

PRESENTATION FOR SIDE MEETING

**BUILDING TEACHERS' CAPACITY TO ENHANCE EARLY LEARNING -THROUGH CHILD
FOCUSED AND PLAY-BASED APPROACHES IN GHANA AND SIERRA LEONE**

SIERRA LEONE

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THREE KEY LESSONS FROM THE PROJECT SO FAR

1. From both the intervention and non-intervention districts and schools, there is lack of provision for disability.
 - A blind girl in a remote school in Rotana in the North had to sit in class with her abled counterparts. No special provision was made by the teacher for this girl.
 - Even though disability was not evident in the other schools, the absence of facilities for that category of student was outstanding

LESSONS CONT.

2. Lack of capacity at the tertiary level (colleges) was vivid. Almost all the tutors had qualifications in disciplines not directly related to ECD.
3. There are more female teachers at the early childhood education level than male teachers. The opposite is true for levels higher than the ECE level

LESSONS CONT.

- Generally, students in Sierra Leone do not want to enroll into Early Childhood Education programs.
- At Ernest Bai Koroma University in the North, there was only one student in the entire ECD department who was in the final year.
- At Njala University in the South, there was only one student in the final year, three in the two in the third year, three in the second year and six in the first year

CHALLENGES

1. Getting key stakeholders onboard is a challenge. We have had two stakeholder engagement meetings, to which UNICEF as an institution was invited. In both meetings UNICEF was conspicuously absent, even though they gave the go-ahead to the Technical Working Group on Early Childhood Education (an outfit set up by UNICEF on behalf of Government) to participate in the meetings.
 - To date our preliminary findings are yet to be presented to the Minister of Basic and Senior Secondary Education as a result of their unavailability.
 - MITIGATION:
 - Continuous engagement through the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education with whom we have open door engagement
 - Updating stakeholders on our activities with the hope of getting them onboard.

CHALLENGES CONT.

2. Understanding and using the platform for reporting on project activities is still a challenge even though an online training was done.

- MITIGATION: We have had to send report (Eg MEL) to our counterparts in Ghana who uploads to the platform on our behalf.

3. Workload Management amidst a truncated academic calendar: Since Covid19 when we had lockdowns, the academic calendar has been restructured such that instead of the normal 13 to 14 weeks in a semester, we now have, particularly for this academic year, and to enable us go back to normalcy, only 8 weeks of academic activities. This had put pressure on us to cope with the workload and meet deadlines.

- MITIGATION: We've had to embark on effective delegation among team members to get us to where we are.

Strengthening Gender Equality and Inclusion in Project work

- We have had a fair representation of females in our project activities. The project team itself had two female representations. Unfortunately, we lost one through death.
- The stakeholders invited had more females present. Females also played key roles as Chair persons and presenters.
- The data collection team also had five females, two of whom were at the supervisory level

What is working in terms of Knowledge Mobilization

1. Excellent working relationship with the Technical Working Group on Early Childhood Education and Development. The TWG is made of representatives from Non-Governmental as well as Government institutions (Colleges and Universities, Government Ministries of Health, Nutrition, Gender and Children's Affairs, Social Welfare etc) These are serving as vehicle for knowledge mobilization.

Knowledge Mobilization Cont.

2. Excellent working relationship with officials of the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education particularly at the District levels and Local Councils. Good relationship with heads of schools as well who were and are more than willing to participate with in our study.
3. Excellent working relationship with the innovators (Teach for Sierra Leone) who have always been cooperative in every facet of this project

Ensuring Scaling

- There is improved understanding of the project from the innovators as well as the spirit and context of the innovation from hands-on experience particularly during data collection.
- There is also a fair understanding of the low-cost requirement for scaling this model nationally. It costs Government \$25 per child for scaling compared to less than \$10 for the TFSL model of intervention.
- The team intends to produce two policy briefs out of this preliminary findings.