Proposal to the Global Partnership for Education for a contribution towards the implementation of the 2018-2020 Education Sector Plan

Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, Government of Sierra Leone and UNICEF

Programme Document

April 2018

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1   Country information and education sector context

Sierra Leone has been developing steadily since the end of the civil war in 2002, with a peak economic growth rate of 20.7% in 2013. The overarching framework for poverty reduction has been The Government's Agenda for Prosperity 2013-18 (AfP). However, the impressive growth rate has since been disrupted by the impacts of a decline in iron ore prices from late 2013 and the Ebola outbreak from 2014 to 2016.

The authorities, in close partnership with donors and other stakeholders, prioritised the country's immediate strategic interventions in a Post-Ebola Recovery Plan (PRP), to include investment in education. Current trends show that real GDP growth recovered to 4.3% in 2016, and the IMF has projected growth of 6.0% in 2017. Despite this, challenges remain.

The 2016 Human Development Index (HDI) reports that Sierra Leone ranked 179 out of 188 countries in 2015. The 2011 Sierra Leone Integrated Household Survey estimated that 52.9% of the population live on less than 1 US dollar a day. The 2013 integrated household survey shows that wealth is concentrated in the urban areas, where 61% are in the highest quintile compared to just 1% in rural areas, where 59% of people live. In the 2015 Population and Housing census (PHC), the total population was 7,092,113 with 40.9 per cent younger than 15 years old.

1.1   Education sector context

The indicators presented above have significant impact on education planning and financing. Having been unable to achieve the education-related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015, the Government (with donor support) is committed to putting in place strategies to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as outlined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by the UN General Assembly in September 2015. The GPE support is a key part of this.

Sierra Leone is signatory to various conventions and declarations on education, the right to education and the rights of children, and supports the SDGs. The driving policy documents are the Education Act of 2007 and Education Policy of 2010, which give the right to basic education of at least nine years' duration (primary and junior secondary school). The Education Sector Plan (ESP) translates these policies into actionable strategies, and is informed by priorities of the government's development agenda as articulated in the country's PRSP document, Agenda for Prosperity (A4P).

To date, Sierra Leone has developed three ESPs: 2007-2015, 2014-2018 and 2018-2020. Implementation of these plans initially led to improved access and learning but was hit hard

by the devastating Ebola epidemic in 2014-2015, during which schools closed for almost nine months. This caused disruption of an entire school year and seriously compromised the existing plans.

Following the abatement of Ebola, the Ministry of Education conducted a mid-term review (MTR) of the period 2014-2016 to identify contextual changes and align the ESP with post-Ebola transitional and recovery priorities. This informed the priorities in the 2018-2020 ESP which identifies four strategic areas of intervention:

1) Access, Equity and Completion

2) Quality, Relevance and Integrity

3) Systems Strengthening

4) Emergency Preparedness and Response.

1.1.1   Access

More children are enrolling in school, with noticeable increases in the school population over the last decade as Sierra Leone began to stabilise following the civil war.

Enrolments have remained low at pre-primary level, with a Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) of just 13.7% in 2016. The bulk of children within the system are in primary school, where the GER was 130% in 2016. At the junior secondary level (JSS), the GER falls notably to 65%, despite it being supported in part by government. By senior secondary (SSS) the rate is lower still, at just 29.5%. There is also low participation in TVET and higher education.

These numbers, while low, are on a positive trajectory, with the number of children in primary school rising from 1.1m enrolled in 2003/04 to 1.4m in 2016. Junior secondary rose from 139,000 in 2003/04 to 300,000 in 2016, while senior secondary rose from just 38,000 children in 2003/04 to 170,000 children now.

The steady increase in enrolment at all levels is a clear indication that the interventions to improve access have been successful. Measures such as keeping fees at a reasonable level, constructing more classrooms and schools in remote areas, and using traditional leaders and local people to showcase the benefits of schooling, have all borne fruit. The challenge going forward is to get students to progress through school on time, and work with those who are out of school.

1.1.2   Equity

In Sierra Leone, inequality is visible across gender, socio-economic status and geographical locations. One of the challenges is the cost of schooling, indicating that affordability of education drives inequality through household wealth. It was confirmed in the Country Status Report in 2013 that children from more wealthy households in urban areas are more likely to attend and complete school than those from poorer families in rural areas.

While gender parity has been achieved at the pre-school and primary levels (with more girls enrolled than boys) it equalises at JSS, and becomes pro-male at SSS, TVET, and tertiary level. The Gender Parity Index (GPI) at pre-school level is in favour of girls at 1.1, while there is gender parity at primary and near-parity at JSS level. At SSS level, girls are disadvantaged in comparison to boys, with a GPI of 0.9. The chart below shows the favourable trend in gender parity from the 2011/12 to the 2015/16 school year.

Fig. 1.1 – Trend in Gender Parity Index at School Level from 2011/12 – 2015/16
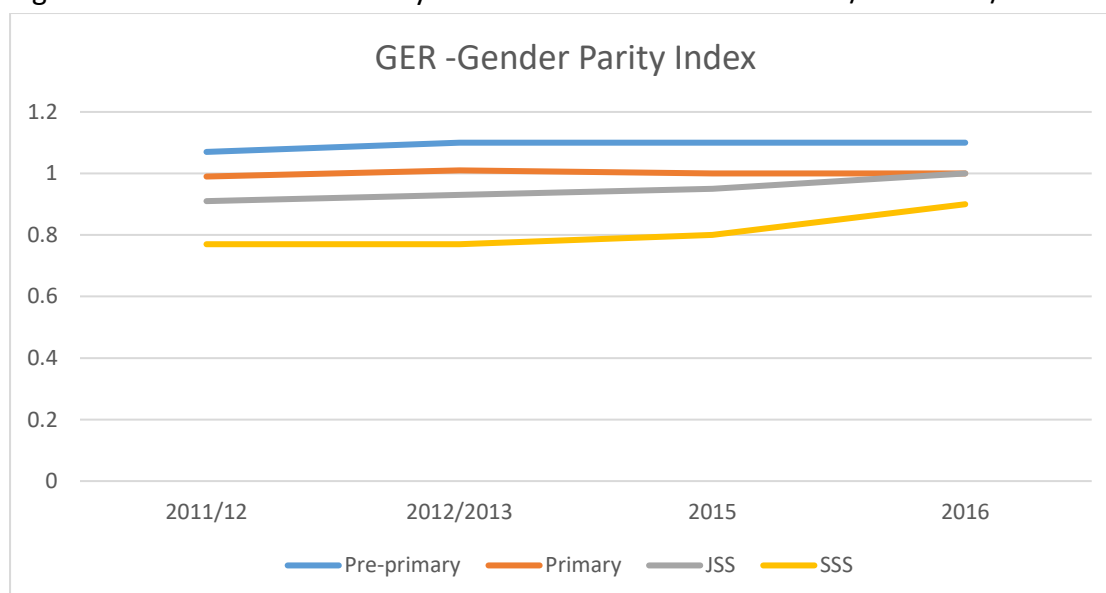
For many years, the Northern Region lagged behind the other regions in school enrolments. It has since caught up and surpassed other regions in general enrolments at primary and junior secondary levels, as a result of interventions targeting the Eastern and Northern Regions in the last two decades. However, it still lags behind the others in terms of gender parity, especially at the post-primary level.

Even within regions, there are disparities. For example, there are significant differences between the districts that make up the Northern Region; The Bombali District, the capital of the Northern Region, has a pro-female GPI.

The lack of data on school age populations by district and region makes it difficult to compare between them in terms of GER. The Ministry is currently working with the national statistics

authority, Statistics Sierra Leone (SSL), to generate the required tables from the database of the recently conducted Population and Housing Census.

Children with disabilities are particularly disadvantaged when it comes to accessing education, as many of them are unable to freely and safely enter and navigate through the school structures. In addition, there is a lack of appropriate facilities, teaching/learning materials and trained teachers to meet the needs of children with disabilities.

According to the 2015 School Census, only 25,339 disabled students were enrolled at various levels of the school system, with the majority (20,341) enrolled in primary school. This means that less than 2% of the overall primary school population has a disability, which is very low.

The most common disabilities among children enrolled in schools include hearing and visual impairment, physical disabilities, speech and learning disabilities. These children are disadvantaged in many ways, and require teachers with additional training to meet their learning needs as well as specialised teaching and learning materials. The analysis being carried out as part of the process of developing an inclusive education policy will help to provide information to work towards improved support.

In terms of approved schools, (which has potential long run impacts on financing and resources from government[1]) there are also regional differences. The Western region has 50% of its schools approved, the highest of all districts, compared to a national average of 41%. The Eastern and Northern regions have the lowest rates, where only 35% of the schools are approved. In many instances, unapproved schools serve low-income households, which renders children in these communities more vulnerable and at risk of not enrolling or dropping out of school.

Completion

Although completion rates have risen at all levels, there are still many children who do not complete primary school, with a Primary Completion Rate (PCR) of 75.3% in 2015, and JSS and SSS completion rates of 40.6% and 22.2%, respectively. Many students not only fail to complete the levels of education within the required number of years but also fail to complete schooling at all, due to, amongst other things, elevated levels of repetition. According to the Annual School Census (2015), while repetition rates are falling, at primary school level they still stand at 12.6%, meaning one child in every eight repeats each year. This rate is similar at JSS level, falling to 6.7% at SSS level.

Girls in particular, are adversely affected by repetition and it is not uncommon for girls in remote rural areas to start schooling at age 8 instead of the official starting age of 6. If they

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[1] While Government financing is not guaranteed for approved schools (i.e. you can have approved private schools), it is a necessary step for those schools wishing to apply for funding.

repeat twice at the primary level, they would be 16 years of age by the time they complete primary schooling. Age distribution data tells us that a significant number of children at the primary level are above the official age range for that level, as the chart below shows.

Fig 1.3 – Age Distribution of Students Enrolled in Primary School in the 2015/16 School Year

	5 years old	6 years old	7 years old	8 years old	9 years old	10 years old	11 years old	12 years old	13 years old	14 years old	15 years old	16 years old
Male	22050	117356	124574	114542	101291	88213	66363	36223	18160	8682	3561	1163
Female	21833	120068	124729	116890	102728	88312	65746	37051	18927	9232	3786	1044
Both	43883	237424	249303	231432	204019	176525	132109	73274	37087	17914	7347	2207

With such relatively low completion rates at the post-primary level, it is evident that many children who start school drop out before the end of the 9 year 'basic education' cycle. High repetition and drop-out rates are indicators of inefficiency within a system that is striving to accommodate all school age children. Children repeating a grade, for example, leads to overcrowding within early grade classrooms.

1.1.3   Quality, relevance and integrity

One of the main challenges in Sierra Leone is the large percentage of unapproved schools. In the ASC 2016, 4,777 out of 8,907 schools (53%) are not approved. The largest share of unapproved schools was found in Bombali, Kono and Koinadugu District Councils, where up to two-thirds of the schools were unapproved. These schools are generally less accountable and do not provide conducive learning environment.

Poverty is a major barrier to learning. Many students lack basic learning materials such as core textbooks, exercise books, pens, pencils and rulers, especially in primary schools. This hinders a student's ability to learn effectively. MEST has an aim to increase supplies of teaching and

learning materials to schools, and to improve the quantity and coverage of support particularly in core textbooks provision.

Many teachers are unqualified, with 41% of male and 28% of female teachers in 2016 without a qualification or teaching with a qualification below the standard required. At the SSS level, nearly half of teachers are not qualified to a sufficient standard. At the primary level, the results of the 2014 EGRA and EGMA tests show that the majority of children at the end of lower primary are only just learning to read and have limited competencies in mathematics.

Additional challenges include: the low priority and negative public perception of TVET education; ensuring that girls and children with special needs have a full complement of quality and relevant education; and production of graduates from Higher Education Institutions with knowledge and skills that are applicable to the local labour market. There are also issues with girls being exposed to sexual exploitation in educational institutions by staff.
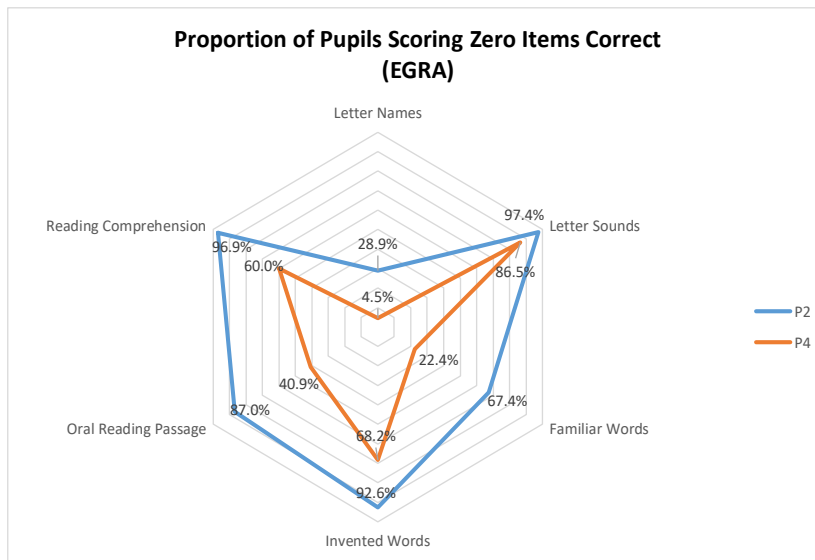
While overall performance in the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) exams has been improving, performance in the key subject areas of English language, mathematics and science has been of concern. The ESP is therefore focused on: improving the teaching and learning situation, monitoring learning through learning assessment tests and analysis of scores, improving performance in the WAEC conducted National Primary School Examination (NPSE), Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE), and West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE).

In April and May 2014, EGRA and EGMA learning assessment tests were conducted using a nationally representative sample of 2,367 (1,192 girls and 1,175 boys) from 130 primary schools in all 14 districts. Analysis of performance in the EGRA assessment led to the following conclusions:

   i.   *Primary/Class 4 pupils cannot read grade and age appropriate text fluently and with comprehension*
   ii.   *Pupils in Sierra Leone are not learning <u>how</u> to read in schools*
   iii.   *Pupils in Primary/Class 2 and Primary/Class 4 do not know the letter sounds*
   iv.   *Pupils in Primary/Class 2 and Primary/Class 4 do not have the ability to decode words*

The above listed conclusion and others can be derived from the diagram shown below:

Fig. 2.1 – Proportion of Pupils Scoring Zero Items Correct - EGRA

Proportion of Pupils Scoring Zero Items Correct (EGRA)

Letter Names — 28.9% (P2), 4.5% (P4)
Letter Sounds — 97.4% (P2), 86.5% (P4)
Familiar Words — 67.4% (P2), 22.4% (P4)
Invented Words — 92.6% (P2), 68.2% (P4)
Oral Reading Passage — 87.0% (P2), 40.9% (P4)
Reading Comprehension — 96.9% (P2), 60.0% (P4)

Based on the above findings, it was recommended that greater attention be given to reading in the first 2 years of primary schooling. The Government is now placing greater emphasis on teaching and learning in early primary school, and early grade reading was a major intervention under the GPE funded Revitalisation of Education Development in Sierra Leone (REDiSL) Project and under the proposed GPE funds.

As a follow-up to the early grade reading intervention and a check on whether the findings of the 2014 study still hold true, another EGRA/EMGA using the same class levels will be conducted during the forthcoming ESP period.

Results to date through the ESP and REDiSL.

The 2014-2016 ESP set out the governments aims in education during this period. The ESP had 3 key strategic objectives; Increase access, equity, and completion rate at all levels of education; Improve the Quality and Relevance of Education at all levels; and Strengthen Systems for Effective Delivery of Education Services.

There were notable successes in this period, especially around gender parity in primary school. However, the Ebola outbreak posed significant challenges to the attainment of targets, and half of the indicators were knocked off track. The outbreak resulted in school closures and showed a period of increased teenage pregnancy. During the recovery period, enrolment levels have improved and emergency processes have been strategized to mitigate the influence such crises have on access in the 2018-2021 ESP.

Overall, progress was made. For of the indicators for strategic objective two (quality), half were on-track, with an estimated 4,000 teachers of grades 1-4 and 1,000 head teachers, from the 14 districts receiving 10-days of training on effective early grade reading instruction through REDiSL during Jul-Aug 2017. In addition, REDiSL provided 2.2 million early grade readers for grades 1-3 as well as more than 41,000 teacher guides which were distributed in all primary schools. This disbursement was coordinated with the afore mentioned training.

The certification of teachers held was a key issue and with the change in funding flows a "position" shift was made aiming to train improve the curriculum of pre-service teachers. The 2018-2020 ESP, and the current GPE proposal aims to build on this foundation.

Strategic objective three displayed a good level of success making progress towards 13 of 20 indicators. During the 2014-2016 project, REDiSL facilitated the creation and supervision of effective working group of 7 TTCs to establish a unified approach to preservice training and to develop teaching standards. Strong progress was made towards creating minimum standards for schools and institutions and structural aids have been put in place to aid dissemination of these. Challenges surrounding the staffing of key MEST positions and lessons have been learnt and applied to the ESP to address issues regarding financing, expertise and recruitment of these positions.

For the REDiSL project, the outbreak of Ebola saw a change in funding to the initially designed project. This took the form of a reduction and in some cases cessation of some project activities. The most highly impacted of these was teacher training. The focus shifted from direct teacher training to an improvement in preservice training quality this has laid the groundwork which will enable the proposed 2018-2021 ESP to provide a pipeline of capable teachers. Early child education was established as a key determent for positive change in this 2014-2016 ESP, as such REDiSL constructed, furnished and equipped 50 early years' classrooms annexed to primary schools in the four target local councils. The expansion of this approach can be seen in the REDiSL proposal with a total of 80 more classrooms being provided and more teacher training for early years.

2 Higher level objectives: The ESP and Implementation Plan

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 labour in the workplace.

In the post-Ebola period the MEST has demonstrated that rapid 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.
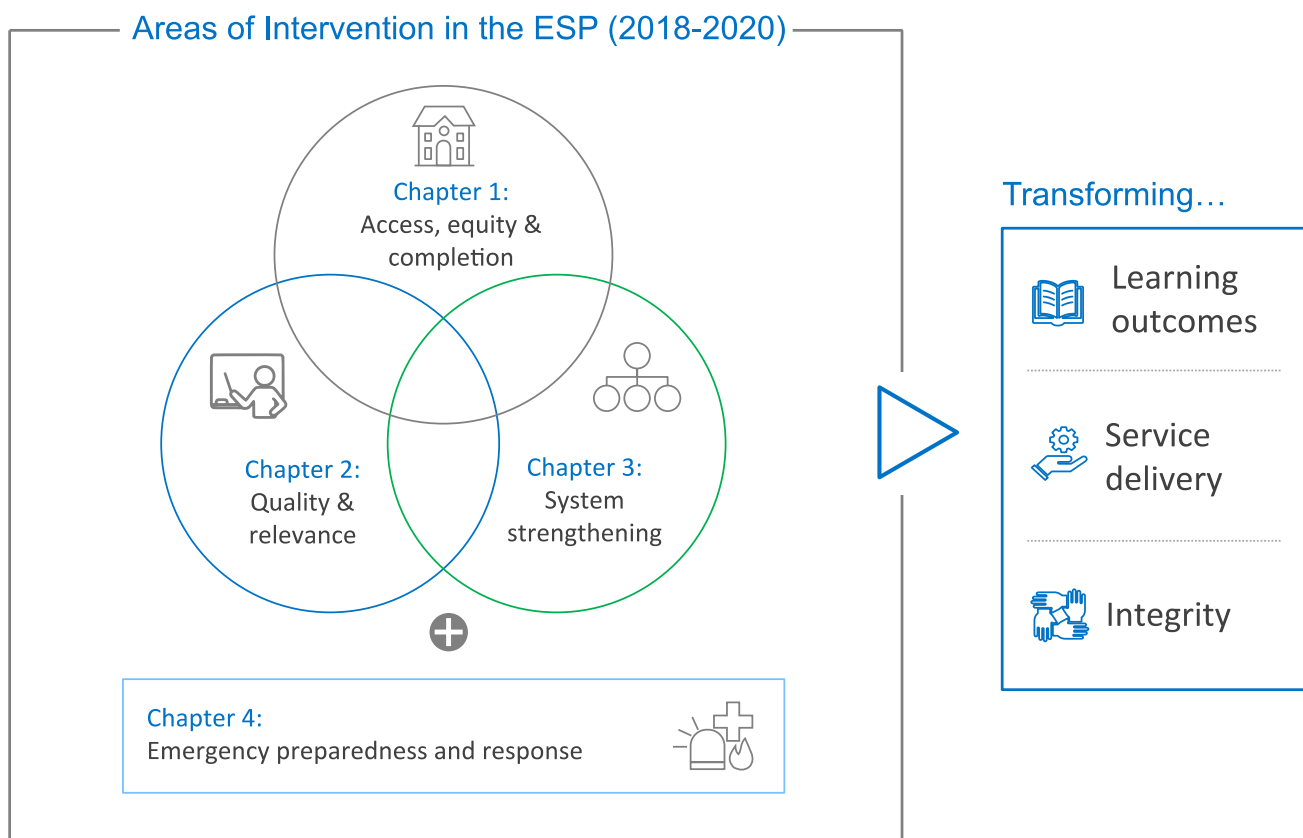
The 2018-2020 Education Sector Plan (ESP) is intended to be a transition document between the 2014-2018 ESP and the 2021-2025 ESP. It sets out to be an improvement over the current ESP by recognising the weaknesses of the previous document and learning lessons from the devastating Ebola epidemic. It recognises that *quality education* is dependent on a number of frequently overlooked factors that can have a catastrophic effect on efforts to achieve quality if left unaddressed. Consequently, the sub-title for this ESP is *"Getting it Right – Service Delivery, Integrity and Learning in Sierra Leone"* with 3 over-arching targets:

- ✓ *Tangible improvement in education service delivery by achieving a minimum increase of 10% in the service delivery rating in 2020 relative to the 2018 baseline[2].*

- ✓ *Improve systems integrity by reducing cases of malpractices reported by the MEST Examinations Monitoring Teams by 80% between 2018 and 2020, and by decreasing the number of results withheld by WAEC by 50% over the same period.*

- ✓ *Improve learning, demonstrating at least a 10% increase in the share of primary and JSS students meeting minimum Learning Assessment standards in English Language and Mathematics appropriate to their grade level by 2020 (relative to a 2017 baseline)[3], and a 7% increase in the West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (WASSCE) English Language and Mathematics pass rates by 2020 (relative to a 2017 baseline).*

All other interventions/activities described in the 2018-2020 ESP contribute to the achievement of the above outcomes, and include interventions across four areas: i) Access, equity and completion, ii) Quality and relevance, iii) Systems strengthening, iv) Emergency preparedness and response. The links are graphically illustrated below.

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[2] A new service delivery survey will be introduced to allow MEST to hold itself against tangible improvement measures of its own service delivery performance and improvements

[3] A national learning assessment is provided through the Leh Wi Learn DFID funded programme

Areas of Intervention in the ESP (2018-2020)

Chapter 1:
Access, equity & completion

Chapter 2:
Quality & relevance

Chapter 3:
System strengthening

Chapter 4:
Emergency preparedness and response

Transforming…

Learning outcomes

Service delivery

Integrity

Strategic outcomes and interventions in the ESP 2018-2020

i) Access, equity and completion: The Government of Sierra Leone has committed to attain Universal Primary Education by the year 2020. Over the past five years, access to education has improved, but despite relatively high gross enrolment rates at the primary level, there are still concerns regarding significant repetition and drop-out rates at the upper primary levels, secondary and above (in particular among girls and students from low income households). According to the Education act of 2007, the MEST has decided to make basic education 'free and compulsory', but affordability still remain as one of the biggest challenges facing the education sector. Other critical challenges include significant overcrowding in existing education facilities, no secondary school facilities in some Districts/Chiefdoms, and lack of basic water and sanitation facilities in many schools.

To improve access, equity and completion rates in the education system, the ESP aims to:

▪ *Increase access to free GoSL pre-primary education for children 3 to 5 years old* from 13.7% in 2016 to 15% in 2020 by developing a costed action plan to guide the expansion of pre-primary education services. This will include 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.

- *Increase the entry and completion rates in primary school* from 75.4% in 2016 to 85% in 2020 by reducing the cost of schooling to parents by streamlining the disbursement process of grants to schools to ensure that funds reach the beneficiaries in a timely manner, and providing additional support to the most vulnerable communities through a targeted school grants programme.

  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 promote community participation and local procurement from small holder farmers. Efforts will also be made to promote the school garden concept to supplement food in schools, and use it as a resource to train local communities and schools on best production methods. The possibility of encouraging commercial farming and establishment of a processing factory are also being discussed.

  The school feeding programme is intended not just to provide balanced and regular meals for school children but also a means of encouraging enrolment and completion of school.
- *Increase the transition levels from primary to JSS* from 83% (in 2015) to 92% in 2020 *and GER at JSS level from* 61% to 75% over the same period. This will be achieved by expanding tuition support for girls at JSS level, formalising the policy for re-entry of teenage mothers to the school system, and ensuring all schools are safe for girls through programmes to curb sexual violence and exploitation in schools.
- *Increase equitable access to senior secondary education* from 27.6% GER (in 2016) to 30% in 2020, and GPI from 0.9 to 0.97 over the same period. This will be achieved by providing scholarships to the most vulnerable groups of SSS students, in particular girls, the poor, and children with disabilities.
- *Improve school infrastructure in primary, JSS and SSS levels* by maintaining and constructing additional fully functional classrooms. This measure will reduce overcrowding and deliver clean water facilities, separate toilets for boys and girls, and ramps for children with disabilities. New JSS and SSS school facilities will also be considered in areas of the country with critical gaps.
- *Increase equitable access to Technical and Vocational Education* by developing a plan for implementing the existing TVET policy, operationalising the NCTVE, reviewing the financing system for TVET, and strengthening public/private partnerships in the provisioning of TVET.
- *Increase equitable access to higher education* by 0.2% additional GPI in 2020 relative to 2016. This will be achieved by developing a higher education strategy to consolidate policies for addressing equitable growth at higher education levels, provisioning of scholarships to the neediest students (including the poor and students with disabilities), and continuing grant support for females in STEM (Science, Technology, English and Mathematics).

- *Improve literacy rates for youth and adults* from 51% (in 2016) to 56% in 2020 by expanding the number of non-formal learning centres across the country with strengthened links allowing pupils to better transition from the non-formal to the formal education system. This will provide accelerated primary education for older children and youth aged 10-15 years old, and increase the funding for non-formal and adult education.

ii) Quality and relevance: Student learning is recognized as the most critical outcome in education systems. High levels of achievement are the result of several interacting factors; whether students learn what they need to learn and reach their full potential depends on factors of quality and relevance. In this regard, current examination results and the level of basic literacy and numeracy among early grade pupils (EGRA/EGMA) must be improved. Rapid improvement relies on the ability to appropriately address a set of fundamental sector challenges, including the very low level of qualifications and motivation among existing employed and voluntary teachers, the significant number of unapproved schools operating below the MEST minimum standards, and a growing number of observed integrity breaches in the school system.

To improve the quality and relevance of the education system and its constituent programmes, and to attain the highest possible level of integrity and performance, the ESP sets out to:

- *Improve the performance and assessment of students* by ensuring that at least 50% of all pupils attending basic education or learning centres have sufficient learning materials (notebooks, exercise books, ledgers, pens, rulers, etc.), distributing new and updated textbooks in core subjects for primary school children (and at minimal cost at the JSS level), conducting an annual sample-based learning assessment for selected levels in English Language, Arts and Mathematics, implementing the revised curriculum for primary and JSS (with the recently launched lesson plans), undertaking studies in assessment, performance and employment of learners, and equipping science laboratories in selected secondary schools.
- *Ensure all schools in operations are approved and comply to the minimum quality standards* set by MEST by revisiting the 2004 Education Act and 2010 Education Policy, communicating the standards clearly, and working closely with all schools (especially those awaiting approval) to drive quality improvements and adherence.
- *Ensure the education sector is safe and free of corruption* by reducing examination malpractice rates by 20% in 2020 through a national strategy and action plan. Furthermore, ensure that 100% of schools implement measures to prevent school-related economic and sexual offences by raising awareness of learners' rights and referral channels at JSS, SSS, TVET, HEIs and learning centres.
- *Improve teacher and senior school leadership competency, work orientation and commitment*, with 75% of teachers being trained and qualified for their employment, inspected and evaluated by the year 2020. This will be achieved by promoting ICT usage across the board, providing support for innovative pre-service education programmes,

developing and implementing standards and competencies for teachers, providing induction programmes for newly qualified teachers, providing in-service teacher training through continuous professional development, supporting teachers to develop and use essential tools such as lesson plans for all English and Mathematics teachers at SSS level, recruiting and deploying teachers for sought-after subjects and areas in need, and providing structured supervision, inspection and monitoring of teachers.

- ***iii) System strengthening:*** Efficient service delivery and good governance are at the heart of a strong and high-performing education sector. The education sector in Sierra Leone is expanding rapidly and increasing in complexity. The Teaching Service Commission, established to address all matters relating to teachers, is an institutional response to emerging needs for better quality. Its proper functioning will require systemic changes in a number of regulatory and oversight roles and functions at central and district levels. The ESP will support the development and implementation of policy guidelines, processes and tools for improved teacher management and teacher performance. The School Feeding Programme is another innovation in the education system, aimed at increasing student retention and learning. These initiatives are ultimately designed to strengthen the education system and will therefore require clear definition of roles, strong inter-ministerial collaboration, dynamic partnerships, and credible evaluation and accountability measures.

To strengthen the education system, the ESP aims to:

- *Fill all key positions at MEST headquarters, in the District Education Offices (DEOs) and Teaching Service Commission (TSC)* by filling the highest priority MEST professional staff vacancies for a minimum period of 2 years, and securing the support necessary for TSC to be able to fill key positions and become fully functional.
- *Develop and maintain clean payroll records* and teacher allocation through better records management and systems, and as far as possible reduce reliance on voluntary teaching support.
- *Improve the MEST service delivery rating* by 10% from 2018 to 2020. This will be achieved by disseminating the MEST Service Charter widely and conducting annual education service delivery surveys, providing capacity development training based on a comprehensive MEST staff development programme, providing resources to release WASSCE results to schools within 50 working days and analyse the performance of schools and candidates in the exams, introducing Performance Based Financing for schools, colleges, polytechnics and universities, and providing support for regulators as well as timely monitoring of the operations of educational institutions.
- *Ensuring timely, reliable and accurate data and information on performance* by equipping and empowering each District Education Office to collect and analyse data in the districts, enabling Paramount Chiefs to participate in the education monitoring/validation process and produce termly reports on the education in their Chiefdoms, and establishing a 'one stop shop' for all available MEST data on education (EMIS).

- *Ensure that a full/comprehensive diagnostic sector analysis is carried out within the lifetime of the ESP.*

iv) Emergency preparedness and response: The Ebola epidemic that affected thousands of families, teachers and school-aged children across Sierra Leone has demonstrated the importance of ensuring that the education sector is prepared to face and minimise the impact of such an emergency through future contingencies.

To increase the emergency preparedness, the ESP aims to:

- *Develop an Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan, Handbook, and Phone Directory* that will be available in at least 75% all Educational Institutions.
- *Ensure readiness to act according to the Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan* by raising awareness using a wide range of media, training key stakeholders (including DEOs, Councils, Partners, Head Teachers and Teachers) in emergency response and humanitarian support, establishing strong coordination with the Situation Room for real time data and information dissemination. Furthermore, improve systems to disseminate information through the Ministry's EMIS and Website, and provide adequate emergency response kits and emergency supplies to the DEOs. To minimise the costs, existing structures and systems will be leveraged as far as possible to perform the outlined activities.

In summary, the four main ESP focus areas are as follows:

- ❖ Access, Equity and Completion
- ❖ Quality and Relevance
- ❖ System Strengthening
- ❖ Emergency Preparedness and Response

Section 0 will outline in more detail the proposed GPE activities, all of which are relevant to the ESP and Implementation Plan.

3   GPE programme objectives and costs

3.1   Overview

The programme is aligned to Sierra Leone's Education Sector Plan (2018-2020) and the GPE's goals. It is aligned with the three key areas within the GPE 2015-20 strategic plan, and contributes to the GPE's strategic objectives – specifically through supporting data systems; mutual accountability; achieving targets on equity, efficiency and learning; training teachers; and building/renovating 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*".

Over its four-year implementation period, **the entire (three year fixed plus two year overlapping variable) GPE project is expected to directly benefit approximately 160 pre-primary schools and communities, and 2000 primary schools, reaching over 10,000 teachers. Approximately 500,000 students (about half of whom are female) are expected to benefit from the early grade reading & mathematics program.**

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.

3.1.1   Programme objectives

The programme has the following objectives, drawn from the ESP and aligned with GPE's strategy. The programme chose to focus on three objectives, to ensure maximum impact.

1. Build strong foundations for learning through increased access to early learning (pre-primary education) for 3-5 year olds.
2. Improve learning outcomes in reading, writing and maths for early grades 1-3.
3. An improved system of decentralized school monitoring, data collection and management, a learning assessment unit, and the availability of comprehensive sector analysis data.

3.1.2   Output indicators

The following outputs underpin the above objectives:

		GPE Financing US$	% of Total
	Total MCA	17,200,000	
Fixed Part			
	Program Component		
A	Expansion of early childhood learning opportunities	3,737,350	31%

	1) Expansion of pre-school classes in primary schools	1,882,600	15.7%
	2) Expansion of access through community based ECD centers	1,854,750	15.5%
B	In-service training of Primary Teachers to improve early grade reading, writing and maths	5,906,855	49%
C	Decentralized school monitoring, data collection and management	1,782,800	15%
	1) Integration of EMIS and situation room data collection, management and use	1,582,800	13%
	2) Comprehensive sector diagnosis	200,000	2%
D	Project Management	572,995	5%
	1) Supervision cost of UNICEF for the fixed part	244,200	2%
	2) Other program management costs	328,795	3%
	Sub-total of Components	12,000,000	
	Variable Part		
A	Equity	1,700,000	33%
B	Efficiency	1,760,000	34%
C	Learning Outcomes	1,740,000	33%

	Sub-total Variable Part	5,200,000	100%
	(of which Supervision cost of UNICEF for the variable part)	120,900	
	GRAND TOTAL (with Grant Agent's Implementation Support Costs)	17,200,000	
	Total UNICEF supervision costs (inside MCA)	365,100	2%
	Agency Fees (outside of MCA)	1,376,000	8%

3.2   Aid effectiveness and alignment with other activities

There is active investment in the education sector by the LEG. The GPE grant, through the Co-ordinating Agent (CA), will look to maintain efforts to improve harmonisation. The GPE defines aid effectiveness as (i) country ownership; and (ii) alignment of country systems. 'Harmonization' of all efforts in the sector by government, donors, NGOs and Civil Society are important as well.

The proposed program has been aligned with the ESP, which was developed by MEST and agreed by all education stakeholders. In terms of leadership, the program will be overseen by the IMT; monthly meetings among MEST, UNICEF and the new CA, DFID; and quarterly meetings among the EDPs to discuss progress in the education sector in general. A Terms of Reference for these meetings has been developed and can be shared upon request. MEST also established a Donor Coordination Desk in 2016, with support from REDiSL, and information sharing has improved since the Desk became functional.

Overall, planned support to the sector through donors is as follows:

- DFID, through its Sierra Leone Secondary Education Improvement Program (GBP 62 million), has supporting the implementation of the second phase of the Presidential Recovery Priorities in education and providing financing to the UNICEF Girls' Access to Education Project. The upcoming phase of this project will focus on improving quality of education and learning, promoting girls' access, and supporting system-level interventions.
- DFID through Girls Access to Education and Girls Education Challenge program (GBP 12.7 million) is supporting the most vulnerable girls to remain in school and succeed.

- The EU is providing support under the 11th Education Development Fund (EDF) (€29 million), which will focus on primary education with some support for the JSS level, while also providing support to technical and vocational education and training. In addition to supporting capacity building of the MEST as well as teacher training and development of teaching and learning materials, the project will also support the expansion of the EMIS to include non-formal and post-secondary institutions and data on learning outcomes, teacher records and payroll, and human resource management in the MEST and the TSC (including teachers).

- UNICEF supports a variety of activities under the UNICEF basic education programme 2015-2019, commits approximately $ five million annually to address the causes of lack of access, participation and completion of basic and lower secondary education including challenges of enrollment, gender and geographical disparities, quality, completion and dropout rates, school environment and capacity to implement sector plans. They are also implementing the DFID funded Girls' Access to Education Project, with an emphasis on community mobilization, sensitization of boys and men,

mentoring, girls' safety and addressing and preventing school-related gender-based violence, and providing support to the Situation Room. UNICEF is also piloting a community-based early childhood development model in 22 communities as well as cluster monitoring in six remote districts.

- The World Bank has agreed additional financing ($10m) to continue selected activities within the REDiSL project. These include support to continue the Performance Based Financing to 1,850 schools; additional support to TSC to execute its functions centrally; and support the roll-out of the ASC 2018.

The following table was compiled for the World Bank project extension document for REDiSL in mid-2017, and provides a very useful summary of partners' activities to support the ESP in Sierra Leone. Table 1 provides an overview of current donor interventions in the sector by education level, highlighting areas of support as well as key gaps. As can be seen, while donors support various types of interventions at different levels of education, coverage in general tends to be partial, in terms of either geography, schools, subjects, and/or grade.

Table 1

KEY EDUCATION SECTOR INTERVENTIONS.	DONOR	EDUCATION LEVEL			
		PRE-PRIMARY	PRIMARY	JUNIOR SECONDARY	SENIOR SECONDARY
NEW FACILITIES/ CENTRES SCHOOLS	UNICEF GPE/ World Bank	√ (P)			
GIRLS EDUCATION	DFID/UNICEF			√	√
PRE-SERVICE TEACHER TRAINING	GPE/World Bank	√ (P)	√ (P)		
IN- SERVICE TEACHER TRAINING	GPE/World Bank, EU, DFID, UNICEF	√ (P)	√ (P)	√ (P)	√ (P)
SMC CAPACITY BUILDING	GPE/World Bank		√ (P)	√ (P)	

KEY EDUCATION SECTOR INTERVENTIONS.	DONOR	EDUCATION LEVEL			
		PRE-PRIMARY	PRIMARY	JUNIOR SECONDARY	SENIOR SECONDARY
WASH	DFID, UNICEF		√ (P)	√ (P)	
SCHOOL FEEDING	Catholic relief services, World food programme		√ (P)		
CLASSROOM CONSTRUCTION	DFID, Islamic Development Bank		√ (P)	√ (P)	√ (P)
PERFORMANCE-BASED FINANCING	GPE/World Bank		√ (P)	√ (P)	
PROVISION OF EDUCATION MATERIALS	GPE/World bank, DFID, EU	√ (P)	√ (P)	√ (P)	√ (P)
DEVELOPMENT OF LESSON PLANS	DFID, EU		√ (P)	√ (P)	
CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT	UNICEF, GPE/ World Bank	√	√	√	√
LEARNING ASSESSMENT	GPE/ World Bank, DFID EU		√	√	√
EMIS/ASC	GPE/ World Bank, EU			√	
SITUATION ROOM	DFID, UNICEF			√	

KEY EDUCATION SECTOR INTERVENTIONS.	DONOR	EDUCATION LEVEL			
		PRE-PRIMARY	PRIMARY	JUNIOR SECONDARY	SENIOR SECONDARY
TSC/TEACHER MANAGEMENT	GPE/World Bank, DFID, EU, (Payroll)			√	
DISTRICT LEVEL SUPERVISION AND SUPPORT	DFID, EU			√	
MEST CAPACITY BUILDING	EU			√	

(P) Partial coverage.

The key areas of interest here are early childhood interventions, teacher training and data interventions. The interactions between the current GPE proposal and these activities are discussed in more detail within the next section.

Proposed Activities Details

Through discussions with the Local Education Group (LEG), output activities from the ESP implementation plan have been identified as areas for GPE support. These are shown in the table above and have been designed to complement existing efforts in the sector while building on the previous GPE programme and related activities.

3.3   Pre-school education

Access to early learning in Sierra Leone is a significant challenge. Only 13.7% of children have access to early learning services, which are often confined to urban areas and private/fee-based. Failure to access quality early learning services means that children are likely to be ill-prepared for schooling and is a predictor for inferior performance or dropout. Many parents address this challenge by enrolling children in primary school early, which places pressure on early grades and inflates class-sizes. By improving both pre-school and community ECD options, it is expected that more children will begin to enrol at the correct age.

The Government of Sierra Leone and the LEG accepts the evidence (see the Lancet 2016 special feature[4] on this for an overview) that access to early childhood education is a key predictor of future success. It is an important part of the Education Sector Plan, which aims to increase the Gross Enrolment Rate to a more equitable figure across the socio-economic spectrum. Given the low baseline, a realistic plan is needed which combines both expansion of the formal primary school structures with a community based approach. Two outputs have been agreed to allow a multifaceted approach to expanding access, given the low existing rates. The selection criteria for the locations of both the centres and classrooms will take each other into account, so no area is unfairly prioritised.

Early Childhood Education (ECE) curriculum, minimum standards and policy have been developed and validated and recently endorsed by an inter-sectoral review group. MEST will submit the Cabinet paper for formal approval of the ECD Policy in early 2018 and it is expected to be in place for the start of the GPE grant, subject to any changes in Government after the March election.

The Ministry of Education, in collaboration with UNICEF, the World Bank and REDiSL have rolled pilot programmes using school and community based early learning, including the completion of 50 pre-primary classrooms under the existing REDiSL grant, which are now functional and equipped with age-appropriate furniture and educational kits, and ECE classes are already in session in these 50 schools.

A competency-based training program (comprising three days for Level I and 6 days for Level II) has designed in line with the ECE curriculum, and delivered to 300 preschool teachers and caregivers, 117 preschool head teachers, and inspectors/supervisors in the four LCs. These preschools have begun to receive monthly coaching and monitoring visits which will continue until the end of the current school year – preschools that demonstrate a change in practice at the end of the coaching cycle, determined by meeting the minimum pass score on the monitoring tool, will be endorsed and qualify for performance-based grants (including teacher incentives) in the next school year under the new World Bank programme.

The REDiSL project also supported a consortium of teacher training colleges to harmonize and align their pre-service certificate, diploma and degree programs in line with the ECE curriculum, ECE minimum standards, and teacher professional standards. As part of the support to teacher training colleges to upgrade the quality of pre-service ECE programs, they constructed and equipped a model ECE classroom/lab in the teacher training colleges. In addition, 20 new picture books (prototypes) have been developed in line with the ECE curriculum themes.

The proposed GPE programme will build on these gains to expand services to cover all 14 districts in Sierra Leone through two modalities; community-based facilities and formal pre-

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[4] http://www.thelancet.com/series/ECD2016

school classrooms. This dual approach was agreed by the sector considering both the experience of the existing programme, and UNICEF's experience and expertise in undertaking community-based programmes. Evidence from Rwanda found that community-based programmes can be more cost effective than school based, enabling countries with larger need to cover a greater proportion of children. However, this is balanced by a need to expand the formal system, hence the mixed approach of support to both communities and pre-school classrooms.

These activities are numbers 1.2a and 1.2b in the multi-year implementation plan and are discussed below. It was agreed that the ECD programme would build on both the existing REDiSL programme in-schools, and supplement this with the community-based work that UNICEF have piloted. This will enable the grant agent to draw on its existing expertise in community-based holistic child development, while at the same time building on the existing GPE grants work within the formal school system. Given the high numbers of underserved children (the 2016 census showed 43,883 five-year olds enrolled in primary schools, showing substantial parental demand for services) there is a strong rationale for continued GPE support to ECD in the Sierra Leone context.

3.3.1 Expansion of pre-school classes in primary schools

The proposal will look to build on the existing model, drawing on lessons learned. Activities will be structured around three areas, with quality provision being at the heart of activities: enhancing Government capability to deliver; construction of additional classrooms; provision of teachers; and materials to complete the package of support. The delivery of these activities will be undertaken by an implementing partner (IP) – UNICEF, as part of their country programme, has several pre-qualified NGO/NGO partners who can be mobilised for implementation activities. The construction elements, and the provision of the teacher training will be implemented by selected NGO/INGOs, while teacher stipends will be paid through the responsible implementing partners. UNICEF will draw on their global frameworks to procure the required ECD resources, in accordance to their existing agreements with the Government of Sierra Leone. While ideally these resources would be procured through Government systems, UNICEF has substantial expertise in this area, including long-term negotiated rates at favourable rates. As such, it has been agreed that Government will delegate the procurement of materials to UNICEF in this instance. UNICEF will provide technical leadership supported by implementation assistance through the implementing partner to support MEST staff and local education staff to manage the expansion.

The classrooms will be located adapting the following criteria: The initial plan is to expand pre-school classrooms to those local councils which are currently underserved, ensuring all local councils with below average provision are reached. Within each local council,

information from the school census will identify those areas with the lowest existing provision, which will be given priority, and are bolded in the table below.

Table 2: Primary and Pre-Primary Classrooms by Local Council (ASC 2016)			
Council	Pre-Primary	Primary	Pre-Primary Classes per 100 primary classes
Kailahun District	79	1,603	4.9
Kenema City	92	765	12.0
Kenema District	48	1,734	**2.8**
Koidu-New Sembehun City	84	572	14.7
Kono District	157	1,553	10.1
Makeni City	94	494	19.0
Bombali District	74	2,380	**3.1**
Kambia District	24	1,249	**1.9**
Koinadugu District	59	1,548	**3.8**
Port Loko District	69	2,186	**3.2**
Tonkolili District	74	2,175	**3.4**
Bo City	151	723	20.9
Bo District	77	1,964	**3.9**
Bonthe Municipal	9	58	15.5
Bonthe District	46	876	5.3
Moyamba District	53	1,765	**3.0**
Pujehun District	9	757	**1.2**
Freetown City	983	3,885	25.3
Western Area Rural District	344	1,644	20.9
National	2526	27,931	9.0

Within each district, Local Councils will work to identify Chiefdoms, 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. Within each Chiefdom, towns/villages will be again ranked, in collaboration with the Paramount Chiefs, on the breadth of their existing provision to agree the location of the proposed schools, with new sites identified with a view to promoting equitable access (to improve the ECD enrolment rate in the poorest local councils).

The following activities will be undertaken.

- The UNICEF ECD specialist will provide technical guidance for the MEST ECD unit, as well as NGO/INGO IPs and other partners such as TSC and TTCs on the new GPE programme document, and 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. In addition, 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 into government payroll.
- UNICEF, MEST, and NGO/INGO partners will develop expansion plan for the school-based pre-primary education and ensure complementation and synergy with the Community-based ECD model, prioritizing the most vulnerable local councils, chiefdoms, and communities.
- MEST will be supported by implementation assistance from the NGO/INGO implementing partner to disseminate and raise awareness of the ECD policy, curriculum and minimum standards.
- The IP will work with MEST to implement expansion of public pre-primary education in existing primary schools, targeting the construction of 80 classrooms over the period in areas with existing shortages in line with an agreed selection criterion, to ensure equitable access across Chiefdoms. Where it is more cost-effective to refurbish existing classrooms, this will be undertaken (potentially increasing the reach)
- The IP 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[5] through implementing partners, linking to the EU & Le Wi Learn systems of stipend provision.
- The IP will, in collaboration with MEST, provide age/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, raising 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. On the MEST-UNICEF Community-based ECD Pilot project, a total of 10,000 young children under six years of age will be reached by 2021, including approximately 5,000 children 3-5 years old.

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[5] At a rate equivalent to an entry-level government teacher salary

However, this underlines the need for more support in this area, as this still leaves a very high proportion of the population underserved. The implementing partner will work with District Education Offices and Local Councils to ensure buy-in for these efforts to promote sustainability, and the MEST will work with the Ministry of Finance to ensure funds are secured to transition from stipends to teachers' salaries after programme completion and to sustain regular training and on-site monitoring and technical support.
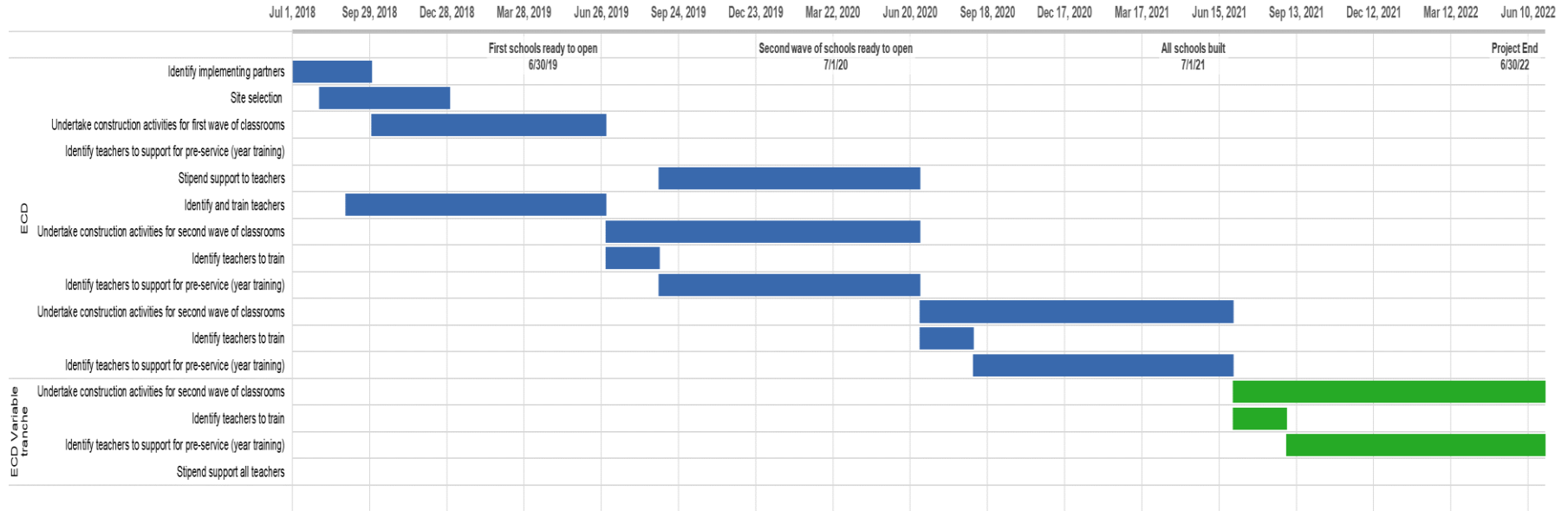
Figure 1: Indicative Timeline of Pre-schools

3.3.2   Expansion of access through community based ECD centres

In addition to the formal pre-school approach, the GPE grant will also support a community based ECD programme, which has been shown to provide a cost-effective and sustainable community led strategy to reach as many marginalized children as possible. This will expand access to more children than is possible using the traditional model, allowing more equitable access.

Experiences in the field suggest that community-based integrated approach can provide viable solutions to early education issues. An integrated approach to community-based ECD was piloted by UNICEF in collaboration with the MEST and three NGO/INGO partners in 2015-2017, starting with 22 pilot communities across the four target districts in which over 2,100 young children under six years of age benefited from early stimulation and early learning opportunities that they did not have before the MEST-UNICEF Community-based ECD Pilot. In 2018, this project is expanding to another 43 communities and expected to include over 6,000 children (0 – 59 months) and their caregivers. UNICEF has led capacity building and team building of the pre-primary administrators at the national district and community levels, NGO/INGO partners, local ECD experts, district and community partners over the past few years. The practical knowledge of ECD and project implementation skills of these partners have been greatly improved. In addition, UNICEF has led innovations in enhancing early learning resources, including developing the first set of Sierra Leonean picture books for young children, toy making using natural and recycle resources, and using the UNICEF ECD kits (containing toys and learning materials for young children). These will serve as an asset in implementing the current GPE programme.

Under the technical leadership of UNICEF and working with the MEST, the implementing partners will continue working with the district and community structures including, District Education Officers, Local Councils, and Mothers Support Groups/Mothers' Clubs and the ECD pilot committees to implement project interventions. They will work with these stakeholders to raise the importance of ECD and correct-age enrolment. In addition, the IP will also establish new ECD centres in underserved target local councils according to plan that is developed by UNICEF, MEST, NGO/INGO partners.

This initiative will be follow a similar implementation plan to the UNICEF pilot, working with an international non-governmental organisation to implement the following interventions, with oversight from MEST:

- Capacity building for NGO partners and district and community stakeholders in implementing and monitoring project interventions through practical training at national, district, and community levels, as well as activities during regular field monitoring.

- 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 (including WASH), providing necessary supplies, and enhancing early learning resources such as toy making.
- Providing age/developmentally appropriate early stimulation and early learning opportunities for young 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 ensure ownership and establish mechanisms for sustainability and support, including the ECD Seed Fund.
- Alongside the direct provision of ECD, the IP's will work with the local communities to raise awareness of the importance of enrolling children on time, to improve the proportion of children who enroll at the correct age.

3.4 In-service training of Primary Teachers to improve early grade reading, writing and maths.

The ESP Mid-Term Review and updated ESP identified the need to reinforce reading and maths skills in the early primary grades. Improving educational foundations is a key aim within the sector and a key part of the current GPE grant and wider support. All teacher received lesson plans during the recovery programmes, which, alongside the REDiSL programme have laid strong foundations. Through the REDiSL programme, 2.5 million supplementary readers and 56,000 teachers' guides for classes 1-3 have been developed, published, and distributed to all primary schools in the country. In addition, the Project also developed, published, and distributed 1,000 copies of readers and guides in Braille. Further, over 4,000 teachers of grades 1-4, 1,000 head teachers, and inspectors/supervisors from all 14 districts participated in a 10-day training on early grade reading instruction using the readers, classroom support packets, and other supplementary materials. Furthermore, the Project supported three teacher training colleges to integrate the training materials in their Language Arts curriculum. An assessment (comprising classroom observation, a mini-student diagnostic assessment, and teacher and head teacher interviews) was recently administered in a sample of 96 treatment schools (i.e. schools that were randomly assigned to receive the 10-day training) and 96 control schools (i.e. schools with similar baseline characteristics to the treatment school that were randomly assigned to not receive the 10-day training). This will generate information on the effectiveness of this component and offer lessons learned for modification of this activity, which this project will draw on once they are available (which is likely to be summer 2018) to improve the training under the new grant.

In addition, the REDiSL project supported communications activities including jingles and songs to promote early grade reading, and advertising and reading competitions. MEST will shortly inaugurate its own radio station, and the audio-visual materials will be handed over to MEST to be aired by the MEST radio station beyond the project lifetime. The project will work with MEST to support these activities.

In addition to drawing on lessons from REDiSL, the programme will align with the work being undertaken by the EU on teacher training, and draw on the lessons learned in provision of teacher training through DFID's programme, notably the need to assess the trade-offs around the use of sector-support officers for follow-on trainings. The GPE 2018-20 grant will build on this work and momentum being created around early grade interventions, and work to train teachers in reading, writing and mathematics in the early grades in a third of schools nationwide each year, to get national coverage over the grant period. One key challenge, highlighted in the 2014 EGRA/EGMA is that only 1% of the sampled students were using English at their home. As such, the training will focus on teaching English as a second language, using scaffolding techniques to ensure that home-support in mother-tongue can amplify the impact of the training.

The teacher training within UNICEF Sierra Leone will work with Government to deliver the teacher training through the district education officers, teacher training colleges (TTC's), Njala University and Fourah Bay College, working with TSC to ensure the trainings are in-line with the agreed standards.

The activities under this area will be undertaken in conjunction with the Teacher Service Commission (TSC), which has been supported under the current REDiSL grant to be fully functional. The TSC is key to the delivery of the programme, given their mandate for organising continual professional development programmes for teachers. However, the current REDiSL project highlighted some capacity gaps within the commission, and delays in getting the commission up and running, with the TSC only inaugurated in August 2016. Key staff at the HQ level are now on board after much discussion on the salary scale with MEST and Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MOFED); however, the salary scales of remaining TSC staff and recruitment – particularly in the district offices – are still pending. MEST agreed to transfer teacher records to TSC in November 2017, and the process is underway. The recently approved World Bank Budget Support Operation series includes TSC transfer of functions and records from MEST to TSC as a prior action for disbursement to further leverage support for helping the TSC achieve full functionality. Given the timing of the training, it is expected that TSC will have the records, and the capacity to manage these, before the training is rolled out. In addition, TSC now has MOFED approval to hire staff at the District levels – meaning that teaching trainings at the district level can be conducted in conjunction with them.

A comprehensive situation analysis and policy review on teacher management has been completed under REDiSL; and policy guidelines on teacher management and teacher registration and licensing have been drafted and are being validated in various consultative fora. Further, with EU technical support, the TSC has launched the teacher professional standards and is developing policy guidelines on teacher professional development and performance. The teacher training specialist will work with TSC to ensure that the existing REDiSL training programme, and any amended programme, continues to be in line with these guidelines. Given the capacity constraints within MEST and TSCs needing time to get fully functional, high-level technical support will be provided through a long-term consultant specialist in early grade reading and maths to work with the TTC's and TSC to ensure the training is in line with best practise and the guidelines and standards as overseen by TSC. This is deemed necessary given the high levels of specialist technical expertise required to design such a technical intervention.

MEST will work, supported by a TA, with TSC and teacher training institutions to further develop the existing training where necessary, in line with lessons, once available, from the REDiSL evaluation, and align it to teaching standards and existing activities - the EU is currently supporting the TSC for the formulation of Professional Standards for Teachers and Schools Leaders, and under the previous GPE grant three teacher training colleges have been supported to integrate early grade reading into their language arts curriculum, which, along with the impact assessment that has been recently conducted, will provide a unique platform from which to improve the trainings.

TSC has now received permission from MoFED to pay salaries of two staff at the decentralised level, who will support the implementation of the training where possible, with assistance from an implementing partner where necessary.

One important lesson from the REDiSL project is drawn from the difficulties faced when tendering for a suitable firm to develop modules on early grade reading, where none of the bidding firms had the suitable experience and a follow up single-source procurement was necessary. This risk is mitigated as UNICEF have pre-qualified a number of NGO's who can provide technical assistance who have experience in this area. It is also mitigated by the current status of training, as it is building on existing efforts – REDiSL, the EU programme and DFID's work to provide scripted lesson plans to teachers in secondary schools.

This is part of the new orientation of the TSC towards overseeing Teacher Professional Development and is likely to represent a milestone towards forthcoming policies. Therefore, the content of the training implemented through the ESPIG will draw on evidence and recommendations from the EGRA/EGMA assessment, the REDiSL evaluation, international evidence and the experiences of partners currently implementing programs.

As Sierra Leone operates a classroom teacher approach, a whole school approach is necessary with sufficient implementation time required to upskill teachers, shift behaviours and improve pedagogy. The programme will target all public schools, given the pervasiveness of

challenges and poor indicators in learning outcomes. Given the limited resources available, only teachers responsible for grades 1-3 will be trained in the first instance, on a rolling basis – it is hoped that one-third of schools can be reached in each year. Teachers shall receive a minimum of 10 days training per year.

As the training is limited in duration, additional support will be provided to trained teachers through a clustered approach, whereby selected teachers are identified and trained as Master Teachers, who will then lead peer-to-peer sessions within a school cluster. Four cluster schools will be identified for each Chiefdom. These trainings will commence in the school year following their training year, allowing training to continue throughout the duration of the project. They will draw on, where possible, the activities being undertaken through Le Wi Learn which are working with supervisors to improve their ability to support schools.

Ideally, this activity stream would also include an output level measure of teachers' changes in pedagogical ability, or changes in their classroom practises. However, the limited funds available mean that instigating these activities (which require funding) would require a reduction in the reach, or intensity of the teaching training. While no formalised evaluation is therefore possible given the limited funding, a lighter touch version of these methods will be incorporated within the design of the training programme and peer-to-peer learning sessions.

Summary of activities

The Government of Sierra Leone, through MEST and TSC, will be the main implementers of this activity. Given capacity constraints, a long-term teacher training expert will be hired as technical assistance to help the Government deliver training activities. NGO partners will be identified to work with the two TSC staff to deliver at the district levels.

The schedule of activities will also include a supervision plan for the roll-out, and a monitoring plan to track changes in pedagogy and outcomes. The programme will be supported with provision of appropriate materials, procured through UNICEF's systems, to ensure it forms a complete package:

- UNICEF will work with TSC to develop the training package for early grade reading and maths for grade 1-3 teachers, ensuring it builds on current materials under REDiSL, and is aligned with standards being developed by TSC and aligned with the roll-out of the new curriculum.
- UNICEF and the technical assistance/implementing partners will work with TSC, MEST, the DEO's, and training colleges to Implement termly training to three teachers in all schools within 10 districts within the first two years of the programme. 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 through master teachers.

- Institute regular learning assessments, formative (observations and teacher reported) and summative (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 linked with activity 0 and engage with other learning assessments being undertaken, such as those supported by DFID.
- Provide schools with adequate teaching and learning materials for teachers[6], to facilitate the effective implementation of the intervention.
- Supplement the existing early grade readers in schools with pupil learning materials as required, procured through UNICEF's global frameworks.

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[6] 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.
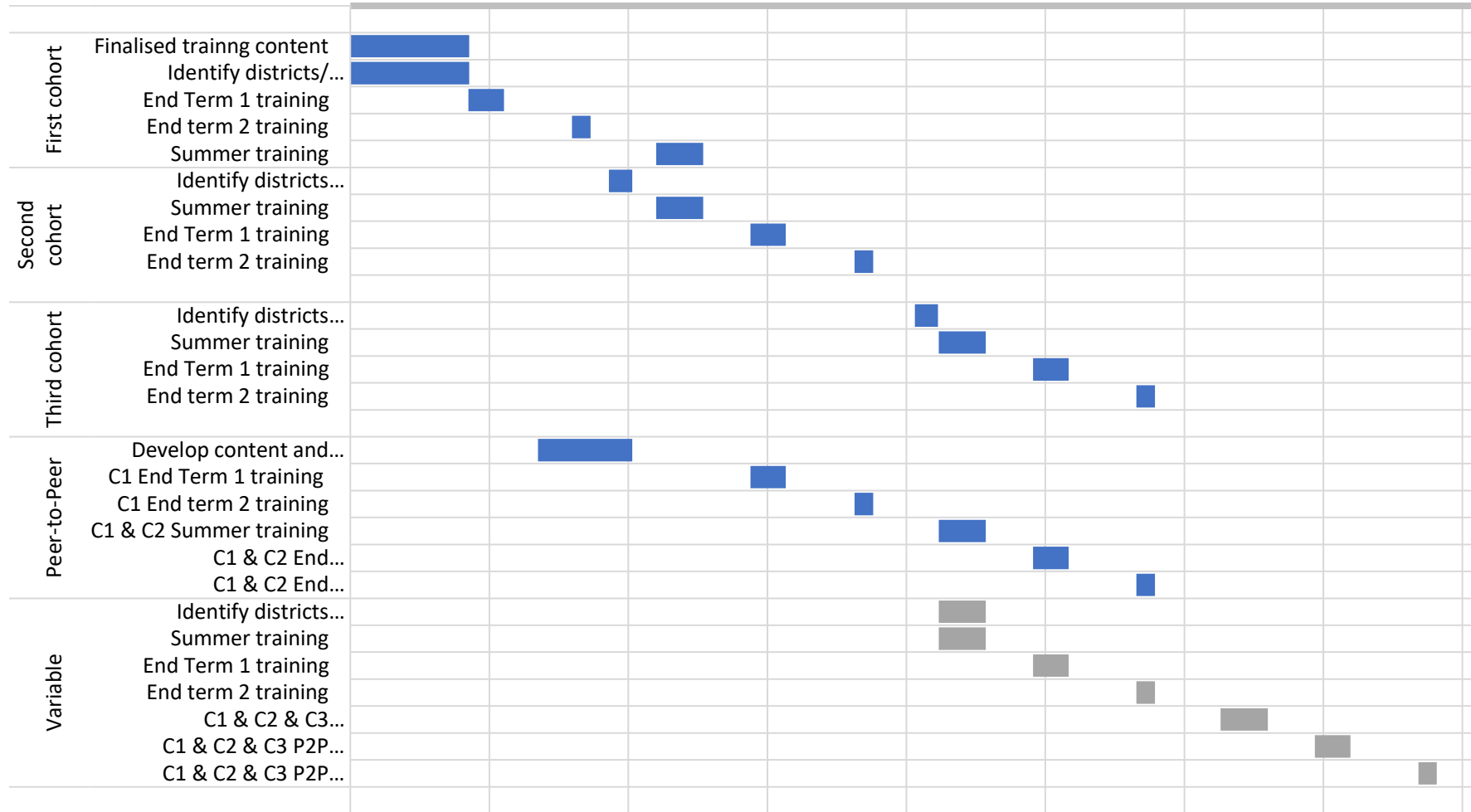
Figure 2: Indicative teacher training timelines

3.5   Decentralised school monitoring, data collection and management

A key outcome proposed in the ESP 2018-2020 is to ensure that decentralised, 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 Education Management Information System (EMIS). In addition, there has been the development, supported by UNICEF, of an innovative real-time data collection, reporting and dissemination system, entitled the "Situation Room" or EduTrac or RapidPro. The data cleaning, analysis, and report generation of the Situation Room data is undertaken by the analyst financed by REDiSL. This proposal builds on the previous work and aims to align efforts with those of other donors.

By December 2015, a functioning "core" EMIS was set up and training conducted for MEST on the use of the system. With EMIS, the ASC data is the backbone and for the first time in Sierra Leone, the EMIS system was used for the 2014/2015 ASC and 2015/2016. In addition, a dashboard presenting key education statistics for Sierra Leone was developed and is easily accessible through the MEST website. This data needs updating, and requires more work on how information is disseminated and used.

With the foundation already established and strengthened, the need to expand the scope of EMIS by bringing in data to complement ASC data was critical, for instance, through the inclusion of more routine data from monitoring systems into EMIS. While borne out of the Ebola emergency, which promoted the use of Rapidpro/EduTrac software to enable real time data collection on adherence to safety protocols. This led to the setup of 'situation rooms', which are hubs for data at national level and district level, and the training of relevant MEST staff in data management and RapidPro/EduTrac use. Alongside this, work was undertaken to building the capacity of school community structures, for instance school management committees, to routinely monitor and report data on schools through real-time SMS based questionnaires and phone-calls.

This situation room tracks key performance indicators in the education sector, covering a sample of schools across 14 districts using 1,182 community monitors. While the data coverage is not as high as the ASC, the indicators collected (including on teacher and pupil attendance, the status of facilities, the functionality of school clubs and parent-teacher committees) benefit from more regular data collection. Several lessons have been learned in the process of developing and strengthening the situation room. The most prominent lesson is the need to integrate the activities of the situation room and the EMIS, to allow for a full picture of the efficiency and effectiveness of the education sector.

While the situation room provides incentives to its monitors, regular debrief sessions and refresher trainings for community monitors (at least twice per year) is critical to improve capacity and data quality. This has been a key part of the work to-date, where data quality

has been improved through two trainings to all 1,182 community monitors, dashboard training to 14 district IT personnel, mapping of schools to monitors and performance-based payment.

While both the Situation Room and the EMIS systems have their strengths, running multiple data systems is not ideal. They are insufficiently integrated, and as such do not benefit from possible synergies in data collection and analysis. The GPE grant will therefore be used to fund the continuation and integration (with EMIS) of the activities of the situation room, working through MEST.

Alongside the support to the integration of the EMIS/Situation room, work is underway to improve the quality of the EMIS, led by the EU. The EU programme to support the education sector has also a component to strengthen and expand EMIS thought technical assistance and provision of IT hardware and software across the district education officers. In addition, they will train MEST on education planning, and support the production of the ASC. The technical assistance on EMIS aims to integrate learning outcomes within EMIS and decentralise EMIS through provision of laptops and training on data analysis, collection, processing and utilisation. They will undertake this through a pilot programme in four districts. The GPE programme will aim to work with the EU to integrate GIS data into the EMIS system.

In addition to strengthening the quality of the systems, a key part of the GPE grant will be to improve the use and feedback of the information to schools and communities, a key issue highlighted in the current REDiSL grant. This will be done through two outputs: the development of an online user-friendly dashboard (aligned to the work being undertaken by Le Wi Learn) to visualize the status of key performance indicators in any given month and to compare performance against trend, district and national benchmarks; the training and support to district education officers on production and dissemination of school report cards, building on work being piloted by the EU in their four districts.

To this end, the following activities will be implemented:

- Support will be provided to MEST continue the activities of the Situation room, 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 joined up information management system.
  - Undertake a technical assessment of the underlying software differences between EMIS & Situation Room (EduTrac/RapidPro) 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.
- Also, "stocktakes" or workshops will be used, bringing together district level stake holders to reflect and discuss generated data, and make informed decisions in terms of driving progress and unblock problems as they emerge or tackle underperformance.
- Establish information feedback systems that can bring the findings back to schools and communities, while strengthening accountability and community empowerment.
  - Decentralize report generation and data quality assurance at district level to promote feedback into 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.

3.5.1 Comprehensive sector diagnosis

The current ESP is a transition plan for the period 2018-2020, in part 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 last diagnostic analysis for Sierra Leone was conducted in 2012/2013 and the context has changed since then. The diagnosis will commence in early 2019 while the ESP development process will be completed in 2020. The sector diagnostic will be conducted by a team of national and international consultants (to promote capacity development) in line with the GPE guidelines for conducting sector analysis. UNICEF and the Co-ordinating Entity will support the process of conducting the diagnostic analysis and use by the sector. The exact scope of the Education Sector Analysis will be agreed with MEST and the LEG following commencement of the GPE grant, with a view to work commencing in early 2019 covering the following sector-wide thematic areas: context; access; cost and financing; quality, system capacity and management; external efficiency; and equity. This is necessary as Sierra Leone was granted an Education Sector Plan Development grant in 2017, and as such will not be eligible to receive another grant until 2020, by which point it is hoped that the next ESP will be developed.

3.6   Proposed variable tranche indicators & use of the variable tranche

Under the new GPE funding modality, of the overall US$17.2 million GPE funding, 30% of the grant will be available only upon the achievement of selected indicators - the "variable part" of the project. Disbursement of the variable part is linked to the achievement of agreed indicators which target the three dimensions of: (i) equity; (ii) learning outcomes; and (iii) efficiency.

Given the value of the both the fixed ($12m) and variable part ($5.2m) and the high levels of need within Sierra Leone (97% of P2 children were unable to recognise a single letter in 2014), the variable part will be used to finance actions and activities that are a continuation of the fixed part, and which have been related to the stretch indicators and which directly contribute to the ESP targets.

The objective of the variable component is to further incentivize Governments to undertake ambitious reforms within a relatively short timeframe to make a transformational impact on the education sector. As such, it is proposed that the variable tranche indicators are achieved within the first three years of the project, with the variable tranche funding then used to fund activities in the third and fourth year of the project.

To ensure the maximum continuity with the fixed part, it is proposed that approximately 25% of the funds are targeted within the first 24 months of the programme, with the remaining funding within the final year. As the programme is expected to line up with school years, this gives up to three school years to achieve the results – which will be a challenging stretch, but not impossible.

This time frame for the variable part is deemed appropriate by MEST and Development Partners, though it does raise the risk of a slight misalignment of the programme with the ESP 2018-20. In addition, the time frame will allow for the use of the funds from the variable part to complement and build on the implementation already in place through the fixed part, ensuring high levels of coherence with the ESP, and enabling national reach for the teacher training activities.

The Local Education Group (LEG) has been fully engaged in the selection of the proposed variable indicators, which aim for transformative impact across Sierra Leone, with a special focus on the local councils which have the farthest to go in meeting key educational targets, on the foundational skills, and improving systematic barriers at the sector level. The Programme Implementation Grant activities under the 'fixed' part and the proposed actions in support of achievement of the variable results are closely aligned and complement each other to ensure achievement of the interim ESP targets.

The policy priorities address some of the serious issues affecting education in Sierra Leone, such as poor learning outcomes in English and maths and high repetition rates in the early grades. They have been agreed upon in various stages, with many proposed indicators not meeting the new requirements. They were developed through consultation with key stakeholders and follow-up meetings with participation of the development partners. The realisation of indicators below will trigger payment of 30% of the costs of the activities detailed in the fixed part. Given the new requirements, the indicators have been proposed by the LEG as measurable, stretching and not requiring disproportionate verification costs, while providing a strategic shift in the outcomes of the sector. The full justification for these measures can be found in section 9. The focus on outcome level indicators will pose a major stretch to the capacity of the education sector within Sierra Leone, which is rebuilding capacity following a major crisis.

Equity: US$1,700,000

Key strategies and policies proposed	Reducing the gap in access to early childhood development services could lead to reduction of overage enrolment in primary schools, thus to improved probability that students continue to JSS.
Indicators	**1) An increase in the ratio of pre-primary to primary classrooms in the six most underserved local councils to the national average (median)**
Targets, amount and verification	Increasing the ratio from a low of 1.2:100 in 2016 to the current median, 4.9:100, by 2021 (verified in May 2020 & May 2021 through ASC) in the six lowest local councils. With $1,700,000 disbursed by June 2021 with **prorated** scaling by local council: two LC paid by June 2020 final four by June 2021), $284,000 per LC. Verification will be conducted by inspections of construction completion reports, and physical inspection of schools by the EFA Coalition, accompanied by randomised spot checks by LEG members.

Efficiency: US$1,760,000

Key strategies and policies proposed	Reducing the repetition rate in Primary 1, which is the highest among the primary grades, could lead to improve efficiency by ensuring children obtain the foundational skills to help with learning. This will allow them to progress through the school system in a more efficient, timely manner.
Indicators	1) A reduction in the national repetition rate at P1
Targets, amount and verification	1) Reducing the repetition rate at P1 from M14.59%/F14.4% in 2016 to 10% for both in 2020 (verified in May 2021 through ASC and $ disbursed in 2021 with prorated scaling: ~$191,721 per percentage point for reduction for boys; $200,000 per percentage point reduction for girls).

Learning: US$1,740,000

Key strategies and policies proposed	Improving reading and math skills in schools through improved measurement of learning.
Indicators	1) Create an official unit for learning assessment, with a work plan available for the first two years of activities. 2). Publication of the analysis of results of valid national assessments in the Early Grades, upper primary and secondary.
Targets, amount and verification	1) 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* of the unit will be assessed by a contracted third-party (the EFAC, subject to availability of 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. $820,000 by September 2019 2) *Publication* 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 and that these are reported on in the media, through radio, TV or newspapers.; *valid* is defined by an external check of the technical annexes by an independent third party. $920,000 (By June 2021)

Use of the variable tranche

The variable tranche will be used to expand on the activities undertaken in the fixed part allocation, and fund activities in the final year of the programme (2020-2021). The following additional activities will be undertaken, with the associated results. For full details of the activities that undertake these headline outcome/outputs, please refer to the relevant section within 3.3.

Table 3 : High level outputs from variable tranche				
Strategic Outcome	**Intervention name**	**Indicator Name**	**Indicator Targets**	
			2020-2021	**2021/22**
Improved access to early learning for 3-5 year olds.	Expansion of pre-school classes in primary schools	Additional number of classrooms built	20	20
	Expansion of access through community based ECD centres	Number of centres supported to continue operations	20	20
Improved learning outcomes in reading, writing and maths for early grades 1-3	In-service training of Primary Teachers to improve early grade reading, writing and maths	Number of teachers trained	1,953	1,953
Strengthened decentralised school monitoring, data collection and management	District level disaggregated data	Situation room reports received	12	12

4   Monitoring and evaluation

The Monitoring and Evaluation Unit within the Directorate of Planning and Policy in collaboration with the Inspectorate/ Quality Assurance Directorate (QAD) will provide overall technical expertise and guidance on monitoring and evaluation exercises for this programme. The relevant departments of MEST will monitor progress and results indicators on a regular basis and where necessary, third party monitoring with civil society will be engaged. Drawing on the lessons learned from previous programmes, and advice from the QAR I & II process, support will be provided to this unit, in the form of continuation of funding to the REDiSL funded staff member (this is alongside the work that will be supported to integrate the Situation Room and EMIS).

Given the recent DFID support to the Situation Room, EMIS, and the proposed support to the Annual School Census from the EU/WB, the information necessary for regular reporting should be available, meaning that the challenge will be in processing and analysing the data. This risk is also minimised by the support being provided by both other donors and the GPE grant, alongside the increased human capacity the programme will provide. It is hoped that, by the end of the ESP period, additional decentralised data will be available to further refined policy and programmes.

The reporting for the majority results will be conducted annually, drawing on the annual school census, but periodic milestones and targets will be monitored throughout the year, and learning outcomes will be monitored at the end of 19/20 school 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 provides the opportunity for the communication of real-time information/data electronically monthly.

Experience from the previous GPE grants shows that quality of learning and teaching improvement rates are difficult to measure over the limited implementation period. In addition, the technical expertise to accurately measure changes in learning outcomes over time (in terms of designing an appropriate sampling framework, dealing with attrition, ensuring test items are valid over time) are not available in Sierra Leone, and it will take time to build the requisite capacity to manage such robust systems.

That said, learning outcomes will be tracked during the grant period through the collection of sample based learning data, focusing on early grade reading and maths outcomes. This will, alongside the information being collected at secondary level by 'Leh Wi Learn', be used by policy makers to facilitate planning and to check the broad health of the system. These measures will be overseen by a learning assessment unit, funded in part by the GPE grant, with the aim of creating a semi-autonomous entity that will be responsible for learning assessments.

Specific outputs indicated in the results framework will be measured 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, to ensure the necessary information is available in a timely fashion and the guidelines/deadlines of the project are met.

Data collection systems will be strengthened to allow more decentralised data collection and data cleaning at the district level. Monitoring on outputs of specific components (to track intermediate indicators) has been built into the components themselves – for example, assessment of the ECD interventions will be evaluated separately.

In addition to the internal monitoring processes, a third-party external verification will be undertaken by the Education for All Coalition, partly to support the verification of the variable tranche indicator, and partly to verify the results achieved under the fixed part. Specifically, they will verify that the pre-schools/community centres are operational; that teachers in both pre-primary and early grades have received training; and that data are being collected and processed in a transparent manner. This evaluation will be overseen by UNICEF and managed in conjunction with the MEST M&E team and the Local Education group, and is budgeted within the programme management costs.

DFID have supported Government to introduce a toll-free number for complaints and queries concerning education related issues to be raised with MEST. In addition, UNICEF will use their end-user reports to further ensure beneficiary feedback from the targeted users and communities.

During the grant period, reporting on the GPE will be undertaken within LEG 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 will be conducted.

5 Programme management

This section covers the arrangements for programme management, oversight and coordination, financial assurance, monitoring and evaluation.

5.1 Implementation management

MEST will have overall responsibility for direction, coordination and delivery of programme results. A team leader or ESP Implementation Coordinator will be identified by MEST to provide programme leadership and several MEST departments will be involved in the implementation of programme activities, to ensure that MEST capacity is strengthened and sustainability is enhanced. The Directorates of Planning and Policy, Inspectorate, Programme (early learning), non-formal education and Curriculum will be involved in the implementation. The programme will be implemented under the overall leadership of the Inclusive Management Team (IMT) of MEST. The IMT is led by the Chief Education Officer and the Permanent Secretary with heads of directorates, divisions and units as members. The Deputy Ministers I and II are also part of the team.

The IMT will provide strategic direction on the interventions and track implementation with supervision and leadership from the executive management team which is comprised of the Ministers (i.e. the Minister and his two Deputies), Permanent Secretary and Chief Education Officer. This body will have the mandate to make technical decisions that will further guide and effect actions related to the implementation of the programme. Feedback on progress including challenges and recommendations will be reviewed and possible endorsement taken by this body during fortnightly meetings. The IMT will meet every two weeks and progress on this grant will be a standard agenda item.

The Grant Agent, UNICEF, will work collaboratively with the MEST to manage the implementation of this programme. UNICEF will provide both technical, financial and monitoring support and oversight to programme implementation. UNICEF, the Coordinating Agencies (which will rotate between DFID, the EU and the World Bank) and MEST will also ensure the programme activities are aligned with the ESP, oversee progress, and ensure compliance with agreed GPE guidelines, through quarterly meetings.

The UNICEF GPE Project Coordinator will facilitate the overall coordination and implementation of the project, closely supervised by the Chief of Education and supported by the UNICEF Basic Education team. The Education team consists of 14 international and national professional staff at the national and sub-office level, all operating within the context of the larger UNICEF Basic Education programme. All UNICEF education staff members have designated areas of responsibility which can be aligned to the GPE grant. They cover technical areas including: access and equity, early learning, quality education and learning, education systems strengthening, and education in emergency. The funding for the new project will

support key UNICEF technical staff members, who will be directly involved in the achievement of the outputs.

5.2   Implementation Strategy

The GPE project will be implemented in collaboration with MEST, TSC, NGO partners and other identified key stakeholders. As requested in the QAR II, Table 4 provides the delineation of the respective responsibilities between MEST and UNICEF for implementation of the GPE-financed ESPIG and the flow of funds. A shown in Table 4, certain risks (deliver and fiduciary) mean that a range of implementing partners, and procurement mechanisms will be used, with a view to use Government systems where-ever this is deemed possible. UNICEF works through supporting Government to deliver where they are deemed to have the requisite capacity – this is the case for development of standards, oversight and facilitation of training. Procurement of supplies will mainly be handled through UNICEF's Global Supplier frameworks, to mitigate against the delays experienced in the REDiSL project and in line with UNICEF's Country Programme Document 2015 -2019. This has been judged to be the most cost-effective and transparent and offer the best protection for GPE funds at this time.

Table 4

Component	Implementer & funds flow
Expansion of pre-school classes in primary schools	For construction: UNICEF and Implementing Partner For training: TSC & DEO/TTC's Salary payments: MEST
Expansion of access through community based ECD centres	All aspects: UNICEF and NGOs
In-service training of Primary Teachers to improve early grade reading, writing and maths	For training logistics: TSC District officers with IP support For training development & standards: TSC & UNICEF (TA) For procurement of supplies: UNICEF
District level disaggregated data	For situation room/EMIS integration: MEST/Districts (with TA support) For stipends/incentives: MEST For learning assessment unit: MEST
Sector analysis (diagnostic) report available	MEST and UNICEF (TA)

5.3   Oversight and coordination

The Working Group (WG) approach, which proved successful during the implementation of the Ebola and Post Ebola recovery interventions in the education sector, was recommended during the MTR for adaptation for the 2018-2020 ESP. The Working Groups on key thematic focus areas will consist of MEST leadership at the pertinent level and include international and local NGOs, development partners, line MDAs, CSOs, the private sector and any other local or international education stakeholders.

It is anticipated that a WG will be constituted for this programme chaired by the MEST programme team lead. The WG will meet monthly and be responsible for tracking progress and also providing oversight to programme implementation and updating the IMT.

The Education Development Partners (EDP) will serve as an advisory and oversight mechanism. The EDP will review programme documents and make endorsements as necessary, and also validate achievement of results under the programme.

DFID will be the initial co-ordinating entity for the GPE grant, taking responsibility for the Joint-Sector review process, to which GPE reporting will be aligned. As part of the GPE reporting, annual sector reviews will be undertaken led by MEST.

5.4   Financial management

The second GPE support for both fixed and variable allocation funding will be administered by UNICEF and managed as per UNICEF financial rules and regulations. UNICEF's role as the Grant Agent of the fund includes planning, administration, contracting, procurement of services and supplies as necessary, management of the funds, monitoring and reporting to the GPE.

The programme will operate through both MEST financial systems and independently contracted implementing partners (NGO and CSOs). Where funds flow through MEST, UNICEF will help to ensure that MEST implements activities to standard and conducts rigorous and regular monitoring of programme activities and submits narrative and financial reports prior to payment of new instalments. Depending on what is being procured, both MEST procurement unit and UNICEF Supply Unit will have responsibility for procurement of any supplies/materials and services required for this programme and the required procurement procedures will be followed.

In March 2015, the UN Agencies, UNICEF and UNFPA, commissioned a micro assessment of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) to ascertain its financial management capacity. The micro assessment concluded that the overall risk rating for the Ministry's financial management system was Medium; implying that MEST has a fairly well

developed financial management system and control framework but with some delivery risks. An update to this assessment is being finalised, and, while not available in time for the submission of the proposal, will be used to inform on-going support to MEST during the programme period.

In addition, UNICEF will conduct a micro-assessment, in line with HACT principles, to assess the risk and necessary management controls required to facilitate the direct transfer of funds to TSC to undertake activities.

Any required construction will be undertaken through UNICEF systems, using implementing partners who will be selected through a local competition within pre-qualified firms on framework agreement.

In 2016 UNICEF Sierra Leone commissioned an audit of UNICEF funded activities during the period from 1January 2015 to 30 June 2016. The overall audit conclusion was an unqualified audit opinion. In other words, in all material respects, MEST's financial statements for the audit period were true and fair and UNICEF's resources were properly accounted for. The audit for 2017 covering the period 1 July – 30 June 2017 was conducted in October-December 2017 and will be reported later this year. Under the GPE programme, the programme will be audited on an annual basis.

Following on from the REDiSL project, for funds flowing to government, UNICEF will work with the Financial Management Specialist and Finance Officer within the Secretariat, who has experience managing GPE projects. UNICEF will work collaboratively with MEST to develop annual operational plans and budgets for the programme, monitor the implementation of the programme activities by the corresponding MEST departments, and monitor outputs and progress on outcomes. Funds will be transferred on a quarterly basis, against a prospective list of activities, and a retrospective report of funds spent in the previous quarter.

Regular meetings of the WG and reporting to the IMT will ensure appropriate monitoring of operational and fiduciary progress for this programme. Overall, financial management under this programme will be the accountability of the MEST Accounts Office with support from the Secretariat, and any procurement required with be sourced by Procurement Unit with technical support from UNICEF's Operations Unit.

UNICEF will conduct investigations of any irregularities including suspected cases of corruption, fraud, embezzlement, abuse of assets and waste or violation of laws and regulations and take necessary action if required, including reporting to the GPE as per the GPE zero tolerance policy.

6   Risks & Mitigating measures

No.	Description	Before Mitigation		Mitigating Action	After Mitigation	
		Prob. of Occurring	Impact if Realised		Prob. of Occurring	Impact if Realised
Operational Risk						
1	Quality enhancement agenda fails to deliver desired improvements in measured learning outcomes, leading to forfeiture of variable tranche.	Medium	High	Continue to work through the Co-ordinating Entity and the LEG to ensure the ESP is delivered, and that the Government prioritises those activities with the strongest theory of change linked to learning.	Medium	High
2	Institutional capacity for improved service delivery remains weak	High	High	Key staff are being recruited for MEST, including providing support to. Named staff within GA and MEST will increase accountability. Given the sustainability risk of continual use of project staff, work with Government to improve HR capabilities and Min.	High	Medium

No.	Description	Before Mitigation		Mitigating Action	After Mitigation	
		Prob. of Occurring	Impact if Realised		Prob. of Occurring	Impact if Realised
				Finance to allow transition onto payroll.		
4	Change in GoSL leads to a failure to provide adequate leadership to implement ESP	Unknown	High	Having the ESP 2018-2020 validated and approved by the political authorities should allow a continuity in the education sector programmes.	Unknown	Medium
5	Selection of beneficiary areas becomes politicised	Medium	Medium	Locations of ECD centres and community centres are decided collaboratively in a transparent and equitable manner. Local authorities (DEO's, Paramount Chiefs) are engaged early in selection of beneficiaries.	Low	Low
6	TSC is not fully operational	High	Medium	The requirements for TSC have been designed with their existing capacity in mind. While they are now (or will soon be) able to fulfil the national level functions of teacher management/standards, work is needed to strengthen their district level operational unit. An implementing partner will be	Medium	Medium

No.	Description	Before Mitigation		Mitigating Action	After Mitigation	
		Prob. of Occurring	Impact if Realised		Prob. of Occurring	Impact if Realised
				identified to supplement the two TSC district staff members.		
Financial Risk						
6	Financial mismanagement and corruption	Medium	High	Further strengthening of financial management and procurement capacity through direct support from UNICEF Operations department. UNICEF will also update their micro assessment of the MEST which involves due diligence to ascertain the financial management capacity, and use this to inform appropriate measures to build capacity and quality assurance to mitigate any identified risks.	Medium	Medium

No.	Description	Before Mitigation		Mitigating Action	After Mitigation	
		Prob. of Occurring	Impact if Realised		Prob. of Occurring	Impact if Realised
				UNICEF and MEST will conduct an orientation on programme implementation, financial procedures and guidelines for the MEST staff and concerned departments including its decentralized structures.		
7	Insufficient resources to implement extensive reform agenda	Medium	High	Continue to work through the LEG to advocate for increased resources to Education	Medium	Medium

No.	Description	Before Mitigation		Mitigating Action	After Mitigation	
		Prob. of Occurring	Impact if Realised		Prob. of Occurring	Impact if Realised
8	Insufficient resources exist to allow teachers sufficient exposure (time spent on) to training to improve learning outcome	Medium	High	Work with the supervisors to provide CPD on a continual basis	Medium	Medium
8	GPE activities fail to be implemented on time.	Medium	Medium	The current GPE programme has already laid the basis for implementation and MEST will use existing teams to roll out the programmes. Areas have been collaboratively designed, increasing ownership.	Medium	Medium

No.	Description	Before Mitigation		Mitigating Action	After Mitigation	
		Prob. of Occurring	Impact if Realised		Prob. of Occurring	Impact if Realised
9	Extreme weather events lead to damage to school infrastructure and/or reduce school attendance	Medium	Medium	UNICEF will work to ensure any construction activities undertaken within the programme meet the required environmental standards.	Low	High
OVERALL SCORE		**Medium**			**Medium**	

7 Results Framework –

7.1 Outcome Level

Strategic Outcome	Indicator Name	Indicator Targets				Means of Verification
		Baseline	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	
Improved access to early learning for 3-5 year olds.	Percentage of girls and boys in first grade (Class 1) of primary school who attended pre-school during the previous school year in target local councils	1.6% (Boys:1.44% , Girls:1.76%)		2.5% (both genders)	5% (both genders)	Annual School Census
	Decrease in the P1 repetition rate	14.54% (male) 14.39 %(female) in 2016	13% for both genders	11.5% for both genders	10% for both genders	Annual School Census
Increased learning outcomes in the early grades	Percentage of P2 children scoring non-zero scores in letter identification	2.6% (2014); No gender differences			5.1% (No gender differences)	EGRA sample assessment
	Percentage of P2 children scoring non-zero scores in reading comprehension	3.1% (2014); No gender differences			5.6% (No gender differences)	EGRA sample assessment

7.2 Fixed Part

Strategic Outcome	Intervention name	Indicator Name	Indicator Targets					Means of Verification
			Baseline	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	Total	Baseline
Improved access to early learning for 3-5 year olds.	Expansion of pre-school classes in primary schools	Additional number of classrooms built	-	40	30	10	80	-
		Number of teachers trained	-	80	60	20	160	-
		Number of Children supported with ECD packages for pre-primary		1,200	900	300	2,400	Quarterly project reporting
	Expansion of access through community based ECD centres	Number of additional girls and boys, under 6 years of age, participating in community-based early learning (ECD) activities in pilot local councils	-	2,000 (1,000 boys and 1,000 girls)	2,000 (1,000 boys and 1,000 girls)		4,000 (2,000 boys and 2,000 girls)	Quarterly project reporting
		Number of additional Community ECD Workers and MSG members trained on ECD	-	200	200		400	Quarterly project reporting
Improved learning outcomes in reading, math and writing for	In-service training of Primary Teachers to improve early grade reading, math and writing	Cumulative Number of Early Grade teachers trained		5,858	5,858		11,000	Quarterly project reporting
		Number of teacher learning materials provided		5,858	5,858		11,000	Quarterly project reporting

Strategic Outcome	Intervention name	Indicator Name	Indicator Targets					Means of Verification
			Baseline	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	Total	Baseline
early grades 1-4.		Number of teacher participating in cluster peer-to-peer support events			5,858	11,716	17,574	Quarterly project reporting
		Girls and Boys supported with learning materials		300,000 (150,000/150,000)	300,000 (150,000/150,000)		600,000 (300,000/300,000)	Quarterly project reporting
Strengthened decentralized school	Increased access and availability of quality school	Situation room reports present		12	12	12	36	Quarterly project reporting

Strategic Outcome	Intervention name	Indicator Name	Indicator Targets					Means of Verification
			Baseline	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	Total	Baseline
monitoring, data collection and management and availability of comprehensive sector analysis data.	data at both central and decentralized levels through integrated systems	Number of districts that report on time data that represents 80% of schools	-	7	10	12	12	Quarterly project reporting
		Number of districts that use the data on a monthly basis to make decisions.		7	10	12	12	Quarterly project reporting
		EMIS & Situation room are successfully integrated	EMIS and situation room are separate entities	Technical Feasibility study is undertaken	Job Descriptions have been agreed for all integrated roles.	Data for the School Census is drawn from the merged dataset	-	Quarterly project reporting
	Sector analysis (diagnostic) report available	Sector diagnostic available			Full sector analysis is approved by MEST	Education Sector Plan completed	-	MEST website

7.3 Variable Part

Strategic Outcome	Intervention name	Indicator Name	Indicator Targets			
			Baseline	2020-2021	2021/22	Total
Improved access to early learning for 3-5 year olds.	Expansion of pre-school classes in primary schools	Additional number of classrooms built	-	20	20	40
		Number of teachers trained	-	40	40	80
		Number of Children supported with ECD packages for pre-primary		600 (300 boys and 300 girls)	600 (300 boys and 300 girls)	1,200
	Expansion of access through community based ECD centres	Number of additional girls and boys, under 6 years of age, participating in community-based early learning (ECD) activities in pilot local councils	-	2,000 (1,000 boys and 1,000 girls)	2,000 (1,000 boys and 1,000 girls)	4,000 (2,000 boys and 2,000 girls)
Improved learning outcomes in reading, math and writing for early grades 1-4.	In-service training of Primary Teachers to improve early grade reading, math and writing	Number of Early Grade teachers trained		1,953	3,905	5,858
		Number of teacher learning materials provided		1,953	3,905	5,858
		Number of teacher participating in cluster peer-to-peer support events			17,574	17,574

Strategic Outcome	Intervention name	Indicator Name	Indicator Targets			Total
			Baseline	2020-2021	2021/22	
		Girls and Boys supported with learning materials		100,000 (50,000/50,000)	200,000 (100,000/100,000)	300,000 (150,000/150,000)
Strengthened decentralized school monitoring, data collection and management and availability of comprehensive sector analysis data.	Increased access and availability of quality school data at both central and decentralized levels through integrated systems	Situation room reports presented		12	12	24
		Number of districts that report on time data that represents 80% of schools	-	12	14	14
		Number of districts that use the data on a monthly basis to make decisions.		12	14	14

8 Sustainability

This project has been designed by the MEST with technical assistance from UNICEF and input from the LEG comprised of donor partners and CSOs. It is aligned to the Implementation Plan of the Education Sector Plan. For sustainability, it is important that the program is easy to implement and scale-up by MEST given current capacity constraints. This means strengthening and maximizing use of existing routine administrative systems/sources rather than creating parallel systems, which has been done wherever possible.

Widespread consultations have been carried out, and all key partners have been bought into the process. 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.

Enhanced teaching capacity and an improved learning environment for the early grades will continue to benefit students' learning after the completion of the project. The model will be designed to allow teachers to reach an ability threshold, while the continuous professional development will ensure it is used sufficiently to become part of their daily routine. Sustainability in this case is a question of the teachers continuing to operate in the profession, and being supported through clusters initiated through the project rather than a need to continue the project post-GPE. Activities such as the CPD activities being supported by the EU, in addition to the use of the classroom supervisors to follow up on trainings will seek to reinforce the messages from the trainings. That said, as quality improvements are a continuum, it will be necessary to further upskill teachers – hence the LEG will continue to work with MEST and Ministry of Finance to finance the schools and districts in the coming years.

For the integration of the situation room and the EMIS system, the work will draw on open-source software where-ever possible, to negate the need for continual funding of license-fees. Equally, the steps taken to restructure the necessary Departments will ensure that the new integrated system is embedded within MEST. Issues remain over the costs of providing the incentives to community monitors, which are outside of payroll – these issues will be investigated as part of the integration process, with a view to ensuring the combined system is cost-effective and obtainable without recurrent support.

Supporting the Government in delivering and monitoring the ESP and helping the MEST move forward with greater capacity is a critical step towards enhancing the quality of service delivery in the sector.

For the pre-primary classrooms, sustainability will be obtained through discussions around integration of the teachers into the government school system, in terms of both hiring and

remuneration processes. For the community, based models, sustainability will be considered in the context of raising community demand and discussions around integration into the wider ECD structures. It will be key to influence the development of the next Education Sector Plan, and the Ministry of Finance through the medium-term development framework, when the Government is more likely to have sufficient resources to carry out the scale up of interventions, particularly those focused on early childhood education, increase funding to schools, and provide more training for teachers through the TSC.

The Government is committed to further support to ECD in the next sector plan, and the continuation of a co-ordination unit. The exact nature of this support, including what activities from this programme will be directly absorbed, will form part of that planning process over the coming years.

In addition to the programme activities, UNICEF will work to strengthen Government systems where possible over the grant period. This includes the activities within their broader country programme, as part of the HACT agreements. Where specific activities are identified within the micro-assessments of MEST and TSC, support will be provided to help develop capacity on these specific issues, and funding has been reserved for such occasions within the programme budget. Government is a key partner on all components, and will be included in specific component level trainings, which will improve their capacity to deliver similar programmes in the future.

9   Justification of the Variable tranche.

For the variable tranche, the identification of system level outcome indicators is a challenge in the Sierra Leonean context, as the statistical systems are weak (though improving) and the Ebola crisis led to significant changes in the school system for the 2015 & 2016 school years. As such, getting baseline or trend data is problematic, as is discussed in more detail below.

The LEG, with support from the Secretariat, discussed a wide range of indicators, and explored the use of measure increases in outcomes – such as reading comprehension or drop-out and repetition rates. A thorough analysis of the literature on what can feasibly be achieved within the period at the system level was conducted. This led to discussions with technical experts and statisticians around measurement issues (specifically around the level of error that the statistics are measured with). Given the lack of evidence on large scale shifts in these indicators over time, the weak fiscal and technical capacity of the operating environment, and the statistical noise inherent in affordable samples, both learning outcomes and drop-out indicators were not deemed suitable for use as a high-stakes payment triggers, though it is proposed that they are still tracked as programme level outcome targets.

9.1   Process & data issues

The process of identifying the variable tranche indicators has been open, collaborative and involved all members of the LEG, including CSOs. Initial areas were suggested for the indicators, which were then discussed and prioritised according to if they were (i) realistic; (ii) stretching; (iii) catalytic. While ideally all the indicators should be outcome level, the capacity and context of Sierra Leone makes this difficult, so a combination of outcome, output and process indicators were discussed. A shortlist of interventions was then considered in more detail by MEST, Donor Partners and CSOs.

The LEG has found the process particularly challenging, due to weak systems prohibiting many options. With respect to data, several challenges emerged. Data availability has been a challenge in Sierra Leone, and an area of recent investment to improve the EMIS system, develop the situation room and reinstate the school census report. Given the GPE requirements to have baseline data prior to commencement of the project, the choice of indicators is narrow in data-poor contexts. This is further complicated by Ebola, which led to the closing of schools for the 2014/15 school year, and which will have a knock-on effect on the school system for years to come, as the 'bulge' in children works its way through the system.

An additional challenge is posed by the lack of reliable district level age data in the population census. The authors of the report noted statistical issues, which necessitated the use of

smoothing techniques when developing age bands. So, while these data are used at the national level to develop Gross rates, they currently lack the statistical power to be used reliably at the district level of age specific rates (for example the Gross-Intake rate in P1 in Tonkolili district).

The underlying data that are available in Sierra Leone are drawn from the school censuses in 2015 and 2016, which were atypical years due to the Ebola recovery. In 2015, the schools reopened in May, and the school year ran through December. In 2016 the school year ran from January through August, before the school calendar returned to normal in 2016/17 school year.

It is worth reflecting on this, and the impact that Ebola will have on the system level indicators that could be used for the baseline. While Ebola had devastating consequences on the country as a whole, it will most prominently affect the age/grade distribution of students (as all children will be one year older for the grade they should be in, even if they have never repeated). Additionally, in 2015 school year, P1 enrolment will comprise of two school year cohorts – those who should have enrolled in 2014/15 and those who should have enrolled in 2015/16. This, aligned with the expect number of repeaters, will lead to a P1 population over double the normal size, that will work its way through the system. By 2020-2021, these students (with no repetition or drop-out) would be in the final year of primary schooling. While the situation is far more complex, this means that the repetition rate in 2015/16 should be unaffected by Ebola – and indeed, the rate seems in line with the average rate in Sierra Leone (13.6% on average, compared to 16% in 2010/11 and 12% in 2004/05).

Table 5: Indicative pattern of enrolment bulge following Ebola

STUDENT ENROLMENT IMPACT OF EBOLA

	2013/14	2014/15	2015	2016	2016/17	2017/18	2018-2019	2019-2020
1		a̶	a+a1					
2	Tested	b̶	b	a+a1				
3		c̶	c	b	a+a1			
4	Tested	d̶	d	c	b	a+a1		
5		e̶	e	d	c	b	a+a1	
6		f̶	f	e	d	c	b	a+a1

For learning outcomes, the only system level indicator with any baseline is the 2014 EGRA assessment, which was conducted prior to Ebola. This collected data on P2 and P4 students. This survey undertook literacy and numeracy assessments in 2014 among approximately 2,400 primary grades 2 and primary grade 4 pupils from 130 schools in all 14 districts of Sierra Leone.   As shown in Table 5, the enrolment bulge should have passed P2 by the time the survey is next undertaken – that said, the later grades of primary will still be greater than they should be through 2020-2021, which could create teaching pressures across the whole school which may make progress harder than usual.

Using outcome level data on learning

Setting the learning outcome target has been a real challenge, as high-stakes payments on learning outcomes is new to the Sierra Leone context. As such, it is important that the derivation of a target follows a consistent methodology, which is in line with international best-practise, while understanding the specific contexts of Sierra Leone. The consequence of the requirements for a variable tranche indicator (i.e. has a baseline) reduced the choices for Sierra Leone to the possible use of an EGRA/EGMA test. This is in line with the new SDG's and a step towards reporting on indicator 4.1.1. The LEG considered this, but have opted against for the following reasons.

The learning test on the cohort will be applied at the end of the project at the end of the school year in 2021. As the GPE stipulates that the target measures systemic change, it is not possible to follow the standard impact evaluation methodology (i.e. track treatment vs control), that forms the basis of the available information on changes in learning outcomes.

Focusing on the existing literature comes with an additional problem – as the indicators that are monitored are the share of students getting non-zero, it is impossible to know the existing levels of children – i.e. how far below zero they are. This has important implications for the statistical derivation of targets, as the literature reports 'effect sizes', usually in terms of standard deviation increases over time. So, while it is possible to say that a 0.2 SD increase in learning outcomes is a fair target, having reviewed the literature, the extreme clustering of the scores in the 2014 EGRA around zero mean it is statistically impossible to translate this into an increase in the share of pupils getting non-zero scores.

The exact level at which to set the target poses a question, as this will be the first time a country has a performance related indictor on system level changes in EGRA scores. While some developing countries, in line with the SDG's, are introducing tracking of scores at the system, they focus around 'minimum standards', which are still being locally developed.

While very little evidence exists (a table of country learning assessment over time is presented in the annex), in some smaller countries the reading interventions were national, and as such have national estimates. In Malawi, between 2010 & 2012 there was an improvement in the number of children getting non-zero scores in reading from 2.9 to 5.4%, a 2.5 percentage point increase in two years. The only other estimates from EGRA over time at a national level draw from Rwanda.

In Rwanda, the USAID programme, which specially targeted early grade reading, led to a reduction in the number of non-zero scores in P1 reading fluency by 10 percentage points between baseline and midline. This equated to a reduction in the number of children who can read a word from 60% to 50% of the sample for those who received the programme. Taking this as the benchmark for estimated impacts under intensive support, we can scale this by the likely scale of the interventions proposed within the ESP. The interventions in the Rwanda context were of much greater intensity, including teacher training, community libraries and parental support and Ed-tech initiatives through audio. The propose ESP lacks the funds to undertake such a comprehensive reform effort. While the evaluation does not report the

specific impacts of the teacher support alone, it is unlikely to be responsible for all of the impact, necessitating the target to be scaled back to be realistic.

An addition challenge is the sample on which this impact estimate is based, as the programme was national. Equally, the impacts from the literature are all drawn from examples which evaluate specific 'treatments'. The only evidence we have of national level changes in learning outcomes through sector wide support are from the ASER/UWEZO surveys in South Asia and East Africa.
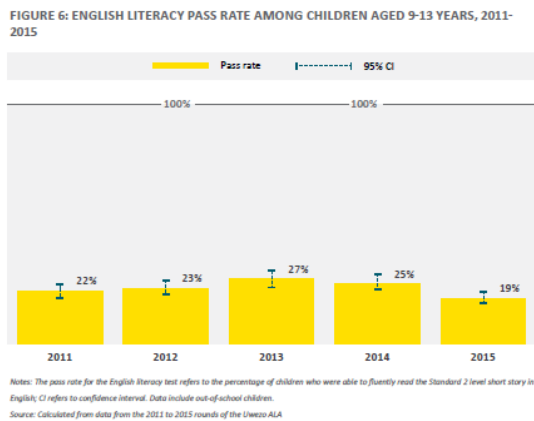

Figure 3: Changes in Learning levels over time in Tanzania (UWEZO 2017)

Sadly, the changes in basic literacy and numeracy, as measured by the citizen-led assessments, change very slowly, if at all, at the country level. For Tanzania, there was no statistically significant increase between 2011 & 2017, despite large scale support by donors. In India, the ASER report found that while there were changes in some states, on average, average reading ability levels were stagnant at best, and may have declined as school enrolment expanded.

As such, the evidence tells us that while education projects can be shown to increase learning outcomes through direct, intensive instruction, getting system level improvements is quite difficult, with little precedent to set a realistic, yet stretching target. The scant evidence on sector-level changes in learning outcomes appears to suggest that any positive improvement would be a relative achievement, while evidence from targeted programmes tells us change can occur within the timeframe. As such, the best estimate must draw on the existing activities that are likely to impact on early grade reading, which centre around the GPE grant, and scale these to consider the low levels of system-interventions within the time-period.

The activities, which will directly impact on fluency assessments will be rolled out on a staged basis over the coming years and will cover approximately 10 out of the 14 districts by the end of the fixed tranche. As such, any target must be scaled proportionally in line with the expected interventions within the ESP and the implementation time of activities. Focusing on cohort 1 of the trainers, they will complete their training by the start of the school year in 2019, giving two years to improve learning practices. These will be approximately 5/10 districts, with an additional five districts that will receive training by the school year 2020-

2021, who will have just one year to display changes. If the estimate of impact of 10 percentage points reduction is drawn equally from the within-school components vs out of school, and assuming that the technology component was impactful, then scaling this by half seems reasonable. This gives a five-percentage point increase in those areas which received treatment. As only 10/14 of the areas will receive treatment over the period, this should again be scaled – leaving approximately a 3.5 percentage point increase over the period as an indicative target. This would be in line with the EGRA results from Malawi, which found a 1.25 percentage point increase per school year.

One additional challenge this creates is the issue of measurement error – all statistical samples are drawn with 'error', which is usually measured through the confidence interval. As the estimated level of change is quite small, to detect a change without a disproportionately expensive sample is very difficult. As such it is hard to structure payments, as it is unclear if they should be made on the upper bound of the confidence interval of measurement exceeding the target, irrespective of the mean value.

For drop-out rates, a favoured indicator for the GPE, the data can only be calculated from the two years of 2015 & 2016, which were impacted upon with Ebola. It is unclear which direction this will influence rates – it could be the case that rates are higher than usual, as classes will be higher due to the existence of the 'bulge' of students. However, as drop-out is closely linked with age, it is likely that it may bias the older grades more, as children are an additional year older than they should be. As no reliable time-series data exist, it is hard to translate this into a statistical correction for the current data levels.

Given these challenges, sections 9.2 to 9.4 propose variable tranche indicators which has been deemed to be suitable for the Sierra Leone context. They are a mix of process (setting up systems), output (building classrooms to improve equitable access) and outcome (repetition rates) level variables which will create considerable stretch in Sierra Leone over the period.

9.2 Justification of Learning Indicators

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.

It is argued by the GPE that the ability to collect and use learning data is critical to a well-functioning education system, with the partnership having improvements in countries capacity within learning assessment systems as a strategic priority.

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 equates 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.[7]

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.

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[7] See Bruns "Making Schools Work" (2011) for a review of this literature in developing countries; and Figlio and Loeb "Accountability: Economics of Education Handbook" (2011) for a review in developed countries.

- 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[8] 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[9]. 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 behaviours and thus improve outcomes[10]. 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. This will be aligned to the work that the Ministry has been undertaking since 2016 on a simplified league tables for schools performance in the WAEC, and the wider work in Strategic Outcome 3.4 on ensuring data are timely and reliable.

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[8] "Does One Size Fit All? The Impact of Cognitive Skills on Economic Growth", Journal of Macroeconomics (2017), *Altinok et al.*
[9] Pritchett, L., and Beatty, A. (2012). *The Negative Consequences of Over-Ambitious Curricular in Developing Countries*. Harvard Kennedy School.
[10] Bruns et al. (2011) "Making Schools Work"

The Theory of Change for this indicator is as follows, with the variable tranche focussing on stage one of the process – obtaining the necessary information to inform decision making. This is show diagrammatically in the figure below, which also provides links through to the actions planned within the ESP in these areas.
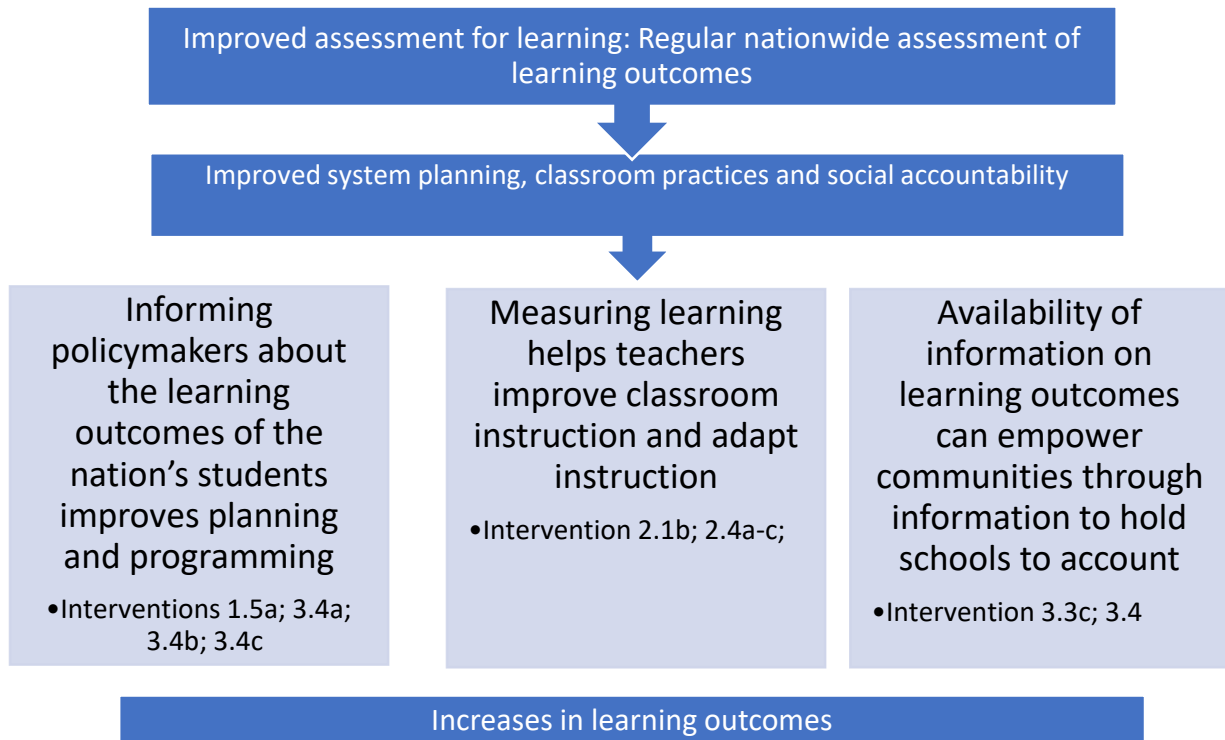
Overall, it is argued that measuring learning is key to improving learning, working through three channels of impact – at the system, classroom and community levels. At the system level, learning outcomes are needed to inform policymaking, measure the impact of the governments' education reforms, and help in targeting resources to those most in need. This information is key to the upcoming sector analysis and to help support the new Government in delivery of the existing ESP, and to improve the targeting of programmes within this.

At the classroom level, measuring learning is central to the learning process, helping teachers understand what students know and to adapt instruction accordingly. Where there is a large gap between the content being taught and the child's ability, it is difficult for learning to progress.

Finally, the availability of learning data can also improve accountability by providing parents and communities evidence to inform discussions with schools about learning outcomes, enabling parents to hold schools to account. This will be aided by the publication of the learning outcomes data.

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, 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 Ministry of Education website www.education.gov.sl, within one year of the data being collected, and that these are reported on in the media, through radio, TV or newspapers; *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, 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 a 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.

9.3 Justification of Equity Indicators

9.3.1 Identification of the challenge to be addressed

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 local councils 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.

Table 6: Ratio of pre-primary classrooms to primary

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

Council	Preschool		Total	Primary		Total	Pre-primary classes per 100 primary classes
	Perm.	M/shift		Perm.	M/shift		
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 6: Ratio of pre-primary classrooms to primary

The Table 6 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 local councils. 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[11]) 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

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[11] http://www.thelancet.com/series/ECD2016

whom would be expected to repeat[12]. By improving access to early childhood opportunities, and encouraging children to enrol 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.

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[12] There is a strong correlation found between age and repletion (although causality is hard to discern). See for example, Sunny, et al. (2017). *"Failing to progress or progressing to fail? Age-for-grade heterogeneity and grade repetition in primary schools in Karonga district, northern Malawi"*. International Journal of Educational Development.

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 within Government, though other Local Education Group partners will be encouraged to provide additional support to leverage the variable tranche target. Bringing one-third of the country to the national average will require an additional 220[13] 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.

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[13] Of these, 80 will be built through the fixed tranche funding, leaving 140 classrooms to be built using Government funds

9.4 Justification of Efficiency Indicator

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[14], 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).
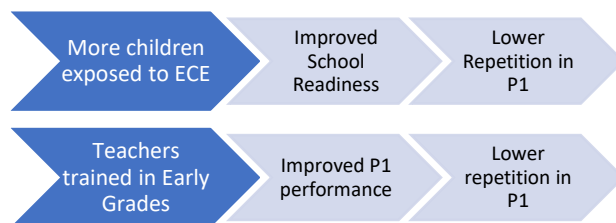
As repetition rates are a lagged indicator, to enable payment within the lifetime of the grant, is necessary to use the repetition rate between the 2019-2020 school year and the 2020-2021 school year to report on this indicator. Therefore, it is necessary to intervene to tackle the sources of repetition within two years of the ESP commencing, creating substantial time pressures.

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

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[14] "School Resources and Educational Outcomes in Developing Countries: A Review of the Literature from 1990 to 2010". *Paul Glewwe*, University of Minnesota. Eric A. Hanushek, Stanford University. Sarah Humpage, University of Minnesota. Renato Ravina, University of Minnesota. September 2011.

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) [15] 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

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[15] https://www.bsg.ox.ac.uk/sites/www.bsg.ox.ac.uk/files/documents/RISE_WP-001_Glewwe_Muralidharan.pdf

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).

Summary of Variable tranche indicators

Equity: US$1,700,000

Key strategies and policies proposed	Reducing the gap in access to early childhood development services could lead to reduction of overage enrolment in primary schools, thus to improved probability that students continue to JSS.
Indicators	**1) An increase in the ratio of pre-primary to primary classrooms in the six most underserved local councils to the national average (median)**
Targets, amount and verification	Increasing the ratio from a low of 1.2:100 in 2016 to the current median, 4.9:100, by 2021 (verified in Jan 2020 & May 2021 through ASC) in the six lowest local councils. With $1,700,000 disbursed by June 2021 with **prorated** scaling by local councils: two LC paid by June 2020 final four by June 2021), $284,000 per LC. Verification will be conducted by inspections of construction completion reports, and physical inspection of schools by the EFA Coalition, accompanied by randomised spot checks by LEG members.

Efficiency: US$1,760,000

Key strategies and policies proposed	Reducing the repetition rate in Primary 1, which is the highest among the primary grades, could lead to improve efficiency by ensuring children obtain the foundational skills to help with learning. This will allow them to progress through the school system in a more efficient, timely manner.
Indicators	1) A reduction in the national repetition rate at P1
Targets, amount and verification	1) Reducing the repetition rate at P1 from M14.54%/F14.39% in 2016 to 10% for both in 2020 (verified in May 2021 through ASC and $ disbursed in 2021 with prorated scaling: $193,832 for boys; $200,455 for girls.

Learning: US$1,740,000

Key strategies and policies proposed	Improving reading and math skills in schools through improved measurement of learning.
Indicators	1) Create an official unit for learning assessment, with a work plan available for the first two years of activities. 2). Publication of the analysis of results of valid national assessments in the Early Grades, upper primary and secondary.

| Targets, amount and verification | 1) 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* of the unit will be assessed by a contracted third-party (the EFAC, subject to availability of 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. $820,000 by April 2020

2) *Publication* 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, and that these are reported on in the media, through radio, TV or newspapers.; *valid* is defined by an external check of the technical annexes by an independent third party. $920,000 (By June 2021) |
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10 Annex 1: Summary of Learning Changes at national levels

Country	Summary	Source	Indicator	Grade	Baseline (%) [Male/Female]	Year	Latest Value (%) [Male/Female]	Year
Malawi	Increase	National Early Grade Reading Assessment Survey	% of reading comprehension questions attempted and correctly answered	2	97.1% scored zero on reading comprehension tests	2010	94.4% scored zero on reading comprehension tests	2012
Bangladesh	Increase	National Student Assessment	Demonstration of reading comprehension in Bangla	Grade 3	67% [66/68]	2011	74% [73/75]	2013
Uganda	Increase	UWEZO (TWAWEZA)	% able to read a simple Grade 2 level story in English	Grade 3	8% [7/7]	2011	19% [17/21]	2014
Zimbabwe	Increase	Government's ZELA exam	% achieving at or above the grade-appropriate level after completing grade 2	2	49% [45/54]	2012/13	53% [47/57]	2015/16
Rwanda	Increase	EGRA	% scoring zero WPM	End of P1	60%	2016	50%	2015
Pakistan	Decrease	ASER	% of children that can read a story in Urdu/Sindhi/Pashto	Class 3	20% (Rural)	2012	15.7% (Rural) [49/41]	2015

Nigeria	Decrease	ESSPIN Composite Survey, Cambridge Education [covering 6 states]	% who demonstrate ability to read with comprehension	P2 (or P4?)	2.7% [2.9/2.3]	2012	1.6% [1.6/1.7]	2014
Ethiopia	Decrease	National Learning assessment (Ministry of Education - MoE)	% reading in mother tongue at basic and above level	Grade 4	48.3%	2008	46.20%	2012
Ghana	Decrease	National education assessment (MoE)	Reading comprehension scores	P3	40.6%	2011	38.3%	2013
Kenya	No change	Uwezo	% of Grade 3 children who can read a Grade 2 story in Kiswahili	3	33.20%	2011	33.00%	2012