

## Education Sector Program Implementation Grant - ESPIG

April 2018

OVERVIEW	
Country:	Sierra Leone
Grant agent(s):	UNICEF
Coordinating agency(ies):	UNICEF
Date of submission of the endorsed ESP/TEP:	10/11/2017
Period of the ESP/TEP:	2018-2020
Date of submission of the full ESPIG package:	4/30/2018
Program name (optional):	“Getting it Right; Building Strong Foundations for Learning”
ESPIG amount requested - Fixed Part:	\$12m
ESPIG amount requested - Variable Part:	\$5.2m
Agency fees (additional to the country allocation):	\$1.376
Estimated ESPIG starting date:	9/1/2018
Estimated ESPIG closing date:	6/30/2022
Expected submission date of completion report:	12/31/2022

Grant modality - (please enter 'X')	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sector Pooled
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Project Pooled/ Co-financed
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Project/ Stand-alone



**Note to the user****Notification to the Secretariat:**

Prior to any ESPIG application development process, the coordinating agency should always notify the Secretariat of the country's intent to apply. The Secretariat will engage with the government and coordinating agency to agree on a timeline for the preparation and submission of the application, based on the country's own education sector planning and GPE semi-annual submission dates.

**ESPIG Guidelines:**

Applicants should read the [ESPIG Guidelines](#), which explain the application development process, including timeline, necessary steps and intermediary submissions for the quality assurance process of the application. In case additional information is needed, the applicant can contact the country lead at the Secretariat.

**Application package:**

The full ESPIG application package is considered an integral part of the Board's approval. Any changes to any of these documents from submission to the GPE should follow the [ESPIG Policy](#). This includes any changes to program documents during the internal approval process of the grant agent.

**Data Sources**

The financial, education sector, and any country information data included in the application should be accompanied by the relevant sources in the corresponding sections of the form.

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## II. FULFILLMENT OF FUNDING REQUIREMENTS – FIXED PART

### II.1 Requirement 1: An endorsed quality ESP/TEP<sup>2</sup>

Please explain why the endorsed ESP/TEP can be considered a quality plan by summarizing the main conclusions and recommendations of the Appraisal Report and how these were addressed in the Appraisal Memo, including any adjustments made to the ESP/TEP and/or any medium-long term follow-up actions decided upon, as a result of the independent assessment, as well as any other outstanding issues related to the ESP/TEP.

The Education Sector Plan 2018-2020 is the principal planning document for the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) and was approved in November 2018 by the Local Education Group (LEG), which consists of Development Partners, Government of Sierra Leone and international and national Non-Governmental Organizations. The document was developed by MEST, with support of the LEG, and supports the Government of Sierra Leone in their attempts to meet national targets and international protocols arising from Education for All (EFA), Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Sierra Leone has recently elected a new Government, who have taken ownership of improvements in the Education system, with this being a key stated priority for the new Government.

The provision of quality education is considered a key factor in accelerating the future growth and development of Sierra Leone. Improving basic education for all children is essential, but the contributions of higher institutions cannot be overlooked, as well as the ability of the sector to meet and fulfil the growing need for skilled labor in the workplace.

In the post-Ebola period the MEST has demonstrated that rapid sector improvements are possible, but several underlying challenges and constraints need urgent attention to transform learning outcomes, such as low qualifications among the existing teacher workforce, systems integrity issues, and inadequate resources.

This 2018-2020 Education Sector Plan (ESP) is intended to be a transition document between the 2014-2018 ESP and the 2021-2025 ESP. Even so, it is not just an update and extension of the current ESP but is an improvement that recognizes

the weaknesses of the document it is replacing and takes into cognizance lessons learnt from the devastating Ebola epidemic, that put schools to a close for a period of nine months and devastated the country, including severely disrupting access to basic social services. It recognizes that quality education is dependent on many frequently overlooked factors that can have a catastrophic effect on efforts to achieve quality if left unaddressed.

This ESP organizes interventions across four areas: i) Access, equity and completion, ii) Quality and relevance, iii) Systems strengthening, vi) Emergency preparedness and response.

The interim ESP substantially benefited from the appraisal report, which raised the following issues, which were addressed in the following ways.

Firstly, it was raised that MEST should make it explicit that the ESP 2018-2020 is a transition document that sets the foundation for an ESP 2021-2025. This has significant implications in terms of the need to make a clear prioritization of the interventions and activities, focusing on fewer activities so that results can be achieved by the end of the ESP. This is particularly important if we consider the scarce domestic resources allocated to education.

This was done, with the text being made much clearer in the final ESP document. In addition, the current grant includes provisions to undertake a full sector analysis, considering the interim nature. The document was also adapted to be more explicitly aligned to the SDG's.

Concerns were raised over share of the national budget allocated to education, which is currently 11.88% and the ESP foresees a reduction to 11.02% in 2020. The report recommended seeking additional commitments from the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development in terms of future resources. The report also raised suggestions about how to work to improve this situation, including focusing on tax revenues and leveraging of funds. The financial information and costing chapter was edited to ensure greater clarity, and the additional resources in absolute terms were addressed. Given the timing of the ESP, shortly before elections, no additional explicit commitment was possible, but education financing is now

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<sup>2</sup> Evidence of a credible ESP will primarily be drawn from the ESP documents submitted prior to the application itself. This section should therefore be limited to a brief summary of key issues highlighted in the appraisal process.

part of an on-going dialogue between MEST, donor partners and the Ministry of Finance.

In light of the low levels of resources, it was recommended that the ESP included a study of how to improve the efficiency in the use of the scarce resources in the education sector. Improving efficiency in resource use was implicit in the development of the plan, and the ESP was adapted to make this more explicit. Efficiency of resource use was central to the discussions on prioritization within the Implementation Plan, which saw a dramatic reduction in activities through the process, with activities being prioritized that are achievable, affordable and with a strong link to learning outcomes.

The appraisal highlighted the problematic nature of current dependence on external aid (41.5% in the overall education budget, and 86% in the development budget) and suggested that the ESP should include specific steps to reduce this dependence. This was not deemed appropriate for an ESP, as it is part of the wider Government of Sierra Leone development plan as a macro- economic domestic resource mobilization question. However, it is a risk that will be monitored, and is included in the costings risk section.

The report raised concerns over the Simulation Model, and highlighted inconsistencies within the financial sectors of the ESP.

The costing model was redeveloped following the appraisal, focusing specifically on costing activities which were additional to the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework. By building the costing model for the implementation activities from the bottom up, the accuracy of the costs has increased. Actions will be taken to improve the macro-costing model during the Education Sector Analysis which will take place as part of the proposed programme. This redesign came as a response to an additional request to align the costs with the proposed targets, which was undertaken as part of the redesign. The report also raised issues around the funding gap which were addressed as part of the re-costing exercise.

With respect to the Implementation Plan, the appraisal recommended that all targets ought to be set and quantified in the final version before endorsement of the ESP, which was done before approval. It was also recommended, and actioned, that a Result Framework that compiles proposed interventions in a table organized by themes in the same way that they appear in the ESP should be included.

Over and above the sector plan, the appraisal memo raised quite a few specific points relating to risks to implementation of the plan. These were around staffing, organograms, and work on the Teacher Service Commission (TSC). These were noted in the risk section and have been considered in the design of the current proposal, an extension to the World Bank programme and under EU support.

Several queries were raised on the accuracy of the figures in the ESP, and some of the targets. It is accepted that data quality is weak in Sierra Leone, though activities over recent and coming years have and will improve this. However, internal discrepancies were corrected. The appraisal advised that the collection of data disaggregate indicators by gender, district, and inclusion factors, and that the decentralization process be completed. This will be undertaken through EU support and the proposed project.

Concerns were also raised on unrealistic targets, notably around the approval of schools. While the headline ESP has kept this stretch target, it has been refined for its use within the GPE grant. This is a key aim of the Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL), and as such the LEG agreed that it should remain within the ESP. For other targets, it was agreed that conservative targets within the document reflected the challenges facing Sierra Leone and the resources available.

The report also raised several specific comments on the activities, which were addressed. Often, this was simply a case of expanding the text (such as comments on training), though there were cases where the recommendations were not applicable (such as the World Food Programme (WFP) being integrated into the School Feeding). Comments around equity and gender were taken on board, strengthening the document.

Finally, it was recommended that the ESP be disseminated at all levels, which is currently underway.

Overall, the response to the appraisal was deemed satisfactory by the Local Education Group, who approved the document in November 2017.

Please use the table below to provide information on external resource mobilization. For evidence of domestic resource mobilization, complete the Excel template in [this link](#)<sup>3</sup> only if there are changes to the education financing data submitted in the Quality Assurance Review (QAR) process. Indicate if you are using fiscal or calendar year, and if the former please state when (the month) the fiscal year begins and ends. Also include, where applicable, the sources of all data.

**TABLE 1 |**
**Evidence of external resource mobilization**

Actual value for three years			Target values for the period of the Program					Total
Data for the past three years (indicate years as relevant)			Data for the relevant duration of the program (indicate years as relevant)					
2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020			

**Education sector plan**

Education sector plan cost (local currency, LeM)

			1,146,898	1,340,798	1,444,578			
External funding <sup>4</sup> – excluding GPE funds (Millions, local currency)								

<sup>3</sup>This Excel template is the same as the domestic financing spreadsheet initially submitted during the Quality Assurance Review (QAR) process. It is also available on the GPE website at: <http://www.globalpartnership.org/content/funding-model-requirement-matrix-domestic-financing-annex>. Should you have any question about this section of the application form, please send an email to the GPE Secretariat at [gpe\\_grant\\_submission@globalpartnership.org](mailto:gpe_grant_submission@globalpartnership.org).

<sup>4</sup>Note, as this is an interim sector plan focusing on the implementation plan, not all donor activities are included – as such external support to the plan is a subset of the donor support to education.

			34,943	37,878	42,046			
Funding gap as recorded in the ESP (Millions, local currency)								
			273,727	275,835	254,070			
GPE support (Millions, local currency)								
			33,554	48,166	47,278			

### II.3. Requirement 3: Availability of critical data, or a strategy to use and produce data

This requirement concerning the availability of data or alternatively a strategy to produce and use data is divided into three sub-components as indicated below.

#### II.3.1 A recent education sector analysis

- Provide information and dates on the most recent education sector analysis, including a list of which analytic elements are included (e.g. demographic analysis, analysis of existing policies, costs and financing, system performance and system capacity).
- Indicate how vulnerability and equity, particularly the situation of education for marginalized groups, including girls and children with disabilities, have been addressed.<sup>5</sup>

A full education sector analysis (ESA) was carried out in 2013 which informed the 2014 – 2018 Education Sector Plan (ESP). Implementation of the current ESP was impacted by an Ebola epidemic. As such, a decision was made to conduct a rapid review of the ESP, rather than a full sector analysis, and to update the ESP for the period 2018-2020. This rapid review and updating was conducted using data and studies that are already available and through national/district consultations. This rapid sector analysis has informed the Mid – Term Review (MTR) of the ESP in April 2017 and is informing the subsequent ESP Update in August 2017. In addition to the ESP, a costed multi-year implementation plan has been developed, using the Annual School Census (ASC) data and revealed programmatic costs to inform the ESP implementation.

The ESP Update was also informed by the Population and Household Census, Demographic Health Survey data and Ministry of Finance administrative data. The most ASC (2016) was also used in the ESP. Relevant existing and new policies and proposed organizational and changes in structure are also reviewed. As the transition from ‘recovery’ to ‘regular’/’development’ is now taking place this is also reflected in the ESA.

Equity discussions formed a key part of the first outcome of the ESP. This included gender issues – while in Sierra Leone gender parity has been achieved in primary school, it is evident in the later years. Regional issues, alongside poverty discussions also informed the document. For disability, there is an acceptance that more can be done, notably around access, but also teacher training. An inclusive education policy is being developed which will form the foundation of further work in this area.

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<sup>5</sup> Reference can be made to the assessment made in the GPE Funding Model Requirements Readiness Matrix (Quality Assurance Review Phase I Matrix), with this paragraph limited to an update on progress vis-à-vis identified gaps; alternatively, if the analysis exists in another document, this section can simply reference that document, which should then be attached.

These issues, particularly around equity and vulnerability, will form a key part of the next planning process. A full-scale ESA is planned in 2018- 2019 in readiness for the preparation of a new ESP.

### II.3.2 Basic financial and education data

- Provide date of last submission of data to UIS and highlight any areas where data was not provided;
- Highlight any gaps in national data (such as data quality issues, disaggregation by gender, availability of data on marginalized groups, financial data, etc.); and
- Provide summary of strategies to address these, including how the implementation of a data strategies will be financed and whether they are part of the endorsed ESP.<sup>6</sup>

Data from the 2016 school census were submitted to UNESCO Institute of Statistics. There has been a noticeable improvement in the data quality in Sierra Leone, with improvements to the Education Management Information System, and the Annual School Census now being undertaken regularly. In addition, learning outcome data are available for 2014, and will be collected again under the proposed programme.

The main gaps in national data include dropout rates, promotion rates, and transfers between schools.

District level data on rates (such as gross/net intake and enrolment rates) are problematic due to issues with the underlying census data. This is partially due to difficulties with population data, and issues around accurate collection of age. Disaggregation remains a challenge, though the Annual School Census reports attempt to report at the local council level where possible. All data issues are more pronounced at the district level, with the ESP highlighting improvements to decentralized data as a key result over the 2018-2020 period.

Through the Situation Room, monthly attendance rates for both teachers (and students) are now being collected and

<sup>6</sup> If these strategies are included in the endorsed ESP, this paragraph should be limited to a list of the strategies and their financing source and a reference to the relevant section in the ESP.

reported, alongside information on facilities and the use of lessons plans. While coverage is incomplete, this forms a useful platform from which to build the proposed activities within the ESP.

### **II.3.3 A system or mechanisms to monitor learning outcomes**

- Indicate whether there is a system for measuring learning outcomes and if so, describe briefly;
- Highlight any gaps and provide summary of strategies to address these, including how the implementation of the strategies will be financed.<sup>7</sup>

Learning outcomes are monitored in many ways. Firstly, the Government undertakes end of cycle exams at the end of Primary, and the end of Junior and Senior Secondary. The Government has National Primary School exams at the end of primary 6, and the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) (end of Junior Secondary). For Senior Secondary exams, Sierra Leone participates in the West African Examination Council (WAEC). The ESP draws heavily on analysis of performance in these exams and trends over time in the pass rates.

In addition to the end of cycle examinations, learning assessments have also been undertaken within primary schools (in 2014, an Early Grade Reading assessment was conducted in a representative sample of schools) and in Secondary Schools through the 'Leh wi Learn' project. However, MEST have identified a lack of data and the lack of a system to assess learning or quality as a key focus for the 2018-20 ESP. Work is planned to design a learning assessment framework and assessment instrument, which should help close this gap. The EU are providing support to attempt to integrate learning assessments within the EMIS system. The ESP aspires to undertake annual sample-based assessments (outcome 2.1a) across various levels.

To co-ordinate all these activities, a Learning Assessment Unit is being proposed as a variable part indicator for the GPE grant, which will aim to aggregate the existing and future learning assessments, including those proposed over the ESP

<sup>7</sup> If the system or strategy to develop one are included in the endorsed ESP, this section should be limited to a brief statement and a reference to the relevant section in the ESP.

period in the early grades, upper primary and secondary (more details are provided in the variable tranche section).

### III. COUNTRY INFORMATION

**NOTE:** 1. Federal State applicants should duplicate this section as needed for States applying.  
2. Please include the sources of population and GDP data in footnotes.

Total population:	7.396m.
GDP Per Capita (USD):	\$496
School year runs from (month to month):	September to June
Budget cycle runs from (month to month):	January to December

### IV. PROGRAM

#### IV.1 Program description - summary

In 1,500 words or less (maximum 3 pages), please:

- Provide a narrative of the Program in summary form, describing overall program objectives and related expected outcomes, and the components and sub-components with financing amounts (further details are to be provided in table form under IV.2 and IV.3).
- Indicate as relevant GPE's anticipated share by components and sub-components if this is a co-financed project.

The programme is aligned to Sierra Leone's Education Sector Plan (2018-20) and GPE's goals. It speaks to all three results areas within the GPE 2015-20 strategic plan. It also contributes to the GPE's strategic objectives – specifically through supporting data systems; mutual accountability; while achieving targets on equity, efficiency and learning; training teachers and building/rehabilitating classrooms.

The overall impact of this programme will be “Increased equitable access to education and improved learning outcomes for all boys and girls in pre-primary and primary schools”.

The programme is coming at an opportune time, with a new Government being elected in April 2018, who have identified Education as a key priority, including meeting with Development Partners to discuss education within the first weeks of their tenure. There is a renewed sense of optimism around education, with the new Government giving strong backing to the GPE grant proposal to help them with their efforts to improve the education system. The GPE grant is seen as a key part of the Education Sector Plan, and over its three-year implementation period, the fixed tranche of the GPE project is expected to directly benefit approximately 80 pre-primary schools and communities and two thirds of all primary schools, reaching 10,000 teachers. Approximately 600,000 students (about 50 percent girls) are expected to benefit from the early grade reading & mathematics program.

### **Component 1: Expansion of ECD opportunities**

#### **Expansion of pre-schools.**

Activities will be structured around three areas: enhancing Government capability to deliver ECD programming; construction of additional ECD classrooms; provision of ECD teachers and materials to complete the package of support. The delivery of these activities will be managed by the Grant Agent, UNICEF, as part of their country programme. Activities such as construction and the provision of the teacher training and payment of stipends will be implemented by a selected INGO/NGOs,

The initial plan is to expand pre-school classrooms to those districts which are currently underserved. Within each district Chiefdoms' will be ranked on their socio-economic status, existing enrolment rates at pre-primary and primary, alongside other equity indicators to create an index of early-childhood deprivation with a view to promoting equitable access (to improve the ECD enrolment rate in the poorest districts).

The following activities will be undertaken.

- The UNICEF ECD specialist will provide technical guidance for the MEST ECD unit who will take responsibility for leading the design (including adjustments in design), planning, overseeing and monitoring of the interventions delivered by the implementing partners under this programme. GPE funds will be used to strengthen the ECD Unit at MEST through recruitment of two qualified staff who will be supported by this programme and gradually phased onto government payroll.
- UNICEF, MEST, and INGO/NGO partners will develop an expansion plan for the school-based pre-primary education and ensure complementation and synergy with the Community-based ECD model, prioritizing the most vulnerable districts, chiefdoms, and communities.
- MEST will be supported by INGO/NGO implementing partner to disseminate and raise awareness of the ECD policy, curriculum and minimum standards.
- The IPs will work with MEST to implement expansion of public pre-primary education in existing primary schools, targeting the construction of at least 80 classrooms over the programme period in areas with existing shortages in line with an agreed selection criterion, to ensure equitable access across Chiefdoms.
- The IPs will facilitate the training of pre-primary teachers by adapting the approved new curriculum, building on the existing models of teacher training.
- UNICEF will directly support stipends of pre-primary teachers through implementing partners.
- The IP will, in collaboration with MEST, provide age and developmentally appropriate learning materials, such as toys and picture books, building on those currently being developed on the MEST-UNICEF Picture Books for Young Children project and Toy Making project, as well as under the REDiSL, to facilitate play-based learning.
- The IP will work with MEST to implement an effective monitoring system, adapting the minimum standards, to ensure quality of service provision in both the school and community based ECD programmes and integrate the monitoring system for the pre-primary education sub-sector into the overall monitoring system for education.

Through delivery of these activities, an additional 80 fully functioning classrooms will be available by the end of the GPE grant, which, aims to increase the GER to an estimated 14%. The target is a realistic calculation based on the funds available and the absorptive capacity of the Government to undertake expansion.

### **Community led ECD**

In addition to the pre-school approach in government schools, the GPE grant will also support a community based ECD programme to provide a cost-effective and sustainable community led strategy and reach as many marginalized children as possible. This initiative will follow a similar implementation plan to a UNICEF pilot, working with INOG/NGOs to implement the following interventions with oversight from MEST:

- Capacity building for INGO/NGO partners and district and community stakeholders to implement, and monitoring (including field-based monitoring) project interventions through practically oriented training at national, district, and community levels
- Carrying out in-depth community mobilization activities to raise awareness about the importance of ECD and to improve child rearing practices among caregivers and community members.
- Construction of ECD centres in alignment with the MEST minimum standards for ECD, providing necessary supplies, and enhancing early learning resources such as toy making.
- Provide age and developmentally appropriate early stimulation and early learning opportunities for children under six years of age through activities at community ECD centres and during home visits.
- Provide regular on-site monitoring and technical supervision involving cross-sectoral partners, and peer support and experience exchange among the communities on the initiative.
- Engage communities in the initiative to help ensure ownership and establish mechanisms for sustainability and support, including the ECD Seed Fund.
- Alongside the direct provision of ECD, the IPs will work with the local communities to carry out sensitization activities on the importance of enrolling children on time and to improve the proportion of children who enrol at the right age.

**Component 2: In-service training of Primary Teachers to improve early grade reading, writing and math.**

The ESP Mid Term Review (MTR) and updated ESP identified the need to reinforce reading and math skills in the early grades of primary school. Improving educational foundations is a key aim within the sector and a key component of the current GPE grant and wider support.

- UNICEF will work with the TSC to develop a training package for early grade reading and maths for grade 1-3 teachers ensuring it builds on current materials which were developed under REDiSL and is aligned with standards being developed by TSC and with the roll-out of the new basic curriculum.
- UNICEF and the implementing partners will work with TSC, MEST, the District Education Officers (DEOs) and training colleges, to Implement training to all schools within 10 districts within the first two years of the programme, to reach all schools over the grant period through termly training. The remaining four districts will be reached through the variable tranche programme.
- A monitoring system will be developed in conjunction with TSC and the inspectorate to assess the effectiveness of the training through a cluster led approach of peer-to-peer repeat trainings with master teachers.
- Institute regular learning assessments, formative (observations and teacher reported) and summative assessments (EGRA/EGMA) to determine progression.
- In addition, support will be given to the learning assessment focal person, to create a small learning assessment unit, in line with GPE requirements. This unit will oversee the EGRA/EGMA activities and engage with other learning assessments being undertaken, such as those supported by UK's Department for International Development (DFID).
- Provide schools with adequate teaching and learning materials for teachers<sup>8</sup>, to facilitate the effective implementation of the intervention.
- Supplement the existing early grade readers in schools with pupil learning materials as required, which will be procured through UNICEF's global framework.

**Component 3: Decentralized school monitoring, data collection and management**

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<sup>8</sup> Under the early grade reading component in REDiSL, supplementary readers, teacher guides and classroom support packets (stationery, wall pocket charts, posters, sentence/letter cards, alphabet frieze, etc.) are being distributed in all primary schools in Sierra Leone. Need should therefore be quantified in this context.

A key outcome proposed in the ESP 2018-2020 is to ensure that decentralized, timely, reliable and accurate data on education is readily available; an outcome that is well aligned to the GPE strategic outcomes. Many activities are underway in this area and a significant milestone has already been achieved by establishing an effective and functional EMIS. In addition, UNICEF has supported the development, of an innovative real-time data collection, reporting and dissemination system, named the “Situation Room” or EduTrac. This proposal builds on previous work and aims to align efforts with work and data collection systems supported by other donors. Support will be provided to MEST to continue the Situation Room activities, including through the provision of incentives to the community monitors.

- Work will be undertaken to strengthen system integration between Situation Room, EMIS and other monitoring systems/tools to establish a comprehensive and linked information management system. Activities to support this are below.
  - Undertake a technical assessment of the underlying software differences between EMIS & the Situation Room and develop a roadmap to integration.
  - Consolidate the Situation Room unit within the MEST HQ and integrate the district IT focal persons as part of the comprehensive EMIS structure, including developing roles and responsibilities for the integrated system.
- Establish a technical work-group to implement the practical elements of integration of the systems, including plans to bridge systems, develop unique identifiers to allow merging of data; integrate GIS information.
- “Stocktakes”, which are regular meetings to discuss progress, will be used to bring together district level stake holders to reflect and discuss generated data, make informed decisions in terms of driving progress and unblock problems as they emerge or tackle underperformance.
- Establish information feedback systems that can ensure that findings are shared with schools and communities, while strengthening accountability and community empowerment.
  - Decentralize report generation and data quality assurance at district level to promote feedback to schools.
  - Automate decentralised data via an online user-friendly dashboard to visualize the status of key performance indicators in any given month and to compare performance against trend, district and national benchmarks.

### **Comprehensive sector diagnosis**

The current ESP is a transition plan for the period 2018-2020 to address the impact of the Ebola emergency on the education sector. During this period, MEST will conduct a comprehensive sector diagnosis that will inform the next ESP. The diagnosis will commence early 2019 while the ESP development process will be completed in 2020.

Please define the event that will mark the start of the program and which will take place by the expected start date:

[Click here to enter text.](#)

Complementary information for overview purposes:

Please specify whether the Program covers the following:

- |   |     |
|---|-----|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development and use of Education Monitoring and Information System – EMIS<br/>(Please refer to definition in Annex I: <b>Definitions</b>)</li> </ul> | Yes |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development and use of learning assessment system?<br/>(See refer to definition in Annex I: <b>Definitions</b>)</li> </ul>                           | Yes |

Please complete the table below, specifying the levels of education and age (from age to age) covered by the program:

*Extend an/or adapt the table to the number of levels covered by the program, by copying/pasting or erasing rows as relevant.*

**TABLE 2 |**

**Levels of education covered by the program**

Levels	Age
Pre-primary	3-5
Primary	6-11

For more rows, copy a set of the above rows and paste them here.

## IV.2 Expected outcomes

Please complete the table below, extracting relevant information from the detailed Program document. The Program will be monitored and progress will be reported against these **outcome indicators and targets** in the ESPIG annual implementation status reporting template to be submitted each year of the grant to the Secretariat.

Indicate the years starting with the baseline year. Extend and adapt the table to the number of components, subcomponents and outputs that fits the Program, by copying/pasting or erasing rows as relevant.

TABLE 3 |

### Outcome indicators (as extracted from the program document)

Baseline	Targets				
	year 0	Baseline	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
<b>Outcome Indicator 1:</b>	Percentage of girls and boys in first grade (Class 1) of primary school who attended pre-school during the previous school year in targeted local councils				
Source of data:	Annual School Census				
	1.6%(Boys:1.44 %, Girls:1.76%)		2.5% (Both genders)	5% (Both genders)	
<b>Outcome Indicator 2:</b>	A reduction in share of children in P2 who cannot recognize a letter sound				

Source of data:	EGRA sample assessment				
	97.4% zero letters identified with no gender differences			94.9% zero-letters in P2 (with gender equality)	
<b>Outcome Indicator 3:</b>	A reduction in share of children in P2 who cannot answer any comprehension questions				
Source of data:	EGRA sample assessment				
	96.9% with no gender differences			94.4% (with gender equality)	
<b>Outcome Indicator 4:</b>	Decrease in P1 repetition rate.				
Source of data:	Annual School Census				
	14.4% (14.54 boys, 14.39 girls)	13%	11.5%	10% (both genders)	
<input type="checkbox"/> For more rows, copy a set of the above rows and paste them here.					

### IV.3 Results framework<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> For sector-wide financing (through budget support or pooled funds), a reference could be made to the ESP results framework.

Please complete the table below, extracting relevant information from the detailed program document. There is NO need to reproduce the full results framework here, as long as the program document provides a full results framework with a results chain. The Program will be monitored and progress will be reported against these **output indicators and targets** in the ESPIG annual implementation status reporting template to be submitted each year of the grant to the Secretariat.

If the program plans to purchase and distribute textbooks, train teachers, or build or rehabilitate classrooms, please use the following indicators (GPE Strategic Plan 2016-2020)<sup>10</sup>:

- Number of textbooks purchased and distributed
- Number of teachers trained
- Number of classrooms built or rehabilitated

**NOTE:** These indicators are NOT compulsory indicators. They are therefore applicable only when the program plans to implement these activities. In case of sector-pooled funds, please indicate numbers planned at sector level.

*Indicate the years starting with the baseline year. Extend and adapt the table to the number of components, subcomponents and outputs that fits the Program, by copying/pasting or erasing rows as relevant.*

TABLE 4 |

**Output indicators (for the fixed tranche)**

Baseline	Targets
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<sup>10</sup> For definition of indicators, see attached **Annex1**.

year 0	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021		
<b>Component 1:</b>	<b>Expand access to early learning opportunities</b>				
Objective(s):	Improved access and quality in early learning classes and centers				
Sub-component 1.1:	Expanded access through pre-primary schools				
Output indicator:	Number of pre-primary classrooms built				
Source of data:	Quarterly project reporting				
	40	30	10		
Output indicator:	Number of pre-primary teachers trained				
Source of data:	Quarterly project reporting				
	80	60	20		
Sub-component 1.2:	Click here to enter text.				
Output indicator:	Number of ECD community centers constructed				
Source of data:	Quarterly project reporting				
	20	20			
Output indicator:	Number of additional Community ECD Workers and MSG members trained on ECD				
Source of data:	Quarterly project reporting				

	200	200			
<input type="checkbox"/> For more rows, please copy and adapt a set of the above rows and paste them here.					
<b>Component 2:</b>	<b>Improved learning outcomes in early grade reading, mathematics and writing</b>				
Objective(s):	Improve teachers' ability to teach early grade reading, mathematics and writing				
Sub-component 2.1:	In-service training of Primary Teachers to improve early grade reading, math and writing				
Output indicator:	Number of teachers trained				
Source of data:	Project reporting				
	5,858	5,858			
Output indicator:	Number of teachers participating in clustered peer-to-peer support trainings				
Source of data:	Project reporting				
		5,858	11,716		
Output indicator:	Girls and Boys supported with learning materials				
Source of data:	Quarterly project reporting				
	300,000 (150,000/150,000)	300,000 (150,000/150,000)			
<b>Component 3:</b>	<b>Decentralized school monitoring, data collection and management</b>				
Objective(s):	Integrate the separate components of the data system within Sierra Leone and improve their use.				

Sub-component 1.1:	Integration of EMIS and situation room data collection, management, and use.				
Output indicator:	Number of districts that report on time data that represents 80% of schools				
Source of data:	Situation room reports				
	7	10	12		
Output indicator:	Number of districts using data on regular basis to make decisions				
Source of data:	Situation room reports				
	7	10	12		
Output indicator:	EMIS & Situation room are successfully integrated				
Source of data:	Project reporting				
	Technical feasibility study undertaken	Job Descriptions have been agreed for all integrated roles.	Data for the School Census is drawn from the merged dataset		

**Output indicators (for the variable)**

Baseline	Targets				
year 0	2020-2021	2021-2022			
<b>Component 1:</b>	<b>Expand access to early learning opportunities</b>				
Objective(s):	Improved access and quality in early learning classes				
Sub-component 1.1:	Expanded access through pre-primary schools				
Output indicator:	Number of pre-primary classrooms built				
Source of data:	Quarterly project reporting				
	20	20			
Output indicator:	Number of pre-primary teachers trained				
Source of data:	Quarterly project reporting				
	40	40			
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>For more rows, please copy and adapt a set of the above rows and paste them here.</i>					
<b>Component 2:</b>	<b>Improved learning outcomes in early grade reading, mathematics and writing</b>				
Objective(s):	Improve teachers' ability to teach early grade reading, mathematics and writing				
Sub-component 2.1:	In-service training of Primary Teachers to improve early grade reading, math and writing				
Output indicator:	Number of teachers trained				

Source of data:	Project reporting				
	1,953	3,905			
Output indicator:	Number of teachers participating in clustered peer-to-peer support trainings				
Source of data:	Project reporting				
		17,574			
Output indicator:	Girls and Boys supported with learning materials				
Source of data:	Quarterly project reporting				
	100,000 (50,000/50,000)	200,000 (100,000/100,000)			
<b>Component 3:</b>	<b>Decentralized school monitoring, data collection and management</b>				
Objective(s):	Integrate the separate components of the data system within Sierra Leone and improve their use.				
Sub-component 1.1:	Integration of EMIS and situation room data collection, management, and use.				
Output indicator:	Number of districts that report on time data that represents 80% of schools				
Source of data:	Situation room reports				
	12	12			
Output indicator:	Number of districts using data on regular basis to make decisions				
Source of data:	Situation room reports				

	12	14			
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#### IV.4 Financial overview

Please complete the table below, indicating program cost and disbursement by year as applicable, based on information extracted from the program document. If it is a co-financed project, indicate estimates for the expected disbursements of GPE funds by year.

TABLE 5 |

#### Program costs and expected disbursements by year – in USD

Indicate years:	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021			Total
Total program costs per implementation year <sup>11</sup>	4,473,944	5,034,232	2,491,824			\$12,000,000
Total program costs per calendar year						

<sup>11</sup> Implementation year runs by 12-month cycle beginning with signing of grant agreement. For example, if the signing is expected to start in July 2016 then the implementation year is July 2016 to June 2017, and July 2016 should be entered as Year 1. The program costs per calendar year for 2016 should reflect the estimated costs for the July – December 2016 period.

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Please complete the table below, listing the proposed interventions/components, and indicating the expected disbursement by year and total cost for each component, as well as their respective percentage of the total grant.

If it is a co-financed project, indicate estimates for the expected disbursements of GPE funds by year.

*Extend and adapt the table to the number of components that fits the Program, by copying/pasting or erasing rows as relevant.*

TABLE 6 |

**Program costs and expected disbursement by component<sup>12</sup> – in USD**

Components	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021			Total costs	%
Expansion of Early Childhood learning opportunities	1,193,250	1,417,650	1,126,450			3,737,350	31%
In-service training of Primary Teachers to improve early grade reading, math and writing	2,412,095	2,472,983	1,021,776			5,906,855	49%
Real time decentralized and disaggregated data	677,600	952,600	152,600			1,782,800	15%

<sup>12</sup> If not using budget support as grant modality.

For more rows, please copy the above rows and paste them here.

#### IV.5 Supplemental program cost

TABLE 7 |

#### Other grant agent costs and general agency fees – in USD<sup>13</sup>

Indicate years:	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021			Total
General agency fees (in addition to MCA):	458,667	458,667	458,666			1,376,000
Other grant agent costs, including for supervision, country office, etc. (part of MCA)	81,400	81,400	81,400			244,200

#### IV.5.1 Use of Other grant agent costs, including for supervision, country office, etc.

In 300 words, please indicate how Other grant agent costs, including for supervision, country office, etc. will be utilized.

The grant agent will cover percentage shares of salaries for administrative (25%), M&E (50%), procurement and financial officers (25% each). It will also cover office space, and office equipment, alongside stationary and printing costs.

<sup>13</sup> See *ESPIG Guidelines* for explanation of respectively other grant agent costs and general agency fees.

## IV.6 Monitoring and evaluation

In 300 words, please:

- Explain how the Program will be monitored and evaluated.
- Include how the monitoring and evaluation of the Program is aligned with the national reporting systems and to the monitoring and evaluation of the Education Sector Plan through the Joint Sector Reviews or other processes.

The M&E Unit within Directorate of Planning and Policy and the Inspectorate/ Quality Assurance Directorate (QAD) will lead on all monitoring and evaluation exercises for this programme.

The M&E for each component in the results framework will be integrated within the activities and measured regularly during the life of the project. In line with the IP, each activity will have a named officer who will report on progress to the IMT on a regular basis.

Where necessary, third party monitoring with civil society will be engaged, with the Education for All coalition supported to provide third-party verification of the indicators, with technical support where required. The reporting of the results will be conducted annually but periodic milestones and targets will be monitored throughout the year. Data will be collected through the EMIS based mainly on annual school census data and the Situation Room. The Situation Room which has a presence in all the 14 districts through a total of 1,182 community monitoring personnel and 14 District Information Technology focal persons provide the opportunity for the communication of real-time information/data electronically monthly.

During the grant period, reporting on the GPE will be undertaken within Local Education Group meetings and the Annual Joint Sector reviews. A sector analysis will be conducted in 2019 to inform the next ESP, and at the end of the programme in 2021 an evaluation of the programme will be conducted.

## IV.7 Risks, implementation readiness, and sustainability

In 300 words, please:

- Outline the principal risks and assumptions associated with the Program and what is planned to mitigate these risks.
- Demonstrate readiness for implementing the Program.
- Explain what is being done to ensure sustainability of the Program.

Basic social services in Sierra Leone, including the Education sector continue to recover from the Ebola emergency. The sector is under pressure, and suffers from elevated levels of need, low levels of domestic funding, and limited external funding. There are large numbers of children clustered in the early grades, as they strive to obtain the basics. As there is a disconnect between the language spoken at home, and the language of instruction, parents find it hard to support. The proposed intervention aims to tackle this, including training teachers to teach literacy skills for those with different mother tongues. Elevated levels of need may mean that these risks can be reduced, but not completely mitigated, meaning this will be an on-going risk to monitor.

Operational risk: There are likely to be continual operational risks within the programme, due to weak capacity within MEST and the emerging status of associated agencies such as TSC. While the project will provide continued technical assistance and support to mitigate these risks, they are likely to remain active throughout the project and need monitoring.

Sustainability: During the project implementation period, the burden on the MEST limited capacity will be minimized by providing technical support and some additional staff. Once interventions have been tested and proven to be effective, they will be institutionalized thus guaranteeing institutional sustainability. The project has relatively limited fiscal recurrent cost implications for Government, though some exist from both the proposed activities (e.g. stipends) and the current programme in the form of ECD teachers. This issue is being discussed following the appointment of a new government, who have shown a strong commitment to education in their early stages.

Readiness to implement: MEST staff, including Directors of Departments assigned to the project were engaged in the project design from concept note stage to finalization. UNICEF has a pre-existing relationship with MEST, have key management staff in place and have suitable pre-qualified implementing partners already identified. As the project is drawing on both the

REDiSL project and existing and previous UNICEF activities (such as the Situation Room and the community-based model), implementation can commence quickly.

A full discussion of risks and mitigation activities can be found in the programme document.

#### IV.8 Past and current performance

In 250 words or less, please:

- Describe the implementation status of any past or current GPE grants.
- Explain how the proposed Program builds on lessons learned through the implementation of previous grants.

For countries that are not past or current GPE grant recipients, answer “Not applicable” in the box below.

The programme design has drawn on extensive consultations and discussions with donor partners, to ensure it aligns and draws on lessons from implementation. One key lesson from the current REDiSL programme is that the programme should be kept simple, and easy to implement and scale-up. As such, following extensive consultations, and discussions with MEST, the LEG and feedback from the QAR processes, activities within the Implementation Plan have been strictly prioritised, and three areas chosen for the grant. The grant builds on two specific areas of the REDiSL programme, from which it draws heavily. One key lesson was finding that one-off trainings were not enough to improve early grade learning – as such the programme has a year of termly trainings, followed up with peer-to-peer trainings in clusters. For ECD, the previous grant found that strong MEST management and clear frameworks were key, to this end two staff members will be supported to help roll-out the new policy and curriculum guidelines.

## IV.9 Aid effectiveness

Please complete the table below to illustrate how the proposed grant financing modality is evolving in comparison to the previous grant (where applicable) vis-à-vis alignment with national systems.

TABLE 8   Evolution of grant financing modality		
	Previous GPE grant	Current application
<b>In relation to the ESP/TEP</b>		
Is the GPE-funded Program aligned with the Education Sector Plan?	Yes	Yes, the GPE programme is informed by key priorities identified in the updated ESP for 2018-2020
Are the projected expenditures of the Program included in the multi-year forecast of the Minister of Finance (Medium Term Expenditure Framework)?	Yes	Yes – this is work that is ongoing (MoFED has been involved in the costing of the ESP and the costing of the GPE application are informed by the costs in the ESP)
<b>In relation to the national budget and parliament</b>		
Is the project included in the national budget?	Yes	The budget is going to be included in the national budget once agreed

<p>Does the national annual budget show specific appropriations for the different planned expenditures (economic and/or functional classification)?</p>	<p>Partially</p>	<p>Partially</p>
<p><b>In relation to treasury</b></p>		
<p>Is the majority of the financing disbursed into: (a) the main revenue account of government, (b) a specific account at treasury or (c) a specific account at a commercial bank?</p>	<p>It is disbursed through the Lead Agency to a specific MEST account in a commercial bank</p>	<p>It will be disbursed through the Grant Agent to its account. The grant agent will make specific disbursements to MEST account in a commercial bank based on agreed activities and budgets.</p>
<p>Is the expenditure process (documents and signatures on commitment, payment orders, etc.) for the national budget used for the program expenditures? Are there any specific derogations or safeguards on the national execution procedures for the program expenditures (other documents and/or signatures)?</p>	<p>To a certain extent. All four signatories are very senior staff of the Ministry, including the Permanent Secretary who is the Vote Controller of the Ministry. Specific safeguards are in place.</p>	<p>To a certain extent. All four signatories are very senior staff of the Ministry, including the Permanent Secretary who is the Vote Controller of the Ministry. Specific safeguards are in place. The Grant Agent will make disbursements to MEST based on agreed financing framework in alignment with national frameworks. All funding will be made to MEST account which will be managed</p>

		according to government expenditure processes.
<b>In relation to procurement</b>		
Are government procurement rules used? If so are there any derogations/safeguards on the use of these rules introduced?	Procurement rules used are those agreed in the Project Approval Document of the grant management agency	Procurement rules used are those agreed in the Project Approval Document of the Grant Agent. The Grant Agent will use its procurement rules if supplies are directly procured by the GA. If funding is disbursed to MEST and includes procurement, government procurement rules will be followed.
<b>In relation to accounting</b>		
Is the financial accounting directly on government's accounting systems used for the national budget? If not, are the accounting results afterwards integrated in government's accounting systems?	Yes	Government undertakes all financial transactions in accordance with government's accounting systems used for government budgets. All donor support funding transferred to government is also managed according to the government accounting systems with financial reports that includes donor funded programmes.
<b>In relation to audit</b>		

<p>Will the financial accounts be audited by the government's external auditor?</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Yes Government will conduct its audit as required and in addition the Grant Agent will commission an independent audit as is required for all partners receiving more than USD500,000 in a year.</p>
<p><b>In relation to reporting</b></p>		
<p>Will the information on project execution be included in the Education Sector Plan Annual Implementation Report prepared by the Ministry of Education?</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Yes, in addition the information on implementation of this programme will be included in annual joint sector reviews</p>
<p>Will separate / additional reports be required for the Program?</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Yes – By the grant management agency who will require reports for all activities under taken.</p>
<p><b>IV.5.1 Evolution of aligned assistance</b></p>		
<p>In 375 words or less, please:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Describe how the proposed grant financing modality is evolving in comparison with the previous grant (if applicable) based on the table above.</li> <li>Explain what mechanisms are in place to mitigate fiduciary risks and why they seem appropriate.</li> <li>Detail how the proposed Program lays the foundation for more aligned assistance in the future.</li> </ul>		

The proposal has evolved from the previous grant due to the choice of the Government to change Grant Agents from the World Bank to UNICEF. GPE funds will be managed in line with UNICEF's country agreement with Government, which strives to use Government systems where appropriate, and use their own systems where this is deemed to be better value-for-money. As such, the assistance will be provided through a mix of funds transfers, using UNICEF HACT regulations and procedures, technical assistance and working in partnerships through implementing partners.

UNICEF is a long-standing partner of the Government of Sierra Leone and undertakes regular project monitoring and auditing to manage the fiduciary risk. As the proposal will include a new partner, the Teacher Service Commission, an updated micro-assessment will be undertaken for both MEST and TSC to provide on-going support to risk management. Additionally, the programme also aims to provide capacity building for MEST staff in terms of programme and financial management to improve the probability of more aligned assistance in future programmes.

## V. VARIABLE PART INFORMATION

### V.1 Summary of Variable Part indicators and targets

Please complete the table below, by providing and defining the selected indicators and providing recent data for the indicators, where applicable, to reflect past trends, and the specific targets for the Program.

*Extend the table as necessary to fit the Program and number of indicators in each dimension, by copying/pasting rows as relevant.*

TABLE 9 |

**Variable Part Indicators**

	Past trends data		Baseline	Program targets	
Indicate years for data entries:		2015	2016	2019-2020	2020-2021
<b>1. Equity</b>					
Indicator:	An increase in access to pre-primary school classrooms in the six most underserved local councils				
Definition of indicator:	An increase in the ratio of pre-primary to primary classrooms to the national average (median) in the six most underserved local councils				
Data/targets:			Lowest Local Council ratio is 1.2:100	Two Lowest Local Councils raised to 4.9:100	Six Lowest Local Councils are at 4.9:100
<input type="checkbox"/> For more rows, copy a set of the above rows and paste them here.					
<b>2. Efficiency</b>					
Indicator:	A reduction in the national repetition rate at P1				
Definition of indicator:	The share of children in P1 who are repeating				
Data/targets:		17.9/17.4%	14.54/14.39%		10% (both)
<input type="checkbox"/> For more rows, copy a set of the above rows and paste them here.					
<b>3. Learning outcomes</b>					
Indicator:	Create an official unit for learning assessment, with a work plan available for the first two years of activities.				

Definition of indicator:	The creation of the unit is defined as it being confirmed through an official statement, from the public service office responsible indicating, amongst the mandate of the unit, roles and responsibilities and the staffing with the key staff being paid as approved and confirmed by Ministry of Finance. The operability of the unit will be assessed by a contracted third-party (the EFAC, with technical support), through checks on the existence of facilities and materials (unannounced checks) and an external evaluation of the quality of the official work plan covering its planned activities.				
Data/targets:			No Learning Assessment Unit Exists	Unit operational, staff approved and work plan developed	
<input type="checkbox"/> For more rows, copy a set of the above rows and paste them here.					
Indicator:	Publication of the analysis of results of valid national assessments in the Early Grades, upper primary and secondary.				
Definition of indicator:	<i>Publication</i> here is defined as the existence on a publicly accessible website of the results of the learning assessment surveys, within one year of their data being collected.; <i>valid</i> is defined by an external check of the technical annexes by an independent third party				
Data/targets:			No data are published externally on MEST website and other media (radio, newspapers, TV)		Valid statistical surveys of learning in the lower grades, upper primary and secondary are available on the MEST website and reported in other

					media (radio, newspapers, TV).
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## V.2 Strategies and actions in equity, efficiency, learning outcomes

For each specific dimension, please:

- Describe the selected strategies/actions in the Education Sector Plan to address the issue of each specific dimension.
- Explain how the proposed strategies/actions are included in a results' chain and can be considered transformational.
- Demonstrate that the proposed implementation strategies are robust and evidence-based.
- Demonstrate that the selected indicators have a stretch effect as opposed to a mere continuation of current trends.

### 1. Equity

Equity is a key focus on the ESP, which has “access, equity and quality” as its first strategic outcome. Sierra Leone has made substantial progress in gender-equality of schooling, with a GPI of (slightly above) one at primary school, though the

GPI marginally declines as the schooling ladder is ascended, with gender disparities emerging at senior secondary school.

One major area of concern is geographical disparities, with Freetown and the Western Area displaying higher levels of outcomes, in many cases, than the other the districts and regions. As such, the Government of Sierra Leone have proposed a target to improve access to pre-primary schools in the six worst performing Local Councils. While districts represent one level of decentralisation, the Local Councils take responsibility for education and other matters such as markets, garbage collection, etc. and as such are the natural level to hold decentralised structures accountable for results.

At the national level, access to pre-primary education is uneven, with a national Gross-Enrolment rate of just 13.7% in 2016. It is difficult, in the Sierra Leone context, to find reliable population data at the district level (the 2015 census faced issues with getting sufficient power to calculate projections of age-specific local data within accepted error bounds), and as such, population rates are not reported in the Annual School Census at disaggregated levels. However, it is possible to look at proxies for enrolment, such as the relative number of classrooms available to children.

Council	Preschool		Total	Primary		Total	Pre-primary classes per 100 primary classes
	Perm	M/shift		Perm.	M/shift		
Kailahun District	66	13	79	1,356	247	1,603	4.9
Kenema City	71	21	92	560	205	765	12.0
Kenema District	30	18	48	1,369	365	1,734	2.8
Koidu-New Sembehun City	54	30	84	482	90	572	14.7
Kono District	107	50	157	1,122	431	1,553	10.1
Makeni City	87	7	94	443	51	494	19.0

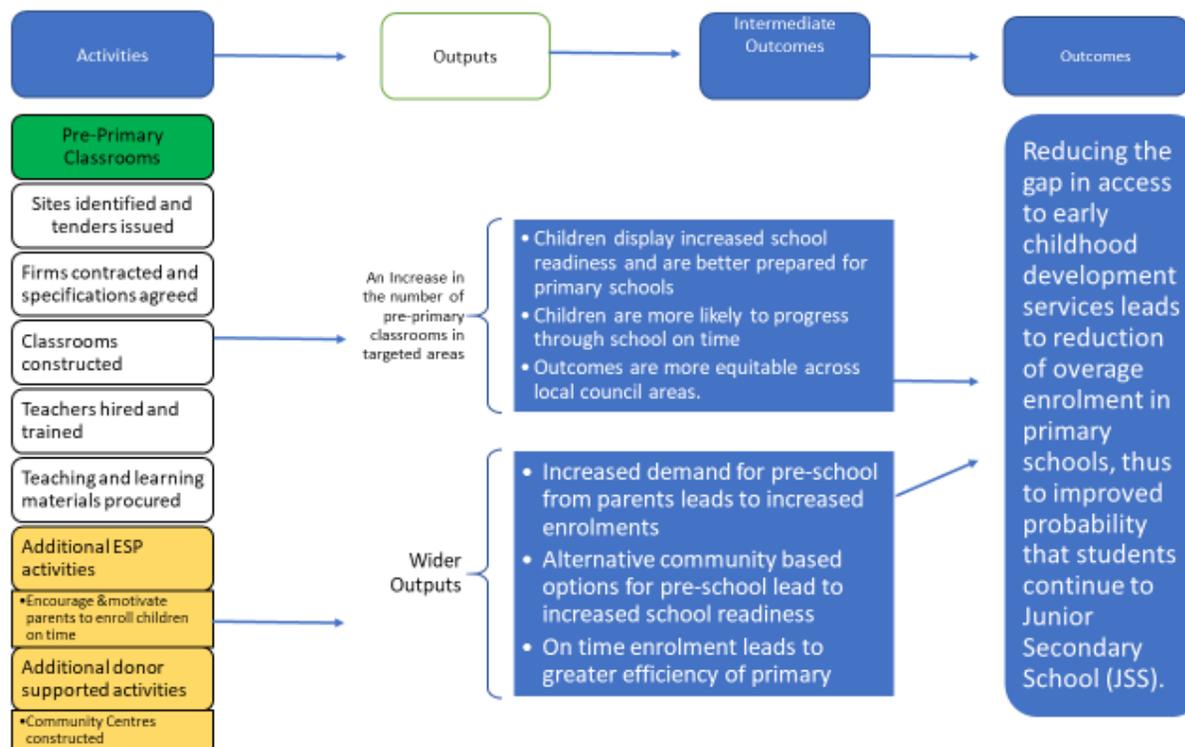
Bombali District	65	9	74	1,980	400	2,380	3.1
Kambia District	22	2	24	1,093	156	1,249	1.9
Koinadugu District	38	21	59	1,255	293	1,548	3.8
Port Loko District	52	17	69	1,905	281	2,186	3.2
Tonkolili District	53	21	74	1,862	313	2,175	3.4
Bo City	141	10	151	672	51	723	20.9
Bo District	66	11	77	1,725	239	1,964	3.9
Bonthe Municipal		9	9	50	8	58	15.5
Bonthe District	39	7	46	692	184	876	5.3
Moyamba District	45	8	53	1,394	371	1,765	3.0
Pujehun District	8	1	9	615	142	757	1.2
Freetown City	738	245	983	3,132	753	3,885	25.3
Western Area Rural District	252	92	344	1,367	277	1,644	20.9
National	1,934	592	2526	23,074	4,857	27,931	Median: 4.9

Table 1: Ratio of pre-primary classrooms to primary

The Table above shows the number of pre-primary classrooms for every 100 primary school classrooms in a local-council area. By looking at the ratio, this can allow us to control for differences in population between district. It is noted that the ratio falls from approximately 25 to 100 in Freetown to just 1.2 to 100 in Pujehun district, and 1.9 in Kambia district. As such, there are substantial inequities within access to pre-school in Sierra Leone.

This matters as many of the students in Sierra Leone do not complete primary school, or complete when they are noticeably over-age, which lowers the probability that they will continue to junior secondary school. There is substantial international evidence (Lancet 2016) that children who have access to early childhood opportunities are more likely to progress through school on time, and complete higher levels of schooling. A study in Sierra Leone found that pupils that attended pre-school were more likely to be in primary school at the correct age.

One additional issue is the age at which children are enrolling in schools – the 2016 school census showed that 43,000 five-year olds are enrolled in primary school, the majority of whom would be expected to repeat. By improving access to early childhood opportunities, and encouraging children to enroll at the correct age, the pressures on P1 should lessen, meaning children would be less likely to need to repeat.



### 9.3.2 Strategy and actions in place in the ESP addressing the identified challenges

The ESP includes a number of strategies to improve early childhood services. Firstly, it targets improvements to ECD facilities, and are seeking to develop a costed action plan to guide the expansion of pre-primary education services, including strategies for expanding public pre-school education in primary schools and increasing opportunities through other forms of services, such as pre-schools, nurseries, and community-based non-formal pre-primary/Early Childhood Development centres.

It will be necessary to expedite the planned interventions in the ESP to develop the costed action plan to secure the funding necessary to undertake the construction of the additional classrooms needed.

In addition to the building of the classrooms, it will be important to raise demand for pre-primary in local communities. To this end, activities will be undertaken to encourage communities to enrol children on time, through raising the importance of education with local leaders including the paramount chiefs.

### 9.3.3 Indicator(s) to monitor success of the ESP in addressing the challenges

It is proposed that the following indicator is used to assess equitable access to pre-primary services in Sierra Leone

1. An increase, towards the national average (the median) in the availability of pre-primary services in one third of the local councils, that is, the six most underserved local councils.

Given the substantial differences between Freetown, the western area and the rest of the country, it is suggested that the median ratio is used for the average, rather than the arithmetic mean, given the skewed nature of the distribution across the local council areas. Statistically, the median is preferred in the presence of outliers.

Following this, this would mean a target of having 4.9 pre-primary classrooms per 100 primary classrooms in the six lowest local councils, which is a stretching, but not impossible indicator. While ideally, all local councils under the median (9 local councils) would be brought to the median, this is deemed unrealistic given the capacity issues. Bringing one-third of the country to the national average will require an additional 220 classrooms to be built over 30 months. Previous experience in Sierra Leone suggests that 40 classrooms per year is a stretch but achievable, given the staffing constraints with MEST. As such, this target of 140 (Government built) classrooms in approximately 30 months is deemed to be off sufficient stretch.

It is proposed that the payment is split into two, with two Local Councils being targeted for payment by June 2020, and the remaining four Local Councils targeted for payment by June 2021. This would mean approximately \$284,000 per Local Council, paid in two instalments - \$568,000 by June 2020 & \$1,152,000 in June 2021.

### 9.3.4 Means of verification

The indicator will be monitored using project completion reports for the construction and checks on the school buildings

through the third-party verification Education for All Coalition. Given the timing of payments, it won't be feasible to rely on the Annual School Census data for payments without making the requirements too stretching (as data is collected at the start of the school year, so schools would have to be ready for August 2019 to be paid by June 2020). These data will then be verified by members of the LEG through randomised spot visits to a small sample of sites.

## 2. Efficiency

Repetition rates in Sierra Leone, particularly in the early grades, have been identified as a key concern in the Education Sector Plan. The latest available data, for 2016, show that in Primary One (P1), approximately 14% of children are repeating the grade. While these figures decline slightly through the grades, they still represent prominent levels of inefficiencies within the system.

Children repeating a grade take up spaces that would have been taken by other children progressing to the next grade. The schooling of girls is adversely affected by too many repetitions. It is not uncommon for girls in remote rural areas to start schooling at 8 instead of the official starting age of six years. If they repeat twice at the primary level, by the time they complete primary schooling they could be 16 years of age. The repetition rate is particularly high in the early grades. Improving repetition in the early grades is therefore important to enable children access to later grades. The share of primary school children who are over-aged is very high, placing pressure on class-sizes but also reducing the probability that they will enrol in junior-secondary schools. It also increases pressure on the teacher through multi-age classrooms, as teachers are unprepared for multi-age teaching, and the level of physical and cognitive development will vary widely across pupils.

There is also a high financial cost of such inefficiencies, with the World Bank estimating in 2014 that the repetition of grades led to a loss of income equivalent to 13 percent of GDP and nearly 16 percent of private household income. This estimation of loss associated with grade repetitions was based on the direct cost of schooling and the discounted value of foregone opportunity costs of expected earnings.

### ii. Strategy and actions in place in the ESP addressing the identified challenges

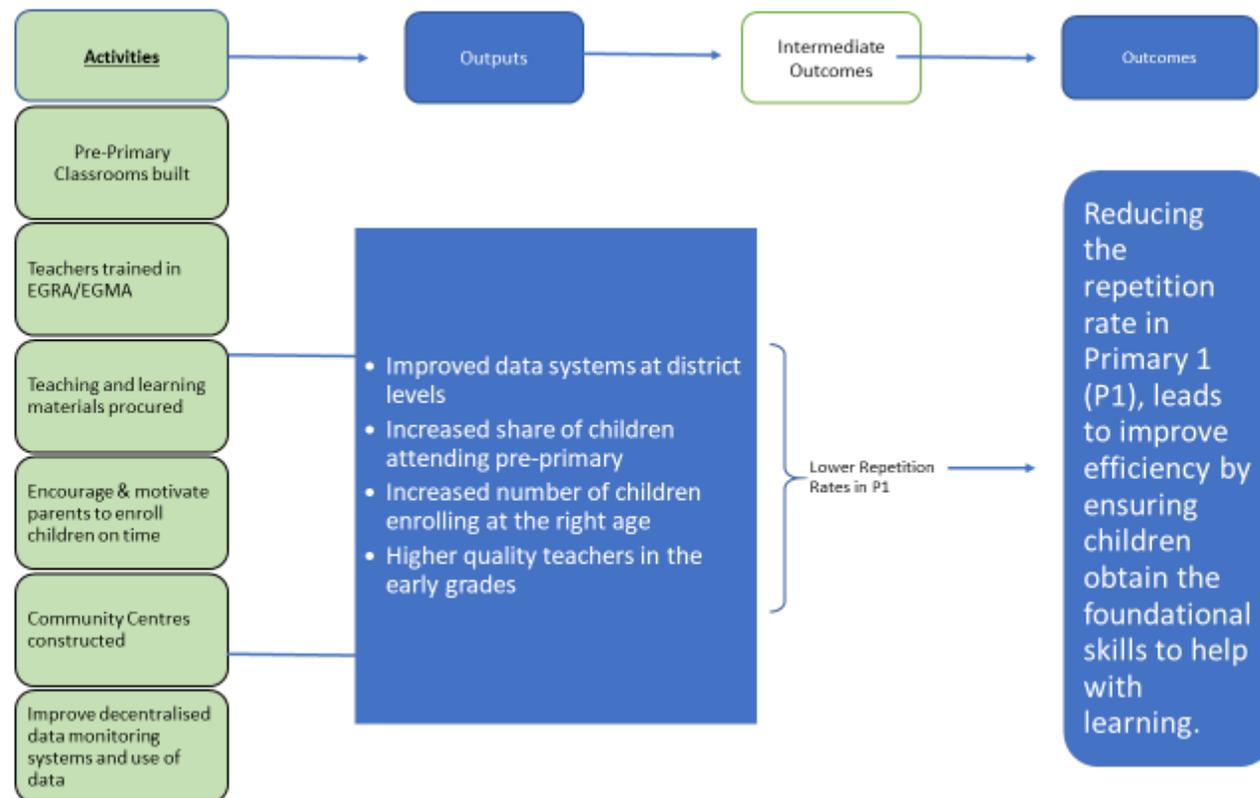
As referenced in the previous indicators, there are several activities taking place within the ESP that aim to improve efficiency

of the education system within Sierra Leone. For data, work is underway to decentralise the data processing activities, with the EU supporting training for local EMIS staff on data collection, analysis and processing. In addition, the use of school report cards based on EMIS data will be trialled in four districts, to facilitate the use of the statistics to hold schools accountable.

The focus on children repeating serves as a particularly ambitious and transformational target, given the complexity of reasons behind repetition. Several factors contribute (home, school quality, household chores) which impact on whether children stay in, or skip, school, leading to repetition. A number of strategies will be supported through the ESP to improve retention including sensitization of communities on the importance of enrolling at the correct age and participating in early grade studies. Improvement of education quality through teacher training and the provision of learning materials. The project will also strengthen the linkages between school improvements and the EMIS/Situation room systems, improving both monitoring and use of regular attendance information (a key predictor of repetition is improved school attendance/completion). The World Bank are also piloting a system to introduce feedback loops for this data back into schooling, which can then be used at the local level to develop localised solutions to this problem. MEST is working with MoFED to try to ensure the timely payment of subventions, which it is hoped will take the pressure of parents and children, enabling them to stay in school.

Alongside this, work will be done to improve the school feeding programme for GoSL/GoSL-assisted primary schools by strengthening integrated service delivery at school level, program design and institutional capacity with support from development partners. This will include exploring partnership collaborations with strategic partners and donors to realize an effective integration of strategies to promote community participation and local procurement from small holder farmers. The Government will also seek to improve repetition rates by improving school quality – through strengthening the Teacher Service Commission, and through direct teacher training on early grade reading and mathematics (through the fixed part) and general continual professional development (through the EU). There is strong evidence from a large number of studies, that

in-service teacher training improves learning outcomes, which leads to higher promotion rates (and as such lower repetition).



A theory of change diagram is shown above.

As repetition rates are a lagged indicator, to enable payment within the lifetime of the grant, is necessary to use the repetition rate between the 2019-2020 school year and the 2020-2021 school year to report on this indicator. Therefore, it is necessary

to intervene to tackle the sources of repetition within two years of the ESP commencing, creating substantial time pressures.

iii. Indicator(s) to monitor success of the ESP in addressing the challenges

The programme will target a reduction in the repetition rate in P1 from 14.1% to 10% by 2020-2021. Setting the target here suffers from the same issues as before – namely a lack of historical trend data and information from international evidence on what is feasible. Where evidence does exist (see Glewwe and Muralidharan (2015) for a summary) they generally do not focus on specific grade repetition rates. The evidence suggests that while reductions are possible, they are usually obtained through interventions to lower financial barriers. Given the interventions planned will focus on improving school inputs, which Glewwe and Muralidharan (2015) report have lower, often zero impact on repetition rates, it seems that a lower target is more realistic.

To set the target for repetition rates, we can compare the share of repeaters in 2015 (immediately after Ebola) with those in 2016. We find that the share of children in P1 & P2 who are repeaters is slightly higher (by 3 percentage points in P1; and by 2.8% in P2). In the other grades the difference is slight, with the exception of P6, where the differences appear again. These figures do not seem to be overly problematic and as such are considered in the measurement of the efficiency of the system. Data from pre-Ebola show equally high rates, with the 2011/12 Annual School Census report showing a Grade/P1 repetition rate of 20%.

Share of repeaters, by grade

Grade	2015		2016	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
1	17.94%	17.36%	14.54%	14.39%
2	14.12%	13.93%	12.66%	12.52%
3	13.15%	13.32%	12.27%	12.42%
4	11.73%	11.72%	11.37%	11.99%

5	11.27%	11.43%	11.15%	11.28%
6	6.60%	6.42%	2.99%	2.87%

Given the pre-Ebola levels of 20% in the ASC 2011/2012, as well as the fact that the Grade/P1 repetition rate has never been below 14% since 2011/2012 even with the fluctuations from one year to the next, and the trend shown above, it is proposed that a target of a reduction in P1 to 10% by 2020-2021 is a stretching target.

i. Means of verification

The Annual School Census in 2020-2021 will be used to report on the repetition rate, which will be verified by the Local Education Group, who will integrate checks into their normal monitoring processes around the use of automatic promotion within schools (to mitigate against the risk of perverse incentives at the school level of the use of this indicator).

### 3. Learning outcomes

The ESP MTR and updated ESP 2018-2020 place improvements in learning, especially improvement in foundational reading and math skills in the early grades of primary school, at the core of education reform. Improving education foundations is a key aim of GoSL and partners and is a key component of the current GPE grant. However, as discussed earlier, there are substantial issues in using measured changes in EGRA performance as a high-stakes payment trigger. In summary, two issues prohibit this. Firstly, the baseline data are drawn from pre-Ebola, so it is hard to know either how far below zero children were on the test, or if this is representative of the situation now. Secondly, any realistic target, as estimated from the literature of systemic changes, will require very large samples, meaning that the cost of undertaking the verification will be substantial. So while changes in learning outcomes will be measured as an outcome of the programme, it is not proposed as a payment trigger.

The ESP identifies the need to systematically monitor and use learning assessments to influence policy and programming as a key step towards improving scores. Given the range of learning assessments that are planned in Sierra Leone, alongside the project level assessments, MEST plans to develop a learning assessment unit to amalgamate the disparate findings. Data alone are not enough to facilitate change, they must be used. To this end, the learning assessment unit will also oversee an annual update to be published alongside the ASC, which draws on any new learning outcomes data within that year to inform policy. There is increasing recognition of a learning assessment system being integral to education systems, as they allow robust monitoring of outcomes and promote evidence-based decision making. Identifying what students are learning, especially in foundational areas of literacy and numeracy, is essential to help the Government support education reforms.

The GPE have identified a robust Learning Assessment System as a key result in their strategic plan. Learning assessments have so far been conducted in a project mode and that establishing a permanent unit in the Ministry, despite limitations on new recruitment, is not a mere continuation of ongoing efforts but stretching objective, as this will equate to Civil Service reform in an area of high importance, and so will require high level support from across Government.

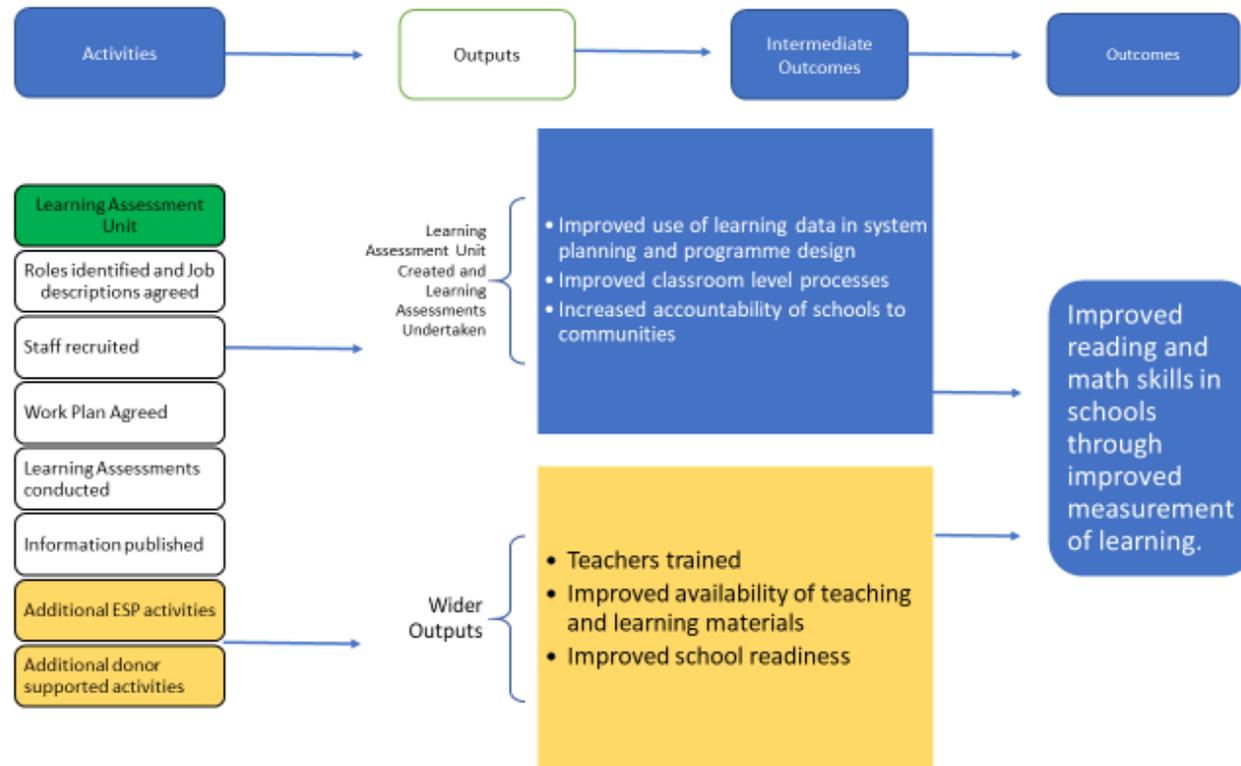
In line with this, the LEG proposes a variable tranche indicator that improves the quality of the learning assessment system in Sierra Leone. The results from assessments can influence policy and practices from the classroom level to large scale reforms and help justify investments by MEST. In the classroom, learning assessments help teachers adapt their pedagogical skills, beliefs about ability and practices to ensure learning takes place. Policymakers and the Local Education Group (LEG) can use learning assessments to monitor outcomes, assess the effect of national policies and identify weaknesses and support MEST to take the appropriate actions.

The project proposes to use the Learning Assessment Unit to improve the monitoring of students learning across the education cycle. It will aim to amalgamate work on assessment in the early grades of primary school with the assessments that are also being carried out at the upper primary grades as well as the junior and senior secondary levels. Given the increased number of sample-based assessments to supplement examination data, this is a key opportunity for Sierra Leone to improve its capacity to be able to integrate learning assessment into its system planning and programme development processes. Given the existing capacity within the system, and the high level of technical knowledge needed to conduct robust sample surveys, technical assistance to deliver this will be required over the ESP period and beyond - however, by beginning

to build this capacity through the unit, Government can become informed users of this data, and have oversight over all activities in this area, which will strengthen the evidence basis of planning and processing.

More informed use of this data for programming is needed to identify the weaknesses in the system and ensure that students are learning. At school level, this information can be incorporated into remediation practices for the teacher training activities. The results of the learning assessments will be used to develop strategies for training and mentoring teachers. Regular dissemination of the results will be carried out at the district and local levels through the media, and internal Governmental channels such as through District Education Officers.

Contrary to the old saying “you don’t fatten a pig by weighing it”, there are several channels through which increased knowledge of learning outcomes can lead to increases in learning outcomes. The first is through improvements in the Government’s ability to ensure that the system is targeted at the right level and can feed this information into teacher training and broader reforms on improving learning outcomes for all children. The second is through increased accountability, increasing the amount of information Government and Parents have to hold Schools to account, increasing their participation, choice and voice.



ii. Strategy and actions in place in the ESP addressing the identified challenges

The ESP identifies several activities to improve learning outcomes. In terms of teacher improvements, the following activities are expected.

- Development of a training package for early grade reading and math for grade 1-3 teachers, ensuring it is aligned with standards being developed by TSC

- Training of early grade primary teachers through termly trainings, supplemented with a Continuous Professional Development (CPD)/cluster approach.

- Increased oversight and management of teachers through strengthening of TSC

It is expected that these actions will lead to an improvement in early grade reading, writing and mathematics scores. The impact of improving foundational literacy scores is well evidenced – improving the foundations of learning has been found key to economic growth alongside increasing the opportunities for children to progress through schools. However, as the bulk of these activities are undertaken with support from the fixed part, their use as a variable indicator is not possible. Equally, due to statistical issues around EGRA, it is not possible to use the 2014 EGRA results as a baseline and target improvements measured at the outcome level.

Underlying all these improvements are assumptions around the existing level of learning. Evidence shows that mismatches between the current levels of learning and what is being taught can hinder learning outcomes. A crucial step towards this is Government ownership of regular learning outcomes data that is nationally representative. Through this learning assessment unit, the myriad of data that is being developed can be turned into information – which can be used to leverage changes in policies or programming, or financial allocation. It can be used directly, as an input into management decisions at the Ministry or decentralised levels. It can also be used to change the relationships of accountability among the various actors in the education system to change behaviors and thus improve outcomes. These outcomes are strengthened when the data is owned by the Government and publicly disseminated, rather than published externally and are not nationally representative. To improve the use of learning assessments, the ESP highlights the creation of a Learning Assessment Unit as a key step towards developing an more advanced learning assessment system, and in improving the levels of learning within the system; In addition, the EU plans to work to support the integration of learning assessments into the EMIS system, which will enable the Learning Assessment Unit to work to undertake regular reporting on learning outcomes, and ensure results are used in policy and planning, and form a key part of the Education System Analysis in 2019-2020. It is key here that the information is publicly available, to facilitate the improvements of using information for accountability. As such, the Learning Assessment Unit will seek to publish the results of the sample-based learning assessment alongside the Annual School Census.

iii. Indicator(s) to monitor success of the ESP in addressing the challenges

As such, a mix of process and output level indicators are proposed, which if achieved, would help Sierra Leone's learning assessment system improve.

1) Create a Learning Assessment Unit within MEST, with a work plan available for the first two years of activities.  
2) Publication of the analysis of results of the valid national assessment in the Early Grades, upper primary and secondary. The creation of the unit is defined as it being confirmed through an official statement, from the public service office responsible indicating, amongst other things, the mandate of the unit and the staffing with the key staff being paid as approved and confirmed by Ministry of Finance. The operability/functioning of the unit will be assessed by a third-party, through checks on the existence of facilities and materials (unannounced checks) and an external verification of the quality of the Official work plan covering its planned activities.

Publication here is defined as the existence on a publicly accessible website of the results of the assessments, for instance the Ministry of Education website [www.education.gov.sl](http://www.education.gov.sl), within one year of the data being collected; valid is defined by an external check of the technical annexes by an independent third party.

The LEG believes that this would be a transformational change for Sierra Leone and place it at the forefront of GPE grantee requirements and align with key areas in the GPE results framework. It will ensure that learning outcomes and foundational learning are at the forefront of discussions over the period, and that the use of Learning Assessments is integrated into the fabric of the Ministry. It is ambitious, given the technical demands of learning assessments, to develop a quality work plan around learning assessments, but as elsewhere, in order to reverse the inherent learning crisis, such ambitious, yet strategic learning assessment unit is necessary to ensure Sierra Leone continue to monitor learning achievement across all levels.

#### iv. Means of verification

This indicator will be verified by the Education for All Coalition, who will report to the LEG. Given the technicalities around learning assessments, they will be supported by an external consultant to get the relevant technical skills to undertake this validation process. The first part of the indicator will be verified by a review of relevant documentation (including the letters stipulating staff salaries and the work plan). The second part of the indicator will be verified by a combination of the LEG members undertaking checks on their ability to download the relevant documents; alongside a review of the validity of the results by a technical assessment specialist working alongside the Education for All Coalition.

### V.3 Means of verification

Please complete the table below by providing an overview of means of verification for each of the three dimensions, the timing and methodology (including inclusiveness) of the process for determining whether the target is reached as well as the process to determine (partial) disbursements based on the results. The means of verification should include:

- 1) Responsible party
- 2) Source document
- 3) Indicative timing of validation by local education group.

*Extend and adapt the table if more rows are needed to fit the Program, by copying/pasting rows as relevant.*

**TABLE 10 |**

**Target attainment verification for disbursement**

Means of verification	Month and year of target attainment verification	Month and year of disbursement of variable part
<b>1. Equity</b>		
<b>Indicator:</b>	Increase in the ratio of pre-primary to primary classrooms in the six most underperforming local councils to the national average (median)	
The indicator will be monitored using project completion reports for the construction and checks on the school buildings through the third-party verification Education for All Coalition. These data will then be verified by members of the LEG through randomised spot visits to a small sample of sites.	May 2020 & May 2021	June 2020 & June 2021

*For more rows, copy a set of the above set of rows and paste them here.*

2. Efficiency		
<b>Indicator:</b>	Reduction in the repetition rate	
Reported in published Annual School Census for 2020-2021	May 2021	June 2021
<input type="checkbox"/> For more rows, copy a set of the above set of rows and paste them here.		
3. Learning outcomes		
<b>Indicator:</b>	Create a Learning Assessment Unit, with a work plan available for the first two years of activities.	
The operability/functioning of the unit will be assessed by a third-party, through checks on the existence of facilities and materials (unannounced checks) and an external verification of the quality of the Official work plan covering its planned activities.	July 2019	Sept 2019
<input type="checkbox"/> For more rows, copy a set of the above set of rows and paste them here.		
<b>Indicator:</b>	Publication of the analysis of results of the valid national assessment in the Early Grades, upper primary and secondary	
This will be verified by a combination of the LEG members undertaking checks on their ability to download the relevant documents; alongside a review of the validity of the results by a technical assessment specialist	May 2021	June 2021

working alongside the Education for All Coalition.		
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## VI. INCLUSIVE APPROACH

### VI.1 Consultation

In 300 words, please:

- Discuss the scope and depth of collaboration in the development of the application within the local education group, the government and its development partners including civil society organizations, teachers' organizations, and the private sector.
- Describe if and how the development of the application has strengthened local education group collaboration.

This project has been designed by the MEST with technical assistance from UNICEF and input from the Local Education Group comprised of donor partners and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). It is aligned to the Implementation Plan of the ESP.

The LEG in Sierra Leone is comprised of the Government of Sierra Leone, development partners, international and national NGOs, and civil society organizations. The LEG engaged actively in consultative process for appraisal of the ESP, Implementation Plan, and development of this new GPE programme. Consultations were held in a collaborative spirit and encompassed a wide range of stakeholders in education sector of Sierra Leone. During identification and preparation missions the representatives of government, DPs, CSOs were involved in discussions led by MEST and UNICEF (as the new Grant Agent). Donors and CSOs have been consulted both during the development of the ESP as well as the GPE project design, to ensure co-ordination of activities alongside learning from previous and existing activities.

The programme has been designed in steps – firstly, the concept note was developed and share with partners, which sought agreement on the broad areas of programming. Following this, more detailed consultations were held with Development partners, including the existing grant agents, to ensure that the project proposal builds on the existing GPE grant, and aligns

well with current and future development partner programming.

Following this, the formal QAR II assessment was conducted, the findings of which were discussed with the LEG, and changes to the programme design agreed. The final programme document, including the variable part indicators and 'stretch' was discussed and agreed prior to submission

## VI.2 Sign-off

### Signature of applicant ministry representative

The below signatory endorses this application on behalf of the government.  
(Please scan this page after signature and include it as an attached file to the submission.)

<b>Name of signatory:</b>	Umaru A. Conteh. Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
Date:	4/30/3013
Signature:	

### Signature of the grant agent representative (Country Director of agency)

The below signatory endorses this application on behalf of the grant agent agency or organization.  
(Please scan this page after signature and include it as an attached file to the submission.)

<b>Name of signatory:</b>	Hamid El Bashir
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Date:	4/30/2018
Signature:	
<b>Signature of the coordinating agency representative</b>	
The below signatory endorses this application on behalf of the development partner group. (Please scan this page after signature and include it as an attached file to the submission.)	
<b>Name of signatory:</b>	Hamid El Bashir
Date:	4/30/2018
Signature:	

### **Submission**

- The coordinating agency submits the full ESPIG application package (see [ESPIG Guidelines](#) for details) on behalf of the government and the local education group via email addressed to [gpe\\_grant\\_submission@globalpartnership.org](mailto:gpe_grant_submission@globalpartnership.org), with copy to the grant agent, the ministry focal point and the country lead within the Secretariat.

