

Country Brief: Sierra Leone

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The EdTech Hub team in Sierra Leone engages with key education stakeholders to support education reform at the national level. In doing so, the Hub works closely with government agencies such as the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE) and the Teaching Service Commission (TSC) and development partners such as the World Bank, FCDO, and UNICEF.

The Hub provides in-country and remote support through technical assistance and research, with the Country Lead and ODI fellow based in Freetown, Sierra Leone. This is where the MBSSE and most development partners are situated. The Hub has had a country lead embedded in the MBSSE Delivery Unit since 2020, providing support and technical assistance to tech-related priorities, such as the One Tablet Per School Programme. Part of this work has also been focused on strengthening data systems and use in the MBSSE at the district and school levels. The Hub's ODI fellow has been based in the MBSSE since 2021 to support the ministry directly on EdTech processes and priorities. The fellow has supported and led EdTech-focused work such as the tablet-supported sandbox for continuous teacher professional development, the UNICEF Learning Passport platform development, and national radio teaching programme reforms. The Hub's physical presence helps strengthen its relationships within the ministry.

Education is the core of the government's human capital development strategy in Sierra Leone. In 2018, the government launched the Free Quality School Education programme to increase the country's access to quality basic and secondary education. Soon after, Minister David Sengeh (previously Minister of Basic and Senior Secondary Education) promised technology-supported change. As a result of the most recent elections, Minister David Sengeh has been promoted to Chief Minister, and Minister Conrad Sackey (previous Chair of the Teaching Service Commission TSC) has been appointed Minister of Basic and Senior Secondary Education.

The response to country demand through requests from the ministry based on the above-mentioned country-level trends and tech priorities, and the Hub's [Sierra Leone research review](#), the Hub has decided to focus predominantly on two of our focus areas: data for decision-making and in-service teacher continuous professional development (TCPD).

EdTech Hub's Helpdesk in Sierra Leone

EdTech Hub has responded to two Helpdesk requests in Sierra Leone for the World Bank. These requests focused on TCPD and acceptable use policies in EdTech.

Example:

[Government of Sierra Leone Education Data Hub: A User Research Report](#)

EdTech Hub's work in Sierra Leone

Activity	Ongoing work
<p>Technical assistance to support the MBSSE and TSC with the design and pilot of the One Tablet Per School programme (Completed in June 2021)</p> <p>Small (GBP 50K or less)</p>	<p>EdTech Hub supported the MBSSE and TSC in adopting a user-centred approach to designing the One Tablet Per School programme. Following this, the Hub supported testing the One Tablet Per School programme in 80 schools in collaboration with the UKAid-funded programme Leh Wi Lan (part of Phase 1 of the Secondary School Education Improvement Programme (SSEIP I)).</p>
<p>Converting fragmented Annual School Census (ASC) datasets into a single fully integrated database in collaboration with Fab Inc (Completed in August 2022)</p> <p>Small (GBP 50K or less)</p>	<p>EdTech Hub's work in Sierra Leone began with partnering with the MBSSE and Directorate of Science, Technology and Innovation (DSTI) to conduct user research on the Education Data Hub. The aim of this research was to identify ways to optimise this investment and to promote data-driven decision-making in Sierra Leone. The Education Data Hub pulls data from the Annual School Census conducted yearly by the MBSSE.</p> <p>Following this work, the Hub collaborated with Fab Inc to pull the ASC datasets from 2015 to 2021 into a single integrated database. This has also been converted into a dashboard and mobile app where the data is readily available for stakeholders and decision-makers.</p>
<p>Supporting the government to set up and facilitate a cross-governmental Education Data Working Group (Completed in June 2023)</p> <p>Small (GBP 50K or less)</p>	<p>Following the completion of the education data ecosystem mapping exercise, EdTech Hub collaborated with the MBSSE, Fab Inc., and Leh Wi Lan to create a roadmap for data harmonisation in Sierra Leone. The roadmap included assisting the government to set up the first Education Data Working Group.</p> <p>The Hub worked with the MBSSE to set up the working group.</p>
<p>Designing and testing a technology-supported continuous professional development (CPD) model (sandbox) (Completed in August 2022)</p> <p>Small (GBP 50K or less)</p>	<p>The Teaching Service Commission (TSC) has been promoting CPD to improve classroom practice and student outcomes. The TSC partnered with the World Bank and EdTech Hub to design and test a technology-supported community of practice (CoP) model to strengthen foundational learning.</p> <p>EdTech Hub, TSC, and World Bank collaborated with the Education Development Trust (EDT) to implement experiments to test the proposed technology-supported CPD model. These experiments were rolled out as a sandbox consisting of three sprints.</p>
<p>Research on GIS-supported teacher allocation (Ongoing)</p> <p>Large (GBP over 400,000)</p>	<p>EdTech Hub and research partners Fab Inc and the Education Commission are undertaking a Hub-Led research study to support the TSC in building evidence on the most feasible approach to GIS-supported teacher allocation in Sierra Leone. Using a mixed-methods model, the study assesses the approach's impact on teacher attendance and retention.</p>

	To align with this research project, EdTech Hub has worked with Fab Inc and the TSC, through its country engagement work, to create an open-source, flexible algorithm for the teacher deployment exercise to make the process easier and quicker.
Investigating the activity levels of School Quality Assurance Officers (SQAOs) (Ongoing) Small (GBP 50K or less)	EdTech Hub, the MBSSE and implementing partners of the Leh Wi Lan programme have collaborated to better understand what factors affect the variability in the activity SQAOs and school principals' levels of engagement with digital tools. Through this research focus, the study aims to determine any examples of effective collaboration between SQAOs and principals that the study team could learn from. The aim is to work with the government to strengthen the use of technology to improve the efficiency of district-level planning and management.
Research on mapping the education data ecosystem (Completed in October 2021) Small (GBP 50K or less)	EdTech Hub conducted a mapping exercise on the education data ecosystem to understand the challenges in the current education data ecosystem, for those collecting and using data at the policymaking level to those in the schools. The aim was to understand who collects, handles, uses, and needs what data to support education decisions in Sierra Leone. This mapping exercise provided a basis for developing a more consolidated system that reduces duplication.
Global Partnership for Education (GPE) Compact development (Completed in June 2023) Small (GBP 50K or less)	UNICEF requested the Hub's input to shape the GPE's System Transformation Grant programme design. EdTech Hub worked with the MBSSE's Delivery Team to ensure the design aligns with the original compact and the ministry's vision for foundational learning. The Hub has helped develop a master plan for the government's work on data under the Zero Learning Poverty Grant and the GPE System Transformation Grant. The activities from the proposed data master plan will be integrated into the GPE System Transformation Grant.

Examples illustrating the impact of our work in Sierra Leone

EdTech Hub support towards a unified education data ecosystem

EdTech Hub worked with the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE) to [map the education data ecosystem](#) in Sierra Leone. This followed the [C-19 work by Fab Inc](#) on a post-Covid-19 data architecture for a resilient education data ecosystem in Sierra Leone. The mapping exercise identified issues of duplication and fragmentation within the data system. EdTech Hub recommended creating a one-stop shop for all education data. Following this recommendation, the Hub worked with Leh Wi Lan and Fab Inc to support the Directorate of Planning and Policy (within the MBSSE) with the development of a vision piece for a unified data system and a concept note and terms of reference for an Education Data Working Group.

EdTech Hub's country leadership team used its position to understand the government's data needs. The Hub's team advocated for the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE), the Ministry of Technical and Higher Education (MTHE), and the

Teaching Service Commission (TSC) to harmonise their data processes. Through this work, we supported the MBSSE, MTHE, and TSC to outline a vision for data collection, validation, curation, and use. As a result of the newly formed Data Education Working Group, Sierra Leone is at a point where several ministries are now working collaboratively on education data. Furthermore, partners are coming together to support the ministry in providing a more consolidated approach.

EdTech Hub has supported the MBSSE, MTHE, and TSC through the working group to create a diagram that shows how each of the ministry's data systems will be connected. Each agency has agreed on a process towards a more consolidated system and, importantly, how their systems will be linked.

EdTech Hub's work with MBSSE on the education data system harmonisation has led to the ministry supporting the creation of a proposal for a one-stop shop for education data. As a result, the Global Partnership for Education has awarded the ministry a system transformation grant worth USD 40 million. This GPE funding is being used to facilitate the integration of the different education data systems used by the MBSSE, MTHE, and TSC. This will ensure the systems are linked so that all the data resides in a single database, which will act as a single source of truth. All insights will be shared from that single source of truth, and each agency can share and use the same information.