Sierra Leone
Region: Sub-Saharan Africa
Income Group: Low Income
Source for region and income groupings: World Bank 2018
National Education Profile
2018 Update

OVERVIEW

In Sierra Leone, the academic year begins in September and ends in July, and the official primary school entrance age is 6. The system is structured so that the primary school cycle lasts 6 years, lower secondary lasts 3 years, and upper secondary lasts 4 years. Sierra Leone has a total of 1,979,000 pupils enrolled in primary and secondary education. Of these pupils, about 1,487,000 (75%) are enrolled in primary education. Figure 3 shows the highest level of education reached by youth ages 15-24 in Sierra Leone. Although youth in this age group may still be in school and working towards their educational goals, it is notable that approximately 25% of youth have no formal education and 11% of youth have attained at most incomplete primary education, meaning that in total 37% of 15-24 year olds have not completed primary education in Sierra Leone.

SCHOOL PARTICIPATION AND EFFICIENCY

The percentage of out of school children in a country shows what proportion of children are not currently participating in the education system and who are, therefore, missing out on the benefits of school. In Sierra Leone, 25% of children of official primary school ages are out of school as shown in Figure 4, which also considers the proportion of children out of school by different characteristics wherever data is available. For example, Figure 4 shows that approximately 27% of boys of primary school age are out of school compared to 19% of girls of the same age. For children of primary school age in Sierra Leone, the biggest disparity can be seen between the poorest and the richest children. Figure 5 looks at the percentage of youth of secondary school ages who are out of school in Sierra Leone. Nearly 32% of female youth of secondary school age are out of school compared to 28% of male youth of the same age. For youth of secondary school age, the biggest disparity can be seen between the poorest and the richest youth.
Figures 6 and 7 look at indicators of participation, completion, and progression in the education system. Figure 6 displays gross indicators (which include under- and over-age students) and net indicators (which include only on-time students of official school age) for student intake, participation, and flows. In Sierra Leone, the gross enrollment rate in primary education is 121% for both girls and boys combined. This decreases to 57% in lower secondary, with a student transition rate to secondary school of 88%. In Sierra Leone, the primary net enrollment rate is 98% and the primary completion rate is 68%. Both of these indicators provide a sense of the progress a country is making towards universal primary education — a key UN Millennium Development Goal — and, for Sierra Leone, suggest that the country has yet to achieve universal primary education. Figure 7 displays the repetition rate in primary education, showing the specific grades in which students are more likely to repeat. It suggests that of the first 5 grades of primary in Sierra Leone, students are more likely to repeat grade 1. The repetition rate in grade 1 is 8.3% (for both males and females), which is 1.8 points higher than the average repetition rate across primary grades of 6.5%.

**LEARNING**

This section provides information on indicators of learning, which lend insight into the quality of educational provision. In this profile, learning is measured through literacy rates, which are important because literacy is a foundational skill needed to attain higher levels of learning, and national performance on learning assessments. Figure 8 demonstrates where Sierra Leone stands in comparison to other low and middle income countries in access to education, measured as the primary school net enrollment rate, and youth literacy. Compared to other countries, Sierra Leone ranks at the 94 percentile in access and at the 10 percentile in learning. Figure 9 compares youth and adult literacy rates and shows that, in Sierra Leone, the literacy rate is 57% among the youth population; this is lower than the average youth literacy rate in other low income countries.

**FIG 6. STUDENT INTAKE AND FLOW FROM PRIMARY TO SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

Data sources: UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), EPDC calculation based on UIS data (see Data Table for year)

**FIG 7. STUDENT REPETITION BY GRADE AND LEVEL IN PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Data source: EPDC calculation based on UIS data (see Data Table for year)

**FIG 8. COMPARISON OF ACCESS AND LITERACY**

Data source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) (see Data Table for year)

**FIG 9. LITERACY RATE AMONG YOUTH AND ADULT POPULATION**

Data source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) (see Data Table for year)

**FIG 10. PERFORMANCE ON LEARNING ASSESSMENTS**

Data source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) (see Data Table for year)
EDUCATION EXPENDITURE

Figures 11 and 12 compare Sierra Leone's per pupil expenditure (PPE) and pupil teacher ratio (PTR), where data is available, to those of other low income countries. PPE indicates a country's commitment to education at each school level. In Sierra Leone, PPE in primary education as a percentage of GDP per capita is 5%, lower than the median PPE in primary for low income countries, which is 9%. In Sierra Leone, the PPE in primary is lower than the PPE in secondary. PTR is low learning quality and resource availability indicator. In Sierra Leone, the PTR in primary education is 34%, meaning that on average there is one teacher for every 34.4 primary school students. This is lower than the median PTR in primary for low income countries, which is 40. In Sierra Leone, the PTR in primary is higher than the PTR in secondary.

DATA TABLE

In this table, the values of different education indicators for Sierra Leone are compared to all countries, to Sub-Saharan Africa, and to low and middle income countries. The percentile rank that is given indicates Sierra Leone's standing relative to these country groups. A higher percentile rank indicates better relative performance than a lower percentile rank. Percentile rankings above 66% are considered high and colored in green, rankings between 33% and 66% are considered average and colored in yellow, and rankings below 33% are considered low and colored in red. For example, the gross enrollment rate for females in primary education in Sierra Leone is 93% relative to all countries, meaning that 93% of countries have lower gross enrollment rates than Sierra Leone. As another example, the survival rate to grade 5 of primary school for males in Sierra Leone is 58%, and Sierra Leone ranks in the 6 percentile relative to all countries, in the 20 percentile relative to Sub-Saharan Africa, and in the 8 percentile relative to low and middle income countries for this indicator.

KEY

- needs improvement can improve further

below 66% between 66th and 99th percentile above 99%

INDICATOR | VALUE | YEAR | All Countries | Sub-Saharan Africa | Low and Middle Income |
---|---|---|---|---|---|
Literacy rate, 15+, Female | 25 | 2013 | 9% | 12% | 3% |
Literacy rate, 15+, Male | 41 | 2013 | 1% | 4% | 1% |
Literacy rate, 24-34, Female | 51 | 2013 | 8% | 27% | 11% |
Literacy rate, 15-24, Male | 65 | 2013 | 7% | 22% | 9% |
Gross intake rate, Primary, Female | 173 | 2017 | 99% | 97% | 99% |
Gross intake rate, Primary, Male | 169 | 2017 | 98% | 95% | 98% |
Net intake rate, Female, Primary | 71 | 2015 | 47% | 78% | 53% |
Net intake rate, Primary, Male | 71 | 2015 | 46% | 70% | 50% |
Gross enrolment rate, Primary, Female | 122 | 2017 | 93% | 85% | 92% |
Gross enrolment rate, Primary, Male | 120 | 2017 | 91% | 75% | 88% |
Gross enrolment rate, Lower Secondary, Female | 57 | 2017 | 15% | 55% | 21% |
Gross enrolment rate, Lower Secondary, Male | 57 | 2017 | 12% | 50% | 16% |
Gross enrolment rate, Upper Secondary, Female | 26 | 2017 | 10% | 43% | 14% |
Gross enrolment rate, Upper Secondary, Male | 29 | 2017 | 8% | 33% | 11% |
Net enrolment rate, Primary, Female | 99 | 2016 | 90% | 100% | 96% |
Net enrolment rate, Primary, Male | 98 | 2016 | 84% | 94% | 90% |
Net enrolment rate, Sec, Secondary, Female | 37 | 2017 | 105% | 57% | 62% |
Net enrolment rate, Secondary, Male | 38 | 2017 | 13% | 54% | 18% |
Repetition rate, Primary, Female | 7 | 2016 | 24% | 66% | 32% |
Repetition rate, Primary, Male | 7 | 2016 | 22% | 66% | 36% |
Dropout rate, Primary, Female | 53 | 2016 | 6% | 24% | 8% |
Dropout rate, Primary, Male | 53 | 2016 | 6% | 21% | 8% |
Survival rate, to Prim GS, Female | 60 | 2016 | 8% | 20% | 8% |
Survival rate, to Prim GS, Male | 58 | 2016 | 6% | 20% | 8% |
Completion rate, Primary, Female | 67 | 2017 | 12% | 37% | 16% |
Completion rate, Primary, Male | 69 | 2017 | 12% | 42% | 16% |
Transition rate, to Secondary, Female | 89 | 2016 | 25% | 66% | 14% |
Transition rate, to Secondary, Male | 86 | 2016 | 18% | 53% | 24% |
Pupil teacher ratio, Primary | 39 | 2017 | 13% | 46% | 16% |
Pupil teacher ratio, Lower Secondary | 22 | 2017 | 25% | 62% | 35% |
Pupil teacher ratio, Upper Secondary | 28 | 2017 | 8% | 11% | 11% |
Public education expenditure per pupil (% of GDP per capita), Primary | 5 | 2017 | 1% | 5% | 1% |
Public education expenditure per pupil (% of GDP per capita), Secondary | 14 | 2017 | 27% | 21% | 33% |
Percentage of children out of school, Secondary, Poorest Quintile | 39 | 2013 | 20% | 41% | 10% |
Percentage of children out of school, Secondary, Richest Quintile | 49 | 2013 | 33% | 52% | 34% |
Percentage of children out of school, Primary, Richest Quintile | 8 | 2013 | 7% | 38% | 24% |
Percentage of children out of school, Secondary, Richest Quintile | 13 | 2013 | 41% | 63% | 42% |
Percentage of children out of school, Primary, Urban | 12 | 2013 | 27% | 45% | 27% |
Percentage of children out of school, Secondary, Urban | 17 | 2013 | 52% | 74% | 52% |
Percentage of children out of school, Primary, Rural | 30 | 2013 | 59% | 37% | 50% |
Percentage of children out of school, Secondary, Rural | 38 | 2013 | 37% | 56% | 38% |
Percentage of children out of school, Primary, Male | 27 | 2013 | 12% | 28% | 14% |
Percentage of children out of school, Secondary, Male | 28 | 2013 | 37% | 54% | 37% |
Percentage of children out of school, Primary, Female | 19 | 2010 | 11% | 36% | 16% |
Percentage of children out of school, Secondary, Female | 32 | 2013 | 35% | 52% | 35% |
Percentage of children out of school, Primary, Total | 25 | 2013 | 14% | 34% | 17% |
Percentage of children out of school, Secondary, Total | 30 | 2013 | 13% | 32% | 37% |

* UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) (see Data Table for year)
* EPDC extraction of DHS dataset
* EPDC extraction of MICS dataset
* EPDC extraction of DHS dataset

**EPDC** calculation based on UIS data

### DATA SOURCES AND LEARNING ASSESSMENTS

| **Demographic and Health Survey (DHS)** | Nationally-representative household surveys that provide data for a wide range of indicators in the areas of population, health, and nutrition. They have large sample sizes (between 3,000 to 50,000 households) and are typically conducted about every 5 years in developing countries. It is funded by USAID and implemented by ICF International. |
| **Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS)** | Household surveys that produce internationally comparable estimates of a range of indicators in the areas of health, education, child protection and HIV/AIDS. It is developed by UNICEF to provide statistically rigorous data on the situation of children and women. Since the mid-1990s, there has been 4 rounds of the MICS survey, with the latest in 2009-2011. |
| **UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS)** | Statistical office of UNESCO and the primary UN depository for cross-nationally comparable statistics on education, science and technology, culture, and communication covering more than 200 countries and territories. It was established in 1999 and collects data directly from the national statistics agencies of its members. |
| **Analysis Programme of the CONFEMEN Education Systems (PASEC)*** | PASEC has been administered in 13 countries in Francophone West Africa. PASEC is designed to assess student abilities in mathematics and reading French. The program is managed by CONFEMEN (La Conférence des Ministres de l’Education des pays ayant le français en partage) and has been in place since 1993. It is typically administered to students in 2nd and 5th grades. |
| **Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS)*** | The PIRLS reading assessment, which is carried out by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) is an assessment of reading comprehension skills. In most countries, PIRLS is administered in school to children in the 4th grade of formal school, every five years since 2001. In a small number of countries, it may be administered at different grade levels. |
| **Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS)*** | The TIMSS math assessment, which is carried out by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), assesses pupils knowledge and understanding of mathematical concepts. TIMMS has been administered to children in the 4th and 8th grades of formal schools every four years since 1995. In a small number of countries, it may be administered at different grade levels. |
| **Second Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study (SERCE)*** | The SACMEQ assessment was designed to assess student abilities in mathematics and reading English. SACMEQ reading and math assessments have been carried out in countries in Anglophone East Africa in 1995, 2000, and 2007. SACMEQ is administered in school to children in the 6th grade of formal school. |
| **Highest Performance Benchmark** | The highest test-specific performance or learning levels of an assessment. These benchmarks are different for each assessment because each assessment uses different constructs, tools, and procedures. Additionally, assessments vary in the standards for each learning achievement benchmark, the number of benchmarks according to which test-takers can be evaluated, and the youth populations they test. |
| **Lowest Performance Benchmark** | The lowest test-specific performance or learning levels of an assessment. These benchmarks are different for each assessment because each assessment uses different constructs, tools, and procedures. Additionally, assessments vary in the standards for each learning achievement benchmark, the number of benchmarks according to which test-takers can be evaluated, and the youth populations they test. |