



## Republic of Sierra Leone - National Statement Transforming Education Summit



Sierra Leone has a vision to be “a nation with educated, empowered and healthy citizens capable of realizing their fullest potential” by 2035. To this end, the Government of Sierra Leone prioritizes inclusive national development through a rights-based education for all: rights to, rights in, and rights through education. To promote broader human capital development, the government designs and deploys evidence-informed interventions and innovations for national transformation.

The Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education and the Ministry of Technical and Higher Education 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, including through:

- Joint Education Sector Reviews based on “*Education Sector Analysis: Assessing the Enabling Environment for Gender Equality*” (2021)
- 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 (2021)
- National Consultations for the Education Sector Plan: *Transforming Learning for All* (2021-2022)
- Gender transformative leadership workshop for regional education leaders (2022)
- National Consultations for the Transforming Education Summit (2022).

This national statement on the country’s commitments to transform education is endorsed by the appropriate authorities of government.

**A. Post-Pandemic System Renewal and Resilience.** Sierra Leone continues to draw on its experience with civil unrest and the Ebola pandemic school closures in the 1990s and mid-2000s respectively to develop a comprehensive vision of full system transformation and resilience in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. The country has drawn on a strong political leadership, data and hybrid technology, quality standards, effective policy and strategic communications to enhance its education sector. National consultations have highlighted that post COVID-19, learners quickly and safely returned to school, and the government promoted a system-wide effort to raise and enforce safety standards. Commitments to consolidate these gains and to build a more resilient education system include:

- I. Promoting high quality education and accelerated (continuous, remedial, non-formal and adult) learning with a prioritized focus on ensuring that all children develop foundational skills in literacy and numeracy;
- II. Adopting and implementing innovative policies that will support system transformation, including comprehensive sexuality education, [integrated home-grown school feeding](#), [integrated early childhood development](#), [school infrastructure rationalization through data-guided catchment area modeling](#), and context-appropriate technology for teaching and learning, including education radio and SMS-based learning tools;
- III. Accelerating implementation of new pre-primary, [basic](#), [senior secondary](#) and civic education curricula for schools and teacher training institutions, and a competency-based curriculum for technical and vocational education;
- IV. Providing digital devices to all schools and paramount chiefs to support teacher professional development, ongoing data collection and effective education monitoring;
- V. Expansion and consolidation of technical universities to address the human capital skills gap;

- VI. Establishing a sustainable digital Learning Management System for higher education;
- VII. Investing in functional infrastructure development to extend electrification and digital connectivity for educational institutions across the country.

**B. Radical Inclusion and the Freetown Manifesto.** In Sierra Leone, the prioritization of education for marginalized children is central for policy and programming. The [National Policy on Radical Inclusion](#) makes the education of the most excluded, including pregnant girls, children with disabilities, the rural poor, and other typically discriminated children, the system's priority through specific support and targeted interventions. Moreover, in partnership with the UN's Gender at the Center Initiative, Sierra Leone's government hosted and facilitated the multi-country adoption of the 2022 [Freetown Manifesto for Gender-Transformative Leadership in and through Education](#). Other examples of this commitment to inclusion 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. Sustaining the public dialog on education transformation and listening to all voices while 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;
- III. A government-wide policy to advance gender-transformative budgeting and planning.

**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 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 service delivery include the following:

- I. The Sierra Leone [Education Innovation Challenge](#) and the [Sierra Leone Education Outcomes Fund](#) as examples of promoting innovative ways of boosting learning outcomes and innovative finance;
- II. The [Sierra Leone Workforce Policy Papers](#) 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](#) to provide 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 [20 percent of the discretionary domestic budget in 2020 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 seeks to close the financing gap and increase impact of its investments by:

- I. Maintaining a minimum 20 percent 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 and scaling innovative financing mechanisms;
- IV. Building a donor coalition to support its goals in its Global Partnership for Education 2022-26 compact.

---