

Agriculture Training and Education Symposium

The Liberian Experience through the eyes of
USAID / Excellence In Higher Education for
Liberian Development Project
(USAID / EHELD)

Presenter
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Chief of Party



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Republic of Liberia



Map of Liberia and its fifteen counties.



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Socio-Demographic Indicators	Year 2009
Population size (in millions)	3.5
Population growth rate (%)	2.1
Percentage of population under 15 yrs	41.93
Life expectancy at birth	47
Illiteracy rate (%)	44
Percentage of population with access to education	31.46
Population below poverty line (< US\$1 per day)	63.8
Total Geographic Area (km sq)	111,370
Total Land area (km sq)	96,320
Coastline (km)	579



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Liberia is endowed with a lot of Natural Resources

- **Fertile Soil & Plenty rain** (6 months)
- **Abundant Rain Forest**, est. b/w 900,000 hectares and 1.44 million hectares,
- **Plenty wide life, Natural plant products and wood**,
- **On land** – Iron ore, Diamond, Gold, several rivers and water falls for potential hydro power (St. John, St. Paul, Cavalla, Lofa , Kpatawee, St. John, LAC, etc,
- **Off land** – Potential oil and natural gas, various fish species, good coastal land for tourism, Eco-tourism



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Liberian Agriculture Decline

- **For many decades, Liberia experienced relative stability (1847 – 1979)**
 - **Subsistence Farming** (slash & burn farming system based on cutlass & hoe technology, i.e. no mechanization)
 - **Agriculture sector** gradually grew and boom (cash crops – rubber, oil palm, coffee, cacao, etc.)
- **Liberia has seen tremendous problems and obstacles in its path since 1979.**
 - **Coup d'état of 1979.**
 - **Civil Conflict / War 1980's- 2003**



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Background

Civil war destroyed much of Liberia's economy, especially the infrastructures.

- Most businesses to include farming businesses were disrupted, close down, etc.
- formal economic activities collapsed.
- Many businessmen fled the country, taking capital and expertise with them.
- Farmers fled their farms, farms assets were looted and destroyed

**Stability returned to the country in 2003
and we have just celebrated 10 years of
Peace & Steady Growth.**



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Liberian Higher Education Background

- **Liberia's universities pre-conflict**
 - Strong curriculum
 - Well qualified faculty
 - Well equipped facilities
 - Strong relationships: public and private sector; peer universities
- **Liberia's universities post-conflict**
 - Outdated curricula
 - Aging faculty, lacking history of professional development and higher degrees
 - Poor buildings
 - Few functioning laboratories
 - Lack of textbooks and other resources



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FEEDBACKS / OUTCOMES

UNIVERSITIES

- General decline in standards
- Increasing irrelevance in curriculum
- Graduates ill-prepared for work
- Poor contribution from higher education to Liberian economic growth
- High non-completion rate (3000 enrolled in engineering @ UL, 30 graduates)
- High failure rates
- 50% studying business and management
- 23,000 take entrance exam, 9,000 enrolled (2012)
- 25,000 take entrance exam, 1,800 enrolled (2013)

HIGH SCHOOLS

- High school graduates are ill prepare and perform poorly on WAEC Exams
- High school teachers have low capacities (low salary, low literacy & numeracy level)
- Inadequate learning environment (no texts books, no electricity, no computers)
- Most high schools graduates are ill prepare & don't want to consider professional career in national building & wealth generating areas, agriculture, engineering , etc



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"It is not **Condition**,
but **Decision** and
Action that
Determine one's
Destiny"

-Anonymous-



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Contribution Toward A Solution

USAID-funded Project

- Excellence in Higher Education for Liberian Development (EHELD)
- 5-year project awarded to RTI International (2011-2016)
- **Subcontract partnership** (Rutgers University, University of Michigan, North Carolina State University and ARD Tetra Tech,
- **Programming Areas**
 - **Pipeline Development**
 - **Create Centers of Excellence** in Agriculture at Cuttington Univ. & Engineering at Univ. of Liberia
 - **Employer Engagement**



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Overall objective

To increase the wealth-generating capacity and capability of Liberia's graduates



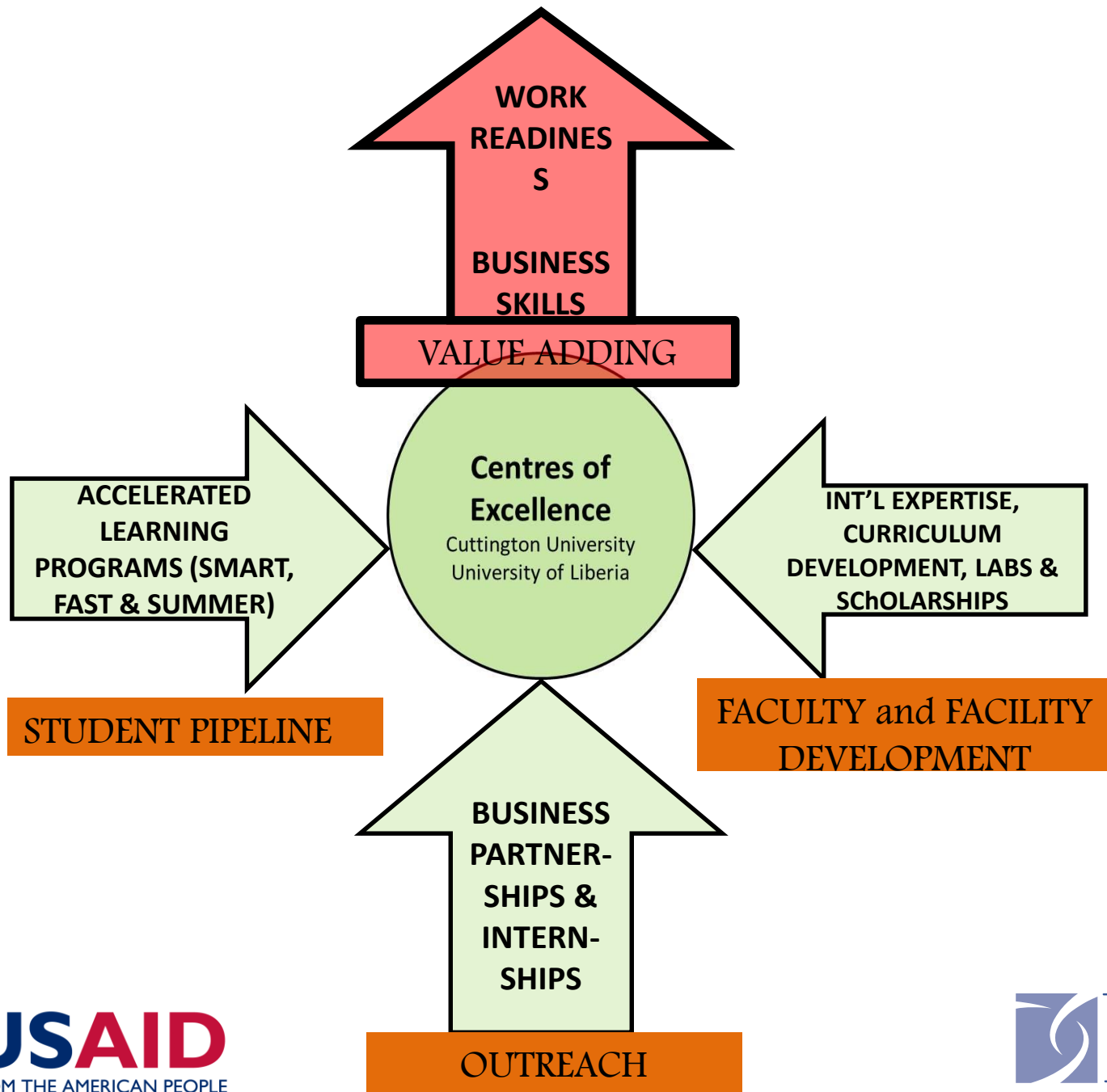
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EHELD Objectives

- Increase number of students who select and succeed in agriculture and engineering majors at Cuttington University and University of Liberia respectively
- Development of Agriculture and Engineering programs that provide highest quality education in line with international best-practice
- Increased employment opportunities for the graduates of Agriculture and Engineering programs





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**EXCELLENCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION FOR LIBERIAN
DEVELOPMENT (EHELD)**

2011—2016

AGRICULTURE / ENGINEERING

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**Pillar 1:
Student Pipeline
Development**

- Smart Start
- Fast Start
- Summer Start
- Career Counseling
- Scholarship



**Pillar 2:
Centers of Excellence -
(Cuttington University and
University of Liberia)**

- Improved Teaching and Mentoring
- Improved Engineering and Agricultural Curricula
- Improved Facilities—
(Laboratories, Libraries and Classroom)
- Short Courses
- Improved Student



**Pillar 3:
Outreach plus Partnerships
Building**

- Increase Linkages with Employers
- Practical Experience Through Service Learning
- Internships
- Employment Opportunities
- Employer Feedback



Successes & Challenges

Implementing a Higher
Education Program in Post-
Conflict Liberia



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EARLY HARVEST / ACHIEVEMENTS

Successful operated 3 years Pipeline programs

- Reached over **10,000** high school students (Pipeline programs) who have expressed interest in pursuing careers in Agr. & Eng.

Center of Excellence in Agriculture

- Improved the learning environment (good classroom facilities, resource center (e-learning), outdoor and indoor laboratories facilities to reinforce learning,
- Recruited visiting and contract faculties (expertise knowledge)
- Developed new agriculture curriculum (2011) and rolled it out 2012/2013 academic year
- Awarded **96 scholarships** (53% Male & 47% female)
- Developing the future faculties (awarded 8 scholarship for post-graduate training (USA – 2, Ghana -6)



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EARLY HARVEST / Achievements Cont.

Center of Excellence in Agriculture

- **Successfully operated 15 short term training courses** (reaching out to NGOs, Communities, farmers, etc.).

Employers engagement

- **Developed good working relationship with public and private sectors.**
 - Provided inputs and feedbacks to new agriculture curriculum development process (2011)
 - Awarded scholarship through the project to students enrolled in the programs
 - Sponsored summer start program (Fast start and summer)
 - Provided paid internship opportunities to students

Strong Partnership

- Amongst key stakeholders (RU, NCSU, UoM, CU & UL)
- Peace Corps Liberia, Vet. Without Border USA, First Avenue Int'l., Public and Private sector



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CHALLENGES

Nationally

- **Ill prepared High School graduates**
- **The field of agriculture is not nationally prioritize as reflected in national budget (< 7 percent & mainly for salaries and operations)**
- **Lack of Government specialized programs and Funding toward agricultural development** in terms of grants, scholarships, research awards, fellowships, etc.
- **Slowly growing agricultural industry that relies heavy on exported products instead of home grown food.**
- **Main agriculture development activities are focused on cash / tree crops (rubber, oil palm, cocoa, and coffee)**



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CHALLENGES Cont.

- **Level of University engagement** & time constrains it takes to work with locals
- **Compensation for local staff** (Budgetary constraints)
- **Limited University Staff** members available for trainings
- **Too much compelling needs**
- **Inadequate funding** (genuine needs)
- **Affirmative actions** (focused to acquiring gender **equity**, also called **gender equality** for awarding scholarship)
- **Lack of an entrepreneurship zeal** amongst students (Employees as opposed to employers)
- **Lack of role models** (youth are uneducated & unskilled) They are not interested in agriculture production activities.



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THANK YOU!