



Country Context

Sierra Leone continues to maintain one of the lowest literacy rates in the world. Successive governments have not given education the priority that it deserves. Funding for the education sector continues to be inadequate for the demands and the available funding is not well utilised due to lack of effective monitoring mechanisms. The wanton destruction of life and property occasioned by the war has further contributed to the deterioration of the country's already low educational levels. Schools were either destroyed or comprehensively looted, thereby rendering them useless to their communities. The notorious abduction and recruitment of children into the ranks of the fighting forces have also deprived many children of access to basic education and exposed them to trauma and related psychosocial disorders. Of a pre-war population of 4.3 million people, less than 15% have completed six years of primary school education. To worsen an already deplorable situation, there has been a mass exodus of trained and qualified teachers due to the unattractive conditions of service.

The situation for girls is worsened by some cultural beliefs, which do not favour the education of the girl child. The situation is worse in the north and east regions with government having to intervene by waiving school fees for all girls entering Junior Secondary Schools in the two provinces and offering further incentives. Getting girls into schools is just one way of realizing their rights to education; creating a conducive and non-violent learning environment is another way of getting them to stay in school. In Sierra Leone more emphasis is being placed on getting the girl child into schools than putting an end to the violence, which to a very large extent contributes to the dropout rate of girls. With the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in the sub-region, it is obvious that it does affect the education of children, especially the girl child. Recently there have been heightened awareness-raising activities supported by NGOs and the Sierra Leone Government, but these have not adequately addressed school situations.

Resources available to government are inadequate and allocations made to the education sector are limited. Rural communities' access to these allocations is minimal because of the over centralization of facilities, lack of transparency and mismanagement of funds of some service providers in education. Limited capacity to monitor the effectiveness of spending characterizes the educational system. The poor and marginalized do not participate in decision-making and policy formulation. A number of education policies formulated have not been sustainable at the strategic and operational levels, as lack of ownership has contributed to the limited commitments in implementation at different levels of public policy directives and projects. Recently, emerging CSO concerns and pressure on government over accountability and transparency on national budgets led, for the first time, to open forum discussions on national sectoral budgets where participants from all over the country were drawn. This

provided an opportunity for participation and space for the public to challenge issues.

Key Achievements

- ❑ Supporting training of coalition members on advocacy planning & implementation.
- ❑ CEF Partners successfully influencing change in policy on provision of two Principals for double shift schools (Kenema district)
- ❑ Supporting campaign leading to ban of Pamphlets used by teachers to exhort fees (Bo District).
- ❑ Facilitating the emergence of District EFA Networks in 5 Districts.

Breakdown by Criteria

CRITERION 1

A nationwide sensitisation campaign was carried out via the media, distribution of brochures, meetings and focus group discussions. Meetings were also held with stakeholders for collective definition of responsibilities. Support was provided to EFA forums and fifty-two members of the coalition were trained on advocacy planning, implementation and budget literacy. Countrywide networks were set up, the Global Week of Action was supported in 2003 and 2004, and the CEF engaged with the private sector as well as ANCEFA and the EFA coalition. The MTR also details some examples of successful advocacy leading to government policy change and the abolition of unofficial payments to teachers.

However, familiar problems of working with coalitions also exist in Sierra Leone. Capacity shortages, lack of punctuality of reports and proposals, unfamiliarity of working in partnerships and a lack of experience around non-material service delivery are all significant issues. Key lessons that are recorded include:

- Little collaboration between national level coalition leadership and district level networks.
- Coalitions and networks lack a base for informed decision making.
- Networks require ongoing monitoring and support from the CEF.

CRITERION 2

The MTR does not provide great detail in relation to criterion 2 but does mention that accountability in terms of budget tracking needs greater sensitisation at the community level than the present effort seems to indicate. Also, that there is a need for the coalitions to exploit the opportunity of decentralised governance to focus on budget controllers at local level.

CRITERION 3

This objective has not yet been fully addressed.

Case Study: Abolition of topic pamphlets in junior secondary schools

The Bo District contains the second largest town in the country with the largest number of schools. However, because teachers, especially new recruits, are often not paid in time they seek to develop survival mechanisms. One such method involves extorting money from parents through their children by a scheme called pamphlet. The teachers make pamphlets on each topic in the syllabus and each week when such new topic is being taught, they will demand money from pupils and those without the money will be driven from the class.

Supported by CEF, the Bo CSO Education Network met and raised the issue. They communicated with the Ministry of Education and held panel discussions on the private radio stations in the District. The outcome was the proscription of the practice of pamphlet production on topics in all schools in Bo District. Pupils from poor families are no longer deprived of education just because they lack money to pay for pamphlets.