Strengthening Education Policy Through Data: Liberia National EMIS Policy Dialogue Report

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1. Introduction

Education is universally recognised as the foundation of sustainable national development, enabling countries to cultivate skilled human capital, promote social equity, and stimulate long-term economic growth. A well-functioning education sector, however, depends not only on adequate resources but also on reliable and timely data to guide decision-making. Education Management Information Systems (EMIS) are designed to meet this need by systematically collecting, analysing, storing, and disseminating education-related data to inform policy, planning, and effective resource allocation.

In Liberia, meaningful progress has been made in advancing EMIS, including improvements in school data collection and reporting. Nevertheless, structural and operational challenges—such as limited technical capacity, weak infrastructure, and financial constraints—continue to hinder its full potential. To address these issues, the Ministry of Education, in partnership with the Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (KIX) Africa 19 Hub, convened a National EMIS Policy Dialogue. The dialogue provided a platform for government officials, education experts, statisticians, regional institutions, and development partners to validate findings from a recent EMIS self-assessment, share best practices, and build consensus on the way forward.

This report synthesises the discussions held during the dialogue, capturing both achievements and persisting challenges, while outlining practical recommendations for strengthening Liberia's EMIS. The recommendations are anchored in Liberia's national priorities and aligned with continental and global frameworks such as the African Union's Agenda 2063 and Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), which emphasize inclusive, equitable, and quality education.

2. About the KIX Africa 19 Hub and Its Mandate

The Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (KIX) Africa 19 Hub is a regional learning and innovation platform established under the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) to foster knowledge exchange and strengthen education systems across 19 Anglophone African countries, including Liberia. Managed in collaboration with the African Union and relevant partners, the Hub provides technical, institutional, and policy support tailored to the diverse needs of member states.

The Hub's mandate revolves around three interrelated roles. First, knowledge brokering and exchange, which involves facilitating peer-to-peer learning by documenting and sharing best practices, innovative approaches, and lessons learned from across the continent. Second, capacity strengthening, through which governments and institutions receive targeted technical assistance in data management, policy design, and evidence-based planning. Third, policy influence, ensuring that research findings and innovations are effectively translated into practical, actionable education policies.

In Liberia, the KIX Africa 19 Hub has played a catalytic role in advancing the EMIS agenda by aligning national reforms with broader continental priorities such as statistical harmonization, quality assurance, and sustainable financing. Through its engagements, the Hub not only strengthens Liberia's EMIS framework but also embeds it within Africa's collective push for improved education outcomes, regional cooperation, and stronger monitoring systems aligned with SDG 4 and AU Agenda 2063.

3. Proceedings of the EMIS Policy Dialogue

3.1 Welcome Remarks

The dialogue opened with remarks from Dr. Jarso Maley Jallah, Liberia's Minister of Education, who warmly welcomed participants from the African Union, regional institutions, development partners, and national stakeholders. She underscored the importance of data driven decision-making, noting that without accurate and timely education data, policies risk being ineffective or misaligned with real needs. Dr. Jallah highlighted the significance of the recently completed EMIS self-assessment, which provided critical insights into existing strengths and weaknesses of the system. The dialogue, she explained, was an opportunity not only to validate the assessment's findings but also to co-create practical solutions with stakeholders. She emphasized that Liberia's commitment to education transformation must be anchored on a reliable EMIS capable of informing planning, budgeting, and accountability. By situating the dialogue within the framework of the government's broader education reform agenda, she reinforced political will and invited collective ownership of outcomes.

3.2 Objectives of the Dialogue

In outlining the objectives, Mr. Soudah A. Dolo, Acting Director for Policy Evaluation and Appraisal, emphasized that the dialogue was designed to be participatory, reflective, and action-oriented. The first objective was to underscore the importance of EMIS as the backbone of planning, monitoring, and evaluation in the education sector. Second, participants were invited to review existing data practices, drawing attention to inconsistencies, gaps, and duplication across institutions. Third, the dialogue sought to identify capacity and infrastructure gaps limiting the efficiency of Liberia's EMIS. Finally, the most critical objective was to build consensus around a national EMIS policy framework, one that is inclusive, evidence-based, and aligned with national and international education priorities. Mr. Dolo emphasized that developing such a framework would not only ensure harmonization but also guarantee long-term sustainability of EMIS. He concluded by stressing that the process must translate dialogue into practical commitments and measurable outcomes.

3.3 Special Remarks from the AU and KIX Hub

Special remarks were delivered by Mr. Noubatour Adoumtar, who spoke on behalf of both the KIX Africa 19 Hub and the African Union Commission. He connected the dialogue to the broader continental vision articulated in Agenda 2063 and Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), both of which underscore inclusive and quality education as key drivers of Africa's transformation. He acknowledged Liberia's progress while cautioning that limited statistical capacity remains a continent-wide challenge, affecting the quality, reliability, and comparability of education data. Mr. Adoumtar urged Liberia to adopt best practices from peer countries, emphasizing the value of peer learning and cross-country exchange. Importantly, he called for increased domestic investment in statistics, arguing that reliance on external support cannot guarantee sustainability. He encouraged stakeholders to view EMIS not merely as a reporting tool but as a strategic asset for accountability, resource mobilization, and long-term planning in education development.

3.4 Liberia's EMIS Achievements, Challenges, and Opportunities Mr.

Emmanuel Dolokeleh, Officer in Charge of EMIS, provided a candid overview of Liberia's progress and persistent challenges. On the achievements side, he highlighted the successful rollout of the Annual School Census, which has improved the regularity of data collection. He also noted the establishment of county-level data hubs, designed to decentralize EMIS operations and strengthen ownership at the local level. Collaboration with partners has further expanded the system's technical base. However, challenges persist. These include limited technical staff, frequent delays in data reporting, weak internet connectivity across rural counties, and inadequate financial resources. He pointed out that these issues undermine the timeliness and reliability of EMIS outputs. Nonetheless, Mr. Dolokeleh stressed that opportunities exist, particularly in leveraging technology, strengthening collaboration with LISGIS, and drawing on regional support through KIX and the AU. He concluded that with strategic investment, EMIS could become a pillar of Liberia's education reform.

3.5 Role of EMIS in Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation In his presentation,

Mr. Abdallah Housseini underscored the centrality of EMIS in supporting education planning, monitoring, and evaluation. He explained that EMIS provides the data backbone required to set priorities, track progress, and align national education goals with global frameworks such as SDG 4. Reliable data and well-defined indicators are essential for monitoring enrollment, retention, gender parity, and learning outcomes. Mr. Housseini highlighted that EMIS is not only a technical tool but also a mechanism for ensuring transparency and accountability in how education resources are allocated and used. Without a strong EMIS, he cautioned, planning becomes reactive and fragmented. He further stressed that EMIS plays a critical role in evidence-based policy-making, allowing policymakers to shift from anecdotal decisions to data-driven choices. His intervention reinforced the idea that

strengthening EMIS is fundamental to achieving equity, efficiency, and effectiveness in Liberia's education sector.

3.6 Financing the Sustainability Plan for EMIS

Representing the KIX Africa 19 Hub, Mr. Jarjar addressed the financial dimensions of EMIS sustainability. He noted that while donor support has been instrumental in building EMIS capacity, long-term sustainability requires strong domestic commitment. He proposed the adoption of legal and policy frameworks that embed EMIS financing into the national education budget, thereby reducing dependence on external aid. In addition, he emphasized the importance of designing staff retention strategies, as high turnover among trained personnel undermines system stability. Mr. Jarjar also encouraged inter-African exchanges, where countries can learn from one another's experiences in financing and sustaining EMIS. He concluded by stressing that financial investment must go hand-in-hand with political commitment and continuous stakeholder engagement. Sustainable financing, he argued, is not merely about securing funds but about ensuring that EMIS becomes an integral part of national development planning.

3.7 Data Integration and the Role of LISGIS

Mr. Isaac Binnay of the Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services (LISGIS) outlined the institution's mandate in coordinating national statistics and managing geospatial data. He explained that effective integration between LISGIS and EMIS would significantly enhance efficiency, reduce duplication of data collection efforts, and improve consistency in reporting. Mr. Binnay highlighted the potential of geospatial technologies to support school mapping, resource allocation, and disaster preparedness in the education sector. He further emphasized that harmonized data systems are critical for aligning education statistics with national development indicators and for reporting to regional and global frameworks such as SDG 4. Collaboration with LISGIS would also strengthen data credibility and encourage cross-sectoral use of education data. His intervention reaffirmed that data integration is not only a technical necessity but also a strategic pathway to building a coherent, reliable, and efficient national statistical system.

3.8 Panel Discussions and Stakeholder Reflections

The panel discussions provided an interactive platform for stakeholders—including government officials, donors, AU representatives, and civil society—to reflect on Liberia's EMIS priorities. Panelists unanimously emphasized the urgency of developing a comprehensive national EMIS policy, which would guide reforms and secure institutional ownership. The discussions also highlighted the need for continuous training and professional development of EMIS personnel, given the high demand for skilled statisticians and data managers. Stakeholders noted that strengthening partnerships with donors, the AU, and regional institutions is essential to secure both financial and technical support. Several participants called for a stronger focus on data use, cautioning that collecting data without ensuring its application in decision-making undermines the entire process. The reflections underscored the importance of collective responsibility, with stakeholders agreeing that building a strong EMIS requires collaboration, innovation, and shared accountability.

4. Key Insights from the Dialogue

Several key insights emerged from the dialogue: - Policy Gaps: Liberia urgently needs a comprehensive EMIS policy. - Capacity Development: Training and retaining skilled EMIS personnel is critical. - Data Use: Greater focus must be placed on using EMIS data for decision-making. - Financing: Long-term sustainability requires budget allocations and clear frameworks. - Integration: EMIS must link with national statistical systems for efficiency and reliability.

5. Recommendations

Based on the discussions, the following recommendations are proposed: 1. Develop and adopt a National EMIS Policy. 2. Strengthen institutional and human capacity through regular training and retention strategies.

3. Secure sustainable financing, including allocation of at least 0.15% of the national budget to statistical activities. 4. Promote a culture of data use for planning, monitoring, and accountability. 5. Expand and modernize EMIS infrastructure, including county-level hubs in all 16 counties. 6. Enhance integration with LISGIS and other systems for harmonized data management. 7. Leverage regional partnerships, including the KIX Hub, for innovation, capacity building, and resource mobilization.

6. Conclusion

The National EMIS Policy Dialogue marked a pivotal step in Liberia's journey toward building a more robust, reliable, and sustainable education data system. By fostering consensus among stakeholders, the dialogue reinforced the urgent need for a national EMIS policy and sustainable financing mechanisms. Liberia's progress, including digital census tools and county-level hubs, demonstrates strong commitment. With continued support from the AU, KIX Africa 19 Hub, and development partners, Liberia is well-positioned to transform EMIS into a system that not only collects data but drives evidence-based decision-making toward inclusive and quality education for all.