

DELIVERING THE FOUNDATIONS OF LEARNING FOR ALL: PROGRAMME DOCUMENT

APRIL 25, 2023

APPLICATION TO GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR EDUCATION

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List of Acronyms

ASC	Annual School Census
CPD	Continuing professional development
ESP	Education Sector Plan
EIC	Education Innovation Challenge
EGMA	Early Grade Mathematics Assessment
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessment
EOF	Education Outcomes Fund
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
FLEx	Foundational Learning Exchange
FLN	Foundational Literacy and Numeracy
FQSE	Free Quality School Education
GoSL	Government of Sierra Leone
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
IEC	Information Education Communication
IECD	Integrated Early Childhood Development
LEG	Local Education Group
MBSSE	Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MTHE	Ministry of Tertiary and Higher Education
NPSE	National Primary School Exam
OTPS	One Tablet per School
P1	Primary class 1
P2	Primary class 2
P3	Primary class 3
P4	Primary class 4
PIU	Programme Implementation Unit
PMU	Programme Management Unit
PRIS	Policy for Radical Inclusion in Schools
SCG	System Capacity Grant
SGBV	Sexual and gender-based violence
SMC	School Management Committee
STG	System Transformation Grant
SQAO	School Quality Assurance Officer
TLM	Teaching and Learning Materials
ToC	Theory of Change
TSC	Teaching Service Commission
TMIS	Teacher Management Information System
TTI	Teacher Training Institute

1. Introduction

Since 2018, Sierra Leone has made concerted efforts to improve access to and quality of education for all children, with an emphasis on the most marginalized and early years learners. However, the country still faces challenges to fully strengthen and transform the system to improve foundational learning outcomes for all.¹ For instance, the vast majority of children in Sierra Leone cannot read a simple text with comprehension by age 10,² or in other words, are experiencing learning poverty.³

The Government has therefore identified **Delivering the Foundations of Learning for All** as the priority reform that will be achieved through education system transformation in the country. Foundational learning is defined as basic literacy, numeracy, and transferable skills, such as socio-emotional skills that provide the fundamental building blocks for all other learning, knowledge, and higher-order skills. Efforts to achieve this transformation will focus on pedagogical solutions and innovations in pre-primary and the first four years of primary school, supported by transversal data and governance reforms. While all levels of education will require strengthening to support the country's growth and human development,⁴ substantial investments in foundational years will ensure that young children develop key literacy, numeracy, and socio-emotional skills to prepare them for future success in school and work.⁵

Through the consultative processes undertaken to prepare the GPE Compact 2022,⁶ the Education Sector Plan 2022-2026 and this Programme Document, several bottlenecks were identified which require systemic reforms to achieve foundational learning for all.⁷ This programme will address these bottlenecks, build capacity, and accelerate system transformation. The programme will collaborate with all key partners and donors to accelerate scale up of foundational learning.

The GPE Partnership Compact, approved by the GPE Secretariat in 2022, articulates and elaborates on the priority reform and, alongside the Education Sector Plan 2022-2026, serves as the basis for Sierra Leone's application to access GPE financing that includes: 1) System Capacity Grant (SCG): US\$ 2.6 million; 2) System Transformation Grant (STG): US\$ 22.5 million; and 3) GPE Multiplier Grant: US\$ 15 million.⁸ **See Annex 1 for more information on the grants.**

1.1 Situation Analysis

Sierra Leone, a West African country of around 8 million people, has sustained human and economic development in recent years, despite several external and internal threats. In 2022, though Sierra Leone experienced a marginal improvement in the Human Development Index, it ranked 181 out of 195 countries globally.⁹ Sierra Leone has demonstrated signs of recovery from the Covid-19-related economic shocks in 2020. However, rising inflation and external threats, including the war in Ukraine, pose risks to economic growth. As of 2022, over half of Sierra Leoneans were considered as living in poverty,¹⁰ with poverty rates higher in rural than in urban areas.¹¹ While the government has prioritized education as a driver of economic and human development, it will require significant investments to meet its goals.

The following sections expand on the education policy context; efforts and achievements towards foundational learning for all; and analyses of relevant components of the education sector.

1.1.1 Education Policy and Government Commitment

Sierra Leone's commitment to quality, foundational learning for all is reflected in various policies and initiatives. The **Education Sector Plan (ESP) 2022 -2026** emphasizes equity in access to quality education through the guiding principle of Radical Inclusion¹², as part of the Government's

broader Human Capital Development programme.¹³ In addition to ensuring **Free Quality School Education** (FQSE), Sierra Leone has overhauled the curriculum for pre-primary and early childhood, basic education and senior secondary education by applying a 5Cs framework: Comprehension, Critical Thinking, Computational Thinking, Creative Thinking, and Civic Education.¹⁴

The Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) has fostered a policy landscape which promotes innovative, inclusive foundational learning, including the **National Policy on Integrated Early Childhood Development** (IECD), the **Policy on Radical Inclusion in Schools** (PRIS), and the **Comprehensive Safe Schools Policy**, and the **Basic and Senior Secondary Education Act 2023**. The government has also demonstrated regional leadership, including through the **2022 Freetown Manifesto for Gender-Transformative Leadership in and through education**.

In June 2022, the President launched the **National Commitment to Foundational Learning**¹⁵ and later led the country delegation to the UN Secretary General's Transforming Education Summit (TES), renewing the country's commitment to achieve Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4: Quality Education.¹⁶ A key to this commitment is to improve the learning outcomes for children in the foundational years, building on sustained increases in enrolment and transition rates in the past decade.¹⁷

The government has also taken a leadership role in the continent by mobilizing the transformation of education through foundational learning, including by hosting the first ever Foundational Learning Exchange (FLEX) Summit in February 2023. FLEX pioneered south-south exchange on the African Continent, where representatives from eight African countries shared their experiences, challenges and ambitions on the path to make learning a reality for all children and signed a ministerial communique. FLEX saw participation from 80 foreign partners and donors sharing lessons and contributing to the discourse.

1.1.2 Evidence around Educational Access, Quality, and Outcomes in Sierra Leone

Access to Pre-Primary and Primary Education

Since 2018, the year that the Free Quality School Education policy was enacted, enrolment rates at primary level have increased significantly in Sierra Leone. The School Infrastructure and Catchment Policy found that over 700,000 more students enrolled in 2019, as compared to 2018, "an increase equivalent to almost 10 percent of the entire population of Sierra Leone."¹⁸ There is gender parity in pre-primary and primary enrolment and the gross enrolment rate (GER) at primary was over 150 percent.¹⁹

At the pre-primary level, only about a quarter of pre-primary aged children are in school.²⁰ However, these numbers have increased significantly in recent years, with rates doubling between 2017 and 2021 [Annual School Census (ASC) 2021]. The IECD policy states one year of pre-primary education as mandatory and free; therefore, enrolments in pre-primary will likely rise in the coming years.

The total number of pre-primary and primary schools in 2021 was 9,413, representing over three-quarters of all schools in the country; around 75 percent of primary schools were government approved. About 99 of children ages 6 to 11 have access to a primary school within a three-mile radius.²¹

Sierra Leone's education sector has shown resilience in face of Covid-19 and other disasters and was able to maintain high rates of participation. For example, 88 percent of learners returned to in-person learning after Covid-19 related school closures.²² This may be attributed to the country's building on lessons learned from the Ebola epidemic and other crises, along with relatively shorter period of school closures as compared to other regions globally.

Quality of Pre-Primary and Primary Education

Teacher Workforce

A favourable trend in recent years has been an increase in qualified teachers at all levels but particularly for foundational years. Between 2018 and 2021, both pre-primary and primary schools saw an increase in the number of qualified teachers – 22 percent and 2 percent respectively.²³

Since the enactment of FQSE, the pupil-to-teacher has increased alongside rising enrolments rates. Sierra Leone has kept the country's average pupil-to-teacher ratio relatively low, although the figures are still above recommended pedagogical standards, according to the World Bank,²⁴ and significantly higher than the 40-to-1 ratio set out in the ESP. In 2021, pre-primary schools had a 39-to-1 pupil to qualified teacher ratio, while primary schools had a 61-to-1 pupil to qualified teacher ratio; the ratio of pupils to both qualified and unqualified teachers was even lower.²⁵ To reach this goal, reforms in teacher recruitment, deployment, and allocation are needed.²⁶

Additionally, sub-national differences, linked to issues around teacher allocation in rural areas, cause disparities in pupil-to-teacher ratios across the country. The number of qualified teachers in remote schools is substantially lower than urban areas.²⁷ This trend is compounded by other obstacles, such as the regularization of teacher: as of 2020, only around 40 percent of teachers were on the government payroll.²⁸

Curriculum

Sierra Leone developed the 'National Curriculum Framework for Basic Education' and reformed the curriculum for pre-primary, basic education, and senior secondary education by applying a 5Cs framework: Comprehension, Critical Thinking, Computational Thinking, Creative Thinking, and Civic Education, as essential learning elements that are nurtured and developed in student learning across the new curriculum.²⁹ The new curricula were created around a learner-centred approach. The country is now aligning the curricula to teacher training courses, TVET, and other higher education courses and programs. In addition, a National Qualifications Framework has been developed to standardize courses and equivalences of certificates. As a next step, core instructional packages should be developed, as well as comprehensive teaching and learning materials to support teachers in delivering the new curriculum.

Foundational Learning Outcomes

The country seeks to ensure that all students, from all backgrounds and geographies, can achieve proficiency in reading, numeracy, and socio-emotional skills. Despite incremental improvements from 2014 to 2021, key assessments undertaken in the country in the past eight years show that most pupils in grades 2 and 4 are not acquiring foundational level literacy and numeracy, with the majority (64-73 percent) failing to comprehend the texts that they read and only one-third proficient in completing higher order tasks in numeracy.³⁰

Boys outperformed girls on nearly every subtask in the Early Grade Reading Assessment and Early Grade Mathematics Assessment (EGRA/EGMA) in both grades.³¹ These results are worrisome, since girls have higher enrolment rates than boys but struggle to achieve similar results on

assessments; suggesting a need to assess pedagogy, classroom culture, and sociocultural norms which impact girls' academic performance.

However, the EGRA/EGMA report also found that results for the highest level EGRA subtasks – which involve learners expressing their reading and processing fluency, as well as their comprehension skills – did not show statistically significant differences, or mean score differences, between boys and girls. This finding indicates that girls and boys are performing at similar levels in the higher order competencies involving cognition and comprehension.³² This suggests that gendered dynamics of learning are nuanced and reasons behind girls' differential performance should be explored.

Radical Inclusion Groups

Despite a strong and supportive policy context in favour of quality education for all, inequalities in access and completion highlight enduring barriers for Sierra Leonean children.³³ Children in rural areas, disabled students, and the poorest wealth quintiles lagging behind their counterparts in enrolment and learning outcomes.

For example, 39 percent of children ages 7 to 14 in the richest wealth quintile demonstrate foundational literacy skills as compared to only three percent of children in the poorest wealth quintile, according to the 2017 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey. One-quarter of children in the richest quintile possess basic numeracy skills while only three percent of children in the poorest wealth quintile possess basic numeracy skills.³⁴ The World Bank identified a “urban-rural gap in literacy and numeracy skills”: a higher share of children in urban areas possess foundational reading (30 percent) and numeracy (22 percent) skills as compared to children in rural areas (5 percent).³⁵

A lack of granular data on disability prevents robust analyses of barriers to foundational learning for specific groups. However, other information may serve as a proxy. For instance, in 2021, only 15 percent of schools had access to infrastructure and materials adapted to the needs of students with disabilities.³⁶ This indicates that disabled students likely encounter challenges to learning which may also lead to performing poorly in class or even dropping out. Over 17,000 students with disabilities were enrolled in pre-primary and primary education in Sierra Leone, a figure which has increased in recent years (ASC 2021) and over 60 percent of all students with disabilities enrolled in Sierra Leonean education system are in primary schools. Education facilities, as well as pedagogical tools and TLMs should be adapted to meet the needs of this demographic group within education and particularly in foundational years.

1.1.3 Progress towards foundational learning for all

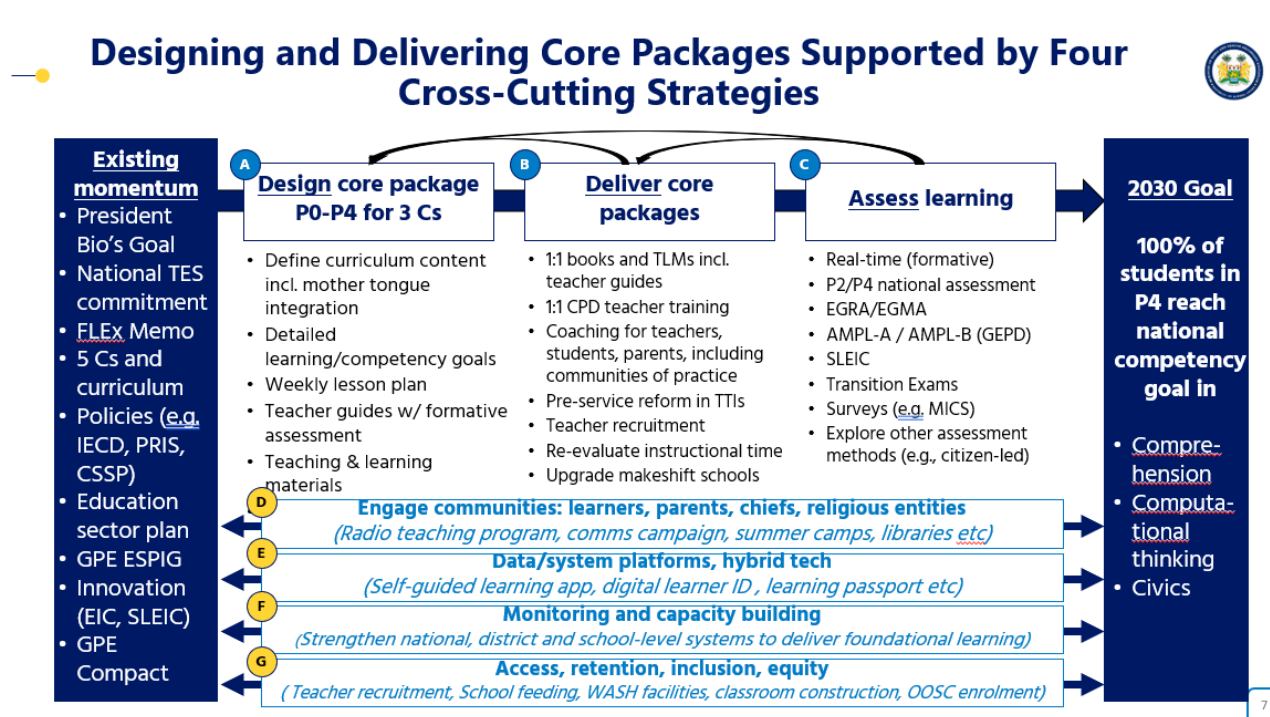
Since the adoption of FQSE, the government and partners have combined efforts towards the goal of increasing learning outcomes for all children in pre-primary and primary levels. In order to support the government's ambitions, two significant programmes have been underway – the FREE Programme (\$66 million plus \$30 million 2nd additional financing) and the current Education Sector Plan Implementation Grant (ESPIG – \$17 million). In addition, FCDO, UNICEF country program, the European Union, the Education Outcomes Fund, Catholic Relief Services, the World Food Programme, and Teach for Sierra Leone have all made critical investments in foundational learning which total to over \$80 million according to recent estimates. See Annex 1 for a detailed breakdown of investments.

1.1.4 The Government of Sierra Leone’s ambitions for foundational learning

Sierra Leone has endorsed the Commitment to Action on Foundational Learning³⁷, committing inter alia to “reducing the global share of children unable to read and understand a simple text by age ten, by half, by 2030”. This goal was also announced by H.E. President Julius Maada Bio at Leaders Day during the Transforming Education Summit 2022, and re-iterated as part of the Ministerial Communique from the Foundational Learning Exchange 2023 held in Freetown.³⁸

Internally, the goal is to make all children in primary 4 reach the national competency goal in comprehension, computational thinking and civics, which represent three of the five” Cs” that undergird all the country’s curricula.

The ambition and the associated activities are illustrated below.



The attainment of the 2030 goals rest on the development and delivery of a set of core packages for P0 (pre-primary) to P4 (class four).

2. Programme Design

2.1 Programme Goal and Objectives

The programme that will roll out **nationwide and at scale**, targeting only public schools, excluding all private schools, has the following goal and objectives:

Goal: To ensure that the foundational learning outcomes are achieved by all pupils from pre-primary to primary grade 4 (P4) and to reduce disparity between girls and boys and disadvantaged and marginalised groups.

To achieve this goal, the government and partners will work towards the following four objectives:

Objective 1: To raise children's readiness to learn through targeted one-year pre-primary education (made compulsory under the National Integrated Policy for Early Childhood Education)

Objective 2: To strengthen instructional core, teachers' cadre, and capacity to deliver foundational learning

Objective 3: To increase the use of data and technology to support foundational learning and education service delivery

Objective 4: To strengthen governance, management, and accountability for performance on foundational learning

2.2 Theory of Change

In order to achieve the programme goal and objectives, the Government and partners developed a **Theory of Change** within the 2022 GPE Partnership Compact. The following Programme Design was directly drawn from this Theory of Change and the high-level goal, as well as the objectives, outcomes, components, and activities, have been drawn from this guiding document.

The Theory of Change assumes that **IF** the following are achieved within the next four years, **THEN** more children in Sierra Leone will have foundational learning outcomes and learning gaps between girls and between marginalized groups will be closed:

- Raise children's readiness to learn through targeted pre-primary education (**Pillar A**)
- Strengthen the instructional core for foundational learning (**Pillar B**)
- Recruit, retain and support excellent educators to deliver foundational learning (**Pillar C**)
- Increase the use of data and technology to support foundational learning and education service delivery (**Pillar D**)
- Strengthen governance, management, and accountability for performance on foundational learning (**Pillar E**)

Each of the pillars directly addresses the primary bottlenecks that hamper the achievement of foundational learning in the country, such as: school age children not ready to learn; misalignment of language of instruction; inadequate quality and quantity of trained teachers; poor quality and availability of instructional resources, spaces, tools, and time; inadequate availability of data and technology to support monitoring and delivery of foundational learning; inadequate financing; and inadequate governance, management and accountability for performance on foundational learning.

During the preparation of the Concept Note and Programme Document for the GPE programme, certain elements of the Theory of Change (ToC) were further refined or strengthened to better support the programme goal and objectives, including: the addition of bottlenecks from the enabling environment; sharper, refined language; shifting of certain activities to more appropriate pillars; and the addition of innovative and supplementary findings.

Theory of change: <i>Delivery of the Foundations of Learning for All</i>								
National Goal	Improved learning outcomes for all children and youth, with every child, regardless of circumstance, having the opportunity to access and complete quality education, whilst showing proficiency in all assessed areas							
Sub Goal	Girls and boys acquire foundational skills. Learning gaps between boys, girls and other marginalized groups closed							
Outcomes	Children, from all circumstances, enter primary school at the right age ready-to-learn		Teachers access and utilize inputs from continuous quality development support to deliver foundational learning		Girls and boys meet literacy & numeracy benchmarks in P1-P4 evidenced through learning assessments	Gov't & LEG maintain mutual accountability and alignment for financing and delivering minimum quality package for foundational learning		
Outputs	Increased access to quality pre-primary education through innovative approaches	Increased availability of qualified & trained pre-primary teachers and gender transformative TLMs for targeted schools	New, existing and potential teachers upgraded through in-service and pre-service training to deliver FLN using updated instructional tools/TLMs and through cluster and Community of Practice support		FLN data collected & used by teachers, school, district staff, & communities to assess quality & support student and school progress	Increased number of central, DEO and TSC district staff skilled and resourced to support foundational learning	Partners in alignment with foundational learning programme and commission of resources	
Inputs/ Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define, promote, and harmonize standards, approaches, and quality assurance Locally produce teaching & learning materials, including for play-based methodologies Train pre-school teachers on building school readiness Create active, stimulating learning environment in classrooms Involve parents & community to support learning Employ innovative financing for existing structures in schools Review National Policy and financing structures 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update TLM, curricular framework, and other tools Teachers and students provided & use updated guides and workbooks integrated with principles for radical inclusion and gender equity Teachers use formative assessment guides 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TSC identifies teacher recruitment needs and strategies Train teachers and admin in FLN and use of technology Teachers provide adequate instructional time on FLN using lesson plans & TLMs Teachers update their skills and knowledge through cluster resource centres and school-based community of practice TTIs provide courses on foundational learning Teachers & school heads visited regularly by district staff & community members and trainings supported 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen capacity of educators and administrators to conduct formative assessment and use data Enhance data & technology tools to enable evidence-based policy Develop & rollout M&E tools and system Expand data dashboard towards one-stop data shop for delivery of foundational skills Raise awareness among community and SMCs on FLN score card Use data from national learning assessments to improve pedagogical tools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen MBSSE & district capacity to support schools to deliver foundational literacy Conduct quarterly meetings with Ministries & partners for alignment & sharing Annual Joint review Missions by MBSSE with line Ministries, LEG and civil society to take stock on foundational literacy Undertake research to assess the impact and use evidence for course correction Engage ministries (MoF, MoH, MSW) on FNL 	MBSSE and partners implement an agreed minimum package for FLN & commit to funds
Pillars	A. Raise children's readiness to learn through targeted pre-primary education		B. Strengthen the instructional core for foundational learning	C. Recruit, retain and support excellent educators to deliver FLN	D. Increase the use of data and technology to support foundational learning and education service delivery	E. Strengthen governance, management, and accountability for performance on foundational learning		
Bottle-necks	Most school age children not ready to learn Mother tongue different from school target language		Poor quality and availability of instructional resources, spaces, tools and time	Inadequate quality and quantity of trained educators and teachers	Inadequate availability of data, technology, common assessment data to inform delivery of foundational learning	Inadequate governance, management and accountability for performance on foundational learning; Inadequate financing		

Figure 2. Theory of Change

2.3 Programme Components

To achieve the above, the programme will focus on four components. Each component has a high-level result indicator as well as accompanying activities. Gender and inclusion are hardwired throughout each component.

The four specific interrelated components, sub-components, and activities which are expected to result from this program are detailed below.

Component 1: Raise children's readiness to learn through targeted pre-primary education

This Component responds to the need for children, from all circumstances, to enter primary school at the right age and ready-to-learn (Pillar A in ToC). School readiness is defined by the Education 2030 Framework for Action as “the achievement of developmental milestones across a range of domains, including adequate health and nutritional status, and age-appropriate language, cognitive, social and emotional development.”³⁹

Rationale

Pre-school education has been recognized as a critical - and cost effective - tool for promoting social equality, improving learning outcomes at later ages, and advancing countries' progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.⁴⁰ Specifically, Sustainable Development Goal 4 Quality Education, Target 4.2 states that countries should ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care, and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education.⁴¹

In addition, bolstering access to quality pre-primary education may have the potential to diminish educational, economic, and social inequalities later in life,⁴² and thus ensuring equitable access to pre-primary will be critical to effectively enacting the government's radical inclusion policy (see Section. Enrolments in pre-primary in Sierra Leone doubled between 2017 and 2021, however over three-quarters of children of this age group do not have access to appropriate learning opportunities.

The current education infrastructure in Sierra Leone is inadequate to support pre-primary education for all students. In 2022, around 2,000 pre-primary schools existed across the country as compared to over 7,500 primary schools.⁴³ Although the number of pre-primary teachers with minimum qualifications has increased dramatically in recent years, from 37 percent in 2017 to 69 percent in 2021, many teachers do not have appropriate training. Only 18 percent of pre-primary teachers were on the government payroll, with 42 percent paid by private schools and 21 percent volunteers. Also of note, the teaching force was predominantly female, in stark contrast with primary and secondary levels (ASC 2021).

In early years, from 3 to 5 years old, a stimulating home environment can bolster the development of skills and attitudes essential to school readiness, however, many children in Sierra Leone, and particularly those from poorer families, do not experience stimulating home environments that support cognitive and socioemotional development. While only 31 percent of children under 5 from the richest quintile experienced a positive and stimulating home environment, this proportion dropped to 13 percent for children from the poorest homes (2017 MICS).

GPE Contribution and System Strengthening

The Government of Sierra Leone has committed to ensuring one year of free pre-primary education. However, additional investments in pre-primary education – and particularly system strengthening – will be required to realize this ambition. GPE grants will accelerate progress towards this goal by improving access to and quality of pre-primary for over 980,000 children over four years, building capacity for over 9,000 in-service pre-primary educators, providing stipends to 1,000 existing pre-primary teachers not on payroll. The GPE programme will also contribute to system strengthening on Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and Cluster-based Communities of Practice (CoP) to deepen teacher support and by creating awareness and demand for this level of education.

The GPE programme will also support sector-wide collaboration and coordination on pre-primary and accelerate the government works towards its goal by encouraging innovative financing. Contributions from the LEGO Foundation towards pre-primary¹ will enable the government to accelerate progress towards this objective and for GPE to unlock additional funding through the Multiplier.

This component will be rolled out in close alignment with innovative mechanisms to support community-based early childhood development led by Education Outcomes Fund (EOF) and its implementing partners; EOF plans an intervention to increase access to pre-primary education for 76,000 to 114,000 children by establishing 1,050 to 1,590 in marginalized regions of the country. These will be new centres in addition to the ones that GPE will support, and thus this intervention complements GPE's investment. MBSSE, Teaching Service Commission (TSC), UNICEF, and EOF will continue to coordinate to eliminate duplication.

Subcomponent 1.1: Improving quality of pre-primary education

This subcomponent will ensure that all children receive quality pre-primary education at P0 level with appropriate teaching and learning materials. Activities in this sub-component will include compiling lessons learned from past and on-going pre-primary service delivery; strengthening the existing curriculum and establishing clear learning outcomes and targets; developing of teaching, learning, and assessment materials including detailed teaching schedules; and disseminating materials to students and to pre- and in-service teachers.

GPE will enable the delivery of the instructional core package to 9,801 pre-primary teachers and 200 educators at TTIs. Additionally, 306,263 students will benefit from TLMs. These TLMs will align with the existing play-based curriculum and teacher guide, with further emphasis on foundational learning outcomes appropriate for the P0 level. The programme will expand play-based learning activities and encourage mother tongue instruction. Teacher guides will also provide clear instructions on how to adapt local games for the pre-primary classroom; while teachers may be familiar with games, they may not view them as relevant or appropriate for the classroom, despite their proven benefits.⁴⁴ TLMs will also take into account best practices for gender transformative ECD.⁴⁵

To ensure that pedagogical tools are aligned with the Sierra Leonean context, the ECD Technical Working Group will hold consultations in each region of the country. These consultations will involve local religious leaders, paramount chiefs, teachers, parents, district education officers, school quality assurance officers (SQAOs), and other community members. Consultations will also support the development of Sierra Leonean standards and quality frameworks for pre-primary; for instance,

¹ Pending validation of Expression of Interest from GPE Board and Board Approval from LEGO Foundation.

in Ghana, teacher observation tools required adaptation to the local context to best understand and capture quality of teacher-student relationships in the local context.⁴⁶

Subcomponent 1.2: Improving pre-primary teachers and mentors (school leaders and SQAOs) capacity on foundational learning

This subcomponent will ensure that pre-primary teachers and mentors have the capacity to deliver the new curriculum and support foundational learning outcomes. This will include competency-based training of existing pre-primary teachers, head teachers, SQA Officers, and Teacher Training Institutes (TTI) Educators on the instructional core package.

Over the course of the programme, over 9,801 pre-primary teachers, and 50 TTI faculty will participate in a six-day training to improve their ability to provide play-based, age-appropriate, inclusive teaching and learning materials, and assessment tools. Furthermore, 400 school quality assurance officers and 2,825 head teachers will participate in a two-day training on observing and coaching pre-primary teachers as they implement play-based learning techniques and other aspects of the pre-primary curriculum.

In addition, 1,000 existing pre-primary teachers not on the government payroll will receive monthly stipends through the GPE programme for four years.

Teachers will be trained to develop games and play-based learning techniques, building on learning visits that MBSSE and TSC have undertaken in Ghana and Bangladesh, as well as innovations by BRAC and Right to Play in Sierra Leone.⁴⁷ Teachers, families, and other stakeholders will also be consulted to adapt tools to the setting; this has proven successful in other African countries such as Tanzania⁴⁸ and is already underway in Sierra Leone.⁴⁹

There is strong evidence to support these interventions. Studies from other sub-Saharan African countries have shown that teacher education was one of the highest determinants of whether pre-primary education positively impacted on children⁵⁰ and training combined with consistent coaching yielded positive learning outcomes.⁵¹

This subcomponent will align with other teacher observation initiatives including the Teach and Coach programme. Pre-primary teachers will also be included in Cluster-Based Community of Practice to ensure that pre-primary teachers have continual support (see Component 2). By regularly monitoring of teacher performance and student outcomes, lessons learned will easily be extracted and applied throughout the course of this programme.

Subcomponent 1.3: Creating demand for pre-primary education

Under this subcomponent, parents and communities will gain awareness about the importance and availability of pre-primary education and learn about creating a stimulating home environment. Activities will include developing a radio programme on foundational learning; an awareness campaign on enrolment at the right age; and holding district level consultations in all 16 districts.

The local language radio series will provide information on positive parenting for young children and fostering cognitive and socioemotional learning. The programme will also include interactive play-based learning activities to heighten understanding of the pre-primary curriculum and encourage similar activities at home.⁵² These activities may also be broadcast in pre-primary classrooms to support teachers in delivering play-based learning.

In addition, the programme will partner with civil society actors to lead an awareness campaign on the ground. School Management Committees (SMC) and civil society organizations, including

female leaders, will mobilise communities and parents on enrolment at the right age and the importance of early learning. This will also include co-designing of communication and information support, messages, and IEC and media materials and products to reach and support families and communities.

District-level consultations, led by civil society organisations, will be held to capitalize on existing networks of education advocates, including the Girls Education Movement (GEM), a civil society organization active in all 16 districts that aims to engage local leaders, communities, young people, and civil society organizations in the campaign for girls' education. This will support other activities in this subcomponent and help to compile critical understanding of needs, opportunities and barriers at the community level to create stimulating and positive environments for young children. These activities will deliver messages about the importance of both male and female caregivers for ECD and discouraging harmful gender norms for young children.⁵³

Encouraging home-based activities has also proven to be effective for reaching children with disabilities or who experience other social disadvantages, according to GPE Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (KIX) research in Uganda.⁵⁴ Prior studies in Africa and Pakistan found that home-based and community interventions, including parental involvement, enhance pre-primary education.⁵⁵

Component 2: Strengthen instructional core, teachers' cadre, and capacity to deliver foundational learning

This Component proposes key investments to strengthen the instructional core, teacher' cadre, and system-wide capacity to improve foundational learning across Sierra Leone (Pillar B and C). Specifically, this will involve strengthening and updating the instructional core for numeracy (P1-P4) and literacy (P3-P4), and the recruitment of, training, and support to teachers and other education personnel.

Rationale

By focusing on basic reading and mathematics in the first four years of primary school, Sierra Leone will improve learning outcomes and raise overall education quality.⁵⁶ This will support the achievement of SDG 4 Quality Education and will contribute to progress towards other SDGs.⁵⁷ The GPE programme will focus specifically on delivering foundational numeracy for P1-P4, complementing other investments detailed below. Through a structured pedagogy approach – which aligns teacher trainings, instructional core, detailed lesson plans, and TLMs- the programme will address systemic factors inhibiting the development of foundational numeracy skills in Sierra Leone. Structured pedagogy can be a cost-effective and sustainable approach to improving instructional quality and teaching practices.⁵⁸

While learning outcomes in numeracy have slightly increased in recent years in Sierra Leone, many children leave primary school without basic computational skills. National Primary School Exam (NPSE) has demonstrated inequalities in learning between districts and regions.⁵⁹

EGMA 2021 revealed that P2 and P4 learners performed well in procedural maths skills; but answered less than half of questions correctly on simple operations, suggesting that students have not adequately developed conceptual and problem-solving skills in numeracy, and are instead demonstrating rote memorization. In spite of similar enrolment and retention rates (40 percent), “boys outperformed their female counterparts on nearly every subtask in EGMA and EGMA in both grades.”⁶⁰ In numeracy, girls had significantly more zero scores on Level 1 subtraction and addition.

The study also found that instructional time was typically shorter than required by the curriculum or international standards and that roughly a quarter of 40-minute lessons generally went unused. In about 40 percent of P2 classes, teachers did not appear prepared for the lesson.⁶¹

Through the programme, teachers will benefit from continuous professional development and pedagogical support and resources to integrate play-based, child-centred learning. Teachers in Sierra Leone generally have several years of experience and long-term commitment to their profession, even when uncertified;⁶² support can increase motivation and build on classroom expertise. However, only 180 School Quality Assurance Officers are currently responsible for observing and supporting all primary and secondary teachers in all 16 districts; since a single officer is responsible for around 44 schools, they face barriers to making regular school visits.

Another obstacle to learning outcomes is the lack of learning materials to support students learning. On average, one maths and one English textbook existed for every 1.75 students; however, when broken down by government assisted and non-government assisted schools, students in non-government assisted schools had a significantly higher pupil to textbook ratio, averaging 1 textbook to 2.5 (EGRA EGMA 2021). Through this programme, the government will produce and efficiently deliver hybrid workbook-textbooks to students with the aim of achieving a 1:1 ratio.

GPE Contribution and Systems Strengthening

The government's goal is for all teachers to access and utilize inputs from continuous quality professional development and supporting materials to deliver foundational learning, which will require additional investments to primary education and system strengthening. GPE grants will accelerate progress towards this goal by improving the instructional core and quality and availability trainings and CPD. Moreover, the programme will shorten the distance between teachers and support systems by training 220 new Foundational Learning SQAQO and 180 existing SQAQO. This will strengthen the School Quality Assurance system, provide added support to the Cluster level, and enhance SQAQO ability to collect data, supporting other goals of the programme (See also Subcomponent 3). This builds on existing Cluster work through the FREE programme and ESPIG and supports the achievement of ESP 2022-2026. The grant will also ensure that 30 percent of all Foundational Learning SQAQO leaders are female (see Component 3), further promoting gender equity within the education system.

Critically, the GPE programme will support sector-wide collaboration and coordination on the primary instructional core and teacher trainings and accelerate progress towards the government's goal. The activities under Component 2 will be undertaken by the government in close coordination with partners. Specifically, the World Bank, through the FREE programme, has funded the literacy instructional core, as well as the development, production, and delivery of TLMs and trainings around the foundational literacy package for P1 and P2. The World Bank's investment complements the GPE grant and will allow the government to use GPE financing to develop the complementary numeracy component at P1-P4 levels and literacy for P3-P4 levels. The GPE grant will also enable coordination and strengthening around radio instruction for foundational years (Subcomponent 2.4) Component 4 will strengthen mechanisms to support coordination on foundational learning.

The Multiplier grant will accelerate progress towards this Component. Contributions from the LEGO Foundation towards primary educational materials and teacher trainings will enable the government to accelerate progress towards this objective and for GPE to unlock additional funding. The GPE Grant will also enable the government to build on existing innovations and good practices, including the Education Innovation Challenge (EIC) and Sierra Leone Education Innovation Challenge

(SLEIC), and the International Rescue Committee's work on adolescent girls and socioemotional learning.

Subcomponent 2.1: Enhancing quality of foundational learning in primary education

This subcomponent addresses the need to strengthen the quality of foundational learning materials. Activities will include documentation of domestic lessons learnt and best practices; regular High Level Technical Working Group meetings; and development and delivery of an instructional core package and TLMs for foundational learning in primary education P1-P4.

The instructional core will be strengthened based on international best practices in large-scale reading and numeracy interventions, based on the structured pedagogy model. The components of the instructional core are set out clearly under Objective 1 in Sierra Leone's 2022-2026 Education Sector Plan. They include clear expectations for learning outcomes, the national curriculum and syllabus, teaching and learning materials (TLM) for the students, and assessment tools.

The GPE programme will fund the development of a comprehensive numeracy package (hybrid textbook-workbooks and TLMs) that will be delivered to 1.89 million students over the four-year programme in all 16 districts, with P1 rolled out in year 1, P2 in year 2, P3 in year 3 and P4 in year 4. Over 5.3 million workbooks will be distributed to P1-P4 students over the course of the programme. 40,594 copies of teacher guide, which will comprise lesson plans, quality standards, and a competency framework, will be delivered to P1-P4 teachers. TTIs will also receive copies of the instructional core in order to support pre-service training. Students in P1 will receive a foundational learning package on the first day of school which includes the hybrid textbook-workbook and TLMs.

The instructional package will include clear learning outcome targets and competency framework for P1-P4; (ii) foundational-level teacher guides that incorporate daily lesson plans laid out in a structured sequence, including with differentiation to accommodate the diverse needs of learners such as those identified by the Radical Inclusion Policy (iii) TLMs for numeracy that mirror the teacher guides and are delivered to every P1-P4 learner, and (iv) formative early-grade assessment tools that are aligned with the lesson plans and the learning outcomes. Socioemotional learning will be integrated within the numeracy TLMs.

The structured pedagogy approach⁶³ has proven to be an effective intervention in foundational literacy in other African contexts such as Kenya and Uganda.⁶⁴ MBSSE and partners will also rely on existing resources in country to support the development of teaching and learning materials.⁶⁵

A technical committee made up of both administrative and technical focal points will be established in the first three months of the programme. It will ensure – through monthly meetings – that roll out, trainings, and continuous professional development are aligned. The technical committee will also ensure that gender-transformative and disability-inclusive approaches are included in the development of numeracy materials.

Subcomponent 2.2: Strengthening Primary Teachers' and Mentors' Capacity in FLN

This subcomponent will focus on building teachers' and mentors' (head teachers and existing and new SQAQ) and teacher trainers' capacity to deliver the curriculum and to carry out formative assessments of student learning. Activities will include trainings on the instructional core package and formative assessment. The programme will also train 220 new Foundational Learning SQAQ to support pre-primary and primary teachers.

Ongoing support and observation of teachers will be critical to the success of this reform. Trainings under this subcomponent will align and support ongoing activities and build the capacity of SQAOs and head teachers to take forward and implement the new instructional core. Specifically, 36,903 teachers (P1-P4) will participate in 6-day trainings over the four years. A further 8,929 school leaders, 180 existing SQAOs, and 220 new SQAOs will be trained during Years 1 and 2. These in-service trainings on the new curriculum will be complemented by trainings to ensure quality, continual support, and coaching. For maximal results, these trainings will occur primarily in-person, since past e-learning interventions in Sierra Leone did not substantially improve teaching practices⁶⁶

These activities will complement the Teach and Coach programme and the School Leadership Programme (through TSC) for teacher observation and improvement and will support hardwiring of gender- and disability -sensitive approaches to student and teacher assessment.

Formative assessments will play an essential role in enabling teachers to routinely monitor students' learning outcomes and to particularly monitor girls' and other disadvantaged groups and differentiate instruction where necessary. Structured pedagogy approaches have more impact when formative assessments are integrated and when parents are informed of their children's progress.⁶⁷ MBSSE will develop and pre-test learning assessment tools for numeracy for P1-P4 in close coordination with literacy. Through head teachers and SQAOs, teachers will be given continual guidance and trained in developing and using their own formative assessment tools. Teachers will also be supported in learning techniques for sharing learning results with parents based on these formative assessments.

In addition to in-service training, this program will support pre-service teacher training institutes (TTIs); 50 TTI faculty will be trained during years 1 and 2. During the ESPIG, pre-service training modules were developed on foundational learning. In this programme, further courses will align to ensure that future pre-primary and primary teachers develop skills in 1) screening and inclusion of students with disabilities and 2) incorporating gender-transformative practices in the classroom.

Subcomponent 2.3: Establishing Cluster Based mentorship initiative for foundation level teachers

This subcomponent addresses the need to provide teachers with continuous, school-based support and mentorship in order for them to fully capitalise on the other activities under this component. Activities under this subcomponent will include: a review of support to foundational teachers and development of a Cluster- based community of practice approach; District, Chiefdom and Ward level consultations; and Cluster- level Community of Practice Guided Sessions on FLN.

The programme will support 15,000 Cluster level guided sessions during years 2-4 of the programme (5,000 each year). District level consultations will support the development of functioning Clusters. These Clusters, which will be led by Foundational Learning SQAOs, will complement the teacher trainings planned around the curriculum by ensuring that teachers have consistent support and guidance. Data collection on foundational learning will also take place through the Clusters and will be fed back to teachers to support their practices. The Clusters will host and support all efforts related to continuous professional development of teachers. Cluster-based mentorship activities have proven successful in Sierra Leone, as piloted during the ESPIG, as well as in similar low-resource contexts.⁶⁸

Some of the number of Clusters will pilot the use of technology, including solar panels, television, and internet, to enhance professional development and increase access to innovative digital materials. This will include the sharing of digitised modules developed through other components of this programme.

Cluster-based mentorship will specifically bolster female teachers' participation and performance and support their retention. Since at least 30 percent of Foundational Learning SQAOs will be women, the programme will encourage the formation of all-female Clusters, particularly in areas where there is low participation or retention of female teachers. By championing and supporting female teachers, the programme aims to create gender-transformative classroom environments and improve girls' enrolment, attendance, and learning.

This subcomponent will be closely aligned with other activities including TSC's Coach and Teach programme as well as the Sierra Leone School Leadership Consortium (not yet launched).

Subcomponent 2.4 Strengthening FLN education through interactive radio

This subcomponent will involve the development and dissemination of interactive radio instruction for foundational learning. The radio instruction will be developed in tandem with the new instructional core package and TLMs and will align its content and sequencing. Thus, in Year 1, four 30–60-minute radio lessons per week will be produced and broadcast for P1 (two for literacy and two for numeracy). In Year 2, literacy and numeracy lessons for P2 will be developed and broadcast along with those for P1. Similarly in Year 3 and 4 literacy and numeracy lessons for P3 and P4 will be added respectively.

Interactive radio is a complementary and cost-effective investment to support learning outcomes within a structured pedagogy approach.⁶⁹ In Sierra Leone, during the Ebola and Covid-19 crises, radio proved to be widely adopted and used by students, particularly those who had difficulties re-enrolling and attending school; nearly 90 percent of learners reported listening to the national radio programme during Covid-19.⁷⁰ To date, 74,141 radios have been distributed in 14 districts except Kailahun and Western Urban, and good national coverage exists;⁷¹ This allows GPE investments to go directly towards developing and airing the content.

The interactive radio instruction will embed concepts related to gender and disability in the teaching of foundational literacy and numeracy. It is expected that this will enhance students' and teachers' understanding of such issues and familiarise them with different types of disability and encourage further support of female students and radical inclusion groups in the classroom. For example, the program may feature characters or scenarios involving students or people with disabilities – or students who are mothers to demonstrate the normalcy of their lives and give examples of good behaviour.⁷²

Component 3: Increase the use of data and technology to support foundational learning and education service delivery

This Component addresses the need to increase the use of data and technology to support foundational learning and education service delivery (Pillar D). As a result, foundational learning data will be more regularly collected and used by teachers, school leaders, cluster learning leaders, parents and communities, district education offices, district councils, and national ministries and authorities to assess quality and support student and school progress. The System Capacity Grant will support several of these key reforms.

Rationale

The Government of Sierra Leone recognises the use of data and technology as a crucial approach to achieving foundational learning for all children. During the Compact development process, Sierra

Leone's Local Education Group (LEG) identified data and evidence as one of the high priority enabling factors for system transformation and for Sierra Leone to achieve its priority reform.

The government, key donors, and NGOs have invested significantly in education data systems at MBSSE, TSC, and MTHE (See Annex 2 for more details). Each year, the government conducts a digitised Annual School Census to gather data on students, teachers, facilities, and finances at every school in Sierra Leone. Separately, the MBSSE has worked with the UKAid-funded *Leh Wi Lan* program to distribute tablets to district officials and principals in all government-supported secondary schools to collect real-time data. More recently, the TSC developed the *Wi Dae Ya* (also known as One Tablet Per School-OTPS) program to equip primary school leaders with tablets to gather real-time data on teachers and students and is currently expanding to 360 schools. The TSC has also initiated technology enabled Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for teachers. A contextualized version of the World Bank's TEACH tool is being used on the tablets to carry out classroom observations and to provide tailored and continued support to teachers.

Despite this investment, Sierra Leone's education data ecosystem presents major challenges. Analysis of the sector concluded that the development of many different data systems has contributed to "significant fragmentation and duplication."⁷³ A recent study, for example, identified 17 different data collection programmes across 11 government directorates and units with at least five different funding sources. Moreover, the education sector continues to face significant data gaps. For example, learning assessments such as the EGRA/EGMA do not occur in regular intervals. In addition, policymakers lack granular data on pre-primary education, radical inclusion groups, and unique learner identification numbers that can facilitate the tracking of student progress towards meeting learning targets. Where data exists, MBSSE officials have expressed low levels of confidence in the quality of school level data, as well as procedures for data validation and verification, according to an analysis of education service delivery in 2020.⁷⁴

Consultations, at the application preparation stage with actors active in developing the education data ecosystem in Sierra Leone, and desk review suggest that data on foundational learning outcomes must be generated on a regular basis with the necessary disaggregation and granularity, including unique learner identification numbers (ULID). Further investments will enhance the capacity of the current data ecosystem to a) report on literacy and numeracy outcomes for each student and from each primary school and b) identify specific thematic and geographic areas of improvement. Continual evidence-based feedback on performance in foundational learning will promote a culture of accountability and increase commitment to rationalize resources. Additionally, the feedback on thematic areas of improvement will allow the continuous professional development to adapt to the needs of teachers. These investments in the data ecosystem will be critical in improving foundational learning at scale.

Consultations with the World Bank revealed that they have earmarked funds to procure 4,000 tablets to support TSC's on-going and upcoming initiatives. TSC's School Leadership Program intends to avoid procurement of hardware and aims to target schools where tablet and internet are already available. As per ASC 2021, there are at least 1,227 pre-primary public schools and 6,663 primary public schools, revealing a significant gap in the number of schools and tablets available. Furthermore, the existing 180 SQAOs face barriers to making regular school visits, since the average SQAO to school ratio is 1:44. This gap in school supervision is highlighted in the Education Sector Analysis 2020 and emphasized in the public expenditure review by World Bank as well as in consultations with government and partners actively supporting data collection from schools.

GPE Contribution and System Strengthening

The government aims to create a data infrastructure that follows a “5c” process consisting of the following steps: 1) coordinate and plan 2) collect data 3) confirm accuracy 4) consolidate and 5) curate access. This will create a “single source of truth” for education data and enable policy and instructional decision-making to accelerate learning.⁷⁵ GPE investments will lead to integration of foundational learning data into the existing data ecosystem as well as assist in addressing the duplication arising from the proliferation of data systems and tools across the education sector. This will include support for a pilot of ULID, in close collaboration with National Civil Registration Authority (NCRA) for P0 and P1 students in all 16 districts, in direct alignment with the 2023 Basic and Senior Secondary Education Act.

The programme will also advance the policy landscape by ensuring the updating of the EMIS policy. The 2022 – 2026 ESP recognises these efforts as critical investments in data collection but also highlights the dire need to streamline these efforts to reduce duplication and improve the use of this data for decision making. To support this vision, the government has mandated an Education Data Working Group (EDWG) led by MBSSE and MTHE to bring together all key technical partners and harmonise all efforts related to the collection, management, and use of data in education and strengthen the institutional frameworks that govern this system. The programme will support the operationalization of the EDWG which will build system capacity for data.

As indicated in the Compact, the program will take full advantage of the System Capacity Grant in strengthening of data systems to support measurement of foundational learning (specifically funding activities under Subcomponents 3.2). The SCG will enable MBSSE to purchase 3,000 tablets and hardware and software required to meet its goal of One Tablet Per School and to collate foundational learning data. Further, the SCG will also support additional human resources at the central level to strengthen systems to support data management and analysis, and analysis on financing and expenditure on foundational learning, enabling better and timely use of data to improve teaching, learning, and financing. Finally, the SCG will be used to hire of 220 additional SQAOs for foundational learning will build capacity in both pedagogical support and data collection and support system’s strengthening and the government’s progress on the ESP 2022-2026 and the overall goal of the reform.

Subcomponent 3.1: Enhancing capacity of education data ecosystem to report on foundational learning data

This subcomponent will enhance the data ecosystem through strengthening policies, strategies, and existing systems.

Recognizing data systems harmonization as an important investment in one of the high priority enabling factors for system transformation, the program will support the activation of Education Data Working Group (EDWG), as recommended by the Education Sector Plan 2022 – 2026, and its merger with the Joint EMIS Technical Committee to avoid overlaps. The program will work closely with the two education ministries to develop clear terms of reference for the EDWG. It is envisioned that EDWG will oversee the harmonization process at the national level and take systems level decisions to streamline data collection, consolidation, integration, analysis and utilization issues at school, cluster, district and national tiers. EDWG will also facilitate in a) reviewing the progress on the execution of the Joint EMIS Roadmap; b) reviewing the draft EMIS Policy and updating it, and c) securing Government of Sierra Leone’s approval for the updated EMIS Policy. It is expected that the updated policy will provide crucial guidance on laying the foundations for a unified education data ecosystem that integrates foundational learning data.

To ensure that the existing data ecosystem caters to the needs of foundational learning, a system evaluation will be supported under this subcomponent. It will assess system capacity to collate,

consolidate, analyse, and generate essential data on foundational learning outcomes from schools for decision making at national, district, cluster and school level. The system evaluation will lead to the development of a clear strategy for adapting the existing education data ecosystem to integrate foundational learning data. The program will also support the implementation of this roadmap. The evaluation criteria and priority foundational learning needs will be determined in agreement with the Education Data Working Group (EDWG) which will also oversee the development of comprehensive ToRs and delivery of this technical assistance and its deliverables. UNICEF technical experts will also support quality assurance of each deliverable.

With the availability of evidence on thematic areas of improvement, the program will develop a strategy to provide targeted technology to support teachers to address low levels of learning in literacy and numeracy. The strategy will inform the development or customization of artificial intelligence (AI) powered tools and content to enhance teaching and learning in classrooms. The program will also capitalize on existing innovations in the country. For one, it will support the expansion of the Word of the Day and Dictionary text messaging service. It will also use Learning Passport, a free online, mobile, and offline platform already in use in Sierra Leone, to disseminate weekly FLN lessons to teachers, students, and parents. Similarly, U-Report, a messaging tool, will disseminate FLN lessons to teachers and adult learners. These interventions will capitalize on the distribution of tablets to primary schools and trainings to teachers and school leaders on their use.

The programme will design and pilot a system to issue ULID to all students in P0 and P1 to facilitate student tracking with respect to their performance in foundational learning as well as their progression in the system, including transition, repetition, and drop out. For children without birth registration and/or certificate, the programme will ensure collaboration with state entities to facilitate simultaneous school and civil registration. This will also enable harmonization between ULID and the country's education data system, as well as integration with MoF data system. MBSSE will collaborate with Ministry of Health and Sanitation and the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs which work on birth registration with communities, especially in remote areas.

Subcomponent 3.2: Enhanced capacity at National, District, Cluster and School Level to collect and use foundational learning data

This subcomponent will strengthen capacity across the system to collect and use data on foundational learning. The program aims to achieve this by providing technical assistance to MBSSE; stipends for district level IT focal points; tablets in pre-primary and primary schools; hiring of 220 Foundational Learning SQAOs and supporting their visits to pre-primary and primary schools; trainings at districts, schools, and for teacher educators in TTIs on data management; and the development of scorecards and KPIs on school, Cluster, and district performance.

The proposed program aims to drive transformation and strengthen capacity by hiring three experts. These experts will support MBSSE with foundational learning data management, gender and radical inclusion in foundational learning, and financial analysis of public spending on foundational learning. These experts will be embedded within the Directorate of Policy and Planning and accountable to the Director of Policy and Planning. The program will also ensure continued availability of district level IT focal persons, embedded within each DEO, to oversee the district level data system.

The programme will hire 220 Foundational Learning SQAOs through a merit-based recruitment process and continue to evaluate their performance. This will reduce the ratio of SQAOs to Schools from 1:44 to 1:20 and will allow increased supervision visits in schools and improve pedagogical support to teachers (See Subcomponent 2). A primary role of these SQAOs will be to master the

content of foundational learning and to observe teachers and give corrective feedback based on these observations.

Of these newly recruited Foundational Learning SQAOs, three per district will have the opportunity to be trained and serve as Curriculum Advisors, with support from the Directorate of Curriculum and Research. These Curriculum Advisors will serve on a rotational basis and will coach teachers and leaders on specific issues around curriculum delivery related to foundational learning.

Since SQAOs currently exist in the education system, the newly recruited Foundational Learning SQAOs will be easily inducted and mainstreamed. The government has committed to mobilizing funding and integrating the newly hired SQAOs onto the government payroll by the end of the programme life to ensure sustainability. This activity will support the government to meet its ESP Outcome 5.2 (*Key Performance Indicator 16*).

The programme will also support Sierra Leone in meeting *Key Performance Indicator 20* of the Education Sector Plan 2022-2026, which identifies a target of providing tablets to all primary schools. The availability of tablets in schools will enhance teachers' and head teachers' capacity to collate foundational learning data and use it to improve classroom instruction and record performance on a regular basis. The program is cognizant of the similar past investments (by FCDO and World Bank) and aims to complement on-going investments (Wi De Ya and School Leadership Program). The programme will enable the purchasing of 3,000 tablets for primary and pre-primary schools in Year 1 of the programme. These tablets will have subsidized and ringfenced data packages for the duration of the programme. School leaders will be required to use these tablets to collect foundational learning data and other school level data and share it with Cluster Learning Leaders, SQAOs, TSC, DEOs and MBSSE. These tablets will also be used as envisioned under *Wi De Ya / OTPS*, and school leadership program and to carry out classroom observations through Teach. Their availability will facilitate the roll out of other on-going and future investments and deliver a much wider impact.

In addition, the programme aims to provide necessary hardware and software, audio visual equipment and solar system at district and cluster levels to promote the collation and use of school level foundational learning data. It is expected that in Year 1, the program will carry out a needs analysis to prioritise the selection of clusters and DEOs that will benefit from this support. The grant will also support SQAOs to visit pre-primary and primary classrooms and provide support to teachers and head teachers more frequently. With this necessary investment, all 16 districts will be able to generate essential evidence on performance and take critical and timely decisions to achieve foundational learning goals.

More than 11,000 pre-primary and primary school leaders, 180 SQAOs, 32 DEOs and local council staff, 2,500 representatives from local councils, chiefdoms, ward education committees, and volunteers from universities and colleges will be trained on the use of tablets for foundational learning data collection.

Equipping all 16 districts, ensuring continuity of cluster leaders, SQAOs and district IT focal persons, and capacity building of all key actors is expected to lay a strong foundation for an education data ecosystem that provides evidence on performance in foundational learning as well as efficiency of the education system to drive transformation.

The programme aims to support MBSSE in promoting a culture of accountability and commitment to evidence-based investments in foundational learning. A scorecard will be developed comprising key performance indicators (KPIs) for school, cluster and district performance in foundational learning. Data from each school will be collected against these KPIs on a regular basis and reports will be generated to showcase school, cluster and district achievements and resultant ranking. MBSSE together with DEOs, Local Councils and District Forums will use this scorecard to allocate resources based on performance in foundational learning and encourage clusters and districts to strive for greater results. It is envisioned that EDWG will lead in selecting the most appropriate KPIs for the scorecard which may include students' foundational learning outcomes, teacher performance through classroom observation, teacher assessment in FLN, students' remedial learning, school leader performance, cluster-based guided sessions for teachers, school leader and teacher trainings, and school action and development plans. The program will support in developing databases and designing dashboards that will display the district and cluster rankings based on the scorecard and data and analysis on KPIs.

This subcomponent also strongly supports gender transformation and radical inclusion, as it will be able to 1) provide more disaggregated data on groups of students who are falling behind in foundational learning such as girls and students with disabilities and 2) enable educators to use data to support these groups of students.

Finally, the program will design a pilot system that issues ULID to all students in P0 and P1, to facilitate student tracking with respect to their performance in foundational learning as well as their progression in the system (transition, repetition, drop out). For children who do not have a birth certificate or whose birth was never registered, the program will ensure collaboration with all state entities to facilitate simultaneous civil and school registration.

Subcomponent 3.3: National Learning Assessments

This subcomponent will enable Sierra Leone to better measure school readiness and foundational learning outcomes at the national level. It will support the development and pre-testing of a) school readiness assessment tool, b) a foundational learning assessment tool for primary, and c) rolling out the two assessments nationally. These assessments are in line with the priorities identified in the Education Sector Plan 2022-2026 and aim to report on *Key Performance Indicator 1* of the ESP Goal. They also compliment MBSSE and FREE Project's design to conduct national level assessments in Grade 4.

With technical oversight by the Foundational Learning and ECD Steering Committees the program will develop comprehensive ToRs and engage experts to support in designing school readiness and foundational learning assessments at national level. These will be informed by international standards and experiences, contextualized to Sierra Leone. These national level assessments, including school readiness at pre-primary and foundational learning in Grade 2, will be developed in year one and rolled out in each of the following years.

Results of the school readiness assessment will enable teachers to better adapt lessons and content to match the learning needs of students. They will also support the screening of learning disabilities from an early age and direct students to necessary services. Results of the foundational learning assessment will enable schools, districts, and the government to measure the learning outcomes of students and track progress.

The results will also contribute to Education Sector Analysis, in articulating FLN policies/programs formulation by providing insights into the needs and challenges of specific populations. This will

help to evaluate the effectiveness of the programs and make data-informed decisions about program funding and scale up, support decisions regarding teacher support, professional development, and inform resource allocation decisions, prioritizing resourcing strategies.

Component 4: Strengthen governance, management, and accountability for performance on foundational learning

This Component addresses the need to strengthen governance and management to improve foundational learning and increase the number of skilled and resourced staff to carry forward the reform (Pillar E). The outcome will consist of the government and LEG maintaining mutual accountability and alignment for financing and service delivery.

Rationale

The government and partners recognise that reforms to governance and management must be implemented in order to ensure transformation towards foundational learning.⁷⁶ Such reforms should address systemic issues at all levels and engage both governmental and non-governmental entities, and across sectors including Ministries of Health, Social Welfare, Finance, and Gender and Children's Affairs. At the district level, there is significant overlap and duplication of the roles and responsibilities of staff. For example, at the district level, there is a District Education Office (MBSSE) in addition to a TSC District office and FQSE District Coordinators. Few mechanisms or operational guidelines exist for sharing information or coordinating between offices.⁷⁷

At the national level, MBSSE experiences staffing shortages, with a 2020 analysis estimating that under half of all positions were not staffed, leading to challenges in the delegation and execution of tasks from senior to junior level staff.⁷⁸ In addition, further coordination between MTHE, MBSSE, and TSC – along with partners – is required to ensure foundational learning. Stakeholders reported that the LEG required more regular meetings and alignment on foundational learning, as well as more effective, meaningful processes for reviewing and validating documents.⁷⁹ In addition to LEG, a Steering Committee to oversee all work on foundational learning will be required to ensure alignment over the four-year programme.

Sierra Leone enjoys a good starting point for coordinated financing through the multi-donor trust fund for the FREE education project 2020-25, which pools contributions from the World Bank, the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, the European Union and Irish Aid. The World Bank recently indicated an additional USD 15 million for this facility and extended its duration until 2027. Much of the funding from donors is not direct budget support. The MBSSE's existing architecture to coordination requires strengthening. MBSSE has a dedicated GPE program coordinator, Programme Implementation Unit (PIU), and a Development Partners Coordination Desk. However, under-staffing within the ministry, as well as fragmentation of different projects on foundational learning being implemented by the MBSSE has led to challenges in consistent coordination and harmonization.

Sierra Leone must maintain a high level of spending on education, and, equally importantly, ensure that such spending creates the most impact toward its high ambitions. Domestic financing of education has benefited from a significant increase since 2018, reaching and exceeding the "20 percent of domestic spending" benchmark.⁸⁰ However, Sierra Leone must shift the emphasis of its spending to focus more on pre-primary and primary education and to the achievement of its inclusion and learning outcomes priorities. Improved budget execution will be necessary for the reforms to be successful.

GPE contributions and System Strengthening

GPE grants will allow the government to build capacity within the ministries responsible for education and TSC to support the reform. The System Transformation Grant will enable the provision of opportunities and avenues for professional development, including participation in seminars, blended courses, exposure visits, trainings, opportunities to work with both international and national experts, and sharing of best practices between and within districts.

The programme will support the hardwiring of gender-transformative education within MBSSE and TSC through dedicated trainings (see also Component 3 for staffing embedded in MBSSE). This will enable MBSSE to have sustainable, in-house gender expertise in curriculum, planning, and data that will benefit the entire education sector.

In order to ensure that the government and its key partners on foundational learning work in close coordination both during and after the period covered by the GPE grant, MBSSE and partners will strengthen their capacity to coordinate and steer the various activities on foundational learning. The government has committed to investing not less than 20 percent of the national budget to the education sector;⁸¹ the programme will enable for critical system strengthening to ensure that the government can finance FLN initiatives beyond 2027. Strengthening coordination and finance processes within the MBSSE will contribute to avoiding duplication and improving effectiveness.

Subcomponent 4.1: Improved national level coordination and harmonization to maximise support on foundational learning

This subcomponent will focus on strengthening capacity and systems to support national level coordination on foundational learning. Activities will include the operationalization of the Foundational Learning Steering Committee; quarterly donor alignment and LEG meetings, as well as an assessment and updating of LEG Terms of Reference; regular reporting on progress, performance, and alignment of resources towards foundational learning.

The GPE programme will support the formation and quarterly meetings of Foundational Learning Steering Committee (SC) under the chairmanship of the Minister of Basic and Senior Secondary Education. In the preliminary phase of this program, a Terms of Reference will be created through a consultative process to establish the committee's membership, mandate, and key objectives. The SC will determine the specific fundamental reading and mathematics competencies and the associated measurements and indicators and provide oversight on the instructional core and teacher trainings. Of particular importance, the SC will review materials and strategies to ensure that gender-transformative and inclusive approaches are integrated throughout.

Crucially, the SC will also lead the work on monitoring results and adapting the reform in accordance with the GPE 2025 strategy, Sierra Leone's GPE Partnership Compact, and the Education Sector Plan. The group will participate in annual joint review missions, to monitor the Education Sector Plan progress and overall progress towards learning and produce biannual reports on progress and emerging results towards foundational learning. Finally, the SC will also engage relevant focal points and coordinate with line ministries including Ministries of Health, Finance, and Social Welfare, among others, particularly on issues of health, gender, and civil registration.

The Steering Committee will also assess any new funding streams and ensure that different donors which are collaborating with the government remain aligned around the issue of foundational learning, as well as overseeing spending towards FLN and ensure that the government is on track to unlocking the Top-Up portion of the grant. This will include supporting the production of disaggregated budget analyses. The Steering Committee will also ensure that the ministries and TSC share any good practices or innovations that are developed.

For the overall governance of the programme, a dedicated Programme Management Unit (PMU) will be set up as the Secretariat reporting to both the MBSSE and GA. The existing PIU under the ESPIG will be strengthened to take up the PMU role to coordinate, facilitate and provide technical support to plan, implement, and monitor relevant programme activities.

Alongside the Steering Committee, a strengthened LEG will also support programme implementation and successful reforms. The LEG is currently undergoing an external assessment and updating of its Terms of Reference to ensure that the group's functionality corresponds to sectoral and programmatic needs. The programme will support the LEG to deliver better and overcome shared problems.

Subcomponent 4.2: Strengthening Government of Sierra Leone's technical and management capacity in effective investments in foundational learning

This subcomponent will strengthen Sierra Leone's technical and management capacities. Activities will include hiring staff in MBSSE Directorate of Policy and planning; training MBSSE staff in procurement and financial management; supporting learning visits; and capacity building on gender, early childhood development, data systems, and policy and planning.

In order to enhance effective spending on foundational learning, including on the various TLMs and products produced through this grant, MBSSE staff across different departments will require training in procurement and general financial management. This will also entail the hiring of additional staff in the MBSSE Directorate of Policy and Planning (one for policy and planning and two for data analysis and management).

During the ESPIG, learning and exposure visits significantly enhanced MBSSE and TSC staff on best practices in foundational learning in similarly resourced contexts. MBSSE and TSC will effectuate visits to best practice countries, as well as attend conferences to share lessons learned from Sierra Leone. The GPE grant will enable 10 such trips.

Finally, to support system strengthening with regards to gender, staff in MBSSE and TSC will receive training from local and/or international experts on gender-transformative education sector planning for FLN.

Subcomponent 4.3: Establishing District level decision making system to support performance in foundational learning

This subcomponent will undertake efforts to strengthen governance at the district level. Activities will include education coordination meetings that involve district councils, local education partners and civil society representative to carry out monthly review of progress on foundational learning, through scorecards and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

Internal and external communication mechanisms will be established to promote foundational learning across the schools and across the country. As necessary, a consortium of outstanding and credible implementing partners (e.g., NGOs, civil society organization) will be selected to support certain aspects of the implementation and monitoring.

Under this subcomponent, a district forum for foundational learning will be established and meet quarterly. This forum will assess the regularly published KPIs and scorecards. This will allow communities, civil society, local councils and district level officials to identify and support low-performing schools and intervene to improve learning outcomes.

The programme will support dialogue with Local Councils to review district level plans and integrate district level foundational learning goals in district plans and budgets. These activities will ensure that data on foundational learning is used to inform district-level planning and will strengthen the engagement of officials.

2.4 Geographic Coverage and Roll Out

Through a number of sectoral analyses, the government and partners have determined that the bottlenecks hampering children's development of foundational learning abilities occur across the country and, as such, that nationwide interventions and system reform are required to unblock them.⁸² Building on the achievements of the ESPIG from 2018-2022, along with other programmes and policies detailed in Section 1, the groundwork has been laid for this program to roll out to scale in all 16 Districts.

A successful scale-up requires institutional capacity in order to support the school and district-level staff in adopting reforms and to take stock of progress and course correct where needed.⁸³ In Sierra Leone, an enabling environment will support nationwide scaling, including:

- Strong political will and leadership committed to transforming education
- Alignment and consistency with government policy, regulations, and education sector structure
- Existing infrastructure and human resources to support scale up
- Cost of implementation at scale can be integrated in both the government budget and key partner organizations' budgets
- Strong, collaborative relationships between all parties at district, regional, and national levels.⁸⁴

The programme will target each district annually for training and distribution of teaching and learning materials at the pre-primary and primary levels. In **Year 1**, delivery of instructional core package, TLMs and assessment materials for **P0 and P1-P2 numeracy** will occur in all 16 districts (FREE programme will cover the costs of P1-P2 literacy); trainings on these materials will also take place in the same year. In **Year 2**, the instructional core package, TLMs, and assessment materials for **P3-P4 numeracy and literacy**. Building on lessons learned through existing piloting and work completed during the ESPIG and the Education Innovation Challenge (EIC), the GPE programme will accelerate the scale up of previously tested interventions.⁸⁵

While the bulk of activities will be rolled to scale and for all P0 and P1-P4, a handful of innovative interventions will be rolled out as part of a piloting process. For one, the ULID will be piloted in all P0 and P1 classes during the programme; based on outcomes, the government may scale this up to all grades in future years. In addition, Cluster-based activities will require targeting to disadvantaged communities, specifically the most disadvantaged schools and also female teachers. Targeting for this activity will be determined by an analysis of retention rates and scores on national assessments, alongside poverty levels at the chiefdom level (see below), since Clusters will need to operate in specific geographic areas. Costing and budgeting of the program will also take into account gender and the inclusion of disadvantaged groups, particularly with regards to the training of new pre-primary teachers.⁸⁶

The hiring and training of administrative staff, as well as the purchasing of requisite materials, under the System Capacity Grant will be completed in Year 1 of the grant in order to support the roll-out of other activities.

During the preliminary period before the grant begins on August 1, 2023, MBSSE and the grant agent will take several steps to prepare for the new program and ensure effective and timely roll-out. This will include the drafting of job descriptions and terms of references for new hires and consultants; a key priority will be to identify and conduct outreach with qualified numeracy specialists to develop the instructional core so that it will be in line with literacy which is ongoing. MBSSE will also continue to convene the Data Working Group in order to prepare for the procurement and use of tablets. Current staff hired at the PMU will begin searching for office space. Ahead of August 1, the Local Education Group will also plan a meeting to kick off the new grant period. MBSSE and UNICEF will also agree on which entity will be responsible for procuring and paying which items ahead of August 1. For a detailed table on the roll out, see Annex 3.

2.5. Beneficiary focus

The direct focus population of this program includes teachers and children from pre-primary and primary schools, as well as parents, and district-level education officials, school quality assurance officers, and staff at teacher training institutes. As the program will have a national scale-up, it is intended that **all teachers and students at the pre-primary and primary levels (P1-P4) in the country will either directly or indirectly** benefit from the program's activities.

A total of 1.89 million students (961,507 girls) in classes P1 – P4 and 306,263 P0 students (160,354 girls) will benefit from the benefit from quality learning materials over the four years. Over 9,800 pre-primary teachers (8,300 women) and 40,062 P1-P4 teachers (12,149 women) will benefit from trainings and instructional core package. At least 8,929 head teachers at the primary level and 2,825 pre-primary teachers will benefit from trainings and instructional core. This will impact at least 1,227 pre-primary schools and 6,643 primary schools. Finally, at least 50 faculty at TTIs will also benefit from trainings and materials.

An estimated one million parents and caregivers will benefit from radio programming and awareness raising activities in communities to better learn positive parenting and early childhood stimulation techniques. This is based on a population estimate of 550,000 children between the ages of 3-5 that have not been enrolled in pre-primary.⁸⁷

Indirectly, it is estimated that about 50,000 teachers will benefit through interaction with School Quality Assurance officers and head teachers trained through the proposed interventions. Indirectly, it is estimated that at least 2.19 million primary and pre-primary students will benefit from interacting with newly trained teachers and from improved data systems and governance and accountability.

Teachers, school administrators, parents, and communities nationwide will benefit from the system strengthening activities particularly around data.

3. Coordination and Partnerships

3.1 Coordination Mechanism

The GPE grants and multiplier support a wider agenda of improving foundational learning outcomes formulated by the Government of Sierra Leone. When coordinated closely with government priorities and systems, the GPE programme, and other partners' support can accelerate progress toward the government's goals. If not, they risk complicating education service delivery in Sierra Leone and delaying the improvement of learning outcomes.

The coordination during the implementation of the project will be ensured through the established coordination mechanisms, specifically the Sierra Leone Local Education Group.

In Sierra Leone, the LEG is active, led by MBSSE and co-led by Irish Aid and UNICEF with several members who are intervening in the education sector. The LEG provides a platform for the government and its partners to have consultation and dialog on education sector development. Supported with the agreed Terms of Reference, this forum is coordinated by MBSSE. The group should meet once every 3 months or more frequently as and when required.

Additionally, UNICEF, Irish Aid, and MBSSE will hold regular meetings once a month to ensure the holistic, aligned approach to the programme implementation as well as ensuring the ongoing complementarity of partners' interventions and progress towards FLN. UNICEF and MBSSE will work with the LEG members, to ensure decisions are made and support are provided in ensuring full implementation of the work plan. UNICEF will provide annual reporting to GPE with fund utilisation outlining the programme status using the key indicators as well as share key lessons learned.

Finally, a Foundational Learning Steering Committee will oversee technical aspects of the implementation of this programme from within the MBSSE, complementing the work of the Programme Management Unit (PMU) embedded in the Ministry.

3.1.1 Implementation Arrangements and Financial Management

MBSSE will use established internal procedures for requesting and reporting expenditures and will also use its internal audit system (See Application Form Section 8). Funds will flow from UNICEF to MBSSE's commercial account; for the variable tranche, funds will flow only after verification processes detailed below.

Both fixed and variable allocation funding will be administered by UNICEF and managed as per UNICEF financial rules and regulations. UNICEF's role as the Grant Agent of the funds includes planning, administration, contracting, procurement of services and supplies as necessary, management of the funds, and monitoring and reporting to the GPE. The programme will operate through both MBSSE and UNICEF financial systems, as well as contracting of implementing partners (NGOs and CSOs); see the Application Form (Section 8) for further details. When funds flow through MBSSE, MBSSE will conduct rigorous and regular monitoring of programme activities and submits narrative and financial reports. In its contracts with local vendors, contractors, and partners, UNICEF will follow the UN guidance and risk mitigation measures against inflation (further detailed in Section 6 of this document).

As in the ESPIG, the Programme will rely on both MBSSE and UNICEF for procurement of various items. However, with increased capacity built by the grant – particularly the hiring of a finance specialist using the System Capacity Grant - the government will progressively take on more responsibility, with UNICEF playing an advisory and support role.

See the below table for further information on implementer and fund flows.

Component	Implementer & funds flow for main activities
Component 1: Raise children's readiness to learn through targeted pre-primary education	Developing and delivering P0 Instructional Core: UNICEF and Implementing Partner (IP) For P0 trainings: MBSSE, TSC, DEO, and & IP

	Stipend payments: UNICEF Radio: MBSSE
Component 2: Strengthen instructional core, teachers' cadre, and capacity to deliver foundational learning	Developing and delivering P1-P4 Instructional Core: UNICEF and IP For P1-P4 + SQAQ trainings: (MBSSE+TSC+IP) Cluster-based activities: (MBSSE+TSC+IP)Radio: MBSSE/TSC
Component 3: Increase the use of data and technology to support foundational learning and education service delivery	Tablet procurement, distribution, and training : MBSSE+UNICEF FLN SQAQ stipends and visits: MBSSE Technical Experts Salaries: MBSSE National Learning Assessments: MBSSE
Component 4: Strengthen governance, management, and accountability for performance on foundational learning	Review missions and meetings: MBSSE+UNICEF District Level Forum: MBSSE +DEO Mid-term review: MBSSE + Education Development Partners

3.2 Partnerships

Sierra Leone has already entered into a number of major partnerships to support its education sector, including previous partnerships with GPE. The World Bank, the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), the European Union and Irish Aid have collectively funded the multi-donor trust fund (MDTF) to support the FREE program for education in addition to each organization's bilateral assistance for the education sector. The GPE programme's coordination with these partnerships will accelerate access towards all children gaining foundational learning skills.

Over the next five years, GPE grants will support the Government to build on assets, resources, and evidence that have been created during the current grant period. In addition to progress detailed above, this includes the cadre of trainers and teachers who have been trained on foundational learning, as well as gains in access to school and learning outcomes. The new grant will also build on strengthened data systems and governance mechanisms, including the commitment to at least 20 percent of the government's discretionary budget spent on education.

The ministries responsible for education will continue working in partnership with key stakeholders over the period covered by the 2022-2026 Education Sector Plan and the 2023-2027 GPE grant period. MBSSE will ensure that the World Bank and GPE align on P1-P4 and EOF and GPE align on all aspects, including instructional core, TLMs, and radio instruction. With the EOF partnership, the government will be able to reach around 100,000 children for pre-primary education that would not have had access to early childhood education.

In addition, the GPE grant will support innovative financing towards foundational learning, in order to maximise results for children. Where necessary, UNICEF will establish appropriate Programme Cooperation Agreements or similar.

Finally, the Education Development Partners Group, which aligns a broader group of local and national organizations will be consulted and kept up to date about the programme, especially as products and materials become available that might also support their work on FLN. These groups will also contribute to essential work being done to reach out-of-school children, to provide accelerated or remedial education programs, or to otherwise support learning outcomes.

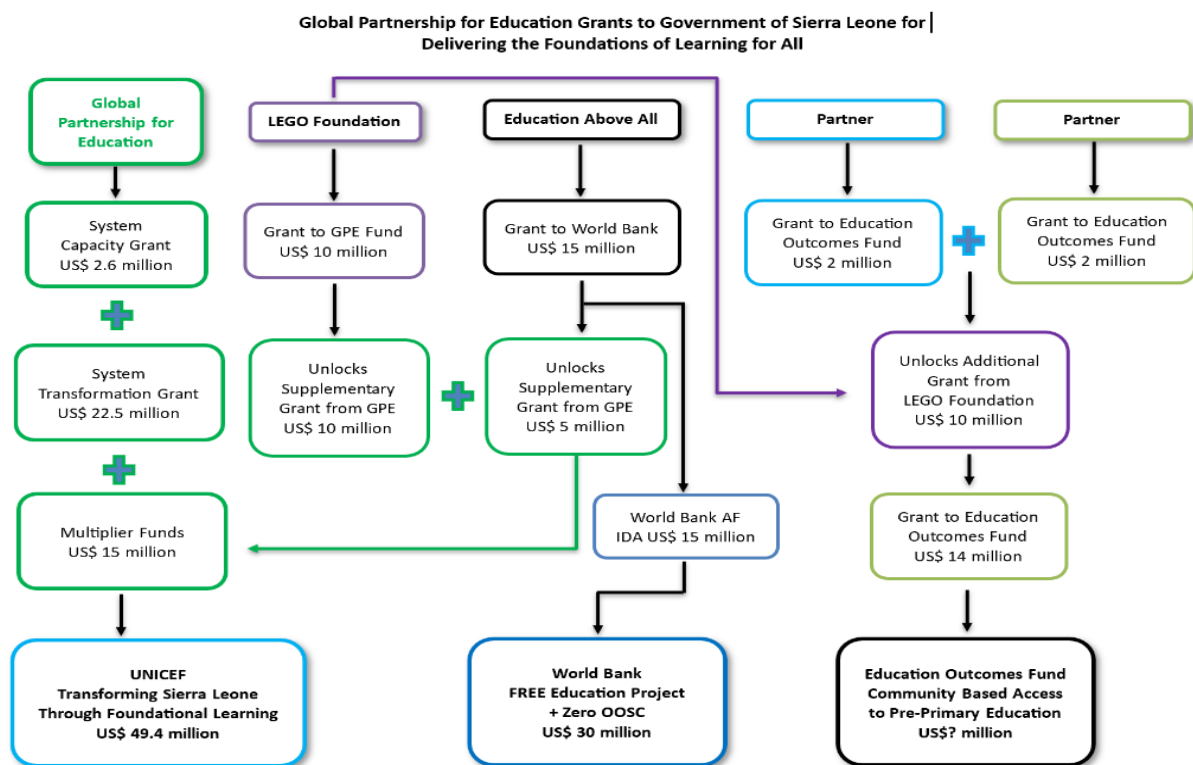


Figure 3 Donor alignment towards foundational learning

3.3 GPE Multiplier

Sierra Leone has mobilised an additional US\$ 25 million to support the priority reform of this program. As such, GPE has committed to allocating the maximum \$15 million multiplier to supplement the System Transformation Grant of 22.6 million. The two contributors of additional financing come from LEGO Foundation and Education Above All (EAA) Foundation. Both of these funding streams have met the requirements of additionality; co-financing; and debt sustainability.

Implementation of the GPE Multiplier grant will be overseen by the Grant Agent, supported by LEG and MBSSE. The LEGO Foundation would like the co-financing and Multiplier grant that it triggers to be transferred to the GPE fund and then to UNICEF (grant agent). EAA has selected the World Bank as its recipient of co-financing and requested that the Multiplier that their co-financing triggers to be managed by UNICEF (grant agent) as part of the System Transformation grant.

The Lego Foundation will contribute \$10 million to support early childhood education; the GPE Partnership Compact and Multiplier were the direct cause for the foundation’s support to the Sierra

Leone's Education Sector. The \$10 million contribution will be put towards activities in Component 1 and 2, particularly the activities surrounding development of pre-primary and primary instructional core and teaching and learning materials and teacher training. Play-based learning techniques will be an important aspect of these activities. This funding will also support activities under Subcomponent 1.4 to create demand in communities for pre-primary and to encourage positive parenting and stimulation for young children. By having the additional funding from GPE, it will enable to bring pre-primary education to all 16 districts and to experiment with innovative forms.

EAA's Multiplier and co-financing will also support the key reform of foundational learning for all, through the primary education sector and with a focus on out-of-school children. This is an area of identified in the GPE Compact as essential to ensuring that all children have foundational learning, though not within the scope of the project. The multiplier will therefore accelerate Sierra Leone's ability to ensure foundational learning for all. The World Bank program supported by EAA will also increase the enrolment and improve learning outcomes of children outside the school system.

The program will be closely coordinated with GPE program to ensure that learning targets are aligned and linkages with the formal education system are maintained. The LEG and Donor Partners Coordination group will support this harmonization. The multiplier of \$5 million triggered by this co-financing will go into the System Transformation Grant and support reforms in Objective 2 related to the instructional core and strengthening capacity of teachers. [See Annex 1].

4. Cross-Cutting Strategies

4.1 Mainstreaming Gender Transformative Education and Radical Inclusion

Improving the foundational skills of girls and other marginalised groups will be holistically, and mainstreamed, as opposed to as a separate intervention within the program. Each pillar of the theory of change will take into consideration gender and inclusion of radical inclusion groups – with an emphasis on the poorest students and those with learning disabilities. It will also require that monitoring targets and funding earmarks are disaggregated on gender and along the lines of the Radical Inclusion policy.

For Component 1 on pre-school education, the instructional core and teacher training materials will be developed following global guidance and evidence on gender-transformative pre-primary education. Furthermore, at the pre-primary level, where the teacher workforce is predominantly female, where mothers are expected to be primary caregivers and where, in Sierra Leone, girls are more likely to be enrolled in pre-primary education, gender-transformation should explicitly look at the bringing more males into the teacher force and targeting fathers and male caregivers in community and family outreach.

For example, within Component 2, new teacher guides, lesson plans, teaching and learning materials, assessment tools, and administration manuals can help ensure that evidence-based practices which support inclusion, raise sensitivity around stigma, increase child safety, and reduce sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in schools are adequately integrated. Likewise, these practices will be incorporated into teacher upgrading, teacher support training, and preservice programs for both foundational level teachers and the pre-primary quality standards. In primary education, where the teacher workforce is predominantly male, efforts to hiring and training female teachers will be important in cultivating gender-transformative norms within the classroom. The Cluster-based CPD will specifically seek to support female teachers, particularly in remote areas.

Also, the programme will capitalise on the Girls Education Movement at the district level to support awareness raising, mobilizing, and supporting female teachers (Subcomponents 1.4 and 2.3).

In Components 3 and 4, system strengthening activities, including the production of granular, gender disaggregated data, and the hiring and training of staff on gender will also take place. Component 3 will address gender inequalities by ensuring that educators, authorities, and communities have access to gender disaggregated data. A gender officer within the MBSSE will be hired and trained to ensure that gender-transformative policies and plans are enacted and that gender is mainstreamed across the education sector. Component 4 will ensure that MBSSE are trained on gender-transformative planning and financing. In addition, the Foundational Learning Steering Committee will provide oversight and engage line ministries where necessary to ensure that girls' learning outcomes are improved.

Fortunately, Sierra Leone has a number of context-specific tools that can be capitalised on to support gender mainstreaming. For example, the MBSSE has compiled an extensive toolbox of that includes guidance on how to make trainings gender responsive (developed for the Leh We Lan program).⁸⁸ Under the EAGER programme, the IRC has developed a toolkit with resources on supporting vulnerable learners, including gender responsive resources.⁸⁹ Similarly, the TSC with support from the World Bank developed a Coaching Manual and Classroom Observation tool for use by headteachers, SQAOs, and TSC DOs. The tool, which was contextualised for Sierra Leone, instructs on how to coach teachers to “not treat any gender group unfairly in the classroom.”

For children with disabilities, the program will enhance pre- and in-service teachers' abilities to identify students with special needs and refer them to appropriate services when they are not available within schools. It will also ensure that content in radio programming features stories of teachers and learners with disabilities. For this reason, it is essential that inter-ministerial and cross-sectoral collaboration continue both at the national and district level, as discussed above.

Further, data tools to monitor and support the delivery of foundational learning and teacher support, including classroom teacher observations, can be designed help district-level staff track services for girls and other children in Radical Inclusion groups and make sure that children from these groups attain the same outcomes as their peers.

4.2 Sustainability and System Capacity

Sustainability for the reform is rooted in the design and implementation of the programme and the following measures will be pursued in this direction. To this effect, MBSSE will lead at all levels and will provide clear definition of the mission goals, as well as holding districts accountable and providing them with the necessary tools, technical assistance, and funding. MBSSE will capitalise on the System Capacity Grant to establish the necessary structures and put in place human resources to see through the reform beyond the period of the grant will work with GPE to ensure that additional resources are secured to keep staff on board after the grant period. Also, MBSSE will cultivate political and technical leadership at national and district council levels, including paramount chiefs, and local leaders, to maintain prioritization and accountability.

High frequency, and highly engaged, monitoring system at every level, from the Minister, Chief Education Officer, District head and “Village Motivator” levels will lead to attention and prioritization. Influencer mapping at the community level will ensure full outreach and maintaining focus on unreached. Outcome tracking and measurement at a granular level will provide clarity around vulnerable areas and populations, enabling the identification of innovations and interventions.

Recognizing and celebrating the efforts of key stakeholders will help to keep momentum and interest beyond programme cycle. To this end, a mapping of development partners' regions of intervention and continued engagement will occur through existing platforms. MBSSE and the grant agent will continually assess, identify, and mitigate key risks and challenges to ensure that the goals are realised sustainably and, in a time-bound manner.

Critically, during the programme, MBSSE and MoF will build capacity for finance and planning through investments from the System Capacity Grant; this system strengthening will allow stakeholders to carefully plan for transitions and new funding streams for the phase after the grant.

4.2.1 System Capacity Grant

Based on the Enabling Factors Analysis and the 2022 Partnership Compact, the System Capacity Grant will strengthen Sierra Leone's capacity to adapt and learn and to implement and drive results at scale (Financing Window 3). The System Capacity Grant will support activities to create a more robust data landscape for foundational learning, under Subcomponent 3.2 (Activities 3.2.1, 3.2.3, and 3.2.5).

The proposed activities covered by the SCG will address enabling factors data and evidence by 1) hiring and paying the stipends for three years for 220 new foundational learning SQAOs who will support data collection and oversee school and district level efforts to use data to improve teaching and learning 2) building capacity at the MBSSE level to use disaggregated data for gender-responsive and inclusive planning, by hiring and paying the salaries of three specialists (data, gender, and financial analysis) at MBSSE Directorate of Policy and Planning over four years and 3) purchasing and distributing 3,000 tablets for primary schools in Year 1, accelerating the government's progress towards its goal of One Tablet Per School.

These interventions have a value for money and complement and accelerate other investments in the sector on data, including the current pilot of the government's One Tablet Per School programme which GPE will support to scale up nationally. More so, similar tablets to monitor teaching and learning are currently used to good effect at the senior secondary level through the Leh We Lan programme, demonstrating chance of success of tablets at the primary level. The investments also ensure that MBSSE and district education offices have the necessary staff to carry through other activities towards the overarching objective of the programme. Critically, the System Capacity Grant will support gender and inclusion by hiring a gender officer and by producing and supporting the use of gender disaggregated data. Furthermore, 30 percent of new Foundational Learning SQAOs will be women. Section 4.1 outlines how gender is hardwired throughout the entire programme.

4.3 Safeguarding

The Grant Agent will strictly adhere to GPE's Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment (SEAH) Policy.⁹⁰ As such, all parties involved in the implementation of the GPE grants will be held to a zero-tolerance policy for sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment.

To enforce this, the Grant Agent will leverage existing national frameworks, including the 2023 Comprehensive School Safety Policy,⁹¹ 2020 Guide for Reducing Violence in Schools,⁹² and 2019 Code of Conduct for Teachers and other Education Personnel.⁹³ Attendees of teacher trainings, workshops, or other activities under the programme will be informed of MBSSE's toll-free line to

report grievances. Furthermore, teachers and other education personnel will be trained on how to report cases of SEAH through existing mechanisms, including school-based mechanisms, or through UNICEF. Contractors and staff hired through the grant will be required to meet UNICEF and MBSSE requirements.

The project will use the UNICEF existing services for timely resolution of raised grievances and feedback to the aggrieved party. The safeguarding approach will also look at safety issues, sexual exploitation and harassment, and gender related matters. Efforts will be made to ensure that parties are able to submit their grievances without fear of victimisation and or intimidation. The Programme does not foresee any significant risks related to activities in the System Capacity or System Transformation grants. UNICEF's Child Safeguarding Business Guide can also be leveraged to get guidance on how to identify and mitigate actual and potential safeguarding risks⁹⁴ in these interventions.

5. Monitoring, Evidence Generation, and Reporting

5.1 Monitoring, evaluation, and learning

A detailed monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) framework has been developed in line with the ESP Monitoring and Evaluation framework to strengthen the overall capacity of the education system. The MEL framework includes overall objectives, fixed and variable indicators, baselines and target values, frequency, data source methodology, and responsibilities for data collection. The Programme Management Unit (PMU) embedded within MBSSE will be responsible for monitoring and reporting on the project, alongside the grant agent.

Success of the reform depends on good governance, support, and alignment of development partners, and strengthened capacity at the central and district levels to help schools to deliver foundational learning. For this purpose, quarterly stock take reviews of the reform will be carried out with the Foundational Learning Steering Committee (the SC), the senior leadership of MBSSE, TSC, and LEG partners to monitor and improve the implementation of the reform. The stock take exercises will incorporate evidence generated by the routine monitoring to enable the Steering Committee to guide course corrections as needed to achieve the goals. This should happen in real time as learning data is collected and in connection with evaluation and joint sector reviews.

Score cards and a set of key performance indicators (KPIs) will be developed to assess performance against foundational learning outcomes, investments in teachers' professional development, and mentorship on foundational learning, financing on FLN, Radical Inclusion groups' coverage, district, Cluster and school level governance and accountability, and citizen engagement through SMCs. Regular data collection against the KPIs will inform the score card and generate school, Cluster, and district ranking. The framework and architecture for the data collection and measurement of literacy and numeracy – activities funded through these grants - will enable automatic data collection and collation from multiple sources and at different frequencies and levels without need for special collection drives, pulling of data from different systems, synchronization, and manual uploading, among others.

The Monitoring and Evaluation of the programme will follow GPE's evaluation policy with regards to gender quality, equity, and inclusion – and will assess these factors across the program's objectives and pillars. Moreover, the program will ensure that evaluation teams have gender

balance and are trained in gender-responsive evaluation tools. Wherever possible, the evaluation will draw on data that can describe intersections of gender with poverty, disability, or other vulnerabilities, in order to assess the baseline and effectiveness of interventions.

See Annex 3 for complete Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Framework.

5.2 Variable Portion

The System Transformation Grant has a fixed allocation of 70 percent, with the variable portion of 30 percent.⁹⁵ The minimum size of the program's variable part is US\$ 9,892,800, which includes at least 30 percent of the initial System Transformation Grant allocation (or US\$ 5,392,800) and at least 30 percent of the Multiplier grant (or US\$ 4,500,000). Based on sector-wide consultations, three variable indicators were identified that will enable Sierra Leone to access the remaining portion of the STG and multiplier grants, based on results. These variable indicators will support equity, efficiency, and learning outcomes and are aligned with the 2022-2026 Education Sector Plan and the key reform of the GPE programme. They support enabling factors that will address identified bottlenecks.

The first strategy focuses on *Equity* and will incentivize the availability of qualified **pre-primary and primary teachers (specially females) particularly in disadvantaged districts**. This strategy was selected because Sierra Leone faces challenges with respect to the availability of qualified teachers, particularly in rural and underserved areas. Training of teachers, particularly females from disadvantaged districts and extending cluster level support to them will promote girls' attendance and learning outcomes. Availability of data from all districts on unqualified teachers and TSC's new protocol on teacher deployment will assist in prioritizing underserved districts or pockets for rolling out teacher training and cluster-based mentorship initiative in Year 1 of the program. This investment will trigger improvement in the availability of qualified teachers hence unlocking of the variable funds associated to this strategy. **A third party will verify and LEG will validate the ASC data to confirm the achievement of this strategy.**

The second strategy focuses on *learning* and will incentivize the government to strengthen the National Learning Assessment mandate with a clear 5-year plan and approved budget to generate evidence and inform teaching and learning. Learning assessments will be critical towards measuring progress towards the programme objective. The strategy will measure progress towards the approval of a plan and budget and publishing of national learning assessment results for P4. **A third party will verify and LEG will validate the annual budget and workplan and the assessment reports.**

The third strategy focuses on *efficiency* and will incentivize the alignment of financing for foundational learning endorsed by LEG. Sierra Leone has attracted several donors and partners who are offering direct or programmatic support to transform education and deliver foundational learning. This requires structures and systems to ensure that finances reach the districts that are most in need of support towards learning for all children – particularly the most underperforming catchment areas and clearly targeting learning dimension that needs improvement on priority. The scorecard developed based on performance in foundational learning will be used to identify thematic and geographic areas requiring additional investments. LEG will endorse the scorecard and review financing and expenditure to ensure that funds are allocated based on evidence on low performance. **A third party will verify and LEG will validate the scorecard data and expenditure report to confirm the achievement of this strategy.**

The Variable Portion will be disbursed to the Grant Agent after verification of results are submitted to GPE. The implementation arrangement will be the same as the fixed portion, with the Grant Agent disbursing funds, either to contractors, vendors, or to MBSSE's account; Verification of the variable indicators will be done as suggested in GPE's guidance.⁹⁶ A third party will review and verify the data from the Annual School Census (Variable 1), published learning assessment results (Variable 2), and MoF and MBSSE reports (Variable 3). LEG will then validate the results.

Details of the three variable indicators are presented in tables (A-D) below. As illustrated below, the variable funds will be spent to ensure continuity of activities under the fixed part as well as support activities that will lead to achieving outcomes that unlock more variable funds.

Table A

Variable Part Strategies and Allocation Summary		
Focus Area	Strategy	
Equity	Improving the availability of qualified pre-primary and primary teachers (specially females) in disadvantaged districts will improve district performance in foundational learning outcomes	3,297,600
Learning	Strengthen National Learning Assessment function and carry out diagnostic assessments	3,297,600
Efficiency	Alignment of financing for foundational learning endorsed by LEG	3,297,600
Total USD		9,892,800

Table B

Strategy 1	Improving the availability of qualified pre-primary and primary teachers (specially females) in disadvantaged districts will improve district performance in foundational learning outcomes					
Indicator	Number of qualified teachers (P0-P4) disaggregated by gender and geography					
Definition	This indicator measures the number of qualified pre-primary and primary teachers at the district level (especially female teachers in disadvantaged districts)					
Targets	Baseline	2024	2025	2026	2027	Total
	26,045 (2022 Projection) (Female: 9,580)	29,537 (F: 11,259)	31,521 (F: 12,251)			31,521 (F: 12,251)
Verification Protocol		Annual School Census; verification by third party, validation by LEG	Annual School Census; verification by third party validation by LEG			
Disbursement Rule		Pro-rata, Scalable	Pro-rata, Scalable			
Disbursement Amount USD		1,648,800	1,648,800			3,297,600

Table C

Strategy 2	Strengthen National Learning Assessment function to carry out diagnostic assessments					
Indicator	MBSSE publishes results of National Learning Assessment for Grade 4 (STRETCH)					
Definition	This indicator confirms that the National Learning Assessment function has an approved annual plan and budget and results of P4 national learning assessments are published					
Targets	Baseline	2024	2025	2026	2027	Total
	National learning assessment doesn't exist	A plan for execution of National Learning Assessment is validated by LEG	Results of National learning assessment for P4 are published			Results of National learning assessment for P4 are published
Verification Protocol		Copy of NASU approved annual plan and budget; verification by third party, validation by LEG	National Learning Assessment Report, verification by third party, validation by LEG			
Disbursement Rule		Binary 1 Year Roll Over	Binary 1 Year Roll Over			
Disbursement Amount USD		824,400	2,473,200	0	0	3,297,600

Table D

Strategy 3	Alignment of financing for foundational learning endorsed by LEG					
Indicator	Number of districts with evidence-based budget allocation informed by score card on foundational learning endorsed by LEG					
Definition	This indicator confirms budget allocation for each district based on identified priority areas for foundational learning informed by district score card and endorsed by LEG. The process also requires LEG to review financing and expenditure on foundational learning and its impact on learning outcomes.					
Targets	Baseline	2024	2025	2026	2027	Total
	Allocation to districts based on evidence on learning outcomes is not in practice	4	8			8

Verification Protocol		School Quality Assurance Reports & Public Expenditure Review Report, verification by third party, validation by LEG	School Quality Assurance Reports & Public Expenditure Review Report, verification by third party, validation by LEG			
Disbursement Rule		Scalable	Scalable			
Disbursement Amount USD		1,648,800	1,648,800	0	0	3,297,600

See Annex 1 for more on GPE grants.

5.3 Top-Up

As per the GPE Compact, 20 percent of the total funding for which Sierra Leone is eligible will be released upon the meeting of certain targets linked to enabling factors. The government decided to address the bottlenecks related to Volume, Efficiency and Equity of Domestic Financing, a high priority enabling factor.⁹⁷ Tying a top-up of the full System Transformation Grant would further incentivize ambitious, but realistic, reforms that improve the equity and efficiency of this spending.

The government proposes the following triggers be applied to activate the top-up:

Trigger 1: Improve budget execution rate (10 percent of top up)

Improving budget execution has been highlighted by the World Bank Public Expenditure Review as a key component of improving the efficiency of education spending. An internal budget review in the MBSSE has also highlighted it as a key constraint on effective service delivery. By improving budget execution, the predictability and regularity of education spending will be improved, allowing for effective planning, and removing delays in service delivery throughout the year.

The trigger for unlocking 10 percent of the grant will be: Increase the percentage of budget spent by the MBSSE. This will be calculated by reviewing internal Ministry of Finance audit of annual budget expenditures. These are typically available in April after the calendar year being considered.

Baseline: 78 percent (2019) Mid-term target: 85 percent in 2024. This implies that when budget accounts for 2024 are closed the execution rate for 2024 will be at least 85 percent. This will be ascertained in the first half of 2025.

Trigger 2: Incorporate learning outcomes and learner disadvantages in teacher allocation mechanisms (10 percent of top up)

Foundational learning outcomes vary considerably by district in Sierra Leone. Typically, the poorer and more remote districts fare worse. Boys consistently outperform girls. Allocating disproportionately more qualified teachers to disadvantaged districts, namely those districts with below-average learning outcomes or those that serve relatively higher numbers of children in radical inclusion groups, will help improve outcomes for learners in these districts and increase equity in the system.

The trigger would have three components:

- The TSC uses the new protocol that prioritizes the allocation of newly qualified teachers to disadvantaged districts (lower learning outcome levels and/or higher numbers of learners from radical inclusion groups).
- MBSSE publishes a list of disadvantaged districts – and catchment areas within districts- that would be targeted under this new teacher allocation protocol. This will be based on the 2021 EGRA/EGMA study which collected outcomes data in all districts or the 2022 baseline for the Education Outcomes Fund which also covered all districts unless more fine-grained learning outcomes data becomes available.
- The TSC implements the new protocol to increase the share of qualified teachers allocated to disadvantaged districts in its allocation of newly hired teachers.

This will be calculated by assessing the proportion of newly qualified teachers allocated to targeted catchment areas in districts compared with proportion of newly qualified teachers allocated to non-targeted catchment areas.

Baseline: No protocol exists for teacher allocation decisions based on learning outcomes or on radical inclusion policy. No indicator exists for measuring the disadvantage level of catchment areas in districts based on these two factors. Mid-term target: The proportion of newly qualified teachers allocated to targeted disadvantaged catchment areas in districts will be measurably higher compared with the proportion of newly qualified teachers allocated to non-targeted catchment areas. The teacher allocations for 2023 will be reviewed in the first half of 2024. This will be reviewed annually in subsequent years.

As advised by GPE QAR, the top-up amount is not included in the grant budget.

6. Programmatic and Operational Assumptions, Risk Assessment and Proposed Mitigation Measures

There are several requirements for the effective implementation of the GPE grants over a four-year time period. The table below summarizes the assumptions and response strategies, as well as risks and mitigation strategies to the successful implementation of the ESP.

Assumption	Response strategy
Communities are supportive of pre-primary and primary learning, particularly for girls and other radical inclusion groups	Advocacy with other UN agencies, development partners, and government to undertake community awareness interventions about flexible learning approaches.
Caregivers are equipped with the skills to support foundational learning; caregivers send children to pre-primary and primary school	Advocacy with other UN agencies, development partners, and government to undertake awareness interventions for caregivers/communities
Teachers effectively use the tools developed through this program	Supportive supervision to teachers and advocacy with schools and education authorities
Learning materials will be available to the children and teachers in time	The supply orders will be placed in time with an efficient supply tracking mechanism

Development partners coordinate to support government	MBSSE and MTHE create frameworks and unified foundational learning strategy
Education Data Working Group meets regularly and implements a strategy	Advocacy with the government through education Cluster to ensure availability of materials, support, and teachers' retention.
Teachers are engaged, retained, and equitably deployed. Teachers stay in their postings, particularly in rural areas.	Government continues to support teachers and continue efforts to regularize teacher workforce at all levels of the education system; district-level education officials provide support and oversight
Risk	Mitigation strategy
Delays in production of numeracy materials and create fragmentation between foundational numeracy and literacy programmes (Likelihood: Possible; Impact: High)	MBSSE ensures coordination between FREE Programme and GPE and aligns joint efforts
Significant global threats, such as COVID-19 may disrupt the face-to-face education/ peer-to-peer learning (Likelihood: Unlikely; Impact: Major)	Government and GA will build on lessons learned and good practices in distance learning from Covid-19, including education radio and radio/digital teacher training.
Climate change and extreme weather events disrupt education, either in specific communities or nationwide (Likelihood: Possible; Impact: Moderate)	Ministries will maintain the Emergency Education Taskforce (EET) as a permanent structure. MBSSE will enforce recommendations related to disasters in the school approval policy. Extra TLMs will be produced annually in case of damage to schools/learning materials.
Innovation is pursued without measurement of outcomes or at the expense of marginalized communities (Likelihood: Possible; Impact: Moderate)	Steering Committee and MBSSE will establish, enforce and track clear criteria for investing in innovation, including value-addition, cost-effectiveness, total cost of ownership, measurement of learning and assessing opportunity costs. Innovative activities like ULID will be thoroughly assessed before scale up including through lens of radical inclusion. Programme will focus on the most marginalized
GPE grants support the expansion of inputs alone, with no impact on learning (Likelihood: Possible; Impact: Moderate)	MBSSE and GA will systematically and regularly measure learning in all relevant activities and course correct as needed, including through systems developed by the GPE programme. LEG and MBSSE will align all inputs and actors in the education sector to support learning. GA and MBSSE will engage in community awareness raising to continue to create accountability.

<p>Change in government due to national elections may mean less budget and support for education and foundational learning</p> <p>(Likelihood: Possible; Impact: Moderate)</p>	<p>MBSSE and TSC will put in place sustainable systems at central and district level to carry forward reforms.</p> <p>Civil servants in MBSSE/TSC/MTHE do not change because of political change; this will help continuity of program, even if there is a change in government.</p> <p>GPE grants will strengthen accountability for government spending and ensure that annual budget commitments are honored.</p> <p>In case of change of government, LEG, civil society, and other partners hold government accountable to foundational learning goals.</p> <p>Digitized knowledge management will ensure that legacy documents – including policy -remain easily available to new staff and to the public</p>
<p>Economic growth projections fall short of assumptions</p> <p>(Likelihood: Possible: Impact: Moderate)</p>	<p>Economic growth estimates used in the Education Sector Plan, which is the basis of some costing in GPE programme, are conservative, which also helps mitigate risk</p> <p>GA and MBSSE, along with LEG and Steering Committee, will monitor spending progress against economic forecasts.</p>
<p>Inflation rates rise rapidly, causing depreciation of the Sierra Leone Leones (SLE) as compared to USD; as a result, contractors are unable to deliver goods and services</p> <p>(Likelihood: High; Impact: High)</p>	<p>GA and MBSSE will build off of lessons learned from the ESPIG and other partners. This includes a 10% contingency within each line item to compensate for unforeseen events including inflation.</p> <p>Furthermore, GA will follow UN-issued guidance on mitigating risks for impact of SLE depreciation vis-à-vis USD on UN contacts with local vendors/contractors. This includes language on tenders, requests for proposals, and contracts that specify payments will be made in SLE based UN operational exchange rate.</p> <p>The top-up portion will relate to budget disbursement in order to encourage effective spending in the beginning of the programme.</p>

<p>Financial management, procurement, and other operational and fiduciary risks.</p> <p>(Likelihood: Possible; Impact: High)</p>	<p>Transparency and regular reporting by LEG and Steering Committee will enable careful monitoring of spending by GA, government, and any implementing partners.</p> <p>Government and partners will follow laws and controls that minimize risks. GA and MBSSE will conduct audits yearly, and recommendations will be implemented. MoF will also conduct external audit.</p> <p>GA will continue to monitor closely the quality of fiduciary management, including annual auditing, and adjust in its approach, should the need arise.</p> <p>GA will continue to support MBSSE as it takes on increased responsibility for procurement. MBSSE and GA will create procurement plan ahead of execution. MBSSE will build capacity in procurement and finance through programme activities; GA will assess systems and mechanisms before handing over procurement activities to the government.</p>
<p>Limited human and technical capacity within MBSSE, TSC, and MTHE to implement activities</p> <p>(Likelihood: High; Impact: High)</p>	<p>There are vacancies within key directorates at both ministries. To mitigate this risk in the short term, local consultants will help with specialized activities. The System Capacity Grant will also provide support to build technical and operational capacities.</p>
<p>SQAOs do not have the capacity to monitor and support teachers' delivery of the curriculum</p> <p>(Likelihood: low; Impact: High)</p>	<p>MBSSE (through Directorate of School Quality Assurance) will continue to assess SQAQO capacity and ensure that alignment of projects (GPE, Leh Wi Lan, FREE) support and do not overburden SQAOs. The programme will also hire and train 220 new SQAQO for FLN to support the system.</p>
<p>Lack of coordination on FLN leads to duplication of efforts or inefficiencies.</p> <p>Likelihood: Medium; Impact: Medium</p>	<p>Several initiatives and projects are being undertaken within MBSSE and by external partners. The coordination mechanisms highlighted above are robust and the Foundational Learning Steering Committee will provide additional oversight.</p>

Annex 1. GPE Grants

	Grants				
	System Transformation Grant (STG)	LEGO Foundation (Excluding Fee)	Multiplier (MLT)	System Capacity Grant (SCG)	Total
MCA	22,470,000		15,000,000	2,600,000	
Co-Financing		9,345,794			
Top-Up	4,494,000				4,494,000
STG (Minus Top Up = 20%)	17,976,000				
Programmable Total	17,976,000	9,345,794	15,000,000	2,600,000	44,921,794
Total of All Grants Available (Including the Top Up)					49,415,794
Variable (30%)	5,392,800		4,500,000		9,892,800
Fixed (70%) Excludes Top-Up	12,583,200	9,345,794	10,500,000	2,600,000	35,028,994

Annex 2. Investments towards Foundational Learning, 2018-2027

Efforts by partners between 2018 and 2027 include:

Donor	Government Entity	Implementing Partner	Project Name	Timeframe	Description
Pre-Primary Quality and Access					
GPE	MBSSE	UNICEF	ESPIG	2020-2023	65 community early childhood development centres were built. Community teachers were also trained and hired, and teacher guides were produced and distributed
LEGO	MBSSE + TSC	BRAC	Technical Assistance	2021	Technical assistance to integrate play-based learning across pre-primary education, including in teacher competency framework.
EOF	MBSSE			2023-	Investment in expanding access to pre-primary and enhancing quality
Primary Instructional Core and Teacher Training					
LEGO	MBSSE + TSC	Right to Play	Technical Assistance	2021	Technical assistance to integrate play-based learning across primary education,
Multi-Donor Trust Fund	MBSSE +TSC	FREE Secretariat	Free Program	2020-2027	Support to enable the MBSSE to transition to a comprehensive national curriculum and to develop curriculum framework. The expected learning outcomes outlined in the curriculum document will be used for regular classroom assessments as well as examinations. Through additional financing, the World Bank is providing funding for TLMs aligned with science of reading for P1-P2.

Education Outcomes Fund	MBSSE + DSTI	World Vision International, Save the Children International, Rising Academy Networks, NYAF-SL and Education	Education Innovation Challenge (EIC)	2019-2022	Results-based financing for foundational learning outcome interventions.
Education Outcomes Fund	MBSSE + DSTI	Street Child, Save the Children International, Rising Academy Networks, NYAF-SL and Education	Sierra Leone Education Innovation Challenge	2022-2025	The successor to EIC, this program targets 134,000 children in 325 public primary schools. The program will work with both local and global providers and will be rigorously evaluated to understand their impact on learning, enabling evaluators to identify the approaches that are most effective.
EOF	TSC	UNICEF	ESPIG	2018-2023	In-service teacher training for grades 1-3
GPE	GPE	Code-Talle and EDT	ESPIG	2020-2023	Under the GPE grant, Education Development Trust (EDT) and CODE-TALLE designed and delivered a school-based community of practice programme for early grade literacy and numeracy teachers in 6 districts
Multi-Donor Trust Fund	TSC	EDT		2020-2022	Review of pre-service teacher training curriculum in early grade reading and maths, review the capacity of initial teacher training, revise pre-service teacher training curricula and methodologies, co-create a framework to bridge pre- and in-service training, and pilot a revised pre-service training course
Multi-Donor Trust Fund	TSC	Code-Talle		2021-2022	The Multi-Donor Trust Fund also supported continuous professional development for teachers, including

					designing and delivering a school-based Community-of-Practice programme to improve reading and mathematics skills in six districts.
World Bank	TSC		FREE Programme	2022-2027	The TSC has worked with the Multi-Donor Trust Fund to develop and adapt the TEACH lesson observation tool and COACH methodology for use in Sierra Leonean primary schools, rolling out in 2023
Multi-Donor Trust Fund	TSC	Education Commission		2023-2027	National School Leadership Development Programme
Multi-Donor Trust Fund	TSC	Fab Inc/ EdTech Hub			Fab Inc and EdTech Hub collaborated with the Teaching Service Commission to develop an algorithm to prioritize schools for teacher recruitment and to identify teachers meeting the needs of these schools
Data System Strengthening					
GPE	MBSSE	MBSSE/UNICEF	ESPIG	2018-2023	Under ESPIG, District Level IT Clerks were hired, a situation room in MBSSE was established to collect real-time data from schools, and a learning assessment unit was created in MBSSE
World Bank and EU	MBSSE	MBSSE		2018- 2027	Since 2018, the World Bank and European Union have provided financial support to digitise the Annual School Census
	MBSSE	Fab Inc/ EdTech Hub		2022	Dashboard to visualize Annual School Census datasets from 2016 to 2022, allowing the government to track longitudinal school-level indicators at all levels

MDTF	TSC	CGA Technologies and Fab Inc			Teacher Management Information System, including modules on teacher management, teacher performance, and teacher development
MDTF	MBSSE	Fab Inc			Upgrading of School Master List from a static Excel sheet to a live relational database that ensures robust unique identifiers that other data systems can link
EU	MTHE	MTHE		2022-	Development and operation a data portal which consolidates data from higher education institutions and some TVET institutions.
		EdTech Hub, CGA, and Fab Inc		2018-2023	Research, evaluations, and studies which provided critical information and recommendations needed to strengthen the education sector to be able to deliver foundational learning.
MDTF	MBSSE/ TSC	Fab Inc/ CGA		2023 - 2027	One Tablet Per School pilot rolled out to over 300 schools, with another 1,500 planned for 2023; Monitoring teacher and student attendance through tablets
FCDO	MBSSE/TSC	Mott McDonald Cambridge Education	Sierra Leone Secondary Education Improvement Programme		Leh We Lan has provided comprehensive technical and administrative support to ensure that all 16 DEOs in the country are functional and able to provide some overnight and support to schools. While the project focuses on secondary education, the quality assurance officers that they support also monitor primary education.
FCDO	MBSSE/TSC	Mott McDonald Cambridge Education	Sierra Leone Secondary Education Improvement Programme II	2023-2028	Focus on girls and children with disabilities, support for SQAOs/principals to use tech and use data from classroom observations, Support to Implement CSSP and Curriculum

Hemple	MBSSE	VSO	Unlocking Talent project	2023-2025	Tablet-based implementation of onebillion software in 50 schools in Pujehun
Governance and Systems Strengthening					
FCDO	MBSSE	Mott McDonald Cambridge Education	Sierra Leone Secondary Education Improvement Programme		Expansion of and training of School Quality Assurance officers at the district level. While the programme focuses on secondary education, the hiring and capacity building of these officers inherently supports quality at the primary level, as they oversee both levels.
GPE	MBSSE	UNICEF/MBSSE	ESPIG		Hiring key staff at district and central government levels to support reforms.
		IRC	EAGER	2019-2023	Project for OOSC adolescent girls ages 13-19, but delivered foundational learning, socioemotional skills, and developed network of female mentors in 10 districts

Annex 3: Results Framework Fixed Part

DELIVERING THE FOUNDATIONS OF LEARNING FOR ALL						
Program Goal						
To ensure that the foundational learning outcomes are achieved by all pupils from pre-primary to primary grade 4 (P4) and to reduce disparity between girls and boys and disadvantaged and marginalized groups.						
Outcome Indicators						
	Baseline	Intermediate Targets (Cumulative)				End Target
		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	
Raise children's readiness to learn through targeted pre-primary education						
% of all pre-primary girls & boys, including those from the Radical Inclusion Group, demonstrating school readiness skills (National level representative sample)	TBD	0	5% increase	10% increase	15% increase	15% increase on the baseline
Strengthen instructional core, teachers' cadre, and capacity to deliver foundational learning						
% of P4 girls & boys, including those from the Radical Inclusion Group, who meet minimum benchmarks in Literacy and Numeracy Skills (ESP M&E Framework Indicator 1)	TBD	0	5% increase	10% increase	15% increase	15% increase on the baseline
Students benefiting from direct interventions to enhance learning	0	735,121	1,215,458	1,705,269	2,195,727	2,195,727

Girls	0	377,276	621,900	871,655	1,121,861	1,121,861
Intermediate Result Indicators						
	Baseline	Intermediate Targets (Cumulative)				End Target
		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	
Component 1: Raise children's readiness to learn through targeted pre-primary education						
80% of pre-primary teachers (from all public pre-primary schools) using Instructional Core Package	0	4,896	5,728	6,702	7,841	7,841
Female Teachers		4,151	4,857	5,683	6,649	6,649
Number of Teacher Guides delivered to Pre-Primary teachers	0	6,732	7,876	9,215	10,782	10,782
Number of Pre-Primary teachers trained	0	6,120	7,160	8,377	9,801	9,801
Female Teachers	0	5,189	6,071	7,104	8,311	8,311
Number of TLMs delivered to P0 students	0	210,344	456,445	744,385	1,081,274	1,081,274
Component 2: Strengthen instructional core, teachers' cadre, and capacity to deliver foundational learning						
80% of primary teachers (P1-P4) (from all public primary schools) using Instructional Core Package	0	9,226	16,361	23,182	29,522	29,522
Female Teachers	0	2,768	4,908	6,955	8,857	8,857

Number of Teacher Guides delivered to Primary teachers	0	12,685	22,495	31,875	40,593	40,593
Number of Primary teachers trained	0	11,532	20,451	28,978	36,903	36,903
Female Teachers	0	3,460	6,135	8,693	11,071	11,071
Number of Workbooks delivered to P1-P4 students	0	598,289	1,689,191	3,277,048	5,355,458	5,355,458
Component 3: Increase the use of data and technology to support foundational learning and education service delivery						
Number of districts reporting performance against score card	0	0	4	8	12	16
Component 4: Strengthen governance, management, and accountability for performance on foundational learning						
% change (increase) in allocation of funding for foundational learning (Foundational learning expenditure items defined in MEL Framework)	0	0	3% increase	5% increase	7% increase	10% increase on the baseline
Annual budget execution rate	83%	83%	83%	84%	85%	85%

Variable Part

Indicators	Baseline	Intermediate Targets (Cumulative)				End Target
		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	
Strategy 1: Improving the availability of qualified pre-primary and primary teachers (specially females) in disadvantaged districts will improve district performance in foundational learning outcomes						

Number of qualified teachers (P0-P4) disaggregated by gender and geography	26,045 (2022 Projection) (Female: 9,580)	29,537 (F: 11,259)	31,521 (F: 12,251)			31,521 (F: 12,251)
Strategy 2: Strengthen National Learning Assessment function to carry out diagnostic assessments						
MBSSE publishes results of National Learning Assessment for Grade 4 (STRETCH)	National learning assessment doesn't exist	A plan for execution of National Learning Assessment is validated by LEG	Results of National learning assessment for P4 are published			Results of National learning assessment for P4 are published
Strategy 3: Alignment of financing for foundational learning endorsed by LEG						
Number of districts with evidence-based budget allocation informed by score card on foundational learning endorsed by LEG	Allocation based on learning outcomes evidence not in practice	4	8			8

Annex 4. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Framework

Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework

Outcome Indicators

Indicator	Definition	Frequency	Source	Methodology for Data Collection	Responsibility for Data Collection
% of all pre-primary girls & boys, including those from the Radical	Share of pre-primary girls and boys (including those from	Annual	National School	Sample Based	National Assessment

Inclusion Group, demonstrating school readiness skills	Radical Inclusion Group) who participate in National School Readiness Assessment, with minimum score against all school readiness skills		Readiness Assessment Report	(National representative sample)	Services Unit (NASU)/ MBSSE
% of P4 girls & boys, including those from the Radical Inclusion Group, who meet minimum benchmarks in Literacy and Numeracy Skills	Share of P1-P4 girls and boys (including those from Radical Inclusion Group) who participate in National Foundational Learning Assessment, with minimum score in literacy and numeracy (ESP M&E Framework Indicator 1)	Annual (As per ESP)	National Foundational Learning Assessment Report	Sample Based	NASU / MBSSE
Students benefiting from direct interventions to enhance learning (number)	Number of Pre-Primary and Primary (P1-P4) students enrolled in Public Schools from 2024 to 2027	Annual	Annual School Census	Census	Directorate of Policy and Planning / MBSSE
Girls benefiting from direct interventions to enhance learning (number)	Number of Pre-Primary and Primary (P1-P4) girls enrolled in Public Schools from 2024 to 2027	Annual	Annual School Census	Census	Directorate of Policy and Planning / MBSSE

Intermediate Result Indicators

Indicator	Definition	Frequency	Source	Methodology for Data Collection	Responsibility for Data Collection
80% of pre-primary teachers using Instructional Core Package	Share of pre-primary teachers (from all public pre-primary schools) using school readiness framework,	Annual	School Quality Assurance Reports	Census	Directorate of School Quality Assurance and Resource Mobilization / MBSSE

	quality standards, teacher guides, and TLMs in pre-primary classrooms				
Female Teachers using Instructional Core Package	Share of pre-primary female teachers using school readiness framework, quality standards, teacher guides, and TLMs in pre-primary classrooms	Annual	School Quality Assurance Reports	Census	Directorate of School Quality Assurance and Resource Mobilization / MBSSE
Number of Teacher Guides delivered to Pre-Primary teachers	Total number of teacher guides covering school readiness framework, quality standards, and lesson plans delivered to pre-primary teachers	Annual	Annual School Census	Census	Directorate of Policy and Planning / MBSSE
Number of Pre-Primary teachers trained	All Pre-Primary teachers trained in Instructional Core Package	Annual	Teaching Service Commission Reports generated from TMIS / Training Reports	Teaching Service Commission Training Monitoring	Teaching Service Commission
Female Teachers	All Pre-Primary female teachers trained in Instructional Core Package	Annual	Teaching Service Commission Reports generated from TMIS / Training Reports	Teaching Service Commission Training Monitoring	Teaching Service Commission
Number of TLMs delivered to P0 students	Total number of TLMs aligned with school readiness framework and teacher guides delivered to all pre-	Annual	Annual School Census	Census	Directorate of Policy and Planning / MBSSE

	primary (P0) students in public pre-primary schools				
80% of primary (P1-P4) teachers using Instructional Core Package	Share of primary (P1-P4) (from all public primary schools) teachers using competency framework, lesson plans and teacher guides, in primary classrooms	Annual	School Quality Assurance Reports	Census	Directorate of School Quality Assurance and Resource Mobilization / MBSSE
Female Teachers	Share of primary (P1-P4) female teachers using competency framework, lesson plans and teacher guides, in primary classrooms	Annual	School Quality Assurance Reports	Census	Directorate of School Quality Assurance and Resource Mobilization / MBSSE
Number of Teacher Guides delivered to Primary teachers	Total number of teacher guides covering competency framework and lesson plans delivered to primary teachers	Annual	Annual School Census	Census	Directorate of Policy and Planning / MBSSE
Number of Primary teachers trained	All Primary teachers trained in Instructional Core Package	Annual	Teaching Service Commission Reports generated from TMIS / Training Reports	Teaching Service Commission Training Monitoring	Teaching Service Commission
Female Teachers	All Primary female teachers trained in Instructional Core Package	Annual	Teaching Service Commission Reports generated from TMIS / Training Reports	Teaching Service Commission Training Monitoring	Teaching Service Commission

Number of Workbooks delivered to all P1-P4 students	Total number of workbooks aligned with competency framework and teacher guides delivered to all primary (P1-P4) students in public primary schools	Annual	Annual School Census	Census	Directorate of Policy and Planning / MBSSE
Number of districts reporting performance against score card	Number of Districts submitting data against all KPIs that constitute score card	Annual	School Quality Assurance Reports (SQA reports based on data against KPIs collected from schools by SQAOs).	Census	Directorate of School Quality Assurance and Resource Mobilization / MBSSE
% change (increase) in allocation of funding for foundational learning	Comparative analysis of annual funding allocation for <i>instructional core</i> for pre-primary and P1-P4, <i>teacher training</i> and <i>use of data</i>	Annual	Public Expenditure Review Report	MBSSE led Public Expenditure Review	MBSSE
Annual budget execution rate	Comparative analysis of annual fund utilization by MBSSE at national and district levels	Annual	Public Expenditure Review Report / Budget Execution Statement	MBSSE led Public Expenditure Review	MBSSE / MoF

Variable Part Indicators

Indicator	Definition	Frequency	Source	Methodology for Data Collection	Responsibility for Data Collection
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Number of qualified teachers (P0-P4) disaggregated by gender and geography	Share of all qualified teachers (and female qualified teachers) consolidated and district wise	Annual	Annual School Census verification by third party, validation by LEG	Census	Directorate of Policy and Planning / MBSSE
MBSSE publishes results of National Learning Assessment for Grade 4 (STRETCH)	National Learning Assessment Services Unit with approved annual plan and budget conducting National Learning Assessments for P4 every year	Annual	Copy of NASU approved annual plan and budget verification by third party, validation by LEG	National Learning Assessment Report validated by LEG	NASU / MBSSE
Number of districts with evidence-based budget allocation informed by score card on foundational learning endorsed by LEG	District budget allocation based on foundational learning priorities informed by district score card, and financing and expenditure review by LEG.	Annual	School Quality Assurance Reports & Public Expenditure Review Report, verification by third party, validation by LEG	Census GA led Public Expenditure Review	Directorate of School Quality Assurance and Resource Mobilization / MBSSE / GA

Annex 5. Indicative Implementation Plan

Attached Separately

Annex 6. List of Consultations

Attached Separately

Annex 7. Costing Model

Attached Separately

¹ *Sierra Leone 2022-2026 Partnership Compact: Foundational of Learning for All*, (2022), MBSSE and MTHE; *Sierra Leone Education Sector Plan Transforming Learning for All 2022 – 2026*, (2022), Government of Sierra Leone.

² [2021 EGRA/EGMA Report](#)

³ See: [The State of Global Learning Poverty: 2022 Update](#)

⁴ See the 2022-2026 Education Sector Plan for more details.

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⁶ MBSSE and MTHE, *Sierra Leone 2022-2026 Partnership Compact: Foundational of Learning for All*, (2022).

⁷ Enabling Factors Analysis

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⁹ "2021/2022 Human Development Report: 9 out of 10 countries fall backwards in human development," United Nations Development Programme Sierra Leone, [Press release](#), September 8, 2022.

¹⁰ World Data Lab, as cited on [The Sustainable Development Report](#).

¹¹ "Sierra Leone Has Opportunity to Increase Growth but Faces Challenges in Improving Citizens' Welfare," World Bank, [Press release](#), December 15, 2022.

¹² GoSL defines radical inclusion as the intentional inclusion of persons directly or indirectly excluded (from education) due to actions or inactions by individuals, society, or institutions. These include but not limited to the historically marginalized groups: pregnant girls and parent learners, children with disabilities, children from rural and underserved areas, and children from low-income families (National Radical Inclusion Policy 2021)

¹³ See for example the [Human Development Incubator](#).

¹⁴ *Sierra Leone 2022-2026 Partnership Compact: Foundations of Learning for All* (2022), MBSSE and MTHE.

¹⁵ [Statement](#) at TES (2022) .

¹⁶ Sustainable Development Goal 4 entails "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. See: [UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs](#).

¹⁷ From 2017 to 2021: gross enrolment ratio (pre-primary) increased from 12.6 to 24 per cent, transition rate between primary and lower-secondary education improved from 75 to 97.6 percent, and completion rate of primary and lower secondary education went up from 64.2 to 92 per cent according to official data.

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¹⁹ [2021 Annual School Census](#)

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- ⁴² For example: Woldehanna, T. (2016). Inequality, preschool education and cognitive development in Ethiopia: Implication for public investment in pre-primary education. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 40(6), 509–516. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0165025415627700>
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