Republic of Sierra Leone

Education Sector Analysis

United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

International Institute
for Educational Planning
IIEP-UNESCO Dakar
Africa Office

unicef
for every child

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Assessing the enabling environment for gender equality

Technical support

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BP 3311 Dakar – Sénégal
Phone : + 221 33 820 57 56
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Foreword

This is the final report of the 2019/20 Sierra Leone Education Sector Analysis, an analytical report giving a comprehensive picture of service delivery in the education sector. It provides evidence-based analysis of the sector to facilitate robust discussion between the ministries of education and other government agencies, as well as development partners, on plausible interventions at policy and operational levels to enhance service delivery in the sector.

The Education Sector Analysis was undertaken against the background of efforts to strengthen delivery of services in the sector which saw the divison of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology into the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE) and the Ministry of Technical and Higher Education (MTHE) in 2018. The split was also marked by the introduction of the flagship Free Quality School Education (FQSE) programme, which seeks to improve the country's human capital development. The analysis report presents one of the essential tools to develop sustainable and credible strategies to complement this programme and to take advantage of the operational opportunity that the split of the former ministry created.

The report presents in-depth analysis of the development of education over the past decade, focusing on key aspects such as the evolution of schooling patterns across sub-sectors, cost and financing, internal and external efficiency, learning outcomes, gender mainstreaming efforts in the sector, and management of the education system. It highlights notable achievements and challenges the sector has faced over the period. Within a constrained economic and social context, the government has made a strong commitment to education, supporting programmes that have seen growth in enrolment, especially at the basic and senior secondary levels. While this growth is a welcome relief to stakeholders, it also presents a challenge to policy-makers. The report presents areas of opportunities that policy-makers can consider in building sustainability into its programmes.

The analysis shares insightful findings on the state and quality of education at basic and senior secondary levels. The results show that improving education quality remains a major challenge, given the general low level of performance observed in both national examinations and learning assessments. The system relies heavily on non-government paid teachers in both government and government-assisted schools, which the analysis finds to be a particular weak point in the quality matrix. Recruiting qualified educators remains a task that the sector should be steadfast on, especially at senior secondary level. This mission is of particular concern since the country already directs nearly 20% of its public expenditure to education, limiting the elasticity of the fiscal space. In addition, constraints on teacher numbers and teaching time, a key determinant of learning outcomes, remains far below the expected national standard, with students taught less than half the expected number of hours per day.

In post-secondary levels, the analysis presents impressive developments from the past decade, showing that more young people today are educated. However, while they are increasingly better educated, the analysis finds that only a few reach tertiary education. Moreover, not many of the young people are attracted to TVET institutions, yet the analysis presents succinct findings showing that undertaking tertiary TVET studies remains their best option in order to transition to the labour market.

Apart from the conventional programmes, the analysis finds a strong political commitment to addressing gender issues and inequalities across all sectors of the government, and particularly through the establishment of the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs. The commitment is seen in the positive evolution of the participation of girls in education, although there remain marked disparities at sub-national level. The likelihood of girls staying in school also drops as they progress through the grades, a phenomenon that the future interventions should try to remedy for better system efficiency. The gender analysis findings also show that outside of education, a lot of work remains to be done to ensure that gender-responsive development can be experienced by all. The findings note that changes in the education sector alone will not be sustainable.

The analysis has been made possible by the availability of key data sets, among them the 2019 Annual School Census conducted by the MBSSE and MTHE, 2017 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, examination and assessment results from the West Africa Examinations Council (WAEC), 2018 Sierra Leone Integrated Household Survey from Statistics Sierra Leone, macroeconomic and government expenditure data from the Ministry of Finance and UNESCO Institute of Statistics, and reports on education service delivery by partner organizations such as the Education Partnership Group.

The ESA process has been a successful work, based on a collaborative approach, with the country in the driving seat and receiving support from IIEP-UNESCO (Dakar and Paris). Despite the challenging working conditions, especially due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the teams remained fully committed to the finalization of this report, which gives all of us the latitude to discuss plausible interventions for the future of Sierra Leone.

Acknowledgements

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The national technical team was led by Mrs Adama J. Momoh, Director Planning and Policy of the MBSSE, assisted by Ms Sia Fasuluku, Director of Research, Planning and Development at the MTHE. Members of the team included: Mr M.S. Sesay, Director of Inspectorate, MBSSE; Mr J.K. Ansumana, Deputy Director – EMIS, MBSSE; Mrs Musu Gorvie, Deputy Chief Technical & Higher Education Officer, MTHE; Dr Victor Massaquoi, Director of TVET, MTHE; Mrs Fatmatta Kaiwa, Director of Science Education, MTHE; Mr Victor Sesay, Director of Technology & Innovation, MTHE; Mr Horatio Nelson-Williams, Executive Secretary Basic Education Commission, MBSSE; Dr Staneala Beckley, Chairperson, TSC; Mr Sorie Turay, Executive Secretary, TSC; Mrs Ann-Lilian Konneh, Gender Focal Officer, MBSSE; Prof Adlyn O. Johnson, lecturer at Njala University's Faculty of Education; Lt Col R.S. Bockarie, Director of Studies, Armed Forces Technical and Education College (AFTEC); Mr James Edwin, Director of National Monitoring and Evaluation Department, MoPED; Mr Lansana Fofanah, Assistant Director, Economic Policy and Research Unit, MoF, Mr Ibrahim S. Kamara, Senior Statistician, Statistics Sierra Leone; Dr S.P. Gbanie, lecturer, University of Sierra Leone; Dr Albert C.T. Dupigny, education consultant; Mr Colin Bangay, DFID Senior Education Adviser, DFID; Mr Giuseppe Paglione, Education Programme Manager, EU; Mr Jonathan Bunting Williams, UNICEF Sierra Leone; Dr Aiah Mbayo, UNICEF Sierra Leone; Ms Mari Shojo, Senior Education Specialist, World Bank Sierra Leone.

These members worked closely with the IIEP-UNESCO team led by Mr Koffi Segniagbeto, Senior Education Policy Analyst, under the overall guidance of Mr Guillaume Husson, Head of IIEP-UNESCO Dakar. The team included Polycarp Omondi Otieno, Pablo Suarez Robles and Emilie Martin, all education policy analysts, Anna Haas, education specialist, and Polly Kirby, gender consultant.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

AIDS	Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
ART	Antiretroviral therapy
BECE	Basic Education Certificate Examination
BSSE	Basic and Senior Secondary Education
CDC	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
CEFM	Child, early and forced marriage
DDE	District Director of Education
DFID	Department for International Development
DO	District Officer
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EMIS	Education management information system
ESA	Education Sector Analysis
ESP	Education Sector Plan
EU	European Union
EVD	Ebola virus disease
FQSE	Free Quality School Education
GER	Gross enrolment rate
GDP	Gross domestic product
GGGI	Global Gender Gap Index
GII	Gender Inequality Index
GoSL	Government of Sierra Leone
HCD	Human capital development
HCI	Human Capital Index
HDI	Human Development Index
HIV	Human immunodeficiency virus
ILO	International Labour Organization
JSS	Junior secondary school
IMF	International Monetary Fund
LAY	Latest available year
MBSSE	Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education
MEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (pre-2018)
MGCA	Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs
MHS	Ministry of Health and Sanitation
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MoPED	Ministry of Planning and Economic Development
MSWGCA	Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs
MTHE	Ministry of Technical and Higher Education
MTNDP	Medium-term National Development Plan
NCTVA	National Council for Technical, Vocational and other Academic Awards
NEET	Not in employment, education, or training

NPSE	National Primary School Examination
NQF	National Qualification Framework
NTHEC	National Technical and Higher Education Census
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PCGDP	Per capita gross domestic product
PPP	Purchasing power parity
PS	Provincial secretary
PSRU	Public Service Reform Unit
PTR	Pupil-teacher ratio
SGLA	Secondary Grade Learning Assessment
SLLFS	Sierra Leone Labour Force Survey
SRGBV	School-related gender-based violence
SSL	Statistics Sierra Leone
SSS	Senior secondary school
SLIHS	Sierra Leone Integrated Household Survey
STEAM	Science, Technology, Engineering, Agriculture and Mathematics
THE	Technical and Higher Education
TSC	Teaching Service Commission
TVET	Technical and vocational education and training
UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UPE	Universal primary education
WAEC	West Africa Examinations Council
WASSCE	West Africa Senior School Certificate Examination
WEF	World Education Forum
WHO	World Health Organization

Executive Summary

A resilient economic and social context

Sierra Leone is facing many economic and social constraints. It has a population of eight million which is growing at a rapid rate of 2.2% each year (2019 estimate), similar to the sub-Saharan Africa average of 2.3% (2018 estimate). This puts direct pressure on the design and implementation of its development programmes. The high population growth means that the country has a youthful population, with 80% aged 35 and below and more than half of them eligible for education. This puts a huge burden on public resources as the country seeks to develop its human capital. The growth of the school age population did however slow to 1.7% in 2019, down from 4.6% in 2012, a positive development for the government as this eases pressure on limited resources.

Apart from the demographic pressure, the country faces a critical human development deficit. Only one in three children born in Sierra Leone will survive infancy, go through education, and grow up to be an adult that is able to realize his or her full economic and professional potential. This low probability is linked to the weak learning environment in many schools, which means that children do not benefit as much as they should from being in class. While the system has endeavoured to absorb eligible children into school, the weak learning outcomes suggests that only half of the time spent by these learners in class count. Other aspects of social development continue to be inadequate, with the country ranking low on global gender parity indices. Although there is parity in education, particularly basic education, there are wide disparities and inequalities between women and men in the economic, socio-political and cultural aspects of development.

Other social indicators that influence education include poverty. More than four million people in Sierra Leone live below the poverty line, with rural households bearing the brunt of the unequal distribution of resources. Moreover, the incidence of poverty is not uniform. Nine out of ten people in the rural town of Pujehun live in poverty compared to two out of ten in the capital, Freetown, indicating a wide social divide across the country. With a significant number of children attending non-approved schools that are not covered by the Free Quality School Education (FQSE) programme, the pressure due to poverty on these households becomes unbearable. Even for approved schools, household consumption surveys indicate that FQSE is unlikely to fully remove the burden that paying for education places on families.

The country continues to grapple with the impact of diseases and pandemics, including malaria, HIV-AIDS and Ebola virus disease (EVD). The latter ravaged the country between 2014 and 2015, bringing a halt to the service industry, and especially to education which is yet to recover from the necessary reorganization of curriculum delivery that took place. While the memories of EVD are still vivid, the country is currently managing a surge in Covid-19 cases, a pandemic that has engulfed the world and will have a negative impact on all aspects of life. It could spark a global economic recession, and has already created uncertainty in the continuity of education, with policy-makers unsure how to balance the need for learners and students to be in school with their safety, especially in places where primary public health is wanting.

Amid the shocks of the past decade, the country's economy has made a significant recovery, growing at an average of 4.2% between 2011 and 2017, and 4.7% in the last four years. However, this economic growth has not had the desired trickle-down effect, undermined by a relatively high population growth, so that in the end, GDP per capita grew by only 2%. In terms of resources, the country has seen its revenue triple in the last decade, driven by massive increases in domestic revenue collection, strengthening its ambitious pursuit of financial independence. Despite this, an increase in the size of government together with the resumption of debt repayment has seen expenditure also triple, resulting in a budget deficit of 2.5% of GDP in 2019. In fact, debt repayment in 2019 was higher than spending on education, raising concerns that this may impact the funding of vulnerable public programmes. Moreover, the recent positive economic performance may be undermined by the ongoing pandemic, with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) forecasting that Sierra Leone's economy will shrink by at least 2.3% (Note: The 2015 Ebola outbreak led to a 20% decrease in the GDP. This would certainly deal a big blow to the economic momentum of recent months and, even worse, to sectors like education which have seen important flagship programmes commence in their departments.

A sharp increase in enrolments following implementation of the FQSE programme, which creates challenges for service delivery

Since 2011, enrolment has increased across all education levels, but more significantly just after the implementation of the Free Quality School Education Programme (FQSE). This increase in enrolment observed over the past year introduces additional challenges for education service delivery. Indeed, at all levels of basic and senior secondary schooling, the system has had difficulties coping with the enrolment growth observed between 2018 and 2019, which has seen the average class size increase from 42 to 51 pupils at primary level, from 34 to 53 at junior secondary level, and from 41 to 58 students at senior secondary level.

Most learners are enrolled in approved schools or those receiving financial assistance from the government. The exception is preschoolers, with more than half of pre-primary pupils registered in non-approved schools. In some locations, almost 7 out of 10 pupils are enrolled in schools that do not receive any financial support from the government. This is likely due to the fact that, until quite recently, pre-primary schooling was largely in the hands of fee-charging private providers. However, this may have significant implications for the quality of the education offered.

Because of the growth in enrolment in basic and senior secondary, school coverage has increased significantly since 2011 but remains uneven from one grade to another. At pre-primary level, the gross enrolment rate (GER) has more than doubled, with an increase from 7% in 2011 to 19% in 2019, meaning that the system can only accommodate one-fifth of three to five-year-olds under present schooling conditions. At primary level, the GER has been consistently higher than 100%, reaching 140% in 2019 (against 109% in 2018). Post-primary education coverage is significantly lower, especially at senior secondary level. The GER at senior secondary schools (SSS) is estimated at 45% (against 32% in 2011), indicating that the infrastructure caters for less than a half of the SSS school-aged population.

There is an improvement in access and completion rates across all levels. Access is almost universal, however, still one child out of ten never attends school. Moreover, according to the analysis of administrative data, the primary school completion rate reached 82% in 2019 (against 76% in 2011). This suggests that two out of ten pupils still do not finish their primary education and are therefore less likely to have acquired

the basic literacy and numeracy skills needed to become and remain literate in their adult lives. At junior secondary level, the access rate rose from 59% in 2011 to 84% in 2019, and completion rate from 49% to 72% over the same period, suggesting that approximately three out of ten students still do not reach the end of basic education. At senior secondary level, the access and completion rates are respectively 50% and 46% in 2019 (against 26.4% and 25.9% in 2011).

Teacher management: Significant reliance on non-government paid and unqualified teachers has been necessary to cope with the large-scale increase in enrolment

Almost two-thirds (64%) of teachers are not on the government payroll. Even in government-owned and government-assisted schools, only half of teachers receive their wages from the state. Moreover, analyses show that there is an uneven distribution of government-paid teachers across local councils, varying from 63% in the Bonthe Municipality to only 20% in the Western Area Rural District.

Despite the implementation of the FQSE programme, households contribute to the payment of teacher salaries, with one out of five educators from pre-primary to junior secondary levels reported as being paid by families during the 2018/2019 school year. Recruiting qualified teachers remains a major challenge, especially at SSS level where 60% are unqualified. In addition, there are significant disparities in the share of qualified teachers across local councils, raising important questions about equitable access to education. At primary school level, the share varies from 93% in the city of Makeni to 48% in Kono District, and at senior secondary level, it ranges from 66% in the city of Bo to 13% in Falaba District. As a result, the average class size increases significantly when considering only qualified or government-paid teachers. The pupil-qualified teacher ratio (PqTR) ranges from 58:1 at primary level to 41:1 at junior secondary level, and 82:1 at senior secondary level. When taking into account only government-paid teachers, the average PqTR is even higher: 83:1 in pre-primary, 77:1 in primary, 53:1 in junior secondary, and 68:1 in senior secondary. This clearly demonstrates the challenges the education system is facing since the implementation of the FQSE programme.

The lack of government-paid and qualified teachers is further complicated by an uneven distribution of teachers across schools. Indeed, there is little relationship between the number of teachers and students in a school. In 2019, the degree of randomness in the allocation of government-paid teachers at primary school level was estimated at 58% (against 39% in 2011), meaning that the allocation of teachers to primary schools is determined largely by factors other than enrolment.

Significant gender, geographical and socio-economic disparities

Schooling patterns are characterized by significant gender, geographical and socio-economic disparities, with poverty being the most discriminatory factor. The probability of accessing primary education is slightly higher for girls than for boys, but retention, completion and transition rates from primary to junior and senior secondary are still persistently lower for girls. This means that as girls progress through the education system, they are more likely to drop out than boys are. Disparities by area of residence are also significant and increase with the level of education attained. The probability of completing senior secondary school is estimated at 50% for urban children against 12% for their rural peers. Household wealth is the most dominant factor in explaining schooling patterns, with only 7% of the poorest quintile completing senior secondary school, against 60% of the wealthiest quintile. When the three factors are combined, only 5% of the poorest rural girls complete secondary education in comparison to 68% of the richest urban boys.

The number of students repeating grades decreased over the 2011 to 2019 period, with the rate for Sierra Leone among the lowest in the West Africa region. However, due to the underdevelopment of preschools, the number of repeaters seems to be significant in the first grade of primary school (18%, MICS6, 2017). This is particularly true for younger pupils who represent 76% of repeaters. They tend not to be allowed to move to higher grades until they reach the official entry age for primary school.

In 2018, the number of out-of-school children was estimated at 524,000, representing 21.9% of young people between the ages of 6 and 18, which is the official school age population for primary and secondary education. Among the out-of-school children, 14.6% (349,926) had never attended school, while 7.3% (174,130) had dropped out. Since senior secondary school education is not compulsory, the number of students who had attended at some point but dropped out prematurely is higher in this age group. There is a 15% dropout rate for SSS, in comparison to 4% in primary and junior secondary school.

Among the various reasons given for children not attending school, the fact that parents do not value education is mentioned by two-thirds of heads of households (62%), whereas about 23% say school is too expensive (SLIHS, 2018). While the FQSE programme may address the latter concern, there are still issues around the perceived social and economic usefulness of education, the relevance of what children learn, the opportunities for parents to enrol them in school, and encouraging youngsters to complete their schooling.

A fairly funded education sector, but there is a need for a more equitable sharing of resources within the different levels of education

Education sector spending passed the Le 1 trillion mark in 2019, translating into 2.8% of GDP, but this remains lower than the globally recommended threshold of 4% for the effective implementation of quality and equitable education for all. Spending in 2019 shows an increased commitment to financing education, which is a welcome change from the previous trend where commitment dropped from more than 3.1% of GDP in 2011, to a low of 2.5% in 2017. Relative to the government's discretionary expenditure, spending on education has remained above the 20% mark, but dropped 3 percentage points in the last six years (from 23% in 2013 to 20% in 2019). Ninety-nine per cent of public expenditure on education is for recurrent items such as salaries and operating costs. The lack of capital or investment spending in areas such as the construction of new schools, adding classrooms or school desks, raises concerns about the effective implementation of the FQSE programme.

Non-salary spending in the education sector is growing faster than spending on salaries, accounting for 43% of the recurrent costs, compared to 34% in 2012. This may seem like a positive development for the pursuit of quality learning. Unfortunately, tuition grants make up the bulk of non-salary expenditure at the expense of materials, operations and supervision, accounting for 83% of spending in primary, 78% in junior secondary, 83% in senior secondary, 60% in TVET, and 99% in higher education. In addition, the lack of clarity and guidelines on how to utilize the grants received from MBSSE, undermines their effectiveness. In basic and secondary education, the ministry is in the process of developing guidelines on the spending of school grants for school committees to ensure that resources are targeted for efficient results.

While the country is yet to achieve universal primary education (UPE), there seems to be a shift in spending priorities, with secondary education taking the top spot. In terms of expenditure, 37% of recurrent spending in 2019 was allocated to the sub-sector compared to 32% for primary school. In non-salary expenditure, secondary spent five times more than primary, owing to the higher per student capitation in secondary. The sudden shift in priority to secondary could hurt the primary sub-sector, which has considerable unfinished business with respect to the achievement of universal primary education. One of the key issues is the need to approve teachers in order to ensure that the right number of qualified educators are deployed in schools to manage the surge in enrolment following the implementation of the FQSE programme, and provide support to vulnerable students to increase retention. In TVET, public spending is not reflective of the ambition contained in the Medium-term National Development Plan (MTNDP), with spending averaging less than 3% in the last decade, and about 90% of this being on salaries, leaving very little room for spending on equipment and training materials.

Government spending on a university student is 4 times higher than the average spent on a TVET trainee, 5 times higher than on a senior secondary student, 12 times higher than on a junior secondary student, and 18 times higher than on a primary learner. This illustrates the imbalance in the spending structure of the current system. Moreover, there are stark disparities in public spending in different parts of the country owing to the weak distribution of key resources such as teachers. For instance, the average annual expenditure on primary school learners ranges from Le 158,000 in Kono to Le 316,000 in Moyamba District, with similar variations observed in preschool and junior secondary. This shows that, depending on their location, Sierra Leonean children are not accessing the same education opportunities. In senior secondary, there is less variation across local councils as the sub-sector is managed directly from Freetown, and with capitation being a major component of the average spending per student, the differences are not as large as at other levels.

Nearly 80% of teachers in basic and senior secondary education work in government-aided schools, but of these, less than half are paid by the state. The complement of teachers is, however, not in excess. They help to keep class sizes manageable. To address this issue, the government has committed to universalize the approval of schools, and then teachers. However, the concern is that teacher wages alone already account for 17% of the country's overall wage bill, which when added to other workers in the sector, make up 23% of expenditure on salaries.

Spending by households on education remains significant even with all the government interventions. The 2018 household consumption survey indicated that families contributed more than government at all levels of education, except for higher education where the contribution was 50-50 (57% in primary, 65% in junior secondary, 57% in senior secondary, and 64% in TVET). Moreover, households pay towards items that are not covered by government subsidies, suggesting that private spending is likely to continue in the near future. Fees, tuition and complementary learning materials are the main items paid for by households, which is unlikely to change following the introduction of the FQSE programme.

Persistent gender and geographical disparities

While at national level gender parity has been achieved in enrolment in basic education, geographical disparities remain for both boys and girls at different levels. In junior secondary school (JSS) for example, enrolment rates are lower for boys across a number of districts. In SSS, while girls' enrolment has improved, it is still significantly lower than that of boys across all except two districts. Moreover, as girls progress through the education system, their likelihood of being retained decreases. For every 100 boys completing SSS, only 66 girls complete the cycle. Conversely, more boys (21%) than girls (14%) are out of school across basic education.

As children progress through the system, most of those who dropout, do so for financial reasons, and this factor disproportionately affects more boys (67%) than girls (53%). However, in 2017, almost a third of girls who dropped out of school did so because of pregnancy. Data also indicate that intersectionality between gender, poverty, disability and location significantly exacerbates inequalities. Poverty is a common denominator. However, in poor rural areas, girls achieve less in terms of education (almost by half) than boys do. In this regard, the FQSE programme initiated in 2018 is an effective way to prevent such a dropout rate. The programme is also likely to have an impact on child labour, which affects both boys and girls. Overall, 39% of children between the ages of 5 and 17 were involved in child labour in 2017, with boys more likely to be involved in economic activities and girls more likely to be responsible for household chores, in both cases exceeding the acceptable number of hours.[1]

Boys continue to outperform girls slightly in learning outcomes in the national exams (NPSE and BECE) and learning assessments. The gender gap increases the higher the grade, with performance worsening for girls at SSS level and varying significantly by district. There is a notable increase in the number of female students accessing tertiary education. However, this slows down the higher the level of educational attainment, with far fewer accessing university courses and more opting for short-cycle tertiary courses. School closures because of Covid-19 risks has compounded educational inequalities for girls with an increased number of dropouts, gender-based violence, and teen pregnancies. Much can be learnt from the Ebola crisis to lessen this impact.

Addressing gender inequalities that are a result of deeply entrenched traditional norms, values and attitudes in Sierra Leone is part of a long-term struggle, and changes in the education sector alone will not be enough. Adolescent pregnancies and child, early and forced marriages (CEFM) are two of the biggest reasons why girls drop out of school at secondary level. Those most at risk are girls who come from poor households or rural areas. In addition, pregnant girls and young mothers face multiple obstacles that impede their progression through tertiary education and into work. At the tertiary level, almost two out of three girls in TVET, and one out of three girls at university, have been pregnant. Moreover, incidences of school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) threaten the safety of the school environment for all children, particularly girls who are vulnerable to sexual harassment, rape, exploitation and discrimination by teachers and peers. Boys are more vulnerable to physical violence and bullying at the hands of adults and other children.

1. The MICS indicator on child labour uses age-specific thresholds for the number of hours children can perform economic activities or carry out household chores without being classified as child labourers.

Learning achievement: Improving the quality of education remains a major challenge, given the low level of performance in national examinations and learning assessments

National examinations pass rates are very low, especially at the junior and senior secondary levels, and with disparities at the district level. National Primary School Examination (NPSE) pass rates are the lowest in Kambia (62%) and highest in Kono (82%). In 2019, less than half (46%) the candidates passed the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) at the end of junior secondary level, a sharp reduction from the previous year when 72% got through. The situation at the end of senior secondary level is of much greater concern with only 6% of the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASCCE) candidates meeting the minimum requirements for access to university.

About four out of five (80%) Sierra Leonean children do not acquire the early reading and numeracy skills necessary for subsequent learning, according to findings of the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS6). In 2019, the Sierra Leone Secondary Grade Learning Assessment (SGLA) report noted that students' learning outcomes do not meet curriculum expectations and that, after having completed 8 to 11 years of schooling, most only demonstrate the English and mathematics skills expected from a child in primary school. Indeed, 57% of students in the second year of junior secondary school (JSS2) and 46% of second year senior secondary students (SSS2) demonstrated the language skills expected from a primary school pupil. In mathematics, 72% of JSS2 and 60% of SSS2 students demonstrated skills expected from a child in primary school.

Poor learning achievement is probably related to the effective teaching time, which is low in comparison to the national target. Indeed, 70% of full-time secondary schoolteachers do not meet the prescribed minimum of 23 teaching periods per week, while 30% are teaching less than 10 periods a week. In addition, according to the last SGLA, an average JSS or SSS student is taught less than half a standard school day. There is therefore undoubtedly room for improvement in the management of educators in terms of making them more accountable for the time they actually teach.

Pedagogical management: Although English and mathematics textbook are available in large numbers, they are neither sufficient nor equitably distributed, and their utilization in the classroom needs improvement

Overall, English and mathematics textbooks are in short supply at primary level, in oversupply at junior secondary level, and in sufficient numbers at senior secondary. At primary level, there are on average two English and two mathematics books for every three pupils while at junior secondary level, there is more than one English and mathematics book available per student. At senior secondary level, the supply is sufficient with an average of 1.1 pupils sharing the same book.

However, textbook allocation to government and government-assisted schools seems to be arbitrary, with substantial variation across schools and local councils. In terms of geographical disparities, the Western Area Rural District is where the need for textbooks for primary pupils is the greatest, with an average of one English textbook for more than six pupils and one mathematics textbook for eleven pupils. Inversely, there is an oversupply in the Pujehun District with an average of two English books and two mathematics book per student. Coherence in the allocation of textbooks is better at junior secondary level, but still far for being optimal with only 40% of textbook allocation for these two subjects corresponding to the number of students enrolled at the school.

Ensuring textbook utilization in the classroom remains an important issue. Indeed, according to the results of the SGLA survey, 38% of secondary students from government-assisted schools report not using the textbooks at all, with 11% saying this is due to their teachers or principals keeping the books rather than distributing them to students.

An improving regulatory framework for higher education and TVET institutions

The Sierra Leonean higher education sub-sector used to outperform its West African peers. Standards dropped however in recent years, mostly because of the decade-long civil war and the Ebola outbreak. At present, it is hampered by poor quality, a weakened learning environment, and inadequate learning materials, as well as accessibility and affordability issues. Moreover, despite the existing five public universities, with more coming in the next few years, the sub-sector currently lacks the capacity to fully absorb the potential increase in students as a result of the Free Quality School Education (FQSE) programme. The GoSL is now focusing on TVET institutions taking on some of these students so that it can meet both skills development and market demands, including through the establishment of a government technical institute (GTI) in each district.

A weak regulatory framework fuelled an uncontrolled proliferation of TVET institutions with poor labour market relevance. In addition, as the country does not have a National Qualification Framework (NQF), just 40% of the existing 183 TVET institutions offer programmes that are relevant to economic demands. TVET also extends to non-formal and informal education and training which largely remains off the radar. Informal TVET refers mainly to traditional apprenticeships and other non-organized forms of learning. With the recent creation of the Ministry of Technical and Higher Education (MTHE), the sub-sector is attracting more attention, as reflected by the adoption in 2019 of a national TVET policy. The aim is to create a National TVET Agency (NTA) that will be in charge, in particular, of establishing a NQF. However, there is a long way to go before TVET transformation becomes effective. Implementation of the national TVET policy has been weak so far, but MTHE priorities include translating policy into law for resource mobilization and expanded function.

A steep upward trend in enrolment in tertiary education and TVET

This report mostly relies on preliminary results from the first census of tertiary institutions ever conducted in Sierra Leone. This census offers an unprecedented opportunity to profile tertiary education, feed the policy dialogue, and inform the designing of a meaningful education sector plan (ESP). Enrolment and access rates have displayed a steep upward trend in recent years (respectively, +44% and +38% between 2017 and 2019). In 2019, 81% of tertiary students were enrolled in higher education (HE) with the remaining 24,749 following short-cycle vocational education programmes. Women continue to be outnumbered by men but are catching up. Between 2017 and 2019, the share of women doing tertiary studies increased from 43% to 48%, and the gender gap in access rate (number of students per 100,000 inhabitants) halved from 350 to 159. Conversely, women make up the majority of tertiary TVET students (54% in 2019).

Sierra Leone is among the top performing countries in the ECOWAS region when it comes to access to tertiary education. With a ratio of HE students per 100,000 inhabitants (1,337 in 2019) that largely exceeds the region's average (963), the country is surpassed only by Cabo Verde (2,144) and Ghana (1,491). Almost all tertiary students are enrolled in undergraduate studies (97% in 2019). While women account for the majority of students in short-cycle tertiary programmes (52%), they are increasingly in the minority and outnumbered by men at upper levels.

Despite gaining ground, Science, Technology, Engineering, Agriculture and Mathematics (STEAM) education still accounts for just a small share of students (27% in 2019). An increasing number of women enrol in STEAM education, but they remain under-represented (39% of students). The distribution of women across fields of study reproduces gender stereotypes. When it comes to graduation, rates are remarkably high with little variation across sexes, levels, and fields of education. In 2019, 94% of final year tertiary students passed their exams. In contrast, the success rate of TVET students in final examinations was as low as 51% in 2018.

In terms of staffing, Sierra Leone is in dire need of qualified TVET teachers. Less than a third of those working in the field have had adequate training in their technical disciplines. Over 80% of qualified TVET trainers are no longer teaching, either because they have retired, switched to other disciplines, or are no longer alive. The government is stepping up efforts to improve the quality of tertiary education and aims to put TVET at the forefront of its education policy. Concrete and financially sustainable actions are required to tackle the poor quality of TVET learning conditions, outcomes, and outdated curricula that do not adequately service the needs of the labour market.

An increasingly better-educated youth, but that is not drawn to tertiary education and TVET despite apprenticeships being the best way to avoid unemployment

Sierra Leone faces a youth bulge. In 2018, young people (15-35) accounted for 33% of the total population and 63% of the working-age population (15-64). A typical youth is a woman (55%) who is younger than 25 (54%) and living in a rural area (54%). Although increasingly better educated, still very few young people get as far as tertiary education. Despite more than doubling since 2014, the number of tertiary-educated youth was as low as 6.3% in 2018, and fell short of adults (7.5%). TVET accounts for less than one in five tertiary-educated youth. Young women and rural youth persistently lag behind, especially at upper education levels. Due to widening gaps, in 2018 only 5.1% of young women and 1.2% of rural youth were tertiary-educated, in comparison to 7.8% of young men and 12.3% of urban youth.

TVET does not attract many young people and is not very inclusive. In 2014, less than one in ten youth had ever done any formal vocational training or apprenticeship, with young women and rural youth being particularly under-represented. TVET subject areas are highly gendered, with girls more tempted by services (tailoring, catering and hairdressing) and boys by manufacturing and construction (carpentry, machinery mechanics, and masonry).

Employment tends to decline with educational attainment, yet tertiary-educated youth record relatively high employment prospects, largely as result of TVET (employment incidence of 61% in 2018). Young women are at a disadvantage and do not seem to be catching up. Conversely, unemployment tends to increase with educational attainment, youth with higher education being the most affected (unemployment rate of 12% in 2018). With one of the lowest incidences of unemployment (5.2%), apprenticeships are probably the best way for young people to avoid unemployment. Although the NEET (not in employment, education, or training) phenomenon tends to decrease with educational attainment, it affects a significant share of tertiary-educated youth (21% in 2018), for the most part because of idleness (76% are inactive non-students). Girls are far more exposed to the NEET phenomenon than boys are.

Educated young people have better labour market outcomes, but still face significant decent work gaps

Tertiary education, especially TVET, increases young people's chances of finding a job. Existing gender disparities play against young women. Youth can expect to reduce the length of transition to the labour market by half if they have a tertiary education (four years) as compared to having only a primary school education (eight years). Labour underutilization is most prevalent among tertiary-educated youth (21% in 2018) who represent a significant potential labour force (12%). Albeit low, time-related underemployment is also the highest among tertiary-educated youth (8%).

Young people who are more educated tend to choose jobs in services rather than in agriculture. TVET trains the largest share of young people for employment in manufacturing and therefore appears to be the main contributor to industrialization. High-skilled (non-manual) jobs are scarce and out of reach for most youth. However, 57% of young people with a higher education were employed in high-skilled jobs in 2018. By contrast, TVET does not enable youth to compete for the most qualified positions.

Youth qualification mismatch is widespread and largely due to undereducation, yet tertiary-educated young people struggle to find jobs that match their level of qualification. In 2018, overeducation rose to 43% for working youth with higher education and 85% for working youth with tertiary TVET. The deficit of high-skill jobs makes it difficult to adequately allocate the increasing number of tertiary school leavers. At odds with adults and less educated youth, young people with higher education mostly end up in wage employment (69% in 2018). On the other hand, self-employment is the dominant form of work for former TVET students (57%). Young women are significantly more likely to take on contributing family work (40%) than young men (28%) are.

The youth employment challenge lies mainly in the low quality of jobs, as evidenced by the large amount of vulnerable jobs and casual paid labourers, from which not even tertiary-educated youth are spared (respectively, 39% and 23% in 2018). Former TVET students, especially apprentices, are particularly at risk.

Likewise, informal employment prevails, including for tertiary-educated youth who, despite faring better, still work predominantly in such adverse conditions (61% in 2018). However, there are many more young people with a tertiary TVET education working informally (81%) than those with higher education (52%). Former apprentices face the worst situation (95% in 2014). Overall, youth employment quality is a major challenge in Sierra Leone, which tertiary-educated youth are not exempt from. While the latter fare relatively better than others do, their labour market outcomes remains quite poor, especially when they opted for TVET studies.

A clear division of labour between the new education ministries, but with outstanding issues

Until recently, there was one ministry of education for the whole sector, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST). In 2018, the MEST split into the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE) and the Ministry of Technical and Higher Education (MTHE). The establishment of the new ministries is not yet anchored in the national regulatory/legal framework, and no official document exists that delineates the mandate and attributions of each institution. In addition, the new institutional landscape counts two new functioning entities: the Teaching Service Commission (TSC) and the Free Quality School Education Initiative (FQSE). Challenges with the outdated legislation are amplified by the frequent lack of polices, guidelines and/or operational manuals outlining the roles and responsibilities of these different entities.

The broad roles and responsibilities of the two ministries of education are clear in practice, but with some outstanding issues. There is widespread consensus that the division of labour between the new ministries makes sense. There are, however, no formal mechanisms in place to coordinate their work. Coordination between the two ministries is essential for the effective functioning of the sector as a whole. This is particularly true for strategic planning and monitoring since this requires multiple interactions between the different sub-sectors. Examples of such strategic planning issues include teacher training, equal access to higher education, and the need for an integrated education management information system (EMIS). Several officials have raised concerns that the current configuration of the FQSE, hosted by MBSSE, has created a complicated structure that makes efficient planning and monitoring of the ministry's work more challenging.

In practice, the devolution of functions to the local council is partial, with the MBSSE retaining control over 90% of recurrent spending. According to the 2004 Local Government Act, the responsibility for primary and junior secondary schools is devolved to local councils. However, the precise mandate of the MBSSE representatives at the district level, including the District Education Office, the Teaching Service Commission and the Free Quality School Education initiative, vis-à-vis the local council are largely unclear. This has created parallel implementation systems, which generates several structural governance issues at district level. In the absence of written regulations, coordination at district level depends heavily on the willingness of individuals to collaborate.

A lack of resources in the organizational units, especially at district levels

The review of the internal functioning sheds light on discrepancies between policy and practice. As of June 2020, neither of the two ministries have validated organograms and made them publicly available. However, the MBSSE is in the process of adopting its new organogram and the new MTHE one has been finalized. A recent analysis of basic education service delivery in Sierra Leone highlights some important discrepancies between existing regulations and practices, including the existence in the MBSSE's administrative and technical arms of more units than allowed by the regulations (i.e. the 2009 organogram and recent job descriptions).

In terms of data availability for planning purpose, there has been an improvement over the past decade. Annual school censuses have been conducted since 2015 and data has been submitted to UNESCO-UIS for a large set of education indicators. An entity known as the Situation Room, which records monthly data at a school level, is widely seen as useful and will likely be integrated, together with the Annual School Census and other monitoring efforts, into the EMIS. This ESA has shown the need for improved data on TVET and higher education. Work is underway to strengthen capacity at the district level with a stronger role for the District Education Office (DEO). This is linked to the need to facilitate the administration's use of data to monitor sector performance and make programme adjustments.

However, the late arrival of funds and a significant shortage of core resources in district offices are major constraints to work effectiveness. The survey results indicate that of a list of 15 pre-defined work challenges, the late release of funds together with inadequate material resources are perceived as the main problems. Close to two-thirds of respondents identified the late release of funds as a major impediment to doing their work well. Nearly one-quarter of the respondents said their offices are not equipped with a computer, and close to one-third do not have a printer or photocopier. Only four out of ten respondents

have access to the internet at work. At the same time, close to half of the respondents that do have internet access report that they never use it. One possible explanation is the low level of computer literacy. In addition to shortages of resources, the central ministries and district offices of education are clearly understaffed. A comparison of staffing norms (as described in existing organograms and job descriptions) with available staff in practice, exposes a relatively significant shortage. A recent detailed organizational mapping of the MBSSE shows that the ministry's technical arm lacks essential staff, in particular at middle management and junior levels, with close to half of all positions vacant. At district level, the sampled District Education Offices are understaffed with at least one-quarter of all positions vacant. Several senior officials at the central level said that due to the lack of personnel, they spend too much of their time on detailed implementation issues.

A need for capacity development in planning and management at an individual staff level

Analysis of the questionnaire reveals a male-dominated administration with very few women occupying positions of responsibility. The group of 105 survey respondents consists of 95 men and 10 women, with only three of the female respondents being senior officials. One contributing factor is that fewer women than men access higher education. The responses point to major training needs and an interest in educational planning. Among a list of 10 core educational planning tasks, a minority of respondents said they believe they have the required competencies. Education officials assess their competencies as particularly weak in terms of calculating education indicators, conducting education data analysis for planning purposes, and preparing strategic plans. The responses also point to a strong interest in professional training in educational planning. Among ten pre-defined training topics in educational planning, how to plan and manage cooperation with development partners comes out as the one in which most respondents show an interest for further training.

Relationship with external partners: Education sector coordination mechanisms on the move

Over the past two decades, the Government of Sierra Leone and its development partners have built a sound foundation for the coordination of the education sector, most notably through the Education Development Partners Group (EDPG). Although stakeholders see the EDPG meetings as a useful forum for information sharing, it has not been used for more strategic discussions, joint planning or monitoring of key education issues. To address this shortcoming, in March 2020 the government and a core group of development partners endorsed a new coordination structure for the sector. It is closely linked to the establishment of a new multi-donor trust fund (MDTF) aimed at pooling resources from four major partners, including the Department for International Development (DFID), the European Union (EU), Irish Aid and the World Bank.

A strong political commitment to addressing gender inequality

There is evidence of political commitment to addressing gender issues and inequalities across sectors through the recent establishment of the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs and the development of the National Gender Strategic Plan 2018-2023 (NGSP). Concrete positive steps to address teenage pregnancy have been taken through the development of the National Strategy for the Reduction of Adolescent Pregnancy and Child Marriage (2018-2022), the launching of a task force on SRGBV in December 2019, and the abolition of the controversial policy that barred pregnant girls from attending school. However, low institutional capacity in terms of personnel and resources within the MBSSE and

at different levels of the system hampers progress and coordination on gender and education planning, implementation and monitoring at the district level, and effective implementation of gender-focused strategies and interventions. Linked to this, government consolidated spending on 'gender and children' as a proportion of spending in education appears small and a potential 'soft target' in the application of austerity measures.

In addition, inadequate sanitation facilities at schools and limited access to hygiene products reduces girls' attendance, particularly during menstruation. However, some schools have started to address this through the provision of cubicles for menstruating girls. This is however not common, and the number of girls with access to 'good toilets' (clean, lockable, etc.) continues to be unacceptably low.

There is also a huge gender imbalance within the teaching workforce. Sierra Leone has one of the lowest ratios of female teachers in secondary education across West Africa, with only 13% of women educators (16% at JSS level and 9% at SSS level). Additionally, men dominate leadership and management positions, with very few head teachers or senior staff being women. At SSS level, 90% of principals and 89% of senior teachers are male. A recruitment drive to attract more women to teaching and into leadership positions is needed, as well as an investigation into the reasons why female teachers, particularly in rural areas, leave the profession.

Subject choices at SSS level and at tertiary level are all highly gendered, and the distribution of women across fields of study reproduces gender stereotypes. Thus, despite the fact that there are more women (39%) enrolled in STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Agriculture and Mathematics) education, they remain under-represented. In this regard, steps have been taken to make the curriculum and teaching pedagogy more gender-responsive through curriculum reform. However, this has yet to be translated into the taught curriculum and teaching practice. The focus in the NGSP 2019-2023 on the provision of comprehensive sex education and life skills training for adolescent girls and boys in school, is much needed and should be monitored carefully.

CHAPTER 1

Socio-economic background

This chapter presents the socio-demographic and macroeconomic factors that influence the delivery of education in Sierra Leone, reviewing the trends over the last decade, as well as providing a deep dive into some aspects that have occurred in the recent past. It is divided into three main sections, starting with the geographical location of the country and its impact on the delivery of education. It presents the administrative structures used in implementing government policies, especially education. The second section discusses demographic trends with a specific focus on the population eligible for school. The chapter closes with a review of the country's key macroeconomic parameters, which form the basis for potential future expansion of programmes currently supported by the government.

1.1 Geography and politics

Sierra Leone is located on the west coast of Africa, sharing borders with Guinea to the north and north-east and Liberia to the south and south-east (see *Map 1.1*). To the west of Sierra Leone is the Atlantic Ocean, the coastline covering an enviable distance of about 506 km. The country covers a total area of 71,740 km2 (71,620 km2 of land and 120 km2 of water).

Map 1.1: Geographical location of Sierra Leone

Source: UN Geospatial

1.1.1 Leadership and organization of service delivery

Sierra Leone has enjoyed relative stability since the end of the civil war in early 2000, with its politics premised on the 1996 Constitution which was revised in 2008. Retired General Julius Maada Bio currently leads the country as the Head of State and Commander-in-Chief of Armed Forces following his election in April 2018 in a competitive multiparty poll. In addition to the exercise of political power through an elected president, Sierra Leone has a unicameral parliament consisting of at least 60 elected representatives (The Constitution, 1996).

Sierra Leone has a three-tier hierarchy of key administrative divisions employed in the management and supervision of public programmes, including education. The divisions include provinces, districts and chiefdoms. The country has five provinces, Eastern, North Western, Northern, Southern and Western Area,[2] which share 16 districts among them. Provinces and districts are headed by a provincial secretary and a district officer respectively, and they both form the principal representation to the central government in their respective divisions (PSRU, n.d.). They have the key function of disseminating government policies and facilitating their implementation within their jurisdictions. In the case of basic and senior secondary education, the District Director of Education (DDE) is responsible for disseminating education policies and overseeing their implementation in collaboration with other district departments, as well as the education establishment in the district. In the case of technical and higher education, the regional units are useful. Below the district are chiefdoms, headed by paramount chiefs who are elected from the lineage of the respective ruling house. There were 205 chiefdoms in 2019. According to (Conte, 2013) the authority of the paramount chiefs has waned over the years, but their voice remains strong on issues of public good. Paramount chiefs were the face of local government before the establishment of local councils in 2004.

The (Local Government Act, 2004) states that local councils are “the highest political authority in the locality and shall have legislative and executive powers” to prepare and implement development plans for localities, mobilize resources for development, develop and maintain basic infrastructure including human settlements, and coordinate and harmonize the execution of programmes and projects carried out by public and non-public entities. These functions include supporting the implementation of education at primary and junior secondary levels, and are operationalized in 21 local councils which are key pillars of the country’s decentralization.

1.1.2 Economic activities and natural resources

Agriculture is the mainstay of Sierra Leone’s economy, together with a vibrant service sector. The country is endowed with rich natural resources. Statistics Sierra Leone estimates that agriculture accounts for 50.3% of the country’s gross domestic product (GDP). Agriculture is rain dependent and enjoys the advantage of both a dry and wet climate, the dry season running from November to May while the rainy season runs from June to October. Notably, Sierra Leone receives one of the highest rainfalls in Africa, the western coast recording between 3,000 and 5,000 mm of rainfall annually, much to the favour of the agriculture sector. Although the rains are a positive for the agricultural sector, they come towards the end of the academic year in Sierra Leone, meaning they affect critical activities like end of the year

2. Provinces and districts: Eastern (Kailahun, Kenema, Kono), North Western (Kambia, Karene, Port Loko), Northern (Bombali, Falaba, Koinadugu, Tonkolili), Southern (Bo, Bonthe, Moyamba, Pujehun), and Western (Western Area Rural, Western Area Urban).

exams. These are scheduled around the beginning of the rains, which thus potentially affect candidates during their preparations for the examinations. Other components of the agriculture sector in Sierra Leone include livestock, fishery and forestry, together accounting for about 14% of GDP. It is important to note that more than 37% of Sierra Leone is covered in forest.

Apart from the agricultural sector, Sierra Leone has a thriving service industry, which brings together trade and tourism, transport and communication, financial services including real estate, education, health, etc. The service industry accounts for 36.7% of GDP. The third key sector of the economy is secondary industry, bringing together mining, manufacturing and construction, and accounts for around 10% of GDP. The mining industry is particularly buoyed by the considerable deposits of natural resources including diamonds, titanium ore, bauxite, iron ore, gold, and chromite. These important resources are key to the country's economic strength and are major foreign exchange earners.

1.1.3 Pandemics and their impact on education

The country has experienced a number of pandemics that continue to impact service delivery in education. Some have been on a global scale, while others have been specific to Sierra Leone.

COVID-19: Declared a global pandemic in March 2020, by July of the same year Covid-19 had infected more than 12.5 million people and caused more than 560,000 deaths around the world. In addition, the pandemic resulted in the abrupt closure of schools in virtually all of the countries, as well as restrictions on movement that resulted in a global economic slowdown. In Sierra Leone, schools closed in April and by July, more than 1,600 people had tested positive for the virus with over 160 deaths. Following the shutdown of key sectors of the economy in accordance with health guidelines, it is projected to contract by 2.3% in 2020, which will have an impact on the resources available for facilitating service delivery. The negative effects of the pandemic may continue to bite as health guidelines put in place to slow down the spread of the disease means that activities like schooling cannot go on as before.

EBOLA VIRUS DISEASE (EVD): The EVD epidemic occurred in Sierra Leone between 2014 and 2016 and had far-reaching impacts on the education system, which was already reeling from the effects of the protracted civil war. The epidemic had a serious effect on the education system, with 1.7 million primary and secondary school children out of school for almost nine months (EPRI, 2017). In total, the EVD left 3,956 people dead across the country (CDC, 2019). In the education sector, it is estimated to have affected 778 teachers (181 dead and 597 infected) and 1,555 students (945 deaths and 609 infections) (EPRI, 2017). While the EVD was successfully contained, its impact will be felt for some time to come, notably the after-effects of the trauma, changes to the way children are taught, the size of the teaching force, and the strain on resources.

MALARIA: Sierra Leone remains one of the high malaria prone countries with the entire population at risk of contracting the disease (WHO, 2016). It is also one of the leading causes of deaths. According to the Ministry of Health, four out of every ten hospital consultations in Sierra Leone is due to malaria and the disease causes 20% of deaths of children under the age of five. Given that the probability of a child born in Sierra Leone growing up to live their full economic and professional potential is influenced by under-five mortality, the country would be well advised to manage the disease. In addition, malaria increases the risk of maternal mortality and complications during delivery – a direct relation to adult survival, which is a critical component of the Human Capital Index (HCI).

HIV/AIDS: The prevalence of HIV among adults aged 15 to 49 is reported to be 1.8%, (UNAIDS, 2018) translating into about 63,000 people living with the virus. In addition, 60% of adults living with HIV are women, and the prevalence rate is higher for them than it is for men (1.8% compared to 1.2%). While HIV has no cure, effective antiretroviral drugs (ARVs) can control the virus when taken consistently. That said, the stigma that comes with the virus remains high, with up to 2 in 3 adults aged between 15 and 49 saying they may choose not to buy vegetables from a shopkeeper they know has HIV. Moreover, knowledge about the basics of HIV remains low among young people (28.8% among women and 30% among men). The stigma and lack of knowledge coupled with the low propensity to use HIV prevention measures, even in high-risk sex, points to a community that remains vulnerable to the virus. Comparatively, the global prevalence rate stands at 0.8% of adults aged between 15 and 49. Africa has the highest prevalence rate at 3.9%, while in the ECOWAS region, the average prevalence is 1.6%. The increased prevalence rates in Sierra Leone, compounded with poverty, have negative implications for teaching staff, education administrators, as well as learners/students who bear the burden of lost parents/guardians.

1.2 Socio-demographic context

The composition of the population and its distribution across the country, including in terms of gender, location of residence, and social class, have a significant bearing on the management of education supply. This section focuses on the population, and especially the children, adolescents, youth and adults eligible for education, a key to understanding their respective education needs. The important aspect of population and sub-population growth is discussed here with the intention of preparing those in charge of the sector to predict the likely demand for education. It is important to note also that beyond the conventional school age, there are adults who pursue education, and there will be even more in the context of lifelong learning. Finally, the section discusses socio-cultural issues that affect the delivery of education, some being reflective of public policies while others are based on community choices.

1.2.1 Demographic trend: Huge potential for dividends but the premium must be paid upfront

There are ongoing discussions around the world about the concept of demographic dividend. Recently, there has been an increased focus on developing countries where declining fertility rates will predictably result in an increased working age population. In sub-Saharan Africa, home to about 1.08 billion inhabitants, population growth has slowed from 2.76% in 2011 to 2.68% in 2018 (World Bank, 2018), consistent with the expected decline preceding the advent of demographic dividend. While the debate has excited potential beneficiaries, countries will reap the demographic dividend only by taking advantage of the large working age population and investing in it by providing quality education and training, as well as health and nutrition for economic development. Sierra Leone is in the same situation, provided it can harness this potential. Failure to invest in this group will lead to a higher dependency ratio with not enough productive people to support the aged population.

1.2.1.1 Total population: Growing rapidly with risk of high dependence

The population in Sierra Leone is growing rapidly, is split evenly between men and women, and 6 out of 10 people live in rural settings. The most recent Population and Housing Census in Sierra Leone (2015) indicated that there were slightly over seven million inhabitants in the country.

The previous census, conducted in 2004, listed the population as 4.98 million people, thereby giving an intercensal growth rate of 3.2% (Statistics Sierra Leone, 2017). Projections show that in 2019, the total population reached 7.9 million, increasing by about 825,000 people since the 2015 census and 1.66 million since 2011, growing at an annual average growth of 3% (see *Table 1.1*). Compared to sub-Saharan Africa, which grew at 2.68% in 2018, Sierra Leone's population is growing at a faster rate. Half of the population is female and has remained stably so in the last decade. The country is fairly urbanized with 59% of the population living in rural areas, considerably inclining the demand for social services like education to the rural setting. Out of the 7.9 million people in the country, 4.5 million are estimated to be in the working age category, leaving 3.45 million dependent on their compatriots, translating into a demographic dependency ratio of 77% in 2019. Notable is the decline in the dependency ratio which has lost close to 8 percentage points, down from 85% in 2011.

Table 1.1: Total population in Sierra Leone

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Total population ('000)	6,235	6,436	6,642	6,856	7,076	7,296	7,499	7,701	7,901
Population growth rate	3.21%	3.21%	3.21%	3.21%	3.21%	3.11%	2.78%	2.69%	2.60%
Male ('000)	3,069	3,168	3,269	3,374	3,480	3,592	3,692	3,791	3,889
Female ('000)	3,166	3,268	3,373	3,481	3,596	3,705	3,808	3,910	4,012
Percentage female	50.8%	50.8%	50.8%	50.8%	50.8%	50.8%	50.8%	50.8%	50.8%
Rural ('000)	3,680	3,798	3,920	4,046	4,176	4,306	4,426	4,545	4,663
Urban ('000)	2,556	2,638	2,722	2,810	2,900	2,990	3,074	3,156	3,238
Percentage rural	59.0%	59.0%	59.0%	59.0%	59.0%	59.0%	59.0%	59.0%	59.0%
Active population (15-65, '000)	3,366	3,486	3,615	3,751	3,895	4,037	4,173	4,311	4,454
Dependent population ('000)	2,869	2,950	3,028	3,105	3,181	3,259	3,327	3,390	3,447
Demographic dependency ratio	85.2%	84.6%	83.8%	82.8%	81.7%	80.7%	79.7%	78.6%	77.4%

Source : Statistics Sierra Leone

1.2.1.2 School age: Half the population eligible for education

Sierra Leone is youthful country, 80% of the population is aged 35 and below, and more than half is eligible for education. Youthful populations are high potential economic game changers, especially when the opportunity presented by their numbers and energy is developed through well-designed social structures. On the flipside, inadequate investment in young people could prove risky for the country, given the lure of extremists. Sierra Leone has first-hand evidence of how an unoccupied youthful population can be misused, as it was during the civil war that ravaged the country at the end of the twentieth century. Of the 7.9 million people enumerated in 2019, 6.15 million were aged 35 years and below, underscoring how youthful the country is. The school age population is primarily aligned to the 6-3-3-4 structure which corresponds to six years of primary school, three years of junior secondary, three years of senior secondary, and four years of tertiary education (Education Policy, 2010). Although not explicitly accommodated in the structure, the policy prescribes preschool for children between the ages of three and five. Consequently, the school age population in Sierra Leone spans the ages of 3 to 24, with children aged 3-5 eligible for preschool, 6-11-year-olds eligible for primary school, 12-14 being eligible for junior secondary, adolescents of 15 to 17 years old eligible for senior secondary, and 18 to 24-year-olds doing tertiary studies (teacher colleges, technical colleges, as well as first and second university degrees).

In 2019, there were 4.1 million children and youth eligible for school in Sierra Leone, representing 52% of the total population (see *Table 1.2*). Children available for basic and senior secondary education numbered three million, translating into 74% of the school age population in 2019. One million were eligible for post-secondary education. The overall number increased by 797,000 between 2011 and 2019, representing a growth of 24% and growing annually at 2.7%. At the sub-sector level, the number of children eligible for preschool increased by 103,000, basic education by 335,000, senior secondary by 107,000, and post-senior secondary by 253,000. Although growing in absolute terms, the rate of growth dropped significantly from 4.6% in 2012 to 1.7% in 2019, showing that the pressure this age group is exerting on public resources is decreasing.

Table 1.2: School age population

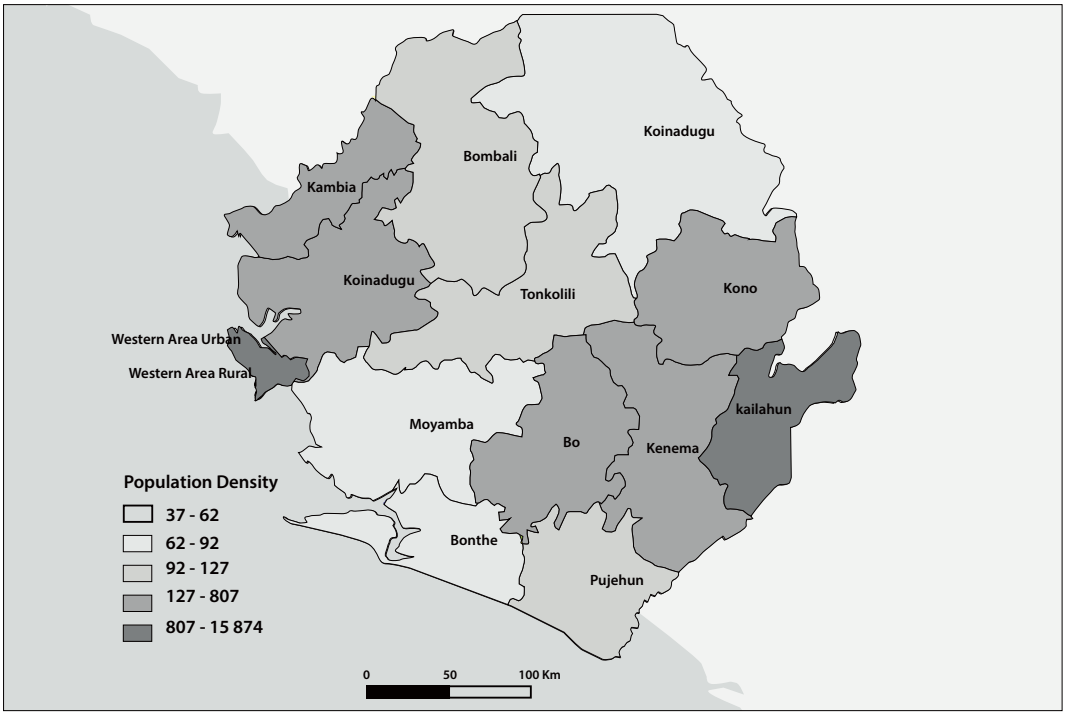
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Population aged 35 and below	4,945	5,095	5,248	5,405	5,565	5,724	5,867	6,008	6,145
As a % of total population	79.3%	79.2%	79.0%	78.8%	78.6%	78.4%	78.2%	78.0%	77.8%
School age population	3,325	3,477	3,584	3,688	3,793	3,915	3,985	4,053	4,122
Preschool	594	611	626	637	649	678	682	688	696
Basic education	1,496	1,547	1,599	1,651	1,701	1,757	1,786	1,811	1,831
Senior secondary	412	427	444	461	478	488	498	508	519
Basic and secondary education	2,502	2,585	2,669	2,749	2,828	2,924	2,966	3,007	3,047
Post-secondary education	823	893	915	939	965	991	1,018	1,046	1,076
Percentage of basic and secondary education	40.1%	40.2%	40.2%	40.1%	40.0%	40.1%	39.6%	39.0%	38.6%
Percentage of post-secondary education	13.2%	13.9%	13.8%	13.7%	13.6%	13.6%	13.6%	13.6%	13.6%
School age population as % of total population	53.3%	54.0%	53.9%	53.8%	53.6%	53.7%	53.1%	52.6%	52.2%

Source : Statistics Sierra Leone

1.2.1.3 Distribution of school age population by district

The distribution of the school age population is not uniform across the country, and there is an incredibly high concentration in Freetown. *Map 1.2* showing the distribution of the 2019 school age population in the original 14 districts, reveals a country with contrasting levels of settlement. Three districts (Bonthe, Koinadugu and Moyamba) have a low school age population density. There are between 37 and 62 children and youth eligible for school per square kilometre in the three districts. In contrast, Kailahun and Western Area Rural have between 127 and 807 children and youth eligible for school. In Western Area Urban, the density rises close to 16,000 per square kilometre.

Map 1.2: Density of school age population



Source: Authors' computation based on annual school census data and national population data

The density of the school age population is a key consideration when organizing the delivery of education (school mapping). While less dense areas may signal a smaller need for resources, employing equity measures ensures that the population there receives the same quality of service as those living in densely populated areas. Countries often fall into traps when delivering education in less densely populated areas, including underestimating the cost of supervision, the transport of learning materials through areas with difficult terrains, and the number of personnel required. Governments allocate these resources based on the number of people, often disregarding the geographical realities in an area. In addition to issues related to variations in population density, education programmes should also take into account existing specificities to ensure appropriate resource allocation for the effective implementation of programmes.

1.2.1.4 International comparison of the school age population

Table 1.3 presents a regional comparison of the share of population eligible for school among the 15 members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). There is a further comparison with a sub-group of five states[3] that conduct joint assessments under the West Africa Examinations Council (WAEC). The results show that in almost all of the countries in the ECOWAS region, more than half of the population is eligible for education, with the exception of Cabo Verde (43.5%) and Ghana (49.1%). The school age population pressure is similar across the five WAEC states.

3. Countries that carry out joint assessments under WAEC: Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria and Sierra Leone.

Table 1.3: International comparison of school age population, 2019

State	School age population				As % of total population	
	Total	Country share	3-24	3-18	3-24	3-18
Benin	11,801,595	3.0%	6,171,177	4,848,787	52.3%	41.1%
Burkina Faso	20,321,558	5.2%	11,073,240	8,799,954	54.5%	43.3%
Cabo Verde	560,349	0.1%	243,617	175,843	43.5%	31.4%
Côte d'Ivoire	25,531,080	6.6%	13,398,290	10,458,570	52.5%	41.0%
Gambia	2,228,075	0.6%	1,214,256	962,478	54.5%	43.2%
Ghana	30,096,970	7.8%	14,779,980	11,416,330	49.1%	37.9%
Guinea	13,398,180	3.5%	6,982,136	5,479,706	52.1%	40.9%
Guinea-Bissau	1,953,723	0.5%	999,311	781,724	51.1%	40.0%
Liberia	4,977,720	1.3%	2,579,274	2,028,020	51.8%	40.7%
Mali	19,689,138	5.1%	10,999,060	8,895,549	55.9%	45.2%
Niger	23,176,690	6.0%	13,089,130	10,723,950	56.5%	46.3%
Nigeria	200,962,460	51.9%	105,982,200	84,546,580	52.7%	42.1%
Senegal	16,743,859	4.3%	8,765,246	6,931,584	52.3%	41.4%
Sierra Leone	7,883,123	2.0%	4,158,150	3,251,819	52.7%	41.3%
Togo	8,186,384	2.1%	4,199,238	3,315,717	51.3%	40.5%
ECOWAS total	**387,510,904**	**100.0%**	**204,634,305**	**162,616,611**	**52.8%**	**42.0%**

Source : United Nations Population Fund

1.2.2 Social and cultural background: Poor human development legacy, social inequalities abound

Social constructs existing in countries often influence the choices people make. The level of education in a country may determine whether it assumes a virtuous or vicious cycle of education access, the former referring to a transfer in access to education to subsequent generations, while the latter refers to the opposite. Coming from a certain socio-economic group, the cost of living may determine whether families support their children through school or otherwise. Some socio-cultural practices may become opportunity costs, competing with the choice of being in school for children and youth of school going age.

1.2.2.1 Human capital development: New measurements, pessimistic prospects

The Human Capital Index (HCI) is a composite of six sub-indicators based on the principles of the Human Development Index (HDI). However, the HCI goes beyond the HDI, evaluating the level of education attained by school-aged children, as well as their acquired learning, and using these components to estimate the probability that they will survive into adulthood and realize their full professional and economic potential (World Bank, 2018). Measured on a scale of zero to one, the HCI provides insights into the opportunities that countries could lose due to weaknesses in their social systems, key among them education and health. The HCI can be an indication for a country that it needs to evaluate its future productivity, given that children born today will move into the labour market in two decades' time.

Only 1 in 3 children born in Sierra Leone is likely to survive through infancy, go through basic and senior secondary education, and grow up to realize their full economic and professional potential, with no observable disparity between boys and girls (see *Table 1.4)*. Although by the age of 18, a child could have done 12 years of schooling as per the education structure, the HCI results shows that average school attendance is 8.95 years, with boys doing 9 years, only marginally above girls at 8.9. Beyond being

in school, the HCI reveals that learning outcomes matter a lot. The harmonized test scores used as a proxy for learning achievement during an individual's stay in school, shows that children in Sierra Leone had 316 points, which is closer to the minimum end of the scale of 300 to 625. The weak learning achievement (cf. *Chapter 4*) affects the learning-adjusted years of school, which is a composite of the expected years of school and the learning achievement.

Table 1.4: Human Capital Index in Sierra Leone and ECOWAS, 2018

Sub-indicator	Sierra Leone			ECOWAS average
	Male	Female	Total	
Probability of survival to age 5	0.88	0.9	0.89	0.92
Expected years of schooling	9	8.91	8.95	7.9
Harmonized test scores (Grade 6)	317.84	313.94	315.88	355.31
Learning-adjusted years of school	4.58	4.47	4.52	4.47
Fraction of children under 5 not stunted	0.76	0.72	0.74	0.71
Adult survival rate	0.6	0.62	0.61	0.73
HCI	**0.35**	**0.351**	**0.351**	**0.37**

Source : World Bank, 2018: The Human Capital Project

The averages show that countries in the ECOWAS region have a better HCI (0.37) compared to Sierra Leone. Although the expected number of years of schooling in Sierra Leone is higher than the regional average, the relatively lower learning achievement hampers the country's overall chances of children achieving their full potential.

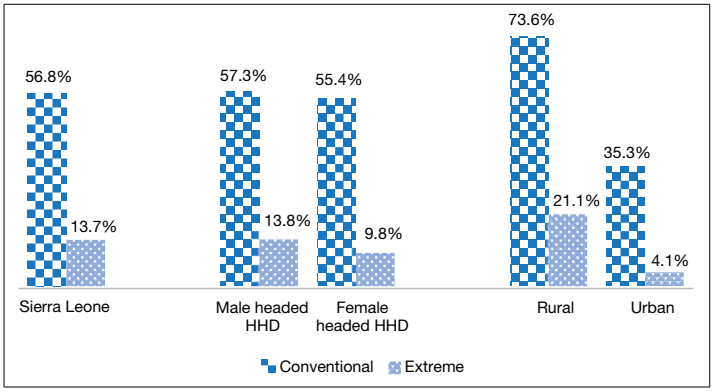
1.2.2.2 Gender equality remains elusive

Sierra Leone still has a long way to go to achieve gender equality. Analysis reveals a wide disparity and inequality between women and men in the economic, socio-political and cultural aspects of development. While Sierra Leone has achieved gender parity in primary school education and life expectancy, it lags behind in several other critical areas. In 2018, Sierra Leone had a Gender Inequality Index (GII) of 0.644, ranking it at 153 out of 162 countries. In the Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI) of the same year, it was ranked 114 out of 149 countries. Both instances indicated high levels of inequality between females and males which represents a significant loss to human development.

1.2.2.3 Poverty incidence: Unequal sharing of the national cake

More than 4 million people in Sierra Leone live below the poverty line, rural households bearing the greater brunt of the unequal distribution of resources. According to the Sierra Leone Integrated Household Survey conducted in 2018, about 6 in 10 people live below the poverty line and 1 in 10 live in extreme poverty (see *Figure 1.1*), totalling about 4.3 million people. The incidence of poverty is more pronounced in rural locations where 7 in 10 live in poverty compared to around 4 in 10 in urban areas. There is only a marginal difference in poverty incidence for households headed by women compared to those headed by men. For extreme poverty however, there is considerable difference between male and female-headed households, with those head by a female showing better performance (10% compared to 14%).

Figure 1.1: Poverty incidence, 2018

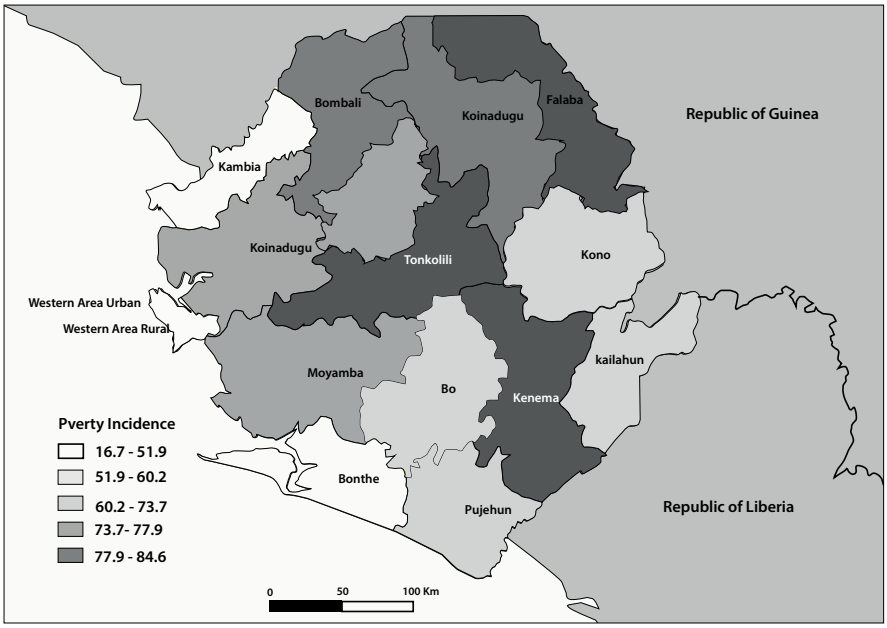


Source : Sierra Leone Integrated Household Survey, 2018

Note: A household is classified as "absolute poor" if its total consumption (food and non-food) is less than the total or absolute poverty line, as "food poor" if its food consumption is less than the food poverty line, and as "extremely poor" if its total consumption (food and non-food) is less than the food poverty line of US$1.9 a day.

About 9 in every 10 people in Pujehun live in poverty compared to only 2 in Freetown, illustrating an even wider social divide. Although the variation in extreme poverty is less pronounced, the results of the 2018 SLIHS show that some districts are heavily burdened while in others, the number of affected persons is quite low. Almost 85% of people in Pujehun are poor compared to 17% in the Western Area Urban (see *Figure 1.2*), and families are five times poorer than those in Freetown.

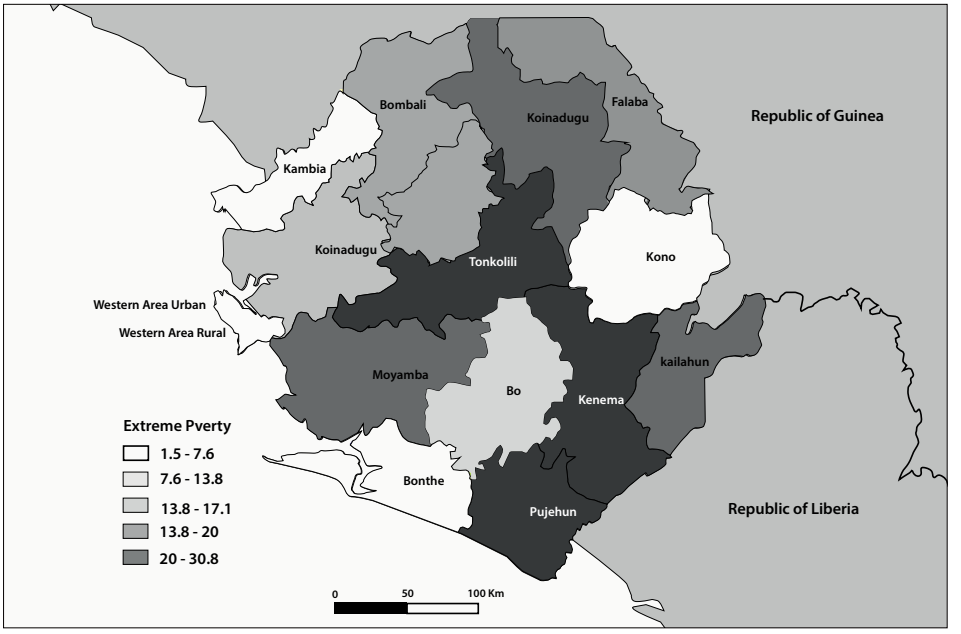
Figure 1.2: Poverty incidence by district



Source : Sierra Leone Integrated Household Survey, 2018

In addition, one in three people in Pujehun and Tonkolili are living in extreme poverty. These conditions, and the existing variations, have an adverse effect on the capability of a household to provide its members with the essentials, therefore education could easily be relegated to a distant priority. In the case of basic needs, families that live in poverty cannot afford proper nutrition. This potentially also affects the participation of children in education, even if their direct school inputs like tuition fees, school development levy, for example, are taken care of by the state or an institution.

Figure 1.3: Extreme poverty incidence by district



Source : Sierra Leone Integrated Household Survey, 2018

1.3 Macroeconomic context: Resilient economic indicators and improving fiscal displine

Governments can facilitate the delivery of services based on the strength or weakness of their respective economies. A strong economy with the right revenue has a higher likelihood of supporting and sustaining its programmes compared to a weak economy. This section presents a review of trends in the evolution of economic indicators, providing an insight into domestic and externally generated revenue, as well as the prioritization of public programmes as seen in the utilization of public resources.

1.3.1 Gross domestic product: The evolution of national wealth

Amid the shocks of the past decade, the economy has made a significant recovery and has been growing at 4.7% in the last four years, with agriculture contributing more than half of GDP. The 2019 GDP (in market prices) was estimated to have reached Le 37.7 trillion, almost tripling in the last nine years, with a Le 25 trillion net increment. In constant 2018 prices, the GDP is estimated to have reached

Le 34 trillion, recording a 5.2% growth between 2018 and 2019, recovering from the great contraction in 2015 (see *Table 1.5*). During the past decade, the GDP registered an annual average growth of 4.2%, with some years marked by mixed fortunes, including the contraction of the economy by 20.5% between 2014 and 2015. This followed the outbreak of the EDV which brought economic activities to a halt as stringent measures were implemented to contain the deadly virus in the country and its neighbours (SSL, 2018). Before the outbreak, the economy was thriving – expanding by 15% and 21% in 2012 and 2013, respectively – driven by an increase in activity in the industrial sector with mining almost doubling its value during the period. Unfortunately, the boom in mining did not last as a drop in international commodity prices in 2014 necessitated the closure of some of the mining companies operating in the country (SSL, 2018), resulting in a dramatic slump in the industry's contribution, from 30% in 2014 to 9% in 2015. The country was declared Ebola-free at the end of 2015, and the economy made a comeback in 2016, registering a growth of 6.3% just one year after the great contraction. This was, however, undermined by the start of electioneering for the 2018 polls. The '*New Direction*' administration's policies have increased confidence in the economy, which grew by 5.2% between 2018 and 2019.

Table 1.5: Evolution of the gross domestic product

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
GDP in billion Leone (current)	12,753	16,461	21,317	22,689	21,583	24,296	27,615	32,402	37,712
GDP in billion Leone (constant, 2018)	24,470	28,190	34,138	35,694	28,380	30,180	31,322	32,402	34,080
Annual growth rate		15.2%	21.1%	4.6%	-20.5%	6.3%	3.8%	3.5%	5.2%
Composition of GDP									
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	52.3%	47.2%	40.7%	39.3%	51.1%	49.9%	50.3%		
Industry (mining, manufacturing)	8.5%	16.8%	27.4%	29.8%	8.5%	10.2%	9.3%		
Service (tourism, finance …)	35.5%	32.7%	28.9%	28.1%	36.7%	36.2%	36.8%		
Financial intermediary services	1.3%	1.2%	1.0%	1.0%	1.3%	1.3%	1.2%		
Total value added at basic prices	95.0%	95.4%	96.0%	96.1%	95.0%	95.1%	95.1%		
Taxes net of subsidies on products	5.0%	4.6%	4.0%	3.9%	5.0%	4.9%	4.9%		
PCGDP '000 (current prices)	2,045	2,558	3,209	3,310	3,050	3,330	3,682	4,207	4,773
PCGDP '000 (constant, 2018)	3,924	4,380	5,139	5,206	4,010	4,136	4,177	4,207	4,313

Source : Statistics Sierra Leone, Ministry of Finance

Distributed per head, the country's average wealth stood at Le 4.8 million in 2019 (at market prices), more than doubling from Le 2 million in 2011. In constant 2018 prices, the per capita GDP (PCGDP) was estimated to be Le 4.3 million, an increase of Le 388,000 over the 9-year period. This implies that the massive increase in the PCGDP (market prices) only covered the attendant inflation and was not a direct increment to the purse of benefitting individuals. The real increase in the PCGDP is thus an average of 1.2% per year for the period. The question is whether this small increment has been enough to make social services like health and education more affordable for households.

Although small in size and population, Sierra Leone has one of the higher real GDP growth rates in the region, the domestic growth being the seventh fastest (see *Table 1.6*). In terms of people's wealth, which is critical for the acquisition of services, Sierra Leone comes second last in the region, with a PCGDP of US$1,555 purchasing power parity (PPP), about one-third of the region's average.

Table 1.6: International comparison of economic parameters

State	GDP (PPP in m US$)	Real GDP growth	PCGDP (US$)
Benin	27,848	6.6%	2,360
Burkina Faso	39,205	6.0%	1,929
Cabo Verde	4,053	5.0%	7,233
Côte d'Ivoire	105,468	7.5%	4,131
Gambia	5,956	6.5%	2,673
Ghana	141,295	7.5%	4,695
Guinea	31,096	5.9%	2,321
Guinea-Bissau	3,372	4.6%	1,726
Liberia	6,306	0.4%	1,267
Mali	44,196	5.0%	2,245
Niger	23,866	6.3%	1,030
Nigeria	1,173,456	2.3%	5,839
Senegal	59,970	6.1%	3,582
Sierra Leone	12,255	5.2%	1,555
Togo	13,994	5.1%	1,709
ECOWAS Total	**1,692,338**	**5.3%**	**4,367**

Source : International Monetary Fund, 2019

1.3.2 Revenue: Improved domestic collection is catalysing financial independence

Revenue tripled in the last decade, driven by massive increases on the domestic front, with indications of strengthening financial independence. The country's total revenue was reported to have reached Le 6.69 trillion in 2019, translating into 18% of the GDP (see *Table 1.7*). Domestic revenue, which includes income tax, customs and excise duties, goods and services taxes, mineral resources taxes, and road user charges, is reported to have reached Le 5.43 trillion in 2019, translating into 14% of GDP, and representing 81% of total revenue. These results show that although the share of foreign revenue remains significant, at 19% in 2019 for instance, the increased efforts to mobilize domestic revenue is strengthening the country's financial independence drive, gaining 14 percentage points from 67% in 2011 to 81% in 2019. The net impact of this is the increased opportunity for the country to implement domestically determined priorities.

Table 1.7: Evolution of revenue in Sierra Leone

Billion Leones	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Total revenue	2,171	2,506	2,828	3,186	3,495	3,615	4,023	5,109	6,688
Domestic revenue	1,462	1,874	2,280	2,226	2,330	2,889	3,340	4,428	5,431
Foreign support	709	633	548	959	1,165	727	683	680	1,257
Domestic revenue as % of total	67.4%	74.8%	80.6%	69.9%	66.7%	79.9%	83.0%	86.7%	81.2%
Total revenue as % of GDP	17.0%	15.2%	13.3%	14.0%	16.2%	14.9%	14.6%	15.8%	17.7%
Domestic revenue as % of GDP	11.5%	11.4%	10.7%	9.8%	10.8%	11.9%	12.1%	13.7%	14.4%

Source : Ministry of Finance

Notably, the country saw a tripling of its revenue, growing from Le 2.17 trillion in 2011 to Le 6.69 trillion in 2019, representing an annual average growth of 15%. Total revenue as a share of the GDP increased by 0.5 percentage points from 17.2% in 2011 to settle at 17.7%, with some fluctuation in between. On the domestic front, collection of taxes and duties has been on a general increase, although this has had

mixed fortunes in the reviewed period, oscillating between 2011 and 2014 before settling on an upward trajectory. It is important to note that in 2014 and 2015, the increased revenue occasioned the rise in tax pressure. While the government's efforts on revenue collection are laudable, with tax pressure increasing from 12% in 2011 to 14% in 2019, a lot remains to be done to achieve the macroeconomic convergence criteria of a revenue to GDP ratio of 20%, agreed on by countries in the region (ECOWAS, 2017).

1.3.3 Government expenditure: Increased spending is driven by salaries and debt servicing

This sub-section assesses the stability and predictability of government spending, a proxy to the guarantee of the sustainability of social sector programmes like education and health.

1.3.3.1 Evolution of total government expenditure

Government expenditure tripled over the period, driven by the expansion of the wage bill and increased debt repayment. In 2019, spending reached Le 7.6 trillion, consisting of Le 5.7 trillion in recurrent and Le 1.9 trillion in development (see *Table 1.8*), the latter translating to 25% of total spending. The recurrent spending consisted of Le 2.6 trillion in salaries, Le 2 trillion in non-salary spending, and Le 1.1 trillion in debt servicing. In sum, total government spending in 2019 translates into 20% of GDP and 114% of the total revenue, demonstrating a spending commitment that is more than revenue collected. Notable observations in the spending include the tripling of total expenditure from Le 2.75 trillion in 2011 to Le 7.6 trillion in 2019. Recurrent spending increased by a factor of 3.6, mainly driven by the increase in wages and salaries which almost quadrupled during the period. In comparison, capital spending increased by 64%, resulting in a slump in the share of government spending on development, dropping from 42% in 2011 to 25% in 2019. Development spending is covered by government revenue as well as ring-fenced foreign budget support. The results also show that the share of government-funded development more than doubled from Le 362 billion in 2011 to Le 748 billion in 2019. With this increase, the share of development spending that is funded by government's own resources increased, rising by over 20 percentage points between 2011 and 2016 and then dropping to 32.4% in 2018 before rising again to 40% in 2019, the overall gain being 8 percentage points between 2011 and 2019.

Table 1.8: Evolution of government expenditure

(Billion Leones)	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Total govt expenditure	2,752	3,360	3,164	3,935	4,419	5,441	6,406	6,831	7,625
Recurrent govt spending	1,603	2,097	2,185	2,718	2,803	3,553	4,121	4,748	5,741
Salaries and wages	681	936	1,060	1,446	1,587	1,818	1,890	2,057	2,578
Non-salary expenses	671	871	824	1,051	1,042	1,534	1,628	1,785	2,043
Debt servicing	250	291	301	221	175	202	602	906	1,119
Debt servicing (2018)	480	498	482	348	230	251	683	906	1,011
As % of GDP	2.0	1.8	1.4	1.0	0.8	0.8	2.2	2.8	3.0
Development spending	1,149	1,263	979	1,217	1,616	1,887	2,285	2,083	1,884
Own-funded development	362	464	417	570	653	1,005	1,062	674	748
Development as % of total	41.8	37.6	30.9	30.9	36.6	34.7	35.7	30.5	24.7
% of own-funded development	31.5	36.8	42.6	46.8	40.4	53.3	46.5	32.4	39.7
Total spending as % of GDP	21.6	20.4	14.8	17.3	20.5	22.4	23.2	21.1	20.2
Recurrent (% of GDP)	12.6	12.7	10.3	12.0	13.0	14.6	14.9	14.7	15.2
Development (% of GDP)	9.0	7.7	4.6	5.4	7.5	7.8	8.3	6.4	5.0
Total as a % of revenue	126.8	134.1	111.9	123.5	126.5	150.5	159.2	133.7	114.0

Source : Ministry of Finance

Repayment of public debt, one of the key components of recurrent spending, is reported to have reached Le 1.1 trillion, translating into 19% of the Le 5.7 trillion recurrent spending in 2019, the implication being that the government had the opportunity to programme and reprogramme only 81% of the recurrent spending. In 2018 prices, debt repayment is equivalent to Le 1 trillion, translating into 3% of GDP. Under the ECOWAS macroeconomic convergence pact, countries have committed to ensuring debt servicing does not surpass 3% of GDP (ECOWAS, 2017), the implication here being that Sierra Leone is at the limit. This share exhibited a downward trend between 2011 and 2016, dropping by more than half, from 2% to 0.8%. In 2017, the country recorded a dramatic increase in debt repayment, almost tripling between 2016 and 2017. The trend has since risen to 3%, which may potentially crowd out vulnerable government programmes.

Figure 1.4: Budget deficit as % of GDP

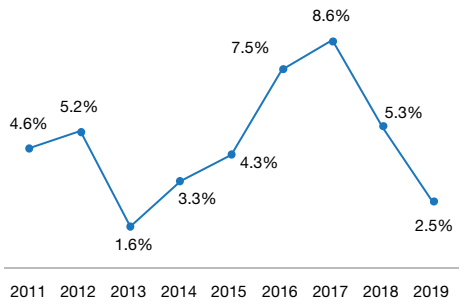
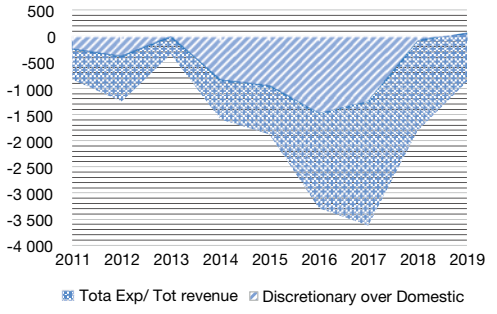


Figure 1.5: Public spending surplus/deficit



Source : Authors' calculations based on Ministry of Finance data on revenue and expenditure

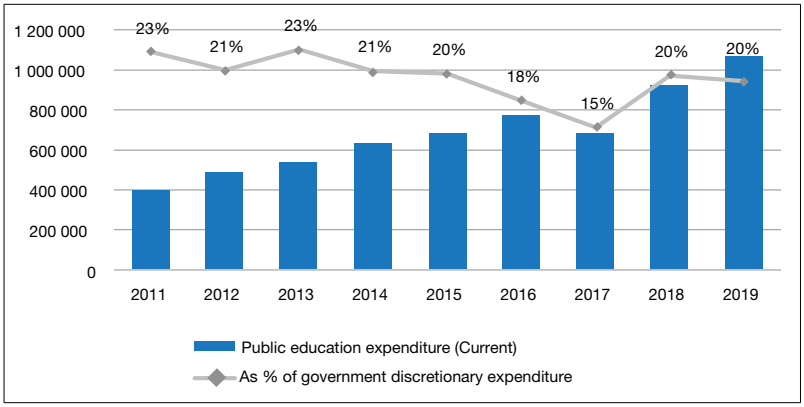
Although operating in deficit, discretionary expenditure falls within domestic revenue. Total government spending in 2019 was Le 7.6 trillion (see *Table 1.8*) representing 20% of GDP. The spending was against a total revenue of Le 6.7 trillion (see *Table 1.7*) occasioning a deficit of Le 937 billion, which translates into a budget deficit ratio of 2.5% of GDP. This is just shy of the 3% recommended by the regional macroeconomic convergence pact (ECOWAS, 2017), which seeks to stabilize economic growth, curb inflation and maintain healthy monetary supply. The budget deficit ratio has exhibited mixed trends since 2011, increasing fivefold from 2% in 2013 to 9% in 2017 (see *Figure 1.4*). Since 2017, the government has made a significant effort to reduce the deficit, cutting back the ratio by three times through increased revenue collection. This increased revenue collection, especially on the domestic front, resulted in the deficit on discretionary spending turning to surplus in 2019 (see *Figure 1.5*).

1.3.3.2 Evolution of public spending on education

Although education spending by volume has increased over the years, its share within government discretionary expenditure had been on a general decline. Recent spending however, shows that the country is on path to restoring education as a priority, a boost to the pursuit of both quality and equality in schooling. In 2019, the government spent a total of Le 1.06 trillion to cover teacher/instructor/lecturer salaries, grants-in-aid, tuition grants, purchase of books and other teaching and learning materials, development and maintenance of infrastructure, as well as administration and

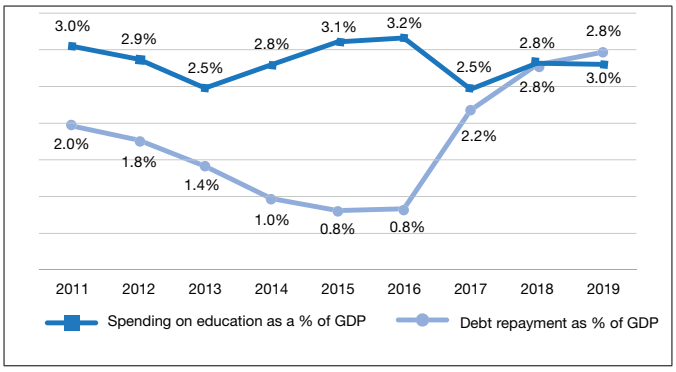
supervision of the delivery of education. This represented 20% of the government's discretionary spending (expenditure less debt servicing). During the 2015 World Education Forum (WEF), global leaders agreed to ensure spending on education would range from 15 to 20% of total government expenditure in a fiscal year, to facilitate the achievement of quality and equitable education by 2030 (UNESCO, 2015). Although it inherited non-serviced debts from the previous administration, the government was able to keep this threshold by giving the necessary priority to education. (see *Figure 1.6*).

Figure 1.6: Public spending on education



In volume, the spending on education almost tripled from Le 389 billion in 2011 to more than Le 1 trillion in 2019, growing at an annual average of 13%. In terms of the implied priority in comparison to other government sectors (based on discretionary expenditure), public spending in education exhibited mixed trends, dropping 2 points between 2011 and 2012, then gaining 2 points between 2012 and 2013, before an 8-point drop to a low of 15% in 2017. The share of spending on education has shown signs of recovery with the '*New Direction*' administration, gaining 5 percentage points in 2018 to reach 20%, with a confirmation of the same share in 2019, indicating that the commitment to education as a priority will likely stay, considering the programmes that the administration initiated in the sector in 2018.

Figure 1.7: Public spending on education versus debt servicing



The national debt servicing programme has grown in recent years, which could result in competition for limited resources, to the detriment of social programmes like education. The total spending of Le 1 trillion on education in 2019 translated to 2.8% of GDP, but this fell shy of the 4 to 6% recommended range necessary to facilitate the effective pursuit of quality education. This share of spending in education has fluctuated since 2011 (see *Figure 1.7*), rising from 2.5% in 2013 to a peak of 3% in 2016, the increased spending attributed to the government and development partners' joint response to the EVD pandemic that engulfed the country between 2014 and 2016. Although the rise in debt servicing and its potential risks were discussed in earlier sections, we note that the servicing of public debt has already surpassed spending on education, and if appropriate fiscal measures are not put into place, there may be less resources available to spend on cash intensive programmes like education.

CHAPTER 2

Enrolment, internal efficiency, out-of-school children and equity

This chapter analyses the increase in student enrolment alongside the evolution in the number of schools, classrooms and teachers, in order to assess Sierra Leone's achievements in enrolment capacity since 2011. It reviews the progress of coverage at the various levels of education and draws particular attention to key indicators of student flow across the various cycles of the system through the analysis of schooling profiles. It also looks at the schooling status of the school-aged population to get a better understanding of issues related to out-of-school children. The last section of the chapter examines the status of equity across a range of dimensions in the sector.

2.1 Structure of the education system

In Sierra Leone, education is managed by the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE) and the Ministry of Technical and Higher Education (MTHE). The MBSSE is responsible for basic and senior secondary school education while the MTHE is responsible for tertiary level technical/vocational and higher education. The education system is currently organized **into two main sectors:**

(i) Formal education, which has four sub-sectors:

- **Pre-primary education** offers a three-year socialization and learning cycle for children aged three to five.

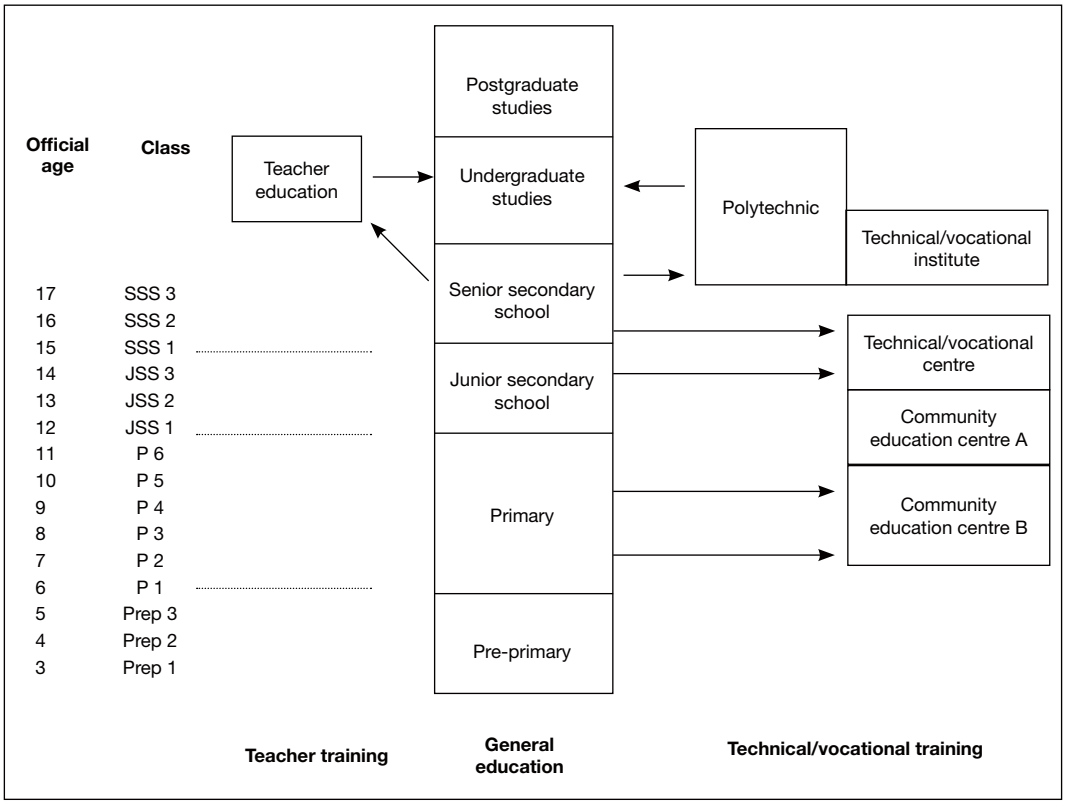
- **Basic education** is moving towards becoming compulsory and comprises primary and junior secondary education. Primary education is a six-year cycle for children aged 6 to 11. There are no entry requirements to this sub-sector and it is open to all children of the appropriate age. At the end of the cycle, pupils take the National Primary School Examination (NPSE) conducted by the West African Examinations Council (WAEC), which determines eligibility for entry to junior secondary. Completion of junior secondary education is marked by the taking of the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) in the final year.

- **Senior secondary education** is over three years and is aligned to the theoretical age range of 15 to 17 years old. There are two types of senior secondary education available. The first is senior secondary school (SSS) which offers a general education, and the second is senior secondary technical vocational (SSTV) which offers technical and vocational education and training. At the end of the senior secondary level, students sit the West Africa Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) to complete the cycle.

- **Tertiary education** follows secondary education and is offered by polytechnics, professional colleges and universities. Tertiary education programmes lead to a variety of diplomas, certificates and degrees. Teacher education is part of tertiary education and is offered by both polytechnics and universities. Detailed explanations regarding the structure of tertiary education are provided in *Chapter 5*.

(ii) Non-formal education is offered to older children, youth and adults who, for a variety of reasons, are not able to join formal education. Community education centres (CECs) provide basic numeracy and literacy skills that allow older students to (re-)enter the formal system if they choose, or to continue on the non-formal path to acquire further skills training, or enter employment. Accelerated primary education or compressed learning programmes are offered for children between the ages of 10 and 15, but also to adolescent mothers or girls who dropped out school due to pregnancy or for other reasons. Successful completers of the accelerated programme sit the National Primary School Examination (NPSE). Sitting the NPSE provides an opportunity for children and youth who go through this stream to return to formal education.

Figure 2.1: Structure of the education system



Source : ESA, 2013

School ownership and approval status

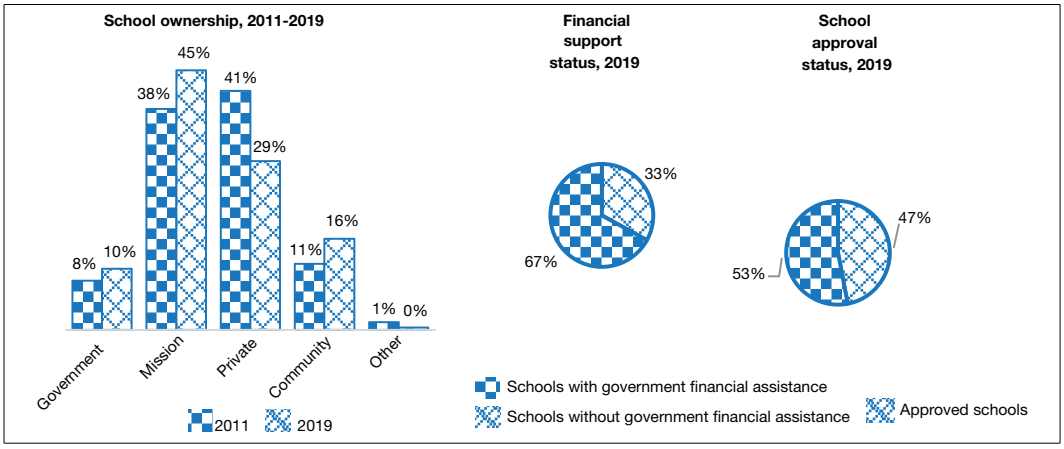
Schooling in Sierra Leone is provided by both government and non-government schools. These are further classified according to several categories reflecting a combination of ownership, approval and funding arrangements. There are four main categories of school owners, namely *government, mission, community, and private*. However, even though some schools are not government-owned, they are not classified as private schools as they receive financial support from the government for teaching/learning materials, teacher salaries, and examination fees. Therefore, a distinction should be made between: (i) *government schools* that are funded and managed by the government; (ii) *government-assisted schools* which receive financial assistance from the government, but are owned by non-government organizations such as religious missions or a community, and (iii) *private schools* that are privately owned, funded and managed. The government has in place a school approval process that can qualify non-government schools for government financial assistance. Although the assistance is not always guaranteed, the approval process is a necessary step for non-government schools wishing to benefit from government financial support. Consequently, a distinction should also be made between: (i) approved schools and (ii) non-approved schools.

2.2 Enrolment dynamics: Substantial increase since Free Quality School Education programme

Over the past nine years, enrolment increased at all levels of education but more significantly between 2018 and 2019, following the implementation of the Free Quality School Education Programme (FQSE). The increase in enrolment occurred not only in government schools but also in mission and community schools. *Table 2.2* and *Figure 2.6* present a general overview of enrolment trends from 2011 to 2019 by sub-sector. The enrolment trend disaggregated by gender is provided in the Annexes.

At **pre-primary level**, enrolment increased by 93,330 over the period 2011 to 2019, to reach 130,681 pupils (62,089 boys and 68,592 girls), representing an average annual growth rate of 17%. A major increase in pre-primary enrolment was observed between 2018 and 2019 as the system absorbed an additional 39,980 pupils, equivalent to an increase of 44% in just one year. As shown in *Figure 2.2*, religious mission schools are the main providers of pre-primary schooling, accounting for 45% of pupils (58,181) in 2019. Although the share of pupils enrolled in the private sector decreased from 41% in 2011 to 29% in 2019, there are still significantly more pupils enrolled in private schools (37,821) than in government-owned schools, which accounted for only 1% (13,719) of pre-primary enrolment in 2019. Furthermore, it is important to note that 53% of pupils are enrolled in schools that are not approved by the government, and 67% are at schools that do not receive financial support from the government. The lack of financial support for preschools is likely due to the fact that preschool is not compulsory and the official age to start school is six. However, this may have important implications regarding the quality of pre-primary education services.

Figure 2.2: Share of pre-primary pupils by school ownership, financial support and approval status

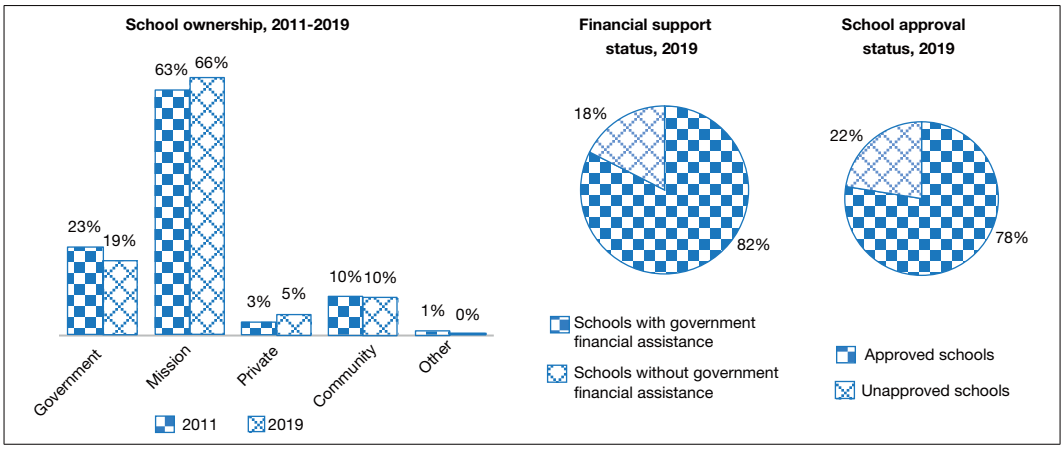


Source: Authors' computation - annual school census database (2019)

At the **primary level,** enrolment increased from 1.2 million pupils in 2011 to 1.8 million (875,344 boys and 897,433 girls) in 2019, with an average annual growth rate of 5% over the period. Between 2018 and 2019, enrolment grew at a higher pace with an astonishing increase of more than half a million additional pupils over the one-year period, representing 29%. *Figure 2.2* shows that the share of primary pupils by school ownership remained stable over the period, with most enrolments in mission schools (66% in 2019, against 63% in 2011) and only 19% of pupils in government-owned schools in 2019 (23% in 2011). The private sector has remained a relatively minor player, enrolling only 5% of primary pupils in 2019, against 3% in 2011.

In terms of school approval and government financial assistance, it is worth noting that 78% of primary pupils are enrolled in approved schools, whereas 82% are enrolled in schools receiving financial assistance from the government.

Figure 2.3: Share of primary pupils by school ownership, financial support and approval status

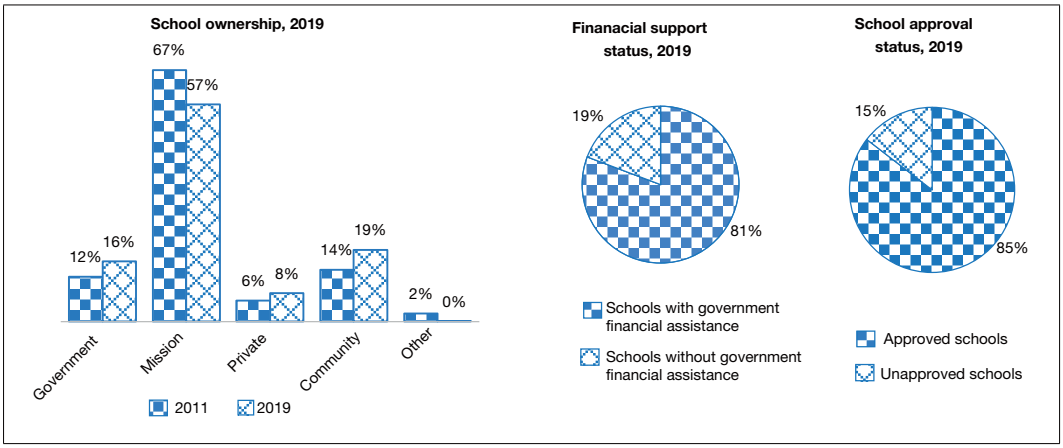


Source: Authors' computation - annual school census database (2019)

At **junior secondary** level, enrolment increased by more than 207, 000 over the period 2011 to 2019 to reach 451,685 students (225,526 boys and 226,159 girls) in 2019, representing an average annual growth rate of 8%. As observed at the other levels, junior secondary enrolment registered a significant increase of 43% (136,185 students) between 2018 and 2019.

Figure 2.4 shows that 57% of junior secondary pupils were enrolled in mission schools in 2019 (against 67% in 2011), 19% were enrolled in schools owned by the community (against 14% in 2011), and 16% were enrolled in government-owned schools (against 12% in 2011). The private sector accounted for only 8% of junior secondary enrolment in 2019. Eighty-three per cent of junior secondary pupils were enrolled in approved schools, and 91% in schools receiving financial support from the government.

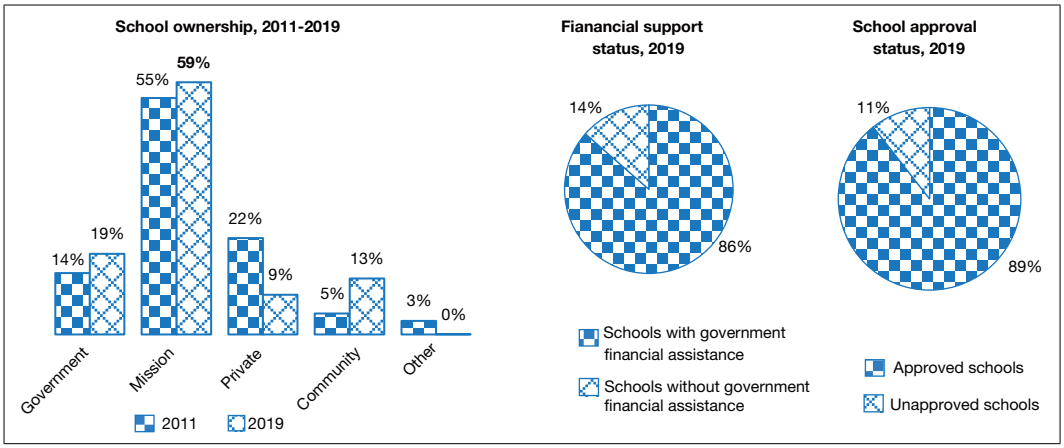
Figure 2.4: Share of junior secondary pupils by school ownership, financial support and approval status



Source: Authors' computation - annual school census database (2019)

At the **senior secondary level**, enrolment more than doubled between 2011 and 2019 to reach 305,485 students (157,551 boys and 147,934 girls) in 2019. This increase corresponds to an average annual growth rate of 14% over the 9-year period. A 48% increase in enrolment is observed between 2018 and 2019. As observed at the other educational levels, the majority of senior secondary students are enrolled in mission schools (59% in 2019, against 55% in 2011) whereas one out of five pupils are enrolled in a senior secondary school owned by the government (19% in 2019, against 14% in 2011). The share of pupils enrolled in the private sector decreased from 22% in 2011 to 9% in 2019. Almost nine out of ten pupils are enrolled in approved senior secondary schools (89%) or in schools receiving financial support from the government (86%).

Figure 2.5: Share of senior secondary pupils by school ownership, financial support and approval and status



Source: Authors' computation - annual school census database (2019)

At all levels, a substantial increase in enrolment is observed just after the FQSE programme was implemented in August 2018, which may be an indication that there was an unmet schooling demand prior to its implementation. By describing trends in average school size, class size and pupil-teacher ratios, *Table 2.1* provides useful information to assess how the education system has adapted, responded, and possibly facilitated the growth in student enrolment.

Although schooling provision kept pace with growth in enrolment from 2011 to 2018, all levels exhibited a reduction between 2018 and 2019:

- At *pre-primary level,* although the number of schools increased by 129, enrolment increased by a bigger margin, driving the average pre-primary school size from 56 to 74 pupils, while the average class size grew from 22 to 32 pupils between 2018 and 2019. The average pupil-teacher ratio also increased significantly from 12 pupils per teacher in 2018 to 23 pupils per teacher in 2019.
- School and teacher supply at *primary level* was unable to keep pace with student enrolment as the average school size reached 247 pupils in 2019 (against 196 in 2018), and the average class size increased to 51 pupils (against 42 in 2018). The pupil-teacher ratio also increased from 27 pupils per teacher to 37 pupils per teacher.
- A reduction in the provision of schooling was also observed *at both junior and secondary levels* with a significant increase in the average school and class size between 2018 and 2019. At these levels, the average number of students per class increased from 34 to 53 at junior secondary and from 41 to 58 at senior secondary level. The student-teacher ratio also went up, from 16 to 23 at junior secondary and from 20 to 31 at senior secondary over the same period.

Overall, the implementation of the FQSE programme has created further challenges for the organization of education in terms of supply, and the capacity to accommodate students, as shown by the significant increase in the average school size, class size and pupil-teacher ratio seen at all levels between 2018 and 2019. Further analysis of teacher and infrastructure management is provided in *Chapter 4*.

Table 2.1: Increase in the total number of schools, teachers and students between 2011 and 2019

	Pre-primary			Primary		
	2011	2018	2019	2011	2018	2019
	2011	2018	2019	2011	2018	2019
Number of schools	644	1,632	1,761	5,931	7,000	7,179
Number of classrooms	-	4,134	4,144	-	32,848	34,921
Number of teachers	1,219	7,279	5,575	35,986	49,850	47,742
Number of students	**37,351**	**90,701**	**130,681**	**1,194,503**	**1,369,738**	**1,772,777**
Average school size	58	56	74	201	196	247
Average class size	-	22	32	-	42	51
Average students per teacher	31	12	23	33	27	37
	Junior secondary			**Senior secondary**		
	2011	2018	2019	2011	2018	2019
Number of schools	888	1,530	1,633	208	581	624
Number of classrooms	-	9,276	8,515	-	5,089	5,272
Number of teachers	11,360	20,329	19,885	3,777	10,167	9,852
Number of students	**244,488**	**315,500**	**451,685**	**108,244**	**206,506**	**305,485**
Average school size	275	206	277	520	355	490
Average class size	-	34	53	-	41	58
Average students per teacher	22	16	23	29	20	31

Source: Authors' computation based on the Annual School Census Report (2011) and databases (2018, 2019)

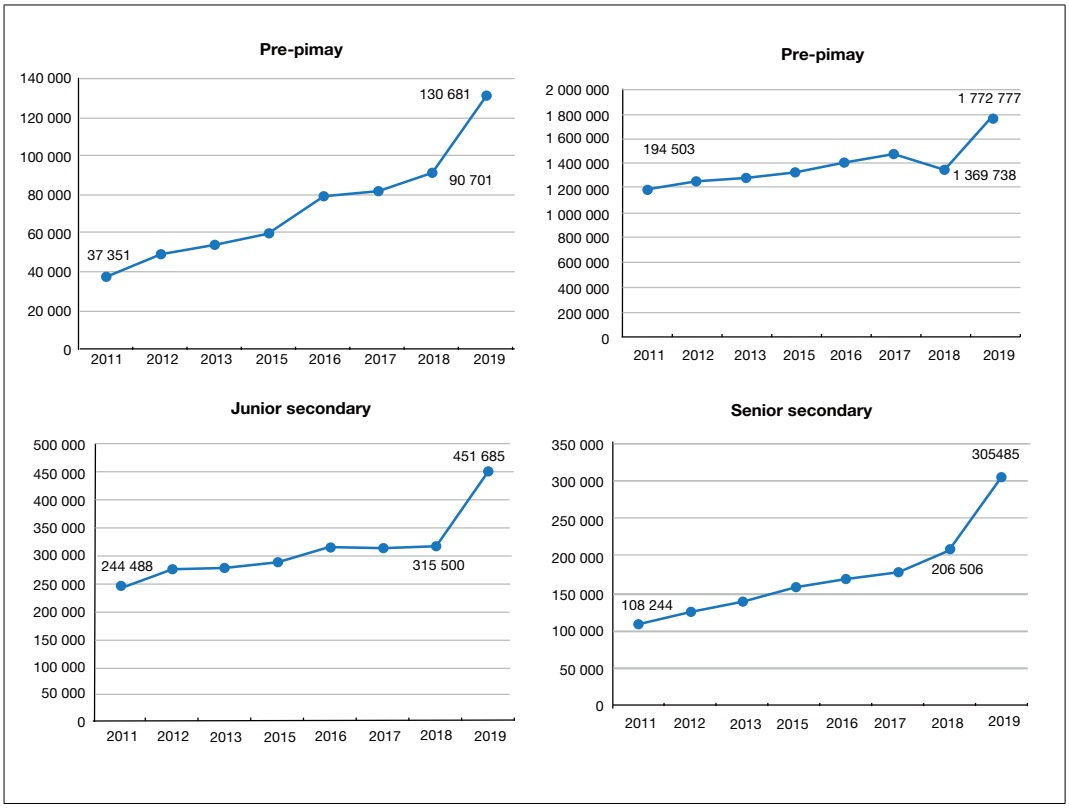
Enrolment data for **tertiary education** is reported in *Table 2.2* but analysed and discussed in detail in *Chapter 5*.

Table 2.2: Enrolment trends from 2011 to 2019

	2011	2012	2013	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Average annual growth rate 2011-2019	Average annual growth rate 2011-2018	Growth between 2018-2019
Pre-primary	**37,351**	**49,006**	**54,040**	**60,065**	**79,280**	**81,892**	**90,701**	**130,681**	**17%**	**14%**	**44%**
Government	3,161	2,708	2,982	5,435	5,754	8,091	9,019	13,719	20%	16%	52%
Mission	14,161	18,116	20,958	19,333	26,455	29,262	34,510	58,181	19%	14%	69%
Private	15,318	21,540	22,742	21,183	28,126	27,195	31,544	37,821	12%	11%	20%
Community	4,222	4,577	6,372	13 ,449	18,099	16,725	15,512	20,468	22%	20%	32%
Other	489	2,065	986	665	846	619	116	492			
Primary	**1,194,503**	**1,252,354**	**1,298,908**	**1,336,727**	**1,410,758**	**1,486,939**	**1,369,738**	**1,772,777**	**5%**	**2%**	**29%**
Government	271,160	233,148	256,564	277,346	252,798	273,992	297,451	338,013	3%	1%	14%
Mission	751,117	874,241	845,613	586,128	809,307	925,480	849,073	1,167,395	6%	2%	37%
Private	41,486	61,257	101,249	58,213	73,478	82,811	80,465	95,785	11%	10%	19%
Community	118,249	42,972	86,902	406,052	268,304	198,072	140,312	169,952	5%	2%	21%
Other	12,491	40,736	8,580	8,988	6,871	6,584	2,437	1,632			
Junior secondary	**244,488**	**275,915**	**276,593**	**286,530**	**314,052**	**312,919**	**315,500**	**451,685**	**8%**	**4%**	**43%**
Government	29,162	37,392	39,102	43,364	46,347	44,191	58,560	72,098	12%	10%	23%
Mission	162,765	187,935	174,873	149,425	172,062	175,910	173,275	259,370	6%	1%	50%
Private	13,747	21,157	19,009	17,478	22,819	25,360	26,549	33,945	12%	10%	28%
Community	33,620	20,603	37,622	73,226	70,409	65,575	55,286	85,900	12%	7%	55%
Other	5,194	8,828	5,987	3,037	2,415	1,883	1,830	372			
Senior secondary	**108,244**	**124,885**	**139,647**	**156,520**	**170,237**	**179,221**	**206,506**	**305,485**	**14%**	**10%**	**48%**
Government	15,471	21,746	25,990	20,913	22,813	21,353	40,268	57,495	18%	15%	43%
Mission	59,676	84,028	93,589	70,029	93,047	103,142	119,443	179,678	15%	10%	50%
Private	24,312	12,860	10,083	16,598	22,093	24,137	24,020	28,264	2%	0%	18%
Community	5,327	3,661	8,698	48,350	31,548	30,529	22,410	39,938	29%	23%	78%
Other	3,458	2,590	1,287	630	736	60	365	110			
Tertiary education	**-**								**129,196****		
TVET	3,890*							24,749**			
Higher education	-								104,447**		

Source: Authors' calculation – Annual School Census Report (2011-2013), annual school census data (2016-2019), * ESA, 2013, **2020 National Technical and Higher Education Census (NTHE)

Figure 2.6: Total enrolment trends by sub-sector, 2011-2019



Source: Authors' computation– annual school census reports (2011-2013), annual school census data (2016-2019), * ESA, 2013, **2020 National Technical and Higher Education Census (NTHE)

2.3 A significant increase in school coverage at all levels

This section analyses enrolment trends in light of the school age population, providing an overview of the potential education demand and ascertaining how much this demand is being met. To this end, the commonly used indicator is the gross enrolment rate (GER), which is defined as the ratio of the number of pupils enrolled in a level to the theoretical school age population corresponding to this same level. *Table 2.3* presents the evolution of the GER between 2011 and 2019 for all education levels, using both administrative and household survey data.

Table 2.3: School coverage by education level, 2011 and 2018

	Administrative data					Household survey	
	2011	2016	2017	2018	2019	MICS6 2017	SLIHS 2018
Pre-primary (GER)	7%	12%	12%	13%	19%	-	-
Primary (GER)	122%	114%	119%	109%	140%	118%	113%
Junior secondary school (GER)	62%	60%	59%	57%	80%	74%	75%
Senior secondary school (GER)	32%	26%	27%	31%	45%	49%	49%
Tertiary (students per 100,000 inhabitants)	330	-	-	-	1,654	-	-

Source: 2011: ESA (2013) / 2016-2019: Authors' calculation based on national population data from Statistic Sierra Leone (SSL) but adjusted for the school age population (See *Chapter 1*) and annual school census data / Household Surveys: MICS6, 2017 and SLIHS, 2018 data

At the **pre-primary** level, coverage has more than doubled over the period, with an increase from 7% in 2011 to 19% in 2019. Although this coverage still reflects the limited capacity of the education system to cater for the pre-primary school age population, it is however in line with the 20% pre-primary GER target set in the strategic outcomes of the 2018-2020 Education Sector Plan. At the **primary level**, the coverage has consistently been higher than 100%, reaching 140% in 2019 (against 109% in 2018). This means that the system can accommodate the 6 to 11-year-old population under the present schooling conditions. However, it does not mean that the country has achieved universal access to primary education. Indeed, the primary GER is inflated by high repetition rates along with early and late primary enrolment.

At the **junior secondary** level, the GER gained 18 percentage points, rising from 62% to 80% over the 2011-2019 period, meaning that the country is already above the 75% junior secondary GER target set in the 2018-2020 Education Sector Plan.

At **senior secondary** level, the GER increased from 32% in 2011 to 45% in 2019, suggesting that the available senior secondary school infrastructure may only be able to cater for less than half of the 15 to 17-year-old population. However, it is worth noting that the country is already way above the 32% target set for senior secondary GER in the 2018-2020 Education Sector Plan.

Table 2.4 assesses where Sierra Leone stands in comparison to the ECOWAS countries in terms of school coverage. **At all levels, except at pre-primary, Sierra Leone presents a higher GER than the ECOWAS averages.** Although its pre-primary coverage is lower than the ECOWAS average (37%), comparatively, many countries in the region have limited pre-primary schooling such as Burkina Faso (4.4%), Mali (7%), Niger (8%) or Côte d'Ivoire (8.2%). At the primary level, Sierra Leone displays the highest GER in the region and is 42 percentage points above the average for ECOWAS countries (97.6%). One explanation may be related to the high proportion of early and late enrolments observed at primary school level in Sierra Leone. At the secondary levels, Sierra Leone's coverage is above ECOWAS's average but stands behind Cabo Verde and Ghana at JSS and SSS levels.

Table 2.4: International comparison of GER (%) by level

	Pre-primary	Primary	JSS	SSS
Sierra Leone (2019)	**18.8**	**140.1**	**79.8**	**44.7**
Benin (2018)	25.5	122.0	73.8	33.8
Burkina Faso (2017)	4.4	96.1	55.5	18.4
Cabo Verde (2018)	73.2	104.0	104.8	71.1
Côte d'Ivoire (2018)	8.2	99.8	63.8	32.5
Gambia (2018)	41.7	98.0	63.7	43.1
Ghana (2018)	114.5	104.8	85.4	47.9
Guinea (2016)	21.7	97.0	48.0	31.0
Guinea-Bissau (2013)	12.6	122.0	61.0	33.0
Liberia (2017)	125.2	85.1	52.6	37.4
Mali (2018)	7.0	75.6	51.6	28.9
Niger (2018)	8.0	72.2	30.7	7.6
Nigeria (2016)	-	84.7	-	-
Senegal (2018)	16.5	81.0	49.3	35.4
Togo (2018)	22.8	123.8	67.4	38.1
ECOWAS average	**37.0**	**97.6**	**62.1**	**35.2**

Source: The comparison is based on the latest available data from IIEP-Dakar, consolidated from various global databases and respective country reporting

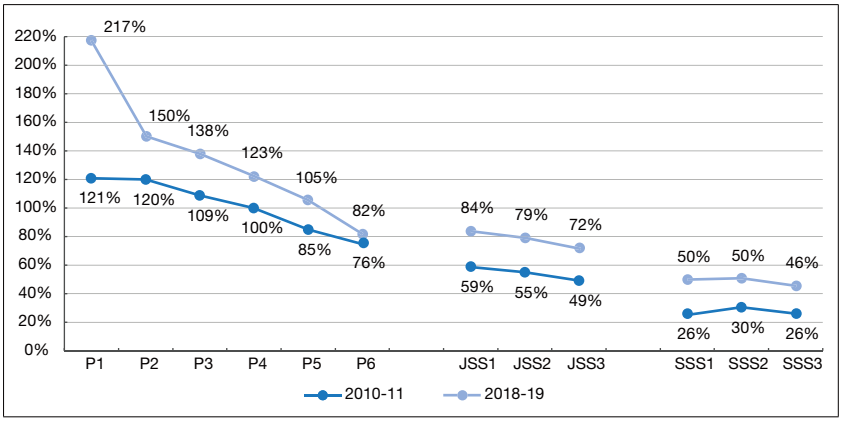
2.4 Schooling profile

Although the GER gives an indication of the system's enrolment capacity for different age groups, it does not offer an accurate picture of schooling patterns nor reflect retention in each grade. By providing a visual representation of school careers, from access to a particular cycle up to its completion, schooling profiles give a more detailed overview of enrolment at each level. Moreover, unlike the gross enrolment ratio, the schooling profile is calculated based on the number of non-repeaters in each grade and is therefore not inflated by repetition. To compute schooling profiles, different approaches and data sources are used. In this section, we use administrative data from the annual school census and Sierra Leone's population data to compute a cross-sectional schooling profile. We also present a probabilistic schooling profile by using data from the MICS6 (2017) and SLIHS (2018) household surveys.

2.4.1 Analysis from administrative data: An improvement in access at all levels

Figure 2.7 provides an overview of the evolution of the cross-sectional schooling profile between 2011 and 2019. Also known as the transversal schooling profile, it depicts a series of access rates in each grade of a given cycle. Access rates are calculated by dividing the number of new entrants for a specific grade by the school-aged population for that grade. The first point of the profile provides the gross intake rate (GIR), while the access rate of the last year of a level is used as a proxy for its completion rate.

Figure 2.7: Cross-sectional schooling profiles, 2011 and 2019



Source: 2011: ESA 2013/2018-19: Authors' computation based on the 2019 annual school census data and Sierra Leone population data from *Chapter 1*

Overall, the figures show an improvement in access at all levels over the period. At the primary level, the gross access rate to the first grade of primary school remains well above 100%. However, the value of 217% observed in 2019 should be interpreted with caution as it does not necessarily mean that all Sierra Leonean children have access to primary education. Rather, this high access rate may be associated with other factors, such as early and late enrolment in primary school. As shown in *Table 2.5*, **half of the P1 enrolment in 2019 were either younger or older than six years, the official age for attending Grade 1.** Among the pupils attending the first grade of primary school, more than 20% were 5 years old or younger, reflecting an important demand for pre-primary schooling and the success in getting young girls to attend school, while almost 30% were 7 years old or older, indicating considerable late enrolment in primary schooling.

Table 2.5: Age of pupils attending P1, 2019

	Number of pupils in P1	Share of pupils in P1
Underage pupils	110,660	21,8%
Official age pupils	251,436	49,5%
Overage pupils	145,724	28,7%

Source: Authors' computation - Annual School Census Report (2019)

The access rate to the last grade of primary school (P6), a proxy for the primary completion rate, reached 82% in 2019 (against 76% in 2011). This means that in 2019, 1**8% of Sierra Leonean pupils did not reach the end of the primary education cycle and are therefore less likely to acquire, through formal schooling, the basic literacy and numeracy skills needed to become and remain literate in their adult lives.**

With regards to secondary education, an upward trend in both access and completion rates was observed between 2011 and 2019. Access rates to JSS1 rose from 59% in 2011 to 84% in 2019, representing a 25 percentage points increase over the period. Interestingly, in 2019 access rates to JSS1 were slightly higher than the primary completion rate (82%). One possible explanation could

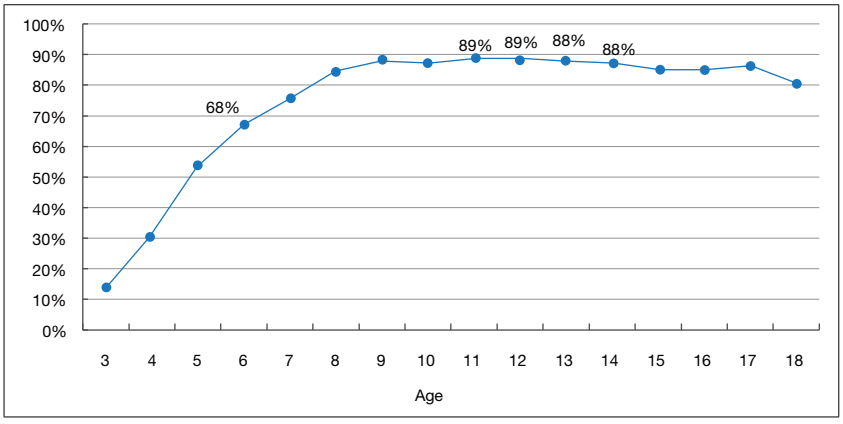
be that the FQSE provides a better opportunity to access junior secondary school for those who may have already passed the NPSE but lacked resources to access secondary school. In addition, junior secondary completion rates increased by 23 percentage points between 2011 (49%) and 2019 (72%), meaning that almost **3 out of 10 students still did not reach the end of basic education. Late starting of primary school and repetition, resulting in students being overaged (sometimes 18 or older) before the end of basic education, may result in them dropping out.** For the senior secondary level, the access and completion rates are respectively 50% and 46% in 2019 (against 26.4% and 25.9% in 2011). It is also worth noting that at all education levels, the completion rate is lower than the intake rate, which is mainly the consequence of poor retention.

2.4.2 Analysis from household surveys: About one child out of ten will never have access to school

A major limitation of cross-sectional schooling profiles is that they mix groups of children of different ages, leading to a possible overestimation of access and completion rates. Therefore, it is useful to compare the schooling profiles computed with administrative data, to the probabilistic schooling profiles computed using household survey data.

Figure 2.8 presents the probability of a given generation's access to primary education or early childhood education (ECE) programmes. **About 11% of 3 to 18-year-olds have never had access to school.** The proportion of individuals accessing some form of schooling increases as the individual gets older, and reaches its maximum between the ages of 11 (89%) and 14 (88%). This means that by 11 years of age, 89% of Sierra Leoneans (87% for boys and 91% for girls) would have probably attended some form of schooling, while 11% (almost 1 out of 10) would probably have never accessed school. This represents an improvement since 2011, when 14% of a generation of children did not have access to primary school. However, these figures from MICS 2017 are probably higher in 2019, thanks to the implementation of the FQSE programme which has helped the country move closer to achieving universal access to primary education. The figure also indicates that at the age of 6, only 68% of Sierra Leoneans (two out of three) would probably have accessed some form of schooling, implying considerable late entry.

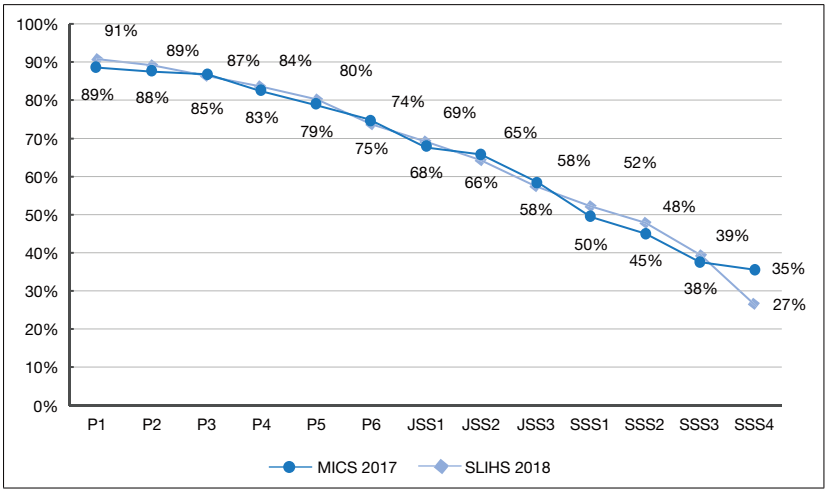
Figure 2.8: Share of people having attended primary education or ECE programme (MICS 2017)



Source: Authors' computation based on MICS, 2017 data

Beyond school access, household surveys also make it possible to estimate the probability of a generation accessing and completing each cycle. *Figure 2.9* provides the probabilistic schooling profiles obtained from the MICS 2017 and the SLIHS 2018 surveys. It is apparent that access and completion probabilities obtained from the MICS 2017 data are very close to those estimated from the SLIHS 2018 data.

Figure 2.9: Probabilistic schooling profile (MICS 2017 and SLIHS 2018)



Source: Authors' computation based on MICS6, 2017 and SLIHS, 2018 data

2.4.3 Approximately one child in five leaves school before the end of primary

A comparison of access and completion estimations at each level through administrative and household survey data is provided in *Table 2.6.* Regarding the primary level, access is considerably higher when calculated using the administrative data (170%) compared to its calculation using household survey data (89% and 91%, respectively, with MICS 2017 and SLIHS 2018). As previously explained, one reason is that household surveys tend to provide results that are less affected by the multi-cohort phenomenon. Regarding primary completion, some similarities between the survey estimations can be noted: 75% with the MICS 2017 data and 74% with the SLIHS 2018 data, while the primary completion rate is estimated at 82% with the annual school census data from 2019. **This means that around one out of five pupils still drop out of formal schooling before reaching the end of the primary level** (girls being a little more disadvantaged than boys, as mentioned in *Chapter 7*). Therefore, some effort is still needed to reduce primary school dropout rates in order to reach the 85% target for primary school completion targeted in the 2018-2020 sector plan. At the secondary levels, although some discrepancies between estimations from household surveys and administrative data are observed, it can be noted that at the JSS level, access ranges between 70% and 83%, and completion between 58% and 67%. According to all sources of data, access to SSS is estimated around 50%, while senior secondary completion ranges between 27% and 44%.

Table 2.6: Summary of access rates and probabilities according to different sources of data

	MICS 2017	SLIHS 2018	Administrative data 2018-2019
Primary			
Access	89%	91%	217%
Completion	75%	74%	82%
Junior secondary			
Access	68%	69%	84%
Completion	58%	58%	72%
Senior secondary			
Access	50%	52%	50%
Completion	35%	27%	46%

2.4.4 A child is expected to receive an average of 9.1 years of schooling

The school life expectancy, or average schooling duration, is the total number of years of schooling that a child can expect to receive given the current enrolment rates across the education system. **In 2017, a Sierra Leonean child could expect to receive an average of 9.1 years of schooling, against 8.1 in 2011, with no significant difference between boys and girls.** This is longer than the 8.2 average estimated from the ECOWAS countries (see *Table 2.7*).

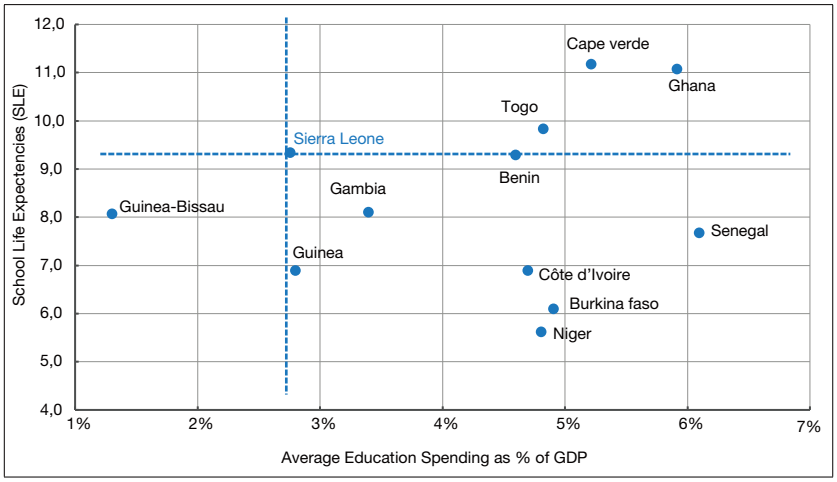
Table 2.7: School life expectancy, international comparison

	School life expectancy		School life expectancy
Cabo Verde (2012)	11.2	Senegal (2010)	7.7
Ghana (2013)	11.1	Côte d'Ivoire (2014)	6.9
Togo (2012)	9.8	Guinea (2012)	6.9
Sierra Leone (2018)	**9.1**	Burkina Faso (2014)	6.1
Benin (2015)	9.1	Niger (2012)	5.6
Gambia (2010)	8.1	**ECOWAS average**	**8.2**
Guinea-Bissau (2012)	8.1		

Source: IIEP-Dakar – Latest available year

Figure 2.10 compares the educational investment (calculated as the average education expenditure as a percentage of GDP over the last 10 years) with the school life expectancy. This provides an idea of the efficiency of the Sierra Leonean education system compared to its neighbours. Sierra Leone is quite efficient in comparison to ECOWAS countries and ranks just before Benin. Indeed, while a child is expected to receive nine years of schooling in both countries, the average education spending in Sierra Leone (2.6% of GDP) is much lower than in Benin (4.6% of GDP). School life expectancy in Cabo Verde, Ghana, and Togo is higher than in Sierra Leone, but the average education spending in those three countries is also higher. To reach the level of performance of the latter three countries, Sierra Leone would have to significantly increase the level of investment in its education system.

Figure 2.10: Comparison of education investment and school life expectancy



Source: Authors' calculation based on IIEP-Dakar most recent available indicators

2.5 Internal efficiency of the education system

Although increasing school enrolment is an important objective of the education system, it is also necessary to ensure that students who begin a cycle complete it, and that they do so in the theoretical number of years allocated to the cycle. Indeed, dropout and repetition affect the system's internal efficiency and waste of public resources. In the case of a drop out, resources are wasted because it usually involves spending on an individual that will not derive the full benefit of schooling for themselves or society, and in the case of repetition, resources are used inefficiently because two or more school years must be financed instead of one to achieve similar learning outcomes. This section reviews the share of repeaters across levels of basic and senior secondary education, and measures the internal efficiency of the system.

2.5.1 Reduced level of repetition in 2019, compared to 2011

Table 2.8 compares the share of repeaters based on two data sources, administrative data and household surveys. According to the administrative data, there is a significant decrease in the level of repetition between 2011 and 2018. The share in 2018 is fairly low with only 2% of repeaters reported at the primary level (against 12% in 2011), and 1% at the junior and senior secondary levels (against 8% and 7% in 2011). However, analysis from household surveys provides another perspective. They contain information about the grade attended during the current year as well as the year before. It is then possible to calculate the proportion of pupils that were in the same grade the year before. According to MICS6, 2017, grade repetition appears to be more significant, with 9% of pupils enrolled at the primary level who were in the same grade the year before, and 5% and 4% of repeaters among students attending junior and senior secondary levels, respectively. The observed difference between the administrative and household data

may be due to possible under-declaration of the level of repetition in the annual school census, particularly in the early grades. Indeed, a 4 or 5-year-old in Grade P1 accompanying an older sibling to school may be required to stay in that grade until the official starting age of 6 is achieved. This may not be reported by some school heads as repetition.

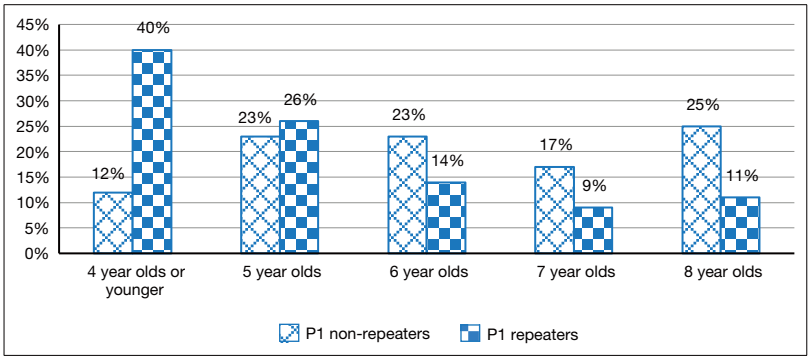
Table 2.8: Share of repeaters by grade and education level

	Administrative data		MICS6, 2017
	2010-11	2017-18	2017
P1	14%	**2%**	**18%**
P2	13%	2%	6%
P3	12%	2%	6%
P4	12%	3%	7%
P5	11%	2%	6%
P6	3%	1%	6%
JSS1	9%	1%	4%
JSS2	10%	0.5%	3%
JSS3	5%	**1%**	**8%**
SSS1	8%	1%	3%
SSS2	9%	1%	3%
SSS3	9%	1%	3%
SSS4	2%	**0.3%**	**11%**
Primary	12%	2%	9%
JSS	8%	1%	5%
SSS	7%	1%	4%

Source: 2011: ESA 2013/ 2018: annual school census data (2018)

Repetition is highest in the first grade of primary, especially among early-age pupils. According to the data from the MICS 2017 survey, the highest proportion of repeaters was recorded in the first grade of primary (18%). This could be related to the fact that underage pupils are retained in the same class until they reach the official age, which may not be categorized as repeaters in the annual school census. This hypothesis tends to be confirmed by *Figure 2.11*, which gives the age distribution of repeaters and non-repeaters in the first grade of primary school.

Figure 2.11: Age distribution of P1 pupils by repetition status (MICS 2017)



Source : MICS Eagle Report, 2019

Overall, repeaters attending the first grade of primary school appear to be much younger than non-repeaters, with 76% being 5 years old or younger. This high level of repetition in Grade 1 is seemingly linked to the lack of preschool facilities available to meet demands for pre-schooling, which forces families to enrol young children in the first grade of primary school. Underage children are not allowed to enter officially until they reach the correct age. According to the MICS6 data, repetition also tends to be higher at the end of the junior secondary (8%) and senior secondary levels (11%) which may be linked to end-of-cycle exam repetition. Across all levels and regardless of the data source, analyses show no significant differences between boys' and girls' repetition rates.

Table 2.9: International comparison of number of repeaters (%)

	Primary	JSS	SSS
Sierra Leone (2017)	**2%**	**1%**	**1%**
Benin (2015)	10.7	23.4	23.0
Burkina Faso (2017)	6.4	23.6	20.4
Cabo Verde (2017)	8.0	21.8	24.1
Côte d'Ivoire (2017)	11.0	13.2	35.0
Gambia (2016)	5.2	3.4	2.9
Ghana (2017)	1.8	1.6	0.7
Guinea (2016)	11.6	24.0	22.4
Guinea-Bissau (2013)	-	20.4	-
Liberia (2016)	6.0	3.6	4.0
Mali (2017)	22.9	41.9	29.4
Niger (2017)	1.4	21.7	21.1
Nigeria (2016)	-	-	-
Senegal (2017)	1.4	20.9	17.2
Togo (2017)	7.7	24.4	29.6
ECOWAS mean	7.2	18.8	19.2

Source: Annual school census (2018) for Sierra Leone and IIEP-Dakar for international data

Overall, in comparison to other ECOWAS countries, Sierra Leone shows relatively low level of repetition (see *Table 2.9*). At the primary level, the share of repeaters in Sierra Leone is below the ECOWAS average, which is equivalent to 7.2%, and ranges from 1.8% in Ghana to 22.9% in Mali. At the junior and senior secondary school levels, Sierra Leone is among the countries with the lowest secondary repetition rates with Ghana (1.6% and 0.7%), Gambia (3.4% and 4%) and Liberia (3.6% and 4%).

2.5.2 Internal efficiency coefficient: Dropout is the main source of inefficiency

The internal efficiency of the system can be assessed by comparing two aspects: (i) the resources that the system currently consumes to produce its annual outputs (i.e. primary and secondary school completers), and (ii) the resources that it would have spent without students repeating their grades or dropping out the system. *Table 2.10* provides an estimation of the internal efficiency coefficient (IEC) for 2017/18, which is the ratio between the theoretical duration of a cycle and the average number of pupil-years effectively invested. An IEC of 100% represents the ideal situation where all students complete the cycle in the set number of years, with no dropout and repetition.

At the primary level, the internal efficiency coefficient reached 48%, meaning that 52% of public education resources were wasted on repeated years, or years of school for students who dropped out before completing the primary cycle. Moreover, the system required an average of 12.5 years to produce one primary school leaver, compared to 6 years under perfect efficiency conditions. The main source of inefficiency at primary school level was dropout-related. Indeed, the repetition-related IEC of 99% indicates that repeating years induces only a 1% waste of resources, while resource wastage due to primary school dropout rates is evaluated at 52% (dropout-related IEC of 48%). The decrease in repetition, as observed in the previous section, can explain the improvement by 15 percentage points of the repetition-related IEC since 2011.

At junior secondary level, internal efficiency was equivalent to 91% in 2017, implying that 9% of resources were wasted on dropout and/or repetition which represents an improvement of only 12 percentage points over 2011. It takes 3.2 years to produce a graduate instead of the 3 theoretical years needed, which is better than in 2011 when 3.8 years were required. At senior secondary level, internal efficiency is even better, with a coefficient of 98% (against 86% in 2011). Therefore, only 2% of resources are currently used for repetition or dropout occurring at the senior secondary level. It takes 4.1 years on average to produce a graduate, which is more than the 3 years theoretically needed. The main source of inefficiency at junior and senior secondary levels is also related to dropout, the repetition-related IEC of 99% indicates that repetition induces only a 1% waste of resources, while resource wastage due to dropout is evaluated at 8% at junior secondary level (dropout-related IEC of 92%) and 2% at senior secondary level (dropout-related IEC of 98%).

Table 2.10: Internal efficiency coefficient by level, 2011 and 2018 (%)

	2010-11	2017-18
Primary		
Internal efficiency coefficient	**63**	**48**
Dropout-related IEC (without repetition)	75	48
Repetition-related IEC (without dropout)	84	99
Effective student years required for completion	10.3	12.5
Junior secondary		
Internal efficiency coefficient	**79**	**91**
Dropout-related IEC (without repetition)	90	92
Repetition-related IEC (without dropout)	88	99
Effective student-years required for completion	3.8	3.2
Senior secondary		
Internal efficiency coefficient	**86**	**98**
Dropout-related IEC (without repetition)	99	98
Repetition-related IEC (without dropout)	87	99
Effective student years required for completion	3.5	4.1

Source: 2011: ESA 2013 / 2017: Authors' calculation based on annual school census data (2018)

2.6 A sizeable number of out-of-school children

This section provides an overview of the magnitude of the challenge regarding out-of-school children in Sierra Leone, with information calculated using data from SLIHS 2018 and MICS6, 2017. **Overall, out-of-school children represent 21.9% of the school age population, most of whom have never attended school.** In 2018, the number of out-of-school children in the 6 to 18-year-old age group was estimated to

be approximately 524,000. Of these, 14.6% (349,926) had never attended school, while 7.3% (174,130) had dropped out prematurely. Moreover, 21% (265,802) of primary school age children and 15% (77,993) of junior secondary school age children were estimated to be out-of-school, while the proportion reached 29.5% (180,261) among the senior secondary school age population (see *Table 2.11*).

That said, since the introduction of the FQSE in August 2018, many of these out-of-school children have come back to school, as confirmed by the high access rates to primary and lower secondary in 2019. It is advisable to conduct a similar analysis with a post-FQSE survey to confirm the aforementioned hypothesis.

Table 2.11: Out-of-school-children by age category, 2018

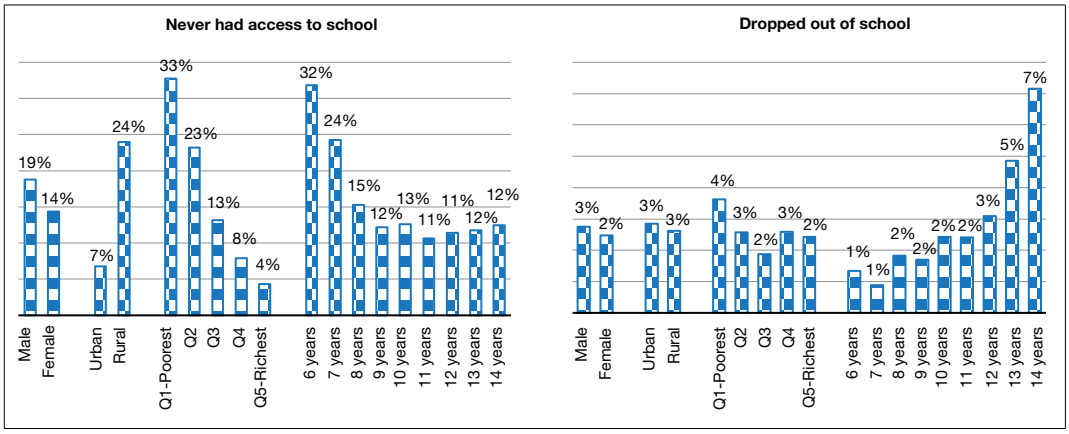
Ages	Total	Enrolled	Out-of-school		
			Total	Never attended	Dropped out
6-11	1,264,457	998,655	265,802	204,657	61,145
12-14	521,349	443,356	77,993	56,965	21,028
15-18	611,260	430,999	180,261	88,304	91,958
Total	**2,397,066**	**1,873,010**	**524,056**	**349,926**	**174,130**
6-11,	100%	79.0%	21.0%	16.2%	4.8%
12-14	100%	85.0%	15.0%	10.9%	4.0%
15-18	100%	70.5%	29.5%	14.4%	15.0%
Total	**100%**	**78.1%**	**21.9%**	**14.6%**	**7.3%**

Source: Authors' calculation based on the SLIHS, 2018

The highest proportion of children who attended school at some point but dropped out prematurely is within the senior secondary school age population, the proportion of dropouts being equivalent to 15% (14% for boys and 17% for girls), against only 4% among the primary and junior secondary school age population. One possible reason is that senior secondary school is not compulsory. A gender analysis of the reasons underpinning these differences between girls and boys is discussed in *Chapter 7*. Since 2011, the prevalence of out-of-school children has decreased slightly among the primary and junior secondary school age population, respectively estimated at 24% and 19% in 2011, but it remains stable among the senior secondary school age population.

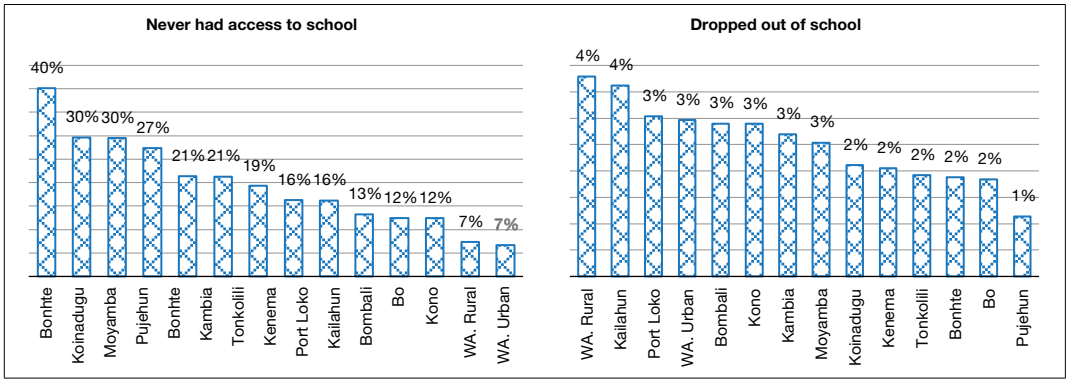
As shown in *Figure 2.12*, among the 6 to 14-year-old population, non-attendance affects more boys (21%) than girls (17%), more children living in rural areas (24%) than urban children (7%), and more children from the poorest families (33%) in comparison to their wealthier peers (4%). Children aged six (32%), seven (24%) and eight (15%) are also more likely to never have accessed school, which might be related to the prevalence of late school enrolment discussed in the previous section of this chapter. Inversely, the number of children who drop out of school is more prevalent at the age of 13 (5%) and 14 (7%). The prevalence of children who have never accessed school is higher among children living in the districts of Bonthe (40%), Koinadugu and Moyambe (30%) and Pujehun (27%) and the lowest in the Western and Urban Area (7%). The prevalence of children who dropped out of school ranges from 4% in the Western Area Rural and Kailahun to 1% in Pujehun.

Figure 2.12: Prevalence of out-of-school children aged 6 to 14 years old by socio-economic characteristics



Source: Authors' calculation based on MICS6, 2017

Figure 2.13: Prevalence of out-of-school children aged 6 to 14 years old by district

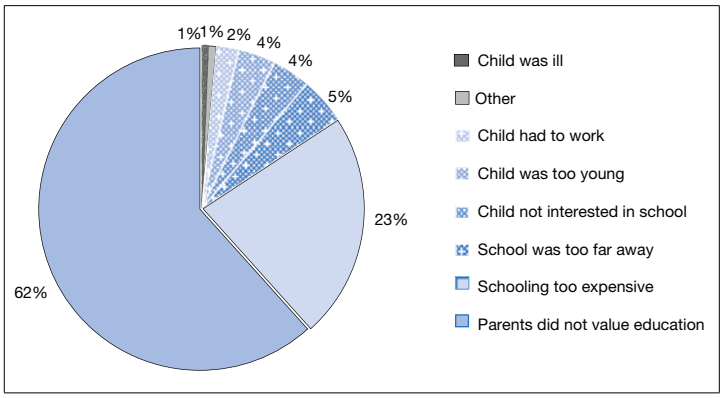


Source: Authors' calculation based on the MICS 2017

In SLIHS 2018, parents of out-of-school-children were asked why this was the case. The reasons for non-attendance, according to heads of households, are presented in *figure 2.14*. The fact that parents did not value education was mentioned by two-thirds of them (62%), whereas financial reasons (school is too expensive) was cited in about 23% of cases. Although further analysis is needed to understand why these parents do not value education, it raises questions about the demand for education in Sierra Leone today. In other words, its perceived social and economic usefulness, the relevance of what children learn, the opportunities for parents to enrol their children in school, and to encourage them to complete their education. These are concerns that policy-makers should consider in future reflections on service

delivery in order to ensure the relevance and usefulness of schooling in Sierra Leone. Finally, only 5% of the families consider school to be too far from home, while 4% believe that their child is not interested or is too young to go to school. It should be noted, however, that these results pre-date the implementation of the FQSE and therefore may be different if the same survey were to be conducted now.

Figure 2.14: Reasons for not attending school, 2018



Source: Authors' calculation based on the SLIHS, 2018

2.7 Disparities in enrolment

This section analyses student enrolment from an equity perspective in order to assess the extent to which the education system offers every child in Sierra Leone the same schooling opportunities, regardless of their socio-economic background. It examines schooling patterns at the primary and secondary levels, with a focus on socio-economic and geographical disparities. Gender disparities are only briefly addressed in this section as they are analysed and discussed in detail in *Chapter 7*. Most of the analysis is based on the MICS 2017 household survey.

2.7.1 Gender disparities

Table 2.12 compares the gross enrolment rate (GER) for girls and boys, and presents the Gender Parity Index (GPI) by education level. From pre-primary to the junior secondary level, gender parity indices are above one, which means that boys are slightly disadvantaged at these levels. However, by the time boys enter senior secondary school, girls are slightly more disadvantaged than boys, with the GPI then being equal to 0.91. However, overall, the gender gaps observed in the GER are slight, regardless of the level.

Table 2.12: GER by gender and the Gender Parity Index, 2019

	Pre-primary	Primary	JSS	SSS
Girls	20%	143%	81%	43%
Boys	18%	137%	78%	47%
Gender Parity Index (G/B)	**1.11**	**1.04**	**1.04**	**0.91**

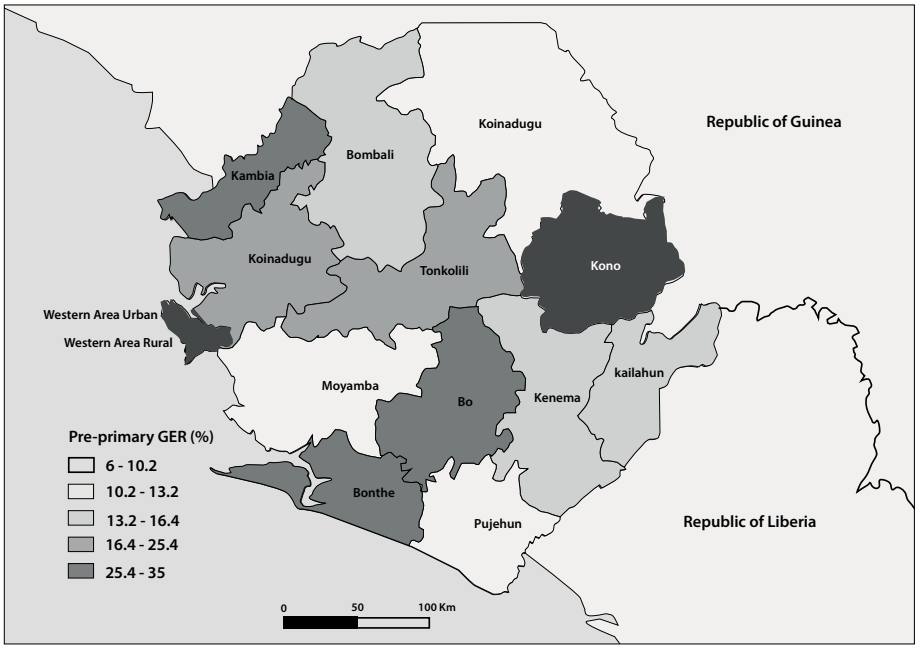
Source: Authors' calculation based on annual school census data and national population data

As explained in the previous sections, the GER tells us just a little about access, completion and retention. Therefore, to obtain a broader picture of enrolment patterns, it is useful to rely on the schooling profile. Overall, the schooling profile disaggregated by gender shows that the probability of girls accessing primary education is slightly higher than for boys, but as soon as children reach the end of this level, girls tends to be more disadvantaged than boys. These results can be found in *Chapter 8* where girls' and boys' progression through the education system are presented and discussed in detail.

2.7.2 Large disparities in school coverage across districts

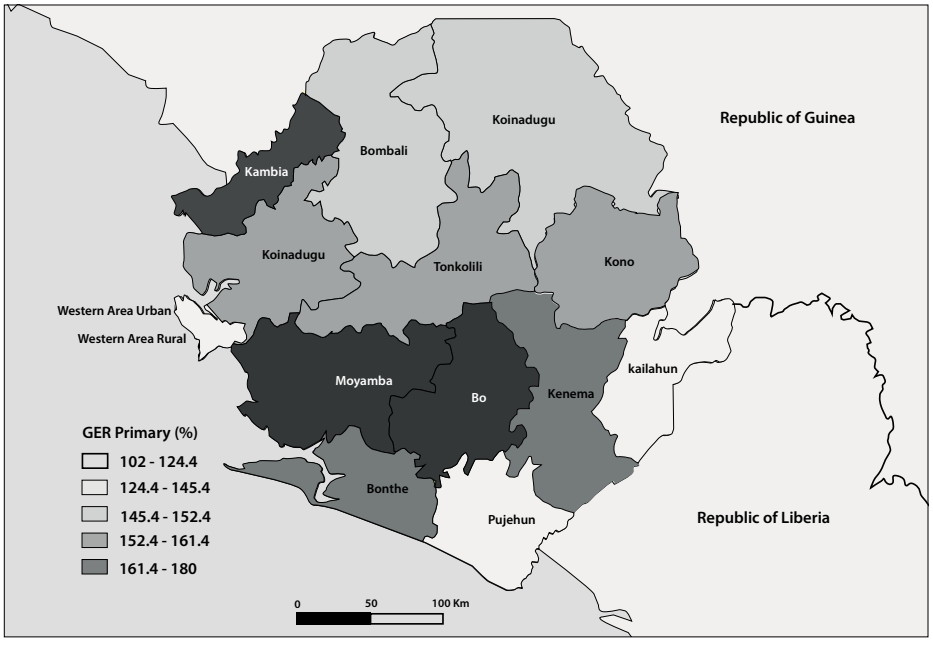
This section first examines the school coverage disparities across the 14 districts, and then looks at the schooling profile by area of residence. *Maps 2.1* to *2.4* provide an overview of the GER disparities across districts in 2019. Overall, **at all education levels, there are large disparities in school coverage.** Indeed, it varies enormously from one district to another. The GER ranges from 35% to 6% at the pre-primary level, from about 180% to 102% at the primary level, from 120% to 32% at junior secondary level, and from 93% to 8% at the senior secondary level. These wide disparities indicate that some districts are quite advanced in terms of enrolment, while others are falling further behind. At the pre-primary level, 9 out of the 14 districts have a GER below the national average (19%), 3 of them being under 10% (Koinadugu: 9%, Moyamba: 9% and Pujehun: 6%). At the primary level, all districts have a GER above 100%, meaning that these districts have more children in school than the primary school age population. However, it might also be related to the fact that children enrolled at the primary level in these districts are overage or underage. At the junior secondary level, 7 districts have a GER below the national average (80%), 2 of them present a GER below 50% (Kailahun: 49% and Pujehun: 32%). Finally, at the senior secondary level, 2 districts display a GER below 20% (Moyamba: 18% and Pujehun: 8%), while 9 districts display a GER below the national average of 45%.

Map 2.1: Pre-primary GER by district, 2019



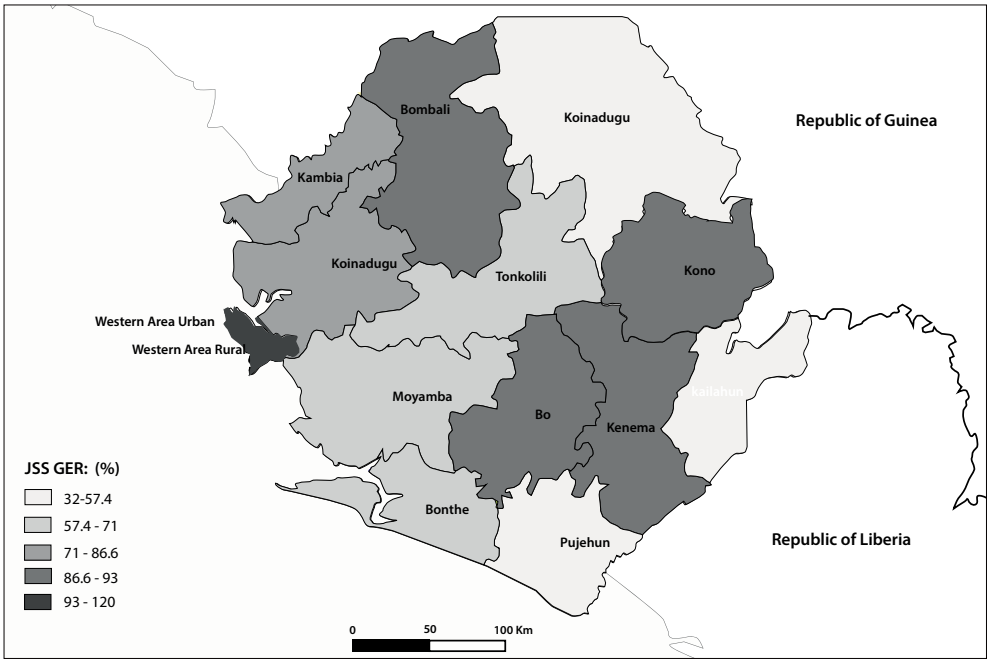
Source: Authors' computation based on annual school census data and national population data

Map 2.2: Primary GER by district, 2019



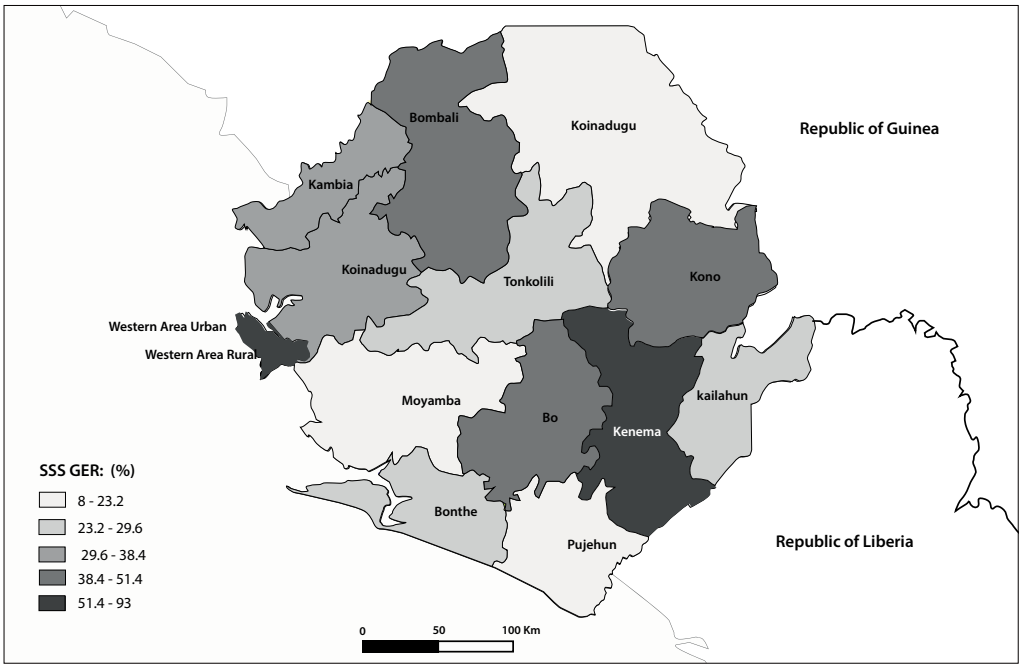
Source: Authors' computation based on annual school census data and national population data

Map 2.3: Junior secondary GER by district, 2019



Source: Authors' computation based on annual school census data and national population data

Map 2.4: Primary GER by district, 2019

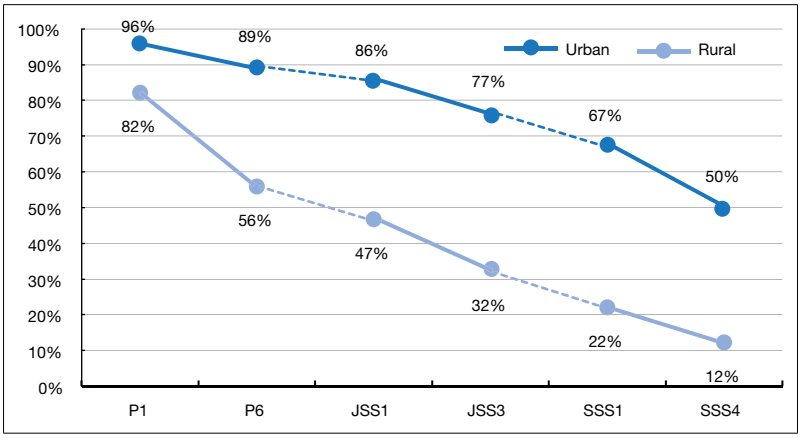


Source: Authors' computation based on annual school census data and national population data

Figure 2.15 displays the probabilistic schooling profile disaggregated by area of residence (urban/rural), and computed based on the MICS 2017 data. **Children living in rural areas face lower access and completion probabilities at all levels of education in comparison to their urban peers, and the gap widens significantly in the course of their schooling careers.** The probability of accessing primary school is estimated at 96% for urban against 82% for rural children. This 14 percentage point difference in favour of urban children reaches 33 percentage points at the end of the primary level. The probability of completing primary education is estimated at 89% and 56% for urban and rural children, respectively. At junior secondary level secondary level, the probability of access for rural children is estimated at 47% (against 86% for urban children), and at 22% (against 67% for urban children) at the senior secondary level. At the end of the secondary levels, disparities in favour of urban children are even wider, with a difference of 45 percentage points in the probability of their completing junior secondary, and a difference of 38 percentage points in the probability of completing senior secondary schooling. The analysis also shows an important deterioration in the parity index which drops from 0.86 for primary access to only 0.24 for senior secondary completion, meaning that for every 100 urban children, 86 rural children access primary education and only 24 complete the senior secondary level.

Figure 2.15: Probabilistic schooling profile by area of residence (MICS 2017)

	Parity index (Rural/urban)
Primary access	0.86
Primary completion	0.63
JSS access	0.55
JSS completion	0.42
SSS access	0.33
SSS completion	0.24

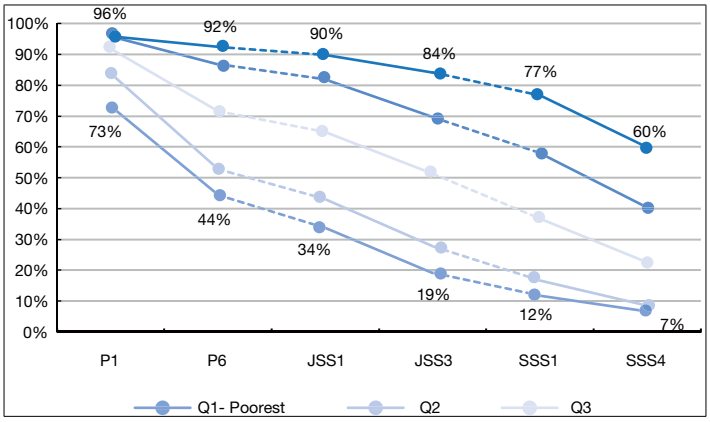


Source: Authors' calculation based on MICS 2017 data

2.7.3 Socio-economic disparities increase considerably as the school career progresses

In order to provide an overview of the socio-economic disparities in schooling patterns, a probabilistic schooling profile disaggregated by wealth quintiles (Qs) is reported in *Figure 2.16*. **Disparities according to children's socio-economic background are apparent from their entry at primary level and increase considerably as they progress through the cycles**. The chances of accessing primary education are estimated at 73% for children from the poorest families (Q1) against 96% for those belonging to the wealthiest families (Q5). The gap widens further with regards to primary school completion, due to lower retention of pupils from the poorest families. Indeed, there is a difference of 48 percentage points in the probability of completing primary education between the richest and the poorest children, whereas the difference was estimated at 23 percentage points for primary education access.

Figure 2.16: Probabilistic schooling profile by socio-economic status (MICS 2017)



	Parity index (Q1/Q5)
Primary access	0.77
Primary completion	0.48
JSS access	0.38
JSS completion	0.23
SSS access	0.15
SSS completion	0.11

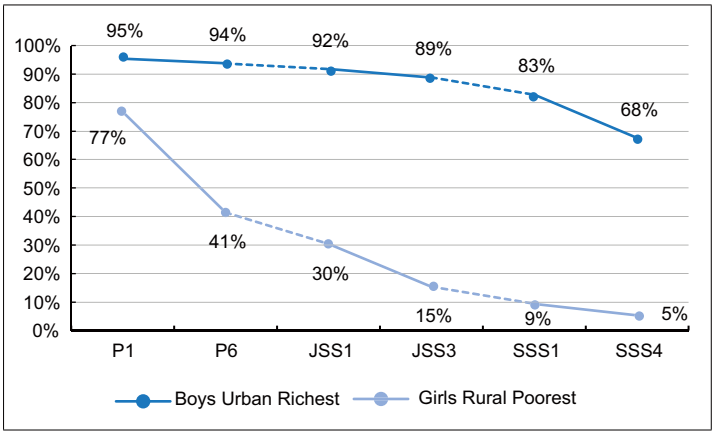
Source: Authors' calculation based on MICS 2017 data

Socio-economic inequalities continue to increase significantly at the secondary level. The gap in the opportunity to access secondary education increases to 56 percentage points for junior secondary and 65 percentage points for the senior secondary level. Likewise, the chance to complete secondary levels are evaluated respectively as 19% and 84% for the poorest and richest children at the junior secondary level (a gap of 65 percentage), and 7% and 60% at the senior secondary level (a gap of 53 percentage points). Finally, the parity indices calculated from the two extreme groups (Q5/Q1) decreases considerably from 0.77 for primary access to only 0.11 for senior secondary completion, meaning that for every 100 children from the wealthiest families, 77 children from the poorest households access primary education and only 11 of them complete senior secondary level.

2.7.4 Cumulative disparities: Triple penalty for girls

The simultaneous analysis of the three dimensions previously reviewed enables the identification of the most disadvantaged groups in terms of schooling careers. *Figure 2.17* computed from MICS 2017 data, offers a comparative view of the two extreme groups: girls from poor families living in rural areas, and boys from wealthy families living in urban areas.

Figure 2.17: Probabilistic schooling profile by socio-economic status (MICS 2017)



	Parity index (Q1/Q5)
Primary access	0.81
Primary completion	0.44
JSS access	0.33
JSS completion	0.17
SSS access	0.11
SSS completion	0.08

Source: Authors' calculation based on MICS 2017 data

Inequalities tend to be cumulative, with poor rural girls having the worst schooling profile. Although inequality between the two extreme groups start from their access to the primary level (77% for poor rural girls and 95% for rich urban boys), they are intensified by a high primary level dropout within the poor rural girls' group. Moreover, disparities tend to explode at the secondary levels, leaving poor rural girls with little opportunity to pursue their schooling careers. Indeed, the parity index shows that for every 100 rich urban boys, 81 poor rural girls access primary education. But only eight of the girls reach the end of senior secondary level. Possible factors behind this are discussed in *Chapter 8*.

CHAPTER 3

Education financing

Chapter 1 of this report revealed two key facts about the public financing of education in Sierra Leone. Firstly, the priority given to education in government spending meets international standards. Secondly, when compared to the national wealth generated, the level of resource mobilization for the sector is low, partly due to the rising cost of debt servicing. While the country has not yet achieved universal basic education (see *Chapter 2*), the question then becomes how much room for manoeuvre is there for the government to make the best use of the resources available to the sector. This is the purpose of this chapter. It presents the resources spent on facilitating education, looking at both public and household spending.

3.1 Public spending on education: Compilation from public expenditure returns

The Government of Sierra Leone executes its education spending both at the level of central government and that of local councils. At the central level, the government does this through its Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE), Ministry of Technical and Higher Education (MTHE), the Teaching Service Commission (TSC) and other line ministries like the Ministry of Health and Sanitation (MOHS). In addition to the centralized spending, it supports decentralization through transfers to local councils.

3.1.1 Evolution of government expenditure on education

The consolidated public expenditure on education has passed the one trillion Leones mark, and most of this is used for recurrent items. In 2019, the GoSL spent Le 1.057 trillion on education (see *Table 3.1*), of which Le 1.06 trillion was on recurrent costs. The Le 11.1 billion in capital spending accounted for a paltry 1% of the total spending, implying almost no spending on investment. This is a complete departure from the overall capital investment which accounted for 24.7% of government expenditure in the same year (see *Table 1.8*). In terms of recurrent expenditure, the government spent Le 937.5 billion through MBSSE, MTHE and TSC, an estimated Le 3.5 billion through the Ministry of Health's School of Nursing, and Le 105 billion through the 21 local councils. Spending at central level represented 90% of recurrent expenditure, indicating that while there is a strong push for decentralization, most of the resources are still managed from Freetown.

Table 3.1: Total expenditure on education

(Billion Leones)	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Recurrent spending	**386.75**	**472.70**	**528.19**	**634.51**	**670.06**	**763.59**	**672.07**	**910.11**	**1,045.96**
Central ministries & TSC	313.80	447.73	473.03	584.49	596.32	716.71	642.34	826.46	937.49
Other ministries	-	-	-	1.43	1.80	4.64	3.48	3.48	3.48
Local councils	72.95	24.97	55.17	48.59	71.94	42.24	26.25	80.17	104.99
Capital expenditure	**2.12**	**(0.28)**	**0.64**	**0.52**	**0.26**	**4.31**	**7.33**	**3.36**	**11.12**
Education/MBSSE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3.29
Tertiary/MTHE	2.12	(0.28)	0.64	0.52	0.26	4.31	7.33	3.36	7.83
Total (current prices)	**388.88**	**472.42**	**528.84**	**635.03**	**670.32**	**767.90**	**679.40**	**913.47**	**1,057.08**
Total (constant 2018)	**746.16**	**809.06**	**846.88**	**999.00**	**881.40**	**953.87**	**770.62**	**913.47**	**955.28**
Recurrent spending	742.09	809.53	845.85	998.19	881.06	948.52	762.30	910.11	945.22
Capital spending	4.07	(0.47)	1.03	0.81	0.34	5.35	8.31	3.36	10.05

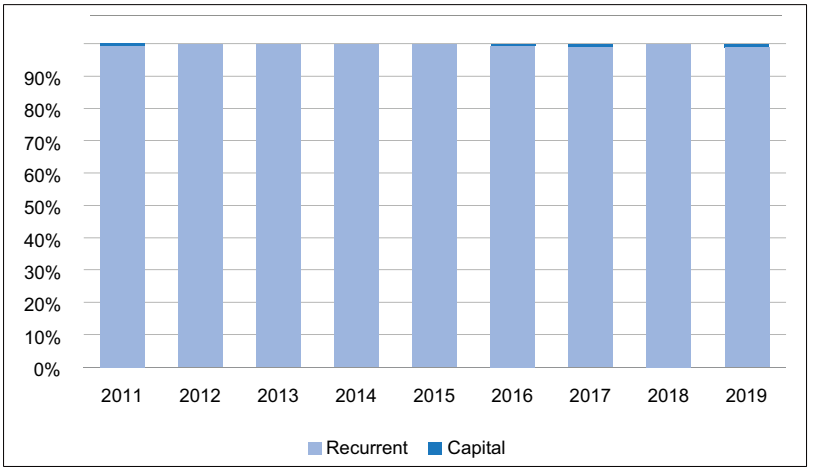
Source: Ministry of Finance

Expenditure returns show that public spending on education increased by more than Le 668 billion over the 9-year period, an overall growth of 168%, with an annual average growth of 13.3%. Adjusting for inflation over the years, the spending (at 2018 prices) increased by Le 200 billion spread across the 9-year period, and represents an overall growth of 26%, with an annual average increase of 3%. Spending at local councils indicates a growth of 44% but the 'mop-up' nature of spending[4] at the decentralized units means these results should be viewed with caution. This is evident from the fluctuations in the volume of spending at local councils, dropping from about Le 73 billion in 2011 to Le 25 billion in the next year, before rising to Le 72 billion three years later, and then facing another drop. According to the Ministry of Finance, local councils do not receive disbursements without accounting for resources advanced to them in the previous quarter. Nonetheless, resources allocated to the local councils are not reallocated to other departments, even when local councils fail to provide proof of how the money was spent. The government releases subsequent resources together with appropriations for the following financial years, which accounts for the oscillating trends observed in *Table 3.1*.

There is very little capital expenditure in the sector, raising concerns about potential risks for the effective implementation of FQSE. As presented in *Table 3.1*, the government spent a total of Le 11.1 billion in capital, Le 3.3 billion through the MBSSE and Le 7.8 billion through the MTHE. Compared to 2011, the consolidated capital spending in education increased more than five times, 2012 to 2015 representing a period where capital spending was at its lowest, including going into the negative[5] in 2012. Between 2011 and 2018, there was no government capital spending on basic and senior secondary education (see *Table 3.1*), possibly one of the main reasons behind the huge infrastructure deficit discussed in *Chapter 2*. Although it injected additional resources as capital investment in 2019, and for the first time in a decade at basic and senior secondary level, this translates into just 1.1% of the total public spending in the sector (see *Figure 3.1*), allocating almost the entire expenditure to recurrent items. The government introduced public capital spending in basic and senior secondary education to address infrastructure pressure arising from the introduction of FQSE in 2018, especially the surge in enrolments in approved schools. However, concerns remain that, given existing infrastructure challenges, effective implementation of the FQSE may be at risk as a result of these low levels of capital spending.

4. A spending phenomenon where resources not released in one quarter of a financial year are released in the subsequent year.
5. The negative was occasioned by the recovery of an overdraft by Njala University.

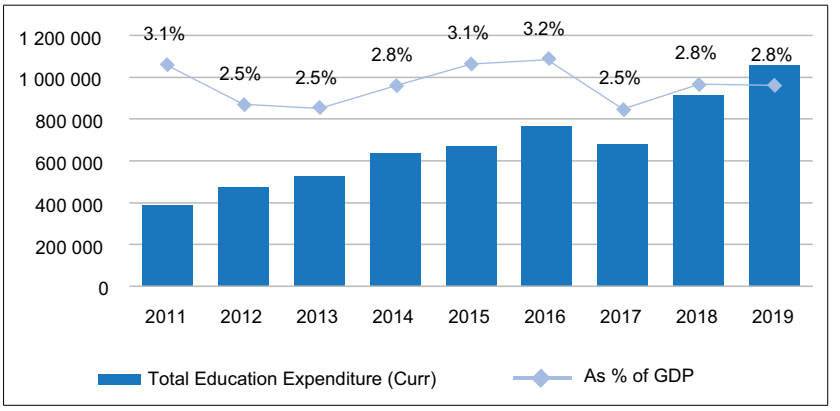
Figure 3.1: Recurrent and development spending on education



Source: Ministry of Finance and Authors' calculation

Although spending on education increased almost threefold over the last nine years, this still fell below internationally recommended standards. The country's spending on education in 2019 represented 2.8% of GDP (see *Figure 3.2*), which is 1.2 percentage points outside of the recommended threshold for countries pursuing inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all. The Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) framework recommends that countries spend between 4 and 6% of their GDP on the sector if they are to achieve targets set out in the education framework (UNESCO, 2015). The relative spending exhibited fluctuations over the past nine years, dropping from 3.1% in 2011 to 2.5% in 2013, before rising to 3.2% in 2016, dipping to 2.5% again in 2017. The last two years showed general recovery (2.8% in both 2018 and 2019), but these still fell below both the 2011 levels and the recommended levels of spending. The expenditure returns also show that the diminishing share of GDP spent on education took place during a period when tax pressure increased by an overall 2.8 percentage points (see *Table 1.7*), the implication being that education received less attention during this period.

Figure 3.2: Public spending on education as percentage of GDP



Source: Ministry of Finance and Authors' calculation

The sharp drop in 2017 remains inexplicable, although anecdotal evidence from some school heads point to a non-payment of school grants during that year, in the run-up to the 2018 general elections, and suggesting there was a consolidation of resources for large infrastructure programmes. These anecdotes demonstrate the volatile nature of spending in education, and the speed at which spending commitments can become reversible.

Sierra Leone faces challenges in spending recommended resources for education, but a regional comparison reveals that its neighbours are not doing any better. *Table 3.2* presents spending on education as a share of GDP across the 14 ECOWAS states, comparing the evolution between 2010 and 2018. On average, they spent 3.9% of their GDP on education in 2018, just shy of the 4 to 6% range recommended by the international community under the Education 2030 Framework for Action (UNESCO, 2015). Burkina Faso spent the highest among its peers, five times more than the lowest spender, Guinea-Bissau, and more than double than spending in Sierra Leone. At the continental level, African states spent an average of 4% of GDP on education. Compared to spending in 2010, the results show that education spending in the region and continent dropped by 0.5 and 0.4 percentage points, respectively, underscoring a relative drop in the attention that education has received in the recent past. Out of the 14 countries in the region, only 4 managed to increase their commitment to education (Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Togo), which suggests the need for a regional review of the implications for the delivery of quality education.

Table 3.2: Education spending as a percentage of GDP in ECOWAS

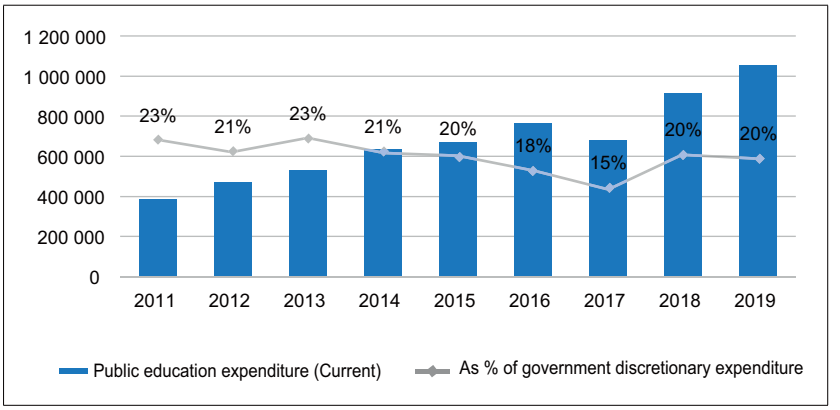
Country	2010	2018 or LAY	Improvement
Benin	4.9%	4.0%	-0.9%
Burkina Faso	4.2%	6.0%	1.8%
Cabo Verde (2017)	5.6%	5.2%	-0.4%
Côte d'Ivoire	4.7%	4.4%	-0.3%
Gambia	4.2%	2.4%	-1.8%
Ghana	8.2%	4.0%	-4.2%
Guinea	3.6%	2.6%	-1.0%
Guinea-Bissau	1.3%	1.2%	-0.1%
Liberia	3.4%	2.6%	-0.8%
Mali (2017)	3.6%	3.8%	0.2%
Niger	3.9%	4.9%	1.0%
Senegal	5.6%	4.7%	-0.9%
Sierra Leone	3.3%	2.8%	-0.5%
Togo	4.1%	5.4%	1.3%
ECOWAS Total	**4.3%**	**3.9%**	**-0.5%**
Africa Total	**4.9%**	**4.0%**	**-0.9%**

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics

Note: LAY = latest available year

Spending on education relative to overall government spending may have been on a downward trend, but the current administration has restored the sector as the single highest spender. The Le 1.06 trillion spent on education in 2019 represented about 20% of the country's discretionary expenditure (the base excludes debt servicing and foreign support which is mostly on capital spending). This implies that education alone spends one-fifth of the budget the country has discretion over. The Education 2030 framework recommended that countries commit 15 to 20% of their expenditure on education, which Sierra Leone is not far from. As noted earlier, in the overall spending, education accounts for 14% of government expenditure and this is largely due to inherited debts that it is servicing.

Figure 3.3: Public spending on education as % of government discretionary expenditure

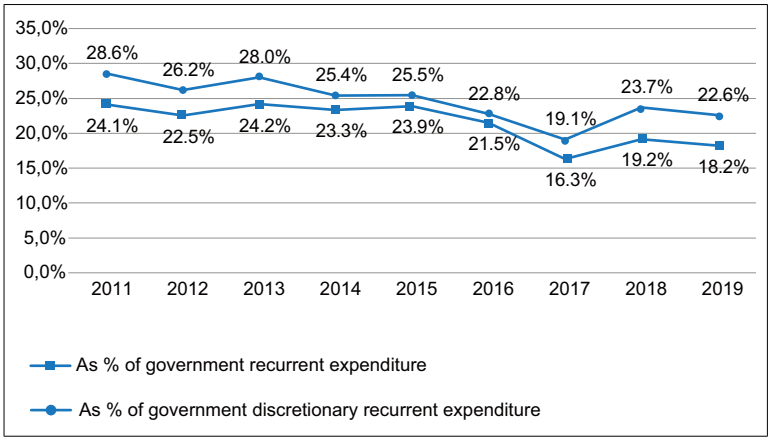


Source: Authors' calculation based on MICS 2017 data

Spending on education relative to discretionary spending peaked in 2013 (23%) but was on a 4-year straight decline, losing 8 percentage points to other sectors, and reaching a low of 15% in 2017 before rising to 20% in both 2018 and 2019. Introduction of the resource-intensive FQSE, together with the focus on human capital development in tertiary education, may continue to push up government spending on education. The commitment to approve additional teachers in approved schools, coupled with increasing teacher salaries from 2020, may further increase the share of government spending directed to education.

Comparatively, the priority of recurrent spending in education is lower today than it was nine years ago. The sector spending is down six percentage points relative to both total government recurrent and recurrent discretionary spending. Whereas by volume, recurrent spending recorded a 3% annual growth during the 9-year period (see *Table 3.1*), education did not lose out to other sectors only on capital, this extended to recurrent spending. Government recurrent spending on education (Le 1.045 trillion in 2019) translated to 18.2% of its overall recurrent spending. Compared to the expenditure that the government has control over, in other words spending net of debt servicing, returns show that the recurrent spending on education represents 23% of the discretionary recurrent spending across government. In both cases, (see *Figure 3.4*) education lost out to other sectors, losing 6 percentage points from a high of 28.6% in 2011.

Figure 3.4: Recurrent spending on education



Source: Ministry of Finance and Authors' calculation

The decline in commitment is not unique to Sierra Leone. There is a general reduction in the commitment on recurrent spending by regional states, extending to the continental level. On average, one-quarter of government discretionary recurrent expenditure by members of ECOWAS in 2018 was spent on items in education (see *Table 3.3*), slightly more than the continental average of 23%. Senegal recorded the highest commitment with more than one-third of its discretionary commitment going to recurrent education spending. Liberia, facing protracted difficulties in reviving its economy amid political volatility, had the least commitment at 11%. Notably, there has been a decline in this commitment since 2010, with the regional states losing about a percentage point in the eight years considered. The highest loss comes from Benin with a decline of six percentage points. There has been a similar trend at the continental level, with a 1.3 percentage points loss during the same period. Notwithstanding the general decline, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Mali and Niger showed a significant increase in their commitment.

Table 3.3: Share of recurrent discretionary spending on education in ECOWAS

State	2010	2018	Improvement
Benin	32.3%	26.3%	-6.0%
Burkina Faso	28.1%	30.2%	2.1%
Côte d'Ivoire	27.0%	29.5%	2.5%
Gambia	20.1%	20.4%	0.3%
Guinea	20.1%	20.4%	0.3%
Guinea-Bissau	19.5%	13.0%	-6.5%
Liberia	12.9%	10.5%	-2.4%
Mali	27.8%	32.4%	4.6%
Niger	27.7%	35.8%	8.1%
Senegal	41.3%	35.3%	-6.0%
Sierra Leone	28.6%	22.6%	-6.0%
Togo	29.0%	24.6%	-4.4%
ECOWAS average	**26.2%**	**25.1%**	**-1.1%**
Africa average	**24.6%**	**23.3%**	**-1.3%**

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, Education sector analyses

3.1.2 Recurrent expenditure by economic classification

Recurrent education spending in Sierra Leone is categorized into two economic classes - salaries and non-salary expenditure. This sub-section presents the evolution of salaries in the sector and its contribution to the country's overall wage bill. It also presents the composition of non-salary expenditure, with details on items covered as well as their evolution.

3.1.2.1 Salary and non-salary spending

Non-salary spending in the sector is growing faster than salaries, shrinking the share used for wages. In 2019, the country spent Le 1.042 trillion on recurrent items, Le 594. 6 billion on the salaries of teachers in pre-primary, primary, junior and senior secondary, instructors in TVET, lecturers at universities, as well as administrators at the central and decentralized offices (see *Table 3.4*). Spending on salaries translates into 57% of the sector's recurrent expenditure, 43% having been spent on non-salary recurrent items including tuition grants, teaching and learning materials, as well as utilities and operations. Out of the Le 594.6 billion spent on salaries in 2019, Le 528 billion went to teachers and instructors, translating into 89% of wages in the sector. Salaries for administrators associated with MBSSE totalled Le 40.5 billion, covering central and decentralized offices, and accounting for 7% of the total. MTHE administrators were paid a total of Le 17.4 billion in salaries while the Teaching Service Commission (TSC) spent Le 9 billion, the two accounting for 2.9% and 1.5% of salaries in the sector, respectively.

Out of the Le 528 billion spent on teacher salaries in 2019, Le 285 billion was spent on educators deployed in pre-primary and primary schools (see *Table 3.4*), accounting for 54% of the total. Teachers in junior and senior secondary schools were paid Le 145 billion, translating into 28% of the total spending on the teaching workforce and double the volume spent on pre-primary and primary school teachers. Salaries to instructors and lecturers in TVET and universities totalled Le 97.6 billion, representing 18% of the overall spending on teacher wages. In terms of growth, the spending on salaries in the sector more than doubled, increasing from Le 234.4 billion in 2011 to Le 594.6 in 2019. In constant 2018 prices, the volume of salaries increased by Le 82 billion, from Le 455.3 billion in 2011 to Le 537.3 billion in 2019, increasing at an annual average of 2%, almost double the growth rate of the per capita GDP.

Table 3.4: Composition of recurrent expenditure by economic classification

(Million Leones)	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Salary	**234,443**	**313,612**	**326,033**	**404,318**	**427,641**	**453,862**	**424,365**	**443,856**	**594,564**
Education/MBSSE	4,091	4,109	4,688	52,884	9,031	9,961	9,798	11,828	40,490
Tertiary/MTHE									17,397
TSC							389	3,387	9,080
Teacher salaries	230,352	309,503	321,346	351,434	418,610	443,900	414,178	428,640	527,597
Primary	154,809	205,831	213,554	227,326	274,918	289,252	273,073	274,252	285,113
Secondary	65,711	90,091	93,943	110,408	126,485	137,210	124,817	132,565	144,861
TVET/universities	9,832	13,581	13,848	13,700	17,207	17,439	16,288	21,823	97,623
Salaries (const. 2018)	**455,269**	**475,027**	**522,110**	**636,055**	**562,302**	**563,756**	**483,870**	**443,856**	**537,303**
As a % of sector RE	**60.6%**	**66.3%**	**61.7%**	**63.9%**	**64.0%**	**59.8%**	**63.5%**	**49.0%**	**57.0%**
As a % govt. wage bill	**34.4%**	**33.5%**	**30.8%**	**28.0%**	**26.9%**	**25.0%**	**22.5%**	**21.6%**	**23.1%**
Non-salary	**152,311**	**159,088**	**202,159**	**228,761**	**240,617**	**305,087**	**244,225**	**462,777**	**447,916**
Education/MBSSE	28,017	27,363	19,977	23,148	26,889	80,888	34,289	129,341	197,820
Tertiary/MTHE	51,344	106,751	127,016	157,025	141,785	181,963	182,580	251,957	140,216
TSC							1,105	1,306	4,891
Local council	72,949	24,974	55,165	48,589	71,942	42,236	26,250	80,172	104,988
As a % of sector RE	**39.4%**	**33.7%**	**38.3%**	**36.1%**	**36.0%**	**40.2%**	**36.5%**	**51.0%**	**43.0%**
Grand total	**386,754**	**472,700**	**528,192**	**633,079**	**668,258**	**758,949**	**668,590**	**906,632**	**1,042,480**

Source: Ministry of Finance, Teaching Service Commission

Notes: The Ministry of Finance officially defined the TSC as an independent spending unit in 2017. MTHE was created at the end of 2018 and executed its first independent budget in 2019. Non-salary expenditure for MTHE has been reconstructed from the tertiary division of the former Ministry of Education Science and Technology.

Although sector salaries increased in volume, as a share of the total government wage bill, they registered a sharp drop, implying faster human resource expansion in other sectors. In 2011, the overall government wage bill was Le 681.3 billion and it was Le 2.578 trillion in 2019 (see *Table 1.8*). The education sector accounted for one-third of the wage bill in 2011 before dropping about 12 percentage points to 22% in 2018. This may be attributed to the long-standing freeze on the recruitment of teachers and the fact that, before 2019, less than half of schools in the country were eligible for the deployment of government-paid teachers. The introduction of FQSE in 2018 resulting in the accelerated approval of schools and subsequent approval of teachers, is expected to increase the share of education salaries in the wage bill, especially if the 1.5 percentage point improvement between 2018 and 2019 is an indication of things to come.

On non-salary items, the government spent a total of Le 448 billion in 2019 (see *Table 3.4*), Le 198 billion executed by MBSSE and accounting for 44% of the sector non-salary expenditure, Le 140 billion (31%) executed by the MTHE, Le 105 billion (23%) executed by local councils, and Le 4.9 billion (1%) executed by the TSC. Overall, non-salary expenditure increased threefold from Le 152 billion in 2011 to Le 448 billion in 2019, which was 26% faster than the growth in salaries. As a consequence, the share of salaries in education's recurrent expenditure has been on a downward trend, dropping from 66.3% in 2012 to a low of 49% in 2018, before rising to 57% in 2019. The level of spending on salaries is particularly good for the sector considering all sector salaries are accounted for, including emoluments to lecturers that were previously reported under transfers to universities, and which would ordinarily appear as non-salary expenditure. This gives the sector ample room for reorganizing programmes that are likely to influence the delivery of quality education.

3.1.2.2 Composition of non-salary spending

Tuition accounts for the largest share of non-salary recurrent spending in education, secondary schools and universities being the biggest beneficiaries, especially since the introduction of FQSE. Non-salary recurrent spending in Sierra Leone covers tuition, textbooks, examination fees and operations as presented in *Table 3.5.* In 2019, the government spent Le 448 billion towards non-salary recurrent items, of which Le 382 billion went towards tuition, Le 14 billion for textbooks, Le 40 billion to examination administration, and Le 22 billion for operations and utilities. The spending on tuition and related items constituted the largest part of the non-salary bill, accounting for 83%, including for FQSE grants, tuition fee subsidies, grants to TVET and universities, and student loan schemes. Spending on textbooks, examinations and operations accounted for 3%, 9%, and 5% of non-salary expenditure, respectively. Within tuition and related items, the returns show that secondary school and university were the largest consumers, spending Le 143 billion and Le 132 billion respectively, and accounting for 39% and 36% of tuition spending, respectively. Junior secondary comes third at 15% followed by primary education at 11%. Technical and vocational training account for less than 1% of the non-salary spending.

Table 3.5: Composition of non-salary recurrent expenditure

(Billion Leones)	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Tuition and related	**95.11**	**130.24**	**152.70**	**181.32**	**191.28**	**243.00**	**208.78**	**325.94**	**371.89**
Pre-primary and primary	35.20	12.96	16.97	14.01	43.41	33.52	18.09	30.30	40.81
Junior secondary								19.12	54.39
Senior secondary	9.49	11.19	9.07	12.24	7.05	29.01	9.71	26.65	143.22
Technical and vocational	1.07	1.39	0.83	1.67	1.11	1.49	1.04	14.49	1.02
Higher education	49.34	104.70	125.82	153.40	139.71	178.98	179.94	235.38	132.45
Textbooks	11.89	4.07	2.62	9.88	11.73	9.32	0.00	107.48	14.00
Examinations	27.84	11.55	3.27	14.83	28.55	23.38	27.69	16.63	39.87
Operations	17.47	13.22	43.57	22.74	9.06	29.40	7.75	12.73	22.16
Grand total	**152.31**	**159.09**	**202.16**	**228.76**	**240.62**	**305.09**	**244.22**	**462.78**	**447.92**
Tuition and related	**62.4%**	**81.9%**	**75.5%**	**79.3%**	**79.5%**	**79.6%**	**85.5%**	**70.4%**	**83.0%**
Pre-primary and primary	37.0%	10.0%	11.1%	7.7%	22.7%	13.8%	8.7%	9.3%	11.0%
Junior secondary	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	5.9%	14.6%
Senior secondary	10.0%	8.6%	5.9%	6.7%	3.7%	11.9%	4.7%	8.2%	38.5%
Technical and vocational	1.1%	1.1%	0.5%	0.9%	0.6%	0.6%	0.5%	4.4%	0.3%
Higher education	51.9%	80.4%	82.4%	84.6%	73.0%	73.7%	86.2%	72.2%	35.6%
Textbooks	7.8%	2.6%	1.3%	4.3%	4.9%	3.1%	0.0%	23.2%	3.1%
Examinations	18.3%	7.3%	1.6%	6.5%	11.9%	7.7%	11.3%	3.6%	8.9%
Operations	11.5%	8.3%	21.6%	9.9%	3.8%	9.6%	3.2%	2.8%	4.9%
Grand total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

Source: Ministry of Finance

Between 2011 and 2019, tuition constituted an average of 77% of non-salary recurrent spending, albeit with fluctuations. Spending on books averaged 5.6% during the period, with a single spike in 2018 when the government spent Le 107.5 billion to procure teaching and learning materials for learners and students in primary, junior and senior secondary schools under the FQSE programme. While the government focused on the procurement of books for learners in primary and junior secondary, the British Department for International Development (DFID) supported Sierra Leone's Secondary Education Improvement Programme (SSEIP), known locally as "*Leh Wi Lan*", by providing English textbooks to students in senior secondary. In 2019, the government focused textbook spending on non-English core books for students in senior secondary. This explains the sharp drop in the spending on textbooks between 2018 and 2019. The government has committed to replenish textbooks every three years and consumable teaching materials annually, to be procured centrally and distributed to schools across the country.

The government pays examination fees for candidates sitting the NPSE, BECE and WASSCE, with the overall spending based on the number of candidates enrolled in government and government-assisted approved schools, and other private schools. Spending on examinations averaged 9% between 2011 and 2019 and for a programme of its calibre there have been large fluctuations, raising concerns about the integrity and stability of the examination process. In 2013 for instance, Le 3.3 billion was spent on exams, shrinking more than 8 times in comparison to 2011. Another glaring drop was observed in 2018 with 40% less spent on examinations than in 2017.

Spending on operations, which covers utilities (electricity, water, telephone, etc.) and supervision, is marked by inconsistent trends, expenditures in 2015 and 2016 being lower compared to the other years. The low spending on operations leaves the effectiveness of school programmes in question. With the investment in books and tuition grants, as well as salary for personnel, it is necessary to have adequate spending on operations to ensure an efficient follow-up of the intended programmes which has a great bearing on the quality of learning.

3.1.3 Recurrent expenditure by level of education: Secondary tops spending among education sub- sectors

Sierra Leone's education spending is focused on four main levels i.e. pre-primary and primary, secondary (junior and senior), technical and vocational training, tertiary education and non-formal and adult education. In addition to the defined levels of education, recurrent spending supports centralized and decentralized administration, including education-related operations within local councils.

3.1.3.1 Overall evolution of recurrent spending by level of education

Secondary education is the biggest consumer of public recurrent spending in education, replacing primary, even although the country is yet to achieve universal primary education. In 2019, the government spent Le 1.042 trillion on recurrent expenditure in education, of which Le 87 billion went towards administration (8%), Le 334 billion (32%) to pre-primary and primary, Le 388.2 billion (37.2%) on secondary education (Le 70 billion for junior secondary, Le 173 billion for senior secondary), and Le 145 billion on secondary teachers' salaries. In addition, the government spent Le 233.3 billion (22%) on post-

secondary education as presented in *Table 3.6* and *Figure 3.5,* this expenditure consolidating spending at central ministries and the 21 local councils. Although enrolment in pre-primary and primary combined is almost three times that of enrolment in junior and senior secondary, in 2019, spending in secondary was 16% more than in primary. However, in 2018, primary spent 25% more than secondary.

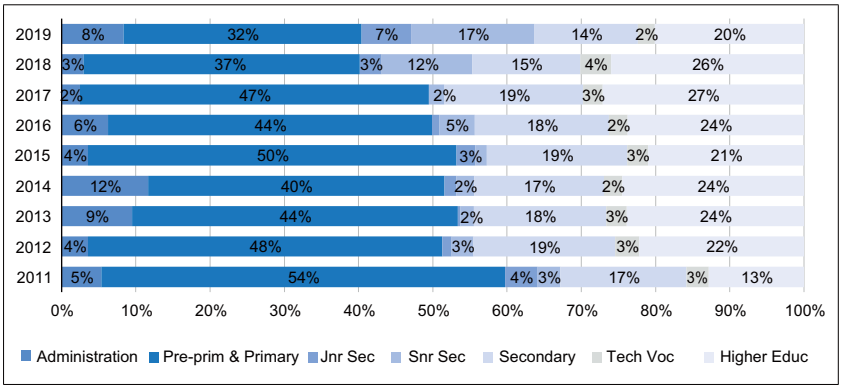
Table 3.6: Recurrent spending by level of education

(Billion Leones)	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Administration	20.75	16.66	50.16	73.67	23.79	47.47	16.65	26.72	86.93
Pre-prim and primary	210.25	225.76	231.87	252.77	331.74	331.29	314.06	337.60	334.08
Secondary	**94.58**	**109.94**	**105.30**	**135.92**	**153.74**	**180.78**	**139.02**	**269.39**	**388.18**
Junior secondary	16.95	5.80	1.67	10.16	16.72	7.12	0.00	26.71	69.90
Sen secondary	11.92	14.05	9.69	15.35	10.54	36.46	14.20	110.11	173.42
Secondary (wages)	65.71	90.09	93.94	110.41	126.48	137.21	124.82	132.57	144.86
Post-secondary	**61.18**	**120.33**	**140.86**	**170.72**	**158.99**	**199.40**	**198.87**	**272.91**	**233.29**
Tech and vocational	11.56	15.37	14.82	15.70	18.62	18.93	17.37	37.19	23.83
Higher education	49.62	104.96	126.05	155.03	140.37	180.48	181.50	235.73	209.46
Grand total	**386.75**	**472.70**	**528.19**	**633.08**	**668.26**	**758.95**	**668.59**	**906.63**	**1,042.48**

Source: Ministry of Finance

Remarkably, at the beginning of the decade, spending on pre-primary and primary accounted for more than half of the recurrent expenditure in the sector, while secondary accounted for less than one-quarter. These results show a shifting of the government's focus to secondary education, even although it has unfinished business in primary education. Universal primary education is not yet achieved, gross intake is still marked by multi-generational access, and primary school completion is far from universal. The reality of achievements to date in this sub-sector underscores the need to stick to the benchmark of spending at least 50% of the sector's recurrent expenditure on primary education (World Bank, 2003).

Figure 3.5: Recurrent spending by level of education



Source: Ministry of Finance and Authors' calculation

The volume of spending in pre-primary and primary increased by 53.6% over the 9-year period (see *Table 3.6*), going up gradually between 2011 and 2014, before a sharp increase in 2015 following the Ebola virus disease (EVD) response. Since 2015, spending at this level has remained more or less the same. Notwithstanding the positive change in the volume of spending, the share of pre-primary and primary declined from 54% in 2011 to 32% in 2019 (see *Figure 3.5*). In secondary, recurrent spending more than tripled during the 9-year period, gradually increasing between 2011 and 2016. There was a 3 percentage point dip in 2017, after which the sub-sector saw a sharp increase to 30% (see *Figure 3.5*), following the introduction of school grants to senior secondary under the FQSE programme. Overall, the share of recurrent spending in secondary increased from 24% in 2011 to 38% in 2019, and in particular, the increase between 2018 and 2019 has been phenomenal, gaining 8 percentage points over other sub-sectors in a year, as a result of the increase in government's per student capitation.

Although identified as a critical pillar in education development, skills development continues to receive limited attention from the government. A strategic focus of Sierra Leone's Medium-term National Development Plan (MTNDP) 2019-2023 is increasing access to quality technical and higher education to enable graduates to engage in meaningful productive economic activity (MoPED, 2019). While technical education explicitly comes out as a key enabler of this vision, spending levels depict a sharp departure from the policy intent. Recurrent spending in TVET during the 2019 fiscal year amounted to Le 23.8 billion, accounting for only 2.3% of the overall recurrent spending in the sector, with an average of 2.9% over the last nine years (see *Table 3.6*).

Consolidated spending on TVET and tertiary education increased fourfold from Le 61 billion in 2011 to Le 233 billion, with notable fluctuations in between. The bulk of the spending for these two levels is on higher education, with an average of 88% during the 9-year period. As a share of the sectoral recurrent spending, expenditure in post-secondary education has generally increased over the years, gaining 7 percentage points to reach 23% in 2019. This gain is, however, concentrated on higher education at the expense of TVET.

3.1.3.2 Non-salary spending by level of education

Secondary takes up to five times the share of primary, making it the biggest consumer of non-salary expenditure. Once the government recruits and deploys teachers/instructors to schools, they require non-salary spending to give life to learning in the institutions. Out of the Le 447.9 billion non-salary spending in 2019, the government spent Le 49 billion on pre-primary and primary education or 11% of non-salary expenditure, Le 243.3 billion (54%) in secondary, Le 135.7 billion (30%) in technical and tertiary education, and Le 20 billion (5%) for administration (see *Table 3.7*). The results show that non-salary spending in secondary is 5 times the spending in primary, twice the spending in technical and tertiary education, and 141 times the spending in technical and vocational training, this further confirming that secondary education is the priority of the sector based on relative investment.

Table 3.7: Non-salary spending by level of education

(Billion Leones)	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Spending at central level	**79.4**	**134.1**	**147.0**	**180.2**	**168.7**	**262.9**	**218.0**	**382.6**	**342.9**
Administration	15.2	12.0	9.4	6.3	13.3	32.2	3.4	11.5	16.9
Pre-primary and primary	0.9	1.3	0.9	1.5	3.1	12.2	17.8	9.9	16.9
Secondary	11.9	14.0	9.7	15.4	10.5	36.5	14.2	110.1	173.4
Post-secondary	51.3	106.8	127.0	157.0	141.8	182.0	182.6	251.1	135.7
Technical and vocational	1.7	1.8	1.0	2.0	1.4	1.5	1.1	15.4	1.7
Tertiary education	49.6	105.0	126.0	155.0	140.4	180.5	181.5	235.7	134.0
Spending at local councils	**72.9**	**25.0**	**55.2**	**48.6**	**71.9**	**42.2**	**26.3**	**80.2**	**105.0**
Administration	1.5	0.5	36.1	14.5	1.5	5.3	3.0	0.0	3.0
Pre-primary and primary	54.5	18.7	17.4	23.9	53.7	29.9	23.2	53.5	32.1
Secondary	17.0	5.8	1.7	10.2	16.7	7.1	0.0	26.7	69.9
Grand total	**152.3**	**159.1**	**202.2**	**228.8**	**240.6**	**305.1**	**244.2**	**462.8**	**447.9**
Administration	16.7	12.6	45.5	20.8	14.8	37.5	6.5	11.5	20.0
Pre-primary and primary	55.4	19.9	18.3	25.4	56.8	42.0	41.0	63.4	49.0
Secondary	28.9	19.9	11.4	25.5	27.3	43.6	14.2	136.8	243.3
Post-secondary	51.3	106.8	127.0	157.0	141.8	182.0	182.6	251.1	135.7
Technical and vocational	1.7	1.8	1.0	2.0	1.4	1.5	1.1	15.4	1.7
Tertiary education	49.6	105.0	126.0	155.0	140.4	180.5	181.5	235.7	134.0
Administration	10.9%	7.9%	22.5%	9.1%	6.1%	12.3%	2.6%	2.5%	4.5%
Pre-primary and primary	36.4%	12.5%	9.1%	11.1%	23.6%	13.8%	16.8%	13.7%	10.9%
Secondary	19.0%	12.5%	5.6%	11.2%	11.3%	14.3%	5.8%	29.6%	54.3%
Post-secondary	33.7%	67.1%	62.8%	68.6%	58.9%	59.6%	74.8%	54.3%	30.3%
Technical and vocational	1.1%	1.1%	0.5%	0.9%	0.6%	0.5%	0.4%	3.3%	0.4%
Tertiary education	32.6%	66.0%	62.4%	67.8%	58.3%	59.2%	74.3%	50.9%	29.9%

Source: Ministry of Finance

Note: Before 2019, salaries in universities were bundled inside transfers which appeared as non-salary expenditure.

Primary and TVET spend the highest on salaries, leaving limited space for acquisition of goods and services that support quality learning. The expenditure returns show that TVET has the highest share of salary spending, 93% of its 2019 expenditure having been on salaries (see *Table 3.8*). This is followed by primary, whose 2019 salary spending accounted for 85% of the sub-sector's recurrent spending. This means only 15% was spent on goods and services that support learning. In 2018 when the government introduced enhanced FQSE spending targeting school supplies, non-salary expenditure accounted for only 19% of the total recurrent spending in the sub-sector. In the 9-year period from 2011, primary spending on salaries averaged 86% of recurrent expenditure. Non-salary spending was limited to the remaining 14%, which is less than half of the 33% benchmark recommended by the Education for All framework (World Bank, 2003). The framework suggested the share of resources that countries should dedicate to each sub–sector, especially at primary level in order to realize universal primary education (UPE), which is yet to be achieved in Sierra Leone. In secondary, the share of salary spending within the sub-sector's recurrent expenditure in 2019 was 37%, and has been on a general decline since 2013, easing 52 percentage points in the 6-year period.

Table 3.8: Salary and non-salary spending by level of education

(Billion Leones)	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Administration	**20.7**	**16.7**	**50.2**	**73.7**	**23.8**	**47.5**	**16.6**	**26.7**	**86.9**
Salary	4.1	4.1	4.7	52.9	9.0	10.0	10.2	15.2	67.0
Non-salary	16.7	12.6	45.5	20.8	14.8	37.5	6.5	11.5	20.0
Pre-primary and primary	**210.3**	**225.8**	**231.9**	**252.8**	**331.7**	**331.3**	**314.1**	**337.6**	**334.1**
Salary	154.8	205.8	213.6	227.3	274.9	289.3	273.1	274.3	285.1
Non-salary	55.4	19.9	18.3	25.4	56.8	42.0	41.0	63.4	49.0
Secondary	**94.6**	**109.9**	**105.3**	**135.9**	**153.7**	**180.8**	**139.0**	**269.4**	**388.2**
Salary	65.7	90.1	93.9	110.4	126.5	137.2	124.8	132.6	144.9
Non-salary	28.9	19.9	11.4	25.5	27.3	43.6	14.2	136.8	243.3
Junior secondary	17.0	5.8	1.7	10.2	16.7	7.1	0.0	26.7	69.9
Senior secondary	11.9	14.0	9.7	15.4	10.5	36.5	14.2	110.1	173.4
Technical and vocational	**11.6**	**15.4**	**14.8**	**15.7**	**18.6**	**18.9**	**17.4**	**37.2**	**23.8**
Salary	9.8	13.6	13.8	13.7	17.2	17.4	16.3	21.8	22.1
Non-salary	1.7	1.8	1.0	2.0	1.4	1.5	1.1	15.4	1.7
Higher education	**49.6**	**105.0**	**126.0**	**155.0**	**140.4**	**180.5**	**181.5**	**235.7**	**209.5**
Salary									75.5
Non-salary	49.6	105.0	126.0	155.0	140.4	180.5	181.5	235.7	134.0
Grand total	**386.8**	**472.7**	**528.2**	**633.1**	**668.3**	**758.9**	**668.6**	**906.6**	**1,042.5**
Administration									
Salary	19.7%	24.7%	9.3%	71.8%	38.0%	21.0%	61.2%	56.9%	77.0%
Non-salary	80.3%	75.3%	90.7%	28.2%	62.0%	79.0%	38.8%	43.1%	23.0%
Pre-primary and primary									
Salary	73.6%	91.2%	92.1%	89.9%	82.9%	87.3%	86.9%	81.2%	85.3%
Non-salary	26.4%	8.8%	7.9%	10.1%	17.1%	12.7%	13.1%	18.8%	14.7%
Secondary									
Salary	69.5%	81.9%	89.2%	81.2%	82.3%	75.9%	89.8%	49.2%	37.3%
Non-salary	30.5%	18.1%	10.8%	18.8%	17.7%	24.1%	10.2%	50.8%	62.7%
Technical and vocational									
Salary	85.1%	88.4%	93.5%	87.3%	92.4%	92.1%	93.8%	58.7%	92.8%
Non-salary	14.9%	11.6%	6.5%	12.7%	7.6%	7.9%	6.2%	41.3%	7.2%
Higher education									
Salary	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	36.0%
Non-salary	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	64.0%

Source: Ministry of Finance

In technical and vocational training, there is almost no spending on non-salary items, salaries averaging 87% of the sub-sector's recurrent spending during the 9-year period. In fact, the 2019 expenditure returns show that salary spending was more than 90%. For a sector that aims to revolutionize youth training and stimulate collaboration with industry, this level of spending on training materials and equipment is a cause of concern. In tertiary education, about two-thirds of the recurrent spending goes towards non-salary items. It is important to note that prior to 2019, it was not possible to identify how much money spent on salaries was paid from the grants and transfers spent by universities. Expenditure in 2019, however, gives a glimpse into the structure of spending in the highest level of education, following civil service reforms requiring that all public service employees be paid directly by the Accountant General.

Table 3.9 presents the breakdown of non-salary spending by level of education which shows that at all levels, tuition is the largest component, accounting for 83% in primary, 78% in junior secondary, 83% in senior secondary, 60% in TVET, and 99% in higher education. Notwithstanding its major contribution to non-salary expenditure, tuition grants have gone through a series of transitions over the past decade. In primary for instance, the share of spending on tuition grants showed a sharp drop from 80% in 2013 to 43% in 2017, before rising to 48% in 2018, and eventually to 83% in 2019.

Table 3.9: Breakdown of non-salary spending by level of education

Level/ (Billion Leones)	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Administration	**16.66**	**12.55**	**45.47**	**20.78**	**14.76**	**37.51**	**6.46**	**11.51**	**19.96**
Tuition grants	0.11	-	2.26	0.00	6.66	9.61	0.30	-	-
Operations	16.54	12.55	43.21	20.78	8.09	27.90	6.16	11.51	19.96
Pre-primary and primary	**55.44**	**19.93**	**18.32**	**25.44**	**56.82**	**42.04**	**40.99**	**63.35**	**48.97**
Tuition grants	35.09	12.96	14.71	14.01	36.74	23.90	17.79	30.30	40.81
Textbooks	11.89	4.07	2.62	7.32	11.73	9.32	-	28.62	0.00
Examinations	8.46	2.90	0.99	4.11	8.35	8.82	23.20	4.44	8.16
Junior secondary	**16.95**	**5.80**	**1.67**	**10.16**	**16.72**	**7.12**	**0.00**	**26.71**	**69.90**
Tuition grants	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	19.12	54.39
Textbooks	-	-	-	2.56	-	-	-	-	-
Examinations	16.95	5.80	1.67	7.60	16.72	7.12	-	7.59	15.51
Senior secondary	**11.92**	**14.05**	**9.69**	**15.35**	**10.54**	**36.46**	**14.20**	**110.11**	**173.42**
Tuition grants	9.49	11.19	9.07	12.24	7.05	29.01	9.71	26.65	143.22
Textbooks	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	78.86	14.00
Examinations	2.42	2.85	0.62	3.12	3.49	7.45	4.49	4.60	16.20
Technical and vocational	**1.72**	**1.79**	**0.97**	**2.00**	**1.41**	**1.49**	**1.08**	**15.37**	**1.71**
Tuition grants	1.07	1.39	0.83	1.67	1.11	1.49	1.04	14.49	1.02
Operations	0.65	0.40	0.14	0.32	0.30	-	0.04	0.87	0.69
Higher education	**49.62**	**104.96**	**126.05**	**155.03**	**140.37**	**180.48**	**181.50**	**235.73**	**133.96**
Tuition grants	49.34	104.70	125.82	153.40	139.71	178.98	179.94	235.38	132.45
Operations	0.28	0.27	0.22	1.63	0.67	1.50	1.56	0.34	1.51
Grand total	**152.31**	**159.09**	**202.16**	**228.76**	**240.62**	**305.09**	**244.22**	**462.78**	**447.92**
Administration	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**
Tuition grants	0.7%	0.0%	5.0%	0.0%	45.1%	25.6%	4.7%	0.0%	0.0%
Operations	99.3%	100.0%	95.0%	100.0%	54.9%	74.4%	95.3%	100.0%	100.0%
Pre-primary and primary	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**
Tuition grants	63.3%	65.0%	80.3%	55.1%	64.7%	56.9%	43.4%	47.8%	83.3%
Textbooks	21.5%	20.4%	14.3%	28.8%	20.6%	22.2%	0.0%	45.2%	0.0%
Examinations	15.3%	14.5%	5.4%	16.2%	14.7%	21.0%	56.6%	7.0%	16.7%
Junior secondary	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**0.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**
Tuition grants	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	71.6%	77.8%
Textbooks	-	-	-	25.2%	-	-	-	0.0%	0.0%
Examinations	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	74.8%	100.0%	100.0%	-	28.4%	22.2%
Senior secondary	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**
Tuition grants	79.7%	79.7%	93.6%	79.7%	66.9%	79.6%	68.4%	24.2%	82.6%
Textbooks	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	71.6%	8.1%
Examinations	20.3%	20.3%	6.4%	20.3%	33.1%	20.4%	31.6%	4.2%	9.3%
Technical and vocational	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**
Tuition grants	62.3%	77.7%	85.8%	83.8%	78.9%	100.0%	96.3%	94.3%	59.5%
Operations	37.7%	22.3%	14.2%	16.2%	21.1%	0.0%	3.7%	5.7%	40.5%
Higher education	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**
Tuition grants	99.4%	99.7%	99.8%	98.9%	99.5%	99.2%	99.1%	99.9%	98.9%
Operations	0.6%	0.3%	0.2%	1.1%	0.5%	0.8%	0.9%	0.1%	1.1%

Source: Ministry of Finance

In junior secondary, tuition grants were implemented just two years ago at the start of the FQSE programme. In senior secondary, tuition grants exhibited a similar trend to the one observed in primary, and not just in share but also in volume, an indication of the vulnerability the program has faced in the past. In 2011, the government spent Le 9.5 billion on tuition grants in senior secondary, which increased to Le 11 billion the following year, before dropping back to Le 9 billion in 2013. In 2014 it went up once again to Le 12 billion

before going down to Le 7 billion in 2015. Even after increasing fourfold to Le 29 billion in 2016, there was a sharp drop again in 2017, by up to three times. TVET has also seen mixed trends in spending on tuition grants, oscillating between Le 800 million and Le 1.6 billion prior to 2018. It is only universities that have recorded a consistent increment in spending on tuition. But this has a caveat when you consider that prior to 2019, salaries to academic and non-academic staff were concealed in the transfers to tertiary institutions.

Tuition grants have not always had clear guidelines on what they were meant to be spent on. For a long time, it has been left in the hands of school management committees and boards to determine the programmes to be supported by the grants. This may have made the transfer of subsidies quite vulnerable to austerity measures. In tertiary education, it is not clear what the grants are spent on, particularly considering that one of the main items they conventionally cover was directly catered for by the Accountant General in 2019. Yet the spending level of tuition grants in tertiary education remains significant. Taking into account the Ministry of Finance's limited fiscal room for manoeuvre, understanding what the tertiary education tuition grants are spent on could inform discussions on how the sector can effectively deliver education with the current budget allocation before looking at other ways to mobilize resources.

3.1.4 Average public spending per student

This section estimates the public financial input into individual learners/students, detailing the proportions of constituent items, like salaries, grants and utilities for example, the spending on each learner covers. This provides insight into the assessment of the real structure of the country's spending. In addition to national averages, details of the spending status at decentralized units are provided, which allows one to assess whether spending is equitable, particularly in pre-primary, primary, junior secondary and senior secondary.

Table 3.10 presents a summary of central spending by level of education, spending categories, and economic classification, details of which have been discussed in previous sections and sub-sections.

Table 3.10: Recurrent spending at central ministries and TSC, 2019

Level of education/spending department	Salaries			Grants and transfers	Operation and related	Grand total
	Teachers	Admin	Sub-total			
Administration	**-**	**66,967**	**66,967**	**-**	**16,935**	**83,902**
Basic and senior secondary	-	40,490	-	-	7,498	7,498
Tertiary and vocational	-	17,397	-	-	4,545	4,545
Teaching Service Commission	-	9,080	-	-	4,891	4,891
Pre-primary and primary	**285,113**	**-**	**285,113**	**16,907**	**-**	**302,020**
Pre-primary	16,380	-	16,380	-	-	16,380
Primary	268,733	-	268,733	16,907	-	285,639
Secondary	**144,861**	**-**	**144,861**	**157,215**	**16,200**	**318,276**
Junior secondary	-	-	-	-	-	0
Senior secondary	-	-	-	157,215	16,200	173,415
Tertiary	**97,623**	**-**	**97,623**	**133,471**	**2,200**	**233,294**
TVET	22,116	-	22,116	1,020	695	23,831
Higher education	75,507	-	75,507	132,451	1,506	209,463
Grand total	**527,597**	**66,967**	**594,564**	**307,592**	**35,335**	**937,492**

Source: Ministry of Finance

3.1.4.1 National average of spending per student

Public spending increases the higher the level of education, with spending in tertiary education up to 18 times more than spending in primary school. The government spent an estimated Le 242,000 on every learner in primary school in 2019; an average of Le 298,000 on children in pre-primary, which is 20% higher than the spending in primary schools; Le 382,300 on every student in junior secondary, which is 60% higher than spending in primary school; and Le 857,000 on each student in senior secondary, which is 3.5 times higher than spending in primary school. A comparison (IIEP-Dakar, 2013) shows that by volume, the average spending between 2010 and 2019 increased for every learner/student at all levels. There was an increase of 66% for pre-primary school learners, it more than doubled for learners in primary and junior secondary, almost tripled for students in senior secondary, and doubled for students in tertiary education. However, compared to the per capita GDP, the results show that in fact spending levels dropped, with the exception of senior secondary where average spending increased by close to two percentage points of the PCGDP. Given that the recommended class size in primary schools is 40 learners, the results show that public spending on two students in tertiary education can sustain an entire class in primary under the current spending structure.

Table 3.11: Average spending per student by level of education

	Average spending per student		Average spending as % of PCGDP		Average spending relative to primary	
	2010	2019	2010	2019	2010	2019
Pre-primary	179,655	298,046	10.2%	6.9%	1.6	1.2
Primary	111,530	241,979	6.4%	5.6%	1.0	1.0
Junior secondary	186,849	382,278	10.6%	8.9%	1.7	1.6
Senior secondary	316,061	857,008	18.0%	19.9%	2.8	3.5
Technical and vocational	-	1,032,770	-	23.9%	-	4.3
Tertiary education	2,118,011	4,435,387	120.7%	102.8%	18.8	18.3

Source: Authors' computations

Notes: 2010 data extracted from the 2013 Sierra Leone Country Status Report

3.1.4.2 International comparison of government spending per student

Within the ECOWAS, only Guinea-Bissau spends comparatively less on education than Sierra Leone. In 2019, Sierra Leone's average spending on learners enrolled in primary was Le 242,000 per head, translating to 6% of the PCGDP, while the average for secondary (junior and senior secondary combined) was about 13%. In the region, the 14 countries whose data was available spent an average of 12% of the PCGDP on each learner in primary, and 22% for students in secondary. Niger topped the chart in spending at both primary and secondary levels, spending 21% and 47% of the PCGDP compared to the country that spends the least, Guinea Bissau, with 4% in primary and 9% in secondary. This shows that there are differences in the region in terms of actual commitment to learners/students, considering that the variation in overall spending on education by the respective countries was not large (see *Table 3.12*).

Table 3.12: International comparison of average spending in primary and secondary

Country	Avg. spending as % of PCGDP		Relative to Sierra Leone		Relative to average*	
	Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary
Benin (2015)	11.0%	15.0%	2.0	1.2	0.9	0.7
Burkina Faso (2015)	16.0%	19.0%	2.8	1.5	1.3	0.9
Cabo Verde (2017)	17.1%	17.2%	3.0	1.4	1.4	0.8
Côte d'Ivoire (2015)	13.4%	36.4%	2.4	2.9	1.1	1.6
Gambia (2013)	9.5%	12.2%	1.7	1.0	0.8	0.5
Ghana (2013)	8.7%	39.8%	1.6	3.2	0.7	1.8
Guinea (2016)	7.0%	13.0%	1.2	1.0	0.6	0.6
Guinea-Bissau (2013)	4.2%	9.2%	0.7	0.7	0.3	0.4
Liberia 2015)	10.2%	22.8%	1.8	1.8	0.8	1.0
Mali (2015)	14.6%	27.1%	2.6	2.2	1.2	1.2
Niger (2015)	22.1%	46.7%	3.9	3.7	1.8	2.1
Senegal (2016)	15.7%	24.5%	2.8	1.9	1.3	1.1
Sierra Leone (2018)	5.6%	12.6%	1.0	1.0	0.5	0.6
Togo (2017)	15.7%	15.3%	2.8	1.2	1.3	0.7
ECOWAS average*	**12.2%**	**22.2%**	**2.2**	**1.8**	**1.0**	**1.0**
Africa average	**11.9%**	**28.8%**	**2.1**	**2.3**	**1.0**	**1.3**

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics

These comparisons, although not from the recent past, indicate that after Guinea-Bissau, Sierra Leone spends the least in the region on primary school learners. More recent data shows that countries like Cabo Verde, Senegal and Togo spend up to three times more on their primary school learners than Sierra Leone. In secondary, the average spending in the region is twice the level of spending in Sierra Leone.

3.1.4.3 Breakdown of the average spending per student: Salary is the main component

Having seen the average spending per learner/student by level of education and its evolution over time, we assess the elements of this spending, based on the various expenditure categories discussed earlier (teacher/instructor/lecturer salaries, salaries for administrators, tuition grants/grants for pedagogical materials and operations).

With the exception of senior secondary and tertiary, teacher salaries account for the largest part of the average spending per student. *Table 3.13* presents a breakdown of this spending in 2019, detailing how much is spent on salaries, grants and operations. The average spending per student rises from a low of Le 242,000 in primary to a high of Le 4.43 million in tertiary education. Salaries and grants account for more than 90% of spending at all the levels. In 2019, the government spent Le 268,300 towards teacher salaries per learner in pre-primary, translating into 90% of the average for each learner in the sub-sector. In primary, 81% of the Le 195,600 per learner went towards teacher salaries. While the absolute spending on teacher salaries per student in junior and senior secondary is the same, the share of the overall spending is different. It stands at 58% per student for junior, and 26% for senior secondary owing to the higher

spending on grants and subsidies at this level. In technical and vocational training, the government spent about Le 885,000 per student on instructor salaries, translating into 88% of the average spending. The government spends an average of Le 1.54 million per student in tertiary education for lecturers' salaries, which is eight times the proportion of average spending on teachers' wages for primary school learners.

Table 3.13: Average spending by level of education, 2019

Level of education	Teachers/lecturers	Administration	Grants	Operations	Total
Average spending					
Pre-primary	268,285	803	28,434	523	298,046
Primary	195,553	10,898	28,434	7,093	241,979
Junior secondary	219,756	2,777	140,897	18,847	382,278
Senior secondary	219,756	1,878	575,534	59,840	857,008
Technical and vocational	884,656	79,545	40,782	27,787	1,032,770
Tertiary education	1,542,717	155,731	2,706,177	30,762	4,435,387
Composition					
Pre-primary	90.0%	0.3%	9.5%	0.2%	100.0%
Primary	80.8%	4.5%	11.8%	2.9%	100.0%
Junior secondary	57.5%	0.7%	36.9%	4.9%	100.0%
Senior secondary	25.6%	0.2%	67.2%	7.0%	100.0%
Technical and vocational	85.7%	7.7%	3.9%	2.7%	100.0%
Tertiary education	34.8%	3.5%	61.0%	0.7%	100.0%

Source: Authors' computations based on data from MoF, MBSSE and MTHE

Basic education is a devolved function with primary and junior secondary education managed by local councils, including supervision. All other levels are managed by central government while policy directives are determined by the relevant minister. The distribution of resources to each sub-national unit is based on the number of learners/students it serves, which can create logistical problems. The next set of tables presents a breakdown of the average spending on the first four levels of education, showing the disparities masked by national averages.

3.1.4.3.1 Pre-primary education

The average spending on teachers per learner at any local council is the result of the total wage bill in that local council divided by the total number of learners enrolled in the same local council. Although the average government spending for teacher salaries per learner in pre-primary was Le 268,300 in 2019 (see *Table 3.14*), this does not exist in some local councils (Falaba and Karene districts) as there are no approved pre-primary teachers in these areas. Even where there were teachers, the analysis shows that spending on wages ranged from a low of Le 31,000 in Tonkolili District Council to a high of Le 643,200 in Port Loko District Council, which represents 20 times more. An in-depth look at the municipalities shows that rural local councils are more disadvantaged when it comes to government contribution to teacher salaries. For instance, in Bo District which has Bo City and Bo District (rural) Local Council, there is a higher contribution for teacher salaries in the city (Le 474,000) which is more than nine times more than for the rural local council (Le 51,373). Similar patterns are observed in Kenema and Bonthe districts. This

phenomenon is caused by the deployment of more teachers in cities at the expense of rural schools. With all other parts of the average spending being similar or the same, the disparity in the average spending per learner thus stems only from the deployment of teachers.

Table 3.14: Average spending by local council per preschool learner

Local Council	Teachers	Administrators	Grants	Operations	Total
Bo City	474,210	821	28,434	720	504,185
Bo District	51,373	779	28,434	351	80,938
Bombali District	343,054	788	28,434	417	372,693
Bonthe District	39,433	818	28,434	522	69,208
Bonthe Municipal	442,466	1,477	28,434	4,895	477,272
Falaba District	0	787	28,434	373	29,595
Freetown City	325,801	809	28,434	751	355,796
Kailahun District	133,530	802	28,434	483	163,249
Kambia District	90,899	781	28,434	379	120,493
Karene District	0	769	28,434	322	29,525
Kenema City	354,188	796	28,434	656	384,073
Kenema District	55,773	768	28,434	303	85,278
Koidu-New Sembehun	229,564	837	28,434	977	259,812
Koinadugu District	353,012	796	28,434	451	382,693
Kono District	132,250	823	28,434	507	162,014
Makeni City	288,735	823	28,434	921	318,913
Moyamba District	251,963	775	28,434	335	281,507
Port Loko District	643,203	795	28,434	462	672,894
Pujehun District	34,036	785	28,434	364	63,619
Tonkolili District	30,789	789	28,434	418	60,431
Western Area Rural	257,051	808	28,434	627	286,920
Sierra Leone	**268,285**	**803**	**28,434**	**523**	**298,046**

Source: Authors' computations based on data from MoF, MBSSE and MTHE

3.1.4.3.2 Primary education

In 2019, the government spent Le 195,600 towards teacher salaries for every learner in primary, about Le 11,000 towards administrators, Le 28,400 towards subsidies, and Le 7,100 towards operations. This totalled Le 242,000, which is 37% lower than the average government spending on learners in pre-primary (see *Table 3.15*). The contribution to salaries represents 81%, administration 4%, grants and subsidies 12%, and operations 3%. With the exception of Bonthe Municipal, contributions to administrators, subsidies, and operations are very similar. The disparity in the total spending per learner is again related to teacher distribution. This ranges from a low of Le 102,300 in Kono District to a high of Le 732,000 in Bonthe Municipal. It receives over seven time more money than Kono, which begs the moral question of whether learners in these two locations can expect to have the same learning experience and, ultimately, similar learning outcomes.

Table 3.15: Average spending by local council per primary school learner

Local council	Teachers	Administrators	Grants	Operations	Total
Bo City	226,651	10,713	28,434	6,933	272,731
Bo District	139,170	11,057	28,434	6,677	185,338
Bombali District	225,276	11,216	28,434	8,067	272,993
Bonthe District	127,435	11,191	28,434	7,458	174,518
Bonthe Municipal	732,061	16,178	28,434	41,720	818,393
Falaba District	120,592	11,666	28,434	8,670	169,362
Freetown City	247,467	10,489	28,434	6,051	292,441
Kailahun District	211,804	11,068	28,434	7,458	258,764
Kambia District	151,739	10,988	28,434	6,953	198,115
Karene District	139,470	11,200	28,434	7,649	186,754
Kenema City	247,056	10,659	28,434	7,715	293,863
Kenema District	227,441	11,209	28,434	7,029	274,113
Koidu-New Sembehun	134,478	10,647	28,434	7,330	180,890
Koinadugu District	262,131	11,157	28,434	7,759	309,481
Kono District	102,344	11,163	28,434	6,875	148,817
Makeni City	277,824	10,709	28,434	8,349	325,317
Moyamba District	268,943	11,146	28,434	7,020	315,544
Port Loko District	176,784	10,990	28,434	7,296	223,504
Pujehun District	139,247	11,375	28,434	7,579	186,635
Tonkolili District	237,387	10,951	28,434	6,767	283,539
Western Area Rural	167,586	10,596	28,434	6,122	212,738
Sierra Leone	**195,553**	**10,898**	**28,434**	**7,093**	**241,979**

Source: Authors' computations based on data from MoF, MBSSE and MTHE

3.1.4.3.3 Junior secondary

In junior secondary, teacher salaries contribution to per student spending is Le 220,000, which is 58% of the average spending on junior secondary (see *Table 3.16*). This teacher input ranges from a high of Le 634,000 in Bonthe Municipal (accounting for 69% of the average student spending), to a low in Falaba where average spending on teachers' wages was more than six times less at Le 104,600. Apart from salaries, grants in junior secondary are also quite significant and account for more than one-third of the spending on each student, with considerable variation between local councils.

Table 3.16: Average spending by local council per junior secondary student

Local council	Teachers	Administrators	Grants	Operations	Total
Bo City	347,637	2,790	140,897	14,345	505,668
Bo District	119,787	2,722	140,897	26,028	289,435
Bombali District	190,298	2,833	140,897	23,846	357,874
Bonthe District	168,528	2,757	140,897	30,848	343,030
Bonthe Municipal	633,690	4,711	140,897	138,455	917,753
Falaba District	104,602	2,783	140,897	45,675	293,958
Freetown City	245,688	2,736	140,897	10,114	399,436
Kailahun District	166,968	2,780	140,897	23,812	334,458
Kambia District	189,109	2,760	140,897	20,733	353,500
Karene District	149,270	2,789	140,897	25,221	318,177
Kenema City	191,566	2,824	140,897	12,655	347,943
Kenema District	564,349	2,730	140,897	30,593	738,569
Koidu-New Sembehun	131,603	2,850	140,897	11,935	287,286
Koinadugu District	201,411	2,786	140,897	26,425	371,519
Kono District	112,623	2,726	140,897	32,103	288,349
Makeni City	265,584	2,854	140,897	14,962	424,298
Moyamba District	226,915	2,739	140,897	27,578	398,129
Port Loko District	199,165	2,799	140,897	19,226	362,088
Pujehun District	237,082	2,741	140,897	37,935	418,655
Tonkolili District	221,568	2,750	140,897	20,527	385,743
Western Area Rural	167,310	2,750	140,897	11,412	322,368
Sierra Leone	**219,756**	**2,777**	**140,897**	**18,847**	**382,278**

Source: Authors' computations based on data from MoF, MBSSE and MTHE

3.1.4.3.4 Senior secondary

In senior secondary, the allocation for grants accounts for the largest part of average spending, even exceeding teacher salaries. By volume, the contribution of teacher salaries to the average spending per student is same as that of junior secondary since teaching in the two levels is not mutually exclusive. That said, the huge amount spent on grants in senior secondary means that the proportion of the average student spending that goes to teachers accounts for only 26% (see *Table 3.17*).

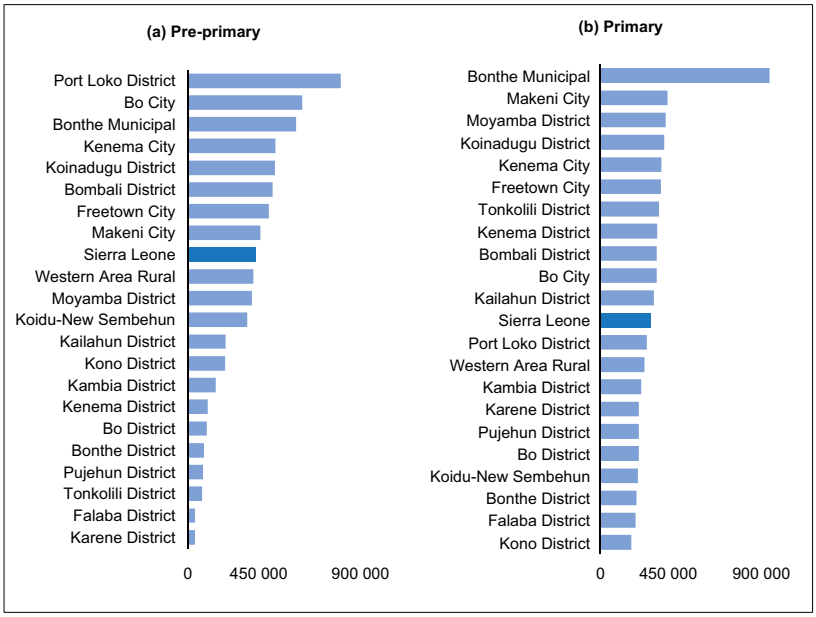
Table 3.17: Average spending by local council per senior secondary student

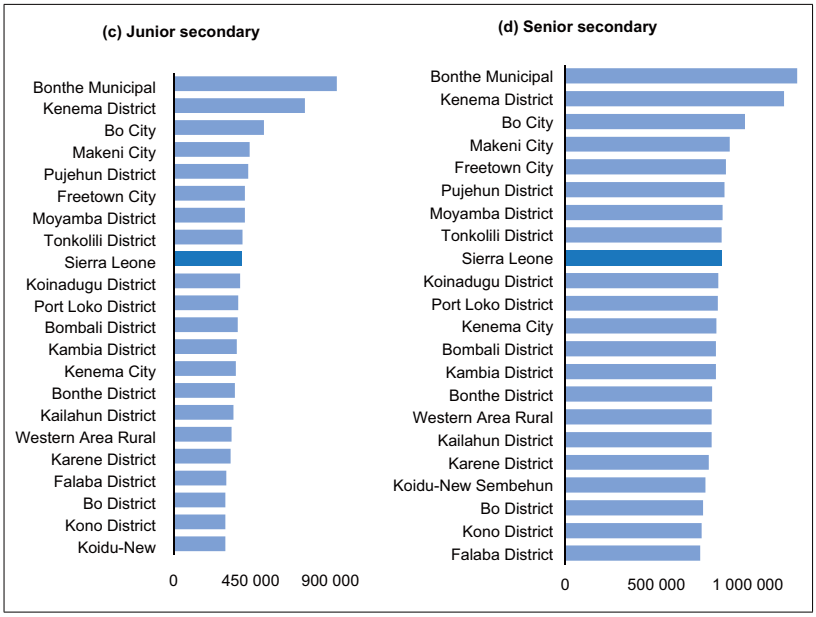
Local council	Teachers	Administrators	Grants	Operations	Total
Bo City	347,637	1,913	575,534	59,840	984,924
Bo District	119,787	1,801	575,534	59,840	756,962
Bombali District	190,298	1,843	575,534	59,840	827,515
Bonthe District	168,528	1,844	575,534	59,840	805,745
Bonthe Municipal	633,690	3,282	575,534	59,840	1,272,345
Falaba District	104,602	1,804	575,534	59,840	741,780
Freetown City	245,688	1,911	575,534	59,840	882,973
Kailahun District	166,968	1,865	575,534	59,840	804,207
Kambia District	189,109	1,833	575,534	59,840	826,316
Karene District	149,270	1,825	575,534	59,840	786,469
Kenema City	191,566	1,969	575,534	59,840	828,909
Kenema District	564,349	1,784	575,534	59,840	1,201,506
Koidu-New Sembehun	131,603	1,934	575,534	59,840	768,911
Koinadugu District	201,411	1,868	575,534	59,840	838,653
Kono District	112,623	1,792	575,534	59,840	749,789
Makeni City	265,584	2,025	575,534	59,840	902,983
Moyamba District	226,915	1,801	575,534	59,840	864,090
Port Loko District	199,165	1,849	575,534	59,840	836,388
Pujehun District	237,082	1,793	575,534	59,840	874,249
Tonkolili District	221,568	1,833	575,534	59,840	858,774
Western Area Rural	167,310	1,874	575,534	59,840	804,557
Sierra Leone	**219,756**	**1,878**	**575,534**	**59,840**	**857,008**

Source: Authors' computations based on data from MoF, MBSSE and MTHE

Average spending per student in pre-primary is Le 298,000, sadly ranging from a low of Le 30,000 in Karene District to a high of Le 673,000 in Port Loko (see *Figure 3.6 (a)*). In primary, the average spending per learner is Le 242,000 (23% lower than in pre-primary) and ranges from a low of Le 149,000 in Kono to Le 818,400 in Bonthe (see *Figure 3.6 (b)*). In senior secondary, the average spending is Le 857,000 (see *Figure 3.6 (d)*), more than double the average spending in junior secondary of Le 382,300 (see *Figure 3.6 (c)*), the two levels exhibiting minimal disparities between localities.

Figure 3.6: Disparity in average spending per student at local councils





Source: Authors' calculation based on MICS 2017 data

3.1.5 Teacher salaries: Consolidating teacher emoluments and analysing existing space for additional recruitments

Nearly 80% of teachers in basic and senior secondary education teach in government-aided schools, but of these less than half are paid by the administration. The entire basic and senior education system is served by 83,000 teachers, comprising educators paid by the government, those paid privately by schools, parents or private organizations, and the third category is made up of volunteers who teach based on regular or irregular stipends from the school or the community (see *Table 3.18*). According to the 2019 payroll, there were 30,000 government-paid teachers (consistent with the number obtained from the schools' census). In addition, there were 43,200 privately paid teachers and 10,000 volunteers serving the system. Out of the 83,000 teachers, 65,200 were reported to be teaching in approved/government-aided schools, with the complement of 21,000 teaching in non-approved schools. Teachers working in approved schools thus accounted for 79% of the total teaching workforce in basic and senior secondary schools. This demonstrates that the 21% of teachers in non-approved schools are supported by structures outside the public provisions, indicating that public funds do not cover all the costs of financing education. Since households send their children to school, it is expected that they pay for the service, especially when they have sent them to non-approved schools.

Out of the 65,200 teachers serving in approved schools, 30,000 are paid by the government, accounting for 46% of all the educators in these schools. A further 28,500 are privately paid, while 6,800 are volunteers, accounting for 44% and 10%, respectively, of teachers in approved. Although 46% of teachers in approved schools are government-paid, this varies according to the level of education. In approved pre-primary schools, 835 (28%) of the 2,950 teachers are paid by the government, in primary this is 18,500 (49%) out of 38,000. In junior secondary, 6,700 (41%) out of the 16,200 educators are government-paid, and this is the case for 3,900 (47%) out of the 8,400 teachers in senior secondary. This demonstrates that even within approved schools, the government does not pay for all teachers, signalling another supply side weakness that requires cooperation from households in order to meet the full supply of teachers.

Table 3.18: Teachers serving in basic and senior secondary schools

	TSC payroll	2019 Annual Schools Census			
		Government	Private	Volunteers	Total
Approved	**29,975**	**29,872**	**28,510**	**6,818**	**65,200**
Pre-primary	1,150	835	1,811	301	2,947
Primary	19,488	18,462	14,789	4,482	37,733
Secondary	9,337	10,575	11,910	2,035	24,520
Junior secondary		6,662	7,930	1,571	16,163
Senior secondary		3,913	3,980	464	8,357
Non-approved			**14,648**	**3,206**	**17,854**
Pre-primary			2,275	353	2,628
Primary			7,866	2,143	10,009
Secondary			4,507	710	5,217
Junior secondary			3,214	508	3,722
Senior secondary			1,293	202	1,495
Grand total	**29,975**	**29,872**	**43,158**	**10,024**	**83,054**

Source: Teaching Service Commission and 2019 Annual Schools Census

As discussed in *Chapter 2,* the pupil-teacher ratios (PTR) in approved schools are quite low (24 in pre-primary, 38 in primary, 23 in junior secondary, and 32 in senior secondary). This is made possible by the combination of government and non-government paid teachers. The exclusion of non-government paid teachers from the system would make the PTR spike to 123 in pre-primary, 90 in primary, 65 in junior secondary, and 76 in senior secondary. This confirms the low supply of government-paid teachers to approved schools by the Teaching Service Commission (TSC). The maintenance of non-government paid teachers in approved schools thus remains a necessity, and has to be financed by sources outside the public stream. Even with the abolishment of school fees and levies under FQSE, families probably still pay some amount to cater for the non-government paid teachers.

3.1.5.1 Teacher wage bill

Basic and senior secondary teacher wages account for 17% of the country's overall salary bill. The Teaching Service Commission manages the payroll, remunerating a total of 29,975 teachers, 1,150 in pre-primary, 19,488 in primary and 9,337 in junior and senior secondary (see *Table 3.19*). Educators are recruited and managed through a 12-grade career hierarchy for salaries, grade 1 being the lowest, while grade 12 is the highest a teacher can attain. According to TSC records, the majority are currently in grades 5, 6 and 7, representing 875 (76%) of teachers in pre-primary, 12,109 (62%) in primary, and 5,973 (64%) in secondary. Teachers were paid a total of Le 430 billion in 2019 and, considering that the overall wage bill of the country was Le 2.6 trillion (see *Table 1.9*), this translates into 16.7% the country's total wage bill, and 7.5% of government's total recurrent spending for the year. Teachers in pre-primary were paid a total of Le 16.8 billion, accounting for 4% of the total teacher wage bill, those in primary Le 269 billion (63%), while those in junior and senior secondary combined were paid a total of Le 145 billion which represented 34% of the teacher wage bill.

Table 3.19: Wage bill in basic and secondary

Teacher Salary Grade	Number of teachers on payroll				Wage bill (in million Le)			
	Pre-primary	Primary	Secondary	Sub-total	Pre-primary	Primary	Secondary	Sub-total
1	8	150	50	207	82	1,548	516	2,146
2	124	4,502	381	5,007	1,363	49,464	4,217	55,044
3	25	886	291	1,202	309	10,629	3,471	14,409
4	6	149	90	246	88	1,909	1,154	3,150
5	157	3,083	884	4,123	2,070	41,065	11,730	54,865
6	465	6,124	914	7,503	6,706	89,579	12,950	109,235
7	244	2,753	4,085	7,081	3,603	41,257	61,474	106,334
8	70	1,053	1,509	2,632	1,140	17,305	25,322	43,768
9	51	781	1,025	1,857	1,019	15,764	20,706	37,488
10		7	45	52		168	1,101	1,269
11		1	62	64		46	2,178	2,225
12			1	1			42	42
Grand total	**1,150**	**19,488**	**9,337**	**29,975**	**16,380**	**268,733**	**144,861**	**429,974**
As % of total	**3.8%**	**65.0%**	**31.1%**	**100.0%**	**3.8%**	**62.5%**	**33.7%**	**100.0%**

Source: Teaching Service Commission

3.1.5.2 Average teacher salary

Given the 29,975 teachers who benefitted from the Le 430 billion wage bill in 2019, the annual average salary for a teacher, regardless of the grade or level of education they are deployed to, amounts Le 14.3 million. The pay ranges from Le 10 million for teachers who are in grade 1, to a high of Le 42 million for teachers in salary grade 12. The average teacher's salary is therefore 3.3 times the per capita GDP (PCGDP), ranging from 2.4 multiples of PCGDP for grade 1 teachers to a high of 10 multiples of the PCGDP for teachers in grade 12. In pre-primary, teachers earn an average of Le 14.2 million annually, which is 3.3 times the PCGDP. In primary, the average is Le 13.8 million, translating to 3.2 times the PCGDP which is 3% lower than the average pay of teachers in pre-primary. As seen in the structure of the wage bill, there are about 4,500 primary school teachers (one-quarter of educators in primary) at grade 2, which holds mostly untrained and unqualified teachers, who together account for 18% of the wage bill. Their numbers therefore bring the average teacher's pay in primary to marginally lower than those of pre-primary. In secondary, the average pay is Le 15.5 million, which is 3.6 times the PCGDP and 12.5% higher than the average pay for primary teachers.

Table 3.20: Average teacher pay in basic and secondary (in million Le)

Teacher salary grade	Pre-primary	Primary	Secondary	Sub-total	Average	In multiples of PCGDP
1	82	1,548	pay	2,146	10.4	2.4
2	1,363	49,464	4,217	55,044	11.0	2.5
3	309	10,629	3,471	14,409	12.0	2.8
4	88	1,909	1,154	3,150	12.8	3.0
5	2,070	41,065	11,730	54,865	13.3	3.1
6	6,706	89,579	12,950	109,235	14.6	3.4
7	3,603	41,257	61,474	106,334	15.0	3.5
8	1,140	17,305	25,322	43,768	16.6	3.9
9	1,019	15,764	20,706	37,488	20.2	4.7
10		168	1,101	1,269	24.3	5.6
11		46	2,178	2,225	34.9	8.1
12			42	42	41.8	9.7
Grand total	**16,380**	**268,733**	**144,861**	**429,974**	**14.3**	**3.3**
As % of total	**3.8%**	**62.5%**	**33.7%**	**100.0%**		
Average pay	**14.2**	**13.8**	**15.5**	**14.3**		
In PCGDP	**3.3**	**3.2**	**3.6**	**3.3**		

Source: Teaching Service Commission

3.1.5.3 Evolution of teacher pay

Salaries have increased considerably for teachers in pre-primary and primary, but have not gone up much for those in secondary. According to records obtained from 2010, the average teacher pay was 4.4 million for pre-primary teachers, 4.3 million for those in primary, and Le 6.1 for those in secondary (see *Table 3.21*). The structure of the average pay between pre-primary and primary has remained similar, results from 2010 indicating a 4% difference in salaries between the two sub-sectors. In constant 2018 prices the 2010 salaries are equivalent to Le 10 million for pre-primary, Le 9.6 for primary, and Le 13.7 million for secondary teachers. Similarly, adjusting the 2019 salaries to 2018 prices for comparison, the average salaries are

equivalent to Le 12.8 million for pre-primary, Le 12.5 million for primary, and Le 14 million for secondary teachers. Accordingly, the comparison between 2010 and 2019 salaries reveals that there was a 29% growth in the salaries for pre-primary teachers, 30% for those in primary, and only 2% for those in secondary.

Table 3.21: Evolution of average teacher salaries in basic and secondary

Level of education	Average salary (thousand Leones)				As % of PCGDP		Relative to primary	
	2010		2019					
	Current	Const. 2018	Current	Const. 2018	2010	2019	2010	2019
Pre-primary	4,441	10,000	14,249	12,877	2.5	3.3	1.0	1.0
Primary	4,274	9,624	13,789	12,461	2.4	3.2	1.0	1.0
Secondary	6,089	13,710	15,514	14,020	3.5	3.6	1.4	1.1

Source: Authors' computations based on data from the TSC and the 2013 Country Status Report

In previous sections, the change in priority of the sub-sectors has been quite evident, with the level of spending in secondary education changing sharply in the recent past to overtake primary and higher education. One of the observed risks here is that secondary salaries show no growth in the last decade. The question is whether teachers will remain motivated to provide adequate stewardship to the increased resources in the sub-sector when their own remuneration is not improving.

3.2 Private spending on education

Although the government continues to maintain education as a top priority, households have also played a part in achieving the vision for education. This is demonstrated through their participation in school activities or facilitating the implementation of some of them. This section presents the findings on the contribution to education by households, drawn from the 2018 Sierra Leone Integrated Household Survey. It is important to note that the survey was conducted in 2018, and so in terms of the questions about education, it precedes the implementation of FQSE. The results presented in the subsequent sub-sections cover spending on tuition fees, uniforms, learning materials, food, transport, etc., as declared by households. The findings, together with the results from the previous section, provide some sense of the total amount the government and households pay to sustain learning in education institutions every year.

3.2.1 Household contribution to education

During the 2017/18 academic year, households are estimated to have spent an average of Le 499,600 towards each child or young person attending school, representing 12% of the PCGDP (see *Table 3.22*). There is only marginally higher spending on girls compared to boys, households spending an average of Le 514,000 towards girls attending school, compared to Le 485,200 for boys. Rural and urban locations show wider disparities in spending, with families in urban areas estimated to have spent Le 814,000 per head, almost 20% of the PCGDP, and 3.5 times the average spending on rural school scholars.

Table 3.22: Household spending on education, 2018

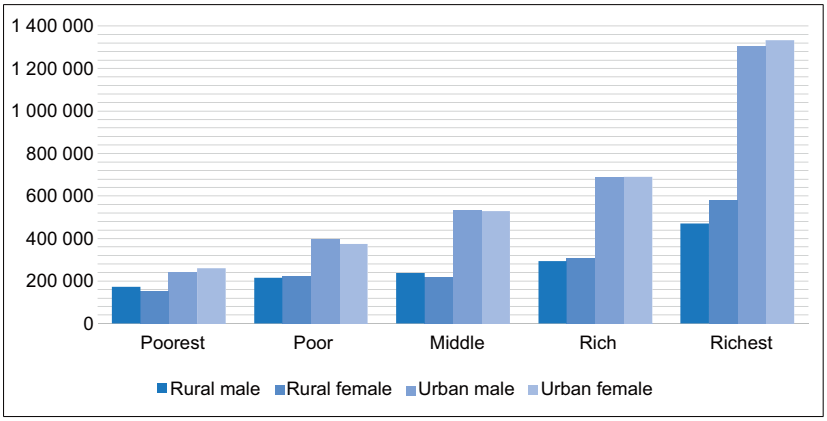
	Amount (Le)	Relative to avg.	As % of PCGDP
Average	499,618	1.00	11.9%
Male	485,227	1.00	11.5%
Female	513,978	1.06	12.2%
Rural	231,322	1.00	5.5%
Urban	813,968	3.52	19.3%
Eastern	364,872	1.34	8.7%
N. Western	279,304	1.03	6.6%
Northern	303,931	1.12	7.2%
Southern	271,915	1.00	6.5%
Western	1,167,070	4.29	27.7%
Poorest	175,679	1.00	4.2%
Poor	266,900	1.52	6.3%
Middle	355,498	2.02	8.4%
Rich	535,161	3.05	12.7%
Richest	1,197,224	6.81	28.5%

Source: 2018 Sierra Leone Integrated Household Survey

In the provinces, households in the Western Area Urban (country's capital city), as expected, spend the highest on education, spending more than four times per student (Le 1.17 million) compared to families in the Southern Province who spend an average of Le 272,000 per head. In terms of socio-economic status, households in the first four socio-economic classes have a gradually evolving trend from the poorest to the rich, but when you reach the richest class, there is a dramatic jump beyond the million Leones mark. These households spent more than twice as much on education than those in the second richest group (see *Table 3.22*). Remarkably, the richest households spend almost seven times more than the poorest households, underscoring the inequalities that exist in the country. This highlights the need to restructure the country's education financing model to relieve pressure on poor households that have to use a huge percentage of their available funds to send their children to school, yet public schools receive a similar capitation for children from the richest households.

Except in the poorest and richest rural households, families spend equally on boys and girls. The poorest rural households spend an average of Le 150,000 on girls, which is 13% lower than the Le 172,300 spent on boys. Among the richest rural families, spending on girls (Le 580,300) is 24% higher than the Le 469,500 spent on boys (see *Figure 3.7*). That there is equal spending on both genders should not elicit early celebrations as there is a need to assess whether this is fulfilling their needs.

Figure 3.7: Intersection of spending by gender, location and wealth status, 2018

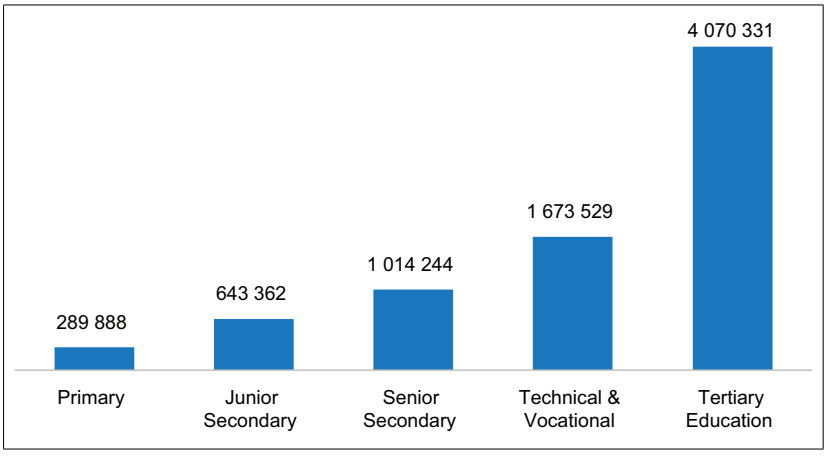


Source: 2018 Sierra Leone Integrated Household Survey and Authors' calculation

3.2.1.1 Household spending by level of education

Household spending increases with advancing levels of education, with higher spending seen in private institutions, except for TVET. *Figure 3.8* illustrates household expenditure per student by level of education during the 2017/18 academic year. The results show that families spent about Le 290,000 for every learner in primary school, representing 7% of the PCGDP, and just a little lower than government spending on learners in pre-primary schools. In junior secondary, families spent around Le 643,400, translating into 15% of the PCGDP, while in senior secondary the spending crossed the Le 1 million mark, which translates into 24% of the country's mean wealth. In post-secondary education, households spent Le 1.7 million for technical and vocational training, and Le 4 million for tertiary education, translating into 39% and 94% of the PCGDP, respectively.

Figure 3.8: Household spending by level of education, 2018



Source: 2018 Sierra Leone Integrated Household Survey

Households pay the highest to private institutions, with community schools providing a reprieve for poor families. Spending on private primary schools is estimated to be Le 951,100 (see *Table 3.23*), indicating that it is 3.5 times the spending on government schools within the same sub-sector. Households pay the least in community primary schools and, compared to private primary schools, it costs close to six times less to have their children attend. In junior secondary, the average household spending is Le 1.1 million to attend private schools, which is 71% more than the Le 653,000 paid for government schools. This is similar in senior secondary spending where households spend Le 1.8 million for private schools, 71% more than the Le 1 million spent on students in government schools. In community junior secondary schools, households pay one-third of the cost of private schools and almost half that of government schools.

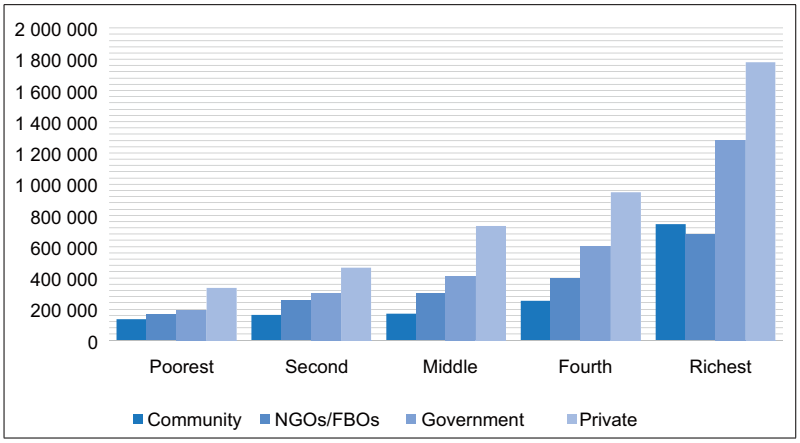
Table 3.23: Household spending on education by institution type

School type	Primary	Junior secondary	Senior secondary	Technical and vocational	Tertiary education
Government	272,909	652,673	1,054,269	2,232,507	4,163,818
Community	169,499	369,571	597,281	-	-
NGOs/FBOs	180,164	511,636	738,271	-	2,576,166
Private	951,116	1,112,851	1,801,934	1,952,010	5,744,173
Average	**289,888**	**643,362**	**1,014,244**	**1,673,529**	**4,070,331**

Source: 2018 Sierra Leone Integrated Household Survey

In TVET, spending for trainees in government institutions is Le 2.2 million, which is 14% higher than for those in private colleges, making TVET the only level where households spend less on private institutions. The spending in public TVET institutions may be more elevated compared to other education levels because of the spending deficits identified earlier, the government mostly supplying human resources with limited input for training materials and equipment. Households therefore may have to pay for the equipment themselves. In tertiary education, households pay the highest for private institutions, with a total of Le 5.7 million annually, 41% higher than the Le 4.1 million paid for government establishments, and more than twice the Le 2.6 paid to mission-run institutions.

Figure 3.9: Household spending by wealth status and school type, 2018

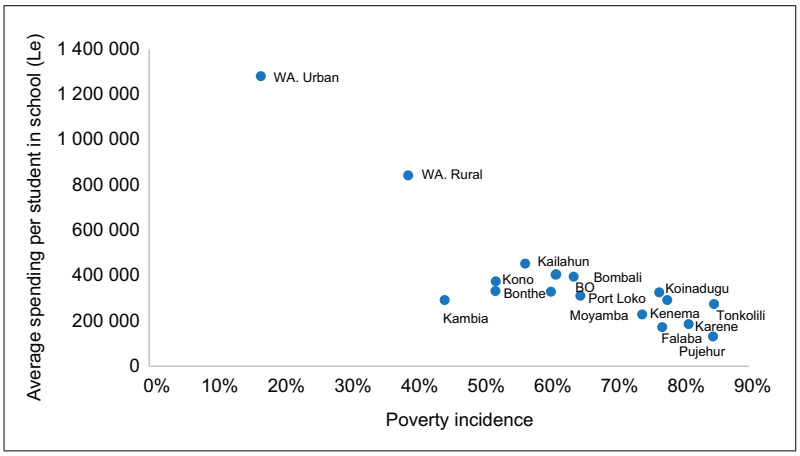


Source: 2018 Sierra Leone Integrated Household Survey

3.2.1.2 Household spending in primary and secondary by district

The household spending shows considerable association between the incidence of poverty and the average spending in a district. *Figure 3.10* illustrates the association between education spending and the poverty head count. With up to 85% of individuals living below the poverty threshold in Pujehun District (see *Figure 1.2*), as might be expected, households there spend the least on education. In the capital, Freetown, 17% of the population lives below the poverty threshold with spending on education being the highest item of spending. This again underscores how important the overall wellbeing of a family is in order for them to be able to access services that are not fully subsidized by the government. Notable also is the isolation of the Western Area districts from the rest of the country, Freetown spending far more than the rural Western Area.

Figure 3.10: Household spending by district and incidence of poverty, 2018



Source: Authors' computations based on 2018 Sierra Leone Integrated Household Survey

Table 3.24 presents the average household spending per student attending primary, junior and senior secondary, revealing the stark disparities that exist between districts, as seen earlier with average public spending by local councils. While the average spending in primary is Le 290,000, this ranges from a low of Le 100,000 in Pujehun, which has the highest incidence of poverty, to a high of Le 900,000 in Freetown.

Table 3.24: Average household spending by district for selected school levels

District	Average spending per student			As a percentage of PCGDP		
	Primary	Junior sec	Senior sec	Primary	Junior sec	Senior sec
Pujehun	100,239	254,895	349,398	2.4%	6.1%	8.3%
Karene	124,398	319,611	461,754	3.0%	7.6%	11.0%
Moyamba	125,808	536,381	838,342	3.0%	12.7%	19.9%
Kenema	126,684	405,933	729,227	3.0%	9.6%	17.3%
Falaba	142,303	428,918	560,044	3.4%	10.2%	13.3%
Bo	171,662	518,096	760,098	4.1%	12.3%	18.1%
Port Loko	190,189	512,578	756,084	4.5%	12.2%	18.0%
Tonkolili	190,413	416,735	717,919	4.5%	9.9%	17.1%
Koinadugu	199,516	475,482	525,577	4.7%	11.3%	12.5%
Kambia	201,295	501,139	642,651	4.8%	11.9%	15.3%
Bonthe	211,436	590,427	1,082,386	5.0%	14.0%	25.7%
Bombali	233,976	559,477	738,986	5.6%	13.3%	17.6%
Kono	267,926	521,978	823,366	6.4%	12.4%	19.6%
Kailahun	291,136	775,628	985,166	6.9%	18.4%	23.4%
WA. Rural	619,441	977,893	1,344,695	14.7%	23.2%	32.0%
WA. Urban	933,326	1,133,044	1,529,000	22.2%	26.9%	36.3%
Sierra Leone	**289,888**	**643,362**	**1,014,244**	**6.9%**	**15.3%**	**24.1%**

Source: 2018 Sierra Leone Integrated Household Survey

Excluding Western Area districts, the results show that Kailahun, with its Le 291,000 spends almost three times the amount spent by households in Pujehun. The spending patterns in junior and senior secondary are not any different than in primary, the average spending in Freetown (Le 643,400 and Le 1.5 million) being 4.4 times the spending in Pujehun at both levels of secondary education. These results continue to underscore the need for a more targeted approach to cushioning households from the burden of education costs.

3.2.1.3 Recurrent cost-sharing between government and households

Despite government interventions to cushion the poor from costs, households still contribute significantly towards education. The average spending by government and households provides some idea of the resources utilized to sustain learners/students in a school year. Government spending is deflated to the 2018 prices to allow integration between public and household spending. With a low estimate for pre-primary spending by households, we conservatively assume that, on average, households spend the same as the average spent by the government (see *Table 3.25*). In primary, the total spending by both government and households is Le 508,600 annually, and more than half (57%) of this is contributed by households. In junior and senior secondary, the total spending is Le 990,000 and Le 1.8 million respectively, with households contributing two-thirds in the case of junior secondary, and 57% in the case of senior secondary.

Table 3.25: Government and household average spending

	2019 Public (2018 constant)	2018 Households	Total	Percentage paid by households	As % of PCGDP	Relative to primary
Pre-primary	269,342	-	269,342	0.6%	6.4%	0.5
Primary	218,675	289,888	508,563	57.0%	12.1%	1.0
Junior secondary	345,461	643,362	988,823	65.1%	23.5%	1.9
Senior secondary	774,471	1,014,244	1,788,715	56.7%	42.5%	3.5
Technical & vocational	933,306	1,673,529	2,606,835	64.2%	62.0%	5.1
Tertiary education	4,008,222	4,070,331	8,078,553	50.4%	192.0%	15.9

Source: 2018 Sierra Leone Integrated Household Survey

In TVET and tertiary education, the total spending is Le 2.6 million and Le 8 million respectively, and as in the case of junior secondary, households contribute two-thirds for TVET. In the case of tertiary education, the bill is shared equally. One of the concerns highlighted by these results is the irony of the pro-poor programmes in education like the FQSE. Estimates from the SLIHS (SSL, 2018) indicate that more than one-third of the learners in primary schools come from rich families (see *Table 3.26*). But the government response is a uniform subsidy to all children, despite evidence arising from the household spending survey. But the burden of educational costs is not the same for rich households as it is for poor families. Moreover, when young people get to tertiary education, only the elite are left in the system. In fact, 9 out of 10 students in higher education come from the top rich and richest classes (top 40%), yet the government spends more than one-fifth of the public recurrent resources on them (see the intra-sector spending of recurrent resources).

Table 3.26: Education attendance by socio-economic status, 2018

Socio-economic status	Pre-primary	Primary	Junior	Senior	Vocational	Tertiary
Poorest	12.0%	24.5%	17.8%	7.8%	0.0%	0.8%
Poor	9.9%	22.4%	19.2%	16.3%	13.2%	5.7%
Middle	16.5%	20.9%	20.7%	20.1%	8.7%	3.7%
Rich	25.3%	18.0%	21.9%	24.8%	26.1%	14.7%
Richest	36.3%	14.0%	20.3%	30.7%	52.0%	75.1%
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

Source: 2018 Sierra Leone Integrated Household Survey

3.2.1.4 Household spending on scholastic items

Fees, tuition and complementary learning materials are the main items covered by household spending, and are unlikely to be replaced by the introduction of a programme like FQSE. The spending of school subsidies in MBSSE is currently at the discretion of the school committee, and largely the school heads. However, the MBSSE is preparing guidelines for the utilization of the tuition subsidy. The proposed guideline is organized into the three thematic areas of access and equity; quality, relevance and integrity; and system strengthening. They are expected to cover:

a) **Access and equity (30%):** This would cover school maintenance, including acquisition of school furniture; establishment and maintenance of playing grounds, lawns and gardens; payment of utilities like electricity and water for schools with such facilities; making schools accessible to vulnerable learners, including physical access to classrooms and toilets based on need; and the establishment and maintenance of changing rooms and separate toilets for girls.
b) **Quality, relevance and integrity (50%):** This would cover the payment of non-payroll staff; engagement of temporary and/or part-time staff to fill staffing gaps; provision of additional teaching and learning materials (TLMs) as needed; provision of remedial lessons for students needing additional support; facilitation of field trips for students to encourage knowledge sharing; provision of consumables for science, home economics and other subjects in need of 'practical work'; facilitation of continuous professional development programmes for teachers; implementation of interventions aimed at reducing examination malpractices; provision of teacher sign-in books for class prefects; and implementation of electronic records for all enrolled students.
c) **System strengthening (20%):** This would cover improvements in data collection and usage at school level; facilitation of the activities of boards of governors and school management committees as well as their induction; and financing equipment and programmes for emergency and disaster management.

Apart from the array of items covered by government school grants, there are other essentials that are not included in the guidelines, but have a direct or indirect impact on learning. These include school uniforms, food, transport, accommodation, complementary learning materials, and support to privately employed teachers and volunteers who may not be covered by the government grants. As discussed earlier, this group of teachers form the majority of educators, even in approved schools (see *Table 3.18*). It is therefore not surprising that the household spending covers fees and tuition, school uniforms, food and transport and other non-declared items as presented in *Table 3.27*.

In primary for instance, the average spending per student is Le 290,000, consisting of Le 122,600 on fees and tuition which covers registration, contribution to PTA, and support for students' extra classes. The spending on tuition translates into 42% of the average spending in primary. Learning materials, which cost households an average of Le 71,300, account for one-quarter of spending in the sub-sector, while school uniforms account for 16% (see *Table 3.27*).

Table 3.27: Household spending on education by items covered

Item	Primary	Junior secondary	Senior secondary	Vocational	Higher education
Fees and tuition	122,571	283,628	432,967	1,250,079	2,991,496
Uniform/clothes	46,827	67,694	81,813	16,535	7,329
Learning materials	71,291	160,719	271,668	239,360	376,405
Food and transport	18,194	75,740	168,495	352,439	666,447
Other	32,511	64,084	103,371	200,554	229,851
Total	**291,394**	**651,864**	**1,058,314**	**2,058,967**	**4,271,528**
Fees and tuition	42.1%	43.5%	40.9%	60.7%	70.0%
Uniform/clothes	16.1%	10.4%	7.7%	0.8%	0.2%
Learning materials	24.5%	24.7%	25.7%	11.6%	8.8%
Food and transport	6.2%	11.6%	15.9%	17.1%	15.6%
Other	11.2%	9.8%	9.8%	9.7%	5.4%
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

Source: 2018 Sierra Leone Integrated Household Survey

In junior and senior secondary, fees and tuition together with learning materials account for two-thirds of the household spending, and when a uniform is added, these items account for more than three-quarters of household spending in the sub-sector. There is a remarkable rise in the share of household spending that goes towards food and transport (accommodation included) between primary and secondary, owing to the dispersed distribution of schools at this level, occasioning the need for students to lodge. In TVET, fees and tuition average Le 1.5 million, and account for 61% of the total spending at this level. And in tertiary education, households spend close to Le 3 million for students, representing 70% of the spending. Food and transport account for significant part of costs in post-secondary education, 17% in TVET and 15% in tertiary.

Table 3.28: Household spending on education by items covered in government schools

Item	Primary	Junior secondary	Senior secondary	Vocational	Higher education
Fees and Tuition	105,226	274,100	414,110	1,480,092	2,917,761
Uniform/clothes	47,800	67,109	83,820	16,293	6,132
Learning materials	72,175	165,648	281,643	241,088	375,118
Food and transport	19,155	80,354	173,399	309,218	650,184
Other	29,469	65,907	101,297	185,817	214,622
Total	**273,825**	**653,118**	**1,054,269**	**2,232,508**	**4,163,817**
Fees and tuition	38.4%	42.0%	39.3%	66.3%	70.1%
Uniform/clothes	17.5%	10.3%	8.0%	0.7%	0.1%
Learning materials	26.4%	25.4%	26.7%	10.8%	9.0%
Food and transport	7.0%	12.3%	16.4%	13.9%	15.6%
Other	10.8%	10.1%	9.6%	8.3%	5.2%
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

Source: 2018 Sierra Leone Integrated Household Survey

Obviously, these items are for both private and government institutions (see *Table 3.28*). While programmes like FQSE are noble and seek to ensure the participation of all eligible children, the role played by the household spending is quite critical, and the best approach to this is a balance in communicating the intended cushioning to be expected from government programmes, and at the same time working on a graduated programme which takes into account the different levels of need in the different groups. With the exception of TVET and food in primary schools, households spend more on girls than on boys (see *Table 3.29*).

Table 3.29: Household spending on education by items covered by gender

Item	Primary	Junior secondary	Senior secondary	Vocational	Higher education
Boys					
Fees and tuition	115,491	270,438	387,758	1,587,671	3,012,406
Uniform/clothes	46,123	66,427	77,141	8,353	5,203
Learning materials	69,958	159,170	258,305	310,819	362,439
Food and transport	19,153	73,354	141,636	374,057	573,268
Other	32,053	64,064	101,746	161,912	201,683
Total	**282,778**	**633,452**	**966,586**	**2,442,811**	**4,154,999**
Girls					
Fees and tuition	129,578	296,714	481,816	976,785	2,967,945
Uniform/clothes	47,524	68,951	86,860	23,159	9,723
Learning materials	72,610	162,255	286,106	181,511	392,135
Food and transport	17,244	78,108	197,516	334,938	771,393
Other	32,965	64,103	105,128	231,837	261,576
Total	**299,922**	**670,131**	**1,157,426**	**1,748,230**	**4,402,772**
Total	**1.06**	**1.06**	**1.20**	**0.72**	**1.06**

Source: 2018 Sierra Leone Integrated Household Survey

CHAPTER 4

Learning outcomes and system management

Student learning outcomes, and the management process in place within the education system to ensure they are effective, are key issues for policy-makers. This chapter examines the extent to which pupils acquire the learning outcomes, and the strengths and weaknesses of the management mechanisms, with an emphasis on teacher and infrastructure management.

4.1 Students learning outcomes

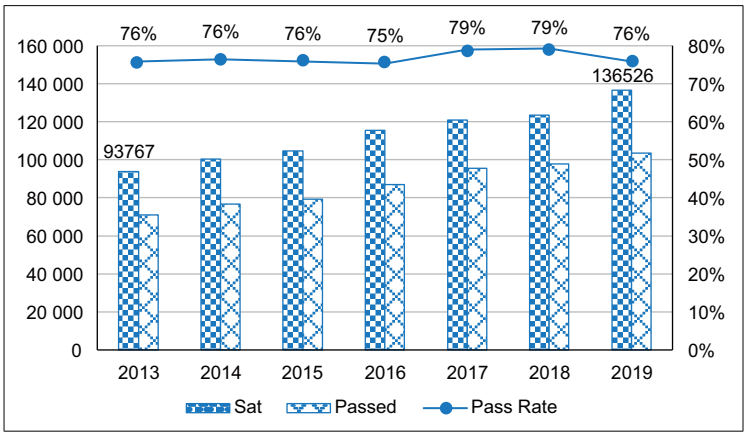
Student's learning outcomes can be evaluated using two sources of data: national examinations and learning assessments. National examinations are aligned with the school curriculum and certify a student's readiness to enter the next level of instruction. Learning assessments, on the other hand, test the standard skills of students on a sample basis and tend to reflect the effectiveness of the education system to deliver quality services. After an overview of national examination results, this section provides a summary of two recent studies on learning assessments.

4.1.1 National examination results

4.1.1.1 Around 8 out of 10 students passed the National Primary School Examination (NPSE)

The sitting of the National Primary School Examination (NPSE) signals the completion of the primary school cycle. It tests students in five areas: English, mathematics, general studies, verbal aptitude, and quantitative aptitude. As illustrated in *Figure 4.1*, **the number of pupils sitting the NPSE exam has been rising progressively from 93,767 in 2013 to 136,526 in 2019. Due to the use of standardised T-scores** and an unchanged aggregate pass score, the pass rate has remained around 76% **over the period.** Note that the aggregate score is more a reflection of how pupils perform vis-à-vis the average, rather than their actual level.

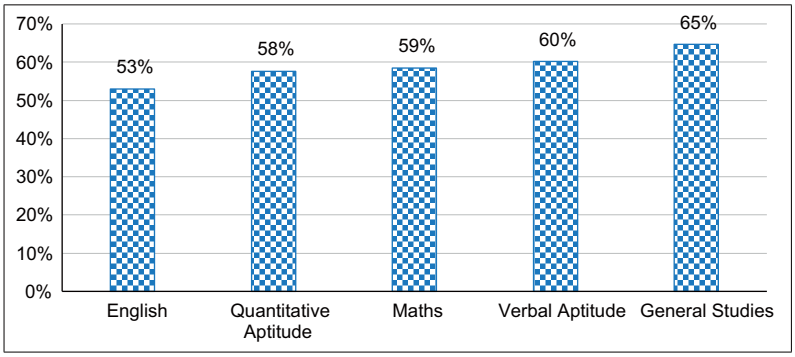
Figure 4.1: Number of NPSE candidates, graduates, and pass rates, 2013-2019



Source: Authors' computation based on national examination data

A comparison of candidates' pass rates across subjects in 2019 shows that more of them got above average marks in general studies (65%) than in all the other papers (see *Figure 4.2*).

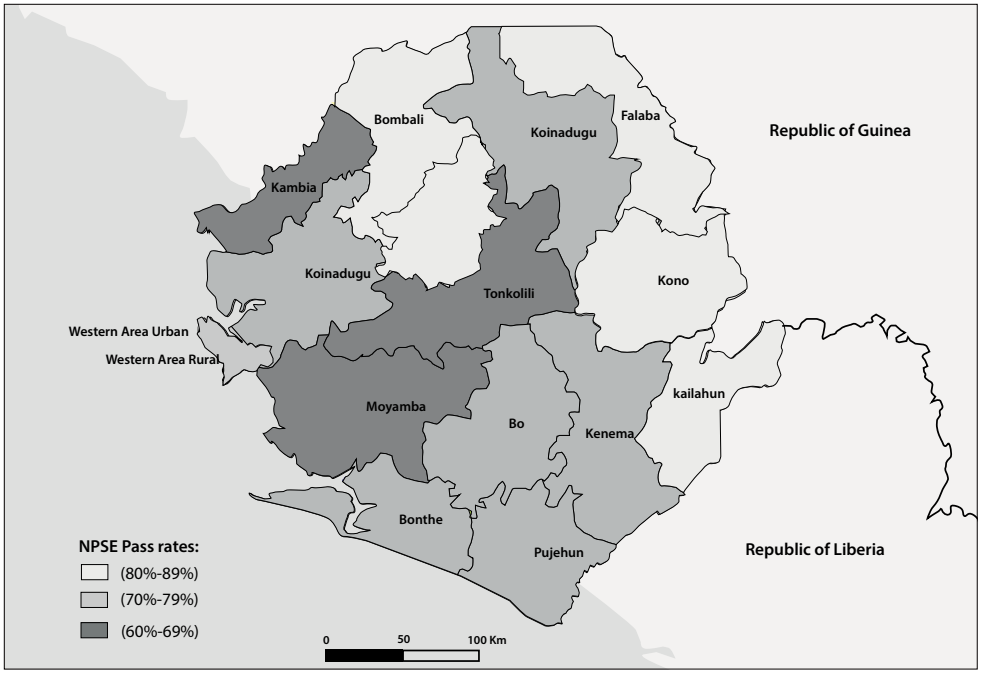
Figure 4.2: Proportion of NPSE candidates who are average or above average in performance, by subject, 2019



Source: Authors' computation based on national examination data

As shown in *Figure 4.3*, NPSE pass rates vary across districts. In 2019, NPSE pass rates were lowest in Kambia (64%) and highest in Kono (82%).

Figure 4.3: NPSE pass rates by district, 2019



Source: Authors' computation based on national examination data

From a gender perspective, **boys slightly outperformed girls over the period (except in 2019), but gender disparities were not significant** as shown by the Gender Parity Index that is remains close to one over the period 2014 to 2019 (see *Table 4.1*).

Table 4.1: NPSE pass rates by gender and Gender Parity Index (GPI), 2014-2019

	NPSE pass rates (%)		GPI
	Boys	Girls	
2014	78	75	0.96
2015	77	74	0.96
2016	76	74	0.97
2017	80	78	0.98
2018	80	78	0.98
2019	76	77	1.02

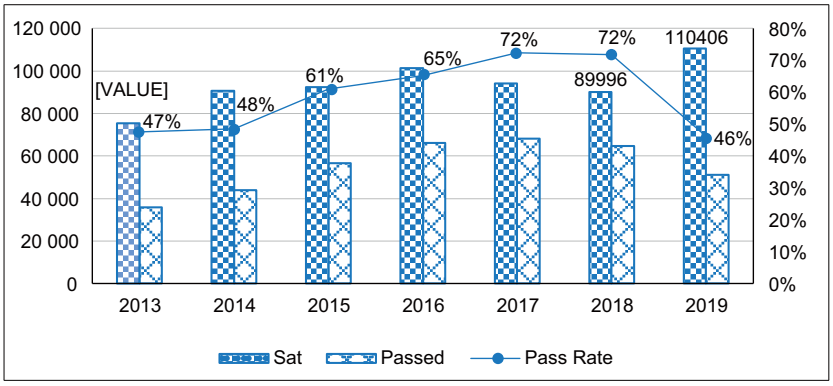
Source: Authors' computation based on national examination data

4.1.1.2 Trend in Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) pass rates

The BECE is administrated at the end of the junior secondary cycle and signals the completion of basic education. Each candidate takes eight subjects, four of them being compulsory core subjects: language arts, mathematics, social studies and integrated sciences. To qualify for entry to general senior secondary level, students must pass at least five subjects including language arts or mathematics.

In 2019, only one out of two candidates who sat the BECE exam met the minimum requirements to enter general senior secondary school. Figure 4.4 presents the number of candidates and the pass rate trend from 2013 to 2019. Out of the 110,406 candidates who sat the BECE exam in 2019 (against 75,357 in 2013), only 50,984 (46%) met the requirements to proceed to the next level. Over the period, the share of successful candidates followed an upward trend, before falling again under the 50% threshold in 2019. A possible explanation for this drop might be related to control measures adopted to improve system integrity and reduce cases of malpractice in national examinations.

Figure 4.4: Number of BECE candidates, graduates, and pass rates, 2013-2019



Source: Authors' computation based on national examination data

Since 2014, boys have been consistently performing slightly better, but girls are catching up. Indeed, gender disparities have narrowed over the period as shown by the increasing Gender Parity Index (GPI) that goes from 0.88 in 2014 to 0.94 in 2018, and 0.92 in 2019 (see *Table 4.2*).

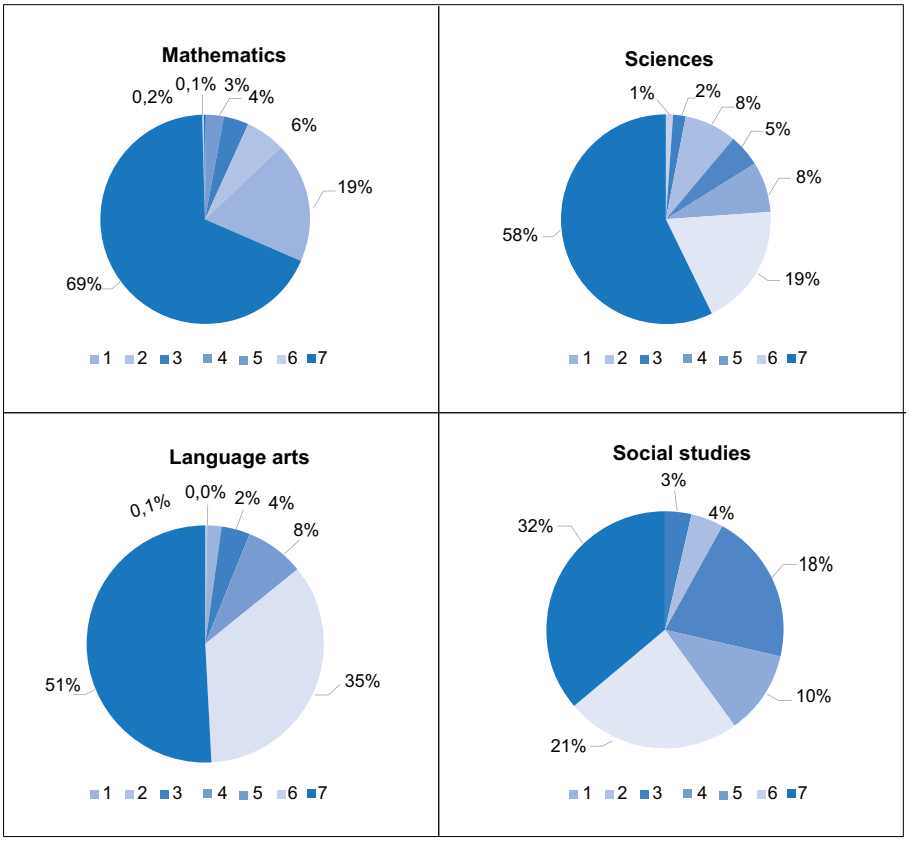
Table 4.2: BECE pass rates by gender and Gender Parity Index (GPI), 2014-2019

	NPSE pass rates (%)		GPI
	Boys	Girls	
2014	51.4	45.2	0.88
2015	63.6	58.2	0.91
2016	67.8	62.6	0.92
2017	75.0	69.6	0.93
2018	74.2	69.4	0.94
2019	48.0	44.4	0.92

Source: Authors' computation based on national examination data

More than half of BECE candidates do not pass the cores subjects, except for social studies. For each subject, scores are given on a reversed seven-point standard scale and range from one to seven, with one being the best score and seven being a fail. Candidates should obtain a score between one and six to 'pass' the subject. *Figure 4.5* presents the distribution of score for the four core subjects. Students' performance is poor, as demonstrated by their low achievement level in the core subjects, except for social studies. **The percentage failing is particularly prominent in mathematics (69%)**, but is also significant in integrated science (58%) and language arts (51%). The low level of achievement in language arts, which is English language and literature combined, is quite worrying because of its importance for teaching and learning in Sierra Leone. Beyond the fact that one out of every two candidates do not pass language arts, 35% of the successful candidates only achieve the lowest pass grade (score 6), underlying the fact that the majority of students might continue to have challenges in learning throughout their schooling because they have not mastered the language of instruction.

Figure 4.5: BECE score distribution, core subjects, 2019



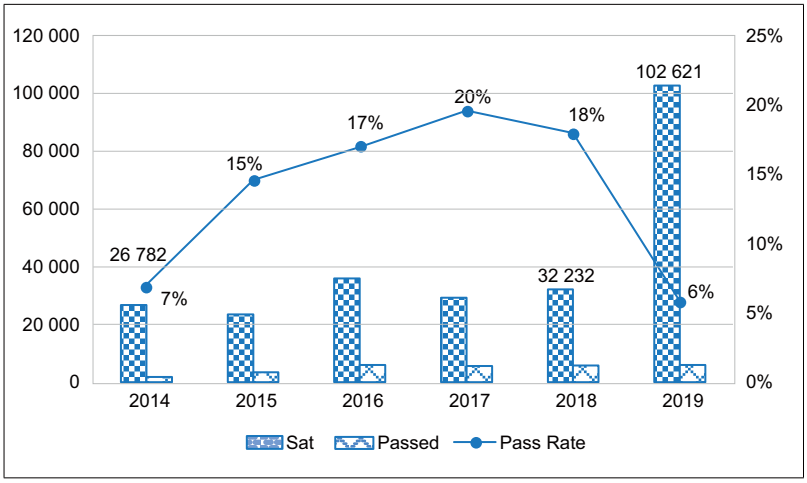
Source: Authors' computation based on national examination data – Note: scores are reverse and range from one to seven, one being the highest score and seven being a fail. Candidates should obtain a score between one and six to succeed the subject.

4.1.1.3 Extremely weak pass rates in West African Senior School Certificate Examinations (WASSCE)

Students take the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) at the end of senior secondary school and it is used to screen them for entry into higher education institutions. The most important subjects are English language and mathematics. In addition to these two, each candidate chooses between six and seven others. This means that most WASSCE candidates from Sierra Leone take eight or nine subjects. Some repeaters sit fewer.

As shown in *Figure 4.6*, **the number of candidates who sat the WASSCE exam increased from 56,893 in 2014 to 102,621 in 2019, with a major increase observed between 2018 and 2019.** This was largely due senior secondary school reverting to a three-year cycle from a four-year one, which resulted in two sets of students sitting the WASSCE at the same time. In other words, students promoted from SS3 to SS4 (which no longer existed), and those from SS2 that were promoted to SS3. Part of the increase might also be due to the implementation of the FQSE programme at the start of the 2018/2019 academic year.

Figure 4.6: Number of WASSCE candidates, graduates, and pass rates, 2014-2019



Source: Authors' computation based on national examination data

Since 2014, the WASSCE exam pass rate has been very weak, suggesting that access to higher education is restricted to a really small percentage of the Sierra Leonean population. Over the period, the highest pass rate was registered in 2017, when one out of five candidates who sat the exam met the minimum requirements to enter into higher learning institutions (see *Figure 4.6*). There was a large decline, however, in 2019 when the pass rate fell to 6%. This could be explained by the removal of the fourth year of the senior secondary cycle which brought together of two sets of candidates with a different number of years of schooling. But it could also be because of the extra thorough monitoring and supervision conducted by the MBSSE in order to cut down on the level of examination malpractices threatening to overcome the system. These have a direct connection with the weak management system analysed in detail in *Chapter 7*.

As shown by the Gender Parity Index reported in *Table 4.3*, **no significant gender disparities have been observed among WASSCE candidates with girls' pass rates being as weak as those of boys.**

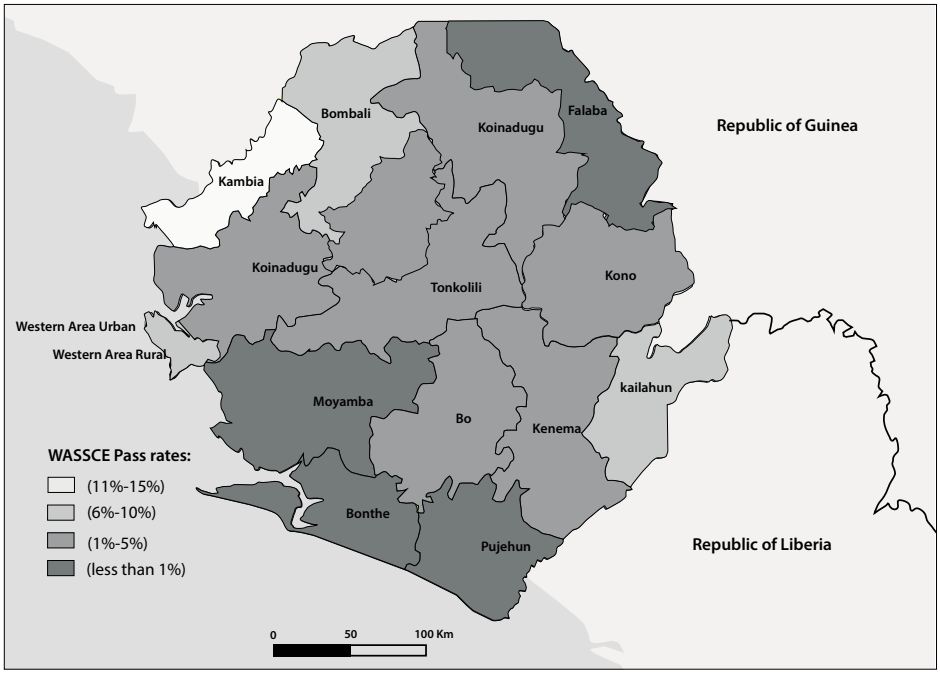
Table 4.3: WASSCE pass rates by gender and Gender Parity Index (GPI), 2014-2019

	NPSE pass rates (%)		GPI
	Boys	Girls	
2014	7.9	6.2	0,8
2015	14.5	14.7	1,0
2016	17.9	15.7	0,9
2017	20.1	19.0	0,9
2018	17.6	18.4	1,0
2019	5.8	5.9	1,0

Source: Authors' computation based on national examination data

Wide variations in WASSCE pass rates are observed at the district level. In 2019, pass rates were the highest in Kambia (12%), West Urban/Rural Areas (9%), Kaliahun (7%) and Karene (6%), while the lowest was in Moyamba, Pujehun, Bonthe and Falaba where pass rates did not even reach 1% (see *Figure 4.7*).

Figure 4.7: WASSCE pass rates by district, 2019



Source: Authors' computation based on national examination data

Overall, education outcomes from public examinations are extremely low, especially at secondary level with less than half of the junior secondary students passing the BECE exam (46%), and less than one out of ten senior secondary students passing the WASSCE exam (6%) in 2019. These results raise important questions about the skills/knowledge/competence level acquired throughout the schooling system, and the overall quality of the education system. Further analyses from learning assessment data are provided in the next section.

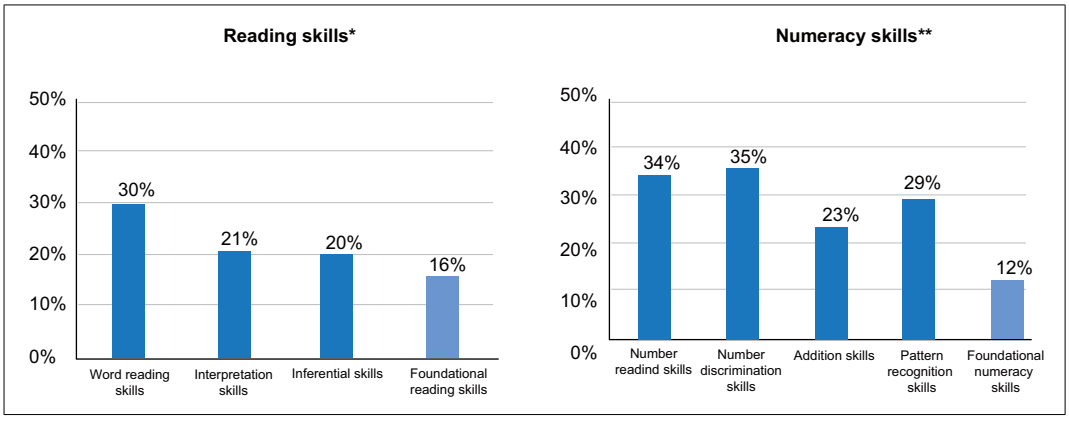
4.1.2 Learning assessments

4.1.2.1 MICS Foundational Learning Assessment: Children do not acquire foundational reading and numeracy skills

The Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS6) conducted in 2017 included a module assessing foundational reading and numeracy skills of children aged 7 to 14. It was designed to measure children's reading and numeracy skills expected after completion of the second and third year of primary education (Grades 2 and 3).

About four out of five Sierra Leonean children do not acquire the early reading and numeracy skills necessary to build a solid foundation for learning in their adult life according to the MICS6 survey. As illustrated in *Figure 4.8*, only 3 out of 10 children were able to correctly read a story, while just 1 out of 5 succeeded in answering the interpretation and inferential questions based on it. Overall, only 16% of children acquired the expected reading skills for their age. However, children are struggling even more with numeracy, with only 12% of children with foundational numeracy skills. More specifically, only one-third of children were able to read six numbers between one and three digits each (numeracy reading skills), or able to answer the five questions on number magnitudes (number discrimination skills). Furthermore, addition seems to be the most difficult numeracy skill, with only 23% of children (less than a quarter) able to solve simple questions.

Figure 4.8: Children aged 7 to 14 reading and numeracy skills, 2017



Source: MICS Eagle Report, 2019

Note: * The reading assessment asked children to read a short story and then answer three literal and two inferential comprehension questions. Children are considered to have foundational reading skills if they successfully read 90% of the words and correctly answer all the questions. ** The numeracy assessment asked children to answer a set of questions designed to assess four competencies: (i) number reading, (ii) number discrimination, (iii) addition and (iv) pattern recognition. Children are considered to have foundational numeracy skills if they can correctly answer all the questions in the four assessed domains.

Children from rural areas and the poorest families have a considerably lower chance of acquiring foundational reading and numeracy skills. Important disparities in children's learning are observed with regards to the area of residence and socio-economic background. Only 5% of children living in rural areas and 3% of children from the poorest household acquire early foundational reading and numeracy skills (see *Table 4.4*). Those living in the Western Region (capital region) performed better than children from all other parts of the country, with 35% and 26% having foundational reading and numeracy skills, respectively.

Table 4.4: Foundational reading and numeracy skills in relation to children's background, 2017

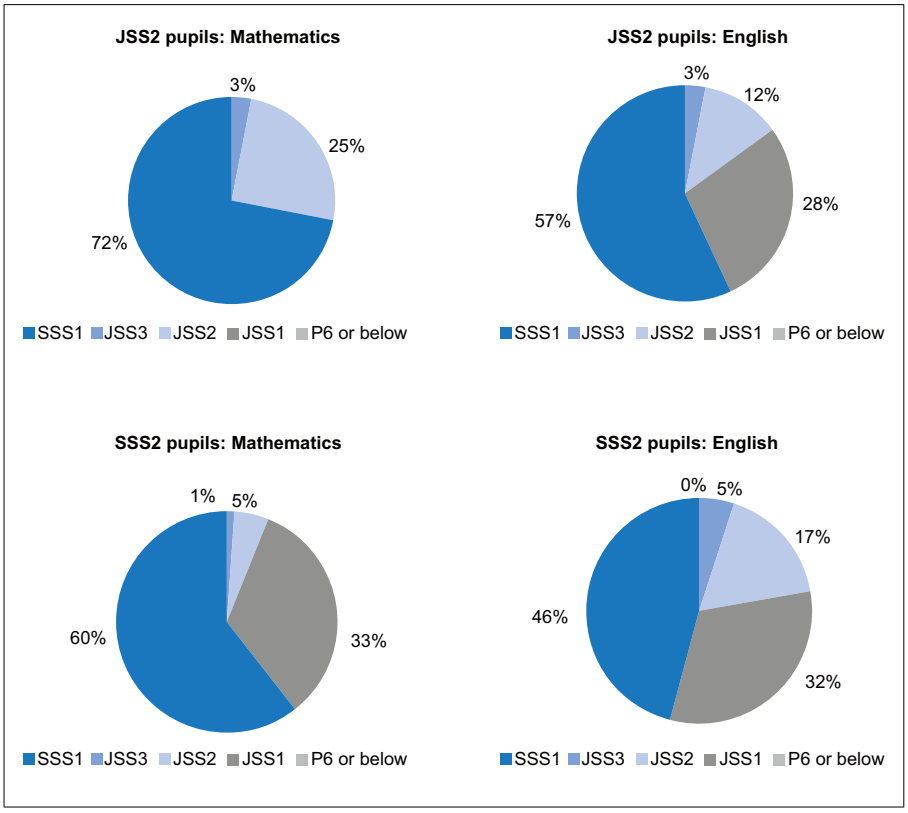
	Foundational reading skills	Foundational numeracy skills
Girls	15%	11%
Boys	17%	13%
Rural	5%	5%
Urban	30%	22%
East	11%	9%
North	10%	7%
South	13%	10%
West	35%	26%
Q1 - Poorest	2%	3%
Q2	5%	4%
Q3	10%	10%
Q4	25%	20%
Q5 - Richest	39%	25%

Source: MICS Eagle Report, 2019

4.1.2.2 Sierra Leone Secondary Grade Learning Assessment: Learning does not meet curricula expectations

The Sierra Leone Secondary Grade Learning Assessment (SGLA) measures the English language and mathematics learning outcomes of students attending the second grade of junior secondary and senior secondary school (JSSS2 and SSS2). The third round of the survey was conducted in 2019. Using the curricula as a reference, SGLA aims to assess the knowledge and skills acquired by pupils in these grades, and their ability to apply them in "real life" both in and outside of school. Each level of learning is sorted into five performance bands, representing a set of skills deemed appropriate for that grade. Performance bands goes from "P6 or below" referring to basic skills expected at primary school to "SSS1" referring to more demanding skills expected at SSS1 grade.

Figure 4.9: Distribution of JSS2 and SSS2 pupils across English and mathematics grade-level performance bands



Source: Authors' computation based on SGLA II Report, 2018

After having completed 8 (JSS2) to 11 (SSS2) years of schooling, most Sierra Leonean students only demonstrate skills equivalent to those expected from a primary school pupil. *Figure 4.9* presents the distribution of JSS2 and SSS2 students across levels of learning in both English language and mathematics. Results shows that the majority of JSS2 students were only able to demonstrate mathematics (72%) and English language (57%) skills that would be expected from students at Grade P6 or below. The share of JSS2 pupils who demonstrate the expected skills for the level they are in is only estimated at 3% for mathematics and 12% for English language skills. Moreover, 3% of JSS2 pupils showed English skills exceeding expectations (JSS3-level knowledge) but none show mathematics skills exceeding expectations. A similar picture holds for students attending SSS2 with 60% and 46% of SSS2 students only able to demonstrate mathematics and English language skills respectively, expected from students in Grade P6 or below.

Figure 4.5: Disparities in pupil's performance by household wealth

	JSS2		SSS2	
	Richest	Poorest	Richest	Poorest
English				
P6 or below	51%	65%	39%	59%
JSS1	30%	25%	32%	30%
JSS2 or above	14%	9%	29%	12%
Mathematics				
P6 or below	67%	76%	53%	74%
JSS1	29%	21%	36%	24%
JSS2 or above	4%	2%	10%	2%

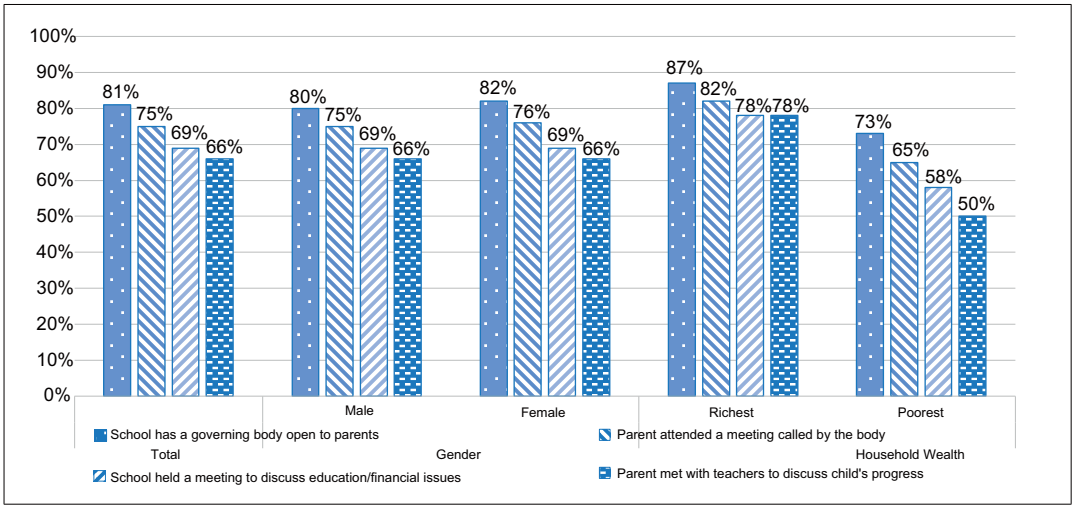
Source: Authors' computation based on SGLA II Report, 2018

Pupils from the poorest households are more likely to feature in the lowest performance bands in both English language and mathematics. *Table 4.5* provides an overview of the socio-economic disparities in learning levels. The results show that household wealth is an important determinant of a pupil's learning level, JSS2 and SSS2 pupils from the poorest families being more likely to have their skills limited to those expected at primary grade level, and to struggle with skills expected from higher grades (JSS2-level knowledge or above). Gender disparities are analysed and discussed in *Chapter 8*.

4.1.2.3 Parents play a significant role in their children's learning

Among the many factors associated with how well pupils learn, particular attention should be paid to parents' involvement in their children's learning activities. With this in mind, MICS6 data provides information on school-based parental involvement through the following indicators: (i) schools have a governing body in which parents can participate; (ii) parents attended school board meetings in the last 12 months; (iii) parents discuss key education or financial issues; (iv) parents met the teacher to discuss child's progress.

Figure 4.10: School-based parental involvement by gender and household wealth, MICS6, 2017

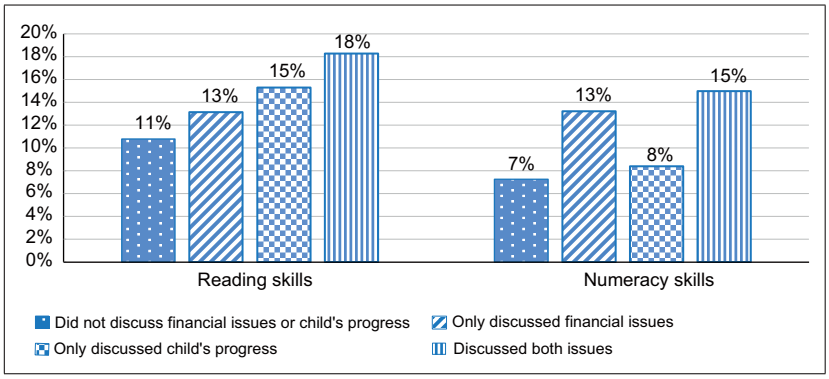


Source: MICS Eagle Report, 2019

School-based parental involvement is quite high but closely link to household wealth. The analysis of parental involvement from the MICS-Eagle report is presented in *Figure 4.10*. Results indicate that a vast majority of children (81%) attended a school with a governing body open to parents. In many countries, the presence of a governing body does not necessarily imply parent participation. But in Sierra Leone, school-based parental engagement is quite high with the parents of 75% of children having attended governing body meetings. Therefore, the majority of them have had the opportunity to discuss key education or financial issues (69%), or meet with teachers to discuss their child's progress (66%). Although there are no significant gender disparities in school-based parent involvement, socio-economic inequalities are clearly marked. Indeed, children from wealthier households more often go to schools with a governing body (87%, in comparison to 73% of the poorest children), and their parents are more often engaged in different meetings to discuss education or financial issues (78%, in comparison to 58% for the poorest children) or their child's progress (78%, versus 50% for the poorest children).

Parental engagement is significantly associated with children's learning skills. *Figure 4.11* from the MICS Eagle report analyses the relationship between children's reading and numeracy foundational skills and the engagement between parents and teachers. The results show that children whose parents do not interact with teachers (in discussions related to financial issues or the child's progress) perform significantly worse than those whose parents do engage in such discussions.

Figure 4.11: Children's foundational learning skills in relation to parental interaction with teachers, MICS6, 2017



Source: MICS Eagle Report, 2019

4.2 System management issues

4.2.1 Teacher management is key to quality

In order to improve education quality, teachers are one of the most important resource at the disposal of the education system, not only because their salaries represent the major part of public spending on education, but also because there is no teaching without teachers. Efficient management and utilization of educators is therefore a prerequisite to ensure adequate student learning. It is essential that teachers

are available to all pupils across the country, and that they have a high level of commitment and adequate professional skills to perform their duties. This section reviews key features of the utilization of the teaching workforce in Sierra Leone with respect to their status, qualifications, experience and workload, as well as their deployment in the system across local councils and schools.

4.2.1.1 Teacher payment status: Two-thirds are not on the government payroll

Despite the FQSE programme, 64% of teachers are not on the government payroll, leaving only 36% (just over a third) who are paid out of the government budget (see *Table 4.6*), with varying salaries according to their grading. At the pre-primary level, the government is paying only 15% of teachers. At primary level, the total is slightly more than 47,700 (or 57% of the total teaching workforce in the country), with only 39% on the payroll in 2019. At secondary, respectively 34% and 40% of teachers in the lower and upper levels are on the government payroll. It is worth noting that there are no significant gender disparities between government-paid teachers. As shown in *Figure 4.12,* across all levels, 35% of male teachers are paid by the government against 37% of female teachers.

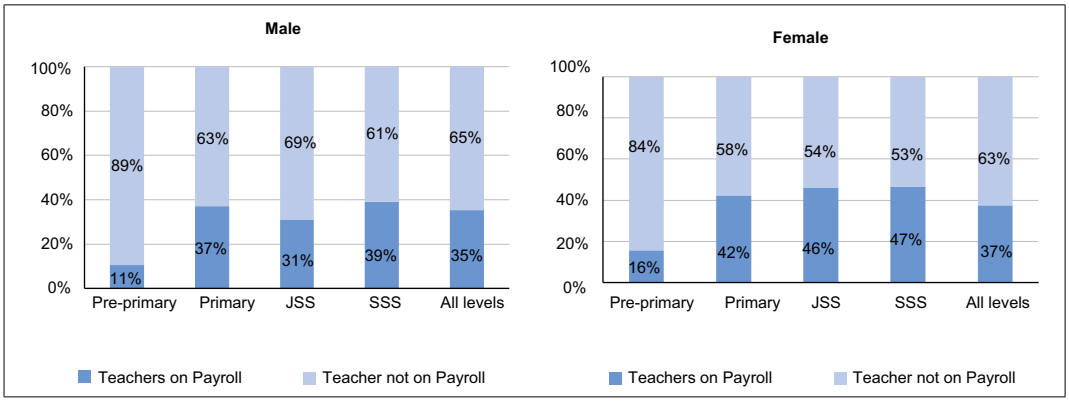
Table 4.6: Number and share of teachers by payment status (all schools)

	2011*		2019	
	Number	%	Number	%
Pre-primary	**1,219**	**100%**	**5,575**	**100%**
Teachers on payroll	463	38%	835	15%
Teachers not on payroll	756	62%	4 740	85%
Primary	**35,986**	**100%**	**47,742**	**100%**
Teachers on payroll	22,311	62%	18,462	39%
Teachers not on payroll	13,675	38%	29,280	61%
Junior secondary	**11,360**	**100%**	**19,885**	**100%**
Teachers on payroll	6,589	58%	6,662	34%
Teachers not on payroll	4,771	42%	13,223	66%
Senior secondary	**3,777**	**100%**	**9,852**	**100%**
Teachers on payroll	2,719	72%	3,913	40%
Teachers not on payroll	1,058	28%	5,939	60%
Total teachers	**52,342**	**100%**	**83,054**	**100%**
Teachers on payroll	**32,083**	**61%**	**29,872**	**36%**
Teachers not on payroll	**20,259**	**39%**	**53,182**	**64%**

Source: Authors' computation – 2011: ESA (2013) and 2019: annual school census database (2019)

In order to cope with the expansion of schooling and to tackle the need for teachers, an increase in the recruitment of non-government paid teachers has been necessary. Indeed, the significant decrease in the share of government-paid teachers observed at all levels can be interpreted in the light of the rapid expansion of enrolment depicted in *Chapter 2* and achieved at the expense of the availability of government funds to ensure teacher salaries.

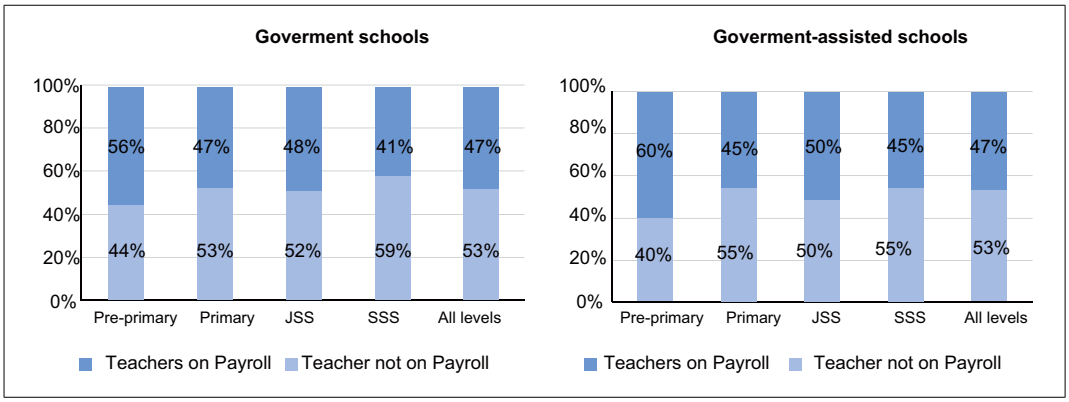
Figure 4.12: Share of teachers by payment status and gender, 2019



Source: Authors' computation – annual school census database, 2019

Even in government and government-assisted schools, a significant number of teachers are not paid by the government. The Teaching Service Commission (TSC) has a mandate to recruit teachers in both government and government-assisted schools. *Figure 4.13* provides an overview of the distribution of teachers according to their payment status in both types of schools. The results show that in government schools, 53% of teachers are paid by the government, the share of payroll teachers varying from 44% at pre-primary level, to 59% at senior secondary level. Moreover, no significant difference is observed between the proportion of teachers on the payroll in government and government-assisted schools.

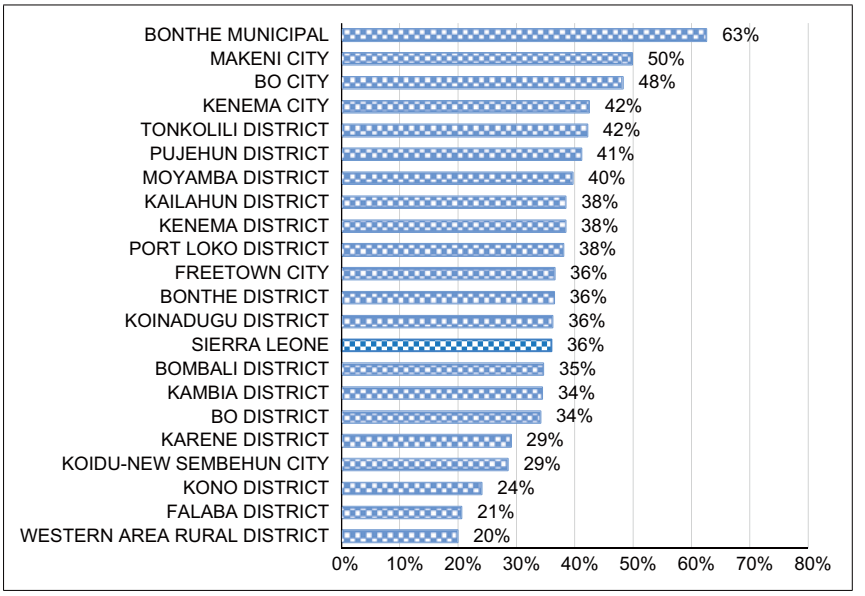
Figure 4.13: Share of teachers by payment status in government and government-assisted schools, 2019



Source: Authors' computation – annual school census database, 2019

Government-paid teachers are unevenly distributed across local councils. As illustrated in *Figure 4.14*, the share of teachers on the government payroll in 2019 varies from 63% in Bonthe Municipal to 20% in Western Area Rural District. It is however worth noting that Western Area Rural District is among the local councils with the highest share of private schools.

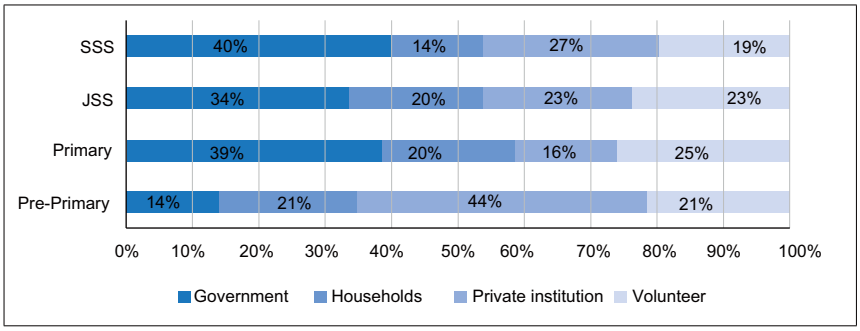
Figure 4.14: Proportion of teachers on payroll by local council, 2019



Source: Authors' computation – annual school census database (2019)

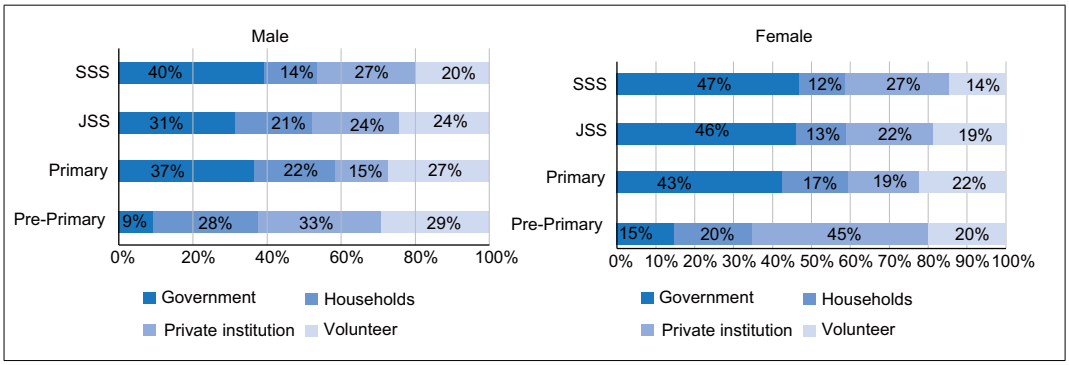
Families are important contributors to teacher wages, with one out of five educators from pre-primary to junior secondary level reporting that households were their main source of salary during the 2018 to 2019 school year. Information on teachers' salary sources provided by the annual school census indicate that those who are not paid by the government are either paid by private institutions or households. Twenty per cent of teachers from pre-primary to junior secondary levels are paid by families which raises important equity issues (see *Figure 4.15*). Moreover, one in five teachers across all levels are volunteers. They are often school leavers or college graduates with no training who are seeking temporary employment while waiting for the opportunity to study further or get a job in their preferred field (Situation Analysis 2019, TSC). Thus, in primary and lower secondary schools, almost half of the teachers are either volunteers or paid through direct contributions from parents. Moreover, at all levels of the system, men are more likely to volunteer than women as shown in *Figure 4.16*.

Figure 4.15: Share of teachers by source of salary, 2019



Source: Authors' computation – annual school census database (2019)

Figure 4.16: Share of teachers by source of salary and gender, 2019

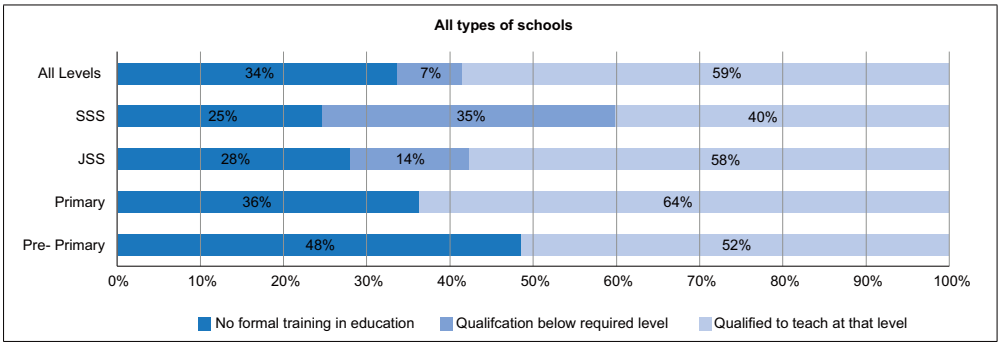


Source: Authors' computation – annual school census database (2019)

4.2.1.2 Teacher professional qualifications and experience: A long way to go

In Sierra Leone, teachers' qualifications remain an important challenge with around two out of five of them unqualified to teach a subject, or at the level they are deployed to teach. According to MBSSE official standards, the minimum teacher qualification requirement for the various levels of education are as follows: (i) Teachers' Certificate (TC) with a specialization in early childhood to teach at pre-primary level, (ii) Teachers' Certificate (TC) to teach at primary level, (iii) Higher Teachers' Certificate (HTCS) to teach at junior secondary level, and (iv) university degree, preferably a Bachelor of Education to teach at senior secondary level. Based on these standards, *Figure 4.17* presents the share of teachers according to their qualifications at the various education levels, focusing on three categories: (i) teachers with no formal training in education, (ii) teachers with qualifications that are below the requirement, (iii) teachers who are qualified for what they teach. In 2019, 59% of teachers held the required qualification to teach at their education level, meaning that Sierra Leone is still far from achieving the 75% target set for the percentage of qualified teachers in the 2018-2020 Education Sector Plan.

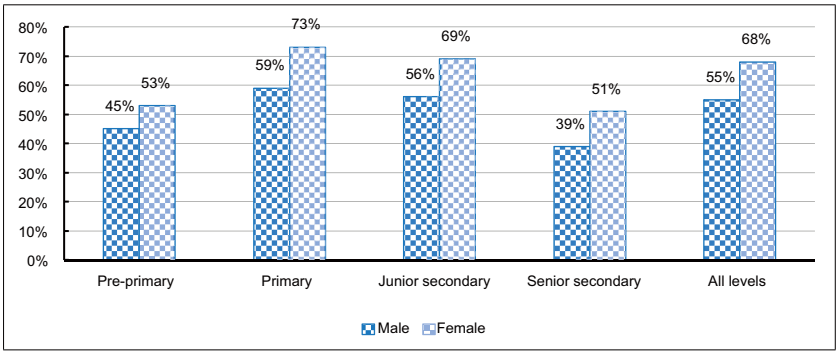
Figure 4.17: Share of teachers according to their qualification, 2019



Source: Authors' computation – annual school census database, 2019

Half of pre-primary teachers are qualified to teach at that level. The highest share of qualified teachers is observed at primary level with 64% of teachers holding at least a Teachers' Certificate (TC). At secondary level, the lowest share of qualified teachers is at senior secondary level, with two out of five teachers with the minimum qualification required for teaching at that level, against almost three out of five junior secondary teachers being qualified. It should be noted however that 35% of senior secondary teachers and 14% of junior secondary teachers have some qualification, but do not meet the requirements for teaching at this level. Moreover, as shown in *Figure 4.18*, across all levels, the overall proportion of qualified teachers is more significant among female teachers.

Figure 4.18: Proportion of qualified teachers by gender, 2019



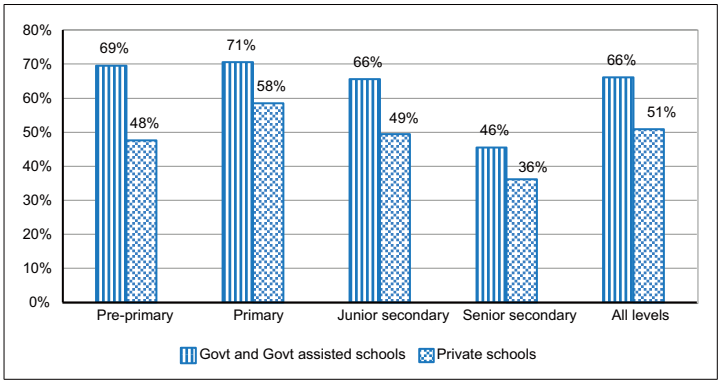
Source: Authors' computation – annual school census database (2019)

At all levels, the proportion of qualified teachers is significantly lower in private schools. Indeed, the share of qualified teachers is evaluated at 66% in government and government-assisted schools against 51% in private schools, the same trend being observed at all levels (see *Figure 4.19*).

Furthermore, it is worth noting that according to figures from the most recent education sector analysis, the share of qualified teachers in government and government-assisted schools has significantly improved from 52% in 2011 to 66% in 2019. This upward trend is observed at all levels, except at senior secondary.

Over the 2011 to 2019 period, the proportion of qualified teachers increased from 46 to 69% at pre-primary, from 48 to 71% at primary, and from 59 to 66%, at junior secondary. At the senior secondary level, 46% of teachers were qualified in 2019, representing a sharp decrease since 2011 when 69% were qualified.[7]

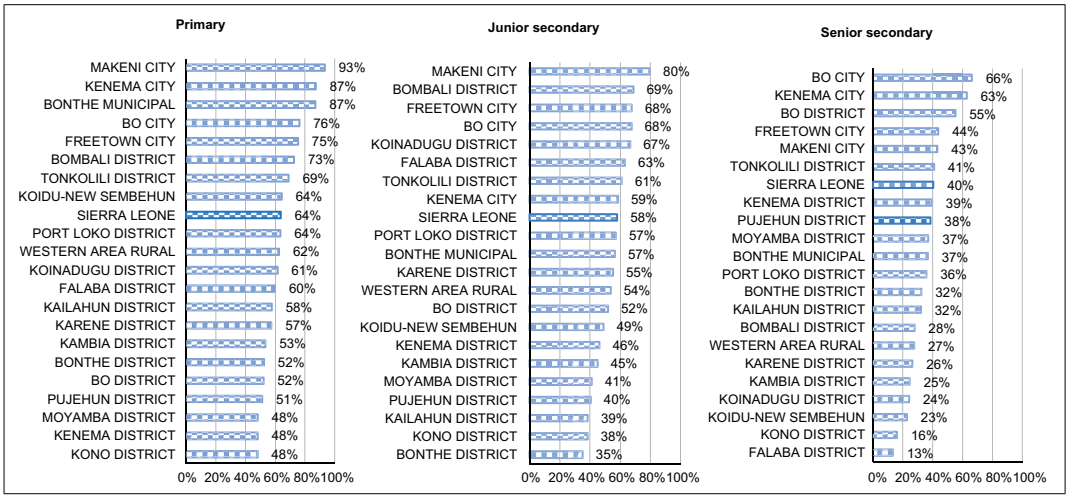
Figure 4.19: Proportion of qualified teachers by level and type of school, 2019



Source: Authors' computation – annual school census database, 2019

Disparities in the share of qualified teachers across local councils may hamper equitable access to quality education. *Figure 4.20* further illustrates this point and shows the uneven geographical distribution of qualified teachers, with more than 90% of primary teachers in Makeni City being qualified in comparison to less than 50% in Moyamba, Kenema and Kono districts. At junior secondary level, the percentage of qualified teachers ranges from 80% in Makeni City to less than 40% in Kailahun, Kono and Bonthe districts. Disparities are even more pronounced at senior secondary level as the percentage of qualified teachers varies from 66% in Bo City, to less than 20% in Kono and Falaba districts, meaning that in these two districts more than 4 out of 5 teachers are insufficiently skilled to teach at senior secondary level.

Figure 4.20: Share of qualified teachers by local council – all types of schools, 2019



Source: Authors' computation – annual school census database, 2019

7. This decrease can be explained by a change in teacher qualification requirements between 2011 and 2019. Since 2019, a senior secondary teacher must hold at least a university degree, preferably a Bachelor of Education (MBSSE standards, 2019), whereas in 2011, senior secondary teachers holding either a Higher Teacher Certificate (HTCS) or an undergraduate degree were considered as qualified to teach at senior secondary level (ESA,2013).

Most teachers in Sierra Leone are relatively young with few years of teaching experience, which highlights the need for professional support to attract but also retain them in the profession. *Table 4.7* shows that across all levels, the average teacher age is around 36 years old, with half of the Sierra Leonean teaching workforce being younger than 35. In contrast, less than one-fifth of teachers are aged between 50 and 65. Moreover, they have limited years of teaching experience, with 66% of pre-primary to senior secondary teachers being in service for 10 years or less, of which 41% have only 5 years or less experience. On the other hand, only 1 in 10 teachers has more than 20 years of service (see *Table 4.8*). All of this suggests that teaching is not a lifetime professional choice for many, or is not sufficiently attractive to retain large numbers of those that enter.

Table 4.7: Age distribution and average teacher age by level, 2019

Teacher age	Pre-primary	Primary	Junior secondary	Senior secondary	All levels
Less than 35 years old	58%	47%	59%	54%	51%
35 to 49 years old	29%	35%	31%	35%	34%
50 to 65 years old	12%	18%	10%	10%	15%
More than 65 years old	0,5%	0,2%	0,2%	0,3%	0,2%
Average age	**35**	**37**	**35**	**36**	**36**

Table 4.8: Teachers' years of service by level, 2019

Teacher age	Pre-primary	Primary	Junior secondary	Senior secondary	All levels
5 years or less	57%	37%	44%	41%	41%
6 to 10 years	22%	23%	28%	29%	25%
11 to 20 years	15%	28%	20%	21%	24%
21 to 30 years	4%	7%	6%	7%	7%
31 to 40	2%	4%	2%	3%	3%
Over 40 years	0.4%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%
Average years of experience	**8**	**11**	**9**	**9**	**10**

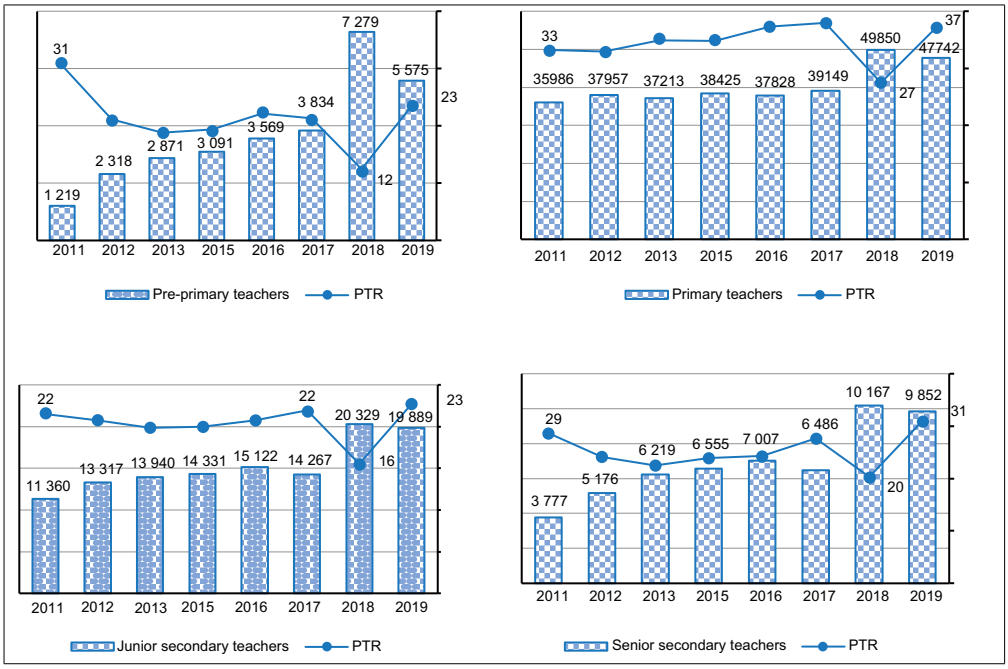
Source: Authors' computation – annual school census database, 2019

4.2.1.3 Pupil-teacher ratio (PTR) and average workload: Heavy reliance on unqualified and non-government paid teachers

At national level, the average PTRs are relatively good due to a heavy reliance on unqualified and non-government teachers in both government and government-assisted schools.

Figure 4.21 presents the evolution of the average PTR at national level over the 2011 to 2019 period for all types of schools and all teachers, regardless of their status and qualifications. Results shows that the average PTR at pre-primary level improved significantly from 31:1 in 2011 to 23:1 in 2019, whereas a slight deterioration from 33:1 in 2011 to 37:1 in 2019 is observed at primary level. However, at both levels PTR remains quite low and in line with the MBSSE recommendation that the average number of pupils handled by a teacher does not exceed 20 at pre-primary and 40 at primary. At the secondary levels, the PTR remained relatively stable over the period at around 22:1 in junior secondary and 30:1 in senior secondary. Nevertheless, it should be noted that between 2018 and 2019 significant increases in PTR were observed at all levels. It went up from 12:1 to 23:1 in pre-primary, 27:1 to 37:1 in primary, 16:1 to 23:1 in junior secondary, and 20:1 to 33:1 in senior secondary. This trend can be seen as resulting from the major increase in enrolment across all levels after the implementation of the Free Quality School Education Programme.

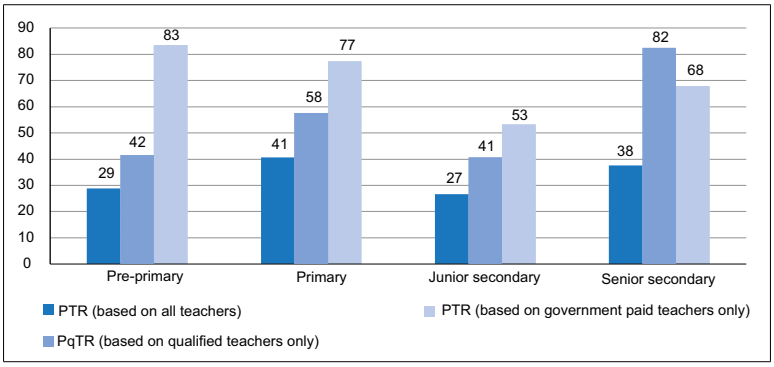
Figure 4.21: Trends in the number of teachers and PTR – all type of schools, 2019



Source: Authors' computation – annual school census reports (2011-2015) and annual school census databases (2016-2019)

When considering all teachers, regardless of their qualifications or status, the average pupil-teacher ratio (PTR) in government and government-assisted schools ranges from 27:1 in junior secondary schools, to 41:1 in primary schools (see *Figure 4.22*). However, this ratio increases substantially when only qualified teachers are considered. For example, the average PTR rises from 29:1 to 42:1 in pre-primary schools and from 41:1 to 58:1 in primary schools, which is well above the 'pupils to qualified teacher ratio' (PQTR) targeted by MBSSE, namely 20:1 at pre-primary and 40:1 at primary level. If you consider only government-paid teachers, the average PTR is even higher: 83:1 in pre-primary, 77:1 in primary, 53:1 in junior secondary, and 68:1 in senior secondary. Therefore, the inclusion of non-government paid teachers in both government and government-assisted schools significantly improves the PTR. This demonstrates the challenges that government and government-assisted schools have been facing since the commencement of FQSE programme implementation.

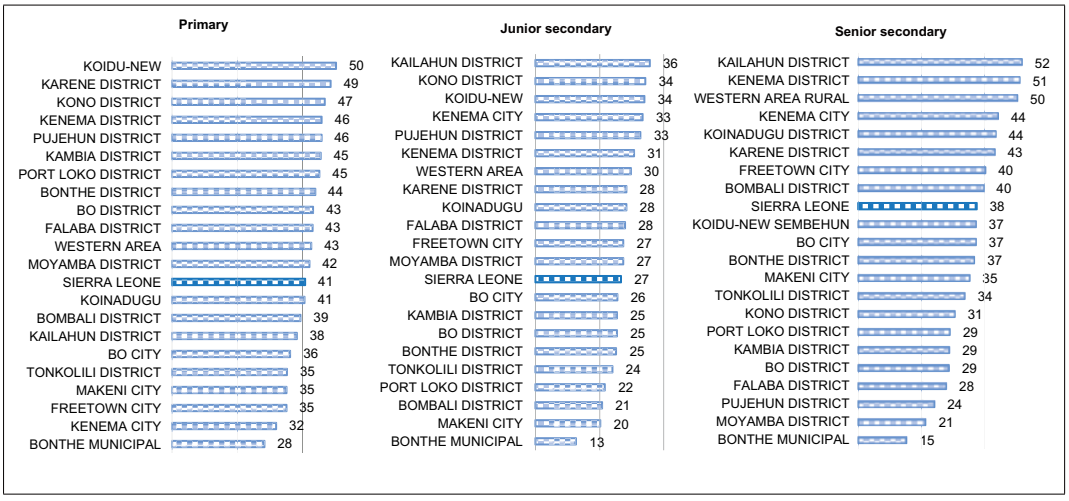
Figure 4.22: Pupil-teacher ratio in government and government-assisted schools, 2019



Source: Authors' computation – annual school census database, 2019

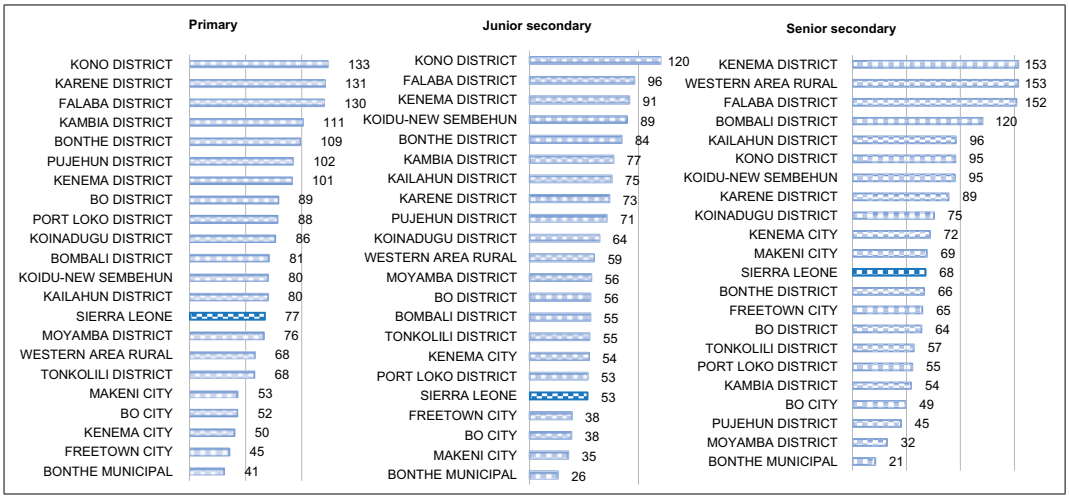
Average PTRs at national level hide geographical disparities. At primary level, the average PTR across local councils varies from 50:1 in Koidu-New Sembehun City, to 28:1 in Bonthe Municipal, and at junior secondary level from 36:1 in Kailahun District to 13:1 in Bonthe Municipal. At senior secondary level, the highest PTR is observed in Kailahun District (52:1) whereas Bonthe Municipal displays the lowest average (see *Figure 4.23*). Disparities across local councils are even higher when only government-paid teachers are taken into account in the calculation of the PTR, reflecting important disparities in the allocation of government-paid teachers (see *Figure 4.24*).

Figure 4.23: PTR by local council in government and government-assisted schools - all teachers, 2019



Source: Authors' computation – annual school census database, 2019

Figure 4.24: PTR by local council in government and government-assisted schools – government paid teachers, 2019



Source: Authors' computation – annual school census database, 2019

Table 4.9 assesses where Sierra Leone stands in comparison to the ECOWAS countries in terms of PTR. Sierra Leone's primary level PTR in government and government-assisted schools (41:1) is above the ECOWAS average which is equivalent to 38:1, and ranges from 22:1 in Cabo Verde to 52:1 in Guinea. At junior secondary level, Sierra Leone's PTR (27:1) is close to the ECOWAS average (25:1), but stands behind several countries such as Benin (11:1), Ghana (13:1) or Liberia (16:1). At senior secondary level, Sierra Leone is among the country with the highest PTR in the region (38:1) together with Guinea-Bissau (35:1), Gambia (36:1) and Togo (43:1).

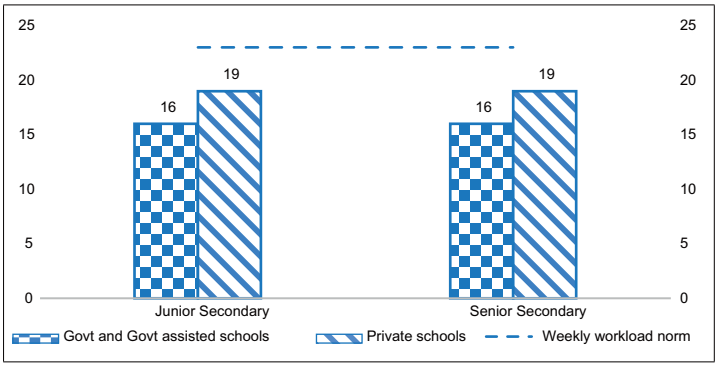
Figure 4.9: Pupil-teacher ratio, international comparison

	Primary	JSS	SSS
Sierra Leone (2019)	**41**	**27**	**38**
Benin	45	11	-
Burkina Faso	42	25	18
Cabo Verde	22	17	15
Côte d'Ivoire	43	40	20
Gambia	39	23	36
Ghana	27	13	22
Guinea	52	45	29
Guinea-Bissau	47	32	35
Liberia	30	16	23
Mali	39	25	13
Niger	36	31	18
Senegal	32	-	-
Togo	43	56	43
ECOWAS mean	**38**	**28**	**25**

Source: Latest available data from IIEP-Dakar

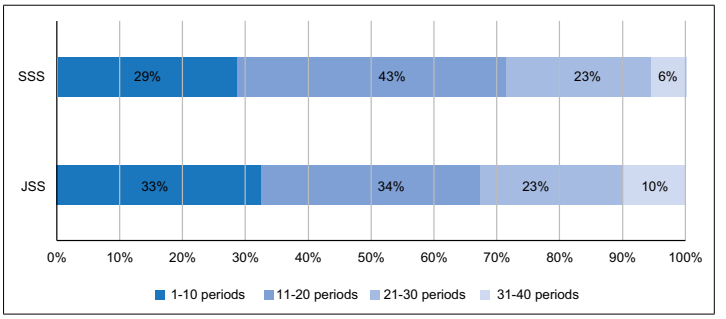
Teaching time, which is also a key determinant of learning outcomes, is far below the expected national standard, with an average student being taught less than half of a normal school day. In Sierra Leone, the theoretical weekly workload norm for a full-time teacher at junior and senior secondary levels is a minimum of 23 out of 40 periods of 40 minutes each. However, as illustrated in *Figure 4.25*, the teaching time reported by full-time teachers in the annual school census is clearly below this norm, with an average of 16 periods in government and government-assisted schools and 19 periods in private schools. It is also worth noting from *Figure 4.26* that around 70% of full-time JSS and SSS teachers do not meet the prescribed minimum of 23 teaching periods per week, among which 30% are teaching less than 10 periods a week.

Figure 4.25: Average weekly workload of JSS and SSS full-time teachers, 2019



Source: Authors' computation – annual school census database, 2019

Figure 4.26: Distribution of average weekly workload among JSS and SSS full-time teachers, 2019



Source: Authors' computation – annual school census database, 2019

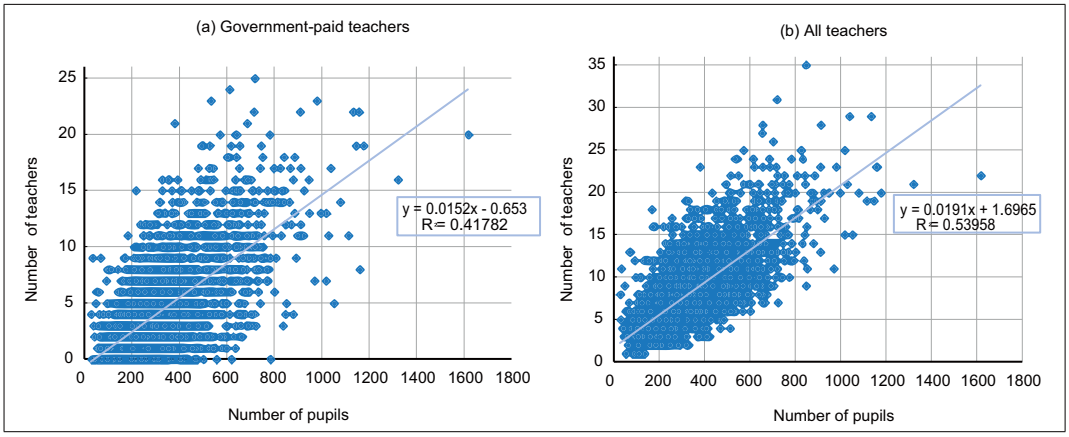
Such low instructional time is in line with findings from the Sierra Leone Secondary Grade Learning Assessment Survey (SGLA) which analyses not only learning outcomes, but also the current state of classroom practices in both junior and senior secondary schools based on a sample of teachers. The last survey conducted in 2018 reports an average of only 2.5 hours teaching per day, meaning that an average student is taught less than half a standard school day. The survey also found that 36% of the observed

classrooms, with pupils seated, were unattended by teachers (SGLA III, 2019). This partly explains the low quality of student learning detailed in the previous sections. The findings presented indicate that there is room for improvement in the management of teachers.

4.2.1.4 Teacher distribution

Although the analysis of pupil-teacher ratios has offered some insight into how equitably teachers are distributed across local councils, this section goes a step further to consider the pattern of teacher distribution in schools. Coherence of school-level teacher distribution is based on the principle that the number of teachers in a school should be proportional to the number of pupils. In other words, the more pupils in a school, the more teachers should be allocated. In addition, schools with the same number of pupils should have the same number of teachers, if the departments and number of subjects being taught are the same, and the schools being compared are at the same level.

Figure 4.27: Coherence in the allocation of primary school teachers among government and government-assisted



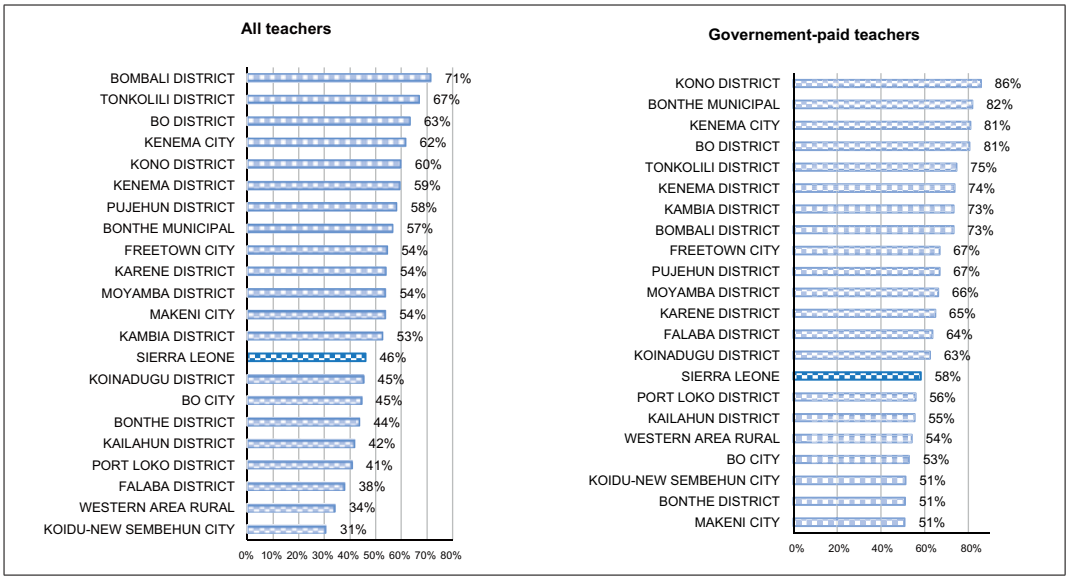
Source: Authors' computation – annual school census database, 2019

Teacher distribution across primary schools displays weak coherence. *Figure 4.27* graphically illustrates the relationship between the number of pupils and government-paid teachers, each point representing a government or government-assisted school. The results show that the overall relationship between the number of pupils and number of teachers is positive (i.e. the number of teachers increases with the number of pupils), but that wide variations exists among schools. For example, primary schools with 10 government-paid teachers can be anything from 207 to 752 pupils, which leads to large disparities in pupil-teacher ratios. Specifically, in 42% of cases (R^2=0.417), government-paid teacher allocation to schools is explained by enrolment numbers, meaning that in 58% of cases (1-R^2=0.58) the number of teachers allocated to primary schools is determined by other factors. The situation has deteriorated since 2011, when teachers were allocated to schools according to pupil numbers in 61% of cases. An

improvement in the distribution of teachers to schools is observed when all teachers, regardless of their status, are taking into account in the analysis (see *Figure 4.27*). Indeed, the correlation between the number of pupils and the number of teachers improves by 12 points from 42% based on government-paid teachers alone, to 54% if all teachers are considered.

The degree of randomness in teacher distribution varies considerably across local councils. The analysis of primary teacher deployment at local council level shows marked disparities in coherence. When all teachers are taken into account, the degree of randomness (1-R^2) ranges from 71% in Bombali District to 31% in Koidu-New Sembehun City, with really weak coherence in teacher distribution in the former and better coherence in the latter. When only government-paid teachers are considered, the degree of randomness varies from 86% in Kono District to 51% in Makeni City (see *Figure 4.28*).

Figure 4.28: Degree of randomness (1-R^2) in teacher allocation in government and government-assisted schools, by local council, 2019



Source: Authors' computation – annual school census database, 2019

The analysis of the relationship between pupil-teacher ratios and the degree of randomness in teacher allocation enables the classification of local councils into four categories (see *Figure 4.29*):

(i) Category A: Local councils relatively well endowed with government-paid teachers (PTR below national average), but with little coherence in teacher allocation across schools (degree of randomness above national average). This is the case of Bonthe Municipal, Kenema City, Tonkolili District and Freetown City.

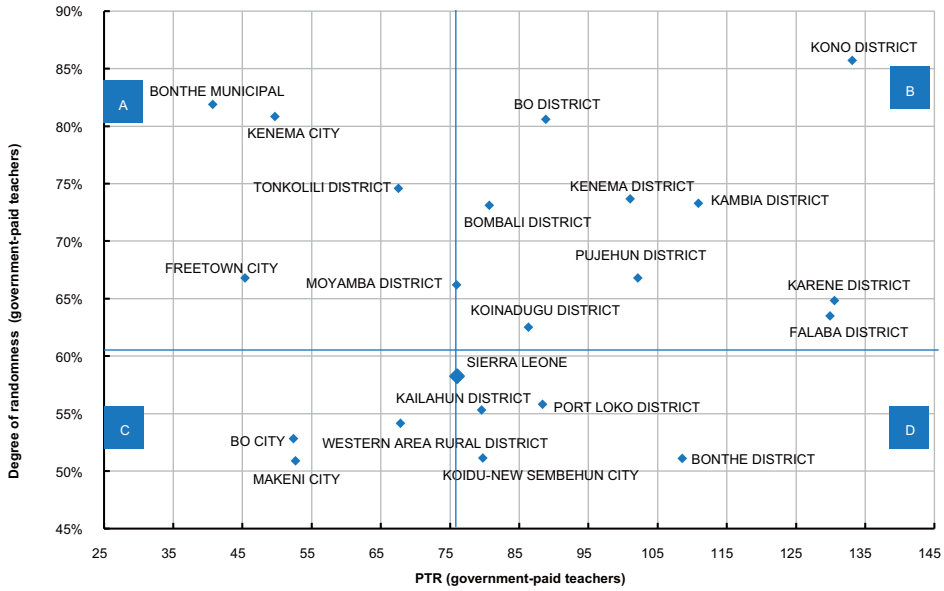
8. The strength of the relation between the number of pupils and the number of teachers is synthesized by the coefficient of correlation: R^2, representing the degree of coherence in the allocation of teachers to schools, and ranging between 0 and 1. The closer to 1, the more coherent the allocation. The degree of randomness (1-R^2) measures the share of school teacher postings that are correlated with factors other than the number of students in the school. The higher the degree of randomness the greater the problem of coherence in teacher allocation.

(ii) Category B: Local councils with relatively few government-paid teachers (PTR above national average), and with little coherence in teacher allocation across schools (degree of randomness above national average). This is the case of Kono District, Bo District, Kenema District, Bomabali District, Kambia District, Pujehun District, Koinadugu District Karene District and Falaba District.

(iii) Category C: Local councils relatively well endowed with government-paid teachers (PTR below national average), and where teacher allocation across schools is relatively coherent (degree of randomness below national average). This is the case Bo City, Makeni City and Western Area Rural District.

(iv) Category D: Local councils with relatively few government-paid teachers (PTR above national average), but where teacher allocation across schools is relatively coherent (degree of randomness below national average). This is the case of Kailahun District, Porto Loko District, Bonthe District and Koidu-New Sembehun City.

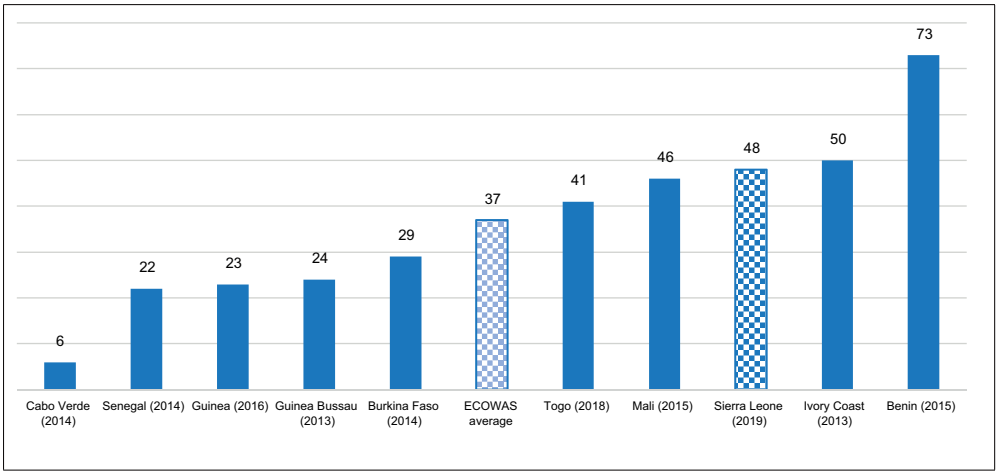
Figure 4.29: Relationship between PTR and degree of randomness in distribution of teachers in primary government and government-assisted schools (government-paid teachers), 2019



Source: Authors' computation – annual school census database, 2019

Sierra Leone is among the countries with weak consistency in teacher allocation/distribution. Indeed, as shown in *Figure 4.30*, teacher deployment in Sierra Leonean primary schools is among the weakest of the region, coming just after Côte d'Ivoire and Benin. The degree of randomness (1-R^2) among ECOWAS countries stands, on average at 37%, and ranges from 6% in Cabo Verde to 73% in Benin.

Figure 4.30: Degree of randomness (1-R^2) in public primary school teacher allocation, international comparison



Source: Latest available data from IIEP-Dakar

4.2.2 Pedagogical and infrastructure management

4.2.2.1 Textbook management: They are not equitably distributed across local councils and schools

Thanks to the Free Quality Education Programme, textbooks were recently distributed to all Sierra Leonean government and government-assisted schools. This section explores textbook management practices to assess whether the process was sufficiently equitable and efficient.

English and mathematics textbooks are in short supply at primary level, in oversupply at junior secondary level, and in fairly sufficient number at senior secondary. *Table 4.10* provides the number of textbooks available at each level, as well as the pupil-textbook ratio across levels and subjects. At primary level, a total of around 818,000 English and 766,000 mathematics books was reported in the annual school census, meaning there is still not enough to provide one textbook per child. On average, there is one English book for every 1.5 pupils and one mathematics textbook for every 1.6 pupils in primary school.

At junior secondary level, textbook supply in both English and mathematics is more than sufficient, compared to the situation in primary schools. Indeed, with close to 458,700 English and 459,500 mathematics textbooks available in government and government-assisted schools, there is clearly more than one of each available for every junior secondary student. Finally, at senior secondary level, although the supply in English and mathematics textbooks is fairly sufficient, an average of 1.1 pupils share the same book.

Table 4.10: Number of books and pupil-textbook ratio in government and government-assisted schools, 2019

	English		Mathematics	
	Number of books	Ratio	Number of books	Ratio
Primary	**818,702**	**1.5**	**766,676**	**1.6**
P1	227,479	1.5	211,490	1.6
P2	158,292	1.4	149,573	1.4
P3	143,915	1.4	124,948	1.6
P4	116,702	1.5	91,909	1.9
P5	95,709	1.6	114,544	1,3
P6	76,605	1.5	74,212	1.6
JSS	**458,766**	**0.7**	**459,570**	**0.7**
JSS1	167,029	0.7	166,961	0.7
JSS2	154,290	0.7	152,947	0.7
JSS3	137,447	0.7	139,662	0,7
SSS	**185,265**	**1.1**	**183,344**	**1.1**
SSS1	66,536	1.1	66,120	1.1
SSS2	63,057	1.1	62,429	1.1
SSS3	55,672	1.1	54,795	1.1

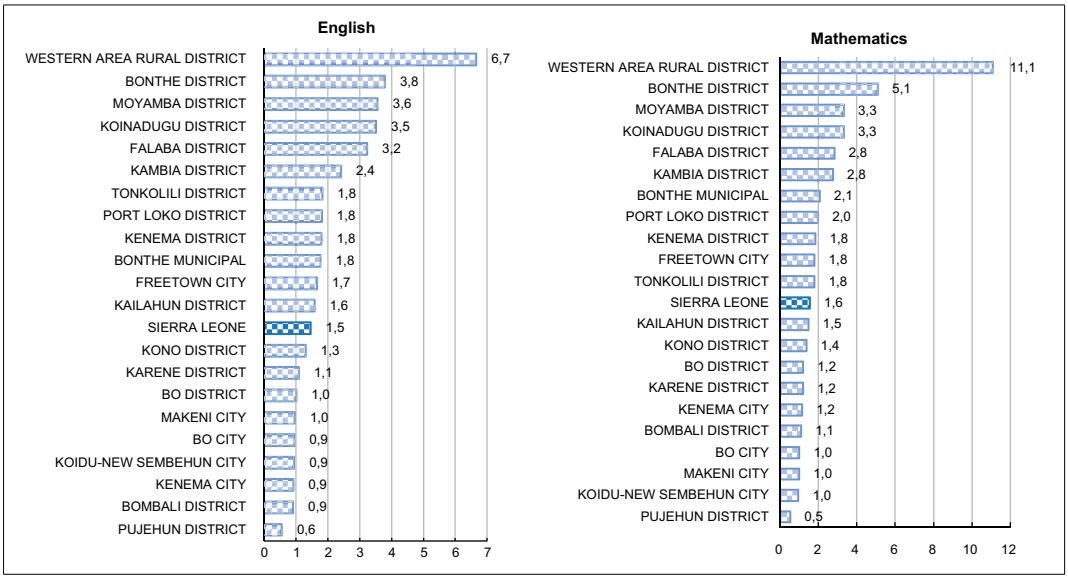
Source: Authors' computation – annual school census (2019)

Ensuring textbook utilization in the classroom remains an important issue. Overall, data shows that English and mathematics textbooks are available for a majority of Sierra Leonean students, especially at secondary levels. However, textbook distribution is not sufficient in itself to improve student learning. Ensuring their utilization in the classroom is also necessary.

The latest Sierra Leone Secondary Grade Learning Assessment Survey (SGLA III, 2019) provides information about the use of the recently distributed textbooks at the secondary levels. The results show that 64% of junior secondary students, and 47% of senior secondary students, report using the textbooks. Three majors barriers to textbook utilization in the classrooms are mentioned in the SGLA report, namely: (i) many students in private, unassisted schools are unable to use these handbooks simply because they are only distributed to government and government-assisted schools, (ii) textbooks are stored by teachers or principals rather than used, (iii) parents are unable or unwilling to sign the terms and conditions which allow for the release of the textbooks. In government-assisted schools which were covered by the textbook provision, 38% of secondary students reported not using the textbooks, with 11% saying this was due to their teachers or principals keeping the books rather than distributing them to the pupils (SGLA III, 2019).

Textbook provision varies substantially across local councils. *Figure 4.31* illustrates the variation in pupil-textbook ratios by local council at primary level. In both English and mathematics, the average pupil-textbook ratio is the highest in Western Area Rural District and lowest in Pujehun District. In English, the textbook ratio varies from 6.7 in Western Area Rural District to 0.6 in Pujehun District. In mathematics, the pupil-textbook ratio is as high as 11.1 in Western Area Rural District and as low as 0.5 in Pujehun District. Therefore, with an average of 1 English textbook for more than 6 pupils and 1 mathematics textbook for 11 pupils, Western Area Rural District is the local council where the need in textbook supply for primary pupils is the greatest.

Figure 4.31: Average pupil-textbook ratio in government and government-assisted primary schools by local council, 2019



Source: Authors' computation – annual school census (2019)

Textbooks are poorly allocated to schools. At primary level, textbooks allocation to government and government-assisted schools seems to be largely unplanned, with substantial variations in the number per school. For example, a primary school with 200 pupils may have anything between 0 and 778 English textbooks. As shown in *Figure 4.32*, only 16% (R^2=0.1651) of English and 18% (R^2=0.1757) of mathematics textbooks allocated across schools is explained by the number of pupils in each school, meaning that textbook allocation is mainly driven by factors other than the number of pupils. The coherence in the allocation of textbooks is better at junior secondary level but still far from being optimal. Indeed, the degree of coherence (R^2) in textbook allocation across junior secondary schools is evaluated at 39% and 41% for English and mathematics, respectively, meaning that around 60% (1-R^2) of textbook allocation in junior secondary schools is explained by factors other than the number of students per school. (see *Figure 4.33*).

Figure 4.32: Coherence in textbook allocation in primary government and government-assisted schools, 2019

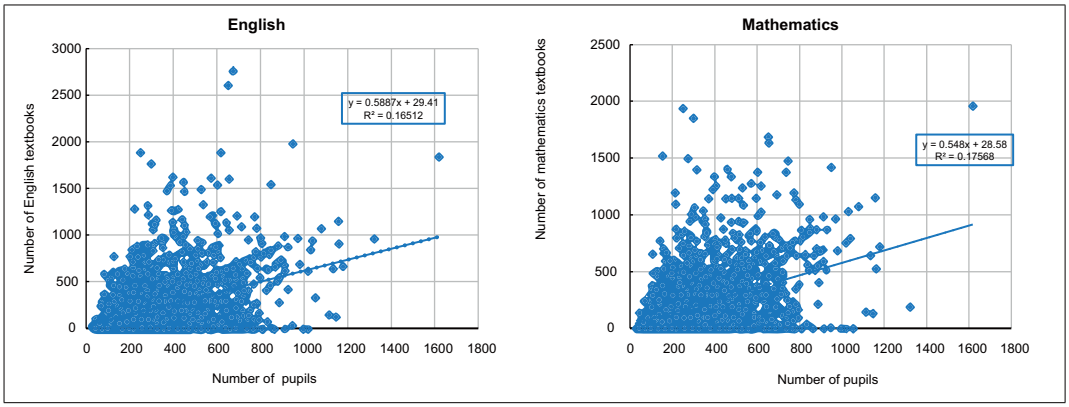
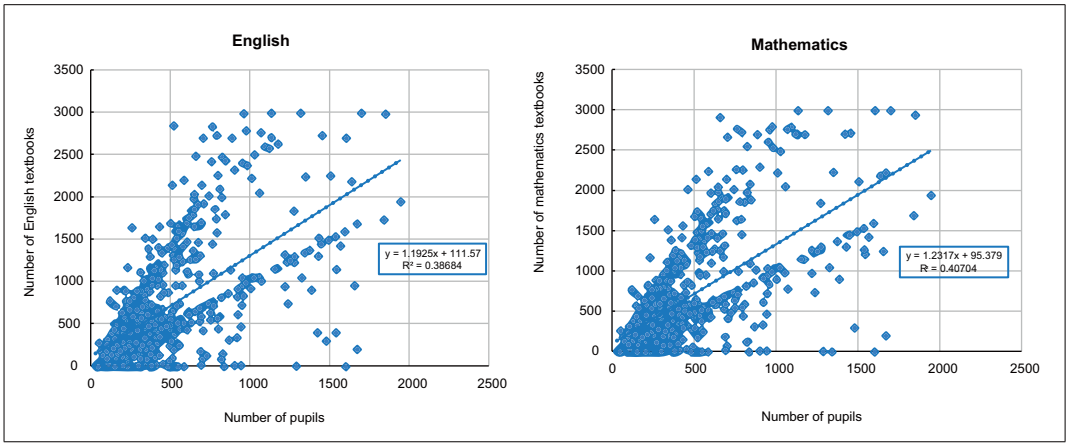


Figure 4.33: Coherence in textbook allocation in JSS government and government-assisted schools, 2019



Source: Authors' computation – annual school census (2019)

4.2.2.2 School infrastructure: Secondary schools are in better shape than primary schools

This section briefly looks at the availability of basic infrastructure across schools at both primary and secondary levels. *Table 4.11* compares teaching conditions in terms of school infrastructure between government and government-assisted schools on the one hand, and private schools on the other.

Overall, at both primary and secondary levels, access to basic facilities is better in private schools, while secondary schools are in better shape than primary schools. At primary level, among all the government and government-assisted schools, 67% are easily accessible by road (against 85% of private

schools), 64% have access to water (against 72% of private schools), 48% have separate latrines for boys and girls in good condition (against 60% of private schools), while only 7% have access to electricity (against 62% of private schools). It is however worth noting that the vast majority of private schools are found in urban areas where access to electricity is much easier. With regards to classroom conditions, data shows that in 56% of government and government-assisted schools, all the classrooms have solid walls (against 73% of private schools). However, 31% of government and government-assisted schools do not have any classrooms with solid walls (against, 20% in private schools).

Table 4.11: School infrastructure availability by level, 2019

	Govt. and government assisted schools	Private schools
School infrastructure – primary level		
% Schools easily accessible	67%	85%
% Schools with source of water	64%	72%
% Schools with separate latrines for boys and girls in good condition	48%	60%
% Schools with electricity	7%	62%
% Schools with all classrooms with solid walls	56%	73%
% Schools with no classroom with solid walls	31%	20%
School infrastructure – junior secondary level		
% Schools easily accessible	84%	87%
% Schools with source of water	78%	80%
% Schools with separate latrines for boys and girls in good condition	56%	62%
% Schools with electricity	36%	61%
% Schools with all classrooms with solid walls	72%	79%
% Schools with no classroom with solid walls	16%	19%
School infrastructure – senior secondary level		
% Schools easily accessible	92%	92%
% Schools with source of water	83%	81%
% Schools with separate latrines for boys and girls in good condition	52%	73%
% Schools with electricity	59%	75%
% Schools with all classrooms with solid walls	70%	83%
% Schools with no classroom with solid walls	10%	9%

Source: Authors' computation – annual school census (2019)

At junior secondary level, 84% of government and government-assisted schools are easily accessible by road (against 87% of private schools), 78% have access to water (against 80% of private schools), 56% have separate latrines for boys and girls in good condition (against 62% in private schools), and 36% have access to electricity (against 61% of private schools). Regarding classroom conditions, 72% of government and government-assisted schools have all their classrooms with solid walls (against 79% in private schools) while 16% do not have any classrooms with solid walls (against 19% of private schools). Finally, at senior secondary level, a majority of government and government-assisted schools are easily accessible by road (92%), have access to water (83%), to electricity (59%), and to separate latrines for boys and girls in good conditions (52%). Moreover, 70% of senior secondary government and government-assisted schools have constructed all their classrooms with solid walls (against 83% of private schools), while 10% do not have any classrooms with solid walls (against 9% of private schools).

CHAPTER 5

Overview of TVET and Higher Education

The youthful structure of the population in Sierra Leone offers both an opportunity and a challenge to achieve a demographic dividend. If properly managed, it provides a readily available workforce for economic transformation and diversification. If not properly managed, it could lead to heightened unemployment and gaps in decent work, together with several social challenges. On the supply side, human capital is key for youth employability and labour market integration. Against this background, this chapter aims to uncover the strengths and weaknesses of terminal levels of education in Sierra Leone, namely technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and higher education (HE). It focuses on the organization and delivery, performance in terms of access and equity, and internal efficiency and quality, drawing on information directly collected from the Ministry of Technical and Higher Education (MTHE) and the other main stakeholders, as well as the 2020 National Technical and Higher Education Census (NTHEC), whose preliminary results have been made available for this report.

5.1 Organization and delivery

This first section provides an overview of the organizational and delivery features of the TVET and HE systems in Sierra Leone. It documents historical and recent developments, discusses system capacities and labour market relevance, and highlights policy, regulatory and institutional gaps.

5.1.1 Higher education is still recovering from the country's turbulent past

The Sierra Leonean HE system used to outperform other countries in West Africa, but standards dropped as a result of the civil war and the Ebola epidemic. Before and after independence, the educational standard in Sierra Leone tended to rank among the best in the region, with the Fourah Bay College the first university college established, and Freetown dubbed the "Athens of West Africa" (Paracka, 2003). However, the curricula at different educational levels were not tailored to the needs of the country. To address this, the National Commission for Basic Education was introduced to complement the new educational system, commonly known as "6-3-3-4", which was meant to be flexible enough to allow for both formal and non-formal education, with the possibility to exit and return at certain points in the system. The new system also encouraged TVET in order to provide graduates with more marketable skills. At present, HE in Sierra Leone is hampered by poor quality, weakened learning environments, inadequate materials, as well as accessibility

and affordability issues. This is partly a result of the protracted civil war, and later on the Ebola epidemic, which at its height saw the institutions come to a standstill, leading to the destruction and deterioration of infrastructure, fleeing of trained and qualified teachers, and an unstable environment for learning. HE also suffered because of a low budget allocation to the education sector. However, the sector is now receiving increasing attention within the national budget, and HE within the education budget (see *Chapter 3*). The country has tried to rebuild itself and presently a lot of work is still being done, with the help of development partners, to rehabilitate these institutions and construct new ones.

5.1.2 Higher education is not capacitated to meet the growing demand

HE currently comprises five universities operating under the Bachelor-Master-Doctorate (BMD) system. Three are public (the University of Sierra Leone [USL] located in Freetown, the Njala University with campuses in Njala and Bo, and the Ernest Bai Koroma [EBK] University of Science and Technology with campuses in Magburaka, Makeni and Port Loko), and two are private (the University of Makeni [UNIMAK] with campuses in Makeni and Yoni, and the Limkokwing University with a campus in Freetown). HE also comprises Teacher Training Colleges (TTC) delivering the Teachers Certificate (TC) for pre-primary and primary levels and the Higher Teachers Certificate (HTC) for junior secondary school. The disruption of teachers' training in 2020 as a result of the Covid-19 outbreak, and subsequent school closures, is expected to be contained since many teacher training programmes are offered online. However, there are concerns about the quality of distance learning because of the lack of regulations governing the accreditation and monitoring of distance learning providers (World Bank, 2017).

Universities currently lack the capacity to fully absorb the potential increase of students as a result of the Free Quality School Education (FQSE) programme in senior secondary schools. To meet the growing demand, the HE sub-sector is increasing its capacity with three more universities, spread across the country, coming in the next few years (University of the East, University of Science and Technology, and a Centre of Excellence). In addition, a few private institutions are currently working on having their status regularised and approved by the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC), the main regulatory body for universities and colleges. However, with the FQSE attracting hundreds of thousands of primary and secondary students, the current number of universities cannot contain the volume of potential new entrants.

5.1.3 Government relies on TVET to accommodate excess demand

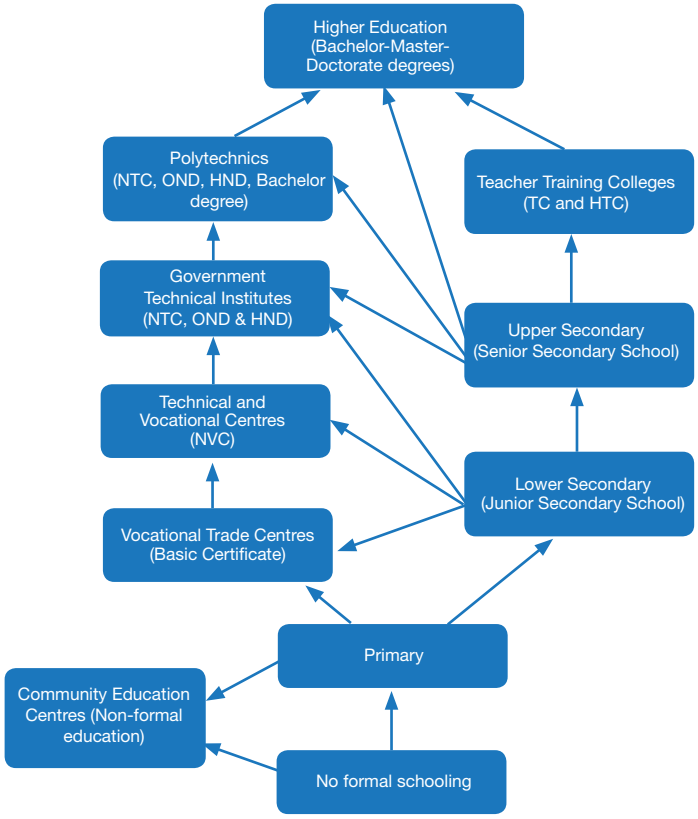
The government's focus is now on TVET to help absorb some of these students to meet both skills development and market demands. TVET also matters because the brain drain, driven by the poor economic performance and insecurity that Sierra Leone experienced in its recent past, has significantly eroded the country's technical and vocational skills base.

TVET cuts across all education levels from primary, with non-formal community education centres for early school leavers and adult learners, to tertiary with polytechnics. At secondary and post-secondary levels, this includes Vocational Trade Centres (VTC) awarding a basic certificate, Technical and Vocational Centres (TVC) awarding the National Vocational Certificate (NVC), and Government Technical Institutes

(GTI) (see *Figure 5.1*). Sierra Leone currently has two polytechnics (Milton Margai College of Education and Technology [MMCET], and Eastern Polytechnic), with both offering TVET and teacher training programmes.

To meet the anticipated surge in demand and shift towards demand-driven skills production, the Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) has established GTIs in 10 districts, with plans to construct 6 more in the remaining districts in order to develop middle-level manpower nationwide. The 10 GTIs already established have been operational since October 2019, and completed the recruitment of administrative staff. They are, however, struggling to employ technical staff due to a massive shortage of suitably qualified people. In addition, there are ongoing challenges with accessing basic materials, tools and equipment, which are being sourced from various locations both locally and internationally. GTIs will be awarding National Technical Certificates (NTC), National Diplomas (ND) and Higher National Diplomas (HND), and are expected at some point to start offering HE degrees.

Figure 5.1: Pathways in the Sierra Leonean education and training system in force in 2020



Source: Ministry of Technical and Higher Education (MTHE)

Note: NVC = National Vocational Certificate, NTC = National Technical Certificate, OND = Ordinary National Diploma, HND = Higher National Diploma, TC = Teachers Certificate, HTC = Higher Teachers Certificate.

5.1.4 TVET supply lacks labour market relevance

The weak regulatory framework has fuelled an uncontrolled proliferation of TVET institutions which most often have poor labour market relevance. Apart from GTIs and polytechnics, there is a large number of TVET institutions in Sierra Leone, totalling 183, of which 107 (58%) are privately-owned and 76 are government-assisted (42%). According to the 2020 NTHEC, only 40% of these institutions offer training programmes and activities that are of relevance to economic demand, despite the fact that this is central to youth employability and labour market integration. The remaining TVET institutions tend to focus on courses like gara tie dying, basic soap making, weaving, tailoring and catering. According to the MTHE, while this kind of training is important, it does not really respond to the contemporary demand for technical labour. As an example, the mining and construction industries are in dire need of heavy machinery operators, but such occupational skills are not readily available in Sierra Leone which therefore has no choice but to resort to hiring foreign labour. According to a recent skills needs assessment study (GIZ, 2018*a*), in strategic sectors with high potential for economic growth and job creation (industry including mining, construction and manufacturing, as well as health, energy, tourism and agriculture), employers face challenges in filling vacancies as most candidates possess limited technical skills and practical experience. Besides, only 3% of surveyed employers appear to actively collaborate with training institutions.

Sierra Leone currently has no formal mechanism to assess the demand for skills in key economic sectors, hence skills development remains largely supply-driven, with negligible contribution from employers in the design and delivery of programmes. The World Bank in particular aims to fill this gap thanks to the US$20 million Skills Development Project launched recently, which seeks to increase access to demand-led skills training and build the foundations for a demand-led skills development system in Sierra Leone (World Bank, 2020).

Sierra Leone has never had a National Qualification Framework (NQF). TVET's lack of relevance to the labour market is linked to the prevailing weak regulatory framework which stems from government's long-standing neglect of the sub-sector. According to World Bank (2017), the current regulatory framework does not include clear provisions regarding the accreditation and monitoring of TVET providers. For instance, some of the TVET institutions that have mushroomed across the country are simply money-making enterprises with little or no emphasis on quality assurance in the delivery of training programmes. They tend to rely too much on consultancies and service contracts at the expense of investing in the appropriate equipment needed for training.

5.1.5 Little is known about non-formal and informal TVET

TVET is not only formal training, but also extends to non-formal and informal education and training which largely remains off the radar. For starters, let us take a closer look at formal TVET institutions. Regarding certification, it takes one academic year to obtain the National Technical Certificate (NTC), two for the Ordinary National Diploma (OND) and three for the Higher National Diploma. The National Council for Technical, Vocational and other Academic Awards (NCTVA) Act (GoSL, 2001), which establishes the eponymous organisation charged with the accreditation of TVET institutions, mandates what curriculum to implement, how exams are to be conducted, what certification to award, and how to monitor and evaluate them. Training delivery generally includes 30% of in-class teaching and 70% of practical or field work. Technical education, which for some students is a stepping stone towards tertiary education, puts more emphasis on theoretical learning. All TVET institutions are supposed to offer apprenticeship and internship opportunities at various levels, thanks to public-private partnerships. Some courses, such

as entrepreneurship, business communication, maths and information and communication technologies (ICT), are mandatory while others may be on demand and tailored to labour market needs (e.g. agriculture, mining, construction…).

Skills development programmes as part of non-formal TVET aim to train young people, primarily out-of-school individuals with no formal education or very limited primary schooling, in areas where they have already attained practical experience, like tailoring, dressmaking, automobile repairs, carpentry, welding, shoemaking, etc. Usually, two to three months of intensive theoretical courses are given once a year, but shorter courses lasting just one to three weeks are also made available. Training modalities include apprenticeship, mentoring via community groups with support from some NGOs and public institutions, and experiential learning. MTHE recently instructed all GTIs to conduct specific short-term practical courses on basic literacy and numeracy to be accredited *in fine* by the NCTVA.

Informal TVET is, by definition, out of control and sight of public authorities, and mainly relates to traditional apprenticeships and other non-organized forms of learning. The Ministry of Labour and Social Security (MLSA) runs a TVET certification programme for informal workers, the Trade Test Certificate. This programme, which targets artisans involved in selected trades like motor mechanics or solar panel installation for example, would gain from upscaling as it currently registers a very limited number of beneficiaries (66 in 2019, of which only 6 were women). In addition, it is worth mentioning the National Youth Commission's (NYC) Graduate Internship Programme (GIP) which has been operational since 2012 and which in 2019 saw the participation of nearly 300 trainees who benefited in particular from career guidance and placement services, as well as the National Youth Service Corps operated by the National Youth Service (NYS). The Ministry of Youth Affairs, which regulates both the NYC and NYS, aims to merge the two programmes to leverage potential synergies and economies of scale.

5.1.6 TVET is receiving more attention with the recent creation of a dedicated ministry

The mandate of the Ministry of Technical and Higher Education (MTHE) is to "provide effective supervision to the tertiary, technical and vocational sectors of the national education system for effective service delivery in the country". Before 2019, MTHE and the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE) were together under the same ministry, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST), which was in charge of all education sub-sectors. At that time, TVET was not a priority and suffered from a lack of visibility and holistic policy direction; poor documentation; a lack of investment, equipment and tools; inadequate coordination; and insufficient supervision and monitoring. After the separation, MTHE was born with the intent to "radically transform" the entire TVET landscape and to service the technical and vocational needs of the growing young population, especially girls and women, and those seeking fresh skills or transitioning into alternative occupations, to meet the labour market demand and address skills shortages and gaps. The rationale for prioritising TVET lay in improved efficiency, increased effectiveness, and better quality results in all socio-economic strata of Sierra Leonean society.

Against this backdrop, the ongoing transformation of the TVET sector led to the adoption of a national TVET policy (GoSL, 2019) as well as the development of guidelines and methodologies to facilitate TVET implementation, with women and disadvantaged youth its heart. It has also led to improved relationships with TVET providers. MTHE is also making fundraising efforts at local and international levels, and exploring capacity building opportunities for staff and instructors. However, the planning capacity of MTHE remains largely undermined by a lack of visibility resulting from the unavailability of reliable data

on TVET, especially with respect to non-formal and informal education and training. As pointed out in *Chapter 7*, the planning directorate of MTHE also suffers from a lack of human resource capacity. That being said, MTHE made a major stride in January 2020 when it conducted the very first National Technical and Higher Education Census (NTHEC), a nationwide data collection exercise in collaboration with NCTVA and Tertiary Education Commission (TEC), covering all HE and TVET institutions at the tertiary level. Preliminary results from the 2020 NTHEC are being used in this Education Sector Analysis (ESA) and will be key to feeding the policy dialogue and making policy recommendations for the forthcoming new Education Sector Plan (ESP). Coming back to the national TVET policy, it is worth highlighting its objective to create a National TVET Agency (NTA) that will be responsible for the implementation, coordination and management of TVET programmes. In particular, NTA will be in charge of establishing a NQF, a National Accreditation System (NAS), a TVET Management Information System (MIS), and a National Skills Development Fund (SDF) sourced from different agencies and development partners.

5.1.7 There is a long way to go before TVET transformation becomes effective

So far, implementation of the national TVET policy has been weak, monitoring and supervision of TVET centres remains fairly poor, and critical tools, instruments and equipment for TVET are still lacking. Besides, TVET operations across the country are fragmented, with existing centres being clustered in specific areas, while over 85% of TVET students come from poor rural backgrounds. According to a recent diagnostic study (GIZ, 2018*b*), some of the main drawbacks for TVET providers in Sierra Leone include poor internet connectivity and lack of sustainable funding from GoSL, which only takes responsibility for costs relative to teachers' salaries, and more generally the absence of any formal in-service teacher training. The latter ends up becoming the responsibility of the TVET providers and teachers themselves, who have little incentive to invest their own financial resources in training. As *Chapter 2* shows, TVET received only 2% of the recurrent budget in 2019. This is the result of an unfavourable intra-sectoral budget allocation within the MTHE, with HE accounting for one-fifth of overall education budget. This could be explained by the lack, so far, of a coherent TVET strategy. In addition, the TVET system faces the need to formalise and strengthen the membership structure of the TVET coalition which brings together the main public and private stakeholders, as well as development partners and NGOs, and whose aim is to support the TVET system in Sierra Leone, and with the overarching goal of improving the employability of TVET graduates.

Looking ahead, the MTHE priorities include: (a) improving access to TVET in rural areas, (b) working towards sustainable funding thanks, for example, to public-private partnerships, (c) translating policy into law for resources mobilization and expanded function, (d) developing a NQF for regional TVET integration, (e) working with multilateral organizations to align national TVET curricula with international standards (African Union, ECOWAS, UNESCO), and (f) opening BMD degrees to technical education. Furthermore, the national TVET policy needs to be disseminated and popularised to ensure coordination, cohesion and compliance with its content. For the sake of policy coherence, it needs to be adjusted to ensure alignment with the overall education sector strategy, as well as with other sub-sector strategies. As for the NQF, the MTHE has set up a national committee and will be supported in the development process by the German Corporation for International Cooperation (GIZ). For now, NCTVA remains the institution responsible for providing certificates and diplomas to students after completion of standard training and coursework in specific technical and vocational trades. However, the NCTVA, as well as the other main institutional accreditation agency in Sierra Leone, the TEC, have limited qualified human and financial resources at their disposal to tackle their expansive portfolio of responsibilities, which means part of their functions are not fulfilled, leading to lax eternal quality assurance processes (World Bank, 2017).

Box 5.1 TVET and HE systems in turbulent times: Risks induced by the Covid-19 outbreak

External shocks stemming from the Covid-19 outbreak seriously threaten TVET and HE systems with potential damages extending beyond the short- and medium-term. According to the Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Centre[1], as of 2 July 2020 Sierra Leone counts 1,498 confirmed cases, of which 439 active cases, and 60 deaths. Covid-19 keeps spreading in the country, with the number of new cases registered going up every day. Worryingly, the country ranks among the worst performers in Africa in terms of healthcare with, in particular, a very limited supply of health professionals, hospital beds, and access to safe water (World Bank, 2020). To reduce the spread of the coronavirus, GoSL has put in place containment measures, including the closure of schools and universities, a ban on public gatherings, border closure and an inter-district travel ban, a nationwide partial lockdown and night curfew, and a year-long national state of emergency[2]. However, at the time of writing, GoSL has started easing containment measures by lifting inter-district travel restrictions and reducing curfew hours[3]. As a low-income country with abundant resources but commodity-dependent and export-led growth, Sierra Leone faces high risks of a protracted economic downturn as a result of not only the containment measures, but also the repercussions in the domestic market of the bleak economic outlook worldwide (disruption of global production and value chains, plunge in global demand and commodity prices, and slashed Foreign Direct Investment [FDI] flowing to the country). To cope with the damaging economic backlash, GoSL is resorting to fiscal and monetary policies aimed at supporting businesses (World Bank, 2020), but these may not suffice to prevent a prolonged drop in production and massive job losses. This situation could lead to tax base erosion, reduced fiscal space, and austerity in government spending, which could translate into expenditure cutbacks for the TVET and HE sectors if not considered a priority for economic recovery.

Making the case for continued support and investment in TVET and HE systems. If properly managed, they can be key for economic recovery and sustained growth by providing the labour market with the skills needed to sustain productivity and competitiveness. In the short term, supporting retraining programmes as part of active labour market policies is an effective way to promote labour mobility from depressed to recovering or expanding sectors. Together with employment retention policies, yet to be discussed and effected in Sierra Leone[4], they can stand as a bulwark against rising levels of unemployment and underemployment. However, TVET and HE systems are for now facing more immediate and pressing challenges. According to UNESCO[5], school closures are affecting nearly two million learners in Sierra Leone. Currently, we have insufficient data to fully assess the situation for TVET and HE, but there is no doubt that priority should be given to ensuring continuity in education by means of distance learning. This entails dealing with a number of problems revolving around access to ICTs and remote learning solutions, internet connectivity, and digital skills. As a new ministry, MTHE is still in its "running-in" phase, and hence faces heightened challenges to keep operations afloat. This situation calls for the stepping up of efforts to ensure continued support and financial sustainability of the TVET and HE systems. These uncertain and volatile times also present the opportunity to take a step back and reflect on the state of education in order to devise the systems of tomorrow that will best serve the interests of the next generation.

Notes: 1. The database with daily updates is available online at: https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html
2. OECD Covid-19 Country Policy Tracker available at: https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/country-policy-tracker/
3. Statement by the President of the Republic of Sierra Leone at the Fourth Press Conference on Covid-19. Freetown, State House – 23 June 2020.
4. International Labour Organization (ILO) Covid-19 and the world of work: Country policy responses available at: https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/coronavirus/country-responses
5. UNESCO database on Covid-19 Educational Disruption and Response available at: https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse

5.2 Performance in terms of access and equity

In this second section, we turn to an analysis of enrolment in tertiary education by level and field of study based on preliminary results from the 2020 NTHEC. These are disaggregated by sex in order to highlight gender equity issues.

5.2.1 This report relies on the first census of tertiary institutions ever conducted in Sierra Leone

The 2020 NTHEC offers an unprecedented opportunity to comprehensively profile the highest levels of education. This is the first nationally-representative census of HE and tertiary TVET institutions ever conducted in Sierra Leone. After the inception and fact-finding missions to Sierra Leone by the UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP-UNESCO Dakar), which is supporting GoSL in the ESA process, it came to light that the country was devoid of reliable and comprehensive data on TVET and HE for monitoring and evidence-based policymaking purposes. The truth is that existing data were scattered across government institutions which tend to work in silos without any formal data sharing or internal quality cross-checking, thereby depriving policy-makers of the much-needed evidence base. To rectify this, MTHE spared no effort and, thanks to financial support from the World Bank, in collaboration with the NCTVA and TEC carried out this last-minute data collection exercise. Conducted in January 2020, the NTHEC covers all TVET and HE institutions at the tertiary level; captures geospatial coordinates; and provides key information on access, internal efficiency and quality. Sierra Leone currently has five registered fully functioning universities and two polytechnics, but the census was able to identify a few more HE institutions in the process of registration with TEC.

Beyond the ESA, it is of critical importance to make the most of the information contained in the 2020 NTHEC to feed the policy dialogue and design a meaningful Education Sector Plan (ESP) for tertiary education. The information at hand, which we discuss and display in this second section, includes enrolment data and, with regards to internal efficiency and quality, some numbers on graduation and academic staff. There is a significant limitation to the data because of the short time period covered in the census, concretely three academic years from 2017 to 2019. Moreover, disaggregated data for TVET and HE are only available for 2019 and limited to enrolment. Beyond the 2020 NTHEC, the lack of data prevents us from extending the analysis to TVET at primary and secondary education levels. Accordingly, the following analysis provides essentially a loosely dynamic snapshot of tertiary education in general.

5.2.2 The number of tertiary students is growing significantly

Tertiary enrolment and access rates display steep upward trends in recent years. The 2020 NTHEC data shows that tertiary enrolment increased by 44% between 2017 and 2019, the number of enrolled students climbing from 89,592 to 129,196 (see *Table 5.1*). Likewise, the tertiary access rate, defined as the number of students per 100,000 inhabitants, rose by 38% from almost 1,200 to close to 1,700. These positive trends can be attributed to recent efforts to improve access to tertiary education, including the creation of a dedicated ministry, namely MTHE, and the provision of scholarships by public and private entities. Also important is the rolling out of a student loan scheme which aims to increase access to education and raise the level of participation among students from all levels of learning.

Tertiary education is currently weighted in the favour of HE and to the detriment of TVET. Tertiary education encompasses general education and vocational education programmes, referred to here as HE and TVET respectively. TVET includes short-cycle tertiary vocational education programmes which correspond to the International Standard Classification of Education 2011 (ISCED-11) levels 551 and 554 (UNESCO-UIS, 2012). In turn, HE includes short-cycle tertiary general education, bachelor's degrees, master's degrees, and doctoral degrees, or the equivalent levels (ISCED-11 levels 541, 544 and 6 to 8). Note that besides academic programmes, bachelor's and higher degrees also include professional programmes, but these are deemed to be part of HE, that is general education, and not TVET. In 2019, four in five tertiary students were enrolled in HE (81%) with the remaining 24,749 following short-cycle vocational education programmes. In the same vein, there is a large gap in access rates with the number of students per 100,000 inhabitants doing TVET studies (317) falling more than four times short of those in HE institutions (1,337). However, TVET is expected to pick up as a result of increased awareness and rebranding since 2018, notably with the creation of MTHE and new partnerships established with NGOs and development partners. The share of enrolment per type of institution further reveals that limited access to tertiary TVET is largely driven by the limited capacity of public institutions, which only account for 40% of tertiary TVET students. This is not surprising since the unit cost per student in tertiary education in public institutions is very high, especially when compared to lower levels of education (see *Chapter 3*). Despite this, private TVET providers generally possess better equipment and tools.

5.2.3 Women continue to be outnumbered by men, but they are catching up

Between 2017 and 2019, tertiary enrolment and access rates increased twice as fast for women (+61% and +54%) as it did for men (+32% and +26%). As a result, over the same period, the share of women among tertiary students increased from 43 to 48% and the gender gap in the access rate halved from 350 to 159. This situation shows that inclusive education policies are paying off thanks, in particular, to the updated grant-in-aid policy which provides women with automatic scholarships when applying to courses in science, technology, engineering, agriculture and mathematics (STEAM), and the promotion of girls' education by gender-sensitive civil society groups. MTHE aspires to remove all economic and physical barriers that hamper admission to tertiary education, while ensuring equity and promoting equal access to all men and women, people with special needs, as well as urban and rural dwellers. On 30 March 2020, Sierra Leone made a major stride towards gender parity in education by overturning with immediate effect the ban on pregnant girls attending schools. This historic decision will allow thousands of girls back into classes nationwide, but only when schools reopen after the shutdown prompted by the Covid-19 outbreak.

In fact, women enrolled in tertiary education are not all in the same boat. In 2019, while they make up the majority of TVET students (54%), in HE they are less numerous than men (46%). In line with enrolment figures, women enjoy better access than men to tertiary TVET (+46 students per 100,000 inhabitants) but not to HE (-205). There are at least two reasons why tertiary TVET is more populated by women: (i) the type of programmes and courses attract more women (e.g. catering, tailoring/dressmaking, tourism, etc.), and (ii) the lower cost and duration are favourable to women given their domestic expectations and other social commitments. Participation of women in TVET is expected to expand since the updated grant-in-aid policy providing women with automatic scholarships will also apply to GTIs.

Table 5.1: Tertiary education (TE) enrolment and access rates by gender, 2017-2019

		Number			Number/100,000 inhabitants		
	Coverage	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
2017	TE	51,228	38,364	89,592	1,372	1,022	1,196
2018	TE	57,088	44,529	101,617	1,496	1,161	1,328
2019	TE	67,562	61,634	129,196	1,733	1,574	1,654
	Of which						
	TVET	11,453	13,296	24,749	294	340	317
	HE	56,109	48,338	104,447	1,439	1,235	1,337

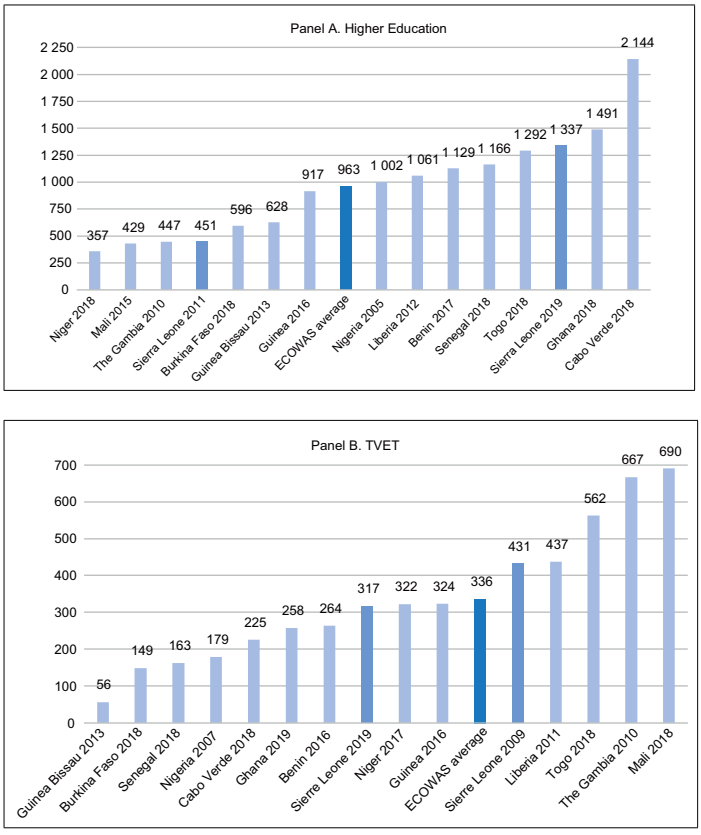
Source: 2020 National Technical and Higher Education Census (NTHEC) and United Nations (UN) 2019 Revision of World Population Prospects.

Note: Tertiary education encompasses vocational education and general education programmes, referred to here as TVET and HE respectively. TVET includes short-cycle tertiary vocational education programmes, which correspond to the International Standard Classification of Education 2011 (ISCED-11) levels 551 and 554 (UNESCO-UIS, 2012). HE includes short-cycle tertiary general education, bachelor's degrees, master's degrees, and doctoral degrees or the equivalent levels (ISCED-11 levels 541, 544 and 6 to 8). Disaggregated data for TVET and HE is not available for 2017 and 2018.

5.2.4 Sierra Leone ranks among the top performers in ECOWAS for tertiary education access

As surprising as it may seem given its unsettled recent past, data at hand, based on the latest year available, shows that the number of HE students per 100,000 inhabitants in Sierra Leone (1,337) largely exceeds the average for the ECOWAS region (963), and is only surpassed by Cabo Verde (2,144) and Ghana (1,491) (see *Figure 5.2* Panel A). Sierra Leone has come a long way since, according to the previous ESA (IIEP-UNESCO Dakar, 2013) which showed that in 2011, the number of HE students per 100,000 inhabitants stood at 451, meaning that it has increased threefold since then. In 2011, there were no more than 32 tertiary institutions registered with TEC, of which only three were universities (World Bank, 2013). A different story emerges with TVET. The number of TVET students per 100,000 inhabitants in Sierra Leone (317) falls short of the ECOWAS average (336), and lags far behind top performing countries in the region like Mali (690), The Gambia (667) and Togo (562) (see *Figure 5.2* Panel B). In addition, it plummeted over the last decade as illustrated by the access rate of 2009 which stood at 431. However, these results should be viewed with caution as the 2019 access rates to TVET in Sierra Leone is biased downwards as it includes only short-cycle tertiary vocational education programmes. Therefore, it is not strictly comparable with the other countries and previous years for which secondary TVET is also taken into account.

Figure 5.2: Number of students per 100, 000 inhabitants in ECOWAS countries, latest year available



Source: 2020 NTHEC, UN 2019 Revision of World Population Prospects, and IIEP-UNESCO Dakar database

Note: The number of TVET students per 100,000 inhabitants in Sierra Leone in 2019 includes only short-cycle tertiary vocational education programmes, therefore it is downward biased and not strictly comparable with other countries and previous years for which secondary TVET is taken into account.

5.2.5 Most students do not go beyond undergraduate studies

The largest increases in TE enrolment between 2017 and 2019 concern undergraduate studies, in other words short-cycle tertiary (+34%) and bachelor's degree or equivalent level (+55%) programmes (see *Table 5.2*). With regards to postgraduate studies, master's degree or equivalent level programmes registered a 22% increase in the number of students enrolled. Doctoral schools are still in their infancy in Sierra Leone, with barely 28 PhD students in 2019 compared to 13 in 2018, and none in 2017. In 2019, those doing undergraduate studies make up almost the entire population of TE students (97%), of which 42% are enrolled in short-cycle tertiary programmes and 55% in bachelor's programmes. The share of students enrolled in master's (3%) or doctoral (0%) degrees is therefore close to nil. It is worth mentioning that the limited availability of data for doctoral studies makes it difficult to check on the actual status of this level of education. Barriers that hamper youth progression beyond undergraduate studies are numerous, and include financial constraints, socio-cultural factors, and unmet entry requirements.

Table 5.2: Tertiary education (TE) enrolment by level of education, 2017-19

	Enrolment				Distribution of learners, 2019	
	2017	2018	2019	% by level	% of female students	% in private institutions
Short-cycle tertiary	40,338	42,114	53,894	42%	52%	52%
Bachelor's or equivalent	45,642	55,116	70,873	55%	45%	29%
Master's or equivalent	3,612	4,374	4,391	3%	39%	3%
Doctoral or equivalent	0	13	38	0%	21%	0%
Total	89,592	101,617	129,196	100%	48%	38%

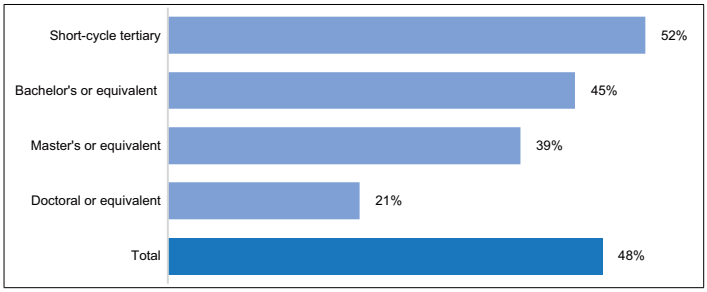
Source: 2020 NTHEC

Note: Data not available separately for tertiary TVET and HE.

5.2.6 The higher the level of education, the lower the share of women enrolling

Gender-disaggregated data show large gaps in the number of women at different levels of higher education. While they account for the majority of TE students in short-cycle tertiary programmes (52%), women are increasingly in the minority and outnumbered by men at upper levels, accounting for just one in five students (21%) at PhD level (see *Figure 5.3*). The disparities women face are not unrelated to traditional gender roles that promote early marriage and motherhood, as well as other binding responsibilities in the domestic realm (see *Chapter 8*), which jeopardise their progression in education. Besides, TE providers are highly dispersed with private institutions involved almost exclusively in undergraduate studies while public institutions take over at higher tertiary levels.

Figure 5.3: Share of women among TE students by level of education, 2019



Source: 2020 NTHEC

Note: Data not available separately for tertiary TVET and HE.

5.2.7 STEAM education accounts for a minority of students, but is gaining ground

STEM education, which encompasses science, technology, engineering and mathematics subject areas, is most often analysed through a gender lens in order to evidence the lower participation of women and its detrimental effect on employment and decent work prospects. In contrast with other countries, Sierra Leone considers that agriculture is also a key sector in which the participation of women should be promoted. Accordingly, we adopt here a broader perspective by including agriculture so as to extend the analysis to all STEAM courses. As a reminder, women applying to courses in STEAM are provided with automatic scholarships in Sierra Leone.

Table 5.3: Tertiary education (TE) enrolment by ISCED broad field of education, 2017-2019

	Enrolment			Distribution of learners, 2019	
	2017	2018	2019	% by field	% of female students
Total	89,592	101,617	129,196	100%	48%
Social sciences, journalism and information	18,906	27,598	33,565	26%	47%
Business, administration and law	12,084	18,266	26,838	21%	45%
Arts and humanities	2,430	3,060	17,315	13%	69%
Education	10,053	10,060	10,726	8%	49%
Health and welfare	3,870	4,833	9,245	7%	72%
Information and communication technologies	5,871	6,411	9,184	7%	29%
Engineering, manufacturing and construction	3,507	1,497	8,650	7%	14%
Agriculture, forestry, fisheries and veterinary	2,187	2,238	6,383	5%	45%
Not known or unspecified	26,565	23,577	4,425	3%	38%
Services	2,289	1,113	1,660	1%	59%
Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics	1,830	2,964	1,205	1%	22%

Source: 2020 NTHEC

Note: ISCED broad fields of education sorted by descending order of importance in terms of number of students enrolled. STEAM fields of education are displayed in bold. Data not available separately for tertiary TVET and HE.

In 2019, 7 out of 10 TE students were enrolled in non-STEAM courses, with the bulk of students concentrated in just 3 fields of studies: social sciences, journalism and information (26%), business, administration and law (21%), and arts and humanities (13%) (see *Table 5.3*). If we put aside missing values (the field of study is not known or unspecified for 3% of students), it shows that only 27% of TE students are enrolled in STEAM subject areas. In addition, STEAM courses are not on an equal footing. While natural sciences, mathematics and statistics gather barely 1% of TE students, the other courses do better with 5% for agriculture, forestry, fisheries and veterinary, and 7% for the remaining courses. That being said, it is encouraging to see that enrolment in STEAM education is progressing fast, although quite heterogeneously across subject areas. Between 2017 and 2019, TE enrolment more than doubled in health and welfare (+139%), engineering, manufacturing and construction (+147%), and agriculture (+192%). By contrast, enrolment increased more slowly in ICTs (+56%), and even experienced a contraction in natural sciences (-34%).

Overall, these findings echo the critical need for the TE system to step up efforts to better adapt the training supply to labour market needs. As seen before, employers in strategic sectors (i.e. mining, construction, manufacturing, health, energy and agriculture) are facing challenges in filling vacancies, which does not come as a surprise given the relatively few students enrolled at the tertiary level in these fields of study. Among supply-side constraints, STEAM education is weakened by a shortage of qualified teachers resulting from the skewed specialisation towards non-STEAM subjects in Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs). MTHE aims to reverse this pattern by encouraging TTC students to opt for STEAM studies. Furthermore, the lack of functional laboratories, as well as adequate equipment and tools, does not create an enabling environment for STEAM education.

Table 5.4: Women and men in tertiary STEAM education, 2017-2019

	2017			2018			2019		
	Numerator	Denominator	%	Numerator	Denominator	%	Numerator	Denominator	%
Participation									
Women in STEM education	5,793	38,364	15%	6,369	44,529	14%	10,840	61,634	18%
Men in STEM education	9,285	51,228	18%	9,336	57,088	16%	17,444	67,562	26%
Women in STEAM education	6,612	38,364	17%	7,539	44,529	17%	13,686	61,634	22%
Men in STEAM education	10,653	51,228	21%	10,404	57,088	18%	20,981	67,562	31%
Distribution									
Women in STEM education	5,793	15,078	38%	6,369	15,705	41%	10,840	28,284	38%
Women in STEAM education	6,612	17,265	38%	7,539	17,943	42%	13,686	34,667	39%
Graduation									
Women in STEM education	_	_	_	_	_	_	4,808	5,075	95%
Men in STEM education	_	_	_	_	_	_	10,269	10,706	96%
Women in STEAM education	_	_	_	_	_	_	6,146	6,474	95%
Men in STEAM education	_	_	_	_	_	_	12,087	12,604	96%

Source: 2020 NTHEC

Note: STEM includes natural sciences, mathematics and statistics; ICTs; engineering, manufacturing and construction; and health and welfare. STEAM includes agriculture, forestry, fisheries and veterinary in addition to those subjects. As a reminder, women applying to courses in STEAM are provided with automatic scholarships in Sierra Leone. Participation refers to the share of men or women enrolled in tertiary STEAM education. Distribution refers to the proportion of men or women among the total number of students enrolled in tertiary STEAM education. Graduation refers to the graduation rate defined as the number of final year students who pass the exam, expressed as a percentage of students enrolled in the final year. Data not available separately for tertiary TVET and HE, and data on graduation not available for 2017 and 2018.

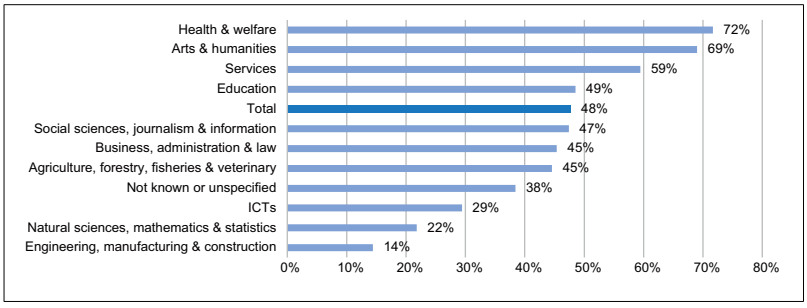
5.2.8 Increasing number of women enrol in STEAM education, but they remain under-represented

The share of female students enrolled at the tertiary level in STEAM education increased from 17% in 2017 to 22% in 2019 (see *Table 5.4*). This is encouraging, and is expected to increase further thanks to the updated grant-in-aid policy providing women with automatic scholarships in STEAM education. However, the fact that in 2019 only one in five women follow STEAM studies in contrast with nearly one in three men (31%) is not satisfactory, especially when compared to basic education where gender parity prevails. Moreover, the number of male students studying STEAM subjects grew faster (+10 percentage points [pp] between 2017 and 2019) than female students (+5 pp). In terms of distribution, we find that women account for 39% of STEAM students, a proportion that has remained stable over the past years. If we exclude agriculture, it results in the same pattern but sheds further light on women's poor access to scientific education, with less than one in four female students opting for STEM studies at the tertiary level in 2019 (18%). Data on African countries are difficult to find, but global estimates covering 110 countries

around the world show that only 31% of female students select STEM-related fields in higher education (33% for STEAM) (UNESCO, 2017), thus indicating there is still room for improvement in Sierra Leone.

The distribution of female students across fields of study reproduces gender stereotypes and commonalities observed elsewhere. In Sierra Leone, women account indeed for the bulk of TE students enrolled in courses deemed as feminine, essentially health and welfare (72% in 2019), arts and humanities (69%), and services (59%) (see *Figure 5.4*). Conversely, they are under-represented to a large extent in more productive sectors of activity like engineering, manufacturing and construction (14%), natural sciences, mathematics and statistics (22%), and ICTs (29%). Similar results are observed at the global level (UNESCO, 2017), with the slight difference that in Sierra Leone the share of female students is comparatively much lower in natural sciences, mathematics and statistics (-33 pp in Sierra Leone as compared to the global average), education (-22 pp), social sciences, journalism and information (-14 pp), and engineering, manufacturing and construction (-13 pp). All in all, breaking the intergenerational transmission of gender stereotypes is key to opening up the entire spectrum of existing education and employment opportunities to women, so that they can unlock their potential and thrive as men do.

Figure 5.4: Share of female students in TE by field of education, 2019



Source: 2020 NTHEC

Note: Data not available separately for tertiary TVET and HE.

5.3 Internal efficiency and quality

This third and last section focuses on the internal efficiency and quality of higher education and TVET. It uses the 2020 NTHEC preliminary results firstly to document graduation patterns, and then moves to more qualitative aspects and forward-looking considerations.

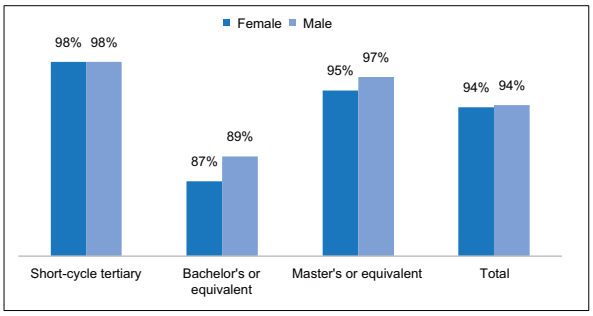
5.3.1 Nearly all final year tertiary students graduate

Turning to internal efficiency, 2020 NTHEC data shows remarkably high TE graduation rates with little variation across sexes, levels, and fields of education. Due to data limitations, bearing in mind that only partial results of the 2020 NTHEC were made available at the time of writing, our analysis of internal efficiency is limited to graduation rates, which are defined for a given cycle as the number of final year students who pass the exam, as a percentage of students enrolled in the final year. Strikingly, results obtained point to nearly universal graduation prevalence in tertiary education in Sierra Leone, which casts

doubts on the quality of either the data, the certification, or both. Indeed, as many as 94% of final year TE students passed their exams in 2019, with no difference emerging between sexes overall (see *Figure 5.5*). Graduation rates do not vary much with the level of education either. Only bachelor's degrees stand out with a lower, but still impressive, graduation rate (88%).

These appealing findings call for further data digging and investigation. Meanwhile they must be nuanced, especially as they contrast sharply with informal data received from the National Council for Technical, Vocational and other Academic Awards (NCTVA), as well as with the poor performance of Sierra Leonean students during WASSCE exams at secondary level (See *Chapter 4*). Admittedly, data obtained from NCTVA are likely to be incomplete, but they leave no doubt that, at least as far as TVET is concerned, a very different story arises. According to NCTVA, around 95% of all TVET institutions operating in the country are registered with them. Vocational programmes are not only delivered by TVET providers but also by TE institutions. NCTVA data reveal that, in 2018, the overall success rate of TVET students in final examination is as low as 51%, and falls to 45% in TVET institutions whereas TE institutions somehow do better (56%). Beyond poor learning outcomes, the data shed light on poor management of the examination process, undermining the education system. It appears that 3% of TVET students are under investigation for cheating in the final examination, 2% in TE institutions, and 4% in TVET institutions. Accordingly, the quality of TVET seems to be a non-negligible issue in Sierra Leone.

Figure 5.5: TE graduation rates by gender and level of education, 2019

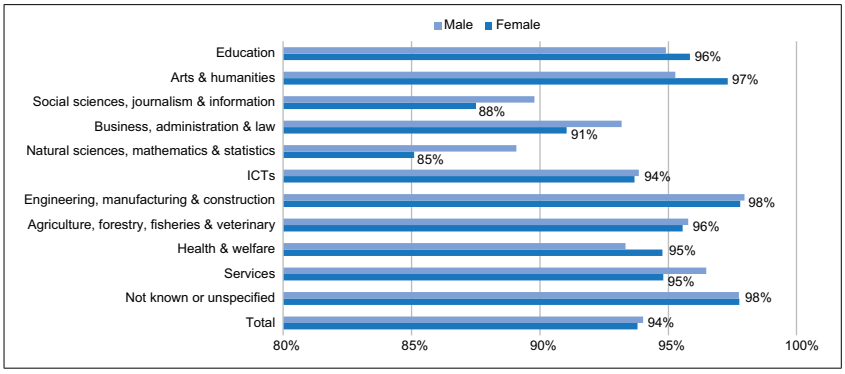


Source: 2020 NTHEC

Note: Graduation data not available for 2017 and 2018, and not available separately for tertiary TVET and HE.

Coming back to the 2020 NTHEC, graduation rates also prove to be relatively homogeneous across fields of study in tertiary education, ranging from 88% in natural sciences, mathematics and statistics, to 98% in engineering, manufacturing and construction. As *Figure 5.6* shows, there is no significant gap in graduation rates across sexes, suggesting that male and female students tend to be on par in terms of knowledge acquisition whatever the field of study, including STEAM subject areas. With this we conclude the analysis of the partial data available from the 2020 NTHEC, and turn to more qualitative aspects and forward-looking considerations.

Figure 5.6: TE graduation rates by gender and field of education, 2019



Source: 2020 NTHEC

Note: Graduation data not available for 2017 and 2018, and not available separately for tertiary TVET and HE. To ease reading, data values are displayed only for women.

5.3.2 Serious shortage of qualified TVET teachers

In terms of quality, Sierra Leone is in staggering need of qualified instructors for technical and vocational trades. According to MTHE, the total number of full-time TVET instructors in Sierra Leone amounts to 1,142, of which only 31% are women and 40% are employed in government-assisted institutions. Moreover, less than a third of TVET instructors are adequately trained in their technical disciplines. In other words, over two-thirds of them are from other non-technical disciplines and converted to teaching. In addition, according to an assessment undertaken by MBSSE, over 80% of trained TVET tutors are unavailable either because they retired, switched to other disciplines, or just died. There are only a handful of available qualified TVET experts, less than a hundred for a population of nearly 8 million inhabitants. While some teachers and trainers possess diplomas and certificates, others are not officially qualified and were trained informally without receiving any certification. However, MTHE is working closely with the Teacher Service Commission (TSC), teacher training colleges, and other entities to recruit professional technical trainers. An efficient way to address the shortage of TVET tutors is to use the services of experienced professional consultants in their respective fields of expertise. To this end, partnerships could be concluded with national firms. Another option could be to revive the bilateral cooperation TVET training programmes that Sierra Leone used to enjoy in the 1980s and 1990s. Either way, the situation is expected to change with the development of a NQF and the upgrading of national TVET curricula to meet international standards.

5.3.3 Government is stepping up efforts towards quality tertiary education

All the initiatives taken by the MTHE aim to benefit not only current students but also all those expected in the future as a result of the FQSE. Ongoing initiatives include: (i) review of the Universities Act (GoSL, 2005), (ii) inclusion of lecturers' salaries in the government payroll, (iii) extensive construction and refurbishment of campuses and administrative buildings, (iv) scholarships for students and lecturers at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, (v) upskilling of current lecturers with the assistance of retired professors from abroad, (vi) updated grant-in-aid policy providing women with automatic scholarships when applying to STEAM courses as well as, for the first time, to GTIs in order to increase enrolment of

women in TVET courses, (vii) modification of HE institutions' curricula to meet labour market demands and ground students in the local realities so that the skills acquired are directly relevant for addressing local challenges and opportunities, and (viii) rolling out of the student loan scheme to increase access to education across the country and raise the level of participation among students from all levels of learning.

Looking ahead, MTHE's main objectives are to: (i) remove all economic and physical barriers to accessing HE while ensuring equity and promoting equal access for all men and women, people with special needs, as well as urban and rural dwellers, (ii) invest in data collection and set up a HE Management Information System (HEMIS) to support evidence-based educational planning, (iii) render curricula and programmes more responsive to national and global labour market demands, (iv) assist staff to achieve qualifications on a par with international standards, (v) extend digitalisation in administrative work, and (vi) increase knowledge exchange with regional and international institutions. Specifically, MTHE aspires to recruit more academic staff to cater for student numbers, increase training opportunities to upgrade junior staff, encourage students in TTC to specialise in STEAM-related subjects, roll out the Fourah Bay College career advisory programme to other institutions, boost investment in the area of scientific research and production (currently almost inexistent, apart from some research conducted in private universities), pursue construction and refurbishment efforts (lecture rooms, hostels, laboratories, day-care centres to assist young mothers with infants, recreational facilities), and develop digitalised user-friendly assessment tools for students to provide feedback on modules and lecturers while avoiding fear of intimidation.

5.3.4 Government aims to put TVET at the forefront of its education policy

GoSL is now increasing the resources devoted to TVET with the ultimate goal of reducing unemployment, improving standards of living, increasing tax revenues, fostering social cohesion, and achieving a demographic dividend. In addition, it is increasingly partnering with bilateral and international organizations, such as GIZ and the World Bank, to address skills shortages and gaps across the country. The 2020 NTHEC reveals indeed that TVET in Sierra Leone is currently attracting significant support from GoSL, a number of development partners, and also businesses. It is central to the government's strategy to capacitate TVET institutions to offer well-defined, sector-specific skills production that will unleash economic competitiveness. TVET traditionally suffers from negative social perceptions and is commonly seen as an endpoint in the educational journey for school dropouts and those for whom HE is not an option. But this is likely to change owing to the current rebranding of TVET, climbing enrolment patterns, and a proliferation of success stories youth are witnessing within their communities. The government should definitely leverage evolving mindsets.

However, while moving TVET higher on the policy agenda is necessary to bridge skills gaps and address employment concerns, it is not enough. Concrete and financially-sustained actions are most needed to tackle the disturbingly poor quality of TVET learning conditions and outcomes, and prevailing outdated curricula that have little relevance to the labour market. These issues must be addressed in a comprehensive and coherent manner within the framework of the recently adopted national TVET policy, which brings together formal, non-formal and informal streams, but whose implementation is yet to get underway.

In light of the situation, MTHE calls for a number of key steps forward to make TVET more effective. Investing in data collection is all the more needed since informal and non-formal segments account for the bulk of trainees and students and remain largely invisible and uncounted. Evidence-based educational planning in TVET is best supported by tracer studies, absent for now in Sierra Leone, documenting youth trajectories all the way from studies to work. In this regard, TVET centres must be capacitated to improve on data management. A better and more comprehensive documentation of TVET functioning at both administrative and programmatic levels would be very much welcomed as well. It goes without saying that existing TVET curricula and certification need to be reviewed to reflect labour market demand. Investing in TVET for green jobs would be a good move since the country has a huge potential to harness clean energy from its numerous water sources for the production of electricity.

MTHE along with its partners and private TVET entities must develop relevant training both in and outside of the country for TVET instructors, and provide the necessary tools, instruments and equipment needed to enhance the technical skills of trainees and students. Within MTHE, the TVET directorate needs in particular to be provided with the capacity to properly monitor and supervise TVET institutions operating throughout the country. Poor students must be given scholarships, bursaries or any other support to pursue relevant technical or vocational skills training at various levels. Finally, as part of TVET promotion, yearly exhibitions and other communication activities are particularly useful.

CHAPTER 6

Labour market performance of TVET and HE

People expect education to contribute effectively to national wealth by facilitating graduates' integration into the labour market. While this is true for general schooling, it is even more so for the terminal levels of education, namely technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and higher education (HE).

This chapter makes use of the most recent household surveys with comprehensive information on employment, the Sierra Leone Labour Force Survey (SLLFS) 2014 and the Sierra Leone Integrated Household Survey (SLIHS) 2018, to analyse the labour market outcomes of education leavers, especially from TVET and HE. It aims to shed light on the extent to which these terminal levels of education increase young people's chances to access employment, complete the labour market transition and occupy decent jobs, including jobs aligned with their level of qualification.

It is worth noting that during the period covered in this chapter (2014-2018), the Sierra Leonean labour market experienced a protracted shock as a result of the Ebola outbreak which began in early 2014 and led to over 3,900 deaths (Kastelic *et al*., 2015). Therefore, all the results and trends reported here should be seen through this lens. They also need to be put in perspective with the potential damages caused by the Covid-19 pandemic which, at the time of writing (July 2020), is unfolding with uncertain, yet likely unparalleled outcomes[9].

6.1 Youth demographics and educational attainment

This first section analyses the relative weight of the youth population and its distribution by highest level of education attained. It also assesses TVET attractiveness, inclusiveness, and youth distribution across subject areas.

6.1.1 Sierra Leone is confronted with a youth bulge

According to the 2003 National Youth Policy and the 2012 draft revised policy (Youth Policy Labs, 2014), and in line with the African Youth Charter (African Union Commission, 2006), Sierra Leone defines youth as all individuals in the age range of 15 to 35. In 2018, youth accounted for a third of the total population (33%), and almost two-thirds of the working-age population between the ages of 15 and 64 (63%). However, the youth bulge is receding, as illustrated by the higher proportion of youth in 2014 (36% of

9. As of 3 July 2020, Sierra Leone had registered 1,518 confirmed cases, of which 451 are active, and 60 deaths related to Covid-19, according to the Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Centre (the database with daily updates is available online at: https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html).

the total population and 66% of the working-age population), which shows the demographic transition is under way. A first look at their profile reveals that the typical youth is a woman (55% in 2018), below 25 years old (54%), and living in a rural area (54%). It is worth noting the significant decline in the proportion of rural dwellers among youth since 2014 (15 percentage points), owing most likely to the acceleration of urbanisation and rural-to-urban migration.

6.1.2 Youth are increasingly better educated, but still very few reach tertiary education

In 2018, 32% of youth had no formal educational background, 17% reached at most primary, 23% lower secondary, and 22% upper secondary education (see *Figure 6.1 Panel A*). Youth educational attainment largely outperforms adults' and has improved significantly since 2014 (see *Figure 6.1 Panel B*). For instance, the share of uneducated youth decreased by 12 percentage points over the period and, in 2018, stood at 37 percentage points below that of adults. Likewise, an increasing number of young people are reaching upper secondary education, thereby widening the gap at the expense of the adult population. However, the same does not hold at the tertiary level. Despite more than doubling since 2014, the share of tertiary-educated youth remained as low as 6.3% in 2018, and fell short of adults (7.5%). When it comes to TVET, which accounts for less than one in five tertiary-educated youth, the share goes down to 1.5%. Not all youth end up graduating, which means those with tertiary education qualifications are even fewer (3.4%, of which 0.9% in TVET and 2.5% in HE).

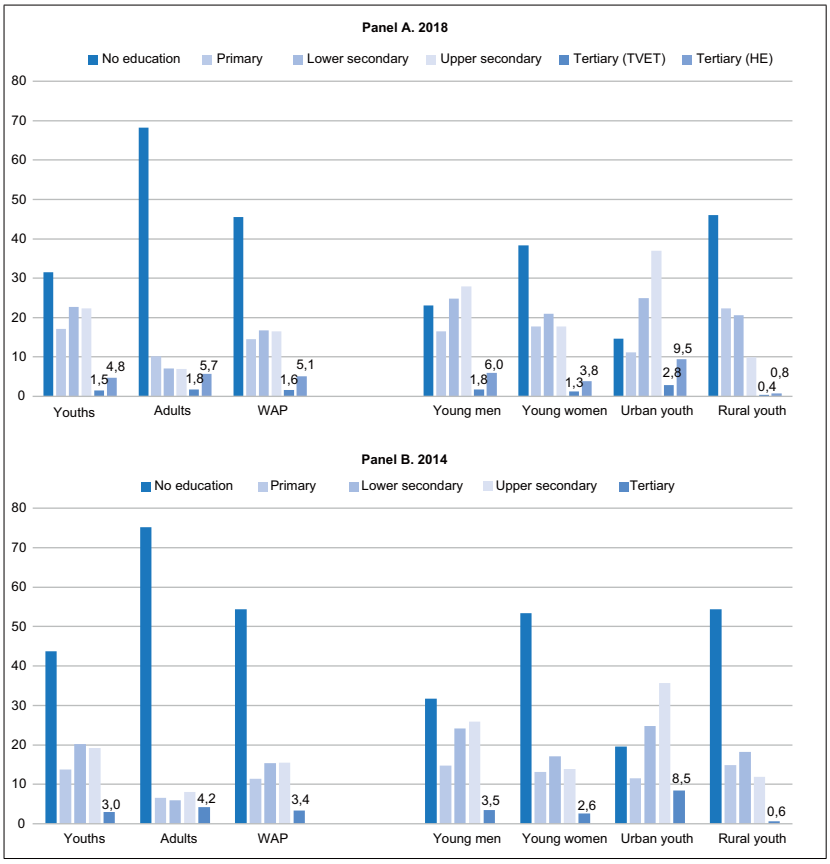
Overall, what is most striking is the fact that in 2018, nearly half of the working-age population had not received any formal education, and 60% had not gone beyond primary schooling. Such a poor level of human capital undoubtedly falls short of being able to lift the country out of poverty and enable an economic take-off. This situation calls for stepping up efforts so that, over the medium-term, Sierra Leone can catch-up with top performing countries in the region like Sao Tome and Principe, which for some time now has had nearly universal access to education.[10]

6.1.3 Young women and rural youth persistently lag behind

In 2018, the majority of young women and rural youth had a primary education or less (56% and 68%, respectively), in sharp contrast with their male and urban counterparts (39% and 26%, respectively) (see *Figure 6.1 Panel A*). Hence, at upper education levels, young women and rural youth are by far outnumbered, gaps persisting up to tertiary education, and being particularly acute between urban and rural settings. Although there is long way to go before reaching equality, a comparison with educational attainment in 2014 indicates that disadvantaged youth are catching up (see *Figure 6.1 Panel B*). However, there seems to be a glass ceiling beyond secondary schooling since the share of young women and rural youth with a tertiary education increased to a lower extent. Due to widening gaps, in 2018 only 5.1% of young women and 1.2% of rural youth had a tertiary education in comparison to 7.8% of young men and 12.3% of urban youth. Finally, it is worth noting that overall tertiary-educated youth have predominantly achieved HE but it is in TVET that those disadvantaged are relatively more numerous.

10. According to the latest data available from UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), in 2012, 88% of the population of 25 and older in Sao Tome and Principe had at least completed primary education.

Figure 6.1: Highest level of education attained, 2014 and 2018, %



Source: SLLFS, 2014, and SLIHS, 2018.

Note: Youths are aged 15-35, and adults 35-64. WAP stands for the working-age population (15-64). Panel A: tertiary (TVET) includes vocational and polytechnic courses (OND, HND), and tertiary (HE) includes teacher training, nursing, other certificates or diploma, first degree (BA, BSc, etc.) and higher degrees. Panel B: information available in the SLLFS 2014 does not differentiate TVET from HE at the tertiary level.

6.1.4 TVET does not attract many youth and is poorly inclusive

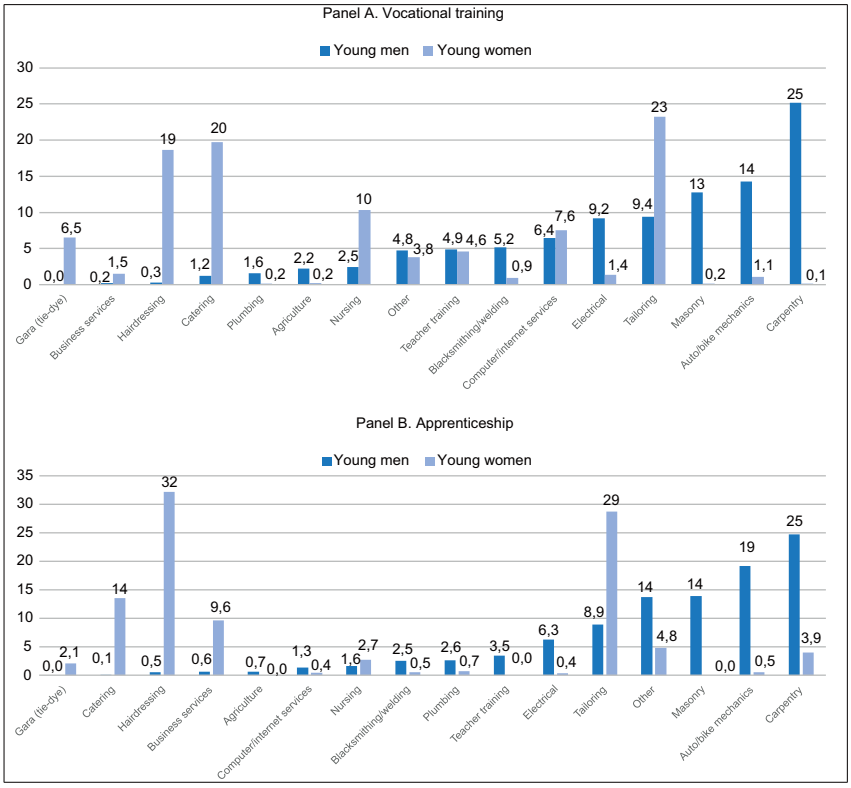
The SLLFS 2014 provides information on any formal vocational training and apprenticeships done by the respondents.[11] The results show that less than one-tenth of youth are concerned (3.0% did vocational training, 3.5% did an apprenticeship, and 2.3% did both). Once again, young women and rural youth were the most disadvantaged with barely 4.2% and 3.4%, respectively, having done vocational training, and 2.2% and 4.3%, respectively, an apprenticeship. Moreover, these disadvantaged youth are less likely to complete[12] their vocational training (52% for young women and 56% for rural youth), or obtain a certificate (44% and 29%, respectively). Overall, only 58% of youth completed their vocational training and 39% obtained a certificate. On a positive note, girls doing vocational training are better educated than boys (68% and 58%, respectively, have secondary education). However, rural youth are not in the same situation and, in particular, are twice as likely as urban youth to be uneducated at the beginning of the training (34% and 16%, respectively).

11. In addition to the highest level of education attained, the SLLFS 2014 asked the following questions that we use in this chapter for the analysis of TVET labour market outcomes: (a) “Have you done any formal vocational training?” (b) “In what subject did you receive the most recent training?”, (c) “Did you complete the training?”, (d) “What level of education did you have when you entered this training?”, (e) “Have you ever done an apprenticeship?”, and (f) “In what area of work did you do the apprenticeship?”.
12. Either graduate, or participate for the entire duration of the training.

6.1.5 TVET subject areas are highly gendered

Indeed, the SLLFS 2014 further shows that vocational training and apprenticeships exhibit a clear occupational segregation by sex. The most frequent subject areas for young men in vocational training are carpentry (25%), automobile and motorcycle mechanics (14%), and masonry (13%) (see *Figure 6.2 Panel A)*. The same holds true in apprenticeships (25%, 19% and 14%, respectively) (see *Figure 6.2 Panel B*). Conversely, young women are primarily attracted by tailoring (23% in vocational training, and 29% in apprenticeships), catering (20%, and 14%), and hairdressing (19%, and 32%). Strikingly, apart from tailoring, subject areas dominated by one sex are almost completely neglected by the opposite sex. By and large, in vocational training and apprenticeships alike, girls are more tempted by the services sector and boys by manufacturing and construction. In rural areas, carpentry, tailoring, and automobile/motorcycle mechanics account for more than half of vocational training and apprenticeships undertaken by youth, far more than in urban areas where the services sector is more widespread. Surprisingly, almost no rural youth have received vocational training or done an apprenticeship in agriculture (2.7%, and 0.8%, respectively), thus echoing the sector's low productivity.

Figure 6.2: Distribution of young men and women by subject area of vocational training and apprenticeship, 2014, %



Source: SLLFS, 2014, and SLIHS, 2018.

Note: Youths are aged 15-35. Data not available in the SLIHS, 2018. Subject areas sorted by ascending order of importance for men. Panel A: The most recent (formal) vocational training done is taken into account.

6.2 Youth labour market transition and access to employment

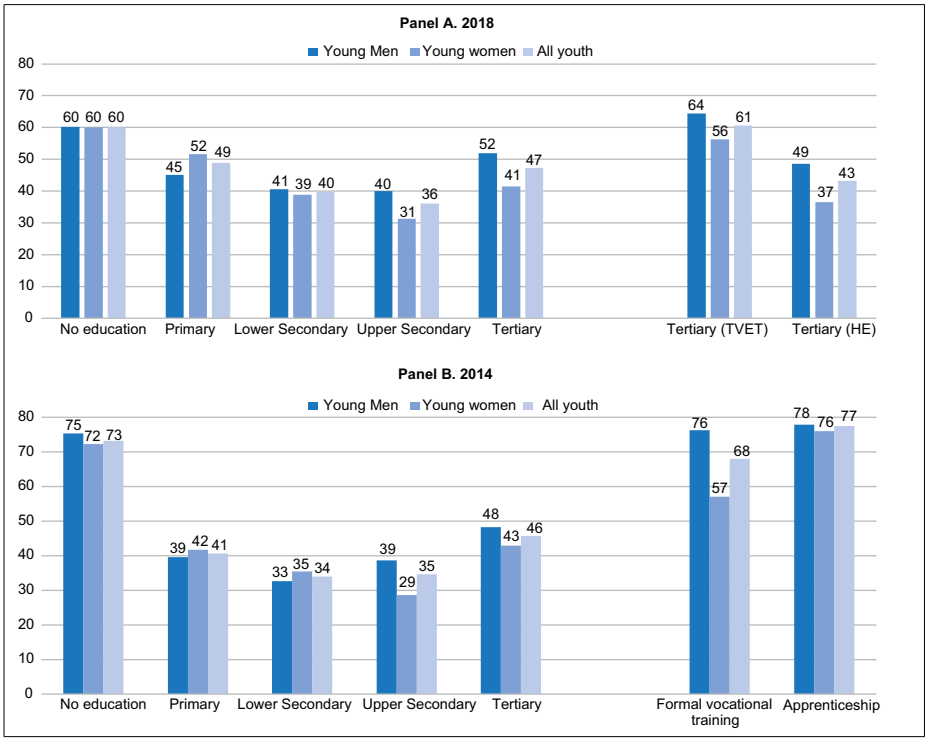
In this second section, we turn to the analysis of youth labour market outcomes. We first draw on employment, unemployment, and NEET[13] figures to gauge how easy it is for youth to access employment, depending on their level of education. We then attempt to assess young people's chances of completing the labour market transition, and how long this transition takes.

6.2.1 Employment declines with education, but tertiary-educated youth fare relatively well

Employment tends to decline with educational attainment, yet tertiary-educated youth record relatively high employment prospects, largely as result of TVET. In 2018, the youth employment-to-population ratio (EPR) stood at a remarkably low level (47%), lagging far behind that of adults (69%), and dropping significantly in comparison to 2014 (53%). In other words, youth participation in economic activities is relatively modest, and losing ground. This finding is not necessarily bad, as almost half of non-working youth are attending school (43%) which, by the way, constitutes an improvement as compared to 2014 (38%). Actually, youth EPR diminishes with educational attainment, from 60% for uneducated youth, to 36% for young people with an upper secondary education, in 2018 (see *Figure 6.3 Panel A*). This is partly because youth are more likely to be attending school when they have reached the higher levels of education. Similar patterns are observed for 2014 (see *Figure 6.3 Panel B*). A radically different picture emerges with the adult population whose employment incidence appears to soar with educational attainment, from 64% for no formal schooling, up to 85% for those with a tertiary education, in 2018.

13. NEET stands for "not in employment, education, or training".

Figure 6.3: Youth employment-to-population ratio by highest level of education attained and gender, 2014 and 2018, %



Source: SLLFS, 2014 and SLIHS, 2018

Note: Youth are aged 15-35. The youth employment-to-population ratio is defined as the number of employed youth, expressed as a percentage of the total youth population. An individual is considered as employed if, during the reference period (the last seven days before the date of interview), she/he worked for at least one hour in any market-oriented activity or was temporarily absent from work: (a) due to health reasons, vacation or maternity/paternity leave; (b) for less than 2/3 months; (c) but still receiving pay.

However, tertiary-educated youth stand apart with a relatively high incidence of employment which, in addition, is slightly increasing over time (from 46% in 2014 to 47% in 2018). We should not be misled by the similarity of the results for primary and tertiary-educated youth. As we will see later, their jobs differ substantially in terms of quality and conditions of work. Moreover, tertiary-educated youth are expected to have higher employability, and are more likely to have already started transitioning to the labour market. Within tertiary education, there is a high youth employment gap in favour of TVET (61%, in contrast to 43% for HE in 2018). This makes sense, firstly given that TVET programmes are meant to be professional and labour market oriented, and secondly, because they are part of short-cycle tertiary education which aims to help youth start the labour market transition quickly. Besides, data from SLLFS 2014 cast no doubt on the employment premiums resulting from TVET, regardless of the level of education, with formal vocational training and apprenticeship leading to youth EPRs as high as 68% and 77%, respectively. That being said, HE qualifications seems to be extremely rewarding since, by graduating, youth can significantly increase their chances of accessing employment (+19 percentage points in 2018). In tertiary TVET, obtaining a diploma or certificate does not have any significant impact on employment.

From a gender perspective, we observe noticeable employment penalties incurred by tertiary-educated young women. In 2018, their EPR is 10 percentage points lower than young men's, and the gap widens to 12 percentage points in HE. Gender equality seems out of reach in TVET too (8 percentage points difference in favour of boys). Moreover, the employment premium resulting from graduation in tertiary education is clearly not as high for young women (11 percentage points [pp]) as it is for young men (17 pp). In line with these results, we observe that in 2014, formal vocational training at large is substantially less rewarding for young women (EPR equivalent to 57% versus 76% for young men). In turn, apprenticeships do not appear to be gender-sensitive in terms of youth employment prospects. All in all, tertiary-educated young women are largely disadvantaged and do not seem to be catching up, as illustrated by their unique downward employment trend (-1.4 pp between 2014 and 2018).[14]

6.2.2 Conversely, unemployment soars with education up to the tertiary level

Indeed, unemployment tends to increase with educational attainment, youth with higher education being the most affected. According to the ILO definition, the youth unemployment rate (UR) in 2018 was rather modest at 4.0% – albeit well above adults' (2.6%) – and in decline since 2014 (5.8%). However, the ILO definition of unemployment is often perceived as too restrictive in developing countries where most people find work through informal channels. In 2018, the youth UR triples when accounting for discouraged workers (12%), and increases nearly sixfold (22%) when relaxing the job search criterion (using the broad definition) to account for all available potential job seekers. Youth unemployment according to the strict definition increases steadily with educational attainment up to the tertiary level (10%), where HE is associated with a much higher risk (12%) than TVET (7%) (see *Figure 6.4 Panel A*). The latter advocates for prioritising TVET when it comes to investing in tertiary education. SLLFS 2014 results demonstrate a similar pattern, although youth unemployment rates are remarkably higher, especially with regards to tertiary education (21%) (*see Figure 6.4 Panel B*).

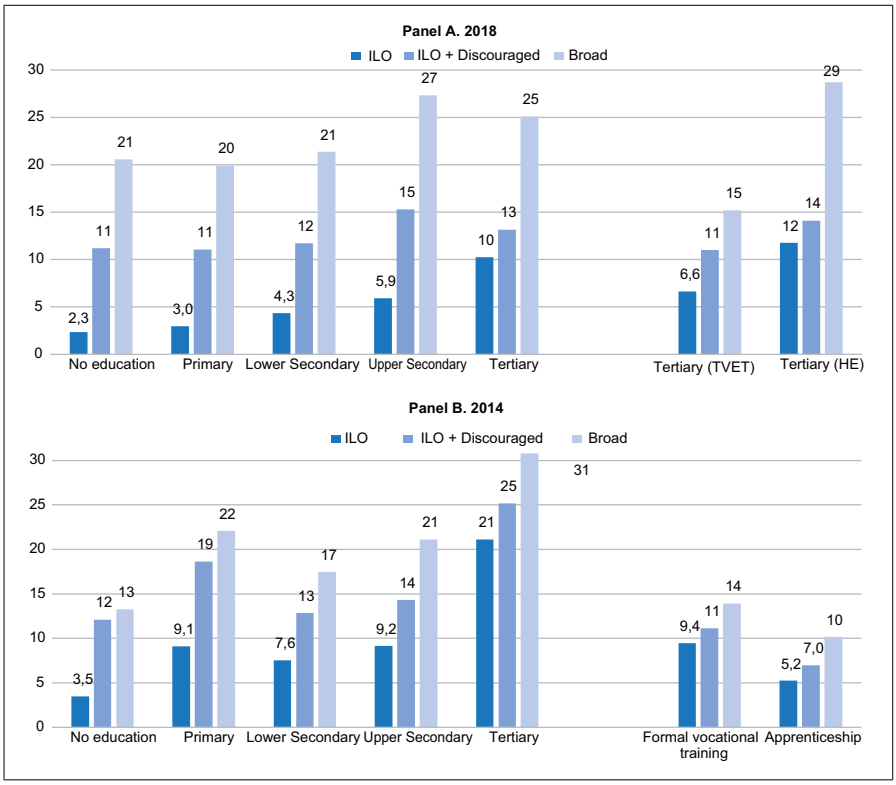
Moving from the strict to the broad definition of the youth unemployment rate (UR) leads to more than a doubling of the incidence of unemployment among tertiary-educated youth in 2018 (+145%). HE generates relatively more available potential job seekers (+144%) than TVET (+ 129%). The fact is that at the tertiary level, youth with TVET education are more prone to becoming discouraged, despite being less affected by unemployment (66% increase in UR when accounting for discouraged workers as opposed to 20% for HE). Interestingly, the SLLFS 2014 shows that apprenticeships are probably the best escape route from youth unemployment, which ranges from barely 5.2% (strict) to no more than 10% (broad). Accordingly, there should be a greater consideration of apprenticeships in the scaling up of TVET, including further modernisation of how they operate.

Unsurprisingly, tertiary-educated young women are disadvantaged compared to their male counterparts (strict UR 3.4 pp higher in 2018), and even more so when opting for TVET (5.4 pp higher). Besides, they have experienced only a 35% decline in strict unemployment since 2014, which falls way short of tertiary-educated young men's 61% drop. The gender unemployment gap widens with alternative definitions, meaning that tertiary-educated young women account for relatively more discouraged workers (+43%) and available potential job seekers (+16%), especially those who went through HE (+62% and +16%,

14. Unfortunately, the SLIHS 2018 and SLLFS 2014 do not provide sufficient observations on tertiary-educated youth in rural areas to obtain robust results and conduct a comparative analysis with urban areas. Accordingly, no spatial analysis will be presented in the rest of the chapter.

respectively). According to the SLLFS 2014, the unemployment penalty incurred by young women extends to formal vocational training at large and apprenticeships, with strict UR differentials rising to 4.2 percentage points and 13 percentage points, respectively.

Figure 6.4: Youth unemployment rate by highest level of education attained, 2014 and 2018



Source: SLLFS, 2014 and SLIHS, 2018

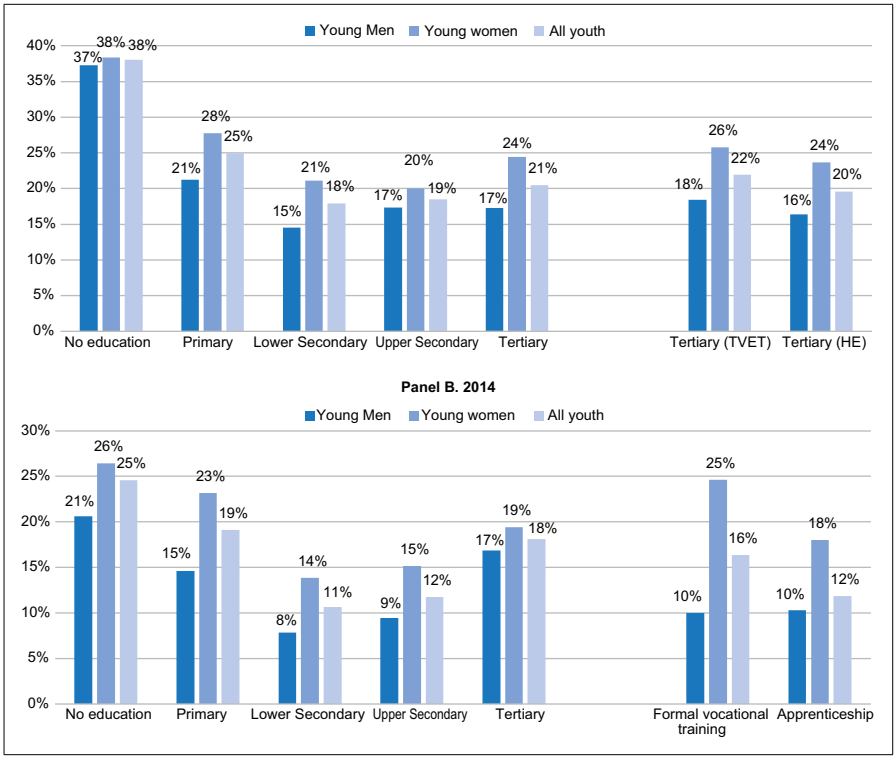
Note: Youth are aged 15-35. The unemployment rate is defined as the number of unemployed workers expressed as a percentage of the labour force (employed and unemployed workers). According to the ILO definition, an individual is considered as unemployed if she/he is: (a) without work, (b) currently available for work, and (c) seeking employment. The second definition includes, in addition, discouraged workers who are: inactive, currently available for work, but not seeking employment for specific reasons (too young; retired/too old; lack financial or other resources; lack skills, requirements or experience; or discouraged/no jobs out there). The broad definition relaxes the third ILO criterion related to seeking employment.

6.2.3 The NEET phenomenon does not spare tertiary-educated youth

Although the NEET phenomenon (not in employment, education, or training) tends to decrease with educational attainment, it affects a significant share of tertiary-educated youth, plagued for the most part by idleness. In 2018, one-fifth of tertiary-educated youth were not in employment, education, or training (21%), which is much less than the uneducated (38%), or primary-educated youth (25%) (see *Figure 6.5 Panel A*). Still, this number is far from being negligible and has been on the rise since 2014 (18%). Moreover, three-quarters of NEET youth are inactive non-students (76%), meaning they are likely to have not even started the labour market transition, thus falling prey to idleness. The UK Department for

International Development (DFID) recently commissioned a scoping study of students from two schools in Freetown who took the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) or the West African Secondary School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) exam in previous years (Sam-Kpakra, Sumberg, and Flynn, 2017). According to the study, as many as 70% of the 143 respondents who were NEET, reported that they were not looking for work. Back to our results, we observe that within tertiary education, TVET is associated with a larger proportion of youth NEETs (22%) than is HE (20%), and with a higher risk of idleness (80% versus 73%) among them. However, according to the SLLFS 2014, youth seem to be better sheltered from such adverse conditions when they have had any formal vocational training (NEET: 16%, of whom 63% are inactive non-students) or completed an apprenticeship (12% and 6%, respectively) (*see Figure 6.5 Panel B*).

Figure 6.5: Youth NEET rate by highest level of education attained, 2014 and 2018, %



Source: SLLFS, 2014 and SLIHS, 2018

Note: Youth are aged 15-35. NEET stands for not in employment, education, or training. The Youth NEET rate is calculated as the share of youth currently not employed or attending school, and includes unemployed and inactive non-students.

As expected, tertiary-educated young women are way more exposed to the NEET phenomenon (24% in 2018) than their male peers (17%), and the gap has been growing since 2014 (19% and 17%, respectively). They are, in addition, slightly more prone to idleness (77% of inactive non-students among the NEETs) compared to tertiary-educated young men (74%). The gender NEET gap does not vary much across

tertiary TVET, HE, and apprenticeships, standing at around 7 percentage points, whereas it widens greatly as far as formal vocational training at large is concerned (15 pp in 2014). However, young female NEETs who received any formal vocational training appear to be relatively much less subject to idleness (58%) than their male counterparts (74%).

6.2.4 Tertiary TVET is the best option for completing the labour market transition

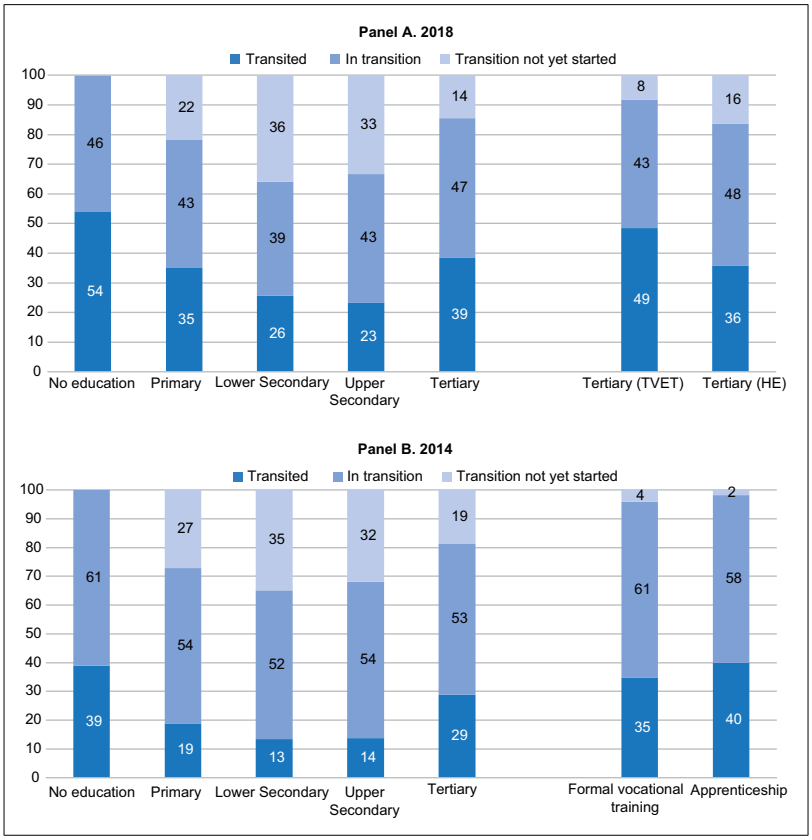
Tertiary education, especially TVET, increases youth chances to complete the labour market transition. Based on the ILO definition (2017: 29-31), we analyse the youth distribution across labour market transition stages (transited, in transition, transition not yet started).[15] Unsurprisingly, the likelihood of young people completing the transition rises gradually with age, from 14% for the youngest (15 to 19 years old) to 61% for the oldest cohort (30 to 35 years old) in 2018. The labour market transition is not an easy road and requires, among other things, time. The time needed to be educated and experienced enough. Speaking of education, we do observe that tertiary-educated youth's chances of transiting are greater (39%), but they do not seem to fare much better than primary-educated youth (35%), and are even surpassed by uneducated youth, most of whom have already transited (54%) (see *Figure 6.6 Panel A*). This might be normal in as far as aspirations also come into play. Uneducated or less-educated youth are more likely to satisfy themselves with less attractive work including non-regular or temporary jobs, and self-employment, in which case they are deemed to have completed the transition.

The share of youth who have transited has registered a sizeable jump since 2014, including for tertiary education (+33%) (see *Figure 6.6 Panel B*). However, any trend observed should be interpreted with caution since operational definitions are not strictly comparable across the surveys at hand. In fact, data from the School-to-Work Transition Surveys (SWTS), conducted over the period 2012-2013 in selected sub-Saharan African countries, shows that the distribution of youth by stages of transition varies to a large extent from one country to another. The share of transited youth accounts for the majority in Madagascar, approaches 50% in several other countries (Malawi, Togo and Uganda), and does not exceed one-third in the remaining countries (Benin, Liberia, Tanzania and Zambia) (Elder and Koné, 2014: 42).

Coming back to Sierra Leone, we find that tertiary TVET in 2018 stands as the best option to achieving labour market transition (49%), although HE does not prove unworthy at all (36%). A significant share of transited youth is noted in 2014 for formal vocational training-at-large (35%) and apprenticeship (40%). Lastly, gender disparities prove, once again, to be marked. In 2018, the share of tertiary-educated youth who completed the labour market transition was significantly lower among women (33%, compared to 43% for men), the gap reaching 12 percentage points when considering tertiary TVET. In 2014, formal vocational training-at-large led to the greatest gender gap (23 pp), followed by apprenticeship (8 pp).

15. See *Figure 6.6* footnote for exact definitions and data limitations.

Figure 6.6: Youth distribution by labour market transition stage and highest level of education attained, 2014 and 2018, %



Source: SLLFS, 2014 and SLIHS, 2018

Note: Youth are aged 15-35. Based on the ILO definition of labour market transition stages (ILO, 2017: 29-31) : (i) **Transited** if not in school and currently belongs to one of these three categories: (a) employed in a stable job (employment contract of 12 months or more), (b) employed in a temporary but satisfactory job (do not want to change current employment situation), or (c) is in satisfactory self-employment. (ii) **In transition** if: (a) employed student, (b) unemployed worker (broad definition), (c) non-satisfactory temporary job, (d) non-satisfactory self-employment, or (e) inactive non-student (impossible to know if they have the intention of looking for work so, by default, they are all considered to be in transition). (iii) **Transition not yet started** if inactive student. Panel A: due to the lack of information on employment contract's duration in the SLIHS, 2018, the criterion related to employment stability (stable vs temporary job) is replaced by the regularity of employment (non-regular jobs include casual, seasonal employees and paid apprentices). Moreover, the way job satisfaction can be measured differs between the two surveys. Accordingly, results should be handled with care since they are not strictly comparable.

Analysing the duration of youth labour market transition proves to be challenging in the absence of longitudinal or retrospective data (IIEP–UNESCO Dakar, 2017). Using the definition of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 1998), we measure the duration of the school-to-work transition as the elapsing time between two situations: (i) the age from which less than 75% of youth were studying and not working (proxy for average age of school-leaving); and (ii) the age from which at least 50% of youth are working and no longer studying (proxy for average age of first access to employment). In 2018, it takes an average of seven years for youth to transit from school (20 years old being the average age of school leaving) to work (28 years old being the average age of first access to employment). The transition is getting longer over time. In 2014, youth used to access employment one year earlier.

There is a clear negative correlation between educational attainment and transition duration. Youth can expect to reduce their transition length by half with tertiary education (four years), be it TVET or HE, compared to primary education (eight years). The average age at which youth stop studying, according to our definition, stands at 26 for those who attained the tertiary level, as compared to 22 for upper secondary, and 18 for lower secondary levels. Several factors can explain these results, beyond the fact that we are using proxy measurement methods, including late entry into primary school, repetition, and of course the lack of birth registration or the misreporting of individuals' actual age. Interestingly, young women need less time than men to transit regardless of the level of education attained: one year less overall, and up to two years less among youth with a secondary or tertiary education. At the tertiary level, what differs between young women and men is the age at which they first access employment (29 and 31, respectively). In fact, as we will see later, this result masks a more complex and bleak reality. The labour market transition is shorter for young women because they are more likely to get poor quality jobs.

6.3 Youth employment quality[16]

The third and last section focuses on the quality of jobs held by youth. Acknowledging the complexity and multidimensional nature of the challenge for youth to find decent work, it relies on a wide range of internationally-agreed labour market indicators to analyse the situation for young people across education levels.

6.3.1 Tertiary education leads to the highest rate of youth labour underutilization

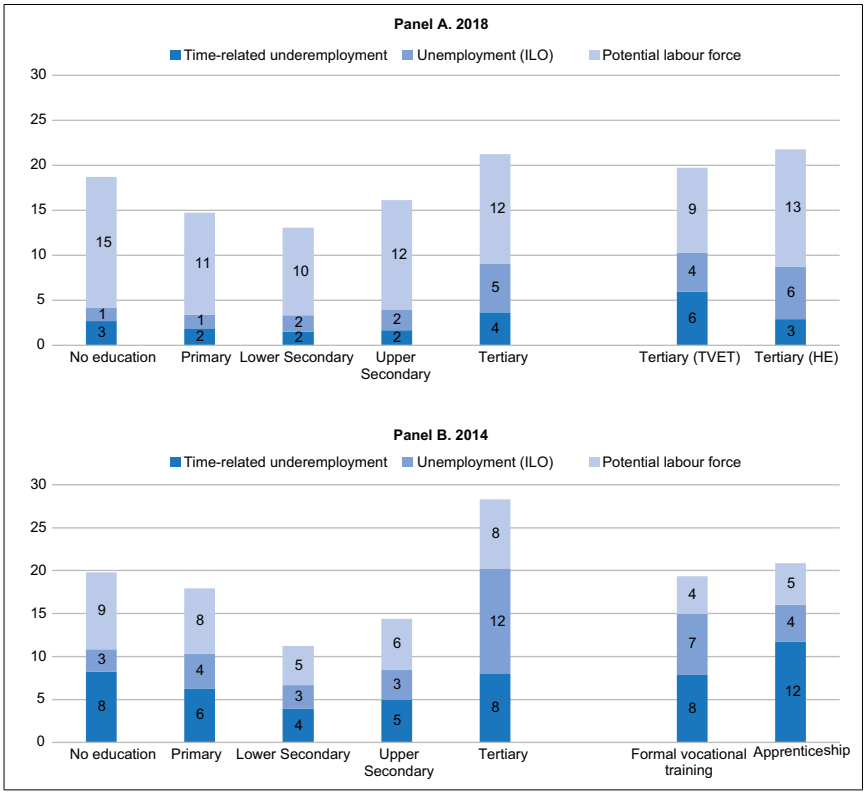
Labour underutilization is indeed the most prevalent among tertiary-educated youth who account in particular for a significant potential labour force. There are different measures one can use to assess the extent to which the economy is fully utilising its available human resources, including unemployment and NEET rates, as already seen. Here, we go beyond this by using a composite indicator of youth labour underutilization that takes into account the quality of jobs through time-related underemployment, in addition to two measures of access to the labour market, namely unemployment and potential labour force. The latter captures those who are available for work but not actively seeking a job, often as a result of discouragement (available potential job seekers), as well as those seeking employment but not currently available to take up a job, for instance because they are still completing their studies (unavailable job seekers).

In 2018, labour underutilization affected 16% of the young population in Sierra Leone, which is slightly more than the adult population (14%) and is pretty much in line with what is observed on average in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) (ILO, 2020: 36).[17] Among youth, no significant differences are found across sexes and areas of residence. By contrast, the incidence of youth labour underutilization varies markedly with the level of education, tertiary-educated youth being the most affected (21%) (see *Figure 6.7 Panel A*). This result is not surprising since, as seen before, tertiary education is associated with relatively high youth unemployment and NEET rates. Within tertiary education, HE leads to a higher risk of youth labour underutilization (22%) than TVET (20%).

16. Due to the limited number of observations available in the SLLFS 2014 and SLIHS 2018, in this section we unfortunately cannot analyse youth employment quality simultaneously by education level and gender.
17. According to ILO (2020: 36), the youth labour underutilization rate, defined as the combined rate of youth unemployment and potential youth labour force, rises to 16.1% in SSA in 2018.

In fact, looking at the composition of youth labour underutilization reveals that, regardless the level of education, it is mainly driven by the potential labour force, followed far behind by unemployment and time-related underemployment. According to the ILO (2020: 152-3), the untapped youth labour outside of the labour force, as represented by the potential youth labour force, amounted to 8.8 million individuals in SSA in 2018, which corresponds to 7.4% of the total youth population.[18] In Sierra Leone for instance, the potential labour force reaches 12% among tertiary-educated youth who account, in addition, for 5% of unemployed and 4% of time-related underemployed workers. Albeit low, time-related underemployment is the highest among tertiary-educated youth, in particular youth with a tertiary TVET education (respectively, 8% and 10%, when expressed in terms of the employed population).

Figure 6.7: Youth labour underutilization rate and its components by highest level of education attained, 2014 and 2018, %



Source: SLLFS, 2014 and SLIHS, 2018

Note: Youth are aged 15-35. The youth labour underutilization rate is defined as the number of youth whose labour is underutilized, expressed as a percentage of the total youth population. Labour underutilization components include: (i) **Time-related underemployment**, (ii) **unemployment** (ILO definition), and (iii) **potential labour force**. **\Time-related underemployment** accounts for individuals who: (a) worked less than 40 hours in all jobs the week prior the date of interview, (b) wanted to work more hours, and (c) gave economic reasons for not working more hours (cannot find more work, lack of business, lack of finance or other inputs, slack/off season, industrial dispute). Beyond work and leisure, individuals need to devote a minimum amount of time to tertiary activities, i.e. time needed to maintain a person's biological functioning (time spent for rest, personal hygiene, and nourishment). Here, the threshold for tertiary activities is set at 42 hours a week (6 hours per day on average) to account for extreme workloads (World Bank, 2010: 302). All those with a total number of weekly hours of work exceeding 126 (the total time available in a week [168 hours] minus the threshold for tertiary activities [42 hours]) are thus excluded from the calculation of time-related underemployment. **Potential labour force** accounts for all persons of working age who are neither in employment, nor in unemployment but who are: (1) unavailable job seekers (seeking employment but not currently available for work), or (2) available potential job seekers (not seeking employment but currently available for work).

18. From ILO (2020: 152-3), the potential youth labour force in SSA in 2018 is derived in relative terms (7.4%) by deducting the youth unemployment rate (8.7%) from the combined rate of youth unemployment and potential labour force (16.1%).

Comparing results over time, we do not observe substantial differences with regard to the youth labour underutilization rate, except for tertiary education which has registered a significant drop since 2014 when it stood at 28% (see *Figure 6.7 Panel B*). As for the composition of youth labour underutilization, the increase of the potential labour force has been more than offset by the decline of unemployment and time-related underemployment. In 2014, formal vocational training-at-large and apprenticeships also raised concerns with relatively high incidences of youth labour underutilization (19% and 21%, respectively) that were mainly attributable to time-related underemployment (respectively, 12% and 16% when expressed as a percentage of the employed population).

All in all, youth labour underutilization can have long-lasting negative consequences in terms of employment and earning prospects. Tackling youth labour underutilization requires tapping into the potential youth labour force and addressing its unmet needs for employment. To this end, a better alignment of tertiary education, and especially TVET, with labour market requirements is particularly needed in order to reduce the mismatch between youth labour supply and employment opportunities available to them.

6.3.2 Educated youth turn their backs on agriculture to engage in services

Agriculture remains the main employment provider in Sierra Leone, especially among youth of which 52% worked in this sector in 2018 (see *Table 6.1*). However, youth are less and less attracted by agricultural activities (62% of youth employment in 2014), which could reflect, on the demand-side, the structural transformation of the economy and, on the supply-side, evolving employment preferences towards more productive sectors. The sectoral distribution of the adult population is almost identical to that of youth. Among the latter, women differ from men in that very few of them work in industry and substantially more work in services, with this pattern widening over time. Services, including trade, are often referred to as free-entry sectors. In developing countries, they often require low levels of capital and skills, which facilitates entry into self-employment (OECD, 2017*a*: 36).

Table 6.1: Distribution of young workers by sector of activity, 2014 and 2018, %

	2014			2018		
	Agriculture	Industry	Services	Agriculture	Industry	Services
Youths (all)	61	6	33	52	10	38
By gender						
Male	60	12	28	51	18	31
Female	62	1	37	53	4	43
By education level						
No education	72	4	24	68	8	24
Primary	55	9	36	59	9	32
Lower secondary	54	7	39	49	11	40
Upper secondary	34	9	57	26	14	60
Tertiary	3	8	89	9	11	80
Tertiary (TVET)	_	_	_	11	20	69
Tertiary (HE)	_	_	_	8	7	85
Formal vocational training	25	26	49	_	_	_
Apprenticeships	24	36	40	_	_	_

Source: SLLFS, 2014, and SLIHS, 2018

Note: Youth are aged 15-35. Sectors of activity are defined based on the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC), Revision 4 (UN DESA, 2008). Agriculture includes: **Agriculture**, forestry and fishing (ISIC section A). **Industry** includes: Mining and quarrying (B), manufacturing (C), electricity, gas, steam, and air conditioning supply (D), water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation activities (E), construction (F). **Services** include: Market services (G,H,I,J,K,L,M,N) and non-market services (O,P,Q,R,S,T,U).

Education is a strong determinant of the distribution of youth across sectors of activity. In 2018, the share of agriculture in youth employment went from 68% among those with no formal education, to 9% for tertiary-educated youth, whereas the share of services stood at 24% and 80%, respectively. The share of industry in youth employment remains low no matter how educated youth are, which points to the low level of development of the Sierra Leonean economy. Evidence from developing countries shows that manufacturing in particular is quite uncommon for youth-owned businesses because of the significant entry barriers in terms of capital, investment and skills required, and is unattractive to young employees because of the poor working conditions that usually prevail (OECD, 2017*a*: 36). In Sierra Leone, the number of tertiary-educated young workers involved in agriculture grew from 3% in 2014 to 9% in 2018, suggesting that new and more productive opportunities are nonetheless emerging in this sector. To become attractive, agriculture needs in particular to be less labour-intensive and use modern technology. However, evidence from Africa suggests that, although youth contribute to agricultural transformation, they are not better positioned than adults (IFPRI, 2019: vi). In developing countries, together with food processing, agriculture represents an untapped reservoir of opportunities, especially for rural youth (OECD, 2018: 9).

TVET stands apart with a more balanced youth distribution across employment sectors. In 2018, 69% of youth with tertiary TVET education were employed in agriculture, 20% in industry, and 11% in services. Data from the SLLFS 2014 shows that youth participation in agriculture and industry is even higher when it comes to formal vocational training-at-large and apprenticeships. Within the education system, TVET thus appears to contribute significantly more to industrialisation and, as such, deserves to be scaled up, focusing on potential high-growth sectors.

6.3.3 High-skilled non-manual jobs are scarce and out of reach for most youth

In Sierra Leone, the majority of the employed population is holding skilled manual jobs (62% in 2018) which range from plant and machine operators and assemblers to skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers. High-skilled (non-manual) occupations are relatively rare and particularly out of reach for youth (5% in 2018) (see *Table 6.2*), as compared to adults (9%). However, the share of young workers with high-skilled occupations is increasing over time, albeit at a fairly slow pace (3% in 2014). The youth labour market is further characterized by an occupational segregation by sex. Young women are, to some extent, less likely to occupy high-skilled jobs and more prone to engage in unskilled elementary occupations than young men. Moreover, the occupational segregation faced by young women is on the rise since 2014. However, it is worth noting that the share of young women holding low-skilled non-manual jobs (32% in 2018), which includes clerical support workers, as well as services and sales workers, largely outnumbers young men's (12%).

Table 6.2: Distribution of young workers by occupational skill level, 2014 and 2018, %

	2014				2018			
	Unskilled	Skilled manual	Low-skilled non-manual	High-skilled non-manual	Unskilled	Skilled manual	Low-skilled non-manual	High-skilled non-manual
Youths (all)	2	69	26	3	9	63	23	5
By sex								
Male	2	77	15	5	8	72	12	8
Female	1	63	34	2	10	55	32	3
By education level								
No education	1	76	23	0	7	75	17	1
Primary	2	67	30	1	9	68	22	2
Lower secondary	2	65	31	2	11	62	25	2
Upper secondary	3	50	38	10	12	44	36	7
Tertiary	1	10	30	59	4	21	30	44
Tertiary (TVET)	-	-	-	-	8	34	44	14
Tertiary (HE)	-	-	-	-	3	16	24	57
Formal vocational training	5	55	26	14	-			-
Apprenticeships	3	68	21	7	-			-

Source: SLLFS, 2014, and SLIHS, 2018

Note: Youth are aged 15-35. Occupational skill levels are defined based on the International Standard Classification of Occupations 2008 (ISCO-08) (ILO, 2012). **Unskilled** includes: Elementary occupations (ISCO-08 major group 9). **Skilled manual** includes: Skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers (6), craft and related trades workers (7), and plant and machine operators and assemblers (8). **Low-skilled non-manual** includes: Clerical support workers (4), and services and sales workers (5). **High-skilled non-manual** includes: Managers (1), professionals (2), and technicians and associated professionals (3). Armed forces occupations are excluded.

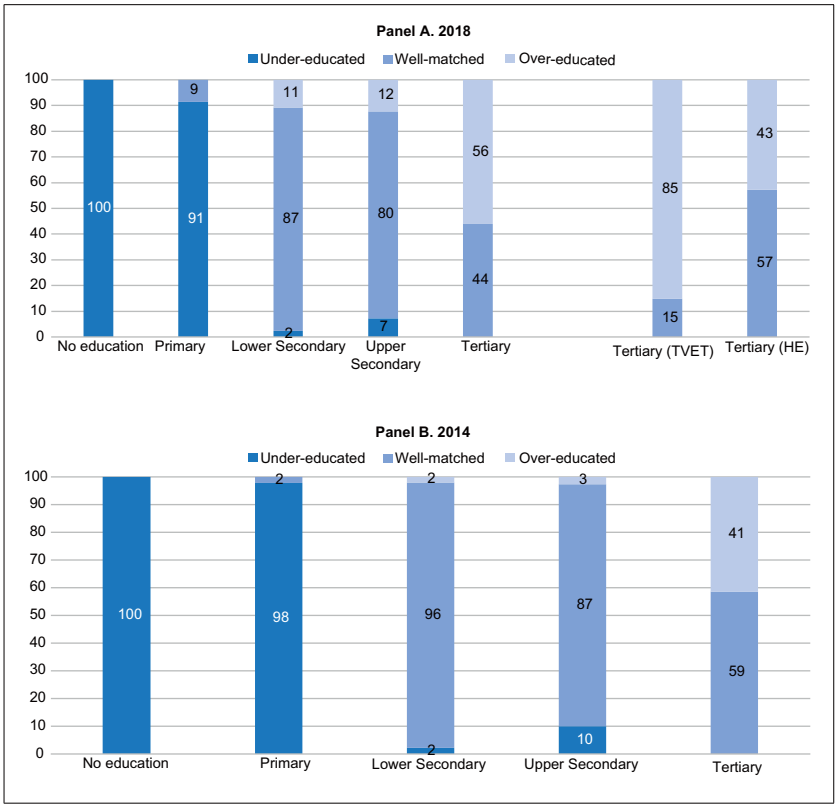
For youth with up to upper secondary education, the scarce high-skilled jobs available appear to be out of reach. Tertiary-educated youth stand out, with nearly half of those employed in 2018 occupying high-skilled jobs (44%). Their occupational profile has, nevertheless, worsened since 2014 when 59% held high-skilled jobs. This suggests that high-skilled job creation is not keeping up with the increasing number of young people with tertiary education entering the labour market. In addition, not all tertiary-educated youth have equal opportunities to access high-skilled jobs. In 2018, while 57% of young workers with tertiary HE education held high-skilled occupations, this was the case for only 14% of young people with tertiary TVET education. Overall, TVET does not enable youth to compete for the most qualified positions, which include managers, professionals, technicians, and associated professionals. As the data from the SLLFS 2014 show, the number of young workers in high-skilled occupations does not exceed 14% when they have only formal vocational training, and falls to 7% for former apprentices.

6.3.4 The majority of tertiary-educated working youth are overeducated

Overall, youth qualification mismatch is widespread and largely due to undereducation, yet tertiary-educated young people struggle to find jobs that match their level of qualification. There are different ways to measure the complex phenomena of qualifications and skills mismatches affecting people in employment. Due to data limitations, we have restricted our analysis to the qualification mismatch by level of education, using the normative approach. While this approach has its pros and cons, it is considered the best measurement method for qualification mismatch (ILO, 2018: 18). In 2018, only one in three young workers in Sierra Leone had jobs that corresponded to their level of qualification (34%). Youth qualification mismatch is almost exclusively the result of undereducation, which affects as many as 58% of working youth. In line with this result, a sample of eight SSA countries surveyed in the early 2010s (Elder and Koné, 2014: 34) found that the share of undereducated young workers averaged 53%, ranging from

19% in Zambia to 82% in Malawi. However, according to the ILO (2019: 93-94), only 20% of young employees in Sierra Leone were genuinely underqualified in 2015. That is, underqualified according to both normative and subjective methods,[19] although this figure far exceeds the average of 7% observed in the 31 low- and middle-income countries under study. On a positive note, we observe firstly that in Sierra Leone, young workers are much less affected than adults by qualification mismatch, and in particular undereducation (81% and 76%, respectively, for adults in 2018). Secondly, youth qualification mismatch and undereducation have registered a sizeable drop over the last years, down from 84% and 83%, respectively in 2014. In other words, working youth increasingly succeed in getting jobs that match their level of qualification, which is definitely good for earnings, productivity, and growth prospects.

Figure 6.8: Youth qualification mismatch (normative approach) by highest level of education attained, 2014 and 2018, %



Source: SLLFS, 2014, and SLIHS, 2018

Note: Youth are aged 15-35. Based on first-digit ISCO-08 levels, we divided occupations into four broad groups according to the skill level, and assigned the corresponding level of education to each broad group, based on the International Standard Classification of Education 2011 (ISCED-11) (UNESCO-UIS, 2012). Individuals working in a given broad occupational group, and having the assigned level of education, are considered well-matched. Those having a higher (lower) level of education are over/undereducated. **Skill Level 1** (unskilled occupations): Well-matched if primary education completed (ISCED-11 level 1). **Skill level 2** (skilled manual and low-skilled non-manual occupations): Well-matched if lower secondary or upper secondary completed, or post-secondary non-tertiary education (ISCED-11 levels 2-4). **Skill levels 3+4** (high-skill non-manual occupations): Well-matched if tertiary education (ISCED-11 levels 5-8).

19. In ILO (2019: xxii), a surveyed individual is considered to be underqualified according to the subjective method if she/he answered affirmatively to the question: "Do you feel your education/training qualifications are relevant in performing your present job?"

Young female workers are particularly penalised. In 2018, two-thirds were undereducated (66%), far more than their male peers who are a minority in this situation (48%). Moreover, the gap is deepening because undereducation is not declining at the same pace for young women (89% in 2014) and young men (75%). Turning to education, as expected, we find huge differences in qualification mismatch by level attained (see *Figure 6.8*). Virtually all young workers with no formal schooling are undereducated. This is because we arbitrarily consider that all jobs, including elementary occupations, require at least basic skills in terms of literacy and numeracy, usually acquired by completing primary education. There is a similar finding for primary-educated youth, with undereducation amounting to 91%, because very few actually completed their primary studies. Moving to secondary education, it emerges, strikingly, that a very large majority of young workers are not subject to qualification mismatch (87% for lower secondary, and 80% for upper secondary education). Although such a positive result is welcome, it does not necessarily mean that the jobs held by secondary-educated youth are of good quality in other respects. Furthermore, the results must be nuanced by the fact that the available data only encompasses broad occupational groups that are unlikely to be homogeneous in terms of the skills required.

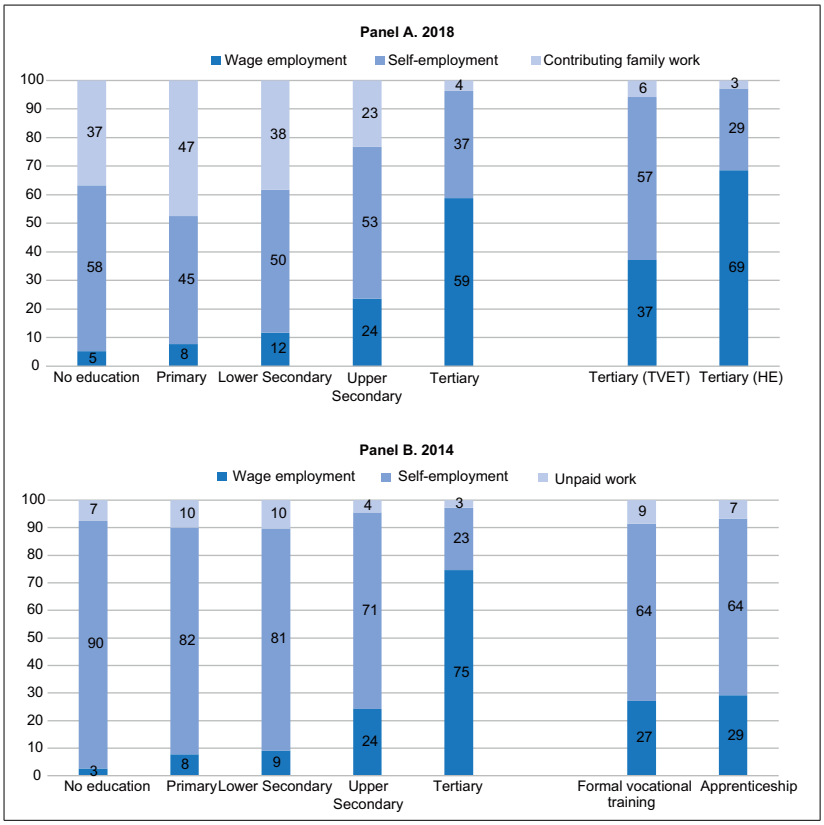
A completely different picture emerges with tertiary education. Tertiary-educated working youth stand out with the incidence of overeducation reaching 56% in 2018. Some evidence shows that Africa is the continent with the largest share of tertiary-educated young workers engaged in medium- or low-skill jobs (64%) (OECD, 2017*b*: 68). In Togo for instance, the fields of study that suffer the most from overeducation, which affects 30% of tertiary school leavers, are those with large numbers of students, and therefore graduates, in excess of labour demand (OECD, 2016: 126). Note that by definition, a tertiary-educated individual cannot be undereducated, based on the level of education, given that tertiary education constitutes the last cycle of the education system. Moreover, as overeducation in Sierra Leone did not exceed 41% in 2014, it is clear that graduates are encountering increasing difficulties in finding jobs at their level of qualification. As previously pointed out, the deficit of high-skill jobs available in the economy makes it difficult for the increasing number of tertiary school leavers to find adequate jobs. Besides, despite being highly educated, they may not be employable enough because of the poor quality of tertiary education. Employers are likely to undervalue tertiary education if it does not equip youth with the skills and competencies they are looking for. Consequently, tertiary-educated youth run the risk of having to fall back on less qualified jobs, with the resultant frustrated expectations and poor return on their investment in education. According to the ILO (2020: 128), this in turn places less educated youth in a particularly vulnerable situation because they face both upward pressure (the risk of automation as a result of technological change, which is yet to emerge in Sierra Leone) and downward pressure (displacement by better educated youth).

However, tertiary education does not appear to be homogeneous with regards to qualification mismatch. In 2018, overeducation stood at 43% for tertiary HE, in sharp contrast with tertiary TVET which produces an overwhelming share of overeducated young workers, as high as 85%. Accordingly, improving the quality of tertiary TVET is a major challenge that cannot be overcome as long as training supply and curricula do not meet labour market requirements and employers' needs. Qualification mismatch is a serious problem that should not be taken lightly. It translates into economic and social costs for workers, employers, and society at large. These include, forgone earnings and productivity, lower job satisfaction, skill depreciation, and wasted education resources (ILO, 2018: 7), with their potential detrimental impact at the aggregate level on consumption, investment and economic growth.

6.3.5 Youth with tertiary schooling mostly end up in wage employment

In 2018, self-employment, which comprises own-account workers, employers, and members of producers' cooperatives, constituted the main youth employment segment in Sierra Leone with 52% of working young people. If we add the 34% who are contributing family workers, it means that employees account for the remaining 13%, a figure that lags behind the SSA average which revolves around 20% (ILO, 2020: 43). This is a matter of great concern because, although self-employment offers more flexibility due to the absence of a dependent employment relationship, in developing countries, it is usually much less rewarding in terms of earnings and conditions of work, and is often associated with subsistence activities. However, there is probably more to worry about contributing family workers who, by definition, are employed informally without any contractual arrangements and pay. Compared to youth, adults seem to be better off. Although there is a disproportionate number who are self-employed (71%), they are much less engaged in contributing family work (13%) and are slightly more likely to get a wage job (16%).

Figure 6.9: Distribution of young workers by employment status and highest level of education attained, 2014 and 2018, %



Source: SLLFS, 2014, and SLIHS, 2018

Note: Youth are aged 15-35. Employment statuses are defined based on the International Classification of Status in Employment 1993 (ICSE-93) (ILO, 1993). **Wage employment** includes: regular employees, other employees (casual or seasonal), and paid apprentices. **Self-employment** includes: own-account workers (self-employed without regular employees), employers (self-employed with regular employees), and members of producers' cooperatives. In line with the ICSE-93, the SLIHS 2018 defines **contributing family work** as comprising those who help without pay in their own household's farm or business. By contrast, the SLLFS 2014 provides a broader definition **of unpaid** work which includes in addition: those who help without pay in another household's farm or business, and unpaid apprentices. Accordingly, results are not strictly comparable and should thus be viewed with caution.

That being said, it is encouraging to see that the share of wage and salaried workers among youth is expanding (13% in 2018, up from 8% in 2014). As for the other employment statuses, large variations are observed which are, for the most part, likely attributable to diverging operational definitions used by surveys to measure contributing family work. However, the fact that the SLLFS 2014, which relies on a broader definition of unpaid work, registers a tiny minority of young workers neither in paid nor self-employment, casts doubt on the reliability of the data. It is therefore not recommended to analyse self-employment and contributing family work separately with the SLLFS 2014.

Status in employment provides a good illustration of the gender disparities existing in the youth labour market. Young female disadvantage is best exemplified by the wage employment rate. In 2018, they are five time less likely to be employees (5%) relative to young men (25%), a difference that appears to have worsened noticeably since 2014 (4% and 15%, respectively). In addition, they are significantly more likely to undertake contributing family work (40%) than their male peers (28%). As highlighted by the OECD (OECD Development Centre, 2019: 3), Sierra Leone has deeply rooted traditional values and attitudes, as reflected for instance by the intra-household gender division of labour, that make it difficult for women to participate in the labour market and realize their potential. An example of discriminatory practice reported by the US Department of State (US Department of State, 2019: 18), is that it is common for an employer in Sierra Leone to dismiss a woman if she becomes pregnant in her first year on the job, and the employer cannot be charged for this as the law does not prohibit dismissal because of pregnancy.

Against this backdrop, education appears to be the optimal pathway towards wage employment. The share of wage and salaried workers among youth increases exponentially with the level of education, from 5% for those with no formal schooling, to 59% for youth with a tertiary education in 2018 (see *Figure 6.9 Panel A*). However, for those without a tertiary education, the likelihood of becoming wage-employed remains quite negligible, even for upper secondary education (24%). As a low-income economy, wage employment opportunities are scarce in Sierra Leone, meaning less educated youth can hardly compete. Despite outperforming, the wage employment rate of tertiary-educated youth has declined since 2014, when it stood at 75% (see *Figure 6.9 Panel B*). In 2018, over a third of tertiary-educated youth were still in self-employment (37%). Evidence from developing countries shows that only a tiny share of self-employed youth are successful, the large majority being confined to subsistence activities (OECD, 2017*a*: 11). For many youth, self-employment is motivated by necessity due to the lack of wage employment opportunities. Among the multiple factors driving youth entrepreneurial performance, education and more specifically, managerial capital and business skills, appear to be key for success. Accordingly, integrating entrepreneurship in formal schooling would be most beneficial. At the tertiary level, it is particularly recommended to develop effective curricula providing students with the basic skills for starting and operating a business, create entrepreneurship schools, and integrating entrepreneurship within traditional subject teaching.

Enhancing entrepreneurship education and business skills is all the more relevant for TVET training supply. Self-employment is indeed the dominant form of work adopted by TVET students. In 2018, 57% of tertiary-educated youth that opted for TVET were self-employed, in contrast to only 29% of those who preferred HE. Moreover, nearly two-thirds of young workers with any formal vocational training or apprenticeship in 2014 ended up in self-employment (64%). Successful entrepreneurs and private sector firms should be more effectively engaged in the TVET system, especially in supplying curricula guidelines and materials. The National TVET Agency (NTA), to be established under the 2019 national TVET policy plan, aims to encourage and support the establishment of business incubators as a means of promoting entrepreneurship acumen and self-reliance in TVET institutions (GoSL, 2019: 26).

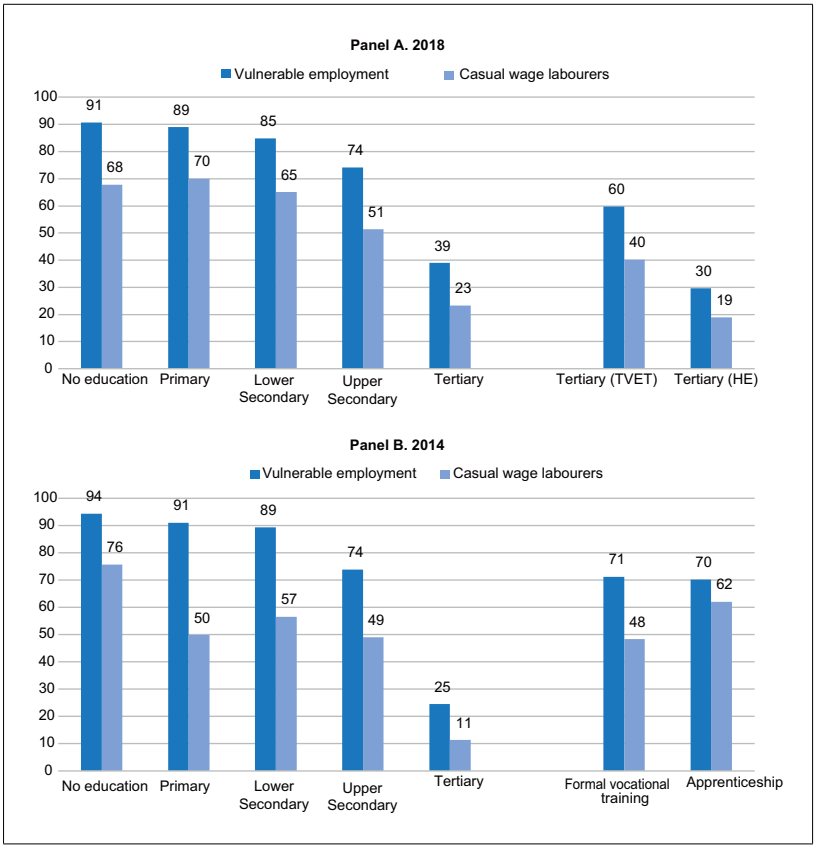
6.3.6 Vulnerable and casual employment are widespread and also affect tertiary-educated youth

The youth employment challenge lies mainly in the low quality of jobs, as evidenced by widespread vulnerable employment and non-standard forms of employment like casual paid labour, which tertiary-educated youth are also not spared from. Non-standard forms of employment, which are all the more insecure when not voluntary, proliferate around the world, not only in developing countries where informality is omnipresent, but also in emerging and industrialised countries witnessing an expansion of the gig economy (ILO, 2016: 2020). In most low-income economies, typically located in SSA, over two-thirds of working youth are in vulnerable employment (66%) or in casual paid labour (4%) (ILO, 2015: 43). Vulnerable employment comprises own-account workers and contributing family workers who, as mentioned before, usually face significant decent work gaps.

Coming back to Sierra Leone, it turns out that in 2018, as many as 83% of young workers were in vulnerable employment – the SSA average stands below 80% (ILO, 2020: 43) – and 7% are casual wage labourers, thus exceeding the incidence of casual paid labour observed in most low-income economies (ILO, 2015: 43). When expressed as a percentage of youth wage employment [20], the share of casual wage labourers increases sevenfold to reach 50% in 2018. In fact, casual paid labour is a prominent feature of wage employment in developing countries, where the growing number of young employees goes hand in hand with the expansion of casual paid employment (ILO, 2020: 43). This is particularly true in Sierra Leone where the incidence of casual paid labour among young employees is following an upward trend (47% in 2014). Besides, youth are disadvantaged compared to adults who display lower incidences of vulnerable employment (78%) and casual paid labour (27%).

20. In what follows, casual paid labour is expressed as a percentage of youth wage employment because it provides a more accurate picture of the extent of this non-standard form of employment

Figure 6.10: Youth vulnerable employment and casual paid labour by highest level of education attained, 2014 and 2018, %



Source: SLLFS, 2014 and SLIHS, 2018

Note: Youth are aged 15-35. The **youth vulnerable employment** rate is defined as the number of young own-account workers and contributing family workers expressed as a percentage of youth employment. The **youth casual paid labour** rate is defined as the number of young casual wage labourers (occasional or seasonal employees, paid apprentices) expressed as a percentage of youth wage employment.

From a gender standpoint, and in line with previous findings, we do find large disparities at the expense of young women. They are significantly more exposed to vulnerable employment (92% in 2018) than their male counterparts (72%). More worryingly, the vulnerable employment rate has barely evolved in recent years for young women (93% in 2014), whereas it has markedly declined for young men (83%), thereby exacerbating gender disparities. By contrast, young men are twice as affected by casual paid labour (56%) as young women (29%). Accordingly, young women disproportionately struggle to access wage employment but, when they manage to do so, they are much less likely to end up in non-standard employment than young men.

Does education protect young workers against the risk of falling into vulnerable employment or casual paid labour? The answer is yes, but only to some extent and at a tertiary level, although tertiary-educated youth are far from immune. In 2018, youth vulnerable employment and casual paid labour rates did not vary substantially for those with schooling below tertiary education level. For those with no formal schooling, the rates were 91% and 68%, respectively, while for youth with upper secondary education they were 74% and 51% (see *Figure 6.10 Panel A*). Tertiary schooling stands out with only 39% of young workers with a tertiary education holding vulnerable jobs, and 23%% of young employees engaged in casual paid labour. However, the fact that there are still so many tertiary-educated youth in vulnerable employment or casual paid labour is not satisfactory at all. Moreover, concern arises over the fact that back in 2014, tertiary-educated youth were less affected by vulnerable employment (25%) and casual paid labour (11%) (see *Figure 6.10 Panel B*).

Quality issues in education represents just part of the equation that leads to poor youth labour market outcomes, which are largely driven by deeply-rooted demand-side factors that hamper the ability of the Sierra Leonean economy to create enough decent jobs for the growing pool of educated youth. Addressing the youth employment challenge calls, accordingly, for a holistic and multipronged approach. As *Figure 6.10* shows, TVET students are particularly prone to vulnerable employment and casual paid labour, especially apprentices, and as such deserve close attention.

6.3.7 Informal employment remains the norm

Likewise, informal employment prevails, including for tertiary-educated youth who, despite faring better, still predominantly work informally. Measuring informal employment allows one to go a step further to more comprehensively capture the extent of the decent work deficit in an economy. Informal employment is defined as "all remunerative work (i.e. both self-employment and wage employment) that is not registered, regulated or protected by existing legal or regulatory frameworks, as well as non-remunerative work undertaken in an income-producing enterprise" (ILO, 2003). Informal employment is, undoubtedly, the most salient and pervasive feature of labour markets in developing countries. Although it plays a key role in poverty reduction as the main source of income for the poor, informal employment is in most cases unenviable in that it encompasses those jobs that generally lack basic social or legal protections or employment benefits, and that may be found in both the informal and the formal sectors of the economy. In SSA, non-agricultural employment accounts for two-thirds of informal workers (66%), a sizeable share that is nonetheless largely underestimated given the weight of agriculture in African economies (ILO, 2013: 4). More recent estimates show that informality as a whole represents 70% of all employment in developing and emerging countries, SSA being the most affected region with as many as 89% of workers occupying informal jobs, these individuals facing high risks of falling into the poverty trap (OECD/ILO, 2019: 27).

Table 6.3: Youth informal employment rate, 2014 and 2018, %

	2014	2018
Youth (all)	95	93
By gender		
Male	94	91
Female	95	95
By education level		
No education	97	96
Primary	98	96
Lower secondary	96	96
Upper secondary	89	92
Tertiary	45	61
Tertiary (TVET)	_	81
Tertiary (HE)	_	52
Formal vocational training	88	_
Apprenticeships	95	_

Source: SLLFS, 2014, and SLIHS, 2018

Note: Youth are aged 15-35. Youth informal employment rate is defined as the number of young workers whose main occupation is informal, expressed as a percentage of youth employment. Based on the information available in the surveys at hand, and following standard practice, we define informal employment in operational terms as including: (a) **informal employees** (no contributions to a social security scheme [NASSIT or private pension] by the employer or, if this information is missing, no entitlements to paid annual leave or paid sick leave), (b) **informal self-employed** (own-account workers and members of producers' cooperatives). Unfortunately, the lack of information on business registration, bookkeeping and business size does not allow us to accurately measure informal self-employment. However, in developing settings, these categories of workers are usually found for the most part in the informal sector, and (c) **contributing family workers** (by definition, they are all considered as informal).

Following the international statistical definition of informal employment[21] (ILO, 2013: 33-43), we take into account all informal workers, irrespective of the type of production units they work in (formal sector enterprises, informal sector enterprises, and households). Basically, we classify as informal all contributing family workers, employees that are not registered with a social security scheme or not entitled to paid annual leave or paid sick leave, and self-employed workers who do not keep official accounts and whose economic unit is small and not registered under national legislation. Due to data limitations, by default we consider all self-employed workers, except employers, as informal. However, this should not introduce a significant bias in our estimates since own-account workers, who account for the vast majority of the self-employed in Sierra Leone, typically are the most at risk of informality (OECD/ILO, 2019: 35).

Table 6.3 reports youth informal employment rates by gender and highest level of education attained. The results obtained follow the same patterns as vulnerable employment. The share of youth working informally is huge (93% in 2018), exceeding that of adults (86%), and has remained relatively unchanged over the past years (95% in 2014). Even if informality is the norm, some categories of youth are more affected than others. This is particularly the case of young women (95% versus 91% for young men in

21. The international statistical definition of informal employment is based on the 17th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) guidelines, whose contextual framework links the enterprise-based concept of employment in the informal sector in a coherent and consistent manner with a broader, job-based concept of informal employment (ILO, 2013). It encompasses informal workers in: (a) **formal sector enterprises** (contributing family workers and informal employees), (b) **informal sector enterprises** (own-account workers, employers, contributing family workers, informal employees and members of producers' cooperatives), and (c) **households** (own-account workers and informal employees).

2018). In addition, the incidence of informal employment is not receding for young women (95% in 2014) as it is observed among young men (94%). By and large, as seen throughout this chapter, young women face multiple deprivations and decent work deficits in the labour market, and struggle to catch up with young men. For the benefit of all, they should not be left behind, but integrated into inclusive education and employment policies that ease their labour market integration and access to decent jobs.

With regard to education, it is only with a tertiary level that youth can really expect to reduce the risk of finding only informal work. However, the prevalence of informal employment among tertiary-educated youth is still remarkable and has even gained ground in recent years (61% in 2018 versus 45% in 2014). Below tertiary education, opportunities to access formal employment are very scarce, not surpassing 8% in 2018 for an upper secondary education. As argued by the OECD and ILO (OECD/ILO, 2019: 18), the pressure exerted by the surplus of low-skilled young labour market entrants continues to be a major driver of informality in developing countries. Once again, the situation of TVET students prove to be particularly unfavourable. According to the SLLFS 2014, former apprentices are in the worst position with a youth informal employment rate reaching 95%. In contrast, youth that have received any formal vocational training do slightly better with 88% of informal workers. It is at the tertiary level that TVET is associated with the lowest prevalence of youth informal employment. However, at 81% in 2018, the prevalence is far from satisfactory.

All in all, this section has shown that youth employment quality is a major challenge in Sierra Leone, which tertiary-educated youth are not exempt from. While the latter fare relatively better than others, their labour market outcomes remain quite poor, especially when they opted for TVET studies. It is worth emphasising that investing in quality education alone will not suffice to cope with this problem because it also comes from demand-side deficiencies associated with the low level of economic development of the country.

CHAPTER 7

Functioning of the educational administration

7.1 Introduction

Educational progress is strongly dependent on the ministry of education's ability to plan, implement and monitor education services, in collaboration with all key stakeholders in the sector. Each country in the world has developed its own governance and management system for how to ensure education service delivery, which reflects the different bureaucratic origins of its public administration as a whole, the traditions and evolutions over time. This chapter presents the main characteristics of the functioning of the educational administration in Sierra Leone and identifies a set of key strengths and areas for further improvement.

It pays special attention to the capacity of the administration to plan the actions of the education sector. By educational planning, we mean a set of techniques and processes aimed at analysing the needs of the system, developing education plans and policies, combining them with available resources, and then being able to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the plan and policy implementation.

An important objective of the type of analysis presented in this chapter is to provide the basis for comprehensive capacity development programmes that will improve the functioning of the educational administration. In order to develop well-targeted and useful capacity development activities, it is important to be able to locate where challenges and good practices reside in the system.

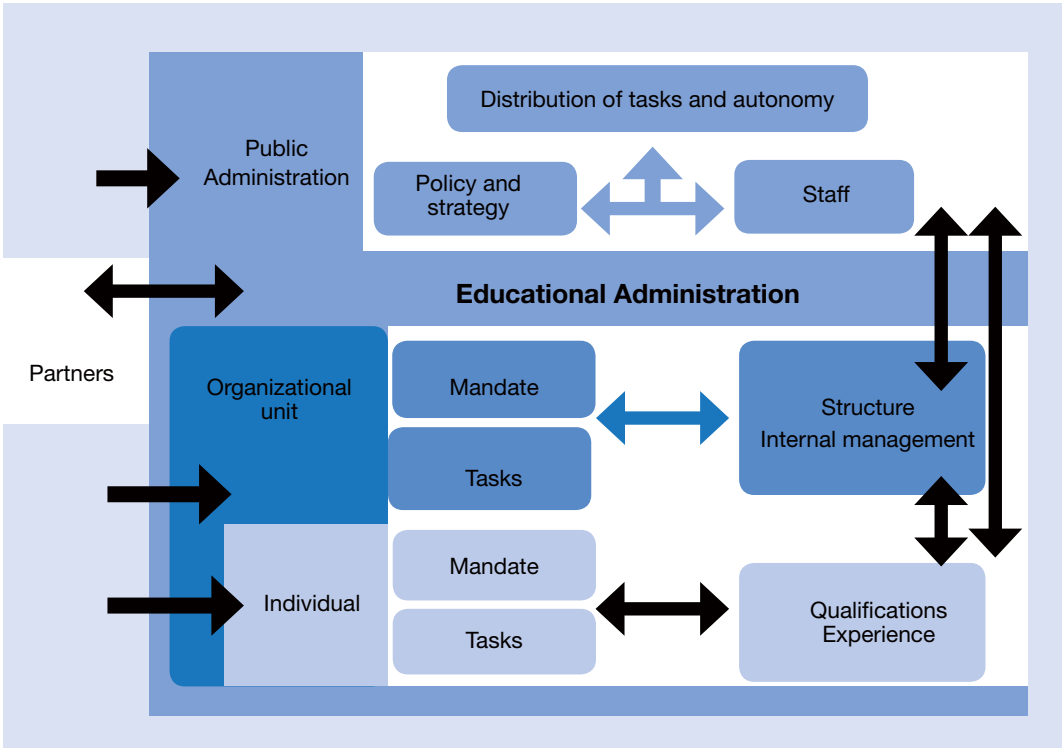
7.1.1 Analytical framework

To examine the functioning of the administration, this chapter relies on an analytical framework developed by IIEP-UNESCO (see *Figure 7.1*). The framework distinguishes between different levels of activity that are known to have an impact on the functioning and performance of the public administration:

- the profile of the individual members of staff (including their training and incentive structures) compared to their roles and tasks;
- the effectiveness of the organizational units that make up the administration (this relates, among other things, to their mandate, their structure, and their internal management);
- the characteristics of the public administration, including the management of the civil service;
- the quality of the relationships that the educational administration develops with external partners, who have important roles in the planning and management of the education sector.

The separation between the different levels of analysis in the analytical framework is not clear-cut but more of a theoretical division. In practice, all levels undoubtedly overlap. While a problem may manifest itself at the individual level, its root causes may lie at the broader level of the rules and regulations of the public administration as a whole, and certain aspects of the management of a unit may contribute to its perpetuation. This analytical framework serves first and foremost as a theoretical framework for structuring the results of the analysis in a meaningful way.

Figure 7.1: Analytical framework for the examination of capacity constraints



Sources: UNESCO-IIEP, 2019

7.1.2 Methodology

To prepare this chapter, the following three main methods were used:

1. A literature review: An important part of the work included a review of the main documents already available on the functioning of the educational administration. Existing documentation was identified, analysed and, when relevant, synthesized. In particular, this part made it possible to take into account the results of two recent analyses of the functioning of the basic and senior secondary educational administration in Sierra Leone.

2. Interviews with key actors in education sector planning: The document review was complemented by a series of interviews conducted by IIEP-UNESCO at the central level, as well as in two districts, Bombali and Pujehun. These two were selected based on their different levels of education performance, and contrasting levels of resource constraints. A semi-structured interview guide was used and a total of 38 interviews were conducted (see *Annex 3*).

3. A survey of individual staff profiles and planning capacities: A questionnaire was administered in 12 of Sierra Leone's 16 districts to key officials working with educational planning in the district education office, the local council, the Teaching Service Commission and the Free Quality School Education initiative. In addition, regional staff working for the Ministry of Technical and Higher Education (MTHE) were targeted. The questionnaire was drawn up on the basis of the information gathered during the documentary review and interviews. Five enumerators were tasked with the administration of the questionnaire. In total, 105 people answered the questionnaire, including 2 at the central level and 103 at district level (see *Annex 4*).

7.1.3 Limitations

Overall, this chapter is able to follow the methodological approach used by IIEP-UNESCO for this type of analysis. However, some important limitations need to be taken into account. These include:

- The data collection for the development of this chapter was interrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic. The sub-sectors that suffered the most from this interruption are early childhood development (ECD), TVET and higher education. Efforts have however been made to compensate for this limitation through some remote work.

- The role of the non-public sector in educational planning and management: Due to the limited time available for data collection, mainly due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the emphasis is placed on data gathered from public educational officials. This prioritization is motivated by the fact that system planning remains a public responsibility, even when there are many non-public actors. That said, given the importance of different types of non-public schools in Sierra Leone, it would have been useful to conduct interviews with representatives from this sector.

- The role of development partners (DPs): Similarly, it was not possible to closely examine the role of DPs in educational planning. In particular, it would have been useful to examine more closely the coordination between the DPs and the two ministries of education, and the effect of the presence of DPs on the planning and steering of the education sector.

- Limited number of responses from the central level: The survey faced significant difficulties, including very few survey responses from the executives targeted at the central level, lack of survey responses from four districts, and reluctance from some respondents to answer certain questions.

7.2 Institutional level: Core characteristics of the educational administration

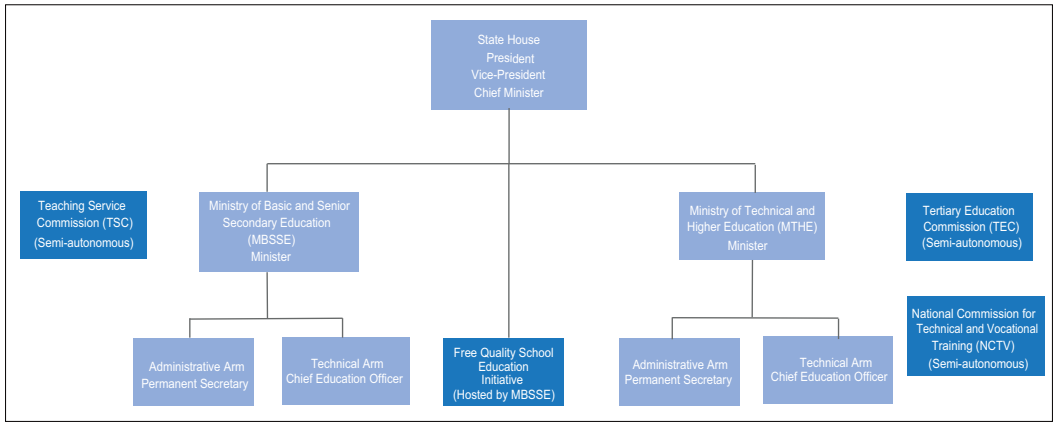
This section examines the institutional framework for educational planning and management, by considering three issues. The first two relate to coherence and coordination in the organization of the school administration, between the different ministries and central level agencies and units in charge of education, and relationships between the central and decentralized levels. The third issue concerns the existence of a global vision, as reflected in national development and educational plans.

7.2.1 Central level administration: No national legislation for the existing two ministries

At the central level, the Government of Sierra Leone has recently made several fundamental changes in the institutional landscape that governs the education system. Most importantly, in 2018, the former Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) was split into two ministries, the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE) and the Ministry of Technical and Higher Education (MTHE). The creation of the two new education ministries originates from the president's election campaign in 2017 to 2018, in which it was stressed that the education sector was not properly governed and that TVET linked to job creation needed stronger attention (Sierra Leone People's Party, 2018). The creation of a separate ministry for technical and higher education was a way for the new government to demonstrate its commitment to this sub-sector (Government of Sierra Leone, 2019*b*).

Besides the split of the old ministry of education into two, the institutional landscape of the MBSSE also counts two new entities: the Teaching Service Commission (TSC) and the Free Quality School Education Initiative (FQSE). The TSC is a semi-autonomous body under the MBSSE, responsible for the management and professional development of teachers. Although the Teaching Service Commission Act was adopted in 2011, the body has been functioning since 2017. Finally, the FQSE is a presidential initiative, launched as the government's flagship programme to promote access to quality basic and senior secondary education for all. Since early 2019, the FQSE secretariat is hosted by the MBSSE (see *Figure 7.2*).

Figure 7.2: Overview of the national educational administration



Sources: MBSSE

The interviews conducted at the central level expose several positive aspects of the recent institutional changes. First of all, it is noteworthy that there is a broad consensus among the education officials interviewed that the division of labour between the two new ministries makes sense and, as expressed by one senior official, it "**provides an opportunity for clarity and focus in the two ministries**". Closely linked to this is the widespread view that overall, the main roles and responsibilities with regards to the planning and management of the different education sub-sectors are clear and well understood by the key players in the sector. This clarity is confirmed in the survey responses.

However, there are also some regulatory issues that stand out as particularly challenging, making it difficult to navigate the institutional landscape. The first among them is the legal framework. The Education Act dates from 2004 and hence does not stipulate the mandates of the current institutions and entities of the educational administration. This means that **the creation of the two new ministries of education is not anchored in the national regulatory/legal framework and no official document exists that delineates the mandate and attributions of each institution.**

The challenges with the outdated legislation are amplified by the frequent lack of polices, guidelines and/or operational manuals outlining the roles and responsibilities of the different entities.

The second institutional challenge is intimately linked to the first one, and concerns fragmentation in the delivery of education services. In particular, several interviewees shared concerns about the current configuration of the FQSE saying that with this initiative, "**the government has created a structure within a structure and in fact, no area covered by the FQSE is outside of the normal responsibilities of the ministry**" that hosts the initiative. Nevertheless, the senior management of the ministry and staff working in the FQSE secretariat are aware of the issue and seem to share the same concern. Without altering the institutional setting, efforts have been made by the FQSE secretariat to minimize the creation of parallel structures and to, as far as possible, align the FQSE implementation plan with the regular work of the MBSSE. At the same time, a few interviewees said the FQSE has recruited 16 district coordinators and that they see a risk that this undermines the role of the MBSSE district deputy directors. It is noteworthy that no policy, guidelines, or operational manual exist for the implementation of the FQSEs main activities, including the major area of planning, disbursing, and monitoring school subsidies.

The third challenge that emerged from the review of the institutional setting concerns the coordination of the education sector. Coordination between the two ministries, as well as the semi-autonomous agencies, is essential for the effective functioning of the system as a whole. This is particularly the case with regard to strategic planning for the sector, since this domain requires multiple interactions between the different sub-sectors. One example is the government's strategic priority of facilitating equal access to higher education. Progress in this area is intimately linked to making it possible for a larger proportion of adolescents from poorer households to access and complete secondary education. Without such strategic efforts, the intake of senior secondary graduates to higher education will continue to be heavily restricted to students from advantaged backgrounds. Another example, highlighted at several occasions during the interviews, concerns teacher training. The MTHE is responsible for primary and secondary teachers' pre-service training, while the TSC is responsible for in-service training. In addition, the MBSSE's school inspection directorate also has a role to play, as inspectors and school supervisors inspect teachers' work and take note of in-service training needs. The situation is further complicated by the fact that a high proportion of the teaching workforce lack pre-service training, with implications for the in-service training provided (as a large number of its beneficiaries are unqualified).

At the moment, there are no formal mechanisms in place to coordinate the work of the two ministries on such topics, nor with the TSC and other agencies, and some of the senior officials interviewed identified this as an area of improvement.

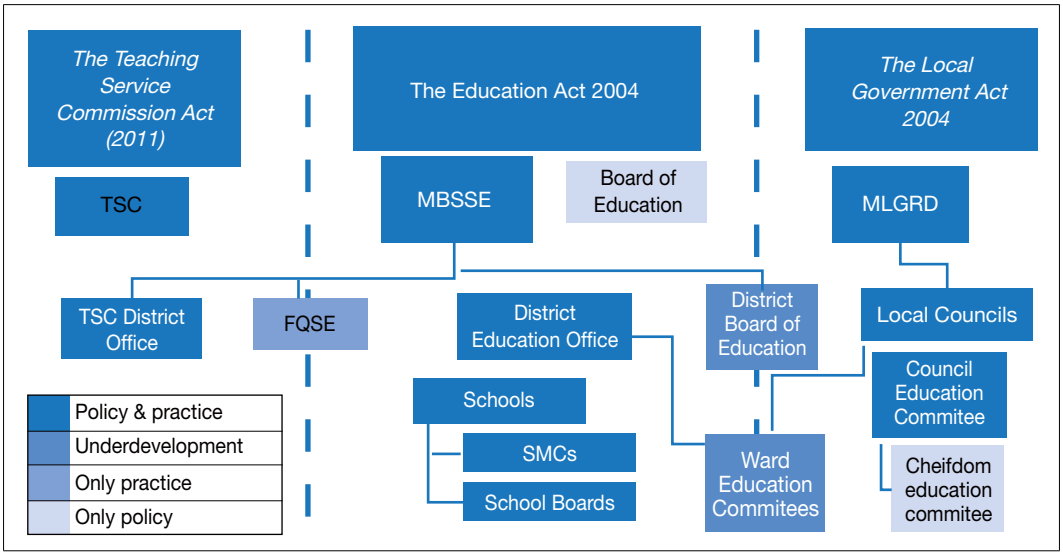
7.2.2 The relationship between central and decentralized levels: Unclear mandates

Significant parts of the administration of the public sector in Sierra Leone are in legal terms devolved to the 22 local councils across the country. This dates back to the post-war reconstruction period, in the mid-2000s, when the Government of Sierra Leone launched a major decentralization programme to bring power closer to citizens and to improve service delivery. The decentralization reform agenda aimed at restoring the political institutions that had existed at sub-national level before the period of one-party rule and the civil war. Most notably, this included the restoration of local councils and providing institutional legitimacy to traditional chiefdoms. These structural measures were seen as important for state and peacebuilding, and for ensuring stability and central government control over the whole country. When launched in 2004, the decentralization programme was heavily supported by the donor community, who saw local government elections as a core strategy for addressing geographical inequities and for moving power away from Freetown (World Bank, 2014; Conteh, 2016; Fanthorpe *et al*., 2011).

The Local Government Act of 2004 set the regulatory framework for political, fiscal, and administrative decentralization through the devolution of core functions from the central government to local councils. It also provided a straightforward framework for intergovernmental transfer of financial resources. According to the Local Government Act, responsibility for 'District Education Schools', primary and junior secondary schools, as well as school supervisors, are in legal terms devolved to local councils. The administration of TVET and higher education are not devolved, but remain under central government control. However, beyond the broad definitions of which sub-sectors are devolved and which are not, **the existing legal and regulatory framework lacks clarity about the precise mandates of the District Education Office (DEO) and the local council with regards to the different education service delivery functions.**

Figure 7.3 provides an overview of the many existing entities at district level, as well as the legal Act and central level body which they fall under. Within the educational administration and directly under the MBSSE, the District Education Office (DEO) is in practice responsible for the coordination and management of education activities within the district. The DEO is led by a deputy director who reports to the Director of the Inspectorate in MBSSE at the central level. Besides the DEO, all 16 districts have since January 2019 established district offices for the Teaching Service Commission (TSC). Each TSC district office is headed by a deputy director, who reports to the TSC at the central level. The final major public education entity at the district level is the Free Quality School Education Initiative (FQSE). Besides the 16 FQSE district coordinators, the FQSE has five regional coordinators, overseeing the work in the districts in his/her region. The regional FQSE coordinator reports directly to the central level FQSE secretariat, hosted in the MBSSE. Besides showing the many existing district level entities, the figure also highlights the extent to which these entities exist on paper as well as in practice. Most notably, the FQSE only exists in practice and does not have any policy or legal backing that determines its roles and responsibilities.

Figure 7.3: Overview of the educational administration at district level



Source: (EPG, 2019)

Note: MLGRD stands for the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development

A review of relevant documentation and the interviews conducted reveal at least two major constraints with regards to the implementation of the decentralization policy in the education sector. These constraints are intimately linked not only to the identified challenges with the structure of the education administration at the central level, but also to the implementation of the decentralization policy for the public administration as a whole.

Firstly, in practice the devolution of functions to the local council is partial, with the MBSSE retaining control over major parts of the implementation chain. This concerns key inputs such as human resource management, learning materials, and financial resources management (school subsidies and examination fees). Although the local councils have managed to acquire financial resources for non-salary recurrent education expenditure from central government, the main share of the education budget expenditure is handled directly by the central level.

This parallel implementation system generates several structural governance issues at the district level. Most notably, the roles of the central level 'arms' at district level, including the District Education Office, the Teaching Service Commission, and the Free Quality School Education initiative, vis-à-vis the local councils are unclear. Again, **no publicly available legal or policy document exists that specifies the detailed roles and responsibilities of the different structures.** During the interviews conducted for this chapter, some DEO officials shared that because the FQSE and the TSC are not working under the supervision of the DEO deputy director, his/her role in overseeing activities is made more difficult.

The parallel implementation system leads to duplications of efforts in districts. The documents reviewed, as well as the interviews conducted, testify to some problems of overlap in mandates and responsibilities that in turn leads to duplication of core tasks and activities. The DEO, the TSC, and the FQSE all see themselves as having critical roles in the monitoring and oversight of teaching quality/ practice and teacher training. This overlap is confirmed in the Education Partnerships Group (EPG) review of available job descriptions and documents which describes the mandate of these three entities:

> *The job descriptions for the Senior inspector, Inspector and Supervisors within the DEO describe monitoring teaching and learning as their most significant responsibility (...). Whilst the job descriptions for staff at the TSC District Office are not available, the TSC Act 2011 makes it clear that all aspects of teacher management are the mandate of the TSC and its officials. The job descriptions for the FQSE coordinators describe the role as coordinating and implementing all activities related to Free Quality School Education which includes responsibility for monitoring teaching and learning in classrooms, overlapping with both DEO and TSC staff (EPG, 2020).*

From an efficiency point of view, it is a paradox that senior district level officials raise concerns about lack of resources to do a good job and that at the same time, similar tasks are performed by these same entities.

On the positive side, there is significant awareness of the challenges with the new district education landscape among all key actors. Some efforts have been made to improve coordination and clarify the division of labour. Several interviewees mentioned a harmonization workshop organized in Bo in April 2019, which aimed at improved coordination between the key district actors. The workshop identified the following four areas for improved coordination at the district level:

- Teacher professional development and teacher training
- Strengthening district coordination platforms
- Data collection, data sharing, and data integration
- Community engagement, communication and advocacy

Similarly, several local council representatives raised concerns about the council's weak position and control over education service delivery in the district. On several occasions, interviewees expressed frustration at not being fully aware of what was going on in the district and said it undermined the authority of the local government. As expressed by one local council official: *"What is for us that is without us, is against us."* Another official said that, *"You cannot be under my roof, in my home, and talk to my son without talking to me as a father".*

When asked about explanations for the perceived weak position of the local council, issues of human resource management, and the ways in which financial resources are disbursed to the districts were mentioned. Because staff at the DEO, the TSC and the FQSE have not been recruited by and are not supervised by the local council, it has little direct control over their work. In the words of one interviewee, *"It's a fundamental problem that the ones who should be in charge at the local level cannot hire and fire the personnel".* Some council representatives expressed the view that the recent arrival of both the TSC and the FQSE have further undermined local government authority.

There are also issues with the flow of financial resources to the district level. As highlighted in *Chapter 3*, in financial terms the local councils are not in a strong position as the majority of the funds for education are not channelled through them. In 2019, only 10% of all recurrent education spending was made by the local councils. This raises the issue of how easy it will be to generate sufficient interest from the local council when there is little at stake in terms of its own direct financial involvement in education sector activities. Overall, it seems likely that the council's involvement in the education sector will remain limited as long as control over human and financial resources remains to such a large extent with the central government.

The second constraint, closely linked to the existence of parallel structures, concerns the coordination of the sector at the district level. This includes not only the coordinated planning of the sector, but also issues of implementation and monitoring of education activities. On paper, there are at least three coordinating bodies at the district level: the District Education Committee, mandated by the Education Act, the District Education Board for which the MBSSE elaborated terms of references in 2019, and local council education committees. While the District Education Committee and the District Education Board are not functioning in practice, local council education committees are well established and generally meet once a month. However, no official terms of reference seem to exist for them.

In practice, it is the DEO that prepares the annual work plan and the education budget in close coordination with the local council. In this context, local council education committees tend to play a role in providing inputs and reviewing the budget. However, beyond the budget preparation their role appears limited in relation to the monitoring of budget expenditure (EPG, 2020).

Overall, as the regulations and guidelines for sector coordination are unclear, the conducted interviews reveal that coordination at the district level largely depends on the goodwill of individuals to collaborate. The DEO deputy director, who sees it as her/his role to oversee all education sector activities at district level, does not have the regulatory/legal backing that would allow her/him to have a strong convening power. A complicating factor is that senior officials working for the FQSE and the TSC at the district level are significantly better paid than the DEO deputy director.

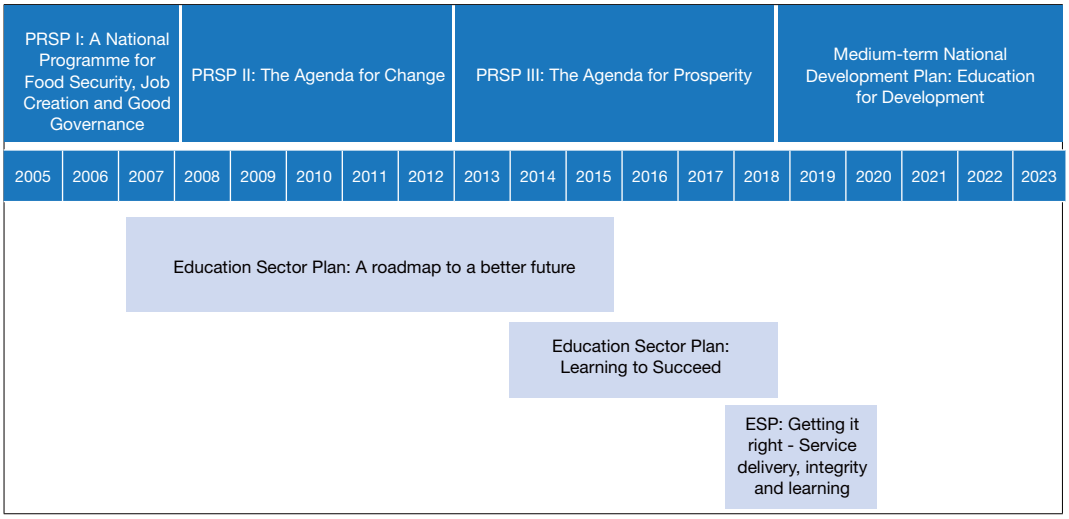
7.2.3 The existence and role of national development plans

The Government of Sierra Leone has a relatively long tradition of preparing national development and education sector plans. Besides showing the direction for the country's national development, these two types of national policy instruments also outline key strategies for how to overcome existing challenges.

With regards to the overall steering of the education sector, the government has so far prepared three national education sector plans (ESP), *(*see *Figure 7.4*). The current ESP (2018-2020) was prepared as a transitional document, in order to indicate the broad priorities to be pursued by the government and development partners following the Ebola crisis. As such, it serves as an intermediate plan between the 2014-2018 ESP and the forthcoming ESP.

However, several constraints exist with regards to the status of the current ESP, and its ability to unify actors in the education sector around a set of common goals and objectives. This section provides some detail on these constraints and discusses some of the reasons behind the current situation.

Figure 7.4: Timeline of national development and education sector plans



Source: Authors' compilation of existing plans

Note: PRSP stands for Poverty Reduction Strategy Programme.

The FQSE has largely overridden the ESP

The Medium-term National Development Plan 2019-2023 (MTNDP) presents the government's overall vision for the development of Sierra Leone. It covers all main sectors, grouped under eight so-called policy clusters. The education sector has a prominent role in the MTNDP. Not only is the subtitle of the MTNDP as a whole, "Education for Development", but human capital development is also the plan's first policy cluster. Although the MTNDP refers briefly to the ESP, the structure and content in the two documents differ with regards to education. While the MTNDP stresses two broad policy areas, namely free quality basic and senior secondary education, and tertiary and higher education, the ESP indicates four broad education priorities: (i) improved access, equity and completion; (ii) improved quality, relevance and integrity; (iii) system strengthening; and (iv) emergency preparedness and response.

The ESP was developed as a transitional plan, preparing the ground for a longer-term education sector plan. In terms of timing, the ESP precedes the MTNDP and it is therefore not surprising that the two plans are not well aligned. Instead, as noted in the external appraisal of the ESP, the ESP is well aligned with the Agenda for Prosperity and the previous president's Recovery Priorities programme (Begue-Aguado, 2017).

However, this lag between the government's two main planning documents does raise questions about the current status and usefulness of the ESP for the steering and monitoring of the sector. The issues involved go to the heart of political choices. As the government's flagship programme, the launch of the Free Quality School Education Initiative has de facto overridden other ESP priorities. In August 2018, the newly elected government made major changes to existing school subsidies, in particular by introducing significant increases in the per pupil subsidy to junior and senior secondary schools (government and government-assisted schools). However, although the ESP pays attention to the continuation of school subsidies to primary schools, it did not include such an important and costly policy measure for secondary

schools. As discussed in *Chapter 3*, the school subsidies paid under the FQSE represent a large part of non-salary recurrent spending. In 2019, these FQSE subsidies to junior and senior secondary schools accounted for as much as 44% of all non-salary recurrent education spending. The MTNDP substantiates the ESP's disconnect, stating the need to *"review the current Education Sector Plan to align it with national priorities and other international benchmarks on education"*.

The MTHE has prepared its own five-year strategic document

There is a gap between the stated policy priorities of the recently established ministry responsible for technical and higher education, and those of the ESP 2018-2020. The MTHE has prepared a document defining the sub-sector priorities for the 2019-2023 period, which follows the stated direction in the MTNDP.[22] While the recently adopted five-year strategy is not costed, its priorities are strongly aligned with the MTNDP. Indeed, the strategy starts from the development plan's stated objective for the sub-sector and takes forward each of its 15 key policy actions.

Neither the ESP nor the MTNDP include clear overviews of financial commitments per sub-sector. Nevertheless, a review of the contents of the two plans reveals that the MTNDP puts a much stronger emphasis on technical and higher education than the ESP does, in terms of level of details, as well as in the number of key policy action areas. The external appraisal of the ESP noted that the TVET and higher education sub-sector were not sufficiently addressed (Begue-Aguado, 2017).

The ESP perceived as a document to attract external funding

Since the launch of the first education sector plan in Sierra Leone in 2007, the plan preparation process has been strongly motivated by the need to mobilize external funds to the sector. As support from the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) is conditional on the endorsement of the ESP, some interviewees suggested that once a new period of GPE funds have been granted, attention to the ESP document declines, both from the government and the development partners' side. In addition, one development partner said that the limited use of the ESP is reinforced by the activity-based focus of both the central ministries, and most development partner funding.

7.3 Organizational level: Structure and internal management

The effectiveness of the educational administration depends on a series of factors, closely linked to the functioning of the organizational units in charge of the planning and management of the sector. This part examines several such factors. In the Sierra Leonean context, the issues that stand out as the most salient challenges are the clarity of the organizational structure, some of the characteristics of the internal management, and the availability of human, financial and material resources.

22. Unpublished excel file entitled MTHE strategic plan.

7.3.1 Internal structure: Discrepancies between policy and practice

All administrative structures need a normative framework that describes the roles and responsibilities of each directorate, organograms defining the internal structure and number of staff per unit, as well as functions and work duties of the personnel. These are essential elements for pursuing clarity in terms of work structures, and are therefore critical for an effective administration.

During the interviews conducted for the development of this chapter, the large majority of respondents referred to the Education Act of 2004 as the key regulatory document for the sector. However, several respondents also said that the fact that this Act is outdated, combined with the lack of detailed guidelines or operational manuals for the different core functions of the two ministries, contribute to blurred internal structures that are open to personal interpretations, which in turn can create tension between different units.

Overall, the responses to the questionnaires confirmed the interview findings, with 96 out of the 105 respondents (or 91%) answering "yes" to the question, "Is there an official document that specifies the mandate of the unit where you work?" Only five replied "no", and the remaining indicated that they did not know. In addition, the large majority that answered "yes" found the indicated official document clear. Staff were also asked whether there was an official document that described the attributions of their current job position. A total of 103 out of the 105 (98%) answered "yes" to this question and among them, only one respondent found the description of his job attributions unclear. The large majority of the staff consider their job description very clear (see *Table 7.1)*.

Table 7.1: Clarity of mandate and job description

	Very clear	Somewhat clear	Not clear
How clear do you find the attributions of your position?	90%	10%	0%
How clear do you find the mandate of your work unit?	83%	17%	0%

Source: Survey of individual staff profiles and planning capacities and Authors calculation

Closely related to the issue of regulatory documents is the existence of organograms, showing the organizational structures of the main governmental bodies responsible for education. At the moment, neither of the two ministries have finally validated and publicly available organograms. The previous ministry of education, MEST, had an organogram that was published in 2009 (see *Annex 5*). At the time of the writing of this chapter, the MBSSE was in the process of adopting a new organogram, and the new MTHE organogram has been finalized by the ministry, (see *Annex 6*). However, following the ministries' own validation processes, the new organograms for both will have to be validated by the Human Resource Management Office, the official body responsible for validation of organograms for all ministries, directorates and agencies (MDAs).

A recent in-depth study of the system for basic education service delivery, conducted from early 2019 to early 2020, includes a useful organizational mapping of the MBSSE (EPG, 2020). In particular, it compares the 2009 organogram to the MBSSE job descriptions, as well as the structure and reporting lines used in practice. The result of the work is visualized in F*igure 7.5*. At the central level, two major constraints are identified by the mapping exercise:

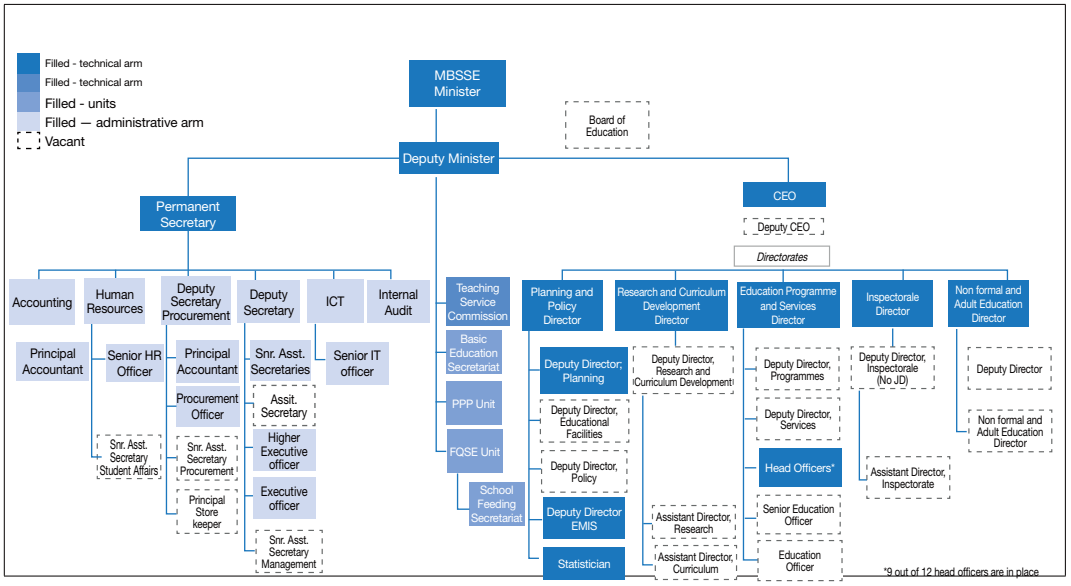
- The 2009 organogram of the former Ministry of Education (MEST), and the recent job descriptions for the MBSSE posts, include some important inconsistencies in terms of structure and reporting lines.
- There are some significant discrepancies between the structure and reporting lines used in practice and those in the 2009 organogram and MBSSE job descriptions.

With regards to the comparison between the old organogram and the job descriptions for the new MBSSE, the organizational mapping finds that the overall structure of the two arms of MBSSE (i.e. the administrative and technical arms) is consistent. However, there are also some important inconsistencies. In particular, discrepancies are identified for the placements of the deputy minister, the heads of the administrative and technical arms, the Basic Education Commission, and the creation of the TSC and the FQSE.

The mapping exercise also highlights **some discrepancies between policy and practice**, including (EPG, 2020):

- In practice, the ministry's administrative arm includes six units and not four, as stated in the regulatory documents (the additional ones being internal audit and ICT).
- There are 19 staff positions in the administrative arm (of which 5 are vacant), compared to 15 on paper.
- The ministry's technical arm has a total of 33 staff positions, of which 16 are vacant.[23] This differs from the existing regulatory documents, which state 21 staff positions.
- There are four different types of semi-autonomous bodies that report to the MBSSE minister directly: the TSC, the FQSE secretariat (which includes the School Feeding secretariat), the Basic Education secretariat, and the Public-Private Partnership unit. On paper, the 2009 organogram mentions no such bodies, while the more recent job descriptions cover the TSC and the FQSE secretariat.

Figure 7.5: The organizational structure of the MBSSE in practice



Source: (EPG, 2019)

23. The EPG study identifies 18 vacancies out of the 33 staff positions existing in practice. Since the finalization of this study, two positions have been filled, the Research and Curriculum Development director's position and the deputy planning director.

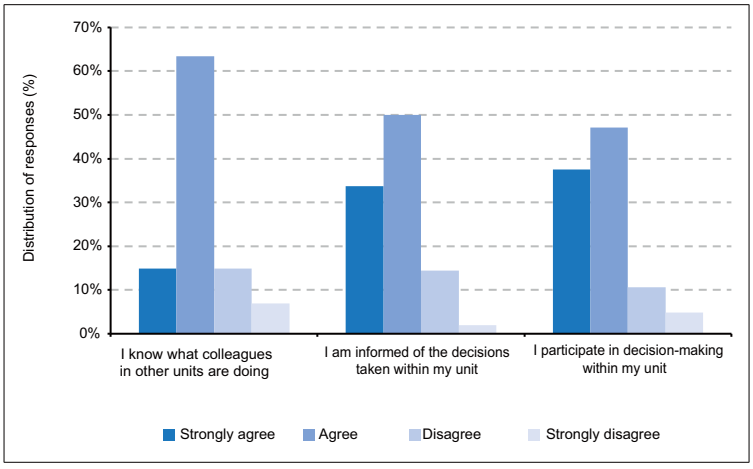
7.3.2 Internal management

The management methods and tools used in an organization are decisive for the effectiveness of the educational administration as a whole. Tools such as staff meetings, coordination within and between units, staff supervision, availability of information, and accountability mechanisms to hold staff and units responsible for performance, are as important as the clarity of organizational structures.

It is evidently difficult to comprehend the complex internal management of the administration in Sierra Leone based on a relatively limited number of interviews and questionnaires, in particular as there are large variations between different units. At the same time, several broad findings do emerge from the analysis and these are presented in this section.

Most education officials express high satisfaction with the regularity and utility of meetings. Close to half of the respondents to the questionnaire indicated that they had participated in staff meetings at least once a month and nearly everyone assesses these meetings as useful or very useful. The interviews commonly reflected a collegial tone, with interviewees stressing the importance of frequent exchanges within and between units for day-to-day problem solving. At the ministerial level, senior management meetings which take place every Monday, serve an important management function within both ministries. As shown in *Figure 7.6*, the collegial work environment is confirmed by the questionnaire responses. For instance, close to 8 out of 10 respondents agree or strongly agreed with the statement, "I know what colleagues in other units are doing".

Figure 7.6: Perceived knowledge of colleagues work and assessment of decision-making



Source: Survey of individual staff profiles and planning capacities and Authors calculation

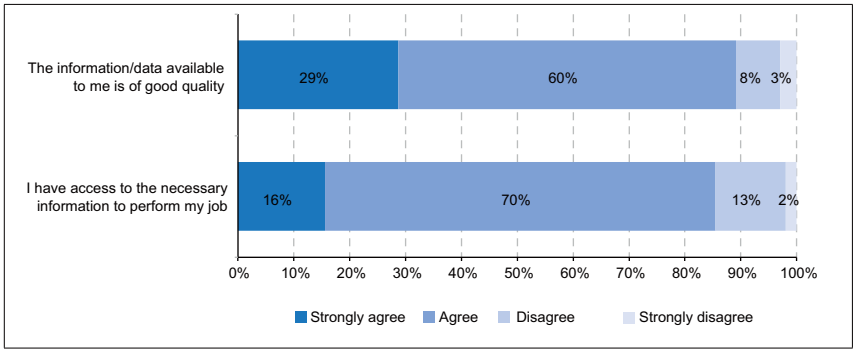
The availability of data has improved in recent years, but several constraints remain. The questionnaire included several other management issues, including how education officials perceive the availability of information. Respondents were invited to express their agreement with the following two statements:

- I have access to the necessary information to perform my job
- The information/data available to me is of good quality

The majority of respondents expressed satisfaction with the information that is available to them (see *Figure 7.7*). The conducted interviews and documentary review shed some further light on the data issue. **Over the past decade, the MEST made a considerable effort to improve the availability of education data for planning, learning and accountability purposes.** Several interviewees expressed a certain degree of pride over the improved ability of the ministry to collect and manage administrative data. Annual school censuses have been conducted since 2015, and the ministry's education management information system (EMIS) unit in the Policy and Planning Directorate is able to submit data for a large set of education indicators to UNESCO-UIS on an annual basis. Interviewees and reviewed documentation also point to the usefulness of data from the so-called Situation Room, also called EduTrac. This was established during the Ebola crisis and made it possible to provide data about schools on a monthly basis, which was then used to plan and adjust education emergency response measures. Data collection was made possible through the recruitment of a very large group of community monitoring personnel (more than 1,000), and a central information technology (IT) person in each district.

At the same time, **several capacity constraints remain.** Work is underway to connect and integrate the Situation Room, the Annual School Census, and other monitoring efforts into an integrated EMIS. The work on this ESA has also revealed the need for improved data on TVET and higher education, and for it to be included in a comprehensive EMIS. With regards to data on basic and senior secondary education, the work entails further strengthening of existing capacities at the district level. The aim is that the DEOs will not only play a role in data collection, but that they will also produce periodic statistical reports, and play a strong data quality assurance role at district level. A final capacity constraint concerns the use of the generated data for planning purposes. A couple of interviewees, as well as some documentation, point to the need to strengthen the ability of the educational administration to use the data to monitor sector performance and make adjustments based on regular monitoring exercises.

Figure 7.7: Perception of access to and quality of information



Source: Survey of individual staff profiles and planning capacities and Authors calculation

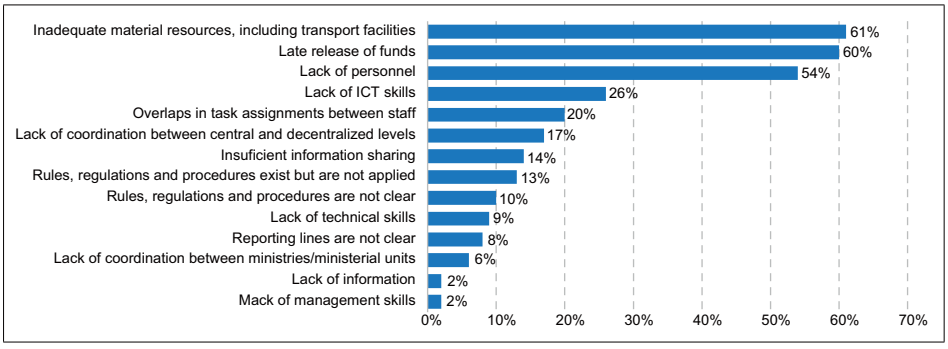
With regards to management tools, the use of work plans is perceived as common practice across all surveyed organizational units. Out of 105 respondents, 103 answered "yes" when asked if their unit has an annual work plan. In addition, 84 respondents indicated that they had been involved in the preparation of their unit's plan. However, both the interviews and a review of a limited number of plans reveal that planning practices often focus on the programming of short-term activities, largely depending

on available resources. Indeed, synchronization between the planning and budgeting processes emerges as a key constraint with regards to the usefulness of annual planning practices. As a result, there is a tendency to use work schedules that show when a certain activity will take place, and who is involved in its execution. **This is in contrast to a comprehensive work plan which should include not only the time schedule, but also an explanation of how the different activities are linked to the achievement of an overall sector objective, who is responsible for what, and information about the source of funding.**

Difficulties synchronizing the planning and budgeting processes are the result of two important bottlenecks in the management of public financial resources as a whole. Each year, funds transferred to the local councils tends to be significantly lower than what had been approved in their annual budgets (based on budget ceilings provided by the Ministry of Finance during budget preparation). In addition, there are frequently major delays in the transfer of these funds. This latter issue was repeatedly mentioned by the interviewed government officials as a major constraint. As expressed by one interviewee: *"Now in January 2020, we are still waiting for the funds from the third and fourth quarters of last year. How are we supposed to plan and manage our work without knowing how much money we have to work with?"* The situation is similar in the central level ministries of education.

Responses to the questionnaire confirm that the late arrival of funds is a major constraint to work effectiveness. Among a list of 15 issues, respondents were asked to tick a maximum of 3 that they considered as important challenges to carrying out their work well. They were also able to add any other issue they considered a challenge but was not included in the pre-defined list. *Figure 7.8* presents the results. It indicates that closely following the lack of material resources, the late release of funds is perceived as a major problem, with two-thirds of respondents identifying this as an important challenge to doing their work well.

Figure 7.8: Frequency of work challenges



Source: Survey of individual staff profiles and planning capacities and Authors calculation

Note: Respondents were asked to tick three items they found challenging. Each bar shows the share of the total number of respondents that ticked that particular item.

In addition, the annual planning process is made more complex by the presence of development partner projects. Each external project tends to have its own programming and timeline, budget and deliverables, and although several respondents spoke about attempts to include external projects in the annual work planning of their unit, the same respondents shared the difficulties involved in such alignment efforts. There are also areas such as non-formal education, pre-primary education, or gender responsiveness, where close to all activities undertaken are driven by externally funded projects. In such situations, it is even more challenging for the responsible government body to be fully in charge of the annual planning and budgeting process.

The central ministries and district offices of education are understaffed, with at least one-quarter of all positions vacant at district level. Effective management of the education system is dependent on the size of the workforce. The survey results, as well as the interviews conducted, reveal that a large number of education officials perceive the lack of staff as a significant obstacle to good performance. Several senior officials at the central level also expressed that, due to the lack of personnel, they spend too much of their time on detailed implementation issues. A comparison of staffing norms, as described in existing organograms, and the available staff in practice, expose a relatively important shortage of staff:

- The MTHE has, within less than 2 years, recruited a core staff of 24 professionals. Yet, a comparison with its organogram shows that 49 professional vacancies are still to be filled, along with 22 vacant administrative posts (the ministry has 21 administrative staff in position).
- The MBSSE's technical arm lacks essential staff, in particular at middle management and junior levels, with close to half of all positions vacant.
- At the district level, the DEOs are understaffed with the EPG study showing that among the sampled districts, at least one-quarter of all positions were vacant (EPG, 2020).

A final constraint with regards to management practices concerns the effectiveness of existing accountability mechanisms. Improved accountability for service delivery is often stressed by the government as a priority, with recent renewed efforts to use the so-called Performance Tracking Table (PTT) at the central level. The PTT is a plan of results that the two ministries of education commit to achieving over the coming year and each plan is agreed on, like a contract, between the corresponding minister and the president. More broadly, the PTT was introduced in 2006 as part of a larger package of results-based management reform efforts in the public administration.

Interviewees shared that the PTT is well established across the public sector, although its degree of implementation varies from year to year. Quarterly reports are submitted by the two ministers of education to the office of the president and, once a year, ministers and heads of agencies present the annual performance of their respective institutions to the president. Furthermore, the PTT has been cascaded within the ministries of education, with agreed contracts entered into between the ministers and respective heads of directorates. The PTT is also linked to the Individual Performance Appraisal System (IPAS), used across the public administration and managed by the Human Resource Management Office (HRMO). In the first quarter of the year, individual staff members set performance targets which are then approved by their superior. A performance review is conducted in June each year, including adjustments of the target in relation to what has been achieved, and a final year-end assessment takes place in December.

Overall, the PTT together with the accompanying IPAS are perceived as useful to facilitate accountability for results, at both the individual staff and institutional level. At the same time, the interviews and a review of relevant research reveals some constraints with the PTT (Bangura, 2010; Africa for Results Initiative, 2017):

- For most education officials, the challenging conditions of service act as a powerful barrier to enhanced accountability in delivery. It has been argued that without minimum incentives and a better work environment, stronger accountability will remain an issue.

- The persistent problem with the late release of funds makes it difficult for the education administration to set ambitious performance targets in the PTT. Although officials express strong commitment to fulfilling sector objectives such as the timely disbursement of school subsidies, some favour a cautious approach with regards to the setting of performance targets, saying that uncertain elements such as the timely availability of funds make it too risky to identify demanding targets.

- Several interviewees shared that the setting of indicators and targets to be able to track progress is challenging. The human resources units in the two ministries see themselves as having an important role in guiding staff on how to set individual performance targets. There is also a continuous need for training to teach and update key staff members on how to prepare and use the PTT. While there are good examples of such initiatives, technical capacity constraints continue to be a challenge.

It is worth noting that this year's PTT exercise is limited to the central level ministries and agencies. Two senior local council officials expressed disappointment at this development which they found detrimental to the council's performance: *"The performance table kept us on our toes. We did not want to go to state house and feel ashamed of what we had done."* During the district visits conducted for the development of this chapter, it was also clear that the setting of individual staff performance targets is not systematically conducted at district level, and some are not even aware of them. This finding was confirmed in the recently conducted internal functional review of the MBSSE (Government of Sierra Leone, 2019*a*).

7.3.3 Availability of resources

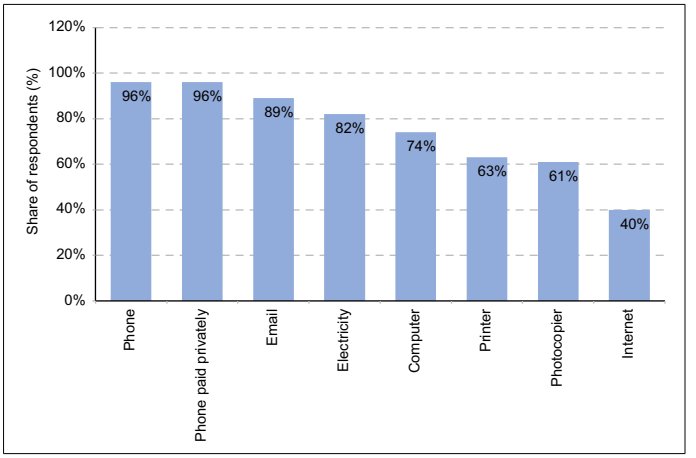
Overall, the financial resources allocated to the Sierra Leone education system are considered insufficient, whether at the level of the pupil, the functioning of the district education offices, or the two ministries. Actions and their results are severely limited by the lack of resources, which prevents the administration from modernizing and expanding its equipment and means of communication. Moreover, the national education budget is almost exclusively earmarked for recurrent expenditures rather than investments (see *Chapter 3* on financing*)*. This means that for all major investments, the government relies heavily on external funding.

Significant shortage of core resources in district offices

The majority of officials interviewed stressed the negative impact the lack of equipment and poor means of communication have on the accomplishment of their work. They brought up the lack of material resources as a demotivating factor that «adds» to the other challenges that make their work difficult: *"Implementation is challenging because we do not have funds for mobility and internet is a big problem. If we had this, much more monitoring of schools could be done,"* says a senior official in one district. Many staff are calling for better material working conditions. *«I often have to use my own vehicle and my own mobile phone to do my work. This is not normal,»* protests another interviewee.

These types of observations are confirmed by the results of the questionnaire. The answers show that although the large majority of respondents have access to a mobile phone and an email, these resources are paid for by the staff themselves. *Figure 7.9* reveals that nearly one-quarter of the respondents indicate that their office is not equipped with a computer, and close to one-third do not have a printer or a photocopier. Finally, the most striking finding is that only 4 out of 10 respondents have access to internet in their office.

Figure 7.9: Availability of material resources in respondents' offices (%)



Source: Survey of individual staff profiles and planning capacities and Authors calculation

As for the frequency of use of these resources, the responses show that it is not because the respondent indicates that her/his office has a certain resource that the person necessarily uses it (see *Table 7.2*). Most notably, close to half of the respondents that do have access to the internet report that they never use it. Despite having access, the use of computers, printers and photocopiers cannot be taken for granted either. For instance, although three-quarters of the respondents use the computer on a daily basis, another 18% never do so. They do not explain the reasons for their failure to use these resources. However, one possible explanation raised in some interviews is the limited computer literacy of some staff.

Table 7.2: Frequency of use of existing office resources (%)

Resources	Never	Daily	At least once a week	At least once a month
Computer	18%	76%	6%	0%
Printer	28%	61%	9%	1%
Photocopier	27%	63%	10%	1%
Internet	49%	46%	4%	1%
Email	8%	59%	22%	11%
Phone (private)	4%	95%	1%	0%
Electricity	16%	79%	6%	0%

Source: Survey of individual staff profiles and planning capacities and Authors calculation

Note: The response rate to this question was lower than for the other questions, averaging 82% for the 7 items

7.4 Individual staff level: Profiles, competencies and incentives

Behind the performance of an organization is the work of many individual officers. Their performance, in turn, is the result of a range of factors including initial qualifications, work experience, and continuous professional development. The performance of individual officers depends also on monetary and non-monetary incentives, such as working conditions and remuneration, and support from superiors and colleagues.

7.4.1 Staff profiles

Experienced staff with a high academic level

Responses to the questionnaire reveal that the majority of the officials have a high academic level. Overall, 88% have at least a bachelor's degree, and 52% have a master's degree or higher (one respondent has a PhD degree). Although the sample includes only a few women, their academic level is clearly lower than their male colleagues with only 10% of them having a master's degree. Because of the limited number of female responses, it is difficult to draw any far-reaching conclusions from this. However, as discussed in *Chapter 5*, fewer women than men enrol in higher education in Sierra Leone and this is surely one of the reasons why there are less of them in professional positions. The responses to the questionnaire also reveal that the majority of staff have a background as teachers, with 77% of them indicating that they have worked for at least one full school year as an educator.

Furthermore, the staff are in general experienced. In terms of overall work experience expressed in the number of years in the public service, 41% stated that they have more than 16 years of service and 17% have more than 25 years. The responses also reveal a relatively high degree of staff mobility. On average, the respondents have changed position twice over the past 10 years, with one-third having changed position 3 or 4 times. Only 16 of the 101 officers who responded to this question had not changed work positions in the past 10 years.

Few women occupy positions of responsibility

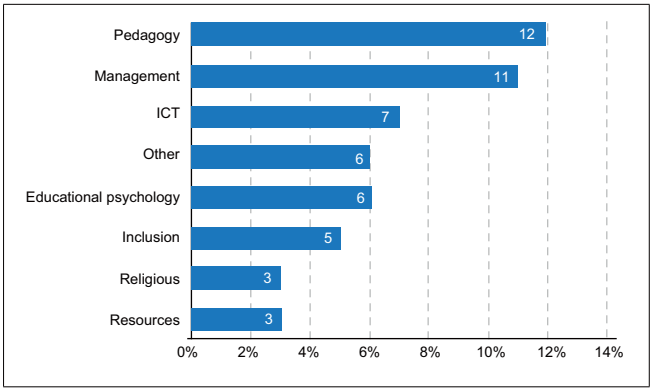
The officers who responded to the questionnaire are generally middle-aged, with an average age of 42. Moreover, the age distribution is fairly wide, ranging from 25 to 63 years of age. In terms of gender, it is noteworthy that the educational administration is dominated by men with very few women occupying positions of responsibility. The group of 105 respondents consisted of 95 men and 10 women, with only 3 of the females being senior officials, and 7 of them being mid-level officials (see *Annex 3*).

Few opportunities for continuous professional development

In a context where a majority of the officials tasked with educational planning and management responsibilities have a background as teachers, continuous professional development can play an important role in strengthening planning competencies. However, the survey data point towards few opportunities for professional training, regardless of the topic. Overall, the responses show that 75% of officers have not received any professional training in the past 10 years (of a duration of at least 15 days). For the few that have participated in training, *Table 7.10* shows the themes of the courses taken.

Training courses are mainly organized within the framework of externally financed projects. The selection of participants is sometimes the result of strategic reflection on who is the most relevant beneficiaries, but it is also regularly the result of individual initiatives. A closer look at the data reveals that a small core group of officials have taken nearly half of the courses.

Figure 7.10: Themes and number of training courses



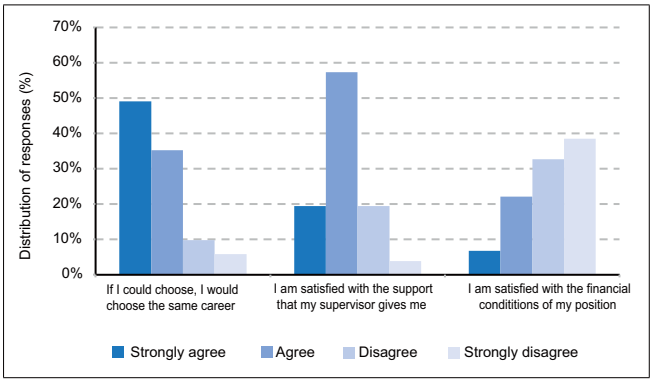
Source: Survey of individual staff profiles and planning capacities and Authors calculation

Note: The figure covers training courses lasting for at least 15 days.

7.4.2 Staff working conditions: Weak incentives and challenging conditions

The questionnaire included several questions on staff working conditions. Overall, education officials say their financial benefits are not motivating, although other aspects of their job seem, to some extent, to compensate for this constraint. As many as 71% of the respondents say that they strongly disagree, or disagree with the following statement: *«I am satisfied with the financial benefits due from my position.»* (see *Figure 7.11*) At the same time, despite the low level of satisfaction with financial benefits, education officials still draw satisfaction from their work. The responses show that the vast majority of respondents are satisfied with their choice of career, with 84% indicating that they would choose the same career again. Another aspect of satisfaction relates to staff supervision. As many as 77% agree, or strongly agree with the statement: *«I am satisfied with the support that my supervisor gives me."*

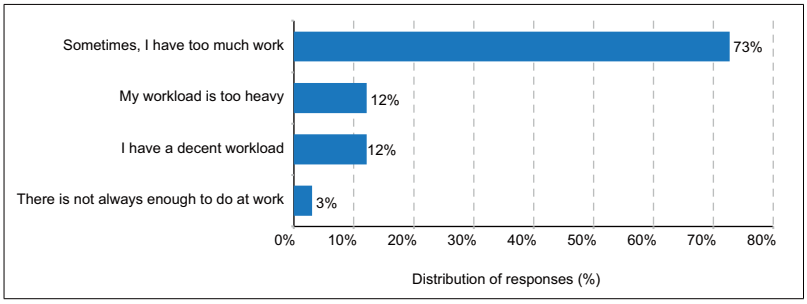
Figure 7.11: Perceived satisfaction with working conditions (%)



Source: Survey of individual staff profiles and planning capacities and Authors calculation

The data reveals that the workload of those who participated in the survey is relatively high. Close to three-quarters of the respondents report that they sometimes have too much work. Approximately 1 in 10 feel they have a fair workload, and the same proportion say their workload is too heavy. Only a small minority (3%) report that they do not always have enough work to do (see *Figure 7.12*).

Figure 7.12: Staff perception of their own workload (%)



Source: Survey of individual staff profiles and planning capacities and Authors calculation

7.4.3 Staff competencies: Significant training needs and interest in educational planning

The questionnaire invited respondents to self-assess their competency level with regards to a core set of planning and management tasks. *Figure 7.13* provides a summary of the results of this exercise. Overall, the survey results point to major constraints in terms of individual planning and management competencies:

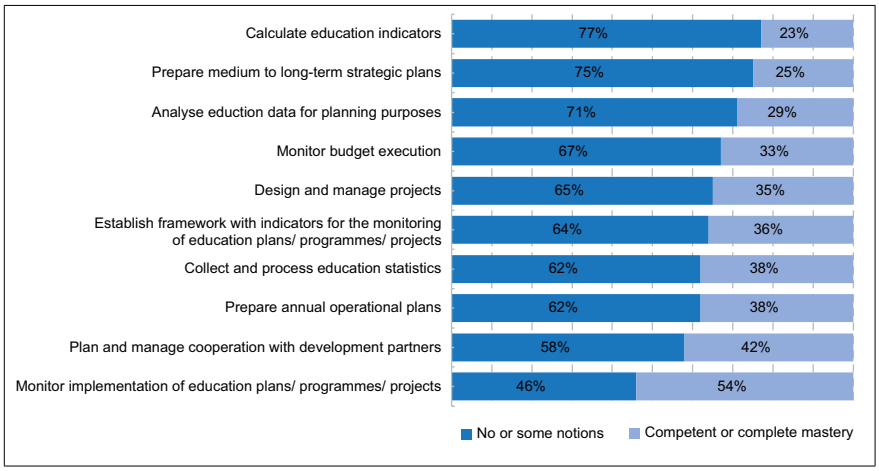
- For all but one of the identified tasks, a majority of the respondents does not consider themselves to have the required competencies. The exception is the monitoring of plan/programme/project implementation, where just over half (54%) of the respondents consider themselves competent.
- For some tasks, in particular with regards to the calculation of education indicators, the analysis of education data for planning purposes, and the preparation of strategic plans, officials' competencies stand out as particularly weak.
- At the same time, for each task, a core group of officials assess themselves as having complete mastery. A more detailed analysis of this group reveals that the majority of them are the more senior level officials. Hence, this group of officials plays an important role in the supervision and further training of less senior staff.

The interviews conducted confirm these statements. The lack of skills required in the area of planning and management was also frequently mentioned as an obstacle for improved sector performance. Furthermore, when asked about sources of motivation or potential incentives in light of the low satisfaction with salaries, several officials said that taking part in professional training could be a source of motivation.

Respondents were also asked to express their interest in training in relation to the listed educational planning tasks. As shown in *Figure 7.14*, there is great interest in training with regards to all planning tasks. Noteworthy

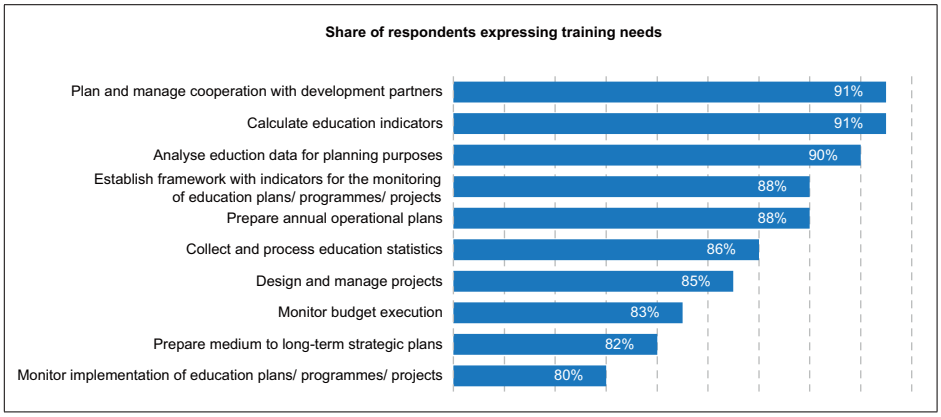
is that it is not necessarily the area in which most officials assessed their competencies as weak that emerge as the one they would most like to do training in. Learning more about the planning and managing of cooperation with development partners generates the greatest interest for training. This is despite the fact that more than 4 out of 10 officials already assess themselves as competent in this area. In contrast, the opposite is true for the preparation of strategic plans. Although this is identified as one of the weakest areas in terms of competency levels, the interest in training in this area is among the weakest.

Figure 7.13: Respondents self-evaluation of educational planning and management competencies



Source: Survey of individual staff profiles and planning capacities and Authors calculation

Figure 7.14: Training needs in educational planning and management



Source: Survey of individual staff profiles and planning capacities and Authors calculation

7.5 Relationship with external partners

The relationship between the national authorities, in particular ministries of education, and the main stakeholders active in the education sector, plays an important role in sector performance. This is particularly the case in countries such as Sierra Leone where a large number of actors, including representatives

from non-public schools, local and international NGOs, and international development partners, work with education. The quality of the relationships between the educational administration and its stakeholders is dependent on a mutual understanding and respect for each other's roles, as well as the existence of functioning forums for information sharing, dialogue, and the coordination of sector activities. This section examines some of the defining features of this relationship in Sierra Leone.

It should be kept in mind, however, that this particular section is based on a limited sample of sources and is intended to provide an overview of external relations. It does not pretend to present a full analysis of the relations with external partners.

7.5.1 Overview of external partners

Sierra Leone's education sector is supported by a wide range of actors, including bilateral donors, multilateral agencies, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Data on aid disbursements to the sector are scarce and not yet comprehensive, with the best available data recorded in the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) credit reporting system. *Table 7.3* provides an overview of direct bilateral and multilateral aid contributions to the education sector as recorded by OECD-DAC. It shows that overall, aid to education in Sierra Leone has been on an upward trend over the past decade, increasing from US$19.1 million in 2009, to US$34.8 million in 2018 (at 2017 constant prices). While it is recognized that all external financial support to the sector is not recorded in this database (which covers official development assistance [ODA] only, so most notably excluding support from international NGOs), the year-to-year fluctuations are substantial. In particular, it shows a major decline in aid disbursements directly to the education sector in 2015, during the Ebola crisis.

Table 7.3: Aid disbursements to education sector from 2009 to 2018, in constant 2017 US$ millions

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Total
DAC countries, Total	**10.1**	**8.8**	**13.5**	**12.6**	**12.5**	**15.2**	**6.2**	**29.5**	**36.6**	**22.9**	**167.9**
Germany	2.0	1.3	0.7	0.9	0.9	1.0	1.1	1.7	0.7	1.1	11.4
Ireland	1.0	1.3	1.6	0.8	1.1	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.5	0.6	12.1
Japan	0.2	0.1	1.9	1.4	1.0	0.4	0.3	0.6	0.3	0.2	6.4
United Kingdom	2.3	0.6	4.5	4.5	6.2	8.8	3.0	17.4	16.2	13.8	77.3
United States	-	1.7	2.0	2.3	1.8	1.7	-	7.7	17.5	6.4	41.1
Multilaterals, Total	**9.0**	**9.5**	**4.5**	**6.2**	**3.4**	**3.2**	**3.0**	**3.7**	**10.7**	**7.8**	**61.0**
EU institutions	0.2	0.4	0.9	0.4	0.4	0.8	0.9	2.3	2.9	6.3	15.5
African Development Bank	4.3	5.4	0.7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10.4
UNICEF	0.5	0.5	1.5	1.3	1.1	1.0	1.0	1.2	2.5	1.3	11.9
WFP	1.7	0.3	0.0	0.3	0.2	0.2	-	0.0	0.0	-	2.7
World Bank Group	1.9	1.1	1.1	2.4	1.2	1.1	0.5	-	5.3	-	14.6
Arab Bank for Economic	-	-	0.3	1.8	0.1	0.1	0.5	-	-	-	2.8
Non-OAC countries. Total	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**3.9**	**4.1**	**8.0**
Saudi Arabia	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3.9	4.0	7.9
Official donors, Total	**19.1**	**18.3**	**18.0**	**18.8**	**15.9**	**18.4**	**9.2**	**33.2**	**51.2**	**34.8**	**236.9**

Source: (OECD-DAC, 2020)

Note: Only donors that have provided more than US$2 million in total over the 2009-2018 period are included in the table.

7.5.2 Education sector coordination mechanisms: On the move

The Government of Sierra Leone and its development partners have taken a number of steps to build a sound foundation for the coordination of the education sector. In particular:

- The Education Development Partners Group (EDPG) has met on a regular basis since 2005, although it was officially formed in 2007. The work of the EDPG was formalized in conjunction with the preparation and approval of Sierra Leone's first Education Sector Plan and since then, it works as the Local Education Group (LEG), which follows the principles and methodologies of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE). Initially, it brought together the Ministry of Education, multilateral and bilateral development agencies, and some international NGOs. However, in 2013 the membership was expanded to include the Education for All Sierra Leone coalition that, in turn, includes the Sierra Leone Teachers' Union (among others). The EDPG meetings are chaired by the minister of MBSSE with the development partner's (DPs) coordinating agency as co-chair, and the objectives, roles, and responsibilities of the group specified in the terms of reference (EDPG, 2011). UNICEF was the EDPG's coordinating agency from 2005 to 2018, and since then, the role alternates between the main DPs on an annual basis. The European Union is the coordinating agency from mid-2019 to mid- 2020. In addition, a smaller group of DPs meet separately in the Education Donor Group.

- The Inter-Ministerial and Partners Group (IMPG) is led by the line minister and co-chaired by the minister of finance and two DPs. This is a new structure for government-DP coordination at the highest level, and is hosted by the State House. The group gathers together heads of agencies and technical leads twice a year, and acts like a "supreme steering committee" for government-DP work across all sectors. As the FQSE is such a high priority for the government, the IMPG meetings have over the past year paid significant attention to this initiative.

- In 2008, a set of Partnership Principles for Support to the Education Sector in Sierra Leone was endorsed by the government and its development partners.

- Joint Education Sector Reviews have been held since 2008 and bring together all education stakeholders to discuss and assess the sector's performance. The reviews have had different formats, but are characterized by attendance by a wide range of stakeholders. The frequency of the joint reviews has varied substantially over the past decade, but were held more frequently during the first 2007 to 2015 Education Sector Plan (ESP) period.

- Since 2016, the former Ministry of Education has a Donor Coordination Desk responsible for bringing together and managing the EDPG. The desk has been supported by the major Revitalizing Education Development in Sierra Leone (REDiSL) project which is a GPE programme, with the World Bank as the supervising entity. During the first 2007-2015 ESP, the ministry had an ESP coordinator and, during this period, the EDPG meetings focused strongly on the implementation of the GPE grant that supported the implementation of the ESP.

Historically, education sector coordination between the government and development partners has been intimately linked to the preparation and implementation of the national ESP. However, some stakeholders interviewed raised the concern that, with the weakened attention of the government to the current ESP, the interest and rational for regular EDPG meetings and joint education sector reviews has diminished. This, in conjunction with the heavy presence of project-based aid, makes strong coordination difficult. As expressed by one development partner: *"All major DPs are concerned about coordination weaknesses (…). Most DPs are heavily activity-based, which makes work on ESP and meaningful coordination difficult."*

An evaluation of GPE's support to Sierra Leone, conducted in 2018, identify several constraints with regards to the functioning of existing coordination mechanisms (Universalia, 2018):

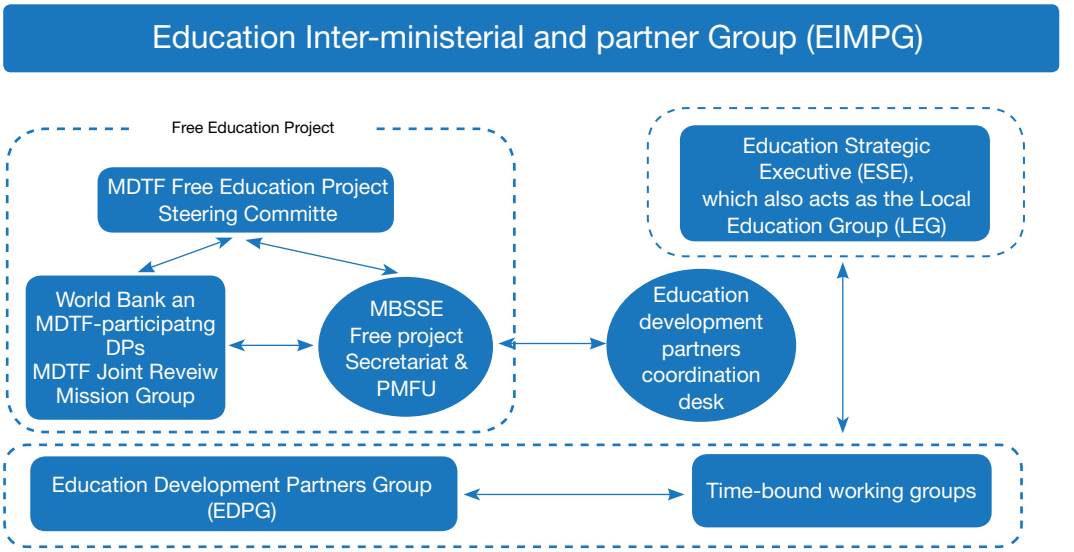
1. Stakeholders see the EDPG meetings as a useful forum for information sharing, in particular with regards to the MBSSE sharing progress on key activities. However, this forum has not been used for more strategic discussions, joint planning or monitoring of key education issues.

2. The conducted joint sector reviews have had limited visible influence on decision-making. The evaluation concludes that the 2015 joint review had no detectable influence, and although the 2017 review was said to inform the development of the 2018-2020 ESP, it has been difficult to grasp the exact nature of this influence.

3. The education sector dialogue tends to focus on how partners work alongside each other and how to avoid duplications. This work is seen as valuable, but by some as insufficient. Limited efforts have been made to strive for active collaboration and stronger synergies among development partners' support efforts. This has led to a situation where several parallel projects on the same issue are implemented, but without using the same approach. This is, for instance, the case with several ongoing in-service teacher training initiatives, where different donors and NGOs support different geographical areas and use different approaches.

To address some of the above-mentioned coordination weaknesses, in August 2019, the minister of MBSSE invited the coordinating agency (EU) and a core group of development partners (DFID, Irish Aid, UNICEF and the World Bank) to work together on a proposal for a revised governance and coordination structure. The drafting of the proposal took about six months, including consultations between DPs and the government, and the new structure was finally endorsed during the LEG meeting on 17 March 2020 (see *Figure 7.15*).

Figure 7.15: Education sector's development partner coordination structure



Source: ESC/LEG, 2020

The revised coordination structure is closely linked to the establishment of a new multi-donor trust fund (MDTF), aimed at pooling resources from four major partners (DFID, EU, Irish Aid, World Bank), and which is led by the World Bank. The MDTF will support the implementation of the new Free Education Project over the 2020-2025 period, with an expected budget of US$65 million. For this core group of DPs, the new coordination structure is seen as a way to move beyond information-sharing, and to engage in strategic dialogue related to the government's priorities and policy areas. The MDTF will have two joint reviews per year which will replace the contributing partners' bilateral reviews. The draft project document focuses on eight support areas, including evidence-based planning, curriculum and assessment, gender equality and inclusive education, workforce planning and teacher management, teacher professional development, performance-based school financing, school infrastructure and learning materials. The pooling of resources to areas such as teacher training and girls' education, where many partners are involved, aims to reduce transaction costs and approaches used.

CHAPTER 8

Assessing the enabling environment for gender equality in education in Sierra Leone

In Sierra Leone, as in many countries globally, gender parity has been achieved, or is close to being achieved in enrolment in basic education. However, this only concerns the relative equality in terms of numbers and proportions of girls' and boys' access to education, which masks disparities in progression throughout the system, as well as differences in the quality of experience and benefits gained from education.

This chapter analyses evidence from Sierra Leone which highlights where girls and boys do not share the same experience of and exposure to education, and/or gain the same benefits. It illustrates how girls and boys from particular socio-economic backgrounds do not have the same freedom to develop their personal abilities and make choices without the limitations set by stereotypes, rigid gender roles, or prejudices. It looks at some of the factors and dynamics behind these trends, including an analysis of the multiple legal, social, economic, and structural factors that determine which girls and which boys are the most marginalized.

We also look at some of the gender equitable and gender-responsive measures that are being put in place in Sierra Leone to compensate for the historical and social disadvantages that prevent girls and boys from benefitting from educational opportunities equally. This is especially significant in the light of school closures brought into effect as a result of the spread of Covid-19, and we look at lessons that can be drawn from the Ebola crisis to lessen the long-term negative educational impact on girls and young women in particular.

The structure of this chapter and content of each section has been influenced by the UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report (GEMR) Gender Review framework 2017 and respective indicators as shown in *Annex 1*. The five sections are as follows:

1. **Educational opportunities:** This looks at the gender parity index on enrolment, transition and completion rates from primary through to tertiary education; out of school children, non-attendance and what ages and stages girls and boys drop out; learning outcomes, including national exams and learning assessments; the intersectionality of poverty, location, disability, and gender on the above data; and the impact of Covid-19 on gender equality in education.

2. **Gender norms, values and attitudes:** This looks at the overall gender context in Sierra Leone and the traditional norms, values and attitudes which have an impact on the educational opportunities and outcomes for girls and boys. It pays particular attention to issues relating to adolescent pregnancy, child, early and forced marriage (CEFM), and school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV).
3. **Institutions, laws and policies:** This looks at evidence of legal and political commitment to gender equality and equal education in Sierra Leone (constitution, planning frameworks, local statutes); accountability and monitoring processes; institutional capacity to deliver on gender-focused policies and strategies; and government spending on gender.
4. **Resource distribution (human and material):** This looks at the systemic issues affecting girls' and boys' education, including a gendered analysis of the learning environment, the teaching workforce, and education leadership and management.
5. **Teaching and learning practices:** This section looks at gender-bias in subject choice at SSS and tertiary levels, and the extent to which the curriculum and pedagogy are gender-responsive.

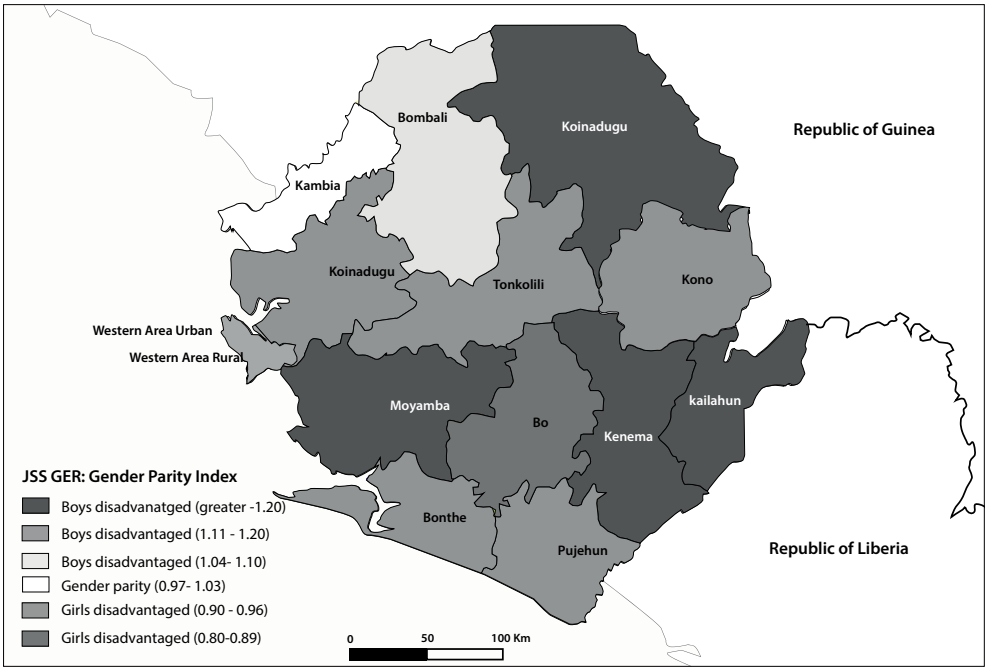
8.1 Educational opportunities for boys and girls

Trends show that while gender parity has been achieved in enrolment in Basic Education, this masks gender disparities at district level for both boys and girls and disparities for girls in completion and transition rates as they progress through the education system. Economic status and social norms combine to influence the non-attendance and dropout of boys and girls differently at each stage with adolescent girls being particularly vulnerable to gender norms and dropout at SSS level. There is also evidence of disparities in learning outcomes for girls and boys, with girls performing worse the higher the grade.

8.1.1 Overall gender parity in enrolment masks geographical disparities for boys as well as girls at different educational levels

National gross enrolment rate (GER) data suggests that Sierra Leone has reached overall gender parity for enrolment across all educational levels. While enrolment has increased at roughly the same rate for boys and girls at pre-primary and primary levels between 2011 and 2019, at JSS and SSS levels the trend illustrates a greater increase for girls as compared to boys. The average annual GER growth rate between 2011 and 2019 is 9% for girls compared to 7% for boys at JSS, and 17% for girls compared to 11% for boys at SSS. The introduction of the government's Free Quality School Education Initiative (FQSE) has likely contributed to this increased growth at secondary level for girls, which in turn has impacted the overall picture of gender parity. A closer analysis of the 2019 GER by gender and district however, reveals a number of geographical disparities.

Figure 8.1: GER gender disparities by district at JSS, 2017

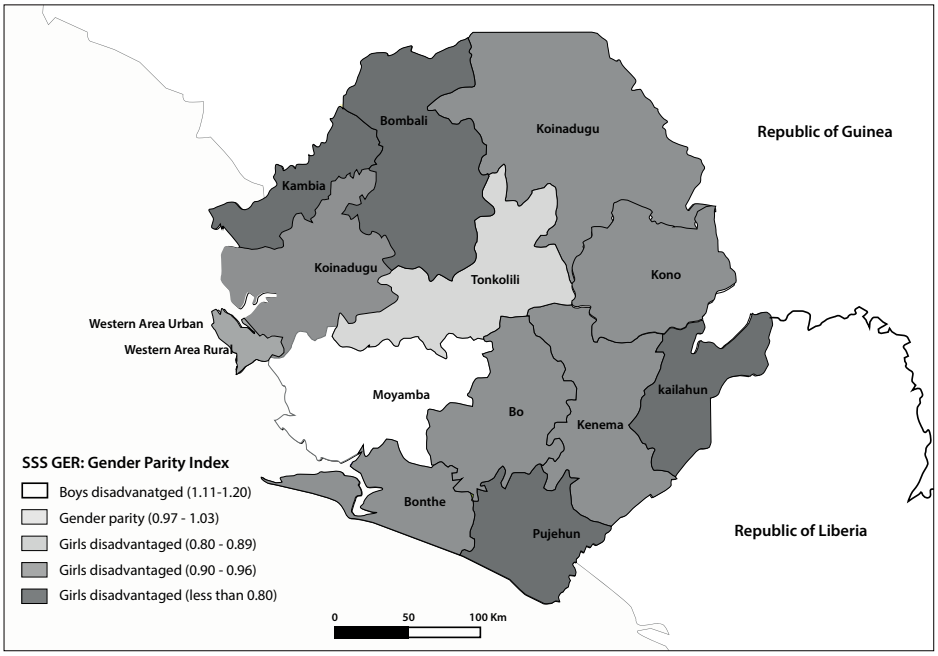


Source: Authors' calculation based on MICS, 2017

In junior secondary school, significant disparities in enrolment to the disadvantage of boys emerge across a number of districts, in particular: Kailahun, Koinadugu, Kenema, and Moyamba. The exceptions are Bo, Kono, and Western Area Rural, where enrolment rates are lower for girls as shown in *Figure 8.1*. Poverty and the prevalence of child labour (boys seeking out economic activities to support their families) could be a contributing factor in those districts (see *Section 1.2*). However, further investigation should be undertaken to better understand the comparatively low enrolment rate of boys at JSS level.

At SSS, while girls' enrolment has improved in recent years, it continues to be lower than boys across all districts except Tonkolili and Moyamba. The following districts having the lowest comparative enrolment for girls: Kambia, Bombali, Kailahun, and Pujehun, as shown in *Figure 8.2*. Adolescence brings an increased likelihood of pregnancy and child, early and forced marriage (CEFM) for girls, and is likely to be one of the key contributing factors to the lower enrolment rates of girls at SSS level. Additionally, in districts where secondary schools are in short supply, girls are less likely to enrol given the distance they have to travel to school which puts them at greater risk of gender-based violence (see later section "Gender norms, values and attitudes").

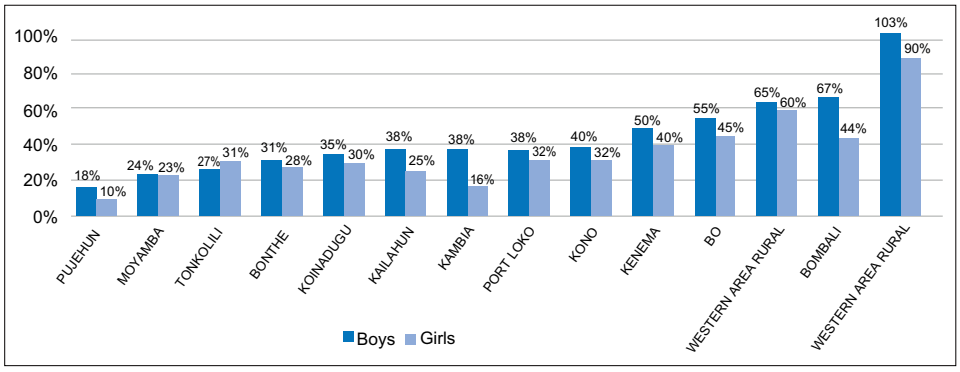
Figure 8.2: GER based Gender Parity Indices by district at SSS level, 2017



Source: MISC6, 2017

Pockets of resistance to girls' and boys' schooling at JSS and SSS levels are not only on the demand-side, but may also point to the need to improve the supply of schools as illustrated by these district level disparities. *Figure 8.3* clearly shows that while girls are comparatively disadvantaged overall at SSS level, there are a number of districts with very low enrolment for both girls and boys. The following districts have less than 35% of both sexes enrolled: Koinadugu, Bonthe, Tonkolili, Pujehun, and Moyamba. Further investigation is needed in order develop targeted interventions to address the barriers to both girls' and boys' enrolment in those most disadvantaged districts.

Figure 8.3: GER gender disparities by district at SSS level

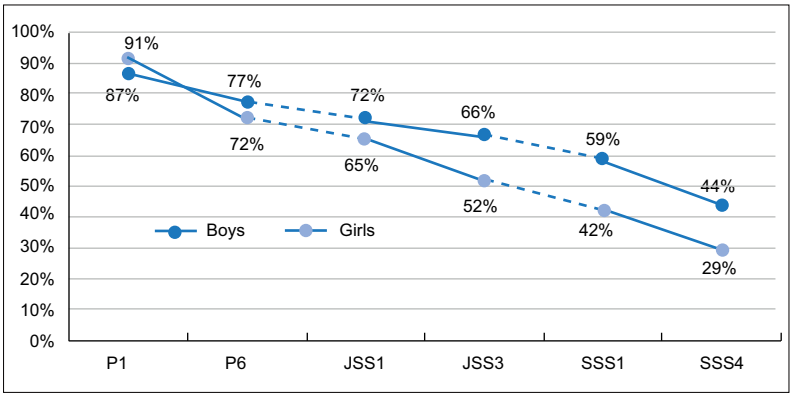


Source: MICS6 2017

8.1.2 As girls progress through the education system, their likelihood of being retained decreases

Trends show that while the probability of accessing school at primary Grade 1 (P1) is higher for girls than for boys, retention, completion and transition rates from primary to JSS and SSS are still persistently lower for girls, meaning that as girls progress through the education system, they are more likely to drop out than boys. *Figure 8.4* illustrates this by showing that the overall probability of accessing primary education (P1) for boys (87%) and girls (91%) is similar, boys being a little more disadvantaged than girls. However, the gender gap reverses during primary education and widens as the school career progresses. The probability of completing secondary education is estimated at 44% for boys and 29% for girls, a difference of 15 percentage points. This means that for every 100 boys completing senior secondary school, only 66 girls complete the cycle.

Figure 8.4: Probabilistic schooling profile by gender

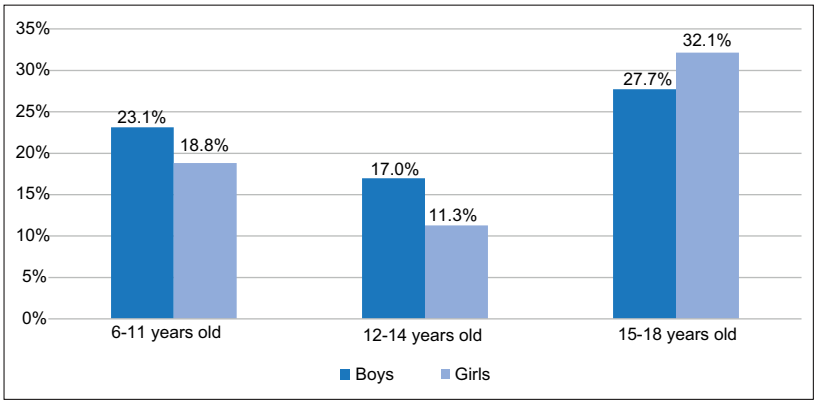


Source: MICS, 2017

Girls and boys therefore do not have the same chance of survival through the education system in Sierra Leone. This shows that the fight for retention in school, in particular that of adolescent girls, has to be one of the top priorities in Sierra Leone. This cannot be done without an understanding of the particularity of girls' schooling, their specific needs, and the social/economic constructions that favour or discourage their progress through the education system.

The inverse of the above trend is that more boys than girls are out of school across basic education. Analysis of data from the SLIHS, 2018, indicates that more boys are out of school at primary and JSS levels than girls. There are 23.1% of boys are out of school compared to 18.8% of girls at primary level, and 17% of boys compared to 11.3% of girls are out of school at JSS level. This supports the trend that overall, there are more girls enrolled in basic education than boys. This is reversed at SSS level, with more girls out of school (32.1%) than boys (28.7%), as illustrated by *Figure 8.5*.

Figure 8.5: Percentage of out-of-school children by gender and age, 2018



Source: Sierra Leone Integrated Household Survey report, 2018

8.1.3 Boys tend to drop out and/or never attend school for economic reasons, whereas girls tend to drop out for social reasons

Out-of-school-children (OOSC) include those who have never attended and children who have dropped out of school. *Table 8.1* shows that the proportion of OOS boys who have never attended school is consistently higher than that of girls across the lower age groups. The proportion of OOSC who have dropped out, on the other hand, is fairly equally divided between girls and boys until they reach the ages of 15 to 18, where more girls than boys drop out.

Table 8.1: Out-of-school children who have never attended or dropped out, by gender, 2018

	OOSC (Total)		Never attended		Dropouts	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
6-11 years old	23,10%	18,80%	18,20%	14,20%	4,90%	4,70%
12-14 years old	18,00%	11,30%	12,50%	9,10%	4,50%	3,50%
15-18 years old	28,70%	32,10%	14,20%	14,70%	13,50%	16,60%

Source: Authors' calculation based on Sierra Leone Integrated Household Survey data, 2018

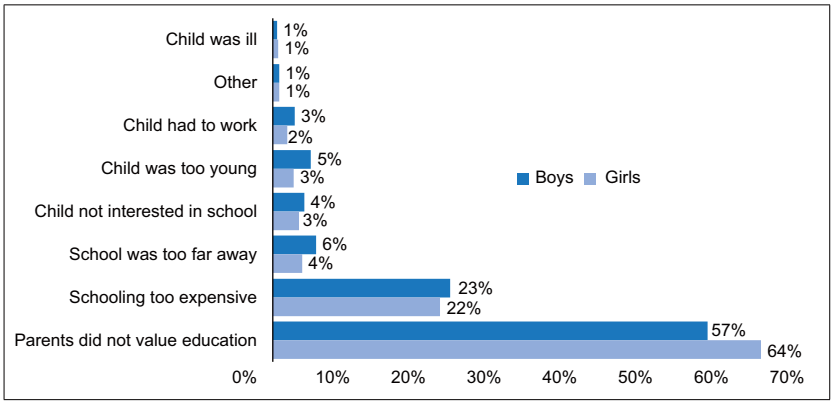
Rurality and socio-economic background are the two biggest factors influencing children's non-attendance in schools at primary and JSS levels.[24] Poverty often leads to children, particularly boys, being involved in economic activities for their families (see section on child labour below). Parental attitudes towards education also have a role to play, with the SLIHS, 2018 report revealing that 61.6% of parents have never sent their children to school because they do not value education (see *Figure 8.6*). In *Chapter 2*, we discussed how some parents choose not to send their children to school as a way of denouncing the irrelevance of the education service delivery as it is in Sierra Leone today.

Parents' attitudes towards education also seem to vary according to whether their child is a girl or a boy. In all but one district,[25] parents of girls justify not sending their daughters to school because they don't see

24. MICS EAGLE Sierra Leone Country report, 2019.
25. Falaba, where the difference is marginal.

the value of education,[26] and in 7 out of 16 districts[27] this figure rises to more than 70%. In only 2 districts (Tonkolili and Kambia), more than 70% of parents choose not to send their sons to school.

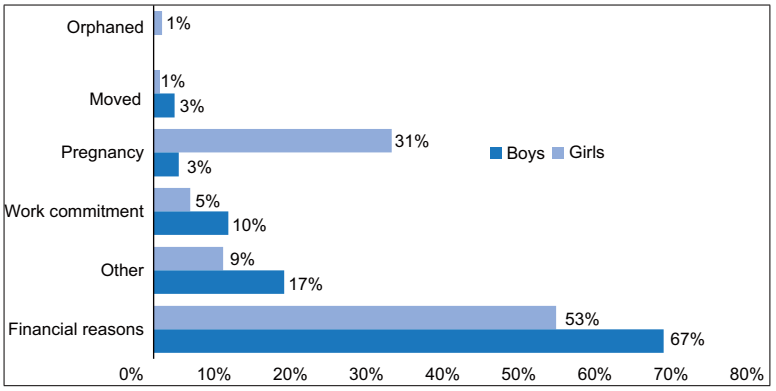
Figure 8.6: Reasons for never attending school, by gender, 2018



Source: Sierra Leone Integrated Household Survey, 2018

When it comes to reasons for dropping out of school, data from the SLIHS, 2018 shows that most children drop out due to financial reasons and this factor disproportionately affects more boys (67%) than girls (53%), as illustrated by *Figure 8.7*. It should be noted that in this regard, the free schooling adopted in August 2018 likely enabled thousands of children who dropped out of school to re-enrol and stay in class, as seen in the 2019/2020 enrolment figures (see *Chapter 2*). Almost a third of girls who have dropped out of school however, did so as a result of pregnancy, and this may be linked to child, early and forced marriage (CEFM) (see section on "Gender norms, values and attitudes").

Figure 8.7: Reasons for dropping out of school, by gender, 2018



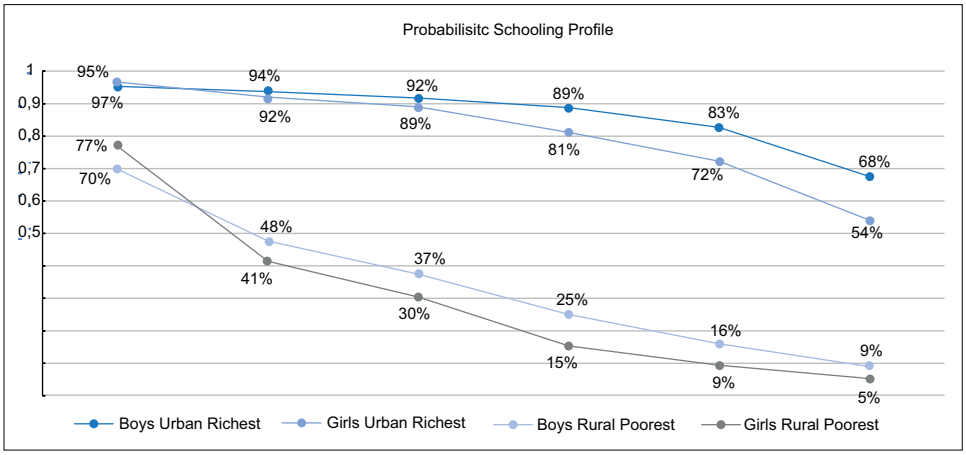
Source: Sierra Leone Integrated Household Survey report, 2018

26. SLIHS, 2018: 30
27. The seven districts include: Kono, Bombali, Tonkolili, Kambia, Karene, Port Loko, and Bo.

8.1.4 Intersectionality between gender, poverty, disability and location significantly exacerbates inequalities

Data also shows that the interaction of gender with poverty or location exacerbates educational inequalities. For example, boys from the richest urban areas are 95% likely to access Grade 1 of primary school (P1), compared to 76% of girls from the poorest rural areas. The disparity widens dramatically as they progress through the different levels of schooling. Practically no poor girls graduate from senior secondary school, and the completion rate for girls from the poorest rural areas is 5% compared to 68% (two-thirds) of boys from the richest urban areas.

Figure 8.8: Cumulative probability of staying in school, by extreme group



Source: Authors' calculation based on MICS, 2017

The gap between rich urban girls and poor rural boys is also substantial, with only 9% of the boys completing SSS in comparison to 54% of wealthy girls living in urban areas, indicating the significance of poverty in determining education outcomes for all children.

In the context of limited resources, the intersectionality between gender, poverty, and location is an important dimension to be taken into account in the education sector planning process, in order to invest in targeted and impactful actions where gender inequalities are the most prevalent. Poverty is clearly a common denominator affecting demand for education, and this is often compounded and perpetuated by the fact that SSS supply in poor rural areas is frequently much more limited compared to in urban areas. However, the critical point to highlight here is that even in these poor rural areas, girls achieve less (almost by half) than boys. Even if policy-makers do not make plans to improve the school supply in these areas, they must tackle gender issues in order to address the imbalance in the gender profile of the student population.

Girls with disabilities face multiple structural and social barriers to accessing educational opportunities. According to SLIHS data, while 20% of the population without disabilities aged 3 to 24 were not able to access school in 2018, this rises to nearly 30% of the disabled population for the same age group, and 33% for females with disabilities, as shown in Table 8.2. Gender disparities are notable, with 43% of girls with disabilities completing primary education, compared with 47% of boys. In JSS,

these figures are 16% for girls in comparison to 21% for boys. However, when compared with their non-disabled peers, differences in levels of educational attainment seem surprisingly small and, in some cases (i.e. boys at JSS level), and children with disabilities appear to do better.[28] It is likely that some of the children with disabilities included in this data are not attending government schools but rather enrolled in a parallel system of "special schools", which in turn does not help build a more inclusive education system. This data also masks geographical and poverty-related disparities. As global evidence shows, many girls with disabilities, particularly those from rural areas and lower-income families, are not expected to work, and therefore there is no perceived need for education. Their role in the society will be entirely focused on unpaid care and domestic work, while remaining financially dependent on fathers and brothers.[29]

Table 8.2: Persons with and without disabilities, by gender and level of educational attainment

Highest education level completed	With disability			Without disability		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
No Education	6 251	7 704	13 955	285 595	291 462	577 057
Primary	11 735	9 989	21 724	765 111	799 507	1 564 618
JSS	5 296	3 720	9 016	229 462	250 308	479 770
SSS	1 754	2 040	3 794	170 654	174 508	345 162
Total	**25 036**	**23 454**	**48 489**	**1 450 822**	**1 515 785**	**2 966 607**
No Education	25,00%	32,80%	28,80%	19,70%	19,20%	19,50%
Primary	46,90%	42,60%	44,80%	52,70%	52,70%	52,70%
JSS	21,20%	15,90%	18,60%	15,80%	16,50%	16,20%
SSS	7,00%	8,70%	7,80%	11,80%	11,50%	11,60%
Total	**100,00%**	**100,00%**	**100,00%**	**100,00%**	**100,00%**	**100,00%**

Source: SLIHS, 2018

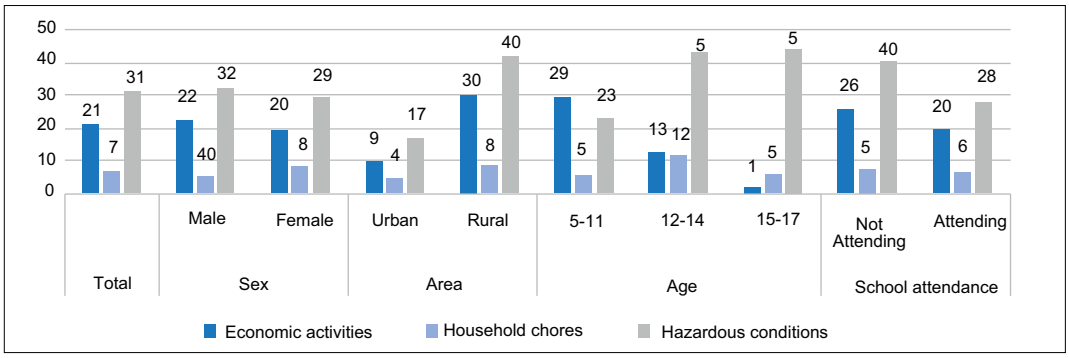
8.1.5 Child labour in Sierra Leone seems to be a result of non-attendance at school rather than a cause, and impacts both boys and girls

The MICS 2017 defines child labourers as children who work for more hours[30] than would be expected at their age, either doing economic activities or domestic work, or who are involved in hazardous activities that compromise their physical, mental, social, or educational development. While the SLIHS 2018 data indicates that only 2.3% of OOSC said they were not in school because of "having to work",[31] the MICS EAGLE report illustrates how child labour decreases the likelihood of them attending school.[32] UNICEF reported that the vast majority of out-of-school children (78.5%) seek out economic activities as soon as they leave school.[33] Child labour is much higher among children from rural areas and the older age groups, thus making it difficult for them to enter and stay in school (see *Figure 8.9*). In addition, poorly educated women are more likely to make their children work than mothers who attended secondary or higher education.[34]

28. These discrepancies could also be a data accuracy issue.
29. Still Left Behind: Pathways to inclusive education for girls with disabilities, 2017; UNGEI, Leonard Cheshire Disability
30. The MICS indicator on child labour uses age-specific thresholds for the number of hours children can perform economic activities or carry out household chores without being classified as child labourers. A child that performed economic activities during the last week for more than the age-specific number of hours is classified as in child labour. (i) age 5-11: 1 hour or more; (ii) age 12-14: 14 hours or more; (iii) age 15-17: 43 hours or more. A child that performed household chores during the last week for more than the age-specific number of hours is classified as in child labour: (i) age 5-11 and age 12-14: 28 hours or more; (ii) age 15-17: 43 hours or more. https://www.statistics.sl/images/StatisticsSL/Documents/sierra_leone_mics6_2017_report.pdf
31. SLIHS, 2018
32. MICS EAGLE Sierra Leone Country report, 2019
33. UNICEF Assessment of Out of School Children, Sierra Leone, 2016
34. MICS EAGLE Sierra Leone Country report, 2019

Overall, 39% of children aged 5 to 17 in Sierra Leone were involved in child labour in 2017 (39.6% male and 38.4% female). Of these, 22.5 per of boys and 19.6% of girls exceeded the acceptable number of hours for economic activities, while 8.1% of girls compared to 5% of boys did more than the acceptable number of hours of household chores.

Figure 8.9: Children in different child labour activities by gender, location, age, and school attendance



Source: MICS EAGLE Report, 2017: 23

Boys are more likely to be involved in economic activities than girls in all three age groups, and girls are more likely to be responsible for household chores. Adolescent girls in particular carry out nearly twice as many household chores as boys, including activities such as cooking, cleaning or caring for children, as well as collecting firewood or fetching water, (15% of 12 to 14-year-old girls exceed 28 hours of household chores per week, compared to 8% of 12 to 14 year-old boys, and 7% of 15 to 17-year-old girls exceed 43 hours per week compared to 3.5% of boys).[35] These gaps are likely to be even wider for girls from poorer socio-economic backgrounds and in rural areas. In this regard, schools, especially school principals and teachers, should be cautious about not reproducing these bad habits on the school premises. In particular, girls should not exclusively or quasi-exclusively be given tasks like collecting firewood or fetching water at school, while most of the boys are tasked with economic or more valuable activities.

Across Sierra Leone, 30.7% of children were working under hazardous conditions (32.3% male and 29.3% female) in 2018. These include children engaging in the worst forms of child labour, including diamond mining for boys and commercial sexual exploitation for girls, each sometimes as a result of human trafficking.[36]

8.1.6 Boys continue to slightly outperform girls in learning outcomes. This gender gap increases the higher the grade and varies by district

In terms of performance in national examinations, an initial analysis of 2019 data shows that boys are slightly outperforming girls in National Primary School Examinations (NPSE) and Basic Education Certificate Examinations (BECE), as we saw in *Chapter 4*. However, while the boys' average pass rate in the NPSEs was 78.1% compared to the girls' average pass rate of 74.6%, it is still worth noting that 4 of

35. MICS 2017
36. United States Department of Labor, 2017 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor - Sierra Leone, 20 September 2018

the top 5 candidates in the 2019 NPSE are female[37] demonstrating that given the right support, girls are capable of achieving the same as boys. In BECEs, the boys' pass rate was 48% compared to 44% for girls, who have performed consistently lower than boys over the last 5 years. However, trends indicate that they are gradually catching up as shown in *Chapter 4*.

The BECE results are important as they determine entry to both SS general, SS technical/ vocational, and TVET centres, with entry requirements for the latter two being lower than for SS general. Proportionately more young women enrol in TVET centres than those who go on to SSS and university. This could be partially attributable to the academic versus vocational pathways being determined by girls' overall lower performance in the BECEs (see analysis of other reasons in *Section 4.1*). The performance in BECE, combined with the lower rate of transition for girls (81%) compared to boys (89%) between JSS and SSS levels, partially accounts for the lower enrolment rate of girls in SSS1.

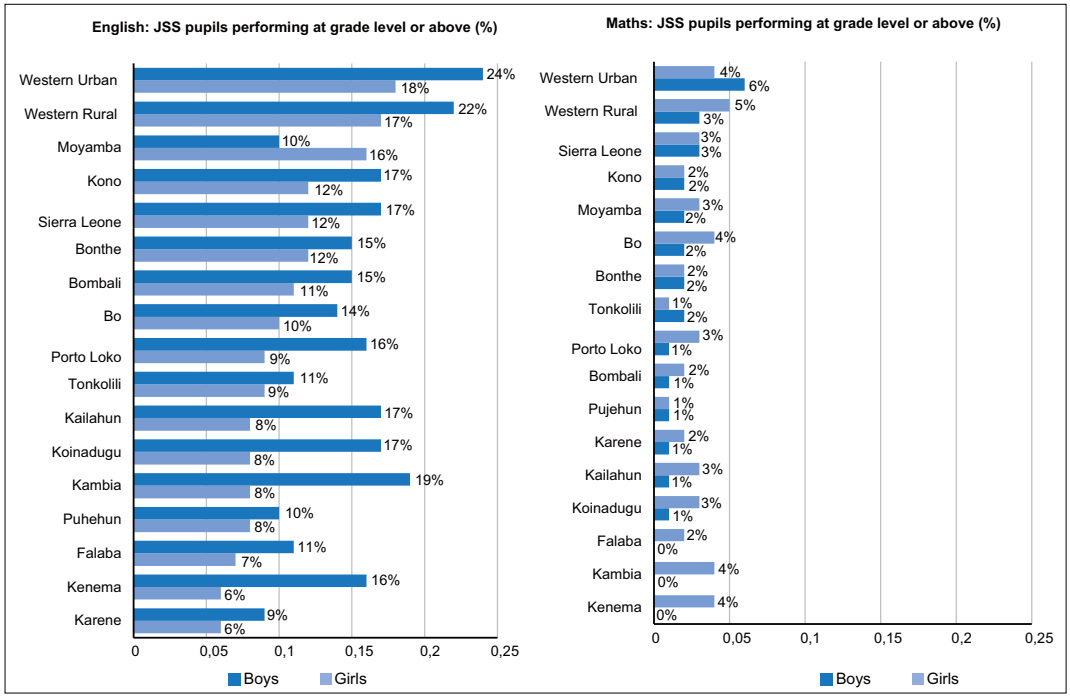
As we saw in *Chapter 4*, the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) results for 2019 were overwhelmingly poor across the board for girls and boys. All of the top 10 performing candidates were boys, and 8 of them attended the same school[38]. Interestingly, girls appear to slightly out-perform boys in the WASSCE results in both core subjects English (4%, compared to 3.5%) and mathematics (5%, compared to 4.6%), and across a number of districts (Kambia, West-Rural, Karene, Kono). However, it is not possible to say whether these results are statistically significant or not.

The Secondary Grade Learning Assessment (SGLA) Survey conducted in 2019, (described in more detail in *Chapter 4*), assessed to what extent JSS2 and SSS2 pupils are performing at the level of their current grade in English and mathematics. Results from the SGLA 2019 show that across both grades, on average boys perform better in these tests than girls. This gap is small in JSS2, but widens as girls move from JSS2 to SSS2. In JSS2, girls are more likely to have skills limited to those expected at primary grade level, in other words P6 or below, and struggle with the skills required in higher grades. Compared to boys, significantly fewer girls reach JSS1-level knowledge or above, either for English or mathematics. An even starker difference is seen for SSS2 pupils, where 51% of girls are performing at a primary grade level, as compared to 39% of boys.[39]

When looking at a district level analysis of the SGLA 2019 results, there are some variation across the country, but boys on average still perform better in tests than girls across both grades in almost all districts. The average performance of girls across the country by district also worsens in comparison to boys as they move to higher grades (i.e. to SSS2).[40] *Figure 8.11* shows the gender disparities for JSS2 pupil performance by district. In some districts, girls do better than boys (e.g. Moyamba for English; and Kono, Western Urban, Bonthe, and Pujehun for mathematics). However, other districts show large gender gaps with girls performing much worse than boys (e.g. Kenema, Kambia, Koinadugu and Karene).

37. MBSSE: Preliminary 2019 NPSE results analysis report
38. West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) 2019, preliminary analysis.
39. Leh Wi Lan: Sierra Leone Secondary Grade Learning Assessment 2019
40. Leh Wi Lan: Sierra Leone Secondary Grade Learning Assessment, 2018.

Figure 8.10: Gender disparities in pupil performance by district (JSS2)



Source: SGLA 2019

Possible driving factors for the underperformance of girls, as we will see later in the chapter, could include the under-representation of female teachers in secondary grades, absence during menstruation, school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV), issues including sex-for-grades, and sexual harassment by staff and male students. However, a further study or survey would be needed to confirm this and the underperformance of girls in school in general deserves further analysis.

8.1.7 Notable increase in number of female students accessing tertiary education, however this slows the higher the level of educational attainment

As shown in *Chapter 5*, the percentage of women accessing tertiary education increased significantly between 2017 and 2019 compared to that of men (61% increase for women, 32% for men).[41] However, while there is a slight majority of women students in short-cycle tertiary courses (52%), they are at a disadvantage in bachelor's degrees or courses of an equivalent level, where they make up 45% of enrolment. Disparities against women are accentuated in higher levels of education with only 39% of master's students and 21% of doctoral students being female.[42]

41. Source: 2020 National Technical and Higher Education Census (NTHEC) and United Nations (UN) 2019 Revision of World Population Prospects.
42. Source: 2020 National Technical and Higher Education Census (NTHEC).

The increase in female enrolment in short-cycle tertiary courses can be partly attributed to a greater public focus on young women accessing tertiary education through sensitization campaigns and encouragement at community level, particularly by paramount chiefs. Short-cycle tertiary courses are also potentially more attractive to female students for a number of reasons. They are mainly offered through TVET centres which are located across the country at district level, making them more accessible to women from rural areas, young mothers, and those who don't want to travel due to financial or safety concerns; they require a shorter-term commitment which again may better suit young women with family commitments; and have lower entry requirements than universities which links back to the trend in the lower performance of girls at secondary level as seen previously.

While this may be acceptable in the short term as a start to changing historical trends of exclusion, it can also introduce the risk of accentuating the gendered division of labour through, for example, leading to gender bias in disciplines/sectors or career paths pursued by men and women *(see Section 5.2 on gendered subject choice at tertiary level)*. Ultimately this can push women into more menial and lower paid jobs, as seen in *Chapter 5*. There are significantly less women in senior and management positions, or professional and technical jobs, across Sierra Leone with 37% of women engaged in unskilled manual work compared to 27% of men.[43]

8.1.8 The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic is likely to compound gender inequality in education

The 2014 to 2016 Ebola epidemic saw an increase in dropouts, child labour, violence against children, teen pregnancies, and persisting socio-economic and gender disparities.[44] Therefore there is a real risk that school closures as a result of Covid-19 will affect disadvantaged children more, impeding learning and compounding inequities. Many students may not return to the classroom even once the crisis is resolved, increasing the numbers of out-of-school children and youth. Adolescent girls are likely to be disproportionately among them, halting progress made in addressing gender disparities in education.[45]

Schools closures lead to an increase in domestic and caring responsibilities and a shift towards income generation for girls, limiting their opportunities for study at home. Research into the Ebola crisis[46] also found that the closure of schools increased girls' vulnerability to physical and sexual abuse, both by their peers and older men, as girls were often at home alone and unsupervised. Transactional sex was also widely reported as vulnerable girls and their families struggled to cover basic needs. As family breadwinners perished from Ebola and livelihoods were destroyed, many families chose to marry their daughters off, falsely hoping this would offer them protection. In Sierra Leone, adolescent pregnancy increased by up to 65% in some communities during the Ebola crisis[47]. In one study by Save the Children, most girls reported this increase was a direct result of being outside the protective environment provided by schools.[48]

43. The Global Gender Gap Index.
44. https://www.savethechildren.org/content/dam/global/reports/emergency-humanitarian-response/ebola-rec-sierraleone.pdf and https://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/crisis%20prevention/RBA%20Policy%20Note%20Vol%202%20No%201%202015_Gender.pdf
45. http://www.iiep.unesco.org/en/what-price-will-education-pay-covid-19-13366
46. https://www.sl.undp.org/content/sierraleone/en/home/library/crisis_prevention_and_recovery/assessing-sexual-and-gender-based-violence-during-the-ebola-cris.html
47. https://plan-international.org/blog/2020/03/covid-19-school-closures-hit-girls-hardest
48. https://www.savethechildren.org/content/dam/global/reports/emergency-humanitarian-response/ebola-rec-sierraleone.pdf

There is some evidence however, of how gender-transformative programmes might increase the education system's resilience to such disease outbreaks. In villages with established "girls' clubs", and existing sensitization efforts to promote their education, fewer girls experienced the adverse effects of school closures and were more likely to continue their learning. For example, an intervention to raise young women's economic empowerment in Sierra Leone that continued through the Ebola outbreak, enabled young girls to allocate time away from men, preventing out-of-wedlock pregnancies, and enabling them to re-enrol in school after the crisis.[49] The same project also reported an alternative interpretation of the increase in transactional sex, concluding that it resulted from the empowerment of girls benefiting from the vocational education programme.

It is possible that if social distancing measures are implemented to curb the spread of Covid-19, as has been seen in other countries, this may offer some degree of protection for vulnerable girls from unwanted sexual attention. However, this would depend on the extent to which the measures are enforced and adhered to, and children and girls would still be open to abuse within families. Social distancing will also limit the types of interventions that can be safely implemented, which means that flexible options such as the adaptation of radio programming should be considered. This was the case in the "Getting Ready for School" programme in Kailahun, which continued with good results for disadvantaged children, including girls, throughout the Ebola crisis.[50]

8.2 Gender norms, values and attitudes

Sierra Leone is deeply rooted in traditional norms, values and attitudes regarding the roles and responsibilities of women and men, many of which have a significant impact on the educational opportunities and outcomes for girls and boys. Gender roles determine the value parents place on their son or daughter's education, what subjects they are expected to study, the length of time they attend school, how they behave, and their responsibilities within the home and the community. Addressing the gender inequalities that arise as a result of these traditional norms, values and attitudes, is part of a long-term struggle, and changes in the education sector alone will not be enough to achieve it.

8.2.1 Globally, Sierra Leone still has a way to go to achieve gender equality in a number of domains that have a relevance to and impact on education

In 2018, Sierra Leone had a Gender Inequality Index (GII)[51] of 0.644, ranking it 153 out of 162 countries, and similarly, in the Global Gender Gap Index of the same year,[52] it was ranked 114th out of 149 countries. Both indicated high levels of inequality between females and males and a significant loss to human development. A gender analysis of development issues in Sierra Leone reveals wide disparities and inequalities between women and men in the economic, socio-political and cultural aspects of development. While Sierra Leone is close to achieving full gender parity with regards to primary education and healthy life expectancy, it lags behind in several other critical areas. A few examples of how the deeply rooted gender norms and values impact on education have been selected and expanded on in this section.[53]

49. https://www.povertyactionlab.org/sites/default/files/publications/The-Economic-Lives-of-Young-Women_ELA_SL_Bandiera-et-al_Dec2018.pdf.
50. https://www.bmj.com/content/363/bmj.k4667
51. The GII measures gender inequalities in three important aspects of human development—reproductive health, empowerment, and economic status. The GII is built on the same framework as the Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index (IHDI)—to better expose differences in the distribution of achievements between women and men. It measures the human development costs of gender inequality.
52. The Global Gender Gap Index seeks to measure the relative gaps between women and men across four key areas: health, education, economy and politics. Sierra Leone is one of five new countries to be included in the 2018 report.
53. The selection of indicators here has been guided by the UN Set of Minimum Gender Indicators and the indicators in the monitoring framework introduced in the 2016 GEMR Gender Review.

Decision-making largely rests with the men (fathers, husbands, brothers), including decisions related to the use of earnings and the health, well-being, and overall welfare of women. Particularly in rural communities, patriarchal norms and cultural practices that reinforce male dominance and decision-making are widespread. These decisions also affect things like whether a girl or boy child is sent to school, when a girl is deemed ready for marriage, and the types of career paths she is encouraged to pursue. Policy-makers, head teachers, and teachers all have a role to play in ensuring these biases are not perpetuated in the curriculum, the school, and the classroom.

Women tend to work long hours for low wages, are engaged in reproductive activities, non-remunerative domestic and family tasks, and spend three times more on unpaid care work as men[54]. As seen previously, this is significant given the link between the disproportionate number of hours that adolescent girls in particular spend on domestic chores, affecting school attendance and time available for study at home.

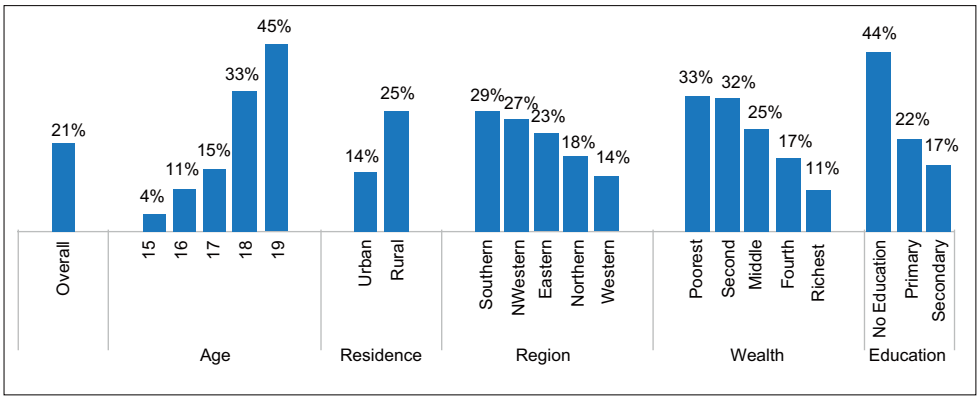
Violence against women and girls is pervasive and tolerated in Sierra Leone. Just over half (51%) of women between the ages of 15 and 49 who have been married at least once, have experienced physical, sexual, or emotional violence committed by a spouse or partner (in comparison to 33% of men).[55] Violence inside intimate partnerships is widely tolerated with 63% of women, compared to 34% of men, thinking that wife beating is justifiable in some circumstances.[56] These perceptions and patterns of behaviour also spill over into the school environment and have the potential to negatively impact girls' participation and achievement in education, as shown in the section on school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV).

8.2.2 Adolescent pregnancy and child, early and forced marriage (CEFM) are two of the biggest causes of school dropout for girls at secondary level

In 2019, 21% of women aged 15 to 19 had begun childbearing. The proportion of teenagers who have begun having children rises rapidly with age, from 4% at the age of 15, to 45% at age of 19 as shown in *Figure 8.11*. Rural teenagers tend to start childbearing earlier than urban teenagers (29% versus 14%). Teenagers with secondary education and higher, and those in the highest wealth quintile, tend to start childbearing later than those with no education or in the lowest quintiles.[57] The high prevalence of adolescent pregnancy in Sierra Leone is intrinsically linked to child marriage, as girls who become pregnant out of wedlock are often forced by their families into marrying the men who impregnated them, even if the relationship had been an abusive or predatory one. Equally, girls who are subjected to CEFM are likely to fall pregnant quickly.

54. https://www.genderindex.org/ OECD: Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI), 2019
55. Ibid.
56. Ibid.
57. Sierra Leone Demographic and Health Survey (SL DHS), 2019: 12

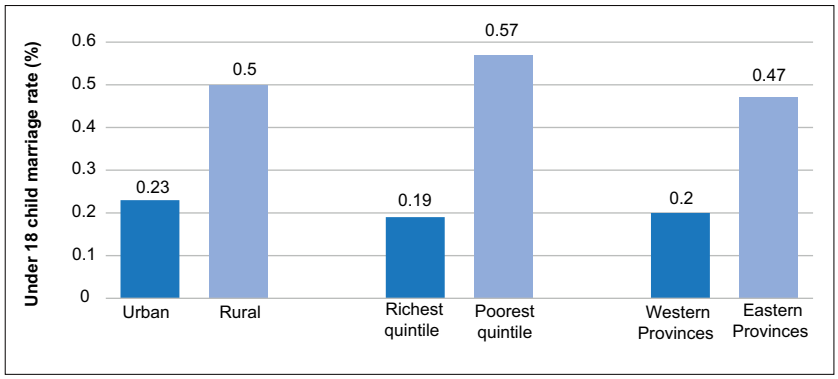
Figure 8.11: Percentage of teenagers who have begun childbearing



Source: DHS 2019

According to UNICEF, Sierra Leone has the 18th highest prevalence rate of child marriage in the world.[58] Girls are more at risk of child marriage than boys, with a median age at first marriage of 18 for women, compared to 25 for men. In Sierra Leone, 39% of girls are married before their 18th birthday and 13% are married before the age of 15.[59] Child marriage is most common in Port Loko, Kenema, Kono, and Tonkolili.[60] Girls most at risk include those who are in poor and in rural areas. Child marriage rates are 57% among the poorest fifth of rural girls; girls in the Eastern, Southern and Northern Provinces, where child marriage rates are over 40%, compared to 20% in the Western Province; girls from certain ethnic groups; vulnerable girls, including as a result of disability, sexual abuse and/or commercial sexual exploitation, and separation from parents.[61]

Figure 8.12: Child marriage rates among different groups, 2013



Source: SL DHS, 2013

58. https://www.unicef.org/stories/ending-child-marriage-and-teenage-pregnancy-sierra-leone
59. Sierra Leone Demographic and Health Survey, 2013
60. https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/child-marriage/sierra-leone/
61. https://www.savethechildren.org.uk/content/dam/global/reports/advocacy/child-marriage-sierra-leone.pdf

As indicated previously in *Section 2.3*, CEFM and adolescent pregnancy are both causes and results of girls dropping out of school. Global evidence shows that once girls drop out of school (or are unable to attend due to enforced closures during a crisis for example), they are more vulnerable to being forced into marriage by their families,[62] for financial reasons or otherwise, and/or are more likely to fall pregnant away from the protective environment of the school. Child mothers are also vulnerable to mental health problems, often have sexual and reproductive health complications due to having babies before their bodies are ready, and their children are more likely to die young or be malnourished.[63]

Gender norms have a significant role to play in influencing both sexual behaviour and the stigma and discrimination surrounding pregnant teenagers. There is a cultural emphasis on girls being responsible for controlling/curtailing their sexual behaviour and actions,[64] and subsequently receive the brunt of the blame and shame if they become pregnant out of wedlock. Boys, on the other hand, are often subjected to contradictory messages. They are expected to "not get a girl pregnant", but the wider model of masculinity in Sierra Leone defines being a "man" as having one or more female partners outside of their marriage and "demonstrating their sexual prowess by having children with multiple partners".[65] Education has an important role to play in addressing this through the implementation of a comprehensive sexuality education programme that should include guidance on safe sexual behaviour, including consent, respect for one's own and others' bodies, and traditional perceptions of masculinity linked to unsafe sexual behaviour. This will be discussed further in *Section 8.5.4*.

8.2.3 Pregnant girls and adolescent mothers face multiple obstacles that impede their progression through tertiary education and into work

At the tertiary level, almost two out of three girls in TVET, and one out of three girls at university, have been pregnant in their lifetime.[66] According to the SLIHS 2018 report, over a 12-month period, more than 60% of these women had their pregnancies end in live births, while over 30% were still pregnant. This gives an "'implied motherhood" figure of 67% for female TVET students and 50% for female higher education students, meaning that they will be responsible for at least one child while completing their tertiary education. This presents challenges for many, as there are currently no facilities or mechanisms in place, such as creche facilities, to support young mothers attending tertiary education institutions.

Additionally, as seen in *Chapter 5*, attitudes towards working mothers in Sierra Leone are reflected in the intra-household gender division of labour, which makes it difficult for women to participate and realize their potential in the labour market. As an example of discriminatory practice reported by the United States Department of State, it is common in Sierra Leone for a woman to be dismissed if she becomes pregnant during her first year on the job, and the employer cannot be charged for this as the law does not prohibit dismissal based on pregnancy.[67]

62. https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Child-marriage-and-humanitarian-crises-June-2016.pdf
63. Ibid.
64. Farzaneh Nassrin, Sierra Leone: An Evaluation of Teenage Pregnancy Pilot Projects in Sierra Leone, UNICEF, 2013.
65. Cavanagh, Roisin: Gender Equality Assessment in Sierra Leone, Nov 2016.
66. SLIHS report, 2018.
67. OECD Development Centre, 2019: 3

8.2.4 Incidences of school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) threaten the safety of the school environment for children, especially girls

School-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) refers to acts of **sexual, physical, or psychological violence** inflicted on children in and around schools, that are due to stereotypes and roles or norms attributed to, or expected of them, on the basis of their sex. Unequal power relations between adults and children, as well as deeply rooted gender stereotypes and roles, leave girls especially vulnerable to sexual harassment, rape, coercion, exploitation and discrimination from teachers, staff and peers. Boys, by contrast, are more vulnerable to physical violence and bullying at the hands of adults and other children.[68]

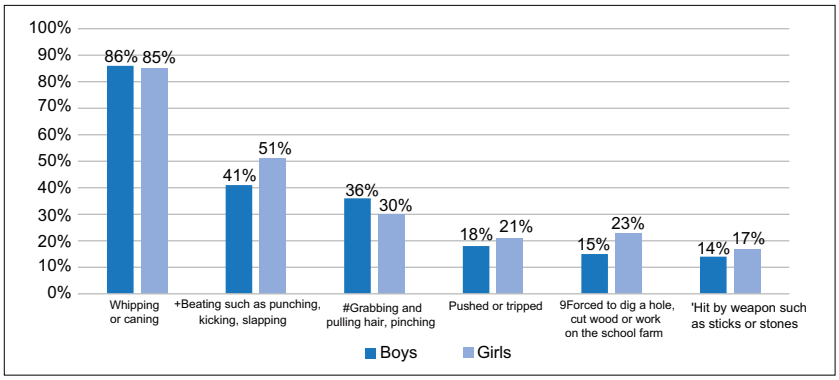
Girls with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to gender-based violence. They are often perceived as helpless, asexual and powerless, and are therefore at particularly high risk. Girls with disabilities are less likely to report abuse, and if they do, they are often considered not credible, especially if they have a sensory, intellectual, or psycho-social impairment.[69]

There is a lack of up-to-date data on SRGBV in Sierra Leone.[70] However, a coalition of civil society organizations (CSOs) including Plan International, conducted a comprehensive national study on SRGBV in 2010, and some of its results are included below. Additionally, UNICEF is conducting a study on SRGBV but we were unfortunately unable to access the data in time for this report.

Physical violence and corporal punishment: In 2017, 86.5% of children aged 1 to 14 experienced physical punishment and/or psychological aggression at home, with little difference between boys and girls (87% versus 86%). Distressingly, disabled children are more likely to experience harsh discipline (being hit on the face, head or ears, hit repeatedly, or hit hard).[71] According to the 2010 national study on SRGBV, 9 out of every 10 pupils in primary and secondary schools have experienced at least one form of physical violence. Forms of physical violence vary by gender. While boys are more likely to experience physical assaults such as kicking, slapping or beating, girls experience hair pulling, pinching and grabbing. Eight out of ten of the boys, and three-quarters of the girls, said that they were whipped or caned in school. Perpetrators of physical violence in schools include teachers, peers, senior pupils, and principals. (Within the home setting, mothers and elder sisters are the main perpetrators of physical violence).[72]

68. Ibid.
69. Still Left Behind: Pathways to inclusive education for girls with disabilities, 2017; UNGEI, Leonard Cheshire Disability
70. UNICEF is currently conducting a situational analysis on SRGBV in Sierra Leone, the findings from which can be included in the ESA at a later stage.
71. Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey Sierra Leone, 2017. https://www.statistics.sl/images/StatisticsSL/Documents/sierra_leone_mics6_2017_report.pdf
72. National study on school-related gender-based violence in Sierra Leone, 2010 (Plan International, Concern, CRS and Ibis).

Figure 8.13: Percentage of students who experienced physical violence, by type of violence and gender



Source: National Study on School-Related Gender-Based Violence in Sierra Leone, 2010

Sexual Violence: According to the 2010 national study on SRGBV, two-thirds of girls have experienced at least one or more forms of sexual violence. The prevalence of sexual violence varies considerably by district, with Tonkolili having a relatively higher percentage of victims in most of the reported forms of violence. The most common form is the touching or pinching of genitals, which was experienced and reported by 42% of the girls, while 36% of those interviewed had received sexual comments. These forms of sexual harassment can affect all females (including teachers and students).

Nine per cent of girls experienced forced or coerced sex in exchange for money, gifts or grades. Some adolescent girls may accidentally consent to such relationships because they appreciate the gifts and do not realize that sex is expected of them later. Unfortunately, because men have much more power in these relationships due to their age, position or money, they can force girls to have sex against their will - which is rape and a criminal offence. This also leads to high levels of teenage pregnancy.[73] Rape is more likely to take place within the home and community settings. But still, school-related rape incidents contribute to 30% of the cases. The most commonly cited places in connection with school-related rape include on the way to and from school, and the school toilets.

The most common form of **psychological violence** against students in schools in Sierra Leone is the use of abusive, humiliating or ridiculing language. Teachers often use abusive language instead of caning, but the negative effects on the children are the same. Students with disabilities are often subject to teasing or ridiculing language (from peers, teachers, people in the community), particularly if they look or act differently to others.[74] Girls are prone to psychological violence as teachers use it as a way of intimidating them to accept their sexual proposals.[75]

Paradoxically, there are reports of girls saying they "feel safe in school"[76] which, as mentioned above, probably reflects the relative incidence and extent of harassment they encounter outside school in the community.

73. National study on school-related gender-based violence in Sierra Leone, 2010 (Plan International, Concern, CRS and Ibis).
74. Reducing Violence in Schools (Sierra Leone): A step by step guide to setting up a School Safety System to reduce violence in schools (UNICEF; 75. National study on school-related gender-based violence in Sierra Leone, 2010 (Plan international, Concern, CRS and Ibis)
75. Ibid.
76. Leh Wi Lan: Sierra Leone Secondary Grade Learning Assessment, 2018

8.3 Institutions, laws and policies

There is significant recent evidence of legal and political commitment to gender equality in education in Sierra Leone. However, the presence of entrenched gender norms and traditional practices at the local level, combined with weak institutional capacity, has challenged the implementation of gender-related policy, strategies and interventions, as this section goes on to explore.

8.3.1 There is evidence of strong political commitment to addressing gender issues and inequalities across sectors in Sierra Leone

The GoSL has signed, ratified, and enacted a range of international treaties[77] and national legislation and policies to ensure the protection and promotion of the rights of women and children. This includes the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1988,[78] the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, and the 1991 Sierra Leone Constitution.[79]

The government's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) III, known as "The Agenda for Prosperity" (2013-2018), made provision for a stand-alone pillar on gender equality and women's empowerment in the National Development Plan. This gave more importance to gender issues and, at the same time, ensured that gender was mainstreamed into the remaining seven pillars of the document. This was replaced by the GoSL's Medium-term National Development Plan (MTNDP): Education for Development[80] (2019-2023), which in addition to mainstreaming strategies to address issues affecting women, adolescents and children, includes *Policy Cluster 5 – Empowering women, children, adolescents, and persons with disability.* Pursuing special policies under this cluster recognizes the issue of gender and the role of vulnerable groups in guaranteeing inclusiveness and empowerment. There are a number of key targets and policy actions aimed at addressing gender inequities and inequalities affecting women, with the strategic objective being to promote the overall empowerment of women in political, social, economic, and cultural spheres.

The MTNDP also called for the establishment of a Gender Affairs Commission to ensure that there is the requisite leadership and focused attention on gender equality and women's empowerment across all sectors and at all levels.[81] It stated that, despite additional government structures being established with gender equality and women's empowerment as part of their mandates (the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs; the Human Rights Commission; the Family Support Unit in the Sierra Leone Police; and the Legal Aid Board, among others), these are not sufficient by themselves. This recommendation has since been acted on with the government, in October 2019, deciding to split the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs (MSWGCA) into the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs (MGCA) and the Ministry of Social Welfare (MSW), thus placing greater emphasis and attention on addressing gender issues. The Gender Affairs Directorate of the MGCA continues to lead on all strategic planning relating to gender equality and women's empowerment.

77. Other international human rights treaties signed and ratified by GoSL influencing gender equity and equality: The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR); The International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR); The Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT - Torture Convention); The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (Race Discrimination Convention).
78. An international treaty to protect the rights of women and girls. CEDAW requires countries to eliminate discrimination against women in the public as well as the private sphere, including in the family, and recognizes that traditional gender roles and stereotypes must be eliminated in order to end all forms of discrimination against women and girls.
79. http://www.sierra-leone.org/Laws/constitution1991.pdf
80. http://www.moped.gov.sl/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Medium-Term-National-Development-Plan-Volume-I.pdf
81. Ibid.

The National Gender Strategic Plan 2018-2023 (NGSP) is the key document guiding the work of the Gender Affairs Directorate and serves as a blueprint for the implementation of all policies that are related to gender and the empowerment of women in Sierra Leone. The strategic plan is aligned with the Medium-term National Development Plan (MTNDP), the MSWGCA's strategic plan, and other frameworks. The NGSP includes actions to review and align the numerous gender-related Acts and policies (see below for a summary of these).

The strategic framework is comprehensive and includes eight strategic objectives[82] with three of direct relevance to addressing gender inequalities in education. These include:

i) Strategic Objective 2 *(SO2: Promote women's economic empowerment)* includes the education-specific outcome, *education and training opportunities for marginalized and vulnerable women including women with disabilities, with a focus on STEM disciplines.*

ii) Strategic Objective 4 (SO4: *Promote sexual and reproductive health and rights of women and adolescent girls, and prevention and response to GBV)* includes the education outcome provision of *comprehensive sexuality education and life skills training for adolescent girls and boys in-school.*[83] The MBSSE is leading the development of this programme in schools,[84] working together with other partners including the UNFPA[85].

iii) Strategic Objective 5 (SO5: *Strengthen coordination and gender mainstreaming across sectors)* recognises the need for cross-sectoral coordination, and lists among its activities the *establishing/strengthening of gender focal points/gender desks in ministries, directorates and agencies (MDAs),* including the MBSSE at district-level and local councils, providing them with *capacity building training,* and *establishing gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) committees at national, regional and district levels*[86].

Previously, the MBSSE worked with the Children's Directorate of the MSWGCA on joint monitoring of school feeding programmes and several girls' education projects, together with international NGOs. While effective coordination across sectors and ministries to address gender inequalities within education has been challenging, the MBSSE has already taken steps to improve this through the Strategic Partnership Committee, and a closer working relationship with the MGCA at regional and district levels to support implementation and monitoring of the ESP.

8.3.2 The government has taken concrete steps to address issues surrounding teenage pregnancy

A National Secretariat for the Reduction of Teenage Pregnancy (NSRTP) was established in May 2013, and the Teenage Pregnancy Reduction Strategy (2013-2015) was developed that same year, which has now been replaced by the National Strategy for the Reduction of Adolescent Pregnancy and Child Marriage (2018-2022). It has been developed as an integrated document, recognising child marriage as a national problem in Sierra Leone, and the strong link between child marriage and adolescent pregnancy. It details the commitments of multisectoral stakeholders across five government ministries to tackle the challenge

82. The other five strategic objectives in the NGSP are: (1) Strengthen legal, policy, and institutional capacities to enhance gender equality and women's empowerment; (3) Improve women's political participation, (6) Support research, ICT and reporting; (7) Women, peace, security and humanitarian action; and (8) Production and use of gender statistics for evidence-based localization of the Sustainable Development Goals.
83. The National Gender Strategic Plan (2018-2023).
84. The National Gender Strategic Plan (2018-2023).
85. The MBSSE is not the named lead partner in the NGSP, however this has since been rectified by the education minister.
86. The National Gender Strategic Plan (2018-2023)

of adolescent pregnancy and child marriage. These are the Ministry of Health and Sanitation (MoHS), Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs (MSWGCA), Ministry of Youth Affairs (MoYA), Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE), and the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MLGRD).[87]

Significantly, a controversial 2015 policy that barred pregnant girls from attending school has finally been lifted. The policy, based on the perception that *"pregnant girls have the potential to negatively influence their peers to be sexually active and become pregnant",* was amended in October 2019 to allow girls to sit exams, although they were still excluded from normal schooling.[88] In December 2019, a regional court held that Sierra Leone's ban on visibly pregnant girls attending school and sitting exams was discriminatory, and the Community Court of Justice of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) ordered that the policy be revoked with immediate effect.[89] In the same month, a **Task Force on SRGBV** was launched by the MBSSE at the request of president, partly in response to the ECOWAS ruling. This body is tasked with addressing orders from the regional court that Sierra Leone integrate sexual and reproductive health rights classes into the national school curriculum, and develop strategies to address stigma and discrimination against pregnant girls. On 30 March 2020, the government finally lifted the ban on pregnant girls attending school and sitting exams, ahead of plans to issue a nationwide closure of schools in the light of Covid-19.

Many of the school-aged girls who became pregnant during the Ebola crisis never returned to the classroom, largely due to the ban, so this measure could contribute to alleviating a similar negative outcome in the context of disease outbreaks, such as Covid-19, and prevent the further violation of girls' educational rights. Following the decision to lift the ban, the education minister announced that the MBSSE will lead a collaborative and consultative process to develop a comprehensive policy setting out its vision of "radical inclusion" and "comprehensive safety," in which "all children are encouraged and supported to realize their right to universal education, without discrimination".[90]

8.3.3 The implementation of political and legal commitments to gender equality are undermined by entrenched gender norms, values and traditional practices

The OECD Development Centre's Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI)[91] measures discrimination against women in social institutions across 180 countries. By taking into account laws, social norms and practices, the SIGI captures the underlying drivers of gender inequality with the aim of providing the data necessary for transformative policy change. Sierra Leone has a SIGI value of 48%, placing it in the "high levels of gender discrimination in social institutions" category. Discrimination in the family (including child marriage) is ranked as "very high" at 54%.

There are however, a wide range of policies and laws in place for the protection of women and children in Sierra Leone. As we saw in the section on gender norms and values, almost all of these policies and laws have a relevance to and impact on gender equality within the education sector. These include the Domestic Violence Act 2007, the Devolution of Estates Act 2007, the Registration of Customary Marriage

87. National Strategy for the Reduction of Adolescent Pregnancy and Child Marriage (2018-2022)
88. https://gemreportunesco.wordpress.com/2019/12/02/pregnant-girls-must-be-supported-in-attending-school/
89. https://africanarguments.org/2020/01/27/sierra-leone-ban-pregnant-school-girls-outlawed-landmark-ruling/
90. https://twitter.com/dsengeh/status/1244597164799655936/photo/1
91. https://www.genderindex.org/.

and Divorce Act 2009, the Child Rights Act 2007, the new Sexual Offences Act 2019, the Teacher Code of Conduct 2019, and the National Referral Protocol for Gender-Based Violence 2012. The purpose of these laws and policies is to protect women and children from deeply rooted structural injustice, for their socio-economic empowerment, and to create a climate where access to justice can be achieved. In 2019, the president declared a state of emergency on rape and sexual violence against women and girls, and promulgated the new Sexual Offences Amendment Act 2019,[92] which allowed the government to enact drastic measures without parliamentary approval, including the introduction of maximum life sentences for those found guilty of sexually abusing a minor.

Enforcement of these laws is, however, often ineffective, and contradictions exist which have resulted in the continued violation of human rights, including educational rights, for women and children. For example, there is evidence at both national and international levels[93] of Sierra Leone demonstrating a commitment to ending CEFM. Nationally, the 2012 Sexual Offences Act prohibits sexual activity with children (anyone under the age of 18, including those in a marital relationship), and the 2007 Child Rights Act prohibits marriage for anyone under the age of 18. However, this is undermined by the 2008 Customary Marriage Act, which allows children younger than 18 to marry if they have parental consent. Progress towards reconciling this discrepancy has been slow, and many rural communities respect customary leadership and by-laws more than national law.[94]

In addition, the Child Rights Act, which supersedes all other national laws and is considered compatible with the Convention and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, does not provide an outright prohibition on corporal punishment. Corporal punishment is still considered lawful in schools under the right "to administer punishment" in Article 3 of the Prevention of Cruelty to Children Act 1926, and the provisions for "reasonable" and "justifiable" correction in Article 33(2) of the Child Rights Act of 2008. It should supposedly be meted out by the principal only, or by female teachers on girls, but there is no specific legislation or regulation governing how this is administered. Despite recommendations by the Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission to prohibit corporal punishment in schools, the Education Act 2004 is silent on the issue.[95]

8.3.4 Low institutional capacity within the MBSSE at regional and district levels hampers progress and coordination on gender and education

The assistant director of the Gender Unit is currently the only gender-focused officer for the entire country based at the MBSSE headquarters. This, combined with no trained personnel (gender focal points) at regional and district levels makes effective policy coordination and implementation of any gender-related strategies in education very challenging. As we saw in *Chapter 6*, there are a number of institutional capacity challenges within the education administration as a whole, which are also reflected here. These primarily concern two areas. Firstly, a lack of gender focal people in place at district level, who have been given sufficient up-to-date staff development training, and whose remit it is to coordinate gender-focused activities. Secondly, weak coordination on gender and education planning, implementation and monitoring at the district level, including clear guidance for cross-sector coordination on gender, and coordination

92. https://statehouse.gov.sl/sierra-leones-first-lady-takes-hands-off-our-girls-campaign-to-the-united-nations/
93. Sierra Leone co-sponsored the 2017 Human Rights Council resolution recognizing the need to address CEFM in humanitarian contexts, and the 2015 Human Rights Council resolution to end CEFM, recognizing that it is a violation of human rights.
94. https://www.savethechildren.org.uk/content/dam/global/reports/advocacy/child-marriage-sierra-leone.pdf
95. http://www.endcorporalpunishment.org/wp-content/uploads/country-reports/SierraLeone.pdf

with development partner projects. It is encouraging that the National Gender Strategic Plan 2018-2023 (NGSP) includes a strategic objective on "strengthening coordination and gender mainstreaming across sectors"[96] and, as mentioned previously, the MBSSE seeks to improve coordination through the Strategic Partnerships Committee and at different levels of the system. With financial support from the donor partner DFID, the MBSSE is targeting community influencers at district, chiefdom and village levels, including the paramount chiefs of each district, and coordinating meetings on child protection and gender issues. Critically, while the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs (MGCA), the Family Support Unit (FSU) of the Sierra Leone Police (SLP), as well as the Ministry of Health and Sanitation are all key players, the MBSSE is leading on these activities.

The current ESP 2018-2020 includes a number of interventions directly addressing gender disparities in access, participation and achievement.[97] However, their status and extent to which they have been implemented, monitored and evaluated seems to vary considerably. For example, in the ESP 2018-2020, the MBSSE committed to formalise the policy for the re-entry of teenage mothers into the school system, allowing pregnant school girls to attend specially created centres that offer "accelerated learning programmes" (also open to young mothers). After giving birth and fully recovered, they would be encouraged to return back to school and continue with their formal education.[98] The accelerated learning programme is implemented under the non-formal education directorate. Therefore, it appears that data on how many pregnant girls and young mothers accessed the programme and returned to school has been monitored and collected separately, and has not been incorporated into the national education management information system (EMIS) data. Unfortunately, again this highlights a lack of coordination which has led to a deficiency in the MBSSE data system's ability to monitor the implementation of a key programme of national concern. Currently, however, the Gender Unit is lobbying to include data collection on pregnant girls as part of the coordinated interventions preventing the exploitation and abuse of girls during Covid-19.

In the ESP 2018-2020, the MBSSE also committed to *ensuring that all schools are safe for girls through curbing sexual violence and exploitation in schools by ensuring mechanisms are in place for taking legal action against those within and outside schools involved in sexual violence and the exploitation of schoolgirls*.[99] Again, there has been no comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness of these mechanisms to date, including whether any disciplinary steps or legal action were taken when offences were committed. The launch of a national task force on SRGBV by government indicates there have been limitations in the implementation of the measures. The MTNDP reports "weak child protection systems, inconsistent laws and policies", and that "child protection must be based on a multidimensional approach involving all relevant sectors and authorities" with the "establishment of child protection institutions and structures at national and local levels".[100] The MTNDP commits to ensuring all MSWGCA and district council offices are using the Child Protection Information Management System, with agreed reporting, service delivery, and referral systems by 2022.[101] Two key related tasks of the Strategic Partnership Committee are to interpret the policies and instruments on education and child protection, and to strengthen mechanisms to ensure prompt response to incidences of violence, punishment for the perpetrators, and full support to the victims as required.

96. National Gender Strategic Plan 2018-2023 (NGSP).
97. Sierra Leone Education Sector Plan 2018-2020.
98. Ibid.
99. Sierra Leone Education Sector Plan 2018-2020.
100. http://www.moped.gov.sl/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Medium-Term-National-Development-Plan-Volume-I.pdf
101. Ibid.

The Sierra Leone Teaching Service Commission revised **the Code of Conduct (CoC) for Teachers and Other Education Personnel** in 2019. Among other things, it aims to address the entrenched problem of sexual abuse of students within schools. The code sets out *"standards of professional behaviour for teachers and other education personnel in their relationships with learners, their colleagues, parents and the general public,"* and covers areas such as corruption, parent/learner exploitation, ending physical and humiliating forms of punishment, psychological abuse, child labour, and zero tolerance for all forms of sexual and gender-based violence.[102] While the 2009 teacher CoC did not provide a path of action to be taken once a teacher was found to be exploiting a child, and no clear punitive measures were given, the 2019 code includes clear guidance and stipulates punishment according to Sierra Leonean law. Implementation of the 2019 teacher CoC will, however, require careful coordination and linkages with the Child Protection Information Management System and referral systems sitting under the MGCA.

8.3.5 Government consolidated spending on 'gender and children' as a proportion of government spending in education appears to be quite small and a 'soft target'

The data included in *Table 8.3* has been extracted from the budget of the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Social Services. The zeroes on the budget lines for "Children's Commission" and "local councils" (gender and children's affairs division) indicate that they had budget allocations, but there is no spending recorded. Some lines also have spending in one year and then disappear in the next year, begging the question as to what happened in those years.

Table 8.3: Consolidated government spending on gender (MSWGCA)

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Total govt. Spending (1)	2 751 942	3 360 322	3 163 997	3 935 403	4 419 105	5 440 651	6 405 638	6 830 697	7 624 816
Recurrent (1a)	1 602 816	2 097 378	2 185 127	2 718 468	2 803 336	3 553 254	4 120 675	4 747 560	5 740 560
Capital	1 149 126	1 262 944	978 870	1 216 935	1 615 769	1 887 397	2 284 963	2 083 137	1 884 256
Spending in Education (2)	388 876	472 423	528 836	635 029	670 315	767 897	679 399	913 467	1 041 868
Recurrent (2a)	386 754	472 700	528 192	634 512	670 059	763 592	672 069	910 112	1 030 747
Capital	2 122	-276	644	517	257	4 305	7 330	3 355	11 121
Spending on gender & social programmes (3)	2 584	3 697	3 792	6 810	8 206	8 276	7 039	10 368	10 103
Recurrent (3a)	2 467	3 402	3 792	6 104	8 206	8 276	7 039	10 368	10 103
Salaries	1 020	1 391	2 320	3 656	5 946	6 840	6 809	8 355	9 245
Goods & Services	1 447	2 012	1 473	2 448	2 260	1 436	230	2 012	858
Central Ministry	1 287	2 012	1 419	1 876	1 134	1 112	230	1 820	374
Child Commission	161	0	54	0	544	324	0	192	484
Local Councils	0	0	0	572	583	0	0	0	0
Capital	117	295	0	706	0	0	0	0	0
(3) / (1) %	**0,09%**	**0,11%**	**0,12%**	**0,17%**	**0,19%**	**0,15%**	**0,11%**	**0,15%**	**0,13%**
(3a) / (1a) %	0,15%	0,16%	0,17%	0,22%	0,29%	0,23%	0,17%	0,22%	0,18%
(3) / (2) %	0,66%	0,78%	0,72%	1,07%	1,22%	1,08%	1,04%	1,13%	0,97%
(3a) / (2a) %	0,64%	0,72%	0,72%	0,96%	1,22%	1,08%	1,05%	1,14%	0,98%

Source: Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs

102. Teaching Service Commission; Code of Conduct for Teachers and Other Education Personnel 2019

The *"spending on gender as a percentage of education spending"* indicator shows a gradual increase in budget allocation since 2011. However, spending still averages less than 1% which seems remarkably low given the significance of gender inequalities in the education sector.

Gender and protecting the rights of women and girls cuts across multiple sectors and therefore requires careful cross-sectoral coordination and budgeting between ministries at national level, and between line-ministries at district level. The Gender Affairs Directorate's National Gender Strategic Plan (NGSP) will be subjected to the MGCA's Global Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, and will ensure that a system is developed to support the planning and establishment of baselines for all new gender-based interventions that will be implemented during the NGSP's time frame.[103] Moreover, there are inter-ministerial collaboration activities in place, including regular meetings of line ministries. However, until gender focal persons/officers are in place at district level, collaboration and coordination on addressing gender inequalities in education cannot be effectively implemented.

8.4 Resource distribution

As this section shows, there are a number of systemic issues and processes that are often intrinsically gender unequal, including access to facilities in the learning environment and the gender balance of the teaching workforce and education management that contribute to impeding gender equality in education.

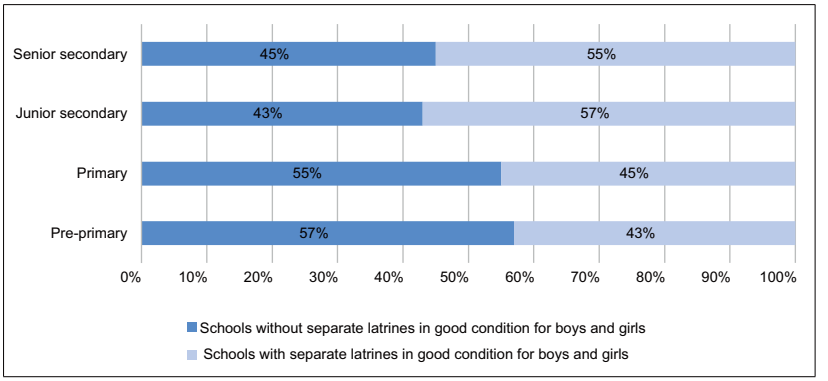
8.4.1 Limited access to adequate school sanitation facilities and hygiene products reduces attendance for girls, particularly during menstruation

The Sierra Leone Annual School Census 2019 shows that just over half of junior and senior secondary schools across the country have separate latrines for girls and boys in a good condition,[104] but this drops to 43% for primary schools as shown in *Figure 8.14.* At district level, the picture is considerably worse with the following districts having nearly 60% of senior secondary schools without a separate latrine in a good condition available for girls and boys: Bonthe, Kambia, Moyamba and Western Area Rural.

Based on this data, the ratio of toilets to learners by gender, when considering only toilets in a good condition, is unacceptably high, with 134 boys and 138 girls for every toilet at primary level, rising to 149 girls and 166 boys for every toilet at SSS level. This of course masks the fact that for many schools, the ratio will be much higher, and/or the only toilets learners have access to, are in a poor condition. In other works, they are not clean, have no water and soap for handwashing, and are not lockable, making them unsafe, especially for girls.

103. The National Gender Strategic Plan 2018-2023
104. The National Gender Strategic Plan 2018-2023

Figure 8.14: Percentage of schools with separate latrines in good condition



Source: Annual School Census 2019

Challenges exist for girls attending schools where there are not adequate sanitation facilities, and can possibly increase the numbers of girls not attending school when menstruating, or dropping out of school entirely due to embarrassment and risk of stigmatisation during this period. The MICS 2017 report indicated a high level of non-attendance of menstruating girls in school: *23.3% of 15 to 19-year-old girls (almost 1 in 4) did not participate in social activities, including school, due to their last menstruation in the last 12 months*.[105] This is corroborated by the findings from the Secondary Grade Learning Assessment 2019, in which almost half the teachers interviewed believed that girls had a tendency to absent themselves from school during menstruation.[106] In addition, education providers have described that many girls do not have access to sanitary towels due to costs or accessibility of shops in rural locations. This leads to girls using large pieces of cloth that are uncomfortable (sometimes causing chafing) and make it difficult for them to walk long distances due to their inefficiency, causing the girls to again risk shame and stigmatisation in school.[107]

To help address this, a number of schools in Sierra Leone have cubicles in place for girls experiencing their menstrual period. *Table 8.4* shows the percentage distribution of co-education schools with a cubicle for girls experiencing their menstrual period by level and district. Overall, 4% of primary, 13% of JS, and 20% of SS schools provide a cubicle for girls in their menstrual period. A number of districts do not report having any senior secondary schools with cubicles. These include Bonthe, Falaba, Karena, and Pujehun districts. However, it is not clear whether this is through a lack of reporting or an actual absence of the cubicles in schools. Kambia and Karena districts have the least number of junior secondary schools with a cubicle (4% and 8%, respectively), while Bo, Kailahun, Karene, Kono, and Tonkolili districts report having the least number of primary schools with a cubicle for girls.

105. Sierra Leone MICS report 2017
106. Leh Wi Lan: Sierra Leone Secondary Grade Learning Assessment 2019
107. Cavanagh, Roisin; Gender Equality Assessment in Sierra Leone; Nov 2016

Table 8.4: Distribution of schools with cubicle for menstruating girls, by level and district

District	Primary		Junior secondary		Senior secondary	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Bo	7	1%	19	16%	5	12%
Bombali	10	3%	13	12%	7	16%
Bonthe	28	12%	7	22%		0%
Falaba	9	4%	2	10%		0%
Kailahun	6	2%	12	22%	4	21%
Kambia	18	5%	3	4%	2	9%
Karena	4	1%	4	8%		0%
Kenema	29	4%	12	10%	7	16%
Koinadugu	33	13%	7	18%	3	30%
Kono	10	2%	12	11%	8	24%
Moyamba	19	4%	9	14%	4	18%
Port Loko	24	4%	16	10%	7	16%
Pujehun	9	3%	4	17%		0%
Tonkolili	9	2%	21	22%	10	37%
WA Rural	37	8%	20	9%	19	23%
WA Urban	40	5%	49	18%	40	27%
National	**292**	**4%**	**210**	**13%**	**116**	**20%**

Source: Annual School Census 2019

Increasing the number of schools, particularly at secondary level, that have cubicles in place for menstruating girls would help improve their overall attendance throughout the school year. Of course, non-attendance at school during menstruation is a complex issue that may not be solved simply through the provision of sanitation facilities and hygiene products, as social norms in Sierra Leone dictate that girls are considered "impure" during menstruation and therefore should avoid social interactions. Interventions to challenge and transform these beliefs must accompany any improvement in inputs at school level.

8.4.2 There continues to be a huge gender imbalance of teachers within the education system

The gender profile of the teaching workforce in Sierra Leone compares poorly with the situation in other countries and regions. Data from the UNESCO Institute of Statistics indicates that it has one of the lowest percentages of female teachers at primary and secondary school levels. In 2019, only 28% of the total teaching workforce in Sierra Leone were women, in comparison to 61% of health professionals, and 53% of the overall employed population.[108] Thirty% of teachers at the primary level were female, among the lowest in West Africa, with the average percentage of women teachers at primary level being 45% across sub-Saharan Africa, according to the UNESCO estimates.[109]

108. Calculations based on Sierra Leone Labour Force Survey (SLLFS) 2018, and Sierra Leone Integrated Household Survey (SLIHS) 2018
109. UIS, 2018
110. UIS, 2018

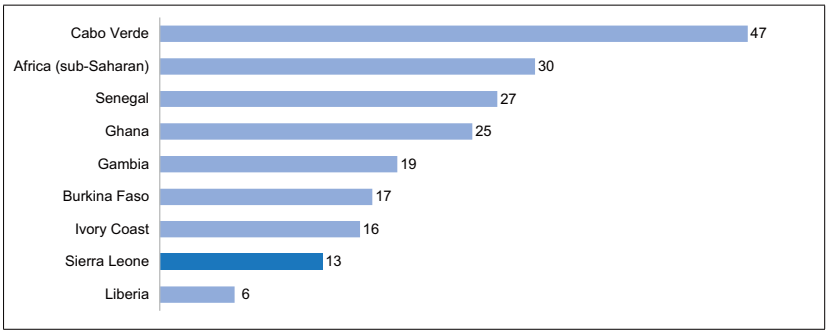
Table 8.5: Teacher numbers disaggregated by level and gender in 2019 (all types of school)

	Preschool	Primary	JSS	SSS	Totals (%)
Male	749	33 333	16 652	8 975	59 709 (72%)
Female	4 826	14 409	3 233	877	23 345 (28%)
Totals	5 575	47 742	19 885	9 852	83 054 (100%)
%	7%	57%	24%	12%	100%
% Female	**87%**	**30%**	**16%**	**9%**	**28%**

Source: Authors' calculation based on EMIS 2019 data

As shown in Table 8.5, at preschool level, the ratio of female to male teachers is markedly high at 87%, but then drops dramatically to 30% at primary level, and continues to decrease the higher up the education system you go, with only 13% of teachers in secondary school being female (16% at JSS level, and 9% at SSS level). This probably reflects the common notion that teaching at preschool constitutes a "soft option" and is little more than childcare (stereotypically an appropriate role for women), whereas education becomes more "serious" the higher the level. Again, as shown in *Figure 8.15*, Sierra Leone has one of the lowest ratios of female teachers in secondary education across West Africa.[110]

Figure 8.15: Percentage of female teachers at secondary level in 2018

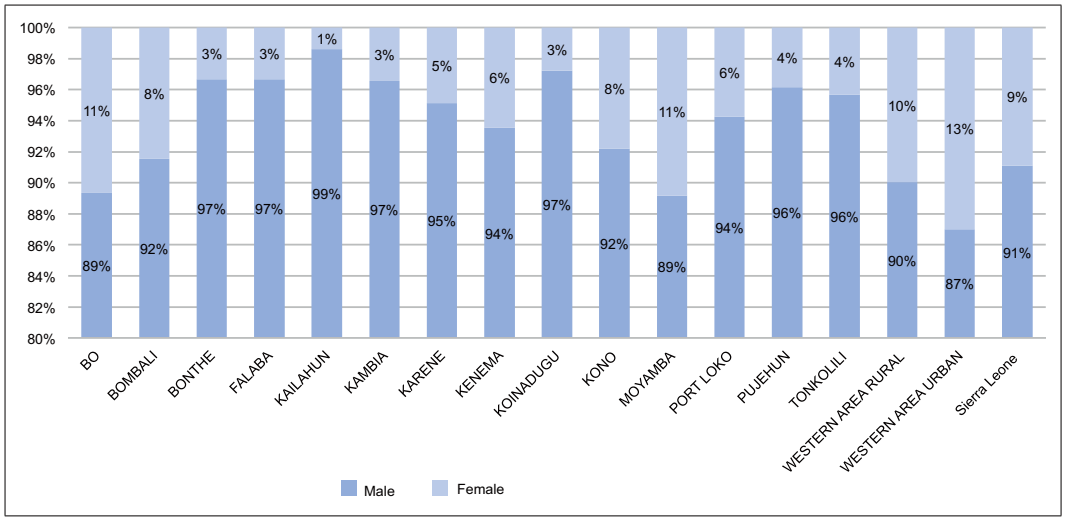


Source: UNESCO Institute of Statistics data, 2018

The ratio of female to male teachers is even worse in rural areas and some districts where they are needed the most, with almost half of the districts in Sierra Leone having over 95% male teachers at SSS level as shown in *Figure 8.16*.

110. UIS, 2018

Figure 8.16: SSS: Proportion of teachers by gender



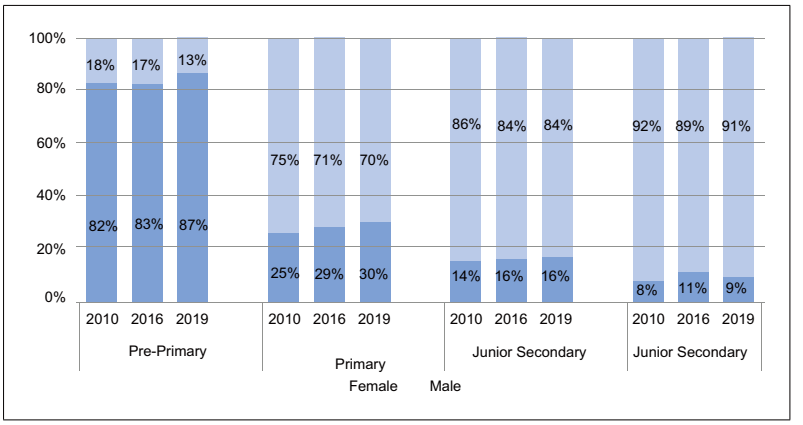
Source: Annual School Census data, 2019

In schools where there are high levels of sexual exploitation by male teachers and students, and student levels of participation are gendered, the low level of senior female teaching staff is problematic. There is global evidence[111] to show that when adolescent girls have access to female teachers at JSS and particularly SSS levels, this can lead to an improvement in attendance, participation and learning. Having a balanced teaching force in which female teachers can guide, counsel, and inspire girls to complete school is critical. The Sierra Leone Secondary Grade Learning Assessment 2019 also reported that female teachers are more likely to be aware of and responsive to incidences of SRGBV, and report greater concern over girls' safety than their male counterparts.[112]

The Teaching Service Commission (TSC) Situational Analysis of Teachers conducted in 2019 reports that the gap in percentages of male and female teachers reduced very slowly between 2010 and 2016. During this period, the percentage of male teachers at the JSS level dropped from 86 to 84%, and from 92% in 2010 and 89% in 2016 at SSS level. However, when you include the 2019 data it shows that while percentages of female teachers have continued to increase slightly at primary level, they actually plateaued at 16% at JSS level, and fell again to 9% SSS level as shown in *Figure 8.17*.

111. ODI/UNGEI Evidence Review: Girls' learning and empowerment, the role of school environments 2016: http://www.ungei.org/Policy_Brief_-_School_Environments-v2.pdf, Girls' Education Challenge 2018 https://girlseducationchallenge.org/#/article/what-are-we-learning-teaching-learning, and UNESCO Bangkok: The impact of women teachers on girls' education, 2006.
112. Leh Wi Lan: Secondary Grade Learning Assessment III, 2019.

Figure 8.17: Trends in percentage of teachers by gender and level of education



Source: Annual School Census Sierra Leone, 2010, 2016 and 2019

The Situational Analysis of Teachers 2019 also reports lower enrolment of women (40%) compared to men in pre-service teacher education courses. Just 40% of primary and 17% of secondary level teacher trainees are female. These percentages are still higher than the actual number of female teachers in service at the respective levels, potentially implying a lower graduation rate and/or higher attrition rate of women teachers. There is a high rate of attrition in the teaching workforce in general in Sierra Leone, and the specific factors having an impact on the reduction in numbers of female teachers, such as maternity benefits and leave, incentives for deployment to rural areas, safe accommodation, and transport should be investigated further.

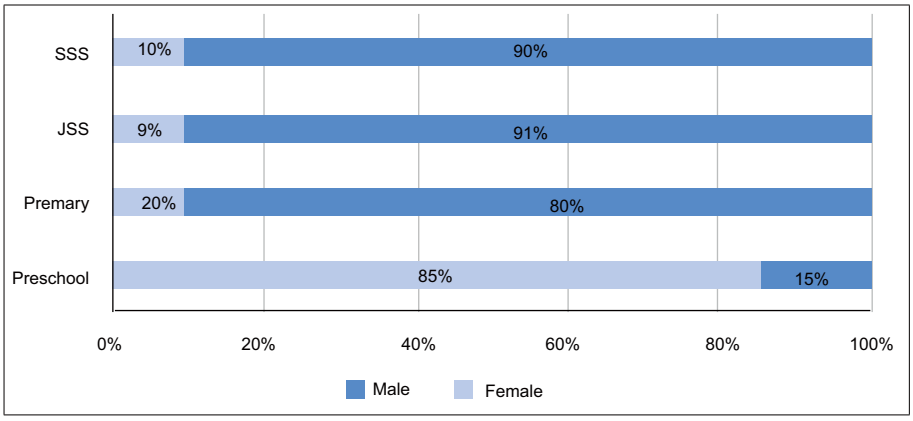
The same report described the gender imbalance as *"acute, persistent, and retrogressive"* and observed that it coincided with the sharp increase in teacher recruitment that happened between 2004 and 2005 and 2010 to 2011, when numbers of teachers doubled for primary and increased threefold for secondary. *"Prior to this spike, gender balance in the teaching force was 'normal', and anecdotal evidence suggests that in a climate of high unemployment, teaching became a repository of hope for breadwinners (especially males) in many communities."*[113] This trend correlates with the crises that have hit Sierra Leone in recent years and it is not surprising that women retract from the workforce during periods of high instability, as they are often required to care for the family and "are protected by the community at home". While education authorities clearly need to focus on recruitment drives to attract more women to the teaching profession, the wider context and influential factors in Sierra Leone, which is out of their control needs to be considered.

113. A comprehensive situation analysis of teachers and the teaching profession in Sierra Leone, TSC, 2019.

8.4.3 Education leadership and management positions are dominated by men, with very few head teachers or senior staff being women

At primary level, 80% of head teachers and 54% of senior teachers are male, this rises to 90% for principals and 89% of senior teachers at SSS level.[114] Overall women are even less represented in leadership and management than they are in the teacher workforce as a whole. The MBSSE has a role to play here to improve the situation and ensure that women are at least as represented in these positions as they are in the teaching workforce.

Figure 8.18: Share of head teachers/principals by gender, 2019



Source: Annual School Census data, 2019

There are often systemic constraints for women wishing to develop their career within the education sector, such as negative attitudes towards their ability to manage and lead schools, lack of female role models, long hours, and commitments that are difficult to reconcile with family and childcare responsibilities.[115] These would need to be further investigated and addressed, as improving the representation of and leadership by women, and revising the roles played by men, are an important step in addressing the gender imbalance in the education sector as a whole.

The TSC has no current policies or strategies in place to increase the number of female teachers or the number of women in management and leadership positions. However, the situational analysis conducted in 2019 includes clear recommendations on increasing the recruitment and retention of female teachers in the teaching workforce including, *measures to attract, recruit, and retain more female teachers, especially at JSS and SSS levels where they can mentor and encourage pubescent girls to stay on in school and complete the highest level of education possible.*[116] This is a key area to be followed up on and monitored.

114. Sierra Leone Annual School Census, 2019.
115. UNESCO Bangkok: The impact of women teachers on girls' education, 2006.
116. A comprehensive situation analysis of teachers and the teaching profession in Sierra Leone, TSC, 2019.

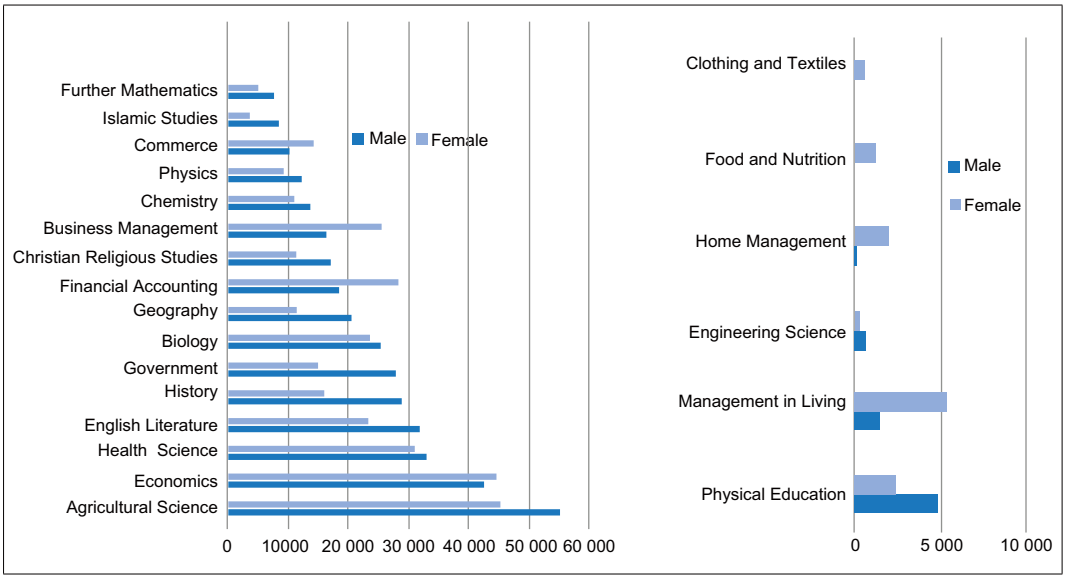
8.5 Teaching and learning practices

8.5.1 Subject choices at SSS level indicate gender bias

At the end of JSS, students have to make a choice about the subjects they wish to continue studying beyond the core subjects (English, mathematics, and science) and an analysis of this data[117] illustrates gender bias in some areas in terms of subject choice. Among the more popular subject choices, there is a tendency for boys to select more traditionally academic subjects such as English literature, history, geography and the sciences (including agricultural science). Interestingly, more girls elect to study business related subjects such as business management, financial accounting and commerce. However, this could potentially be because they are offered as shorter vocational courses. Almost twice as many boys (28,032) as girls (15,026) chose to study "government" at secondary level, which could be both influenced by and contribute to the low participation of women in local and national government in Sierra Leone.

Among the less popular but often traditionally "gendered" subjects, the disparities between girls' and boys' choices are even starker, with certain subjects such as home management, food and nutrition, and clothing and textiles, being completely dominated by girls, while subjects such as physical education and engineering science are dominated by boys. The subjects, applied electricity, building construction, metalwork, and woodwork, have been omitted from the figure below because they attracted low overall numbers of students. However, all of those subjects were only selected by boys.

Figure 8.19: Popular and less popular subject choices made at SSS level by gender, 2019



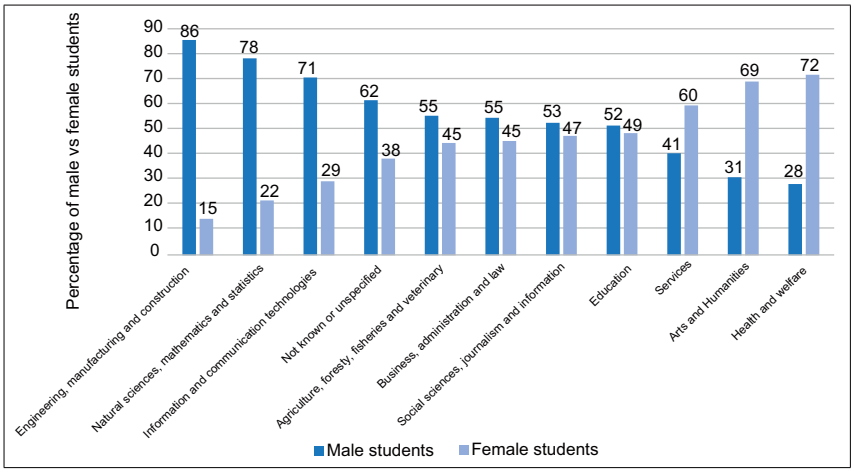
Source: The WASSCE subject-grade statistics of results, 2019

117. The WASSCE subject-grade statistics of results, 2019.

8.5.2 Subject choices at tertiary level including university courses, vocational training and apprenticeships, are all highly gendered

Despite government scholarships from private and public funds to help boost the number of female students enrolling in STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Agriculture and Mathematics), these subjects are still significantly dominated by male students, with the majority of women opting for the more traditionally female subjects of health and welfare, arts and humanities, and services.

Figure 8.20: Tertiary education enrolment by field of education and gender (%), 2019



Source: 2020 National Technical and Higher Education Census (NTHEC)

In the TVET sector, gender roles are also strongly reflected in the kind of training and vocations that girls and boys are encouraged to pursue as shown in *Chapter 5*. The most frequent subject areas for young men in vocational training and apprenticeships are carpentry, automobile and motorcycle mechanics, and masonry, whereas young women are attracted to tailoring, catering, and hairdressing. While this vocational training potentially provides girls with feasible vocations, these tend to be in the low-income bracket, whereas the more technical training pursued by boys provides a much higher earning potential. More often than not, subject areas are dominated by one sex and almost completely neglected by the other. While girls tend to follow courses to suit their assigned social roles, the demand follows the supply and therefore the education sector, through provision of highly-gendered courses, also contributes to the reproduction of these gender biases.

8.5.3 Steps taken to revise the basic education curriculum to be more inclusive and gender-responsive, not yet reflected in the taught curriculum

In 2014, the basic education curriculum was reviewed for its gender (and inclusive) responsiveness and messaging, and student textbooks were reviewed to remove gender stereotypes. However, this has not yet been finalised or rolled out in schools. Progress was delayed by the lack of someone in the director

of curriculum post. Even when the new curriculum has been rolled out, it is likely to be a very long time before it has a real impact on what is taught as teachers tend to rely on long-standing practices and older peers to guide their daily teaching. Gendered messages and stereotypes will often still be supported and reinforced through biased teaching pedagogy (see below), differing learning outcome expectations for girls and boys, and gendered subject choices.

8.5.4 Lack of gender-responsive pedagogy in the teacher training curriculum

Teachers currently do not receive any comprehensive training as part of their pre-service teacher training curriculum on gender equality or gender responsive pedagogy. Examples of this would be learning methodologies to ensure equal participation of boys and girls in the learning environment, and guidance on challenging the gender and social norms that prevent girls from reaching their potential. There is also global evidence to show that teacher education programmes in which the gender nature of teaching and the gender identities of male and female teachers are discussed, can make a considerable impact on individual teachers' awareness of gender relations in the classroom, school and wider community, as well as empowering them to use their potential as teachers to address inequities[118].

Teachers with a guidance and counselling role in schools in Sierra Leone receive some training in Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE), which includes adolescent sexual reproductive health and life skills, however, to date, this has been limited in both scale and scope as described in the box below. With the recent political focus on teenage pregnancy and the formation of the SRGBV task force, as well as the inclusion of interventions focusing on *the provision of Comprehensive Sexuality Education and Life Skills training for adolescent girls and boys in-school*[118] *in* the NGSP 2019-2023, there is renewed hope that the government will integrate CSE into the national school curriculum more effectively.

Limitations of the Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) programming: In 2015, a CSE package was produced under the Guidance and Counselling Unit in collaboration with UNICEF and UNFPA, which included a "Psychological and Guidance and Counselling training manual". It was developed in the wake of the Ebola crisis and included related content such as "Appropriate Safety on Ebola Prevention", "Psychological Counselling", "Stress and Trauma". It also included a wide range of topics such as basic life skills, adolescence, the menstrual cycle and family planning, teenage pregnancy, sexual exploitation, and child abuse. However, it lacked more explicit guidance on sexuality and safe sexual behaviour, including consent, respect for one's own and others' bodies, negotiating safe sex, traditional perceptions of masculinity linked to unsafe sexual behaviour, and preventing HIV and other STIs.

In 2017, UNICEF supported the "intensive" training of 2,000 teachers in guidance and counselling using the training manual. However, these teachers retained their full teaching workload which made it very challenging for them to carry out their counselling duties. A joint monitoring visit by the Guidance and Counselling Unit and UNICEF revealed that much of the content of the training had been forgotten.

In the 2018 to 2020 ESP, the GoSL stated its commitment to the implementation of CSE. Since June 2019, there has been a technical working group for CSE in place, supported by UNFPA, and with the MBSSE leading on the scaling up and strengthening of the existing CSE training. The new CSE will include the sensitization of parents, as well as the training of teachers at all levels of the education system. It will be integrated across the curriculum into six core subject areas, with different teachers having responsibility, and guidance counsellors providing support as needed.

118. UNESCO Bangkok: The impact of women teachers on girls' education, 2006.
119. The National Gender Strategic Plan 2018-2023.

Annexes

Annex 1:

Potential indicators of gender inequality in education, by domain

Domain	Potential indicators
Educational opportunities	• Gender parity index on enrolment, transition and completion rates, and learning outcomes (alone or gender interacting with location and wealth)
Gender norms, values and attitudes e.g. sexual and reproductive health decisions, women's autonomy and empowerment, domestic violence, household expenditure	• Percentage of population aged 20 to 24 married before age 18 • Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 who had a live birth before age 15 to 18 • Percentage who agree with statement 'A university education is more important for a boy than for a girl' (e.g. World Values Survey) • Percentage who agree with statement 'If a wife burns the food, a husband is justified in hitting her' (e.g. DHS and MICS) • Degree of decision-making on family planning • Degree of decision-making on earnings and household expenditure • Labour force participation rate or employment rate • Percentage of women in leadership positions in political and economic life
Institutions outside education e.g. legislation forbidding gender-based discrimination	• Whether the constitution contains at least one approach to gender equality • Whether the country is a signatory of CEDAW • Social Institutions and Gender Index results
Laws and policies in education systems e.g. guarantees of the right to education for girls and women	• Whether the constitution protects the right to education regardless of gender • Whether the country has a policy on gender equality in education
Resource distribution e.g. gender parity in teacher pay, water and sanitation, training, learning materials	• Percentage of women in school leadership and management positions • Gender parity in teacher education graduates by sector and level • Gender parity in teacher employment by sector and level • Gender parity in teacher pay by sector and level • Percentage of single-sex toilets • Percentage of poor girls (or boys) who receive incentives to attend school (cash transfers, stipends, scholarships)
Teaching and learning practices e.g. teacher and student gender-related attitudes and interactions	• Percentage of teachers who received training in gender sensitivity • Percentage of countries that include gender equality topics in their curricula (gender discrimination, gender roles, violence, sexual and reproductive health)

Source: Based on Peppin Vaughan et al, 2016, with GEM Report team contribution

Annex 2:

Enrolment trends by gender (2011-2019)

	2011	2012	2013	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Average annual growth rate 2011-2019	Average annual growth rate 2011-2018	Growth between 2018-2019
Pre-primary	**37,351**	**49,006**	**54,040**	**60,065**	**79,280**	**81,892**	**90,701**	**130,681**	**17%**	**14%**	**44%**
Boys	18,247	23,639	25,748	28,480	37,375	38,924	42,922	62,089	17%	13%	45%
Girls	19,104	25,367	28,292	31,585	41,905	42,968	47,779	68,592	17%	14%	44%
Primary	**1,194,503**	**1,252,354**	**1,298,908**	**1,336,727**	**1,410,758**	**1,486,939**	**1,369,738**	**1,772 777**	**5%**	**2%**	**29%**
Boys	611,604	628,329	648,303	664,494	702,473	736,275	673,196	875,344	5%	1%	30%
Girls	582,899	624,025	650,605	672,233	708,285	750,664	696,542	897,433	6%	3%	29%
Junior secondary	**244,489**	**275,915**	**276,593**	**286,530**	**314,052**	**312,919**	**315,500**	**451,685**	**8%**	**4%**	**43%**
Boys	134,096	144,174	143,132	146,701	160,706	156,394	158,651	225,526	7%	2%	42%
Girls	110,393	131,741	133,461	139,829	153,346	156,525	156,849	226,159	9%	5%	44%
Senior secondary	**108,243**	**124,885**	**139,647**	**156,520**	**170,237**	**179,221**	**206,536**	**305,485**	**14%**	**10%**	**48%**
Boys	67,283	71,236	78,812	86,769	91,098	94,187	108,144	157,551	11%	7%	46%
Girls	40,960	53,649	60,835	69,751	79,139	85,034	98,392	147,934	17%	13%	50%

Annex 3:

List of interviewees

	Person interviewed	Title	Organizational entity
1.	Mr Mohamed Sillay Sesay	Director Inspectorate	MBSSE
2.	Mr Joseph Lamin	Programme Officer, Free Quality School Education Programme	FQSE, MBSSE
3.	Mr Idrissa Sannoh	Regional Director, Western Area, Acting head Student Secretary	MTHE
4.	Mrs Christiana Samu	Director M&E Department	MTHE
5.	Mrs Passie Rita Keita	Senior Human Resource Officer	MBSSE
6.	Mrs Sia Fasuluku	Director Research, Planning and Development	MTHE
7.	Mrs Rebecca M Saffa	Deputy Director Human Resources	MTHE
8.	Mrs Yatta Kanu	Chief Education Officer	MBSSE
9.	Mr Gilbert H Coopert	Permanent Secretary	MTHE
10.	Mr Mohamed Combo Kamanda	Secretary General	NatCom UNESCO
11.	Mr David w.s. Banya	Permanent Secretary	MBSSE
12.	Mr John K Ansumana	Deputy Director EMIS	MBSSE
13.	Mr Michael Mambo	Consultant, Free Quality School Education Programme	MBSSE
14.	Mr Stephen Allai Korosa	Assistant Director Special Needs Education Unit	MBSSE
15.	Mr Andrew Dunbrack	Education Specialist	UNICEF
16.	Mrs Petula Sylvie Risch	Director Teacher Development & Performance Department	TSC
17.	Mr Samuel Johnson	Planning, Monitoring & Evaluation Manager	TSC
18.	Mr Alimamy Bundu Kamara	Deputy Director Teacher Management	TSC
19.	Mr Albert Dupigny	Education Consultant	MBSSE
20.	Mrs Celeste Staley	Education Chief	UNICEF
21.	Mr Giuseppe Paglione	International Aid/Cooperation Officer	EU
22.	Mr Colin Bangay	Education Advisor	DFID
23.	Mrs Mari Shojo	Education Specialist	World Bank
24.	Mrs Agnes M Kamara	Deputy Director of Education, Bombali District	MBSSE
25.	Mr Joseph Ismael Kargbo	Deputy Director Teaching Service Commission, Bombali District	TSC
26.	Mr Bockarie K Buanie	Chief Administrator, Bombali District Council	MLGRD
27.	Mr Jonh S Koroma	District Chair, Bombali District Council	MLGRD
28.	Mrs Sunkarie Kabba Kamara	City Mayor, Bombali City Council	MLGRD
29.	Mr Abu Bakarr Jalloh	Regional Coordinator	FQSE
30.	Mr Michael Anthony Samai	District Inclusion Officer, Bombali District Education Office	Leh Wi Lan
31.	Mr Frank Kanu	Development Planning Officer, Bombali District Council	MLGRD
32.	Mr Lansana Rogers	Deputy Director, Teaching Service Commission, Pujehun District	TSC
33.	Mr Aiah Kofuma	IT/Statistical Officer, Bombali District Education Office	MBSSE
34.	Mr Aiah Yerdeh	IT/Statistical Officer, Bombali District Education Office	MBSSE
35.	Mr Ibrahim Yahaya Fofanah	Deputy Director of Education, Pujehun District	MBSSE
36.	Mrs Hannah Kamara	IT/Statistical Officer, Pujehun District Education Office	MBSSE
37.	Mrs Baindu Tshumbe	M&E Officer, Pujehun District Council	MLGRD
38.	Mr John Simeon Barkar	District Inclusion Officer, Pujehun District Education Office	Leh Wi Lan

Annex 4:

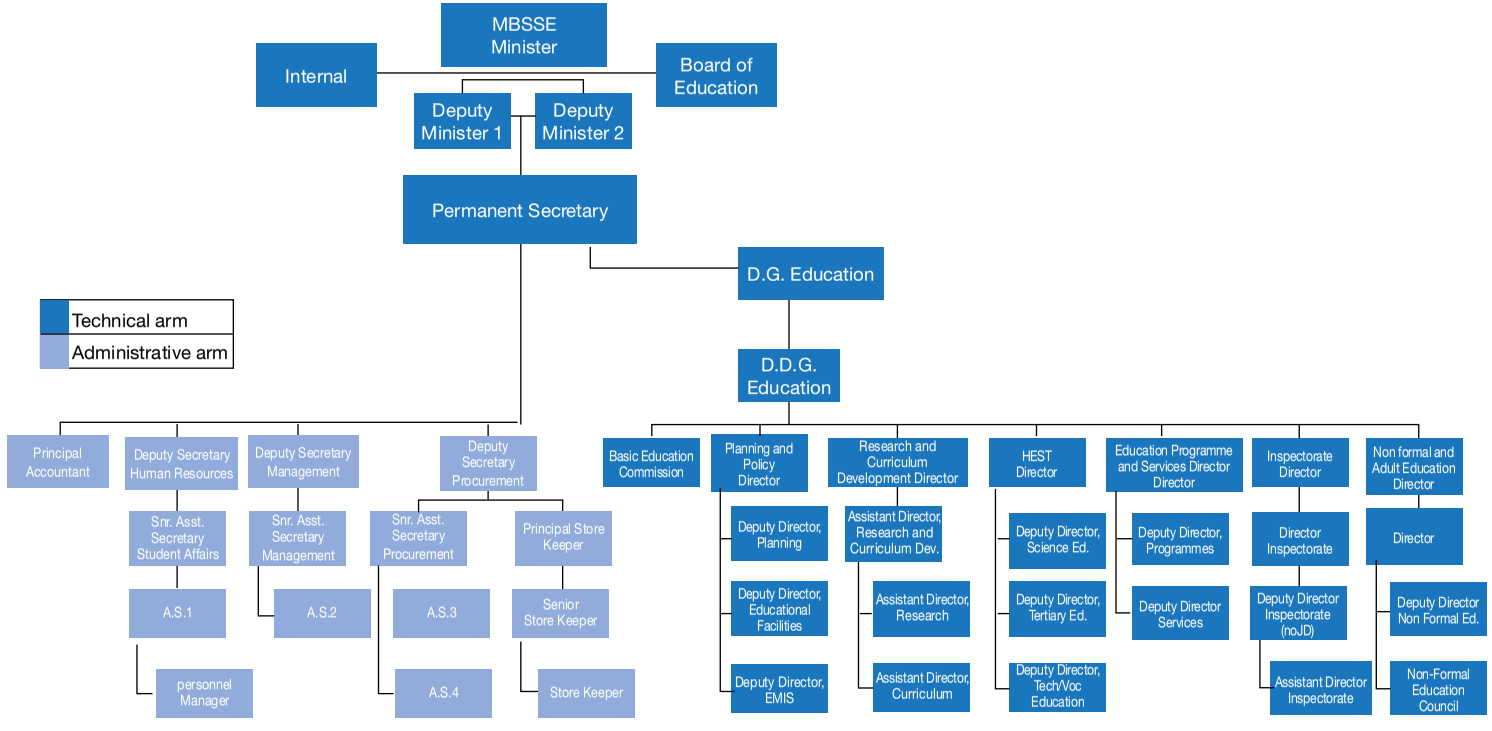
Distribution of survey responses

	Senior officials		Mid-level officials		Total
	Women	Men	Women	Men	
Bo		2	1	5	8
Bombali	1	2		4	7
Bonthe		3		7	10
Kailahun		3		4	7
Kambia		5		5	10
Karene	2	3		5	10
Kenema		5		5	10
Kono		4	1	3	8
Moyamba		3		7	10
Port Loko		6		4	10
Pujehun		2	1	2	5
Western Rural		1	3	4	8
Central level				2	2
Total	**3**	**39**	**6**	**57**	**105**

Place of work	Number
District Education Office	38
Local council	22
Teaching Service Commission (district level)	18
FQSE (regional and district levels)	11
MTHE, central level	2
MTHE, regional level	10
Other	4
Total	**105**

Annex 5:

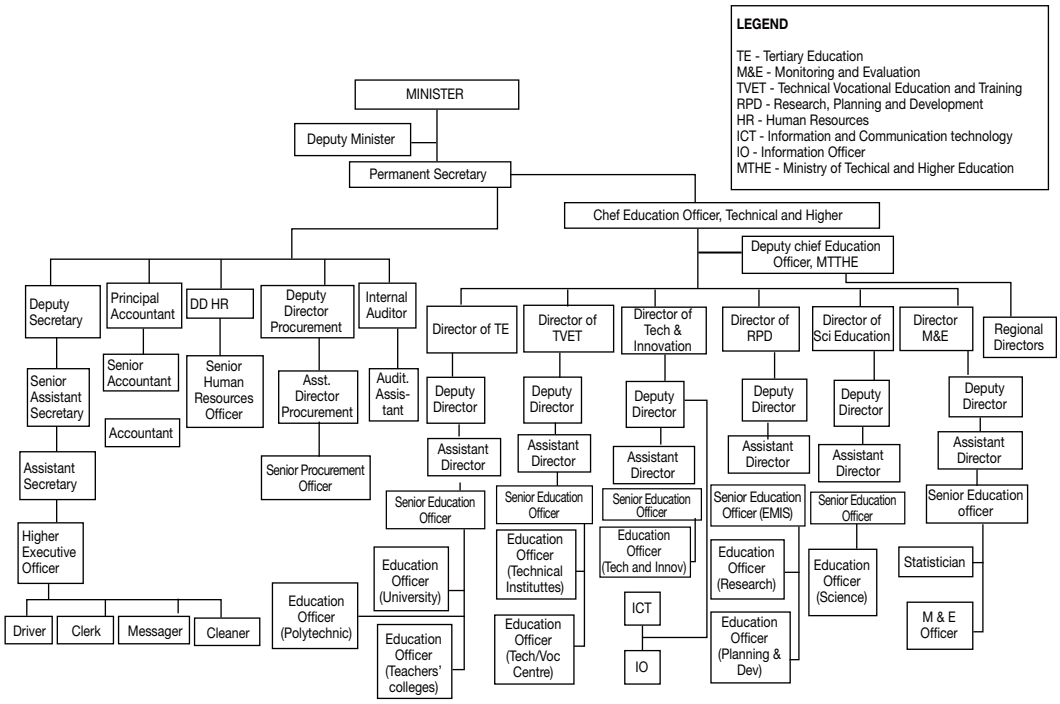
MEST 2009 organogram



Source: EPG, 2020

Annex 6:

Organogram of the Ministry of Technical and Higher Education



Source: Unpublished document from the MTHE, shared with the ESA team in June 2020

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This Education Sector Analysis (ESA) report is the second of its kind in Sierra Leone in the last ten years. With a focus on gender, the report highlights the strengths and weaknesses of the performance of the education/training system as a whole in terms of: coverage, internal efficiency, quality, equity and external efficiency. Its outputs will feed the reflection on the development of the next education and training sector plan in the country.

United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

International Institute
for Educational Planning
IIEP-UNESCO Dakar
Africa Office

IIPE-UNESCO Dakar
Almadies - Route de la plage de Ngor
BP 3311 Dakar – Sénégal
Tél : + 221 33 859 77 30
dakar.iiep.unesco.org