



**GOVERNMENT OF SIERRA LEONE
MINISTRY OF BASIC AND SENIOR SECONDARY EDUCATION (MBSSE)**

Presentation Topic: Development and Implementation of Evidence-Based Polices on Learning Assessment in Sierra Leone.

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PRESENTATION OUTLINE:

- BACKGROUND
- SIERRA LEONE EDUCATION BEFORE COVID-19 OUTBREAK
- INNOVATIVE APPROACHES FOR ASSESSING LEARNING OUTCOMES IN COVID-19 ERA
- CHALLENGES
- NEXT STEPS/WAY FORWARD

Background

Sierra Leone operates a four-tier education system: The Pre-Primary (ages 3-5), Primary (ages 6—11), Junior Secondary (ages 12-14) and Senior Secondary (ages 15-17). The country's education has continued to successfully navigate its way through after a decade civil war. The outbreaks of the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) in 2014 was another serious hit that negatively affected Sierra Leone's educational system as most of our schools and other educational centres were used as either quarantine or treatment centres. Our experience as a nation that has witnessed all of these horrible things placed us in a 'somehow' better position to prepare and get ready for any future outbreak.

In his interviews by **F&D's Adam Behsudi** on [Inclusive Approach to Digitalizing Sierra Leone's Education System & Economy](#), the Hon. Minister and Chief Innovation Officer stated that as part of the measures to help address some of the education challenges, Sierra Leone has formulated nimble policy strategies to ensure that all children continue to receive the education they deserve and in a better

EDUCATION BEFORE COVID-19 OUTBREAK IN SIERRA LEONE

- ❖ Almost two years before the outbreak of COVID-19 in Sierra Leone, the school coverage had increased from 10,747 (2018 Annual School Census(ASC) to 11,168 (2019 Annual School Census) which ultimately increased enrolment from 1,982,475 in 2018 to 2,654,306 in 2019 given a difference of 671,831 increase in enrolment with 421 additional schools. Of this figure, 983,751 are males and 998 are females (2018 ASC) while 1,317,508 are males and 1,336,798 are females. **Close to 50,000 of these enrolments are children with special needs (visual, hearing, speech, physical and learning impairments).**
- ❖ With the introduction of the Policy on Free Quality School Education (FQSE) in August 2018 by the current Administration of President Julius Maada Bio, the total enrolment in schools now falls around **2.7 million children (Draft 2020 Annual School Census Report)**. This policy focuses on increasing access to quality education by all-school aged children and young adults.
- ❖ The policy covers payment of tuition fees for all pupils in government and Government-assisted schools, payment of fees for all children registered for public examinations conducted by the West African Examinations Council (WAEC), provision of Core text books and exercise books, school feeding programme in selected schools in “hard-to- reach” communities, etc. This has resulted to high increase in enrolment with 2.7 million pupils in government and government assisted schools nationwide.

INNOVATIVE APPROACHES ADOPTED BY SIERRA LEONE FOR ASSESSING LEARNING OUTCOMES IN COVID-19 ERA

- ❖ SL recorded its first COVID-19 index case in March 2020 which marked the closure of schools to 2.5 million children and over 30,000 students in higher education of learning. The National COVID-19 Response Council was established laying down the foundation for a national response strategy to address all issues relating to the pandemic;
- ❖ The establishment of the **Directorate of Science, Innovation and Technology (DSTI)** headed by the Hon. Minister, Dr. David Moinina Sengeh, is a big blessing to Sierra Leone;
- ❖ The government has developed and is now using the **National Innovation and Digital Strategy** to inform not just how it implements but also enhances innovation across government and how it supports the Medium-Term National Development Plan—the road map that drives the Country's budget and sets priorities for ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs);;
- ❖ Using technology, DSTI ensures that GoSL delivers on its National Development Plan and design of an innovative ecosystem.

INNOVATIVE APPROACHES CONTINUE

- ❖ The Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE) in collaboration with her partners (World Bank, European Union, Irish Aid, FCDO, UNICEF and National and International Non-Governmental Organisations) immediately set up an Education Emergency Taskforce (EET) comprising of four pillar working groups (PWGs) namely: **Communications and Media (Pillar 1)**, **Continuous Distance Learning (Pillar 2)**, **Schools Reopening (Pillar 3)**, and **Operations, Policy and Planning (Pillar 4)**. These PWGs continue to meet weekly to help address all issues relating to education during the pandemic.
- ❖ Using the PWGs, an initial assessment of schools and learning situation was undertaken to all the 16 districts to ascertain the learning needs of the children;
- ❖ Establishment of Learning Assessment Unit (LAU) in advance stage with funding support from the GPE;

INNOVATIVE APPROACHES CONTINUE

- ❖ Reports were generated which informed the PWGs and the Ministry about the type of teaching and learning interventions required for the children;
- ❖ Education radio station owned by MBSSE was now better strengthened to be able to reach out to all and sundry;
- ❖ Modalities put in place for examination classes (West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examinations (WASSCE), National Primary School Examination (NPSE), the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE);
- ❖ **Policy developed for the utilization of Teaching and Learning materials (TLMs)** including radios and other forms of physical supports given by the Government of Sierra Leone and our education partners to teachers and children in examination classes across the country;
- ❖ The Teaching Service Commission (TSC) has developed several policies and strategies (**Professional Standards for Teachers, Revised Code of Conduct, TSC Operational Framework, Financial Management and Procurement policy, District Operations Manual, Teacher Deployment Strategy,**) etc. TSC continues to organise their teachers across the country to do continuous distance learning via radio teaching programmes;
- ❖ Dates for all public examinations were fixed and followed;

INNOVATIVE APPROACHES CONTINUE

- ❖ **Policy developed for re-opening of schools for examination classes** firstly and for all schools later. This was put in place and implemented with support from the Government of Sierra Leone and her education donor partners- **WB, EU, FCDO, Irish Aid** to the **Multi-Donor Trust Fund (MDTF)** and the **Global Partnership for Education (GPE)** with **UNICEF** as the Grant Agent;
- ❖ **The Annual School Census** (Data Collection) continued to avoid gaps in our school level data collection exercise and more so to ascertain the level of impact of COVID-19 on learning situation in about 11,400 schools across the country;
- ❖ Using geospatial data (partnering with GRID 3) leading to the improvement of education outcomes for all students especially girls, students with disability and those living in remote areas;
- ❖ **The Policy on Radical Inclusion** leading to turning over the decision on Pregnant girls not attending schools.
- ❖ **Strengthening Public-Private Partnership Arrangement** across education (E.g. Supportive collaboration with Mercury International and Orange in the construction of schools and classrooms across the country).

CHALLENGES

- ❖ Coverage rate for Pre-school/Early Childhood Education(ECD), Junior Secondary and Senior Secondary are about 54%, 71% and 53% respectively (taking 3 miles distance from a school). Most of the ECD schools are owned by private individuals and found in urban and semi-urban communities;
- ❖ Low quality of teaching especially in remote communities;
- ❖ Financial challenges;
- ❖ Gender inequality;
- ❖ Hard to reach areas/Remote areas to access better education;
- ❖ Slow acceptance of the ‘radical’ aspect of total inclusiveness in education.

NEXT STEPS/WAY FORWARD

- ❖ GoSL in collaboration with UNICEF is increasing coverage for ECD schools with support from the GPE funds. About 30 blocks of 2 classrooms each are being constructed giving a total of 60 ECD classrooms. According to the Hon. Minister, Dr, David Moinina Sengeh, on his public education and commissioning of ECD schools in one of the communities in Kambia District, he stated that Orange has invested in three (3) ECD Schools in three months complete with furniture and outdoor playgrounds.
- ❖ TSC continues to recruit and deploy trained and qualified teachers in remote communities.
- ❖ Government continues to advocate for more allocations for improvement in Basic and Senior Secondary Education. At the moment, It's difficult to determine how much of the 22% of the national budget for education goes to MBSSE.
- ❖ More female teachers to be recruited since girls enrolment is increasing steadily;
- ❖ MBSSE continues to intensify public education on the relevance of radical inclusion policy using radios, televisions, social media, town hall meetings, etc.

THANK YOU ALL

QUESTION TIME

Conclusion