

Sierra Leone

Education Sectoral and OR+ (*Thematic*) Report

January – December 2018



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Table of Contents

A.	Executive Summary	4
B.	Strategic Context of 2018.....	5
C.	Results Achieved in the Sector	6
	Output 5.1 – Access and Equity	6
	Output 5.2 – Early Learning	9
	Output 5.3 - Quality and Learning	12
	Output 5.4 - Policy and Systems	13
D.	Financial Analysis.....	14
E.	Future plans	18
F.	Expression of Thanks	18
G.	Annexes	18

Abbreviations and Acronyms

ASC	Annual School Census
CCTT	Child Centred Teaching Techniques
CFS	Child Friendly Schools
CoC	Code of Conduct
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
CTA	Community Teachers Association
CWC	Child Welfare Clubs
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
ECD	Early Childhood Development
EDP	Education Development Partners
EMIS	Education Management Information System
ESP	Education Sector Plan
EVD	Ebola Viral Disease
FQSE	Free Quality School Education
GATE	Girls Access to Education
GEM	Girls Education Movements
GoSL	Government of Sierra Leone
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
JSS	Junior Secondary School
LC	Local Councils
MBSSE	Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education
MC	Mothers Clubs
MDA	Ministries, Departments and Agencies
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
MSG	Mother Support Groups
MSWGCA	Ministry of Social Welfare Gender and Children's Affairs
NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations
OOSC	Out-of-School Children
PCA	Programme Cooperation Agreement
REDiSL	Revitalizing Education Development in Sierra Leone
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SDP	School Development Plans
SLeGEN	Sierra Leone Girls' Education Network
SLTU	Sierra Leone Teachers' Union
SMC	School Management Committees
SMOGE	Students' Movement for Girls Education
SRGBV	School Related Gender Based Violence
SSS	Senior Secondary School
TOT	Training of Trainers
TSC	Teacher Service Commission
TTI	Teacher Training Institutions
VDC	Village Development Committees

A. Executive Summary

Over the course of 2018, UNICEF sustained its support to the Ministry of Basic and Secondary School Education (MBSSE) to expand access to quality basic education. Through a newly developed Free Quality School Education (FQSE) initiative, UNICEF aided the Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) in enabling over 90,000 vulnerable children, particularly out-of-school and over-aged children, to access school.

As evidenced in research conducted by UNICEF on Early Childhood Education (ECD) and subsequent guidance developed on ECD programming, education in early childhood significantly contributes to school readiness, future academic achievement and success throughout life. Accordingly, following concerted advocacy by UNICEF, the MBSSE developed an ECD policy to advance early stimulation and school readiness at a national scale. The policy references the national Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Minimum Standards and Curriculum, facilitated by UNICEF. As a result, 4,264 young children from poor communities across Sierra Leone are now accessing ECD centres, and community-based ECD models are being documented to inform future scale up in 2019 and beyond.

In order to improve quality of teaching in 2018, 2,875 basic education teachers received UNICEF-supported training in child-centred participatory teaching techniques. This helped to ensure improved classroom and pedagogical practices and child-friendly school environments for improved learning outcomes. In addition, 538 schools developed and implemented school improvement plans, while 948 schools were provided with teaching and learning materials benefitting a total of 120,000 vulnerable children and 5,000 teachers.

With support from UNICEF, the Education Sector Plan (ESP) 2018-2020 was validated, disseminated and used to leverage US\$17.2 million in funding from the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) to support children's access to quality education. Given its role as a trusted partner to the GoSL, UNICEF was designated by the GoSL as the Grant Agent. The GPE programme commenced in September 2018 with a focus on prioritising access to quality education and strengthening the education system to be in line with national priorities as outlined in ESP, with the goal of improving school readiness and learning outcomes, emphasizing reading and mathematics in early grades.

Despite many successes in 2018, significant challenges were also faced. The weak capacity of national and district level education counterparts stalled progress on the development of alternative learning opportunities and skills development for out-of-school children (OOSC). Progress was further constrained due to the limited literacy and numeracy skills of community ECD workers.

At the school level, follow up of enrolled students to ensure their retention in school was poorly sustained due to under-staffing and low capacity of school personnel to conduct quality assurance and school supervision as required. The same was true for follow up of trained teachers to ensure skills acquired through teacher training were being applied.

Additionally, the use of real time data in planning, especially at district and chiefdom level, was poor despite UNICEF's efforts to promote filtering data from districts to schools and then communities.

Going forward, UNICEF will continue to support the MBSSE to expand school readiness for more children in Sierra Leone and to improve early learning, retention and progression in the school system. UNICEF will also improve its focus on the quality of learning and using evidence-based research for planning and policy implementation to continue to strengthen the education system across the country.

B. Strategic Context of 2018

The 2015-2019 UNICEF Education Programme is focused on improving learning outcomes for all boys and girls, in an inclusive and equitable basic education system. This is in line with the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, to '*Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all*', as well as Sierra Leone's education priorities outlined in the Education Sector Plan (ESP) 2018-2020.

Specific programme outputs in UNICEF's Education Programme focus on increasing access to basic education, particularly for girls and out-of-school children (OOSC) and improving a quality education system that provides all girls and boys with equitable quality learning opportunities. The programme also supports the development of the Government of Sierra Leone's (GoSL) capacity and strengthening of its systems to enhance evidence-based planning, partnerships, coordination and service delivery focusing on specific outcomes, such as access to early learning (pre-primary education) opportunities with a focus on disadvantaged children; school readiness, prompt school enrolment, and retention; increased primary completion and transition to Junior Secondary School (JSS); and improved quality of teaching and learning and of school environments.

Current progress indicates increased access to education for all children especially at the primary level. Gross enrolment rate for primary level increased from 122 in 2010 to 130 per cent in 2017. The high level of child enrolment in primary school is a positive step in the direction of universal primary education. Gross enrolment at pre-primary level is low, but on a positive trend, increasing from four per cent in 2010¹ to 11.9 per cent in 2017². Pre-primary education remains inaccessible to most households, due to financial constraints for families and the limited supply of services. Gender parity has been achieved from pre-primary levels through JSS. However, imbalances appear at Senior Secondary School (SSS) and at the tertiary level. Overall, completion rates remain low, the primary completion rate is 67 per cent, while the figures for JSS and SSS completion rates are 49 per cent and 20 per cent, respectively³, revealing low completion in the secondary cycle. With the GoSL's newly launched Free Quality School Education (FQSE), access to school will progressively expand, while significant focus will also be made to improve retention and completion.

The 2017 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) in Sierra Leone confirmed that only 12 per cent (5 per cent in rural areas, 22 per cent in urban areas) of children aged 7-14 have foundational skills in numeracy and only 16 per cent (5 per cent in rural areas, 30 per cent in urban areas) have foundational skills in literacy, which calls for serious measures to improve the quality of education.

This learning crisis is escalated by a dearth of qualified teachers; 41 per cent of male teachers and 28 per cent of female teachers in 2016 were without a qualification or teaching with a qualification below the standard required. At the SSS level, nearly half of teachers are not qualified to a sufficient standard. Consequently, pedagogy and subject matter expertise is a serious challenge affecting learning outcomes, and this is further compounded by inadequate teaching and learning materials in poorly resourced schools. Pre-service and in-service teacher education systems are weak. Moreover, only 49 per cent of teachers are on the government payroll. The establishment of the Teacher Service Commission (TSC) was therefore envisaged to improve the teacher recruitment, improve teacher education and development, as well as deployment and motivation.

¹ 2010 Multi-Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) in Sierra Leone.

² 2017 Annual School Census (ASC) in Sierra Leone.

³ Ibid.

In collaboration with the World Bank, UNICEF supported the Ministry of Basic and Secondary School Education (MBSSE) to develop three key national policy documents to facilitate the improvement of access to early learning and school readiness for children up to eight years old. In 2018, the integrated Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) policy, ECCE Curriculum and Early Childhood Education (ECD)/Early Learning Minimum standards were validated and are awaiting cabinet approval. UNICEF also continued to support roll out a cost-effective community-based ECD programme to ensure more children are accessing ECD services. In 2018, over 4,264 children accessed the programme in 2018.

UNICEF also supported the MBSSE to improve the teaching practices through Child Centred Teaching Techniques (CCTT) within the Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programme for teachers. With approved funding from the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), UNICEF will refocus the in-service teacher development in 2019 to emphasize training of teachers in lower primary grades 1-3, in order to improve foundations-in-learning outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics for all children in early grades.

In a drive to improve data availability for evidence-based planning, policy and decision making, UNICEF supported the MBSSE to roll out a citizen-led monitoring initiative through the text messaging-based RapidPro/EduTrac application, which has made it possible for the MBSSE to collect monthly data on key indicators from over 70 per cent of schools nationwide. The system was used effectively to collect data and monitor the flooding and mudslide response in late 2017, and again in early 2018 to ensure the affected children were accessing rehabilitated schools and learning materials to ensure continuity of their access to education.

UNICEF also supported the MBSSE to develop a comprehensive programme for a US\$17 million grant from GPE in order to support the ESP 2018-2020 priorities in three areas: 1) to build strong foundations for learning through increased access to early learning (pre-primary education) for 3-5 year olds; 2) to improve learning outcomes in reading, writing and maths for early grades 1-3; and 3) to improve the system of decentralized school monitoring, data collection and management, a learning assessment unit, and the availability of comprehensive sector analysis data. Given its role in leveraging this funding, and for its continuous support to and effective partnership with the MBSSE, UNICEF was assigned as Grant Agent for the GPE grant.

C. Results Achieved in the Sector

OUTCOME 5 / THEMATIC POOL 4 – EQUITABLE AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Output 5.1 – Access and Equity

i. Access to Education

Global Thematic funding support to Education in Sierra Leone significantly supported the enrolment of 328,855 marginalised and out-of-school children (132,539 boys; 196,316 girls). This included orphans, Ebola-affected children and 5,072 teenage mothers who were re-integrated to formal school from an accelerated learning programme.

A national assessment was conducted on the situation of OOSC and strategy developed based on the findings and recommendations of the assessment report, which suggested effective interventions for reaching all categories of OOSC. The funding was further utilised in complementing the government's efforts to implement its new flagship programme for education -- the FQSE initiative. This initiative, officially launched in August 2018 by the GoSL, establishes a phased approach to FQSE, which provides free admission and tuition waivers to all children in government and government-approved schools nationwide. Yet despite its good intentions and timeliness, many children remain out of school, at risk of dropping out or

lacking access to the benefits from this initiative as they live in remote rural communities, where there are no schools or schools that are not yet government-approved. Furthermore, many parents are still unable to afford some of the direct and indirect costs of education.

ii. Partnerships

In 2018, UNICEF worked in partnership with the MBSSE and 10 local and international Civil Society Organisations (CSO), as well as the Ministry of Social Welfare Gender and Children's Affairs (MSWGCA), Local Councils (LC) and community structures such as Village Development Committees (VDC), School Management Committees (SMC) and Mothers' Clubs (MC) to address the educational needs of vulnerable OOSC in deprived, remote and hard-to-reach communities, through community-based engagements and enrolment drives.

With Global Thematic funding, these children were supported with school materials such as uniforms, bags, shoes and learning materials, and were assisted in other school-related costs. Consequently, 328,855 poor and marginalised children (132,539 boys; 196,316 girls) were supported to enrol and stay in schools nationwide.

The MBSSE continued to provide monitoring oversight during the implementation of the project to ensure activities were implemented on time in all 14 districts across the country.

iii. National Strategy for Out-of-School Children

UNICEF supported the MBSSE to develop a National Strategy including effective interventions to reach all categories of OOSC to enrol in school, remain in school and complete it following the roll-out of the National Assessment report that was conducted on the situation of OOSC in 2016⁴. The report indicated that 392,137 children of primary school age were out of school, and clearly showed evidence of the need for stronger interventions and programmes to ensure children are enrolled and retained in schools, and that schools are safe and accessible to all children, regardless of their background and socio-economic status.

The National Strategy was therefore developed to address the above National Assessment and is aligned with the FQSE initiative and the ESP 2018-2020 in order to address issues of quality and inclusive education for all categories of OOSC. Furthermore, in collaboration with MBSSE Situation Rooms, databases profiling 85,230 OOSC were established in 14 districts and are being updated regularly for enhanced evidence-based planning and interventions in the districts⁵.

iv. Code of Conduct

With Global Thematic funding, UNICEF supported the MBSSE Gender Desk to coordinate with the Teaching Service Commission (TSC), the Sierra Leone Teachers' Union and other relevant stakeholders to finalise the review of the Teachers' Code of Conduct (CoC) and aligned the document with other relevant policies governing the standards and ethics of teachers' professionalism. The CoC is also aligned with the National Strategy for out-of-school interventions, so as to create a safe learning environment and enhance girls' retention and completion of school.

v. Girls' Education

Global Thematic funding also facilitated UNICEF's coordination of strategic partnerships to promote girls' education and gender equality in the programme interventions, by providing technical and financial support through the MBSSE Gender Desk for girl champions (i.e. girls from Sierra Leone Girls' Education Network (SLeGEN), Girls' Education Movement (GEM) and Students' Movement for Girls' Education (SMOGE) who advocate for the promotion of

⁴ Global Initiative On Out-Of-School Children -A National Assessment Of The Situation Of Out-Of-School Children In Sierra Leone, Gosl/UNICEF 2016

⁵ With support from community monitors, OOSC are profiled through a MBSSE 'Situation Room' system.

girls' education at the district and national levels). UNICEF also supported the Gender Desk Officer in MBSSE to coordinate with the girl champion networks in planning and organising of a national girls' camp that provided mentorship and role-modelling, psycho-social and career guidance counselling to 196 girls to build their self-confidence, acquire knowledge, provide skills and tools to speak up about the issues affecting them, and to create peer linkages to enhance their development and empowerment in society. District Education Offices worked closely with the district-level GEM chapters and teacher mentors to provide continuous mentorship and psycho-social support to in/out-of-school girls in the schools and communities to help mitigate early marriage, teenage pregnancy and enhance girls' education.

Additionally, the MBSSE Gender Desk facilitated training and capacity development for 117 participants (56 males; 61 females) including school authorities, NGO partners, government officials and community stakeholders in social norms approaches, to equip them with knowledge and skills to tackle negative social norms practices and beliefs and reduce barriers to education, including violence and gender discrimination. This has increased parents and other stakeholders' knowledge and skills in community engagement for sustainable positive behaviour change in the communities, thus improving community-school relationships and general collaboration on children's education.

Finally, the MBSSE Gender Desk, in collaboration with the TSC, the Sierra Leone Teachers' Union and other relevant stakeholders, finalised the review of the Teachers' CoC and aligned the document with other relevant policies governing the standards and ethics of teachers' professionalism. The CoC contributes to safe learning environment and helps strengthen the coordination of girls' education advocacy at the national and district levels.

Monitoring & Evaluation

With Global Thematic funding, the MBSSE Gender Desk and Guidance and Counselling Unit monitored, supervised and distributed psycho-social support materials to trained primary school communities, teachers and student peer mentors to help combat early marriage and teenage pregnancy, contributing to an increased retention rate of girls in school. Through interaction with peer mentors, girls have acquired increased knowledge of their rights, roles and responsibilities and have been empowered to prevent rape and other exploitation and to reject the desires of their parents in relation to early marriage and teenage pregnancy. Parents and other stakeholders have also acquired knowledge and skills on approaches for sustainable positive behaviour change in the communities.

UNICEF also supported the MBSSE to conduct quarterly joint monitoring visits to the project communities in collaboration with implementing partners, representatives of the LCs and community structures to improve implementation and document lessons learnt. Full involvement and participation of all relevant stakeholders, especially community structures such as SMCs, MCs, Community Education Committees (CEC) and Child Welfare Committees (CWC) was ensured for local ownership and sustainability. The partners engaged the community structures to develop and implement Community Action Plans (CAP) to support school enrolment, retention and completion of school.

UNICEF used Global Thematic funding to conduct an evaluation of a Menstrual Health Hygiene (MHH) project that was piloted under the Girls' Access to Education (GATE) project in Kono and Tonkolili Districts with support from UK Aid. Based on feedback received during the evaluation, the project is vital in enhancing girls' regular school attendance and retention since adolescent girls were found to miss school at least every seven days every month due

to their menses. The MHH will be replicated in Bo District, where the need is highest based on the 2017 MICS⁶.

Lessons Learned

- An inter-sectoral approach in addressing children's issues increased collaborative partnerships between policy makers and partners. For instance, many voices were raised for Government to ensure continued learning for pregnant teenage girls, which gave rise to the establishment of the accelerated learning centres.
- The involvement of all different strata of communities (men, women and children) in the planning, implementation and monitoring of project activities strongly reinforces community participation, increased ownership and accelerates commitment to achieve excellent project results that are sustainable.
- Exchange visits between communities enhanced sharing of best practices to strengthen successful implementation of the interventions defined within the CAPs.
- Awareness on violence against girls and safety of girls/children in schools has been enhanced by linking school clubs to community-based clubs as well as other initiatives.
- Implementing integrated child support projects (e.g. WASH, nutrition, ECD, OOSC, etc.) in the same communities creates noticeable synergy.
- Effective engagement and mobilization of communities by implementing partners has resulted in high community participation and improved acceptance of projects by communities.

Output 5.2 – Early Learning

Early Learning supports improved access to quality ECD, care and education for children under six years of age. It uses an integrated community-based ECD model that empowers parents and caregivers to provide early stimulation and appropriate parenting and key care practices to their children in an integrated manner, working closely with nutrition, health, WASH and child protection delivery platforms. In 2018, with Global Thematic funding, the community-based ECD initiative project was scaled up to 32 vulnerable communities with 42 ECD centres in four districts: Koinadugu (3); Bombali (17); Port Loko (15); and Moyamba (7). The centres were accessed by 4,264 children (1,983 boys; 2,281 girls) with the targeted aim of reaching approximately 6,000 young children under six years by the end 2018. The following results were achieved:

i. ECD Policy, ECCE Minimum Standards & Curriculum

To promote equitable access to quality ECD services for young children in Sierra Leone, funds from Global Thematic facilitated a five-day final review and validation workshop on the national ECD Policy including discussion on the ECCE Minimum Standards and Curriculum. In all, 43 participants, including consultants/facilitators, officials from various Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDA), Training Colleges, Sierra Leones Teachers Union, Nursery/Pre-schools, World Bank and UNICEF participated in the review of the ECD policy. An updated version has been presented to the MBSSE for their final review and parliament's approval.

ii. ECD Educators and Caregivers

To strengthen centre-based activities for young children in communities, UNICEF supported community-level training workshops for 1,389 community ECD workers/educators, 1,520 caregivers, NGO partners, District Education and LC representatives. The trainings supported capacity development in project implementation; use and management of ECD kits; and approaches to support improved children and parents/caregivers' interactions. Trained

⁶ Multi-Indicator Cluster Survey 6 (MICS 6) in 2017 survey results indicated that 20 per cent of women between the ages of 15 and 49 did not participate in social activities, school or work last year due to menstruation. In Bo district, 47 per cent of women reported the same.

participants conduct sensitization and discussions with families and communities on the benefits of holistic ECD to young children. One way this is carried out is through Focus Group Discussion (FGD) on selected ECD themes (nutrition, WASH, early stimulation) with caregivers of children up to two years of age. Discussions centre around: what caregivers have been doing well; possible areas for improvement; and how to better access available ECD services in communities.

Trained participants also participated and implemented activities at the centres, which targets children three to five years. Activities included play-based early learning sessions for school readiness skills; and transition to primary school at age six. In addition, to improve the early learning environments and opportunities, UNICEF provided 153 ECD kits containing toys and play materials for all 42 ECD centres.

UNICEF continued to educate caregivers and craftsmen in communities on the importance of developing cost-efficient toys/play materials using local materials. The idea of toy making is now embraced by communities, as communities are now making toys for children using local and recycled materials. This practice ignited the quarterly celebration of toy fair exhibitions in communities. During such celebrations, homemade dolls, balls using stuffed materials, wooden toys, picture card puzzles and other play materials made by craftsmen and MSGs in communities were donated to support children's play and learning sessions. This initiative will continue to be part of the community-based activities to be scaled up, where caregivers will continue to make homemade toys to support early stimulation and early learning at ECD centres and at homes, as well as engaging in children's play sessions -- proven to improve children's cognitive, social and emotional skills for improved learning opportunities.

To create a conducive learning environment per ECCE Minimum Standards, Global Thematic funds also supported the construction/extension of ECD centres in 32 communities across the four pilot districts.

iii. Outreach

In promoting inclusiveness as part of the community-based ECD model, with Global Thematic funding UNICEF supported home visits focusing on most vulnerable households with special needs children. Home visitations integrated the Care for Child Development (CCD) early stimulation strategy, which engages parents/caregivers in positive child-caregiver interactions; sensitises caregivers about the importance of ECD and good child rearing practices; provides caregivers with easy-to-use and understand information about available ECD services; and encourages them to access these services in communities.

In 2018, trained NGO partners together with MSGs conducted approximately 3,000 visitations to vulnerable households and supported parents/caregivers on:

- (i) engaging in play and communication with young children aged 0-2 years at home;
- (ii) play-based early learning of young children aged 3-5 years at home;
- (iii) young children's transition to primary school at age 6;
- (iv) bringing young children to participate in centre-based activities;
- (v) accessing available ECD services, such as Free Health Care Initiative.

Discussions with caregivers in communities during monitoring visits indicated that home visitations continue to offer valuable learning and awareness for parents/caregivers on good child rearing practices and the importance of ECD. Partner reports indicated that communities, particularly in Koinadugu district, are encouraging other caregivers to send young children to ECD centres to benefit from the play-based learning, rotational cleaning the centres, provision of clean drinking water and provision of additional materials that enhanced play-based learning.

Discussions on meal preparation and distribution for young children and families has enlightened parents/caregivers, who demonstrated effort in ensuring that part of their locally grown products from their farms/backyard gardens are used in preparing meals for their families instead of just being sold for money as previously practiced.

iv. Baseline Study

During the first phase of the community-based ECD project in 22 communities, an ECD baseline study was conducted and communities selected through a randomized sampling process. The purpose of the baseline was to document: the status of young children's (under six years) early development; and the context of child-rearing practices at home and in targeted communities. Findings from the baseline informed modifications to planned interventions in ways that best served children. Some key findings indicated that:

- 87 per cent of children between ages 3-5 years lag in literacy development for their ages compared to 30 per cent in socio-emotional development;
- Physical development and learning development are relatively on-track;
- Boys lag in social-emotional development;
- Literacy is strongly associated with caregiver's educational background;
- School-readiness, i.e. children's ability to follow instructions and do things independently, are interwoven with past and present nutrition deficiencies;
- 42 per cent of children in communities' experience multiple deprivations;

v. Supplies

Global Thematic funding supported the procurement of school supplies for partners, including the MBSSE and NGOs, including projectors, scanners, photocopiers, cameras, hard drives, laptops etc. to support the ECD programme implementation.

Monitoring & Evaluation

UNICEF worked to strengthen ECD quality assurance at the systems level through collaboration with MBSSE-Revitalizing Education Development in Sierra Leone (REDiSL) officials. To this end, UNICEF developed a joint monitoring tool pulling from existing tools used in Sierra Leone and other country contexts. The tool captured key areas such as: general information about existing pre-schools; classroom practices; teaching and learning materials; facilities available; community partnerships; monitoring and coaching; and qualitative questions. Analysed data from monitoring visits that administered the tool provided a clear picture on some of the best ECD practices as well as areas for further improvement.

Joint field level visits to community-based ECD centres were conducted together with district-level MBSSE representatives, LCs and NGO partners. During the visits, ECD workers, MSGs and communities were provided with technical/supportive supervision and coaching for quality delivery of activities aligned to community-based ECD.

Lessons Learned

- Children of pre-school age accessing the community-based pre-school model are expected to converge at primary class 1 together with those accessing school-based pre-schools at the end of their pre-school years. Therefore, there is need to improve on quality play-based learning for young children with links for the ECCE curriculum at the community-based centres.
- There is currently a shortage of trained and qualified teachers on ECD in-country and the few that are available only have Teacher Certificates or Diplomas. In most cases they are already attached to primary schools, thus trained and qualified teachers in communities are not available to facilitate play-based learnings. As a result, there is a need to revisit the selection criteria for ECD Workers/Educators; and if possible explore engaging retired teachers that will facilitate play-based learning sessions for children.

- Limited technical capacity of NGO partners and District Education Inspectors and Supervisors in conducting effective on-site monitoring, supervision and coaching, can affect the quality of reporting and implementation of community-based ECD.

Output 5.3 - Quality and Learning

In the 2018, UNICEF continued to work with the MBSSE, Teacher Training Institutions (TTI) and other relevant stakeholders to strengthen the capacity of the Ministry in improving the quality of education. UNICEF supported continuous professional development of teachers and school administrators through in-service training in early grade reading and numeracy to improve instruction and child-centred participatory teaching techniques. The MBSSE was also supported to carry out supportive supervision of teachers in all 14 districts. The following results were achieved.

i. Continuous Professional Development

UNICEF, in partnership with the MBSSE and five TTIs supported teacher training to strengthen teacher classroom practice and effective delivery of lessons for an additional 2,875 in-service teachers (1,787 males; 1,088 females). Through the CPD initiative, a cumulative total of 10,781 primary school teachers, including 1,340 head teachers, have benefitted from UNICEF supported training in CCTT, early grade reading and mathematics, school administration, management, and instructional leadership.

In 2018, the series of trainings focused on early grade reading, writing, and numeracy following the poor performance of children in early grade reading and numeracy as a foundation for future learning.

The continuous professional development initiative sought to directly impact teachers' pedagogical skills for quality teaching and participatory classroom practices including increased time on task to improve learning outcomes for children.

ii. Quality Assurance & Supportive Supervision

In 2018, the MBSSE sought to strengthen its capacity to carry out quality assurance activities with support from UNICEF using Global Thematic funding. As a first step, a National Quality Assurance Strategy was developed and validated by the GoSL in readiness for enactment of a national policy on quality assurance.

Moreover, the capacity of 1,120 school administrators and primary head teachers from across 14 districts was improved through training in quality assurance principles and best practices. The beneficiaries used the knowledge and skills acquired from the training to undertake supportive supervision (tutoring, mentoring, and coaching) of teachers in schools. A major outcome of the supportive supervision exercise as reported by MBSSE was improved teacher punctuality and attendance in schools, better planning of lessons, improved instructional practices of teachers and delivery of lessons, and increased time on task. This could potentially lead to improved teacher efficiency and effectiveness and ultimately improved learning outcomes.

iii. School Development Plans

UNICEF support to the Child Friendly Schools (CFS) initiative continued as part of the 2018 work plan. A cumulative total of 538 schools (84 per cent of target schools) and communities were supported to facilitate development and implementation of community-driven school development plans (SDP). Key partners were Council of Churches Sierra Leone, Development Initiatives Programme, and CAUSE Sierra Leone. Through partners, engagement with local community structures (SMCs, CTAs, VDCs, MCs and Children's Governments) was enhanced. UNICEF supported capacity development of these school/community structures for effective management and supervision of schools.

In addition, with the new government's FQSE initiative and the establishment of Ward Education Committees, there is renewed emphasis on providing child friendly school environments and ensuring improved learning outcomes through multiple initiatives.

iv. Teaching & Learning Materials

In 2018, Global Thematic funds were used to support the MBSSE and TTIs to develop a handbook on "Quality Assurance and Supportive Supervision," to be used as a guide and reference by school administrations and quality assurance officers.

Additionally, UNICEF supported the MBSSE and TTIs to develop and produce 1,600 copies of training manuals in early grade reading, writing, and numeracy to guide teachers in early grade teaching and administration. The manuals were distributed to teacher educators, supervisors of schools, and teachers to improve instructional practices in early grades.

UNICEF also procured and distributed learning materials (exercise books, pens, pencils, erasers, etc.) to 120,000 children and 5,000 teachers in support of the GoSL's FQSE initiative.

Output 5.4 - Policy and Systems

i. Situation Room, Education Management Information System

In 2018, within the framework of UNICEF's support to the MBSSE, UNICEF provided capacity development on improved data collection and coordination, decision and policy making. UNICEF also supported the enhancement of the Situation Room, to ensure real-time monitoring as well as in updating data from the ASC report as a component of the Education Management Information System (EMIS). A key element of the support included strengthening coordination of the Situation Room activities to ensure timely reporting and sharing of relevant data that can be used both by the government and other education stakeholders in guiding decisions relating to improvements in the FQSE implementation. For instance, the Situation Room updates from districts were used to inform progress of enrolment and attendance of children in schools across the country. Furthermore, the Situation Room was used to track the distribution of teaching and learning materials across the country, which enabled the Ministry to successfully reach out to underserved and hard-to-reach communities with adequate supplies for schools and school-going children.

In partnership with other education development partners, UNICEF supported development of a well-coordinated comprehensive programme for capacity building of data management and utilisation at national and district level. This includes the establishment of a user-friendly and accessible dashboard, with key education sector indicators displayed for informing policy, planning and practice as well monitoring through real time data collected from school level.

ii. Programme Strategic Note

UNICEF utilised Global Thematic funding to develop a new programme strategy for education as part of the next country programme, 2020-2023.

Providing access to quality basic education for all children in Sierra Leone is an important goal. Based on the current country programme 2015-2018, strategic review of lessons learnt and shifts in sector priorities, a new programme structure has been developed which will focus on a) improved evidence and strengthened capacity to ensure education policy planning, implementation and management; b) improved coverage and quality of early learning and development; c) strengthened capacity to improve the quality of basic education; and d) improved access to opportunities for adolescents, particularly girls, to develop skills for learning and active citizenship.

D. Financial Analysis

Table 1: Planned Budget for Education Sector

EXPECTED Programme Outcome(s) and Output Results	Amount US\$
Output 5.1 Access and equity: Improved equitable access to and retention of children (boys and girls) in basic education in Sierra Leone, with a focus on vulnerable groups by the end of December 2019.	
RR	46,512.60
OR	1,271,693.02
ORE	150,069.10
Sub Total	1,468,274.72
Output 5.2: Early Childhood Development (ECD): Improved accessibility and quality of care and pre-primary education for young boys and girls in target districts, by the end of December 2019, with a focus on vulnerable groups.	
RR	0.00
OR	766,664.50
ORE	0
Sub Total	766,664.50
Output 5.3 Quality and Learning: Improved capacity of schools and other learning facilities at primary level to provide child friendly learning environment to children (boys and girls) by the end of December 2019.	
RR	899,081.90
OR	1,032,439.46
Sub Total	1,931,521.36
Output 5.4 Policy and Systems: MBSSE, Local Councils, schools and communities have the capacity to plan, implement and monitor equitable delivery of education services by end December 2019.	
RR	26,626.52
OR	388,839.64
ORE	0
Sub Total	415,466.16
Output 5.5 Emergency: MBSSE, Local Councils and communities have the capacity to plan, prepare and respond to emergencies by end December 2019.	
RR	0
ORE	311,372.86
ORR	7,647.72
Sub Total	319,020.58
TOTAL RR	972,221.02
TOTAL OR	3,467,284.34
TOTAL ORE	461,441.96
GRAND TOTAL	4,900,947.32

Table 2: Sierra Leone Thematic Contributions Received for Education in 2018 (in USD)

Donors	Grant Number	Contribution Amount	Programmable Amount
Korean Committee for UNICEF	SC1899040011	93,905.53	89,433.84
United States Fund for UNICEF	SC1899040037	47,500.00	45,238.10
Finnish Committee for UNICEF	SC1499050522	150,964.00	143,775.24
Total		292,369.53	278,447.18

Table 3: Expenditures in Education in 2018

Fund Category	All Programme Accounts			
Year	2018			
Business Area	Sierra Leone - 39			
Prorated Goal Area	22 Learn			
Expense	Fund Sub-Category			
Prorated Results Area	Other Resources - Emergency	Other Resources - Regular	Regular Resources	Grand Total
22-01 Equitable access to quality education	676,431	3,010,966	1,096,546	4,783,944
22-02 Learning outcomes	179,964	1,252,113	384,719	1,816,796
Grand Total	856,395	4,263,080	1,481,265	6,600,740

Table 4: Thematic Expenses in Education in 2018

Fund Category	All Programme Accounts
Year	2018
Business Area	Sierra Leone - 3900
Prorated Goal Area	(Multiple Items)
Donor Class Level2	Thematic
Row Labels	Expense
Other Resources - Emergency	508,587
22-01 Equitable access to quality education	450,827
22-02 Learning outcomes	57,760
Other Resources - Regular	742,678
22-01 Equitable access to quality education	414,963
22-02 Learning outcomes	327,716
Grand Total	1,251,265

Table 5: Expenses by Intervention Codes

Fund Category	All Programme Accounts
Year	2018
Business Area	Sierra Leone - 3900
Prorated Goal Area	22 Learn
Fund Sub-Category	(Multiple Items)
Row Labels	Expense
22-01-01 Provision of (formal and non-formal) early learning / pre-primary education (including in temporary learning spaces)	1,040,654
22-01-03 Provision of (formal and non-formal) primary education (including in temporary learning spaces)	453
22-01-05 Provision of (formal and non-formal) multiple-levels or alternative pathways of education (including in temporary learning spaces)	1,283,535
22-01-07 System strengthening - inclusive education for other vulnerable children poorest quintile, ethnic/linguistic minorities, migrant children, non-citizens/undocumented children etc.	92,388
22-01-08 System strengthening - risk informed programming, including climate, resilience, disaster, conflict, and emergency preparedness	317,474
22-01-12 Education analyses including OOSCI, Education Sector Analyses, etc.	77,599
22-01-14 Education Management Information System (EMIS) (excluding learning assessment systems)	180,053
22-01-15 Education sector planning including coordinating role, SDG 4, etc.	653
22-01-17 School Related Gender-based Violence (SRGBV)	1,244,233
22-01-99 Technical assistance - Equitable access to quality education	4,913
22-02-02 Provision or procurement of primary education learning materials	270,470
22-02-04 Provision or procurement of multiple-levels (or alternative pathways of education) learning materials	144,097
22-02-16 System strengthening - early learning / pre-primary teaching and learning environment (including curriculum and material design)	60,420
and support	300,815
22-02-21 System strengthening - community participation and social accountability, e.g. school management committees	560,045
22-02-23 Education analyses including OOSCI, Education Sector Analyses, etc.	-87
22-02-26 Education sector planning including coordinating role, SDG 4, etc.	308,515
26-01-01 Country programme process (including UNDAF planning and CCA)	6,339
26-01-02 Programme reviews (Annual, UNDAF, MTR, etc.)	1,441
26-01-03 Humanitarian planning and review activities (HRP, RRP, UNICEF HAC)	5,358
26-02-01 Situation Analysis or Update on women and children	14,837
26-02-02 MICS - General	13,851
26-02-04 Stimulating demand for and capacity to use data	2
26-02-07 Data dissemination	1,251
26-02-08 Programme monitoring	1,478
26-03-01 Advocacy and partnership-building for social behaviour change	140,931
26-03-02 Capacity and skills development for social behaviour change	97,930
26-03-04 Community engagement, participation and accountability	395
26-03-05 Innovation, multi-media content production and dissemination	92
C4D	170
26-03-07 Strengthening C4D in Government systems including preparedness for humanitarian action	26,502
26-03-99 Technical assistance - Cross - sectoral communication for development	1,174
26-04-01 CO/RO Supply - technical assistance and collaboration in supply chain, procurement of goods and services, and logistics	17,711
26-06-02 Innovation activities	-412
26-06-04 Leading advocate	17,158
26-06-05 Leading voice	1,344
26-06-07 Leading brand	170
26-06-08 Emergency preparedness (cross-sectoral)	637
26-06-13 Joint programmes/pooled funding/inter-agency agreements	1,472
26-07-01 Operations support to programme delivery	447,701
27-01-15 CO programme coordination	37,973
27-01-16 CO advocacy and communication	62,141
28-07-04 Management and Operations support at CO	-183,135
Grand Total	6,600,740

Table 6: Planned Budget for 2019

EXPECTED Programme Outcome(s) and Output Results	2019 Amount in USD
Output 5.1 Access and equity: Improved equitable access to and retention of children (boys and girls) in basic education in Sierra Leone, with a focus on vulnerable groups by the end of December 2019.	
RR	145,000
OR	649,675
Unfunded (Gap)	394,500
Sub Total	1,189,175
Output 5.2: Early Childhood Development (ECD): Improved accessibility and quality of care and pre-primary education for young boys and girls in target districts, by the end of December 2019, with a focus on vulnerable groups.	
RR	138,982
OR	1,544,459
Unfunded (Gap)	1,356,000
Sub Total	3,039,441
Output 5.3 Quality and Learning: Improved capacity of schools and other learning facilities at primary level to provide child friendly learning environment to children (boys and girls) by the end of December 2019.	
RR	385,697
OR	3,154,818
Unfunded (Gap)	700,000
Sub Total	4,240,515
Output 5.4 Policy and Systems: MBSSE, Local Councils, schools and communities have the capacity to plan, implement and monitor equitable delivery of education services by end December 2019.	
RR	388,978
OR	1,061,826
Unfunded (Gap)	-
Sub Total	1,450,804
Output 5.5 Emergency: MBSSE, Local Councils and communities have the capacity to plan, prepare and respond to emergencies by end December 2019.	
RR	65,909
ORR/ORE	50,400
Unfunded (Gap)	740,000
Sub Total	856,309
Total RR	1,124,566
Total OR	6,461,179
Total Unfunded (Gap)	3,190,500
GRAND TOTAL	10,776,245

E. Future plans

UNICEF Sierra Leone will continue to develop its new programme strategy as part of the new Country Programme 2020-2023.

In 2019, the CO will also:

- Develop play-based learning materials drawing from the ECCE Curriculum to be used for both community-based and school-based ECD models.
- Build the capacity of ECD personnel (Master Trainers, NGOs, ECD Workers/Educators and MSGs, district and community stakeholders) on play-based learning approaches using developed materials.
- Construct community-based pre-primary schools with play spaces that include furniture and WASH facilities to expand access to quality early stimulation and learning.
- Continue to address widening gaps in learning outcomes, including support for teacher professional development through the TSC in partnership with TTIs, and capacity building of the MBSSE to undertake effective quality assurance and supportive supervision activities.
- Support early grade learning through strategic partnerships with MBSSE, TSC, TTIs, and other stakeholders to scale-up training of early grade teachers and provision of early grade learning materials.
- Support the development of community-driven SDPs in most vulnerable districts as a critical strategy for improving school management and performance.

F. Expression of Thanks

UNICEF Sierra Leone would like to express its sincere appreciation to the many generous donors who have contributed to thematic funding for Education in Sierra Leone, which has enabled the Country Office to accelerate progress towards children's education – and the future of Sierra Leone -- in 2018. UNICEF Sierra Leone looks forward to continued collaboration to achieving meaningful results for children and their families in 2019 and beyond.

G. Annexes

Annex 1 - Human Interest Story

Annex 2 – [Donor Feedback Form](#)

Annex 1 – Human Interest Story

Improving water, sanitation and hygiene services at ECD Centres

By Tapuwa Loreen Mutseyekwa

The opening of an Early Childhood Development (ECD) Centre in the Kunsho Community of Bombali District brought about a whole new world of learning for both the children and the parents of this rural community in the northern part of Sierra Leone.

Aminata Bangura is a mother of four children, three of whom never had the chance of having the invaluable ECD experiences of play-based early stimulation and learning, interacting with friends and building social skills. Today her youngest son, two-year-old Bartholomew, is enrolled at Kunsho ECD Centre, while Aminata volunteers her time and service at the centre.

On a daily basis, Aminata ensures that there is sufficient water in the buckets designated for handwashing. Upon the arrival of each child at the centre, she supports them to wash their hands with soap under the running water from the buckets.



Aminata helps a pupil practice good hygiene through hand washing with soap. ©UNICEF/Sierra Leone 2019/Mutseyekwa

“Before this centre was opened, most parents thought that children should stay with us at home until they get to go for Grade one,” says Aminata, who ensured that Bartholomew was among the 41 children who are enrolled at the centre. “I have also decided to help out at the centre because I would like this experience to be rewarding for my son and for all the other children here.”

“When many children are coming together, we must make sure that basic hygiene services are in place to reduce the spread of diseases,” says Aminata, as she explains the rationale for this

handwashing ritual, which she has taken charge of. “The chances of children coming here with germs is high. They touch a lot of things on their way to the centre and we need prevent the spread of germs they might pick up.”

Aminata is fully aware that more still needs to be done to improve water, sanitation and hygiene services at Kunsho ECD Centre. Since the centre opened in 2016, there has been no toilet facility for the pupils. Children therefore walk to the adjacent primary school to use the toilets, and in some cases use the nearby bushes. Because of the resultant high prevalence of diseases related to poor sanitation, the confidence which parents previously had in the ECD centre has faded and attendance dropped amongst enrolled children.



Having learned from Aminata and other volunteers like her, a little girl washes her hands. ©UNICEF/Sierra Leone 2019/Mutseyekwa

According to the sixth Multi-Indicator Cluster Survey in Sierra Leone completed in 2017, 26.8 per cent of residents of Bombali practice open defecation. Water and sanitation facilities at schools and ECD centres are also widely reported to be low across the district, resulting in high dropouts and illnesses among pupils.

Aminata is therefore excited about the ongoing support from UNICEF to improve sanitation coverage at 14 targeted ECD centres across 10 communities in Bombali.

As an immediate solution to eliminate open defecation, UNICEF provided each of the centres with 10

colourful potty chairs, which are accessed by the children for use when the need arises. The teachers at the centre then empty the excrement into the toilets at the primary school. To take the sanitation agenda further, toilet facilities and nearby water points have been erected.



Both a toilet block and classroom block will soon be completed and ready for children to use at the ECD centre. ©UNICEF/Sierra Leone 2019/Mutseyekwa

Today, a gender segregated toilet is near completion and will be accessed by Bartholomew and his peers within the month. A handwashing station is also near the toilet to support the practice of handwashing after using the toilet. The teachers at the centre also receive regular information and support on good hygiene and sanitation, lessons which Aminata says she has taken to her own household.

Motivated by the support from UNICEF, parents from the community are contributing to the building of a new classroom block, which will add to the ECD experience for pupils from the community.

“Early learning services, which are still very limited across Sierra Leone, should always be combined with providing the children with clean and safe environments,” said UNICEF Representative, Dr. Hamid El Bashir Ibrahim. “As efforts to provide early learning services are ongoing, provision of improved sanitation services should remain a high priority.”

Aminata is happy about being part of the progress at the ECD Centre. She heartily mentions that because of the experience of volunteering at the centre, her maternal instinct has extended beyond the need to support her own children. Even when Bartholomew graduates to the primary school in two years' time, she will continue to be of service at the centre.