Environmental Scan on

Education in Sierra Leone

with Particular Reference to Open and Distance Learning and Information and Communication Technologies

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1.0 Sierra Leone and Its Current Educational Situation

1.1 The country and its people

Sierra Leone became a British Colony after Portuguese explorers became the first Europeans to arrive in 1492. It gained independence in 1961 and became a republic in 1971. The country has experienced a mixture of democratic, civilian and military dictatorships in its 43 years of independence. Currently, civilian democracy is the political dispensation. A devastating civil war, spanning 11 years, ended in 2002. The main reasons put forward by the perpetrators of the civil war were lack of social-economic opportunities overall, lack of access by many citizens to what economic life there was, and tyrannical political rule. Today, Sierra Leone enjoys a liberalised economy and relative peace.

The country, which shares borders with Liberia and Guinea, is located on the west coast of Africa, facing the Atlantic Ocean. It has about 71,640 square kilometres of land and 71,620 square kilometres of water. A large part of the coastline of Sierra Leone consists of mangrove swamps. Freetown, the capital city, is situated on a peninsula in the Atlantic Ocean.

Sierra Leone is mostly plateau about 300 metres above sea level. It includes rain forests, grasslands, wetlands and mountains. The climate is tropical (hot and humid) with two distinct seasons: a rainy season between May and November and a dry spell between December and April. The natural resources include diamonds, gold, titanium ore, bauxite and iron ore. The main agricultural products are rice, coffee, cocoa, cassava, sweet potatoes and palm oil.

Besides Freetown, the major cities are the regional headquarters of Bo, Kenema and Makeni in the southern, eastern and northern provinces, respectively. Some of

the environmental issues affecting the country include rapid population growth, over-harvesting of timber, high soil weathering from intensified crop farming and extensive cattle grazing, soil erosion and water pollution as a result of poor garbage and sewage disposal systems.

Sierra Leone has a population of about 5 million, the higher proportion being female. The population is growing at an annual rate of about 4.0%. The birth rate is 46/1,000 and the death rate is 20/1,000. Sierra Leone has one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the world and one of the lowest life expectancy rates. About 13 indigenous African ethnic groups in the country make up about 90% of the population. The Mende and Temne and associated groups form the greatest proportion of the ethnic groups from the southeastern and northern parts of Sierra Leone, respectively. Each accounts for about 30% each of the population. A sizeable number of Creoles live in the western area, where Krio is the lingua franca. The official language of Sierra Leone is English. Christianity and Islam are the predominant religions practised by the people. A minority of the population tenaciously cling to African religious beliefs. A third of the population live in the capital and other urban areas; the rest live in the rural areas. The western and eastern areas of the country are the densest.

1.2 Recovery in the education system

Sierra Leone's educational system, which attracted several West African students in the colonial and post-independent period, was in crisis by the early 1990s for various reasons, including poor financial support, inappropriate curricula, the start and intensification of the rebel war, and a dim view of the value of education by the youths.

The decline in enrolment at the primary and secondary levels and the near stagnation at the tertiary level left many existing and prospective students

frustrated and disenchanted. Several student and other riots protesting the lethargy of the government in power at the time (1968–1992) served as a prelude to the crisis of the rebel war and the euphoria that greeted the advent of a military regime that promised to revamp the country's economic and social fabric. This regime – the National Provisional Ruling Council – was in power from 1992 to 1996. It ushered in the New Education System (the "6-3-3-4," discussed later) in 1993, issued the New Education Policy (1995), promulgated the Basic Education Decree (1994) and advanced the National Education Action Plan (1994).

The return to civilian rule in 1996 initially provided an enabling environment for the new government to build on the foundation laid by the military regime. This the new government did by providing short-, medium- and long-term strategies for implementing various aspects of the New Education Policy.

The National Education Master Plan

A major document in this regard is the National Education Master Plan 1997–2006. The plan deals with all aspects of the formal and non-formal sectors of the education system, providing support for basic education, education for the physically challenged, disadvantaged and gifted learners, women and girls' education, technical/vocational and science education, tertiary education, adult continuing education, national languages, and the administration and management of education.

The focus of the current government has been on implementing the 6-3-3-4 system of education which the policy regards as the key to Sierra Leone's economic development.

The "6-3-3-4 education system" was introduced in 1993. It consists of nine years of basic education. At the end of six years of primary education, all students sit for

the National Primary School Examination (NPSE). If successful, they proceed to junior secondary education for three years and then sit for the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE). Successful BECE candidates proceed to three years of senior secondary school, at the end of which they sit for the West African Secondary School Certificate Examination (WASSCE). Those who fail the BECE may either repeat the examination or turn to technical and vocational institutions or employment. On the basis of performance in the WASSCE, students who meet the requirements for undergraduate work may proceed to the university to take a four-year degree course.

The three externally moderated examinations (i.e., NPSE, BECE and WASSCE) emphasise Mathematics, the sciences and a number of new subjects. The government pays the examination fees for all candidates in government-assisted schools who take these examinations. The reason for this payment policy is to mitigate the financial burden on parents, guardians and students and to ensure that all students are externally assessed to ascertain their level of learning achievement.

A summary of the goals and targets enunciated for education by the government are shown in the sidebar.

Goal and targets of Sierra Leone's National Education Master Plan

The goals and targets enunciated for education by the government include:

- Promotion of quality basic education (i.e., the 6-3 in the 6-3-3- 4 system) that is free and compulsory by 2015.

- Significantly increasing the present 36% literacy rate, up to at least 50% by 2015, in consonance with Goal Four of the Dakar Education for All (EFA) initiative. This is expected to be achieved through establishment of community education and technical/vocational centres.

- Elimination of gender disparity in access to, and participation in, education through the operation of free junior secondary education for girls by 2006.

- Provision of opportunities for increased access to education for the physically challenged and citizens in difficult circumstances.

- Creation of an environment that favours the empowerment of youths through education.

- Use of education as a tool for poverty alleviation.

- Encouragement of active community participation in ownership of schools through increased decentralization.

- Increasing the number of qualified teachers by 30% by 2015 using conventional and distance education approaches.

- The far reaching reorganization and expansion of tertiary education by 2007.

To further its goals and targets, government allocated 23% of the national budget to the education sector and thus achieved the following:

- Starting in 2000, parents of children attending primary schools in classes 1 to 6 were relieved of the burden of paying tuition fees and government provided core textbooks. These costs previously served as a deterrent to many children accessing basic education.

- Starting in 2001, government paid examination fees for all children in government-assisted schools taking the three levels of examinations.
- Grants in Aid, scholarships and study leave were provided for many students (about 80%) in tertiary institutions. Up to 95% of costs are currently provided to all the public institutions such as university, polytechnics and teachers' colleges.

As a result of these interventions, there has been a massive increase in primary school enrolment since the 1996/1997 academic year – from 367,920 to 1,110,000 in 2003/2004. The number of students passing the National Primary School Examination has increased from 16,972 in 1999 to 37,117 in 2003. In the area of tertiary level awards of Grants in Aid, the total for 11 institutions rose from 829 in 1995/1996 to 3,509 in 2002/2003.

As well, to minimise regional differences in girls' access to secondary education, an affirmative action was initiated in 2003 whereby tuition fees were waived and uniforms and learning materials were provided free of charge for girls in the Northern and Eastern Regions. A total of 4,975 girls have so far benefited.

In other areas of formal and non-formal education, government has collaborated with a variety of local and international development partners to train teachers and construct or rehabilitate educational structures destroyed during the 11-year civil war.

The emphasis of the 6-3-3-4 system education on technical and vocational skills training led to the establishment, by Act of Parliament, of the National Council for Technical, Vocational and Other Academic Awards (NCTVA) by in 2001 to set examinations and ensure parity of esteem for all technical and vocational

training. Five polytechnics, of which three are now operational, were also established with the aim of diversifying human resource training for various middle cadre vocations and careers.

Specific projects within the Ministry are also worth mentioning for their actual and potential contribution to the overall national socio-economic development.

- The Rehabilitation of Basic Education Project, more popularly known by the name SABABU (a local name meaning "opportunity"). This project has been hailed as the largest funding in aid of education since independence, valued at US$ 42 million. It aims to construct and rehabilitate basic education facilities for 30% of schools nationwide. An estimated 600 junior secondary and primary schools are targeted for this intervention, which also includes funding for textbooks and furniture. Training of 6,000 untrained and unqualified teachers is also targeted for this project, which is funded by the World Bank and African Development Bank.

- The Islamic Development Bank with a further US$ 7 million aid package will also assist in the rehabilitation of 143 partly or totally destroyed primary schools.

- The Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa (BADEA) has earmarked a sum of US$ 7.2 million for rehabilitating the campus of Njala University College.

- Under the Highly Indebted Poor Countries Initiatives (HIPC), US$ 9 million was approved by Parliament and used for reconstructing 83 primary, secondary and technical/vocational institutions, teachers' colleges and inspectorate offices. School furniture was also part of the package.

Non-formal education, largely undertaken by non-governmental and community-based organization such as Partners in Adult Education (PADE), have also been receiving inputs from government. For example:

- Through the Islamic Development Bank intervention, 6,000 non-literates in three chiefdoms in the provinces have been trained yearly since 2003 in literacy and livelihood skills.
- With UNICEF support, the government is implementing a three-year non-formal primary education project targeting learners, especially girls aged 6–14 years in settlements without formal school.
- The government is also taking over schools of the Complementary Rapid Education for Primary Schools Project (CREPS), which target illiterate children who missed years of schooling during the war.

Most of these initiatives are spin-offs of recent legislation affecting various sectors of education, the most recent being the *Education Act* of 2004, which seeks to entrench basic education provision, including measures to tackle non-compliance in access to education.

A further step in ensuring community participation and ownership of education at the local level is the *Local Government Act* of 2004. Taken together with the *Education Act* 2004, the MEST is expected to devolve to District Education Committees the authority for supervision of pre-primary and primary schools, junior secondary schools, and centres for Adult Literacy and Community Education under the technical advice of the District Inspectorate Division.

The *Universities Act* of 2004 provides for the creation of multiple public universities to replace the current unitary university system and also to provide opportunities for the establishment of private universities. The activities of the new universities and existing polytechnics are to be regulated by provisions of an earlier legislation, the *Tertiary Education Commission Act* of 2001.

Overview: Sierra Leone's 14-year journey towards "Education for All"

In March 1990, Sierra Leone participated in the World Conference on Education for All (WCEFA), held in Jomtien, Thailand. The conference proceedings served as the primary impetus for the development of programmes to increase access to education for disadvantaged groups, particularly in the Third World countries. In the 10-year period leading to the next major international gathering on education –the World Education Forum held in Dakar in April 2000 – Sierra Leone achieved several steps towards meeting the Jomtien goals.

The 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone currently in use mentions the provision of free adult literacy programmes. However, concerned about the large number of out-of-school children, particularly in the rural areas, UNICEF, in collaboration with the People's Educational Association of Sierra Leone (PEASL; a local non-governmental organization), launched the Non-Formal Primary Education Project (NFPEP) in 1992 to reach such children. Girls aged 6–14 years were specifically targeted for a three-year basic education course, after which they would gain access to formal schools in other settlements.

The country's education, long patterned after the colonial system, was revamped in 1993 with the introduction of the 6-3-3-4 education paradigm with its emphasis on basic education for all during the first nine years of schooling.

The overriding concern with providing basic education for all was further addressed with the establishment of the National Commission for Basic Education in March 1994 by the then military regime of the National Provisional Ruling Council (in power 1992-96). The decree emphasized the need for basic education for children, as well as a commitment to strive to drastically minimize adult illiteracy in Sierra Leone (then reckoned at 80% nationally) by 2000.

A significant milestone in Sierra Leone's development in the field of education was the publication of the New Education Policy for the country in 1995. It enthroned the 6-3-3-4 paradigm as the national education system and formulated proposals dealing with various sectors (formal and non-formal) at various levels (primary, secondary, tertiary).

The decade also witnessed the implementation of other projects designed to open access to marginalised groups. Among them were the Literacy and Civic Education for Women Project to make 2,000 women literate in the rural areas; and the Functional Political Literacy and Civic Education Project for slum dwellers in the Kroo Bay area in the west end of Freetown, to ensure their effective participation in local and national politics.

At about the same time, a massive Accelerated Literacy Project was sponsored by the Overseas Development Agency (now Department for International Development)

through the British Council in Sierra Leone. It was aimed at conferring literacy skills on 10,000 non-literates in English in the Western Region over a period of six months.

A comprehensive plan for education covering the decade 1997 to 2006, the National Education Master Plan, was crafted when the country returned to civilian rule in 1996. It dealt with the various levels of education and established links for developing the New Education Policy of 1995.

The ravages of the 11-year rebel war hindered the development of the envisaged programmes, but following the Dakar World Education Forum (2000) and the signing of various peace accords with the rebel forces, the government renewed its determination to raise education to higher heights. Fee-free primary schools, establishment of new tertiary institutions for manpower development such as polytechnics, and a new role for technical and vocational training were subjects of parliamentary legislation.

In 2002, the first draft of the Education for All (EFA) National Action Plan for Sierra Leone was crafted with a focus on the six goals enunciated at the Dakar Conference. The goals cut across all sectors of education. In April 2004, a new all-embracing *Education Act* was enacted, replacing the earlier one passed 40 years ago. In 2004, a *Universities Act* was promulgated by Parliament, thus making room for more than one public university and paving the way for the establishment of private universities.

1.3 Use of distance education in Sierra Leone's formal education system

There are a few references to distance education in some of the documents cited above. The New Education Policy mentions the creation of an Open University (though without elaboration) and refers to "the use of distance learning" as part of the low-cost training strategies envisaged by the policy. The National Education Master Plan refers to upgrading teachers through the use of the distance education mode. The Education for All National Action Plan makes a passing reference to the possible consideration of distance education as a mode in realizing education for all particularly through teacher education. And the *Education Act* (2004) defines distance education, but – unlike for other areas (e.g., non-formal) – suggests no policy directive.

Prompted by the massive growth in pupil enrolment as a result of the fee-free education provisions, the need for training and upgrading primary school teachers became acute in 2000. Teacher training through conventional face-to-face instruction was found to be inadequate to provide for the large numbers of people needing training. Thus, starting in 2001, the use of distance education to upgrade existing primary school teachers began, with support from the Commonwealth of Learning (COL), UNESCO, UNICEF and Plan Sierra Leone. There are at present about 2,000 unqualified and untrained primary school teachers enrolled in the Teacher's Certificate Course operating in Freetown and eight districts of the country. The students follow the same syllabus as the conventional teachers' college students for the same duration. The first batch of students for the Teacher's Certificate graduated in 2004.

In the period before the launch of the project, a needs assessment survey was conducted, followed by a COL-sponsored workshop on instructional materials design and development, including editorial skills. All of the modules now in use by tutors and students on the programme were produced during workshops funded by the Sierra Leone government, Plan Sierra Leone, COL and other donor agencies. Apart from personnel of the teachers' colleges, University of Sierra Leone staff members also benefited from the training on materials development for distance learners. This, in a modest way, is to realize government's aim to ensure "the production of teachers of high quality and in sufficient quantity" (New Education Policy, 1995, p. 19).

Educational broadcasting is mentioned in the New Education Policy and its significance for the 6-3 segments of the 6-3-3-4 systems is emphasized. The civil war disrupted the communications network nationwide, leaving Sierra Leone's Broadcasting Unit dormant for a long time. However, since the end of the war, several private and public FM broadcasting stations have been established across

the country and there is one FM 95.1 Radio Education unit housed at the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology with UNESCO support. The government is now in the process of revamping it to implement educational programmes for children between 6 and 14 years of age. The aim is to accelerate the level of literacy from 20% to 75% by 2005 and to ensure the participation of women and girls in non-formal education programmes. To quote from the 1995 policy:

> "Quality radio programmes can be beamed relatively cheaply all over the Country, but particularly to rural areas where populations are thinly dispersed and access by road difficult. The broadcasts will be of immense benefit to all learners."

There are plans to rename the School Broadcasting Unit the Educational Broadcasting Division and it is expected that all schools, colleges and adult education classes will be encouraged to possess at least one radio set each, and where the national television signals are within reach, one television set.

1.4 A profile of current primary and adult literacy educational programmes in Sierra Leone

The 6-3-3-4 system of education that came into existence in 1993 resulted in increased access to basic education (the first nine years of the system) in terms of increased number of primary and secondary schools and student enrolment. As of 2004, there were 4,015 primary schools in the country (Table 1), 277 public secondary schools (Table 2), and 16 private secondary schools (Table 3).

Table 1. Number of primary schools in Sierra Leone, by region

Region	No. of Schools
Eastern	748
Northern	1,759
Southern	1,122
Western	386
Total	4,015

Source: Sierra Leone Ministry of Education, Science & Technology.

Table 2. Number of public secondary schools in Sierra Leone, by region

Region	No. of Schools			
	Government	Government-assisted	Private	Total
Eastern	1	55	-	56
Northern	3	73	-	76
Southern	3	53	-	56
Western	9	55	25	89
Total	16	236	25	277

Source: Sierra Leone Ministry of Education, Science & Technology.

Table 3. Number of private secondary schools in Sierra Leone, by region

Region	No. of Schools
Eastern	-
Northern	1
Southern	-
Western	15
Total	16

Source: Sierra Leone Ministry of Education, Science & Technology.

Table 4 shows the distribution of primary school pupils by region, age and gender in 2003, and Tables 5 and 6 show enrolment figures in primary school. According to the National Recovery Committee Survey, about 200,000 non-registered children were in primary-level education in May 2003.

Table 4. Distribution of primary school pupils by region, age and gender, 2003 (percentages of total enrolments rounded)

Region	Age and Gender							
	< 5		6–11		12–15		>15	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Eastern	5	7	53	57	28	22	14	9
Northern	4	5	56	64	31	27	9	4
Southern	7	5	61	64	23	25	7	6
Western	4	5	61	68	31	25	3	2

Source: Adapted from Sierra Leone Integrated Household Survey (SLIHS), cited in Bennell et al. (n.d.; p. 78).

Table 5. Enrolment of children attending government-assisted primary schools on a per-year basis, 2000/01 to 2003/04

Year	Enrolment	Increase over Previous Year (%)
2000 / 01	456,000	-
2002 / 03	967,000	112
2003 / 04	1,110,000	15

Source: Bennell et al. (n.d.; p. 18).

Table 6. Class 1 Enrolment on a per-year basis, 2001/02 to 2003/04

Year	Enrolment	Increase over Previous Year (%)
2001/02	228,000	-
2003/04	299,000	31

Source: Bennell et al. (n.d.; p. 18).

Tables 7 and 8 show enrolment figures for adult education programmes.

Table 7. Enrolment of adult literacy* learners by level and gender, 1998–2003

Level	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Beginners Stage 1	729	597	1,326
Beginners Stage 2	360	242	602
Beginners Stage 3	620	441	1,061
Intermediate	569	380	949
Advanced	422	278	700
Advanced Special	278	122	400

Source: Thompson et al. (2004, p. 17).

*Adult literacy provision by the people's Education Association of Sierra Leone (a non-governmental organization).

Table 8. Partners* in adult education enrolment in adult literacy and skills training by year and gender

Year	Enrolment		
	Male	Female	Total
1998	1,138	720	1,855
1999	1,744	997	2,741
2000	4,050	4,870	8,920
2001	4,265	4,326	8,591
2002	4,033	5,514	9,547
2003	3,254	2,047	5,301
	18,759 (50%)	18,474 (50%)	37,223

Source: Thompson et al. (2004, p. 43).

*Four partners: People's Educational Association of Sierra Leone, Sierra Leone Adult Education Association, Division of Extra-Mural Studies at Fourah Bay College, and Partners' Women Commission.

1.5 An overview of current tertiary institutions in Sierra Leone

Several higher education institutions exist in the country. These are mainly public institutions and include the University of Sierra Leone, polytechnics and teacher-training colleges.

1.5.1 University of Sierra Leone

The University of Sierra Leone, established in 1972, has four constituents: Fourah Bay College, Njala University College, the College of Medicine and Allied Health Sciences, and the Institution of Public Administration and Management.

This is the premier tertiary institution in the country. A brief synopsis of each of the constituents is give below:

- **Fourah Bay College** was established in 1827 by the Church Missionary Society (CMS) of London as an institution for training African clergymen and schoolmasters. It became affiliated with Durham University in England in 1876 for degree-granting purposes. The first qualifications were awarded in 1879. The relationship with Durham University continued until 1972, when the University of *Sierra Leone Act* was passed by Parliament. Fourah Bay College served as a higher education provider for many West Africans wishing to obtain a university qualification, a function it continued to provide until the end of colonial rule in the 1960s. Today, Fourah Bay College has about 2600 students in four faculties: Arts, Social Science and Law, Pure and Applied Sciences and Engineering.

- **Njala University College** has its origins in the government-established agricultural station built in 1912 at Njala in the Southern Region of the country. The station trained Agricultural Technicians and Extension Agents. In 1964, with the support of the government of Sierra Leone and the University of Illinois in the U.S., the station was upgraded to a university college with two faculties, Education and Agriculture. In 1972, together with Fourah Bay College, they constituted the University of Sierra Leone under a unitary system. A third faculty of Environmental Sciences

was incorporated into the college in 1989. It has a current student population of about 2,500.

- **The College of Medicine and Allied Health Sciences** was established in 1988 and trains students in Basic Medical, Clinical and Pharmaceutical Sciences. It has a current student enrolment of about 400.

- **Institute of Public Administration and Management** came into existence in 1980, as an off-campus institute of the university. Some 800 students are currently enrolled in various degree and sub-degree programmes such as B.Sc. Applied Accounting, B.Sc. Financial Services, Master of Business Administration, and Diploma in Business Administration.

The university also has in-campus institutes based within Fourah Bay College such as the Institute of Library, Information and Communication Studies (INSLICS), the Institute of Marine Biology and Oceanography (IMBO) and the Institute of Population Studies (IPS). In-campus institutes based at Njala University College include Home Sciences, Continuing Education and Educational Services.

The minimum entry requirements for undergraduate degree courses at the university are five WASSCE passes at credit levels, including English for direct entry students mainly from school. Over the last five years, access courses for entry into the faculties of Pure and Applied Sciences and Engineering have been conducted with a view to increasing the number of students in those disciplines. A similar access programme exists for courses in the faculties at Njala University College, which are

mainly science and education based. Post-graduate degrees in various disciplines are also offered by the university.

The *University of Sierra Leone Act* of 1972 provides the legal framework for the university's operations. The administrative organs include the Court, Senate and Standing Committees of the various colleges. This structure will remain largely unchanged as the *Universities Act* of 2004 comes into effect.

1.5.2 Other institutions

- **Milton Margai College of Education and Technology (MMCET)** has a student enrolment of about 3,000. It has the status of a polytechnic and brings together the Milton Margai College of Education, the Freetown Technical Institute and the Hotel and Tourism Training Centre. MMCET offers courses leading to the Higher Teacher's Certificates (HTC) and B.Ed degrees. There are also certificate and diploma courses in Engineering, Hotel and Catering, Performing Arts, Agriculture and Social Sciences.

- **Makeni Teachers' College** was upgraded, through the *Polytechnics Act* of 2001, to the Northern Polytechnic, incorporating the Islamic College Magburaka and the Magburaka Trade Centre. It has, since 2004, resumed operations in Makeni after the rebel war. The student population is currently about 1,000 students. Programmes offered include the Teacher's Certificate and Higher Teacher's Certificate.

- **Eastern Polytechnic**, established in 2001 under the *Polytechnics Act*, is made up of the Bunubu Teachers' College and the Kenema Trade Centre, both in the Eastern Region. It has about 1,500 students pursing various

technical, vocational and teacher education courses for Teacher's Certificate, Higher Teacher's Certificate and Bachelor of Engineering.

- **Bo Teachers' College**, has been, under the *Universities Act* of 2004, incorporated into the new Njala University, along with Njala University College, the Paramedical School and the School of Hygiene in Bo. Its present enrolment is about 1,200 students. Currently, it runs courses for Teacher's Certificate and Higher Teacher's Certificate.

- **Freetown Teachers' College (FTC)** has a student enrolment of about 1,000. It recently became a dual mode institution, training teachers by conventional and distance modes for the Teacher's Certificate and Higher Teacher's Certificate. The college will soon be merged with the Freetown Trade Centre to form the Freetown Polytechnic.

- **Port Loko Teachers' College** is located in the northwest of the country, and trains teachers for the Teacher's Certificate and Higher Teacher's Certificate. It will be constituted into a polytechnic in the near future.

- **Freetown Trade Centre** offers artisanal courses for lower level personnel for both the public and private sectors of the economy. This institution has about 1,000 students.

The above list is not exhaustive as there are many private technical and vocational institutions providing skills training for a wide variety of clientele. The activities of these institutions are mostly regulated by the National Council for Technical, Vocational and Other Academic Awards (NCTVA).

1.5.3 Cross-border providers of education

Cross-border education is yet to gain much appeal in Sierra Leone, probably a result of current legislation for University education (i.e., University Act of 1972) which prohibits the setting up of universities other than the University of Sierra Leone. This is likely to change and open up Sierra Leone to cross-border providers, once the new *Universities Act* (2004) receives presidential assent.

Meanwhile, however, there are a few cross-border provisions in the form of packaged programmes delivered at local institutions by Sierra Leonean tutors for certificates awarded by the external institutions. For example:

- undergraduate and post-graduate degrees in Social Sciences and Computing at IAMTECH packaged by St. Clements University in Turks and Caicos Islands, British West Indies;
- certificates and diploma programmes in Accounting, Commerce, Secretarial Practice and Management at the College of Business Studies, packaged by a college in London, England;
- preparation of students for G.C.E. "O" and "A" Level examinations, following syllabi developed at London University, by private schools such as Lebanese and Limount schools; and
- correspondence and open and distance learning (ODL) courses at the degree and sub-degree levels, mainly in Social Sciences and Arts (these are advertised by mostly U.K., USA and Australia providers in the local newspapers; instruction is mostly by printed materials, audio and videocassettes, and tutorials by Internet chats and e-mailing).

None of these educational options has yet been quality-assured locally. The Tertiary Education Commission (TEC), created by an act of Parliament in 2001, is still grappling with putting robust mechanisms in place to regulate such cross-border education offerings.

The World Trade Organisation/General Agreement on Trade in Services has classified education as a commodity that can be freely traded amongst Nation States. Indeed, the world is today witnessing a burgeoning trade in cross-border education for all kinds of careers, vocations and professions. It has become a billion dollar industry, with the U.K, U.S., Australia, Canada and India in the forefront.

With limited institutions, facilities and infrastructure for tertiary education and a growing number of senior secondary school leavers, Sierra Leone has the potential of becoming very attractive for cross-border education.

The government, through the Tertiary Education Commission, should therefore stand ready with clear guidelines and regulations to ensure quality assurance and parity of esteem for the qualifications the foreign cross-border providers would be awarding. That they will come rushing is inevitable – it is a trend gaining currency across Africa. Kenya, for example, now has over 10 cross-border education campuses and programmes.

Data on the educational sectors in Sierra Leone are provided in Appendices 1– 11.

2.0 Sierra Leone's Current Policy on Formal and Non-Formal Education

Provision of quality, relevant and equitable learning opportunities for all is the policy thrust and overarching objective of education in Sierra Leone.

The policy and legal framework for education in Sierra Leone is established by the following official documents:

- *Constitution of Sierra Leone* 1991
- New Education Policy 1995
- National Education Master Plan 1997–2006
- Education for All National Action Plan 2004
- Sierra Leone Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper 2004
- *Education Act* 2004
- *University Act* 1972, which is to be replaced by the *Universities Act* 2004

Provision of quality, relevant and equitable learning opportunities for all is the policy thrust and overarching objective of education in Sierra Leone. The importance of education as the key to human development is recognized in all of the nation's social and economic development policies and practices.

2.1 Significant educational reforms

In 1964, three years after the attainment of political independence, the *Education Act* promulgated the first national policy on education. This Act provided the framework for all other policies on education, including the Policy White Paper on Education (1970), the Education Review (1976), and the Education Sector Review (1979). Other social/human development policies – such as the National Youth Policy, the National Policy on the Advancement of the Status of Women, and the

National Policy on Gender Mainstreaming – have also strong education/capacit-building components.

Sierra Leone's economic situation declined between the 1970s and 1990s because of the global oil crisis, poor governance and macro-economic distortions. The quantitative and qualitative decline was aggravated by the 11-year rebel war. The decline has persisted for over three decades and has been manifested in low primary and secondary school enrolment and low retention, a high drop-out rate and high adult illiteracy rates. According to the Draft Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) Education Sector Review of 2004, the adult illiteracy rate now stands at over 60% of the population.

It is against the background of this inefficiency in education that the Government of Sierra Leone, with the active support of the international development partners initiated fundamental structural reforms. Access, quality, equity and relevance constitute the policy orientation of the ongoing reform measures whose objectives include:

- **Developing a broad-based education system**
  The government is committed to the "6-3-3-4" educational system (described earlier), and to paying the examination fees for all candidates in government-assisted schools who take the externally moderated examinations.

- **Providing increased access to basic education for all citizens**
  The government is committed to ensuring that the right to basic education is open to all and is exercised by all. The policy of providing increased access to basic educational opportunities is put into effect through a number of non-formal and adult education programmes and projects, including the Non-Formal Primary Education (NFPE) Project, the Complementary Rapid Education for Primary Schools (CREPS) Project, and

the Illiteracy Eradication Project. The target groups of these projects are out-of-school children, youths and adults. Provision of educational opportunities for girls and women is emphasized, especially for girls in educationally marginal areas such as the Northern and Eastern Regions, where positive discriminatory measures in favour of girls' education have been taken. These measures are evident in the policy of free junior and secondary education.

- **Improving the quality and relevance of education**
  The government has taken many measures to improve the quality and relevance of education, including the revising (and, where necessary, adopting of new) curricula to ensure relevance; procuring and distributing teaching and learning materials including science equipment and laboratory chemicals; and developing infrastructures such as new schools and additional classrooms. The District Inspectorate Division in the Ministry has been strengthened in terms of human and other resources.

- **Upgrading technical and vocational educational institutions**
  Technical and vocational education (TVE) centres have been established nationwide and these have targeted unemployed youths, especially ex-combatants, since 2000. The demand for TVE can be gauged by the proliferation of TVE centres in the urban areas. Many of these centres, which are privately owned, provide training opportunities for junior and senior secondary school level dropouts.

  In 2001, the government established the National Council for Technical, Vocational and Other Academic Awards (NCTVA), with the main aim of moderating and co-ordinating examinations for these centres, thereby promoting quality assurance and parity of esteem of the sub degree certificates and diplomas awarded.

- **Promoting literacy and numeracy in adult and formal education**

  Government actions in this direction include establishing a National Commission for Basic Education and a Non-Formal Education Council to advise on non-formal education programmes, including their designs, structures, contents and implementation.

- **Reducing poverty through education**

2.2 Distance education and ICT-mediated learning

In support of distance education and learning aided by information and communication technologies (ICTs), the government's reform initiatives include restructuring and upgrading of the School Broadcasting Unit in support of the 6-3-3-4 system. An upgraded Educational Broadcasting Division has been proposed to replace the School Broadcasting Unit. One of the objectives of the new proposed division is "to produce and deliver quality educational radio and television programmes to complement and enrich lessons in formal and non-formal education classes."

The *Education Act* of 2004 gives effect to the policies set out in the New Education Policy (Government of Sierra Leone 1995) and the National Education Master Plan 1996–2007. The Act makes provision for operationalizing the 6-3-3-4 education system and refers to "distance education," though does not elaborate on how that can be used to deliver education and training. The implication is that providers of education have flexibility in determining how distance education can be utilized. As with any other educational programme, however, steps to provide quality assurance of the distance education programmes established would be required.

2.3 Initiatives to support ODL policies

Support for open and distance learning (ODL) policy is demonstrated in the government's following initiatives:

- **Training of teachers and other education personnel through distance education**

  Distance education has been adopted as a strategy to drastically reduce the large number of untrained and unqualified primary school teachers nationwide. Towards this end, the Sierra Leone government has initiated a policy on training and embarked on a training strategy to use distance education to prepare primary school teachers and other education-sector personnel. This training strategy is expected to contribute to personnel capacity-building and achievement of the Education for All Goals by 2015, as well as to further enhancing implementation of the 6-3-3-4 system. Untrained and unqualified primary school teachers are now being trained up to Teacher's Certificate level at Freetown Teachers' College, through distance education. The Ministry also plans to train teachers for the first three years of primary school by distance education, leading to the one-year Teacher's Elementary Certificate.

  The Division of Extra-Mural Studies (DEMS) in Fourah Bay College at the University of Sierra Leone is implementing, in co-operation with the University of Ghana (Legon), a Commonwealth Youth Programme diploma course in Youth in Development Work through distance education. DEMS also offers Distance Education as an elective course for the Master of Arts degree in Adult Education.

  The Institute of Public Administration and Management of the University of Sierra Leone also offers a distance education module for one semester as part of the Master of Arts for the Master of Arts in Educational

Administration Programme. Similarly, Distance Education is one of the courses for the award of the 12-calendar-month Master's Degree in Educational Administration at Njala University. This elective three credit-hour course is taught during the first and second semesters of the academic year.

- **Training of educational administrators in distance education**

  To ensure effectiveness in the administration of education, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) in Sierra Leone has taken action by training through distance education. About 20 educational administrators are currently being trained by the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), through distance education. The training lasts for one academic year and leads to the award of a Post-Graduate Diploma in Distance Education. Possibilities for further training leading to the award of a Master's degree in distance education exist.

- **Establishment of ODL Resource Centres**

  With support from UNESCO, the MEST is in the process of establishing ODL Resource Centres countrywide. These centres will serve both formal and non-formal education clientele.

- **Setting up of FM radio station**

  To operationalise the policy on educational broadcasting, the MEST, with UNESCO support, has set up a frequency modulation (FM) transmitting station in Freetown. Actual transmission on FM 95.1 Radio Education will commence soon. The radio coverage is expected to extend country wide with the purchase of a bigger transmitter.

- **Technology-mediated learning**

   Under the aegis of the MEST, training of science teachers is being facilitated by the use of television and video. Training workshops are being organized to enhance the capacities of science teachers to conduct experiments aided by video recordings.

Progress in these initiatives is discussed in more detail in Section 4.

Educational interventions by non-governmental organizations (NGOs)

- **The Institute of Advanced Management and Technology** (IAMTECH), formerly a computer training centre, has partnered with St. Clements University to prepare Sierra Leoneans for undergraduate and post-graduate qualifications through the Internet and local supervision.

- **The African Development and Emergency Organisation (ADEO)**, originally from Kenya, began operations in Sierra Leone in 2002 in co-operation with United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). The organization with headquarters in Kenema in the Eastern Region, says in its brochure that its "education department is presently implementing Distance Education for Learners in Senior Secondary Levels 1,2,3." In addition, ADEO claims that it "has trained Sierra Leonean Teachers to master skills in writing distance education materials such as printed modules in various secondary school subjects [and producing] distance education audio cassettes, and to efficiently handle distance education tutorials and serve as internal examiners."

3.0 Current Policies to Support Use of ICTs in Formal Education in Sierra Leone

The 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone currently in use asserts that the government shall promote "the study and application of modern science, technology, commerce and business." Concerning media and its practices, the Constitution states that the print and electronic media such as newspaper dailies, magazines, radio and television shall at all times be free to uphold the fundamental objectives contained in the Constitution and highlight the responsibility and accountability of the government to the people.

3.1 Objectives and strategies to facilitate widespread use of ICTs

A national policy on ICTs is almost non-existent at the present time. However, provisions for ICT utilization are embedded in the National Science and Technology Policy, with assertions such as making science and technology education compulsory in the basic education system by integrating it into the curricula of all schools and at all levels. The policy also states that "the rapid development and exploitation of ICTs shall be targeted."

These objectives aim at facilitating the widespread use of ICTs in the country through:
- creating a regulatory environment for the harmonious development of ICTs;
- improving the human resources capacity for ICT usage in the country;
- promoting and facilitating private sector participation in ICTs; and
- establishing linkages with regional and international ICT organizations and institutions.

Several strategies have been suggested for meeting the objective, including:

- ensuring the acquisition, production and distribution of instructional and educational materials, and basic electronic media and other facilities;

- establishing Internet facilities in schools and higher education institutions to improve ICT literacy, standards, practices and guidelines for the development and acceleration of the exploitation of the technology;

- transforming the traditional public library systems into a network of electronic libraries and establishing new ones;

- establishing an ICT centre of excellence where intensive, practical and quality training courses can be provided to reorient professionals and other workers in the public and private sectors;

- creating an enabling environment and incentives for private sector investments in the manufacturing of a selected range of ICT components and equipment; and

- promoting regional, sub-regional, bilateral and multilateral co-operation in ICTs.

3.2 Implementation of policy objectives and strategies in support of ICTs

Though there are many Internet centres and cafes in Freetown, their use for educational purposes is minimal. However, one key project established since the war is making use of ICT in education. It is the "Knowledge Aid Project" sponsored by a non-governmental organization in the U.K. The project provides computers to selected secondary schools in Freetown, to the Milton Margai College of Education and Technology and to the Freetown Teachers' College, which runs the teacher upgrading programme by distance education. Through the project, untrained teachers download instructional materials for their classes. It also provides CD libraries for schools in key subjects such as Science and Mathematics. In areas with infrequent power supply, such as remote provincial towns and villages, the project encourages teachers to use the CD materials provided for teaching in

schools. It is also working to target selected educational websites whose contents could be downloaded.

Major constraints to the implementation of this project are the high costs of telephone connection and the long-distance charges. This has the potential of delaying the spread of the technology to schools and other educational institutions. The erratic supply of electricity even in Freetown can also be limiting.

All the major tertiary institutions, such as the university and polytechnics, have computer centres for training students and giving concessionary access to staff and students for Internet use.

4.0 How ODL and ICTs Are Currently Being Used in Outreach and Extension Programmes in Sierra Leone

Open and distance learning (ODL) approaches are not new in Africa. Several countries – for example, Tanzania, Ghana, Botswana, Lesotho and Malawi – have a long and interesting record in ODL. Open and distance learning provides educational opportunities for all categories of people who cannot otherwise access formal institutions of learning to gain skills and knowledge. It is a solution in situations where learners are working on the instructional materials independently but have infrequent access to a teacher. Working at home in a self-directed learning situation is the norm. In the informal sector, ODL takes place in the form of radio and TV discussions, broadcast messages, dramatisations and skills acquisition.

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) are normally integrated into ODL opportunities and used alongside print materials. ICTs cover a wide array of electronic media such as radio, television, video, audio-tapes and computer-assisted learning modes incorporating multi-media such as CD-ROM, DVD, the Internet and World Wide Web.

Examples of the successful use of ICTs are found in the radio schools of Latin America, "Radio Primaria" and "Telescundoria" of Mexico, and the supervised study groups of Zambia and Malawi. Extended educational opportunities to large numbers of children and adults who were previously deprived because of the social class into which they were born are provided. Thus, distance education utilizing ICTs has helped to address class-based limitations in educational choices.

4.1 Minimal use of ODL and ICTs in national education programmes

The use of ICTs in ODL in Sierra Leone is gaining currency, as the ODL policy-related initiatives in section 2.2 noted. At present, however, there are limited outreach and extension programmes to service the educational and training needs of learners many of whom are unemployed and far less productive and inefficient in many of their livelihood engagements.

Formal in-school learning systems in Sierra Leone respond more to traditional clientele who acquire the education and/or training that society has identified as fundamental for socio-economic development. The provision of such education or training entails pre-determined programmes designed with a general focus on human resource development for national gains.

The non-formal outreach and extension programmes co-ordinated or facilitated by the Non-formal Division of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology often cater to those learners who may not fit into the formal education system. The People's Educational Association (PEA) of Sierra Leone, an NGO subsidized by the government, plays a major role in servicing the non-formal education sector of the general population. Currently, ODL opportunities are limited to sectors such as Teacher Education, Health and Agricultural Extension Agents, Social Mobilization and Adult Education Facilitator Training – all located in Sierra Leone. For instance, Fourah Bay College at the University of Sierra Leone conducts a Diploma in Youth in Development programme through distance education, while the Freetown Teachers' College runs one for the untrained and unqualified teachers in primary schools. Other examples of ODL and ICTs use can be found in the health and agriculture sectors in Sierra Leone.

In the health sector, ODL and ICTs use can be discerned in the inclusion of Telemedicine in the instructional mode for clinical training of medical students and doctors in the College of Medicine and Allied Health Sciences (COMAHS), University of Sierra Leone. This training involves the use of Internet chats and e-mailing to discuss critical medical cases. Case history, laboratory tests, X-rays, histology and clinical findings are mounted on the Internet for discussion during grand rounds at COMAHS and two overseas centres (one in Oxford, England, and the other in the United States). This way, competence in the training, diagnosis and management of disease conditions is greatly enhanced. Interesting cases of medical importance are also usually mounted so that the experience can be shared among members taking part in the network.

As well, ODL and ICTs are used extensively in the Government of Sierra Leone–World Bank campaign on HIV/AIDS sensitization and awareness-raising. This programme, implemented by the Secretariat for HIV/AIDS Response Project (SHARP), has as its main objectives the reduction of HIV/AIDS transmission and the mitigation of its impact on the population. The project uses the multi-sectoral approach by engaging information, education and communications strategies in intensive sensitization and awareness raising via the print and electronic media. The modes of delivery include:

- broadcast messages and focused audience-orientated segmented messages utilizing posters, pamphlets, booklets and audiocassettes.
- radio and television discussions and dramas;
- expansive outreach on the World Wide Web for an directed at both national and international clienteles; and
- distribution of video and TV sets to community-based and non-governmental organizations, community associations and clubs for group viewing of HIV/AIDS sensitization and awareness-raising materials at resource centres in remote communities.

In the agricultural sector, ODL and ICT use will form the main thrust in the recently signed agreement between the Government and FAO for a training programme to target the right to food, farmers field schools and school gardening in remote parts of the country using audio cassettes and print materials. The project is sponsored through FAO and the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security (MAFFS) using German funds.

Similarly, the Commonwealth of Learning, jointly with the University of Sierra Leone's Njala University College, is preparing to conduct a research needs assessment for training extension agents employed by MAFFS in aspects of vegetable production in peri-urban Freetown. This project, which aims at increasing vegetable production and sustainable improvements in livelihood skills to reduce poverty at the farm level, will depend solely on ODL using ICTs and print modes of delivery.

Other initiatives at Njala University College and the Agricultural Research Institutions are also using ICTs for learning and to make scientific literature accessible to students, academics and researchers in fields such as agriculture, food, nutrition and related biological, health, environmental and social sciences. Two of those initiatives – the Access to Global Online Research in Agriculture (AGORA) and the Essential Electronics Agriculture Library (TEEAL) – are backed by the FAO and the UNDP, respectively, in collaboration with a range of public and private sector partners. AGORA provides online access to over 400 scientific journals, while TEEAL provides literature in the form of CD-ROMs. Through these means, up-to-date literature for teaching and research, and curricula reviews is made accessible at the college library to students, academics and researchers.

There are also many technically competent professionals who are also trainers of apprentices in a variety of technical and vocational fields. For example, apprenticeship is a popular mode of training in Auto Mechanics, Tailoring,

Masonry, Carpentry, Welding, General Housing Construction and Home Appliance Repairs. The technician-trainers, while being qualified by experience and capable of working proficiently, may nevertheless not be well prepared to be trainers. Some may lack the theoretical foundations of their vocations; others may not have the appropriate training attitudes, approaches, methods and techniques and therefore do not know how to interact effectively with apprentices. Often such trainers find it difficult to train apprentices to a completion. Moreover, they sometimes employ methods and training exercises that are inappropriate and abuse fundamental human rights. For all these reasons, it is not uncommon to find trainees dropping out of apprenticeship programmes. Clearly, then, these technically competent professionals need reorientation and training in Apprenticeship Education.

Another area in which ODL and ICTs could find greater use in outreach and extension programmes is in the health sector. There are many public health workers with less-than-adequate competence for the types of duties expected of them. For example, the nurses' aides in the rural communities could provide better services if they were better trained. Very often many of them have little or no formal training or qualification in modern health care methods (such as helping with birth deliveries). These individuals also must often face performing operations in unhygienic and unorthodox circumstances. They need appropriate training in order to become more effective, efficient and competent. Similarly, nurses, doctors and other paramedics are variously trained in their particular vocational choices, but they may not have mastered all concepts, knowledge and skills, especially new emergent ones. Also, their public relations and communication skills, styles and orientations in delivering service are sometimes counter-productive.

4.2 The potential use of ODL and ICTs in outreach and extension programmes

Nationally, ODL could be invaluable in addressing the crisis Sierra Leone faces with the high illiteracy rates, high dropout rates from the formal educational sector, and the large number of unemployed adults. Priority areas to be considered for ODL and ICT applications in the formal and non-formal education sectors could be Small and Medium Enterprises Management/Operations, Agricultural Production, Home Management/Economics, Health, Literacy, Textiles/Clothing, Metal Works, Home Appliance Repairs, and other technical and vocational endeavours. Use of ODL in Sierra Leone calls for creative approaches in design and structure of the programmes to meet the learning and training needs of the many Sierra Leoneans not catered for by the current traditional formal and non-formal delivery systems.

Using ODL and ICTs, remedial and refresher courses not requiring professionals to leave their places of work could be mounted. (A practical parallel can be drawn from the professional development programme for primary and secondary school administrators, most of whom were never prepared for educational administration. These administrators are currently benefiting from the ODL training they are receiving through the Indira Gandhi National Open University.) Through a multimedia approach, written information and audiotapes could be made available to various groups of ODL learners. As well, group learning by radio and television programmes could occur in regional centres where learners could meet from time to time for tutorials as necessary. In these centres, learners could also develop practical skills using equipment not easily accessible in their home environment.

The use of such facilities including ICTs would:
- ensure consistency in teaching quality;
- bring experts and technocrats into the classroom to enhance better understanding the contents of courses;

- ensure access to education in the learners' own time;
- provide entertainment and therefore motivate students; and
- sustain the interest of learners.

An increase in the use of ODL and ICT delivery opportunities in Sierra Leone would further expand the clientele base beyond that currently served by the normal in-school and non-formal education systems. The result would be improved educational access for more people of different backgrounds – for example, non-professionals, professionals, vocational, technical and people with leisure orientations.

It is unusual for each learning opportunity to target a specific group, and so be organized to meet the situation of the group in terms of family and economic circumstances. Any educational delivery system – ODL and ICTs included – must therefore also be chosen to ensure effectiveness and efficiency in meeting both the country's development needs and the learners' special circumstances.

Sierra Leone should take full advantage of all systems including ODL and ICT-enhanced education and training opportunities, to improve on the human capital for its economic growth as a nation.

5.0   Priority Areas for Implementation of ODL Initiatives in Sierra Leone

Priorities for ODL and ICT interventions:

1. Training of adult and non-formal education teachers and facilitators for participation in a mass illiteracy eradication campaign. Reducing the high rate of illiteracy – 76% of women and 40% of men are illiterate – can be tackled using a combination of conventional and ODL methods. Training a critical mass of adult literacy teachers and facilitators would contribute immensely in attaining the Education for All National Action Plan Goal of achieving a 50% increase in the present adult literacy rate nationally by 2015. Literacy education programmes designed using ODL and ICTs as key components would be necessary for accelerating the process of literacy acquisition in Sierra Leone. Mobilization and sensitization of communities through targeted television and radio programmes for the proposed illiteracy eradication campaign could be one mode to facilitate this. Community radio and television listening and learning groups could be established in centres nationwide as a strategy in this regard.

2. Mounting and dissemination of well-articulated anti-HIV/AIDS messages through video recordings for television viewing groups in established centres. Training of community-based facilitators and provision of the necessary ICTs for effective and efficient programme implementation is a way forward in the fight against the spread of HIV and AIDS.

3. Use of video recordings for the training of community health personnel in various disciplines. The recordings could be combined with print materials as instructional pathways.

4. Creation of linkages with external agencies' educational programmes using ODL, especially programmes in Africa (for example, the University of South Africa, the National Open University of Nigeria, Zimbabwe Open University and the African Virtual University are involved in the production of teaching and learning materials for post-secondary schools).

5. Development of programmes for professional and occupational training. Areas to consider include:
   a) teacher training for untrained and unqualified teachers;
   b) adequate training for medical workers in various fields, especially in rural communities where they may be the only recourse for emergency medical attention;
   c) adult education programmes such as literacy and remedial/bridging courses, mostly for people who want to write the West African Secondary School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) public examinations to qualify to enter university or another tertiary institution;
   d) youth programmes geared towards engaging the minds of young people and challenging their creativity to make useful contributions in society;
   e) programmes for retirees and others who may wish to change careers or occupations or read for leisure;
   f) technical and vocational programmes in various fields;
   g) programmes in peace and civic education;
   h) creation of country-wide access to education and electronic media; and
   i) production of teaching and learning materials, including pictorial and printed documents.

Priorities for an ODL policy proposal:
1. Use of ODL for the training of personnel for critical development sectors such as education, health, social mobilization and agriculture.

2. Addressing quality assurance and parity of esteem issues in distance education and the need to improve on efficiency through service delivery (e.g., quality assurance in the training of teachers through distance education).

3. Removal of import duties and other taxes from materials and equipment to be used for ODL training.

4. Increased role of research in the use of ODL and ICTs in Education, Health, Agriculture, Social Sciences and other areas.

5. Inclusion of ODL courses in the curricula for teacher training.

6. Promotion of the use of solar energy for rural electrification to enhance access to ICTs among the rural and urban poor.

7. Training in instructional materials development.

8. Establishment of a Distance Education or Special Initiative (or Commission or Council) within MEST.

9. Paving of the way for an open learning college or university similar to the ones in Namibia and Botswana (e.g., NAM, COL and BOCODOL).

10. Establishment of FM broadcasting stations that would, in the medium- and long term, reach every chiefdom in the country.

11. Recognition of ODL qualifications by stakeholders and the general pubic.

6.0 Plan of Action for Implementation of ODL Initiatives in Sierra Leone

The following table outlines actions proposed for the short-, medium- and long terms. Note that responsibilities and required resources have yet to be assigned.

Areas to Be Addressed	Strategies	Time Frame	Responsibility	Resource	Comment
Short term (1–6 months): 1. Needs assessment surveys on: a) HIV/AIDS b) Agricultural Extension Agents training c) Resources assessments for ODL d) Identification of areas for ODL intervention in the areas of health and social mobilization.	Desk search and field visits/work " " " " "	April - Aug 2005 " " " " "			
2. Creation of linkages with established ODL providers.	Formal contacts networking.				
Medium term (1year): 1. Actual projects identification, one each in: a) Agriculture b) Health c) Social mobilization d) Education	Desk and field work visits	Sept 2005 - Aug 2006 "			
2. Training in the use of ICTs.	Training workshops	"			
3. Training in instructional materials design and production.	Training workshops				

Areas to Be Addressed	Strategies	Time Frame	Responsibility	Resource	Comment
4. Establishment of Broadcasting Units and ICT study centres.	Identification, procurement, distribution, operationaliz-ation.	"			
5. The establishment of a Distance Education Special Initiative Commission (or Council).	Consultations, promulgation	"			
6. Formulation of national ODL policy.	Consultations, promulgation	"			
7. Development of curricula for various training programmes (e.g., teacher training, vocational/technical, etc.).	Curricula development workshops	" "			
8. Development of robust quality assurance guidelines and recognition of ODL qualifications on offer.	Review of existing guidelines from other places for adoption	"			
Long term (1–3 years):					
1. Training on adult literacy and teacher education and other vocations.	Training programmes	Sept 2005 - Aug 2008 "			
2. Training of community health personnel in various disciplines.	"	"			
3. Paving the way for an open learning college or university.	Consultation and promulgation				

7.0 Recommendations to Government on ODL Usage

Considering the opportunities that widespread use of ODL and related activities offer in enhancing access, quality, relevance and equity in education and training in Sierra Leone, we make the following recommendations:

That the government:

1. Adopt ODL as an acceptable delivery mode alongside others for education and training in the country.
2. Set up a unit within the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology to co-ordinate and monitor ODL activities in the country.
3. Formulate and promulgate a policy framework for ODL and related training in the country.
4. Establish an open college or university in the medium to long term under the *Universities Act* of 2004.

That the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology:

5. Direct, as a matter of urgency, the Tertiary Education Commission and National Council for Technical, Vocational and Other Academic Awards to put clear guidelines and regulations for accreditation, quality assurance (including examinations for programme courses) and recognition of qualifications awarded after programmes of study following ODL and related training.

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Appendices: Data on Education in Sierra Leone

Appendix 1:
Enrolment: Primary School Gross and Net Enrolment Rates by Region (Percentages Rounded)

	Southern		Eastern		Northern		Western	
	GER	NER	GER	NER	GER	NER	GER	NER
Female	115	73	127	79	108	69	128	87
Male	117	71	138	73	122	68	143	88

Source: Sierra Leone Integrated Household Survey (SLIHS), cited in Bennell et al. (n.d.) *Draft PRSP Education Sector Review,* p. 78.

Appendix 2:
2003 Primary and Secondary School Gross Enrolment Rates by Level and Location (Percentages Rounded)

	Primary		Junior Secondary		Senior Secondary	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Urban	134	144	60	82	47	16
Rural	103	115	14	26	9	13

Source: SLIHS, cited in Bennell et al., p. 19.

Appendix 3:
Junior and Senior Secondary School Gross and Net Enrolment Rates by Region 2003

JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL

	Southern		Eastern		Northern		Western	
	GER	NER	GER	NER	GER	NER	GER	NER
Female	46	19	23	4	24	11	97	16
Male	66	34	50	7	40	15	68	17

SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL

	GER	NER	GER	NER	GER	NER	GER	NER
Female	30	11	13	2	14	4	74	11
Male	46	13	16	3	21	3	126	16

Source: SLIHS, cited in Bennell et al., p. 27.

Appendix 4a:
Enrolments at Constituents of the University of Sierra Leone, 1993/94–2003/04

University of Sierra Leone	1993/94	1999/2000	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04
Fourah Bay College	1,576	1,800	2,055	2,245	2,800
Njala University College	988	1,100	1,500	2,000	2,069
College of Medicine and Allied Health Sciences	91	160	105	300	
Institute of Public Administration and Management	357	328	412	900	

Source: SLIHS, cited in Bennell et al., p. 85.

Appendix 4b:
Enrolments at Existing Polytechnics and Teacher Education Colleges

Institution	1993/94	1999/2000	2001/2002
Milton Margai College of Education and Technology	709	753	1,050
Eastern Polytechnic	316	475	1,010
Makeni Teachers' College	558	390	780
Bunumbu Teachers' College	522	496	829
Port Loko Teachers' College	494	498	805
Freetown Teachers' College	346	429	870
Total	2,945	3,041	5,344

Source: SLIHS, Cited in Bennell et al., p. 85.

Appendix 5:
2002 Adult Literacy Enrolments by Region

Region	Female	Male	Total
Southern	780	1,490	2,270
Eastern	540	1,080	1,620
Northern	910	640	1,510
Western	1,060	1,550	2,610
Total	3,290	4,760	8,050

Source: Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, cited in Bennell et al., p. 85.

Appendix 6:

Literacy Rates* by Gender, Year, National Average and Source of Data

Year	Gender	Rate	National Average	Source of Data
1985	Male	36.4%	(30.0%)	Central Statistics Office (CSO)
	Female	22.8%		
1995	Male	31.0%	(21.0%)	CSO
	Female	11.0%		
1998	Male	36.0%	(29.5%)	UNDP
	Female	23.0%		
2000	Male		(36.0%)	HDR
	Female			

* Based on definition of ability to read easily or with difficulty.

Source: Government of Sierra Leone (2004), Education for All (EFA) National Action Plan, p. 6.

Appendix 7:
Non-Formal Primary Education (NFPE) Enrolment

Year	Enrolment		
	Male	Female	Total
1998	800	650	1,450
1999	915	661	1,576
2000	980	728	1,708
2001	1,340	780	2,120
2001	1,560	798	2,358
2003	2,711	804	3,515
	8,306 (66%)	4,421 (34%)	12,727

Source: Thompson et al. (2004).

Appendix 8:
Primary School Completion Rates by Age Groups and Location (Percentages Rounded)

Age	Urban		Rural	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
10-14	15 (59)	17(74)	5(63)	4 (69)
15-19	54 (21)	57 (26)	11(23)	16(43)
20-29	40 (14)	64 (11)	7(5)	17(12)
30-39	33 (6)	57 (9)	4(3)	19(7)

Note: Figures in parentheses are percentages of age group still in primary school.

Source: SLIHS, cited in Bennell et al., p. 79.

Appendix 9:

NPSE Pass Rates (Greater Than 220 Points) by Region, 2001–2003 (Percentages Rounded)

Year	Northern		Eastern		Southern		Western	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
2001	68	65	79	69	84	75	83	82
2002	81	77	86	75	82	70	83	80
2003	82	79	92	88	77	64	79	76

Source: West Africa Examinations Council, cited in Bennell et al., p. 46.

Appendix 10:
Basic Education Certificate of Education (BECE), Pass Rates for Core Subject, 2001–2003 (Percentages Rounded)

Core Subject	2001	2002	2003	
			Female	Male
Social Studies	55	43	31	48
Languages Arts	51	47	49	53
Integrated Science	38	41	54	69
Mathematics	15	14	14	18

Source: West African Examinations Council, cited in Bennell et al., p. 47.

Appendix 11:
Population Never Attended School, by Age Group and Location, 2003 (Percentages Rounded)

Age	Urban		Rural	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
5-10	29	31	50	52
10-14	16	9	31	27
15-19	25	15	65	40
20-29	47	22	88	70
30-39	59	32	93	72

Source: SLIHS, cited in Bennell et al., p. 22.