



Project Information Document (PID)

Appraisal Stage | Date Prepared/Updated: 26-Nov-2020 | Report No: PIDA30239



BASIC INFORMATION

A. Basic Project Data

Country Sierra Leone	Project ID P174958	Project Name Sierra Leone COVID-19 Education Response AF	Parent Project ID (if any) P167897
Parent Project Name Sierra Leone Free Education Project	Region AFRICA WEST	Estimated Appraisal Date 27-Nov-2020	Estimated Board Date 29-Jan-2021
Practice Area (Lead) Education	Financing Instrument Investment Project Financing	Borrower(s) Republic of Sierra Leone	Implementing Agency Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Educaiton, NGO Consortium (Save the Children-led Consortium)

Proposed Development Objective(s) Parent

The project development objectives are to improve the management of the education system, teaching practices, and learning conditions.

Components

COVID-19 Education Response
 Policy, Governance, Accountability, and System Administration
 Teacher Management and Professional Development
 School Level Education Development
 Project Management, Coordination and Monitoring and Evaluation
 Contingent Emergency Response Component

PROJECT FINANCING DATA (US\$, Millions)

SUMMARY

Total Project Cost	6.85
Total Financing	6.85
of which IBRD/IDA	0.00
Financing Gap	0.00

DETAILS



Non-World Bank Group Financing

Trust Funds	6.85
EFA-FTI Education Program Development Fund	6.85

Environmental and Social Risk Classification

Moderate

B. Introduction and Context

- 1. The Sierra Leone Free Education (FREE) Project (P167897) in the amount of US\$50 million equivalent of IDA was approved on June 29, 2020, and became effective on August 10, 2020.** The Project Development Objectives (PDOs) of the FREE Project are to improve the management of the education system, teaching practices, and learning conditions. The FREE Project is co-financed through a grant in the amount of US\$15.97 million equivalent from the European Union (EU); the Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office (FCDO) of the UK; and Irish Aid through a World Bank-administered Sierra Leone education multi-donor trust fund (MDTF), which has been established recently.
- 2. The proposed Sierra Leone COVID-19 Education Response is being prepared as an additional financing (AF) to the FREE Project.** An exception to the requirement of 12 months of satisfactory project implementation of the parent project has been approved by the Africa Regional Vice President. Also, in response to the global coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and the need for a rapid response, the Country Management Unit’s approval has been obtained to apply paragraph 12 of Section III of the Investment Project Financing (IPF) Policy to the AF and to process it using Condensed Procedures, within the context of the pandemic.
- 3. The proposed AF would be financed by a grant in the amount of US\$6.85 million from the Global Partnership for Education (GPE).** On March 31, 2020, the GPE Board created a US\$250 million COVID-19 Accelerated Funding Window under the GPE Fund (for which the World Bank is the trustee). This window provides financing to address the pandemic’s impact on education systems in 67 eligible countries. The GPE approved Sierra Leone’s proposal in the amount of US\$7 million (including Grant Agent [GA] supervision fees in the amount of US\$150,000) on June 15, 2020. The World Bank has been selected as the GA by the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE) and the Local Education Group (LEG).
- 4. The proposed AF and restructuring will cover the costs associated with expanded activities to enhance the impact of the parent project.** Specifically, it will cover the following:
 - (a) Expand the scope of activities to support implementation of the Government’s COVID-19 education response through an additional component—Component 6: COVID-19 Education Response. The component will support (i) strategic communications; (ii) continuous distance



education service delivery; (iii) safe school reopening and health and safety of students; and (iv) effective operations, planning, and policy during and after the COVID-19 crisis.

- (b) Revise the project's Results Framework to include intermediate results indicators related to the AF activities.
- (c) Revise the implementation arrangements to include the nongovernmental organization (NGO) Consortium as one of implementing agencies under the proposed AF.
- (d) Revise the project fiduciary management to move the procurement functions of the project from the Project Fiduciary Management Unit (PFMU) of the Ministry of Finance (MoF) to the Free Education Project Secretariat (FEPS) of the MBSSE.

Country Context

5. **Sierra Leone is a small low-income country on the west coast of Africa with a population of approximately 7.8 million people.** The population is young—with around 45.8 percent of the population below age 15 and 74.8 percent below age 25. Human development outcomes are very low, with Sierra Leone ranking 151 out of 157 countries on the Human Capital Index (HCI),¹ with an HCI value lower than the region's average. This index, as a composite measure of human capital, confirms that only around two-thirds (61 percent) of today's 15-year-olds can be expected to survive to the age of 60 and about one-quarter of the country's children are stunted, a condition resulting from chronic malnutrition. Moreover, the HCI measure predicts that a child born today in Sierra Leone can be expected to be only 35 percent as productive when he or she grows up as the child could have been if he or she had enjoyed complete education and full health.

6. **The pace of poverty reduction has slowed down in recent years.** The poverty rate fell by 1.5 percentage points annually over 2003–2011 and by 0.8 percentage points annually over 2012–2018 to reach 56.8 percent in 2018. Inequality, as measured by the Gini coefficient, increased from 0.33 in 2011 to 0.37 in 2018. Poverty remains disproportionately in rural areas (78.5 percent), and the largest poverty reduction occurred in urban areas outside Freetown (by 0.9 percentage points annually over 2012–2018). The major determinants of poverty are large household size, low level of education of the household head, employment in agriculture, and non-wage employment. Furthermore, poverty rates for households with access to electricity are between 13.5 and 20.2 percentage points lower than those without electricity access. Disturbingly, extreme poverty in rural areas increased by 4.3 percentage points between 2012 and 2018; it is equally disturbing that 3 (out of 15) districts have poverty rates of above 80 percent. While the share of food-insecure Sierra Leoneans decreased from 49.8 percent to 43.7 percent between 2012 and 2018, 3.2 million people remain food insecure.

7. **Education is at the heart of the Government's medium-term National Development Plan (NDP) 2019–2023.** In May 2018, the current administration came to power. The new Government is guided by five core principles: disciplined leadership, national integration, efficiency, professionalism, and delivery of the NDP. The NDP outlines eight strategic priorities: (a) education for development, (b) health, (c) water, (d) macroeconomic management, (e) energy, (f) agriculture, (g) tackling corruption, and (h) security. Specifically, the NDP highlights the importance of education in

¹ The HCI is made up of five indicators: the probability of survival to age 5, a child's expected years of schooling, harmonized test scores as a measure of quality of learning, adult survival rate (fraction of 15-year-olds who will survive to age 60), and the proportion of children who are not stunted.



enhancing human capital development and facilitating the transformation of the country. Many measures are being developed and are currently under way to address each of these priority areas.

8. **COVID-19 has already affected the implementation of the Government's NDP 2019–2023.** The Government has launched a Quick Action Economic Response Program² (QAERP) not only to maintain macroeconomic and financial stability, but also to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 shock on citizens, households, and businesses. The rapidly evolving situation calls for an adaptive response with course correction. Previous major outbreaks like Ebola had negative impacts on food and nutrition security—particularly for the most vulnerable, including children, women, the elderly, and the poor. Results of the recently conducted Sierra Leone COVID-19 Impact Monitoring Survey show that most households have seen a decrease in income since March 2020 from all sources.

Sectoral and Institutional Context

9. **The education sector is managed by the MBSSE and the Ministry of Technical and Higher Education (MTHE),** with the MBSSE being responsible for basic education (primary school and junior secondary school [JSS]) and senior secondary school (SSS) and the MTHE being responsible for technical/vocational tertiary and higher education, including preservice teacher training. According to the 2019 Annual School Census (ASC), there were 11,168 basic education schools in Sierra Leone. Of these, preprimary schools accounted for 15.7 percent (1,758 schools), primary schools for 64.1 percent (7,154 schools), JSSs for 14.6 percent (1,633 schools), and SSSs for 5.6 percent (623). There are approximately two million students in primary and secondary education in Sierra Leone.

10. **Education services are provided by a mix of government and nongovernment providers.** The majority of schools delivering basic and senior secondary education lie outside government ownership. At the primary level, only 16 percent are owned/run by the Government, while the majority (62 percent) are owned/run by missions, 12 percent by the community, and 10 percent by a private entity. At the JSS level, only 10 percent are government schools, and 90 percent of schools are owned/run by nongovernment providers (48 percent by missions, 21 percent by the community, and 20 percent by a private entity).

11. **The Government supports nongovernment community/mission schools through funding of teachers and learning materials.** The Government has in place a school approval process that can qualify community/mission schools for government assistance. The latest ASC shows that three-quarters of schools have been approved for government assistance (53 percent in preprimary, 79 percent in primary, 77 percent in JSS, and 80 percent in SSS). Government approval implies the payment of subsidies, textbooks, teacher salaries, and examination fees. The increase in government-approved schools adds substantial fiscal outlay to the Government.

12. **Sierra Leone has made substantial progress in increasing access to education, but challenges remain.** Access is almost universal; however, 1 child out of 10 still never attended school. The primary school completion rate increased from 76 percent in 2011 to 82 percent in 2019. Completion rates in JSSs and SSSs increased from 59 percent and 49 percent in 2011 to 84 percent and 72 percent, respectively, in 2019. Despite this significant progress achieved in the last decade, the Sierra Leone education system faces a set of major challenges. They include the following:

- (a) **Poor learning outcomes and skills acquisition.** Learning outcomes are low, and skills acquisition is limited. After having completed eight (JSS2) to eleven (SSS2) years of schooling, most Sierra Leonean

² http://www.statistics.sl/images/2020/Documents/GoSL_COVID_19_Quick-Action-Economic-Response-Programme.pdf.



students only demonstrate skills equivalent to those expected from a primary school pupil. Graduates from technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and higher education also lack job relevant skills, contributing to high levels of youth unemployment. Key factors contributing to these challenges include (i) low quality of teaching, (ii) weak teacher management, (iii) inadequate learning environment in schools, and (iv) poor labor market relevance.

- (b) **Low and inequitable access.** A large number of primary-age children, mostly poor and disabled, are out of school. Although most children start grade 1, retention rates are very low, especially among poor and adolescent girls. Inequities in access to preprimary and SSS are particularly salient. Key factors driving these gaps include (i) cost burden, especially for poor families (for example, uniforms); (ii) distance to schools (low access to preprimary schools, SSS, and TVET is partly driven by the limited number of schools at these levels); (iii) teenage pregnancy (29 percent of out-of-school girls are excluded from school because of teenage pregnancy); and (iv) school-related gender-based violence (GBV).
- (c) **Weak sector management and governance.** Key challenges include (i) a weak policy and regulatory environment; (ii) inadequate quality assurance systems across subsectors; and (iii) an education management information system (EMIS) that is in place but is fragmented and underused.

13. **The Government, working with partners, has initiated a number of interventions to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on education.** First, in early March 2020, the MBSSE asked District Directors of Education and school heads to reactivate the school safety guidelines initially developed during the Ebola crisis to keep schools safe. On March 19, 2020, the MBSSE and the MTHE jointly announced the closure of all educational institutions by March 31, 2020. The COVID-19-induced closure affected the academic calendar for education institutions, including public examinations, which were scheduled to commence in May, June, and July 2020.

14. **The MBSSE has established an Education Emergency Taskforce (EET) to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on children and learning and has developed a COVID-19 Education Emergency Response Plan (EERP).** The EET advises and supports the Government's education activities during COVID-19 crisis and will continue this support after the COVID-19 period ends. The EET will specifically support coordination, planning, and response through four strategic pillars: (a) communications; (b) continuous distance learning; (c) school reopening readiness; and (d) operations, planning, and policy. Development partners (DPs), being part of an EET strategic working group, are supporting the Government in its efforts to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on the education sector.

15. **As a response to the COVID-19-induced school closure, the Teaching Service Commission (TSC) launched the radio teaching program, which is an emergency education program, a week after the schools were closed.** The program is transmitted through the MBSSE's dedicated broadcasting station. Access to this 'low-tech' radio transmission is a challenge in some very remote regions. The household survey³ shows that radio coverage reaches 62 percent of households nationwide in Sierra Leone, with much lower radio ownership in the lowest quintile at 31 percent. As the Government plans to expand remote learning through the use of digital technologies, it is important that special attention is given to equity in access to remote learning, especially students coming from rural areas, low-income households, children with disabilities and other marginalized groups.

³ Sierra Leone Demographic and Health Survey 2013.



16. **After three months of school closure, the MBSSE, following extensive consultations with critical stakeholders in the education sector, reopened schools on July 1, 2020, for a limited period for examination candidates (National Primary School Examination [NPSE], Basic Education Certificate Examination [BECE], and West African Senior School Certificate of Education [WASSCE]).** The consultative meetings included both national and regional organizations, including but not limited to the Ministry of Health and Sanitation (MoHS) Emergency Operations Centre, Ministry of Gender and Children’s Affair, TSC, Sierra Leone Teacher’s Union, National Council of Head Teachers, Association of Private Schools, civil society organizations (CSO), and DPs (for example, the World Bank, FCDO, EU, and UNICEF). As a member of the West African Examinations Council (WAEC), the MBSSE aligned its decisions on school reopening for examination candidates and examination dates with other member countries.

17. **Schools reopened for all students on October 5, 2020.** In consultation with the National COVID-19 Emergency Response Center (NACOVERC), the MoHS and other partners, the MBSSE, and school authorities have developed guidelines for school attendance and reopening of schools, including the number of students in classrooms and activities permitted in schools. After developing comprehensive logistical requirements for reopening of schools, the MBSSE reopened schools for all students on October 5, 2020. Meanwhile, COVID-19 prevention and risk mitigation measures continue to be in force, including social distancing and restrictions on group gatherings. With the current epidemiological situation, there is a risk of a second wave of COVID-19, which could lead to further and extended school closure and increased health risk. The proposed AF will mitigate such risks by building flexibility into the project to ensure the continuation of activities adapted with COVID-19 protocols and restrictions with an emphasis on the distance learning aspect.

18. **The onset and spread of COVID-19 disproportionately affect children and adults with disabilities; and the crisis may generate additional stress, anxiety, and uncertainty resulting in mental health issues.** Stress generated by the COVID-19-induced job loss or income shortage, loss of life, and uncertainty among adults can emotionally affect children staying at home due to school closure. Lack of information and an abundance of misinformation related to the pandemic can exacerbate the fear among both adults and children. Persons with disabilities additionally suffer from being sidelined from risk communications, health and safety measures, and distance learning.

19. **Urgent action is required to support the coordinated response designed by the EET.** The MBSSE has started to operationalize the EERP laid out by the EET with support from the education DPs. However, there are important gaps in funding and capacity. For example, even though partners have supported a COVID-19 sensitization and awareness campaign, broadcasting of the radio teaching program, and a Back to School campaign, they need to be expanded to reach the most vulnerable. While COVID-19 prevention and risk mitigation measures continue to be in force, including social distancing and restrictions on group gatherings, as schools reopen, special attention should be given to the following priorities: (a) catching up on learning losses; (b) bringing back to school learners at risk of dropping out; and (c) focusing on the social and emotional welfare of the student population, teachers, and staff. Necessary guidance, support, and training will be required. Moreover, with the current epidemiological situation, there is a risk of a second wave of COVID-19, which could lead to further school closures and increased health risks for children. The proposed AF intends to aid Sierra Leone to address the immediate and short-term effects of the pandemic by supporting the EET’s plan to ensure continuity of learning and school safety after schools reopen. In this respect, the AF aims to minimize the negative effects of the crisis in both the short and medium term and protect the human capital in Sierra Leone.

20. **An AF was considered the preferred mechanism to support the EET’s national response to COVID-19.** The FREE Project directly responds to the Education Sector Plan (ESP) 2018–2020 and the Government’s flagship Free Quality School Education (FQSE) Program. The ESP was developed through a sector-wide approach with consultation and



collaboration with the MBSSE and the education DPs group. By responding to the COVID-19 EERP defined by the EET, the proposed AF is well aligned with the approach undertaken to develop the FREE Project. Both the FREE Project and the AF have system-level interventions (such as the definition of guidelines and policies) as well as focused interventions targeted at the most vulnerable groups, including girls. The objectives of the AF are the same as those of the parent project and there are efficiencies to be gained from working through the FREE Project's design and implementation arrangements. It also provides an opportunity to expand the scope of the FREE Project to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and enhance the overall development impact of the project.

C. Proposed Development Objective(s)

Original PDO

21. The project development objectives are to improve the management of the education system, teaching practices, and learning conditions.

Current PDO

22. The Development Objective of the proposed AF is the same as that of the parent project -- to improve the management of the education system, teaching practices, and learning conditions.

Key Results

23. There are no proposed changes to the PDO-level indicators. The proposed AF will include the following additional intermediate results indicators to capture progress made under the new Component 6. (a) Number of children provided access to programs and sensitization campaigns that aim at minimizing the negative impacts of school closure (GPE Core Indicator); (b) Number of children supported with remote learning and accelerated learning interventions (GPE Core Indicator); (c) Number of teachers trained in using distance learning methods or provided materials to support accelerated learning (GPE Core Indicator); (d) Number of schools equipped with minimum hygiene standards for prevention of COVID-19 (GPE Core Indicator); and (e) Radical inclusion policy in place. The end target date for these indicators is January 31, 2022.

D. Project Description

24. The goal of the project is to assist the Government in providing equitable access to quality education for all. The proposed AF will support the COVID-19 specific activities.

25. **The original project consists of five components:**

- (a) Component 1: Policy, Governance, Accountability, and System Administration
- (b) Component 2: Teacher Management and Professional Development
- (c) Component 3: School Level Education Development
- (d) Component 4: Project Management, Coordination, and Monitoring and Evaluation
- (e) Component 5: Contingent Emergency Response Component (CERC)



26. The proposed AF aims to strengthen the overall development impact of the parent project through introduction of a **sixth component—COVID-19 Education Response**. Component 6 will comprise the following sub-components:

- (a) Strategic Communications (US\$0.76 million);
- (b) Continuous Distance Education Service Delivery (US\$2.89 million);
- (c) Safe School Reopening, and Health and Safety of Students including the Most Vulnerable (US\$2.66 million); and
- (d) Effective Operations, Planning and Policy during and after the COVID-19 Crisis (US\$0.54 million).

27. **The design of Component 6 is responsive to strategies articulated in the MBSSE’s Education Sector COVID-19 Response Plan.** The proposed project will ensure strategic communications and strengthen continuous distance education service delivery. It will also support safe school reopening, and health and safety of students including the most vulnerable. Lastly, the proposed project will support sustaining effective Government’s operations, planning and policy during and after the COVID-19 Crisis. More details on Component 6 are provided below.

Subcomponent 6.1: Strategic Communications (US\$0.76 million)

28. The proposed subcomponent will develop a communications strategy to ensure that communities are well-informed regarding COVID-19 risks and the Government’s education response to the crisis. On the basis of this strategy, the project will support communications in rebuilding school communities, the continuation of distance learning through radio transmission and other modes, implementation of the protocol for school reopening in basic education, and long-term operations and planning. Efforts will be made to ensure that the communications outreach campaigns are inclusive and accessible to children and vulnerable populations. The project will support the extension of coverage of the MBSSE’s radio station to districts with poor receptivity to increase access to information services and listenership and equip regional radio stations with the capacity to manage and implement education programming. Moreover, the project will also establish an online data/resource sharing platform for dissemination of knowledge and effective information-sharing.

Subcomponent 6.2: Continuous Distance Education Service Delivery (US\$2.89 million)

29. The proposed subcomponent will support continuous distance learning under the COVID-19 EERP. This will include the development and deployment of accessible and inclusive tutorials for basic education students through radio, television, mobile and other digital technologies and frameworks. The Teaching Service Commission (TSC) has already launched a nationwide radio teaching program within one week of school closure. This subcomponent aims to support and increase these efforts, so that the majority of children across the country will have access to some form of education programming and distance learning program is even more interactive and conducive to learning. In-service training for basic education teachers will also be supported to improve teacher capacity in digital literacy and the delivery of lessons through the digital platforms. Training will focus on the following areas, including: (a) facilitation of remote and distance learning; (b) use of online tools including WhatsApp, SMS, television, and radio; (c) inclusion, accessibility, safeguarding during school closure and in use of smart devices and on-line learning platforms; and (d) remote student assessment. Teachers will also be trained to support crisis management, health prevention/promotion, psychosocial wellbeing, and child wellbeing in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Subcomponent 6.3: Safe School Reopening, and Health and Safety of Students (US\$2.66 million)



30. The proposed subcomponent will support school reopening under the COVID-19 EERP. It will work on three main streams: (a) safe school operations; (b) reaching the most vulnerable; and (c) wellbeing and protection of students. To ensure safe school reopening, this subcomponent will support the process of implementing School Safety Protocols. Along with School Safety Protocols, hygienic practices by schoolchildren and staff will be promoted. Learning from the experience during the Ebola crisis, the project will also support a rapid assessment to apprise the readiness of the system for school reopening, and finance the provision of essential water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) supplies (e.g. thermometers, face masks, buckets, soap) for basic education schools, the process of cleaning and disinfecting school building premises and refurbishing school facilities as needed (school facilities are currently used as quarantine sites and in support of the health emergency). The pandemic will likely have a greater negative impact over those who are vulnerable such as girls, students with disabilities and those in poorer families. The subcomponent will involve designing and collaborating with partners on implementing community outreach campaigns to support girls, vulnerable children and other students at risk of dropout, so as to encourage them to remain engaged in learning and to return to school. Further, the subcomponent will support the Government to monitor the situation (e.g. dropouts, gender-based violence, pregnancy, learning) when students come back to school. This will complement the annual school census (ASC) with COVID-19 relevant data. Finally, for wellbeing and protection, the subcomponent will support the provision of psychosocial support to children and teachers in basic education.

Subcomponent 6.4: Effective Operations, Planning, and Policy during and after the COVID-19 Crisis (US\$0.54 million)

31. This subcomponent aims to improve system-level resilience, ensuring that the Government has the capacity to respond to emergencies and monitor the functioning of the response, and to establish the overarching policy covering preventative health, safety and inclusion that will be essential to the safe re-opening of schools. Activities will include: (i) the development of overarching policy comprising guidance, protocols and standard operating procedures, delivery standards and redressal mechanism in the event of substandard delivery; (ii) the development of a mechanism to guarantee that community-engagement in the development of critical policies is maintained despite the social distancing implied by the COVID-19 pandemic through the development of a hybrid platform for online and SMS-based annotation of policies; and (iii) the evaluation of the education-response to COVID-19 initiatives including the communications campaign, the distance learning initiatives and rapid assessments of student learning once children come back to school to guide teachers to teach at the right level.

Legal Operational Policies

	Triggered?
Projects on International Waterways OP 7.50	No
Projects in Disputed Areas OP 7.60	No

Summary of Assessment of Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts

32. The Environmental Risk Rating is moderate. The AF will finance COVID-19 education response interventions including support for distance education services, supply and rehabilitation of school WASH kits, sanitization of schools especially those used as isolation or quarantine centers, public awareness and communication and development of



guidance, protocols and standard operating procedures, grievance mechanism for safe school reopening etc. The AF in general, presents a positive social and environment impacts in that it will put in place substantial distance learning to safeguards against school dropout, adolescent pregnancy during school closures and build the digital infrastructure in the education sector. In spite of this, disadvantaged students including girls, those with disabilities, children in rural remote areas, and who lack access to technology are likely to fall further behind without consideration for inclusive and accessible outreach campaign, safe and accessible delivery of learning packages and assistance to teachers and parents to support children with special learning needs. From the environmental side, sanitization and fumigation of schools may involve the use of chemicals that must be mitigated with a choice of the proper chemicals and application procedures. School refurbishment will likely present moderate risks that relate to noise, dust and general health and safety of workers, students, teaching staff. These activities will not raise the Environmental and Social Risk Categorization (ESRC) or introduce any new Environmental and Social Standards (ESSs) other than those that are already covered in the parent project. However, asbestos assessment has to be conducted ahead of the refurbishment activities as indicated in the parent project ESMF. As such, the preparation and implementation of the activities under this AF will comply with all environmental and social framework (ESF) requirement of the parent project. An ESMF, RPF, ESCP, SEP, Labor Management Procedure (LMP) have all been prepared and disclosed for the parent project. The SEP and ESCP has been updated and disclosed. The ESMF and RPF will be updated within 30 days after effectiveness to ensure that mitigation measures for disinfection of schools, inclusive COVID-19 risk communication and distance learning measures are covered consistent with the ESF. The ESCP has outlined the client's commitments to screen all subprojects further during implementation and prepare associated Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA), Environmental and Social Management Plans (ESMPs), Resettlement Action Plan (RAP) as may be required.

33. The AF project design includes mitigation to address risks on inclusiveness in basic education with special focus on gender and disability. This will be complemented by intervention under Subcomponent 1.3 of the parent project which seeks to address system and school level gender and disability disparities in access to learning as well as school based Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment (SEA/SH). The context of COVID-19 crisis presents additional risks of SEA/SH and teenage pregnancy as girls and women are more prone to domestic abuse under stay-at-home orders without regular access to schoolteachers and other support systems in the community. Further, children and persons with disabilities are also at risk of sexual assaults. The proposed AF will train teachers to support psychosocial and child wellbeing in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. It will also collaborate with development partners to develop materials and carry out community outreach campaigns to support girls and children with disabilities.

34. The AF is being prepared by the MBSSE; the main institution responsible for leading the parent project. Following effectiveness of the parent project, the MBSSE will recruit an environmental and social specialist to be based at the Free Education Project Secretariat. It will also establish an Environmental and Social Management and Reporting System and a Grievance Mechanism (GM) which will cover for the AF as well. The GM will use a combination of physical, in-person and digital strategies. The AF will develop a communication strategy to inform the project's COVID-19 risk communication for communities and schools. This strategy should build synergies with the project SEP for proper stakeholder mapping to ensure that, the communications outreach campaigns are inclusive and accessible to children, children with disabilities, children in remote areas and other vulnerable population. Subcomponent 6.2 will establish a toll-free helpdesk and other online platform for remote assistance to teachers and students on the use of education technologies being rolled out, and for reporting of safeguarding and child protection issues. Third party monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of the communications campaign, the distance learning initiatives, and implementation of COVID-19 school protocols by a CSO/NGO group is recommended to ensure transparency and accountability. Findings or feedback should be used to correct any implementation gaps.



E. Implementation

35. **Proposed Implementation period and AF costs.** The implementation period for the parent project is five years with the closing date of September 30, 2025. The closing date remains unchanged, but the implementation period for the proposed Component 6 would be ending on January 31, 2022. Project activities are expected to be implemented within the first year. The costs for the proposed AF are provided in Table 1.

Table 1. AF Financing (US\$, millions)

Component/Sub-component	Estimated Cost
Component 6: COVID-19 Education Response	6.85
6.1: Strategic Communications	0.76
6.2: Continuous Distance Education Service Delivery	2.89
6.3: Safe School Reopening, and Health and Safety of Students	2.66
6.4: Effective Operations, Planning, and Policy during and after the COVID-19 Crisis	0.54
Grant Agent (World Bank) Supervision Cost	0.15
TOTAL	7.00

Institutional and Implementation Arrangements

36. **Project implementation.** Like the FREE Project, the MBSSE will be responsible for the overall implementation, prompt and efficient coordination, oversight, and monitoring of the project activities. Within the MBSSE structures, there are various directorates and units that will be responsible for several aspects of the implementation of the AF. The proposed AF will strengthen the Government’s institutions responsible for education, including MBSSE, TSC, and District Education Offices. A dedicated FEPS will be responsible for day-to-day project management and coordination and will oversee project activities. For the AF activities, the technical leads of the EET will lead the decision-making process to ensure that an emergency work plan is delivered on time. The MBSSE and TSC will also work closely with other ministries and DPs.

37. **Implementation partnership.** Given the fast-track nature of the proposed GPE grant with its short life, the NGO Consortium (Save the Children-led Consortium⁴) will be contracted to implement some of the project activities under the proposed AF in the amount of US\$3.5 million. The NGO Consortium is a collective of highly experienced implementing partners, with significant technical expertise and operational capacity to deliver the emergency education response quickly and effectively in Sierra Leone. They have the global expertise, knowledge of best practices, and a long history of working in close collaboration with the Government in Sierra Leone. Implementation partnership with the NGO Consortium will help the Government deliver activities rapidly, focus more on community engagement, and reach the most marginalized and deprived groups.

38. The NGO Consortium will implement the project activities in all 16 districts, directly reaching more than 101,200 children (54,500 girls and 46,700 boys) in more than 500 primary schools and JSSs. In addition, they will support the district authorities to roll out activities to a significant number of schools, reaching a greater proportion of children in all

⁴ The NGO Consortium will be led by Save the Children, partnering with Handicap International (operating under the name Humanity and Inclusion), Plan International Sierra Leone, Concern Worldwide, Foundation for Rural and Urban Transformation [FoRUT], Focus 1000, and Street Child of Sierra Leone.



16 districts. Through the strategic NGO partnership, the NGO Consortium collectively has technical excellence in girls' education, community engagement, education in emergencies, accelerated and catch-up education, inclusive education, safe learning, evidence generation, and development of strong relationships with local partners and stakeholders. The details on implementation arrangements, M&E, governance, and reporting, will be delineated in a Subsidiary Agreement between the Government and Save the Children on behalf of the NGO Consortium and also will be included in the project implementation manual (PIM).

39. **Project fiduciary management.** There is a proposed change in project fiduciary management. The PFMU of the MoF is currently responsible for the day-to-day financial management (FM) and procurement functions of the parent project. The fiduciary management for both the parent project and the AF will be transferred to the FEPS. This transfer aims to strengthen fiduciary management capacity of the MBSSE, and the project will have designated procurement specialist(s) and FM specialist(s) in place who are part of the FEPS.

40. **Policy direction and oversight.** Policy direction and oversight of the FREE Project is carried out by an MDTF Free Education Project Steering Committee on a biannual basis. The committee will review the overall performance of the project and decide on important policy aspects to facilitate the achievement of outcomes and results. The committee will comprise heads of the MBSSE, TSC, MoF, World Bank, and MDTF-participating DPs. The committee will act as the steering body for the FREE Project and will be co-chaired by the Government (rotating the chair position between the MoF and MBSSE) and the World Bank.

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