

**Sierra Leone**  
**Education**  
**Thematic Report**  
**SC149905**  
**January - December 2016**



ECD community training in Port Loko district (©UNICEF Sierra Leone/2016)

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**March 2017**

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## **A. List of Acronyms**

BECE	Basic Education Certificate Examination
C4D	Communication for Development
BTS	Back To School
CAP	Community Action Plan
CPC	Country Programme Component
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
CSR	Country Status Report
DEO	District Education Office
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
ECD	Early Childhood Development
EGRA/EGMA	Early Grade Literacy and Numeracy Assessment
ESP	Education Sector Plan
EVD	Ebola Viral Disease
GNP	Guidance Notes and Protocol
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
IP	Implementing Partners
JSS	Junior Secondary School
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
MOE	Ministry of Education
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
OOS	Out Of School
REDiSL	Revitalizing Education Development in Sierra Leone
TOT	Training of Trainer
WASSCE	West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examination
WB	World Bank

## B. Executive Summary

In the reporting year, the Government of Sierra Leone's focus was on the implementation of the post-Ebola recovery plan; the 'President's Recovery Priorities'. Immediately after Ebola, the Government developed a 6-9 month plan as a recovery strategy in the short-term. This was followed with another medium-term 10-24 months plan. Education was a priority sector in both plans. While the 6-9 month education plan focused on getting all children back to school following a prolonged period of closure during the Ebola outbreak, the 10-24 month plan identified priorities linked to the Education Sector Plan (ESP) for 2014-2018. Although these recovery plans emerged from a devastating emergency, which has had long-term negative effects on the sector, they also brought renewed interest to the sector.

The Ebola emergency hit Sierra Leone at a time when the country was recovering from the effects of a civil war that lasted from 1991 to 2002 and which left the country with a weakened economy and with much of its infrastructure destroyed. The civil war and the Ebola outbreak have left a legacy of myriad challenges for the education sector, which at least pre-Ebola had been showing some signs of progress, in terms of enrolment, more access for girls, improved infrastructure, and an effort to increase access to early learning. Too many school-age children are out of school, learning outcomes need improving, and insufficient classrooms is resulting in overcrowding and inadequate water and sanitation (WASH) facilities in school<sup>1</sup>. Additionally, a large number of the teaching force is unqualified, and getting adequate supplies of teaching and learning materials to schools consistently is still a challenge. However, just as after the war, the Government of Sierra Leone has selected education as a national priority, as articulated in the current ESP and the ones before that.

The ESP for 2014-2018<sup>2</sup> outlines key government priorities to improve education access for all children, and ensure better learning outcomes at all levels through an improved and strengthened education delivery system. However, as stated earlier, the Ebola crisis necessitated a re-profiling of national priorities. The short-term (6-9months) post-Ebola focus was to get all children back to school, keep schools safe and accelerate learning to make up for lost time. The medium-term (10-24 months) focus was on addressing overcrowding in schools, approval of schools, teacher payroll issues, adequacy of WASH facilities in schools, school attendance and completion, as well as improving teaching and learning in schools. The Government's leadership to bring back the sector on track post Ebola was buttressed by the support of development partners including the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), the European Union, DFID, the World Bank and UNICEF among others.

For UNICEF in particular, support to the sector has been at two levels: upstream work to influence policy and strengthen the capacity of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) to deliver quality services; and downstream work to implement cost effective models that have impact and potential for replication nationwide. At the policy level, UNICEF has been instrumental in working with MEST to institutionalize the better collection and management of data to inform planning and decision making. UNICEF supported the establishment of a functional Education Management Information System (EMIS), a citizen-led monthly school data collection through the open-source RapidPro technology, the organization of the first ever national learning assessment through Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) and Early Grade Mathematics Assessment (EGMA), the review of the national basic education curriculum, and also the development of a national early childhood care and education policy, curriculum and minimum standards.

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<sup>1</sup> Sierra Leone: Education Country Status Report, 2013

<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) – Education Sector Plan (2014 – 2018) – “Learning to Succeed”; Government of Sierra Leone; Final Version - September 2013

Furthermore during the Ebola emergency, UNICEF played a central role in the implementation of the radio education programme that broadcast lessons to learners when schools were closed. In addition, UNICEF has been the lead partner in the implementation of WASH interventions including support to develop national guidelines for WASH in schools. Post Ebola, UNICEF also supported the organization of a national assessment of out of school children to assess the impact the emergency had on access to education. At the downstream level, UNICEF has been supporting the roll out of cost effective community based early childhood development interventions, working with school and communities to ensure child friendly schools that facilitate learning for children, and capacity development of teachers through continuous professional development programmes. UNICEF has also been working with partners to identify out of school children including pregnant and lactating mothers to reintegrate into schools.

### **C. Strategic Context of 2016**

The 2015-2018 UNICEF Education Programme is focused on improving learning outcomes for all boys and girls, in an inclusive and equitable basic education system by 2018. This is in line with the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 4), but also the country level priorities as outlined in the Education Sector Plan (ESP) for 2014-2018. Specific programme outputs focus on increasing access to basic education in particular for girls and out of school children, and cultivating a quality education system that provides all girls and boys with equitable quality learning opportunities. The programme also supports the development of government capacity and strengthening of systems to enhance planning, coordination and service delivery focusing on specific outcomes including access to early learning (pre-primary education) opportunities with a focus on the disadvantaged children; prompt school enrolment, right-age entry, and retention; increase primary completion and transition to Junior Secondary School (JSS); and improve quality of teaching and learning and of school environments.

Current progress indicates increases in access for all children especially at primary level. Gross enrolment rate for primary level has increased from 89 per cent in 2001/2 to 126 per cent in 2014/15 largely as a result of implementation of free primary education policy. More girls' are accessing and completing primary education with gender parity being realised at that level. However, in 2015, gross enrolment remained lower at preschool (10 per cent), Junior Secondary School (61 per cent) and Senior Secondary School (28 per cent). At all these levels, gender disparities in access to education deepens as children progress through school with the widest disparities in favour of boys at Senior Secondary School (SSS) level. Overall, completion rates remain less than 50 per cent at secondary level in 2015 (41 per cent JSS, and 22 per cent SSS). Also, while equal chances exist for boys and girls to transition from junior to senior secondary school levels, more boys (58 per cent) make the transition compared to girls (56 per cent).

Furthermore, a 2016 National Assessment of the Situation of out of School Children in Sierra Leone conducted by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) with support from UNICEF revealed that 37 per cent of school going children are out of school, an increase from 22 per cent in 2013. More children from rural, poor and child headed households are out of school than those from urban and higher income quintile households. The increase in out of school children is a result of the Ebola emergency that resulted in closure of schools for close to nine months in 2014-2015. A UNFPA study reported that over 18,000 adolescent girls fell pregnant during the Ebola emergency period in 2015. Over 11,000 of these were school going before the outbreak. Furthermore, the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs (MSWGCA) reported that more than 8,000 children were orphaned by Ebola. In addition, the aftermaths of the Ebola crisis have been compounded by the general changes in the economic welfare of the country, a factor that can also be linked to the increase in the number of out of school children. Overall, the combination of these factors have negatively contributed to the increasing disadvantages of children in Sierra Leone and in particular, girls. Even prior to Ebola, girls' education was at a disadvantage for many factors, including costs (both opportunity and actual), pressures for early

marriage, concerns for health, harassment and safety, as well as cultural norms that places less value on educating girls than boys.

Learning outcomes remain low by international standards. In Early Grade Reading Assessments and Early Grade Numeracy Assessments conducted in 2014, less than one percent of children in Grade 4 could read with sufficient fluency for comprehension and 27 per cent achieved level 2 addition for understanding and application of numeracy. Additionally, the pupil to qualified teacher ratios are much higher at primary school level (62). 40 per cent of the teachers in schools are untrained and unqualified and consequently, pedagogy and subject matter expertise is a serious challenge affecting learning outcomes and this is further compounded by inadequate teaching and learning materials in poorly resourced schools. Pre-service and in-service teacher education systems are weak. Moreover, only 49 per cent of teachers are on government payroll.

UNICEF in collaboration with other development partners is working collaboratively with the MEST to improve services delivery and get more children to access quality education. The Girls Access to Education (GATE) project is one of the interventions to get more girls into secondary schools and improve school safety for their retentions. UNICEF is also supporting an accelerated learning programme aimed at getting out of school, including pregnant girls reintegrated into schools. Furthermore, in partnership with more than ten international and local Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), UNICEF is supporting the identification of vulnerable out of school children to get them enrolled and retained in school.

UNICEF in collaboration with the World Bank and MEST is supporting the development of three key policy documents to facilitate the improvement of access to early learning for children 0-8 years. In 2016, the integrated early childhood care and education policy, Curriculum and Minimum standards were developed, validated and awaiting completion. UNICEF also rolled out a cost effective community based ECD programme to get more children accessing ECD services. UNICEF also continues to support the MEST to improve the teaching practices of teachers through the Child Centred Teaching Techniques (CCTT) through the Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programme for teachers. In addition, UNICEF has been supporting the review of the basic education curriculum which has since been validated and awaiting roll out. In a drive to improve data availability for planning and decision making, UNICEF supported the MEST to roll out a citizen led monitoring initiative through the SMS based RapidPro/EduTrac which has made it possible for MEST to collect monthly data on key indicators from over 70% of the schools. The system has been used effectively to collect data and monitor the President's post Ebola recovery priorities.

UNICEF also continues to be the Coordinating Agency for the education sector and supported the MEST to ensure regular Education Development Partners (EDP) meetings, the conduction of the Education Sector annual reviews and commemoration of the Week of Education. UNICEF is also supporting the MEST to conduct the Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the ESP with the aim of updating the ESP and developing a follow up programme to the currently funded Global Partnership for Education (GPE) grant.

## **D. Results in the Outcome Area**

### **5.1 Expanded Access to basic education**

In the 2016 reporting year, UNICEF worked with Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) and other relevant partners and stakeholders to advocate and put in place strategies for identifying and ensuring that the out of school children access schools after the devastating Ebola crisis in 2014 and 2015. With thematic funding, the following results were achieved:

### **1. National Assessment of the Situation of Out-of-School Children in Sierra Leone was conducted and validated**

A national assessment on the situation of out of school children was conducted and validated in collaboration with the MEST. The study aimed to address the crucial gaps in data/knowledge and provide a basis for remedial action. Key findings from the study include: a) an estimated 392,137 primary aged children and 172,932 junior secondary school aged children to be out of school, which is 37 per cent of school going children that are out of school, an increase from 22 per cent (240,000) in 2013. It is believed that the impact of the Ebola emergency and resulting closure of schools for close to nine month has resulted in an increase in out of school children. b) More children from rural, poor and child headed households are out of school than those from urban and higher income quintile households. c) Access to school is still affected by a number of challenges, which includes cultural practices such as long seclusion of children from school for initiation into secret societies, insufficient school infrastructure, and inadequate trained teachers, especially in remote and deprived communities. Also poor school environments in terms of unavailability of WASH facilities in schools is affecting regular school attendance, especially for girls. Most of the highlighted issues have formed basis of UNICEF programming going forward. The findings of this assessment will be used by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) and partners to develop national strategies to address the problem of out of school children.

### **2. Partnerships for supporting vulnerable children sustained**

In order to increase access to education for vulnerable children, UNICEF sustained partnerships with ten local and international Civil Society Organisations(CSOs), through a Programme Corporation Agreement (PCA) to work closely with the MEST, Ministry of Social Welfare Gender and Children's Affairs (MSWGCA), Local Councils (LCs) and community structures such as Village Development Committees(VDCs), School Management Committees (SMCs), Mothers' Clubs (MCs), etc. to ensure vulnerable children's increased access to school. About 95% of the targeted 136,482 vulnerable children were supported to enrol and remain in school, and strategies put in place for increased demand for girls' access to education as well as children with special needs. Overall, of the totals supported to enrol, 60% are girls. This includes 5,072 of teenage mothers who were supported to re-integrate into formal school from the UNICEF supported accelerated learning programme, above a target of 5,000. MEST continued to provide monitoring oversight during the implementation of this intervention to ensure that target beneficiaries were reached and activities were implemented timely in all the 14 districts in the country.

UNICEF in collaboration with other partners such as Irish Aid and CSOs advocated for the right to education and lifting of the ban for pregnant adolescent girls from attending school and taking public exams. Consequently MEST Gender Desk worked with partners and community structures to develop a Community-based Counselling Manual and a Communication Strategy for the promotion of Girls education.

### **3. Strengthening Coordination for girls' education**

UNICEF supported the MEST Gender Desk to strengthen the coordination of advocacy for girls' education at national and district levels. Additionally, through UNICEF support, 14 Girls' Education Movement (GEM) chapters were activated in 14 districts and are mentoring and providing psychosocial support to over 288,862 girls in 7,996 schools to help mitigate teenage pregnancy and promote girls' education. To ensure community support for school enrolment, retention and completion, 820 adolescent theatre for development groups reached 128,655 communities with enrolment campaign messages representing 75% increase over the target. Consequently, communities developed and implemented 1,144 community action plans in all districts to accelerate enrolment and retention.

Furthermore UNICEF supported the MEST, through the Gender Desk to commemorate the International Day of the Girl Child (IDGC). The Global Theme for 2016 was “Girls’ Progress = Goals Progress: A Global Girl Data Movement. The National sub-theme was Invest in Girls for Progress (Improving Data for Girls’ Empowerment). Through melodrama and poetry, representatives of the girls unequivocally expressed some of the challenges and barriers militating against their access to girls’ education and empowerment. These barriers include child marriage, as well as discrimination and gender-based violence in schools and communities, which threaten their safety and eventual school dropout. Stakeholders used the event to appeal to policy makers for renewed commitment to girls’ education and safety. UNICEF also took advantage of this commemoration to launch a DFID funded Girls Access to Education (GATE) project which will work with over 120,000 girls in Junior Secondary Schools (JSS) to retain them in schools and make schools safe for their learning. The project will also target out of school girls including pregnant and young mothers for their reintegration into schools as well as a social mobilisation campaign to raise awareness on girls’ education.

#### **4. Monitoring of implementation**

UNICEF supported MEST to conduct quarterly joint monitoring visits to the project communities in collaboration with the IPs, representatives of the LCs and community structures to improve implementation and document lessons learnt. Full involvement and participation of all relevant stakeholders, especially community structures such as School Management Committees (SMCs), Mother’s Clubs (MCs), Community Education Committees (CECs), Child Welfare Committees (CWCs), etc. was ensured by the Implementing Partners (IPs) for local ownership and sustainability. The IPs engaged the community structures to develop and implement Community Action Plans (CAP) to support school enrolment, retention and completion of school with focus on vulnerable communities.

#### **Future plans**

- Using the equity focused agenda, UNICEF will use findings from the OOSC assessment to improve focus and targeting of vulnerable children in the districts highlighted in the study with the largest numbers of out of school children. UNICEF will seek to increase school participation of the children from the lowest poverty quintile as an indicator of education equity, but also recognising education net attendance rates of the poorest quintile.
- Building on the new Girls Access to Education (GATE) project, particularly the in school interventions that aim at eliminating school related gender based violence, bullying and corporal punishments in junior secondary schools, there will be an increased focus on replicating similar strategies in primary schooling to improve regular attendance and learning outcomes of girls from early childhood through to adolescence.

### **5.2 Early learning**

In 2016, the overall goal on this output intervention was to support improved access and quality care and education for young children under six, through an integrated Early Childhood Development (ECD) model and early learning services, where parents/caregivers were empowered to address and practice key ECD integrated issues on Nutrition, health, WASH, child protection and early stimulation, for young vulnerable children at home and in community-based ECD centres. The project was implemented in 22 vulnerable communities, where ECD centres were established in four districts including Koinadugu – 3, Bombali – 17, Port Loko – 5 & Moyamba – 7). These community-based ECD centres, which are now accessed by 2,136 young vulnerable children (3-5), aim to reach approximately 5,000 young children under six years by end 2018. With thematic funding, the following results were achieved;



## **1. Review, validation, and roll-out of the national ECD policy, ECCE Minimum Standards, and ECCE Curriculum**

To promote equitable access to quality ECD services for young children in Sierra Leone, funds from Global Thematic facilitated a 5-day validation workshop on the 3 National ECD Policy documents (National ECD Policy, ECCE Minimum Standards and ECCE Curriculum). Forty-Three (43) participants including consultants/facilitators, officials from various Ministry Department Agencies (MDAs), Training Colleges, Sierra Leones Teachers Union, Nursery/Pre-schools, World Bank and UNICEF participated in the workshop an outcome of which was an updated version of the three documents which were presented to the MEST for their final review. Since 2015, UNICEF in collaboration with the World Bank have been working with the MEST and other relevant MDAs to put in place these policy documents with the aim of increasing access to care and education for children.

To strengthen Nursery/Pre-school Administrations and teachers, MEST and District Education Officials (DEO), Local Council representatives and caregivers, were trained on how to use and monitor adherence of the ECCE Minimum Standards and Checklist, and ECCE Curriculum. A team of 4 Resource persons (1 male, 3 female) supported the design of training guides for both the ECCE Minimum Standards and Curriculum, which targeted 116 participants (75 male, 41 female). Sessions conducted during the trainings ensured participants understand the two documents as well as the relationship between the ECCE Minimum Standards and the Checklist. Knowledge gained has guided DEO Supervisors, school heads and other education professionals on the application of minimum standards to inspect nursery/pre-schools and ECD centres as they supervise or inspect these schools.

## **2. Procurement of supplies to support implementation of the community-based ECD pilot Project**

Building on the experiences of distributing UNICEF ECD Kits to the pre-schools and nurseries and training the pre-school and nursery teachers in 2015, UNICEF endeavoured to procure 1,200 ECD kits for government assisted/supported primary one pupils (1,156 ECD Kits). A total of 44 ECD kits were also provided to the World Bank/GPE Revitalising Education Development in Sierra Leone (REDiSL) project sites which benefited approximately 1,500 children.

UNICEF also worked with NGO/INGO implementing partners to showcase visibility and document achievements/changes as they roll-out the community-based ECD pilot project. Using thematic funding, UNICEF supported the procurement of photographic and film equipment, in focus projectors, printer, cameras, scanner, laptop, external hard drives including accessories for this purpose. These Supplies will help to enhance partners reporting of changes as they will be able to track, record and document changes occurring in communities during community engagement and interaction. Pictorial evidences on best ECD practices on key ECD thematic issues such as child protection, nutrition, WASH, early stimulation and early learning are now displayed in communities.

Furthermore, 32 ECD centres were also equipped with relevant teaching and learning materials including basic stationaries, ECD kits, posters and play materials that are used in facilitating centre-based activities/learning sessions for young children. Children accessing these centres benefited from play-based early learning sessions, whilst parents/caregivers with children 0-2 years, get information and support on: child-caregiver play and communication sessions using Care for Child Development (CCD) early stimulation strategy, and also engage in Focus Group Discussion (FGD) on key ECD issues i.e. Nutrition, health, WASH, child protection, and early stimulation, which are facilitated either by Community ECD workers or Mother Support Groups (MSGs), with technical support and supervision from NGO/INGO implementing partners, National ECD Experts, UNICEF, MEST-District Education Office and District Council representatives.

### **3. Capacity development for implementing the community-based ECD pilot project**

With Thematic funding, UNICEF built stakeholders understanding, demand and capacity among parents/caregivers on good child rearing practices through community awareness raising engagements. National, district, community trainings and district ECD coordination meetings were supported with representation from MEST, District Education Office, District Council and community representatives, and NGO/INGO implementation partners that made huge contributions in translating the community-based ECD and early learning services into local community contexts. Information generated at those meetings especially on the importance of ECD towards the holistic development of the child and the road map for rolling out the project, were cascaded in target communities through community mobilization and awareness raising.

UNICEF also supported community sensitization campaigns on: effective and cost efficient approaches for sustained implementation; importance of an integrated approach to ECD; good child rearing practices; availability of ECD services/facilities in target communities during community meetings/trainings. Awareness around these issues, increased community stakeholders' understanding, capacity and commitments towards the project, which led to the allocation of unfinished houses and plots of land for the rehabilitation/construction of ECD centres. Communities also provided manual labour and local materials throughout the process. NGO/INGO implementation partners, community stakeholders especially Mothers Support Groups (MSGs): (1) registered and enrolled 2,136 young vulnerable children including (0-2 years, total 966 (435 boys and 531 girls) and 3-5 years, total 1,170 (537 boys and 633 girls) (2) identified vulnerable households in communities with children under the ages of six; and (3) using set criteria, identified 96 Community ECD workers in all 22 communities, supporting centre-based activities in the rehabilitated/constructed community-based ECD centres.

In relation to this, the first Care for Child Development (CCD) ToT and Basic Course trainings were conducted and now have the first cohort of 33 professionals including (14 Female, 9 male) who were trained on CCD in Sierra Leone. The CCD early stimulation strategy now forms part of the MEST-UNICEF Community-based ECD Pilot Project.

### **4. Centre-based activities through capacity development of community ECD workers and Mothers' Support Groups (MSGs) in target communities**

To strengthen centre-based activities for young children in communities, UNICEF empowered community ECD workers, Mothers Support Group members, and NGO/INGO Partners, District Education and Council representatives through district and community level capacity development workshops on how to support the implementation of the project and on approaches to be used to support parents/caregivers with children under age six. Participants that attended the training are confidently educating parents/caregivers in their communities either at the ECD centres or during home visitation on ECD issues with correct information; as well as discuss key benefits the child stands to gain from holistic development interventions during. Activities implemented at the centres, which target children 3-5 years include; play-based early learning sessions; and support transition to primary school at age six. Caregivers, who access these centres together with their children under 2 years also benefit from Focus Group Discussion on a selected ECD theme for each session related to Nutrition, WASH, early stimulations. During these sessions discussions are centred on what caregivers have been doing well; possible areas for improvement and how to better access available ECD services in communities.

To improve early learning conditions as children access these centres, UNICEF provided 153 ECD kits containing toys and learning materials for all centres to boost learning opportunities for young children.

To further address the issue of replenishing toys and learning materials in the ECD kits, UNICEF continued to reinforce and educate caregivers and craftsmen in communities on the importance of developing cost efficient toys and learning materials using local or recycled materials found in their communities. The idea of toy making is now embraced by communities, as communities are now making toys for children using local and recycled materials. This practice now ignites the quarterly celebration of toy fair exhibitions in communities, of which a session in the month of June was part of the celebration of the African Child's Day (June 16). During that celebration, homemade dolls, balls using stuffed materials, wooden toys, picture card puzzles and other play materials made by craftsmen and MSGs in communities, were donated to support children's play and learning sessions. This initiative continues to be part of the community based activities of caregivers to make homemade toys for early stimulation and early learning at the centres and at home, as well as engaging in children's play sessions, as it is proven to improve children's cognitive, social and emotional skills for improved learning opportunities.

### **5. Home visits (outreach activities) to vulnerable households with parents/caregivers**

In promoting inclusiveness as part of the ECD model, UNICEF supported home visits especially to vulnerable households with special needs children. Home visitation integrates the CCD early stimulation strategy to engage parents/caregivers in positive child-caregiver interactions, sensitises caregivers about the importance of ECD and good child rearing practices, and provides caregivers with easy-to understand information about available ECD services as well as encourage them to access these services in communities.

For this reporting period, trained NGO/INGO together with Mothers' Support Groups have visited approximately 3,000 vulnerable households and supported parents/caregivers on: (i) better ways of engaging in play and communication with young children aged 0-2 years old at home; (ii) play-based early learning of young children aged 3-5 years at home; (iii) young children's transition to primary school at age 6; (iv) participation in centre-based activities; and (v) access available ECD services, such as the Free Health Care Initiative.

Home visitation interventions have created massive awareness among parents/caregivers about good child rearing practices and on the importance of ECD. Communities are demonstrating their support for the project as parents/caregivers, whose children are accessing these centres continue to encourage other caregivers to send young children to the centre to benefit from the community-based ECD package. In some communities, caregivers have pledged to support children's feeding at the centres, and to provide ECD centres with additional materials that enhance learning at the centres. Discussion sessions on meal preparation and distribution for young children and families, has enlightened parents/caregivers, who are putting extra effort in ensuring that part of their local grown products from their farms/backyard gardens are used in preparing meals for their families instead of selling them all as they used to before.

### **6. Monitoring the implementation of ECD activities**

To ensure effective implementation of the project, UNICEF staff in collaboration with the MEST officials at national and district offices conducted field level visits to community ECD centres. During the visits, technical and supportive supervision to partners was provided as they rolled-out implementation of the community-based ECD Pilot project.

### **Future plans**

- Support nationwide ECD advocacy and awareness raising campaign about the importance of ECD and good child rearing practices, particularly among caregivers.
- Training of pre-school and grade one teachers on the use and management of UNICEF ECD Kits.

- Continue to support the Community-based ECD pilot project to bring early learning opportunities to vulnerable children in resource poor communities and empower Mother's Clubs/Mothers' Support Groups to support parents/caregivers to improve child rearing practices in the communities.
- Support the conduct of an ECD baseline assessment study in view of the Community-based ECD pilot project.

### **5.3 Improved quality and learning outcomes**

In this 2016 reporting year, thematic funding supported capacity development initiatives for teachers through in-service teacher training on child-centered participatory teaching techniques thereby ensuring improved pedagogical practices of teachers and protective child friendly school environments for improved learning outcomes. The following results were achieved;

#### **1. Capacity development of Teachers**

The year 2016 saw remarkable progress in the delivery of education services to children and teachers across the country following stabilization of the education sector after the Ebola outbreak. UNICEF through its partnerships with the MEST and Teacher Training Institutions (TTIs) supported efforts to strengthen the country's post-Ebola recovery efforts. 6,805 teachers constituting 73% of the targeted 9,307 teachers benefitted from UNICEF supported training of teachers in child centered teaching techniques, numeracy, and literacy/reading including critical thinking skills through the continuous professional development (CPD) initiative. The CPD initiative seeks to directly impact teachers' pedagogical practices for improved quality of teaching, and ensuring protective child friendly school environments for improved learning outcomes.

#### **2. Provision of teaching and learning materials**

In order to improve the learning experiences of children, 948 primary schools across eight districts were supported to meet minimum availability levels of teaching and learning materials including (teacher syllabi, exercise books, chalk, pens/pencils and core text books) benefiting 214,635 children. Further, 86 percent (884 schools) of targeted 1,030 primary schools were provided Child friendly WASH facilities. In order to ensure compliance with Safe Schools Protocol, 7,577 schools received replenishment supplies (hand washing kits, cleaning materials, hygiene kits, veronica buckets, detergents, soap) benefitting over 800,000 school-going children as part of the post-Ebola recovery strategy. UNICEF supported MEST with the procurement and delivery of teaching and learning materials to children in learning centres and Special Need schools in six districts including 32,026 assorted text books for primary, JSS, SSS and 303 Learning Centres.

#### **3. School Development plans**

As part of the child friendly schools (CFS) initiative, 538 schools (57% of 948 schools) and communities were supported to develop and implement school improvement plans facilitated by IPs through intensive community engagement activities. Furthermore, through its community engagement drive, UNICEF supported strengthening of the capacities of fourteen local councils and community structures (Village Development Committees (VDCs), School Management Committees (SMCs), Mother's Clubs and Children's Governments) in target schools to implement national Child Friendly Schooling (CFS) standards in eight target districts.

However, while the MEST working with UNICEF and other education partners made significant progress towards improved quality and learning outcomes through multiple initiatives, there are still gaps across all levels partly due to the limited capacity of MEST to undertake quality assurance at school/classroom levels. The EGRA/EGMA report (May, 2014) indicates that Grade 4 pupils cannot read a grade- and age-appropriate text fluently and with comprehension. These poor learning outcomes largely reflect the low

competencies of a good proportion of teachers; hence an estimated 49% of over 60,000 teachers are untrained and unqualified according to the Annual School Census Report (2015).

#### **Future plans**

1. UNICEF in partnership with MEST and other education stakeholders will continue to direct resources to address the widening gap in learning outcomes including support to the Teacher Service Commission (TSC) for continuous professional development of teachers, supervisors, and teacher educators, and school administrators.
2. UNICEF will contribute to capacity building efforts by MEST towards addressing early grade reading and numeracy and advocating for policy on national child friendly school standards within the framework of the New Basic Education Curriculum including supporting a national strategy for roll-out and uptake

### **5.4 Policy and systems**

During 2016, UNICEF supported interventions focused strengthening the capacity of MEST and other stakeholders including Local Councils and the Parliamentary Oversight Committee to build their capacity for planning, implementing and monitoring of education services across the country as well as to facilitate the regional validation of the New Basic Education Curriculum. Significantly, the focus was on three key activities as indicated below;

#### **1. Community-driven Monitoring of Schools and Education programmes by the Parliamentary Oversight Committee on Education**

With support from UNICEF, members of the Parliamentary Oversight Committee on Education conducted a nationwide visit of schools, learning institutions and local councils as part of a community-driven monitoring initiative of the education sector. The primary objectives of the monitoring visit included the following:

- To monitor the judicious and effective use of resources provided to the sector by both Government and its partners, including school fees subsidy and/or other forms of support.
- To acquire first-hand information on the adherence of schools to the established Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) Protocols.
- To acquire information on progress in the sanitary projects currently under implementation by MEST and its partners, i.e., water wells, toilets, etc.
- To understand the capacity of the District Education Offices and the District Council Administrations to handle the volume of educational activities devolved to them for implementation by MEST.
- To acquire information on some of the effects of the EVD on school going pupils, especially the Girl-Child.

A summary of the findings of the visit, indicated below, are instructive in planning and reforming education policies and systems across the country. These include;

- Overall, all schools across the country were fully operational albeit delays in remitting school fees subsidies, so crucial in implementing school development plans.
- The Committee was satisfied with the level of compliance with the existing protocols on Ebola by all the schools visited. The Committee was also impressed with the tidy condition of the classrooms, as well as the conditions of the toilets in all the schools visited. However, as the visit only covered a selected number of schools in each district, overall, the Committee observed that funding constraints was affecting the effective implementation of the EVD school safety protocols in several of the schools across the country.
- The Committee also observed that the monitoring and supervision capacity of District Education Offices was highly limited, both in terms of human capacity (in terms of numbers and limited relevant

competences) as well as logistics. For instance, the Committee observed that in several of the District Education Offices, the current Supervisors of Schools were either already retired Head Teachers, or nearing the age for retirement.

- Mindful of the critical and crucial important role education plays in cultural, political and socio-economic development of Sierra Leone, the Committee's recommendation focused on a review of a number of policy provisions relating to allocation and disbursement of resources as well as support for building the capacity of district education offices and local councils to effectively monitor and supervise educational services across the country.

## **2. Capacity strengthening of MEST Central and District Monitoring and Information Management Systems**

While UNICEF is working towards strengthening MEST data collection and reporting systems and tools for evidence based planning and policy-making, power supplies was noted to be a challenge at MEST HQ as well as in all 14 DEOs. Therefore, UNICEF procured 35 sets of Solar Systems including 16 solar inverters and distributed to MEST central and District Education Offices (DEOs). UNICEF also supported the installation of these solar systems in EMIS Room (MEST HQ) and Situation Rooms at MEST HQ and all 14 Situation Rooms in the DEOs and to also provide maintenance service for these systems. The system can support basic office AC appliances (desktop computer, laptop, etc.) and has already yielded great improvement in a low cost, uninterrupted power-back up solution supporting seamless use of IT gadgets and allowing information flow between MEST HQ and DEOs.

Also, UNICEF further strengthened the human resources capacity required for a smooth functioning of the Situation Room/EduTrac Monitoring system through support to MEST for the position of National Education Monitoring System Coordinator. The main purpose of the National Education Monitoring System Coordinator is to oversee and facilitate the processes that will ensure a well-coordinated, coherent, strategic, and effective MEST Situation Room/EduTrac Monitoring System and smooth operations of the Situation Room activities that involves routinely producing and disseminating Situation Room reports in MEST internal meetings and Education Partners meetings. The position also oversees the activities of the District and National Situation Rooms and the overall functionality of Situation Room/EduTrac monitoring system, identify capacity gaps, organizing and participating in capacity building activities for Situation Room staff. The Situation Room/EduTrac has been instrumental in the monitoring of the 10-24 months President's Recovery Priorities (PRP) making it possible for the Presidential Delivery Team (PDT) to track progress on indicators for the programme.

## **3. Adopting and implementing a New Basic Education Curriculum**

UNICEF supported the adaption and implementation of the new basic education curriculum. As such through thematic funding, regional level validation workshops of the curriculum materials were conducted through technical and coordinated support of UNICEF. Draft Curriculum materials and guidelines were validated and plans made to ensure the guidelines are incorporated in Core Subjects of the Curriculum. MEST in collaboration with partners have used newly developed curriculum materials in English and mathematics have guided the development of scripted lesson plans for all levels of the education system from primary to secondary.

### **Future plans**

- UNICEF will continue to work with MEST and other partners to improve the real time data collection, analysis and quality assurance processes as well as data usage especially at district, chiefdom and school levels. Data from situation room real time monitoring will continue to be used to measure progress against specific targets, shared and discussed at the internal MEST

management meetings to be able to identify areas of low performance, discuss and make informed decisions.

- UNICEF will also continue supporting national capacity to improve education data at national and local levels so that it better captures educational disadvantages including gender, economic status, location, ethnicity, language, disability. The need to use this data to support national policies to improve equity in terms of school allocation and teachers' distribution across schools will be the main priority going forward.
- UNICEF will engage with relevant partners to ensure the new basic education materials inform reforms in teacher education curriculum. As such, the capacity of teachers to be able to implement the new curriculum will be improved and teacher training institutions will also be supported to reflect and improve their teacher education curriculum so as to align to the new basic education curriculum in terms of goals, pedagogy, delivery, accountability and assessment.

## E. Financial Analysis

Table 1: Planned budget by Outcome Area

EXPECTED Programme Outcome(s)	PLANNED ACTIVITIES	2016 budget (US\$)
<b>Output 5.1 Access and equity:</b> Primary school children (boys and girls) in Sierra Leone are able to enroll in school at the right age and complete grades by end December 2018  <b>Indicators/Baselines/Targets</b>	1. Support 100,000 school age children (5,000 pregnant girls, 95,000 other disadvantaged and vulnerable children) to enroll and stay in school especially girls and children with special needs	2,604,483
	2. Support the reduction of violence against children in 948 schools and school communities, including review and implementation of code of conduct for teachers	200,000
	3. Support advocacy related to access, equity and inclusion for all school age children in 168 school communities	150,000
	4. Establish 14 GEM chapters that promote and strengthen partnerships to support vulnerable children and girls to access education	100,000
	5. Support monitoring and evidence generation activities related to children's enrollment and retention in schools	350,000
RR		
OR		3,404,483
<b>Sub Total</b>		<b>3,404,483</b>
<b>Output 5.2: Early Learning:</b> Children (boys and girls) have access to early learning opportunities with a focus on disadvantaged groups by end December 2018  <b>Indicators/Baselines/Targets</b>	1. Support revision and roll-out of National ECD Policy, ECCE Minimum Standards, and ECCE Curriculum, as well as social mobilization activities on the importance of ECD and good ECD practices	465,230

	2. Support the implementation of the Community-based ECD pilot project in four districts (Koinadugu, Port Loko, Bombali and Moyamba)	500,000
	3. Support development of Sierra Leonean Picture Books for young children under 6 years, training of pre-school and nursery teachers and craftsmen on making early learning materials; and distribute ECD Kits to Class 1 in government and government assisted primary schools including training teachers on using the ECD Kits	346,000
	4. Support ECD coordination and quarterly monitoring activities, including a baseline assessment of ECD in the 4 districts on the Community-based ECD pilot project	214,000
<b>RR</b>		0
<b>OR</b>		1,525,230
<b>Sub Total</b>		<b>1,525,230</b>
<b>Output 5.3: Quality and Learning:</b> Children (boys and girls) learn in child friendly school environments and are able to achieve improved learning outcomes by end December 2018.  <b>Indicators/Baselines/Targets</b>	1. Support the continuous professional development of 5,000 teachers and build capacity of 948 school community structures to contribute to improved school environments and learning.	750,000
	2. Build capacity of Teacher Training Colleges and DEOs for monitoring and supportive supervision activities.	300,000
	3. Procure, distribute and monitor end-user of teaching learning materials (pens, exercise books, etc.) in 948 schools	600,000
	4. Support 948 schools to meet Child Friendly Schooling standards	1,940,927
	5. Support documentation, research, reflective practice and publication of experiences and findings on CFS standards in schools in CPD Reflective Journal.	250,000
<b>RR</b>		569,253
<b>OR</b>		3,271,674
<b>Sub Total</b>		<b>3,840,927</b>
<b>Output 5.4: Policy and Systems:</b> <b>MEST, Local Councils, schools and communities have the capacity to plan, budget, implement and monitor equity focused high impact education services by end December 2018</b>	1. Support the development, production, distribution and implementation of the Basic Education Curriculum and syllabi	1,499,000



Indicators/Baselines/Targets		
	2. Support the EMIS system set-up at central level and decentralized level	180,000
	3. Support the operationalization of the MEST Situation Room including monitoring and reporting of or by MEST and district level structures	620,000
	4. Build capacity of MEST and district level structures for education planning, coordination and advocacy	580,000
	5. Provide support to MEST for Education Sector Review	20,000
RR		
OR		2,899,000
Sub Total		2,899,000
<b>Output 5.5</b> Emergency MEST and communities have the capacity to restore the education system and reopen schools that are safer, better protected and more resilient to emergencies by end December 2018  Indicators/Baselines/Targets	1. Support MEST to develop Education in Emergency preparedness plan and build capacity of DEO staff and partners for its implementation	250,000
	2. Support MEST to implement Education in Emergency risk reduction activities	500,000
	3. Support MEST in Education in Emergency response including refurbishment of Education Radio Station and Resource Centre	150,000
RR		
OR		900,000
Sub Total		900,000
TOTAL RR		569,253
TOTAL OR		12,000,387
TOTAL ORE		
GRAND TOTAL		12,569,640

**Table 2: Country-level thematic contributions to outcome area received in 2016**

Row Labels	Other Resources - Emergency	Other Resources - Regular	Regular Resources	Grand Total
05 Education	6,079,498	7,390,726	1,739,840	15,210,064
Sierra Leone - 3900	6,079,498	7,390,726	1,739,840	15,210,064
Australian Committee for UNICEF		-1		-1
SC130506		-1		-1
BASIC EDUCATION AND GENDER EQUALITY		-		-
SC069901				
SC109901		-		-
Canada/IHA	-77			-77
SM140511	-77			-77
Consolidated Funds from NatComs	5,010			5,010
SM140487	5,010			5,010
Czech Republic (The)	37,699			37,699
SM150306	37,699			37,699
Germany	196,953			196,953
SM140518	1,049			1,049
SM150027	195,904			195,904
Global - Education		1,023,716		1,023,716
SC149905		1,023,716		1,023,716
Global - Thematic Humanitarian Resp	769,476			769,476
SM149910	769,476			769,476
Iceland National Comm for UNICEF		90,154		90,154
SC130300		13,842		13,842
SC140672		76,313		76,313
Italy	80,577			80,577
SM140543	66,346			66,346
SM150548	14,230			14,230
Japan	914,486	63		914,549
SC120567		63		63
SM150079	914,486			914,486
Japan Committee for UNICEF		28,577		28,577
SC110031		-		-
SC130764		28,577		28,577
N/A	1,085	36,517		37,603
NON-GRANT (ORE)	1,085			1,085
NON-GRANT (ORR)		36,517		36,517
Netherlands	99,751	1,476,325		1,576,076
SC110667		1,476,325		1,476,325
SM140540	99,751			99,751
Norway	257,455			257,455
SM140643	257,455			257,455

SIDA - Sweden	692,536			692,536
SM140482	692,536			692,536
Swedish Committee for UNICEF		41,293		41,293
SC160194		41,293		41,293
The United Kingdom	51,469	4,531,465		4,582,935
SC120172		84,687		84,687
SC120781		1,241,522		1,241,522
SC150426		2,888,472		2,888,472
SC150507		15,372		15,372
SC160425		301,412		301,412
SM140626	51,469			51,469
UNICEF (FOR GR ALLOCATIONS ONLY)			1,739,840	1,739,840
NON-GRANT (GC)			1,873,147	1,873,147
NON-GRANT (RR)			-133,307	-133,307
United Arab Emirates	42,650			42,650
SM140577	42,650			42,650
United Kingdom Committee for UNICEF	1,226,141	23,736		1,249,877
SC160114		23,736		23,736
SM150373	1,226,141			1,226,141
United States Fund for UNICEF		138,880		138,880
SC130233		1,049		1,049
SC160018		62,706		62,706
SC160303		5,718		5,718
SC160347		69,407		69,407
USA (USAID) OFDA	1,704,286			1,704,286
SM140648	1,704,286			1,704,286
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>6,079,498</b>	<b>7,390,726</b>	<b>1,739,840</b>	<b>15,210,064</b>

**Table 3: Expenditures in the Outcome Area**

Table 3. Expenditures in the Outcome Area	
Row Labels	Expense
Other Resources - Emergency	6,079,498
05-01 Early learning	14,479
05-02 Equity # focus on girls# and inclusive education	1,644
05-03 Learning and child-friendly schools	890,544
05-04 Education in emergencies	5,147,037
05-05 Education # General	25,795
Other Resources - Regular	7,390,726
05-01 Early learning	569,071
05-02 Equity # focus on girls# and inclusive education	4,026,915
05-03 Learning and child-friendly schools	1,726,578
05-04 Education in emergencies	241,888
05-05 Education # General	826,274
Regular Resources	1,739,840
05-02 Equity # focus on girls# and inclusive education	662,391
05-03 Learning and child-friendly schools	339,159
05-04 Education in emergencies	297
05-05 Education # General	737,993
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>15,210,064</b>

**Table 4: Thematic expenses by programme area**

	Expense
Other Resources - Emergency	6,079,498
05-01 Early learning	14,479
05-02 Equity # focus on girls# and inclusive education	1,644
05-03 Learning and child-friendly schools	890,544
05-04 Education in emergencies	5,147,037
05-05 Education # General	25,795
Other Resources - Regular	7,390,726
05-01 Early learning	569,071
05-02 Equity # focus on girls# and inclusive education	4,026,915
05-03 Learning and child-friendly schools	1,726,578
05-04 Education in emergencies	241,888
05-05 Education # General	826,274
Regular Resources	1,739,840
05-02 Equity # focus on girls# and inclusive education	662,391
05-03 Learning and child-friendly schools	339,159
05-04 Education in emergencies	297
05-05 Education # General	737,993
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>15,210,064</b>

**Table 5: Expenses by Specific Intervention Codes**

	Expense
05-01-01 National policies on early learning and school readiness	74,082
05-01-02 Development and use of standards and measurements for early learning and school readiness	106
05-01-03 Institutional pre-schools	30,030
05-01-05 Parenting education and school readiness	433,009
05-02-01 Out of School Children Initiative (OOSCI)	3,478,879
05-02-05 UN Girls# Education Initiative	80,222
05-03-01 Education materials for learning and teaching including classroom technology	932,292
05-03-02 Child Friendly Schools # Education	1,804,426
05-03-04 Learning assessment systems	25,924
05-04-01 Risk assessments and risk informed programming (DRR and CCA)	107,037
05-04-03 Life skills and vocational training	914
05-04-05 Education # Emergency preparedness	50,383
05-04-06 Education - Emergency response	4,930,299
05-05-01 Education -Systems	1,248,411
08-01-02 Annual review	518
08-01-06 Planning # General	89
08-02-08 Monitoring # General	3,215
08-03-01 Cross-sectoral Communication for Development	424,350
08-03-02 Communication for Development at sub-national level	898,480
08-09-06 Other # non-classifiable cross-sectoral activities	705,524
08-09-07 Public Advocacy	12,214
08-09-10 Brand building and visibility	507
08-09-11 Emergency preparedness and response (General)	6,787
09-01-08 RO technical support to Cross-sectoral areas	9,168
10-07-13 ICT capacity in CO	-6,230
2051 Girls basic education	
2062 Teacher training and support for basic education	-
2901 Staff costs (includes specialists, managers, TAs and consultancies) for multiple OTs within FA2	-1,072
6901 Staff costs (includes specialists, managers, TAs and consultancies) for multiple Focus Areas of the MTSP	-1
7921 Operations # financial and administration	-39,498
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>15,210,064</b>

## F. Expression of Thanks

UNICEF Sierra Leone Country Office greatly appreciates the Global Thematic Committee's crucial support and commitment to this project. The communities in Sierra Leone, the Government and, most importantly,

the children and their families are grateful for the support given to further the progress on education issues in Sierra Leone.

#### **G.     Annex 1: Human Interest Story**



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#### **H.     Annex 2: Donor Feedback Form**



Donor Report  
Feedback-PARMO.d