



Leh Wi Lan



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Photo: Lehi Wi Lan

The Leh Wi Lan programme (LWL) works with the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (MBSSE) and education partners throughout Sierra Leone to strengthen teaching quality, inclusion and safety in secondary schools. This newsletter shares updates from the field – from stronger remote support for schools and improved school leadership to more inclusive and safer learning environments.

Building better support for remote schools

In Sierra Leone, schools in remote areas are less likely to receive frequent support visits from School Quality Assurance Officers (SQAOs) due to the distance and difficulty of travel to access them. But strengthening monitoring and supervision systems is essential for improving teaching quality and learning for all pupils. To solve this challenge, a new pilot is underway to provide support texts and phone calls to 200 schools across five districts. An internal evaluation showed 43.5% of the target schools received messages from SQAOs, which is good progress but we're aiming for improvements. In doing so, we will build understanding of how schools engage with remote support and how it can further contribute to improving teaching practices.

SQAOs' work includes:



Monitoring teaching and learning conditions



Gathering data to inform evidence-based decision making



Promoting safer, more inclusive learning environments



Supporting school leaders with feedback



Empowering district leadership with innovation grants

District Education Officers (DEOs) are best placed to identify specific support needs of their local schools, so LWL is building capacity to develop innovative solutions to overcome learning obstacles. Together with the MBSSE and the Teacher Service Commission (TSC), LWL introduced district-level innovation grants to fund interventions that address specific issues in schools. Projects include reducing teacher violence and absenteeism as well as supporting learners with hearing impairments and young mothers. This work builds leadership skills and encourages DEOs to take initiative in tackling school challenges.

Expanding the Girls' and Boys' Clubs

The Girls' and Boys' clubs (GBCs) are after-school spaces where learners speak freely, share concerns and explore topics such as sexual health, mental health, violence and inclusion. Feedback shows that clubs contribute to learners' safety, self-esteem and wellbeing. LWL is working to ensure more GBCs are set up to support more learners with resources recently distributed to 200 schools. Each school received two radios and solar panels to ensure consistent access to GBC content, especially in off-grid communities. This will enhance access to structured, approved content that empowers learners to speak up against abuse. It also aligns with the Radical Inclusion Policy and our broader goals of inclusive education, safeguarding and gender empowerment, especially in marginalised communities.

Sustaining the School Leadership Programme

"The School Leadership Programme (SLP) helps us becoming change agents", says Principal Morlai Mafinda. Developed by the TSC with LWL support, the SLP is equipping school leaders with skills to better manage schools, support teachers and improve learning outcomes for every child, ensuring classrooms are inclusive and safe.

A recent validation workshop began plans for gaining accreditation for the SLP and exploring ways for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to offer the programme in the future – ensuring continued access to formal training beyond the life of LWL. The SLP team is also exploring the possibility of offering the SLP on a Learning Management System, so the programme is more interactive, easier and cheaper to offer.



"The SLP aims for us to become well-grounded principals. As the head of the school, you serve as a school manager and as a school leader."

Principal Morlai Mafinda, SLP participant, Western Rural.

Improving the effectiveness of School Safety Committees

School Safety Committees (SSCs) have been set up to bring together teachers, parents, pupils and community members to prevent violence, respond to incidents and promote learners' protection in and outside school. This has a direct impact on learning outcomes. SSC members recently received coaching and training through WhatsApp to improve their understanding of school safety, focusing on the Teacher's Code of Conduct and annual safety action plans. As a result, the majority of SSCs are now implementing plans to improve community engagement, disability inclusion, violence prevention and school infrastructure.



"SSC are helping to identify potential safety risks, raise awareness among students and foster a sense of security among pupils and staff."

Principal Abu BS Conteh Rose, SSC member, Makeni.

Strengthening access to Child Adolescent Health and Life Skills lessons

Alongside traditional academic subjects, schools must support learners with life skills that enable them to navigate common challenges, such as the risks of drugs and unprotected sex. This means they can better concentrate in class and perform in exams. However, implementation of the new Child Adolescent Health and Life Skills (CAHLS) curriculum is inconsistent across Senior Secondary School (SSS) grades. A recent survey of 46 schools found that CAHLS delivery is widespread in SS1 (96%) with a significant drop in SS2 and SS3 (68.1% and 14.9% respectively). The survey identified that to make improvement, better teacher training and materials are needed alongside guidelines on implementation – actions that LWL is exploring with MBSSE. In the meantime, a WhatsApp group is connecting teachers with CAHLS experts to access real-time coaching, support and feedback. Community engagement through Community Teachers' Association (CTA) meetings are also raising awareness on the value of educating learners on sensitive topics. As a result, teachers are reporting an improvement in their confidence to provide CAHLS lessons.



Personal Insight

This is a space where LWL staff and partners share reflections, lessons and stories from their work in education. A deeper look at what drives our efforts and the people behind the progress.



Salaymatu Kamara

LWL Gender and Inclusion Lead

“Our goal is to ensure girls and boys can attend school safe from all forms of violence. We work with the MBSSE, the Ministry of Gender and Children Affairs (MoGCA) and TSC to do this through reduced gender-based violence.

I’m especially proud of the GBCs – they are everywhere in our pilot districts, in all 200 schools. It will amaze you to see how the kids are responding to the sessions and the reporting mechanisms [they learn about]. And also the distribution of the menstrual hygiene kits – if you go to a school you will find that there are girls who will say “I am coming to school without hesitation because I have the sanitary pads.” In some schools, you also find that if a girl comes to school and discovers she has her period, she can get a kit from a mentor – instead of having to go home.

I want to see more outstanding girls bold to speak and I will continue to do my best for them.”



The second phase of the Leh Wi Lan programme is part of the Sierra Leone Secondary Education Improvement Programme II (SSEIP II), which is funded by UK International Development. This five-year programme supports Sierra Leone’s Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE) to deliver improved education outcomes at secondary level, with a focus on schoolgirls and learners with disabilities. Leh Wi Lan is implemented by a consortium of national and international organisations led by Cambridge Education.