

NATIONAL REPORT ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATION IN SIERRA LEONE, WEST AFRICA FOR THE YEAR 2003

Even before the official end of the eleven-year war in 2002, Education has remained the topmost priority of Government. Education was deemed fundamental to ending the war and the sustenance of peace. It is the key to our development and an antidote for poverty. With such a potent panacea for development, government has aggressively pursued educational development with all available and potential resources. Indicators in the National Education report for the year 2003 reflect the effort made by the Ministry towards development of the humans resource base in Sierra Leone..

GOALS OF EDUCATION BY THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Taking into considerations its statutory mandate, the Ministry developed the Government goals of Education that take into cognisance international markers such as the Education For All (EFA) programmes, the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and the desperate desire to recover from the throes of war.

These goals are:

- 1: Reduction and relief of poverty using education;
2. Significant increase in the literacy rate;
3. Free and compulsory quality Basic Education;
4. Gender equity in access to and participation in education;
5. Increase in access to quality education at post Junior Secondary School (JSS) level;
6. Empowerment of youths through education;
7. Increased access to education for the disadvantaged and the disabled;
8. Decrease in regional and district disparities in access and quality education;
9. Greater decentralisation of education and devolution of authority by increase in community ownership of schools

TARGETS FOR ACHIEVING EDUCATIONAL GOALS:

In order to achieve the above stated goals, the Ministry of Education has set itself a number of ambitious targets, which are:

1. Free primary education by 2003;
2. Establishment of school management committees in all primary schools by 2005;
3. At least one Junior Secondary School in each of the 149 chiefdoms by 2007
4. Free junior secondary education for girls by 2006
5. Free junior secondary education for all by 2010

6. Free and compulsory basic education by 2015
7. A 10% increase in the National Primary School Examinations (NPSE) and Basic Education Certificate Examinations (BECE) pass rates by 2010
8. Establishment of community education centres and technical/vocational centres in all chiefdoms by 2007
9. A 30% increase in the percentage of qualified teachers in the system by 2015
10. Provision of Remote Area and Needy Subject Allowance by 2005;
11. Complete reorganisation and expansion of tertiary education by 2007;
12. Establishment of model schools and centres of excellence initially in all Regions and ultimately in all districts by 2008 and 2015 respectively

INVESTMENT IN BASIC EDUCATION

Government has progressively increased allocation to the Education sector to about 23% of the National budget. This increased allocation has facilitated improved access to fundamental quality education.

Support to parents having children in Primary schools started in the year 2000. Government paid for tuition fees of every child from class 1 – 3, teaching and learning materials and core textbooks. These provisions were extended to classes 4 – 6 in the year 2002.

Furthermore, at the end of the Primary cycle, every child should take and pass the National Primary School Examination (NPSE) before entering Secondary school. In earlier years, the examination fee was a deterrent to most parents such that a high percentage of children in rural areas ended their educational pursuit at this level.

In 2001 Government extended its provision to pay fees for all children attempting the examination nationally.

Considering that a large number of children could not access school during the war years, the Ministry developed a compressed Primary school scheme called Complementary Rapid Education Programme (CREPS).

All these interventions have resulted in a major improvement in enrolment at the Primary level with increase transition from Primary to Secondary School as shown in tables 1 & 2.

Table 1 – Total Primary School Enrolment 1999/2000 – 2002/03

1996/97	1999/2000	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03
367,920	548,059	659,503	775,434	1,092,721

Table 2 – NPSE Entries and Passes 1999 - 2003

Year	Sat	Pass	% Pass	Cut-Off Score
1999	18,907	16,872	93.5	200
2000	21,005	18,681	92.5	200
2001	26,451	20,705	78.3	220
2002	34,931	28,181	81	220
2003	46,851	37,117	79.2	220

However, major Regional disparities were observed in access of girls to Secondary School. Girls in the most disadvantaged Regions were supported by Government in 2003, by providing tuition fees, uniforms, core textbooks etc starting 2003. While

4,975 were supported 11,600 has now passed the NPSE to access secondary school in these Regions.

TEACHERS AND TEACHING

The demand for education requires corresponding trained and qualified teachers to sustain the system. The survey of 2001 revealed that 54% of teachers have the relevant qualification and training whilst 46% may have some qualification but not the skills to teach.

Teacher Training

There is an urgent requirement to train teachers to meet the increase in demand. However limitations in the number of teachers that can be trained at any one time by existing teacher colleges means that new modes of training have to be devised and teacher training provisions expanded.

As a new mode of training, in 2004/05 academic year to be an introduction of a 1-year Teacher Elementary Certificate (T. E. C.) Programme for LOWER primary (Classes 1 – 3) teachers using distance education. This would ensure that teachers from the rural areas stay at post whilst accessing training. This programme will accelerate qualified teacher turn out for the increasing enrolment at the lower level.

A distance education project supported by UNESCO, UNICEF, COL, and Plan Sierra Leone is also in progress for the training of teachers' insitu. The present enrolment is 2000, which is twice the previous year roll.

The integration of Teachers Colleges to form Polytechnics will also ensure that specialist in technical-Vocational education can also receive the relevant teaching qualifications to adequately transfer their knowledge.

Teacher Salaries and Conditions of Service

The procedure for getting teachers on to the payroll has been greatly streamlined in order to reduce the time between being employed and being paid. Additionally, an audit of schools, including confirmation of the actual numbers of teachers in our schools, was carried out in 2003.

Significant improvements in the salaries and terms and conditions of our teachers have been taking place over the years. Government since 1998 has given over 300% salary increased to teachers by 2003.

Under the European Union and the SABABU Education Project, funding will be provided for the construction of teacher quarters especially in rural areas so as to encourage retention.

OTHER INVESTMENTS

To provide the immediate manpower needs of the country, Government also undertook additional investment at the upper level of education. This includes the payment of subventions to handicapped schools, technical-vocational institutions, Teacher's colleges, polytechnics, the University, and other institutions upon demand. These subventions cover the payment of salaries of workers, utility bills and other charges.

Additionally, government provide Grants-In-Aids and Study Leave with pay to students and teachers in tertiary level institutions. About 45% of students in these institutions benefit from either the Grants-In-Aids or the study Leave or both. Teachers and other Lecturers are also supported for further post-graduate studies to service the local polytechnic institutions.

Table 18 - Tertiary Level Award of Grants-In-Aids – 1995/96 – 2002/03

Institution	1995/96	1996/97	1997/98	1998/99	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/2003
MMCE	110	114	*	168	175	183	183	557
FTC	110	120	*	120	140	150	150	310
MTC	110	120	*	125	136	139	139	392
BuTC	110	120	*	150	158	162	168	294
PLTC	110	120	*	156	162	168	168	389
BoTC	110	106	*	120	149	156	156	306
FBC	80	224	*	357	370	397	397	594
NUC	80	170	*	185	200	254	254	502
COMAHS	9	16	*	21	22	32	32	42
IPAM	*	30	*	77	79	89	89	112
LAW SCHOOL	*	7	*	7	7	7	6	11
TOTAL	829	1267	0	1486	1598	1736	1736	3,509

EXTERNAL SUPPORT TOWARDS EDUCATION.

Government has also been able to mobilise resources and expatriates services in the education recovery programme. These include donor s such as UNESCO, the World Bank, the Islamic Development Bank, the African Development Bank, UNICEF, Norwegian Refugee Council to name but a few.

(1) The GOSL/ADB/IDA Education Project –(SABABU)

The SABABUI Education project remains the largest funding towards education since Independence. The total value of the project is US\$42.40 million. The intention of this programme is to rehabilitate basic education and take a maximum of 30% of schools nationally up to a Basic Operational Level. Over 600 junior and primary schools are undergoing rehabilitation/reconstruction/construction countrywide. These are to be provided with textbooks, teaching learning materials and furniture. Furthermore, about 6000 untrained and unqualified teachers will be expected to undergo training to improve their pedagogical skills..

(2) The Islamic Development Bank (IDB) Education Project

The IDB Education Project is also valued at \$7million. It is aimed at restoring educational facilities affected by the recently ended civil conflict through the construction / reconstruction / rehabilitation of 143 totally or partly destroyed primary schools throughout the country over a three year period. Target schools will also benefit from furniture, teaching/learning materials, equipment, water wells and VIP latrines. All of the four regions of the regions will benefit from the project proposed for launching in August 2004.

(3) The Arab Development Bank (BADEA) has provided a loan of about \$7 million that is now used to rehabilitate the entire campus of Njala University College

including staff quarters, all academic facilities, laboratories and workshops, farms, complete overhauling of utilities such as water and electricity, students hostels, and the provision of transportation.

(4) Highly Indebted Poor Countries Initiative Funds – HIPC (2002)

Parliament in August 2002 approved \$9 million, representing 25% of the total HIPC funds available to Sierra Leone, to be expended on various programmes and activities by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. This budget was used to rehabilitate/reconstruct 83 institutions from primary, secondary and tech-voc, two Teachers Colleges, and five District Inspectorate Offices in the country. A total of 5,500 sets of school furniture and beds were supplied to schools.

OTHER SUPPORT

The Ministry in collaboration with traditional and other partners like UNICEF, Plan Sierra Leone, the Norwegian refugee Council, and a host of others undertake various programmes in the development of education in Sierra Leone. For example, the African Development Bank assisted in procuring science equipment, materials and chemicals and technical/vocational subject's equipment to schools and rehabilitating school laboratories. UNICEF is implementing the 3-year Non-formal Primary Education Programme (NFPEP) and the Complementary Rapid Education Programme (CREPS), schemes. UNESCO on the other hand supported the development of a National Science and Technology Policy in Sierra Leone, while the United Kingdom based NGO project known as Knowledge Aid Sierra Leone has introduced Internet service to schools and colleges in the country.

With the support of UNESCO a small pilot programme on School Broadcasting with Distance Education component has been established in Freetown to broadcast on FM 95.1, Radio Education. It is hoped that with the availability of a bigger transmitter, this service will be extended to cover the entire country.

The World Bank through the National HIV/AIDS Secretariat is also supporting a variety of HIV education programmes that focus on school age children. This programme it is hoped will preserve the human resource base of this country against the scourge of this disease.

POLICY FRAMEWORK AND LEGISLATIONS ON EDUCATION

In effort to effectively implement some of the educational programmes earmarked within the time frame, government has within the year made effort to pass some legislations through Parliament. These legislations will improve access to quality education and give wider options to students than previously allowed. Below are a few of the legislations passed so far.

- (a) The Tertiary Education Commission Act 2001 was established for the development of tertiary education in the country and to provide for other matters connected therewith. The Commission functions include, the monitoring of academic programmes of each tertiary institution to ensure that their respective programmes are not at variance with the overall socio-economic aims and aspirations of the country; acting as a depository of all academic and non-academic programmes of every tertiary institution in the country; acting as a depository of all rules and regulations binding the conduct

of students and staff of each institution; and approves the establishment of new universities, polytechnics, or new campuses.

- (b) The Polytechnic Act 2001 was established with corresponding Polytechnic Councils and to make provision for the management and supervision of polytechnic institutions throughout the country. so far three Polytechnics have been established, integrating with existing Technical-Vocational institutions for wide course options.
- (c) The National Council for Technical, Vocational and other Academic Awards Acts 2001 (NCTVA), was established for the evaluation and certification of certain academic courses and programmes and to provide for certain related matters. The NCTVA succeeds the Institute of Education, University of Sierra Leone in the Awards of certificates in the country. It is an independent national body of both the university and other tertiary institutions.
- (d) The Education act 2004 was also passed by Parliament to replace the one enacted in 1964. A significant provision in the Act is to make Basic education free and compulsory for all citizens with punitive measures for those who cause hindrance in accessing education.;
- (e) A new University Act has gone through Cabinet and now awaits Parliamentary approval. Its intention is to revolutionise university operation in the country so that two or more Universities can operate and award degrees.
- (f) Both the Local Government Act 2004, and the proceeding New Education Act 2004 now enforce decentralisation of Educational Management. In effect, steps are being taken to integrate the Inspectorate with the established Local government Councils, as managing national education in a centralised manner does not yield the required quality. The Ministry has therefore devolved authority for the supervision of pre-primary and primary schools, Junior Secondary Schools, Adult Literacy Centres, and Community Education Centres, to District Education Committees.

The District Inspectorate Division should now acts as the technical arm of the District Education/Council to monitor and evaluate educational output at district level.

This ministry is encouraging community ownership of schools. This is done at the primary level through the establishment of School Management Committees (SMC).

In conclusion, Sierra Leone acknowledges the support of the international community in its educational development. It is hoped that sustenance of current educational endeavours, following a very devastating conflict, will in the foreseeable future enhance the young people of Sierra Leone to proudly regain their glorious heritage as pioneer of education in Sub-Saharan Africa, and never again would they resort to war.