
RIGHT TO EDUCATION COUNTRY FACTSHEET

SIERRA LEONE

This brief intends to assist practitioners to identify the key national laws and policies relevant to the right to education, analyse their strengths and weaknesses and detect the gaps between policies and practice, in order to use the empirical data collected to define an advocacy strategy informed by human rights. The information collected here reflects what is publicly available; it is neither intended to be exhaustive nor give an authoritative analysis of the situation in the country, but rather, to be a useful tool for reflection on the right to education.

THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION IN SIERRA LEONE: A BRIEF ANALYSIS

Sierra Leone has ratified most international and regional treaties that guarantee the right to education. The current Constitution does not recognise education as a human right, rather as a fundamental principle of State policy. The 2007 Child Act recognises the right to education for every child and the 2004 Education Act states that 9 years of basic education shall be free and compulsory. However, enrolment at secondary level is low (less than 50% in 2013) and despite the law, in practice, public schools often charge fees and private schools are only limited, in law, to not charging fees that are ‘unreasonable’.

In 2003, Sierra Leone emerged from eleven years (1991-2002) of devastating civil conflict. The education sector was badly affected with the destruction of school infrastructure, severe shortages of teaching materials, overcrowding in many classrooms in safer areas, displacement of teachers and delay in paying their salaries, frequent disruptions of schooling, disorientation and psychological trauma among children, poor learning outcomes, and weakened institutional capacity to manage the system. The civil conflict had a particularly negative effect on children; there was widespread use of child soldiers and a high incidence of violence against women and girls. By the end of the conflict, according to the World Bank, 67% of school-aged children were out-of-school.

Significant improvements in education have been made post-conflict however the effects of the conflict linger. The government has sought to address these challenges and a number of steps have been taken. In 2005, the net primary school enrolment rate was estimated to be about 45 percent, far short of the goal of education for all. The disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration process was set-up to reintegrate child soldiers, as the future stability of Sierra Leone likely depends on whether the large majority of youth who were involved in and affected by the conflict will find access to education, skills, training and employment. While the DDR process benefited a substantial number of boys, relatively few of the estimated 8,600 to 11,400 girls who were abducted or otherwise associate with fighting forces were included in it (source:

[USAID](#)).

Unfortunately, Sierra Leone continues to be a country in which girls are frequently affected by gender discrimination, violence, harmful traditional practices and pregnancies, causing many girls to drop out of school or to be banned from attending school for being pregnant. For this reason, the government has developed a number of education policies to improve access to and quality of education for girls. However, while child marriage is prohibited by the Child Rights Act, the Registration of Customary Marriage and Divorce Act authorises children under 18 to marry if they have the consent of their parents or guardians.

In 2014 the Ebola outbreak in West Africa also had a negative impact on the right to education, as the closure of schools left thousands of children without access to education.

Education reform and the ability to cope with emergencies have been, and continue to be, hampered by the insufficient allocation of resources. In 2013, the education budget represented 2.8% of GDP and 15.2% of the total public expenditure. International benchmarks set the percentage of GDP to be allocated to education at 4-6% and / or at least 15% -20% of total public expenditure.

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I. INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATIONS

The major UN and regional treaties (listed below) each have provisions relevant to education, non-discrimination or access to justice. UN treaties can be signed and / or ratified by all States, thereby obliging them to respect, protect and fulfil human rights. When States ratify international treaties, they legally commit to guarantee its provisions, and the concrete situation in the country can therefore be measured against the standards set in the treaty. The ratification of treaties further indicates that the right to education does not come out of a vacuum, but corresponds to international standards that many States have committed to enforce.

It is sometimes possible to bring complaints before national courts if these treaties are not respected by States. Some conventions, either in their core text or in optional protocols, also specify routes of individual complaints to the different committees of independent experts.

Instrument	Ratified
<u>International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)</u>	23 August 1996
<u>Optional Protocol to the ICESCR</u>	Not ratified
<u>Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)</u>	18 June 1990
<u>Optional Protocol to the CRC on a communications procedure</u>	Not ratified
<u>Optional Protocol to the CRC on the involvement of children in armed conflict</u>	15 May 2002
<u>Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)</u>	11 November 1998
<u>Optional Protocol to the CEDAW</u>	Signed 8 Sept. 2000
UN <u>International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)</u>	23 August 1996
<u>Optional Protocol to the ICCPR</u>	23 August 1996
<u>International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD)</u>	2 August 1967
<u>Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)</u>	4 October 2010
<u>Optional Protocol to the CRPD</u>	Signed 30 March 2007
<u>Convention relating to the Status of Refugees</u>	22 May 1981
<u>Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrants Workers and Member of their Families</u>	Signed 15 Sept. 2000

UNESCO	<u>UNESCO Convention Against Discrimination in Education</u>	02 February 1967
ILO	<u>ILO 169 Convention concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples</u>	<i>Not ratified</i>
	<u>ILO C111 Convention concerning Discrimination in Respect of Employment and Occupation</u>	14 October 1966
	<u>ILO 138 Minimum Age Convention</u>	10 June 2011
	<u>ILO 182 Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention</u>	10 June 2011
AFRICAN	<u>African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights</u>	21 September 1983
	<u>Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Establishment of an African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights</u>	Signed 09 July 1998
	<u>Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa</u>	Signed 09 Dec. 2003
	<u>African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child</u>	13 May 2002
	<u>African Youth Charter</u>	17 June 2008

*Ratification status of UN instruments available here: <http://treaties.un.org/pages/Treaties.aspx?id=4&subid=A&lang=en>.
 ILO instruments: <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/english/newratframeE.htm>. For information about each treaty, see the Right to Education Project Website: <http://www.right-to-education.org/page/international-law>*

II. NATIONAL LAWS & POLICIES

National laws and policies are important because they concretely define the framework of rights and obligations for actors in the country. The Constitution is the highest legislative norm; it sets out general principles to which all other national laws and policies have to adhere. It is usually the text where human rights, including the right to education, are or should be defined. If a policy or law does not respect the Constitution, it can usually be challenged before the courts.

Laws and policies that are related to the right to education form a complex nexus that is useful to review in order to 1) identify to what extent they are in line with international standards, and 2) to measure concurrence with the reality of education in a country.

The list of laws and policies presented below is not exhaustive; it gives an indication of relevant existing policies and their relation to the right to education. It can constitute a basis for further research, and should be considered critically, together with the observations made by NGOs and international organisations.

1. CONSTITUTION

The [Constitution of Sierra Leone](#) of 1991, [last amended](#) in 2008, does not recognise education as a human right but rather as a fundamental principle of State policy.

Article 9 on educational objectives stipulates that:

“(1) The shall direct its policy towards ensuring that there are equal rights and adequate educational opportunities for all citizens at all levels by:

- a. Ensuring that every citizen is given the opportunity to be educated to the best of his ability, aptitude and inclination by providing educational facilities at all levels and aspects of education such as primary, secondary, vocational, technical, college and university;
- b. Safeguarding the rights of vulnerable groups, such as children, women and the disabled in security educational facilities; and
- c. Providing the necessary structures, finance and supportive facilities for education as and when practicable.

(2) The government shall strive to eradicate illiteracy, and to this end, shall direct its educational policy towards achieving:

- a. Free adult literacy programmes;
- b. Free compulsory basic education at primary and junior secondary school levels;
- c. Free senior secondary education as and when practicable.

(3) The government shall promote the learning of indigenous languages and the study and application of modern science, foreign languages, technology, commerce and business.”

Article 24 (protection of freedom of conscience) specifies that:

“(2) Except with his own consent (or if he is a minor the consent of his parent or guardian) no person attending any place of education shall be required to receive religious instruction or to take part in or to attend any religious ceremony or observance if that instruction, ceremony or observance relates to a religion other than his own.

(3) No religious community or denomination shall be prevented from providing religious instruction for persons of that community or denomination in the course of any education provided by that community or denomination.”

Article 27 enshrines the principle of non-discrimination:

“(1) Subject to the provisions of subsection (4), (5) and (7), no law shall make provision which is discriminatory either of itself or in its effect.”

2. LEGISLATION

a. Education Act (2004)

The [Education Act 2004](#) states that 9 years of basic education shall be free and compulsory for all citizens with punitive measures for those who cause hindrance in accessing education. It outlines the structure of the entire education system from pre-primary to tertiary level, including education for girls and women as well as special needs education.

The Act focuses, to a great extent, on management and control, and the role of the various actors in the system including local authorities.

Education Act (2004)

3. “(1) The six years of primary and three years of junior secondary schooling provided under paragraph (a) and (b) of subsection (1) of section 2 shall constitute formal basic education in Sierra Leone.

(2) Every citizen of Sierra Leone shall have the right to basic education which accordingly shall be compulsory and shall be designed to:

(a) Provide facilities for all citizens to be literate and numerate and help them to cultivate the knowledge, skills and attitudes that will enable them to earn a good living;

(b) Improve the social and health circumstances of the citizen;

(c) Enable the citizen to understand the complexities and opportunities of the modern world.

(3) Basic education shall be, to the extent specified by the Minister by statutory instrument, free in government assisted primary and junior secondary schools and private schools shall not frustrate the right to basic education conferred by subsection (2) by charging fees that are, in the opinion of the Minister, unreasonable.

(4) A parent, including a guardian, who neglects to send his child to school for basic education commits an offence and shall be liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding Le 500,000,00 or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding one year or to both such fine and imprisonment.

(5) A child who persistently fails to attend schools for basic education shall be treated as if he were a juvenile in need of care under paragraph (b) of subsection (1) of Section 27 of the Children and Young Persons Act.”

It also enshrines the principle of non-discrimination (Section 4) and enforces decentralisation of education management. Furthermore, Section 11 requires the Minister to establish a “Non-Formal Education Council to be responsible for developing and implementing programmes for adult and non-formal education in Sierra Leone” and Section 12 ensure that the National Commission for Basic Education is also responsible to “protect the right to basic education for every citizen, including the amputees and other disabled persons”.

b. The Child Rights Act (2007)

The [Child Rights Act of 2007](#) provides in Article 26 that: "(2) Every child has the right to [...] education."

With regard to persons with disabilities, Article 30 states: "(1) No person shall treat a disabled child in an undignified manner. (2) A disabled child has a right to special care, education and training wherever possible to develop his maximum potential and be self-reliant." Moreover, Article 32 specifies that "(1) No person shall subject a child to exploitative labour as defined in subsection (2). (2) Labour is exploitative of a child, if it deprives the child of its health, education or development."

c. Other relevant laws

[The National Council for Technical, Vocational and other Academic Awards Act \(2001\)](#) established an independent body whose main functions are notably to validate and certify awards in technical and vocational education and teacher training; and to accredit technical and vocational institutions.

[The University Act \(2005\)](#) allowed for a plurality of universities to exist, as well as guaranteeing autonomy in matters of administration and academia and for the creation of private universities.

[The Sierra Leone Teaching Service Commission Act \(2011\)](#) provides for the establishment of the Sierra Leone Teaching Service Commission to manage the affairs of teachers in order to, *inter alia*, improve their professional status and economic well-being.

3. POLICIES

a. The Sierra Leone Education Sector Plan (2014-2018)

Sierra Leone Education Sector Plan (2014-2018)

The aim of the [Sierra Leone Education Sector Plan \(2014-2018\)](#) is to continue the strategies developed in the [first ESP](#) and address the issues faced during its implementation. There is a strong focus on capacity building in the new Education Sector Plan and regular monitoring and evaluation will be key to ensuring that policies are adjusted to ensure that costs remain in line.

The main issues to address are:

- Low learning outcomes (poor performance in examinations conducted by the West African Examinations Council).
- Teachers / Lecturers failing to complete syllabuses at all levels.
- Large number of teachers without a teaching qualification.
- Large number of individuals teaching at a level above the one they are qualified to teach.
- Large number of institutions operating without MEST approval.
- Lack of competence-oriented teaching and learning.

The new Education Sector Plan establishes a strategy divided in several chapters containing several objectives each:

1. Access, equity and completion.
2. Quality and relevance.
3. System strengthening.
4. Monitoring the ESP.
5. Costing the Education Sector Plan.

b. The Sierra Leone Sector Capacity Development Strategy (2012-2016)

Sierra Leone Education Sector Capacity Development Strategy 2012-2016

The aim of the [Sierra Leone Education Sector Capacity Development Strategy 2012-2016](#) is to enhance the government of Sierra Leone and civil society's capacity to:

1. Make informed policies for the education sector.
2. Plan and deliver education services.
3. Ensure educational quality in ways that can identify and respond to change and drive improvement.

There are fourteen strategic objectives to achieve before 2016, including:

- The adoption of new policies, legislation and regulatory framework in the education sector;
- The capacity to plan, develop and deliver on education budgets effectively;
- The capacity for the education system to monitor performance and supervise quality improvement at all levels;
- The creation of a safe and positive environment by early childhood care and education;
- The existence of an effective, functioning systems for teacher recruitment;
- The capacity and capability to collect, manage and use current data and evidence to inform its own work and that of other education stakeholders;
- The ability to identify children with special educational needs and to provide them with suitable support; and
- The existence of infrastructures, structures and procedures to communicate and coordinate more efficiently and effectively within the education sector.

c. The Sierra Leone Education Sector Plan (2007-2015)

Sierra Leone Education Sector Plan (2007-2015)

The [Sierra Leone Education Sector Plan \(2007 – 2015\)](#) is a strategic document based on the [government's 2006 Country Status Report](#) (the diagnostic and analytical foundation of the situation of education in Sierra Leone) and the [2004 Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper](#). Together they map out how the government will build on the education gains made since the war so that by the year 2015 all children will attend school and receive a quality education.

It concerns several areas of focus, including: expanding and improving post-primary schooling, achieving universal primary education, improving the quality of education and monitoring it, ensuring the financing of education with sustainable proposals.

The major strategies are:

- Building up infrastructure and an adequate qualified teaching force.
- Reviewing the curriculum and making it more relevant to the needs of individuals.
- Developing a policy to address the gender issues which negatively impact on the education sector such as gender inequality and gender-based violence.
- Tackling the problem of out-of-school children with targeted responses and reaching those disadvantaged children who have special needs, come from underserved rural areas or live in extreme poverty.
- Supporting post-primary education as a linchpin for the education sector and society as a whole.
- Making increased provisions for literacy and skills training.
- Increasing the capacity of education actors at all levels.
- Improving data collection and analysis for monitoring, planning and accountability.
- Improving on quality, mobilising and making effective use of resources.

4. SELECTED THEMATIC LAWS AND POLICIES

MEASURES TAKEN BY SIERRA LEONE TO GUARANTEE THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION		
Area	Legal Guarantees	Implementation Policies
Free and compulsory education	<p>The Constitution recognises the need to achieve free compulsory basic education at primary and junior secondary school levels, free adult literacy programmes and free senior secondary education (Article 9).</p> <p>The Education Act guarantees free and compulsory basic education (six years of primary and three years of junior secondary schools shall constitute formal basic education in Sierra Leone) (Article 3).</p>	<p>The Sierra Leone Education Sector Plan (2007-2015) highlights the challenges in meeting the cost of ‘free schooling’ programmes and their consequences (See Figure 12). One of the specific objectives of the Plan is to ensure that all children enter primary school at the age of six years, notably by enforcing the Education Act 2004, enforcing registration of all births and constructing new schools, as well as rehabilitating old schools (See Figure 12).</p> <p>The Education Sector Plan (2014-2018) establishes several objectives related to free and compulsory education. First, the objective that: ‘All children enter school and complete primary education’ by organising campaigns, working with vulnerable groups and leaders to encourage parents to send their children to school, reducing the cost of schooling to parents and households, providing targeted support program for the neediest families (Objective 1.1). Second, it establishes the need to increase the level of completion of secondary school and equitable access to junior secondary school, notably by providing additional trained teachers, reduce cost of education for the most vulnerable (Objective 1.2).</p> <p>Furthermore, it aims to increase access to pre-school for children three to five years old by constructing learning spaces, developing minimum standards and training teachers and caregivers (Objective 1.2).</p>

<p>Non-discrimination</p>	<p>The Constitution establishes that the government shall direct its policies to ensure that there are equal rights and adequate educational opportunities for all citizens. This can be ensured by safeguarding the rights of vulnerable groups, providing the necessary structure, finance and supportive facilities for education and ensuring that every citizen is given the opportunity to be educated to the best of his ability, aptitude and inclination at all levels and aspects of education (Article 9).</p> <p>The Constitution also establishes: <i>“no law shall make provision which is discriminatory either of itself or in its effect”</i> (Article 27).</p> <p>The Education Act guarantees: <i>“any other enactment and administrative instructions relating to education shall be administered and interpreted in such a manner as to ensure that there is no discrimination between pupils of students in the matter of their admission to and treatment in any educational institution in Sierra Leone”</i> (Article 4).</p> <p>The Act does not prevent the establishment of separate educational systems or institutions to pupils of the two sexes, the establishment of separate educational systems or institutions for religious or linguistic reasons and the establishment of private educational institutions, <i>“if the object of such institutions is not to secure the exclusion of any group but to provide educational facilities in addition to those provided by the public authority”</i> (Article 4).</p>	<p>One of the objectives of the Sierra Leone Education Sector Plan (2007-2015) is to ensure that schools provide a safe environment for all children, especially with regards to discrimination (See Figure 12).</p>
<p>Gender Equality</p>	<p>Article 4 of the Education Act defines discrimination as: <i>“any distinction, exclusion, limitation or preference which is based on (...) sex (...) has the purpose or effect of impairing equality of treatment in</i></p>	<p>The Sierra Leone Education Sector Capacity Development Strategy (2012-2016) outlines the specific considerations and issues that should be integrated into each strategic action to ensure the promotion of gender equality</p>

	<p><i>education at any level”.</i></p> <p>The Education Act also guarantees that the educational system should be designed to “improve the educational opportunities for women and girls, rural areas dwellers and those disadvantaged in the acquiring of formal education” (Article 2(2)).</p> <p>The Child Rights Act establishes a village child welfare committee elected to advance the enjoyment of the rights of the child at the village level. Its duties are to “monitor the advancement of girl child education” (Article 48).</p>	<p>and gender sensitive programming and activities at all levels of the education sector (Annex 3). It is however focused on teachers and equality in accessing a teaching position and does not refer to the accessibility of education for girls.</p> <p>One of the objectives of the Sierra Leone Education Sector Plan (2007-2015) is to improve access of girls to and completion of primary education “with the aim of attaining gender parity and equality”. Strategies to attain this goal include: making it easier for girls to access school, allowing child-mothers and drop-outs to continue schooling, creating a safe environment and separate toilets for girls and abolishing the idea of primary school-going aged children becoming baby-sitter, child traders during school hours (Figure 12).</p>
<p>Persons with disabilities</p>	<p>The Constitution establishes that the National Commission for Basic Education has the responsibility “to protect the right to basic education for every citizen, including the amputees and other disabled persons” (Article 12).</p> <p>The Child Rights Act guarantees that children with disabilities have the right to special care, education and training “wherever possible” to develop his maximum potential (Article 30(2)). It also establishes that “no person shall treat a disabled child in an undignified manner” (Article 30(1)).</p> <p>The Education Act specifically refers to persons with disabilities in its non-discrimination clause (Article 4).</p> <p>The Persons With Disability Act (2011) refers several times to the right to education of persons with disabilities. Article 6 of the Act states that the Commission established to ensure the</p>	<p>Strategic Objective 14 of the Sierra Leone Education Sector Capacity Development Strategy (2012-2016) establishes that the education system has to identify children with special education needs (for emotional, mental or physical reasons) and must be able to provide them with suitable support, where possible within a mainstream school environment. Few strategies are mentioned in this aim, such as developing national tools and systems to identify children with special needs and classify their needs or developing guidance for teachers to identify children with hearing or visual impairments.</p> <p>The Sierra Leone Education Sector Plan (2007-2015) has, as one of its objectives, to ensure that the vulnerable and disadvantaged children including orphans, children in institutions, those with special needs and in need of protection, enrol and stay in school. Strategies mentioned include providing necessary social support and follow-up. Moreover, the objective focused on improving quality education includes the aim to ensure that physically disabled children can safely use schools. Also, another objective of the Plan is</p>

	<p>well-being of persons with disability should develop measure to ensure that they obtain education, especially through the creation of an <i>“integrated system of formal and non-formal education for persons with disability and the establishment, where possible, of braille and recorded libraries for persons with visual disability”</i> (Article 6(2) and (3)). The Act also establishes that <i>“Every person with disability shall have a right to free education in tertiary institutions accredited by the Tertiary Education Commission and approved by the Ministry responsible for education”</i> (Article 14(1)), that a person with disability should not be denied admission to or expelled from an educational institution by reason only of his disability, and that educational institutions should take into account the special needs of persons with disability (Article 15).</p>	<p>to ensure provision for the mentally challenged at the primary level by creating an enabling environment (See Figure 12).</p>
<p>Quality Education</p>	<p>The Education Act guarantees that even if the establishment or maintenance of separate educational systems or institutions to pupils of the two sexes is authorised, these systems have to offer “offer equivalent access to education, provide a teaching staff with qualifications of the same standard as well as school premises and equipment of the same quality” (Article 4).</p> <p>The Act also ensures that all teachers employed are qualified to give instruction in one or more subjects of the curriculum in force at the school (Article 18).</p>	<p>Strategic Objective 9 of the Sierra Leone Education Sector Capacity Development Strategy (2012-2016) is to ensure that the education system has the capacity to monitor performance and supervise quality improvement at all levels, notably by establishing an inspection and supervision framework that sets out clear school performance indicators with a focus on quality improvement.</p> <p>The Sierra Leone Education Sector Plan (2007-2015) aims to improve the quality of primary education nationwide, notably by focusing on trainings of teachers, incentives for qualified teachers to access remote / rural areas, improve financial management, re-train and review performance of inspectors annually (Figure 12).</p> <p>Strategic Objective 3.9 of the Education Sector Plan (2014-2018) aims to build the capacity of the education sector to monitor performance and supervise quality improvement at all</p>

		levels, notably by the establishment of national minimum standards for schools.
Safe and non-violent environment	<p>The Child Rights Act guarantees that no person shall subject a child to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, including any cultural practice that is injurious to the physical and mental welfare of a child. It also establishes that no correction of a child is justifiable which is unreasonable in kind or in degree <i>“according to the age, physical and mental condition of the child”</i> and no correction is justifiable <i>“if the child (...) is incapable of understanding the purpose of the correction”</i> (Article 31).</p> <p>Therefore, correction of a child is not completely prohibited under national law there is no mention of bullying in the Child Rights Act.</p> <p>While the Child Rights Act repeals the Corporal Punishment Act, under which boys under age 17 could receive up to 12 lashes as punishment, and the fact that corporal punishment had not been judicially applied for years, corporal punishment is not prohibited (§35, concluding observation of the CRC, 2008).</p> <p>Also, there is no mention of bullying in the Child Rights Act.</p>	<p>The Sierra Leone Education Sector Capacity Development Strategy (2012-2016) has for objective that early childhood care and education, when available, provide a safe and positive environment, notably by promulgating standards (Strategic Objective 13).</p> <p>The Sierra Leone Education Sector Plan (2007-2015) aims to ensure that schools provide a safe environment for all children, especially with regard to sexual exploitation and abuse and discrimination. Strategies include nationwide sensitisation on issue; safe environment and separate toilets for girls and instituting sever penalties for child abusers (Figure 12).</p> <p>The Education Sector Plan (2014-2018) highlights the need to improve learning environments, notably by rehabilitating or reconstructing existing classrooms to ensure safe learning environment, increase access to potable water, increase availability of sanitation facilities (Strategic Objective 2.1).</p>
Infrastructure	<p>The Educational Act establishes that facilities should be provided to ensure the right to basic education in order for all citizens to be literate and numerate and in order to help them cultivate the knowledge, skills and attitudes that will enable them to earn a good living (Article 3(2)).</p> <p>Facilities for pre-primary education do not seem to be mandatory, as Article 2(3) states: “the age of entry into primary school shall be six years preceded, where the appropriate facilities exist, by such pre-primary education as may be</p>	<p>Strategic Objective 8 of the Sierra Leone Education Sector Capacity Development Strategy (2012-2016) includes the development of a comprehensive ICT plan to cover infrastructure, equipment specification, staff training and skills upgrading.</p> <p>In its objective concerning quality education, the Sierra Leone Education Sector Plan (2007-2015) insists on establishing minimum standards for infrastructure, teaching and student performance criteria for schools (Figure 12).</p>

	<p>prescribed”.</p> <p>The Child Rights Act establishes the National Commission for Children with the function to ensure every child has access to free basic education, including the provision of adequate school facilities in rural areas (Article 11(2)).</p> <p>It also guarantees that every district, city or town council shall include the provision of early child care facilities, provision of play and recreational facilities for children particularly of pre-school and basic education age, and adolescents, provide youth friendly health centres and promote child participation in development activities. (Article 39(2)).</p>	<p>The Education Sector Plan (2014-2018) focuses on improving learning environments, notably by strategies such as the rehabilitation or reconstruction of existing classrooms to ensure safe learning environment, provide adequate furniture in schools, increase availability of sanitation facilities and provide learning materials (Strategic Objective 2.1).</p>
<p>Status and training of teachers</p>	<p>The Sierra Leone Teaching Service Commission Act establishes a Commission to consider all matters pertaining to teacher management and the improvement of the professional status and well-being of teachers (Article 9(1)).</p> <p>The function of the commission is also in charge of <i>“vet all teachers’ qualifications and determine their equivalence based on a qualifications framework, (...) advice the Minister on the pre-service training of teachers; (...) recommend to the Minister programmes for training of non-professional teachers in service”</i> (Article 9(2)).</p> <p>The Child Rights Act establishes a National Commission for Children, which notably has the function to ensure that every child has access to (...) materials and trained teachers in rural areas (Article 11(2)(c)).</p>	<p>The Sierra Leone Education Sector Capacity Development Strategy 2012-2016 has for objective the establishment of effective, functioning systems in place for teacher recruitment, deployment, performance appraisal, promotion, development and separation that serve all national needs (Strategic Objective 3).</p> <p>The Education Sector Plan (2014-2018) establishes several objectives regarding status and training of teachers, notably to revise the current curricula and student assessment (Objective 2.2), to improve on students’ acquisition of basic skills of reading and numeracy (Objective 2.3) and to improve the quality of teachers by providing support of innovative pre-service education at the primary and junior school levels, and in service-knowledge and teaching skills upgrading short courses for all teachers (Objective 2.4). It also includes the strategy to equitably deploy and incentivise-trained teachers to the neediest communities, approve community schools that meet pre-determined criteria (Objective 2.5).</p>

<p>Respect for the views of the child</p>	<p>The Child Rights Act guarantees that, in determining the best interests of the child, a person, court or other authority should respect and take into account the views of the child (Article 3(2)(iii)).</p> <p>Furthermore, it guarantees that no one should “deprive a child capable of forming views the right to express an opinion, to be listened to and to participate in decisions which affect his welfare, the opinion of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child” (Article 31).</p> <p>It also guarantees meetings of a Child Panel that should permit a child to express his opinion and participate in any decision, which affects the child’s welfare commensurate with the level of understanding of the child concerned (Article 73).</p>	
<p>Gender-based violence</p>	<p>The Child Rights Act establishes a village child welfare committee elected to advance the enjoyment of the rights of the child in villages. Its duties include preventing domestic violence and all forms of gender based violence (Article 48).</p>	<p>The Sierra Leone Education Sector Capacity Development Strategy (2012-2016) outlines that the action to establish systems for quality assurance and to monitor teacher recruitment should also include a strong emphasis on the monitoring and enforcement of the Code of Conduct, particularly regarding zero tolerance for all <i>sexual and gender-based violence</i>, exploitation and abuse, and adherence to Child Rights legislation (Annex 3).</p> <p>The Sierra Leone Education Sector Plan (2007-2015) aims to ensure that schools provide a safe environment for all children, especially with regard to sexual exploitation and abuse and discrimination. Strategies include nationwide sensitisation on issue; safe environment and separate toilets for girls and instituting sever penalties for child abusers (Figure 12).</p>
<p>Indigenous peoples</p>	<p>The Constitution establishes that the government shall promote the learning of indigenous languages (Article 9(3)).</p>	<p>Objective 1.1 of the Education Sector Plan (2014-2018) is that all children enter school and complete primary education, notably by organising campaigns working with vulnerable</p>

		groups and leaders to encourage parents to send their children to school.
Freedom of religion	<p>The Constitution establishes that: <i>“no person attending any place of education shall be required to receive religious instruction or to take part in or to attend any religious ceremony or observance if that instruction, ceremony or observance relate to a religion other than his own”</i> (Article 24).</p> <p>The Education Act, as well as the Constitution, authorises the establishment and maintenance of separated educational systems or institutions for religious or linguistic reasons (Article 4).</p>	
Child Labour¹²	<p>The Child Rights Act establishes that: <i>“no person shall subject a child to exploitative labour”</i>. It defines labour as being exploitative of a child <i>“when it deprives the child of its health, education or development”</i> (Article 32).</p>	

¹ See US Department of Labour factsheet on the Worst forms of Child Labour: <http://www.dol.gov/ilab/reports/child-labor/tanzania.htm>

² Please note: these laws are not properly enforced and child labour remains a significant problem.

SUMMARY OF SIERRA LEONE MINIMUM AGE LEGISLATION AS OF 2015				
See the Right to Education Project website for information on the methodology used				
	End of compulsory education	Admission to employment	Minimum age for marriage General girl/boy Exception girl/boy	Criminal responsibility
Age	15	15	18/18 Possible under 18 with parental consent	14
Source	Child Right Act <i>“125. The age of fifteen shall be the age at which the compulsory primary education of a child shall end (...)”</i>	Child Right Act <i>“125. The age of fifteen shall be (...) the minimum age for the engagement of a child in full-time employment”</i>	Registration of Customary Marriage and Divorce Act <i>“2. (1) Subject to this Act, a customary marriage, contracted after the coming into operation of this Act, shall be valid only if – (a) both spouses are not less than eighteen years old and consent to the marriage (...) (2) Where, either of the prospective spouses, not being a widow or widower, is less than eighteen years, it shall be necessary for the parents to give consent to the marriage (...).”</i> However it is inconsistent with the Child Right Act (2007) , which establishes that <i>“34. (1) The minimum of marriage of whatever kind shall be eighteen years”</i>	Child Right Act <i>“70. In any judicial proceeding in Sierra Leone, a child shall not be held to be criminally responsible for his actions if he is below the age of fourteen years”</i>

5. AVAILABLE REMEDIES

DOMESTIC

See CRIN, Access to justice for Children: Sierra Leone:

https://www.crin.org/sites/default/files/sierra_leone_access_to_justice_-_updated_sep_2015.pdf

REGIONAL

- [The African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.](#)
- [The African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights.](#)

INTERNATIONAL

- [UN treaty bodies](#), including the [UN Human Rights Committee](#) through procedure 1503, the UN [special rapporteur on the right to education](#) or the [ECOSOC](#) for women’s rights violations.
- [UNESCO procedure](#) for human rights violations in UNESCO's fields of mandate.
- [ILO procedure](#) in the cases of those conventions, which Sierra Leone has ratified.

For more information, see: <http://www.claiminghumanrights.org/sierraleone.html?L=0> which is a useful source of information about international remedies for human rights violations, available in African countries.

III. STATISTICS AND DATA

- Sierra Leone’s UIS profile:

<http://www.uis.unesco.org/DataCentre/Pages/country-profile.aspx?code=SLE®ioncode=40540>

- EFA GMR World Inequality Database on Education (WIDE):

<http://www.education-inequalities.org/countries/sierra-leone#?dimension=all&group=all&year=latest>

1. PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATION

			2011	2012	2013
Pre-Primary enrolment	GER (%)	Total	6.86	8.81	9.54 (2013 Regional Average: 18)
		M	6.7	8.5	9.1
		F	7.01	9.11	9.98
	NER (%)	Total	...	8.16	6.49
		M	...	7.86	6.24
		F	...	7.46	6.84
Primary enrolment	GER (%)	Total	125.29	128.32	130.05 (2013 Regional Average: 101)
		M	129.5	129.4	130.32
		F	121.14	127.25	129.78
	Total NER (%)	Total	...	99.6	99.8
		M	...	100.0	99.5
		F	...	99.3	100.0
Lower Secondary enrolment	GER (%)	Total	60.2	66.2	64.7
		M	66.2	69.2	67.0
		F	54.3	63.2	62.4
	NER (%)	Total	...	70.7	...
		M	...	71.9	...
		F	...	69.6	...

Secondary enrolment	GER (%)	Total	44.32	49.17	43.42 (2013 Regional Average: 43)
		M	51.28	53.53	46.89
		F	37.55	49.17	40.04
	NER (%)	Total	...	36.87	37.27
		M	...	38.9	40.05
		F	...	34.89	34.57

Source : [UNESCO-UIS](#) & [World Bank Edstat](#) / Symbol used : ... Data not available

Percentages of children in school are represented by Gross Enrolment Ratios (GER) and Net Enrolment Ratios (NER). GER is the number of pupils enrolled in a given level of education regardless of age expressed as a percentage of the population in the theoretical age group for that level of education. The GER may be greater than 100% when students younger or older than the official age for a given level of education are enrolled in that level. NER is the number of pupils in the theoretical age group who are enrolled expressed as a percentage of the same population.

Participation in education data is useful for measuring accessibility to education. For all levels of education, the GER in Sierra Leone in 2011, 2012 and 2013 was equal or higher than the regional average except for pre-primary enrolment where it appears that while the percentage has increased from 7.1% in 2011 to 10.1% in 2015, it is still under the regional average, 18%, of 2011.

At the primary level, there are not enough data for the Total Net Enrolment Ratio to determine whether there was improvement in primary enrolment. However, data for 2012 shows close to a 100% Total NER, which is the benchmark under international and national law. Data for the Gross Enrolment Ratio highlights an increase in enrolment between 2012 and 2013.

The Net Enrolment Rate for secondary education increased for boys in 2013 compared to 2012 but decreased for girls so the number of girls accessing a secondary education is still only around 34%. This highlights a huge disparity between boys and girls while the government is trying through its laws and policies to “improve the educational opportunities for women and girls, rural areas dwellers and those disadvantaged in the acquiring of formal education” (Article 2(2), [Education Act](#)), Strategies to attain gender parity and equality include making it easier for girls to access school, allowing child-mothers and drop-outs to continue schooling, creating a safe environment and separate toilets for girls and abolishing the idea of primary school-going aged children becoming baby-sitter, child traders during school hours (Figure 12, [Sierra Leone Education Sector Plan \(2007-2015\)](#)).

However, the NER is much higher when only lower secondary education is considered, with 70.7% of children being enrolled in lower secondary education. At that level of education also, the disparity between boys and girls is very low.

2. PROGRESSION AND COMPLETION IN EDUCATION

		2011	2012	2013	2013 Regional Average
School life expectancy, primary and secondary, both sexes (years)		10.65	11.10	11.18	9.26
Percentage of repeaters in primary education (%)		15.65	14.07	13.74	8.22
Survival rate to grade 5 of primary education, both sexes (%)		...	59.65
Primary to secondary transition rate (%)	Total	79.3	88.0	...	80.87 (2012)
	Male	79.4	87.6
	Female	79.2	88.4

Source : [UNESCO-UIS](#) & [World Bank Edstat](#) / Symbol used : ... Data not available

Progression and completion rates measure the degree to which free and compulsory education is enjoyed.

The transition rate from primary to secondary education went up between 2011 and 2012, which means policies implemented by the government seems to have an impact on the number of children accessing secondary education after completing primary education. It is also positive to observe such a small difference between male and female children accessing secondary education.

However, while the average percentage of repeaters in primary education is of 8.22% in 2013 at the regional level, this number is quite high in Sierra Leone with a rate of 13.74% in 2013. On the other side, the school life expectancy in primary and secondary education increased from 10.65% in 2011 to 11.18% in 2013 and is much higher than the regional average of 9.26% in 2013.

3. RESOURCES FOR EDUCATION

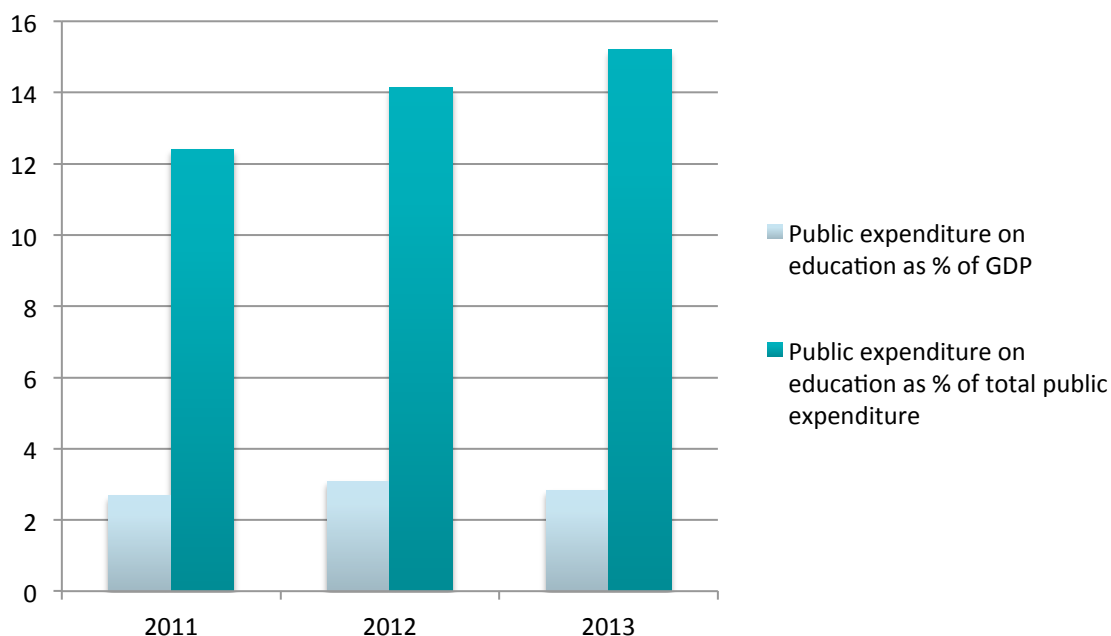
	2011	2012	2013	2013 Regional Average
Pupil / teacher ratio (primary education), headcount basis	31.1	33.0	34.8	38.4
Percentage of trained teachers in primary education who are trained, both sexes (%)	48.0	54.6	57.1	74.0

Source : [UNESCO-UIS](#)

See *Right to Education Project's page on Education Financing* for more information on the importance of education financing: <http://www.right-to-education.org/issue-page/education-financing>.

The Pupil / Teacher ratio has gone up since 2011, which may reflect an increased participation in education. However, the percentage of trained teachers, although improving, is still well below the regional average.

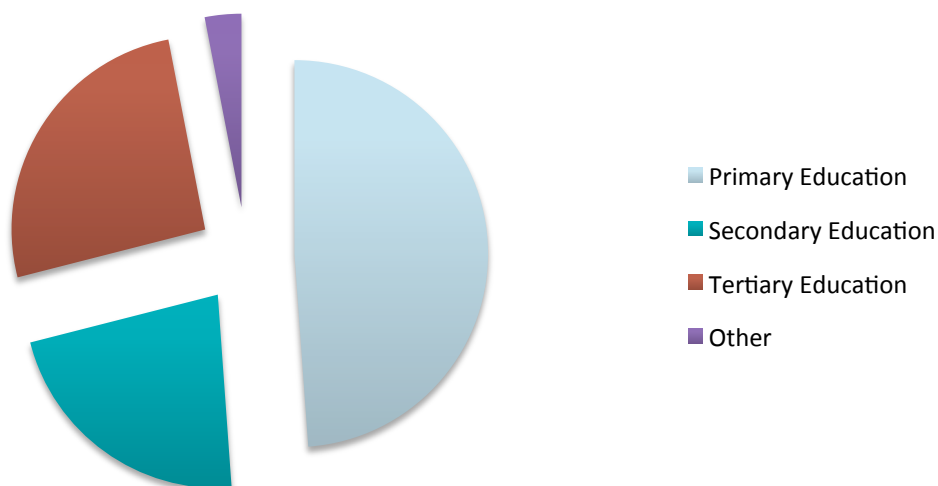
Public Expenditure on Education



Source : [UNESCO-UIS](#)

The 2015 [Incheon Declaration](#) reaffirmed the [Jomtien](#) international benchmarks on education expenditure: States should spend at least 4% to 6% of their GDP and / or at least 15% to 20% of their national budgets on education in order to achieve quality education for all. Although the allocation of resources increased from 2011 to 2013, Sierra Leone still does not meet these requirements with only 15.2% of its national budget and 2.83% of its GDP allocated to education. Education expenditure as a percentage of GDP remained fairly stable during the past three years although there has been a slight overall decrease from 3.09% in 2012 to 2.83% in 2013. Education expenditure as a percentage of the national budget has slightly increased from 12.41% in 2011 to 15.5% in 2013.

2013: Government expenditure by level of education as % of total government expenditure on education



Source : [UNESCO-UIS](#)

Since 2011, the percentage of expenditure allocated to primary education has fallen from 52.56% to 48.86% in 2013. This pattern is repeated for secondary education, in 2011, 26.29% was spent on secondary education; this had fallen to 22.16% in 2013. However, tertiary education spending has risen from 17.93% (2011) to 25.93% (2013). This is a positive increase demonstrating the interest of the government to invest more in tertiary education.

The high participation rate in primary education as shown above might therefore be explained by the large expenditure of the government on this level of education. However, as there is no data on quality education, it is not possible to ensure that the important government expenditure is providing good quality education to children enrolled in primary education.

4. LITERACY RATES

Literacy rates		2004	2013	2015	2013 Regional average
Adult (15+) %	Total	34.8	45.7	48.09	62.97
	M	46.7	56.6	58.74	71.29
	F	24.2	35	37.65	54.97
Youth (15-24) %	Total	47.93	64.30	67.57	73.94
	M	59.61	73.02	75.84	75.6
	F	37.36	55.60	59.29	63.7

Sources: [UNESCO-UIS](#) and [World Bank Edstat](#)

Some progress can be observed as the adult literacy rate went from 34.8% in 2004 to 48.1% in 2015 and the literacy rate for young people rose from 47.93% in 2004 to 67.57% in 2015.

However, compared to the regional average in 2013, literacy rates are still low, with a rate up to 45.7% for adults in Sierra Leone compared to a rate of 62.97% in Africa. Such low rates may be a function of the effects of the civil conflict which saw thousands of children unable to attend school. While the rate increased to 64.3% for young people aged from 15 to 24 years, it is still under the regional average of 73.94% for young people in Africa.

The government of Sierra Leone committed to eradicate illiteracy (Article 9, [Constitution of Sierra Leone](#)) but these figures show that this commitment is far from being reached. It points towards a lack of efficiency of national policies that aimed to improve access of girls to and completion of primary education “with the aim of attaining gender parity and equality” (Figure 12, [Sierra Leone Education Sector Plan \(2007-2015\)](#)) as well as those that outlined the necessity to ensure the promotion of gender equality and gender sensitive programming and activities at all levels of the education sector (Annex 3, [Sierra Leone Education Sector Capacity Development Strategy \(2012-2016\)](#)).

Furthermore, there is a massive disparity between men and women with a difference of 17.42% between genders to the detriment of young women (15-24 years old) and a difference up to 21.6% for adults. Whilst the Education Act guarantees that the educational system should be designed to “improve the educational opportunities for women and girls, rural areas dwellers and those disadvantaged in the acquiring of formal education” (Article 2(2), [Education Act](#)), the literacy rates therefore raise concerns about discrimination in the

quality of education between genders. It appears that laws and policies have not been properly implemented in order to fill the gender gap regarding literacy.

For more information, see Sierra Leone profiles on:

- [EFA GMR World Inequality Database on Education \(WIDE\)](#)
- [UNESCO-UIS](#)
- [World Bank EdStat](#)

IV. RELEVANT OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS BODIES

The relevant observations and recommendations made by UN agencies on the human rights situation in Sierra Leone can be found in the [Compilation of UN information prepared for the UPR](#). In addition, the OHCHR provides an advanced search option for all UN human rights recommendations made on Sierra Leone, [here](#).

1. UN UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS

Below is a selection of the most relevant recommendations made to Sierra Leone at the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). Advanced search of the UPR recommendations can be made using the website of the NGO UPR Info on www.upr-info.org/database which includes a [research guide](#). For further information on the UPR, see [Right to Education Project's website](#).

Last review	06 May 2010 - A/HRC/15/8 – can be checked here .
Next report	October 2015 - can be checked here .

Recommendation	Recommending State
Intensify its efforts in the name of gender equality; amend the legal provisions that establish a system of patronising gender promotion and protection for gender reasons; and develop a comprehensive policy in favour of gender equality, including awareness campaigns in areas of society and public administration (82.28)	Spain
Implement further policies to ensure gender equality and the promotion of the rights of women and children throughout society (81.18)	South Africa
Increase the annual budget as well as set up mechanisms to investigate ways to	Hungary

improve education management and teaching methods (82.27)	
Incorporate human rights education and awareness training into the school curriculum through cooperation with and assistance from the international community (81.53)	Indonesia
Allocate more financial resources to improve access to and quality of education in the country (81.51)	
Bring its legislation into conformity with its commitment to equality and non-discrimination for all by prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity (82.7)	Canada

2. UN HUMAN RIGHTS TREATY BODIES

COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD (CRC)

Below is a selection of the most relevant recommendations made to Sierra Leone by the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Past and future sessions of the CRC can be found on <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/sessions.htm>.

To search CRC recommendations, see [OHCHR tool](#).

Last review 20 June 2008, [CRC/C/SLE/CO/2](#)

Next review [CRC Pre-sessional Working Group](#) in February 2016 and [CRC session](#) in September 2016

Key points of the last concluding observations:

- *Dissemination, training and awareness-raising*

21.the Committee is ... concerned that there has been no incorporation of human rights, including child rights, into the school curricula.

22. ...**the Committee recommends that human rights education be included in the official curriculum at all levels of education.**

- *Non-Discrimination*

25. The Committee notes with appreciation the section on the principle of non-discrimination, including against girls, contained in the Education Act (2004) and the ongoing and **increasing efforts to educate the public on the need for non-discrimination**, particularly against the girl child and children with disabilities. The Committee regrets nevertheless that the **Constitution continues to allow discrimination against women and children, particularly in matters relating to marriage and inheritance, through restrictions and privileges available under customs and tradition.**

- *Respect for the views of the child*

31. ... **The Committee is concerned, ... that children, particularly those belonging to vulnerable groups, are not always given the opportunity to express their views in ... schools.**

32. The Committee ... recommends that the State party continue and strengthen its efforts **to implement article 12 of the Convention and promote respect for the views of the child, including in ... schools.** The Committee also recommends that the State party mainstream successful pilot initiatives promoting the participation of children in all matters that concern them in the family, school, other children's institutions and the community.

- *Corporal punishment*

35. The Committee notes with appreciation that the Child Rights Act repeals the Corporal Punishment Act, under which boys under age 17 could receive up to 12 lashes as punishment, and that corporal punishment had not been judicially applied for several years. However, **the Committee is concerned that corporal punishment is not prohibited and, in fact, is widely practiced in ... schools....**

36. The Committee recommends that **the State party ensure the full implementation of the Child Rights Act and that it explicitly prohibit by law all forms of violence against children, including corporal punishment, in all settings, including in ... schools, ...**

- *Children with disabilities*

49. **While the Committee notes with interest that a National Policy for the Protection of Persons with Disabilities³ is being developed by the State party, it remains concerned at the lack of appropriate legislation to cover the needs and protection of persons with disabilities... the Committee expresses its concern over reports that children with disabilities are excluded from the regular education system due to parents who do not want to send their children to school, the lack of teachers trained to teach children with disabilities and the inaccessibility of the infrastructure to children with disabilities**

50. In light of the United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (General Assembly resolution 48/96) and the Committee's general comment No. 9 (2006) on the rights of children with disabilities, the Committee recommends that the State party:

- (a) Take all **necessary measures to ensure the effective implementation of existing legislation, and take all necessary measures to expedite the completion and adoption of the National Policy for the Protection of Persons with Disabilities;**
- (b) Make every **effort to provide programmes and services for all children with disabilities and ensure such services receive adequate human and financial resources;**
- (c) Carry out awareness campaigns to sensitise parents as well as the public about the rights and special needs of children with disabilities and encourage their inclusion in society;
- (e) Provide training for professional staff working with children with disabilities, such as teachers, medical, paramedical and related personnel and social workers; and

³ No draft to be found

(f) Consider **ratifying the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol.**

- *HIV/AIDS*

61. The Committee urges the State party, while taking into account the Committee's general comment No. 3 (2003) on HIV/AIDS and the rights of the child (CRC/GC/2003/3) and the International Guidelines on HIV/AIDS and Human Rights, to take measures to prevent and reduce HIV/AIDS infection in its territory, particularly with regard to the young people through, *inter alia*:

(d) Taking effective measures to prevent discrimination against children infected with HIV and/or affected by HIV/AIDS, particularly with regard to equal access to education;

- *Education, leisure and cultural activities*

64. The Committee notes that the Education Act (2004) mandates free and compulsory basic education and junior secondary education for government-assisted schools and affordable school charges for private schools. The Committee further notes that the Act and a corresponding Education Policy promote education for girls, vocational training, including for dropouts and enhanced quality, *inter alia*, by teacher training. The Committee is concerned that despite increased enrolment and completion rates in primary schools, enrolment is still low, in particular for girls, and that the number of teachers, in view of the large class sizes, is too small. The Committee also expresses concern at the practice of public schools to charge additional fees. Finally, the Committee is concerned about reports of sexual abuse of children, mostly girls, by teachers and the continued practice of corporal punishment in schools.

65. The Committee recommends that the State party, taking into account its general comment No. 1 (2001) on the aims of education:

(a) Ensure that primary education is free of charge, and also of other (additional) costs, in order to facilitate the participation of all children in primary education;

(b) Expand access to education, including early childhood education, to all regions of the State party;

(c) Improve the quality of education through the increase of the number of well-trained and fully qualified teachers and invest sufficient resources to provide adequate school facilities, materials and salaries;

(d) Continue and strengthen promotion of vocational education and training, including for children who have dropped out of primary or secondary schools;

(e) Reduce socio-economic, regional and gender disparities in access to and full enjoyment of the right to education;

(f) Take appropriate measures to address charges of sexual abuse in schools and prosecute perpetrators;

(g) Promote the use of alternative forms of discipline in a manner consistent with the child's human dignity and in accordance with the Convention, especially article 28, paragraph 2; and

(h) Include human rights and child rights in the school curricula.

- *Economic exploitation, including child labour*

68. The Committee welcomes efforts to address common forms of child labour through, inter alia, the provision of compulsory basic education for children, the promotion of vocational skills training for adolescents, and the upholding of the protective legal provisions for children contained in existing laws of the State party. The Committee also notes with concern that the law does not limit working hours for children and, while school attendance is required through the age of 12, the government does not enforce this. Finally, the Committee expresses its concern over reports that adults have asked orphanages for children to be used as household help.

- *Street children*

70. ... the Committee notes that a number of children are still working and/or living in the street ... and do not attend school. **The Committee shares the State party's opinion that street children, and other disadvantaged children, deserve special care and attention and notes that the Ministry for Social Welfare and its Child Protection Network partners provide interim care facilities for such children. The Committee notes with concern, however, that this response serves only as a temporary measure and does not permanently resolve the issue.**

- *Juvenile justice*

76. ... The Committee ... notes that the Child Rights Act increases the minimum age of criminal responsibility from 10 years to 14 years.

COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN (CEDAW COMMITTEE)

Past and future session of the CEDAW Committee can be found on <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cedaw/sessions.htm>.

Last review	10 March 2014, CEDAW/C/SLE/CO/6
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Next review	Unknown
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Here are the relevant paragraphs of its last concluding observation on Sierra Leone regarding education:

28. **The Committee expresses its concern about:**

- (a) Girls' lower performance at the primary level of education, despite the increased enrolment and completion rates of girls at that level;**
- (b) The low enrolment and completion rates of girls at the secondary and tertiary levels of education;**
- (c) The geographical disparities in access to education;**
- (d) The increase in sexual abuse and harassment of girls in schools and the increase in teenage pregnancies, despite the development of a code of ethics for teachers, and the negative impact of harmful traditional practices such as early and forced marriages on girls' education, and barriers impeding pregnant girls' and young mothers' access to education;**
- (e) The continued practice of corporal punishment in schools.**

29. The Committee recommends that the State party:

- (a) Improve the educational infrastructure, especially in rural areas, and raise awareness of the importance of education as a human right and a basis for the empowerment of women;
- (b) Ensure equal access for women and girls to all levels of education and retain more girls in school, and intensify its efforts to reduce geographical disparities in access to education;
- (c) Ensure that sexual abuse and harassment in school are adequately addressed and punished, and effectively implement the National Strategy for the Reduction of Teenage Pregnancy (2013) and the Code of Ethics for Teachers, and remove all barriers to school attendance by pregnant girls and young mothers;
- (d) Integrate age-appropriate education on sexual and reproductive health and rights into school curricula, including comprehensive sex education for adolescent girls and boys covering responsible sexual behaviour and the prevention of early pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS;
- (e) Explicitly prohibit corporal punishment in all settings.

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE

Below is a selection of the most relevant recommendations made to Sierra Leone by the Human Rights Committee.

Past and future sessions of the Human Rights Committee can be found on [here](#).

For further information on the Human Rights Committee, see [Right to Education Project's website](#).

Last review 17 April 2014, [CCPR/C/SLE/CO/1](#)

Next review Unknown, Sierra Leone submitted its last State report in May 2013 [CCPR/C/SLE/1](#).

Here are the key issues highlighted by the Human Rights Committee:

- *Early marriage*

13. While noting that the Child Rights Act of 2007 establishes the age of marriage at 18 years, **the Committee notes with concern that the Registration of Customary Marriages and Divorce Act allows child marriage with parental consent. The Committee is concerned at the persistence of early marriages, especially in rural areas, and the lack of sanctions on those responsible (arts. 3, 23 and 24).** The State party should review the Registration of Customary Marriages and Divorce Act in order to bring it into line with the Child Rights Act of 2007 and ensure the strict application of its legislation banning early marriages. It should carry out campaigns to publicize the legislation and inform girls, their parents and community leaders of the harmful effects of early marriage.

- *Abortion, adolescent pregnancy and maternal mortality*

14.the State party should increase education and awareness-raising programmes, both formal (at schools and colleges) and informal (in the mass media), on the importance of using contraceptives and the right to reproductive health.

V. KEY ACTORS ON THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION

Although information about key organisations working on the right to education was difficult to find, below is a list of few Civil Society Organisations working on the right to education and issues pertaining to the right to education in Sierra Leone:

- **Free the Children**

The Organisation [Free the Children](#) works with war-affected communities to give children a safe place to be kids, to gain an education and to heal. According to their website, Nearly half of all Sierra Leone children between five and 14 are involved in child labour, while 36% of primary school-aged girls don't attend school, and 52% of girls aged five to 14 are illiterate. So Free the Children helps building schools to support higher quality education and providing libraries and administrative offices.

- **Education For All – Sierra Leone**

[Education For All Sierra Leone](#)'s aim is to reach out to isolated communities and encourage them to send their children to school, especially girls. The organisation also offers literacy classes to parents and helps them to learn a trade such as sewing to improve their quality of life.

VI. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Additional information on education law and policies in Kenya can be found on government websites:

- Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone: <http://www.hrcsl.org/>
- Constitutional Review Committee: <http://www.constitutionalreview.gov.sl/>

Information can also be found on UN agencies websites:

- UNESCO-International Bureau of Education provides an education profile which includes laws and policies: <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/en/worldwide/unesco-regions/africa/sierra-leone.html>
- UNESCO- IIEP / Planipolis provides downloadable education laws and policies: http://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/format_liste1_en.php?Chp2=Sierra+Leone

See also:

- Right to Education Project website, which provides resources on the right to education in Sierra Leone: <http://www.right-to-education.org/resources/country/sierra-leone>
- Wikipedia page on education in Sierra Leone: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Education_in_Sierra_Leone
- GPE Sierra Leone's Profile: <http://www.globalpartnership.org/country/sierra-leone>
- Elimu Yetu Coalition (EYC), Global Coalition Education Member, which provides information about education in Kenya: <http://www.elimuyetu.net/>

- [“Implementation completion and results report” by the World Bank on a grant to Sierra Leone for an education sector development project](#)

Useful information about human rights and children rights in Sierra Leone can be found on the website of these human rights organisations:

- Amnesty International: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/africa/sierra-leone/>
- Human Rights Watch: <http://www.hrw.org/africa/sierra-leone>
- CRIN: <https://www.crin.org/en/library/countries/sierra-leone> and http://wiki.crin.org/wiki?title=Sierra_Leone

Analysis on education in Sierra Leone can be found in:

- [The State of Human Rights in Sierra Leone – 2011](#)
- [Environmental Scan on Education in Sierra Leone with Particular Reference to Open and Distance Learning and Information and Communication Technologies](#)
- [Sierra Leone Effective Delivery of Public Education Services. A review by AfriMAP and the Open Society Initiative for West Africa by Dr Claudius Bart Williams \(January 2014\)\]](#)
- [Education For All Sierra Leone Coalition \(2010\) A SITUATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF GIRLS EDUCATION](#)

The Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights also provides relevant information on human rights in Sierra Leone: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/countries/AfricaRegion/Pages/SLIndex.aspx>