

Memorandum of Understanding

BETWEEN

Ministry of Education, Government of Liberia

AND

Bridge International Academies

1. Background and Overview of the Pilot Project

- After more than a decade of civil war, post-conflict stress, and the Ebola health crisis in 2014-2015, Liberia's children remain with a right to quality education that is unrealized. The provision of this right is the responsibility of the Government of Liberia. Without a radical change in the existing strategy of the Government of Liberia, it is unlikely that a child's right to quality education will be actualized.
- This agreement is the first part of a Pilot Project to serve up to 120 Liberian public schools. This project is part of a wider Public-Private Partnership initiative (PPP), the Partnership Schools for Liberia. Schools will be managed with autonomy within existing laws to deliver on improved learning gains. The MOE & Bridge agreement covers 50 schools.
- These 50 public schools remain under Government control. Parents will not be charged for tuition or school services. The Government is committed to free basic education.
- The Government has partnered with Bridge International Academies because of their proven success with school management, teacher support, and instructional materials that together deliver significantly improved literacy and numeracy gains as compared to the existing public system. The Government will also be looking at other providers to provide the remaining schools included in the overall Public Private Partnership.
- During the pilot, the Government is not paying Bridge International Academies. The Government simply pays the regular salaries of teachers, administrators, and school maintenance and repair that they would normally allocate for any Liberian public school.
- Bridge receives money from donors to take on the work required to comply with terms of the Pilot Project. The government does not pay Bridge to create the Teacher Guides, train teachers, and so forth. Bridge invests the philanthropy in research and development and to pay for all costs of operating the schools not covered by the MOE during the pilot.
- All teachers are civil service teachers. Also, no teachers are required to join the pilot. Any teacher who wishes to transfer to another public school may do so. Similarly, Bridge chooses its teachers: from those in the 50 Pilot Schools, or from other public schools. Any teacher not chosen in a Bridge school is turned over to the government, for example, for transfer to another school. No Partnership Schools provider has authority to terminate a teacher. This process is called "Mutual Opt-In." Upon selection, all personnel will undergo extensive training.
- Pupils at the Pilot Schools will choose – at the parents' sole discretion – whether to continue at the Pilot Schools or to transfer to other public schools. No current pupils will be denied. Additional pupils around the neighborhood will have the option to apply. See below ('Pupils enrolled in Pilot School')

2. Capacity Building

- The Pilot will affect 50 schools and approximately 20,000 children. Bridge will share its lessons learned on management, curriculum, materials use, and learning practices with the Ministry.

3. Scope of Services Delivered by Bridge under this MOU

- **Personnel:** After the mutual selection process described in #1 – "Mutual Opt-In" – the teachers will receive extensive training on classroom management, pupil-centered learning, using teacher tablets, and other key elements of creating an engaging and happy learning environment.

In the meantime, the Government of Liberia continues to train teachers at the three national Teacher Training Institutes, to test all teachers across the country to identify their long term training needs and to pilot B-Certificate training and Early Childhood Curriculum training. There is no question of Liberia not aspiring to a fully trained workforce. However, it need funds and training takes time. In the meantime, the MOE cannot ignore that existing classroom teaching is not getting results. The Bridge method may offer an interim solution which will be tested while pursuing longer term solutions.

- **Instructional Materials, Guides and Teacher Technology:** Bridge will supply each teacher with an e-reader tablet, textbooks, and other learning materials. The tablet is loaded with lesson guides for each subject every day. This ensures that every teacher has the core content, pacing, and activities for the day at his or her fingertips. In addition, Bridge will work with the Ministry, and other agreed providers or consultants, on a full curriculum review. Any lessons from Bridge's expertise will be shared nationally and benefit all Liberian children.
- **Measurement & Evaluation:** There will be both internal and external measurement of the Pilot. Bridge will report back the results of an internal M&E program back to the Ministry, and support/agree to Pilot Schools being tracked by a third party of external program. This will compare Bridge schools to local government schools with similar features. Schools will be monitored in the same way as all government schools.
- **Operating System Technology:** Bridge will prepare and deploy advanced and innovative technology that tracks teacher and student attendance, teacher use of lessons, and student assessments, ensuring a robust and productive accountability system is in place. Each principal will be supplied with a smartphone running Bridge's Academy Manager applications to ensure smooth operations at each Pilot School.
- **Operational Support:** Bridge will ensure quality through monthly visits to Pilot schools by a field audit team and professional development coaches. It will also ensure operational support through responsibility for supply chain, financial management, customer care call centers, and other established methods and processes in other countries where Bridge operates.
- **Community Engagement:** Bridge will ensure community engagement in the new center of excellence by conducting extensive community outreach, including: recruiting out of school children back to school, achieving classes that are maximum 55 pupils, ensuring increasing gender equality for girls throughout all Pilot Schools (specific outreach to girls and ensuring a girl-friendly environment), and forming a PTA at each Pilot School.

4. Timeline

The PPP is currently undergoing extensive preparation and will launch in September 2016.

5. Measuring Pilot Project Results

Bridge and the Government agree to two sets of Pilot Project Results Measurements: one after the first semester based on proxy indicators that are correlated with outcomes, and one set at the end of the first academic year. These outcomes will be defined as part of the wider Partnership Schools for Liberia program. Outcomes will also be monitored in a comparator group of schools. In addition to these reports, the Government will also conduct regular site visits for learning, observation, and audit.

6. Availability of Data and Reports

Data shared will include measurement and evaluation data, pupil assessment data, pupil enrollment characteristics, operational data such as pupil or teacher attendance, teacher selection data, teacher efficacy data.

7. Expansion of Pilot

The Government will decide to continue or expand Partnership Schools for Liberia based on performance indicators. Those metrics are being agreed as part of the wider Partnership Schools for Liberia program which includes several other providers.

8. Core Terms of Engagement

Principals and Teachers for the Pilot PSL project

- The process to select Pilot School principals and teachers will be a "double opt-in" process.
- All teachers in the Pilot Schools will be existing teachers in the employment of GOVERNMENT with at minimum a C-Certificate.
- Hours of operation, standards of the job will be quite rigorous. Principals and teachers first need to volunteer to be a part of the Pilot School, and Bridge will then choose who will be selected.
- Principals and teachers who are not accepted by Pilot Schools will NOT be terminated by Bridge. Instead they will be transferred within the Civil Service.
- In addition to regular teachers, Bridge will also employ permanent substitute teachers that are regionalized and clustered to cover for absenteeism.
- Once accepted to be a principal and teacher in a Pilot School, every teacher will be subject to the rules, standards and code of conduct operated at the Pilot School. Should Bridge need to remove a principal or teacher from the

Pilot School for not complying with the Pilot School's rules, standards and code of conduct, or general performance, Bridge will inform the Government, who will transfer the person within the Civil Service.

Selection of Locations for the Pilot project

- Bridge and the Government will together select the 50 Pilot Schools, based on agreed-upon minimum standards and locations. Each of the 50 schools will have 1 classroom each for each grade-level. Other providers will also select their school locations in partnership with the Government.

Daily Timetable and Annual Calendar

The Pilot will have flexibility in creating a timetable and calendar, and may choose to:

- Allow pupils at the Pilot School have access to a full day (7:30am to 3:30pm, with time on Saturdays provided as an optional service).
- Create an annual calendar that includes additional days of class compared to the current academic calendar. In all cases, Pilot Schools will follow nationally recognized holidays.

Curriculum Compliance

Pilot Schools will use materials that comply with the national curriculum. Flexibility will be allowed for:

- Enhancing and adding additional topics and skills to be covered that are not contemplated in the national curriculum (for example speech or debate) but are not inconsistent or in conflict with the existing national curriculum.
- Particularly in the early part of the year, but potentially throughout the year, allowing Pilot Schools to put additional emphasis and time allocation on basic literacy and numeracy until basic literacy and numeracy rates are achieved.
- As the Government is in the process of reviewing and adjusting the national curriculum, ensuring Bridge participates in such a review as a key partner who will have thoughts and ideas to contribute to the review.

Pupils Enrolled in Pilot Schools

Bridge will endeavor to allow all pupils who are currently studying at selected schools and as many additional pupils from the community as possible to be able to benefit from being educated at Pilot Schools, and will confirm selection process with MOE to ensure no discriminatory processes.

- All pupils will be required to take exams to ensure that pupils can be placed in the right class (but not used for selection into the schools).
- Bridge may propose that significantly overage pupils (ages 15-18+) be placed in a separate "catch up" program run by Bridge at the same Pilot School.
- Pilot Schools will be limited to a class size of 55 pupils.
- The parents of all children in a Pilot School will have to "opt-in". No child will be required to attend a Pilot School.
- For all Pilot Schools, all existing pupils who had previously been learning at the school prior to it becoming a Pilot School location will have the first right (subject to space constraints) to attend the Pilot School. Parents of other pupils who live within walking distance will be allowed to apply for admission as well.

Eligibility for participation in other Ministry and donor-driven programs

Because all Pilot Schools are Ministry public schools, all Pilot Schools will be eligible (and hopefully given preference) for participation in programs that may be run by the Ministry or its donor partners (Eg. World Food Program etc.)

Provision of ancillary services and materials

The Pilot will not provide a) transport to and from school, b) writing instruments and pencil erasers, blank exercise books, or other similar items that are already expected of the pupils in current public school.

Pilot project Support Staff

Bridge will need to hire a large in-country team (estimated 63) across many different departments to implement the pilot project: Academics, Technology, Finance, Human Resources, Parent Experience, Operations, Supply Chain, etc. Bridge's Global Team will also work extensively on this Pilot.

9. Costs

- The Government of Liberia will continue to pay its typical teachers, administrators, and building maintenance costs at these 50 Pilot Schools.

- The GOL may choose to purchase Bridge uniforms, textbooks, homework books at its sole discretion in future years, if the pilot year proves successful in achieving learning gains.
- Philanthropic partners will support Bridge in funding the costs of all of the work to develop teacher and learner training and materials as part of the pilot.

10. Key Financial and Non-Financial Contributions of Government of Liberia

While the Government will not pay for the cost of the intervention, it will provide financial contributions that ensure the success of the pilot project, including:

- Physical premises, buildings, furnishings and fittings of each Pilot School
- Principal and Teacher Salaries
- Building Maintenance
- Hiring Support
- Visible Government presence in promoting the pilot project internally and externally
- Incorporation, Vat and Duty Support