

PRSP EDUCATION SECTOR REVIEW

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ACRONYMS

ACTION-AID	Action-Aid
CARE	Concern American Relief Everywhere
CARITAS	Caritas Makeni/Freetown
CCF	Christian Children's Fund
CREPS	Complimentary Rapid Education Programmes
COMAHS	College of Medicines & Allied Health Science
CTA	Community Teachers Association
DEC	District Education Committee
DFID	Department for international development
FAWE	Forum of African Women Educationalist
FBEAs	Faith-based Education Agencies
FTC	Freetown Teachers College
FBC	Fourah Bay College
GoSL	Government of Sierra Leone
IRC	International Rescue Committee
JSS	Junior Secondary School
MEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
MOF	Ministry of Finance
MTEF	Medium Term Expenditure Framework
MTC	Makeni Teachers College
NAP	National Action Plan 2003 -2015
NEMP	National Education Master Plan 1997 –2006
NER	Net Enrolment Rate
NUC	National Nursing College
NCRDC	National Curriculum Research and Development Centre
NCTVA	National Commission for Technical/Vocational and other awards
NPA	National Power Authority
NSC	National Sports Council
NRC	Norwegian Refugees Council
PASCO	Poverty Alleviation Strategy Co-ordination Office
PBET	Post Basic Educational Training
PE	Primary Education
PLAN	PLAN Sierra Leone
SC	Secondary Education
SSS	Senior Secondary School
SLTU	Sierra Leone Teacher Union
SLIS	Sierra Leone Information System
SLIHS	Sierra Leone Integrated Household Survey
SSL	Statistics Sierra Leone
SALWACO	Sierra Leone Water Company
TVE	Technical and Vocational Education
TEC	Tertiary Education Council

UNICEF
WV
WFP
WHO
WB
WAEC

United Nations Children's Fund
World Vision
World Food Programme
World Health Organisation
World Bank
West African Examination Council

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report reviews the current state of education and training provision in Sierra Leone and identifies priority interventions for possible inclusion in the Poverty Reduction Strategy. It draws on information from various sources including the 2003 Integrated Household Survey and a small rapid survey of primary schools in all 14 districts. Over 80 individual interviews and group meetings were conducted with officials from the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) and other ministries, managers of education and training institutions, and individuals from NGOs, and international and donor organisations.

The recommended PRSP priority interventions for the education and training sector for the period 2005-2007 are largely based on current government education policy as laid out in the New Education Policy, the National Education Master Plan, and the Education For All National Action Plan. Chapter 2 summarises the main policy objectives and resource commitments for education and training. Major funding inequities persist in the allocation of public resources to education across the districts, which must be addressed if the learning needs of the large majority of the population who live in rural areas are to be met. Another key feature of the schooling system in Sierra Leone is the major role played by faith-based organisations, which own and manage over 70 percent of primary and secondary schools.

BASIC EDUCATION

The basic education cycle covers six years of primary education and three years of junior secondary education. GoSL's key goal over the next years is that all children should receive nine years of free basic education, which is of good quality and relevant to the livelihood needs of the population.

The 11-year civil war had a devastating impact on all aspects of the education system. However, tremendous progress has been made in extending primary education provision in both government-assisted and non-formal community schools since the end of the war in 2001. Primary school enrolments have at least tripled in little more than three years to around 1.3 million in 2003/2004. The overall gross enrolment rate for primary education has increased from little more than 35 percent in the early 1990s to 122 percent in mid-2003 and the gender enrolment gap has also narrowed appreciably. The surge in enrolments has been fuelled by the abolition of tuition fees, increased awareness of the importance of schooling, especially among the rural poor, the provision of school feeding as part of emergency relief support, and significant improvements in school infrastructure.

Despite these considerable achievements major challenges remain with respect to both access and completion and the overall quality of education provision. Around one-third of children aged between 5 and 17 year olds have been to school and differences in urban and rural enrolments rates remain very large. Drop out rates remain unacceptably high mainly as a result of long

distances to schools, the costs (both direct and indirect) of school attendance, acute poverty, and poor learning outcomes.

The quality of primary education is very low in most locations. Only around one-half of teachers are trained and qualified and in-service training is extremely limited. Relatively very few qualified teachers are working in rural schools. The commitment and morale of teachers is also an increasingly critical issue. Teacher pay covers less than one-third of household livelihood needs. Textbook availability and utilisation is very poor in most schools, especially those in remoter, rural areas. Classrooms, especially in the infant grades are chronically over-crowded and only one-quarter of children are appropriately seated.

There are only around 250 secondary schools in the country. Total enrolments were 135,000 in 2003/2004. The gross enrolment rates for junior and senior secondary education are, according to the Integrated Household Survey, 41 percent and 34 percent respectively. Enrolment rates for urban areas are three-five times higher than in rural areas and gender enrolment disparities are very large.

ADULT AND SPECIAL NEEDS EDUCATION

Adult literacy rates in Sierra Leone are among the lowest in the world. Only one in 13 women in the Northern Region are reported to be literate and only one in 10 in the Eastern Region. Only around one percent of the adult population has received any formal literacy training. Public expenditure on adult literacy is minimal.

Accurate information on the incidence of disabled children and adults is not available. A rapid survey of 10 villages in Bombali District suggests, however, that, as many as 3-4 percent of school-aged children have some kind of disability and have special educational needs. There are no more than 10 specialist education schools for the disabled in the whole country.

POST-BASIC EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Opportunities for post-basic education and training remain very limited in Sierra Leone. Slightly more than 15,000 individuals are enrolled at the University of Sierra Leone and six other tertiary education institutions. Although there has been some improvement in cost recovery levels in recent years, these institutions rely mainly on government funding. The share of tertiary education in public education expenditure has fallen from around 30 percent in the early 1990s to 20 percent today. Acute funding constraints make it very difficult for these institutions to maintain acceptable standards of education and training. The qualification and experience profiles of teaching staff are very weak and the university is particularly reliant on part-time lecturers. There is a chronic shortage of essential infrastructure and learning materials.

There are around 250 technical and vocational education institutions registered with MEST, with a heavy concentration of provision in Western Area and the other main urban centres. Three-quarters lack basic equipment and tools and two-thirds of instructors are untrained. Less than five percent of MEST budget is allocated to TVE. Only two centres are fully funded by MEST.

PRSP PRIORITY INTERVENTIONS FOR BASIC EDUCATION AND TRAINING

There are a number of broad strategic issues that need to be urgently addressed in order to ensure that education and training provision is able to fulfill its full potential in alleviating poverty. A revised and up-dated national education policy and strategy is proposed, which fully incorporates all the key policy developments in the post-war period and sets out clear, time-bound quantitative targets for both basic and post-post basic education and training. The policy would also consider quantity and quality trade-offs, the creation of a unified basic education cycle and redressing the current inequities in resource allocations in the education sector, the strengthening of planning and management capacities, and improved teacher management, deployment and training.

Primary education

Universal primary education with reasonable learning outcomes is critically important in improving the livelihoods of the poor. Without minimum levels of literacy, numeracy and other key life skills it will be difficult, if not impossible, to achieve GoSL's main development goals. These include higher agricultural productivity (especially among smallholder farmers), improved nutrition, lower population growth, the empowerment of women, a vibrant private sector, effective democratic governance at both national and district levels, and strong civil society participation in the development process.

The following seven priority interventions for primary education clearly emerged from stakeholder consultations in the districts and from individual interviews.

Increased fee subsidy: Free and compulsory primary education is only attainable if schools receive adequate financial support from government to be able to procure textbooks and other essential learning materials. The annual fee subsidy should therefore be increased to Le.12,000 per pupil. Given likely enrolment growth over the next three years the cost of increasing the fee subsidy to this level will be Le.16.6 billion over the PRSP period.

School feeding for all: EFA with acceptable learning outcomes is not attainable in Sierra Leone without a universal primary school feeding programme. The provision of a cooked meal early in the school day is a powerful incentive for children to attend school and provided the essential nutritional input for effective learning to take place. A national school feeding programme should be implemented which provides a nutritious meal to every primary school pupil in both government-assisted and registered non-formal

schools free of charge. The total cost of this programme over three years (food inputs and distribution) is Le.300 billion.

A conducive learning environment: The learning environment in the large majority of primary schools must be substantially improved in order for effective learning to take place. Without this improvement, primary schooling will not have the intended impacts with regard to improved livelihoods and reduced poverty. The top priorities over the next three years are: the reconstruction and rehabilitation of 1655 schools for which funding has still to be secured; the construction of an additional 5000 classroom to ease chronic congestion; and the provision of bench desks so that all children can be properly seated. Total cost: Le.127.4 billion.

Improving the teacher qualification profile: There are around 8500 untrained primary school teachers who need to obtain the basic TC qualification. The successful TC Distance Learning Programme should therefore be expanded so that these teachers can be trained on the job over the next five-six years. Excluding the required external technical assistance, the total cost of training these teachers is Le.11.7 billion.

Greater availability and utilisation of learning materials: It is very important that the textbook-pupil ratio of 1:2 is achieved as soon as possible. This will require another 1.7 million textbooks over and above funded provision over the next three years. The textbook distribution system also needs to be strengthened and small libraries should be established in every school. Total cost: Le. 34.2 billion.

Additional incentives for rural teachers: The paucity of qualified teachers in rural primary schools has to be addressed. The introduction of centralised teacher deployment and national service for new teacher graduates will be important steps. However, additional incentives also need to be provided. The Remote Area Allowance should be re-introduced for hard to staff schools and teacher housing provided at up to ten schools in each district. Total cost: Le.19.6 billion.

Expansion of community primary schools: Community schools are a cost-effective way of ensuring that all children are able to complete the first three years of primary education. MEST with the support of UNICEF has developed a project proposal for the establishment of another 1500 community schools in the expectation that all out of school children can be reached. Communities will be provided with building materials for the construction of one-room 'pavilion' schools as well as teaching and learning materials. Total cost: Le. 82.5 billion.

Secondary education

Two priority interventions are identified for secondary education. First, the current government policy of providing bursaries for all girls who are eligible for junior secondary education should be supported by the PRSP, although it is suggested that the size of the current bursary should be reduced by around

one-third. Total cost: Le.15 billion. And secondly, 300 new fully equipped science laboratories should be constructed at a total cost of Le.10 billion.

HIV prevention

The overall adult HIV prevalence rate is currently 0.9 percent in Sierra Leone. It is essential therefore that a concerted effort is made to prevent further HIV infection. Schools have a major role to play. It is proposed that youth-friendly life skills education is introduced as a separate timetabled and examinable subject in all secondary schools with specially trained subject teachers. Total cost: Le.10 billion.

Adult and special need education

A concerted effort is needed to tackle chronically low levels of literacy in the rural population. It is proposed that one million adults should receive good quality literacy training over the next 10 years from a new cadre of peripetic Adult Education Teachers. Around 700 AETs will need to be recruited and deployed to the districts and chiefdoms. Total costs for the period 2005-2007: Le. 27.5 billion.

As a general principle, children with special learning needs should, wherever possible, attend ordinary primary and secondary schools. However, it is important that these children receive additional support, where necessary. More severely disabled children will need to attend specialist schools.

Skills development for the poor

The core definition of basic education covers 'all skills and knowledge that people need if they are to lead a decent life'. Good quality training increases productivity and incomes and promotes more equitable access to employment opportunities. The PRSP should provide the opportunity for the development of a skill development strategy that comprehensively targets the poor. A Skills Development Fund should be established, which channels resources to target groups for viable, high-impact training activities. Total cost: Le.90 billion.

PRSP PRIORITY INTERVENTIONS FOR POST-BASIC EDUCATION AND TRAINING

A vibrant, expanding post-basic education and training (PBET) sector is essential for national development in Sierra Leone. Basic education for all is essential, but the role of post-basic education and training in reducing poverty must also be properly recognised. Poverty can only be eliminated with high and sustained rates of economic growth. The graduates of PBET institutions should be spearheading the process of private sector development, which is now expected to be the main source of this economic growth. PBET institutions also provide the bulk of the personnel who are at the front line in the delivery of essential services to the poor (most notably education, health, water, roads, agricultural extension and input provision, policing and security). Consequently, a balanced approach is required that objectively assesses the contribution of each of these areas of human resource development in attaining the key PRSP goals and objectives.

There are a number of broad strategic issues that must be addressed in the post-basic education and training (PBET) sector. In particular, it is essential that PBET provision should be unified which, inter alia, will end the current artificial and quite rigid demarcation between technical and vocational training and tertiary education. The challenge is to develop a common framework of skill/competence levels and related qualifications, which a diverse range of training and other specialist service institutions are accredited to offer. The overall strategic direction of PBET provision should be based on a well-conceived national human resource development strategy, with clearly identified priorities (especially for the high-growth economic sectors). TVE provision needs to be comprehensively reformed in order to ensure high quality, relevant and cost-effective provision. Finally, levels of cost recovery should, wherever possible, be significantly increased. All PBET institutions should charge variable fees depending on the cost structure and employment outcomes of courses. A student loan scheme should also be introduced. Government-supported students should be required to work for ~~in~~ the public sector for a minimum of three years.

Technical training for key service delivery sectors

The new personnel that will need to be employed in order to meet the PRSP goals and targets must be properly trained. They must have relevant knowledge and skills as well as appropriate attitudes to serve the poor. The chronic lack of resources means that minimal training standards are difficult, if not impossible, to meet in most PBET institutions in Sierra Leone. Courses are too theoretical, students do not have access to essential learning materials, and most lecturers are poorly trained. Unless therefore corrective measures are taken, the PRSP will not be properly implemented.

A concerted effort is required therefore to improve the quality of high priority pre-employment training courses. Improving the qualification profile of lecturers is a top priority. Staff development programmes are expensive because most lecturers have to study for post-graduate degree courses at

overseas universities, but split-site degree programmes are cost-effective and distance- learning opportunities are expanding rapidly.

Apart from education, the other key areas of service provision for poverty reduction are health, water and sanitation, roads, electricity, agriculture and enterprise development. It is essential therefore that pre- and in-service technical training capacity for personnel working in these sectors is considerably strengthened. A minimum of Le.20 billion (US\$7.3 million) needs to be available from the PRSP for this purpose.

A Poverty Reduction Learning Network

A key component of a pro-poor HRD strategy should be the establishment of a national poverty reduction learning network (PRLN). The overall objective of this learning network would be to improve the planning and management capacities of all service delivery providers in the key PRSP sectors, including, education, community development, health, agriculture, security, water, roads and general administration. The planned decentralization of key services to the districts considerably increases the importance of mounting this learning network as soon as possible.

The PRLN would harness the expertise of PBET institutions to provide high quality job-related training that is directly focused on building service delivery capacity for poverty reduction. The main target groups are managers, professionals and support personnel in government ministries and NGO service delivery organisations, as well as political and community leaders, donor personnel, and other interested individuals.

The PRLN curriculum comprises of a range of courses that cover generic and specialist, sector-specific planning and management competencies. All service providers need a wide range of core, generic competencies in order to design and manage the delivery of basic services to poor client groups. Each course comprises of a set of learning modules (probably of around 5-6 per course). The generic courses would focus on poverty analysis and basic planning and management. These would be supplemented by courses on the planning and management services to the poor in specific sectors.

The Tertiary Education Council would accredit courses and learning modules with prescribed combinations leading to certificate, diploma and masters-level qualifications. A network of training organizations would be responsible for delivering the PRLN learning modules. The main learning modalities are conventional, face-to-face training courses/workshops, private study with good quality print and other learning materials, and learning groups.

The PRLN is demand-driven. Organisations and individuals decide on the courses and learning modules they wish to study for and training organizations (in both the private and public sector) bid to provide the necessary learning support.

The PRSP would fund the establishment of the PRLN as well as meet the learning needs of core groups of public sector and NGO personnel in each sector over the next three years. This would be an important source of income for USL and other training organizations.

The total costs of establishing a PRLN for the main areas of service for poverty reduction (local government, education, health, rural infrastructure, agriculture, enterprise development) is Le.50 billion (US\$10.9 million) over the initial three-year PRSP period.

Developing institutional partnerships

The training and research capacity of the university and polytechnics needs to be strengthened very significantly in PRSP priority areas, including the PRLN. One of the most effective ways of achieving this is through the development of strong institutional partnerships with suitable overseas universities and other relevant organizations. These partnerships can be linked to staff development programmes and overseas lecturers should assist with course teaching and undertake collaborative research. Partner institutions could also provide expertise for the development of the PRLN generic and specialist course curriculum. The PRLN would include a budget to support the development of these partnerships.

Gender

Gender enrolment disparities in PBET institutions should be directly targeted as part of the PRSP. Targets need to be established for each of the main PBET institutions. For USL, a reasonable goal would be to increase the share of female students to 35 percent by 2007 and 50 percent by 2010. A package of interventions will be required including lowering entrance standards, quotas with respect to enrolments and government bursaries, additional learning support (both prior to formal admission and once enrolled), and financial support for women from poor households. Total cost: Le. 3.0 billion.

1. INTRODUCTION

According to the 2003 Integrated Household Survey, nearly two-thirds of Sierra Leoneans are poor. The overriding goal of education and training provision should be therefore to equip all individuals with the knowledge, skills and attitudes that will enable them to improve significantly their livelihoods and thereby meet their basic subsistence needs. The importance of basic education in reducing poverty is particularly crucial. Without minimum levels of numeracy, literacy, and other key life skills, it will be difficult, if not impossible, to achieve key development goals. These include improved nutrition, lower population growth, the empowerment of women, a vibrant private sector, effective democratic governance at both national and district levels, and strong civil society participation in the development process.

A team of consultants has been assisting the Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) and its civil society and international partners in the preparation of a review of the education and training sectors, which will form the basis of the education chapter of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP). The Review Team comprises Dr. Paul Bennell (International Consultant and Team Leader), and Dr. Jeanne Harding and Mrs. Shirley Rogers-Wright (National Consultants).

The first draft of the report was widely circulated during April and early May 2004 to all senior officials in the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) and all other key stakeholders including other ministries, the main education and training institutions, NGOs, and donors. Meetings to discuss the main findings of the first draft were also held over a ten-day period in mid-May 2004. In particular, a special meeting of the PRSP education sub-sector working group was convened, which was well attended by both government and civil society representatives. The report has been significantly revised in the light of the comments received.

The Sector Review has been used by MEST and PASCO in order to develop the key goals and performance indicators of the PRSP Pillar III, namely 'promoting human development' (see Annex A). These were discussed and revised at national and district level consultations held during May and early June 2004.

1.1 REVIEW OBJECTIVES

The main purpose of this review is, on the basis of a detailed review of basic and post-basic education and training in the country, to elaborate a possible set of priority interventions, which collectively represent a coherent pro-poor strategy for the education sector as part of the PRSP.

The formal terms of reference state that the 'objective of the review is to assist the MEST and the PRSP Education Sub-Sector Working Group prepare a well-costed sector strategy for formal and non-formal education that is:

- Based on an up-to-date understanding of the nature and causes of poverty in Sierra Leone, the role of education in improving social development and gender disparities.
- Reflects the stated desires of the people of Sierra Leone as identified in the Participatory Poverty Assessment and Focus Group Discussions undertaken as part of the PRSP preparation process
- Reflects current plans for decentralization and devolution of the authority being discussed by the Decentralisation Task Force
- Fully costed and linked with the Medium Term Expenditure Framework
- Reflects the on-going reforms for MEST following the 2002 Functional Review'.

1.2 REVIEW PROCESS

1.2.1 Stakeholder consultation

A credible PRSP process requires extensive consultation with all key stakeholders. Consequently, the Review Team held meetings with MEST officials, head teachers, NGO service providers, and officials from other relevant ministries in the four regions and 13 districts. In total, around 300 people attended these meetings. Another 70 interviews were conducted with MEST officials at ministry headquarters, other ministry officials, managers of education and training institutions, and NGO, civil society and donor and international agency personnel (see Annex B).

1.2.2 Data collection

The Review Team undertook a rapid survey of a small but representative sample of primary schools. One primary school was visited in each of the 13 districts as well as another two schools in Freetown. Typical rural and urban schools were selected. Around 1.5 days was spent in each school so as to allow enough time to conduct structured focus group exercises with pupils, teachers, and parents, interview the head teacher, and collect basic statistics about the school and its pupils. Arithmetic and reading tests were also administered to groups of Class 4 and 6 pupils respectively. Quick, 'pop-in' visits were made to at least two community schools in each district as well as other schools when time permitted.

Separate studies were also completed on the employment outcomes among graduates from Fourah Bay College and a rapid survey of the educational profiles of disabled people in ten villages in Bombali District.

Preliminary data from the 2003 Sierra Leone Integrated Household Survey (SLIHS) has also been used to calculate up to date and accurate enrolment and attendance rates. Other survey data has also been fully utilised including the 2001 Sierra Leone School Survey (SLSS), and school data collected by the National Recovery Committees and compiled by the Sierra Leone Information System (SLIS). In addition, a database was specially compiled for the sector review from the following three sources: the 2002 School Census, which was undertaken by KPMG, MEST data collected by the Inspectorate Division, and teacher payroll data from the Ministry of Finance. Information from the PPA focus group discussions was not available at the time of writing.

MEST does not yet have a fully operational education management information system (EMIS). Consequently, accurate up to date data on enrolments, repetition, dropout by grade, teacher numbers and characteristics (in particular qualification and experience profiles), resource availability and utilisation, and other key data are not available.

The key documentation on education and training provision is listed at Annex C.

1.3 REPORT STRUCTURE

The first part of the report summarises current GoSL education policy objectives and reviews the current provision of education and training services with respect to access and attainment and quality and relevance. The proposed PRSP priority interventions for basic and post-basic education and training are then elaborated in the second part of the report.

1.4 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Review Team wishes to acknowledge the excellent support and cooperation by MEST officials, head teachers, teachers, students and parents and all other individuals, both in and outside government, who worked with the Review Team in the preparation of this report. Special thanks go to the Review Team's counterparts in MEST, Mr. Augustine Mansaray, Ms. Georgiana Kamara and Mr. Horatio Nelson Williams. The university tracer study was very ably undertaken by Mr. Mustapha Sandy as was the disabled survey by Samuel Sesay, Ali Martin Sesay, Stephen Caulker, Adama Boima, Memuna Kargbo and Mike Flood.

The UK Department for International Development (DFID) provided the financial support for the Review and the British Council was contracted as the managing agent. We are grateful to the staff of the British Council in Freetown and Manchester for their excellent support during the entire review process.

2. POLICY OBJECTIVES AND RESOURCES

The key official policy documents are the New Education Policy of 1995, the National Education Master Plan 1997-2006, and the Education For All National Action Plan 2003-2015. The current major policy thrusts are nine years of basic education for all, the full implementation of the new 6-3-3-4 education structure with its strong scientific and vocational orientation, redressing gender inequalities, and increased cost recovery at the tertiary level.

2.1 BASIC EDUCATION

2.1.1 Early childhood care and education

One of the 'guiding principles' of the New Education Policy is that every child shall be encouraged to have between 1-3 years of preparation at nursery or kindergarten school'. The EFA National Action Plan has 15 specific objectives for early childhood care and education namely:

- Development and implementation of a national policy on ECCE
- Establishment of an ECCE Council
- Establishment of Early Childhood Education Units in regions and districts
- Training 2000 personnel for a national network of ECCE centres
- Provision of free and compulsory educational services for all children aged 0-3 years
- Establishment and equipping of 200 ECCE centres attached to pre-school and other institutions.
- Development and implementation of a policy of pre- and post-natal care services
- Establishment and equipping of 100 pre-and post-natal health care centres.
- Provision of free health care services for all under fives
- Provision of free and compulsory education for all children aged 3-5 years
- Establishment and equipping of 500 pre-primary schools
- Teacher training
- Preparation of a pre-primary school curriculum
- Training of 26 family life educators
- Development of curriculum materials for family life education
- Carry out periodic research

The estimated development costs of this programme are US\$21.5 million and the recurrent cost of providing free and compulsory education for 3-5 year olds is US\$12.0 million.

2.1.2 Primary and junior secondary education

Since 2000, the government has made considerable progress in redressing the legacy of government neglect and war-related destruction of the school infrastructure. The attainment of Education for All has been accorded top priority. The key goal is that all children should receive nine years of basic

education - six at primary school and three at junior secondary school. MEST and its partners have actively pursued this goal through the implementation of a number of specific policies. The most important are the abolition of primary school tuition fees coupled with the provision of per capita fee subsidies; the waiving of all fees for all three national examinations; a major programme of school reconstruction and rehabilitation; the supply of free textbooks to primary schools; the expansion of non-formal primary education provision; and incentives for girls to attend secondary schools. The next key step will be the implementation of compulsory primary education, which is planned for 2005.

The EFA National Action Plan proposes the following 10 programmes for primary and junior secondary schools in order to attain the goal of Basic Education for All

- Provision of core textbooks, teachers' guides and other learning materials to 1.6 million primary school pupils as well as disabled children
- Establishment of 1000 community libraries
- Provision of 5000 computers for 500 schools and other technical and vocational learning materials for junior secondary schools
- National sensitisation campaigns in support of EFA and girl's education in particular
- Establishment of alternative teacher training programmes
- Construction of 650 day schools (450 JSS and 200 primary) and 26 single-sex boarding schools (13 each)
- Provision of furniture for 2876 schools (2400 primary, 450 JSS, and 26 boarding)
- Support for the CREPS programme- training and facilitator salaries
- Support for the education of disadvantaged girls
- Construction and staffing of trauma clinics
- Carry out periodic research to examine situational variables of formal basic education

The EFA National Action Plan estimates the total cost of these programmes to be in US\$722.9 million.

2.1.3 Adult and non-formal education

The New Education Policy states that 'top priority should be given to adult and non-formal learning'. The EFA National Action Plan goal is to achieve an overall adult literacy rate of 50 percent by 2015. The Plan identifies the following priority interventions:

- Identification and rehabilitation of existing adult education centres
- Construction of additional buildings
- Deployment of an adult education officer in each of the 18 inspectorial districts
- Establishment of a National Council for Adult/Non-Formal Education
- Recruit, pay (with 'good conditions of service'), and train 1050 literacy and continuing education personnel

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- Preparation and distribution of learning materials and provision of furniture and other equipment
- The integration of occupational life skills into the literacy curriculum
- Sensitisation programmes

The total non-salary cost of these programmes is estimated to be US\$16.6 million. In addition, salary payments to facilitators and supervisors amount to US\$4.0 million.

2.1.4 Special needs

The EFA National Action Plan states that 'Education For All is for all categories of people. No group should be marginalised or left out so that all will benefit from education. The disabled in Sierra Leone need special attention as the war has considerably increased their number, especially the amputees. Therefore, it is absolutely essential that many more schools are opened and adequately equipped and staffed for pupils and adults with special needs' (p.43). A budget of US\$1.1 million is proposed in order to establish four schools for the physically and mentally handicapped and four special schools for the gifted and also develop training capacity for special needs teaching.

2.1.5 Gender

Eliminating gender discrimination in education is a major policy objective. The National Action Plan for EFA states that 'the investment in girl's education is probably the single most cost-effective way to improve standards of living'.

The New Education Policy outlines 'multiple interventions' to redress gender inequality in education, most notably a minimum age of marriage of 18, penalties for boys who impregnate females who are younger than 18, readmission of 'mother-girls' to schools, and 'a graduation target of 70 percent at the basic education level'. More recently, greater emphasis has been placed on demand-side measures to improve the incentives for girls to continue their education, in particular the abolition of secondary school charges for girls in the Eastern and Northern Regions. Sensitisation programmes are also being launched at all levels.

The EFA National Action Plan delineates a separate set of policies and related interventions in order to redress gender inequalities at the basic education level. Eight gender programmes are included in the Plan at a total cost of US\$10.09 million.

- Sensitisation and awareness campaigns
- Stakeholder advocacy
- Enactment of legislation on compulsory education
- Construction of 144 girls-only skills training and literacy centres i.e. one per chiefdom
- Development of a database management system to facilitate surveys and other research

- Provision of grants and technical support to schools
- Special support for mathematics, science and technology
- Development of gender-neutral curricula

2.1.6 Other programmes

HIV prevention and life skills

The EFA National Action Plan states that a curriculum on HIV/AIDS prevention should be developed. In particular, JSS students should be sensitised about HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections, which includes the distribution of flyers and pamphlets. Top priorities are the promotion of sexual abstinence and the prevention of harmful traditional practices. HIV/AIDS education is to be infused in the syllabuses of physical health education, home economics, integrated science and other related subjects. The total proposed budget for these activities is US\$0.2 million. An HIV/AIDS Unit has already been established at MEST headquarters.

A closely related area is the strengthening of guidance and counseling units in schools and the establishment of guidance and counseling services in non-formal education centers, at a total estimated cost of US\$0.37 million.

Peace and civic education

The EFA National Action Plan proposes that a programme of peace education is mounted for both formal and non-formal education centers so as 'to ensure that peace is lasting'. Civic education should also be taught in schools and colleges in order to raise citizen awareness of civic rights and responsibilities.

School-based health services

The New Action Plan proposes that all pupils should have a medical examination every year with 'appropriate support' for follow-up.

2.2 POST-BASIC EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The three main components of post-basic education and training in Sierra Leone are senior secondary schools (SSS), post-JSS technical and vocational education, and tertiary education (the university, polytechnics and the teacher training colleges).

2.2.1 Senior secondary schools

The New Education Policy states that the overall purpose of senior secondary schools (SSS) is the 'provision of individuals equipped with skills in line with the nation's manpower needs'. There are two types of SSS – general and specialist.

2.2.2 Technical and vocational education

Equitable access to appropriate skills training is a key policy objective. Thus, GoSL attaches very high priority to the establishment of new skills training programmes, especially for disadvantaged youth including ex-combatants. The EFA National Action Plan notes that 'a large percentage of young persons are envisaged to require training in income generating and self-sustaining skills'.

The overall rationale of the new 6-3-3-4 structure is that the education system should have a strong technical and vocational orientation, in particular at the post-primary levels. The New Education Policy states that the 'envisaged destinations of young people after completing nine years of basic education are: 25 percent senior secondary schools, 25 percent technical and vocational education institutions, and 50 percent 'the world of employment''. However, the latter group 'may not find income generating employment unless they are equipped with skills to work for themselves'. The mass provision of TVE is, therefore, a central component of educational policy.

The main New Education Policy goal for TVE is to 'increase the number of indigenous, skilled, lower-middle level blue-collar workers'. A three-tiered hierarchy of training institutions is to be established: Trade/technical/vocational centres providing three-year certificate level training. Technical/vocational institutes, which offer two-year Ordinary National Diploma and Higher National Certificate courses for certificate-level graduates; and two-year Higher National Diploma courses at polytechnics for OND and HNC graduates. In addition, there are two other types of TVE provision, namely technical secondary schools and Community Education Centres (which operate at both primary and JSS levels).

The New Education Policy also highlights the importance of encouraging a national apprenticeship scheme and introducing access courses at training centres for young women who lack the requisite formal qualifications.

The TVE Handbook, which has been prepared by MEST, states that graduates from 'technical and vocational schools and centres will only be regarded as having school-leaver qualifications equivalent to their SSS counterparts if they have completed a full three-year programme and sat papers of an equivalent standard'. The New Education Policy proposes a NVQ3 qualification for this group of TVE institutions. However, since this has not as yet been introduced, students at technical secondary schools still take the West African Senior School Certificate of Education (WASSCE).

The recently launched National Youth Programme proposes the establishment of an imaginative job creation scheme, the development of a harmonised practical skills training scheme, and support for youth in community development.

The EFA National Action Plan identifies the following programme objectives for technical and vocational education. It should be pointed out though that a significant proportion of these proposed training activities is at the post-basic education level.

- Revision and expansion of existing TVE programmes using the findings of a baseline survey
- Establishment of new TVE programmes
- Staff development including overseas training for 600 lecturers at six new polytechnics
- Construction and equipping of new TVE institutions – four polytechnics, 28 skills training centres (at the secondary school level), and 300 community education centres.
- Rehabilitation of existing skills training centres
- Curriculum development and provision of learning materials
- Improved monitoring and evaluation

2.2.3 Tertiary education

There are ten tertiary education institutions – the four constituent colleges/institutes of the University of Sierra Leone (USL), three polytechnics, and three teacher-training colleges. A University Bill is currently being drafted, which will enable new universities to be established, both public and private.

The goal of university education is to meet the 'high calibre top-level manpower needs of the nation'. The New Education Policy notes that the University of Sierra Leone has 'suffered from problems of quality and relevance over the years'. There is no official policy for redressing gender inequality at the tertiary level.

2.3 RESOURCE INPUTS

There are four main sources of direct funding for education and training institutions, namely domestic public expenditure channeled through central and local governments, students and their parents/guardians, the proprietors of non-state institutions, and external donors.

2.3.1 Public expenditure

In nominal terms, total MEST expenditure has increased by over 40 percent during the last three years - from Le.76.0 billion in 2001 to Le.106.5 billion in 2003 (see Table 1). According to the Medium Term Expenditure Framework, (MTEF), it is projected to increase to Le.128.2 billion (in constant 2003 prices) by 2006. Development expenditure accounted for only 3.3 percent of total MEST expenditure between 2001-2003. The share of the MEST budget in total public expenditure has remained fairly constant at around 21 percent during the last three years. Ten years ago, this figure was just 8.7 percent.

Increased government commitment to educational development is also reflected in the rising share of public expenditure in total GDP – from 1.9 percent in 1991/92 to 5.0 percent in 2002/03. Around four-fifths of the total recurrent budget is allocated to emoluments.

In the past, budgetary allocations have strongly favoured university education. However, current government policy is to reduce the expenditure burden of tertiary education through the introduction of user fees and other cost recovery

Table 1: Total actual and projected MEST expenditure 2001-2006 (Le.billion)

Expenditure category	ACTUALS			MTEF PROJECTED		
	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Pre- and primary	37.7	47.2	50.5	53.1	56.5	60.3
Secondary	16.6	18.3	23	22.3	23.7	25.3
Technical and vocational	4.1	4.1	4.8	4.4	4.7	5.1
Tertiary (inc teacher training)	13.6	14.7	20	22.2	24.4	27
Non-formal education			0.1	0.2	0.2	0.2
Inspectorate	0.3	0.3	0.3	1	1.1	1.1
Office of the Permanent Sec.	3.5	5.9	7.3	6.2	6.8	7.5
Other	0.2	0	0.5	1	1.7	1.7
Totals	76	90.5	106.5	110.4	119.1	128.2

Source: MEST

measures. The share of tertiary education in public expenditure has fallen appreciably since the early 1990s. Primary education now accounts for around one-half of total recurrent expenditure, and the shares of secondary and tertiary education are around 20 percent each (see Table 2). This is in

marked contrast to the sub-sector expenditure targets presented in the Education Master Plan for the period 1997-2006, namely primary 20 percent, secondary 39 percent and tertiary 14 percent.

The unit public expenditure ratio between primary and tertiary education fell from 62.5 in 1992 to 35.4 in 2003 (see Table 2). About three times more public resources are spent on each secondary school pupil than each primary school pupil. This is mainly due to the much lower pupil-teacher ratios and higher salaries at secondary schools.

A considerable proportion of technical and vocational education and training is funded and, in some cases, provided by other ministries, in particular in the following sectors: agriculture, health, defence, local government, police, transport and youth development.

Table 2: Public expenditure per student by type of education

		Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
MEST expenditure/pupil (L'000)	2003/04	43.5	166.6	1540
Multiple of primary unit expenditure	2003/04	1	3.8	35.4
Share of MEST total expenditure	1991/92	39	23	30
	2003/04	49	20	23

Source: MEST

2.3.2 Non-state resources

Although over 80 percent of primary and secondary schools are owned by faith-based education agencies (FBEAs), recurrent and development funding from these organisations is now generally limited. In fact, some agencies appropriate public resources intended for schools for other uses. With the abolition of tuition fees, user charges for primary education now account for less than five percent of total school expenditure. However, for secondary education, as much as 70 percent of non-salary recurrent expenditure is funded from tuition and other fees.

NGOs and other external donors have played a major role in the rehabilitation of schools and the provision of school material in some districts (especially in Moyamba). The bulk of this funding support is not covered by public expenditures.

Over three-quarters of TVE institutions do not receive any state subventions and are therefore reliant on direct funding from donors (domestic and overseas), user charges, and income generation activities.

2.4 RESOURCE EQUITY

In common with many countries, state funding of education in Sierra Leone disproportionately benefits the better-off sections of society who reside mainly in Freetown and other urban areas. Public expenditure per primary school pupil in the Western Area is over double than in the Northern Region (see Table 3). And yet, poverty levels are highest in these northern districts. Unit

salary expenditures also vary very considerably across the districts - from Le.164000 per month in Western Area to Le.111000 in Koinadugu (see Annex tables 1 and 2).

There are three main reasons for this funding inequity: the relatively low proportions of trained teachers working in the poorest districts, lower pupil-teacher ratios in urban areas, and differences in the percentage of teachers who are on the government payroll. Trained teachers earn at least 50 percent more than untrained teachers. Remoter schools, which are generally in the poorest, least developed areas of the country also tend, mainly for logistical reasons, not to receive their full entitlements to learning and other school materials (see below).

Table 3: Mean public expenditure per pupil by type of education and region, 2003
(Le. '000 rounded)

	WEST	NORTH	SOUTH	EAST
PRIMARY	78	38	53	48
SECONDARY	165	197	175	204
TVE	222	173	240	197
% total expenditure	32	27	24	18
% total population	12	35	26	27

Source: MEST and Ministry of Finance

3. ACCESS AND ATTAINMENT

This chapter reviews the available information concerning the overall educational attainment of the population and the current enrolment levels and rates among the school-aged population.

3.1 ADULT EDUCATION PROFILE

For the last forty years, most Sierra Leoneans have been denied their basic human right of access to education. The consequence of the chronic under-provision of education and training services has had a devastating impact on the development of the country, particularly in the rural areas where over two-thirds of the population continues to live.

Table 4: Highest educational attainment of father and mother by consumption quintile (rounded percentages), 2003

Educational attainment		Quintile				
		1	2	3	4	5
Never attended	Father	67	57	58	67	53
	Mother	82	82	62	83	65
Incomplete primary	Father	5	8	6	3	5
	Mother	5	5	5	4	5
Complete primary	Father	5	5	5	3	3
	Mother	3	5	2	2	3
Post-primary	Father	15	24	20	23	33
	Mother	9	8	9	9	27

Source: SLIHS, 2003

Currently, 76 percent of women and 60 percent of men have never been to school. Table 4 shows that barely one in ten of the poorest 20 percent of women have managed to complete primary schooling. Given the pervasiveness of poverty in the country, the incidence of never-attenders is consistently high across all households. Thus, only one-third of women from the richest 20 percent of households have completed primary education.

3.2 PRE- AND PRIMARY EDUCATION

3.2.1 Early childhood care and education.

The Rapid Assessment of ECCE in 2003 enumerated 153 institutions in urban and semi-urban areas, nearly two-thirds of which are located in the Western Area. Over 40 percent are not in 'permanent sites'. Provision of ECCE is almost exclusively by private proprietors and caters mainly for children from better off households. Total enrolment was around 16,520 in 1999/2000 with 700 teachers, half of whom are trained. More recent enrolment figures are not available. Enrolment rates are very uneven across the country (East 15 percent, South 11 percent, West 31 percent and North 0 percent). Low

enrolment rates for ECCE exacerbates the growing problem of under-age enrolment in primary schools (see below).

3.2.1 Primary school numbers and proprietors

The 2001 Rapid School Survey enumerated a total of 3152 primary and secondary schools. According to Inspectorate statistics, this had increased to 3429 in 2003/04. The KPMG school census identified 3089 primary schools (including 886 community and feeder schools) in September 2002. Information from the District Recovery Committees puts the number of primary schools at 3505 in May 2003.

Government pays the salaries of most teachers at all government-assisted schools. However, many of these schools deploy teachers to feeder schools. MEST statistics indicate that there are around 300 primary community schools that do not receive regular support from government. In addition, the CREPS programme is operating at 184 centres and enrolled 22,530 students at the start of the 2003/04 school year.

FBEAs are the designated 'employing authority' for approximately 75 percent of all government-assisted primary schools. Six agencies account for over two-thirds of all faith-based schools. Over half of the 120 registered agencies managed schools with total enrolments of less than 1000. Only 21 agencies are responsible for more than 5000 primary school pupils. Data from the Integrated Household Survey indicates that government District Education Committee (DEC) schools enrolled around one-third of primary school pupils in both urban and rural areas in mid-2003 (see Annex table 3). Less than 4 percent of pupils were enrolled in private schools.

3.2.2 Enrolments

The increase in children attending government-assisted primary schools has been spectacular during the last three years. Statistics compiled by the Inspection Directorate show that enrolments at government-assisted primary schools grew from 465,000 in 2000/01 to 967,00 in 2002/03 and 1,110,000 in 2003/04. The National Recovery Committees estimate that there were 1.096 million 'registered' and 0.18 million 'non-registered' primary school enrolments in May 2003. Thus, in the space of three years, enrolments have tripled. To date, most of the enrolment growth has been concentrated in Classes 1-3. Class 1 enrolments increased from 228,000 in 2001/02 to 299,000 in 2003/04. The number of Class 6 pupils rose from 40,000 to 76,000 during the same period. Candidates taking the National Primary School Examination (NPSE) increased from 18,907 in 1999 to 46,851 in 2003.

At the end of the war, getting on for a half of all primary school enrolments were in the Western Area. Now, however, the regional distribution of enrolments is more balanced (East 22 percent, South 23 percent, North 38 percent, and Western Area 16 percent). Average enrolments at primary schools are 278 pupils.

Enrolment rates

The primary schooling gross enrolment ratio (GER)¹ was 35 percent at the time of the School Census in 1992. Data from the Integrated Household Survey shows that the overall GER had risen to 121.8 percent at the end of the 2002/03 school year. As can be observed in Table 5, the GERs for females and males living in rural areas are 30 percentage points less than in urban areas. Enrolment rates also vary very considerably across the 13 districts. They are highest (both for females and males) in Bonthe, Kailahun, Kono and Western Area and lowest in Bo, Kenema, Koindadugu, and Tonkolili (see Table 6).

Table 5: Primary and secondary gross enrolment rates by location, 2003 (percentages rounded)

	PRIMARY		JSS		SSS	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
URBAN	134	144	60	82	47	66
RURAL	103	115	14	26	9	13

Source:SLIHS

The net enrolment rate for primary education is 71 percent, over 50 percentage points less than the GER. This is because around 30 percent of pupils are older than the official leaving age and another 6 percent are under-aged i.e. less than five years old.

Primary school enrolment rates do not vary very much according to income level. The GER for children from the poorest 20 percent of households (the lowest quintile) is 107 percent compared to 118 percent for children from the richest 20 percent of households (the highest quintile) (see Annex table 6).

Gender

The EFA National Action Plan notes that 'economic, social and cultural factors militate against gender (enrolment) parity. Boy's educational chances are put ahead of girls'. The available data is somewhat conflicting, but it appears that the overall gender enrolment gap has also narrowed appreciably during the last few years. The gender enrolment ratio² increased from 0.78 in late 2001 (SLSS) to 0.98 in mid-2003 (SLIHS). According to the 2003 Integrated Household Survey, more girls than boys were enrolled in Class 1 regardless of household income level. The gender ratio among the 15 Rapid Survey schools was 0.92 in January 2004, again with more girls than boys enrolled in Class 1.

The primary education GER gender gap is around 10 percentage points in both rural and urban areas. At the district level, this gap is very high in Bombali (42 percentage points), Kailahun (29), Kambia (35) and Koinadugu

¹ The GER is the ratio of total primary school enrolments and the primary school age population 6-11.

² The gender ratio is female enrolments divided by male enrolments

(24). In five other districts, however, the GERs are higher for females than they are for males (Bonthe, Pujehun, Kenema, Port Loko, and Tonkolili).

Table 6: Primary and secondary schooling gross enrolment rates by district, 2003, (percentages rounded)

DISRICT	PRIMARY		JSS		SSS	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Bo	112	105	59	44	56	33
Bonthe	140	157	78	47	63	32
Moyamba	116	112	58	61	43	38
Pujehun	109	120	72	39	10	12
Kailahun	182	153	37	13	9	0
Kenema	107	108	42	24	21	35
Kono	147	135	68	30	18	11
Bombali	155	114	26	17	21	7
Kambia	141	106	91	48	10	17
Koinadugu	106	82	28	16	26	0
Port Loko	108	117	50	26	23	24
Tonkolili	106	116	27	18	36	13
Western Area	145	129	69	99	126	74

Source:
SLIHS

The evidence is limited but, in overall terms, there does not appear to be any sizeable gender enrolment gap in the NFPE sub-sector. The 2002 survey of 30 community schools found a good gender balance, with girls accounting for 51 percent of total enrolments. The fact that these schools are completely free, only cater for classes 1-3, are located very near to children's homes, and the school day is only two hours (3.5 in Class 3) are all likely to contribute to good gender outcomes.

Causal factors

The surge in school attendance has been fuelled by four factors. Firstly, the abolition of the Le.500 per term tuition fee in 1999. Secondly, there has been a leap in the awareness of the population (especially among the rural poor who were displaced to the towns and refugee camps during the war)³ concerning the importance of education for their children. Government efforts to sensitise communities about the need to send children, and particularly girls to school have also been important.

Thirdly, children at many primary schools have been fed a cooked meal each school day as part of the emergency relief support of the World Food Programme. Given the endemic poverty in the country, this has significantly boosted school enrolments. Sizeable numbers of under-aged (i.e. less than six) children are enrolled in primary schools in order to take advantage of the free meal school.

³ Around half the population was displaced by the war. Most fled to Freetown and refugee camps in Guinea.

And fourthly, there have been significant improvements in school infrastructure and the availability of key learning materials. Nearly 90 percent of primary schools were completely destroyed or seriously damaged during the war. By May 2003, almost 40 percent had been reconstructed or rehabilitated. MEST has distributed over two million textbooks to primary schools since 2000 and the fee subsidy increased from LE. 1.7 billion in 2000 to LE. 3.6 billion in 2003.

3.2.3 Out of school children

UNICEF estimates that between 350-400,000 children in Sierra Leone are currently 'out of school'. This group comprises children who have never attended school and those who have dropped-out somewhere between Classes 1 and 6.

The Multi Individual Cluster Survey (MICS) reports that, in 2000, almost two-thirds of the 15 to 19-age group had never attended school and that, with an intake rate of 52 percent, only 36 percent of this group had completed six years of primary schooling. The WFP estimates that 'as many as 500,000 children in the 10-14 age group have missed some schooling' because of the war.

According to the Integrated Household Survey, in mid-2003, 38 percent of females and 31 percent of males aged between 5 and 17 had no formal education. On the basis of the Pilot Census Survey results and, assuming a total population of 5.0 million, this means that around 570,000 school-aged children have never attended school (315,000 females and 255,000 males). Nonetheless, the incidence of never-attenders among this age group has fallen dramatically since 2000. In that year, nearly 60 percent of 5 to 17 year olds had received no formal education. Such was the impact of the war coupled with decades of neglect and mismanagement.

The differences in never-attended rates between adults (aged over 18) and school-aged children (aged 5-17) in mid 2003 also highlight the enormous increase in educational provision since the end of the war. In Kono, for example, 83 percent of adult females had never attended school compared to 37 percent among school-aged children. (see annex table 7). However, it can be observed that the incidence of non-attenders still varies very considerably across the country. In particular, over half of female school-aged children in Kambia, Koinadugu, Port Loko, and Tonkolili had never been to school. The situation is much better though among the under-10 age group.

Table 7 shows the percentage of each age group who have no formal education broken down by urban and rural location and sex. Despite the improvements in recent years, among children aged 10-14, around one in seven living in urban areas and almost one in three in rural areas have never been to school. Interestingly, gender differences in attendance rates are larger in urban areas for the younger age group.

**Table 7: Never attended school by age group and location, 2003
(percentages rounded)**

AGE	URBAN		RURAL	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
5 to 9	29	31	50	52
10 to 14	16	9	31	27
15 to 19	25	15	65	40
20 to 29	47	22	88	70
30 to 39	59	32	93	72

Source:SLIHS

Drop outs

Dropout statistics supplied by schools are notoriously unreliable in most countries. Table 8 presents overall primary school drop out rates (i.e. from Class 1 to 6) among mothers and fathers according to household consumption quintiles. For fathers, the dropout rates for the three bottom quintile groups are around 20 percent and, for the two top quintiles, 10 percent. For mothers, dropout rates are around 30 percent, with the exception of the top quintile group, where the drop out rate was 14 percent. It is clear though that the war seriously disrupted the education of many individuals. Around one-quarter of the SLIHS respondents who had completed primary school reported that their schooling had been interrupted at least once for at three months or more. It is possible therefore that dropout rates could fall appreciably in the future.

Survival rates are lowest in the Southern and Northern Regions. According to the MICS survey, only 68.6 percent and 76.2 percent respectively of pupils in these two regions 'survived' until Class 5 in 2000 compared to 83.7 percent in the Eastern Region and 97.3 percent in the Western Region. The overall completion rate for primary school (Class 6) was 73.3 percent in 2000.

The 2003 Household Survey shows that, in the urban areas, well over half of all female and male 15-19 year olds had completed primary schooling and almost another one-quarter were still in school (see Annex table 8). In marked contrast, among rural children in this age group, only 11 percent of girls and 16 percent of boys had completed Class 6, but over 40 percent of the boys and almost one-quarter of the girls were still in school. Relatively few 10-14 year olds had completed primary school, particularly in the rural areas. However, the large majority of children were still attending school (85-90 percent for girls and boys in urban areas and around 70 percent for girls and boys in rural areas).

Table 8: Overall primary school drop out rates for mothers and fathers, 2003 by household consumption quintile (percentages rounded)

	QUINTILE				
	1	2	3	4	5
Father	20	22	19	10	12
Mother	29	28	31	27	14

Source:SLIHS

There are numerous factors that collectively determine how many children drop out of school: The most important are distance to school, the private costs of education, school feeding, and early marriage.

Travel time to school: The distance to and from school is particularly important. For at least 40 percent of girls and boys, their journey to school takes over an hour (see Annex table 9). Many parents are not prepared to let young children walk such long distances unescorted to school. It is interesting to note that average travel times are similar in both rural and urban locations and that children from the richest households spend the longest time travelling to school, regardless of location (see Annex table 10). This highlights the importance of school location for poorer households. There are no significant gender differences in travel times. Children in rural Pujehun have the longest journeys to school with an average journey time of nearly two hours.

Around one-half of pupil and three-quarters of parent focus groups at the rapid survey primary schools did not agree with the statement that 'the school is not too far away from pupils' homes' (see Annex table 11).

Private costs: Although tuition fees have been abolished, various school charges are still levied by most primary schools, including for extension classes (especially in Class 6), community teachers, and school feeding. The costs of school uniforms and exercise books and pens are also sizeable expenditures for poor parents and guardians. According to the 2002 Governance and Corruption Study, the payment of 'bribes for education' is also a strong deterrent, which prevents up to 15 percent of households sending their children to school.

The poorest households in the rural areas spend, on average, around Le.20000 per child per annum on educational expenditures (see Table 9). Even the most well off rural households only spend Le.40-50000 on schooling. Educational expenditure among urban households is around twice as much for the bottom three household quintiles, but is four and seven times higher for female and male children respectively for the top two quintiles. Mean expenditure on urban male children in the top 20 percent of households is 15 times than for the poorest quintile of males living in rural areas. Gender expenditure differentials are quite small for most urban and rural households. The main exceptions are for the top quintile of urban households where educational expenditure on male children is over one-third greater than on female children.

Only one-half of the parent focus groups agreed with the statement that 'it does not cost too much to attend primary school' (see Annex table 11).

Household income strongly determines access to post-primary education. Poor households cannot afford secondary school fees and textbooks as well other key expenditure items (see Annex table 12). Rising poverty levels would increase the cost burden of education, which is likely to lower parental commitment to ensuring that their children complete primary school.

Table 9: Mean school expenditure per child (under 18) by household consumption quintile (Le.'000, rounded)

	QUINTILE				
	1	2	3	4	5
URBAN					
Female	36	55	51	120	222
Male	38	65	58	130	303
RURAL					
Female	20	27	29	33	52
Male	22	33	32	35	43

Source:SLIHS

School feeding: School feeding has been one of the most important reasons for the exponential growth in primary school enrolments during the last four years. Head teachers and teachers at the survey schools typically reported that 'most children come to school hungry'. The provision of a hot meal is, therefore, a powerful incentive to enroll and to continue attending school and is also essential for effective learning. Not surprisingly, teachers and parents are unhappy that the WFP emergency school-feeding programme came to an end in mid 2003. At over half of the Rapid Survey schools, Class 1 enrolments in 2003/04 have fallen by over 10 percent, which head teachers and teachers attribute to the cessation of school feeding. With support from WFP, 280,000 children in seven districts will be fed at primary schools over the next two years. But, this is less than 20 percent of total primary school enrolment.

Schooling outcomes: Experience from many other countries shows that poor quality schooling with limited learning outcomes eventually leads to declining parental demand for primary education. This is evidenced by both falling enrolment and completion rates. Parents/guardians have to be convinced of the benefits of sending their children to school, especially when non-trivial (direct and indirect) costs are incurred and schooling is not compulsory. As long as learning outcomes remain limited, primary schooling can have little impact on the productivity of either farm or non-farm activities. Ultimately, it is the prospect of their children finding a 'good job' that fuels parental demand for schooling. However, only 11 percent of the adult population are in wage employment of any kind (see below).

Child labour: Compared to other low-income developing countries, child labour in Sierra Leone appears to be a less important contributory factor with regard to non-attendance at primary school. Part of the reason for this is that the school day usually finishes at 1330 or 1400 and children are mainly engaged in farm labour during weekends. Early marriage is frequently singled as one of the most important reasons why girls do not finish primary schooling. As the head teacher stated at one of the Rapid Survey schools 'parents pull girls out of school when they start to get big'. However, less than that 11 percent of females aged 10-14 were married or engaged in mid-2003. This increases rapidly though to 46 percent among 15-19 year olds (see Annex table 13). The burden on poor households of having to support adolescent girls with respect to food consumption and other expenditures is likely to be a key factor.

Orphans and other seriously disadvantaged children: Never-attenders and dropouts are more likely to be seriously disadvantaged/vulnerable children. The MICS survey in 2000 reports very high proportions of children not living with both parents (North 28 percent, East 41 percent, South 47 percent, West 55 percent). However, the number of children who are 'orphans' appears to be much lower than this. According to the SLIHS, across the four regions, only 2-3 percent of children (i.e. aged under-18) have lost both parents, another 2-3 percent are maternal orphans, and 8-10 percent are paternal orphans (see Annex table 14). But, the incidence of grandparent-headed households does increase noticeably among the poorest 40 percent of households. UNICEF estimates that there are 210,000 street children in Sierra Leone.

Repetition

Very high GERs are the result of late enrolment and high repetition rates. By protracting the length of the schooling cycle, repetition can exacerbate drop out and non-completion. High repetition rates are also a major source of inefficiency since total enrolments are much higher than they should be.

No comprehensive and accurate data exists on current levels of primary and secondary school repetition for each class level. According to the Household Survey, only 19 percent of both females and males who had ever attended primary school reported that they had never repeated a class. Reported repetition rates at the 15 Rapid Survey schools were 18-20 percent in each of the infant classes, falling to 14 percent in Class 4, nine percent in Class 5, and four percent in Class 6. Gender differences are not large (see Annex table 15).

3.3 SECONDARY EDUCATION

3.3.1 Schools and enrolments

MEST statistics indicate that total secondary school enrolments increased from 107,700 in 2000/01 (MEST) to 136,000 in 2003/04 (see Annex table 16). According to the National Recovery Committee survey, there were 165,000