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# Project Information Document (PID)

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Appraisal Stage | Date Prepared/Updated: 10-Jun-2019 | Report No: PIDA26770



## BASIC INFORMATION

### A. Basic Project Data

Country Sierra Leone	Project ID P167897	Project Name Sierra Leone Free Education Project	Parent Project ID (if any)
Region AFRICA	Estimated Appraisal Date 07-Jun-2019	Estimated Board Date 25-Jul-2019	Practice Area (Lead) Education
Financing Instrument Investment Project Financing	Borrower(s) Ministry of Finance	Implementing Agency Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education	

#### Proposed Development Objective(s)

The project development objective (PDO) is to improve management of the education system, teaching practices, and learning conditions.

#### Components

Policy, Governance, Accountability and System Administration  
Teacher Management and Professional Development  
School Level Education Development  
Program Management, Coordination and Monitoring and Evaluation  
Contingent Emergency Response Component

## PROJECT FINANCING DATA (US\$, Millions)

### SUMMARY

Total Project Cost	85.97
Total Financing	85.97
of which IBRD/IDA	70.00
Financing Gap	0.00

### DETAILS

#### World Bank Group Financing



International Development Association (IDA)	70.00
IDA Grant	70.00

**Non-World Bank Group Financing**

Other Sources	15.97
UK: British Department for International Development (DFID)	1.78
EC: European Development Fund (EDF)	10.25
IRELAND, Govt. of	3.94

## Environmental and Social Risk Classification

Moderate

Decision

The review did authorize the team to appraise and negotiate

Other Decision (as needed)

**B. Introduction and Context**

## Country Context

1. Sierra Leone is a small low-income country on the west coast of Africa with a population of approximately 7.5 million people. The country is divided into 16 districts and 22 Local Councils (LCs). The population is young—with around 45.8 percent of the population below age 15 and 74.8 percent below age 25. Human development outcomes are very low, with Sierra Leone's ranking on the Human Capital Index (HCI)<sup>1</sup> among one of the lowest in the world at 151 out of 157 countries, and the country has an HCI value lower than the region's average. This index, as a composite measure of human capital, confirms that only around two-thirds (61 percent) of today's 15-year-olds can be expected to survive to the age of 60 and about one-quarter of the country's children are stunted, a condition resulting from chronic malnutrition. Moreover, the HCI measure predicts that a child born today in Sierra Leone is expected to be 35 percent as productive when he or she grows up as he or she could have been if he or she had enjoyed complete education and full health.

<sup>1</sup> The HCI is made up of five indicators: the probability of survival to age 5, a child's expected years of schooling, harmonized test scores as a measure of quality of learning, adult survival rate (fraction of 15-year-olds that will survive to age 60), and the proportion of children who are not stunted.



2. **The Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) crisis in 2014–2015 had a devastating impact on human development outcomes and the country's economy.** It resulted in the loss of lives of more than 3,880 people and the infection of a total of around 12,000 people. The epidemic resulted in a total shutdown of services and social activity—with the Government declaring a state of emergency imposing curfews throughout the country and putting entire districts under quarantine. During the crisis, the majority of the country's population was unable to access basic health care and education services (schools were closed for a year), and economic activity came to a standstill.<sup>2</sup> While poverty rates had been on the decline in the preceding years—at 46 percent before the crisis (down from 52.9 percent in 2011)—these gains were lost with the poverty rate increasing to 49 percent in 2015.<sup>3</sup>

3. **In addition to a decline in the country's macroeconomic indicators resulting from the EVD crisis, the precarious economic situation was further compounded by a downturn in iron ore prices, upon which the country was reliant.** By 2015, the economy had contracted by 21 percent.<sup>4</sup> A positive trend in the Government's fiscal position had been observed before the crisis, and the decline in iron ore prices caused the domestic revenue to decline to 10.1 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2015 down from 12.6 percent in 2013. Further, the inflation rate had increased from 9.8 percent in 2014 to 17.4 percent by December 2016, largely because of the growing depreciation of the currency.

4. **While significant strides have been observed in the recovery of the economy from this dual-pronged crisis, domestic revenue mobilization remains a challenge.** Economic growth was 3.8 percent in 2017 reflecting the weak recovery of mineral production particularly iron ore—remaining roughly stagnant at 3.7 percent in 2018. The overall budget deficit, including grants, rose to 8.4 percent of the GDP in 2017 (compared to 7.3 percent in 2016), largely due to a shortfall in revenue mobilization and spending overruns in all the major expenditure categories. Despite a 0.3 percentage point improvement, total revenue fell short of the 13.5 percent of GDP target for 2017, mainly due to the delay in enacting the 2017 Finance Bill, non-implementation of retail fuel price liberalization, accumulation of tax arrears by public sector institutions, and leakages through excessive duty waivers. Despite the shortfall in revenue, spending pressures increased emanating from elections preparations and civic registration, road construction, and wages and salaries for outgoing parliamentarians. The overall fiscal deficit was financed by external loan disbursements and grants as well as domestic borrowing, mainly from the banking system, which exceeded the 2.0 percent of GDP limit on which the Government's medium-term fiscal program is anchored. Inflationary pressures remained elevated throughout 2017 mainly due to the depreciation of the currency late in 2016 and in the first half of 2017 and the enduring impact of the upward adjustments in utility tariffs and fuel prices in November 2016.

5. **Education is at the heart of the Government's development plan.** In May of 2018, a new government administration came to power. The new government is guided by five core principles: disciplined leadership, national integration, efficiency, professionalism, and delivery. The new government has launched the Medium-term National Development Plan (NDP) 2019–2023 which outlines eight strategic priorities: (a) education for development, (b) health, (c) water, (d) macroeconomic management, (e) energy, (f) agriculture, (g) tackling corruption, and (h) security. Specifically, the NDP highlights the importance of education to enhance human capital development and facilitate the

<sup>2</sup> For example, 90 percent of firms reported a decline in sales, 32 percent of private sector workers were laid off, and 61 percent were working reduced hours.

<sup>3</sup> These are projections based on the Sierra Leone Integrated Household Survey from 2004 and 2011.

<sup>4</sup> In 2014, there was a complete collapse of the price of iron ore which declined by 47 percent.



transformation of the country. Many measures are being developed and are currently underway to address each of these priority areas.

#### Sectoral and Institutional Context

6. **The education sector is managed by the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE) and the Ministry of Technical and Higher Education (MoTHE), with the MBSSE being responsible for basic (primary school and junior secondary school [JSS]) and senior secondary school (SSS) and the MoTHE responsible for technical/vocational tertiary and higher education including pre-service teacher training.** According to the 2018 Annual School Census (ASC), there were 10,747 basic education schools in Sierra Leone. Of these, preprimary schools accounted for 15.1 percent, primary for 65.1 percent (7,002 schools), JSS for 14.2 percent (1,531), and SSS for 5.4 percent of all schools. There are approximately 2 million students in basic and senior secondary school in Sierra Leone.

7. **Education services are provided by a mix of government and nongovernment providers.** The majority of schools delivering basic and senior secondary education lie outside government ownership. At the primary level, only 18 percent are owned/run by the Government, while the majority (58 percent) are owned/run by missions, 14 percent by the community, and 9 percent by a private entity. At the JSS level, only 10 percent are government schools, 90 percent of schools are owned/run by nongovernment providers (44 percent by missions, 24 percent by the community, and 21 percent by a private entity). The Government has in place a school approval process that can, in time, qualify community/mission schools for government assistance (funding of teachers and learning materials). While schools may be government-approved, fewer than half of the schools under MBSSE are approved for financial assistance (though over 50 percent of all primary schools receive the Government's support). In 2019 an additional 324 senior secondary, 693 junior secondary and 2,387 pre-primary and primary schools have been approved. Government approval implies the payment of subsidies, textbooks, teacher salaries and examination fees; the increase in government-approved schools adds substantial fiscal outlay to the Government.

8. **Sierra Leone has made substantial progress in increasing access to education since the end of the civil war in 2004, especially among girls.** The primary completion rate increased from 55 percent in 2004 to 75.4 percent in 2016 and is above the regional average (69 percent). Secondary enrolment increases in the post-war period have been especially remarkable (50 percent increase in male and more than 100 percent increase in female enrolment from 2010 to 2016). Completion rates in JSSs and SSSs increased from 26 percent and 11 percent in 2004 to 64.5 percent and 27.6 percent, respectively, in 2016. Access also increased at the tertiary level with the number of students in public tertiary institutions increasing from 8,913 in 2000 to 31,103 in 2012. Notably, female enrolment increased sharply—the gender gap in enrolment has closed at the primary level and has been reduced substantially at JSS though it persists at SSS and tertiary levels. This, in turn, has resulted in very low levels of female participation in the teaching workforce with only 30 percent of primary, 15 percent of JSS and 8 percent of SSS teachers being women.

#### Key Challenges Facing the Education Sector

9. **While there have been significant gains in enrolment, learning outcomes are low and skills acquisition limited, there are major inequities in access, weak sector governance, ineffective**



**management, and low and inefficient public spending.** The ambitious Free Quality School Education (FQSE) program launched by the government in 2018 sets out to address many of these issues. However, it will have to do this in the context of a rapidly growing student population. A U.K. Department for International Development (DFID) funded costing of the FQSE program<sup>5</sup> has identified an estimated funding gap of between US\$3 and US\$6 billion between now and 2023. It is clear that in addition to delivering promised access and learning improvements, the FQSE will need to drive substantive efficiency gains if it is to be affordable and sustainable.

**10. The education system is characterized by a deficit in evidence driven, criterion-based policy which impedes rational planning and budgeting.** This situation impacts virtually every aspect of system administration and notably on those areas which receive the largest budget allocations from infrastructure expansion to teacher recruitment and deployment as well as selection of government-assisted schools and the quantum of funding allocated to them.

**11. Education outcomes are amongst the lowest in the region.** HCI research found that a child born in Sierra Leone today can expect to complete 8.9 years of schooling by age 18 (out of a total of 12 years). However, the learning-adjusted years (when the figure is adjusted for the quality of learning) is equivalent to 4.5 years<sup>6</sup>. A 2014 Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) found that 87 percent of Grade 2 students could not read a single word, while 97 percent received zero marks on reading and comprehension. Learning outcomes are also low at the junior and senior secondary levels. DFID funded learning assessments in 2017 and 2018 show that pupil learning falls way behind curriculum expectations – 60 percent of junior secondary grade 2 students (JSS2) and 40 percent of senior secondary grade 2 students (SSS2) demonstrate English skills no higher than expected at primary grade 6. In mathematics the gap is even wider, with 70 percent of JSS2 pupils and 50 percent of SSS2 pupils showing skills no higher than expected at primary grade 6. In public examinations, only 50 percent of Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) candidates received a pass in English or mathematics, while only 3.59 percent of West Africa Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (WASSCE) candidates obtained a credit in any five subjects including English and mathematics (2016).

**12. Key factors driving low retention rates and poor education outcomes include most notably low and inequitable access to education and low quality of education services provided.** Fewer than 10 percent of children make it through school to their final mathematics and English exams and of those 90 percent fail. Overall, rural students' performance in school is worse than that of urban students and girls are: less likely than boys to transition to secondary education; more likely to drop out; and have poorer scores on examinations. For those fortunate enough to stay in school, the low quality of education services is driven by poorly trained and motivated teachers, a chronic shortage of subject specialist teachers at the secondary level, an inadequate teaching and learning environment, insufficient teaching and learning materials, and an inadequate assessment system. Together, these issues are further exacerbated by low and inefficient public spending and weak sector governance and management. Each of these is described in further detail below.

- a. **Low and inequitable access.** While most children begin primary school, the majority of them drop out of school before completing the cycle. The gross enrollment rate (GER) is

<sup>5</sup> Presentation on the Progress on Implementation Plan for the FQSE Program and Costings by Dr. M Mambo.

<sup>6</sup> In the Harmonized Test Scores, Sierra Leone scores 315 on a scale where 625 represents advanced attainment and 300 minimum attainment.



only 55 percent for JSS and 30 percent in SSS respectively in 2018 (compared to the GER for primary education of 108 percent). There is significant variation in school participation by gender, socioeconomic status, and location. Key factors driving these gaps include: (i) cost - unofficial levies are charged by schools often to compensate for poorly targeted / delayed government subsidies. This situation worsens with progression to secondary where provision is less well subsidized.<sup>7</sup> (ii) distance to schools resulting from the lack / variable distribution of secondary schools (mainly located in urban areas) is a major impediment to transition particularly for girls. This is further exacerbated by the lack of affordable and safe transport options (especially in rural areas); and (iii) gender related issues including fear of gender-based violence (GBV) both on the journey to and while in school and poor water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities particularly for girls who have reached puberty.

- b. **Gender issues.** While female enrolment has increased sharply closing the gender gap at the primary and junior secondary levels, there are important gender disparities in terms of both access to schooling and retention and completion rates. An estimated 41 percent of disadvantaged girls<sup>8</sup> have never attended school, and for those that do, retention and completion rates are low—and decrease significantly across the education levels. Some of the specific reasons that girls drop out of school are related to teenage pregnancy (with 29 percent of out-of-school girls excluded from secondary schools), early forced marriages, and school-related GBV and sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) in schools.<sup>9</sup> Poor sanitation and menstrual hygiene management also hinder girls' participation and retention in school.
- c. **Quality of Teaching.** In general, Sierra Leone's teacher workforce is poorly trained, poorly remunerated and receives little support by way of continuous professional development (CPD), consequently morale is low. Excluding preprimary teachers, around 61 percent of the estimated 80,126 teachers in 2018, are not government-approved and hence not paid with government funds - many obtain a precarious living as part time 'volunteers' on minimal stipends. Monthly monitoring undertaken by the DFID Leh Wi Lan secondary program revealed an average student-teacher contact time of only 2 hours per day. There is no national in-service learning program - training is ad hoc and is not informed by learning assessment outcomes nor does it respond to needs as expressed by classroom teachers<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> Annual out-of-pocket expenditure per child in primary and secondary was PPP US\$98 and PPP US\$375 in 2011, which was higher than in countries like Ghana, Niger, Uganda, and Cameroon in the same period. Though out-of-pocket expenses per child in tertiary was high in absolute terms (PPP US\$765 in 2011), it was lower compared to other countries.

<sup>8</sup> Defined as the poorest quintile of rural students whose heads of household have no education.

<sup>9</sup> Though particularly the case at the senior secondary level, educational institutions generally have serious issues related to transactional sex, SEA by teachers, and violent discipline. Adolescent girls are often victims of SEA being forced to exchange sex for basic necessities including education, including for grades and transportation to school. A 2010 study found that 9 percent of girls surveyed had been coerced into sex in exchange for money or grades and the National Study on School-Related GBV in Sierra Leone in 2010 cited teachers as the main perpetrators of SEA—forcing and coercing girl pupils in exchange for better grades, gifts, or money.

<sup>10</sup> Wright. 2018. A Comprehensive Situation Analysis of Teachers and the Teaching Profession in Sierra Leone. Freetown, Teaching Service Commission.



- d. **Inadequate teaching and learning environment.** The lack of qualified and motivated teachers is further exacerbated by poor infrastructure and absence of functioning WASH facilities. Currently the Government does not have a school catchment area plan to guide expansion of provision, nor a national school construction strategy, construction standards, or a quality assurance mechanism to assess and ensure the viability and safety of school infrastructure. Given the recent EVD crisis, the absence of functioning WASH facilities is both a major health concern and a major deterrent to adolescent girls transition to secondary schooling.
- e. **Limited curriculum and insufficient teaching and learning materials (TLMs).** Currently, there is no unit in the MBSSE in charge of curriculum. Students sitting for the WASSCE administered by the West African Examinations Council (WAEC), use WAEC syllabi. At primary and JSS the accelerated curriculum developed as part of post-Ebola recovery is being used. This is deliberately compact and fast-paced to enable students to catch up from the lost year of schooling. Sierra Leone urgently needs a new primary and JSS curriculum with defined learning outcome benchmarks appropriate to grade. According to the 2018 ASC, at the primary level, the student-textbook ratio is around 3:1 (and around 4:1 for science textbooks). This situation will have improved over this year from the efforts of the World Bank assisted Revitalizing Education Development in Sierra Leone (REDISL) Project at primary level, and at secondary level through the DFID funded Leh Wi Lan project which has distributed 2.8 million student guides and 16,000 teacher lesson plans. Though progress has been made in provision of these materials, two major concerns remain: (i) the financing and management of replenishing book stocks, and (ii) ensuring book utilization. A recent impact evaluation (IE) of a textbook distribution program in Sierra Leone showed that students' access to textbooks did not increase because a large majority of the books were stored rather than used.<sup>11</sup>
- f. **Inadequate assessment system.** There is persistent concern about the integrity, robustness and reliability of the national exams provided by WAEC. In 2018, the Sierra Leone Anti-Corruption Commission reported widespread examination malpractice with 71 people being charged. The large fluctuations in WAEC pass rates year on year (for instance, the pass rate was 19 percent in 2017 and 94 percent in 2018) suggest major technical weaknesses and/or manipulation of pass mark boundaries.
- g. **Limitations in education system management and governance.** The 2017 Systematic Country Diagnostic (SCD)<sup>12</sup> reported major weaknesses in governance including government effectiveness, regulatory quality, corruption, and rule of law. In education the policy and regulatory environment is weak, the management of schools and teachers inefficient, and there are major issues with both institutional and human capacity. While basic education has been declared a devolved subject, those functions and budgets that have been devolved to LCs and local agencies such as district education offices (DEOs) and district Teaching Service Commission (TSC) offices is not clear. This is further exacerbated

<sup>11</sup> This finding was confirmed in school visits undertaken during the preparation of the proposed project.

<sup>12</sup> World Bank. 2017. Sierra Leone - Systematic Country Diagnostic: Priorities for Sustainable Growth and Poverty Reduction. Washington, DC: World Bank Group (Report Number 115408).



by a dual system of local administration incorporating both the civil service and paramount chief system. Overall, the system's governance is characterized by a high level of politicization at all levels. For example, at the school level it is not unusual for appointees to outnumber representatives elected by parents. School management is generally weak with governing bodies having limited understanding of financial entitlements and having received little or no training in school improvement planning, financial management (FM), revenue mobilization, and performance management.

- h. **Limitations in teacher management, deployment, and policy development.** Sierra Leone established a Teaching Service Commission (TSC) by an act of Parliament in 2011. Officially the TSC mandate covers teacher registration and licensing, teacher management and payroll, teacher performance and development, and teacher-employer relations. However, the TSC has only recently become operational and is struggling to assert its mandate in the face of major institutional and human capacity weaknesses. Improving teaching in Sierra Leone will require addressing four major challenges. Firstly, labor force planning – currently the linkage between the need for teachers and teacher hiring is weak. This is particularly acute for secondary subject-specific teachers (mathematics, science and English) where there are chronic shortages. Secondly, and related to this, the efficiency and effectiveness of teacher pre-service recent studies suggest that pre-service training is poor and there is no correlation between teacher qualifications and student learning outcomes. There is also little information on the speed or unit cost of teacher production and whether this meets the demand for teachers. Thirdly, teacher deployment - the allocation of teachers to schools does not follow need (student enrolment) with rural areas being particularly disadvantaged. This misallocation has resulted in wide variations in the pupil-qualified teacher ratios (PQTRs) ranging from 30:1 in Western Area Urban to 84:1 in Pujehun. Finally, there is no standard supervision and quality assurance system for managing teachers nor is there a defined career path to guide professional development. The system lacks sufficient staff, resources, and expertise to provide effective planning, supervision and support.
- i. **Low and inefficient public spending.** The Government has made a strong commitment to education raising the education sector of the budget to 21 percent of GDP (of this approximately 80 percent is allocated to basic education). In 2016, public spending on education was US\$109 million or 12.5 percent of total government spending, which is lower than the regional average. Of this, less than 50 percent (US\$52 million) was spent on primary (US\$39 million), JSS (US\$3.5 million), and SSS levels (US\$9.5 million). In per pupil terms, public spending in primary and secondary in Sierra Leone is the lowest among countries with similar GDP per capita. Further, public spending is inefficient and is largely used to cover recurrent costs—three-quarters of which is spent on staff compensation. DFID-funded analysis of the Government's FQSE plans show a disconnect between planned expenditure and available resources. At a school-level this is evident in the distribution of capitation grants where resources are often not made available to meet obligations—forcing schools to charge fees, which in turn poses a significant financial burden particularly on poor households. At a system level, there is a large backlog of schools pending approval and teachers not on payroll—which, depending on the Government's decision, will likely have important fiscal implications. There are also many



inefficiencies related to insufficient financial control of the payroll, weak targeting and fragmentation of education subsidies, inadequate links between funding and performance, low budget execution, disbursement delays, limited capacities in planning and FM in educational institutions, over-centralization, and weak accountability in the use of resources.

### **Actions to Address Education Sector Challenges**

13. **The current government has made its commitment to addressing the above challenges explicit through its adoption and implementation of its flagship FQSE Program.** This program, introduced in 2018, focuses on addressing the significant barrier that school fees pose to accessing school education making it available to all. The key elements of the program for the 2018/19 school year include: (a) reducing barriers to access to education (government payment for school, admission, and public examination fees); (b) providing essential elements for quality education provision (policies to motivate teachers, provision of textbooks in core subjects, TLMs, and pens and pencils); and (c) enhancing the role of parents in students' learning and the support of ward education committees, DEOs, and the MBSSE in program delivery. During the school year, this policy is expected to reach all government and government-assisted schools in the country. The financing of the program comes primarily from the Government with a substantial increased investment up to 21 percent of the supplementary budget. The Government has communicated the key messages of the program and set up a hotline for inquiry, clarifications, and lodging grievances.

14. **The Government response to education sector challenges has been guided by the Medium-term NDP 2019–2023, the Education Sector Plan (ESP) 2013–2017, and more recently the ESP 2018–2020<sup>13</sup>.** As discussed earlier, education is one of the national priorities as articulated in the NDP. The most recent ESP 2018–2020 was endorsed by the local education group (LEG) in 2017 and lays out the Government's strategy to achieve its overall goal of improving: (a) education service delivery, (b) integrity in education, and (c) learning in formal and nonformal settings/education institutions. The plan focuses on a number of key areas including: (a) access, equity, and completion; (b) quality and relevance; (c) system strengthening; and (d) emergency preparedness and response.

15. **Various development partners (DPs) have been engaged in supporting the education sector in Sierra Leone.** For instance, the REDiSL Project, originally funded by a US\$23.2 million grant financed by the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and DFID, received an additional financing (AF) from the International Development Association (IDA) in the amount of US\$10 million in 2017. The Government has also received financial or technical assistance (TA) from DPs including: DFID's Leh Wi Lan program (£62.5 million, 2016-2021) focused on government and community secondary schools; a GPE grant of US\$17.2 (2018-2022) focused on government preprimary and primary schools; and the European Union (EU) grant of €30 million supporting capacity building of the TSC and school infrastructure interventions at the primary level. Irish Aid and other DPs are providing support to the sector, including in the areas of teacher training, TLMs, infrastructure, and TA. The support from DPs has informed the proposed project's design—ensuring project-supported activities are well-aligned with and complementary to the above interventions.

<sup>13</sup> The Government is carrying out the education sector assessment which will inform update of the ESP.



### C. Proposed Development Objective(s)

Development Objective(s) (From PAD)

The Project Development Objective (PDO) is to improve management of the education system, teaching practices, and learning conditions.

Key Results

#### PDO Level Indicators

The PDO-level indicators for the proposed project are as follows:

- School catchment area and rationalization plan in place and associated transparent criterion-based school approval, and financing process implemented
- National assessment framework developed, and one national learning assessment (NLA) conducted and findings disseminated
- Increased percentage of teachers receiving project-supported training demonstrating improved teaching practices in the classroom
- Share of PBF schools (all primary schools except private schools) meeting a 90 percent student attendance rate
- Number of students benefiting from an improved learning environment (percentage female)

16. The proposed project also has a set of intermediate outcome indicators to address key challenges in the education sector. The project will assist the Government in providing equitable access to quality education for all in primary and secondary education.

### D. Project Description

17. **The project will be financed from IDA US\$70 million and US\$16 million equivalent from DFID, Irish Aid and EU through a World Bank-administered Multi Donor Trust Fund (MDTF).** The project will be executed through the Investment Project Financing (IPF) instrument. This financing approach provides flexibility to build necessary human and institutional capacity and also allows for close follow-up of and necessary adjustments to project activities and procedures by the Government and the World Bank. The implementation period for the project is five years with the closing date of September 30, 2024.

18. The proposed project will comprise five components: Component 1 – Policy, Governance, Accountability and System Administration; Component 2 – Teacher Management and Professional Development; Component 3 – School Level Education Development; and Component 4 – Program Management, Coordination and Monitoring and Evaluation. Component 5 is a Contingent Emergency Response Component (CERC), which allows for rapid reallocation of project proceeds in the event of a natural or artificial disaster or crisis that has caused or is likely to imminently cause a major adverse economic and/or social impact.

**Component 1: Policy, Governance, Accountability and System Administration (US\$11.0 million)**

19. This component aims to strengthen the education system in areas of policy, governance accountability, and administration for enhanced quality of education services. It will support policy and implementation coherence across the primary and education sub-sectors and promote strategic initiatives at the country level. Component 1 will include the following subcomponents: (i) evidence-based education planning and rationalization, (ii) curriculum and assessments, and (iii) gender equality and inclusive education.

***Subcomponent 1.1: Evidence-based Education Planning and Rationalization (US\$5.9 million)***

20. **Annual and Medium-term Education Sector Plan Development and Budgeting.** The project will support the MBSSE to prepare annual and medium-term education sector plan and budgeting. It is important for the MBSSE to not only have a five-year sector plan but to also prepare annual credible plans which are resourced through the Medium-term Expenditure Framework and in the light of new information, evidence, policy needs and priorities. The project will support the Directorate of Planning and Policy to develop the necessary annual projection of inputs to inform the budgeting process.

21. **School catchment area rationalization plan and formula-based school funding.** A comprehensive school mapping exercise reveals significant gaps in geographical coverage. The project will support the combination of existing school mapping and population density data to generate a school catchment plan. This will constitute a geographically logical network of JSSs with their associated set of primary feeder schools and SSSs with associated cluster of junior secondary feeder schools. This catchment area plan will then provide the evidence base for long term planning and more immediately, guide a range of interventions including civil works, teacher deployment, CPD organization. The rationalization of the school system will inevitably require building/upgrading of some schools in some areas but also amalgamation and closure of schools in others. To sustain the rationalized system, the sector will require to operate under clear standards that every school should ascribe to. The project will support the development of education norms and standards considering the distribution of school networks with special focus on maximum distance from home to school, maximum size of school/population, minimum package of facilities, minimum standards for a Child-Friendly School, minimum environmental safeguards, unit area per student, architectural norms, and minimum technical norms.

22. **Education Data and Management System.** The project will sustain the ASC data collection through tablets to ensure there are adequate data to support education system planning and management. This subcomponent will support capacity building of the deputy directors, supervisors, and statistical clerks at the district level as well as members of the ward education committees to use the ASC data. A number of the project's activities will rely heavily on effective data collection, management, and analysis as well as their timely provision. This subcomponent will also support efforts to strengthen capacity of the MBSSE to manage the robust data system—as part of the larger EMIS—and to ensure timely and accurate reporting so that these data can be used to inform decision making in the sector.

23. **Schools Standards and Quality Assurance Framework.** The project will support the strengthening of existing school standards to ensure key dimensions in terms of inputs, practices, and outcomes are included including the definition of optimal class sizes and school sizes differentiated according to locations to account for the variation in population incidences, the definition of the minimum



infrastructure package in optimal schools, sanitation standards for males and females, and teacher supply standards (PTR in primary and teachers' teaching load in secondary). On the basis of the school standards, this subcomponent will support the development and implementation of an effective quality assurance system.

24. **Institutional and human capacity development.** Although core regulatory education functions in areas including education policies, standards, curriculum, and quality assurance are under the control of the MBSSE, some units in the MBSSE have been defunct or seriously understaffed—resulting in a lack of leadership and limited policy direction and progress in key certain areas (for example, gender, curriculum, school supervision). Lack of personnel and resources hampers the effectiveness of education services. Moreover, under the devolution process initiated by the Government, some functions have been devolved to the local level. There are also various committees existing at the local levels to monitor and support schools. However, roles and responsibilities at the local level among LCs, district education offices and various committees are not very clear, and coordination needs to be strengthened. The project will provide technical assistance to carry out an organizational and management analysis in the process to determine where in the educational system specific responsibilities and authority should be assigned. It also supports capacity development of government officials at the central and local levels to ensure quality of education services.

*Subcomponent 1.2: Curriculum and Assessments (US\$1.8 million)*

25. **Curriculum Reform.** This project will provide support to enable the MBSSE to transition from the current Ebola emergency accelerated primary curriculum to a comprehensive national primary curriculum. The curriculum and teaching syllabi will be validated by subject specialists and teachers. The curriculum materials will be reviewed to ensure they are gender-appropriate and gender-sensitive. The validated curriculum and teaching syllabi will be printed and distributed to all schools to guide the teaching and learning process.

26. **National Learning Assessment.** The project will support the MBSSE to develop the national learning assessment (NLA) framework and conduct one sample-based NLA of student learning outcomes during project implementation. Specifically, the NLA framework will be developed based on the experience accumulated from learning assessments conducted by various donor-funded projects (e.g., the REDiSL Project and DFID's Leh We Lan project). In addition to learning assessment of students, the project will support the assessment of teacher content knowledge and pedagogical skills. The project will provide capacity building of staff in NLA design, implement, analyze and use the findings from NLA for policy and program development.

27. **Examinations.** This project will support WAEC in conducting analyses of examination results to identify learning gaps for teaching improvement and policy decisions. To enhance the feedback loop between examination and teaching, the project will support WAEC to carry out an in-depth analysis of results on the National Primary School Examination (NPSE), the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE), and the West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (WASSCE) to identify response patterns and detect underlying student strengths and weaknesses by district and ward.

*Subcomponent 1.3: Gender Equality and Inclusive Education (US\$3.3 million)*



28. **Promoting Gender Equality.** A social assessment and a GBV assessment were carried out as part of project preparation. The project will finance both school- and system-level interventions to improve gender equality in education. Gender issues will be addressed through activities supported under each of the project's components. Additionally, under this subcomponent a few targeted activities will be supported to improve and strengthen girls' participation in school, addressing some of the barriers that girls face in accessing a safe and quality education and completing schooling and others targeted at promoting a greater number of women in entering and in staying in the teaching profession. All these activities will be aligned with ongoing support by the Government as well as other DPs.

29. **Inclusive Education.** Children with disabilities often have limited access to schooling and lower completion and retention rates than children without disabilities. The project will support the inclusion of children with disabilities through school- and system-level interventions. Activities will include supporting careful planning of delivery mechanism of inclusive education, supporting a regular monitoring system of student attendance and learning outcomes among children with disabilities, supporting an anti-stigma campaign on the capacities and rights of persons with disabilities, integrating in the training for teachers and school heads and administrators on how to promote an inclusive education environment (using video and information developed for the Sierra Leone context),<sup>14</sup> designating an inclusion champion in each school receiving in-service teacher training (and performance-based school grants), promoting universal design as part of the national school construction strategy, and providing adapted materials and assistive devices to children with disabilities as needed.

### **Component 2: Teacher Management and Professional Development (US\$20.5 million)**

30. **This component seeks to address the critical teacher quality and teacher management issues that limit teaching and learning in the country.** Both system- and school-level interventions will be supported through three subcomponents. They aim to strengthen the ability of the TSC in workforce planning, teacher deployment and professionalization of the teaching workforce and support the delivery of catchment area CPD for primary and JSS teachers. The project will assist data-driven decision making with regard to teacher policy. The component includes two subcomponents: (a) teacher workforce planning and management and (b) teacher professional development.

#### *Subcomponent 2.1: Teacher Workforce Planning and Teacher Management (US\$1.5 million)*

31. The objective of this subcomponent is to assist the TSC in carrying out appropriate workforce projections to ensure adequate supply of teachers to schools. It will finance: a) the development of national teacher registration and certification mechanisms and tools to inform teacher deployment decisions, (b) the development of a protocol for teacher deployment using school-level information collected through the ASC, (c) the development of an implementation strategy (rural/hardship allowances) to incentivize teacher mobilization and retention to the most disadvantaged areas, and (d) capacity-building of key staff within the TSC so that they understand the registration and certification processes and follow the deployment protocol. Given the low share of female teachers, the subcomponent will encourage hiring of qualified female teachers.

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<sup>14</sup> Training and other activities listed here have been provided by both Sightsavers International and Handicap International through projects funded by the EU (to include pilots in targeted areas/schools in different areas of the country).

*Subcomponent 2.2: Teacher Professional Development (US\$19 million)*

32. This subcomponent aims to improve the quality of classroom instruction by developing and delivering a scalable technology-enabled continuous in-service teacher training program to upgrade the knowledge and pedagogical practices of teachers with a focus on core subjects. The project will help TSC implement a continuous professional development (CPD) training program for teachers in primary school (Grades 1–6). The program will strengthen teachers' pedagogical skills focusing on student's main learning gaps in mathematics, English, and science. Easy-to-understand, task- and problem-oriented modules will be made available to all teachers using solar-powered tablets.

**Component 3: School Level Education Development (US\$45.0 million)**

33. **This component aims to improve the quality of education and the teaching and learning environment by addressing school-level needs.** It will focus on support to improved educational delivery among primary and JSS. Specifically, through the first subcomponent, the proposed project will fund the provision of performance-based school grants to non-private primary schools (offering the full cycle) and will support efforts to strengthen the engagement and involvement of school management committees (SMCs) in school planning and performance. Through the second and third subcomponents, the proposed project will aim to improve the teaching and learning environment—ensuring adequate infrastructure and key TLMs.

*Subcomponent 3.1: Performance-based School Financing (US\$19.7 million)*

34. This subcomponent will aim to encourage school-based planning for improved school performance by providing community-managed performance-based grants to all primary schools offering the full cycle of primary education (Grades 1–6). Under the project, integrating lessons learned under the REDiSL Project, targeted primary schools will receive performance-based financing (PBF) with the amount determined based on the number of students in the school and the school's performance on select indicators related to teacher and student attendance, teacher classroom practices, regular classroom assessment by teachers, classroom observation by school heads, and reading performance. It will also support efforts to strengthen the engagement and involvement of SMCs in school planning and performance. The assistance from the project will include the revision of PBF manual and SBM manual, and capacity building for SMCs, school heads and local supervisors to undertake strategic planning and to manage school grants.

*Subcomponent 3.2: Physical Improvements to the Learning Environment (US\$24.1 million)*

35. This subcomponent aims to support construction and maintenance/renovation of primary schools and JSSs identified using ASC data, school catchment area planning, and information collected through site visits. The project will finance the construction of 800 classrooms (300 classrooms for primary and 500 classrooms for JSSs) to meet the infrastructure needs in primary and JSSs. Additionally, school maintenance/renovation grants will be provided to 1,840 primary schools (840 large schools and 1,000 schools of moderate and small size) to support schools in conducting minor maintenance/renovation.

*Subcomponent 3.3: Provision of Learning Materials (US\$1.2 million)*



36. This subcomponent will support the provision of supplementary reading materials (Grades 1–3) in English to all students in primary schools. An inadequate learning environment in schools characterized by inadequate access to and use of TLMs hampers children's learning. Readers will be those developed, validated and used by ongoing World Bank supported activities or they will be selected from the digital libraries which provide a large selection of readers. The readers provided will be leveled (basic to advanced), adapted to the context, and diverse enough to generate interest. The readers will be supplied once, at the beginning of project implementation. In connection with Components 2 and 3, schools and teachers are expected to emphasize utilization of reading materials to ensure that all students can be proficient in reading by the end of Grade 3. A total of 870,000 learners are expected to benefit from this intervention.

#### **Component 4: Program Management, Coordination and Monitoring and Evaluation (US\$9.5 million)**

37. **This component covers the costs of managing the project as well as specific line for monitoring, evaluation (M&E) and learning activities.** The Free project secretariat to be established will be responsible for overseeing the implementation of the project with support from the Directorate of Planning and carrying out day-to-day management of the project, with the support of each of the three component leads. The Project Fiduciary management Unit (PFMU) of the Ministry of Finance (MoF) will be responsible for the program's fiduciary aspects (procurement, FM, disbursement, and audits). This component will cover the administrative costs associated with the project secretariat and the PFMU support to the proposed project and the project's overall coordination. Financing will also be provided for knowledge generation (including undertaking evaluations of key project activities and policy research) and sharing of this information and findings. This component also includes communications and contingency.

#### **Component 5: Contingent Emergency Response Component (CERC) (US\$0)**

38. **This component is included in accordance with OP/BP 10.00 (Investment Project Financing), paragraphs 12 and 13, for contingent emergency response through the provision of immediate response to an eligible crisis or emergency, as needed.** It will allow the Government to request the World Bank for rapid reallocation of project funds to respond promptly and effectively to an eligible emergency or crisis, that is a natural or artificial disaster or crisis that has caused or is likely to imminently cause a major adverse economic and/or social impact.

#### Legal Operational Policies

##### Triggered?

Projects on International Waterways OP 7.50	No
Projects in Disputed Areas OP 7.60	No

#### Summary of Assessment of Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts

Based on the above initial assessment, the Environmental and Social risk is considered moderate for both environmental and social aspects. The environmental and social risks associated with the project are minimal, site



specific, and can easily be managed with the required mitigation measure.

**Note:** To view the Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts, please refer to the Appraisal Stage ESRS Document.

## E. Implementation

### Institutional and Implementation Arrangements

39. **The MBSSE, in coordination with the MoF, will be responsible for the overall implementation of project activities.** The project will work within and strengthen the Government's institutions responsible for education: the MBSSE, TSC, WAEC, and District Education Offices. The MBSSE will also work closely with LCs and Local Education Committees to implement the project activities.

40. **Policy direction and the oversight.** Policy direction and the oversight of the project will be carried out by an Inter-Ministerial Steering Committee on a quarterly basis at the national level for policy direction and oversight. The committee will review the overall performance of the project and decide on important policy aspects to facilitate the achievement of outcomes and results. The committee will comprise the MBSSE (including implementing agencies), MoF, MoTHE, World Bank, and representatives from DPs.

41. **Project implementation.** Overall responsibility for the project will lie with the MBSSE, which will have a dedicated project secretariat that will be responsible for day-to-day project management and coordination and oversee project activities. The Free project secretariat will provide reports of project progress and make this available to the minister and the World Bank. To function effectively, the project secretariat will have at least the following contract officers on hand: (a) head (coordinator), (b) Component 1 coordinator, (c) Component 2 coordinator, (d) Component 3 coordinator, (e) M&E officer, (f) program officer, (g) environmental specialist, (h) social development specialist, and (i) additional administration staff as needed. Other functions, including communications and human resources, will be carried out by the MBSSE with support and guidance from the project secretariat. The project Implementation Manual will specify the implementation arrangements and detailed information on project-supported activities.

42. **Project fiduciary management.** The PFMU of the MoF, which is established by the Government to consolidate project fiduciary management of all World Bank supported projects, will work closely with the project secretariat for fiduciary arrangements. The PFMU is headed by a unit manager who is responsible for ensuring the overall direction of work at the unit. The PFMU is responsible for the day-to-day FM and procurement functions of the entire project.

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**The World Bank**

Sierra Leone Free Education Project (P167897)

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