

IDRC RESEARCH PROJECT

**Increasing Access to Quality Education for Rural and
Marginalized Children in West Africa— A Comparative Study of
Accelerated Education and Girls Focused Programmes in Ghana,
Nigeria and Sierra Leone**

Comprehensive Analysis – Sierra Leone

May, 2022

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**DALAN DEVELOPMENT CONSULTANTS
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Acronyms and Abbreviations

AEP	Accelerated Education Programme
AEWG	Accelerated Education Working Group
ASC	Annual School Census
BECE	Basic Education Certificate Examination
CLC	Community Learning Centres
DHS	Demographic Health Survey
EFA	Education for All
FQSE	Free Quality School Education
GAR	Gross Attendance Ratio
GCR	Gross Completion Rate
GER	Gross Enrolment Ratio
GIR	Gross Intake Rate
HND	Higher National Diploma
HTC	Higher Teacher Certificate
MBSSE	Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
NAR	Net Attendance Ratio
NER	Net Enrolment Rate
NPSE	National Primary School Examination
OOSC	Out-of-School Children
PwD	Person with Disability
SC	Save the Children
SCI	Save the Children International
SSL	Statistics Sierra Leone
TSC	Teaching Service Commission
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UPE	Universal Primary Education
WAEC	West African Examinations Council
WASSCE	West Africa Senior School Certificate Examination

Executive Summary

The International Development Research Centre (IDRC) is funding a research study under its Knowledge Information Exchange (KIX) initiative. KIX is a joint endeavour between IDRC and the Global partnership Alliance for Education (GPE). The research study seeks to examine the efficiency, effectiveness, and scalability of Accelerated Education (AEP) and girls focused education programme models in West Africa's rural, fragile, and hard-to-reach areas, in Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone. The ultimate aim of the research is to increase access to learning for children who are out of school through strengthened use of knowledge on effective AEP and girls focused education models.

An expectation of each focus country undertaking the research is to carry out a comprehensive analysis, in order to generate country specific evidence-based knowledge about the prevalence of out-of-school children, as well as to evaluate the effectiveness and adaptability of accelerated education programs and girls-focused education models in relation to the OOSC population. This comparative analysis for Sierra Leone involved a systematic review and synthesis of existing statistics and empirical evidence from a variety of sources, pertinent to out-of-school children in order to contribute to the research questions which the larger study seeks to provide a response to. The UNICEF five dimensions of exclusion¹ was a key reference point to ensure a thorough analysis.

Three methods were followed by the Sierra Leone team to produce empirical evidence on out-of-school children and AEP programs in Sierra Leone: the first method entailed a systematic literature assessment of reports, peer-reviewed journals, papers, and other relevant materials, the second procedure entailed estimating the size/prevalence of the out-of-school children problem using a variety of datasets, including those from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), EMIS, Population and Housing Census data, and the Sierra Leone Demographic and Health Survey (SLDHS); and the third procedure entailed programmatic analysis, which allowed for a better understanding of successful AEP interventions and girl focused programme models implemented in Sierra Leone.

Of importance, is that the numerous datasets reviewed for this comprehensive analysis, used different metrics to evaluate out-of-school situation in Sierra Leone. Each dataset prioritized different sets of indicators and age groups, and applied different analytical methods, which limited

¹ UNICEF Global out of School Initiative Operational Manual - 2018

attempt for comparative analysis. The MICS data set is the most informative, as it provides detailed breakdown of OOSC data taking into account several parameters, including break down by rural/urban, by region by district, by gender, and by school level. The key findings from each dataset are presented taking into account the inherent differences.

The Education Management Information System (EMIS) data sets. The EMIS essentially focuses solely on in-school children. According to the EMIS 2020 census, 2,695,590 students registered in schools. This represented a 1.6 percent increase over the 2,654,306 students who enrolled in 2019. In 2020, 1,363,430 (50.6 percent) of these students were girls, while 1,332,160 (49.4%) were boys. Attempts to correlate EMIS data to census data to obtain reliable estimates of the number of children who enrolled in primary school level have been largely unsuccessful; The data reported by the EMIS are more likely inflated, to benefit from school subsidies.

UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) database. The UNESCO Institute for Statistics database, provides country specific data on OOSC. In the case of Sierra Leone, the estimated number of OOSC was 624,292, 608,717, and 719,750 in 2015, 2017, and 2018 respectively. Each year, more males than females drop out of school in primary school, but the opposite is true at the secondary school level. The school dropout pattern at the junior high school level suggests a balance between boys and girls. There was no data for 2016, 2019, or 2020, in the UIS data base.

World Inequality Database on Education. According to data from the World Inequality Database on Education 2017, the southern region in Sierra Leone has the greatest out-of-school rates at both the primary (23%) and lower secondary (26%) levels of education, while the northern region has the highest OOS rates at the upper secondary level (45%). In the upper secondary level, however, the out-of-school rate in the northern region is among the highest in the country. Across all levels of education, the western area has the lowest out-of-school rates.

The MICS 2017 data. Bonthe district in the southern region had the highest proportion of out-of-school children (42% males, 37% females) at the district level. At the regional level, the south region had the highest proportion of OOSC at 22.9 percent (27 percent boys, 19 percent girls) compared to the western area urban at 10%. (11 percent boys and 9% girls).

The OOSC estimates by grade level and by sex, showed a distinct pattern. The rates for elementary and lower secondary levels indicate that boys have greater out-of-school rates than

girls. The pattern is the reverse at upper secondary school, with females outnumbering males. Out of school rate was 40% among females compared to 31% among males, which implies that are more likely to dropout as they advance in their schooling.

The MICS data also provide estimates on dropout rates. At the upper secondary level, the northern region emerged as the region with the highest dropout rate of 44.6 percent (37.1 percent for males and 50.8 percent for females), followed by the south with 42.1 percent (36.2 percent for males and 47.3 percent for females), the east with 35.7 percent (32.5 percent males and 38.3 percent females), and the west with 22 percent (19.2 percent males and 23.9 percent females).

2015 Population and Housing Census Only 41.9 percent of the population had ever attended school. Nearly half of the population (49.3% of those aged 15 and over) had never attended school, while 23% were continuously enrolled and 28% had dropped out. Girls were more likely than boys to have never attended school among those aged 15 and up.

The northern region (41.7%) had the greatest proportion of people who had never attended school, followed by the southern region (37.5%), eastern region (35.9%), and western region (35.9%). The western region had the highest percentage of dropouts (30.8 percent), followed by the southern region (15.0 percent), eastern region (14.0 percent), and northern region (11.5 percent).

Demographic and Health Survey (2019) - Thirty nine percent of female household population had no education as of 2019. Thirty-one percent of girls aged six and above had attended some form of primary school, but just four percent had completed it. For women, the median number of years of education is 1.2. Since 2013, the ratio of females aged 6 and over without a high school diploma has declined from 51% to 39%. Urban residents are far more likely to be educated than rural residents. In urban regions, 25% of females aged 6 and above have no education, compared to 50% in rural areas.

The Elementary School Net Attendance Ratio (NAR), reported in the DHS 2019 is 87 percent for students aged 6 to 11 (89 percent for girls and 85 percent for boys). The secondary NAR drops considerably among girls, falling to 44% and 46%, respectively. There is a considerable difference in elementary school NAR between urban and rural regions (90 percent and 85 percent, respectively). The gap worsens at the secondary school level (61 percent in urban areas and 31 percent in rural areas).

NAR in primary schools is highest in the eastern province (90%) and lowest in the southern province (85%); NAR in secondary schools is highest in the western area (62%) and lowest in the southern province (85%). At the district level, Kailahun has the highest primary school NAR (92 percent), while Falaba has the lowest (75 percent). The highest secondary NAR (67 percent) is in western area urban, while the lowest is in Pujehun (27 percent).

The comprehensive analysis report for Sierra Leone uses the following layout: Chapter 1 provides an overview of out-of-school children in Sierra Leone; Chapter 2 analyses out-of-school children and youth using available datasets; Chapter 3 is an analysis of programmatic data from education innovators; and Chapter 4 is a summary of the comprehensive analysis' key findings and recommendations.

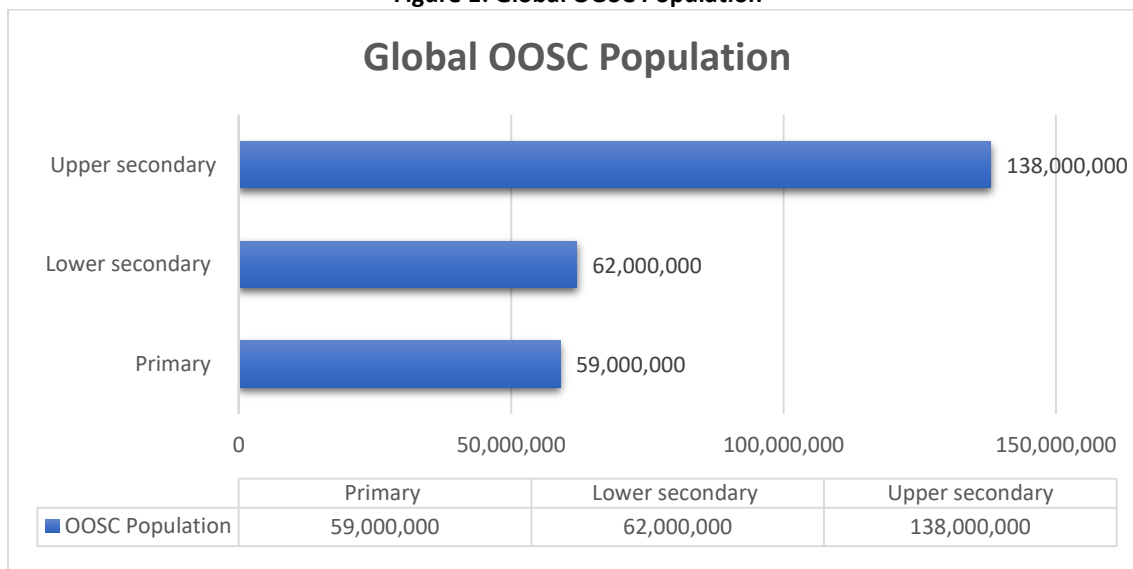
Chapter One

Overview of Out of School Children in Sierra Leone

1.0 Introduction

There has been little progress in reducing the global population of out-of-school children, adolescents, and youth three years after the adoption of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) and the pledge to offer universal primary and secondary education. The latest statistics on trends at the global and regional levels are highlighted in this fact sheet from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), which is based on a revamped calculation approach that provides more precise estimates of the out-of-school population. The phenomenon of OOSC undermines the global efforts toward achieving sustainable and quality education for all (EFA), particularly for low-income countries. Globally, about **258 million** children and youth are out of school, according to UIS data for the school year ending in 2018. The total includes **59 million** children of primary school age, **62 million** of lower secondary school age and **138 million** of upper secondary age.

Figure 1: Global OOSC Population



Source: (UIS, 2018)

According to the global OOSC estimates, they either never went to school or dropped out after enrolling. Displaced children and young people, girls (especially those from rural and impoverished communities), ex-combatants, and physically challenged children and young people are among the most vulnerable groups at danger of dropping out of school. With each missed school year, the likelihood of these youngsters being unable to return to formal schooling increases, putting their safety at risk.

According to UIS data, there were **624,292**, **608,717**, and **719,750** OOSC in Sierra Leone in **2015**, **2017**, and **2018** respectively. At the primary school level, more males than girls are OOS each

year, while the opposite is true at the secondary school level. In terms of OOSC, there is a fine balance between boys and girls in junior secondary school, while the research suggests that it somewhat favors females.

Sierra Leone's children face obstacles in obtaining a good education, staying in school, and graduating from secondary school. Poverty, gender discrimination, long distances to schools, a perceived low value placed on education, and negative social norms practices such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM – 86.1percent), early marriage (30 percent of women marry before the age of 18), teenage pregnancy, and an unsafe learning environment exacerbate these factors. Almost one-fifth (18 percent) of children aged 6 to 11 were out of school. Only 45 percent of JSS-age children were in elementary school, and nearly a fifth (19 percent) were not in school at all, with only 36 percent attending JSS in accordance with their age group. More boys than girls were out of school in both age groups, while (36 percent) of senior secondary school age were out of school; and there was a notable urban-rural divide: 8 percent of JSS-aged children in urban regions were out of school, compared to 29 percent in rural areas (Statistics Sierra Leone, 2018). Several children in Sierra Leone do not complete primary school or make the transition from primary to junior secondary school (JSS) as a result of many of the causes stated above. Primary school graduation rates are 64 percent, JSS (lower secondary) graduation rates are 44percent, and SSS (upper secondary) graduation rates are 22 percent².

However, due to the disparate approaches and data gaps around OOS in Sierra Leone (Graham, et al., 2021), there is dire need to synthesize the information and data on Out of School Children in order to lay the groundwork for the IDRC study on **Increasing Access to Quality Education for Rural and Marginalized Children in West Africa**. This act of bringing together and synthesizing the varied OOS datasets for Sierra Leone is the intended purpose of this Comprehensive Analysis. As a result, the overall study will produce concrete evidences on OOSC in order to better influence alternative education programming in Sierra Leone.

This document examines the out-of-school situation in Sierra Leone using data from both global and national sources, including the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS); Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS); Population and Housing Census data; Sierra Leone Demographic and Health Survey (SLDHS); Education Management Information System (EMIS) data; and other recent research work on OOSC in Sierra Leone, as well as the analysis of programme data provided by the education innovators. Gender, locale (rural/urban dynamics), wealth status (quintiles), and regions are all factored into the analysis.

² <https://www.unicef.org/sierraleone/education>

The first chapter discusses the introductory aspect of OOSC at both global and country level, objective, research questions, methodology, available datasets on OOSC and frameworks underpinning out-of-school children. The analysis of the OOSC data using existing global and national level data and intake, completion and effective transition rates are covered in chapter two; analysis of programme data provided by the education innovators is covered in chapter three, and the key findings, conclusions, and recommendations are highlighted in chapter four.

1.1 Objective of the Comprehensive Analysis

The comprehensive analysis' overarching goal is to generate evidence-based knowledge on the prevalence of out-of-school situations in Sierra Leone, as well as to assess the effectiveness and adaptability of accelerated education programmes and girls' focused education models in relation to the Out-of-School Children (OOSC) population.

The Specific Objectives of the research include the following:

- 1) Generate knowledge on the effectiveness of innovative alternative education approaches in increasing access to quality education for girls, children with disabilities and children living in rural and conflict prone areas.
- 2) Establish how alternative education programs can be better adapted in contexts characterised by extreme poverty, inadequate teachers, conflicts, and growing populations.
- 3) Build capacity of governments to adopt and scale up effective alternative education innovations into policy to increase access for children who are out of school.

1.1.1 Research Questions

The comparative analysis compiles reports, assessments, evaluations, and research studies on out-of-school children in order to answer the following research questions, which are part of a wider study on AEP projects.

- 1) What is the effectiveness, efficiency, and adaptability of the education innovations in relation to the Out-of-School Children (OOSC) population and girls? (RQ:1)
 - a) What is the scale and prevalence of out-of-school girls and boys of different ages and socio-economic backgrounds in selected rural zones across the three countries (Sierra Leone)?
 - b) What are the profiles of the different categories of OOSC?

- c) What is the drop-out rate across the various innovation, particularly for girls and children living with disability?

1.2 Methodology

The comprehensive analysis was put together using a systematic review and synthesis approach. This included a summary analysis and synthesis of program/project reports, as well as the utilization of statistics from international, national, and programmatic levels to estimate the prevalence of out-of-school children in Sierra Leone. The team specifically followed three important procedures, which were as follows:

- a) The first procedure involved a rigorous literature evaluation of peer-reviewed journals, reports and other relevant documents in order to provide empirical evidence on out-of-school children and AEP programmes in Sierra Leone;
- b) The second phase involved estimating the size/prevalence of the out-of-school-children problem using a variety of datasets, including those from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), EMIS, Population and Housing Census data, and the Sierra Leone Demographic and Health Survey (SLDHS);
- c) The final phase involves the programmatic analysis. This process allowed for a better understanding of the AEP interventions' implementation techniques, outreach, and impact.

1.3 Datasets on Out of School Children in Sierra Leone

This section summarizes the most important data/report sources used in compiling the comprehensive analysis.

1.3.1 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) 2017

Statistics Sierra Leone (SSL) conducted the sixth round of the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) for Sierra Leone in 2017, with technical assistance from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) as part of the Global MICS Programme. The MICS program is the world's largest household survey program on women and children. UNICEF created the MICS to help nations cover data gaps on children's and women's health, including fertility, reproductive health, maternal health, child health, vaccination, HIV and AIDS, maternal and child mortality, malaria, and other indicators. The report does, however, give some data/information on children's educational attainment/attendance, out-of-school and related difficulties, as well as educational and fundamental learning skills in Sierra Leone. MICS surveys collect data on key indicators that countries can use to establish policies, programs, and national development plans, as well as track progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and other internationally

agreed-upon commitments. The purpose of this report is to make it easier to disseminate and use the results of the Sierra Leone MICS in a timely manner.

However, the report also provides some level of information on the educational attainment of children, out-of-school and related issues and on education in Sierra Leone. Preliminary evidence from the report shows 18 percent of OOSC at primary level (21 percent male and 16 percent female), 19 percent of OOSC at JSS level (20.2percent male and 17.6 percent female) and 36 percent of OOSC at SSS level (31.4 percent male and 39.7 percent female). The MICS reports an increased disparity in urban and rural gross intake as the children progress.

1.3.2 Sierra Leone Demographic and Health Survey (SLDHS) 2019

Statistics Sierra Leone conducted the 2019 Sierra Leone Demographic and Health Survey (2019 SLDHS) on behalf of the Sierra Leone Ministry of Health and Sanitation. The US Agency for International Development (USAID), the Global Fund, the British Department for International Development (DFID), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the World Health Organization (WHO), and the World Bank all contributed to the 2019 SLDHS. The DHS Program, a USAID-funded programme that provides support and technical assistance in the implementation of demographic and health surveys in countries around the world, provided technical assistance. Fertility levels, marriage, fertility preferences, awareness and use of family planning methods, child feeding practices, women's and children's nutritional status, adult and childhood mortality, HIV/AIDS awareness and attitudes, and female genital mutilation were all studied.

The SLDHS also includes data on education parameters for women and men, such as attendance and reading levels for certain age groups. According to preliminary statistics, roughly 15.3 percent females between the ages of 6-9 years and 17.7 percent males within the same age bracket in Sierra Leone are illiterates. 49.6 percent female and 37.8 percent male in rural regions are OOS while 25.2 percent female and 16 percent male are OOS in urban regions. Hence, female and male in urban regions were far more likely than those in rural areas to obtain greater levels of education, and men were more likely to be literate than women.

1.3.3 Sierra Leone Population and Housing Census (PHC) 2015

The 2015 Population and Housing Census (PHC) is the fifth modern census conducted in Sierra Leone since independence. The main objective of 2015 PHC is to provide quality and timely statistical information for development planning, policy formulation and service delivery, as well as for monitoring and evaluation of development programmes and plans.

The report presents a wide range of quality information on population and housing characteristics at the various administrative sub-divisions. It also contains data on the socio-economic impact of the Ebola Virus Disease.

Information on the attendance status of children aged 3 and older is available as well. According to the report, 44.3 percent of children have never attended school (39.6 percent male and 48.8 percent female) with females accounting for the majority. Furthermore, 55.5 percent has ever attended school (60.1 percent male and 50.9 percent female). The proportion of females who had previously attended school was lower than the proportion of boys who had previously attended school.

1.3.4 Education Management Information Systems (EMIS) 2020

The Directorate for Planning and Policy in the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE) is responsible to provide the leadership and support for Government and its partners related to the Annual School Census. The Annual School Census (ASC) is an activity to collect, compile, analyze and disseminate education data related to schools, infrastructure, management and learning outcomes. These analyses inform the national understanding of trends in numeracy, literacy, retention, transition and multi-level performance.

In line with the Ministry's Policy on Radical Inclusion in Schools, the ASC 2020 report contains different analyses including data on pregnant school girls and special needs schools; in addition to school intake rates; the supply of teachers and their qualifications to match pupil-teacher ratios; pupil classroom ratios and pupil furniture ratios. This report also provides information on school mapping using Global Positioning Systems (GPS) and heat maps of educational facilities. For the first time, comprehensive data has been collected on all non-formal learning centers including the learners and knowledge givers.

The results presented in this report are the outputs of the Education Management Information Systems (EMIS), a critical investment of the sector in MBBSE's existing projects supported by Global Partnership for Education (GPE), EU-Support to Education Sector in Sierra Leone (SESSiL) and World Bank.

1.4 Strengths and Weaknesses of the Aforementioned Datasets

DHS and MICS provide the following advantages:

- They are publicly available, well-documented data sources that are free to use.
- They provide information on trends over time because data is gathered on a regular basis in many nations (every 5 years).
- A core set of survey modules is standardized across countries, allowing for cross-country comparisons; some countries have extra modules (e.g., biomarker data)

DHS and MICS flaws include:

- DHS and MICS data do not provide extensive quantitative food intake data, but the present data can be used to generate insights on the links between baby and young child feeding and nutritional outcomes through time within and across nations.
- Relies on one adult female reporting by proxy for children under the age of five.

In order to evaluate the out-of-school children in Sierra Leone, the various datasets utilized for this comprehensive analysis often use different parameters. With the exception of MICS, all of the datasets offer information on school enrolment, as well as literacy levels, but none of them explicitly addresses out-of-school children. The diverse datasets employed different methods, had different age cohorts, and had varied goals, all of which posed some validity and reliability issues. As a result, each dataset has intrinsic strengths and flaws.

The EMIS data are also not without limitations. EMIS data essentially preclude information on children who are excluded from education, as it focuses exclusively on in-school children. Therefore, the data must be complemented by data from another source, normally census data. Attempts to link EMIS data to the projected census data proved relatively unhelpful; notably, estimates for the primary school age group for various districts and the entire country reflected negative values. Further enquiries revealed apparent data collection and entry challenges. It was reported that since the amount of money allocated as school subsidies is directly correlated to enrolment numbers, many head teachers have deliberately inflated their records on school enrolment.

1.5 Definitions and Frameworks Supporting OOSC

Different organizations and groups have characterized out-of-school children in different ways. For the sake of this comprehensive analysis, we use the following UNICEF OOSCI (2018) and UIS definitions:

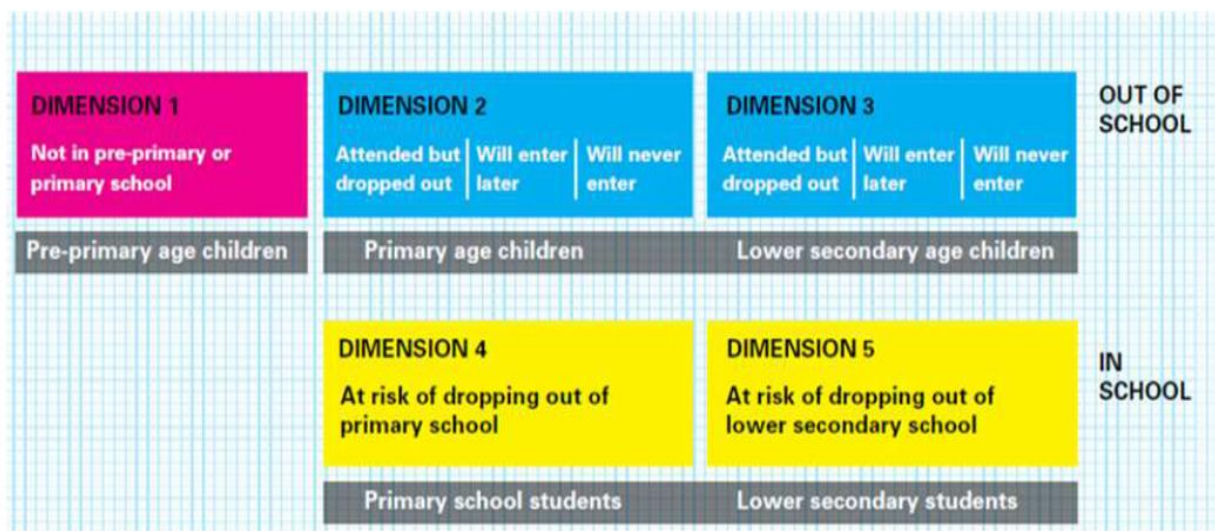
- *Out-of-school children can be individuals who have previously attended school but then dropped out, or those who have never attended school at all.*
- *According to the UIS, Out-of-school children refers to children of official primary school age who are not in primary or secondary education. Children in pre-primary education or non-formal education are considered out of school (UNESCO, 2015).*

1.5.1 UNICEF OOSC Framework

The construction of the comprehensive analysis is based on this framework. It offers a methodical method for identifying out-of-school children, as well as research to better understand the realities "on the ground." It lays forth five criteria for assessing out-of-school children, including those at risk of dropping out. Data on excluded students from pre-primary to lower secondary school age is compiled to apply the framework.

The 'Five Dimensions of Exclusion (5DE),' covers three levels of education and contains five target groups of children and spans three levels of education: pre-primary, primary, and lower secondary (Table 1). It focuses on both children who are out of school (Dimensions 1, 2, and 3) and those who are in school but on the verge of dropping out (Dimensions 4 and 5). The 5DE allows for the investigation of patterns linked with diverse exposures to schooling and disparities that cut across the dimensions, with the potential to improve the tracking and targeting of unique groups by taking a multi-dimensional approach to the issue of OOSC. The inclusion of dimensions that address children who are enrolled in school but on the verge of dropping out helps to connect concerns and policies related to education quality with those related to access and enrolment. The model emphasizes the importance of transition and the necessity for policy coherence across school levels by including children from pre-primary, primary, and secondary schools. This UNICEF model, however, ignores teenagers who have never attended school and those who are on the verge of dropping out of senior high school.

Figure 2: UNICEF OOSC Framework 2018



Source: UNICEF Out-Of-School Children Framework (2018)

Table 1: The UNICEF 2018 Five dimensions of exclusion for OOSC

Dimensions	Description
Dimension 1	Children of pre-primary school age (3-5 years) who are not in pre-primary or primary school (1DE)
Dimension 2	Children of primary school age (6-11 years) who are not in primary or secondary school (2DE)
Dimension 3	Children of lower secondary school age (12-14 years) who are not in primary or secondary

	school (3DE)
Dimension 4	Children who are in primary school but at risk of dropping out (4DE)
Dimension 5	Children who are in lower secondary school but at risk of dropping out (5DE)

Source: (UNICEF, 2018)

Chapter Two

Analysis of OOSC using Available Datasets

2.0 Introduction

In Sierra Leone, children begin primary education at the age of six, junior secondary school at the age of twelve, and secondary school at the age of fifteen. In elementary school, there are six grades, while in secondary school, there are three plus three grades. Class 1 to class 6 are the grades used in primary school. JSS 1 to 3 is used for junior secondary school, and SSS 1 to 3 is used for upper secondary school. Typically, the academic year runs from September to July of the following year³.

This section uses the available datasets such as the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), Sierra Leone Population and Housing Census data, Sierra Leone Demographic and Health Survey and the Education Management Information System data to provide the situation and synthesized details on the out of school phenomenon. The analysis is carried out on global, national, regional and district levels.

2.1 Analysis of Out of School Children in Sierra Leone - International Data

UNESCO Institute for Statistics database has provided several countries with accurate data on the number of OOSC at a given period of time. **Table 2** shows the number of OOSC in Sierra Leone for 2015, 2017 and 2018 as 624,292, 608,717 and 719,750 respectively⁴. In each year, more boys are OOS at the primary level than girls; and the reverse can be said for the senior school level. At junior school level, there is a fine balance between boys and girls in terms of OOSC; although it slightly tilts towards females as dictated by the data. Data for 2016, 2019 and 2020 were not available.

³ MICS Report 2017

⁴ <http://data.uis.unesco.org/>

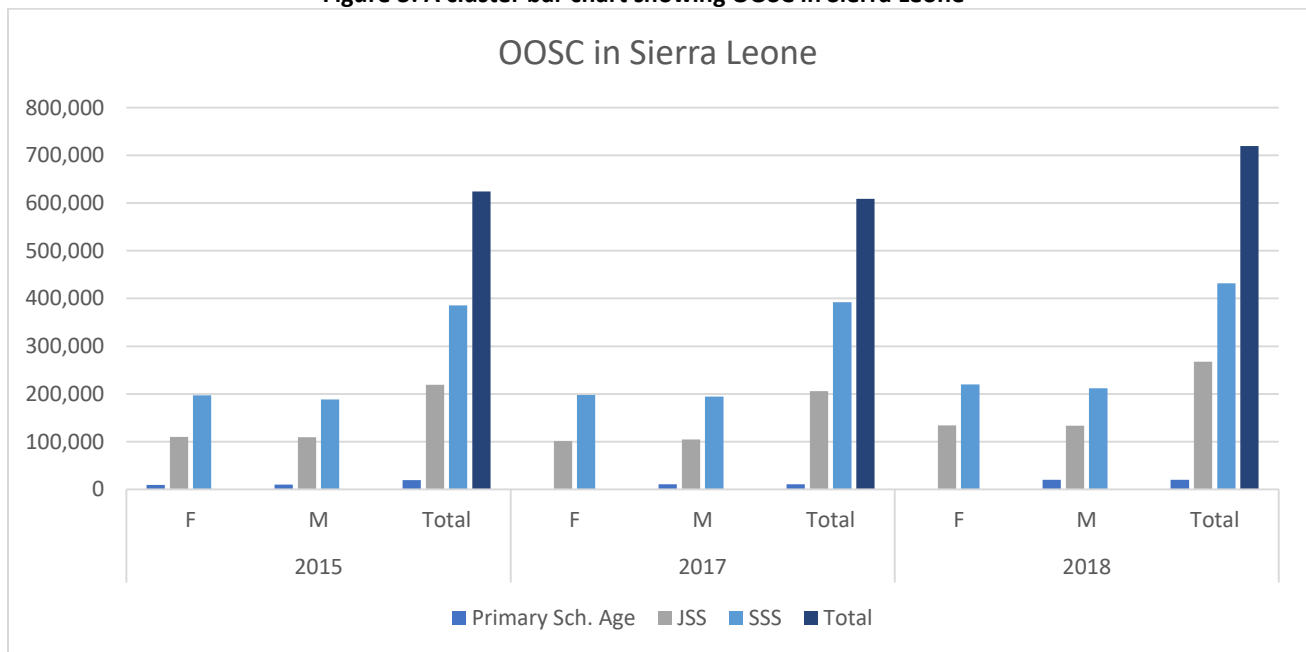
Table 2: OOSC in Sierra Leone based on UNESCO Institute for Statistics

Age	2015			2017			2018		
	F	M	Total	F	M	Total	F	M	Total
6-11	9,053	10,200	19,253	-	10,676	10,676	-	20,296	20,296
12-14	110,156	109,016	219,172	101,322	104,522	205,844	134,005	133,635	267,640
15-18	197,288	188,579	385,867	198,010	194,187	392,197	219,774	212,040	431,814
Total			624,292			608,717			719,750

Source: UIS Database

*For both 2017 and 2018, no female data at primary level is recorded in the UIS database

Figure 3: A cluster bar chart showing OOSC in Sierra Leone



2.1.1 Out of School Children in Sierra Leone - Regional Data

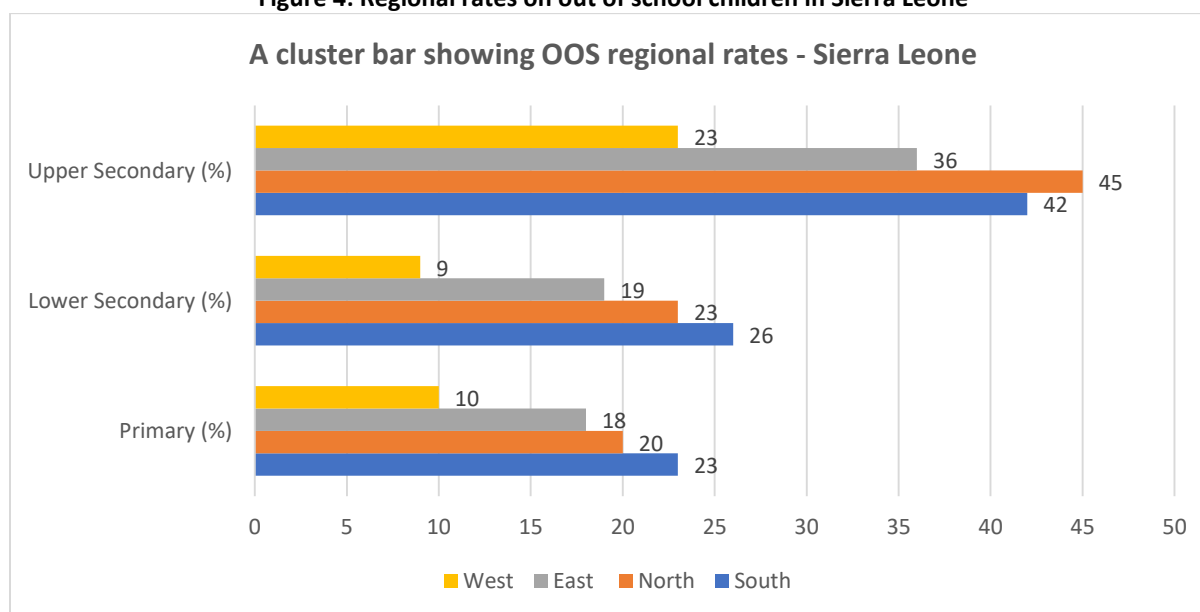
The Southern region has the highest out-of-school rates across both primary (23 percent) and lower secondary (26 percent) levels of schooling, while the Northern region accounts for the highest OOS rates at upper secondary (45 percent) level, according to data from the World Inequality Database on Education as shown in (Table 3). However, the northern region's out-of-school rate climbs to among the highest in the country in the upper secondary level. The western region records the lowest out of school rates across all levels of schooling.

Table 3: Regional rates on out of school children in Sierra Leone⁵

Region	Primary (percent)	Lower Secondary (percent)	Upper Secondary (percent)
South	23	26	42
North	20	23	45
East	18	19	36
West	10	9	23

Source: World Inequality Database on Education

Figure 4: Regional rates on out of school children in Sierra Leone



Source: World Inequality Database on Education

⁵ https://www.education-inequalities.org/indicators/eduout_upsec/sierra-leone#years=percent5Bpercent222017percent22percent5D&ageGroups=percent5Bpercent22eduout_upsecpercent22percent5D

2.2 Analysis of Out of School Children in Sierra Leone – National Data

This section focuses on the use of national level datasets in establishing the out of school situation in Sierra Leone. The aforementioned datasets (MICS, DHS, PHC and EMIS) are the key sources for this analysis.

2.2.1 MICS (2017) Out of School Data – National Level

MICS5, an international survey program to monitor the situation of children and women, includes the Sierra Leone Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) 2017. MICS also provides statistics for measuring progress toward MDGs and SDGs, notably those relating to health, education, and mortality. From 15,309 households, 17,873 women and 7,415 men aged 15 to 49 were successfully questioned for the 2017 Sierra Leone MICS. In addition, 11,764 questions for children under the age of five and 11,033 questionnaires for children between the ages of five and seventeen were completed.

2.2.1.1 Out of School Population at Primary Level

The MICS 2017 data included 12,727 primary school-aged children (6-11 years). Around 2,299 of the children (or 18 percent) were not in school. Poverty, lack of schools & sanitation facilities, lack of inclusive educational settings and discrimination are the leading causes of out of school children in Sierra Leone notwithstanding the introduction of the Free Quality School Education ⁶ According to an analysis of the wealth context in relation to the OOSC condition, children from the poorest wealth quintile have out-of-school rates that are five times higher than those from the highest wealth quintile. Compared to 34.3 percent of children in the poorest wealth quintile, only 6.7 percent of children in the richest income quintile are out of school in primary school. Out-of-school rates among rural children are significantly higher than the national average, whereas rates among urban children are clearly lower. (Statistics Sierra Leone, 2018).

The data also shows that there is a high rate of attendance and a low rate of dropout at the primary school level. At the primary school level, the data shows an attendance rate of 82 percent, with 79 percent of boys and 84 percent of girls.

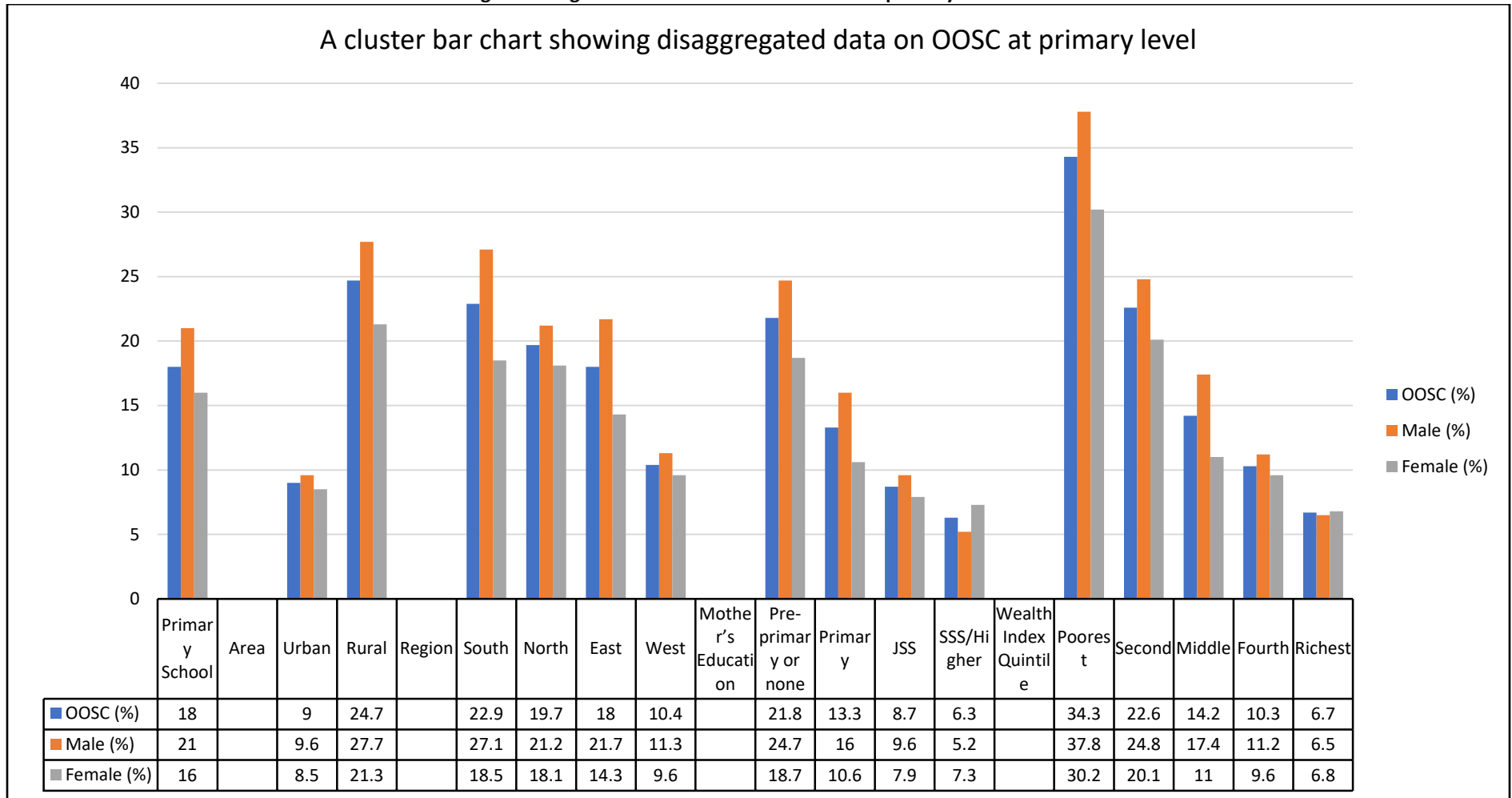
Regional and District Levels

At the district level, Bonthe had the largest proportion of out-of-school children at 42 percent (46 percent boys, 37 percent girls); while at regional level, the south had 22.9 percent (27 percent boys, 19 percent girls) and the western area urban had the lowest at 10percent. (11 percent boys, 9 percent girls).

⁶ <https://educateachild.org/our-partners-projects/country/sierra-leone>

There is a negative correlation between out-of-school children and their mothers' educational level: 22 percent of children with moms with a pre-primary education were out of school, compared to only 6 percent of children with mothers with a senior high school diploma or higher.

Figure 5: Regional and district data for OOSC in primary school



Source: MICS 2017 Data

Table 4: Primary school attendance and out of school children – National Level

PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN OF PRIMARY SCHOOL AGE ATTENDING PRIMARY OR SECONDARY SCHOOL (ADJUSTED NET ATTENDANCE RATIO), PERCENTAGE ATTENDING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION, AND PERCENTAGE OUT OF SCHOOL, SIERRA LEONE, 2017

	Male					Female					Total				
	Percentage of children:					Percentage of children:					Percentage of children:				
	Net attendance ratio (adjusted)	Not attending school or early childhood education	Attending early childhood education	Out of school ^A	Number of children	Net attendance ratio (adjusted)	Not attending school or early childhood education	Attending early childhood education	Out of school ^A	Number of children	Net attendance ratio (adjusted) ^B	Not attending school or early childhood education	Attending early childhood education	Out of school ^A	Number of children
Total	79.2	19.8	0.8	20.6	6,391	84.4	14.7	0.7	15.5	6,336	81.8	17.3	0.8	18.1	12,727
Area															
Urban	90.1	8.1	1.5	9.6	2,493	91.4	7.6	1.0	8.5	2,893	90.8	7.8	1.2	9.0	5,386
Rural	72.2	27.3	0.4	27.7	3,898	78.6	20.8	0.5	21.3	3,443	75.2	24.2	0.5	24.7	7,341
Region															
East	78.2	21.2	0.5	21.7	1,502	85.4	14.0	0.4	14.3	1,518	81.8	17.6	0.4	18.0	3,020
North	78.7	20.6	0.6	21.2	2,305	81.8	17.4	0.7	18.1	2,204	80.2	19.0	0.6	19.7	4,509
South	72.7	26.7	0.4	27.1	1,343	81.5	17.7	0.8	18.5	1,270	77.0	22.3	0.6	22.9	2,612
West	88.5	9.1	2.2	11.3	1,241	90.3	8.4	1.2	9.6	1,344	89.4	8.8	1.7	10.4	2,586
District															
Kailahun	73.9	25.5	0.5	26.0	405	85.4	13.5	0.8	14.2	421	79.7	19.4	0.6	20.0	825
Kenema	75.3	24.7	0.0	24.7	599	84.7	15.0	0.0	15.0	630	80.1	19.7	0.0	19.7	1,229
Kono	85.2	13.6	1.0	14.6	498	86.5	13.1	0.5	13.5	468	85.8	13.3	0.8	14.1	966
Bombali	82.2	17.6	0.1	17.8	558	90.7	9.1	0.2	9.3	531	86.4	13.5	0.2	13.6	1,090
Kambia	78.1	21.4	0.2	21.7	301	79.3	20.1	0.6	20.7	281	78.7	20.8	0.4	21.2	583
Koinadugu	68.4	29.9	0.7	30.6	352	70.6	28.3	0.6	28.9	354	69.5	29.1	0.7	29.7	707
Port Loko	81.1	18.7	0.3	19.0	660	83.3	15.9	0.9	16.7	615	82.2	17.3	0.6	17.9	1,275
Tonkolili	79.0	19.3	1.7	21.0	433	79.7	19.2	1.0	20.3	422	79.4	19.3	1.4	20.6	855
Bo	84.7	14.8	0.4	15.2	580	88.6	10.4	1.0	11.4	666	86.8	12.4	0.7	13.1	1,245
Bonthe	53.5	45.5	0.6	46.1	185	63.1	36.1	0.8	36.9	165	58.0	41.0	0.7	41.8	350
Moyamba	66.2	33.2	0.6	33.8	309	74.9	23.7	1.0	24.7	223	69.9	29.2	0.7	30.0	532
Pujehun	67.6	32.0	0.0	32.0	269	80.2	19.8	0.0	19.8	216	73.2	26.6	0.0	26.6	485
Western Area Rural	87.9	9.6	2.1	11.7	391	89.0	10.3	0.7	11.0	455	88.5	10.0	1.3	11.3	847
Western Area Urban	88.8	8.8	2.3	11.1	850	91.0	7.5	1.4	8.9	889	89.9	8.2	1.8	10.0	1,739

Age at beginning of school year															
6	68.8	27.8	3.4	31.2	1,349	72.5	25.0	2.4	27.3	1,340	70.7	26.4	2.9	29.3	2,689
7	78.3	21.1	0.6	21.7	1,061	84.4	14.3	1.2	15.5	1,143	81.5	17.6	0.9	18.5	2,204
8	83.2	16.5	0.3	16.7	1,007	86.4	13.6	0.0	13.6	963	84.8	15.0	0.1	15.2	1,970
9	81.3	18.3	0.0	18.3	1,159	89.7	10.3	0.0	10.3	1,093	85.4	14.4	0.0	14.4	2,253
10	85.1	14.7	0.0	14.7	839	88.7	10.9	0.0	10.9	860	86.9	12.8	0.0	12.8	1,700
11	83.0	16.8	0.0	16.8	975	89.3	10.6	0.0	10.6	936	86.0	13.8	0.0	13.8	1,911
Mother's education²															
Pre-primary or none	75.1	24.1	0.7	24.7	4,540	81.2	18.3	0.4	18.7	4,291	78.0	21.3	0.5	21.8	8,831
Primary	84.0	14.5	1.6	16.0	699	89.2	9.2	1.4	10.6	725	86.6	11.8	1.5	13.3	1,424
Junior Secondary	90.5	8.2	1.4	9.6	516	92.0	7.3	0.5	7.9	583	91.3	7.7	1.0	8.7	1,099
Senior Secondary or Higher	94.7	4.3	0.9	5.2	633	92.7	5.3	2.0	7.3	735	93.6	4.8	1.5	6.3	1,368
Mother's functional difficulties															
Has functional difficulty	78.7	20.3	0.7	21.0	1,008	83.8	16.0	0.2	16.2	1,060	81.3	18.1	0.4	18.5	2,068
Has no functional difficulty	80.4	18.6	0.9	19.5	4,413	84.7	14.2	0.9	15.1	4,348	82.6	16.4	0.9	17.3	8,761
No information	74.3	24.8	0.8	25.6	970	83.6	15.8	0.4	16.2	928	78.8	20.4	0.6	21.0	1,898
Wealth index quintile															
Poorest	62.2	37.3	0.4	37.8	1,435	69.7	29.9	0.4	30.2	1,235	65.7	33.9	0.4	34.3	2,670
Second	75.0	24.5	0.3	24.8	1,388	79.7	19.9	0.3	20.1	1,264	77.3	22.3	0.3	22.6	2,652
Middle	82.5	16.5	0.9	17.4	1,366	88.8	10.4	0.6	11.0	1,310	85.6	13.5	0.7	14.2	2,676
Fourth	88.5	9.6	1.6	11.2	1,109	90.4	8.3	1.3	9.6	1,287	89.5	8.9	1.4	10.3	2,395
Richest	93.3	5.3	1.2	6.5	1,093	93.1	5.8	1.1	6.8	1,241	93.2	5.5	1.1	6.7	2,334

¹MICS indicator LN.5a - Primary school net attendance ratio (adjusted)

²MICS indicator LN.6a - Out-of-school rate for children of primary school age

^aThe percentage of children of primary school age out of school are those not attending school and further includes those attending early childhood education

Source: MICS 2017 Data

2.2.1.2 Out of School Population at Lower Secondary Level

According to the data, the lower secondary out-of-school rate is 19 percent, with males accounting for 20.2 percent of the total, compared to 17.6 percent for females; nonetheless, the out-of-school rate is slightly higher than that of primary school.

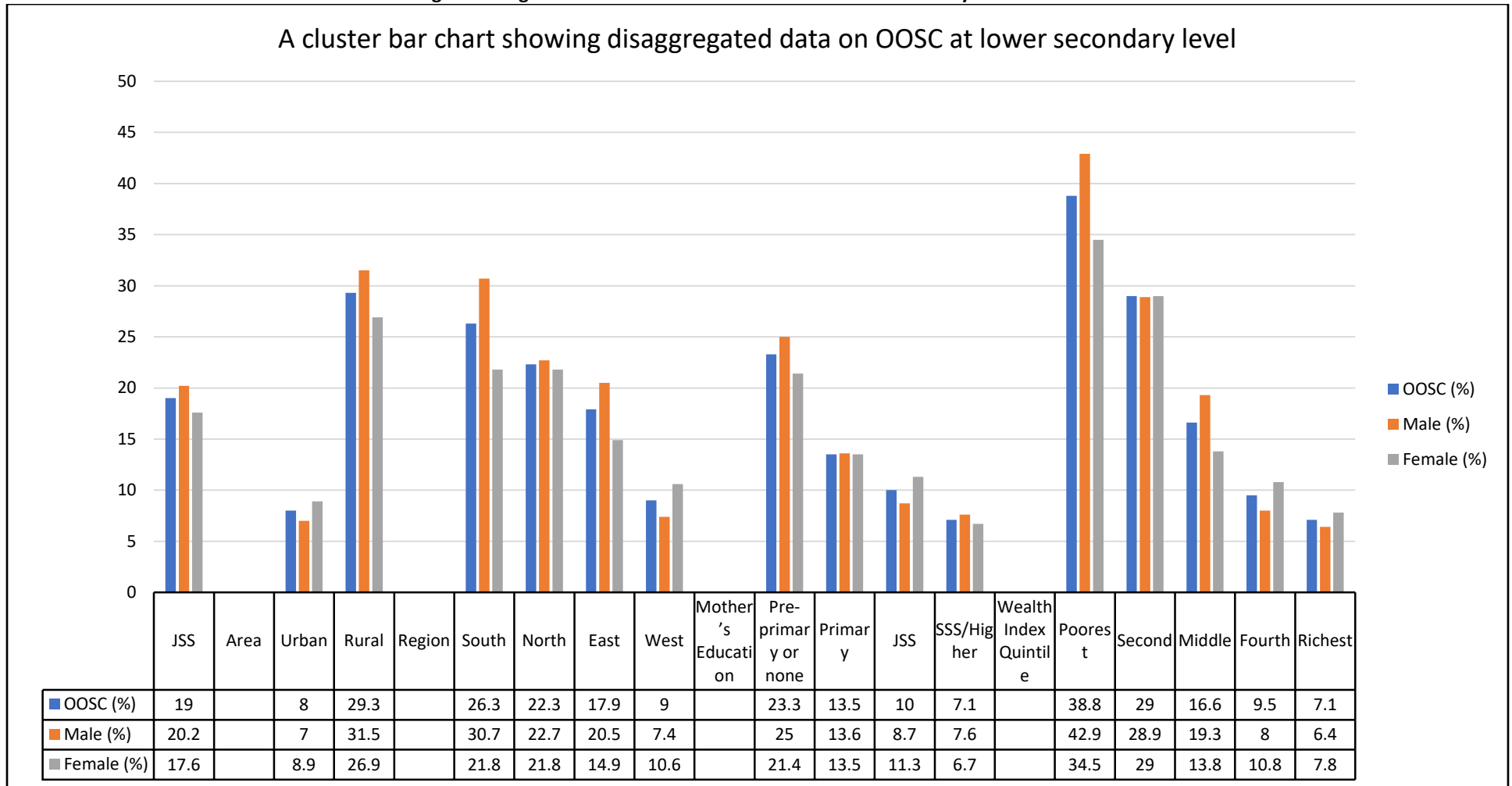
When broken down by location, urban children account for 8.0 percent of the total out-of-school population at the lower secondary level (7.0 percent for males and 8.9 percent for females), while children from rural populations account for 29.3 percent (31.5 percent for males and 26.9 percent for females). The results demonstrate a strong rural-urban gap in the out-of-school population, implying that the majority of excluded children live in low-income neighborhoods. Furthermore, the disparity between rural and urban out-of-school rates is significant (rural out of school population almost four times the urban population). Furthermore, female out-of-school rates in rural areas are lower than male out-of-school rates, whereas female out-of-school rates in urban areas are higher than male out-of-school rates. The data shows a 36.2 percentage of attendance at the lower secondary level, with a gender breakdown of 36.2 percent males and 36.3 percent females.

Regional and District Levels

Similarly, at the district and regional levels, Bonthe (39.0 percent) and south (26.3 percent) had the biggest out-of-school populations. The out-of-school children situation had a negative relationship with a child's mothers' educational level; 23.3 percent of children with mothers with a pre-primary education were out of school, compared to just 7.1 percent of children with mothers with a senior high school diploma or higher.

Finally, the wealth quintile disaggregated data shows that children in the poorest quintile account for 38.3 percent of the total lower secondary out-of-school population, compared to 29.0 percent for children in the second quintile, 16.6 percent for those in the middle quintile, 9.5 percent for those in the fourth quintile, and 7.1 percent for those in the richest quintile. Poorer (richer) pupils are more (less) likely to be excluded from lower secondary school, according to the data.

Figure 6: Regional and district data for OOSC in lower secondary school



Source: MICS 2017 Data

Table 5: Lower secondary school attendance and out of school adolescents – National Level

PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN OF SECONDARY SCHOOL AGE ATTENDING SECONDARY SCHOOL OR HIGHER (ADJUSTED NET ATTENDANCE RATIO), PERCENTAGE ATTENDING PRIMARY SCHOOL, AND PERCENTAGE OUT OF SCHOOL, SIERRA LEONE, 2017

	Male				Female				Total			
	Net attendance ratio (adjusted)	Percentage of children:		Number of children	Net attendance ratio (adjusted)	Percentage of children:		Number of children	Net attendance ratio (adjusted) ¹	Percentage of children:		Number of children
		Attending primary school	Out of school ^A			Attending primary school	Out of school ^A			Attending primary school	Out of school ^{F-A}	
Total	36.2	43.5	20.2	2,590	36.3	46.1	17.6	2,501	36.2	44.8	19.0	5,092
Area												
Urban	56.6	36.4	7.0	1,189	53.7	37.4	8.9	1,286	55.1	36.9	8.0	2,474
Rural	18.9	49.5	31.5	1,402	17.8	55.3	26.9	1,216	18.4	52.2	29.3	2,617
Region												
East	33.9	45.6	20.5	625	34.8	50.3	14.9	552	34.4	47.8	17.9	1,177
North	26.8	50.3	22.7	887	30.7	47.5	21.8	864	28.7	48.9	22.3	1,751
South	26.7	42.6	30.7	490	27.4	50.8	21.8	491	27.0	46.7	26.3	981
West	60.8	31.8	7.4	589	53.1	36.3	10.6	594	56.9	34.1	9.0	1,182
District												
Kailahun	27.4	46.1	26.5	177	30.9	56.9	12.1	140	29.0	50.9	20.2	317
Kenema	37.6	40.9	21.5	255	43.9	40.1	16.0	235	40.6	40.5	18.9	489
Kono	35.1	51.3	13.6	193	26.0	58.3	15.7	178	30.7	54.7	14.6	371
Bombali	29.1	53.2	17.7	233	35.7	50.3	14.0	240	32.5	51.7	15.8	472
Kambia	24.2	55.9	19.9	134	17.9	45.8	36.3	128	21.1	51.0	27.9	262
Koinadugu	26.2	37.7	36.1	124	25.8	40.2	34.0	139	26.0	39.0	35.0	263
Port Loko	22.9	55.3	21.7	225	35.9	49.8	14.3	206	29.1	52.7	18.2	432
Tonkolili	31.1	44.6	23.6	171	30.8	48.0	21.2	151	31.0	46.2	22.5	322
Bo	35.4	48.7	15.9	220	32.7	53.6	13.7	238	34.0	51.2	14.8	458
Bonthe	26.7	24.8	48.6	59	24.0	47.8	28.2	52	25.4	35.6	39.0	111
Moyamba	14.1	45.0	40.9	111	22.1	44.4	33.4	105	18.0	44.7	37.3	216
Pujehun	21.5	36.9	41.7	100	21.9	52.6	25.5	96	21.7	44.6	33.8	196
Western Area Rural	58.3	33.2	8.5	223	42.6	45.2	12.2	214	50.6	39.1	10.3	437
Western Area Urban	62.3	30.9	6.8	366	58.9	31.4	9.7	380	60.6	31.1	8.3	746
Age at beginning of school year												
12	21.8	58.8	19.3	926	21.6	64.0	14.4	873	21.7	61.3	16.9	1,799
13	39.6	42.0	18.4	773	38.0	44.2	17.8	732	38.8	43.1	18.1	1,505
14	48.2	29.0	22.8	892	49.1	30.2	20.7	896	48.7	29.6	21.7	1,787

Mother's education²³

Pre-primary or none	28.5	46.4	25.0	1,759	30.2	48.4	21.4	1,666	29.3	47.4	23.3	3,425
Primary	42.3	44.1	13.6	273	31.9	54.7	13.5	264	37.2	49.3	13.5	537
Junior Secondary	54.7	36.5	8.7	221	50.5	38.2	11.3	219	52.6	37.3	10.0	440
Senior Secondary or Higher	59.5	32.9	7.6	330	59.4	33.9	6.7	349	59.4	33.4	7.1	679
No information	(*)	(*)	(*)	4	(*)	(*)	(*)	4	(*)	(*)	(*)	8

Mother's functional difficulties

Has functional difficulty	28.2	49.5	22.3	350	36.7	46.8	16.5	368	32.6	48.1	19.3	719
Has no functional difficulty	38.1	42.8	19.0	1,737	36.2	45.8	17.9	1,684	37.2	44.3	18.5	3,421
No information	35.2	41.9	22.9	503	36.1	46.5	17.4	449	35.6	44.1	20.3	952

Wealth index quintile

Poorest	9.8	47.3	42.9	436	12.9	52.5	34.5	416	11.4	49.8	38.8	852
Second	17.9	52.9	28.9	528	14.6	56.4	29.0	398	16.5	54.4	29.0	925
Middle	30.7	50.0	19.3	565	29.6	56.6	13.8	552	30.2	53.3	16.6	1,117
Fourth	56.7	35.3	8.0	497	50.8	38.4	10.8	561	53.6	37.0	9.5	1,058
Richest	61.1	32.5	6.4	565	60.4	31.8	7.8	575	60.7	32.2	7.1	1,140

¹MICS indicator LN.5b - Lower secondary school net attendance ratio (adjusted)

²MICS indicator LN.6b - Out-of-school rate for adolescents of lower secondary school age

^AThe percentage of children of lower secondary school age out of school are those who are not attending primary, upper secondary or higher education

[†]Figures that are based on less than 25 unweighted cases

Source: MICS 2017 Data

2.2.1.3 Out of School Population at Upper Secondary Level

At the upper secondary level, the out-of-school rate increases for all groups, with more females out-of-school than males (Table 6). In fact, the share of females is high at 40 percent compared to 31 percent in the case of males. This sharply contrasts with the sex-disaggregated data on out-of-school rates at both primary and lower secondary levels, which show higher out-of-school rates for males than females. This appears to suggest that females' risk of dropping out increases as they advance to higher levels of education. Teenage pregnancy, early marriage and other social obligations are the key causes for females drop out of school at this level.

The share of urban youth in total out-of-school population at the upper secondary level is 21 percent (18.2 percent for males and 23.2 percent for females). The share of those from rural populations is 53.8 percent (46.2 percent for males and 60.2 percent for females). It is interesting to note that the rural out of school rates is more than twice the urban rates. In addition, the female out-of-school rates in both rural and urban areas are higher than the corresponding rates for males. This means that, irrespective of location, females face stronger barriers to education as they progress higher.

Moreover, disaggregating by age shows that the share of age 15 youth in total out-of-school population at the upper secondary level is 24.6 percent (26.2 percent for males and 23.4 percent for females), the share of age 16 youth is 27.7 percent (24.6 percent for males and 30.5 percent for females), age 17 youth's share is 41.3 percent (35.1 percent for males and 45.9 percent for females), and age 18 youth's share is 41.3 percent (40.6 percent for males and 54.7 percent for females). The data shows that the risk of dropping out-of-school rises with age; the risk is even higher for females.

Regional and District Levels

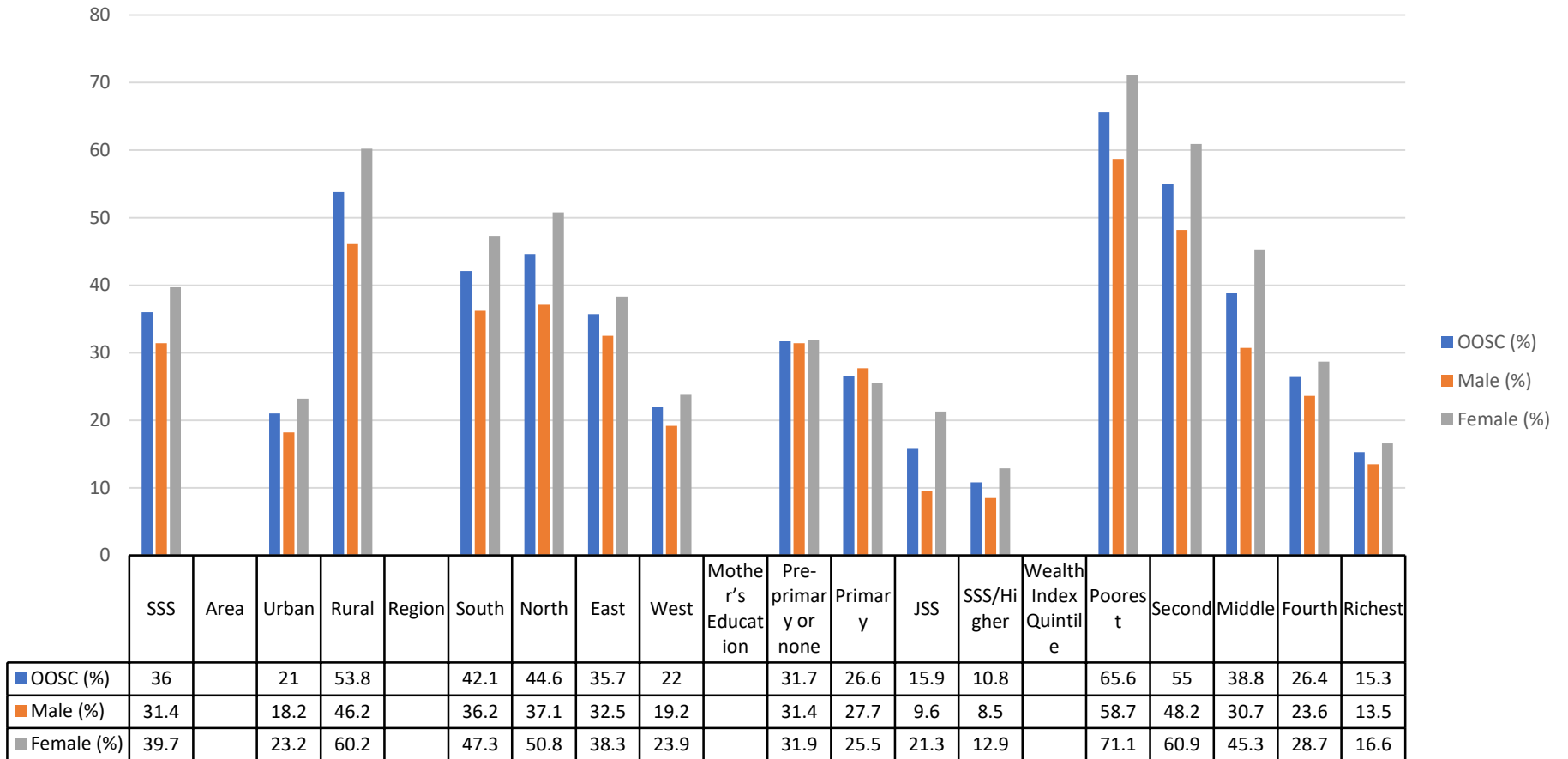
The northern region recorded the highest out of school rate of 44.6 percent (37.1 percent for males and 50.8 percent for females) at the upper secondary level; followed by the south 42.1 percent (36.2 percent males and 47.3 percent females), east 35.7 percent (32.5 percent males and 38.3 percent females) and west 22 percent (19.2 percent males and 23.9 percent females). Moyamba district has the highest upper secondary out of school rates of 56.7 percent (55.2 percent for males and 58.2 percent for females), trailed by Tonkolili, Bonthe and Kambia with out of school rate of 52.2 percent, 51.3 percent and 50.1 percent respectively. The Western Area Urban recorded the lowest upper secondary out of school rates of 18.5 percent (17.7 percent for males and 19.1 percent for females).

The wealth quintile disaggregation shows that share of youth from the poorest quintile is 65.6 percent of the total upper secondary out-of-school population, compared to 55.0 percent in the

case of youth from the second quintile, 38.8 percent for those from the middle quintile, 26.4 percent for those from the fourth quintile, and 15.3 percent for those that belong to the richest quintile. The quintile disaggregated analysis show that poorer (richer) youth are more (less) likely to be excluded from school. But the exclusionary rates are significantly high among youth from all quintile, especially females as shown in (Table 6), which indicates the presence of structural barriers to upper secondary education.

Figure 7: Regional and district data for OOSCY in upper secondary school

A cluster bar chart showing disaggregated data on OOSY for upper secondary level



Source: MICS 2017 Data

Table 6: Upper secondary school attendance and out of school youth – National Level

PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN OF UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL AGE ATTENDING UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL OR HIGHER (ADJUSTED NET ATTENDANCE RATIO), PERCENTAGE ATTENDING LOWER SECONDARY SCHOOL, AND PERCENTAGE OUT OF SCHOOL, SIERRA LEONE, 2017

	Male					Female					Total				
	Percentage of children:				Number of children	Percentage of children:				Number of children	Percentage of children:				Number of children
	Net attendance ratio (adjusted)	Attending lower secondary school	Attending primary school	Out of school ^A		Net attendance ratio (adjusted)	Attending lower secondary school	Attending primary school	Out of school ^A		Net attendance ratio (adjusted) ¹	Attending lower secondary school	Attending primary school	Out of school ^{2A}	
Total	29.9	30.0	8.6	31.4	2,541	27.5	26.3	6.5	39.7	3,187	28.6	27.9	7.4	36.0	5,728
Area															
Urban	46.4	31.0	4.4	18.2	1,340	43.7	29.7	3.4	23.2	1,769	44.9	30.3	3.8	21.0	3,110
Rural	11.6	29.0	13.3	46.2	1,201	7.3	21.9	10.4	60.2	1,417	9.2	25.2	11.7	53.8	2,618
Region															
East	21.7	35.3	10.5	32.5	586	21.3	31.5	8.7	38.3	716	21.5	33.2	9.5	35.7	1,302
North	24.2	29.8	8.8	37.1	796	18.0	24.3	6.8	50.8	969	20.8	26.8	7.7	44.6	1,765
South	20.8	30.4	12.6	36.2	524	16.1	26.7	9.9	47.3	595	18.3	28.5	11.2	42.1	1,119
West	52.3	25.2	3.3	19.2	635	50.0	24.0	2.1	23.9	907	51.0	24.5	2.6	22.0	1,542
District															
Kailahun	20.0	34.6	8.9	36.4	156	8.8	34.5	12.2	44.5	162	14.3	34.6	10.6	40.5	318
Kenema	25.4	34.0	11.9	28.6	263	25.5	31.3	7.0	36.2	343	25.4	32.5	9.1	32.9	607
Kono	17.4	38.0	9.5	35.1	167	24.2	29.4	8.9	37.0	211	21.2	33.2	9.2	36.1	378
Bombali	35.9	29.9	6.1	28.0	250	24.7	27.7	3.5	44.0	232	30.6	28.9	4.9	35.7	481
Kambia	21.1	30.6	12.7	35.0	107	12.9	21.2	6.5	59.4	175	16.1	24.8	8.9	50.1	282
Koinadugu	23.9	23.4	8.7	43.9	131	16.3	24.5	9.1	50.1	197	19.4	24.1	9.0	47.6	329
Port Loko	19.9	32.4	8.3	39.4	185	20.1	23.0	8.7	47.8	225	20.0	27.2	8.5	44.0	410
Tonkolili	9.5	31.9	11.8	46.7	123	12.0	24.3	6.7	57.0	140	10.8	27.9	9.1	52.2	263
Bo	28.9	37.1	12.6	21.3	242	23.8	26.9	12.3	36.9	264	26.3	31.8	12.5	29.5	506
Bonthe	15.5	18.5	16.6	49.4	66	15.3	27.2	4.6	52.9	84	15.4	23.4	9.9	51.3	150
Moyamba	15.9	19.0	9.9	55.2	135	11.6	20.9	9.3	58.2	138	13.7	19.9	9.6	56.7	273
Pujehun	8.7	39.5	13.7	38.1	80	3.9	33.2	8.9	54.1	109	5.9	35.8	10.9	47.3	190
Western Area Rural	40.7	31.0	5.0	23.2	170	37.9	23.6	3.6	34.8	275	39.0	26.4	4.2	30.4	445
Western Area Urban	56.6	23.0	2.6	17.7	465	55.3	24.1	1.5	19.1	632	55.8	23.7	2.0	18.5	1,097
Age at beginning of school year															
15	15.8	40.0	18.0	26.2	532	14.9	46.1	15.6	23.4	637	15.3	43.3	16.7	24.6	1,169
16	26.6	36.9	11.8	24.6	722	28.0	33.0	8.5	30.5	779	27.3	34.9	10.1	27.7	1,501
17	35.8	25.9	3.2	35.1	755	31.5	19.5	2.9	45.9	1,024	33.3	22.2	3.0	41.3	1,779
18	40.2	16.7	2.5	40.6	532	32.2	11.6	1.5	54.7	746	35.6	13.7	1.9	41.3	1,279

Mother's education²															
Pre-primary or none	16.1	36.9	15.6	31.4	859	16.4	37.8	13.9	31.9	982	16.2	37.4	14.7	31.7	1,841
Primary	23.3	38.1	10.8	27.7	142	24.7	41.0	8.9	25.5	147	24.0	39.6	9.8	26.6	289
Junior Secondary	37.1	43.2	10.1	9.6	126	33.2	36.6	8.9	21.3	148	35.0	39.6	9.5	15.9	274
Senior Secondary or Higher	45.6	36.0	9.9	8.5	224	46.4	37.1	3.6	12.9	252	46.0	36.6	6.6	10.8	477
No information ³	37.0	21.6	2.9	38.5	1,189	31.0	15.6	2.1	51.2	1657	33.5	18.1	2.4	45.9	2,845
Mother's functional difficulties															
Has functional difficulty	25.6	36.6	14.6	23.2	171	25.8	36.5	9.3	28.3	228	25.7	36.6	11.6	26.1	399
Has no functional difficulty	25.4	36.8	12.1	25.7	896	27.8	24.5	5.6	42.0	2631	27.2	27.6	7.3	37.9	3,527
No information ^B	33.2	25.2	5.8	35.8	1,474	26.1	33.5	11.5	28.9	327	31.9	26.7	6.8	34.5	1,801
Wealth index quintile															
Poorest	4.4	21.0	16.0	58.7	339	3.7	15.7	9.6	71.1	432	4.0	18.0	12.4	65.6	770
Second	10.5	26.6	14.5	48.2	446	5.1	22.3	11.5	60.9	509	7.6	24.3	12.9	55.0	956
Middle	21.7	37.5	10.1	30.7	528	14.0	32.0	8.6	45.3	651	17.4	34.5	9.3	38.8	1,179
Fourth	37.0	33.3	6.2	23.6	558	35.6	31.3	4.5	28.7	723	36.2	32.1	5.2	26.4	1,282
Richest	56.3	28.4	1.8	13.5	670	55.8	25.4	2.1	16.6	871	56.1	26.7	2.0	15.3	1,541

¹MICS indicator LN.5c - Upper secondary school net attendance ratio (adjusted)

²MICS indicator LN.6c - Out-of-school rate for youth of upper secondary school age

^AThe percentage of children of upper secondary school age out of school are those who are not attending primary, lower secondary or higher education

^BChildren age 18 or higher at the time of the interview

Source: MICS 2017 Data

2.2.1.4 Analysis Based on the UNICEF 5-Dimensions

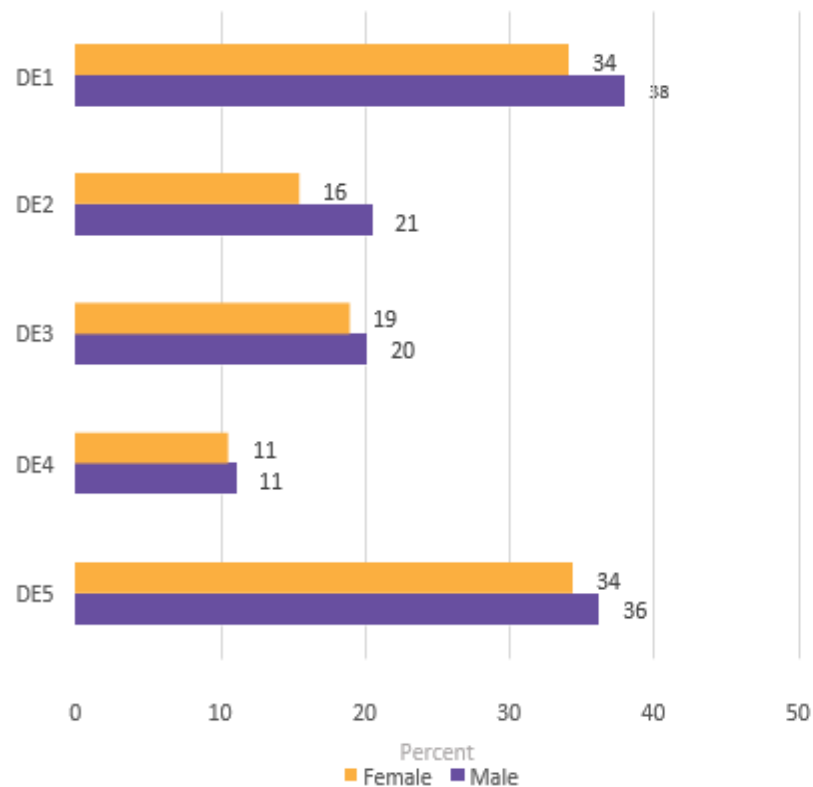
The UNICEF OOSC framework is used to categorize the out of school numbers into five aspects. The data, as shown in Figure 8, demonstrates that the proportion of boys and girls who do not attend early childhood education or primary school is equivalent in dimension one, with 38 percent of boys and 34 percent of girls not attending either early childhood education or primary school.

According to the data, boys account for 21 percent of the OOS figure under dimension two, which refers to children of primary school age who are not enrolled in school, compared to 16 percent for girls. In dimension 3, 20 percent of males and 19 percent of females are out of school. Both males and females showed similar proportions in dimension 4, 11 percent. Furthermore, 36 percent of males and 34 percent of females are said to be in dimension 5, according to the study. The poll found a slight discrepancy in the proportion of boys and girls, while dimension 2 demonstrated the widest disparity in the percentage of boys and girls. Boys are more likely than girls to drop out of school or be out of school, according to a broad analysis of the data.

Figure 8: Out of school dimensions for levels of education

Out of School Rates

Out of School Dimensions for Levels of Education



Dimension 1: Children not attending an early childhood education programme or primary education

Dimension 2: Children of primary school age who are not in primary or secondary school

Dimension 3: Children of lower secondary school age who are not in primary or secondary school

Dimension 4: Children who are in primary school but at risk of dropping out (overage by 2 or more years)

Dimension 5: Children who are in lower secondary school but at risk of dropping out (overage by 2 or more years)

Source: MICS 2017 Statistical Snapshots

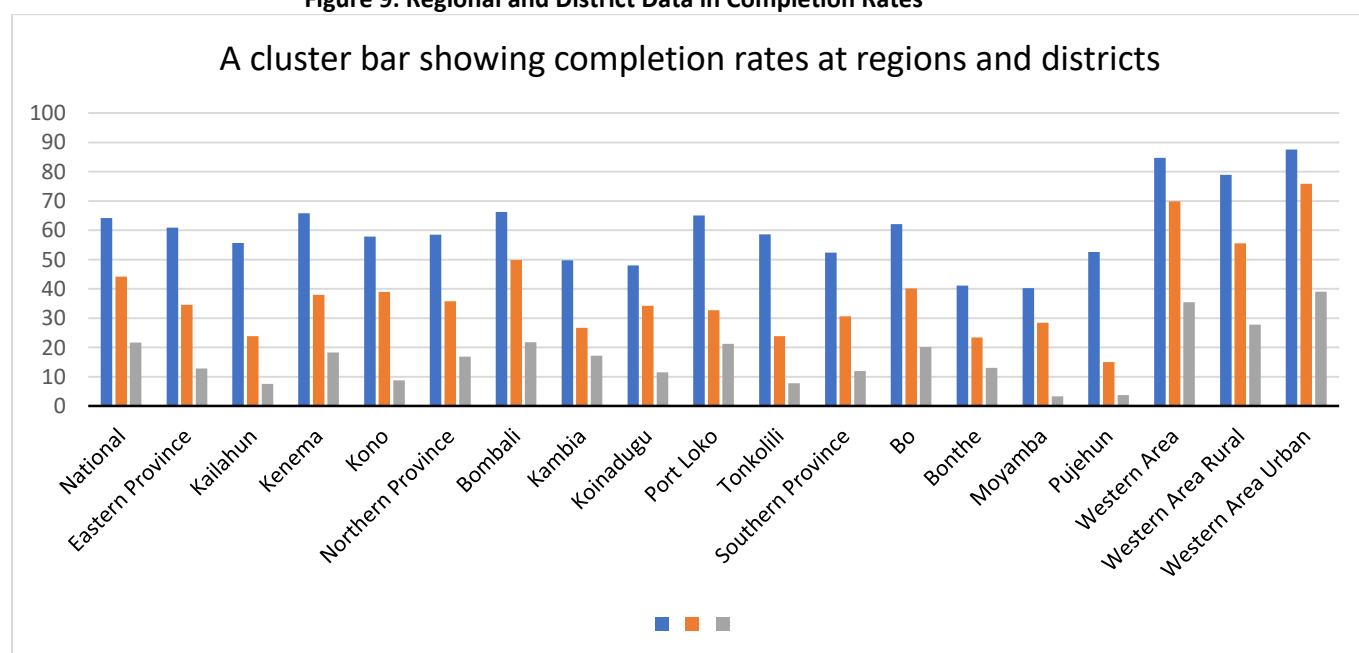
2.2.1.5 Gross Intake, Completion and Effective Transition Rates

Gross enrollment, completion, and effective transition rates for primary, lower secondary, and upper secondary schools are also included in the MICS data. The results of the analysis (Table 7) demonstrate that gross national intake at the primary level is (84.9 percent), with females accounting for the majority (86.5 percent) of this group, compared to (83.3 percent) males. Furthermore, the primary gross intake of urban areas (93.2 percent) is higher than that of rural areas (77.4 percent). This could be as a result of the prevalent poverty and reduced number of schools in rural communities.

Despite a rise in the number of students enrolled, the national completion rate has been continuously declining at all levels (64.2 percent for primary, 44.2 percent for lower secondary, and 21.7 percent for upper secondary), with girls accounting for the majority of primary school graduates. On the contrary, boys graduate from lower secondary and higher secondary school in greater numbers than girls. The completion rate for urban children is comparable to that of rural children, as seen by their enrollment patterns.

Across all levels, the south had the lowest completion rates (52.4 percent for primary, 30.6 percent for lower secondary, and 11.9 percent for upper secondary) (Statistics Sierra Leone, 2018). At the district level, Bonthe (41.1 percent), Pujehun (15.0 percent), and Moyamba (3.3 percent) had the lowest primary, lower secondary, and upper secondary completion rates, respectively. Furthermore, the numbers show a progressive reduction in the rate as children go through the school system at the wealth quintile level. In the lowest income quintiles, the completion ratio was exceptionally low, whereas in the highest income quintiles, it was extremely high.

Figure 9: Regional and District Data in Completion Rates



Source: MICS 2017 Statistical Snapshots (see also Table 7)

Table 7: Gross intake, completion and effective transition rates

GROSS INTAKE RATE AND COMPLETION RATE FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL, EFFECTIVE TRANSITION RATE TO SECONDARY SCHOOL, GROSS INTAKE RATE AND COMPLETION RATE FOR LOWER SECONDARY SCHOOL AND COMPLETION RATE FOR UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL, SIERRA LEONE, 2017												
	Gross intake rate to the last grade of primary school ¹	Number of children of primary school completion age	Primary school completion rate ²	Total number of children age 14-16 years ⁴	Effective transition rate to secondary school ³	Number of children who were in the last grade of primary school the previous year and are not repeating that grade in the current school year	Gross intake rate to the last grade of lower secondary school ⁴	Number of children of lower secondary school completion age	Lower secondary completion rate ⁵	Total number of adolescents age 17-19 years ⁴	Upper secondary completion rate ⁶	Total number of youth age 20-22 years ⁴
Total	84.9	1,911	64.2	4,457	94.7	1,262	69.2	1,787	44.2	4,627	21.7	3,535
Sex												
Male	83.3	975	63.3	2,146	95.7	674	66.4	892	47.3	1,974	27.4	1,494
Female	86.5	936	65.1	2,312	93.6	589	72.1	896	41.9	2,653	17.5	2,041
Area												
Urban	93.2	897	82.9	2,289	96.6	811	101.1	859	64.6	2,537	33.1	2,092
Rural	77.4	1,014	44.5	2,169	91.4	452	39.8	929	19.5	2,090	5.1	1,443
Region												
East	85.4	445	60.9	1,025	95.4	303	67.6	416	34.6	1,019	12.8	668
North	84.1	662	58.5	1,468	92.8	356	52.5	626	35.8	1,399	16.9	1,104
South	79.9	363	52.4	886	93.0	240	57.9	353	30.6	895	11.9	549
West	89.5	441	84.7	1,078	97.2	363	107.9	392	69.9	1,313	35.4	1,213
District												
Kailahun	96.5	108	55.6	240	92.5	71	61.3	107	23.9	265	7.6	162
Kenema	90.2	177	65.8	461	94.8	150	74.7	189	38.0	494	18.3	298
Kono	72.8	160	57.8	324	99.1	82	62.1	121	38.9	261	8.8	208
Bombali	96.0	165	66.2	369	91.8	97	61.0	162	49.9	414	21.8	325
Kambia	76.9	88	49.8	242	94.2	44	47.2	90	26.7	183	17.2	129
Koinadugu	77.6	98	48.0	278	94.5	42	49.2	116	34.2	229	11.5	164
Port Loko	77.5	189	65.1	338	93.8	83	53.6	143	32.7	350	21.2	277
Tonkolili	88.6	123	58.6	241	91.7	90	46.8	116	23.9	224	7.8	208
Bo	95.1	166	62.1	391	91.7	136	63.3	155	40.1	392	20.1	232
Bonthe	58.2	58	41.1	104	98.6	27	54.9	40	23.4	126	13.0	78
Moyamba	69.7	71	40.2	219	(95.8)	27	44.2	90	28.5	224	3.3	126
Pujehun	71.8	68	52.6	172	91.8	51	65.4	68	15.0	153	3.7	113
Western Area Rural	95.0	139	78.9	347	97.3	117	71.2	153	55.5	386	27.8	385
Western Area Urban	87.0	302	87.5	731	97.1	246	131.5	239	75.9	927	39.0	828

Pre-primary or none	76.7	1,323	57.5	2,919	95.6	690	39.8	1,202	na	na	na	na
Primary	79.1	204	63.9	450	94.4	128	42.6	184	(*)	24	na	na
Junior Secondary	85.0	166	80.3	396	96.7	133	59.8	154	(*)	32	na	na
Senior Secondary or Higher	117.1	218	84.2	663	95.9	218	76.6	238	(67.9)	52	na	na
No information ^B	-	-	(63.1)	27	83.4	93	(*)	8	44.1	4,395	21.7	3,535
Mother's functional difficulties												
Has functional difficulty	73.5	294	62.9	598	97.7	169	46.7	245	26.7	52	(*)	19
Has no functional difficulty	86.2	1,280	65.3	2,967	94.0	820	65.0	1,190	42.1	2,617	17.3	2,011
No information ^B	89.5	338	61.4	892	95.2	273	99.4	352	47.5	1,958	27.5	1,506
Wealth index quintile												
Poorest	62.0	337	32.8	659	91.1	119	21.4	289	8.3	602	1.6	429
Second	78.8	375	40.3	766	91.3	156	35.2	322	15.6	778	3.3	516
Middle	96.1	389	61.7	984	91.9	252	67.8	413	35.2	905	11.9	597
Fourth	85.7	386	81.6	964	96.6	378	89.3	378	55.2	1,064	24.0	861
Richest	97.3	423	87.0	1,084	97.5	357	115.7	384	75.8	1,277	41.1	1,132

¹ MICS indicator LN.7a - Gross intake rate to the last grade (Primary)

² MICS indicator LN.8a - Completion rate (Primary)

³ MICS indicator LN.9 - Effective transition rate to secondary school

⁴ MICS indicator LN.7b - Gross intake rate to the last grade (Lower secondary)

⁵ MICS indicator LN.8b - Completion rate (Lower secondary)

⁶ MICS indicator LN.8c - Completion rate (Upper secondary)

^ATotal number of children age 3-5 years above the intended age for the last grade, for primary, lower and upper secondary, respectively

^BChildren age 18 or higher at the time of the interview

na: not applicable

^(*) Figures that are based on less than 25 unweighted cases

^(†) Figures that are based on 25-49 unweighted cases

Source: MICS 2017 Data

2.2.2 Population and Housing Census (2015) – National Level

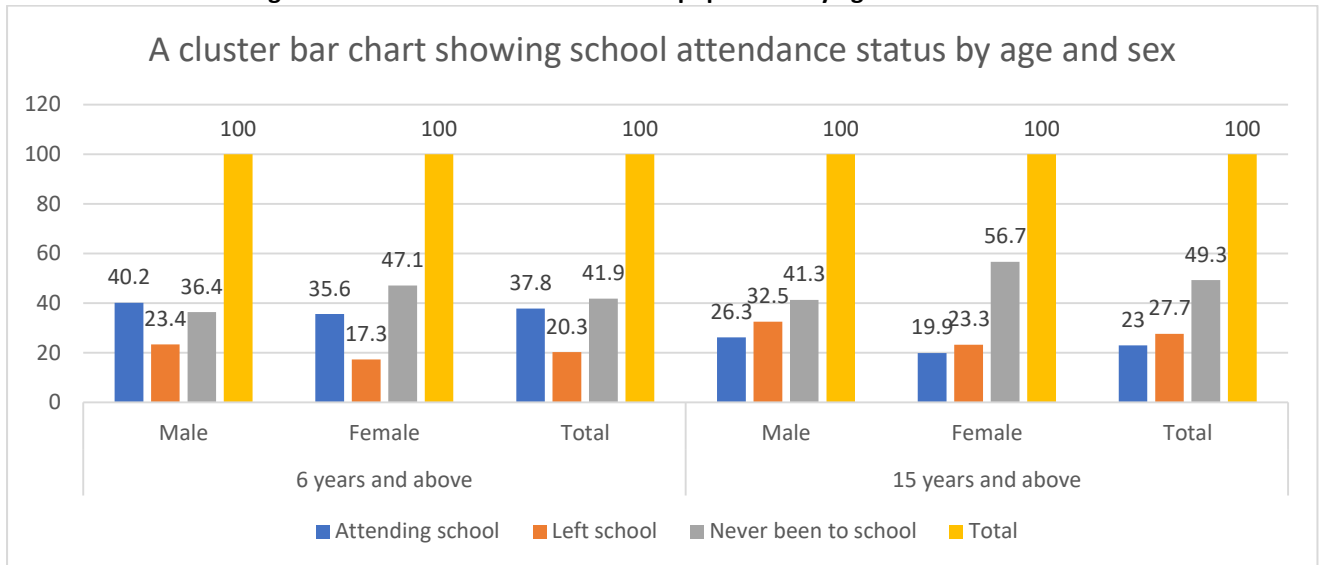
School attendance status was divided into three categories in the 2015 Census: those who were "attending school in 2015," "left school," and "never attended school." This data was gathered from anyone who was 6 years old or older. Only students who had attended school in 2015 were included in the 'attending school in 2015' category. Those who had left school prior to the 2015 Census were classified as "left school," while those who had never attended school were classified as "never attended." Table 8 shows the state of school attendance for students aged 6 to 15 years old. Overall, 37.8 percent of the population aged 6 and up went to school in 2015, with 20.3 percent having dropped out prior to the census. Two-fifths of the population (41.9 percent) had never attended school. Nearly half of the population (49.3 percent) of those aged 15 and up had never attended school, while 23 percent were currently in school and 28 percent had dropped out. Among individuals aged 15 and up, a larger proportion of girls than males had never attended school. The majority of the populace had never attended school (Kabugo, Kargbo, & Bangura, 2017).

Table 8: School attendance status of population by age group and sex

School attendance status	Population					
	6 years and above			15 years and above		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Attending school	40.2	35.6	37.8	26.3	19.9	23.0
Left school	23.4	17.3	20.3	32.5	23.3	27.7
Never been to school	36.4	47.1	41.9	41.3	56.7	49.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Statistics Sierra Leone, 2015 Population and Housing Census

Figure 10: School attendance status of population by age and sex



Source: 2015 population and housing census (See Table 8)

Regionally

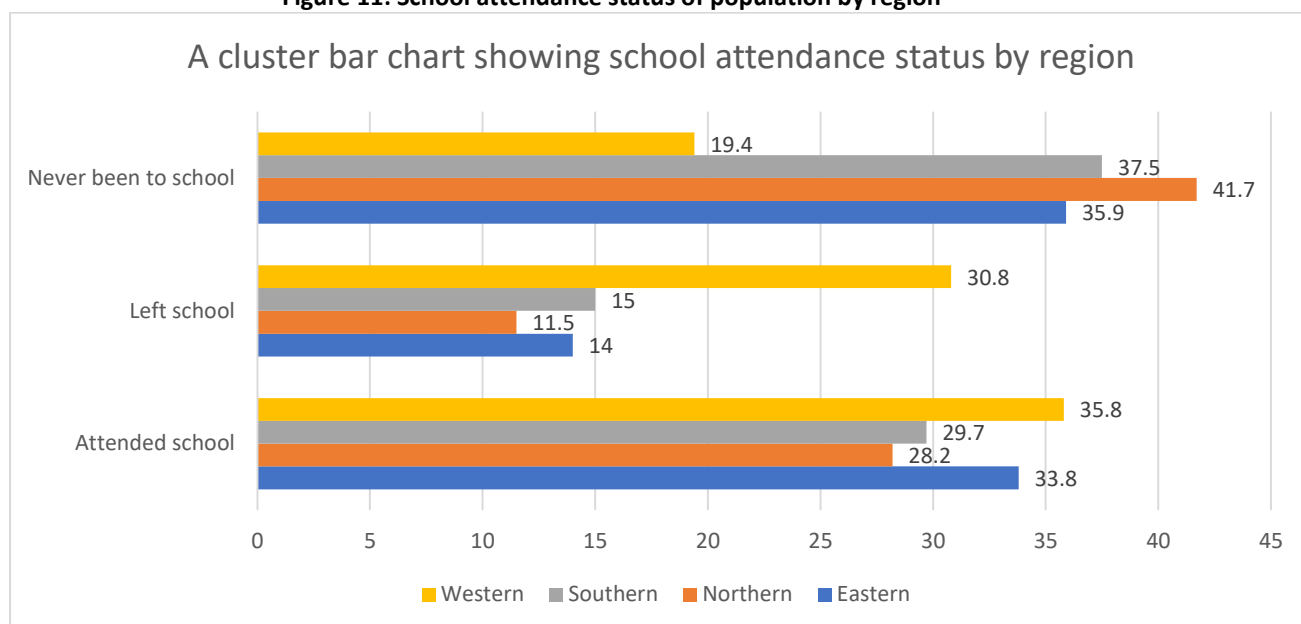
According to census data in Table 9, the proportion of persons who had never attended school was highest in the Northern Region (41.7 percent), followed by the Southern Region (37.5 percent), Eastern Region (35.9 percent), and Western Region (19.4 percent). The Western Region had the largest percentage of students who dropped out (30.8 percent), followed by the Southern Region with 15.0 percent, the Eastern Region with 14.0 percent, and the Northern Region with 11.5 percent (Kabugo, Kargbo, & Bangura, 2017).

Table 9: School attendance status of population by region

Characteristics	Attended school	Left school	Never been to school
Region			
Eastern	33.8	14.0	35.9
Northern	28.2	11.5	41.7
Southern	29.7	15.0	37.5
Western	35.8	30.8	19.4

Source: Statistics Sierra Leone, 2015 Population and Housing Census

Figure 11: School attendance status of population by region



Source: 2015 population and housing census (See Table 9)

2.2.3 Demographic and Health Survey (2019)

The DHS disaggregates data on the degree of education of household heads aged 6 and older by gender, locality, and age group. The data is broken down further by location and household wealth status. This data shows the percentage of females and males who have no education, as well as those with only a primary, secondary, or more than secondary education.

2.2.3.1 Educational Attainment of Female Population

The analysis shows that as at 2019, approximately 39 percent of the female household population have no education (see Table 10). Thirty-one percent of females age 6 or older have attended some primary school; however, only 4 percent of females have completed a primary education. The median number of years of schooling is 1.2 for women.

The percentage of females age 6 and over with no education has decreased since 2013, from 51 percent to 39 percent.

Urban residents are much more likely than rural residents to be educated. Twenty-five percent of females age 6 and older in urban areas have no education, as compared with 50 percent of females in rural areas. Ten percent of women in the highest wealth quintile have more than a secondary education, while 18 percent have no education. In the lowest quintile, 57 percent of women have no education and none have more than a secondary education (DHS, 2020).

Out of School Situation

Estimates for the out of school population for females as presented in (Table 10) shows that the population age 6-9 years had the highest proportion of out of school children accounting

for about 15.3 percent of the total sample (dimension 1). About 84.6 percent had some level of primary education, meaning, they started primary but had to drop for one reason or the other and did not complete their primary education (dimension 2). The female population age 10-14 however, recorded the lowest out of school numbers (5.9 percent).

Table 10: Educational attainment of the female household population

Background characteristic	No education	Some primary	Completed primary ¹	Some secondary	Completed secondary ²	More than secondary	Don't know/missing	Total	Number	Median years completed
Age										
6-9	15.3	84.6	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	4,453	0.3
10-14	5.9	74.2	5.4	14.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	4,814	3.2
15-19	11.5	16.4	4.6	64.6	2.4	0.5	0.0	100.0	3,548	6.8
20-24	21.2	10.3	4.7	47.1	11.3	5.4	0.0	100.0	2,768	7.7
25-29	35.5	12.7	5.0	30.1	9.3	7.3	0.1	100.0	2,746	5.3
30-34	59.1	11.2	3.6	13.9	4.3	7.8	0.0	100.0	2,036	0.0
35-39	70.5	11.1	2.9	9.9	1.9	3.7	0.0	100.0	2,222	0.0
40-44	73.4	8.3	3.2	9.6	1.6	3.9	0.0	100.0	1,347	0.0
45-49	74.9	7.7	5.0	7.4	1.6	3.3	0.1	100.0	1,296	0.0
50-54	79.0	4.5	2.7	8.2	1.8	3.4	0.3	100.0	1,429	0.0
55-59	82.4	4.3	3.6	5.5	1.5	2.1	0.7	100.0	999	0.0
60-64	87.2	2.4	2.1	5.6	0.7	1.7	0.3	100.0	644	0.0
65+	91.7	2.1	1.4	2.9	0.6	1.0	0.4	100.0	1,652	0.0
Residence										
Urban	25.2	29.1	3.4	31.0	5.6	5.6	0.2	100.0	12,993	4.3
Rural	49.6	33.1	3.5	12.3	1.0	0.5	0.0	100.0	16,959	0.0
Province										
Eastern	40.0	35.0	3.7	17.8	2.2	1.3	0.1	100.0	6,290	0.6
Northern	45.1	30.4	3.7	17.0	2.4	1.4	0.1	100.0	6,176	0.2
North West	47.3	32.7	2.1	15.5	1.3	1.0	0.0	100.0	5,264	0.0
Southern	42.6	33.0	4.4	16.4	1.9	1.7	0.0	100.0	5,770	0.4
Western Area	22.3	26.2	3.5	33.8	6.4	7.5	0.2	100.0	6,451	5.2
District										
Kailahun	43.0	36.9	2.4	15.7	0.8	1.0	0.1	100.0	1,511	0.0
Kenema	38.2	35.6	3.5	18.6	2.4	1.7	0.1	100.0	2,871	0.8
Kono	40.4	32.7	4.9	18.0	3.1	0.9	0.0	100.0	1,909	0.8
Bombali	38.2	32.6	2.9	20.8	3.3	2.2	0.0	100.0	2,201	1.6
Falaba	60.6	23.9	2.6	11.1	1.0	0.8	0.0	100.0	785	0.0
Koinadugu	47.7	29.8	1.7	16.6	3.0	1.2	0.0	100.0	846	0.0
Tonkolili	45.4	30.8	5.4	15.5	1.9	0.8	0.2	100.0	2,343	0.0
Kambia	46.4	34.4	1.8	15.6	0.9	0.9	0.1	100.0	1,931	0.0
Karene	54.3	32.4	1.2	11.2	0.6	0.3	0.0	100.0	975	0.0
Port Loko	45.2	31.5	2.7	17.3	2.0	1.4	0.0	100.0	2,357	0.2
Bo	38.2	34.4	4.6	17.7	2.5	2.5	0.1	100.0	2,531	1.3
Bonthe	48.2	27.6	5.7	15.6	1.5	1.5	0.0	100.0	891	0.0
Moyamba	44.3	32.8	4.2	15.8	1.6	1.2	0.0	100.0	1,447	0.0
Pujehun	46.3	34.8	2.6	14.3	1.2	0.7	0.0	100.0	901	0.0
Western Area Rural	25.6	28.7	4.1	31.8	5.0	4.7	0.1	100.0	2,462	4.2
Western Area Urban	20.3	24.7	3.2	35.0	7.3	9.2	0.3	100.0	3,989	5.9
Wealth quintile										
Lowest	57.2	31.6	3.0	7.9	0.2	0.0	0.0	100.0	5,592	0.0
Second	51.3	33.8	3.5	10.8	0.5	0.2	0.0	100.0	5,835	0.0
Middle	42.6	34.6	3.7	17.2	1.5	0.4	0.1	100.0	5,965	0.4
Fourth	29.3	31.2	3.8	29.6	4.0	2.1	0.0	100.0	6,242	3.2
Highest	17.9	26.1	3.4	34.3	8.0	10.0	0.3	100.0	6,318	6.1
Total	39.0	31.4	3.5	20.4	2.9	2.7	0.1	100.0	29,952	1.2

Source: Demographic and Health Survey 2019

2.2.3.2 Educational Attainment of Male Population

According to the findings, around 29 percent of male household population had no schooling as of 2019. (See Table 11). Only 3 percent of males aged 6 and up had completed a primary education, despite the fact that 32 percent of those aged 6 and up had attended some form of basic school. For men, the median number of years of education is 2.8.

Since 2013, the ratio of boys aged 6 and over without a high school education has declined from 41 percent to 29 percent.

People who live in cities are more likely to be educated than those who live in rural areas. In urban regions, sixteen percent of males aged six and above have no schooling, compared to 38 percent in rural areas. In the top wealth quintile, 15 percent of men have more than a secondary education, while 11 percent have no education. In the lowest quintile, 48 percent of men have no formal education and less than 1 percent have completed high school (DHS, 2020).

Out of School Situation

According to the estimates for the out of school population for males (Table 11), the population aged 6-9 years had the largest proportion of out of school children, accounting for around 17.7 percent of the total sample (dimension 1). About 82.3 percent had some level of elementary education, which means they started primary school but had to drop for one reason or another and did not complete it (dimension 2). Males aged 10-14, on the other hand, had the lowest out-of-school rates (10.4 percent).

Table 11: Educational attainment of the male household population

Background characteristic	No education	Some primary	Completed primary ¹	Some secondary	Completed secondary ²	More than secondary	Don't know/missing	Total	Number	Median years completed
Age										
6-9	17.7	82.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	4,598	0.2
10-14	10.4	70.4	3.8	15.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	4,932	3.0
15-19	11.4	16.4	4.1	65.3	2.5	0.3	0.0	100.0	3,570	6.8
20-24	17.2	6.8	3.2	49.8	17.5	5.3	0.2	100.0	2,179	9.1
25-29	20.6	7.0	3.1	35.5	22.2	11.6	0.0	100.0	2,223	8.9
30-34	29.2	7.3	3.1	27.2	15.4	17.2	0.5	100.0	1,658	8.0
35-39	46.1	10.3	4.5	19.1	8.7	10.6	0.6	100.0	1,711	2.7
40-44	50.7	10.2	5.3	18.4	4.4	10.6	0.3	100.0	1,352	0.0
45-49	53.3	9.6	6.6	18.0	4.5	7.5	0.5	100.0	1,411	0.0
50-54	57.5	4.5	3.1	17.0	5.6	11.3	1.0	100.0	920	0.0
55-59	60.0	6.8	4.4	14.6	4.5	8.8	0.9	100.0	895	0.0
60-64	69.8	6.6	2.3	8.9	4.5	7.6	0.3	100.0	767	0.0
65+	76.1	4.0	3.2	8.4	2.5	5.2	0.5	100.0	1,406	0.0
Residence										
Urban	16.0	27.9	3.4	32.6	9.9	9.7	0.4	100.0	11,451	6.1
Rural	37.8	35.4	3.1	18.5	3.2	1.8	0.1	100.0	16,170	0.9
Province										
Eastern	31.2	35.0	3.2	21.9	4.8	3.6	0.2	100.0	5,799	2.0
Northern	31.8	31.0	3.7	23.9	5.8	3.8	0.1	100.0	5,778	2.3
North West	31.5	36.6	1.9	23.5	3.8	2.7	0.0	100.0	4,740	1.9
Southern	35.9	34.4	3.6	17.6	4.3	4.1	0.1	100.0	5,391	1.3
Western Area	14.8	25.7	3.5	34.0	10.7	10.6	0.7	100.0	5,914	6.8
District										
Kailahun	31.5	36.7	3.2	22.2	3.3	3.1	0.1	100.0	1,333	1.8
Kenema	32.8	34.5	2.0	21.8	4.3	4.5	0.1	100.0	2,668	1.8
Kono	28.4	34.6	5.1	21.9	6.6	2.8	0.5	100.0	1,798	2.4
Bombali	24.8	29.9	3.8	28.7	7.4	5.4	0.0	100.0	1,937	4.1
Falaba	51.5	28.8	1.7	14.0	1.7	2.2	0.1	100.0	697	0.0
Koinadugu	35.1	31.2	1.8	19.9	7.2	4.8	0.0	100.0	805	1.4
Tonkolili	30.6	32.4	4.8	24.2	5.3	2.6	0.1	100.0	2,339	2.1
Kambia	32.2	34.7	1.3	26.1	3.4	2.2	0.1	100.0	1,706	1.7
Karene	35.4	40.5	1.6	18.8	1.6	2.1	0.0	100.0	931	1.1
Port Loko	29.2	36.4	2.5	23.4	5.0	3.4	0.0	100.0	2,103	2.2
Bo	28.0	36.1	4.0	20.4	5.6	5.9	0.1	100.0	2,270	2.8
Bonthe	50.2	27.1	4.3	11.9	3.8	2.8	0.0	100.0	880	0.0
Moyamba	35.2	34.1	3.8	20.4	3.0	3.3	0.2	100.0	1,313	1.3
Pujehun	42.7	37.6	1.7	12.0	3.5	2.4	0.0	100.0	928	0.0
Western Area Rural	18.1	29.9	3.3	31.7	8.5	8.3	0.1	100.0	2,205	5.4
Western Area Urban	12.8	23.2	3.7	35.4	11.9	12.0	1.0	100.0	3,709	7.6
Wealth quintile										
Lowest	47.9	35.2	2.6	12.2	1.6	0.4	0.0	100.0	5,358	0.0
Second	37.5	36.6	3.5	18.6	2.9	0.9	0.1	100.0	5,477	0.9
Middle	30.8	35.6	3.4	23.6	3.9	2.6	0.1	100.0	5,502	2.2
Fourth	18.2	31.0	3.5	32.2	9.3	5.7	0.1	100.0	5,485	5.1
Highest	10.9	23.7	3.2	34.2	11.8	15.3	0.8	100.0	5,799	7.8
Total	28.8	32.3	3.2	24.3	6.0	5.1	0.2	100.0	27,620	2.8

Source: Demographic and Health Survey 2019

2.2.3.3 School Attendance Ratios

Net attendance ratio (NAR) versus Gross attendance ratio (GAR)

NAR is the proportion of the school-age population that attends primary or secondary school. The total number of children attending primary school divided by the official primary school-age population and the total number of children attending secondary school divided by the official secondary school-age population are referred to as the GAR.

For children aged 6 to 11, the primary school NAR is 87 percent (89 percent for girls and 85 percent for boys). The secondary NAR lowers dramatically among girls, to 44% and 46%, respectively (See Table 12).

Regional level

Between urban and rural communities, there is a significant variance in primary school NAR (90 percent and 85 percent, respectively). At the secondary school level, the disparity widens (61 percent in urban areas and 31 percent in rural areas).

Primary school NAR is highest in the Eastern province (90 percent) and lowest in the Southern province (85 percent); secondary school NAR is highest in the Western Area (62 percent) and lowest in the Southern province (33 percent).

District level

At the district level, Kailahun (92 percent) has the greatest primary school NAR while Falaba has the lowest (75 percent). Western Area Urban has the greatest secondary NAR (67 percent) while Pujehun has the lowest (27 percent). The NAR rises in tandem with rising household wealth, particularly among secondary school students. The total secondary NAR increases from 22 percent in the lowest wealth quintile to 67 percent in the highest wealth quintile. The secondary NAR increases from 22 percent in the lowest quintile to 65 percent in the highest quintile among females (See Table 12).

Gender parity

Gender parity measures female to male student ratio in primary school, as well as the female to male student ratio in secondary school. The index measures the size of the gender divide.

A GAR result of more than 100% in a primary school indicates that a large number of kids are not of formal primary school age. The GAR in Sierra Leone is 128 percent in primary school (131 percent for females and 125 percent for boys) and 72 percent in secondary school (70 percent for females and 75 percent for males). A GPI of 1 implies parity or equality in the ratios of male and female students in school.

A GPI of less than one implies a gender discrepancy in favor of males, with more males than females attending the given level of education. A GPI greater than one shows a gender imbalance in favor of women. The GPI in Sierra Leone is 1.05 in primary school (showing

that more girls than boys attend primary school) and 0.93 in secondary school (meaning that more females than boys attend secondary school).

Table 12: School attendance ratios

Background characteristic	Net attendance ratio ¹				Gross attendance ratio ²			
	Male	Female	Total	Gender parity index ³	Male	Female	Total	Gender parity index ³
PRIMARY SCHOOL								
Residence								
Urban	90.3	90.1	90.2	1.00	126.9	126.6	126.7	1.00
Rural	82.1	87.7	84.7	1.07	124.1	134.3	128.8	1.08
Province								
Eastern	86.6	93.2	89.9	1.08	128.7	139.9	134.2	1.09
Northern	85.2	87.2	86.2	1.02	125.3	131.8	128.5	1.05
North West	85.9	85.9	85.9	1.00	130.0	128.1	129.1	0.99
Southern	80.0	90.7	85.1	1.13	123.0	135.6	128.9	1.10
Western Area	87.7	85.6	86.6	0.98	117.5	117.6	117.5	1.00
District								
Kailahun	89.8	95.0	92.3	1.06	135.0	150.0	142.4	1.11
Kenema	82.6	93.6	88.0	1.13	122.8	136.7	129.6	1.11
Kono	90.4	91.4	90.9	1.01	133.0	137.3	135.1	1.03
Bombali	85.8	87.5	86.7	1.02	130.5	138.7	134.9	1.06
Falaba	72.4	78.5	75.4	1.08	120.9	117.2	119.1	0.97
Koinadugu	89.9	89.2	89.6	0.99	129.9	129.3	129.6	1.00
Tonkolili	87.0	88.9	87.9	1.02	121.6	131.0	126.1	1.08
Kambia	85.8	85.9	85.9	1.00	127.0	134.6	130.8	1.06
Karene	87.2	89.2	88.1	1.02	133.3	127.1	130.5	0.95
Port Loko	85.4	84.4	84.9	0.99	130.8	123.0	127.0	0.94
Bo	85.4	90.9	88.1	1.06	134.0	136.7	135.4	1.02
Bonthe	71.4	85.2	77.3	1.19	103.0	128.9	114.1	1.25
Moyamba	78.8	90.2	84.3	1.14	117.1	131.6	124.0	1.12
Pujehun	77.7	96.1	85.8	1.24	124.7	144.8	133.5	1.16
Western Area Rural	82.6	81.8	82.2	0.99	115.2	119.6	117.4	1.04
Western Area Urban	91.3	88.1	89.6	0.97	119.2	116.3	117.7	0.98
Wealth quintile								
Lowest	76.3	85.6	80.4	1.12	115.1	130.3	121.7	1.13
Second	83.3	88.2	85.5	1.06	123.3	137.6	129.8	1.12
Middle	86.9	89.5	88.2	1.03	133.3	135.4	134.4	1.02
Fourth	89.2	89.3	89.3	1.00	132.3	129.5	130.8	0.98
Highest	92.6	90.7	91.6	0.98	123.6	122.0	122.7	0.99
Total	85.0	88.7	86.8	1.04	125.1	131.1	128.0	1.05

SECONDARY SCHOOL																										
Residence																										
Urban	62.1	59.8	60.9	0.96	101.9	96.1	98.8	0.94																		
Rural	33.7	28.3	31.3	0.84	54.2	43.1	49.2	0.79																		
Province																										
Eastern	43.6	41.7	42.7	0.96	73.2	64.7	69.1	0.88																		
Northern	49.1	41.2	45.3	0.84	79.4	61.9	71.0	0.78																		
North West	40.7	36.2	38.6	0.89	66.3	56.5	61.7	0.85																		
Southern	30.1	37.3	33.4	1.24	52.2	61.8	56.6	1.18																		
Western Area	64.8	60.2	62.4	0.93	100.9	97.6	99.2	0.97																		
District																										
Kailahun	39.4	32.6	36.0	0.83	63.5	50.7	57.1	0.80																		
Kenema	42.0	44.2	43.1	1.05	76.5	72.0	74.3	0.94																		
Kono	48.1	44.6	46.4	0.93	74.8	64.6	69.9	0.86																		
Bornali	56.7	45.6	51.1	0.81	94.0	70.3	82.0	0.75																		
Falaba	28.3	33.8	31.1	1.19	48.0	50.3	49.2	1.05																		
Koinadugu	44.6	43.0	43.8	0.97	70.0	63.8	67.0	0.91																		
Tonkolili	51.0	38.8	45.5	0.76	80.0	56.4	69.5	0.71																		
Kambia	45.4	34.1	39.7	0.75	78.2	55.1	66.6	0.71																		
Karene	32.1	30.1	31.2	0.94	49.1	41.9	46.0	0.85																		
Port Loko	40.5	40.4	40.4	1.00	63.7	62.9	63.3	0.99																		
Bo	35.1	38.1	36.5	1.09	61.7	60.6	61.1	0.98																		
Bonthe	20.0	40.3	29.6	2.01	46.6	74.4	59.8	1.60																		
Moyamba	35.2	34.1	34.6	0.97	59.5	58.4	59.0	0.98																		
Pujehun	21.0	36.2	26.7	1.72	27.3	57.6	38.6	2.11																		
Western Area Rural	58.5	52.1	55.2	0.89	88.2	85.9	87.0	0.97																		
Western Area Urban	68.8	65.1	66.9	0.95	108.8	104.7	106.7	0.96																		
<table border="0" style="width:100%; text-align:center;"> <tr> <td></td> <td colspan="4">Net attendance ratio¹</td> <td colspan="4">Gross attendance ratio²</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Background characteristic</td> <td>Male</td> <td>Female</td> <td>Total</td> <td>Gender parity index³</td> <td>Male</td> <td>Female</td> <td>Total</td> <td>Gender parity index³</td> </tr> </table>										Net attendance ratio ¹				Gross attendance ratio ²				Background characteristic	Male	Female	Total	Gender parity index ³	Male	Female	Total	Gender parity index ³
	Net attendance ratio ¹				Gross attendance ratio ²																					
Background characteristic	Male	Female	Total	Gender parity index ³	Male	Female	Total	Gender parity index ³																		
Wealth quintile																										
Lowest	22.4	22.0	22.2	0.98	34.4	28.9	32.0	0.84																		
Second	34.5	25.2	30.1	0.73	55.5	37.0	46.8	0.67																		
Middle	40.9	36.7	39.0	0.90	63.4	57.1	60.6	0.90																		
Fourth	56.2	55.7	55.9	0.99	98.4	90.8	94.4	0.92																		
Highest	69.5	65.3	67.3	0.94	111.5	106.4	108.9	0.95																		
Total	45.9	44.2	45.1	0.96	74.8	69.9	72.4	0.93																		

Source: Demographic and Health Survey 2019

2.2.4 Education Management Information Systems

The most current EMIS data (2020), provides details on the Net Attendance/Enrollment Ratio which is a percentage of the age-specific population that is attending school at a particular level. This portion of the study details the number of students enrolled in primary and secondary school at various levels in Sierra Leone. The data is broken down by sub-national level, gender, school type, and other important factors. It also points out the levels and places where enrolment has increased or reduced, as well as the likely causes. The total number of students distributed by various dimensions, enrolment rates by level and gender are among the indicators reported in the undermentioned tables.

2.2.4.1 School Enrolment

Sierra Leone had a total of 2,695,590 children enrolled in schools as of the 2020 census. This is slightly more than the 2,654,306 students registered in 2019, representing a 1.6 percent increase in enrolment between the academic years 2019 and 2020. In 2020, 1,363,430 (50.6 percent) of these pupils were girls and 1,332,160 (49.4percent) were males, indicating that there were more girls than boys enrolled in schools (EMIS, 2021).

Table 13: Enrolment by level, age and gender

<i>Level</i>	<i>Enrolment</i>		<i>Sub-Total</i>
	<i>Boys</i>	<i>Girls</i>	
Pre-Primary (4-5)	66,981	73,750	140,731
Primary (6-11)	866,227	893,548	1,759,775
JSS (12-14)	231,388	236,197	467,585
SSS	167,564	159,935	327,499
GRAND TOTAL	1,332,160	1,363,430	2,695,590

Source: 2020 Annual School Census

Table 13 depicts the enrollment of students by gender, age and school level. Although there are more girls than boys enrolled in school at the national level, gender analysis at the local level yields varied results. There are more girls than boys enrolled in pre-primary, primary, and junior secondary school, with 10.1 percent, 3.2 percent, and 2.1 percent, respectively. However, there are 4.1 percent more boys than girls enrolled in senior secondary school. The majority of students (65.3 percent) attend primary schools. It's worth noting that the number of girls enrolled in school drops as they progress through the grades.

2.2.4.2 Grade Enrolment

As pupils graduate from primary to senior secondary school, the number of learners enrolled in the system decreases, as seen in (Tables 15, 16 & 17) below. It also shows that there are a huge number of pupils registered in class 1 compared to the senior secondary school's last

grade - this is indicative of a system that is losing learners between progression grades. Furthermore, there are more females than boys at each grade level from class 1 to JSS3, and more boys than girls in each grade level from SSS1 to SSS3. Between class 1 and class 2, there is a considerable decline in the number of students, which could be ascribed to students who start primary school before the age of six, rather than attending pre-primary schools. The expansion of pre-primary schools around the country may aid in the normalization of this condition. After class 1, there is a gradual drop off of learners for both genders throughout the system.

Key Findings:

- The primary enrolment trend is comparable to the pre-primary enrolment trend as seen in (Tables 14 & 15), in that enrolment declines as grade levels rise. At the primary level, there are more girls than boys enrolled in each grade, and the girls: boys ratio of 1.0 for each grade indicates that gender parity has been achieved at this level. As in pre-primary, enrolment in primary schools continues to fall as grades rise in both public and private institutions.
- As in pre-primary and primary, the number of students enrolled in junior secondary school reduces as they progress through the grades. In private junior secondary schools, there are more girls than boys enrolled in every grade, however in public junior secondary schools, there are more girls than boys enrolled mainly in JSS 1 and JSS 2. Boys outnumber girls in JSS 3. At the junior secondary level, gender parity has been achieved, as evidenced by the girls: boys ratio of 1.0.
- Senior secondary enrolment declines as grades rise, just as it does at the other levels. At the senior secondary level, gender parity has not been achieved, indicating that there are more males than females enrolled in school. In senior secondary schools, there are more boys than girls enrolled in each grade, indicating that as education progresses, the number of girls enrolled declines. In comparison to the previous three levels of education, the gender divide is more evident in senior secondary.

Table 14: Pre-primary school enrolment by level and gender

Pre-Primary	Day Care		Nursery 1		Nursery 2		Nursery 3	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Private	342	362	6,860	7,358	6,427	6,829	5,994	6,566
Public	883	974	19,005	21,036	15,160	16,918	12,310	13,707
Total	1,225	1,336	25,865	28,394	21,587	23,747	18,304	20,273
	2,561		54,259		45,334		38,577	
Girls/Boys Ratio	1.1		1.1		1.1		1.1	

Source: 2020 Annual School Census

Table 15: Primary school enrolment by level and gender

Primary	Class 1		Class 2		Class 3		Class 4		Class 5		Class 6	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Private	8,237	9,028	7,712	8,525	7,571	8,295	7,117	7,899	6,228	6,873	6,039	6,724
Public	220,586	226,201	154,634	159,841	139,340	143,712	123,160	126,975	105,031	107,866	80,572	81,609
Total	228,823	235,229	162,346	168,366	146,911	152,007	130,277	134,874	111,259	114,739	86,611	88,333
	464,052		330,712		298,918		265,151		225,998		174,944	
Girls/Boys Ratio	1.0		1.0		1.0		1.0		1.0		1.0	

Source: 2020 Annual School Census

Table 16: Junior secondary school enrolment by level and gender

Junior Secondary	JSS 1		JSS 2		JSS 3	
	<i>Boys</i>	<i>Girls</i>	<i>Boys</i>	<i>Girls</i>	<i>Boys</i>	<i>Girls</i>
Private	5,285	6,731	4,720	5,937	4,864	6,009
Public	77,479	78,223	71,703	72,286	67,337	67,011
Total	82,764	84,954	76,423	78,223	72,201	73,020
	167,718		154,646		145,221	
Girls/Boys Ratio	1.0		1.0		1.0	

Source: 2020 Annual School Census

Table 17: Senior secondary school enrolment by level and gender

Senior Secondary	SSS 1		SSS 2		SSS 3	
	<i>Boys</i>	<i>Girls</i>	<i>Boys</i>	<i>Girls</i>	<i>Boys</i>	<i>Girls</i>
Private	4,442	6,054	3,429	4,637	3,108	4,195
Public	70,261	63,638	44,969	42,633	41,355	38,778
Total	73,451	68,796	47,457	46,579	43,288	42,291
	142,247		94,036		85,579	
Girls/Boys Ratio	0.9		1.0		1.0	

Source: 2020 Annual School Census

2.2.4.3 Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER)

The Gross Enrolment Ratio is a measure that indicates the number of individuals enrolled in each level of education. GER is defined as the total number of kids or students enrolled in a particular level of education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the official school-age population corresponding to that level of education. The GER can approach 100% due to the inclusion of over-aged and under-aged children as a result of early or late enrollment, as well as grade repetition. The following are the GER values for pre-primary, primary, junior secondary, and senior secondary:

Table 18: GER for Pre-Primary and Primary Levels

	Pre-Primary			Primary		
	Male	Female	Both	Male	Female	Both
Total Enrolment	66,981	73,750	140,731	866,227	893,548	1,759,775
Population Projection based on UN Statistics Division	343,000	341,000	684,000	642,000	643,000	1,285,000
GER	19.5	21.6	20.6	134.9	139.0	136.9

Source: 2020 Annual School Census

Sierra Leone's school-age population ranges from 3-5 years old for pre-primary to 6-11 years old for primary school. As seen in (Table 18), this is the foundation on which the GER is determined. Pre-primary school has a low GER of 20.6 percent, indicating that there are less children in pre-primary school than in the population of 3-5 years old. As a result, initiatives such as the establishment of more community public pre-schools and the formulation of policies to dramatically improve access to early childhood education are required to ensure that all girls and boys have access to a high-quality pre-school education. Because the primary GER of 136.9percent for both sexes is greater than 100percent, this means that there are more children in primary school than the population of Sierra Leone's 6-11 years old children. In theory, this means that primary schools across the country can accommodate all 6-11 years old kids. Girls had a higher GER than boys in both pre-primary and primary school.

Table 19: GER for Secondary Levels

	JSS			SSS		
	Male	Female	Both	Male	Female	Both
Total Enrolment	231,388	236,197	467,585	167,564	159,935	327,499
Population Projection based on UN Statistics Division	299,000	301,000	600,000	276,000	278,000	554,000
GER	77.4	78.5	77.9	60.7	57.5	59.1

Source: 2020 Annual School Census

Sierra Leone's school-age population ranges from 12 to 14 years old for JSS and 15 to 17 years old for SSS. This is the basis for calculating the GER in (Table 19) above. The GER of 77.9 percent for JSS suggests that this school has a high degree of engagement. The male GER of 77.4 percent vs the female GER of 78.5 percent indicates that girls participate at JSS at a higher rate than males.

Conversely, the 59.1 percent GER for both sexes in senior secondary school suggests that GER decreases as we progress through school. Male participation in senior secondary education is higher than female participation, with 60.7 percent for males and 57.5 percent for females, according to the SSS GER. When comparing JSS and SSS in general, the lower GER at the SSS level indicates that SSS participation is lower than JSS participation.

2.2.4.4 Enrolment of Pupils with Specific Type of Disabilities

Specific disability issues among school-aged children can have an impact on both enrolment and retention in school. The number of pupils with disabilities reported by school level, gender, and kind of disability is shown in (Table 20) below. In the 2019/20 academic year, there were 41,544 students with disabilities enrolled across the country. This accounts for about 1.5 percent of Sierra Leone's overall student population. We can observe that there are more boys than girls enrolled with disabilities when we break it down by gender (52.7 percent for boys, 47.3 percent for girls). There were 47,965 students with disabilities enrolled in schools across the country in the 2018/2019 academic year, a decline of 13.4 percent from 2018/19 to 2019/20.

According to (Table 20), the biggest percentage of students with disabilities attend primary school (66.5percent), followed by 22.4 percent in junior secondary, and 7.6 percent in senior secondary school. Students with visual impairment have the highest enrolment at all levels of the specific disabilities (25 percent). Learning and hearing problems (21 percent) are followed by speech (17 percent) and physical disabilities (16 percent).

Table 20: Enrolment of Pupils with Specific Type of Disabilities by Level and Gender

School Level	Visual		Hearing		Speech		Physical		Learning		All Disabilities	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Pre-Primary	86	82	135	126	286	253	135	125	131	129	773	715
Primary	3,191	2,816	3,121	2,921	3,010	2,374	2,486	2,064	2,743	2,884	14,551	13,059
Junior Secondary	1,534	1,543	1,027	824	489	377	800	536	1,023	1,133	4,873	4,413
Senior Secondary	513	415	283	277	98	118	404	275	381	396	1,679	1,481
Total	5,324	4,856	4,566	4,148	3,883	3,122	3,825	3,000	4,278	4,542	21,876	19,668
	10,180		8,714		7,005		6,825		8,820		41,544	
percent of Type	25		21		17		16		21		-	

Source: 2020 Annual School Census

2.2.4.5 Teacher Distribution

Sierra Leone has benefited from the contributions of a varied set of persons who have worked as educators over the years, as have many African developing countries. These people range in age from recent high school graduates with little or no pedagogical training or experience to seasoned educators.

Table 21: Distribution of Teachers by Gender and School Level

School Level	Female	Male	Total	percent Share of Female
Pre-Primary	5,270	687	5,957	88
Primary	14,392	32,285	46,677	31
Junior Secondary	3,133	16,601	19,734	16
Senior Secondary	853	9,558	10,411	8
All Levels	23,648	59,131	82,779	29

Source: 2020 Annual School Census

According to the 2020 school census, 82,779 instructors were counted, down from 83,033 in 2019. There were 23,648 female teachers and 59,131 male teachers among the 82,779 total. The percentage of female teachers in the overall number of teachers was just 29percent, indicating that teaching is a male-dominated profession. Female instructors, on the other hand, have climbed by 1.1 percent since 2019. The gender distribution of teachers is seen in (Table 21).

Even though there are no official regulations or clear practices that disfavor female instructors, the teaching force in Sierra Leone has been severely and repeatedly biased in favor of male teachers since the civil war years. The ratio of female teachers in primary schools is low (31 percent) and drops as the school level rises, with the lowest percentage of female teachers seen in senior secondary schools (8 percent).

Table 22: Teacher Gaps – Public schools only

Item/Level	Total	Trained	Untrained	percent Trained
Pre-primary	5,957	3,094	2,863	52
Primary	46,677	29,436	17,241	63
JSS	19,734	14,184	5,550	72
SSS	10,411	7,795	2,616	75
Total	82,779	54,509	28,270	

Source: 2020 Annual School Census

2.3 Summary of Key Findings of OOSCY from the Available Datasets

- The Southern region has the highest out-of-school rates at both the primary (23%) and lower secondary (26%) levels of schooling, while the Northern region has the

highest OOS rates at the upper secondary (45%) level, according to statistics from the World Inequality Database on Education (WIDE). However, the northern region's out-of-school rate is among the highest in the country at the upper secondary level. The western region has the lowest out-of-school rates across all levels of education.

- The MICS 2017 statistics indicate that 18% of primary school children are not in school. At the district level, Bonthe had the largest proportion of out-of-school children (42 percent males, 37 percent females), while the south had 22.9 percent (27 percent boys, 19 percent girls) and the western area urban had the lowest at 10%. (There are 11% boys and 9% girls).

Lower secondary school has an out-of-school rate of 19 percent, with males accounting for 20.2 percent of the total versus 17.6 percent for females; yet, the out-of-school percentage is slightly higher than primary school. At the district and regional levels, Bonthe (39.0 percent) and south (26.3 percent) had the greatest out-of-school numbers.

In upper secondary school, the out-of-school rate climbs for all groups, with females outnumbering males. In reality, females make up 40% of the population, while males make up 31%. This is in stark contrast to gender-disaggregated data on out-of-school rates at both the elementary and lower secondary levels, which show that males have higher out-of-school rates than girls at both levels. This appears to show that as women progress in their education, their chances of dropping out increase.

- The northern region had the greatest dropout rate at 44.6 percent (37.1 percent for males and 50.8 percent for females), followed by the south (42.1 percent for males and 47.3 percent for females), the east (35.7 percent for males and 38.3 percent for females), and the west with 22 percent (19.2 percent males and 23.9 percent females). Tonkolili, Bonthe, and Kambia districts, with 52.2 percent, 51.3 percent, and 50.1 percent, respectively, had the highest out-of-school rates in upper secondary, with 56.7 percent (55.2 percent for boys and 58.2 percent for females). The Western Area Urban had the lowest rate of out-of-school upper secondary students, at 18.5 percent (17.7 percent for males and 19.1 percent for females).
- According to the 2015 Population and Housing Census, 37.8% of those aged 6 and above went to school in 2015, with 20.3 percent dropping out before the census. Only 41.9 percent of people have ever gone to school. Nearly half of the population (49.3% of those aged 15 and above) had never attended school, while 23% had been enrolled for a long time and 28% had dropped out. Among those aged 15 and up, girls were more likely than boys to have never attended school. The great majority had never attended a school.

The Northern Region had the highest percentage of people who had never attended school (41.7%), followed by the Southern Region (37.5%), Eastern Region (35.9%), and Western Region (35.9%). Dropout rates were highest in the Western Region (30.8%), followed by the Southern Region (15.0%), Eastern Region (14.0%), and Northern Region (14.0%). (11.5 percent).

- According to the 2019 Demographic and Health Survey, approximately 39% of female household population had no education. Thirty-one percent of girls aged six and up had attended primary school, while only four percent had graduated. The median number of years of education for women is 1.2. Since 2013, the percentage of women aged 6 and up without a high school graduation has decreased from 51% to 39%. Residents of cities are significantly more likely to be educated than residents of rural areas. In urban areas, 25% of females aged 6 and up have no formal education, compared to 50% in rural areas.
- According to EMIS data, Sierra Leone had 2,695,590 kids registered in schools as of the 2020 census. This represents an increase of 1.6 percent over the 2,654,306 students who entered in 2019. In 2020, 1,363,430 (50.6 percent) of these pupils were female, while 1,332,160 (49.4%) were male, indicating that there were more female students in school than male students. For pupils aged 6 to 11, the NAR in elementary school is 87 percent; (85% for boys and 89 percent for girls). The secondary NAR lowers significantly among girls, dropping to 44% and 46%, respectively. The NAR in elementary school differs significantly between urban and rural areas (90 percent and 85 percent, respectively). At the secondary school level, the disparity widens (61 percent in urban areas and 31 percent in rural areas). The Eastern province has the highest NAR (90%) and the Southern province has the lowest (85%); the Western Area has the highest NAR (62%) and the Southern province has the lowest (85%) in secondary schools (85 percent). Kailahun has the greatest primary school NAR (92 percent) in the district, while Falaba has the lowest (75 percent). Western Area Urban has the greatest secondary NAR (67 percent), while Pujehun has the lowest (27 percent).

Below is a tabular illustration of the OOSCY data as revealed by the available datasets used in this comprehensive analysis (Table 23).

Table 23: Summary of OOSCY based on the Available Data

	Primary			JSS			SSS			Total OOSCY
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	
UIS Database										
2018 Int'l Data	20,296	-	20,296	133,635	134,005	267,640	212,040	219,774	431,813	719,750
WIDE										
Regional Data										
South			23%			26%			42%	
North			20%			23%			45%	
East			18%			19%			36%	
West			10%			9%			23%	
2017 MICS										
National Data	21%	16%	18%	20%	18%	19%	31%	40%	36%	
Regional Data										
South	27%	19%	23%	31%	22%	26%	36%	47%	42%	
North	21%	18%	20%	23%	22%	22%	37%	51%	45%	
East	22%	14%	18%	21%	15%	18%	33%	38%	36%	
West	11%	10%	10%	7%	11%	9%	19%	24%	22%	

Chapter Three

Analysis of Programmatic Data

3.0 National Policies on Complementary Education in Sierra Leone

Following the civil war, the government implemented a number of programs aimed at improving educational access for children who had lost out on school or were unable to attend due to the war. Rapid Response Education Program (RREP) and Complementary Rapid Education for Primary School (CREPs) were two of them. The RREP was designed to help youngsters aged 10 to 13 years re-enter formal schooling as well as those who were unable to do so due to the conflict. The five-month program allowed children to return to formal schooling. The CREPs were then directed at children who were over the age of 18. The six-year primary school curriculum was cut down to three. Both programs resulted in an increase in the number of people who participated in them. Both programs increased school enrollment from 260,000 students in 2004 to 355,300 students in 2005, as well as the number of students passing the National Primary School Examination (NPSE). In the same time span, the number of girls completing exams rose from 5,176 in 2004 to 20,062 in 2005 (GoSL and UNDP, 2008). The CREPs program was completed by 1,159 boys and 1,029 girls in 2000/2001. Following the publication of the New Education Policy in 1995, free primary education was implemented, and girls' access to education increased. In 2003, the government provided full support to all girls in the Eastern and Northern Provinces who passed the National Primary School Examinations and wanted to continue to Junior Secondary School because these two regions trail behind the rest of the country in terms of girl-child education (EFA: NAP, 2004:13). Full tuition, core textbooks, two dozen exercise books, two sets of clothing, a set of games tunic, beret, and writing materials were provided for the girls. This assistance was later extended to the Western Area and the Southern Province (UNICEF, 2004).

In the past, the Sierra Leone government's education policy has consistently stressed the abolition of gender discrimination in the classroom. The Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education recently released its National Policy on Radical Inclusion in Schools (MBSSE, 2021). This strategy's major goal is to eliminate all infrastructural and systemic policy and practice barriers that prevent any child from learning. It also eliminates stigma, harassment, intolerance, and any form of exclusion, resulting in a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere. Children with disabilities, children from rural and disadvantaged areas, and children from low-income households are all directly benefited by this strategy.

Commenting on girls' education in Sierra Leone, (Kiendrebeoge & Wodon, 2020) noted that the lifting of the 10-year ban on pregnant girls and teenage mothers (2010-2020) means that girls now have the same educational opportunities as boys, and other policies such as the

Free Quality Education Programme would make access easier. However, they believe that because of child marriage and early motherhood, girls are more likely to drop out of secondary education. They went on to say that giving opportunity for adolescent girls to stay in school is the best economic investment the country can make and further stated that both general and tailored programs are needed to keep the girls in school. On a broad scale, proper school infrastructure and a secure learning environment are required. Economic incentives and safe spaces will be included in targeted programs that give vital life skills.

3.1 Data from Education Innovators on AEPs and Girls Empowerment

Circles

(Tables 23, 24 & 25) show the results of an extensive stakeholder mapping effort conducted at the research's conception phase. The goal of the exercise was to identify agencies and organizations in Sierra Leone that are actively implementing AEPs and Girls Focused Programs, as well as to analyze those 'novel' efforts that have the potential to significantly contribute to the research's goals.

For the stakeholder mapping, a three-stage process was used:

- Extensive desk review with the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE), including web searches and literature reviews of existing documents, as well as informal discussions with colleagues at the Sierra Leone Association of Non-Governmental Organizations (SLANGO) to identify organizations with AEPs and/or girls-focused programs.
- AEPs and girls-focused programs with a lengthy track record of success were identified and contacted. First, visits to the institutions were made, and informal discussions with the heads were held to familiarize them with the research's goals and to obtain their approval to participate in the interview and collaborate with DALAN on the project.
- Formal interviews with each Innovator were conducted using a standard Interview Schedule to ensure that they all answered the same questions and that the most important information was acquired from all of them.

The Stakeholder Mapping resulted in the identification of Ten (10) potential Innovators categorized as follows:

- Grassroots agencies (5): These are community-based initiatives that do not necessarily have the organizational structure or formal status of NGOs;
- Local NGO agencies who are currently 'Purposeful' partners (2); and
- International NGOS (3).

Two organizations – Save the Children-Sierra Leone and BRAC-Sierra Leone – were assessed to have met the requirements to participate in the research as Innovators at the conclusion of the mapping exercise. These criteria include:

- Having operated an AEP or Girls Focused programme for at least 3 years;
- operated in remote and deprived areas;
- have targeted a substantial number of OOS children, especially girls;
- have demonstrated a willingness to participate in the research.

Table 24: Characteristics of the selected Education Innovators

Save the Children – Sierra Leone									
Region and Locations	Number of participants	Start and End of programme	Number of children per AEP class	Context of the programme	AEP Subjects	Curriculum	Transitioned	Target for girls	Age cohort
Southern Region (Pujehun District: Zimmi, Jendema, Gbondapi, Potoru, Massam, Bumpeh)	720 82percent mainstreamed in 2018 into formal school: 2019 mainstreamed into the formal system as per location: Zimmi, 100percent; Jendema, 92percent; Gbondapi, 100percent; Potoru, 66percent; Massam, 100percent; Bumpeh, 100percent.	2016-2020 (Pujehun District)	50 per class	-Overage Children -Working children -Children in Koranic education -Young adolescent mothers One of the most remote districts in Sierra Leone, characterized by high poverty level.	Children acquire academic skills (Functional, Literacy, Numeracy & Life skills)	Approved government school curriculum compressed as follows: Level 1 (Pry 1&2) Level 2 (Pry 3&4) Level 3 (Pry 5&6)	JSS 1	50percent	12-18
BRAC – Sierra Leone									
Region and Locations	Number of participants	Start and End of programme	Number of children per AEP class	Context of the programme	AEP Subjects	Curriculum	Transitioned	Target for girls	Age cohort

Southern Region (Bo District) – 10 communities	300	2019 ongoing (9-18 months cycle. Full cycle 2 yrs.)	15	High poverty, vulnerable girls at risk of dropping out of school	Literacy, numeracy, life skills	Self-developed curriculum (manuals)	Remain in formal school or to TVET	100percent girls	11-19
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Source: Save the Children Sierra Leone

Table 25: BRAC Empowerment and Livelihood Programmes

Name of the AEP programme	Donor (s) that supports/ed the programme	Number of Children Targeted for the AEP? M/F		Number of children reached by the AEPs	
		Male	Female	Male	Female
Empowerment and Livelihoods for Adolescent Girls in Maforki and Marampa chiefdoms in Port Loko District, Sierra Leone (2012-2013)	UNICEF		481		310
Reducing Teenage Pregnancies: Empowerment and Livelihoods for Vulnerable Adolescent Girls: Phase 1 (2013-2014)	UNICEF		4000		4000
Reducing Teenage Pregnancies: Empowerment and Livelihoods for Vulnerable Adolescent Girls: Phase 2 (2014-2016)	UNFPA		6750		6750
Empowerment and Livelihoods for Adolescents (2017-2019)	NoVo Foundation		4800		4800
Empowerment and Livelihood for Adolescents Program: Improving Quality for Enhanced Impact (2019-2021)	NoVo Foundation	150	300		300

Source: BRAC Sierra Leone

Districts where we will likely be studying for the IDRC project (so far) based on the education innovations under study (Save the Children, BRAC SL etc.)

Table 26: Data showing the regions, districts, communities and gender disaggregation of AEPs programs

AEP	Region	District	Communities	Years of intervention	No. of beneficiaries reached			
					Boys	Girls	PwDs	Total
Save the Children	South	Pujehun	Zimmi,	2016 – 2020	385	335	-	720
			Jendema, Gbondapi, Potoru, Massam, Bumpeh					
BRAC	North - South	Kambia Portloko Bo Pujehun Moyamba		2012 - 2021	-	16,160	-	16,160

Source: from Education Innovators

**PwDs – Persons with disability*

3.1.1 Analysis of AEP Program Implemented by Save the Children SL

Save the Children (SC) SL launched a four-year Pilot Accelerated Education Programme (AEP) from 2016 to 2020). 3 funding sources from SC and two private donors contributed to the project's finance. The communities of Zimmi, Jendema, Gbondapi, Potoru, Massam, and Bumpeh were targeted in the Pujehun District of the Southern Province.

The program's main goals were to:

- help 720 older children (50 percent of whom were girls) finish primary school, pass the National Primary School Examination (NPSE), and transition on to Junior Secondary School (JSS);
- test the 10 (Global) Principles for Effective Practice in Accelerated Education.

Table 27: AEP Students Categorization and Gender Disaggregation

Save the Children SL		Boys	Girls
		Teenage Mothers	N/A
	Overage, never attended	42	46
	Drop-out working	157	221
	Attending Koranic Schools	186	27
	Total	385 (53 percent)	335 (47 percent)

Source: Save the Children SL

The above categorization in (Table 26) is based on the following criteria:

- High rates of child labor, linked to household poverty/income
- Parents frequently send their children to religious schools in place of formal schooling when they lack financial resources

3.1.1.1 Accomplishments of the AEP project

- 82 percent pass rate in the 2018 NPSE
- Estimated \$300-400 per child, per academic year
- Normal 6-year primary curriculum condensed into 3 levels
- Volunteer teachers have independently enrolled in distance education to obtain full teaching certificates
- AEP committees in each community are dedicated, mobilized, and active, in one case preventing child marriage
- Community & MBSSE/DEO/local council ownership is very high
- Class hours are suitable for older learners
- Youth were involved in the planning of the initiative
- SC's AEP project is part of the worldwide AEWG
- Save the Children's HQ provides excellent technical support
- Available monitoring tools for the project
- Completed version of AEP step-by-step curriculum

3.1.1.2 Challenges of the AEP project

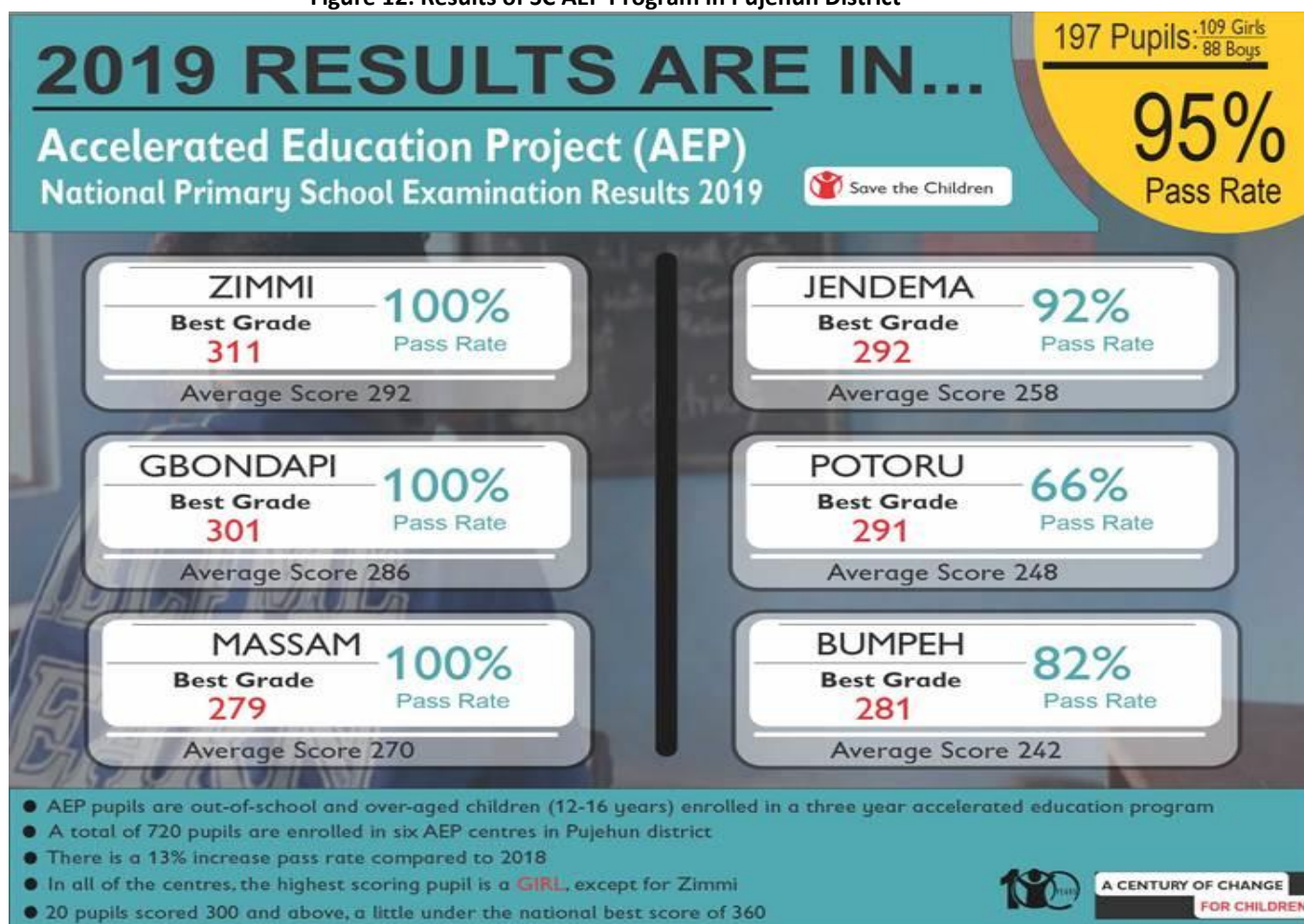
- Teachers are more comfortable with teaching younger children
- Teachers receive stipends from SC... sustainability? How sustainable that will be is the challenge
- JSS-aged children are no longer supported. Parents were introduced to VSL (Village Savings and Loan) in 2018.
- Differences in AEP center/school performance. The head teacher was replaced at one of the schools that did poorly.
- Limited resources to continue to serve other out-of-school children in the community and to maintain the project and its facilities.

3.1.1.3 AEP Project possibilities

- The project can absorb students who have missed part of their primary education and will supplement Free Quality Education.
- The AEP addresses a major issue in the country (older children out of school) and makes a compelling case for scaling up.

- AEP can be combined with other interventions, such as livelihoods support, to ensure that all children and youth receive a basic education
- AEP reaches the most disadvantaged children
- Communities recognize the AEP as a viable education option, and the model can be self-sustaining (still in progress)
- The project contributes to global AE working group learning

Figure 12: Results of SC AEP Program in Pujehun District



Source: Save the Children SL

3.1.2 Challenges with Programmatic Data

Programmatic data were collected from two organizations (SC & BRAC) that have gone through a thorough mapping process. At the conclusion of the mapping process, the two organizations were judged to have met the criteria for participation in the research as Innovators. These requirements include: operating an AEP or Girls Focused program for at least three years;

operating in remote and impoverished locations; targeting a significant number of OOS children, particularly girls; and demonstrating a willingness to engage in the research.

However, these organizations:

- Present missing data on transition of students from one grade to the other
- No dropout rate recorded; meaning all the students who started the program were able to complete it.
- Data shows gender disaggregation but no PwDs recorded as seen in (Table 25).

Chapter Four

Key Findings and Recommendations

4.0 Key Findings

- 1) Data from the UIS shows that Sierra Leone recorded 719,750 OOSC during 2018 and if adequate measures are not taken to address the problem, it might exceed 900,000 OOSC in the next 5 years (Based on the UIS trend in figure 2 above).
- 2) Regionally, the MICS 2017 and SL DHS 2019 recorded the highest levels of OOSC in the Southern region for both primary and JSS levels (22.9% and 26.3% respectively). The Northern region accounted for the highest number of OOSC at SSS level (44.6%) (Statistics Sierra Leone, 2018)
- 3) Bonthe, Moyamba, Koinadugu and Pujehun were among the districts with the highest number of OOSC at both primary and JSS level (Statistics Sierra Leone, 2018). Tonkolili, Moyamba, Bonthe and Kambia are the leading districts with the highest number of OOSC at SSS level (Statistics Sierra Leone, 2018).
- 4) Poverty has been identified as one of the primary reasons as to why school aged children were out of school in Sierra Leone (UNICEF, 2008)
- 5) Teenage pregnancy, the loss of major caregivers, lack of parental care and encouragement are all contributing factors to the increasing population of OOSC
- 6) Negative societal attitudes and views about girls' education are all significant impediments. These facts demonstrate why there is such a large disparity in OOSC especially at SSS level. According to UNICEF research (Lynch, 2019), 46 percent of girls between the ages of 15 and 24 are illiterate, while 72 percent of males in the same age group can read and write. However, significant efforts are being made to ensure that females have equal access to school (Lynch, 2019).
- 7) The 2020 Annual School Census reveals that a total of 29,436 trained teachers were at the primary level out of the 46,677 recorded and of that percentage 69% were males and 31% were female. In fact, the disparity between male and female trained teachers increases at JSS and SSS levels in favour of males.
- 8) Out of the 82,779 teachers recorded at all school levels, 66% were trained and 34% were untrained.

4.1 Recommendations

There is an urgent need for government to pay critical attention to the staggering number of OOSC in the country in terms of instituting robust policy to effectively and efficiently track OOSC

and provide the much-needed assistance. This requires a synergistic approach from all the key players within the educational sector. Approaches such as **Accelerated Education Programmes** should be suitably employed to get these kids back to school.

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