the pupils have their own textbook with pictures of any such phenomena. The pupils were listening carefully while copying the illustrations their teacher made on the blackboard.

The point in the above episode is not that pupils can't learn well what the curriculum demands when they have no audiovisual aids. It is rather that the teacher had nothing to help him create a richer and more exiting experience for the pupils then and there and of course to create a more precise image of what he was trying to bring across with his explanation. It is a fact that some children are more visually oriented in their attention and memory while others are more auditive. The possibility to vary between different

²¹ although they had lent most of its chemical substances to the chemical laboratories at Monrovia University

ways of presenting the curriculum is therefore an important element in the individualization of the teaching and to support those who are slower learners. There are always some pupils in a class who more than others need to see and touch to fully understand what the teacher is talking about.

Observation 4.6.2

The difficult resource situation is well illustrated by the fact that not even the youngest pupils – the 3 and 4 year olds in the ABC-class had any audio-visual teaching aids in their classroom. Since the system for these very small ones already is rather “school-like” in Liberia, with an ordinary classroom, benches for three kids and teachers desk and a blackboard, a flannelboard, wall charts with color pictures or color chalk to assist the teachers instructions would make a lot of difference.

Despite the lack of teaching aids of any kind, there was an impressively calm atmosphere in the ABC and kindergarden-classes, both in William Booth where the observation was more systematic and in Len Millar where the observation was more superficial. The kids seemed calm and content, the attention was excellent and the small ones were listening carefully to their teacher and concentrating on their work.

The same observations as described in Observation box 4.6.2 were made in Kindergarden I and II (the two following years after ABC) and in fact all the way through primary school and up to senior high. The general picture was overcrowded, dark classrooms (especially on rainy days) with between 40 and 50 pupils, the teacher having full attention and the pupils busy copying whatever the teacher carefully wrote up on the blackboard.

Summing up this part, it is fair to say that observations, interviews with pupils, teachers and principals gave the clear impression that the Salvation Army schools offer well structured instruction in a calm and pleasant atmosphere. All teachers demonstrate well planned lessons and pedagogically recognized methods such as well arranged use of blackboard, memorizing techniques and alternation between teacher and pupil activity. Due to very good discipline in class, it was possible to maintain good working conditions despite a teacher – pupil ratio of 1 : 50. That the overall assessment of the quality of teaching ends up being so positive despite a critical lack of teaching aids and equipment, confirms what has already been said above about very competent teacher and staff in the SA schools

4.8 Outcome of the learning process – formal results, relative standing of SA school and relevance of knowledge and competencies

Two parameters

The learning process in SA schools and its outcome, can of course be measured or commented on along many different parameters. Here we will focus on two which in the present situation are regarded as the most important.

The first parameter is the one of *formal results in numerical categories* such as average marks and percentages of pupils in each score group in WAEC exams after 6th, 9th and 12th grade. This dimension is important because the results here are regarded as important indicators of quality in education among the Liberians. If one has the ambition of being a well respected and influential actor within the education sector in

Liberia, one needs to have a reputation as a good school – that is capable of helping the pupils to achieve good results in WAEC exams. As we shall see, in this respect the Salvation Army schools are remarkably successful – remarkably in the sense that as a school operator SA is still relatively small.

The second parameter is *relevance* – in terms of offering education that lead to professions and jobs that are needed in today’s Liberia and to job opportunities that can support a person and his or her family. In this respect it is more doubtful whether the Salvation Army schools have succeeded. At least the picture here is more difficult to analyze.

Formal results – relative standing of SA schools

To start with the first parameter, the Salvation army schools are competing on the absolute top level among the best private schools in Liberia - in academic achievements as well as in sports and music. Apart from unanimously positive evaluations from pupils and their parents concerning the quality of teaching in SA schools, there is also more objective, comparative data confirming this picture in a national perspective. For a start, William Booth School had the third best score in Liberia in the WAEC exams for 2003/2004. Len Millar School has achieved good results too, but during this years tests, their scores came out lower than expected. The explanation given for this by the principal, was problems with the test situation. According to the him, the graduates achieved far below their capacity because they were not familiar with the test situation. Before the WAEC exams next year, the school will make a test exam creating an ambient similar to what the pupils will meet at the real exam. The WAEC exams are held at an other school with teachers from “competing institutions” acting as guards.

Table 4.7.1: WAEC-results Len Millar 2003/4

	7'th grade	9'th grade	12'th grade	Total Len Millar
Passed	488	70	110	668
Failed	7	43	11	61
Absentees	-	2	-	-
Percentage of failures / passes	1,4 / 98,6	37,4 / 60,8	9,1 / 90,9	8,4 / 91,6

Other “hard data” that can give some indication about the quality of teaching at the SA schools, are for instance the promotion and drop out rates. At Len Millar high school division (7'th to 12'th grade), 61 students of a total of 668 failed to be promoted or dropped out during the school year. This means that 91 % of the students were promoted. The deputy principal for instruction thinks that this result – which he considers very good compared to the average in Monrovia – is due to Len Millar School’s system of counseling students who have started to drop out, students who

perform below the expected or students who are performing close to the lower limit for not being promoted (below 70% on their final average).

In sports as well, the SA schools have shown outstanding results. As mentioned above, the SA schools are members of the Liberian Interschool Sports Association organizing leagues in soccer football, kickball and basketball. In the school year 2004/2005 the basketball team of Len Millar School won the finals and became national champion. Len Millar was also champion for three consecutive years on tracking and many athletes from Len Millar are in the National Youth Team who last year participated in international youth competitions in Togo, the Ivory Coast, Kenya and Benin.

In 2003 the Len Millar School Choir won the first prize in a national contest. The finals took place in the National Hall in Monrovia.

Relevance in relation to job opportunities and demands in the Liberian society

So far we have been focusing on the relative academic status and achievements in sports and cultural activities in SA schools as compared to other schools in Liberia. Let us now take a look at the outcome of the teaching in terms of theoretical and practical competencies and their relevance in relation to the needs and demands in Liberian society.

The issue of relevance of the curriculums and syllabuses in SA schools is a complex one. First of all – SA schools follow the same governing principals, rules and regulations as do all schools in Liberia, whether they are private or governmental, non-profit or commercial. This is so because all schools that want to be successful in competing for students in this market-like situation, have to be a partner in the WAEC system. **Being a system that standardizes exams, marks and demands between five West-African countries, by necessity its agreed regulations and curriculums cannot be too rooted in the local context of the pupils. But in addition, the regulations and curriculums defining the requirement for each consecutive exam from primary level (end of 6th grade) through junior high level (end of 9th grade) to senior high level (end of 12th grade) demonstrate an unambiguous focus on academic and theoretical competence aiming at imparting general rather than practical knowledge. So this inclination towards the academic, general knowledge and competence is also a cultural phenomenon, and - as often commented by education officers and politicians in Africa – a heritage from the colonial era.**

Observation 4.7.1

As an example, both the WAEC syllabus for economics (12th grade) and the corresponding curriculum for economics in the Liberia National Curriculum (Liberia National Curriculum, senior high, social studies, Ministry of Education 1996), focus entirely on market theory, macro economic theory, money politics, money and banking business organization and so forth. Although the curriculum mentions how to make these themes relevant for everyday life, there is no emphasis what so ever on personal skills and practical knowledge. Examples of a more practical approach could have been economic priorities and allocations of time and resources, economic planning, budgeting and different systems of accounting. Further one could both focus on home budgeting and accounting and economic planning for a small private enterprise or home industry. Such knowledge would be of great importance for 18 – 19 year old graduates from SA high schools who strive to set up their own workshop of some kind to make a living.

Academic versus Vocational training

This last point actualizes the issue of an academic versus a vocational emphasis in high school. In Liberia as in many other countries in the South, there is a clear tendency that the most popular and most prestigious type of education is the purely academic one leading to a high school certificate and giving direct or indirect access to university studies. This is still so, even though just a small percentage of high school graduates today can afford to pay for university courses and get an academic degree. Job opportunities - both for high school graduates and for academics with lower university degrees - are very scarce in today's Liberia, forcing young high school graduates and university candidates to take unskilled work of any kind or to set up a small business. In Liberia - probably even more than in most other poor countries - you need to have rich parents or a kind personal donor to be able to pay your student fees. Even in the public V.S. Tubman University in Monrovia, the entrance fees and all kinds of levies²² are so high that they go far beyond the capacity of an ordinary "middle class family".

Table 4.7.2: Student fees and other fees and levies at some Universities

	Student fees pr Semester	Extra fees, levies	Complete course
V.S. Tubman University	Less than 100	?	?
International Institute of Computer Studies (IICS)	100 US \$	-	350 US\$
Stella Maris Polytechnic	260 US \$	Registration fee 30 US\$	-
Don Bosco Polytechnic	?	?	?

However, all educational officials we met and interviewed²³ - agreed that the lack of opportunities for a vocational training is a major problem and a challenge that Liberian politicians and educationalist have to address in the years to come. Liberia is in desperate need for professionals in all kinds of crafts and technical vocations. For students leaving high school, the situation is that there is a huge potential for almost any skilled craftsman to make a good living as employee or by setting up a private enterprise, while there are almost no traditional white collar jobs vacant. For them it would be a much better start to leave high school with a craft or technical diploma, combined with practical competence in how to set up and run a business, than today's academic certificate. The challenge for the school system in this respect is both an economical one and a technical / professional one: A vocational workshop fully equipped with machinery is much more expensive to set up than an ordinary classroom. Further, skilled workers and craftspeople in today's Liberia, who are willing give up a good business in his or her field of practice in exchange for a teaching career in the same field, are hard to come by. To attract this type of teacher one would have to double today's salaries at least.

²² such as the examination levy and the document levy

²³ the Secretary for Schools at SA Ernest Suah, the SA consultant Steven W. Weah, principals of high schools, deans at universities etc.

The Deputy Minister of Education, Mr. Peter N. Ben when addressing this issue, said that the Ministry of Education is very much aware of the need for vocational and occupational courses and specializations in high school. On a short term basis the problem cannot be solved without substantial support technically and financially from the international community. But both the World Bank and The European Commission have already addressed this urgent problem and in a recent meeting in Dakar for high ranking officials on the continent, Liberia was promised support to the education sector as soon as the new Government come up with an updated PRSP

Table 4.7.3: Vocational training institutions in Liberia 2005

<p>Liberia Opportunity of Industrialization Center (LOIC)</p> <p>LOIC was set up after the last war for people who would like to have a skill, training students in carpentry, pastry, shoemaking, auto mechanics, tying and dyeing, tillary, agriculture and electricity.</p> <p>MVTC Monrovia Vocational Training Center</p> <p>Several informants mentioned this center, but it was not confirmed during the evaluators stay in Liberia that it is operating at the moment, and if it does, what courses they offer and how many students they have.</p> <p>Don Bosco Rehabilitation & Skills Training Programme. (DBRSTP)</p> <p>Founded in 1991 through a joint initiative of UNICEF and the Salesians of Don Bosco the DBRSTP aims at reaching disadvantaged youth aged between late teens and 26 with rehabilitative skills training and counselling. The DBRSTP's Executive Director Mulbah Johnson says Liberia's youth must be helped to make up for the years lost as result of the war by giving them marketable skills so that they can contribute their technical quota in the rebuilding of the country.</p> <p>Hence the DBRSTP offers skills training in carpentry, masonry, agriculture, plumbing, auto mechanics, metal works, and electricity. Currently working in four counties - Montserrado, Bong, Bassa, and Bomi - reaching some 1,300 trainees, the DBRSTP is now a household name for youth empowerment in Liberia. Since 1994, in collaboration with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, the DBRSTP has also provided skills training for Sierra Leonean refugees in Liberia. Additionally the DBRSTP has, since 1993, been involved in technological research, leading to the small-scale production of local, low-cost and appropriate building materials for use by the local construction industry. Concrete-fibre roofing tiles, laterite bricks, concrete drainpipes, and terrazzo tiles have received research attention and are currently in small-scale production. The DBRSTP also provides awareness and technical support to small contractors and tradesmen. The production unit is providing practical work opportunities for its trainees; thus increasing their involvement in community rehabilitation efforts. Feasibility studies are in hand for DBRSTP's expansion into Lofa and Sinoe counties. Expansion to any country depends on the availability of funds to meet the needs of the youth there.</p>
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4.9 Special needs education

There is at the moment no special needs education classes or groups in the SA school system. Neither are there special activities or programs going on to cope with or compensate for the special pedagogical needs of individual pupils. The issue was not discussed directly with the Secretary for schools but some discussions gave indications of how the issue of learning disabilities is being dealt with in the school system of Liberia in general and in SA schools in particular. In short it seems that the system of entrance tests for all applicants at any level from kindergarten and upwards, effectively excludes from the classes all children who have a learning problem severe enough to hamper their acquisition of basic skills and knowledge.

It was confirmed by the principal at William Booth elementary school that some children fail at the entrance test for kindergarten. They might pass on a later occasion, but sometimes their learning problem is so severe that they will never meet the basic requirements unless they get special training. With a very difficult economical situation in the country and with very few specialists and institutions focusing on learning problems, many children will be permanently excluded from the educational system.

4.10 Gender

The gender issue is an important quality issue in education. The principals were asked about the gender policy in SA schools in general and in their school in particular. **It was confirmed that boys and girls should have the same opportunities to develop their personal interests and capacities and to choose between different options of subjects and activities. However, there are some differences in opportunity when it comes to types of sports activities open to boys and girls, but both boys and girls practice sports on Fridays.** The SA schools participate in interschool leagues in team sports like soccer football, kickball and basketball, all organized by the Liberian Interschool Sports Association. All SA teams participating in these leagues are boy teams, but both boys and girls from SA schools participate in the tracking competitions.

The problem of gender inequality in SA schools when it comes to percentages of boys and girls dropping out of school at an early age and percentages of pupils graduating from elementary school, junior high and senior high, seems to reflect the general situation of inequality in Liberia. Random counting in classes at the two SA schools and in different grades show a falling tendency from more or less a 50 –50 percent distribution in lower elementary school classes up to a 66,6 –33,3 percent distribution in favor of the boys in some senior high school classes. However, it is not possible to regard these examples as representative for the overall situation in SA schools, since there were no statistics available showing the gender distribution at different levels and in different grades.

4.11 HIV/AIDS information

A former student at Len Millar, Cyrus B. Sneh who has studied 4 years after high school at a paramedical institute, now leads a HIV/AIDS information program started by SA in Liberia.

The first HIV/AIDS case was detected in Liberia in 1986. From 1986 to 2005 there has been a steady annual increase and the growth rate is now 12 % pr year. In 2005 there was 15-16000 cases in Liberia. A part of the project is directed towards schools and also towards Christian youth clubs and churches and rural communities. For schools the project has introduced a program called Health Club which is offered both to SA schools and other schools. Members of the Health Club can be students in all junior high and senior high school grades. They will get instruction to become certified health informants and participate in health information campaigns about HIV/AIDS, malnutrition and dehydration. Role-plays are prepared and video-shows produced at the schools and the students form teams that will go out in the community to present their programs.

The Health Club Program will be offered as a so called *Extra Curricular Activity* to hopefully all schools in Liberia, but in SA schools the plan is to make the Health Club a part of the curriculum and to dedicate a portion of the sport-section on Fridays to this.

Mr. Cyrus B. Sneh has participated in a SA infield training program in Nigeria and was there taught the Palava-Hut method using a dialogue/discussion approach with elders in traditional communities. A team has now been set up in Buchana County and this method might be taught and then applied in rural communities there. Special SA teams will focus on information in churches and religious communities.

The problems as presented by Mr. Sneh, are mainly financial. They need financing for the production of instruction material, a portable computer and a video canon. Mr Sneh also wished to mention the high cost of transportation and time consuming problems of transporting heavy electronic equipment on bad roads in the interior. The project needs a vehicle to solve these problems.

The evaluator finds this project very interesting and it seems like a good model for HIV/AIDS information in schools. The information material and the main messages as they were presented to the evaluator seemed balanced enough to be functional also outside religious circles and direct enough to be effective. As expected, the main focus is on abstinence and faithfulness, but the condom is also part of the message²⁴. The particularly strong part seems to be the “frankness” of the approach where African instructors talk about the predisposing factors as inherent in ordinary city and village life. Domestic violence and abuse and disharmony in the home might lead to extramarital sex, which again leads to more violence and disharmony. Specific cultural practices such as polygamy also increases the vulnerability to the pandemic.

The Salvation Army in Norway should look closer into this project and see if there are possibilities to build a NORAD/BN-supported project around this local initiative, for instance in coordination with other NGOs working specifically on AIDS information in West Africa²⁵ and Southern Africa²⁶.

4.12 Salvation Army Teacher Training College

Background – goals and justification

The decision to start a Salvation Army Teacher Training College in Monrovia was based on the following chain of argument and assessment of the situation in the Liberian education sector.

First of all the Application for Support (Salvation Army 2004:4) states that the project has been planned within the framework of the overall goal of

“...providing access to education of good quality in Liberia in an atmosphere characterized by a holistic perspective on the human being”.

²⁴ ABC on HIV/AIDS: (A)bstinence, “B” faithful and (C)ondom,

²⁵ SIK in cooperation with the Norwegian Missionary Society working in Cameroon

²⁶ LINS working in South Africa and Zambia

Specifically the project aims at improving the access to competent teachers with a minimum of a C-certificate for Salvation Army Schools in particular, but of course also for other primary and secondary schools in the country. In addition to the training of new teachers, the project also aims at the certification and upgrading of teachers already working in the Liberian school system.

The application for support further states that there is an urgent need for more experienced, qualified and formally certified teachers on the “free teacher market” in Liberia. This is true, to the extent that there is competition among the schools, especially the best private schools among which we find Len Millar and William Booth, for the best teachers. The turnover of qualified and competent teachers is quite high. This is mostly due to the fact that the salaries are so critically low, that the prospect of even the least raise will lead a teacher to move to a new job, even though they might like their present work, their colleagues and their employer very much and feel a great deal of loyalty towards for instance the Salvation Army.

The solution the Salvation Army Headquarters suggests to this problem of scarcity of teaching personnel, is to increase the capacity of teacher training by building, equipping and running a new college. We will therefore look further into this assumption.

Pedagogical competence, administrative competence and organizational strength

In its application, the Salvation Armies in Norway and Liberia argue that both institutions - separately and together - have the organizational strength both to plan, to construct and to run administratively such an enterprise. **The fact that the secretariat for education already have shown that they can administer two big combined primary/high schools with 1300 pupils each, a teaching staff of around 30 and other staff and do it well, is a strong argument that the organization would also be capable of administering a higher education institution.**

The professional qualifications needed – for instance university degrees in all necessary subjects, teaching experience and experience in teaching supervision, degrees in different aspects of pedagogy – **are not available within the Salvation Army organization, but both the principals in each school and the staff personnel at the headquarters have good personal contacts and access to networks within the university sector in Monrovia.** The private consultant Mr. Taweh Johnson, a former principal in Len Millar School, now acting as the Salvation Army’s facilitator and contact in their dealings with the Ministry of Education and other higher education institutions, will be an important resource for SA when it is time for recruiting personnel and starting up the new institution.

The role of a Salvation Army Teacher Training College in a sector perspective

The statement in the application for support that “..there are many well-qualified personnel just waiting for a job where they will be paid”, is still true enough in 2005, but only to the extent that one chooses to look at the issue from a very narrow educational operator perspective – which we of course will not. In conversations with the Teacher Training College of V.S. Tubman University, a possibly competing institution in this respect, Dean Euphemia K. Abdullai expresses deep concern for what she thinks is an increasing, unhealthy commercialisation within the professional labour market in general and the teacher profession in particular. She also expressed concern

for what she saw as a harmful competition between educational organizations based in too narrow criteria. This goes for both the university and college level, the high school level and the primary level of education. More and more, *salary* replaces other means of attracting the best personnel, and more and more it seems like competitiveness, career consciousness and formal competence seem to be the personal qualities and qualifications honoured, instead of for instance dedication, moral standards and practical experience. Her advise was for the teacher training institutions instead to start cooperating, for instance sharing personnel, premises, teaching aids and experience, in order to offer *good training* for all teacher students in *decent surroundings* and at an *affordable price*.

As was also confirmed by the Dean at Stella Maris Polytechnic, sister Mary Laurene Brown, **the main concern for in fact all teacher training colleges in Liberia at the moment is not lack of institutional capacity to train teachers but to get enough applicants.**

Information 4.11.1

The highest number of applicants for one teacher training course at Stella Maris Polytechnic during the last few years is 6. Stella Maris needs 15 students to start a new course. The present courses are subventioned. In Liberia today there is not enough students who are willing to use their scarce financial resources to “buy” an expensive teacher training instead of almost any other university course. It is generally not cheaper to study teaching than for instance business administration, law or computer science. Moreover, young people are well aware that after four years at the teacher training college you will find yourself either jobless or working as a teacher for a very low salary. The teacher salaries in 2005 cannot even compete with the (almost) unskilled work of for instance a driver or the ambulant business person at the nearest market.

The critically low salaries and the critically low prestige of the teacher profession keep students from applying for teacher training. The lack of incentive to become a teacher is a severe obstacle to the development of the education sector in Liberia. Combining the statements from Tubman University and Stella Maris College, a dilemma emerges: On one hand, teacher salaries are so low in Liberia at the moment that it severely affects the incitement for young people to become teachers while also destroying the prestige of the profession in general. At the same time, while obliged to increase the salary to a decent level, the authorities should not accept that the economical aspect alone become the only focus in educational policies.

As has become evident, the situation of heavy competition between educational institutions for qualified personnel is a very complex and difficult problem to solve, especially if an overall *sector* approach not is applied. (And – as has been argued above - this goes for most other problems related to the education-for-all issue in Liberia as well.). So in what way can The Salvation Army contribute to the overall strategy?

It seems clear that the premises of The Salvation Army, close to the Tubman University and not far from Stella Maris Polytechnic, when finished some time in the course of 2006, can become a very important factor in the struggle to restore the prestige and popularity of the teaching profession. But to achieve this, cooperation with colleges and universities already offering good quality teaching is a core precondition. The problem of offering affordable studies with the prospect

of having a decently paid job afterwards must be met through cooperation and a certain degree of specialization.

The need for vocational training

To indicate a possible course ahead for SA's project on teacher training, the evaluator wants to point at the severe lack of vocational training in today's high school system of Liberia. People interviewed at all levels in the school sector, including the Deputy Minister of Education, pointed to the problem of increasing unemployment among high school graduates and the problems of paying for university or other professional training courses. From a macro-economic perspective as well, the country needs to restore and further develop the capacity to produce ordinary consumer products of all kinds and a consumer market. The country needs skilled workers and craftspeople to develop a national industry. **Many different forms of vocational training are very much needed in Liberia today, could be completed within the framework of high school as has been the trend in several other African countries.²⁷ Combined with training in the economic and administrative aspects of running a small business enterprise, and for instance in cooperation with NGOs involved in micro-credit in Liberia²⁸, such a vocational course could give young students with interests in crafts and small scale industry a very good start in their working careers. They could earn far more than they could expect as white collar employees with shorter university courses.**

The role of a Salvation Army vocational training centre in Monrovia could be twofold. With the high cost of machinery and equipment needed to furnish for instance carpentry, tailoring or car mechanic workshops, one should make use of the workshops both for training high school students in different vocations, for training skilled artisans in pedagogy and the didactics of vocational training and for income generation. Concerning income generation, it is a well known strategy for sustainable management of vocational training centres around the world to offer low cost and high quality service and repairs to the public at a limited scale.

Finally, as was also discussed with the deans of the Tubman University and the Stella Maris Polytechnic, the chemistry, physics and biology laboratories that should be found in a combined teacher training and high school / vocational centre, could also be made available for these two institutions. After years of civil war and a corrupt and incompetent government, the institutions have hardly any equipment left for their training of teacher students in practical and science subjects. In turn they have a lot of competent university lecturers in sciences. This gives a unique opportunity for mutual interchange and combination of resources.

The need for lower level teaching certificates for teachers in less populated areas

The other problem, which can be looked at separately or integrated into the former, is the need for lower level teaching certificates for the lesser populated and less accessible districts and counties of the country. In this field there are already some projects in function supported or run by national and international NGOs. Among others the teacher training institute of Tubman University is involved in a

²⁷ see for instance the case of Zimbabwe described in Johannessen, Tomlinson, Wirak 1999

²⁸ IBIS runs a micro-credit program in Liberia

UNESCO-financed project for upgrading of teachers from around the country with no or only lower teaching certificates. **But in this field there still seem to be a lot more to be done, and a new training centre such as the one SA has under construction, could without doubt be of great help in improving these courses.**

Recommendations concerning the Salvation Army teacher training project

The Deputy Minister of Education, Mr. Peter N. Ben when asked to comment on the plans of SA to build a teacher training college, said that the Ministry of Education is very much concerned about the need to strengthen both the teacher training and the vocational and occupational training. He had so far not heard of SA's plans and wanted to stress the necessity of an application to the Ministry presenting the project in all detail if this had not yet been done. With a new government soon in place, there is hope that an updated PRSP can be presented to foreign partners within short time. Both the World Bank and The European Commission have already promised to support the education sector. **When these important donors together with UN and international NGOs now join forces to strengthen the education sector, it is important that SA strengthens their contact with the representations of these institutions in Liberia. If SA want to play an important role in developing the education sector in the country, something which their TTC plans indicate, they should coordinate their activities in the teachers training and or vocational training field with other NGOs and institutions, both national and international.**

The Salvation Army should strengthen its School Secretariat with at least one new person. One model for the division of tasks and responsibilities is that one secretary will be responsible for the internal administration of the SA schools which is one of Mr. Ernest Suahs responsibilities today, while the other secretary would mainly take care of the developing of plans, curriculums, applications for support and so on concerning the further development of a TTC, while at the same time be responsible for lobbying and extending the network of SA in the field of international cooperation in education.

5 Conclusions

5.1 General Conclusions

As a new school year started last September, thousands of school children and youths gathered every morning, dressed up in their school uniforms, at hundreds of schools in all parts of the capital and all over the country. There were teachers waiting for them in the classrooms. They are generally well trained and experienced, but many have less formal qualifications than needed. They work long days, often full time at two or more schools at a salary that cannot even cover the expense of rice for a family.

All these activities presupposes great sacrifices by relatives and guardians to pay fees of different kinds and other expenses such as school uniforms. For the average lower middle class household with incomes based to a great extent on street-merchant economic activities, these expenses far exceed their monthly incomes. Most families who in 2005 send their children to The Salvation Army schools are struck by underemployment, unemployment and poverty,

Despite the encouraging fact that the schools function despite this difficult social and economic crisis, the general picture - as seen from the outside and compared to other countries in development - is still a school system in a severe crisis. The list below sums up the findings from a 10 day visit in Monrovia September 2005. Most bullet points are true also for the Salvation Army schools visited – Len Millar Elementary and High School in Monrovia, and William Booth Elementary and High School in Painsville.

- In the average school, teachers have to teach and pupils have to work in classrooms with no pedagogical aids or equipment what so ever, except for the blackboard. The average group of students pr classroom/teacher counts 50 and more in classrooms often no bigger than 20m².
- If there are special aulas such as laboratories, libraries or workshops, these aulas don't have equipment and cannot be used as intended. Instead they are being used as ordinary classrooms.
- The average school does not have textbooks for the main subjects available for the students during classes. Most schools don't even have a library with appropriate textbooks for each grade or for that matter – comprehensive textbooks of any kind.
- Most pupils cannot afford to buy the textbooks they need.
- If they had the financial resources, textbooks for the main subjects at any level from kindegarden to 12'th grade are almost impossible to come by in Monrovia or anywhere else in the country.
- For economic reasons there is a constant drain of the more experienced and best educated teachers out of the school system. This is mainly due to the extremely low wages but also to the conditions of work which demonstrate little respect for the teaching profession and threatens to take away any incentive to stay in the

school system. Only a great dedication and love of the profession make highly qualified teachers keep on working despite such humiliating conditions of work.

- When the more experienced and qualified teachers quit, the gap is filled with less experienced teachers.
- At the same time, as a result of these discouraging conditions of work, all regular teacher training programs at universities, colleges and institutes, are experiencing a recruitment crisis. While there are long lists of applicants and severe competition to be admitted at the faculties and departments of health studies, technical studies and economic-administrative studies, the teacher training colleges hardly have any applicants at all.
- The only explanation to the fact that pre-service and in-service teacher training courses of different duration are being started up, is because they are subventioned by UN programs or mother institutions abroad.
- The Salvation Army Schools are run by a typical school owner - the Salvation Army in Liberia and as such a non-governmental, non-profit organization and a Christian Church / organization. Other similar school owners, but much bigger, are The Catholic, The Methodist and the Baptist Churches of Liberia. The Salvation Army and their Secretariat for Education find themselves involved in all the above mentioned problematics.
- Still, the SA schools stand out as schools that in a relatively short time span and mainly in times of great social and political turbulence have managed to gain a reputation as good schools with high quality teaching and good discipline – the last issue being highly valued by all the interviewed parents and students. William Booth and Len Millar are in fact among the best schools in the country, despite the fact that their admittance fees are in the middle of the scale.

5.2 Specific conclusions on Salvation Army schools and school system

In this sub-section, assessments are written in ordinary Times-new-roman types, while recommendations are written in **Times-new-roman Bold**.

Organizational strength

Most administrative tasks of importance for the SA schools are taken care of integrally as part of the systems established to cover the whole SA organization in Liberia. This centralized system may be cost-saving, but it also puts a lot of responsibility and time consuming burdens on the Secretary for schools.

Despite the cost and effort involved, it should still be considered to invest in the strengthening of the education office with one more person. Either SA could employ a deputy secretary with broad administrative competence to take over a part of the present secretary's administrative responsibilities, or another secretary with independent responsibilities could be employed. With two secretaries in place, one post should be defined as mainly policy- and strategy-oriented focusing on strategic planning and networking with national and international contacts. By

strengthening the education office in this way, the important task of successfully completing the ongoing teacher training project with NORAD/BN/the Salvation Army in Norway, would become much more realistic.

An alternative, of course, would be a more decentralized system, where some main administrative tasks and responsibilities were handed over to the principal and deputy principal at each school. However, with the present shortage of both economical, technical and human resources available, the decentralization of these economical-administrative tasks is not at all an easy matter.

Integration and interaction with the education sector and educational discourses

To start from the top level, the organization is both properly registered as a school owner and operator. It is also well known and well recognized as a serious private operator in the school system both in the Ministry of Education, among government school authorities and among fellow private school operators such as the Catholic dioceses and the Methodist synods.

The acute shortage of textbooks that reflects the present situation in Liberia and the latest versions of the agreed national syllabuses, is an example of a pedagogical challenge that need to be addressed by professionals working within or in close cooperation with educational institutions. **To the evaluator it illustrates the need for a common *Forum for education in Liberia*.** Here school principals and teachers with long teaching experience in different subjects could meet with lecturers at the university and teacher training colleges as well as government officials from the Ministry of Education in order to coordinate efforts and expertise needed to solve such issues.

SA could play different roles in establishing such a forum. Due to the good reputation of the SA schools, the dedication of its teachers and principals and the seemingly good networks of the Secretary for schools, one of its roles could be to take initiative and form the interim board of a Forum – together with for instance secretaries for education in other major school owner organizations, deans and directors at universities.

At the district level the principals were well integrated in a network for pedagogical leaders, meeting regularly to discuss both practical and political / pedagogical issues. For example this Association of Principals share progress reports and information about students repeating class. This is being done to prevent pupils from “solving” their problem of being expelled from one school - for instance because of repeated failures in tests or irregular attendance – by simply applying to an other school *without presenting a leaving certificate* from the former.

From the point of view of securing students right to privacy and the obligation of the school administration to maintain professional secrecy, we suggest that focus would be set on the establishment of common requirements regarding documentation from each new student applying for inscription.

Local rootedness and neighborhood support

At the local, neighborhood level, each school seemed well rooted in its local community. A majority of the pupils came from the “natural catchment area” around the

school - that is the local neighborhood. There are other schools situated nearby both Len Millar and William Booth that offer education at the elementary and high school levels and that take lower student fees. Both SA schools in Monrovia were situated in quite poor areas, and parents were struggling hard to raise enough money to be able to give each of their children “at least some good years” at a Salvation Army school. Interviews with parents revealed that the SA school nearby was both their personal and their children’s first choice, and the main reason for this was because of *teaching quality* and the *discipline* maintained.

This positive attitude among students, parents and relatives, however, has not led to a marked involvement on the part of the community in running and developing the school. In that respect, the positive feelings and opinions towards the SA schools so far cannot be said to be more than a *potential* resource - as it is not yet manifest in the administrative structure of the schools.

None of the schools nor SA as a school owner count on an elected or appointed school board. Seemingly, William Booth School in Painesville recently has started the process of involving the community and the parents on a lower level of involvement in the administration of the school.

The point to be made here is that the establishing of an advisory *forum* or *committee*, could be helpful in activating or transforming a lot of positive attitude which is already there, into specific action and support. Such a forum or committee will be a place for learning for those elected, and experiences drawn and competence gained from such work, could in a longer time perspective form the basis for the establishment of an *advisory board* or even *executive board* with more influence and responsibility to the community concerning the development of the their schools.

School fee policy

Despite the fact that Liberia has signed the declarations from Dakar on free and compulsory Education for all, all basic education in Monrovia is financed by student fees and levies of different kinds. This is the case both for private schools and government schools, since the government budgets for teachers salaries and running costs are very far from covering real costs.

In the case of Len Millar and William Booth, the student fee is the main income post in the working budget, financing most expenses. The level of the student fees reflects the complex issue of *what level/quality* of instruction for *what social class/ segment* of society. Student fees must be balanced against the economic capacity of the chosen target group.

On the socio-economic level where the SA schools are “competing” at the moment, the SA schools are the preferred schools for pupils living in acceptable distance from the premises.

The evaluator’s impression after field visits and conversations with parents, is that SA with its present fee policy is striking a fairly good balance between quality and affordability. Their policy takes into consideration both the general economic situation in the country, the aspirations of pupils and parents, the market situation

(fee policy of other schools in the region) as well as national and international policies in offering good quality education for all.

However, it remains an important challenge for SA in Liberia – both as a Christian organization with a special reputation, and as a receiver of Norwegian Government support explicitly aiming at the poorest, to find a way to solve the problem of *practical* exclusion from good, affordable schooling for children from the poorest layers of society.

A solution could be continuous donor support, for instance from NORAD, strictly to be allocated for general reduction of fees. This could be a viable solution according to some quality criteria, but it would collide with the criteria of sustainability of educational institutions. **To avoid some of the most negative consequences of a prolonged operational support, a solution could be to design a program of especially destined support to the lowest income groups. Such a program should for practical reasons be delimited to the natural catchments area of the two SA schools (distance from the school and maximum income as main criteria).**

A way to strengthen the local responsibility for such a socio-economic profile in the SA schools in a longer perspective, could be to support the establishment of a Salvation Army fund that offers grants to students from poor backgrounds, to teachers for their further education as well as support to the professional teams in each school for renewal of teaching aids, laboratory instruments and literature.

Teacher qualification

On the basis of inputs from different actors and stakeholders during fieldwork, it is safe to assess that SA teachers as a group, are among those with the best experience and competence in Monrovia County and among the groups with the highest formal qualification in the county and probably in the country as a whole.

The impression after visiting the two combined schools, on two different occasions, was that the Salvation Army as a school operator attracts good teachers and manages to maintain high quality instruction despite a severe scarcity of pedagogical equipment and ordinary teaching materials. The problem for Len Millar School and William Booth then, seems not that of attracting good teachers, but of keeping them.

The problem with giving low priority to teaching material in the budgets, might be that it makes Len Millar and William Booth more vulnerable to a rapid turnover of their best teachers. **The leadership of The Salvation Army in Liberia together with the Secretary for schools should discuss the possibility for a substantial increase in the budgets for pedagogical equipment and teaching materials, if not permanently, at least for a period of one to two years.**

If improvements of the pedagogical equipment have a stimulating and satisfying effect on the teaching personnel and improve stability, so will investments in professional courses. The assumption is that such actions will be well-invested money – both cheaper and more effective than trying to compete with more prestigious schools in salaries.

The average teacher salary in Liberia today, also in the private sector is simply not decent. Of course this is first and foremost a government responsibility, **but it is also a challenge for SA as all other non-profit private school operators to bear in mind the teachers' rights to an income that can support them and their families.**

The evaluator's general impression after the visits and interviews with principals and deputy principals was that the schools have dedicated, well-qualified principals and vice principals and that the schools seem well administered despite a very difficult situation in terms of electric current, electronic devices, working space and working environment.

It is recommended that sufficient economical resources are allocated to the installation of electric current in the schools or at least the administrative departments. Further it is recommended that sufficient resources are allocated to the acquisition of one or two computers for the administrative departments of each of the SA schools and that the administrative personnel get the necessary computer training to use the most common administrative computer programs.

Quality of teaching

It is fair to say that observations, interviews with pupils, teachers and principals gave the clear impression that the Salvation Army schools offer well-structured instruction in a calm and pleasant atmosphere. All teachers demonstrate well-planned instruction and pedagogically recognized methods such as well-arranged use of blackboard, memorizing techniques and alternation between teacher and pupil activity. Due to very good discipline in class, it was possible to maintain good working conditions despite a teacher – pupil ratio of 1 : 50. That the overall assessment of the quality of teaching ends up being so positive despite a critical lack of teaching aids and equipment, confirms what has already been said above about very competent teachers and staff in the SA schools

Results - quality of learning

The Salvation Army schools are competing on the absolute top level among the best private schools in Liberia - in academic achievements as well as in sports and music.

The SA schools use the West African Examination Councils (WAEC) exams for all grades (6'th, 9'th and 12'th). Being a system that standardizes exams, marks and demands for five West-African countries, by necessity its agreed regulations and curriculums cannot be too rooted in the local context of the pupils. But in addition, the regulations and curriculums defining the requirement for each consecutive exam demonstrate an unambiguous focus on academic and theoretical competence aiming at imparting general rather than practical knowledge. So this inclination towards the academic, general knowledge and competence is also a cultural phenomenon, and - as often commented by education officers and politicians in Africa – a heritage from the colonial era.

This last point actualizes the issue of an academic versus a vocational emphasis in high school. In Liberia today the most popular and most prestigious type of education is the purely academic one leading to a high school certificate and giving direct or indirect access to university studies. This is so, even though just a small percentage of high

school graduates today can afford to pay for university courses and get an academic degree.

All educational officials interviewed agreed that the lack of opportunities for a vocational training is a major problem and a challenge that Liberian politicians and educationalist have to address in the years to come. Liberia is in desperate need for professionals in all kinds of crafts and technical vocations. The professionalism, organizational potential and the international relations of SA makes it a competent and natural partner in the effort to develop a functional vocational training within the high school system in the years to come.

SA in Liberia and SA in Norway should cooperate to propose a NORAD/BN-financed pilot project of introducing vocational courses in Len Millar school, in coordination with the investments that have to be done in the new SA Teacher Training College.

Special needs education

There is at the moment no special needs education classes or groups in the SA school system. Neither are there special activities or programs going on to cope with or compensate for the special pedagogical needs of individual pupils.

Gender equality

It was confirmed that boys and girls formally have the same opportunities to develop their personal interests and capacities and to choose between different options of subjects and activities. However there are some differences in opportunity when it comes to types of sports activities open to boys and girls, but both boys and girls practice sports on Fridays.

The problem of gender differences in SA schools when it comes to percentages of boys and girls dropping out of school at early age and percentages of pupils graduating from elementary school, junior high and senior high, seem to reflect the general situation of inequality in Liberia.

HIV/AIDS-information

The evaluator finds this project very interesting and it seems like a good model for HIV/AIDS information in schools. The information material and the main messages as they were presented to the evaluator seemed balanced enough to be functional also outside religious circles and direct enough to be effective. As one would expect, the main focus is on abstinence and faithfulness, but the condom is also part of the message²⁹.

The Salvation Army in Norway should look closer into this project and see if there are possibilities to build a NORAD/BN-supported project around this local initiative, for instance in coordination with other INGOs working specifically on AIDS information in West Africa³⁰ and Southern Africa

²⁹ (A)bstinence, "B" faithful and Condom,

³⁰ SIK in cooperation with the Norwegian Missionary Society working in Cameroon

5.3 Specific conclusions on Salvation Army Teacher Training College

The fact that the secretariat for education already have shown that they can administer two big combined primary/high schools with 1300 pupils each, a teaching staff of around 30 and other staff and to do it well, is a strong argument that the organization also would be capable of administering a higher education institution.

It seems clear that the premises of The Salvation Army, close to the Tubman University and not far from Stella Maris Polytechnic, when finished some time in the course of 2006, can become a very important factor in the struggle to restore the prestige and popularity of the teaching profession. But to achieve this, cooperation with colleges and universities already offering good quality teaching is a core precondition. The problem of offering affordable studies with the prospect of having a decently paid job afterwards must be met through cooperation and a certain degree of specialization.

To indicate a possible course ahead for SA's project on teacher training, the evaluator wants to point at the severe lack of vocational training in today's high school system of Liberia as discussed above.

The role of a Salvation Army vocational training centre in Monrovia could be twofold. With the high cost of machinery and equipment needed to furnish for instance carpentry, tailoring or car mechanic workshops, one should make use of the workshops both for training high school students in different vocations, for training skilled artisans in pedagogy and the didactics of vocational training and for income generation. Concerning income generation, it is a well known strategy for sustainable management of vocational training centres around the world to offer low cost and high quality service and repairs to the public.

Finally, as was also discussed with the deans of the Tubman University and the Stella Maris Polytechnic, the chemistry, physics and biology laboratories that probably are to be found in a combined teacher training and high school / vocational centre, should also be made available for these two institutions.

In turn they have a lot of competent university lecturers in sciences. This gives a unique opportunity for mutual interchange and combination of resources.

If SA/Liberia want to play an important role in developing the education sector in the country, something which their TTC plans indicate, they should coordinate their activities in the teachers training and or vocational training field with other NGOs and institutions, both national and international.

6 ANNEX

I. Terms of reference for External Review of the Salvation Army (SA) school projects i Liberia September 2005

A. BACKGROUND AND FOCUS FOR THE REVIEW

The review covers four different projects within the education sector in Liberia run by the Salvation Army. Three of the projects have been concluded and concerning those, the review will mainly focus on the impact of the projects in a somewhat longer perspective and on relevance and sustainability. Statistical as well as qualitative data on changes in the patterns of enrolment, drop-outs and graduation are important here. Concerning sustainability, continued support from local and regional authorities and SA in Liberia will be looked into as well as continued interest and participation from the local community in running and maintaining the schools. Concerning relevance, an important issue to be discussed and assessed, is the extent to which there is a need for projects of this type – “constructing and starting up new schools” - in the present national situation of Liberia

The new School in Zwedru is the last of three combined elementary/primary/high-schools to be built and put into practical operation by SA in Liberia. Since this school has been in normal functioning for a shorter period of time, the possibility of assessing *impact* may be more limited, so in this project there might be a slightly higher focus on assessing *immediate outcomes* of the project.

This is even more so in the fourth and latest project which is the construction and putting into operation of a new Teacher Training College in the city of Monrovia. The infrastructure is to be completed by the end of this year, and the college is now about to start functioning. Effectiveness and efficiency related to the construction of the school buildings will be an issue here, but since the project is now entering the important phase of starting up teaching and training, special emphasis will here be put on issues like management, administrative and pedagogical competence / resources as well as the establishing of effective institutional structures that are functional in achieving the overarching project goals. The issue of economic, administrative and pedagogical sustainability - that is the more internal perspective on sustainability - is of course an important perpective in all four projects.

B. PURPOSE OF THE REVIEW

The three main purposes of the review are

4. Assess Progress and outcomes: In an independent an objective manner describe the present situation in the two schools projects William Booth School and New Len Millar School and assess outcomes as well as impacts that are likely to be linked to the input of means and resources through the FA projects in the periode from Further to describe the present situation in FA's latest school projects in Liberia – the new school in Zwedru and the new Teacher Training College. Basis for the assessment shall be the goals and indicators of the projects themselves and

the point of departure will be the Project documents that have been made available for the team.

5. Contribute with proposals and recommendations: The team will develop relevant and clear inputs and recommendations concerning further actions and changes that ought to be made in order to strengthen the positive impact of the projects locally and on higher levels within the education sector and to target the projects even better towards the defined main goals.
6. Create a positive learning atmosphere: The team will seek to initiate a process of collaboration between the evaluation team on one side and leaders and co-workers in each school and in FA Liberia on the other which allow for local and institutional participation, exchange of information and experiences and open discussions on problems and challenges so that the evaluation process is experienced as a constructive learning experience.

C. DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND PROJECT GOALS TO BE REVIEWED

1. Development goal: To reduce analphabetism in Liberia through providing access to education of good quality in an atmosphere characterized by a holistic perspective on the human being.
2. Project goals:
 - a. For BN-project 361 (New Len Millar school): To provide a suitable building equipped so that good quality education can be given to more than 1000 pupils.
 - b. For BN-project 227 (William Booth): To build and equip three schools for 500 pupils in the outskirts of Monrovia for a catchment area populated by 40.000 people and a population under 20 years of approx. 20.000: One senior high school, one junior high school and one elementary school.
 - c. For BN-project 393 (New school in Zwedru): To build and equip one school for a catchment area of 150.000 inhabitants which at the moment has only one high school operating for the moment. The school will receive boys and girls from first through twelfth grade.
 - d. For BN-project 495 (New Teacher Training College): To build and equip a teacher training college in Monrovia for the training of new teachers and certification and upgrading of teachers already working in the Liberian school system.
 - e.

D. METHODOLOGY

The review will be based on studies of the programme documentation both applications, annual reports and final reports, as well as policy documents of SA in Liberia and government policies and development plans both in Norway and Liberia, especially within the field of education.

Field visits will be conducted to all four school communities. Interviews with SA project staff, administrative and pedagogical personnel at the four schools, union representatives, regional and local authorities in the area of operation as well

representatives of the target group and project beneficiaries of all kinds (including household level) will be an important part of the collection of field data.

In addition to interviews with project personnel and representatives of the beneficiary groups, interviews will also be conducted with teachers, pupils and households belonging to other school communities. This is done to establish a basis for comparison.

E. ISSUES AND FACTORS TO BE COVERED

1. Efficiency

Certain aspects of the efficiency parameter will be addressed in the review, such as the degree to which investments in infrastructure and equipment after a few years of operation seem to have had the sufficient quality and / or if sufficient investments have been made in maintenance procedures and personnel.

The question of cost/benefit will be discussed and assessed when actualised in interviews and / or observation. Here is also an important link to the issue of local participation, voluntary work and feeling of local ownership.

2. Effectiveness

The delivery of project outputs and the degree of fulfilment of immediate purpose of the project and its immediate objectives. As far as annual reports can tell, the schools have all been built and equipped and are now in full operation. In addition the review will assess the effectiveness of financial, administrative and pedagogical systems established and of administrative and teaching personnel in offering good quality education on all levels and a functional learning environment in accordance with the overarching values defined in project documents (a holistic perspective on mankind etc) and local needs.

A core issue in assessing the effectiveness of the teacher training school is to look closer into the didactical systems established and the professional and other resources invested in offering high quality teacher training with national and local relevance. An important issue is in what way and to what degree the teacher training focus on teacher competence in dealing with the HIV/AIDS pandemic, gender, learning difficulties, physical and mental disabilities etc.

In assessing effectiveness the review will also address organizational, administrative and financial issues, for instance in asking how the project have managed to established in the school community institutional bodies for beneficiary/target group participation and dialogue, effective communication and collaboration with other NGOs and local / regional government representatives etc.

3. Relevance and impact

The relevance of the projects will be assessed on the overarching level in relation to the overall developmental challenges of Liberia, but especially in relation to the needs and challenges in the education sector, both as defined in national political documents but also in accordance with international declarations such as the *Education for all* – declarations from 1990 and 2000 (Jomtien and Dacca). Again the important issues to be addressed are the way the schools handle the HIV/AIDS issue, gender equality, child labour, health and nutrition, learning difficulties and so forth. The other important

assessment perspective on relevance is the perspective from below taking as a point of departure challenges and needs as experienced by the direct beneficiaries themselves – the pupils and their households. To what extent do the schools and the curriculum taught meet the needs of the communities that form part of their natural catchment areas?

Concerning impact, the projects vary in terms of the time span between completion and this review. This implies that the degree to which impact can be assessed also will vary. Assessing impact, the review will partly focus on indicators such as changes in enrolment figures, drop-out-rates, graduation-rates and marks/grades from government statistics (if such data can be acquired), partly on interviews with school personnel, regional education officers, neighbourhood representatives and household representatives. In addition to these more technical indicators there are of course other more qualitative ones related to the socio-cultural context that involves school communities integration in the local community, feeling of ownership and responsibility in adjacent neighbourhoods, school values versus community values and tendencies to elitism and "brain-drain" (flow of good teachers and better-off-children from other catchment areas to the SA-school areas) etc.

4. Sustainability

Sustainability refers to the probability that the project can maintain its level of activity over time and with the same positive impact in developmental terms *after* the project has been completed and all donor support have been withdrawn. Reviewing sustainability means to assess the level of long-term correspondence between *organizational capacity* and *project activities*, as seen in relation to *external factors*. Assessment of sustainability will in this review be done along the following main parameters

- a) *Financial* – in the sense that the project continues to get sufficient income to cover expenses. This involves issues such as national policies concerning public and private schools, government or local employment of teachers, school fees versus free basic education, etc.
- b) *Organizational*: This involves the degree and the form in which the school is rooted in its community for instance through its ties to neighbourhood organizations or its legal establishment and connection to local government or local government representatives and structures. It also involves the degree to which the schools value orientation is in line with the dominant national and international policies and agreements.
- c) *Pedagogical/professional*: These can be said to be the internal aspects of sustainability but also here we are dealing with the way the pedagogical institution to a sufficient degree reflects both local needs and the national and international pedagogical discourses. Among other aspects it regards the level of professionalism, knowledge and pedagogical skills in the organization compared to the challenges that confront the school. More specifically it regards access to and economical strength to employ (and keep) professional teachers, it regards access to qualified and dedicated school leaders, it involves organizational tools such as a clear vision and value base and a main strategy that is known and internalised by all staff.

F. EXTERNAL FACTORS TO BE CONSIDERED

1. Socio - cultural context locally and regionally/nationally, the actual political and economical situation i Liberia in general.
2. The socio-economic situation i the local communities and neighbourhoods within the catchment area of the schools.
3. Infrastructure, political-administrative integration (presence of public institutions and their capacity as well as the presence and impact of the presence of and project activities of other NGO's in the area of operations

G. THE EVALUATION TEAM.

The team should include one international and two national experts and the representatives together should cover the following fields of expertise: development policies in Norway and Liberia, education and institutional development in education, Liberia country knowledge, evaluation methodology.

H. PRODUCT

1. The evaluation process as a *constructive learning experience*, is in itself an important part of the product. The team agrees to – within the economical and practical limits available – to do its best to initiate a process of collaboration between the evaluation team on one side and leaders and co-workers in each school and in FA Liberia on the other which allow for local and institutional participation, exchange of information and experiences and open discussions on problems and challenges so that the evaluation process is experienced as constructive. .

2. A *written report in English* with an executive summary of 4 to 5 pages and a final chapter that sums up findings and assessments for each project as well as main conclusions and recommendations. The recommendations should contribute to a better alignment of the project activities towards the main goals.

I. PROCESS, PRACTICAL TOOLS, ARRANGEMENTS AND TIME LIMITS

1. Draft work plan: The evaluation team will make a draft work plan for the ten days fields visit. The draft work plan will be discussed and commented by the internal team of SA Liberia and an agreed work plan will be made.

2. Start-up-meeting: When the team unites in Monrovia and the work with the review begins, there will be an information meeting between the evaluation team and the internal team, preferably also with representatives from each school to be visited in order to get to know each other and to clarify issues that are not clear and solve problems.

3. Methods to be used in the review process: Interviews, group-conversations, plenary meetings with personnel, groups of beneficiaries and community stakeholders, observations, workshops and reading of documents. The team chooses and propose what methods to use when and where.

4. End-of-visit-meeting: In this meeting the team will present a summary of their observations and reflections from the visit and their preliminary conclusions and recommendations in order to test their impressions and assessments against the views of the local project administration and the representatives of each school, receive comments start new processes of reflection.

5. Report: The team will hand over a draft report for the SA representatives in Norway and Liberia to read through and comment on by the 14'th of October. The ready report in published version (The *SIK-report series*) shall be handed over to SA Norway by the 13'th of November. If FA fully or partly disagrees with the content of the report, they are allowed to present their comments in writing as an enclosure to the report.

II. List of People met

Major Robert W. Dixon	Officer commanding, Salvation army Headquarters Liberia
Major Hester Dixon	Finance Supervisor, Salvation army Headquarters Liberia
Mr Ernest Suah	Secretary for schools, Salvation army Headquarters Liberia
Cyrus B. Sneh	HIV/AIDS information program coordinator, SA/Liberia
Mr. G. Samuel Lavela	Principal, Len Millar High School,
Mr. Josef N. Togba	Vice Principal for Student Affairs, Len Millar High School Vice Principal for Administration, Len Millar High School Principal, Len Millar Elementary School
Mr. Eliah K. Sowen	Sports director, Len Millar High School
Mr. Julius E. Fayiah	Head of the Musical department, Len Millar High School
Mr. Brima M. Dennis	Principal, William Booth High School
Mrs. Catherine D. Sesay	Principal, William Booth Elementary School
Mr. Richard J.B. Zekor	Vice Principal for student affairs William Booth Elementary School
Mr. Joshua J. Jackson	Chairman of Academic Committee
	Principal of Cathedral High School, Monrovia Principal of Cathedral Elementary School, Monrovia
Mr. Steven D. Weah	Vice Principal of Instruction, Cathedral High School, Monrovia
Mr. Joseph G. Manyango	Vice Principal of Instruction, Acting Principal of G.W.Gibson Senior School Monrovia
Mr. Flomo M. Nuta	Vice Principal of Student Affairs of G.W.Gibson Senior School Monrovia

Per Berre	Director of Norwegian Refugee Councils mission to Liberia
Eva André	Educational coordinator, of Norwegian Refugee Councils mission to Liberia
Fatuma Ibrahim	Project Officer of Protection, UNICEF Mission to Liberian
Hon. Peter N. Ben	Deputy Minister of Education, Department of Planning, research & Development, The Republic of Liberia
Eli M. Lumei	Head of National Office, WAEC, Liberia
Samuel W. David	Head of Accts, WAEC, Liberia

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Senter for Interkulturell Kommunikasjon

2006

ISBN: 978-82-7721-101-5

ISSN: 1500-1474

Misjonshøgskolens forlag

Misjonsveien 34, 4024 Stavanger, Tlf.: 51516247

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