



REVIEW

OF THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK
AND GUIDELINES FOR BASIC EDUCATION USING
THE SEXUALITY REVIEW AND ANALYSIS TOOL
(SERAT)

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Acknowledgements

“ National Curriculum Framework and Guidelines For Basic Education using the SERAT tool

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Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Abbreviations | 5 |
| 1. Executive summary | 6 |
| 2. Introduction | 10 |
| 3. Objectives of the review | 12 |
| 4. Overview of the SERAT tool | 13 |
| 5. Procedure | 13 |
| 6. Limitations of the review | 15 |
| 7. Sources of information | 16 |
| 8. Structure of the report | 17 |
| 9. Results of the SERAT review | 17 |
| 9.1 Analysis of the current education and health context | 17 |
| 9.2 Analysis of the legal and policy context for CSE integration | 20 |
| 9.3 Analysis of the integration of CSE in the national basic education curriculum | 26 |
| 9.4 Analysis of objectives and principles | 30 |
| 9.5 Analysis of curriculum content | 34 |
| 9.6 Analysis of teaching and learning approaches | 38 |
| 9.7 Analysis of teacher training | 56 |
| 9.8 Analysis of monitoring and evaluation system | 57 |
| 9.9 Program coherence | 58 |
| 10. Recommendations | 59 |
| 11. Conclusion | 61 |
| 12. List of participants | 62 |

Abbreviations

| | |
|---------|--|
| AIDS | Acquired Immunodeficiency syndrome |
| AYPF | Adolescent and young people friendly |
| BEC | Basic Education Commission |
| CDU | Curriculum Development Unit |
| CSE | Comprehensive Sexuality Education |
| CSO | Civil society organization |
| DP | Development Partner |
| ESP | Education Sector Plan |
| FGD | Focus group discussion |
| FGM | Female genital mutilation |
| FLE | Family Life Education |
| GATES | Girls' Access to Education and Services |
| GBV | Gender-based violence |
| GoSL | Government of Sierra Leone |
| HIV | Human Immuno deficiency virus |
| HE | Home economics |
| ICT | Information and Communication Technology |
| ITGSE | International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education |
| JSS | Junior Secondary School |
| MBSSE | Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education |
| MLGRD | Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development |
| MoHS | Ministry of Health and Sanitation |
| MoYA | Ministry of Youth Affairs |
| MSM | Men having sex with men |
| MSWGCA | Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs |
| M&E | Monitoring and evaluation |
| NSRTP | National Secretariat for the Reduction of Teenage Pregnancy |
| PHE | Physical and health education |
| Pop/FLE | Population/Family Health Education |
| RME | Religious and moral education |
| SERAT | Sexuality Review and Analysis Tool |
| SLDHS | Sierra Leone Demographic Health Survey |
| SRH | Sexual and Reproductive Health |
| STI | Sexually transmitted infection |
| TSC | Teaching Service Commission |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| UNFPA | United Nations Population Fund |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children's Fund |
| VAW | Violence against women |
| WHO | World Health Organization |



1. Executive Summary

Integrating Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) in formal and non-formal education is one of the key strategies of the Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) to reduce the high prevalence of teenage pregnancy and child marriage in the country. In June 2019, the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE) began the process of integrating CSE into basic education.

The 2015 National Basic Education Curriculum was reviewed using the Sexuality Education Review and Analysis Tool (SERAT) developed by UNESCO. The objective of the review was to assess the curriculum's strengths and gaps with regards to the integration of CSE. These findings were intended to provide an evidence base for necessary improvements or reforms. The review workshop was held from June 24 to 28, 2019. The workshop was attended by key national stakeholders including representatives of MBSSE, the Ministry of Health and Sanitation (MoHS), the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs (MSWGCA), Teaching Service Commission, teacher training institutes, civil society organizations (CSOs), Development Partners (DPs) and donors.

Technical and operational support was provided by UNFPA through the Irish Aid-funded programme, Strengthening Multi-Sectoral Responses to Adolescent Pregnancy (StRAP). An international consultant was recruited with experience in CSE to guide the review process in collaboration with Marie Stopes. This report describes the objectives, process and findings of the review.

Findings

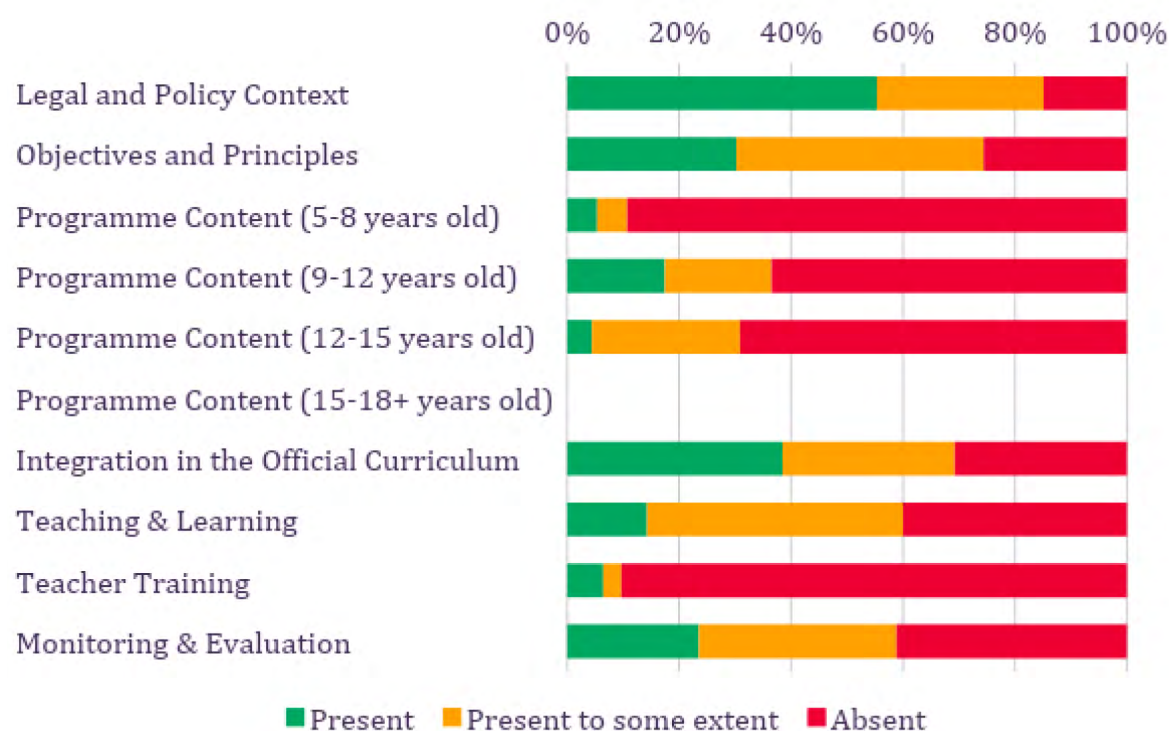
The review shows that the current legal and policy environment is favourable to the integration of CSE in the basic education curriculum. Existing laws, policies and strategies include interventions related to the integration of CSE in formal and non-formal education curricula. For example, there is a clear emphasis on CSE in existing policies and plans such as the Education Sector Plan (ESP) 2018–2020 and the National Strategy for the Reduction of Adolescent Pregnancy and Child Marriage 2018–2022.

It was further found that CSE-related content had been integrated into the National Curriculum Framework and Guidelines for Basic Education developed in 2015 by MBSSE.¹ This curriculum is expected to be introduced by 2021. Specific content related to CSE was found in subjects such as Social Studies, Science and Environment, Physical Health Education (PHE), Home Economics and Religious and Moral Education (RME). Furthermore, languages and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) were found to have integrated some elements of CSE. Analysis of the teaching syllabuses indicates that key concepts related to relationships, human body development and sexual and reproductive health have been developed to a large extent in primary and junior secondary programmes.

However, concepts related to values, rights, culture, understanding gender, violence and staying safe, skills for health and well-being, sexuality and sexual behaviour need to be further strengthened in the overall curriculum. Given the high teenage pregnancy rates, it is crucial to include discussions on interpersonal communication and negotiation skills, as well as contraception (including condom use) for students who are already sexually active. The review also revealed that CSE-related topics integrated into the new basic education curriculum have not yet been included in teacher training programmes.

1. This was done with the technical and financial support of UNICEF.

Country summary results



Objectives, phases and limitations of the review process

Integrating Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) in formal and non-formal education is one of the key strategies of the Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) to reduce the high prevalence of teenage pregnancy and child marriage in the country. In June 2019, the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE) began the process of integrating CSE into basic education.

The 2015 National Basic Education Curriculum was reviewed using the Sexuality Education Review and Analysis Tool (SERAT) developed by UNESCO. The objective of the review was to assess the curriculum's strengths and gaps in terms of CSE integration. These findings were intended to provide an evidence base for necessary improvement or reforms. The review workshop was held from June 24 to 28, 2019. The workshop was attended by key national stakeholders including representatives of MBSSE, the Ministry of Health and Sanitation (MoHS), the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs (MSWGCA), Teaching Service Commission, teacher training institutes, civil society organizations (CSOs), Development Partners (DPs) and donors.

Technical and operational support was provided by UNFPA through the Irish Aid-funded programme, Strengthening Multi-Sectoral Responses to Adolescent Pregnancy (StRAP). An international consultant was recruited with experience in CSE to guide the review process in collaboration with Marie Stopes. This report describes the objectives, process and findings of the review.

The process operated under some limitations. The syllabuses for some subjects had not yet been finalized. A Curriculum Development Unit is not in

place; thus the review process lacked the guidance of national curriculum development experts. There was limited guidance on M&E. Also, some of the topics found in the teacher syllabuses during the review were not accounted for in the SERAT review summaries.

CSE integration is not just about curriculum content; the integration process must take into consideration public health data and have a tangible link to the country's priorities on SRH, its demographics and the prevention and response to gender based violence (GBV). Additionally, the integration process needs to ensure that the curriculum content is age appropriate and relevant to the needs of the learners. Furthermore, teachers need to be properly trained and equipped to deliver non-judgemental CSE lessons in the classrooms. Finally, national education monitoring systems must ensure systematic measurement of the delivery of sexuality education.



Key recommendations

The following key recommendations are made to ensure CSE is effectively integrated, taught and monitored in Sierra Leone.



1 Technical Working group

A CSE Technical Working Group (TWG), should be established under the MBSSE to oversee the process of integrating CSE into formal and non-formal school curricula. It is suggested that as this work falls under Pillar 3, 'Enabling School Environments', this TWG should be chaired by the MBSSE. The TWG should comprise representatives of the five line ministries of the National Secretariat for the Reduction of Teenage Pregnancy,² CSOs, Technical Partners and DPs. In the absence of a staffed and functional curriculum development unit (CDU), a technical committee composed of national curriculum development consultants must be put in place to review the curriculum to strengthen age appropriate CSE-related content. However, in the medium to long term, the CDU needs to be established to sustain and monitor the implementation of the curriculum.

2 Strengthening collaboration

MBSSE, MoHS and MSWGCA need to strengthen their collaboration and coordination to ensure that students have access to both information and services on sexual and reproductive health (SRH), social welfare and legal protection.

3 Education materials

The multiple dimensions of sexuality must be strengthened in the teaching syllabuses.³ Existing resources such as the International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education (ITGSE), It's All in One curriculum, and Population/Family Life Education materials could be used for more context-specific, age appropriate ideas information relating to CSE.

4 Children with special needs

The needs of children with special needs should be taken into consideration while drafting all aspects of CSE integration. It is essential that teachers understand how to adapt their lesson plans so it is appropriate for students who may have an intellectual or developmental disability. Similarly, it is important that teaching material are accessible; for example, they must be available in Braille.

2. Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education, Ministry of Youth Affairs, Ministry of Health and Sanitation, Ministry of Social Welfare Gender and Children's Affairs and Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development.

3. These include relationships, rights, values, culture, gender, social norms, sexuality and sexual behaviour, sexual and reproductive health and rights, violence and staying safe, skills for health and well-being, sexuality and sexual behaviour, and human body development.

5

Training the teachers

CSE must be included in pre-service and in-service teacher training to ensure that teachers are fully equipped to deliver non-judgemental CSE lessons. It is suggested that MBSSE work closely with teacher training colleges to develop a standardized pre-services training for all student teachers.

7

Code of conduct

Schools must also be encouraged to enforce the Teachers' Code of Conduct to ensure that sexuality education is provided and delivered in a safe and healthy learning environment, free of discrimination, harassment and sexual violence.

6

Monitoring and evaluation

From the onset of the integration process, indicators must be set and integrated into national education monitoring systems to ensure that the delivery of sexuality education is properly monitored. Monitoring and evaluation experts at MBSSE must be involved in the design and implementation of the roadmap for the integration of CSE. In particular, their involvement is necessary to develop fit for purpose indicators and monitoring and evaluation systems.



2. Introduction

The reduction of adolescent pregnancy and child marriage is a key priority for the Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL).⁴

In Sierra Leone, over one quarter (28 percent) of girls aged 15-19 have begun childbearing, while, over one third (36.1 percent) of girls are married by the age of 18 (among 20-24 year olds).⁵ Integrating comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) in formal and non-formal education is among the GoSL's key strategies to equip young people with knowledge and skills related to sexual and reproductive health (SRH) while simultaneously challenging myths and addressing harmful gender norms.

The ITGSE defines CSE as a curriculum-based process of teaching and learning about the cognitive, emotional, physical and social aspects of sexuality. It aims to equip children and young people with knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that will empower them by helping them understand issues related to their health, well-being and dignity; develop respectful social and sexual relationships; consider how their choices affect their own well-being and that of others; and understand and ensure the protection of their rights.

4. *National Strategy for The Reduction of Adolescent Pregnancy and Child Marriage 2018-2020.*

5. *Sierra Leone 'Demographic and Health Survey' 2013*

There is clear evidence that CSE has a positive impact on SRH, notably contributing towards reducing sexually transmitted infections (STIs), the spread of HIV and the incidence of unintended pregnancies.⁶ The GoSL's commitment to embed CSE in formal and non-formal education was reaffirmed by His Excellency President Julius Maada Bio in his opening statement to the House when he stated the GoSL will work:

"To address [teenage pregnancy and the alarming maternal mortality], my administration will launch a National Programme on Sexual and Reproductive Health for adolescents [...] In addition, my Government will initiate discussions towards the reintroduction of Family Life Education in schools..."

In 2016, the *I am Somebody – National Life Skills Manual*, an age appropriate, out-of-school curriculum for the 9-13 and 14+ age brackets was launched by the GoSL. The National Life Skills Manual addresses the essential components of education for life – critical thinking, problem-solving, SRH, protection and prevention, risk avoidance, personal rights and responsibilities, and financial literacy. The manual is mainly in use in informal, out-of-school settings to provide vulnerable girls and boys with essential life skills.

With regard to the formal education sector, initial discussions on the CSE integration process in the basic education curriculum began in August 2018. A two-day national stakeholders' workshop organized by MBSSE in collaboration with UNFPA was attended by key stakeholders from across the country. The Minister of Basic and Senior Secondary Education, Mr Alpha O. Timbo, used his keynote address to launch the CSE integration into the formal school curriculum in Sierra Leone.

In 2019, MBSSE conducted a review of the 2015 national basic education curriculum using the Sexuality Education Review and Analysis Tool (SERAT). The aim of the review



was to assess the curriculum's strengths and gaps in terms of CSE integration. Technical and operational support was provided by UNFPA through the Irish Aid-funded "Strengthening Multi-Sectoral Responses to Adolescent Pregnancy" (StRAP) in collaboration with Marie Stopes. The review was conducted during a five-day workshop attended by key national stakeholders including representatives of MBSSE, the Ministry of Health and Sanitation (MoHS), the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs (MSWGCA), Teaching Service Commission, teacher training institutes, civil society organizations (CSOs), Development Partners (DPs) and Donor Partners. National consultants who developed the 2015 basic education curriculum were also invited as national facilitators. An international consultant with experience in CSE integrated was recruited to guide the review process. This report describes the objectives, process and findings of the review.

6. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *Emerging Evidence, Lessons and Practice in Comprehensive Sexuality Education; A Global Review*, UNESCO, 2015.

3.Objectives of the review

The objectives of the review were as follows:



To assess the curriculum's strengths and gaps in terms of CSE integration, and inform improvement or reform;

To assess the curriculum's relevance to health, education, gender, legal and policy data;

To stimulate debate and strengthen advocacy efforts by producing data on CSE that is accessible to different audiences;

To strengthen local ownership and advocacy efforts by involving civil society and actors from the education sector , starting from the initial stages of CSE development;

To produce a report that will inform the development of a roadmap to strengthen CSE integration in basic education curricula.

4. Overview of the SERAT tool

SERAT is an Excel-based tool developed by UNESCO to help collect data on school-based CSE programmes and generate reflection and discussion about strengths and areas of improvement for these programmes. SERAT facilitates the assessment of the relevance of a sexuality education programme to a country's national context and sexual and reproductive health priorities. The tool has been developed based on international evidence and good practices related to the development and content of effective CSE programmes. The major source material is the ITGSE, first developed in 2009, and revised and updated in 2018 based on new evidence and good practice documented from across the globe.

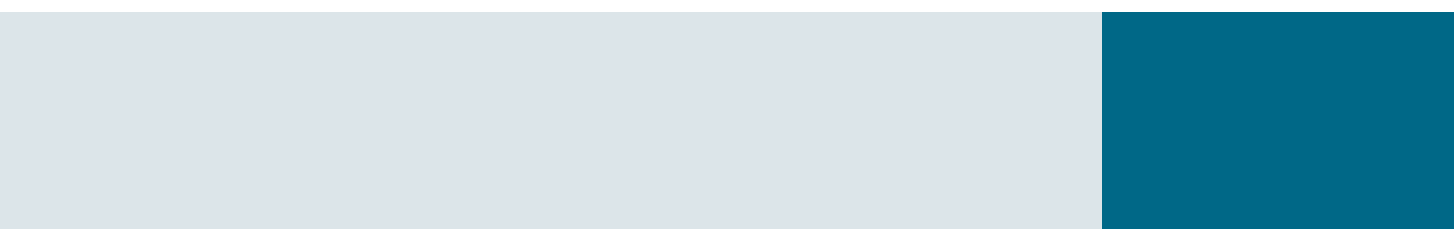
Results from the SERAT analysis are presented in colour coded bar charts (as seen in this report) which are automatically created by the tool, to enable immediate analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the programme. Sierra Leone is the first country to have tested the 2018 revised version of SERAT that was based on the 2018 edition of the ITGSE. Participants' comments and observations on this version of the Tool were collected during the curriculum review process to inform further efforts for its improvement.

5. Procedure

Step 1: Review process with national stakeholders

The review workshop took place from 24 to 28 June 2019 in Freetown. The agenda for the workshop included two days of in-depth discussions and reflections on the concept of CSE, its objectives, relevance and added value in the Sierra Leonean context. During the remaining three days, participants were

introduced to the SERAT tool and trained to use the knowledge acquired over the previous days to conduct the review of the 2015 National Curriculum Framework and Guidelines for Basic Education. To accelerate the CSE integration process, the workshop participants chose to base their review on the yet-to-be-released basic education curriculum designed in 2015 which MBSSE plans to introduce in the near future. The workshop was facilitated by Ame Atsu David, an international consultant specializing in CSE.



Step 2: Consultations with students and teachers in selected schools

After the review workshop in Freetown, the international consultant, along with representatives of MBSSE and UNFPA, conducted Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with students (boys and girls) and teachers in selected schools in the districts of Western Area Urban, Kenema and Port Loko. The purpose was to gather qualitative data to corroborate and complement the findings of the SERAT review. These FGDs helped understand:

- Students' views on what they were currently learning in relation to sexuality, SRH and gender equality
- Students' views on what they would like to learn in school in relation to sexuality, SRH and gender equality;
- Teachers' views on specific practices, barriers and enablers in relation to teaching sexuality, SRH and gender equality in schools;
- Teachers' views on what should be taught in schools in relation to sexuality, SRH and gender equality in schools.

The findings from the FGDs, along with selected quotes from students and teachers, have been compiled in a complementary report to this SERAT report.

Step 3: Desk review and report development

The findings from the stakeholders' review were compiled by the international consultant. She also conducted an in-depth desk review to ensure the accuracy of the information provided during the review meeting.

Step 4: Validation of findings and development of a roadmap for CSE integration into the curriculum

The findings of the review were validated by national stakeholders during a workshop held in Freetown from 25 to 27 July 2019. The findings in the report were used to develop a roadmap of key actions to be implemented by national stakeholders to strengthen the teaching of CSE in Sierra Leone.





6. Limitations of the review



- The syllabuses for some subjects that require CSE integration based on the 2015 national basic education curriculum have not yet been finalized. The teaching syllabuses for languages and ICT which have some CSE-related content were not available.
- Currently, MBSSE does not have a functional Curriculum Development Unit (CDU). The review process therefore lacked the guidance of national curriculum development experts. To fill the gap, national consultants who took part in the basic education curriculum process in 2015 were invited to provide input and clarifications.
- There were no staff from MBSSE's monitoring and evaluation (M&E) department present at either the review or the validation workshop. Thus, there was limited guidance on M&E.
- The CSE content review was conducted by comparing the learning objectives of the teacher syllabuses with the key concepts and topics listed in the ITGSE. However, during the review it was found that the SERAT tool's list of topics and learning objectives did not include several of those that are included in the ITGSE. As a result, some of the topics found in the teacher syllabuses during the review were not accounted for in the SERAT review summaries.
- Due to the unreleased 2015 basic education curriculum, a number of syllabuses of subjects selected for CSE integration are yet to be finalised. Similarly, the teaching syllabuses for two subjects selected for CSE integration (languages and ICT) were not available in time for the review.

7.Sources of information

Curriculum documents

- National Curriculum Framework and Guidelines for Basic Education, GoSL, 2015
- The following teaching syllabuses:
 - Social Studies
 - Physical Health Education (PHE)
 - Science and Environment
 - Home Economics (incomplete version)
 - Religious and Moral Education (incomplete version)

Key policy and legal documents

- Education Act, 2004
- Child Rights Act, 2007
- Sexual Offences Act, 2012
- National HIV and AIDS Commission Act, 2011
- Education Sector Plan 2018-2020
- National Strategy for the Reduction of Adolescent Pregnancy and Child Marriage 2018-2022
- National Strategic Plan on HIV/AIDS 2016-2020
- Sierra Leone National Reproductive Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health Strategy 2017-2021
- Sierra Leone's Medium-Term Development Plan 2019-2023

- Sierra Leone Demographic Health Survey (SLDHS), 2013
- Sierra Leone 2015 Population and Housing Census: Thematic Report on Children, Adolescents and Youth
- Sierra Leone 2015 Population and Housing Census: Thematic Report on Education and Literacy
- Sierra Leone 2015 Population and Housing Census: Thematic Report on Gender
- Sierra Leone Multiple-Indicator Cluster Survey 2017
- Unsafe Abortion in Sierra Leone: A Report of Community and Health System Assessments, Republic of Sierra Leone Ministry of Health and Sanitation Reproductive and Child Health Directorate and Ipas 2013
- FGM, Let's End It: Country Profile: FGM in Sierra Leone, 28 Too Many, 2014
- Shamed and Blamed: Pregnant girls' rights at risk in Sierra Leone, Amnesty International, 2015

8. Structure of the report

This report comprises the following sections:

- An analysis of education and public health data gathered from official sources;
- An analysis of the legal and policy context within which CSE is currently delivered;
- An analysis of the approach used to integrate CSE into the national basic education curriculum;
- An analysis of CSE objectives and principles used to design the curriculum;
- An analysis of the curriculum content for the age groups 5-8 years, 9-12 years and 12-15 years;
- An analysis of the teaching and learning approaches and environment;
- An analysis of teacher training content on sexuality education;
- An analysis of the M&E system.

9. Results of the SERAT review

9.1 Analysis of the current education and health context

Sierra Leone has a young and growing population. According to UNFPA, countries with both increasing numbers of young people and declining fertility have the potential to reap a demographic dividend. However, this dividend can only be achieved by investing in education and health, as well as broader family planning strategies and employment.⁷

7. United Nations Population Fund, *State of the population 2014: The power of 18 billion adolescent, youth and the transformation of the future*. UNFPA, 2014

Despite substantial progress made by GoSL, health and education indicators in Sierra Leone are still alarming and urgent actions are required in order to achieve the demographic dividend. Although education is a basic human right, the literacy rate for those aged 10 years and above is approximately 51 per cent and there is a stark gap between the literacy rate for males (59 per cent) and females (44 per cent).⁸ The country has low school enrolment rates and high drop-out rates, especially among females at higher levels.

With regards to SRH, sex and sexual behaviour are topics not normally discussed publicly.⁹ For most girls in Sierra Leone, sexual initiation occurs during adolescence, as evidenced by the median age of first sexual intercourse among persons aged 25-46 years, which is 16 years for women and 18 years for men.¹⁰ The high likelihood for girls and young women to enter into marriage at an early age is a contributor to the gender disparity in school dropout rates. Overall, 13 per cent of girls are married by their 15th birthday and 39 per cent of girls before their 18th birthday. Sierra Leone has the 19th highest child marriage rate globally.¹¹ Child marriage leads to significant physical, emotional

and social harm for many adolescent girls in Sierra Leone. In particular, girls are often unable to negotiate safe sex with their husbands because of their young age and limited power in the relationship, thus placing them at increased risk of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) including HIV – and are frequently under pressure from in-laws to immediately become pregnant after marriage.¹²

Even though young people initiate sex early, more than 86 per cent of girls aged 15-19 have never used contraceptives and nearly 31 per cent of this age group have an unmet need for family planning.¹³ A major consequence of the low level of contraceptive use is the high prevalence of teenage pregnancy. In Sierra Leone, 28 per cent of adolescent girls between ages 15-19 are pregnant or already mothers.¹⁴ The lack of credible information on SRH issues and access to contraceptives for adolescents contributes to the increasing number of unplanned pregnancies. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), complications during pregnancy and childbirth are the leading cause of death for 15-19-year-old girls globally, and it holds true for Sierra Leone, at 46.8 per cent of the deaths of adolescent girls.

13% of girls are married by their 15th birthday and **39%** of girls before their 18th birthday.

86% of girls aged 15-19 have never used contraceptives



8. Statistics Sierra Leone Sierra Leone 2015 Population and Housing Census, Thematic Report on Education and Literacy. UNFPA, 2017.

9. 28 Too Many, Country Profile: FGM In Sierra Leone, June 2014.

10. Ministry of Health and Sanitation Sierra Leone 2013 Sierra Leone Demographic and Health Survey. MoHS, 2013.

11. United Nations Children's Fund, State of the World's Children 2017: Children in a Digital World, UNICEF, 2017.

12. United Nations Children's Fund/United Nations Population Fund, Ending Child Marriage Briefing Book v.3: UNFPA – UNICEF Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage, 2017.

13. 2013 Sierra Leone Demographic and Health Survey.

14. Ibid.

Although the HIV prevalence rate is low among the general population (1.5 per cent),¹⁵ the prevalence among men having sex with men (MSM) is worryingly high (14 per cent).¹⁶ Punitive laws that criminalize same-sex activity drive this population underground, elevating their risk of HIV and preventing them from accessing health care, including HIV services.¹⁷

Moreover, only 29 per cent of women and 30 per cent of men aged 15-24 have comprehensive knowledge about HIV/AIDS. Additionally, only 14 per cent of women and 5 per cent of men aged 15-24 years have tested for HIV and know the outcome.¹⁸ Sierra Leone is in the bottom 10 of the Gender Development Index, ranking 177 out of 182 ranked countries in 2013.¹⁹

Prevalent forms of GBV in Sierra Leone include domestic violence, sexual assault, including rape of adults and minors, rape in marriage and school-related sexual abuse, as well as harmful practices such as female genital mutilation (FGM).²⁰

Although violence against women (VAW) is recognized worldwide as a violation of human rights, 69 per cent of women and 46 per cent of men believe that FGM should be continued, while 63 per cent of women and 34 per cent of men think that wife beating is justifiable under certain circumstances.²¹ It points to the work that is needed to ensure both men and women – and society at large – understand violence as an infringement of their fundamental rights that needs to end.²²

The education system is a key entry point for providing accurate information on SRH, building core skills such as critical thinking, negotiation and communication skills and developing positive attitudes towards gender equality and women's empowerment. This analysis of education and health data reveals the need for GoSL to prioritize efforts to facilitate children and young people's access to CSE in order to achieve the demographic dividend. ITGSE also recommends special attention should be paid to non-formal and community-based settings since statistics show that a large proportion of children are currently out of school in Sierra Leone.



The education system is a key entry point for providing accurate information on SRH

15. Ibid.

16. UNAIDS, 'Sierra Leone', <www.unaids.org/en/regionscountries/countries/sierraleone>.

17. UNAIDS, 'Prevention Gap Report, 2016', <www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media_asset/2016-prevention-gap-report_en.pdf>.

18. 2013 Sierra Leone Demographic and Health Survey.

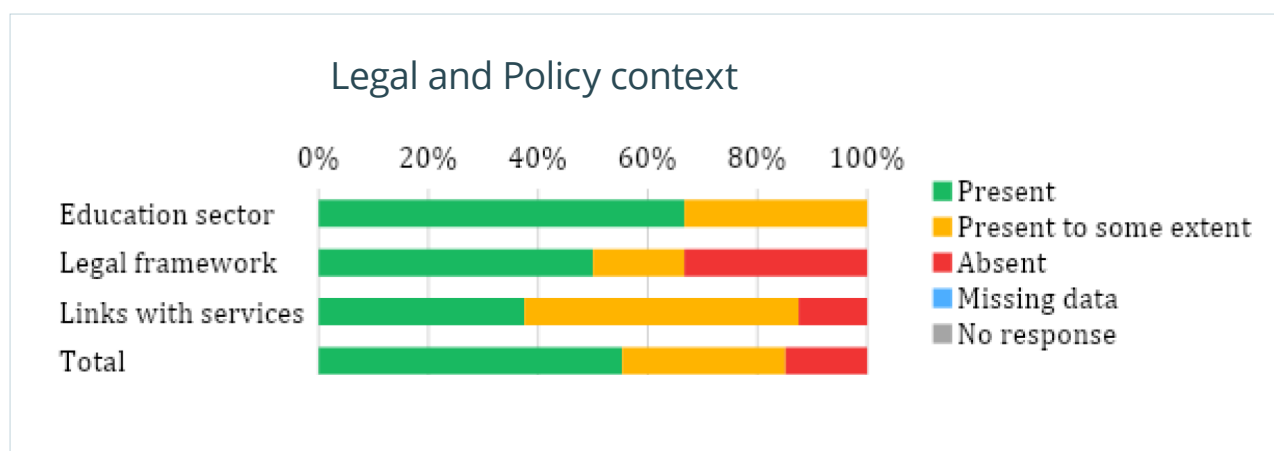
19. United Nations Development Programme, 'Gender Development Index Report, 2013'.

20. Country Profile: FGM in Sierra Leone.

21. 2013 Sierra Leone Demographic and Health Survey.

22. World Bank, 'Gender Equality and Development', World development report 2012, 2011.

9.2 Analysis of the legal and policy context for CSE integration



Education sector

According to the 2004 Education Act, all children – boys, girls and children with special needs – have the right to nine years of free and compulsory basic education. The 2007 Child Rights Act which is the domestic version of the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child also states that every child must have access to health care and free basic education.

The Sierra Leone education system is organized into pre-primary (three years), primary (six years), junior secondary (three years), senior secondary (three years), higher education, and Technical and Vocational Education and Training. The system also supports adult and non-formal education. Together, primary and junior secondary constitute the basic education cycle, which is compulsory for all children.²³

In the formal education sector, the provision of pre-primary to tertiary education (including Technical and Vocational Education and Training) is provided by both the government and by non-governmental actors. MBSSE is in charge of basic and senior secondary education while the Ministry of Technical and Higher Education is responsible for technical and higher education. MBSSE is currently organized into 13 directorates:²⁴

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Education Sector Plan (ESP) Secretariat | 7. Teacher Records Section |
| 2. HE Unit | 8. Planning & Policy |
| 3. Non-Formal Education Directorate | 9. Gender Unit |
| 4. Physical Health Education Directorate | 10. Schools Feeding Coordination Unit |
| 5. The Guidance and Counselling Unit | 11. Student Unit |
| 6. Higher Education, Science and Technology | 12. The Secondary Division (JSS/SSS) |
| | 13. Sierra Leone Or Islamic Development Bank Project |

²³ Education Act, 2004 Ministry of Basic Education and Senior

²⁴ As on the website of the Ministry of Basic Education and Senior Secondary Education, <www.education.gov.sl/Directorates.aspx> [accessed 17 February 2020]

Operating under the aegis of MBSSE are several semi-autonomous government agencies, including the Basic Education Commission, the National Commission for Technical and Vocational Examination and the Teaching Service Commission.²⁵ The establishment of the Teaching Service Commission was mandated by the Sierra Leone Teaching Service Commission Act, 2011 to improve the professional status and economic well-being of teachers, and other related matters.

The two most recent Education Sector Plans, of 2014-2018 and 2018-2020, indicated an overlap and ambiguity in existing education policy and legislation, a lack of clarity of roles within MBSSE, over-stretched management, limitations with current human resources, organizational and institutional capacity and severe staff shortages. Currently, MBSSE does not have a functional CDU which is crucial for the sustainability of the CSE integration process.

Legal framework

Both the desk review and the discussions at the review workshop found a conducive legal and policy context for the integration of CSE, including HIV education, into basic, secondary and non-formal school curricula. The key acts and national strategies presented below clearly spell out GoSL's commitment to the integration of CSE and HIV education into formal and non-formal school curricula.

The ESP 2018-2020 states the following:

“Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) is one of the strategic prongs towards realising the full potential of adolescents and youth and, when implemented correctly, can reduce adolescent pregnancy which could in turn reduce drop-outs. CSE is defined as a right-based and gender-focused approach to sexuality education, whether in school or out of school. The Government of Sierra Leone is committed to the implementation of CSE and policies related to its implementation will be in the revised National Education Policy. Age appropriate CSE will be integrated in the curriculum through the main subject areas from Upper Primary School to Senior Secondary School. The government is committed to scale up and strengthen the existing CSE training (Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health and Life Skills) to Primary School teachers and expand this to Upper Primary School (UPS), Junior Secondary School (JSS), Senior Secondary School (SSS), technical and vocational institutions, teacher training colleges and out of school learning Centres” (p. 35).

25. Universalia 2018, 'Summative Evaluation of GPE's Country-level Support to Education', Batch 1, Country 2: Sierra Leone.



The National Strategy for the Reduction of Adolescent Pregnancy and Child Marriage 2018-2022 in Pillar 3 has the following aim:

"Ensuring all adolescents have access to Comprehensive Sexuality Education and that the learning environment is enabling for adolescent girls and boys to thrive."

The 2011 National HIV and AIDS Commission Act states the following in Article 20:


"The Ministry responsible for education utilizing official information provided by the Ministry shall integrate instructions on the causes, modes of transmission and ways of preventing and protection against HIV and AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases in subjects taught in public and private schools at primary, secondary and tertiary levels, including formal and non-formal systems but the integration shall not be used for the sale and distribution of birth control devices" (p. 14).

The National Strategic Plan on HIV/AIDS 2016-2020 has the following outputs:

- *Young people (10-24 years) reached with comprehensive life skills, Sexuality, HIV and AIDS education increased from 2015 level to 80% by 2020.*
- *Young people and their sexual partners access youth friendly services HIV, SRH, Ebola Virus Disease and harm reduction information and services increased from 2015 level to 90% by 2020.*
- *Adolescents and young people who make and accomplish appropriate Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) commitments (e.g. Sexual abstinence, family planning use etc.) increase from 2015 level to twice that level by 2020.*

Sierra Leone National Reproductive, Maternal, New Born, Child and Adolescent Health Strategy 2017–2021:

“Prioritised interventions around adolescent health package will include teenage pregnancy prevention, ending early child marriages, female genital mutilation and gender based violence. In alignment with the global strategy for women’s, children’s and adolescent’s health, this strategy will strengthen establishment and functioning of adolescent responsive health services across all primary health care units (PHUs) and at district and referral hospitals, strengthen school health programs including comprehensive sexuality education and develop programs for reaching out of school youth” (p. 37).



The Government has demonstrated clear political will to combat GBV through the enactment of the Sexual Offences Act on 28 August 2012. The act specifies that a person aged under 18 years cannot consent to sex, making sex below this age illegal. It also protects children, especially the girl child, from abuse by teachers, religious and traditional leaders.

The law introduced minimum sentences for offenders, raising minimum jail sentences from two years to between five and 15 years. On 14 February 2019, the President of Sierra Leone Julius Maada Bio, declared sexual violence a national emergency, vowing that sex with minors would be punishable by life in prison, amid a public outcry over the issue.²⁶ Following the declaration, the Sexual Offences Act Amendment 2019 was enacted, which strengthens the maximum penalty for sexual penetration of a child from 15 years to life and criminalizes settlement and compromise in the matter of sexual offences.

The GoSL has committed to the reduction of adolescent pregnancy and child marriage through its commitments to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the WHO’s Global Strategy for Women’s Children’s and Adolescents’ Health (2016–2030). In 2016, Sierra Leone became the 15th country to launch the African Union (AU) Campaign to End Child Marriage, ramping up its efforts to ban this harmful practice in the region. Sierra Leone is one of the target countries for the ongoing UNICEF-UNFPA Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage, which was developed to support the elimination of child marriage in 12 countries.²⁷ At the national level, a National Secretariat for the Reduction of Teenage Pregnancy (NSRTP) was established in May 2013 and the country has recently adopted the National Strategy for the Reduction of Adolescent Pregnancy and Child Marriage for 2018-2022, in which child marriage and adolescent pregnancy are addressed jointly.

26. BBC News, ‘Sierra Leone declares emergency over rape and sexual assault’, <www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-47169729>.

27. National Strategy for The Reduction of Teenage Pregnancy.

The Government of Sierra Leone's new Medium-term National Development Plan (MTNDP) 2019–2023 also puts an emphasis on the Free Quality School Education Programme as the government's flagship programme to provide a solid base to enhance human capital development and to facilitate the transformation of the economy. The implementation plan outlines a series of key policy actions and strategies including CSE, to strengthen existing laws, policies and measures related to the reduction of child marriage and gender-based violence. CSE is specifically listed as one of the key programmes to be undertaken to reduce adolescent pregnancy in Volume II of the Implementation plan.

Gaps in content and implementation

- Under the Child Rights Act 2007, the minimum legal age of marriage is 18 years. However, this is contradicted by the Customary Marriage and Divorce Act 2009 which allows children at 16 to get married with parental consent. Efforts are however being made to address this through the introduction of the draft Prohibition of Child Marriage Bill which would standardize the age of legal marriage at 18 years.
- FGM remains a sensitive and controversial issue in Sierra Leone. The country does not have a law explicitly criminalizing FGM. The National Gender Mainstreaming Policy and the National Policy on the Advancement of Women (2000) do not specifically mention FGM. Both early marriage and child betrothal are specifically mentioned as 'customary practices' that are prohibited in section 46 of the Child Rights Act of 2007. Section 33(1) of the Act prohibits torture, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, which could be interpreted to include FGM. This law is applicable to minors only, and there is no sanction or penalty given. The MSWGCA, in collaboration with NGOs, United Nations agencies and local communities, developed a National Strategy for the Reduction of FGM for 2016–2020. The Ministry also planned to put in place a National Steering Committee for FGM Abandonment but it is yet to be put in place.²⁸ However, this strategy is still in draft form and has not been endorsed.
- In April 2015, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology reiterated the position of banning visibly pregnant girls from attending mainstream schools and sitting exams.²⁹ According to the Government, allowing pregnant girls to attend regular schools would undermine their ability to do well, expose them to ridicule and encourage others to get pregnant. In May 2015, following national and international pressure, the President announced the establishment of an alternative 'bridging' education system that would allow pregnant girls to continue going to school, but in different premises or times from their peers. Many experts expressed concern at the lack of choice, and that the persistent presence of the ban was stigmatizing.³⁰ Amnesty International has recommended among others, the development and implementation of a CSE programme as part of the curricula for all schools and communities to enable boys and girls to take informed decisions about their sexuality and health and prevent sexually transmitted diseases and early or unwanted pregnancy.³¹

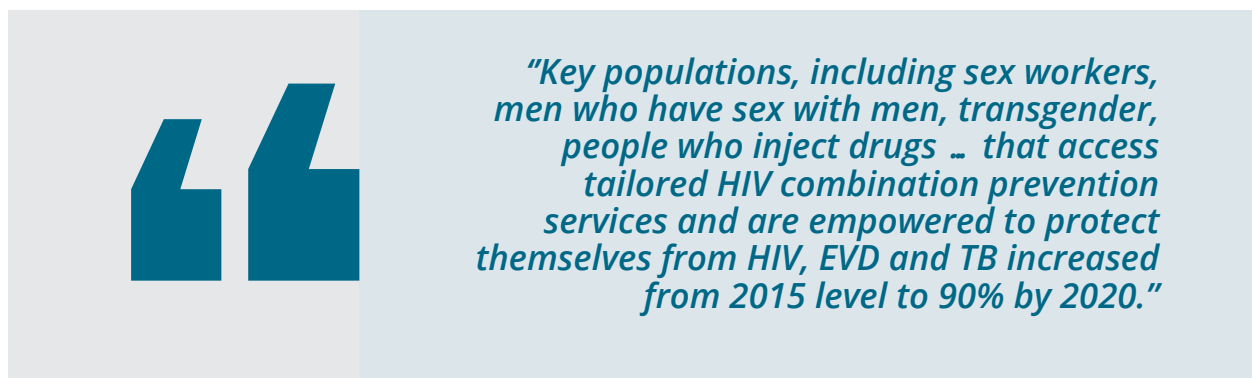
28. UNFPA Regional Office for West and Central Africa, *Analysis of Legal Frameworks on Female Genital Mutilation in Selected Countries in West Africa*, https://sierraleone.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/EN-UNFPA-ANALYSIS-ON-FGM_0.pdf.

29. Amnesty International, *Shamed and blamed: Pregnant girls' rights at risk in Sierra Leone*, 2015.

30. In September 2019 the GoSL issued a statement reiterating that visibly pregnant girls should not attend school. However, pregnant school girls can now sit exams.

31. *Shamed and blamed*.

- Under the Sierra Leonean law, abortion for unwanted pregnancies is illegal in all circumstances, as stipulated by the English Offences Against the Person Act of 1861. The law's restrictiveness drives women to use dangerous methods to end their pregnancies or to seek help from unskilled providers and prevents the implementation of safe abortion. Evidence shows that where laws are restrictive, most abortions are unsafe and maternal mortality is higher (WHO 2008a).
- Section 61 of Offences against the Person Act 1861 criminalises and denounces sexual relations between persons of the same sex as buggery and bestiality, carrying with it a penalty of life imprisonment. UNAIDS reports an HIV prevalence rate of 14 per cent among MSM. Although there is very little data on the sexual behaviour of young MSM in Sierra Leone, global data indicates that young MSM have a greater HIV risk than heterosexual young people and older MSM.³² For example, a study conducted in 2011 in the USA found that among young males aged 13–19 years, 92.8 per cent of all diagnosed HIV infections were attributed to male-to-male sexual contact.³³ There is also evidence that young MSM begin having sexual intercourse at an earlier age than previous generations of MSM³⁴ but many are unaware of the risks of infection and of how to protect themselves.³⁵ Sexuality education in schools often provides inadequate information about HIV and generally does not address sexual health risks relevant to MSM.³⁶ Supportive policy environments and prioritized HIV prevention programmes are therefore vital.³⁷ It is however, interesting to note that Sierra Leone's National Strategy on HIV and AIDS 2016–2020 acknowledges the following:



- The 2011 National HIV Act forbids the sale and distribution of birth control devices in schools. According to the SLDHS 2013, although condom use is one of the main strategies for combating the spread of HIV, educating youth about condom use is sometimes controversial with some saying it promotes early sexual experimentation. To reduce teenage pregnancy and HIV rates, it is crucial that CSE information is accompanied by access to contraception including condoms.

32. World Health Organization, 'A Technical Brief: HIV And Young Men Who Have Sex With Men', 2015.

33. US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *HIV Among Youth in the US: protecting a generation*, in CDC vital signs. November 2012; *HIV Surveillance in Adolescents and Young Adults*. Available at: http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/pdf/statistics_surveillance_Adolescents.pdf [Accessed August 7, 2013]

34. Balthasar, H., A. Jeannin, and F. Dubois-Arber, 'First Anal Intercourse and Condom Use among Men Who Have Sex with Men in Switzerland', *Arch Sexual Behaviour*, vol. 38, no. 6, 2009, pp. 1000-1008.

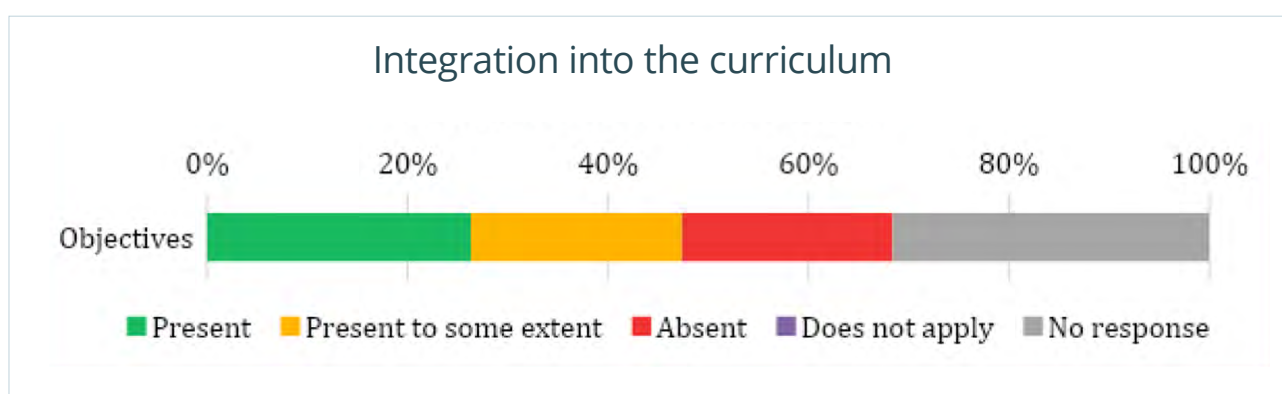
35. Kubicek, K., et al., 'In the dark: young men's stories of sexual initiation in the absence of relevant sexual health information', *Health Education Behaviour*, vol. 37, no.2, 2010, pp. 243-263.

36. World Bank, *The Global HIV Epidemics among Men Who Have Sex With Men*, World Bank, Washington, D.C., 2011.

37. United Nations Development Programme, *Global Commission on HIV and the law: risks, rights and health*, New York: UNDP, 2012.

Several policy and project evaluations reports point out that the major issue in Sierra Leone, is not an absence of relevant laws and policies but their weak enforcement. Implementation is largely dependent on financial and technical support from donors and DPs, which affects the sustainability of national initiatives. While CSE should reflect national legal frameworks, national efforts must review and reform harmful laws and policies such as those that sanction discrimination – including criminalization – based on gender, age, health status, pregnancy or other grounds. Equally, it is important to address the legal and policy barriers that prevent adolescents and young people from accessing services, information and education.

9.3 Analysis of the integration of CSE in the national basic education curriculum



Sexuality education is not new to the school system in Sierra Leone. A course titled Family Life Education (FLE) was taught in schools, however, in the post-war education system has become essentially defunct.³⁹ There is currently no CSE in the basic education curriculum but FLE is delivered sporadically, based on the commitment and interest of individual teachers, rather than through a robust, standardized approach. Thus many adolescents leave school without the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes to make informed SRH choices.

During the desk review, it was found that FLE was piloted and introduced in primary and secondary school in the early 1980's by the Ministry of Education with the technical and financial support of the organisation K4Health.⁴⁰ In 2006, UNFPA and UNESCO supported the development and introduction of a course entitled Population/Family Life (Pop/FLE) in primary and junior secondary education, which emphasized emerging issues such as gender, HIV/AIDS and SRH. Unfortunately, it was discontinued when the project ended.

38. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *Emerging Evidence, Lessons and Practice in Comprehensive Sexuality Education: A Global Review*, UNESCO, Paris, 2015.

39. *Shamed and blamed: Pregnant girls' rights at risk in Sierra Leone*. Amnesty International November 2015

40. K4Health/ PopLine <https://www.popline.org/node/427644> [accessed 17 February 2020]

In 2015, MBSSE developed with the support of UNICEF a National Curriculum Framework and Guidelines for Basic Education to inform and guide all practitioners responsible for designing, implementing and managing the new basic education curriculum in Sierra Leone.⁴¹ It was prepared by national curriculum specialists, subject experts and teachers through a series of nationwide consultations and technical workshops.

Technical expertise was provided by Redi4Change LLC, and oversight for the project was provided by the Curriculum Reform Steering Committee of the MBSSE. The review found that the team that worked on the curriculum capitalized to a large extent on FLE as well as Pop/FLE existing content. CSE-related topics and learning outcomes are mainly integrated into cores subjects like social studies and civics, science and environment, as well as HE, RME and physical health education (PHE) categorized as elective subjects. Some CSE-related content is also found in Languages and technology, and ICT.

The table below summarizes CSE topics and learning outcomes which have been integrated in the different subjects.

| Subject | CSE topic | Expected learning outcomes |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|--|
| Science and the environment | SRH | Demonstrate improved knowledge and understanding of reproductive health, sexuality, growth and development |
| | | Demonstrate life skills to communicate and interact effectively with others and making informed decisions and choices to promote risk-reducing behaviour |
| | | Improved knowledge about gender, sexuality and human rights in Sierra Leone |
| PHE | Physical health | Identify and make routine use of practices that contribute to good personal hygiene and community health |
| | | Learn practices that mitigate the risk of contagious diseases such as Ebola, cholera, HIV and AIDS, STIs and other infections |
| | | Gain an understanding of the health implications of biological growth and personal development, especially in the adolescent years |
| | SRH | Understand, value and act on knowledge of SRH, sexuality, gender, growth and development |
| | | Demonstrate life skills for enhanced interpersonal relations with opposite sex |
| | | Acquire basic skills to communicate and interact effectively and safely with peers and authority figures |
| | | Routinely demonstrate the ability to make informed decisions and choices that promote risk-reducing sexual behaviour |

41. National Curriculum Framework and Guidelines for Basic Education, 'Introduction'.

| Subject | CSE topic | Expected learning outcomes |
|---------------------------|---|--|
| PHE | Diseases | <p>Understand, value and act on best ways of avoiding or minimizing health risks associated with HIV and AIDS</p> <p>Identify, understand, value and act on basic hygiene and health practices</p> <p>Routinely use good health and hygiene practices in the home, school and community</p> |
| | Physical education and health | <p>Develop healthy lifestyle and habits that demonstrate understanding, valuing and acting on basic forms of physical exercises as critical to one's health</p> <p>Make informed decisions about their own health, including sensible use of health facilities in the community</p> |
| HE | Family and household resource management | <p>Apply knowledge and skills to generate and maximize the use of available family resources for a better quality of life, in a fair and equitable manner, for the benefit of all individual members of the family, taking into account their individual interests and needs</p> |
| Social studies and civics | Children and their environment | <p>Understand the physical and social environment, the basic concept of change and response to change (i.e., how individuals construct the environment by defining social norms and adopting common behaviours based on those norms, and how the structure and dynamics of social environment affects individual lives differently</p> |
| | | <p>Understand the meaning and importance of diversity, the concept of leadership and respect for self, others, social justice, authority and public property, rule of law and the importance of peaceful coexistence</p> |
| | Local community | <p>Understand inter-dependence of people, power dynamics, and the physical environment for coexistence</p> <p>Understand both the differences and the tensions between traditional society and modern living</p> |
| Languages | Listening and speaking | <p>Apply critical analysis of messages heard, distinguish between facts and opinions, and express views in a clear, logical manner based on commonly accepted communication norms and showing respect for the opinions of others</p> |
| | Communication skills | <p>Develop communication skills based on the application of critical thinking processes, inquiry, and analysis and synthesis of information, to participate actively in civic affairs of the communities and the country</p> <p>Negotiate decisions to prevent or deal with conflicting opinions constructively</p> |
| ICT | Social and ethical Issues in technology and ICT | <p>Demonstrate supportive, positive and responsible social and ethical behaviours when using technology</p> |

The review shows that MBSSE prioritized the integration into key mainstream core and elective subjects, based on existing educational policies, which call for CSE integration into key subject areas as well as the availability of resources. This approach also reduces pressure on an overcrowded curriculum. Although some stakeholders are advocating for CSE to be a stand-alone subject, ITGSE 2018 states that, while idea, it would be more practical to build upon what teachers are already teaching and integrate it within existing subjects.

Although in the ESP 2018-2020, it is mentioned that age appropriate CSE will be integrated in the curriculum through the main subject areas from Upper Primary School to Senior Secondary School, the review found that CSE has been integrated from lower primary to JSS. Discussions during the review meeting and consultations with teachers show that many stakeholders are reluctant to start CSE from the first year of primary school. This is probably due to the limited understanding of the objectives of CSE. Starting sexuality education in primary school allows children to identify and report inappropriate behaviour (including child abuse) and develop healthy attitudes about their own body and relationships.⁴²

Currently, CSE is only integrated into the basic education curricula. During the review meeting, some stakeholders advocated for CSE to be integrated into the senior secondary education curriculum. However, when resources are so severely limited, it is advisable to focus instead on the short-term goal of finalizing CSE integration into the basic education curriculum. According to UNESCO, it is easier to influence behaviours and norms among the youngest and before sexual initiation.⁴³ Besides, considering the high rate of drop-out, it is better to equip children with basic knowledge and skills before the possibility of their dropping out.

In principle, the integration into key core and elective subjects would mean that all children attending primary and junior secondary schools would benefit from lessons on CSE. However, this requires investment in teacher training and clear guidelines on teaching CSE-related topics. Furthermore, stakeholders at the review meeting emphasized making CSE examinable as some teachers in the past did not accord importance to the FLE subject because it was not examinable. Since CSE is not a stand-alone subject, there is a need to ensure CSE-specific learning outcomes and standards are made examinable.

Although CSE terminology is adopted in some national policy documents, some stakeholders at the review meeting argued that community members may consider it shocking and resist the integration process. It is therefore important for stakeholders to discuss and agree on a terminology that will be acceptable to all at the national level. According to ITGSE 2018, terms such as prevention education, relationship and sexuality education, FLE, HIV education, life skills education, healthy life styles and basic life safety have been adopted in different countries and each country should decide the terminology that best suits the cultural context. Since many people in Sierra Leone are already familiar with the concept of FLE which was once a part of the curriculum, MBSSE could adopt this term. However, regardless of terminology, it is important to ensure that the content covers the different dimensions of sexuality and effectively responds to the needs of young people.

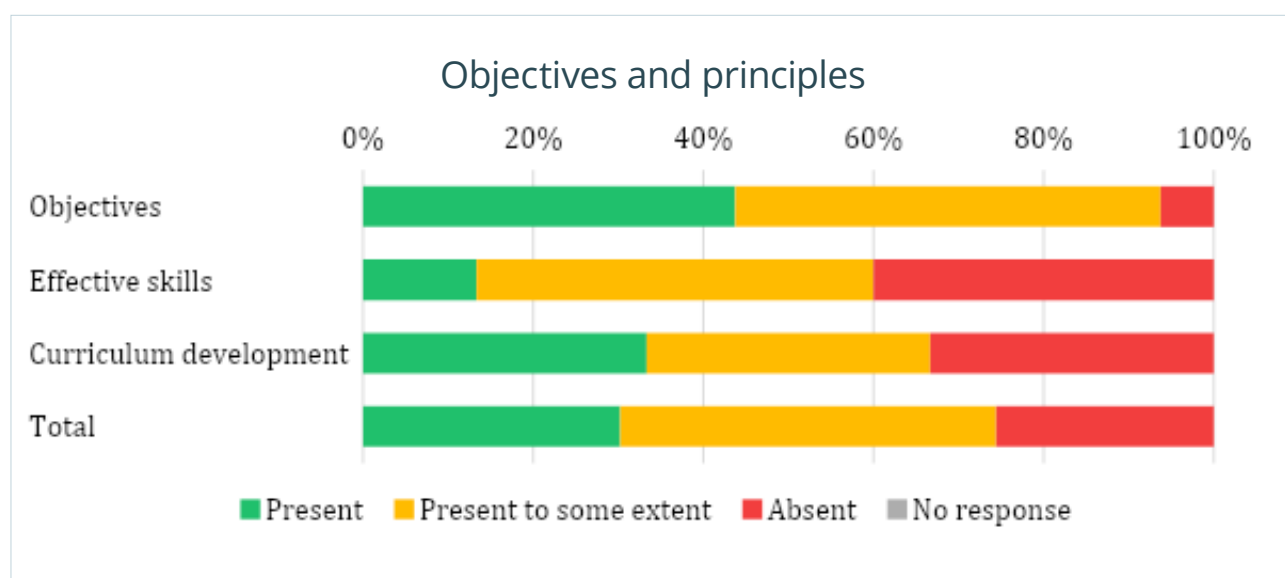
42. *Emerging Evidence, Lessons and Practice.*

43. *United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 'International technical guidance on sexuality education: an evidence-informed approach', UNESCO, 2018.*

Gaps and recommendations

- The development of teaching syllabuses of subjects integrating CSE has not been completed.
- Guidelines on how to teach CSE topics integrated in the different subjects as well as teaching and learning materials have not yet been developed.
- Guidelines on how CSE should be integrated into extracurricular activities do not yet exist.
- According to stakeholders who took part in the review meeting, MBSSE plans to introduce the new basic education curriculum in 2021. The ESP 2018-2020 also states that the new curriculum for basic education will be introduced during the lifetime of the ESP. It is crucial to review and finalize the teaching syllabuses of the subjects integrating CSE. A roadmap for 2019-2021 outlining key activities and responsibilities should be developed to guide the integration process.
- Since MBSSE does not currently have a fully staffed CDU, a technical committee of national consultants with expertise in curriculum development can be put in place to review the curriculum and teaching syllabuses to strengthen age appropriate CSE topics. An international expert in CSE could train the committee in CSE and provide technical guidance to ensure all the different aspects of CSE are fully taken into consideration.
- As the MBSSE has decided on an integration approach that mainstreams CSE in key subject areas, guidelines on how CSE should be taught at each stage should be developed, as well as teaching materials for teachers and students.
- The technical committee should consider integrating CSE content in Language and Arts. CSE content should also be further developed in Languages and ICT subjects as mentioned in the National Curriculum Framework and Guidelines for Basic Education.

9.4 Analysis of objectives and principles



Objectives

CSE is strongly linked with empowerment, gender equality and a rights-based approach, thus putting children and young people at the centre of their own education. It aims to enhance well-being, and, therefore, strives to achieve ideal experiences, rather than solely working to prevent negative experiences. CSE acknowledges and tackles the various concerns and risks associated with sexuality without reinforcing fear, shame or taboo associated with young people's sexuality and gender inequality. CSE not only addresses physical, emotional, social and cultural aspects but also includes aspects like friendship, feelings of safety, intimacy, gender, security, pleasure and attraction. CSE is not value-free: It promotes values human rights and gender equality, including the right to health and non-discrimination. The basic curriculum has clear goals and objectives related to respecting human rights, gender equality and diversity; reducing unintended pregnancy, HIV, STIs and GBV. It also pursues objectives on youth empowerment, including improvement of analytical, communication and other life skills for health and well-being. This is evidenced by the following few statements from the National Curriculum Framework and Guidelines for Basic Education:

"The new curriculum is intended to transform education and society for a new generation, helping to restore the rights and duties associated with education; uphold fairness, truth and transparency; strengthen equity and inclusion; promote a culture of peace, tolerance and mutual respect; encourage social cohesion and the celebration of diversity; and prevent sexual exploitation and gender-based violence against young people, including and especially adolescent girls. The new curriculum should also help to rebuild and uphold the dignity, sense of aspiration, self-confidence and self-worth of all learners; especially young girls, children with disabilities, orphans and children affected by the Ebola crisis" (p. 5).

"The curriculum should also enable young people to be part of cultural change by strengthening some values and practices whilst discouraging some negative and harmful traditional practices" (p. 11).

"The basic education curriculum must be designed such that the prescribed subject areas, pedagogical styles, and supplementary learning materials can be used to address contemporary issues that are of most concern in Sierra Leone. In addition to the range of existential issues mentioned above, other areas of current concern include: food security; teenage pregnancy; youth unemployment; environmental protection; preventing and managing health pandemics ... " (p. 15).

"For instance, learning to deal with gender and sexuality issues or managing health risk behaviours would need to be covered through a number of subjects, such as science, social studies, and physical health education. This can also be done through appropriate stories in language classes and in supplementary learning materials (such as readers, comics, plays, CDs and DVDs). For some subjects, such as Life Skills or sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), it is required by definition that learning must cut across conventional boundaries by being "mainstreamed" into the curriculum" (p. 16).

The review found that objectives related to positive relationships and improving menstrual hygiene management are reflected in the teaching syllabuses. However, objectives relating to reducing menstruation-related stigma, increasing access to modern contraception, and reducing illegal and unsafe abortion need to be spelt out more clearly in the curriculum and the teaching syllabuses.

Effective skills

The review shows that the content of the teaching syllabuses has very limited information on expressing sexual feelings or intimacy in different ways (i.e., not only through sexual intercourse) such as:

- making informed decisions on engaging in sexual intercourse;
- understanding consent;
- using condoms correctly and consistently;
- negotiating power differentials between sexual partners;
- critically analysing social and gender norms and the harms they can cause;
- developing life skills such as risk assessment and negotiation abilities;
- using an effective method of contraception;
- negotiating the use of condoms and contraception; identifying pressure to have sexual intercourse;
- suggesting ways of responding to pressure (e.g., methods of negotiation, delaying or refusing unwanted or unprotected sexual intercourse);
- avoiding specific situations that could lead to unwanted or unprotected sexual intercourse; being tested (and treated as necessary) for STIs (including HIV);
- using nearby SRH services.

Key stakeholders said that while MBSSE allows information on contraception it forbids the demonstration and distribution of condoms in schools. The 2011 National HIV and AIDS Commission Act also prohibits the sale and distribution of birth control devices in schools. Stakeholders noted that the effective skills mentioned above are not clearly highlighted in the curriculum. This is due to taboos around sexuality and limited understanding of how these skills help young people to delay first sexual debut and to make informed decisions.

Curriculum development

A national consultant involved in the development of the new basic education curriculum stated that the curriculum development process was not guided by experts on human sexuality, behaviour change and CSE-related pedagogical theory. According to ITGSE 2018, just like mathematics, science and other fields, human sexuality is an established field based on an extensive body of research and knowledge. Experts familiar with this research and knowledge should therefore be involved in developing, selecting and adapting curricula. Although, the curriculum document states that the curriculum framework was developed through a nation-wide participatory and consultative process that canvassed the views of various groups,⁴⁴ the majority of stakeholders who attended the review meeting were unaware of the new curriculum. It is also unclear if the consultations highlighted the importance of integrating CSE in the curriculum.

45. These groups included school children, parents, teachers, educators, community leaders, employers, local and national politicians, youth groups and traders.

Gaps and recommendations

- CSE objectives should be better highlighted in the learning outcomes of the curriculum. The curriculum and the teaching syllabuses should clearly state the effective skills necessary to help young people delay their first sexual intercourse, strengthen their communication and negotiation skills as well as increase contraception, including condom use.
- To get the buy-in and support of the general population for CSE integration, awareness programmes should be conducted among young people, parents/family members, religious groups and traditional leaders, teachers and supervisors and other relevant groups. As a first step, pupils and teachers were asked to take part in consultations carried out as part of the review process. A UNESCO global review in 2015 found that engaging parents and communities in the implementation and scale-up of CSE is critical to gaining support among the school community as well as enhancing overall understanding of the issues facing adolescents and young people.
- Sexuality education is most impactful when school-based programmes are complemented with community elements, including condom distribution; training of health care workers to deliver youth-friendly services; and the involvement of parents and teachers.⁴⁶ Multicomponent programmes, especially those that link school-based sexuality education with non-school-based, youth-friendly health services, are particularly important for reaching marginalized young people, including those who are not in school.⁴⁷ In the case of Sierra Leone it is essential that this link is also created between community learning centres and other youth-friendly services.



46. Chandra-Mouli, V., Sc, M., Svanemyr, J., Ph, D., Amin, A., Ph, D.,... Ph, D. (2015). Twenty Years After International Conference on Population and Development : Where Are We With Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights? *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 56(1), S1-S6.

47. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2016c

9.5 Analysis of curriculum content

9.5.1 Overview of the review framework

The curriculum content review focused on the following eight key concepts recommended by ITGSE:

| Key concepts | Topics |
|---------------------------|--|
| Relationships | Families Friendship, love and romantic relationships Tolerance, inclusion and respect Long-term commitment and parenting |
| HE | Apply knowledge and skills to generate and maximize the use of available family resources for a better quality of life, in a fair and equitable manner, for the benefit of all individual members of the family, taking into account their individual interests and needs |
| | Understand the physical and social environment, the basic concept of change and response to change (i.e., how individuals construct the environment by defining social norms and adopting common behaviours based on those norms, and how the structure and dynamics of social environment affects individual lives differently |
| Social studies and civics | Understand the meaning and importance of diversity, the concept of leadership and respect for self, others, social justice, authority and public property, rule of law and the importance of peaceful coexistence Understand inter-dependence of people, power dynamics, and the physical environment for coexistence Understand both the differences and the tensions between traditional society and modern living |
| | Apply critical analysis of messages heard, distinguish between facts and opinions, and express views in a clear, logical manner based on commonly accepted communication norms and showing respect for the opinions of others |
| Languages | Develop communication skills based on the application of critical thinking processes, inquiry, and analysis and synthesis of information, to participate actively in civic affairs of the communities and the country Negotiate decisions to prevent or deal with conflicting opinions constructively |
| ICT | Demonstrate supportive, positive and responsible social and ethical behaviours when using technology |

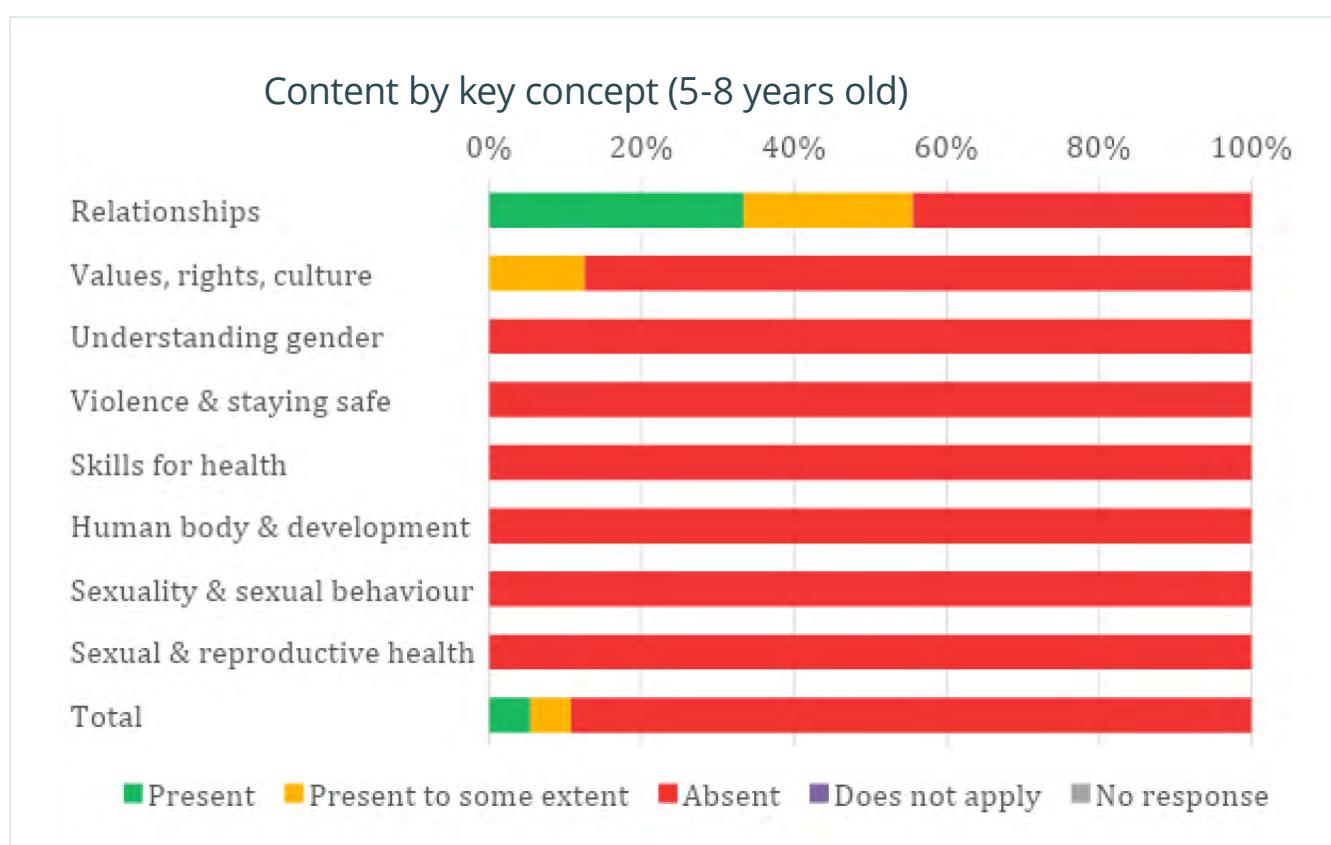
Source: Extracted from ITGSE 2018.

The analysis highlighted three main areas of learning, namely knowledge, attitudes and skills. Knowledge aims at providing a critical foundation for learners, while attitudes help young people shape their understanding of themselves, sexuality and the world. Skills include communication, listening, refusal, decision-making, interpersonal relationships; critical-thinking, building self-awareness, developing empathy, accessing reliable information or services, challenging stigma and discrimination, and advocating for rights.⁴⁸

The review focused on the teaching syllabuses of the following age groups and classes:

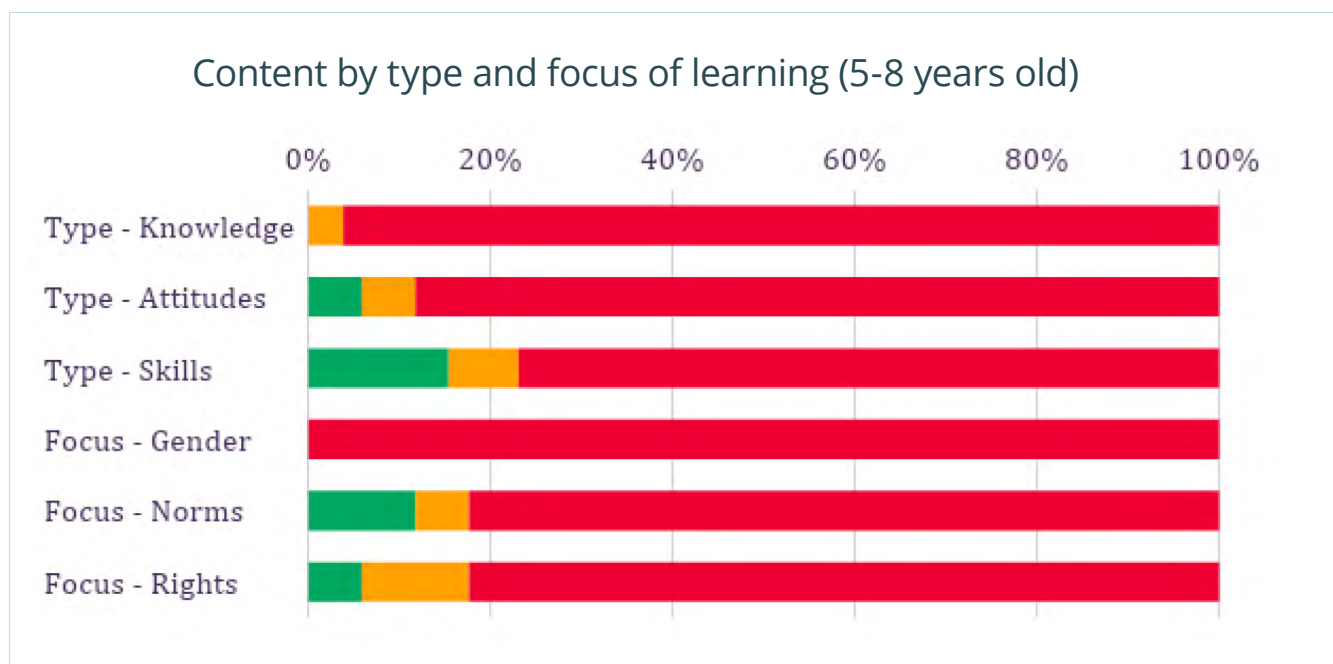
- ages 5 to 8 (classes 1-3)
- ages 9 to 12 (classes 4-6)
- ages 12 to 15 (form 1-3)⁴⁹

9.5.2 Analysis of curriculum content for ages 5-8, primary education, classes 1-3



48. Ibid.

49. The curriculum analysed only covers basic education and that is primary and JSS. Currently, the country does not have a structured national curriculum for Senior Secondary education. It is the WASCE curriculum that is used. The focus of the study was basic education and did not include senior education.



In Sierra Leone, primary school starts at age 6. The content for ages 5-8 was reviewed using syllabuses for primary level classes 1-3. The subjects reviewed were social studies, PHE and RME. Science and environment was also included in the review, despite not being listed as a core subject for classes 1-3. The subject's teaching syllabus indicated that efforts had been made by the curriculum designers to integrate topics from the subject into others, such as social studies, civics, practical health and PHE.

Strengths and gaps of the curriculum

| ITGSE key concepts and topics | CSE content in Sierra Leone national basic curriculum | Learning objective |
|---|--|------------------------|
| Relationships | | |
| | Description of the types of family | |
| | Roles and responsibilities of family members (PHE, classes 1 and 2) | |
| Families | Demonstration of the role of personal identity in family life, his/her immediate environment | Knowledge |
| | My home and family (Social studies, class 1) | |
| Friendship, love and romantic relationships | Missing in the teaching syllabuses | |
| | The importance of peaceful co-existence (Social studies, class 2) | Attitudinal |
| Tolerance, inclusion and respect | Basic understanding of the meaning and importance of diversity (Social studies, class 3) | Knowledge/ Attitudinal |

Strengths and gaps of the curriculum

| ITGSE key concepts and topics | CSE content in Sierra Leone national basic curriculum | Learning objective |
|--|--|--------------------|
| Relationships | | |
| Long-term commitment and parenting | Missing in the teaching syllabuses | Knowledge |
| Values, rights, culture and sexuality | | |
| Values and sexuality | Missing in the teaching syllabuses | |
| Human rights and sexuality | Missing in the teaching syllabuses | |
| Culture, society and sexuality | Missing in the teaching syllabuses | |
| Understanding gender | | |
| The social construction of gender and gender norms | Missing in the teaching syllabuses | |
| Gender equality, stereotypes and bias | Missing in the teaching syllabuses | |
| Gender-based violence | Missing in the teaching syllabuses | |
| Violence and staying safe | | |
| Violence | Missing in the teaching syllabuses | |
| Consent, privacy and bodily integrity | Missing in the teaching syllabuses | |
| Safe use of ICT | Missing in the teaching syllabuses | |
| Skills for health and well-being | | |
| Norms and peer influence on sexual behaviour | Missing in the teaching syllabuses | |
| Decision-making | Missing in the teaching syllabuses | |
| Communication, refusal and negotiation skills | Missing in the teaching syllabuses | |
| Media literacy and sexuality | Missing in the teaching syllabuses | |
| Finding help and support | Services in the community (Social Studies classes 1-3) | Knowledge |

Strengths and gaps of the curriculum

| ITGSE key concepts and topics | CSE content in Sierra Leone national basic curriculum | Learning objective |
|---|---|--------------------|
| The human body and development | | |
| Sexual and reproductive anatomy and physiology | The different parts of the body, the importance of personal cleanliness, good health habits (PHE, class 3) | Knowledge |
| | Personal hygiene: caring for the parts of the body (hair, ears, mouth, etc.) (HE, classes 1 and 2) | Knowledge/ Skill |
| | The self, healthy living (Social studies, class 1) | Unclear |
| | Understanding the parts of the human body (Science and environment, class 1) | Knowledge |
| | Knowledge of anatomy enabling proper identification of body parts and uses (Science and environment, classes 1-3) | Knowledge |
| Reproduction | Missing in the teaching syllabuses | |
| Puberty | Personal hygiene (Science and Environment class 1) | Knowledge/Skill |
| Body image | Taking proper care of oneself (PHE, classes 1 and 2) | Knowledge/Skill |
| Sexuality and sexual behaviour | | |
| Sex, sexuality and the sexual life cycle | Missing in the teaching syllabuses | |
| Sexual behaviour and sexual response | Missing in the teaching syllabuses | |
| Sexual and reproductive health | | |
| Pregnancy and pregnancy prevention | Missing in the teaching syllabuses | |
| HIV and AIDS stigma, care, treatment and support | Missing in the teaching syllabuses | |
| Understanding, recognizing and reducing the risk of STIs, including HIV | Missing in the teaching syllabuses | |

Gaps and recommendations

Despite the general belief among stakeholders that the teaching of CSE should start from the Upper Primary level, studies in developmental psychology have shown that children are born as sexual beings and that their sexuality develops in different stages over their lifetime.⁵⁰ From early infancy, children have sexual impulses and as they grow, they discover physical differences between the sexes through their observations and exploration of their own bodies, as well as those of family members and friends. Children learn about their environment through experimentation, and learning about sexuality is no different in this respect. By asking questions about their sexual characteristics and their feelings, children learn to make sense of their sexuality, express themselves positively and respectfully, and have a concrete sense of bodily integrity. The SERAT review shows that roughly 10 per cent of the CSE topics that were recommended by the ITGSE are present in the existing national curriculum for the 5-8-year-old age group. Only three key concepts were found to have any presence in the teaching syllabuses: Relationships, The human body and development, and Skills for health and well-being (coming a distant third). The other key concepts, namely, Values, rights and culture, Understanding gender, Violence and staying safe, Sexuality and sexual behaviour, and Sexual and reproductive health were completely missing from the teaching syllabuses.

The topics within the key concepts in the syllabuses were unevenly covered. Under Relationships, only half of the topics were covered across the reviewed subjects; the topics Friendship, love and romantic relationships, and Long-term commitment and parenting were absent. Similarly, most topics under Skills for health and well-being were not found in the review. The topics in

the syllabuses lacked specificity and depth, indicating a need for further development of the content. The vagueness of the learning objectives on topics dealing with sexual and reproductive anatomy, puberty and body image casts doubt on whether teachers are using correct and complete information when teaching these potentially sensitive topics.

The CSE-related topics found in the review were not inclusive of persons with disabilities, especially in relevant topic areas such as promoting tolerance and respect for diversity, the human body and development, and body image. Further, some of the content was not made appropriately accessible for the 5-8 age group. For instance, the learning outcomes of the topic Services in the Community, found under the key concept Skills for health and well-being, aims for learners to identify community service providers; however, it may be argued that children of that age group are more likely to turn to their parents or caregivers than to a service provider when in need of support or protection.

The SERAT review also revealed an imbalance in the type and focus of learning pertaining to CSE content in the teaching syllabuses. There appeared to be excessive emphasis placed on knowledge-type learning objectives to the exclusion of attitudinal and particularly skills-based learning. This suggests that the learning objectives adopted a prescriptive, didactic approach to pedagogy, with less emphasis being placed on reflective and applied learning approaches that would be needed for attitudinal and skills-type content.

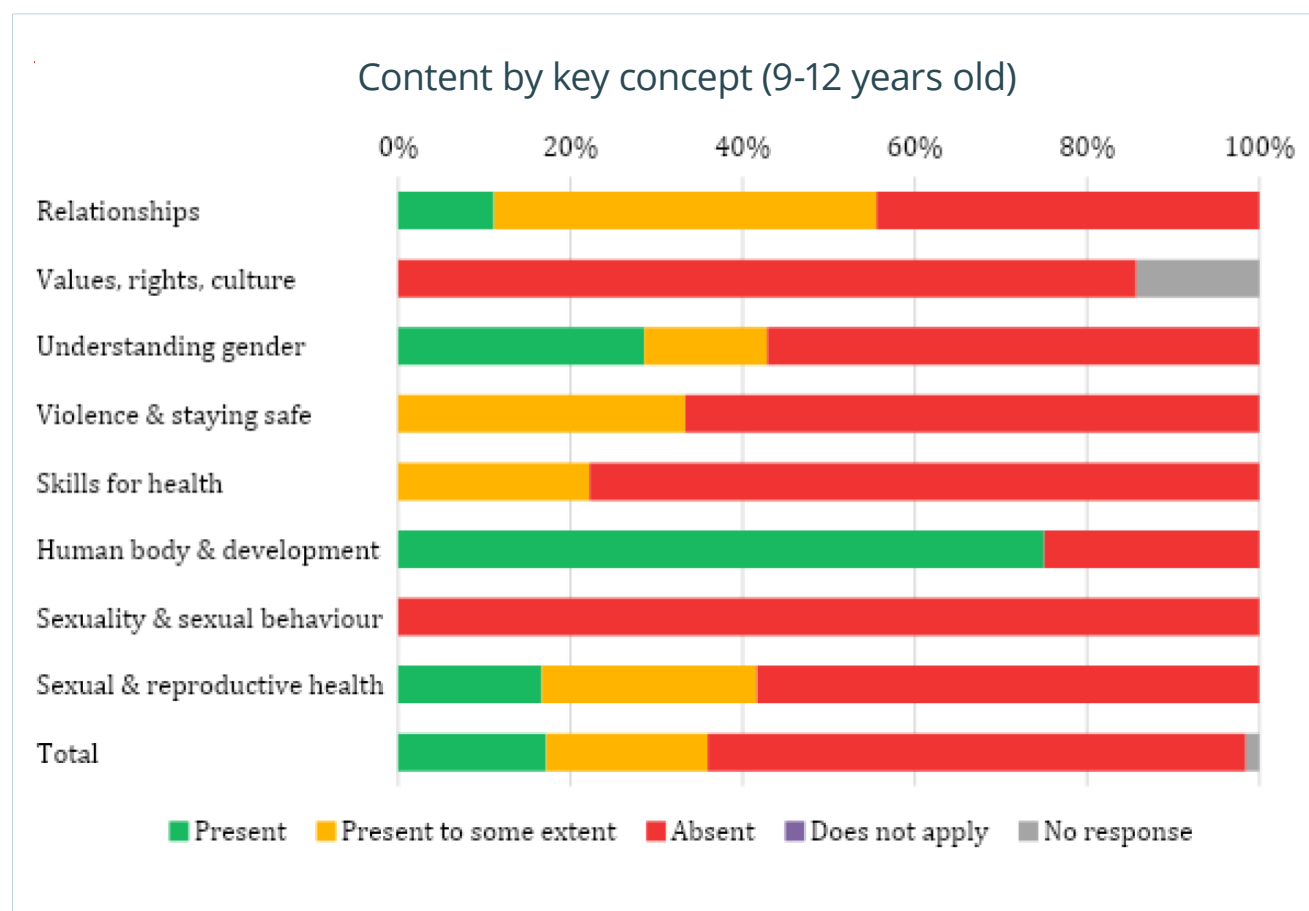
50. WHO Regional Office for Europe and BZgA Standards for Sexuality Education in Europe.

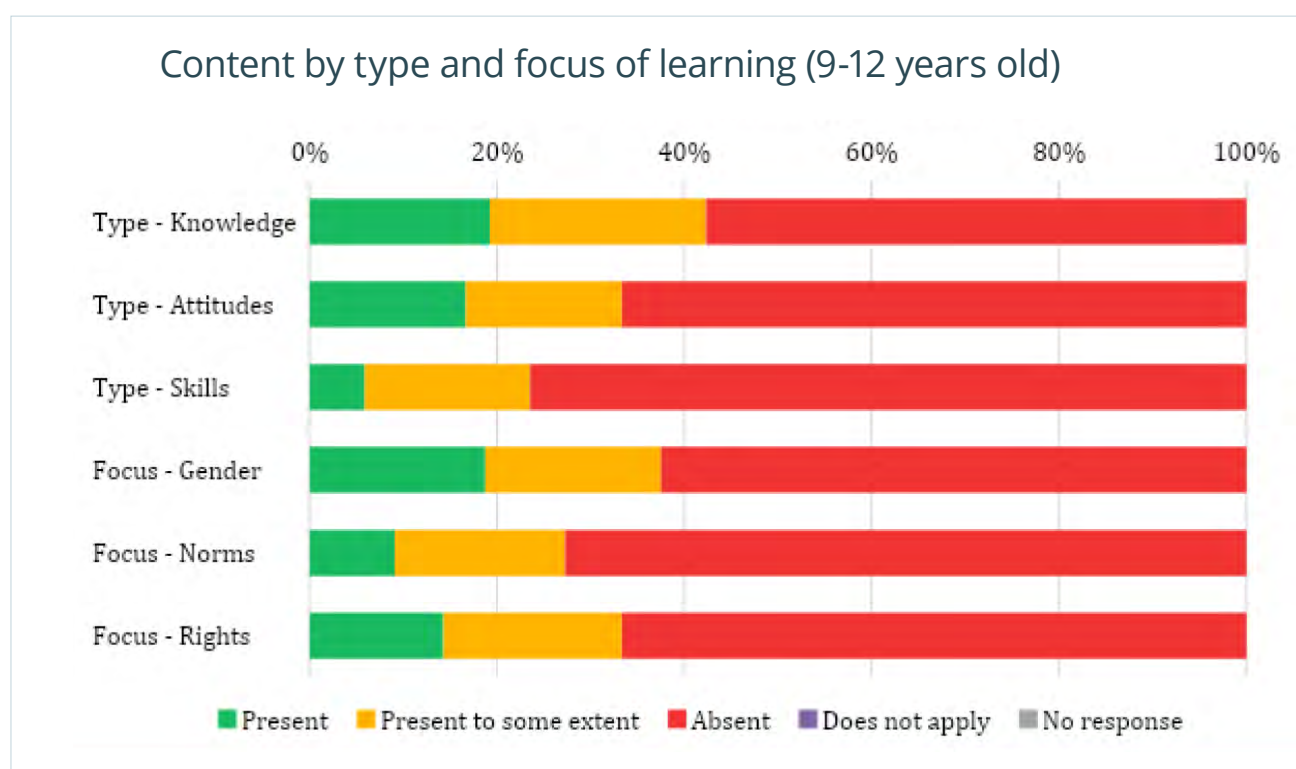
With regards to the focuses of learning, it was found that the content of syllabuses had a very limited inclusion of a rights focus and a complete omission of a gender focus. There was a more substantive inclusion of topics with a norms focus; however, these were often prescriptive, rather than allowing for critical engagement.

The findings from the UNFPA and MBSSE field consultations with primary school pupils in Freetown corroborated many of the findings from the review. They revealed that pupils lacked basic information about their sexual organs, healthy relationships with the opposite sex, harmful practices and understanding of gender. There is therefore a need to strengthen the overall key concepts and topics recommended by ITGSE.

Conversely, it was also apparent that the social context of a high risk of GBV affecting young children influenced the lessons being taught to primary school learners. Despite the absence of the key concept Violence and Staying Safe from the official teaching syllabuses, it was found that teachers were using their discretion by teaching about violence and consent and bodily integrity, albeit with a fear-based approach. It was also apparent that despite the absence of learning objectives covering gender, lessons often contained messaging that perpetuated gender unequal norms and attitudes.

9.5.3 Analysis of curriculum content for ages 9–12, primary education, classes 4–6





The content for ages 9-12 was reviewed using the teaching syllabuses for primary level classes 4-6. The subjects reviewed were social studies, PHE, HE, RME and Science and environment.

Strengths and gaps

| ITGSE key concepts and topics | CSE content in Sierra Leone national basic curriculum | Learning objective |
|-------------------------------|---|--------------------|
| Relationships | | |
| | Types of families | Knowledge |
| | Roles and responsibilities of family members | Knowledge |
| | Advantages and disadvantages of each family type | Knowledge |
| | Practising good relationship with different family members | Skill |
| | Coping with family members | Attitudinal |
| | Relationships in the family, e.g., father and mother, sibling relationships | Knowledge |
| | Interaction between the family, community and school in shaping the behaviour of the child; | Knowledge |
| | How family problems affect the life of the child | Knowledge |
| | Death, separations, sickness (HE, classes 5 and 6) | Knowledge |
| Families | | |

Strengths and gaps

| ITGSE key concepts and topics | CSE content in Sierra Leone national basic curriculum | Learning objective |
|--|---|-------------------------------------|
| Relationships | | |
| Friendship, love and romantic relationships | Boy-girl relationship (HE, classes 5 and 6) Life skills: interpersonal relationships with opposite sex | Knowledge Knowledge |
| Tolerance, inclusion and respect | Can work alongside others and be willing to share ideas with peers (Science and environment, classes 4-6) Display desirable social attitudes such as cooperation, resourcefulness, initiative and patriotism (Social studies, class 5) | Skill Attitudinal |
| Long-term commitment and parenting | Missing in the teaching syllabuses | |
| Values, rights, culture and sexuality | | |
| Values and sexuality | Missing in the teaching syllabuses | |
| Human rights and sexuality | Missing in the teaching syllabuses | |
| Culture, society and sexuality | Describe the cultural practices in their district (Social studies and civics, class 4) | Knowledge |
| Understanding gender | | |
| The social construction of gender and gender norms | Missing in the teaching syllabuses | |
| Gender equality, stereotypes and bias | Missing in the teaching syllabuses | |
| Gender-based violence | GBV Sexual exploitation Harmful practices and habits (Science and environment, classes 4-6). | Knowledge Knowledge Knowledge |
| Violence and staying safe | | |
| Violence | Missing in the teaching syllabuses | |
| Consent, privacy and bodily integrity | Missing in the teaching syllabuses | |
| Safe use of ICT | Missing in the teaching syllabuses | |

Strengths and gaps

| ITGSE key concepts and topics | CSE content in Sierra Leone national basic curriculum | Learning objective |
|--|--|--------------------|
| Skills for health and well-being | | |
| Norms and peer influence on sexual behaviour | Understanding drugs and drug abuse its danger to one's health (PHE, class 6) | Knowledge |
| | Drug abuse (HE, classes 5 and 6) | Knowledge |
| Decision-making | Missing in the teaching syllabuses | |
| Media literacy and sexuality | Missing in the teaching syllabuses | |
| Finding help and support | Identifying some social services and knowing their importance (e.g., health clinics) in their area | |
| | Knowing the work of some welfare organizations (Social studies and civics, class 4) | |
| The human body and development | | |
| Sexual and reproductive anatomy and physiology | Different parts of the body (PHE, class 4) Terminology: adolescent, teenager Physical changes in adolescent boys and girls (HE, classes 4 and 5) | |
| Reproduction | Missing in the teaching syllabuses | |
| Puberty | Physiological changes at puberty | Knowledge |
| | Adolescence: Impact on uncontrolled behaviours | Knowledge |
| | Menstruation: use of sanitary pads, etc. (Science and environment, classes 4-6). | Knowledge |
| | Terminology: adolescent, teenager | Knowledge |
| | Physical changes in adolescent boys and girls (HE, classes 5-6). | Knowledge |
| Body image | Personal hygiene; | Knowledge |
| | The importance of personal cleanliness (PHE, class 4) Personal hygiene | Attitudinal |
| | (Science and environment, classes 4-6) | Knowledge |

Strengths and gaps

| ITGSE key concepts and topics | CSE content in Sierra Leone national basic curriculum | Learning objective |
|---|--|--------------------|
| Sexuality and sexual behaviour | | |
| Sex, sexuality and the sexual life cycle | Missing in the teaching syllabuses | |
| Sexual behaviour and sexual response | Missing in the teaching syllabuses | |
| Pregnancy and prevention of pregnancy | Missing in the teaching syllabuses | |
| Sexual and reproductive health | | |
| HIV and AIDS stigma, care, treatment and support | Missing in the teaching syllabuses | |
| | Understanding what AIDS is | Knowledge |
| | Signs and symptoms of AIDS | Knowledge |
| Understanding, recognizing and reducing the risk of STIs, including HIV | Prevention of AIDS (PHE, class 6) | Knowledge |
| | Safe health practices | Knowledge/ Skills |
| | Disease prevention (Science and environment, class 4-6). | Knowledge |

Gaps and recommendations

Ages 10 and 11 often mark the onset of puberty for girls (boys are 11 or 12).⁵¹ Children from ages 9 to 12, sometimes called tweens, deal with a great many physical and hormonal changes. As they start their journey into puberty, they need to be taught about the physical, social and emotional changes to expect, which include the menstrual cycle for girls and nocturnal emissions for boys. They need the skills to discern positive relationships from negative ones. Overall, they need basic knowledge of reproduction, conception and childbirth, as well as basic knowledge of the role of contraception in preventing unwanted pregnancy. They should be prepared to understand the feelings and risks associated with sexual activities. The concept of skills for sexual health should equip them with decision-making, communication, and refusal and negotiation skills. In addition, pre-teens should also understand how the media influences the way people view their bodies and should be able to think critically about how sexuality is portrayed. This is crucial in a context where harmful practices such as early and forced marriages and FGM are prevalent.

51. WHO Regional Office for Europe and BZgA, 2010, *Standards for Sexuality Education in Europe*.

The review shows that efforts have been made to cover many of the key concepts and topics recommended in ITGSE. It is encouraging to see that six out of the eight key concepts were integrated to some extent in the teaching syllabuses covered. Of particular note are the inclusion of topics such as Gender-based violence, Finding help and support, and Puberty.

However, the content is still not comprehensive and needs to be strengthened. Several topics deemed by UNESCO as being ‘essential components’ of a life skills-based HIV and sexuality education programme integrated into a formal curriculum⁵² are missing from the syllabuses, e.g., Sexual behaviour, Reproduction, Decision-making/communication/negotiation/refusal, and Media in relation to sexuality. This constitutes a serious gap in topics covering knowledge, skills and attitudes directly relevant to SRH and rights. Furthermore, many of the topics are taught based on fear, an approach that causes a negative depiction of sexuality, and adolescent sexuality in particular.

Another cause for concern is the apparent lack of progression in complexity in the descriptions of topics such as Families, tolerance, inclusion and respect, Body image, and Sexual and reproductive anatomy and physiology. Indeed, the learning objectives for older students are very similar, even identical, to those for the 5-8-year-old group. Not only does this miss the potential to build upon the learning outcomes of the younger cohort, but it denies the older cohort access to relevant information much needed for a highly dynamic sexual and emotional development phase and misses the opportunity for promoting gender-equitable and rights-focused values.

The syllabuses need to integrate a gender and human rights focus into the learning objectives. There are several missed opportunities to include directives on gender equitable attitudes, for example in Families, friendships and romantic relationships. There is no mention made of issues of inclusiveness, such as the rights and experiences of persons with disabilities and diversity of sexual orientations and gender diversity. In the topic Culture, society and sexuality, it is unclear whether the cultural practices that are referenced in the teaching syllabus relate to harmful practices such as child marriage and FGM.

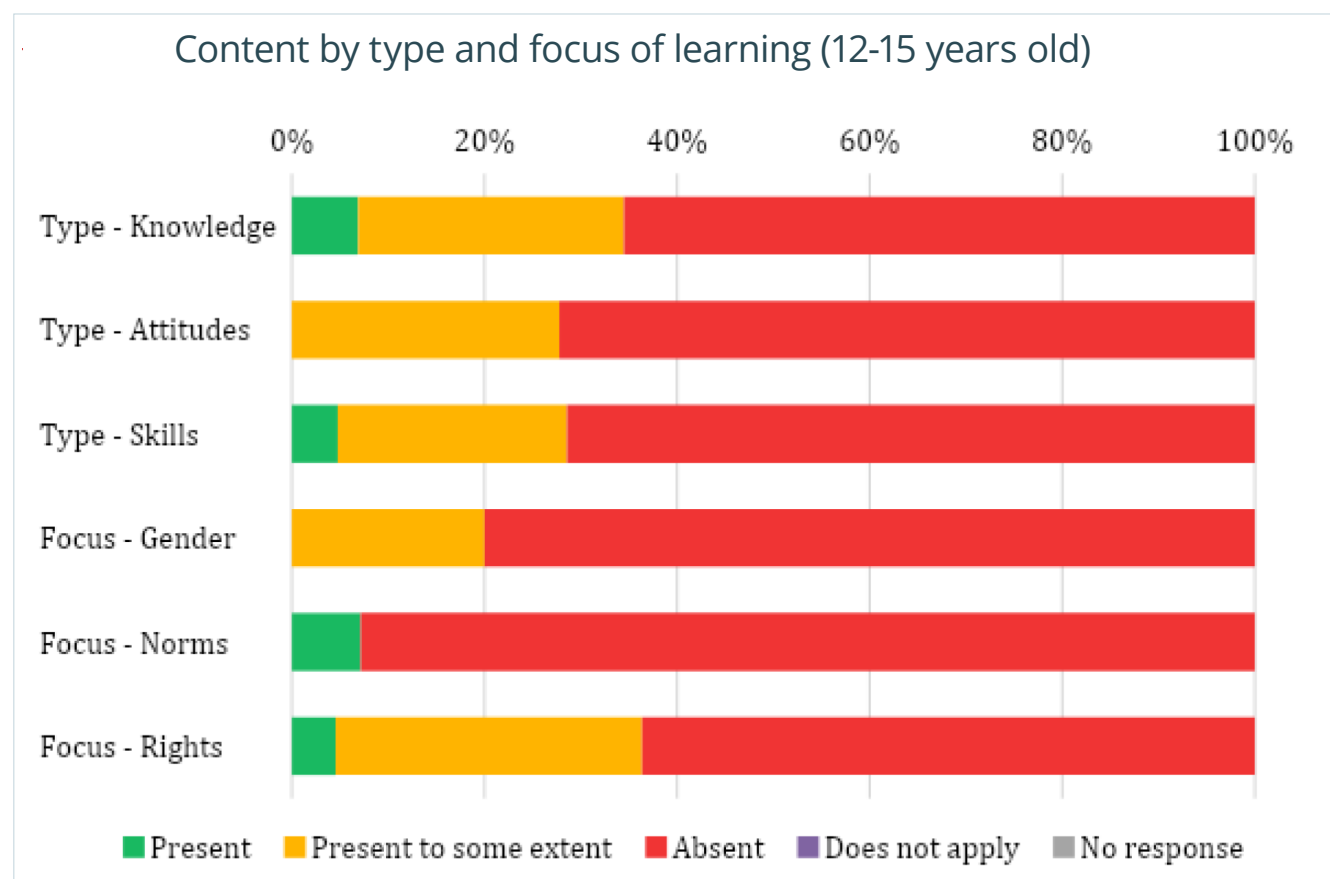
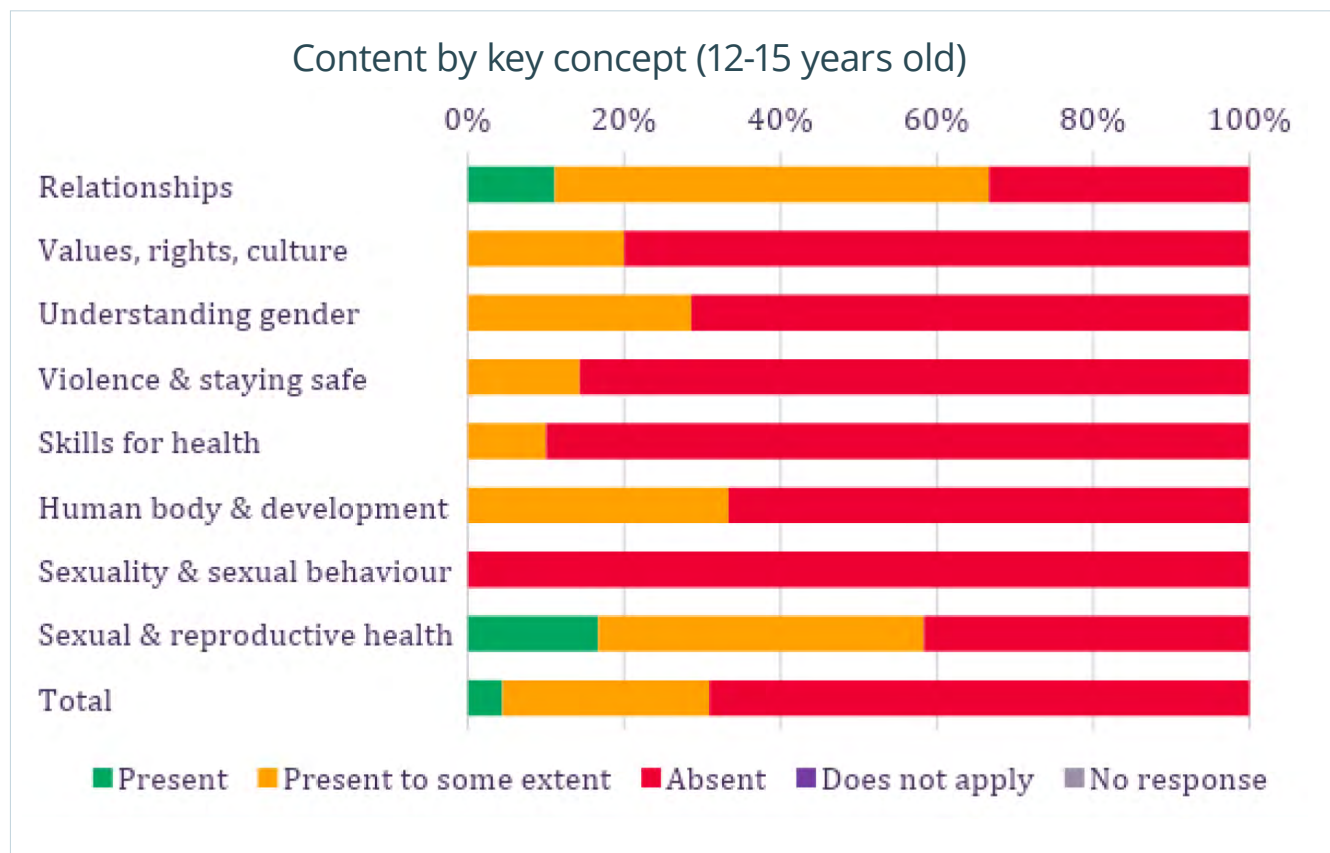
The teaching syllabuses for all learner levels lack coherence in the articulation of learning objectives. Common pedagogical practices, such as the use of Bloom’s Taxonomy for mapping the level and type of learning objective targeted by teachers when designing a lesson plan are used inconsistently throughout the syllabuses, resulting in confusion during the review.⁵³ Moreover, when specific verbs from the taxonomy are used in the learning objectives, they most often tend to be of the most basic cognitive process, i.e., remembering or explaining. This demonstrates the lack of provision for critical engagement with content that is required for meeting the attitudinal and skills objectives. This gap could be attributed to the lack of a CDU in the MBSSE and would need to be addressed by the TWG on CSE. Addressing this issue will allow MBSSE staff, across all levels, to have a common understanding of learning requirements.

Finally, despite the presence of some of these key concept areas and topics in the teaching syllabuses, the FGDs with teachers and pupils during the field consultations revealed that the delivery of these topics was highly variable in content and dependent on the discretion of individual teachers or school administrations.

52. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education*, UNESCO, p. 138.

53. A set of three hierarchical models used to classify educational learning objectives into levels of complexity and specificity. At the most elementary level of learning is ‘knowledge’ or recalling, and at the other end of the spectrum is ‘evaluation’ or creating. For more info, see <<https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/blooms-taxonomy>>.

9.5.4 Analysis of curriculum content for ages 12–15, Junior Secondary School, forms 1–3



Strengths and gaps

| ITGSE key concepts and topics | CSE content in Sierra Leone national basic curriculum | Learning objective |
|---|---|--------------------|
| Relationships | | |
| Families | Main types of family in Sierra Leone and their characteristics | Knowledge |
| | Main functions of the family and roles of family members | Knowledge |
| | Why it is important for each family member to perform his or her role well (Social studies and civics, form 1) | Attitudinal |
| | Understanding the 'family life cycle' and its importance | Knowledge |
| | Identifying the agents of socialization and their roles (Social studies and civics, form 2) | Knowledge |
| | Define terminology in Family life and Home management; | Knowledge |
| | Types of families and their importance | Knowledge |
| | Positive interactions with other family members (HE, form 1) | Skill |
| Friendship, love and romantic relationships | Missing in the teaching syllabuses | |
| Tolerance, inclusion and respect | Developing and demonstrating positive attitudes (e.g., respect other people of all ages, races and religions) | Attitudinal |
| | Respect for authority, value for honesty, service or work, and the opinions of others (Social studies and civics, form 1) | Attitudinal |
| | How sport can be used to foster peace, tolerance and respect among young people (Social studies and civics, form 1); | Knowledge |
| | Importance of respecting people different from oneself (Social studies and civics, form 2); | Attitudinal |
| | The need for peaceful co-existence | Attitudinal |
| | What individual freedom and independence means (e.g., Sengbe Pieh) and nations (Sierra Leone) (Social studies and civics, form 2). | Knowledge |

Strengths and gaps

| ITGSE key concepts and topics | CSE content in Sierra Leone national basic curriculum | Learning objective |
|--|--|---------------------------|
| Values, rights, culture and sexuality | | |
| Values and sexuality | The need for personal discipline (Social studies and civics, form 1) | Attitudinal |
| | How young people in particular can express patriotism (Social and civics, form 2) | Skills |
| | Understanding youth empowerment and the relationship between a good system of education and youth empowerment | Knowledge |
| | The meaning and significance of a global citizen | Knowledge/ Attitudinal |
| | Identification and discussion of some of the major problems affecting young people | Knowledge |
| | The dangers of cultism and ways to eradicate it in Sierra Leone (Social studies and civics, form 3) | Knowledge |
| Human rights and sexuality | The relationship between rights and obligations of children | Knowledge |
| | The purpose of laws in a country | Knowledge |
| | Understanding citizenship and the qualities of a good citizen (Social studies and civics, form 1). | Knowledge |
| | The concept of rights and their significance for individuals and groups | Knowledge |
| | The relationship between rights and obligations | Knowledge |
| | Rights and obligations of children all over the world | Knowledge |
| | Understanding the work of certain human rights organizations | Knowledge |
| | Debate on whether Sierra Leone is a human-rights-sensitive country | Knowledge |
| | How inter-governmental and non-governmental institutions are helping to create a just and peaceful world (Social studies and civics, form 3) | Knowledge |

Strengths and gaps

| ITGSE key concepts and topics | CSE content in Sierra Leone national basic curriculum | Learning objective |
|--|---|------------------------|
| Values, rights, culture and sexuality | | |
| Culture, society and sexuality | Definition of 'culture' and description of its characteristics | Knowledge |
| | The importance of culture in our lives | Attitudinal |
| | How and why cultural practices vary worldwide (Social studies, form 1) | Attitudinal |
| | Dramatization of certain aspects of Sierra Leonean culture (Social studies and civics, form 2) | Skill |
| Understanding gender | | |
| The social construction of gender and gender norms | Missing in the teaching syllabuses | |
| Gender equality, stereotypes and bias | State why it is necessary for boys and girls to receive equal education | Knowledge/ Attitudinal |
| | Write a short account of an educated woman in their community; (Social studies and civics, form 2) | Knowledge/ Attitudinal |
| | Show how social equality contributes to peace, justice and development in countries and how the reverse leads to conflict | Knowledge/ Attitudinal |
| | Display an understanding of the relationship between difference and inequality | Knowledge |
| | Describe systems of privilege and oppression locally and globally, (Social studies and civics, form 3) | Knowledge |
| Gender-based violence | Missing in the teaching syllabuses | |
| Violence and staying safe | | |
| Violence | Causes and consequences of human rights abuses in the home, school, community, etc. (Social studies, JSS 2) | Knowledge |
| | Conflict situations students have been involved in, and their role in resolving or aggravating the conflict | Skills |
| | Identification of words related to peacebuilding | Knowledge |

Strengths and gaps

| ITGSE key concepts and topics | CSE content in Sierra Leone national basic curriculum | Learning objective |
|---|--|--------------------|
| Violence and staying safe | | |
| Violence | The reasons for the civil war in Sierra Leone and concrete steps to prevent its occurrence | Knowledge |
| | What young people can do to minimize conflict in their communities (Social studies and civics, form 3). | Knowledge |
| | Writing of a charter committing students to avoiding anti-social and criminal vices (Social studies and civics, form 3). | Skill |
| Consent, privacy and bodily integrity | Missing in the teaching syllabuses | |
| Safe use of ICT | Modern means of distance communication and how they have made the world a much smaller place | Knowledge |
| | Definition of the term 'mass media' and the importance of the mass media; how social media has changed the way young people and others communicate (Social studies and civics, form 2). | Skill |
| Skills for health and well-being | | |
| Norms and peer influence on sexual behaviour | Missing in the teaching syllabuses | |
| Decision-making | Missing in the teaching syllabuses | |
| Communication, refusal and negotiation skills | Definition of communication | Knowledge |
| | The importance of language in human communication (Social studies and civics, form 2) | Knowledge |
| | Types: person to person, God to person, person to God | Knowledge |
| | Channels of communications | Knowledge |
| | Elements of communication | Knowledge |
| | Purpose of communication | Knowledge |
| | Ways of communication | Knowledge |
| | Skills in communication (1) bad listening skills (2) good listening skills (RME, Form 1) | Skills |

Strengths and gaps

| ITGSE key concepts and topics | CSE content in Sierra Leone national basic curriculum | Learning objective |
|--|---|--------------------|
| Skills for health and well-being | | |
| Media literacy and sexuality | Missing in the teaching syllabuses | |
| Finding help and support | The role of Sierra Leone public health services for expectant mothers and newborns (Science and the environment, form 3) | Knowledge |
| | Listing and discussion of the work of organizations that help young people in Sierra Leone (Social studies and civics, form 3) | Knowledge |
| The human body and development | | |
| Sexual and reproductive anatomy and physiology | The main systems of the body and their functions | Knowledge |
| | The main organs of the body | Knowledge |
| | The difference between growth and development of the body | Knowledge |
| | The various ways of caring for the body | Knowledge |
| | The concept of Family Life Education, | Knowledge |
| | Types of families | Knowledge |
| | Definition of contraception and the types of contraceptives | Knowledge |
| | Methods of preventing pregnancy (PHE, form 2) | Knowledge |
| Reproduction | Early teenage pregnancy (Social studies, form 2) | Knowledge |
| | Understanding ovulation, the ejection of an egg from the ovary | Knowledge |
| | Understanding fertilization, the fusion of a sperm and an egg which occurs in the oviduct | Knowledge |
| | The meaning of gestation | Knowledge |
| | The birth process (Science and the Environment, form 3) | Knowledge |
| | The importance of health during pregnancy and in new-borns | Knowledge |
| | The importance of immunization (Science and the environment, form 3) | Knowledge |
| | Definition of family planning | Knowledge |
| | The importance family planning; its advantages and disadvantages (HE, form 1) | Knowledge |

Strengths and gaps

| ITGSE key concepts and topics | CSE content in Sierra Leone national basic curriculum | Learning objective |
|---|--|--------------------|
| The human body and development | | |
| Puberty | Physical changes during puberty | Knowledge |
| | The menstrual cycle: ovulation, fertilization and menstruation (Science and the environment, form 3) | Knowledge |
| | Reproductive organs, puberty, pregnancy, personal hygiene (HE, form 3) | Knowledge |
| Body image | Definition of self-knowledge | Knowledge |
| | Aspects of self-knowledge | Knowledge |
| | Integral development (RME, form 1) | Knowledge |
| Sexuality and sexual behaviour | | |
| Sex, sexuality and the sexual life cycle | Missing in the teaching syllabuses | |
| Sexual behaviour and sexual response | Missing in the teaching syllabuses | |
| Sexual and reproductive health | | |
| Pregnancy and pregnancy prevention | Definition of contraceptive and the types of contraceptives | Knowledge |
| | Methods to prevent pregnancy (PHE, form 2) | Knowledge |
| HIV and AIDS stigma, care, treatment and support | Show awareness of transmission; | Knowledge |
| | Symptoms and signs shown by patients | Knowledge |
| | Precautionary measures for controlling HIV/AIDS (Science and the environment, form 2). | Knowledge |
| | Causes and harmful consequences of sexually transmitted infections such as AIDS, syphilis and gonorrhea (Science and the environment, form 3) | Knowledge |
| Understanding, recognizing and reducing the risk of STIs, including HIV | Identify sexually transmitted diseases and communicable diseases (HE, form 1) | Knowledge |
| | Explain the concept of healthy living | Knowledge |
| | Explain the meaning of disease and list the types of diseases, causes of diseases, signs and symptoms of diseases (PHE form 1) | Knowledge |

Gaps and recommendations

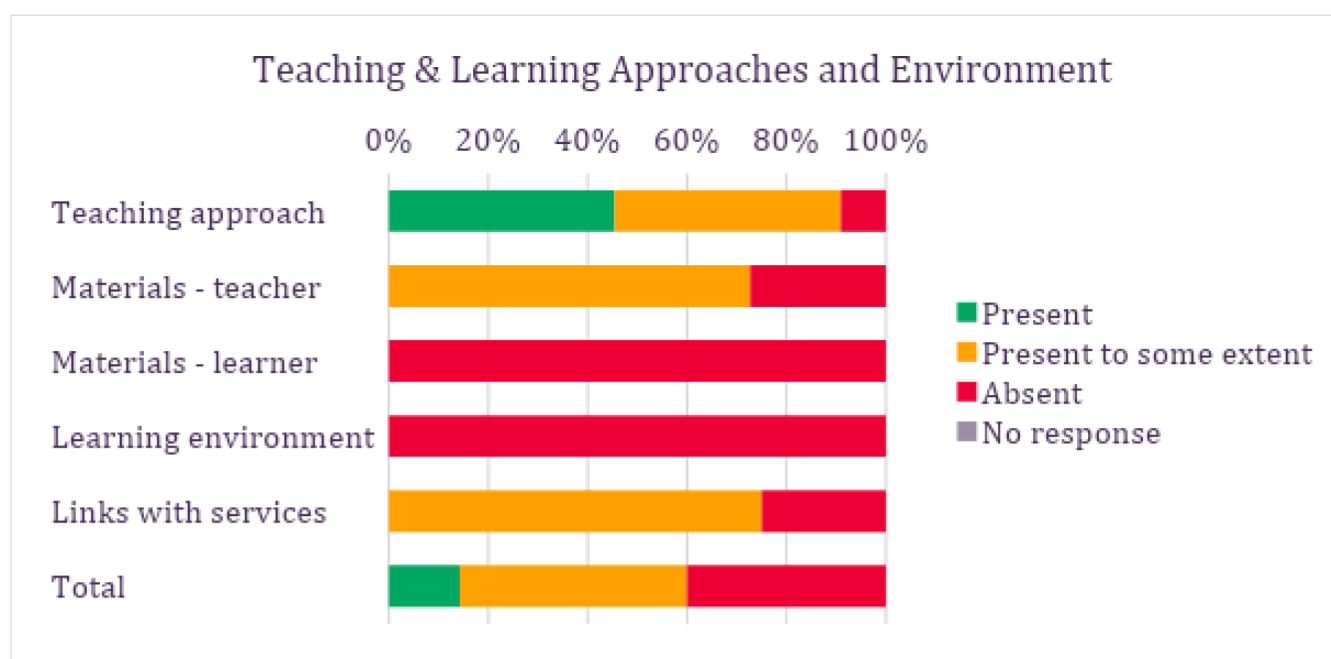
Consultations with JSS boys and girls point out the need to include more discussions and reflections on existing gender norms, and the pros and cons of traditional practices such as female genital mutilation and child marriage. Boys and girls also would like to have more information about their sexual organs, how to control their feelings when they are with the opposite sex, sexual harassment and more.

In a context where GBV prevalence rates are high, it is essential that young people are able to identify GBV in all its forms. It was reported that in the first six months of 2017, sexual penetration/abuse accounted for more than 60 percent of abuse cases reported at police stations. Girls were the main victims of sexual exploitation. A majority of these victims were between the ages of 11 and 14, and an estimated 20 percent were between six and 10 years of age.⁵⁴

Furthermore, it is necessary that learners are provided with correct information on how to access appropriate response services. The understanding of consent needs far more emphasis, empowering learners of both sexes to feel confident in their own bodily autonomy. Girls have many questions about how pregnancy happens which suggests they become pregnant without understanding how. Discussion around contraception and condom use also needs to be strengthened in the curriculum.

As previously noted there is also a need to engage with curriculum experts to ensure that learning outcomes are clearly phrased to enable a common understanding among MBSSE staff at all levels.

9.6 Analysis of teaching and learning approaches



54. United States Department of State, '2016 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - Sierra Leone', 3 March 2017, <www.refworld.org/docid/58ec89d0a.html>, accessed 25 November 2019.

The quality and impact of school-based CSE is dependent on the teaching process – including the capacity of teachers, the pedagogical approaches employed and the teaching and learning materials used. It is furthermore dependent on the safety of the whole school environment, which is manifested through school rules and in-school practices, among other aspects.

ITGSE promotes a learner-centred approach to CSE and encourages collaborative learning strategies within the programmes. Learner-centred approaches allow learners to actively participate in learning processes and encourage distinctive learning styles. Because learning can be seen as a form of personal growth, students are encouraged to use reflective practices to critically think about their own lives.⁵⁵

In the national basic curriculum framework, MBSSE recognizes the need to build the capacity of teachers in participatory teaching methods. However, this is not yet the reality in many schools, expressed in the following statement in the framework.

[The new curriculum places] new demands on teachers and learners, with a shift in the traditional mind-set around teacher-centred pedagogy. The new basic education is not so much about “topics to be taught” by the teacher, but more about the “learning to be achieved” by the student. Hence teachers must shift from simply being transmitters of knowledge to facilitators of learning; and learners must no longer be treated as passive recipients of knowledge from an all-knowing teacher. Learners must become active participants in the teaching-learning process through which they acquire knowledge, skills, attitudes and values prescribed in the curriculum. These well-known principles have major implications for institutions that provide pre-service and in-service teacher education and training in support of the new curriculum”.

Proper training is needed so that teachers can use role play, group work, brainstorming, and the use of pictures and objects from the environment, in their teaching. Specific CSE educational materials have not yet been developed for all classroom activities, for either teachers or students. There are no guidelines on how to create a learning environment that guarantees privacy and confidentiality for learners so that they can share their questions and participate in sexuality education sessions without feeling singled out or vulnerable. Furthermore, there are no existing guidelines on how to address disclosure of sexual abuse or harassment by learners, how to foster a culture of tolerance and solidarity in the learning environment, especially in relation to gender identity, sexual orientation, health status, ethnicity, disability, social or economic status.

55. International Planned Parenthood Federation, 2017.

'MBSSE however has included in its ESP 2018-2020 interventions aiming at



"protecting children from sexual abuses within schools and to ensure those that break the set rules and regulations are sanctioned through child protection mechanisms and guidelines. It will also ensure mechanisms are in place for taking legal action against those within and outside schools involved in sexual violence and exploitation of school girls."

Students they voiced the following concerns during consultations:

"We are asking for them to help us [primary school students] because we are too many in the class and the classroom is small. We only have two teachers for 100 of us in class, it is too much. We want the government to send more teachers to develop the school"

"We want the government to help us because for example when Miss C-- is teaching PHE, she has the only textbook, none of the rest of us have textbooks. Even when she has the textbooks, she cannot see them well so she cannot teach the subjects well, so we are asking for them to help us with textbooks".

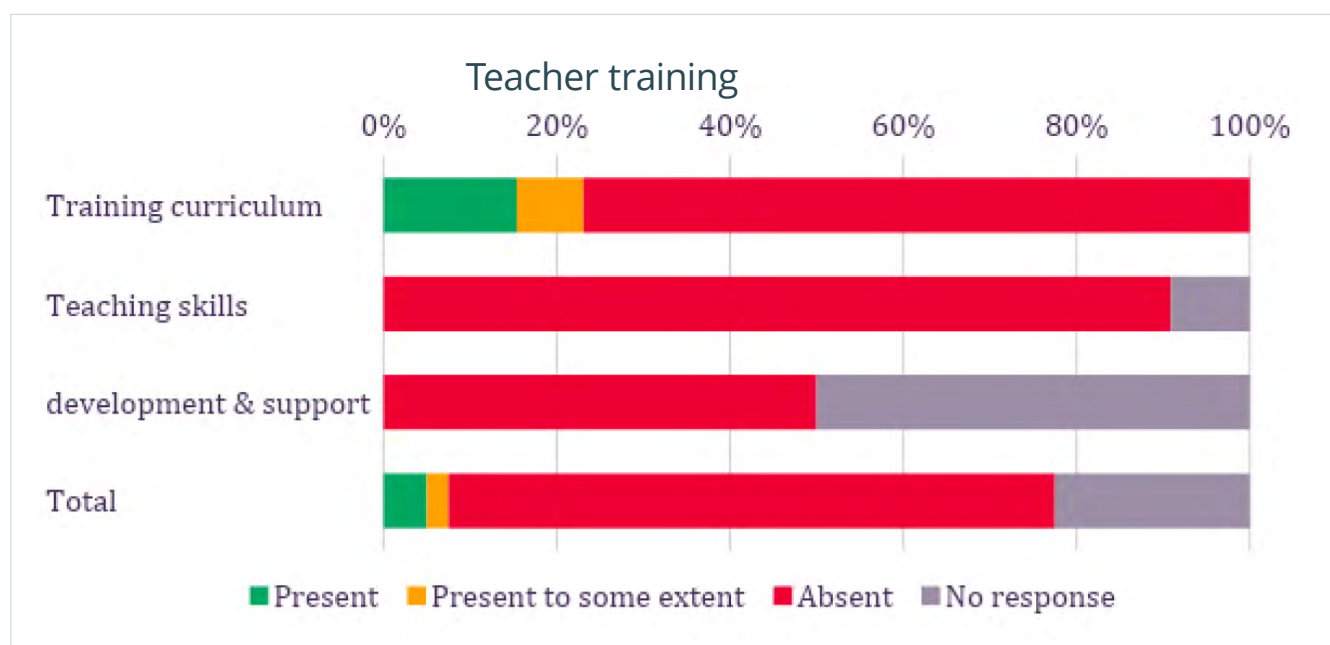
A teacher made the following recommendations during the consultations:

"The government should provide CSE materials, whatever materials they think can help with the smooth teaching and learning, they should provide them. Because you know as teachers, sometimes you got to this school to teach a subject but there are no materials, except that you have to go to the library, (unclear), go the extra mile, so we want the government to provide teaching and learning materials for CSE."



While efforts are being undertaken to develop a stronger school health programme and eventually a policy, there is currently no clear Memorandum of Understanding between the MBSSE, MoHS and MOSWGCA on how to provide services to students in schools. At present the School Health Programme is working on establishing school health clinics in Sierra Leonean boarding schools and district-level clinics for children. Furthermore, there is a need to train the Guidance Counsellors to make referrals.

9.7 Analysis of teacher training



Strengths

Improving curricula in line with international standards is clearly key, but ultimately the quality of CSE delivered to young people depends upon teachers' knowledge, confidence and skills in delivering the subject. Teachers must be adequately trained in the subject matter and in participatory approaches.⁵⁶ For CSE to become a reality, teachers need to be trained both during pre-service and in-service. Quality teachers should have the requisite subject matter knowledge, pedagogical skills and positive attitudes. A strong understanding of child development, effective communication skills, a strong sense of ethics, and a capacity for renewal and ongoing learning is also essential.

The review found that a teacher training module on CSE has not yet been developed to guide the integration of CSE in teacher training colleges. Also, teacher training institutions do not have any specialized pathways for teaching learners with disabilities. National curriculum and exam specifications do not make accommodations for learners with disabilities, placing learners with visual impairments, for example, at a disadvantage in subjects where diagrams are used. This was raised in the consultations with students and teachers.

However, it is important to note that the existing teacher training curricula (HE, PHE, Integrated science and Social studies) include some elements of CSE (see Section 9.3).

The ESP 2018-2020 states that *"teachers are at the very heart of classroom instruction and the most important implementers of MBSSE and Teacher Service Commission goals and policies."* Many teachers are unqualified, with 41 per cent of male and 28 per cent of female teachers in 2016 lacking formal teaching qualifications or teaching with a qualification below the required standard.⁵⁷

56. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education*, UNESCO

57. Ministry of Basic Education and Senior Secondary Education, United Nations Children's Fund, 'Proposal to the Global Partnership for Education for a contribution towards the implementation of the 2018-2020 Education Sector Plan'. UNICEF, 2016.

The political will to put measures in place to respond to the challenges through the ESP2018-2020 gives hope for the integration of CSE in pre-service and in-service teacher training programmes in Sierra Leone.

Since teachers are also moulded by existing social norms, it is important to include in specific CSE teacher training modules a reflection on personal values and skills to handle the concerns of parents. It will be necessary to have a mandatory training programme for all teachers. The programme should include critical thinking and directing free and open discussions among students.

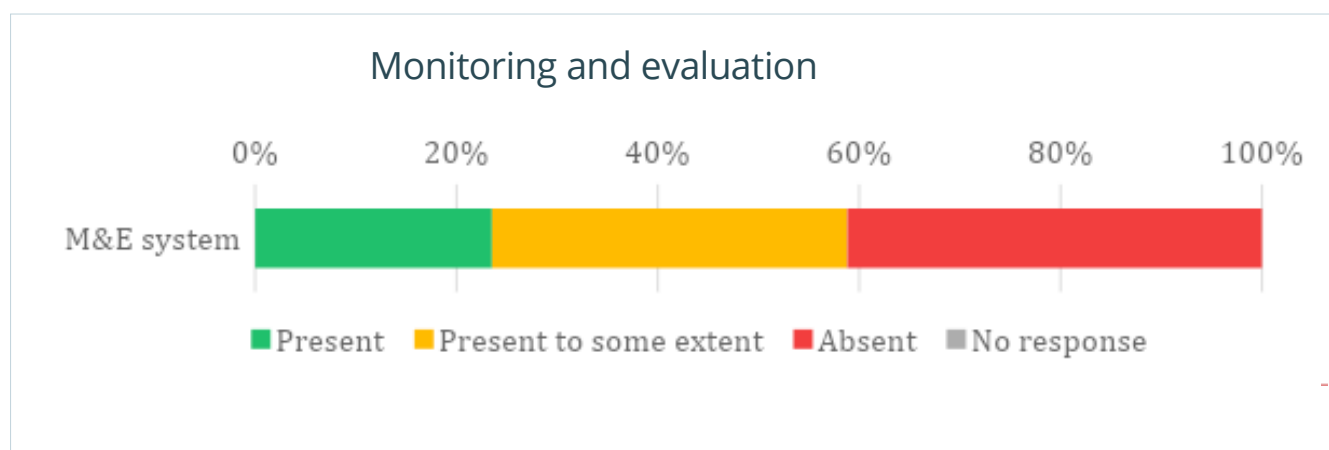
The following are statements shared by teachers on gender roles:

"In the case of Sierra Leone, I want to specify it to Sierra Leone because it is here I live... some of us have the mentality that a woman should not be highly educated than the husband, trust me, because it will lead to effrontery. Just as you were saying now, if you are highly educated than me as your husband oh, you are having a very good job, your salary is more fat than mine, you will think yourself so very superior and you think me very inferior so that's what I should be doing all chores at home. Thereby some women will not take control from the husband again."

"I want to buttress what my colleague just said. In Africa as a whole, Sierra Leone to be specific, there are laws or traditions that are fighting against us: we have the traditional customs, whether you are Mende, Temne or whatever, we have our own, how a woman should be at home. And we have the religious aspect, which is telling us how the women should be to her husband and again, westernization is coming, telling us that the man and the woman should have the same responsibilities that is 50/50. So all these things are fighting against us, that is why you can see even in some homes that's at all costs, the woman should be lower. Irrespective of the position, some religions... And again some traditions, like me I am a Temne, in our own custom, the Temne people, the women should be under the man. So we have been indoctrinated by that, that is why at times we go the other way. But now, you are coming with this, so that we can change our minds. But we have been indoctrinated by that, these forces are fighting against us."

"I will recommend to government that they should train the teachers when it comes to sexual education so we can get to know how it should be incorporated into the system. Pre-service, as well as teacher training."

9.8 Analysis of monitoring and evaluation system



To assess the impact of the teaching of CSE in schools, systematic monitoring should be integrated into existing national systems. For example, MBSSE – which should be involved throughout the review process – could integrate one or more key CSE indicators into the Education Management Information System Annual School Census or through conducting a school-based survey.

The significant work that is ongoing to strengthen the Education Management Information System (according to ESP 2018-2020) needs to be intensified to bring together school census and Situation Room data. It is also necessary to work with these actors to ensure that district-level data - data and information collected by Paramount Chiefs, and by M&E staff and Quality Assurance staff - are properly captured. MBSSE must ensure that their ongoing work to strengthen the Education Management Information System takes CSE indicators into consideration.⁵⁸

9.9 Program coherence

Consultations with pupils found that the majority of students want to have access to information on SRH. Similarly, consultations with teachers found that teachers acknowledge the need for CSE integration into the curriculum.

Despite efforts to include CSE information in the 2015 curriculum, it still has major gaps (see Section 9.5).

A key finding from the FGDs was that most messages provided to learners at school are intended to scare them from entering into sexual relationships. This disempowers learners as they do not have access to basic SRHR knowledge, such as about their sexual organs or their functions, or how reproduction works. Although the curriculum includes knowledge about body parts, it does not explicitly name the sexual organs.

It is important that CSE includes discussions about social and cultural factors relating to broader aspects of relationships and vulnerability, such as gender and power inequalities, socio-economic factors, race, HIV status, disability, sexual orientation and gender identity. Sierra Leone has a patriarchal system and FGDs revealed how both sexes internalize unequal gender norms from an early age. When boys were asked if they could do household chores while their female partner was working outside the home, many replied that household chores were mainly the responsibility of women. Likewise, many girls who said that they wanted to become lawyers, doctors and engineers, still felt that doing household chores was their responsibility and they would not allow their male partners to play that role. CSE education in formal schools as well as out-of-school health promotion, life skills and capacity-building programmes encourage young people to question prevailing gender scripts and adopt new ways of thinking and behaving.⁵⁹⁶⁰⁶¹

58. There is currently ongoing work to make EMIS a one-stop shop for all MBSSE data on education.

59. Irvin A (2004). *Positively informed: lesson plans and guidance for sexuality educators and advocates* New York, International Women's Health Coalition.

60. Breinbauer C, Maddaleno M. *Youth: choices and change: promoting healthy behaviors in Adolescents* Washington DC, Pan American Health Organization (Scientific and Technical Publication no. 594), 2005

61. Haberland N, Rogow D (2007). *Sexuality and HIV education: time for a paradigm shift. Promoting healthy, safe, and productive transitions to adulthood* New York, Population Council (Brief no. 22) (http://www.popcouncil.org/pdfs/TABriefs/PGY_Brief22_SexEducation.pdf)

CSE programming must be by nature gender transformative,⁶² empowering girls to know and assert their rights, and teaching boys to respect the equal rights of women without coercion or violence and to clarify and fulfil their responsibilities.⁶³

Although issues relating to FGM and child marriage are sensitive and controversial, open discussions on positive aspects of traditional practices and the effects of negative traditional practices on individual sexual health and well-being need to be had. Teachers need to be trained to work on their own biases and be equipped on how to create the space for open conversations. Furthermore, it is necessary to provide teachers with the necessary skills to respond to parents or community members who may oppose the discussion of sensitive issues in the classroom.

Looking at the public health data, it is crucial that topics such as contraceptives, safe abortion and sexual orientation are included in the curriculum. These issues may be controversial but not talking about them exposes young people to increased harmful behaviours.

In terms of M&E, a dedicated CSE team at both the central and district levels could facilitate the creation and implementation of CSE-specific indicators to monitor teachers. For M&E systems to be effectively implemented, including in remote areas, local education authorities need to be incentivized to prioritize CSE through clear guidelines matched with adequate budget allocations and robust systems for reporting back to the central level. These reporting systems should include mechanisms for feedback on implementation hurdles encountered across the country, and periodic revisions of the programme or curricula based on this feedback.

10. Recommendations

The following key recommendations are made to ensure CSE is effectively integrated, taught and monitored in Sierra Leone.

Legal and policy context

- To ensure coherence in the integration of CSE in the basic education curricula, clear linkages must be made with the implementation of the National Strategy for the Reduction of Adolescent Pregnancy and Child Marriage 2018-2022, the ESP 2018-2020 and the National Development Plan. A CSE TWG comprising representatives of the five line ministries, CSOs and DPs should be established under the MBSSE to steer this process.
- Despite donor support, GoSL funding for the process of integrating CSE in the basic education curriculum is needed to ensure sustainability.

62. As opposed to being gender neutral or gender-sensitive. Interventions may be gender neutral in treating boys and girls the same with respect to content and methods; gender-sensitive in attempting to meet the different existing needs and interests of boys and girls

63. Girard F (2003). "My father didn't think this way": Nigerian boys contemplate gender equality New York, The Population Council (Quality/alidad/Qualité no. 4

- The sustainability of the integration process will depend on the existence of a fully staffed CDU at MBSSE. The CDU needs to be revamped as soon as possible curriculum development experts must be recruited to lead the unit.
- The CSE integration process must make linkages with ongoing advocacy initiatives to review and reform harmful laws and policies that have proven to have a negative impact on adolescent health and well-being.

Integration/objectives and principles

- According to stakeholders who took part in the review meeting, MBSSE plans to introduce the new basic education curriculum in 2021. CSE should be fully integrated into the new curricula and in the teaching syllabuses of the subjects. A roadmap covering the period 2019-2021 and outlining key activities and responsibilities should be developed.
- Since MBSSE does not have a fully staffed CDU, a technical committee composed of national curriculum development consultants should be put in place to review the curriculum in order to strengthen age appropriate CSE. An international expert in CSE can be brought in to train the committee and provide technical guidance.
- As CSE will be mainstreamed in key subject areas, guidelines are needed on how CSE should be taught at each stage. Teaching materials for teachers and students must also be developed to facilitate learning.
- The needs of children with special needs and marginalized groups should be taken into consideration.

Curriculum content

CSE content needs to be further developed to emphasize the different dimensions of sexuality including relationships, rights, values, culture, gender, social norms, sexuality and sexual behaviour, SRH and rights, violence and staying safe, skills for health and well-being, sexuality and sexual behaviour, human body development. The ITGSE 2018 It's All in One curriculum and Pop/FLE materials can be drawn upon for ideas on age-appropriate information relevant to Sierra Leone.

Link between education and services

Access to accurate SRH information should be complemented by improved access to services, particularly health and social welfare services and, where necessary, access to justice so that young people can act on new knowledge, skills and attitudes. It is therefore crucial for MBSSE to establish strong collaboration with MoHS and MSWGCA.

Teaching and learning approaches and teacher training

CSE must be included in pre-service and in-service teacher training in order to ensure that students benefit from the lessons. To facilitate the integration in both pre-service and in-service, there is a need to develop a training module with detailed information on the definition, objectives as well as the participatory methods for delivering CSE. It is important to also develop teaching and learning materials for children with special needs. It is essential that sexuality education is delivered in a safe and healthy learning environment, free of discrimination, harassment and sexual violence. Thus, schools must also be encouraged to adhere to the teachers' code of conduct .

Monitoring and evaluation

A strong M&E system is necessary to monitor the integration of CSE into the basic curriculum for formal and non-formal education and to evaluate the progress towards achieving key identified learning outcomes. One or more key indicators must be integrated in national education monitoring systems to ensure systematic measurement of the delivery of sexuality education, through national systems of data collection. M&E experts at MBSSE must be involved in the implementation of the roadmap to integrate CSE into the basic education curricula in order to develop and include CSE indicators for M&E systems in the national mechanism.

11. Conclusion

The review and consultation with students and teachers show that sexuality education is not new in Sierra Leone. Most of the population is already familiar with FLE, which was taught before the war in primary and secondary schools. FLE equipped students with knowledge and skills to make informed decisions about their sexual health.

According to a UNESCO global review conducted in 2015, effective sexuality education starts early in childhood and progresses through adolescence and adulthood, building knowledge and skills that are appropriate for each stage through a carefully phased process over time, like any other subject in the curriculum. CSE content must respond appropriately to the specific context and needs of young people. This adaptability is central to culturally relevant programming, and includes understanding the messages that cultures convey around gender, sex and sexuality. This may include a concerted focus on topics such as gender discrimination, GBV, HIV and AIDS, child marriage and harmful traditional practices. As with all curricula, CSE must be delivered in accordance with national laws and policies.

Since the issue of sexuality is taboo for many people, the process for integrating CSE in the basic education curricula must be accompanied with social mobilization on the need for such integration. Engaging parents and communities in the implementation of CSE is critical to ensure broad support and to enhance overall understanding of the issues facing adolescents and young people. Consultations with parents and communities can help change their mindsets about harmful traditional and cultural practices.

The success of CSE integration in the curriculum depends to a large extent on the training of teachers. Since MBSSE has opted for CSE integration into key subjects, it is important to develop a specific CSE guideline and train teachers on CSE-related subjects. The CSE training module for teachers need to include reflections on their own beliefs, attitudes and knowledge regarding the teaching of sensitive topics such as contraception, abortion and sexual diversity, in order to ensure that they will feel comfortable teaching these topics. Teachers also need to be trained in participatory teaching methods.

Sierra Leone is on the right path in terms of integrating CSE in the basic education curriculum. What is needed at the moment is a review of the curriculum to strengthen the CSE content; raise awareness among the population – particularly families – on the importance of teaching CSE in primary schools and JSS; train teachers; and pilot and implement the new curriculum. The interest and support from donors and DPs combined with the political will from the Government and proper implementation will enable Sierra Leone to become a role model in CSE integration.

12. List of Participants

The following are the participants who were involved in the review meeting.

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