



Republic of Sierra Leone
Preliminary National Statement from
National Consultations on Transforming Education Summit Commitments

One of Sierra Leone's foremost goals within its vision of inclusive national development is to be "a nation with educated, empowered and healthy citizens capable of realizing their fullest potential" by 2035. In pursuit of this, the government prioritizes investments in education to achieve inclusive rights-based education for all (*rights to, rights in, and rights through education*). Moreover, the government designs and deploys evidence-informed interventions and innovations that aim to drive up broader human capital development.

Education in Sierra Leone is led by two government ministries: the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education and the Ministry of Technical and Higher Education. These ministries have worked closely together in collaboration with other government agencies, development partners, civil society and non-governmental organizations, and regional and local stakeholders to develop and align behind a set of critical commitments to accelerate progress towards the Agenda 2030 SDG 4 targets and to transform education. Sierra Leone's consultative process has thus far comprised:

- Joint Education Sector Reviews based on "*Education Sector Analysis: Assessing the Enabling Environment for Gender Equality*" (2021)
- National Consultations for the Education Sector Plan: *Transforming Learning for All* (2021-2022)
- Gender transformative leadership workshop for regional education leaders (2022)
- Needs assessment survey on higher/tertiary education and consultative workshop on the report for *transforming access, quality, relevance, and funding mechanisms* for the sub-sector
- National Consultations for the Transforming Education Summit (2022).

As part of the ongoing consultations, the Government of Sierra Leone, through its two ministries of education, here presents a preliminary national statement to capture the country's commitments.

A. Post-Pandemic System Renewal and Resilience. Sierra Leone drew on its unique experience with Ebola to pivot away from a limited aim of recovery in the aftermath of Covid-19 towards a comprehensive vision of full system transformation and resilience based on leadership, data and hybrid technology, quality standards, and strategic communications and continuing education. The government established and leveraged a multi-stakeholder Covid-19 Education Emergency Taskforce to oversee its pandemic response. The national consultations highlighted the gains that are enabling all learners to attend and return to school safely, promoted a system-wide effort to raise and enforce school safety standards, and expanded the national school feeding program. Commitments to consolidate these gains and to build a more resilient education system include:

- I. Promoting accelerated learning (continuous, remedial, non-formal and adult) with context-appropriate technology for teaching and learning, including education radio and SMS-based learning tools;

- II. Adopting innovative policies that will support system transformation, including comprehensive sexuality education, [integrated early childhood development](#), and [school infrastructure rationalization through data-guided catchment area modeling](#);
- III. Accelerating implementation of the new pre-primary, [basic](#), [senior secondary](#) and civic education curricula for schools and teacher training institutions, alongside a competency-based curriculum for technical & vocational education;
- IV. Expansion and consolidation of technical universities to address the human capital skills gap;
- V. Establishing a sustainable digital Learning Management System for higher education to enhance access to data and tracking progress on performance;
- VI. Investing in functional infrastructure development to extend electrification and digital connectivity for educational institutions everywhere in the country.

B. Radical Inclusion and the Freetown Manifesto. In Sierra Leone, the prioritization of education for marginalized children is not only an important side objective of policy and programming as it is for many countries. Rather, by putting marginalized children at the very center of national policy, Sierra Leone makes inclusion the key instrument to ensure systematic and sustained increases in enrollments and outcomes for all. To drive this effort forward, Sierra Leone launched a [National Policy on Radical Inclusion](#), which makes the education of the most excluded children, including pregnant girls, children with disabilities, the rural poor, and other typically discriminated children, the system's number one priority by means of high level visibility, specific support and targeted financing. Moreover, in partnership with the UN's Gender at the Center Initiative, Sierra Leone's government hosted the development, and facilitated the multi-country adoption, of the 2022 [Freetown Manifesto for Gender-Transformative Leadership in and through Education](#). Examples of the commitments include:

- I. Promoting and making into law the [Free Quality School Education](#) program. This guarantees free public education to all children in Sierra Leone from pre-primary to senior secondary. The mutually-reinforcing interventions of the program will help the country achieve its target of zero out-of-school-children and meet the other critical SDG 4 benchmarks;
- II. Putting young people first and including their voice in decision-making processes. In 2022, as a commitment from COP26, Sierra Leone inaugurated a [Youth Advisory Group](#) in the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education, which will protect youth voices through national law.

C. Data- and Evidence-Based Delivery. Sierra Leone is highly invested in and committed to using data and evidence to drive up the performance of every learner and every school in the country, especially those which are furthest behind. The approach is built on a [digitized annual school census](#) that establishes rigorous, reliable, and institutionalized cross-system data and technology-enabled innovations that can work within the country's capacity- and resource-constrained context. Sierra Leone's commitments to data- and evidence-based education delivery include the following:

- I. The Sierra Leone [Education Innovation Challenge](#) and the [Sierra Leone Education Outcomes Fund](#) are examples of innovative ways to link learning outcomes through measures of progress with financing;
- II. The [Sierra Leone Workforce Policy Papers](#) enable the government to improve the supply and demand of teachers across Sierra Leone, especially in the most disadvantaged areas, and [spatial data analytics are used to improve education coverage](#);
- III. The [Skills Development Fund](#) provides competitive grants to both training providers and businesses to support youth, young women and those with disabilities to enhance employability and provide training to employers to improve the productivity of their core business activities.

D. Sustained Public Financing. The government is making a substantial funding commitment to enable Sierra Leone to meet the above commitments and attain the country's benchmark targets for learning, enrollment, and equity. In particular, the government boosted its public financing from [19% of the discretionary domestic budget in 2019 to 22 percent in 2022](#). The government has a goal of raising the education share of GDP from 3 percent to 5 percent by 2030. The government intends to increase the impact of this financing and close the financing gap by:

- I. Maintaining a minimum 20% budgetary allocation year-on-year in line with the Uhuru Declaration;
 - II. Improving budget execution and reviewing efficiency and equity of current spending at all levels (including schools, examination fees, and teacher salaries);
 - III. Developing new innovative financing mechanisms.
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