

## PROJECT INFORMATION DOCUMENT (PID) CONCEPT STAGE

Report No.: PIDC1083

<b>Project Name</b>	REVITALIZING EDUCATION IN SIERRA LEONE (P133070)
<b>Region</b>	AFRICA
<b>Country</b>	Sierra Leone
<b>Sector(s)</b>	Pre-primary education (10%), Primary education (55%), Secondary education (10%), General education sector (25%)
<b>Theme(s)</b>	Education for all (60%), Education for the knowledge economy (40%)
<b>Lending Instrument</b>	Specific Investment Loan
<b>Project ID</b>	P133070
<b>Borrower(s)</b>	ACCOUNTANT GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT
<b>Implementing Agency</b>	Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (MEST)
<b>Environmental Category</b>	B-Partial Assessment
<b>Date PID Prepared/ Updated</b>	14-Jun-2013
<b>Date PID Approved/ Disclosed</b>	21-Feb-2014
<b>Estimated Date of Appraisal Completion</b>	27-Dec-2013
<b>Estimated Date of Board Approval</b>	28-Feb-2014
<b>Concept Review Decision</b>	Track II - The review did authorize the preparation to continue

### I. Introduction and Context

#### Country Context

Sierra Leone is a country of approximately 5.5 million people located on the west coast of Africa. Demographically, it is a very young country with 75% of the population below the age of 35. It is blessed with mineral resources, including diamonds, titanium ore, bauxite, gold, and chromite, and the recently uncovered iron ore. Although seventy-five percent of its land is arable, only about 10 percent is cultivated, mainly for food crops such as rice, cassava, yams, and other root crops.

Since the end of the 10 year civil war in 2003, the Government has made considerable progress in restoring internal security and delivering basic services, particularly in the health and education sectors. As a result of the implementation of sound policies and structural reforms, the economy has been steadily growing. Growth has been broad-based and underpinned by increased activities in agriculture, mining, services (telecommunications and banking) and construction. Real annual GDP growth averaged 5.2 percent over the 2004-2011, dipping in 2009 due to the global financial crisis

and spiking in 2012 at the onset of iron ore production. It should be noted that although growing, the Sierra Leonean economy remains fragile and extremely vulnerable to exogenous shocks in the Global economy.

Despite this, the country still suffers the impact of the war as evidenced by the fact that overall GDP per capita still lags the sub-Saharan African average. Despite an increase of 78 percent, it remains at 374 in current USD. Its ranking among other countries on the human development index has edged from 180th to 177th but remains in the bottom quintile - a reflection of remaining challenges and the country's struggle to cope with a growing population (2.6%), weak infrastructure, low governance, and an unstable business environment.

In 2007, Sierra Leone joined the EFA-FTI (currently the Global Fund for Education-GPE). An EFA-FTI project for US\$13.9 million was approved in December 2008. Despite initial delays in implementation, the project was restructured and refocused on quality and system-building activities, and by the closing date of September 2012, it had a number of achievements, including: a review of the JSS curriculum; a student assessment framework, including training of MEST and other professionals in test and item development, sampling, etc.; and an enhancement of the Girl-Child Support Program with identification of areas for better efficiency and transparency. Lessons from this previous operation have served as the basis for the design of this GPE operation.

### **Sectoral and Institutional Context**

Although Sierra Leone is unlikely to meet most of the MDGs by 2015, progress indicates they will be met in the coming years. The analysis of the 2011 Integrated Household Survey data showed a decline in poverty levels from 66 percent in 2003 to 53% in 2011, still short of the MDG target of 40 but a drop of 20 percent. The country appears to be on-track for meeting the gender equality MDG for primary education and the HIV prevalence rate.

Access, although well above where it was in 2003, is still not universal. Despite a primary gross enrollment rate of 120.5 percent in 2011, the most recent education Country Status Report (CSR) estimates that 14 percent of primary school-age children did not have access to primary school in 2010 (against 20 percent in 2003/04). On the supply-side, distance to the nearest primary school is correlated with higher out-of-school rate as is grade discontinuity (or incomplete schools). On the demand side, despite the official abolition of school fees for primary school in 2002/03, the poorest households often lack the capacity to send their children to school and keep them there due to cost of books, uniforms, supplies, and off the payroll teacher fees. Indeed, SLIHS 2011 data indicate that the annual cost to extremely poor households of sending a child to government primary and secondary schools is 5.4 percent and 14.2 percent of household food costs respectively. This corresponds to 19 days and 51 days of family food consumption.

Inequities in access are primarily along socio-economic and geographic lines (urban vs. rural) though gender disparities are apparent as well at the post-primary level. Although the gender parity is not great at the primary level, it deepens gradually as children progress through school with only 14 percent of school-aged girls reaching SSS 3, against 32 percent of boys. According to the 2011 SLIHS, 56 percent of adults over the age of 15 have never attended formal school with the percentage being higher for women than for men, 64 percent versus 47 percent.

Education results are weak, with learning outcomes and completion rates low by international standards. Pupils' learning outcomes are generally very poor at all levels. According to a recent

Early Grade Reading Assessment the end of Grade 3, many children were not able to read to learn but are still learning to read, lacking the most basic reading, writing and comprehension skills to properly pursue their schooling (over 50 percent were not able to write their own name). Poor results in BECE and WASSCE are affected by the inadequate preparation of students during their early education, resulting in poor mastery of basic literacy and numeracy, and the inability of the system to compensate for these initial shortcomings. Completion rates for primary school are 76% but quality of learning remains an issue.

Teacher availability, lack of tracking, and relevant qualifications remain impediments to major progress in the sector. In 2010/11, the total number of teachers was estimated at 38,125 for primary and 17,194 for secondary schools, up from 19,317 and 5,580 in 2004/05. However, the proportion of unqualified teachers has also witnessed an upward trend for the same period suggesting that despite its broad scope, the teacher training system is facing difficulties in adequately responding to the growing demand for teachers following the surge in primary and secondary enrollment, boosted by the implementation of the fee-free primary education policy. In 2011, female teachers at the primary level comprised only 25 percent of teachers for primary school. This is unfortunate as the importance of female teachers is widely recognized –as role models for all students, particularly for female students in rural settings, where they teach girls to become active agents in community development. Female teachers are also often recognized as encouraging girls' enrollment, as well as favoring quality and retention (See Haugen et al., 2011).

Large proportions of teachers are not on the payroll. A recently completed teacher verification study found that 22 percent of teachers on the payroll could not be verified (they were not teaching in schools). Yet, teacher shortages are significant in certain critical subjects at the post-primary level such as Math, Science, and English. Teachers are allocated with a high degree of randomness which does not address school needs. A strategic and long-term approach to building the teacher workforce in line with prioritized national needs (such as subject area shortages, geographical deployment, and increasing the numbers of female teachers) is critical for building the education sector in Sierra Leone

The education system is operating with very little information management and almost no assessment information. Examinations are held at the end of primary, junior secondary, and senior secondary terms are designed to determine the number of students eligible to transition into next level. There is no mechanism to assess students' learning as a stepping stone towards identifying areas for curriculum modification, teacher training, and system improvement.

Capacity development has been consistently identified as one of the most critical factors for the progress of the sector towards effective service delivery and achievement of better learning outcomes for all. In 2010, a Capacity Development Strategy was developed by the MEST with support from donor partners to provide a coordinated and coherent response to deliver on education policy objectives across the sector.

### **Relationship to CAS**

Since the previous education strategy, the Government has enacted policies to guide the reform and continued development of the sector. The Child Rights Act, (2007) granted every child the right to access to health care and a free, basic education. The Teaching Service Commission Act, (2010) called for the establishment of an autonomous entity responsible for the management of teachers, including their recruitment, deployment, and professional development. Lastly, the Government

White Paper on Education (2010), based on a report from the Gbamanja Commission, took on important recommendations including an additional year of senior secondary schooling and compulsory pre-primary schooling. Currently, the Government is developing its next poverty reduction strategy under the theme of “Agenda for Prosperity”. The 3rd pillar in this strategy- Accelerating Human Development- puts education at the center of the Government’s priorities.

The Sierra Leone Joint Assistance Strategy covering 2010-2013 is organized around two pillars: (i) growth and (ii) human development. The Growth pillar provides financing for investments in agriculture, fisheries, energy, transport, and the financial sector. The Human Development pillar focuses on investments to support decentralized delivery in health, education, and water supply, as well as dedicated support to primary education through the EFA-FTI program (now GPE) and reproductive and child health, to address child and maternal mortality.

Complementing the PRSP, and the CAS, an Education Sector Plan has been developed by the Ministry as a roadmap for delivering on the promise of education in Sierra Leone. The GPE support is embedded in the plan as the operation is an implementation vehicle for a number of elements in the Strategy. Similarly, interventions identified are foundational and complimentary to the work of the Ministry and the donor partners.

The Global Partnership for Education vision has identified five objectives which drive the Fund’s support to the education sector: (i) fragile and post conflict countries implementing sound ESPs; (ii) all girls complete primary and enroll in secondary; (iii) dramatic increase in the number of children mastering Grade 3 literacy and numeracy skills; (iv) improved teacher effectiveness; and (v) increased volume, effectiveness, efficiency and equity in domestic and external financing. It is in this context, as well as the context of the Education Sector Plan that the Sierra Leone GPE operation is being designed: intended to focus on interventions that address access, equity and completion; quality and learning outcomes; and systems strengthening. Furthermore, particularly for Sierra Leone, tradeoffs are underpinned by the need to ensure investments are systemic, foundational and show potential for sustainability.

## **II. Proposed Development Objective(s)**

### **Proposed Development Objective(s) (From PCN)**

The Education Sector Plan (ESP) has identified three strategic objectives under which the Ministry will move forward with interventions: (i) access, equity and completion; (ii) quality and learning outcomes; and (iii) systems strengthening.

The Project Development Objective is to (i) improve school readiness and learning in targeted areas, and (ii) monitor for better education outcomes. To do this, the Project will finance elements of the Education Sector Plan that deliver intermediate results while simultaneously addressing critical issues in the system to build the foundation for better management and efficiency within the sector.

### **Key Results (From PCN)**

The Project aims to deliver the following results:

Increase in proportion of 6 year olds enrolled in grade 1 in targeted schools

Increase in student supplementary reading book ratio from XX:XX to 1:2

Established system for management of teachers

(please see table with details on PDO and Results attached in the supporting documents section)

### III. Preliminary Description

#### Concept Description

The proposed Project is a \$17.9M Specific Investment Loan (Grant) to the Government of Sierra Leone from the Global Partnership for Education Fund. It builds on the progress achieved through the previous EFA-FTI operation and is embedded in the Education Sector Plan (2013-2018). Although it does not currently have co-financing, the interventions have been designed to be interconnected with and complementary to the Government and donor partner efforts in the sector. The specific linkages will be outlined in the PAD

Component 1 –Improve, access, equity and completion (US\$6 million)

1.1 School Grants (\$5 million): The objective of the school development grants is to target resources to schools that would increase the likelihood of attendance/completion by students currently unable to access education services due to cost. Through this component, the GPE would further support the decentralization of education service delivery (by involving local councils and district inspectorates in the selection and oversight). It would finance school grants in select low-income communities where investments would support the alleviation of education burdens on the parents and thereby increase access opportunities to those most marginalized by cost of schooling. The intervention would be limited to a number of districts, the selection of which would be based on the information provided in the Household Survey of 2011.

Eligibility of the grants would be open to all Government-supported primary schools in targeted areas. All schools within a district would be eligible but selection for funding would be based on approved plans of action which are reviewed by the Local Councils (LCs) and the District Inspectorates. Schools may choose to use the grants to subsidize costs of enrollment for the most marginalized in the community. This can include payment for school uniforms, transport, and individual school supplies, among others. School grants could also cover classroom supplies, teaching supplies, school uniforms, learning-relevant furniture, basic school equipment like sports supplies, or gardening tools, and minor construction –mainly of gender-designated toilets. The LC and District Inspectorates would administer and supervise the grants and serve as focal points for accountability. During the life of the project, at least two rounds of grant competitions would be carried out whereby complete and successful execution of the first grant would be a pre-requisite for applying for the follow-on (larger) allocations.

This component would also include relevant funding for technical assistance to support the selection, reporting, procurement, and supervision mechanisms at the Local Councils and District levels. This would include training for school head teachers and SMCs on development of annual plans, monitoring, management, and reporting.

1.2 Increase school readiness (US\$1 million). Expanding pre-school access, particularly in lower income communities would address some of the issues highlighted in the CSR. It would also be in accordance with the aspirations of the Government as identified in the White Paper on the Gbamanja Commission of Enquiry Report 2010, the draft National Education Policy (2010), and the Education Sector Plan. This component is expected to serve as a catalyst for other partners who are considering support to pre-primary education in the medium term.

A research of exiting pre-primary education models and costing implications is currently underway

in Sierra Leone. The project expects to identify sustainable cost-effective, simple model(s) of pre-primary service delivery applicable to Sierra Leone's urban and rural community needs. A piloting of these models would be implemented with aim of scaling up at later stage, pending results of a rigorous evaluation. The outcome expected through this intervention is identifying mechanisms for potential expansion of the pre-school enrollment from targeted communities to national levels

## COMPONENT 2 –Improve quality and learning outcomes (US\$9.4 million)

Strengthening reading outcomes at early grades. To support the Education Sector Plan's aim of improving the pedagogical methodologies used by teachers to improve learning outcomes, the operation will support a comprehensive national reading program intended to improve literacy in early grades and create a culture of reading as a foundation for learning. Specific interventions would include:

2.1 Reading books for primary classes (1-3) and relevant learning materials (teachers' manuals). The GPE would finance the authorship, production, and distribution of approximately 1.8 million reading books for grades 1-3 for all government-assisted and community schools throughout the country. It is expected that these books would complement the current syllabus and would be selected based for age-appropriateness, literary value, and potential appeal to students. They have been calculated at 2 books per students on average with 2-4 titles per grade. Teachers and students are expected to use the books as tools for reading aloud, storytelling, literary games, and individual silent reading.

In the first year, in parallel with book development, the Project would support an assessment of the Ministry's book distribution capabilities, identify streamlined distribution channels and simplified procurement to avoid potential pitfalls encountered in other projects. In the second and third year, the project would ensure timely delivery of the reading books to all schools before the start of the 2014-15 school year. It would also support the distribution of the textbooks procured under the previous EFA-FTI project.

2.2 Grade-level reading campaign. Behavior change, at the student and teacher levels is critical to ensuring success in reading among students in the early primary grades. To complement the distribution of books and ensure effective use, a national reading campaign will be launched using various media tools including print, TV, and radio. In addition, funds will be allocated to Local Councils to carry out minor activities at the district levels that would encourage and reward reading among primary school children.

2.3 Training for teachers of early primary grades. An effort is needed to ensure the reading books are used properly by the teacher and the student. The project will fund training on the teacher lesson guides, pedagogical materials, as well as scope and sequence lists. Initial results of the training show positive increases in teacher's skills and student's knowledge. This will be carried out in targeted schools where books are distributed. To ensure sustainability of the practice, the Project will also work with the MEST and Higher Education teacher training institutions to integrate the training on the use of supplementary reading books into the pre-service and distance learning curriculums for initial teacher training. There are already informal efforts to modify the training in tertiary institutions to improve linkages. This measure should therefore fit well within the current initiatives.

2.4 Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) (funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and implemented by UNICEF and MEST). An EGRA is to be conducted during the project implementation period. Although not funded by GPE, this assessment, which will target students who have received the books mentioned above, will complete the literacy campaign. In addition to analysis of results, the lessons obtained from this activity will be incorporated into the establishment of a national learning assessment system to be funded by GPE (seen component 3.2).

### Component 3 – Strengthen education service delivery (US\$2.5 million)

3.1 Improvements in teacher management. The Teaching Service Commission (TSC) approved by decree in 2011, was established to “manage the affairs of teachers in order to improve their professional status and economic wellbeing.” Two years on, this entity is not functional and considerable work remains to ensure that it becomes an effective body with the capacity to deliver on its wide-ranging functions. The objective of this sub-component would be to establish the TSC so that it reaches functioning capacity to effectively take on teacher recruitment, deployment, performance appraisal, promotion, development and separation that serve national needs. As an output for this intervention, the TSC would have responsibility for management of the teaching labor force, setting teaching performance standards and reporting protocols from districts, and organizing professional development of teachers.

3.2 Building the foundation for better measurement of learning outcomes. In Sierra Leone, the only real assessment of learning that has been carried out has focused exclusively on early grade reading and involved a very limited sample of students. The results however, showed many characteristics of students’ capabilities, but also showed that there is an urgent need for learning assessments of nationally representative samples to be carried out at all levels and involving more than reading. The previous EFA-FTI operation supported the development of a national assessment policy framework, including a draft instrument for piloting and training of personnel in test item writing.

Building on previous outputs, the project would operationalize the learning assessment framework which had been established under the previous EFA-FTI operation. The Project will also build on the 2013 planned EGRA to help the MEST develop a system for monitoring and analysis of learning outcomes. The output would be the establishment of an assessment entity responsible for student assessment in primary grades. By implementation period’s end, the project would finance the first learning assessment for upper primary in English Language and Mathematics. Though the length of the project does not allow for repeated assessments, the ultimate goal will be realized once Sierra Leone is able to carry out national learning assessments regularly to understand patterns in students’ learning and modify the curriculum as needed to gain improvements.

3.3 Implementation of select elements of the Sector Strategy. The MEST has articulated an ambitious strategy in the ESP for 2013 - 2018 [to be] endorsed and appraised by local development partners as a prerequisite for support from the GPE. The project is best placed to support the MEST in implementing specific areas of the strategy in the pilot phase, thereby setting the stage for bilateral support upon successful achievement of outputs. During the appraisal of the operation, these specific areas will be identified further.

3.4 Monitoring and Supervision. A key lesson from the previous EFA-FTI operation and other

programs is that setting up systems to monitor project activities is essential to measuring results of the operation and the ESP. Technical assistance to the MEST is being provided by donor partners on improving data collection and management. The project would complement these activities by providing support for the upgrade of the supervision mechanism, financial audits, qualitative audits, and impact evaluations. To achieve this, the project will provide technical assistance to the MEST, TSC, and Local Councils to undertake M&E activities with the aim of ensuring information flows to all parties (students, communities, and educators) and enforces accountability. In addition, the project would use the 2013 school census which is funded by UNICEF for the baseline. During implementation, the Project will support the 2014, 2015, and 2016 school census to capture updates in project outputs. Interim reporting will be required from district inspectorates in districts targeted under specific components and will be built and supported under this component.

#### IV. Safeguard Policies that might apply

Safeguard Policies Triggered by the Project	Yes	No	TBD
Environmental Assessment OP/BP 4.01	x		
Natural Habitats OP/BP 4.04		x	
Forests OP/BP 4.36		x	
Pest Management OP 4.09		x	
Physical Cultural Resources OP/BP 4.11		x	
Indigenous Peoples OP/BP 4.10		x	
Involuntary Resettlement OP/BP 4.12		x	
Safety of Dams OP/BP 4.37		x	
Projects on International Waterways OP/BP 7.50		x	
Projects in Disputed Areas OP/BP 7.60		x	

#### V. Financing (in USD Million)

Total Project Cost:	17.90	Total Bank Financing:	0.00
Financing Gap:	0.00		
<b>Financing Source</b>			<b>Amount</b>
Borrower			0.00
Education for All - Fast Track Initiative			17.90
Total			17.90

#### VI. Contact point

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