



Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education

COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL SAFETY POLICY

March 2023

FOREWORD

Sierra Leone has made considerable gains in improving access to education following the roll-out of a number of interventions over the past years. Pivotal among these is the launching of the Free Quality School Education Programme by His Excellency Dr. Julius Maada Bio, in May 2018, as a flagship programme of the Government of Sierra Leone. The Free Quality School Education Programme will lead to increase in access, quality and equity for over 3 million children as it will remove financial barriers to school enrolment and improve teaching and learning outcomes, thereby contributing to the improvement of the country's human capital development. Human Capital Development is central to the government of Sierra Leone as laid out in its Medium-Term Development Plan (MTDP) 2019-2023 titled "Education for Development". The MTDP pillars lay out a new direction for improving the lives of Sierra Leoneans through education, inclusive growth, and building a resilient economy. A quality dimension of education that requires improvement in ensuring the rights of all learners is the provision of safe learning environments. It is in this light that the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE) has developed this Comprehensive School Safety Policy (CSSP) and associated guidelines to ensure the comprehensive safety of the school-age population.

The overall aim of the policy is to provide an overarching multi-sectoral framework that will guide school safety and child safeguard, protecting learners and education service providers from injury, disaster, and risks resulting from violence, abuse and harm in schools. The policy also aims to protect education sector investment through the adoption of strategies for risk reduction and resilience planning by the school system. The goal is to secure educational continuity by ensuring safe learning environments in and around schools during school hours.

The policy is formulated around three pillars: (i) Safe School facilities and learning environment; (ii) Disaster risk reduction in schools; and (iii) Protection from violence and other forms of abuse and harm in and around school. The CSSP invests in children's learning and is geared toward safeguarding the rights of learners. When learners feel safe and protected, their achievements in school is likely to be greater. In addition, the policy will have a positive impact on learners from disadvantaged groups, making it an equitable investment and linking it to long-term positive impacts on education outcomes. These pillars and their strategic objectives respond to several legislation, policy and programme commitments of government.

The CSSP also recognizes the opportunities available in the international context. Its implementation will be critical for Sierra Leone's achievement of a number of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 4 which seeks to *'build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all'* by 2030. The CSSP is likewise aligned with the UN's Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, as well as various instruments by UNESCO. The policy also leverages on the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights.

The implementation of the Policy rests on a consultative and collaborative effort among Ministries, Departments and Agencies, the private sector, and development partners. The Government of Sierra Leone, on its part, is fully committed to ensuring the successful implementation of the CSSP. I, therefore, wish to make an urgent call to all citizens of Sierra Leone and development partners to support this policy document and ensure that Sierra Leone's basic and senior secondary schools provide safe environments for all their learners.



Dr. David M. Sengh
Minister, MBSSE

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education would like to express its grateful appreciation to the FREE Education Project for providing financial and technical support toward the development of this Policy. The Ministry also expresses profound gratitude to its Operations, Planning and Policy pillar (OPP), under the astute leadership of Dr. Yatta Kanu, the Chief Education Officer of MBSSE, for coordinating the work of the experts and providing diligent oversight of the development of this policy. We are also grateful to the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) for supporting the work of the Education Partnerships Group (EPG) which provided technical support to MBSSE's Operations Planning and Policy Pillar in coordinating the development of the policy. Special acknowledgement is due to all theme group members at the Stakeholders Working Session, the pupils of the schools visited, and officials of the various ministries and agencies that provided invaluable information during consultations for this project, and the consultants who facilitated the drafting of the policy. Without their invaluable inputs, this document would not have been completed.

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ACRONYMS / ABBREVIATIONS

ASC	Annual School Census
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
CSS	Comprehensive School Safety
CTA	Community Teacher Association
DEO	District Education Office
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey
DMD	Disaster Management Department
EDP	Education Development Partners
EOP	Education Outcome Fund
ESP	Education Sector Plan
EVD	Ebola Virus Disease
FEPS	Free Education Project Secretariat
FQSE	Free Quality School Education
FSU	Family Support Unit
GEWE	Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
HARPIS-SL	Hazard And Risk Profile Information System - Sierra Leone
ICT	Information & Communication Technology
IECD	Integrated Early Childhood Development
IEP	Individualized Education Plan
IFRC	Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
JSS	Junior Secondary School
MBSSE	Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education
MEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
MLGRD	Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development
MOHS	Ministry of Health and Sanitation
MSWGCA	Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs
MWHI	Ministry of Ministry of Works, Housing and Infrastructure
NCF	Nurturing Care Framework
NDPRP	National Disaster Preparedness and Response Plan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NSCIA	National Security and Central Intelligence Act
OPP	Operations, Policy and Planning
PPP	Public-Private Partnerships
PTA	Parent-Teacher Association
PWD	People with Disabilities
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SGBV	School Gender Base Violence
SILNAP	Sierra Leonean National Adaptation Plan
SRGBV	School Related Gender Based Violence
SSC	School Safety Committee

SSS	Senior Secondary School
TLM	Teaching and Learning Materials
TSC	Teaching Service Commission
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WHO	World Health Organisation

GLOSSARY OF TERMS / DEFINITIONS

1. Disaster

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (“IFRC”) defines “disaster” as “a sudden, calamitous event that seriously disrupts the functioning of a community or society and causes human, material, and economic or environmental losses that exceed the community’s or society’s ability to cope using its own resources. In the instance of CSSP, any event – natural or human-made - that disrupts teaching and learning at any pre-primary, primary, junior secondary and senior secondary school but the school lacks capacity to cope.

2. Risk

Risk is defined as 'the possibility of harmful outcomes, and the likelihood of their occurrence in a stated timescale' (Alberg et al in Titterton, 2005). Within the school environment risks exist, and it is important to identify them and eliminate or prepare towards their occurrence. One of the objectives of the CSS is the building of the capacity of schools and actors within the school system to be able to identify, analyze, assess and prioritize risks for the achievement of CSS objectives. This will involve the coordinated allocation of resources to minimize, monitor, communicate and control risk likelihood and/or impact, or. maximize the capacity of schools to advert or prepare towards the risk translating into hazards.

3. Physical infrastructure

Buildings, classrooms, laboratories, and equipment- education infrastructure - are crucial elements of learning environments in schools. High-quality infrastructure facilitates better instruction, improves student outcomes, and reduces dropout rates, among other benefits. The development of physical infrastructure in schools is governed by the school building standards and national building codes. Any entity – government or private –, and not excluding school physical infrastructure is required to secure a building permit from the Ministry of Works, Housing and Infrastructure (MWHI)

The main purpose of building regulations and codes is to protect public health, safety and general welfare including the welfare of pupils as they relate to the construction and occupancy of buildings and structures.

4. Basic and Senior Secondary School Education

The new Basic and Senior Secondary Education Bill 2023 describes basic education as one (1) year of pre-primary, six (6) years of primary, three (3) years junior secondary and three (3) years of senior secondary schooling or three years of technical or vocational education in lieu thereof”. The CSS Policy covers schools at all these levels.

5. School stakeholders

School stakeholders are persons, organizations and actors within the school system who have interests in, or are impacted by, the educational system in some way. A stakeholder is anyone who has a "stake" or a vested interest in the success and welfare of a school, students or educational system. Stakeholders at the basic and secondary level of the education system include both those who are directly involved - such as parents, teachers, and students - and those indirectly impacted

- such as MBSSE Officials and District Officers of Education and Local Council and Chiefdom leaders - by the success or failure of an educational system. All members of a school catchment community are stakeholders in management of the school.

6. Inclusion

We use the definition of radical inclusion as stated in Sierra Leone’s National Policy on Radical Inclusion in Schools which is in consonant with UNESCO’s definition of inclusion, namely: “*The intentional inclusion of persons directly or indirectly excluded (from education) due to actions or inactions by individuals, society or institutions. Sometimes silence and infrastructure added to other intentional actions exclude. Radical inclusion means that these silent exclusionary policies, moral stances, formally stated actions, institutional regulations, national laws and systemic frameworks should be removed intentionally and with urgency to achieve inclusion*”.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As enshrined in the national Constitution, the government of Sierra Leone has the mandate to ensure that all citizens, including the marginalized, have equal rights and opportunities to education. This mandate has seen a number of policies and initiatives introduced aimed at achieving this objective. Some of these initiatives include the Educational Act (2004), the Child Rights Act (2007), National Policy on Integrated Early Childhood Development (IECD, 2021), School Building Standard and The Sierra Leone Medium-Term National Development Plan (2019 – 2023). Additionally, there have been initiatives such as The Free Quality School Education (FQSE) programme, National School Feeding Programme and the School Health Policy—all directed towards increasing access to basic education which, constitutionally, is the right of every Sierra Leonean citizen.

The Comprehensive School Safety Policy (CSSP) aspires to provide for the utmost safety of students and teachers, while helping improve teaching and learning within the school environment. This includes protection from physical, mental and sexual abuse and the elimination of natural and human-made hazards. The policy has a number of guidelines to facilitate achieving the goal of a safe learning environment for children. These guidelines include respect for human rights, universal access, radical inclusion, championing the child’s interest, comprehensive safety, stakeholder shared responsibility, and conflict sensitivity and peace building. Three main thematic policy statement areas (pillars) emerge from these aspirations. These are: (1) safe school facilities and learning environment; (2) disaster risk reduction in schools; and (3) protection from violence and other forms of abuse in and around Schools.

The first objective has four thematic areas with activities devised to achieve them. The first thematic area is safety on school grounds. The object of this theme is protecting school compounds and facilities from intrusion, providing protective safety measures and safeguards, and achieving an aesthetically pleasing environment, to facilitate teaching and learning. The second theme under this pillar is to ensure safety. The object of this theme is to make certain that school structures are properly constructed and maintained in conformity with requisite School Building Standards and national building codes. Ensuring safety of the school environment is the third theme, and this has the objective of providing proper treatment of all forms of waste, maintenance of the natural ambience of the schools, and provision of learning facilities. The final theme under the third pillar is ensuring safe teaching and learning environment for pupils and teachers. What this theme aspires to, is the availability of teaching and learning materials/aids at all times for use by students, and the promotion of effective communication between service providers and students.

The second policy statement prescribes promotion of school disaster management and risk reduction, and has two thematic areas to ensure its smooth implementation. The first thematic area is minimization and management of disaster risk. This theme aims to institute capacity and systems for disaster preparedness and resilience to ensure continuity of teaching and learning. The second thematic area stipulates safety in transportation, and has the objective of ensuring safety of students to and from schools against accidents and other calamitous events.

The third policy statement is protection from violence and other forms of abuse and harm in and outside of school. This pillar has nine themes to aid its implementation. The first is food safety,

which seeks to ensure that dietary intake by students and education service providers are wholesome and promote optimal body functioning. Health and hygiene safety is the second theme and recognizes the importance of providing an environment that nurtures positive health to protect, promote and improve health for all. The third theme is to safeguard against drugs and substance abuse, and prescribes activities for creating a safe and caring environment where learners and staff are aware of the dangers of drug abuse, outlining steps for making schools a drug free space. The safety against drugs and substance abuse as well as safety against physical, emotional and sexual abuse of children are also paramount in achieving the goals of this policy statement. This is to ensure learners and school service providers are safe from all forms of abuse, harm and neglect by teachers, peers, parents, or community members.

The safety of children with special needs is a crucial aspiration of this policy and another theme under the third pillar of the policy. This theme advocates a safe and comfortable learning environment that favors and facilitates teaching and learning for pupils and teachers with special needs. The sixth theme seeks protection from socio-cultural practices and mental ill-health that can affect the teaching and learning processes in schools. The seventh theme relates to school-community relations, which the policy considers as playing a crucial part in teaching and learning in a safe school environment.

Online and cybercrime safety are addressed in theme eight, which prescribes measures to secure the safety of pupils and students from negative risks emanating from online platforms. The final theme under this pillar is protection from gang recruitment and its purpose is to prevent learners from possible gang involvement and recommends implementation of strategies that will prevent such involvement by learners and teachers alike.

The governance and coordination elements of the CSSP straddle the central, district and school level. Key actors from these levels have roles to ensure the smooth implementation of this policy. Collectively these roles will support the smooth implementation, coordination, sustainability and monitoring of the CSSP. At the central level, institutions and offices such as the District Education Offices coordinate the multisectoral structures operational at the district level - namely, the MDAs under the MoPED and MLGRD; the District Health Offices under the MoHS and its directorates; and the Fire Force Branches and the Police Divisions assist their national structures at the district levels.

At the school level, all schools – basic and senior secondary – are required to form School Safety Committees (SSCs) made up of key school stakeholders including:

- SMC Head/Representatives
- Headteachers
- Disciplinary Committee Heads
- School Matron/Food Committee Heads
- Guidance and Counselling Committee Heads
- School Health Officer/Health Committee Heads
- A Parent representing CTA

The SSC coordinate school safety activities at the school level. Each school's SSC will steer the activities of the SMCs, School Administration, School Health Council (initiated by the School

Health Policy, which is responsible for the coordination of school health and school feeding activities), and the Community Teacher Association (CTA).

A monitoring and evaluation framework has also been designed to ensure effective implementation and reporting, building towards an impact assessment of the CSSP. The M&E system seeks to capture relevant data and information in order to:

1. Monitor the policy implementation outcomes and indicators as reflected in the Result Framework;
2. Establish a process to alert stakeholders of inconsistencies and provide the basis for making necessary adjustments;
3. Strengthen the flow of data and information from the stakeholders through agreed channels of communication;
4. Examine the 3 Policy Statements and 15 themes specified in the Policy. For each policy theme, outcome indicators are developed, data needs are disaggregated, the source of data identified, the frequency it should be collected, and the entity responsible for data collection recognized.

The CSSP implementation will rely on various sources of financing. This will include government financing and contributions from non-state actors such as international development partners, international and local NGOs and the private sector. The School Management Committees (SMCs) and the local community leaders, where schools are located, are encouraged to support funding of policy related activities designed to be implemented by the schools.

1 SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Country Context

Sierra Leone is a country on the west coast of Africa with a population of approximately 8.4 million people according to the latest census figures from the World Bank (2022). Geographically, it is divided into Western Area (where the capital, Freetown, is located) and four Provinces: Eastern, Northern, North-Western, and Southern. The country is further divided into 16 districts including Western Area- Urban and Western Area- Rural.

Currently, several factors affect the safety of learners in Basic and Senior Secondary Schools. One of these is violence against women and girls, which is widespread in Sierra Leone and, arguably, inflicts physical, sexual, emotional and structural harm. In 2020, from January to August, 2,245 cases of sexual assault with approximately 75% aged 0 – 15 years were recorded. The 2021 Annual School Census drew attention to concerns regarding incidences of SGBV in schools, particularly affecting female pupils. Yet official reporting remains very low due to a culture of silence that makes it difficult for victims to come forward, which consequently leaves them struggling to access critical legal, medical and trauma support services. The SGBV situation has also contributed significantly to absenteeism, drop out and poor performance of girls in schools caused by teen pregnancies, child marriage and unaddressed trauma. In response government and Education Development Partners (EDPs) have started to carry out sensitization and awareness-raising activities in an effort to eliminate such unacceptable situation.

Across the country there is a significant number of children, particularly those who are most vulnerable and marginalised, who have not had the opportunity to participate in formal education, leading to high rates of illiteracy. The current adult (15+) literacy rate is 47.7% (i.e. the percentage of the population aged 15 and above who can, with understanding, read and write a short, simple statement on their everyday life¹).

Despite these challenges, Sierra Leone continues to leverage its proud history of education in sub-Saharan Africa. Fourah Bay College was the only institution of higher learning in West Africa from 1827 to 1948, and played a pivotal role in training the first corps of doctors, administrators, and teachers in Anglophone West Africa. Additionally, *Sierra Leone Grammar School*, founded in March 1845 was the first secondary school for boys in the sub-region and *Annie Walsh Memorial School*, established in 1849, was the first secondary school for girls in the sub-region. Both of these schools are still prominent today and continue to set the standards for national excellence in girls' and boys' education. The wish to maintain this proud place in education is evident by the legislation and policies enacted in recent years to increase education access and quality, particularly the inventive programmes and policies promulgated by the government of President Maada Bio, such as the National Policy on Radical Inclusion in Schools and School Health Policy as well as the Free Quality School Education (FQSE) programme, and the National School Feeding Policy.

¹ World Bank, Literacy Rate, Adult Total for Sierra Leone [SEADTLITRZSSLE], retrieved from FRED, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis; <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/SEADTLITRZSSLE>, January 7, 2023.

1.2 Structure and Context of the Education System

The CSSP has been developed to directly respond to the current school context, which has influenced the strategic direction of the policy and the education variables that the policy is dealing with.

The delivery of basic education (pre-primary, primary and junior secondary) is a devolved function, governed by the Local Government Act 2004, and implemented by the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development. The country's education system is segmented into five stages, constituting what is known as the 1-6-3-3-4 system: 1 year compulsory pre-primary; 6 years primary education; 3 years Junior Secondary education; 3 years of either Senior Secondary education or technical vocational education; and 4 years University or other tertiary education institutions. At the central government level, basic education service delivery is the primary responsibility of Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE). At the district² level, it is a devolved responsibility of the Local Councils, who report to the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MLGRD). The sector-specific legislation governing and regulating the MBSSE is the Education Act, 2004.

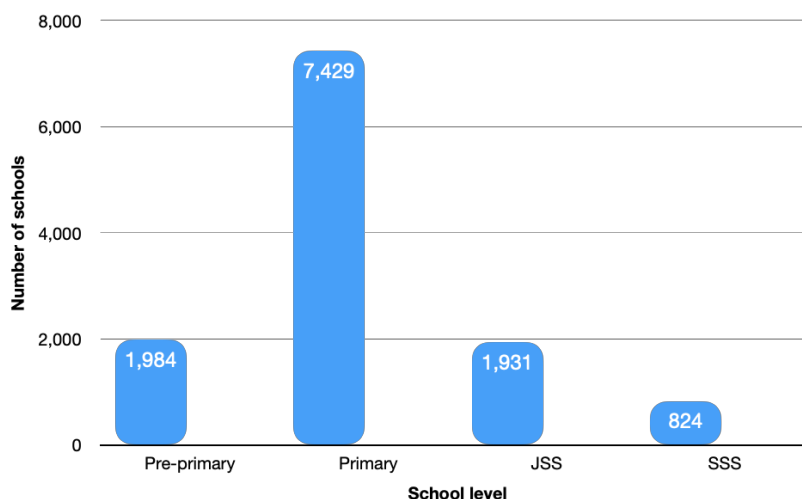


Figure 1: Number of schools

Source: 2021 Annual School Census, MBSSE, 2022

According to the 2021 Annual School Census (ASC), there were 11,344 basic schools (i.e. pre-school, primary and JSS) and 824 SSSs in Sierra Leone. Of these, pre-primary schools accounted for 16% percent (1,984), primary schools for 61 percent (7,429), JSSs for 17 percent (1,931) and SSSs for 7% (824). There are approximately 2.7 million pupils in basic schools (Pre-school, 169,133; primary, 1,964,346; and JSS, 588,813) and 409,148 in SSS.

² Systems-level Analysis of Education Service Delivery in Sierra Leone, April 2020: Education Partnership Group

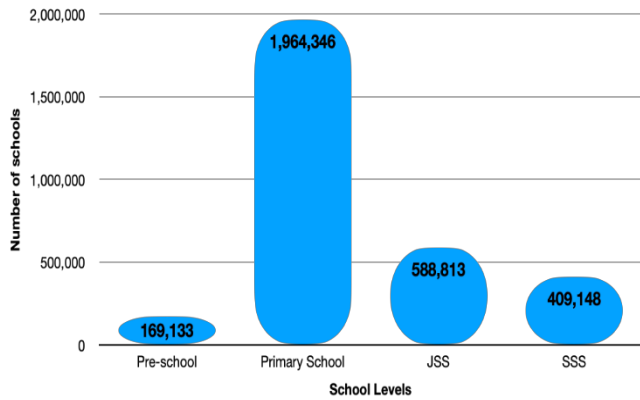


Figure 2: School enrolment

Source: 2021 Annual School Census (ASC), MBSSE, 2022

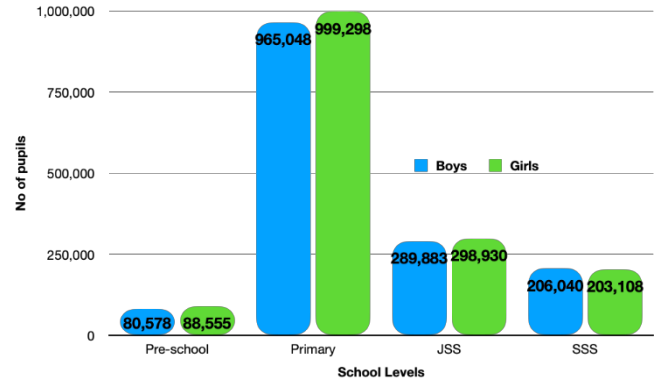


Figure 3: Gender Disaggregation of basic school pupil

Thus, the overall pupil-teacher ratio is 35. The primary schools have the highest ratio of 45 pupils per teacher above the UNESCO standard of 40 but meets the MBSSE requirement of 45.

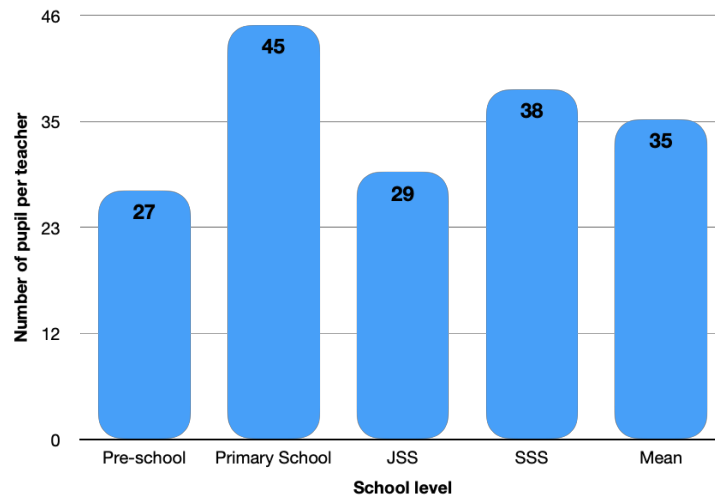


Figure 4: Pupil-teacher ratio

Source: 2021 Annual School Census (ASC), MBSSE, 2022

Average class size is 51 pupils/ per class. The average class size for pre-school is 32, whilst the primary school is 50 pupils per class. The highest is SSS where average class size is 56. There are fewer SSS across the country as seen in the ASC.

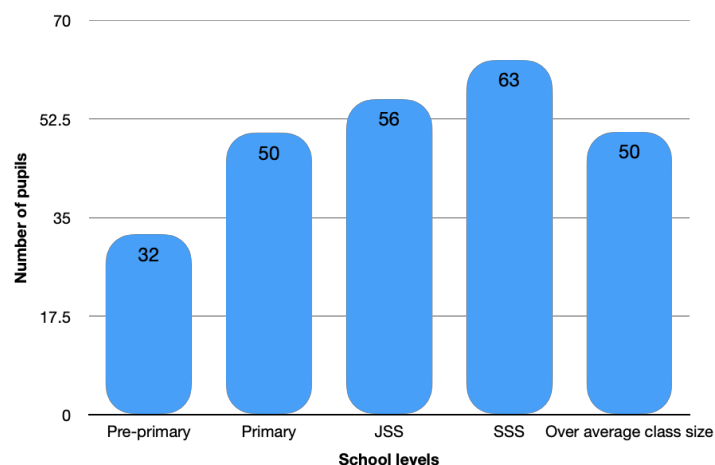


Figure 5: Class size

Source: 2021 Annual School Census (ASC), MBSSE, 2022

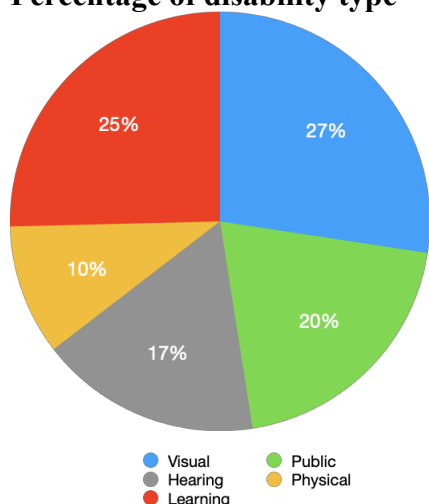
The 2021 School Census revealed that there were 27,368 pupils with disabilities; constituting 1% of all pupils/students at the basic and secondary levels. However, this is likely an underestimate due to underreporting of disabilities. Approximately 4% of pupils with disabilities are enrolled in pre-primary school, 60% enrolled in primary school, 26% are enrolled in JSS. They constitute 10% at the SSS. The majority of these pupils were visually-impaired children (27%), followed by those with disabilities related to learning (25%), hearing (20%), speech (17%) and physical impairments (10%). It is important to note that this current number is three times the number recorded in 2017.

Table 1: Pupils with disabilities of the basic and SSS education level

LEVEL	VISUAL	HEARING	SPEECH	PHYSICAL	LEARNING	ALL PUPIL WITH DISABILITIES	PERCENTAGE PER LEVEL
Pre-Primary	176	150	392	117	220	1,055	3.9%
Primary	3,808	3,531	3,316	1,624	4,218	16,497	60.3%
JSS	2,322	1,413	832	616	1,903	7,086	25.9%
SSS	1,178	396	112	390	591	2,730	10.0%
Total Pupils/students	7,484	5,490	4,652	2,747	6,932	27,368	100.0%
Percentage nature of disability	27.3%	20.1%	17.0%	10.0%	25.3%	100.0%	

Source: 2021 Annual School Census (ASC), MBSSE, 2022

Percentage of disability type



Percentage of disability to total enrollment

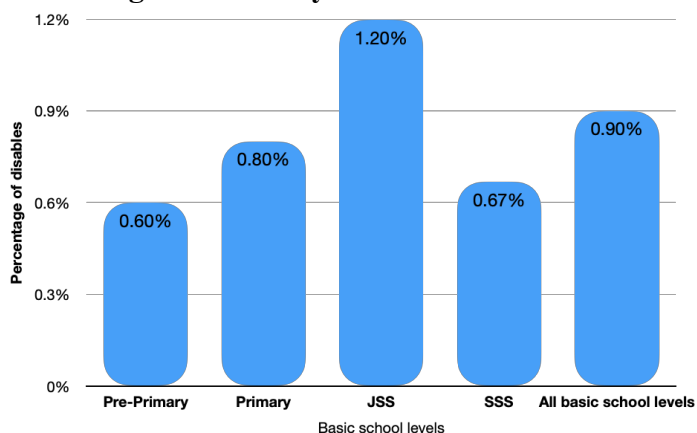


Figure 6: Disability pupil participation at basic school level

Education services are provided by a mix of government and non-state service providers. Overall, government owns 15% of all schools at the basic and secondary school levels. At the pre-primary level, government owns/runs 9% of schools, whilst 40% of them are privately run sector. At the primary level, 62% of schools are mission run, whilst government owns 18% of them. Communities and the private sector together run 20% of the schools- meaning irrespective of ownership, about 80% of schools are public. JSS run schools follows the same pattern, with a large number of the schools being mission run schools – 56%. See Table 2 and Figure 7 for details.

Table 2: Ownership and operation of schools

Level	Community	Government	Mission	Other	Private	Total
Pre-school	266	170	790	1	757	1,984
Primary	710	1,326	4,621	6	766	7,429
JSS	395	195	976	3	362	1,931
SSS	138	88	433	6	159	824
Total number of schools	1,509	1,779	6,820	16	2,044	12,168
Percent category of ownership	12%	15%	56%	0.005%	17%	

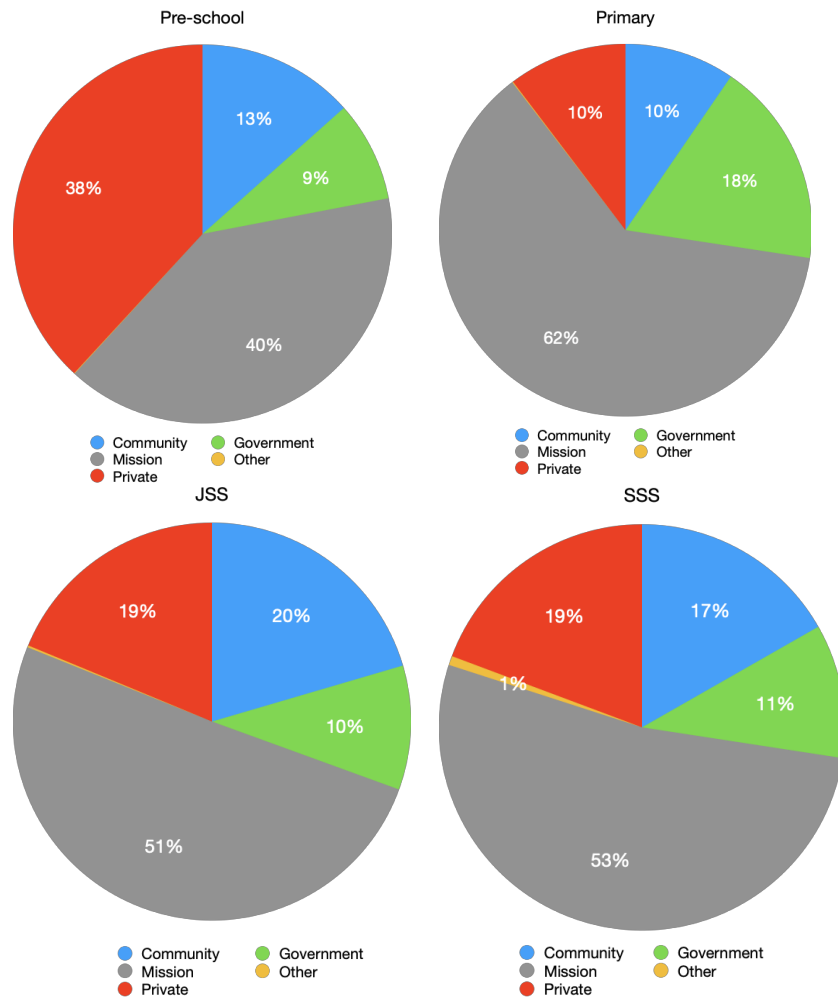


Figure 7: Ownership and operation of basic and secondary schools -Percentage
 Source: 2019 Annual School Census, MBSSE

The Government supports non-government community/mission schools through funding of teachers and learning materials. The Government has in place a school approval process that can, in time, qualify community and mission schools for government financial assistance. Government approval implies the payment of teacher salaries, school subsidies in lieu of school fees, textbooks and examination fees. The increase in government-approved schools adds substantial fiscal outlay to the Government.

Sierra Leone has made substantial progress in increasing access to education, especially among girls, since the end of the civil war in 2004. Enrolment in schools at all levels increased by 37% from 1,982,475 to 3,131,440 pupils over the period of 2018 to 2021. Relative to the immediately preceding year, enrolment increased by 16% from 2,695,590 pupils in 2020 to 3,131,440 in 2021. Of these pupils, 1,541,549 (49%) were boys and 1,589,891 (51%) were girls, i.e. more girls were enrolled in school than boys in 2021. The associated Gender Parity Index of 1:02 is encouraging, as disaggregation to the different levels of schooling shows that gender parity has been achieved at the basic and secondary school level.

The above-cited statistics have been critical and invaluable in designing strategies for ensuring basic and secondary school learners are safe and protected in and outside their school.

2 SECTION 2: NATIONAL POLICY CONTEXT

2.1 General Laws and Policies

The CSSP aspires to substantiate and further the implementation of the right to access education and remain safe in the school environment, accorded by the Constitution of Sierra Leone and Acts of Parliament.

The Constitution of Sierra Leone specifies the educational rights of its citizens. Chapter 2 Article 9 of the Constitution captures the educational aspirations, among others, under the Fundamental Principles of State Policy. The first section of the “educational objectives” under these Principles states that “***The Government shall direct its policy towards ensuring that there are equal rights and adequate educational opportunities for all citizens at all levels***”. Aside from the Constitution, The Education Act 2004 and the new Basic and Senior Secondary Education Bill 2023 defines the educational structure of Sierra Leone and the legal infrastructure for the educational system. The Act describes education management and control, and the roles of the various actors within the system, including MBSSE, local authorities, and School Management Committees and Boards. Article 26 of the Sierra Leone Child Rights Act 2007 *affirms the child’s rights to education and the protection of their general rights*. The child’s right to education is stipulated. The Act likewise provides legal guarantees for children with disabilities to access education with all required care to ensure their maximum development. The Child Rights Act of 2007 is a preamble to other policies, including the 2021 Integrated Early Childhood Development (IECD) policy from which this CSSP is taking inspiration.

The synergy between these legal provisions and the CSSP cannot be understated as the constitutional provision cited above provides the fundamental and legal roots for the CSSP. Further, the Education Act 2004 enshrines the principle of non-discrimination and ensures the protection of the right to basic and senior secondary education for all children within the school-going age cohort. The CSSP is relevant to achieving this objective because a safe and protected learner is one that is most likely to realize his or her right to education. The connection between the 2007 Child Right Act and the CSSP is more obviously conveyed by Article 26.

Aside from the above-cited legislation, the CSSP is inspired by other public policies in Sierra Leone. Chief among these is the Government’s National Development Framework, otherwise known as the Sierra Leone’s Medium-Term National Development Plan (NDP 2019–2023). The NDP charts a clear path towards the goal of Sierra Leone achieving middle-income status by 2039, through inclusive growth that is sustainable and leaves no one behind. It also aspires to a society where disadvantaged members are empowered and integrated into society. The CSSP aspires to achieve the tenet expressed in the NDP as good educational outcomes for learners are contingent on their safety and wellbeing in the school environment. Hence the CSSP can be taken as pivotal to the achievement of the broad national aspirations of NDP 2019–2023.

The strategies of the CSSP are also aligned with other national policies and programmes directly related to basic and senior secondary education in Sierra Leone. Four of these are identified and their relationship with the CSSP briefly stated. Prominent among these is the Free Quality School Education (FQSE) programme which seeks to increase access to and improve standards, in pre-school, Primary, Junior Secondary, and Senior Secondary education. The key elements of the programme include: (a) government payment of admission, tuition, and public examination fees; (b) providing essential elements for quality education (policies to motivate teachers, provision of textbooks for core subjects, Teaching and Learning Materials (TLMs), and pens and pencils); and (c) enhancing the role of parents in students' learning and the support of local education committees, District Education Offices (DEOs), and the MBSSE in programme delivery. The first pillar of the CSSP, particularly its fourth thematic area "safe teaching and learning environment", responds directly to the strategic objectives of FQSE.

The National Policy on Radical Inclusion in Schools, which aims at improving educational access for marginalised students, also deserves mention. The policy focuses on making school learning environments and teaching approaches accessible, friendly, safe and inclusive for all categories of school children - especially pregnant girls and parent learners; children with disabilities; children in the rural remote areas; and children from poor/low-income backgrounds. Comprehensive safety is one of the guiding principles of this policy, and its premise is that an enabling environment which includes safe physical structures and psychologically safe learning environments, is needed to ensure that effective learning takes place.

The CSSP also pays heed to the aspirations of the *National School Feeding Policy* and the *School Health Policy*. The former policy seeks to relieve short-term hunger and contributes to the improved health of learners and their access to education; in the longer term, it seeks to promote human capital development through increasing access to education and learning opportunities and enhanced health and nutrition. The latter policy gives expression to the government of Sierra Leone's acknowledgement that health - physical, social and mental - and education are the two cornerstones of human capital development. The policy, therefore, seeks to guide schools to promote efficient and effective ways to achieve healthy behaviours and to reduce risk factors to communicable and noncommunicable diseases. It seeks to create a safe, healthy and enabling school environment for learning, free from disease, prejudice and violence. Consequently, the objectives of the first two Pillars of the CSSP, namely, "Safe school facilities and learning environment" and "Disaster risk reduction in schools" seek to further the objectives of these two policies.

Other ancillary policies and plans that have implications for the design and roll-out of the CSSP include:

1. The National Disaster Preparedness and Response Plan (NDPRP); which purports to establish a comprehensive approach to managing national disasters, including preparedness, prevention, mitigation, response and recovery. Pillar two of the CSSP "Disaster risk reduction in schools" aligns squarely with this Response Plan.
2. Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) Policy and policy framework are aimed at the prevention of and response to sexual and gender-based violence.
3. National Referral Protocol on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) establishes the need for service providers to be trained on professional standards in caring for

- SGBV survivors, particularly child survivors within or outside the school setting. It also aims to ensure that all survivors/victims of GBV (domestic and sexual violence) receive prompt and comprehensive response from service providers from the first point of contact onwards. This Protocol aligns with Pillar Three of the CSSP, “Protection from violence and other forms of abuse in schools”.
4. The National Policy for Social Protection whose priority areas - social inclusion and nation building, and risk management – are in consonance with the CSSP. For instance, though implicit, schools are perfect settings for post-conflict repair of relationships, provision of physical support, reparation for the injured, abused, and mentally traumatized. Also, school children are victims of conflicts and schools become safe places for their recovery and restitution. Further, the Policy for Social Protection targets the chronically poor, socially vulnerable, and the economically at risk under which a very large proportion school children fall.
 5. The Code of Conduct for Teachers and Other Education Personnel sets out standards of professional behaviour for teachers and other education personnel in their relationships with learners, colleagues, parents and the general public and promotes a positive learning environment and the well-being of learners from Pre-school, Primary, Junior Secondary School (JSS), Senior Secondary School (SSS), among others. The Code is a composite of rules and norms of behaviour to create a safe, conducive, positive learning and work environment. The First and Third Pillars of the CSSP fall in line with the Seven Principles of this Code of Conduct.

2.2 International Policy Context

The CSSP aligns with a number of international agreements aimed at ensuring comprehensive safety of students, staff and other school personnel. These include:

The UN Sustainable Development Goals, in particular SDG 4, which aims to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all”. Particularly poignant for CSSP is Target 4A of SDG 4 which aspires to building and upgrading education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive, and effective learning environments for all.

Also significant is SDG 5 which aspires to achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls, by ending all forms of discrimination against women and girls everywhere: (SDG 5 Target 5.1).

Target 16.2 of the SDGs which seeks to “end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children” also inspired sections of the CSSP.

Other noteworthy inspirational bases for the CSSP are the following:

- Article 28 of the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child** (1989), which enjoins states to “recognize the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and based on equal opportunity, they shall, in particular, make primary education compulsory, available and free to all”.
- Article 24 (1) (2) (3) of the **UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities** (2006), which requires that “*Effective individualized support measures are provided in environments that maximize academic and social development, consistent with the goal of full inclusion*”.

- Article 11 (1) (6) of the **The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1999)**, which requires that “*State Parties to the present Charter shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that children who become pregnant before completing their education shall have an opportunity to continue their education on the basis of their individual ability*”.
- Article 12 (1), of the **Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (2003)** which requires *states parties to “take all appropriate measures to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and guarantee equal opportunity and access in the sphere of education and training”*.

The government of Sierra Leone recognizes the values and standards enshrined in these international instruments, and this underlies the incorporation of these values into the CSSP.

3 SECTION 3: POLICY RATIONALE, GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTIVES

The goal of this CSS Policy is to provide an environment where *all children, teachers, and other stakeholders in the school community are safe from any kind of preventable calamitous events, abuse, violence, bodily and emotional harm which threaten their physical safety and wellbeing due to natural hazards or human-made risk that may threaten their well-being while pursuing their right to obtain an education.* It seeks to provide an overarching multi-sectoral framework of comprehensive school safety to protect learners and education service providers from injury, disaster, and harm in schools and to plan for educational continuity in the face of unforeseen hazards and threats. The policy also intends to safeguard education sector investment through strengthening risk reduction and resilience of the governance systems for improving learning conditions and management of schools. The value of this CSS Policy is to embrace the concepts of inclusion, gender, access (infrastructure and logistics), participation, and risk reduction for all school stakeholders in Sierra Leone where all children and their teachers are protected from any hazards in the school community that may jeopardize their well-being. The CSS policy:

1. Affirms the rights of all members of the school community to feel safe and be safe in all school related activities;
2. Acknowledges that being safe and supported at school is essential for student wellbeing and effective learning;
3. Accepts responsibility for developing and sustaining safe and supportive learning and teaching environments;
4. Encourages the participation of all school community members in the development and maintenance of a safe school community;
5. Commits to a school and evidence informed approach to developing a safe and supportive learning and teaching environment;
6. Builds capacity of education service providers at all levels in risk assessment and management at national, district and school levels;
7. Ensures that every person has the right to feel safe at school.

The Policy Guidelines also seek to highlight specific actions towards school safety that can be undertaken by different stakeholders within the existing education service delivery framework. Three CSS policy pillars³ have been identified and are as follows:

Pillar One: Safe School Facilities and Learning Environment

1. Protecting the school compound and facilities from intrusion, providing protective safety measures and safeguards, and ensuring aesthetically pleasing environment;
2. Ensuring school structures are properly constructed and maintained in conformity with the school building standards and national building codes with requisite school facilities;
3. Ensuring proper treatment of all forms of waste, maintenance of the natural ambience of the schools, and the provision of learning facilities; and
4. Ensuring the availability of teaching materials/aids for learners especially pupils with special needs at all times for the use of students and the promotion of effective communication between service providers and students.

³ The pillars of the policy are defined in section page 33

Pillar Two: Disaster Risk Reduction in Schools

1. Instituting capacity and a system for disaster preparedness and resilience to ensure continuity of teaching and learning; and
2. Ensuring safety of students to and from schools against accident and any other calamitous event.

Pillar Three: Protection from Violence and other Forms of Abuse and Harm in School

1. Ensuring dietary intake on school grounds by students and staff is wholesome, healthy, meets other safety standards, and promote optimal body functioning;
2. Providing an environment that nurtures positive health to protect, promote and improve physical and mental health for school pupil and service providers;
3. Creating a safe and caring environment where learners and staff are aware of the dangers of drug abuse and making the school a drug free environment;
4. Ensure learners and school service providers are safe from any form of physical, emotional, and sexual abuse and neglect by teachers, peers, parents, or community members;
5. Enhance school learning environment that is safe and caring and caters for the requirements of children with special needs/disabilities;
6. Reducing the occurrence of practices that impact negatively on the wellbeing and safety of learners and reduce mental health problems among students;
7. Creating a school climate that is conducive for all stakeholders to be involved in a wide range of school activities;
8. Protecting students from unsafe, dangerous, or risky online situations and behaviours and developing positive online behaviours in students and staff; and
9. Prevent learners from possible gang involvement and implement intervention and prevention strategies in schools.

3.1 Guiding Principles

The policy is firmly anchored on principles that are critical to the full wellbeing of learners. The key principles include the following:

- a. **Respect for Human Rights:** The inalienable human rights of all learners and school personnel will always be respected, protected, and upheld, whether normal or precarious;
- b. **Universal Access:** Free quality education must be accessible to all learners; barriers that are based on social class, gender, geographical location, pregnancy status, physical and mental disabilities, and other markers of difference must be removed and replaced by equal opportunity for all children;
- c. **Inclusivity:** Equalizing opportunities for all children regardless of gender, disability status, creed, socio-economic class, geographical location, age, and ethnicity will be enhanced to ensure that their diversities are accepted, respected, and catered for in schools;
- d. **Championing the Child's Interests:** The welfare of the child is a priority as enshrined by article 3 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. It is imperative for schools to primarily focus on the range of interests of the child;
- e. **Comprehensive Safety:** The safety of the learners, personnel, and stakeholders of schools must be encompassing, including adhering to school building standards and national building codes, food and hygiene protocols, disaster risk reduction, discipline, violence and abuse, forestalling discrimination, and upholding codes of conduct;

- f. **Stakeholder Shared Responsibility:** All matters or issues of school safety are not to be left in the hands of a few school stakeholders. All stakeholders, internal and external, must contribute actively in ensuring that schools are safe and conducive environments, devoid of violence and hostilities, and dedicated to the promotion of effective teaching and learning.
- g. **Conflict Sensitivity and Peace Building:** The policy will tackle actions and activities that spur conflicts and create the understanding of the consequences of conflict dynamics to the school and society. By blending curricular, dialogical, and disciplinary measures, schools will be a safe ambience that frowns on factors or actions that promote conflicts.

3.2 Scope of the Policy

The foregoing CSS policy objectives will be attained through strategies that will be implemented in close collaboration and coordination with relevant stakeholders within Government, donor partners, UN agencies, NGOs, civil society organizations, the private sector, and school communities. This policy has been developed with a focus on basic (Pre-primary, Primary schools, and Junior High Schools), senior secondary schools, and school-level technical and vocational centres.

MBSSE will take the lead in coordinating the implementation of this policy and in ensuring robust systems to monitor, account, and report on the progress of implementation of the CSS policy. Different entities in their respective mandated sectoral and technical capacities will support the execution of the policy through collaborative efforts and arrangements with the MBSSE. The government, through the MBSSE, shall provide adequate resources for efficient and effective management and oversight for effective implementation of the policy.

3.3 Implementation time frame

It is expected that the implementation of this policy will commence in 2023 after cabinet approval. The policy provisions will be implemented over a period of 10 years running until 2032. Modifications and updates will be carried out periodically as needed.

3.4 Policy Development Process

The development of this policy involved the following processes :

- ***Desk review of related national and international policies/acts and global evidence related to comprehensive school safety. This included:***
 - Review of Sierra Leone’s existing education policies, policy statements and guidelines related to school safety to identify gaps and determine what should be included in the CSSP; and
 - Review of regional and international comprehensive school safety policies as well as global evidence on school safety to inform the content of the CSSP draft.

- ***Informational interviews with relevant stakeholders. This process involved:***
 - Identification of relevant stakeholders from the central, district and school levels responsible for the delivery of comprehensive safety in schools. The stakeholders included MBSSE, Teaching Service Commission, National Secretariat for the Reduction of Teenage Pregnancy, The Disaster Management Department (DMD), National Commission for Social Action, Selected District Education Officers, Selected Head Teachers, Pupils / students, School Management Committees, Education Centre for the Blind and Visually Impaired; and
 - Informational interviews with these stakeholders to understand key areas to be included in the draft CSS policy.

- ***Development of the draft CSS policy. This part of the process involved :***
 - Use of the OPP Pillar’s Policy Template and Guide to Policy Development to generate content and structure of the draft CSSP;
 - Generation of policy/programme summaries and highlighting best practices and lessons learned. This included the School Feeding Programme, FQSE Programme;
 - Submission of the first draft for to the FEPS and OPP Secretariat for review and comments; and
 - Embedding of recommendations from stakeholder consultations into the revised policy draft.

- ***Facilitation and conduction of extensive stakeholder consultations on the draft CSS policy. This involved :***
 - Conduction of wide-scale stakeholder consultation at all levels (central, district, ward, chiefdom, and schools);
 - Conduction of semi-structured interviews with stakeholders from relevant ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) as well as NGOs; and
 - Facilitation of focus group discussions (FGDs) and workshops with relevant stakeholder groups, including teachers, head teachers, students, and parents.

- ***Response to quality assurance and finalization of draft CSS policy. This involved :***
 - Incorporation of the changes recommended by the FEPS and the OPP Pillar and submission of the final document to the FEPS and OPP Secretariat and Executive Committee.

4 SECTION 4: POLICY PILLARS AND IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

Policy pillars

The Comprehensive School Safety (CSS) policy seeks to: (a) prevent or reduce risks of all school-related hazards and violence, including school-related gender-based violence, and (b) foster inclusion, participation, and access within the milieu of the education space.

The policy brings into focus child-centred and evidence-based efforts to ensure and enhance safe and conducive school environments and to assure universal access to quality education. In doing so, the CSS policy rests on three **pillars** around which three **policy statements** are framed:

- Safe school facilities and learning environment
- School disaster management and risk reduction
- Protection from violence and other forms of abuse in and around schools.

The MBSSE will take the lead in coordinating the implementation and in ensuring robust systems to monitor, account, and report on the progress of implementation of the priority areas of the CSS policy stakeholders. Different entities in their respective mandated sectoral and technical capacities will support the execution of these priority areas through collaborative efforts and arrangements with the MBSSE.

Figure 8 represents the three pillars guiding the CSS policy statements.

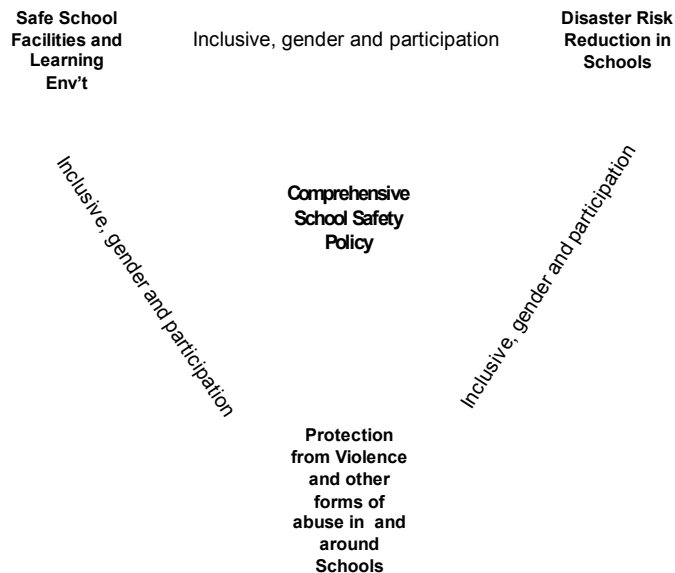


Figure 8: Pillars of CSS Policy

4.1 POLICY STATEMENTS

Policy Statement 1: Ensure safe school facilities and learning environment

Children, teachers and other school staff spend a significant part of their day in schools. It is, therefore, important to keep the school environment and facilities clean and safe. It is important that school buildings are built to high standards reflecting school building standards and national building codes, are more resilient to hazards, and ensure safety. **MBSSE** will work with all relevant stakeholders and agencies in ensuring safe school facilities and learning environment.

Safety on School grounds

Objective: *To protect school grounds and facilities from intrusion, providing protective safety measures and safeguards and aesthetically pleasing surroundings.*

The school should have properly demarcated and fenced grounds with a secure gate. The grounds should be neat, beautiful, and safe for use by learners, staff, parents, and community members at all times.

Implementing Actions and Actors:

Schools will:

1. Supervise and inspect school grounds to ensure the absence of harmful objects such as broken glass, loose sticks, stones, and potholes that can cause injury to the learners, teachers or other school personnel
2. Ensure that school compounds are fenced and gated to protect students from all physical harm
3. Station a trained and professional security personnel at the school gate
4. Provide clearance to visitors before they enter the school premises
5. Supply students and staff in schools with ID cards and require learners and staff to always be in possession of their identity cards
6. Ensure that, where possible, central safety and security alarms and cameras are installed, monitored, and maintained in strategic places
7. Level school grounds to make them safe and easier for use by learners and teachers, especially those with disabilities
8. Plant grass on bare school grounds to minimize the effects of dust and falls.

Safety in Physical Infrastructure

Objective: *To ensure school structures are properly constructed and maintained in conformity with the school building standards and national building codes with requisite school facilities.*

This focuses on the physical aspects of school buildings and facilities that are designed to safeguard against attacks and potential environmental and human threats.

The school should ensure classrooms, dormitories, offices, kitchens/canteens, toilets, and other physical structures are safe, well maintained, safe and properly utilized.

Implementing Actions and Actors:

Local Councils/District Education Office will:

1. Replace rusted roofing sheets and ensure they are routinely maintained

2. Maintain small class size with a maximum of 45 students in a class
3. Provide as much ceiling as possible to reduce the heat in class
4. Ensure headteachers and community representatives inspect school facilities at the beginning of each academic year and make necessary repairs before teaching and learning commence.

MBSSE, District Councils and Schools will:

5. Ensure classrooms are properly lit and ventilated
6. Ensure that school blocks are fitted with serviced fire extinguishers
7. Ensure the positioning of electrical sockets is beyond the reach of young learners to avoid tampering
8. Ensure all buildings and facilities are accessible by special needs learners
9. Ensure toilet facilities are at least 15 meters (50 ft) away from water supply points and accessible for children with disabilities
10. Ensure separate washrooms and other facilities for boys and girls to offer complete privacy but equally are not located in isolated areas of the school compound
11. Provide fire-proof cabinets for the storage of essential office materials and documents
12. Carry out annual safety Audit on all school buildings and mitigate identified risk to avoid any occurrence of hazard
13. Construct boundary walls around schools located near the main road to protect children from any road accidents during school hours.

Safety in School Environment

Objective: To ensure proper treatment of all forms of waste, maintenance of the natural ambience of the schools, and the provision of learning facilities

Safety in the school environment refers to the proper and sustainable management of the physical surroundings of the school. Proper management of the school environment entails appropriate mechanisms of waste management, orderly use and replenishment of plants and animals within the school compound and enhancing a sustainable balance of biodiversity.

A school environment should be safe to promote learners' concentration on learning and to facilitate the development of their social skills without compromising, in anyway, sustainable biodiversity.

Implementing Actions and Actors:

MBSSE, District Councils and Schools will:

1. Ensure solid wastes are properly disposed to avoid the spread of communicable diseases, discourage the presence of pests and other vectors, and prevent human contact with hazardous materials
2. Take immediate action to seal structural cracks on school walls and mend broken windows;
3. Keep school compound free from open gutters, obstacles, tree stumps, sharp objects, debris, boulders, bush, and broken bottles
4. Locate waste disposal sites in isolated places within the school compound, away from any site where learners are active
5. Separate pupils, staff and visitors from areas of construction and maintenance site.

Critical teaching material/aids especially for children with disabilities are significant for inclusive learning. Pupils with disabilities may need accessible instructional materials for a variety of reasons. For example, some pupils have difficulty reading the usual materials. To bridge this gap, accessible instructional materials provide the same information found in textbooks or handouts in a format that students with disabilities can use more easily.

Provide and sustain a safe and caring environment that promotes quality teaching and learning especially where there are pupils requiring special attention. Thus, to achieve a safe teaching and learning environment, the following strategies will be used:

Implementation action will:

1. Promote comfortable conditions that facilitate quality learning
2. Encourage instructional strategies that actively engage learners in the learning process
3. Provide enough age-appropriate chairs and desks in all classrooms
4. Identify and attend to learners with special learning needs to ensure that learning opportunities are accessible to all
5. Provide in-service training for teachers on issues related to special needs children
6. Sensitize school management and, especially teachers, to adopt effective classroom management strategies to reduce learning interruptions
7. Accord learners freedom of speech but without causing harm or discomfort to other learners
8. Encourage learners to participate in co-curricular activities such as sports and educational trips which enrich learning
9. Ensure learner-teacher ratio in all classrooms remains at the official recommended proportion in order to avoid congested classrooms.

Policy Statement 2: Promote school disaster management and risk reduction

Whenever there are hazardous situations, be they natural or human-made, children require special protection to ensure their safety and wellbeing. Such situations manifest themselves in, for example, natural disasters such as flooding, pandemics/epidemics and those of human-made dimensions such as bodily harm and emotional distress. For girls this can involve recognizing vulnerabilities and securing additional protections from sexual abuse and gender-based violence. Policy Statement 2 therefore seeks to provide the required responses for building the capacity of educational institutional actors and infrastructure requirement necessary, as much as possible, for curtailing hazards translating into disaster at the school level. MBSSE will collaborate with relevant stakeholders and agencies such as Community Disaster Management Committees, Sierra Leone Fire Force, Red Cross, Department of Disease Control, Ministry of Health and Sanitation to manage and reduce risk at the school level.

Disaster risk reduction and management

Objective: Instituting the capacity and the system for disaster preparedness and resilience to ensure continuity of teaching and learning

Disaster Risk Reduction and Management refers to actions designed to minimize the destruction of life and property, and disruption of normal operations. Disasters cause serious disruption to the

functioning of a school and can cause human, material, economic or environmental losses which exceed the ability of the affected school to cope using its own resources. Due to a range of factors, including age of pupils, physical ability, gender, disability conditions and, dependency on teachers, many pupils are extremely vulnerable in the event of a disaster.

There needs to be a disaster risk strategy if the effects of disasters are to be minimized. There is need to establish linkage between schools and community embedded Disaster Crisis Response Teams with the mandate to prevent, mitigate and effectively prepare against potential disaster hazards in schools.

The school management committee should create mechanisms and procedures that ensure stakeholders are conversant with measures needed to prevent occurrence of disasters and understand the steps required to reduce the impact, while ensuring the safety of all teachers and students during a disaster, including the most vulnerable. Activities outlined under this theme aim to put in place systems in schools, with support from the national levels, that minimize or eliminate the risks associated with disasters.

MBSSE will:

1. Work with appropriate agencies to build school disaster management capacity, both human and infrastructural, and promote child friendly environments
2. Avoid locating schools in flood-prone or swampy areas

Local Councils will:

3. Ensure that school buildings are located on elevated foundations and castings
4. Provide good drainage systems in schools

District Education Office will:

5. Work with MBSSE to ensure that schools are stocked with emergency kit(s).

Schools will:

6. Promote posting of evacuation maps at entrances and exits to buildings, classrooms, enclosed hallways, stairways, and offices
7. Develop evacuation procedures for basic and secondary schools with emphasis on pupils and teachers with disabilities
8. Organize regular practice evacuation and response sessions for fire, earthquake, lockdown, shelter-in-place, and other situations that the School Safety Committee determines as necessary
9. In collaboration with MBSSE, will ensure schools are safe from natural and human-made disasters by environmental risk assessments
10. Sensitize students on personal security during natural and man-made risk situations
11. Ensure all school electrical lights, sockets and appliances are carefully checked by a qualified electrician before the beginning of any terms
12. Ensure periodic quality checks of physical structures like classrooms, toilets, dormitories, and administrative blocks
13. Collaborate with The National Commission for Civil Protection and Ministry of Defense and National Security to train teachers on promoting and integrating disaster risk reduction and emergency preparedness through school clubs and activities

14. Sensitize students on how to identify risks and hazards during heavy rains in mud and landslide-prone areas
15. Sensitize students and teachers on how to manage rapid evacuation measures.

Food safety

Objective: To ensure students consume wholesome diets provided by health-conscious food vendors in a clean environment to promote optimal body functioning

Food safety entails access to and consumption of wholesome foods that promotes good health and optimal body functioning. Consumption of safe foods by learners is important because safe and wholesome foods promote good health, which is essential to stimulate proper physical and intellectual development and contribute to effective learning.

Implementing Actions and Actors:

Local Councils will:

1. Provide proper canteen or designated location for food vendors in conformity with approved national/school standards.

Schools will:

2. Sensitize school food vendors on food and basic hygiene and safety for students
3. Ensure school food vendors have acquired the required sanitary certificates and relevant trade licenses from authorized agencies
4. Ensure observance of essential hygiene protocols (e.g., hand-washing at critical times) for students, teachers and other auxiliary school service providers

Health and hygiene safety

Objective: To provide the environment that nurtures positive health and to protect, promote and improve physical and mental health for school pupils and service providers.

Health and hygiene safety refers to behaviors that can improve cleanliness and lead to good health. Good hygiene is critical for preventing the spread of infectious disease and helping children lead healthy lives. Maintenance of hygiene can prevent students from falling sick and missing school.

The school should provide an environment that nurtures good health to protect, promote, and improve health for all. Consequently, to achieve health and hygiene safety in schools, the following key activities should be implemented:

Implementing Actions and Actors:

MBSSE in collaboration with other Ministries will:

1. Institute installation of handwashing facilities in all schools
2. Institute first-aid and health referral systems within the basic and secondary education system.
3. Institute a school health warning system that determines when schools are to be closed due to threat of the outbreak of an epidemic or pandemic
4. Where available, institute a free sanitary pad scheme for girls in collaboration with Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs.

DHMT/Public Health Directorate will:

5. Institute routine basic medical checks during critical periods in all or selected schools for students and teachers
6. Promote environmental sanitation and hygiene practices in school through regular health practices

Local Councils will:

9. Provide separate toilet and urinary facilities for male and female students and staff;
10. Provide adequate and safe water for drinking and use by learners and staff; and
11. Construct toilet facilities accessible to all students including students with disabilities.

District Education Office will:

12. Train teachers in first aid skills and health education;
13. Reinforce provision of safe water and sanitation with health and hygiene promoting education materials
14. Regularly inspect sanitation facilities to ensure compliance with standard hygiene requirements, including proper learner: toilet ratio, and providing sanitary materials and facilities where necessary
15. Ensure that working and adequate First Aid Kit and facilities are available to provide emergency care in schools
16. Document health and related incidence within the confines of schools in a school incident register
17. Ensure regular cleaning, weeding, and elimination of stagnant water within the school environment to keep away insects and other vectors
18. Ensure adequate water supply at toilet facility for flushing and hand washing and sensitize and ensure appropriate use of toilet facilities.

Transportation safety

Objective: To ensure safety of students to and from schools against accident and any other calamitous event

This safety objective focuses on the means through which students travel to and from school. The majority of schools in Sierra Leone are day schools. Students commute to school using *poda-poda*, school buses, motor bikes, and bicycles. Several students also walk to school. There are many instances where learners have been involved in accidents as pedestrians or passengers due to negligence, ignorance, or sheer irresponsibility in observing basic traffic signs. Students might also be at risk due to lack of knowledge about how to identify and avoid strangers who can harm them. Girls are at particular risk of sexual violence and sexual exploitation, abuse and sexual harassment, including transactional sex in exchange for transport, food and cash. Hence, schools should ensure that all learners are conversant with basic road safety rules as pedestrians or passengers in public or private transport services to reduce traffic accidents. All learners should also be made aware of the risks facing girls and measures that protect them when moving between home and school. To achieve transportation safety, schools should adopt the following key actions:

Implementing Actions and Actors:

MBSSE will:

1. Establish procedures for school excursions.

Local Councils will:

2. Provide roads signs and infrastructure on routes to schools such as speed ramps, marked out zebra crossings, traffic lights and sound ambers.

Road Safety Authority will:

3. Sensitize students and staff on road safety and correct use of helmets and protective clothing.

Schools will:

4. Provide Road Wardens at schools located close to highways to assist students to cross the road in the morning and evening
5. Sensitize students on dealing with strangers in public transport or on their way whilst walking to and from school.

Policy Statement 3: Protect learners and school personnel from violence and other forms of abuse/harm in and around schools

For school children to continue and complete their education, protection from all forms of abuse / harm, exploitation, harassment and violence is crucial. Children who are victims of violence in any form at school are at a higher risk of physical, emotional, and psychosocial distress that impedes their learning capacity. The CSS policy statement three focuses on the safety of children, and addresses child protection issues regarding neglect, exploitation, mental health, physical torture, sexual exploitation, and cyber bullying in and out of school. Policy Statement 3 will capitalize on school-community cordial relations to address child protection issues to ensure the safety of learners.

3.1: Safety against drug and substance abuse

Objective: To create a safe and caring environment where learners and staff are aware of the dangers of drug abuse and make the school a drug free environment.

Safety against drug and substance abuse entails making students aware of the dangers associated with the use of illegal drugs or the use of prescription or over-the-counter drugs or alcohol for purposes other than those for which they are meant to be used, or in excessive amounts. Instead striving to make schools a drug free environment. To achieve safety against drug and substance abuse in schools the following key actions will be taken:

Implementing Actions and Actors:

MBSSE will:

1. Organize in-service training, in collaboration with Ministry of Health and Sanitation, for service providers on knowledge and understanding about drugs and signs of drug abuse, identify and note the symptoms and take necessary remedial actions
2. Institute a drug abuse referral system within the education system
3. Develop sanctions for teachers caught sending students to buy drugs and alcohol for them

District Education Office will:

4. Sensitize learners about the dangers of drug misuse and abuse and ways of resisting peer pressure to try drugs

5. Sensitize learners to resist peer pressure to use drugs by closely monitoring their activities and advising on the company they should avoid
6. Collaborate with law enforcement agencies, social services, and health professionals to talk to the learners and staff on issues relating to drug abuse, the legal implications and rehabilitation activities
7. Provide counselling service and pastoral advice to learners and refer students with serious drug problems to rehabilitation centres.

Schools will:

8. Conduct spot checks on learners or groups of learners for any illegal substance, upon reasonable suspicion of possession and use of drug
9. Sensitize students on the dangers associated with the use of harmful drugs

Safety against child abuse (physical, emotional, sexual, and neglect)

Objective: To ensure learners are safe from any form of physical, emotional, sexual abuse, and neglect by teachers, peers, parents, or community members by taking a whole school approach

Child abuse refers to subjecting children to suffering through physical, sexual, emotional, or neglectful behaviour. The abuse takes place in families, school and in the community. Children who suffer abuse are often psychologically traumatized and are unable to focus on learning. Schools have a critical role in protecting children from abuse. To achieve safety against child abuse the standard below must be observed. Schools need to ensure that learners are safe from any form of physical, emotional, and sexual abuse and neglect, inclusive of corporal punishment, by teachers, peers, parents, or community members. Consequently, to achieve safety against child abuse in schools performing the following key actions will be taken as part of a whole school approach:

Implementing Actions and Actors:

MBSSE will:

1. Institute guidance and counseling units to support students when they experience abuse
2. Enforce a bully-free regime in schools
3. Ensure that teachers do not engage students in domestic and farm work on weekends and during instructional hours
4. Conduct capacity building training for teachers on child right and protection
5. Institute systems of identification of children subjected to child abuse for reporting to the police, Children's Department, or other appropriate authorities, in accordance with the National Referral Protocol
6. Strengthen guidance and counseling units to investigate matters of sexual harassment
7. Institute a drop-box for student to lodge complaints of abuse and harassment
8. Urge schools to form clubs to create awareness and share experience on harassment and abuse in schools
9. Provide dressing code and protection to girls who wear veil to school to ensure they are safe to practice their religion and cultural beliefs
10. Institute counselling sessions for students who have been subjected to any form of abuse

District Education Office will:

11. Provide school social workers/guidance counselors to support students with behavioral, emotional, mental disorders.

Schools will:

12. Provide counseling services to both abused and abusive students through the Guidance and Counseling Unit
13. Report child abuse cases to the police
14. Educate students on child abuse and how they could distinguish between good touch and bad touch
15. Sensitize and educate students about the dangers of engaging in illicit and/or premature sexual behavior
16. Sensitize students to report matters of sexual harassment and abuse to the Guidance and Counseling Unit in the school
17. Educate learners on reporting to any member of the School Safety Committee, any form of touch of their private parts or utterance of any seductive words to any learners
18. Sensitize parents to report incidence of abuse of their child by students or staff to School Management Committee/Board of Governors for appropriate action.

Safety of children with special needs/disabilities

Objective: To create a school learning environment that is safe and caring and caters for the requirements of children with special needs/disabilities.

This specific objective involves deliberate effort to integrate children with mild disabilities into regular school programmes to enhance their full participation in formal education. This will help children with special needs to realize their full potential to contribute to local and national development, and participate in public life. The Government of Sierra Leone is committed to the education of children with disabilities without discrimination or stigmatization. The Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education is cognizant of the need to enable children with special needs to access education at all levels, without discrimination. Such children include children with challenges such as physical, mental, visual, and hearing impairment. The Government's commitment to the education of children with special needs is captured in several policy documents, including the *National Policy of Radical Inclusion in schools*. To achieve the goals of these national policies and the above objective, the following actions will be taken:

Implementing Actions and Actors:

MBSSE will:

1. Institute a referral system, in collaboration with Ministry of Health and Sanitation, for proper diagnosis of special needs and disabilities within the basic and secondary education school system
2. Stock District offices with required assistive devices for special needs and disable pupils on demand driven basis
3. Designate and train basic and senior secondary school staff members (including teachers) designated and responsible for special needs and disable pupils in collaboration with Ministry of Health and Sanitation
4. Design and integrate special needs and disability care functionality into basic and secondary education school system
5. Use teaching and learning techniques that accommodate the needs of PWD (speech, sign language, braille light, ICT, etc.)

6. Ensure at all-times the school compound and environment are conducive for the use of children with special needs
7. Construct school buildings that meet the required standard for students with special needs
8. Provide students with special education needs with opportunities to participate in all activities within and outside the schools
9. Provide disability learning centers resourced with relevant computers, software and hardware in teaching and learning (screen readers and braille light) for each district
10. Provide in-service training to all teachers on issues related to children with special needs
11. Ensure school-based assessment include Individualized Education Plans (IEPs)
12. In collaboration with Ministry of Health and Sanitation institute a system of referral and proper diagnosis of special needs and disabilities
13. Allocate responsibility for provision of assistive devices

District Education Office will:

14. Strengthen SMCs to collaborate with parents and communities to identify children with disabilities to enroll to attend school
15. Push for early assessment of children entering school for special needs and disabilities
16. Select members of staff who have a designated responsibility as a trained Disability and Special Needs Coordinator in each school or school-cluster

Schools will:

17. With support from MBSS, provide PWD students with assistance for their learning needs (e.g., deaf, blindness, autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorders)
18. Encourage children with disabilities to develop interests in sport and other activities, regardless of their disabilities
19. With support from MBSSE, assess children entering school for special needs and disabilities

Safety against negative socio-cultural practices and ensuring good mental health

Objective: To reduce the occurrence of socio-cultural practices that impact negatively on the wellbeing and safety of learners and to reduce mental health problems among students.

Safety against harmful socio-cultural practices and negative mental health refers to protecting children from going through certain inhumane and outmoded social and cultural practices that will impact on their education and wellbeing. These socio-cultural practices include corporal punishment, early marriage, being housemaids, performing excessive household chores, female genital mutilation, funeral rites, early marriage or elopement, and the use of charms in marriage. To achieve safety against such harmful socio-cultural practices, schools must put measures in place to reduce the occurrence of socio-cultural practices that impact negatively on the education, wellbeing, safety, and mental health of learners. To achieve this, the following specific strategies will be adopted:

Implementing Actions and Actors:

MBSSE will:

1. Collaborate with communities, relevant NGOs and national radio stations to organize dialect-specific radio talk shows to raise awareness on female genital mutilation, child marriage, and other socio-cultural practices that negatively affect the education of children
2. Liaise with Ministry of Health and Sanitation to access mental health supports for students, teachers and school managers.
3. Abolish corporal punishment in all schools and institute humane alternatives to corporal punishment

District Education Office will:

4. Sensitize community members on the negative effects of socio-cultural practices such as corporal punishment, early marriage, female genital mutilation, and other practices that affect the education of children
5. Liaise with community stakeholders to disseminate information on dangers of socio-cultural practices such as early marriage, female genital mutilation, and other practices that affect the education of children (e.g., by using the community radio; convening town halls to discuss these issues)

Schools will:

6. Develop and reinforce a zero tolerance to the use of any form of corporal punishment and all forms of abuse
7. Take actions to reprimand teachers and other school authorities who do not comply with the school's zero tolerance rule and regulation.
8. Educate students, particularly girls, on the negative effects of these practices and the need to report such pressures from their parents and other community members
9. Educate students to handle emotions and self-regulate their behaviour to minimize conflict and mental health problems
10. Ensure that teachers and school managers/leaders take responsibility for management of their emotions and behavior in order to end the use of all forms of corporal punishment in schools.

School-Community Relations

Objective: To create a school climate that is conducive for all community stakeholders to be involved in a wide range of school activities

School-community relations focus on how school learners and staff are viewed and treated by members of communities within which schools are located, and vice versa. Members of communities include parents/guardians of children enrolled in schools and other community members who may not have children enrolled in the catchment schools. The MBSSE is committed to partnering with families and communities to educate all school-going age children in Sierra Leone. This commitment is highlighted through the fourth policy objective of the National Policy on Radical Inclusion which seeks to provide guidance on facilitating community dialogue to encourage and support marginalized children to enroll and stay in school.

Schools should, therefore, create a school climate that is conducive for community stakeholders to be involved in a wide range of school activities. To foster positive school-community relations, the following strategies will be adopted:

Implementing Actions and Actors:

MBSSE will:

1. Integrate traditional community and administrative structures and authority to resolve school-community conflicts
2. Use school curricula, through school subjects like Social Studies and Civic Education, to reinforce the importance of community values and social responsibilities

Schools will:

3. Develop linkage between school management and communities around schools
4. Nurture positive attitudes between learners and school staff and members of the local communities
5. Nurture learners and school staff to show respect towards members of the local communities and their culture
6. School management to organize regular joint meetings on academic matters with parents or guardians and learners
7. Organize regular joint meetings on joint co-curricular and cultural activities with members of local communities
8. Encourage students and teachers to participate in community activities, such as games and community cleaning activities
9. Encourage local communities to participate actively in the schools' development efforts
10. Encourage local community members to cooperate with schools in ensuring learners' and staff safety
11. Engage parents in safety programmes regarding children's movement between the home and their school
12. Sensitize communities on catering for the educational needs of children with special needs
13. Ensure that contact details of emergency response team members in the district or community are made easily accessible to students
14. Sensitize community members on the negative effects of adverse cultural practices such child marriage, forced marriage and female genital mutilation and collaborate with them to curb such practices in order to promote educational success and good physical and mental health for their children.
15. Sensitize parents and guardians to reduce the domestic chores given to their children or wards to facilitate time for study and some relaxation.
16. Sensitize parents and guardians on the negative effects of allowing students to watch TV for long periods of time to the neglect of their school work
17. Sensitize students to live in harmony with people from different tribes and accept diversity and difference
18. Hold occasional dialogue sessions with members of the communities about the dangers of inciting and enforcing tribalism.

Safety from Online and Cyber Crime

Objective: To protect students from unsafe, dangerous, or risky online situations and behaviours and develop positive online behaviours in students.

This objective entails making children feel safe online. Cybercrimes include fraud, trafficking in child pornography and intellectual property, stealing identities or violating privacy.

Focuses on protecting students from unsafe, dangerous, or risky online situations and behaviours and develop positive online behaviour in students.

Implementing Actions and Actors:

MBSSE will:

1. Provide a school-based report system to collaborate with Ministry of information and communication, security agencies, the National Cyber Security Centre, the courts, and individuals to report online crimes against children
2. Instruct the prohibition of the unauthorized use of mobile phones in class during instructional hours
3. Provide and encourage the use of internet content filtering hardware appliance (firewall) at schools to restrict children from wandering away to unsafe internet sites.

Schools will:

4. Partner with parents to sensitize students against excessive social media usage
5. Sensitize students on the positive and negative effects of social media on international, national, district and community platforms
6. Promote and sensitize students on cybercrime and safety
7. Implement strategies to respond to and resolve online safety issues and negative socio-cultural practices faced by schools and students

Safety from gang recruitment

Objective: To prevent learners from possible gang involvement and implement intervention and prevention strategies in schools.

This objective refers to measures available to prevent children from being forced, coerced, enticed, or persuaded to join gangs. To achieve safety from gang recruitment, schools should prevent learners from possible gang involvement and implement intervention and prevention strategies in schools. To achieve safety from gang recruitment, the following key activities will be implemented:

Implementing Actions and Actors:

MBSSE will:

1. Collaborate with law enforcement agencies to promote campaigns against the recruitment of students into gangs
2. Train teachers and students to acquire knowledge and understanding of gang recruitment and signs of association with gangs
3. Provide training for teachers on how to manage disruptive and violent students.

District Education Office will:

4. Collaborate with law enforcement agencies, social work professionals to sensitize students and staff about issues relating to gang recruitment
5. Equip Guidance and Counseling personnel to provide counselling and pastoral advice to ex-gang members in the school and make referrals to rehabilitation centers.

Schools will:

6. Sensitize learners on the dangers of joining gangs and gang recruitment through learner centered teaching strategies
7. Monitor students' attitude and conduct for referral to Guidance and Counselling to help avoid the company of gangs
8. Sensitize parents and community members to provide supervision of their school children to avoid engaging with gangs.

Safety against possession of weapons and other dangerous objects

Objective: To make schools free from weapons and dangerous devices, and prevent physical injuries and emotional trauma on students in order to enhance the learning environment and the improvement of learning outcomes

Implementing Actions and Actors:

Schools will:

1. Ensure the regular monitoring of the school environment (inside and outside the school) with a view to identifying weapons or any other harmful instruments
2. Search learners or groups of learners or the property of a learners/group of learners for weapons or any dangerous objects, upon reasonable suspicion of possession of weapons and dangerous items
3. Ensure that learners' bags, under the authority of designated school officials, are searched from time to time to prevent learners from bringing dangerous weapons into the school.

5 SECTION 5: GOVERNANCE, MONITORING AND EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

5.1 Implementation framework: Governance and Coordination Arrangements

Governance and coordination arrangements for key stakeholders at the central, district, and school levels in Sierra Leone, are proposed to ensure the smooth implementation of the CSSP.

The institutional arrangements for implementing the CSSP are driven by the principle of resource optimization, leverage and identifying key actors from the national to the community level and assigning them distinct responsibilities in the policy implementation. The arrangements detail the principal roles of the key actors in steering, advising, coordinating, executing and monitoring. The MBSSE will provide oversight responsibility and coordination in the implementation of the CSSP. Figure 9 depicts the institutional arrangements for the implementation of the Policy.

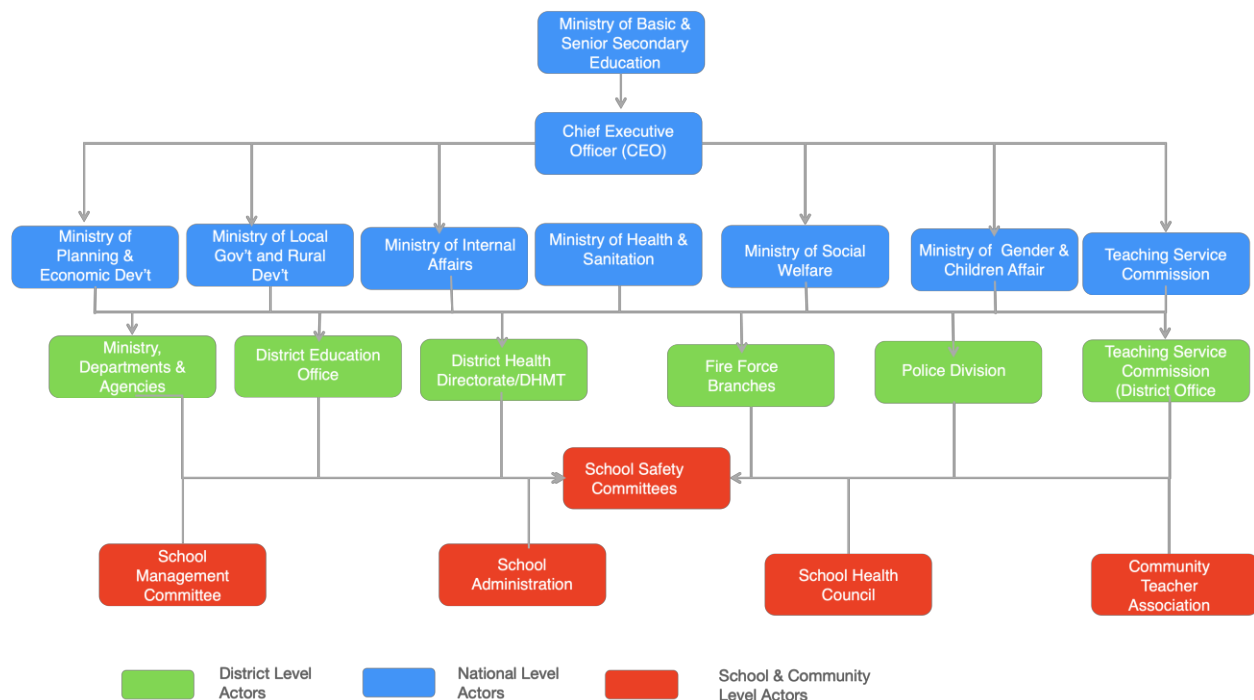


Figure 9: CSSP Coordination and Governance Structure

The central level structures rely on the District Education Offices to coordinate the multi-sectoral structures at the district level namely the MDAs under the MPED and MLGRD, the District Health Offices under the MoHS and its directorates, and the Fire Force Branches and the Police Divisions assist their national structures at the district levels.

At the school level, every school will create a School Safety Committee (SSC), made up of key school stakeholders, which will coordinate school safety policies, programmes, and activities. Each school's SSC will steer the activities of the SMCs, School Administration, School Health Council (birthed by the School Health Policy which is responsible for the coordination of school

health and school feeding activities), and the Community Teacher Association (CTA) and Teaching Service Commission (TSC).

School Safety Committee

This committee is tasked with ensuring that the school is a safe, healthy, and enabling environment devoid of violence, prejudice, disease, disaster risk, and malnutrition for school children and that school personnel can safely undertake teaching and learning activities. The School Safety Committee, unlike the other structures in the governance and coordination arrangements, is not commonly found in all schools. Every school must have such a committee coordinating school safety at the school level and there is a need to restructure and streamline it in terms of its composition and the roles and responsibilities of its key members.

Composition

- BoG Chair/Representative or SMC Head/Representative
- Headteacher/Principal
- Disciplinary Committee Head
- School Matron/Food Committee Head
- Guidance and Counselling Committee Head
- School Health Officer/Health Committee Head
- A Parent representing CTA

SMC Head or Representative: Roles and Responsibilities

- Leads the SSC, chairs its meetings, but in their absence the headteacher takes over their chairing position
- Develop, review (when necessary) and ensure the efficacy of the school safety policy with the SSC
- Must be a pivot in fostering school-community initiatives and activities
- Support the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs National Male Involvement Strategy to forestall sexual and gender-based violence in schools
- Ensure budgetary and expenditure oversight on the school including item(s) on school safety
- Must be a liaison between the SMC and the SSC

Headteacher/Principal: Roles and Responsibilities

- Integrate relevant provisions in CSSP rules and regulations into School Development Plan
- Make provision for training of relevant teachers, staff and School Safety Committee in school safety and disaster management responsibilities assigned to them
- Ensure School Risk Register and Incident Register is rigorously maintained and acted upon
- Exercise oversight of school safety
- Periodically review the "Code of Conduct for Teachers and other Education Personnel in Sierra Leone" and MBSSE's "Safe Schools: Alternatives to Corporal Punishment in Schools in Sierra Leone" to regulate and monitor the behavior of school personnel
- Report, communicate and make referrals (when necessary) of violent and criminal incidents to relevant stakeholders (SSC, parents, Police Force, Fire Force, SMCs, CTAs and school Boards)
- Liaise with Police to enforce security on highway/road crossings to make way for school children and staff to cross roads safely to and from school

- Engage external stakeholders in resource development to support the funding of school safety services, logistics, and infrastructure
- Must liaise with the SMC and the Community Teacher Association (CTA) on all matters relating to school safety (advocacy campaigns, security, budget and resource allocation, development activities, etc.)
- Must be a member of the SSC and deputize in the absence of its head (SMC head or representative)
- Oversee the enforcement of disciplinary measures in the school consonant to the Education Act (2023)
- Must be a lever of inclusivity as championed by the Education Act (2023), the Radical Inclusion Policy (2021), the Disability Act (2011), and the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy (2021)

School Matron/Food Committee Head: Roles and Responsibilities

- Regulate the quality of food sold on the school's premises
- Ensure that food vendors adhere to the regulations concerning food hygiene
- Cooperate with the School Safety Committee to assist in the construction of a school canteen
- Ensure that foods are prepared consistently on time and in clean environments
- Work with the School Health Councils to ensure the effective coordination of school feeding activities
- Report constantly of the state of food safety and quality to the SSC
- Be a liaison between the food vendors and the SSC

School Health Officer/Health Committee Representative: Roles and Responsibilities

- Work with the School Health Councils and regional and district directorates of health to ensure access to school health services in line the School Health Policy
- Make referrals to district or regional officers of health conditions/emergencies beyond the capacity of the school clinic
- Assist the headteacher in enforcing school health regulations
- Ensure that school children have access to adolescent and youth friendly services as spelt out in the School Health Policy
- Ensure that school children and personnel adhere to hygiene standards to promote good health

Guidance and Counselling Unit Head: Roles and Responsibilities

- Must be at the forefront of addressing the psychological needs of school children and personnel
- Provide academic counselling and problem-solving interventions to students
- Establish reporting channels for school children and personnel who need guidance and counselling
- Send quarterly reports about the state of guidance and counselling to the School Safety Committee

Parent representing CTA: Roles and Responsibilities

- Be a liaison between the community/parents and the SSC
- Represent the interests of school children
- Educate parents on how they can contribute to school safety (disciplinary issues, gender-based violence, bullying, tolerance, etc.)
- Encourage voluntary participation in resource development of school safety activities and programmes
- Offer innovative and workable models for school-community partnerships
- Send CTA reports bordering on school safety to the SSC

5.2 Monitoring Policy Implementation

As part of the process to monitor the implementation of the CSS Policy, an M&E framework is designed for the purpose of reporting implementation results and lessons learned. The M&E framework shall be incorporated into all facets of the activities' implementation cycle of the CSS Policy. It will enable the policy managers - i.e., MBSSE to clearly demonstrate to all key stakeholders whether the policy interventions are achieving the stated strategic objectives and initiatives.

The M&E system will capture the relevant data and information in order to:

- Monitor the policy implementation outcomes and indicators as reflected in the Result Framework
- Establish a process to alert stakeholders to any inconsistency and provide the basis for making the necessary adjustments
- Strengthen the flow of data and information from the stakeholders through agreed channels of communication
- Examines the 3 Policy Statements and 15 themes specified in the Policy and Details in the CSSP Action and Monitoring Plan. For each Policy theme, outcome indicators are developed, data needs are disaggregated, the source of data identified, the frequency it should be collected, and the entity responsible for data collection recognized.

5.2.1 Content and scope of the CSS Policy M&E Plan

The M&E Plan lays the foundation for a results-based approach for implementation and management of the CSS Policy and Action Plan. The Plan, therefore, provides the means to robustly analyze the relevant education and school safety data and information in a systematic manner in order to:

- i. Visualize a results/ logic model (including the sphere or boundary of the policy, the goal, agreed activities, responsible institutions and assumed inter-linkages and changes)
- ii. Monitor the policy outcome indicators as reflected in the CSS Policy Framework & Action Plan
- iii. Comprehensively track the implementation of the policy (the policy implementation plans, inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes), using a set of indicators (or milestones) that will be designed for each of the key activities of the policy and policy action plan
- iv. Establish a communication structure among responsible ministries, agencies and implementing actors as well as the provision of the basis for making the necessary adjustments

- v. Outline a structure for communication and knowledge/ information sharing, to support the decision-making (steering) process
- vi. Outline the flow of data and information from the relevant institutions (state and non-state actors) and schools through the various stakeholders to inform decision-making

The CSS Policy M&E Information is framed and constructed using the logic model approach that classifies indicators as process milestones, outcome and impact. The M&E system will not only provide for monitoring of implementation outcomes but will also make room for monitoring of implementation schedule of policy provisions and key activities within the timeframe provided in Implementation Plan. It is expected that agencies involved in operationalizing the policy are expected to integrate strategies and activities of the policy into their long-term and annual plans.

5.2.2 CSSP M&E Framework

The CSSP M&E Framework is a model for assessing implementation outcomes of the Policy. It provides the basis for tracking implementation performance of actors executing the policy's various aspects. The framework sets out the Policy themes and objectives, and the outcome indicators are based on the themes and objectives. The Framework consists of the 15 thematic areas and objectives specified by the CSSP implementation Framework.

As a first step to developing the M&E Plan Objectives and activities were reviewed for determination of the Outcome Indicators. For Policy Statement 1 which involves “Ensuring safe school facilities and learning environment”, 9 outcome indicators were derived from the four identified themes:

1. Safety of School compound – 2 outcome indicators
2. Safety in Physical Infrastructure – 3 outcome indicators
3. Safety in School Environment – 2 outcome indicators
4. Safe Teaching and Learning Environment - 2 outcome indicators

For Policy Statement 2 “Promoting school disaster management and risk reduction”, 6 outcome indicators are modeled for assessing their implementation impact. These are:

1. Disaster risk reduction and management – 4 outcome indicators
2. Food safety – 3 outcome indicators
3. Health and hygiene safety – 1 outcome indicator
4. Transportation safety - 2 outcome indicators.

Twenty-three (23) outcome indicators are derived for Policy Statement 3 to measure success of the implementation over the 10 years of policy implementation. The following are the outcomes:

1. Safety against drug and substance abuse – 4 outcome indicators
2. Safety against child abuse (physical, emotional, sexual, and neglect) - 4 outcome indicators
3. Safety of children with special needs/disabilities - 3 outcome indicators
4. Safety against socio-cultural practices and mental health problems - 2 outcome indicators
5. School community relations - 2 outcome indicators
6. Online & Cyber Crime safety - 1 outcome indicator
7. Safety from gang recruitment - 3 outcome indicators

5.3 Evaluating Policy Implementation – Monitoring Chart

The Monitoring Chart provides the basis for conducting the monitoring target to assessing successful implementation of the CSS Policy. This will enable managers of the policy to monitor the activities completed during implementation, and specified targets and actuals within the chart, as set out in the work schedules. Targets for the 38 indicators has been set for the 10-year implementation period. The chart which is proposed to be adopted by the MBSSE is include in the Comprehensive School Safety Policy Action Plan, Monitoring and Evaluation Framework and Indicative Cost Estimates document.

5.4 Policy Review

The implementation review of CSS Policy will be conducted annually, and the Policy Owner, MBSSE, is responsible for conducting the review. The review will be undertaking with a clear mandate based on the implementation outcomes and existing situation analysis of school safety throughout the country. This will be underpinned by a comprehensive data collection and reports of basic and secondary schools in a systematic way to provide a snapshot of prevailing situation of child safety along the 15 thematic areas of the policy. The review will:

1. Reveal relevance of the provisions of the CSS Policy to current situation of school safety
2. Assess policy effectiveness and having the desired impact on school safety
3. Highlight emerging issues requiring mandates to policy provisions

6 SECTION 6: FINANCING THE POLICY

Over the years, the Government of Sierra Leone has committed 22% of annual budgetary allocation to the education sector. It is expected that over the period of the implementation of the CSSP, the MBSSE will integrate activities under the policy into its annual plans and make budgetary provision for central government funding. The education sector, historically and in contemporary times, is a beneficiary of donor driven funding. Multi-and-bi-lateral development agencies would be engaged to package programmes and projects provided in the CSSP for funding. Even more so, existing donor funded education sector projects would be encouraged to incorporate CSSP activities for implementation. There is also the pressing need for stakeholders to share financial responsibilities for the implementation of designated activities. Financing the CSSP's implementation will require:

1. Nurturing and/or deepening the partnerships and cooperation agreements with existing and prospective local and international stakeholders/partners
2. Leveraging existing funding sources
3. Encouraging resource mobilization by schools and community to execute activities at the school levels

The District Education Offices will be the pivot for implementation and monitoring at the District and school levels. The district offices, which are de-centralised organs of the Local Councils will be urged to make annual budgetary allocation to the Local Council to support activities of the CSSP. At the District level, funding would be broadly focus on the following:

- Infrastructure provision and maintenance
- School security
- Local data capturing and transmission
- Provision of food for children 3-8 years through the School Feeding
- Training of local education service providers and local NGOs on CSS Policy local Action
- Monitoring of School activities on School safety

An indicative budget for the CSSP is provided in the Comprehensive School Safety Policy Action Plan, Monitoring and Evaluation Framework and Indicative Cost Estimates document.

7 SECTION 7: CONCLUSION

The Comprehensive School Safety Policy aims to enhance school safety and reduce risks of abuse, violence and hazards across all basic and secondary education schools in Sierra Leone. The policy brings into focus child-centered and evidence-based efforts to promote school safety throughout the basic and secondary education sector and to assure universal access to quality education. This allows education sector partners to work more effectively and to link with similar efforts in other sectors.

Comprehensive School Safety rests on three pillars including; (i) safe school facilities and learning environments, (ii) disaster reduction in schools, and (iii) protection from violence and other forms of abuse and harm. The policy document addresses these pillars by assigning key responsibilities and actions that can be taken through changes in education policy and practices aligned with child safety and right protection at national, district and local school site levels. The policy is aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals and other international treaties that Sierra Leone subscribes to.