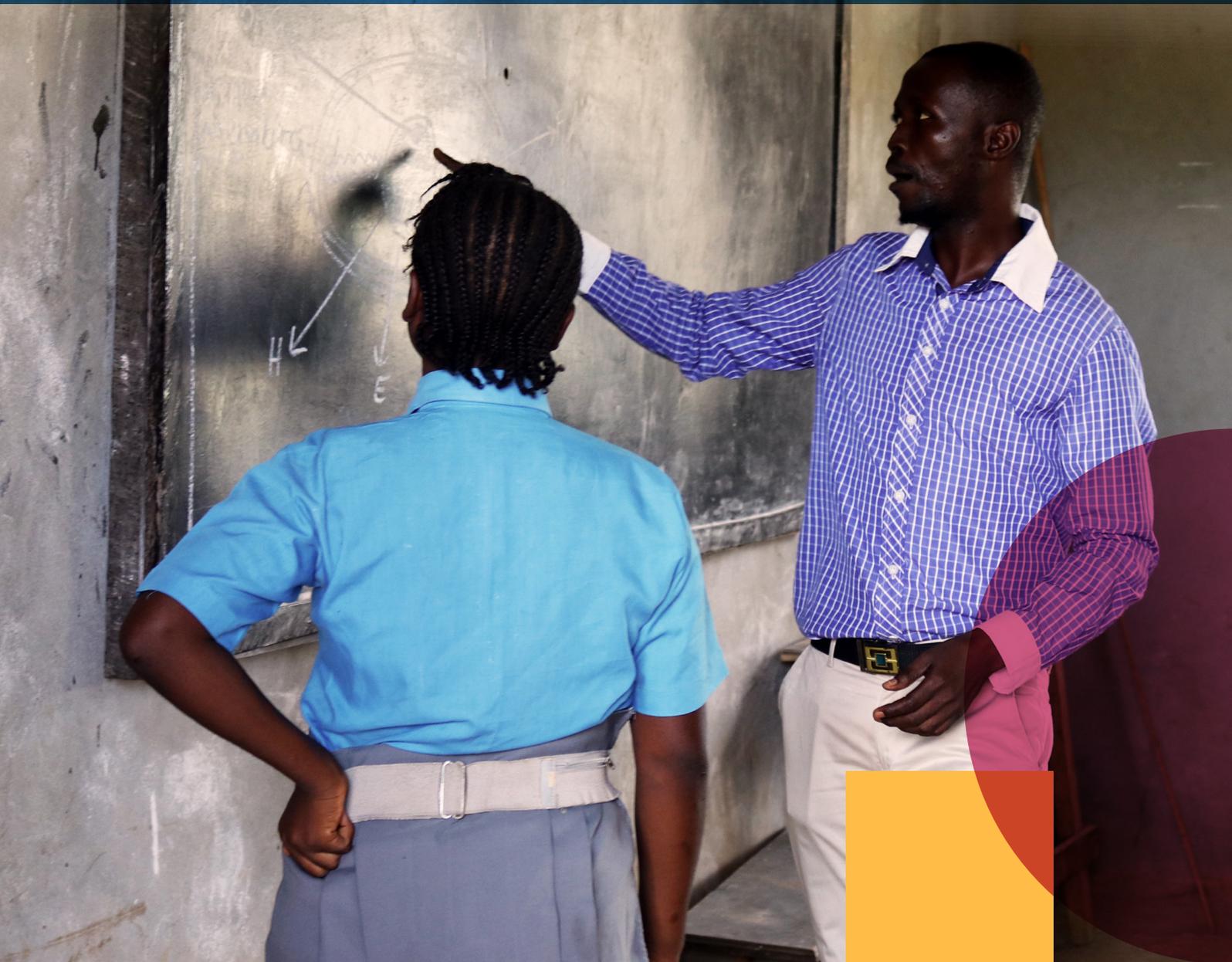


# A Facilitator Guide for Conducting Whole School-Based Continuous Professional Development

## Module 1: Creating a Safe and Inclusive Learning Environment



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## List of abbreviations

<b>CPD</b>	Continuous Professional Development
<b>CTA</b>	Community Teacher Association
<b>CWC</b>	Child Welfare Committee
<b>GBV</b>	Gender-Based Violence
<b>MBSSE</b>	Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education
<b>SGBV</b>	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
<b>SLT</b>	Senior Leadership Team
<b>SLTU</b>	Sierra Leone Teachers' Union
<b>SRGBV</b>	School-Related Gender-Based Violence
<b>TLC</b>	Teacher Learning Circle
<b>TSC</b>	Teaching Service Commission

# Introduction

All children are different, and all have an equal right to education no matter their background and abilities. Our ultimate goal is to have schools and classrooms that are welcoming, nurturing and spaces where ALL our children receive quality education. This will ensure that there is increased demand for schooling by all learners with their diverse backgrounds and abilities. To achieve inclusion all stakeholders must work together to review current practices and redefine inclusion strategies to ensure that these are more practical within the country's education setting.

## About the guide

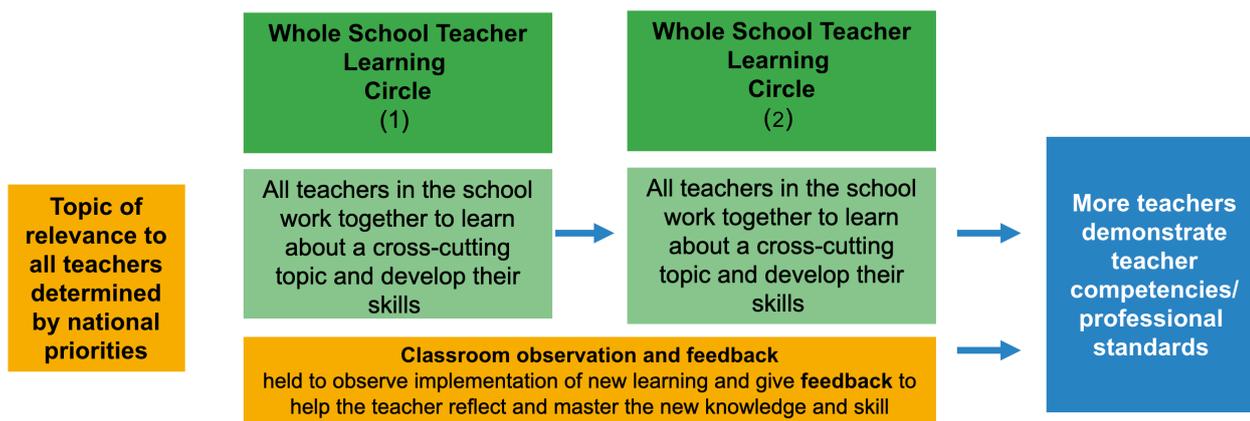
This guide is designed to support facilitation of school-based Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and discussions in schools that help teachers and school leaders to forge their own plan for ensuring that their school and classrooms are safe and inclusive. Each school is different and faces a different set of barriers to achieving safety and inclusion. This guide directs your thinking about your own situation and provides guidance on what could be done in this process or journey to becoming a more inclusive school.

## Structure for Whole school CPD

CPD for teachers includes a variety of activities such as training workshops, school-based meetings and discussions, Teacher Learning Circles (TLCs), classroom observation and coaching, joint planning and more. The Teaching Service Commission (TSC) and the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE) expect all teachers to participate actively in opportunities for professional development.

Whole school CPD involves all teachers in a school and happens throughout the school year. At the start of every term, schools conduct a three hour TLC, at school, which all teachers are expected to attend. During the TLC, one of the school leaders, a Principal or Head of Department for example, facilitates a series of activities to enhance teacher knowledge and skills in relation to a given topic. The activities are supported by a Facilitator Guide. Towards the end of the term, schools conduct a second TLC on the same topic. Between each TLC, school leaders observe teaching and give feedback to help colleagues improve. This is shown in figure 1 below.

**Figure 1.** Whole School: School-based Continuous Professional Development



## How to use the Facilitator Guide

This guide is to support school leaders - Principals, Head of Departments or other senior teachers that will lead and facilitate the TLC. The date and time for the TLC should be agreed well in advance of the meeting and communicated by the Senior Leadership Team in the school.

**Before** each TLC, the facilitator should:

- Read and familiarise themselves with the session notes and instructions for facilitating the TLC.
- Check their understanding of the activities to be undertaken during the TLC and their purpose.
- Prepare and collect resources needed for the TLC.
- Prepare the space including arranging seating, blackboards, whiteboards etc.

**During** each meeting:

- Take a register of attendance. Ensure that it is signed by all participants and given to the school Principal.
- Start and end on time.
- Encourage everyone to participate.

- Ensure the meeting is a safe space for everyone to share ideas and opinions. Listen carefully to what people say and encourage others to do the same.
- If participants want to discuss something that is not related to the topic, record the item on a flip chart and agree to discuss it after the meeting.
- Use energizers whenever participants are lacking in energy. Energizers can be rhymes, songs or a quick physical activity.
- Leave sufficient time for participants to complete the evaluation before they leave the TLC.
- Collect the evaluations.

**After** each meeting:

- Review the evaluations and speak with a few colleagues to get their feedback.
- Offer support to colleagues to complete TLC follow up tasks.

## How the Facilitator Guide is organised

The facilitator guide is organised by activity. Aim to follow the activities in the sequence given.

You will see that some types of activities have a symbol or sign to help you.

The symbols used are shown in the table below.

Symbol	Meaning
	<b>Learning outcomes:</b> These are brief descriptions of knowledge and skills teachers are expected to learn by the end of the learning circle. They also support both the facilitator and teachers to know the purpose of the learning circle thus allowing everyone to self-assess their learning progress.
	<b>Reflective activities:</b> Use reflection time to allow individuals and groups to think more deeply about an issue, or about what they've learnt.
	<b>Facilitator notes:</b> In these sections you will find the topic background and information needed to complete the task. If you can, print it and share with teachers or send it via WhatsApp to read before or after the TLC.
	<b>Discussion:</b> These are tasks where teachers get to talk and share ideas or experiences about specific topics.
	<b>Video:</b> These are visual and audio learning aids that introduce a topic/theme, provide a summary of the content taught or showcase different perspectives.
	<b>Audio clip:</b> These are audio recordings that introduce a topic/theme, provide a summary of the content taught or showcase different perspectives.
	<b>Case study:</b> These are real-life experiences collected from different school settings that provide opportunities to teachers to reflect and assess their ability to handle scenarios presented based on content learnt during the learning cycles.
	<b>Tasks for after the meeting:</b> These are tasks that teachers are required to do after the TLC. They may be individual or group tasks.

**Remember! A good facilitator...**

- Is well prepared to conduct the session
- Starts and ends the session on time
- Follows the guide and the proposed activities and discussions
- Communicates information and instructions clearly
- Encourages everyone to participate
- Is enthusiastic about CPD and the content covered in the TLC
- Recognises and respects participants' contributions
- Encourages participants to work together
- Is gender responsive and does not use any form of discrimination.



# Facilitator Guide for Teacher Learning Circle 1:

## Creating a Safe and Inclusive Learning Environment



# Teacher Learning Circle 1

**Theme:** School Safety and Inclusion

**Duration:** 3 hours

**Guiding document(s):** Radical Inclusion Policy, Code of Conduct for Teachers and Other Education Personnel, National Referral Protocol. These documents can all be found on the MBSSE’s Knowledge Platform - [Policies and research](#)<sup>1</sup>

## Learning outcomes

By the end of the TLC, teachers should be able to:



- Explain MBSSE and TSC’s Radical Inclusion policy and inclusion in the Teachers’ Code of Conduct.
- Use techniques to include all students in learning.
- Implement specific actions to make school and their classroom more inclusive.

## Agenda

Activity	Suggested duration
Introduction to the TLC	5 minutes
Reviewing the Teacher Code of Conduct	20 minutes
What does inclusion mean to us?	40 minutes
What does inclusion mean in Sierra Leone schools?	30 minutes
How do we, as a school team, manage inclusion?	20 minutes
What do we expect to see in a safe and inclusive classroom?	40 minutes
Learning from case studies	15 minutes
Next steps and way forward	10 minutes

<sup>1</sup> <https://mbsseknowledgeplatform.gov.sl/materials/section/policies-and-research>

## TLC 1 Activities

### Activity 1: Introduction



5 minutes

#### Resources

Learning outcomes written on the board or chart (see 'Learning outcomes' above).

#### Instructions for the session



- Explain that this TLC is about creating a safe and inclusive learning environment and everyone will be working together on this topic during this three-hour TLC. Invite participants to say what they would like to get from the TLC. Keep a record on a flip chart or board so that you can check back at the end to see if expectations were met.
- Share the learning outcomes for the TLC on a flip chart, blackboard or whiteboard, displayed where everyone can see. Briefly, run through them with the teachers and check everyone is clear.

## Activity 2: Reviewing the Teacher Code of Conduct on inclusion



20 minutes

### Resources

Poster of the MBSSE's [Code of Conduct for Teachers](#).<sup>2</sup>

### Instructions for the session



- Explain that during this TLC and the next you will be looking at the MBSSE's Code of Conduct for Teachers and other Education Personnel.
- Ask the teachers what they know about the Code of Conduct and whether anyone has read it recently.
- Read out the following paragraph from the document to the teachers:

'The Code of Conduct sets out standards of professional behaviour for teachers and other education personnel in their relationships with learners, colleagues, parents and the general public. This instrument also provides principles to guide professionalism and promote a positive learning environment and the well-being of learners from Pre-school, Primary, Junior Secondary School (JSS), Senior Secondary School (SSS) and Technical/Vocational level'.

- Now ask teachers to review the Code of Conduct poster you have displayed.
- Ask them to spend a few minutes discussing in pairs which statements are particularly relevant to promoting inclusion in the school and classroom and to be prepared to justify their choice.
- Ask two or three pairs to say which statement they have chosen and why.

<sup>2</sup> Teachers' Code of Conduct available at: <https://mbsseknowledgeplatform.gov.sl/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Code-of-conduct-for-teachers-and-other-educational-personnel-in-Sierra-Leone.pdf>

## Activity 3: What does inclusion mean to us?



40 minutes

### Resources

A copy of the 'Inclusion Questionnaire' for each teacher.

### Instructions for the session



- Explain that thinking about what inclusion means in Sierra Leone starts with themselves and their understanding of inclusion. At the end of this activity they will be asked to look at some national data on inclusion in the country.
- Ask teachers to reflect individually and then share experiences with each other as they answer the following questions below.

**Question 1:** Reflect on a time when you were deliberately included in an activity that you did not expect. Where was this? How did you feel about being deliberately included? What exactly made you feel deliberately included? Based on this experience, how would you best describe inclusion?

**Question 2:** Reflect on a time when you felt you were excluded from an activity. Why were you excluded? By whom? How did you feel about being excluded? What exactly made you feel excluded? Based on this experience, how would you best describe exclusion?

- After answering both questions, ask teachers to fill in the 'Inclusion Questionnaire' (see Page 16).
- Ask three or four volunteers to share with the group one thing they have learned from the exercise (NB/don't ask them to read out their answers).
- Write the two headings on the blackboard 'Inclusion is' and 'Inclusion is not'.

- Read out the statements below, one at a time. Ask teachers to tell you which heading they belong under and why.

Meeting the need of one learner at the expense of another.
Improvements to be done in the system by identifying and removing the barriers.
Welcoming diversity and benefiting all learners.
Focusing only on specific learners.
Providing attention and support to the majority group only.
Advocating for learners to leave the current system.
Making certain provisions for certain learners, especially those at risk of being excluded or underachieving.
All children being given the opportunity to participate in learning.
Focusing on one group of learners and ignoring the rest.
All children, including those who are not in school because they have not enrolled or have dropped out.
Only supporting learners in school.
Identifying barriers and keeping the system the same.

- Explain or read the information below to the teachers and spend 5 minutes making sure everyone is clear about inclusion.

**Inclusion** - The process of improving the terms of participation in society for people who are disadvantaged on the basis of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, or economic or other status, through enhanced opportunities, access to resources, voice and respect for rights.

**Inclusion in a school set up** is the belief that the needs of learners can be met in a common learning environment. An inclusive school includes all students, and welcomes and supports them to learn, whoever they are and whatever their abilities or requirements. This means making sure that teaching and the curriculum, school buildings, classrooms, play areas, transport and toilets are appropriate for all children at all levels.



## Facilitator notes - Activity 3

### Inclusion - What is and what is not?

Inclusion is about	Inclusion is not
Welcoming diversity and benefiting all learners.	Providing attention and support to the majority group only.  Focusing on one group of learners and ignoring the rest.
Making certain provisions for certain learners, especially those at risk of being excluded or underachieving.	Meeting the need of one learner at the expense of another.
Improvements to be done in the system by identifying and removing the barriers.	Identifying barriers and keeping the system the same.  Advocating for learners to leave the current system.
All children, including those who are not in school because they have not enrolled or have dropped out.	Only supporting learners in school.
All children being given the opportunity to participate in learning	Focusing only on specific learners

# Inclusion Questionnaire

Questions	Always	Sometimes	Never
Do I communicate my expectations on inclusion and equity clearly to my students?			
Do I develop clear rules and procedures to encourage inclusion in my class?			
Do I establish systems that allow students to report exclusion?			
Does my emotional, mental, financial or physical wellbeing affect my reactions and actions towards students?			
Do I address the individual needs of my students?			
Do I try new strategies to benefit struggling students?			
Do I support struggling students in my classroom by finding out why they are struggling?			
Do my actions as a teacher demonstrate my belief that all students can learn at a high level?			
Do I connect with all students, or are there some I need to reach out to more?			
Do I take time to observe my students and notice when there is exclusion?			
When I notice instances of exclusion, do I act or intervene?			
Do I provide my students with opportunities for choice?			
Do I provide opportunities for students to share their inputs about matters that affect them including my lessons?			
Do I encourage students to approach me with questions, not be afraid of making mistakes, and not be too harsh on themselves?			
Am I open to negative feedback from students?			
Do I establish safe boundaries with my students?			
Do I handle students who are not learning in my classroom by disciplining/punishing them?			
Do I have other discipline strategies other than caning to handle disruptive students in class?			

## Activity 4: What does inclusion mean in Sierra Leone?



30 minutes

### Resources

- MBSSE video.
- A copy of the data sets, one for each group of teachers.

### Instructions for the session



- Show the MBSSE video that defines inclusion.
- Remind teachers that Sierra Leone's government advocates for an inclusive education system and has produced a Radical Inclusion Policy which can be found on the [MBSSE's Knowledge Platform](#)<sup>3</sup>.

### Tasks for after the meeting



Send the link to the Radical Inclusion Policy and the background information from the facilitators notes '**Inclusion in Sierra Leone**' and suggest that during their own time they should read them along with the Radical Inclusion Policy and reflect on the following questions. You could start a school WhatsApp discussion around them.

- What does the law in the country say about inclusion in and out of school?
- What is Radical inclusion?
- Who is targeted in the Radical Inclusion Policy?
- What does the Radical Inclusion Policy state about pregnant girls and young mothers?
- The Radical Inclusion Policy calls on schools to provide a safe, inclusive and accessible learning environment that meet the needs of all children and where diversity is valued and supported. How have you applied this in your school?

<sup>3</sup> Radical Inclusion Policy available at: <https://mbsseknowledgeplatform.gov.sl/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Radical-Inclusion-Baseline-Report.pdf>



- Explain that as a country and as a school, we cannot say that we are promoting inclusion if we cannot identify, name, and recognise all the ways in which people are excluded, as well as recognising the impact of exclusion.
- Ask teachers in four groups to review and discuss together one of the data sets on the progress of inclusion in the country and reflect on the implication of this data in relation to the progress their school has taken in being inclusive.
- Ask each group to share two key points of feedback based on their discussions of the given dataset.

**Data set 1:** According to the 2021 Annual School Census report, there were 950 pregnant girls in schools during data collection with the highest number of pregnant schoolgirls being enrolled in JSS3. The minimum ages of these girls were 12, 13 and 14 years for primary, junior and senior secondary school levels respectively<sup>4</sup>.

- Why are there high cases of schoolgirl pregnancies in our regions?
- What are we doing as a school to prevent more teenage pregnancies?
- How can we support students who are pregnant and in school?
- How can we reduce teenage pregnancies?

**Data set 2:** 28% of adolescents aged 15-19 have begun childbearing; 22% have had a live birth. A larger proportion of teenagers in rural areas than in urban areas have begun childbearing (34% versus 19%). At regional level, the proportion of teenagers who have started childbearing is highest in the Southern region (33%) and lowest in the Western region (18%). The percentage of teenagers who have started childbearing decreases as education levels increase<sup>5</sup>.

- Why are young mothers not returning back to school after getting children?
- Even after rejoining school, stigma, discrimination, social and moral judgements often make it difficult for girls to continue with their learning. How can schools support young mothers rejoin and complete their schooling?

<sup>4</sup> [MBSSE\\_ASC2021\\_V3\\_Web-Version.pdf](#)

<sup>5</sup> <https://doctorswithafrica.org/en/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/01/teenage-pregnancy-sierra-leone.pdf>

**Data set 3:** According to the 2021 Annual School Census, 101 schools had reported cases or incidences of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV). Similarly, the Sierra Leone Demographic and Health Survey noted that 62% of girls and women aged 15-49 have experienced physical or sexual violence.

- What is SGBV?
- Why are there still occurrences of SGBV in schools?
- How do we encourage learners to report SGBV in schools?
- What can schools do to prevent cases of SGBV?

**Data set 4:** According to the 2019 Annual School Census Report, only 10% of schools nationally had ramp access for physically disabled students and teachers<sup>6</sup>.

- Are all our classroom and school facilities accessible by physically disabled students and teachers? Do we have ramps?
- What can we do as a school to make our facilities easily assessable to all people with disabilities?

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<sup>6</sup> [mbsse.gov.sl/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/2019-Annual-School-Census-Report.pdf](https://mbsse.gov.sl/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/2019-Annual-School-Census-Report.pdf)



## Facilitator notes - Activity 4

# What does inclusion mean in Sierra Leone?

## Background on the data sets

### Teenage pregnancies and young mothers

Poverty, lack of information, sexual violence and limited skills and knowledge to negotiate their sexuality, are some of the factors contributing to early pregnancies. For many girls, transactional sex and early marriages are a feature of survival as they get money, food and support in their studies by giving in to sexual advances or marriage. Teenage pregnancies deprive many girls of their childhood by limiting their opportunities to continue with education.

Young mothers who return to school often face similar stigma and exclusion as pregnant girls. They lack support breastfeeding and taking care of their babies and are often faced by judgements making many of them afraid to go back to school.

Research conducted in Western Area Urban, Western Area Rural, Koinadugu, Bombali, Bo, Karene and Falaba found that among the marginalised groups of learners, pregnant learners were found to experience the greatest levels of stigma and exclusion<sup>7</sup>. They face exclusion by their peers, their teachers, parents and even the community. There is a common assumption that once a girl is pregnant, she is unlikely to be successful in her education. Peers, teachers and even the community often make judgemental and humiliating comments about them, leading to many of them dropping out due to shame and lack of support from teachers and parents.

To support pregnant girls and young mothers, schools should:

- Select guidance counsellors to have discussions with all students, both girls and boys, on teenage pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases. These discussions should provide students with accurate information on human development, anatomy, reproductive health, family life, relationships, culture and gender roles, as well as human rights, gender equality, and threats such as discrimination and sexual abuse.
- Have discussions with students and school staff on inclusion and exclusion - including the school's inclusion policy and how support can be offered to those who have been excluded in the past.
- Create a school-based system to monitor and support pregnant girls, ensuring there is follow-up to facilitate their return to school.

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<sup>7</sup> Understanding exclusion in secondary schools. Available at <https://mbsseknowledgeplatform.gov.sl/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Understanding-Exclusion-in-Secondary-Schools.pdf>

Educating communities on laws and policies that allow pregnant girls and young mothers to continue with their education can help shift any negative attitudes. Schools are a great avenue for working with the community. For example, parent meetings can help showcase the importance of education for all children and change the narrative by showing that pregnant girls and young mothers can succeed after re-entry back to school.

## Children with Disabilities

A disability is any continuing condition of the body or mind that makes it more difficult for a person to do certain activities and interact with the world around them. For example, blind pupils have the same ability to learn than any other child, but it is more difficult for them to take notes, study and interact with the school environment. If we look at disability focusing on what the person is not able to do, we will tend to have low expectations for what people with disabilities can achieve. This is unfair because a disability is not the person's fault. Instead of seeing the person with a disability as 'having something wrong', we need to look at how we can support their full and effective participation in society. When it comes to pupils with disabilities, families and teachers should recognise that every child has unique characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs, so every child has the right to receive quality education to learn and progress in life.

People with disabilities are often subject to unfair treatment based on false assumptions about what they can or cannot do. They are often perceived as dependent and unable to fully participate in society<sup>8</sup>. This can happen to children and adults with disabilities, and children and adults can be responsible for the unfair treatment. People with disabilities can be discriminated at different levels: within their family when parents do not prioritise their education and well-being; at school when teachers do not adapt their teaching practice to their special needs; in their community when public spaces are not accessible; at work when they are refused employment because of their disability; in society when they are not represented in politics. People with disabilities can also suffer from teasing, bullying or avoidance, when people deliberately chose not to interact with them because of the stigma on disability. Women and girls with disabilities experience unique forms of discrimination; they may be singled out as targets for sexual harassment and many forms of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) due to a perception that they are more vulnerable and unable to protect themselves.

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<sup>8</sup> Inclusion Champions Handbook. Available at <https://mbsseknowledgeplatform.gov.sl/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/The-Inclusion-Champions-Handbook.pdf>

## Inclusion in Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone's government advocates for inclusive education systems.

Inclusive education can be defined as "an on-going process aimed at offering quality education for all while respecting diversity and the different needs and abilities, characteristics and learning expectations of the students and communities, eliminating all forms of discrimination<sup>9</sup>. This means that inclusive education is not limited to a specific group of students, but it targets supporting the learning and wellbeing of all students to ensure that they all have access to quality education regardless of their background or ability.

There are several laws and policies in the country that promote inclusion in and out of the school. These include:

- The Education Act.
- The Child Rights Act (2007). It says that every child has a right to an education.
- The Persons with Disability Act (2011). It gives children with disabilities the right to equal access to schools and participation in educational programmes.
- The Radical Inclusion Policy. This aims at removing all the barriers that can limit the learning of any child, emphasising the inclusion of those groups who have been historically marginalised.

## What is Radical Inclusion Policy?

This is the intentional inclusion of those excluded from education due to actions of individuals, institutions or even the society. It removes the barriers that limit learning for children and creates an inclusive education environment for all that is free from stigma, intolerance and exclusion.

## Who is targeted in the Radical Inclusion Policy?

The policy particularly emphasises the inclusion of historically marginalised groups: pregnant girls and parent learners, children with disabilities, children from rural and underserved areas, and children from low-income families. It is about creating an inclusive education system that allows all children in Sierra Leone to thrive.

In the past, pregnant girls were not allowed to attend school or sit for examinations. This policy sets out to support pregnant girls and young mothers fully participate in school including engaging schools and communities to support all learners. It also supports access to health and sex education at school to prevent more girls from falling pregnant.

The policy supports government's commitment to providing learning environments for all children.

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<sup>9</sup> Inclusive education: the way of the future; conclusions and recommendations of the 48th session of the International Conference on Education (ICE). UNESCO, 2009, p.126.

<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000180629>

## What does the Radical Inclusion Policy state about pregnant girls and young mothers?

Radical Inclusion Policy. Article 19 of the act states that “Pregnant girls, parent learners, children from the poorest homes, rural areas and underserved communities shall be encouraged to access, stay in, complete school and enjoy all the facilities provided in the school,” and that there should be “no discrimination between pupils in the matter of their admission to and treatment in educational institutions throughout Sierra Leone.”

### **The Radical Inclusion Policy calls on schools to provide a safe, inclusive and accessible learning environment that meet the needs of all children and where diversity is valued and supported. How have we applied this in our school?**

The Radical Inclusion Policy calls for all schools to systematically reduce cultural, policy and practical barriers to education thus ensuring that the school is a place of dignity, safety, and that there is respect and tolerance for all. This can be achieved by:

- Making physical adaptations to bring all school buildings up to expected national standards. For example, having ramps.
- Providing water and sanitation facilities for all, including girls and people with disabilities.
- Making teachers aware of students’ needs.
- Providing individualised learning to students.
- Having inclusion champions and support groups including clubs for marginalised groups in schools.
- Training and supporting teachers and students to promote inclusive practices in school.
- Intentionally supporting marginalised students to stay in school for example introducing leadership programmes to boost their confidence.
- Allowing pregnant girls to attend medical appointments during pregnancy.
- Supporting marginalised students to catch up on lost lessons.
- Imposing a zero-tolerance policy against bullying, discrimination, violence and exclusion of any kind.
- Providing desks and chairs that will enable pregnant girls to fit for use during the last stages of their pregnancy.
- Working with parents and communities to identify and enrol marginalised out of school children.
- Providing guidance to the community around marginalised students, especially pregnant girls and young mothers.

## Further Reading

### **-Radical Inclusion Policy**

<https://mbsseknowledgeplatform.gov.sl/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Radical-Inclusion-Baseline-Report.pdf>

### **-Improving Inclusion and Learning Outcomes for Pupils with Impairments and Disabilities in Sierra Leone's Secondary Schools**

<https://mbsseknowledgeplatform.gov.sl/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Improving-Inclusion-and-Learning-Outcomes-for-Pupils-with-Impairments-and-Disabilities.pdf>

## Activity 5: How do we, as a school, manage inclusion?



20 minutes

### Instructions for the session



Review the table below with your teachers and work together to fill in the first row. Once done, divide teachers into groups and have each group discuss two rows from the table below. Ask each group to complete the empty columns in their row. Encourage them to be honest when thinking about examples from within the school.

Ask each group to join with another group and share their discussions.

Type of exclusion	Who experiences it	When/where do they experience it	What can we do to eliminate exclusion?
Exclusion from play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Children with disabilities.</li> <li>-Classes which are being taught over break.</li> </ul>	During breaktimes	
Exclusion from learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Students who are suspended from school.</li> <li>-Children who are constantly being sent away because of fee balances, lack of uniform.</li> <li>-Children who do not have the chance to participate in class.</li> </ul>		
Exclusion from contributing to a lesson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Students whose responses are hardly correct.</li> <li>-Students who cannot keep pace with the lesson.</li> </ul>		

Exclusions from lack of physical access to school facilities e.g. stairs, not seeing the blackboard, pregnant girls not having seats they can fit in during last trimester			
Exclusion from separate water and sanitation facilities			
Exclusion from representation in leadership positions.  Does the school/ class leadership accurately represent all students in the school?			
Exclusion from medical appointments e.g for pregnant girls, sick students			

## Activity 6: What do we expect to see in a safe and inclusive classroom?



**40 minutes**

### Resources

Statement, questions and table for each group of teachers.

### Instructions for the session



- Ask teachers to read the following statement and briefly discuss (5 minutes) the subsequent questions in groups of three.

For a teacher to have an inclusive classroom they need to create a conducive classroom culture where all students are treated respectfully, and they need to use positive language with students. The teacher responds to students' needs, does not exhibit bias and challenges stereotypes in the classroom.

- What does this statement mean?
- What is a classroom culture and why is it important to create one?

The table below picks out the key points from this statement. Give each group of teachers one row from the table to discuss, thinking about:

- What the teacher would be doing (during the lesson/while teaching) if they were displaying this behaviour?
- What would the teacher be doing (during the lesson/while teaching) they were not displaying this behaviour?

Give each group about 10 minutes to discuss and complete their row, then discuss in a whole group for 20 minutes. Encourage the teachers to share their thoughts and then use the information in the facilitators notes to help guide the discussion.

Specific aspect being observed	Quality of teacher behaviour/teaching practices	
	High - What would the teacher be doing if they were displaying this behaviour	Low - What would the teacher be doing if they were not displaying this behaviour
<b>Classroom culture:</b> Supportive learning environment		
The teacher treats all students respectfully		
The teacher uses positive language with students		
The teacher responds to students needs		
The teacher does not exhibit bias and challenges stereotypes in the classroom (gender)		
The teacher does not exhibit bias and challenges stereotypes in the classroom (disability)		



## Facilitator notes - Activity 6

### What do we expect to see in a safe and inclusive classroom?

Classroom culture is created through the language we use, the responsibilities we encourage, and our teaching approaches. Positive classroom cultures are environments where students feel safe, included, involved and accepted by all. It's a space where everyone should feel accepted and included in everything. Students should be comfortable sharing how they feel, and teachers should be willing to listen and use the feedback to influence classroom culture.

As a teacher, creating a positive classroom culture should be one of your top priorities. The way you build a positive classroom culture can significantly impact your students' academic achievements, their wellbeing and behaviour. Classroom cultures are different for each teacher. Teachers need to take time to know their students to show kindness and promote inclusivity. A positive, caring classroom culture doesn't "just happen." It emerges because of thoughtful reflection and purposeful planning and actions.

During lesson observations, some forms of exclusion can be easily noted while some may not be easily detected. For a teacher to have an inclusive classroom, they need to:

- Treat all students respectfully.
- Use positive language with students.
- Respond to students' needs.
- Not exhibit bias and challenge stereotypes in the classroom.

## Further reading

### **-Teachers as change agents: Classroom research in Sierra Leone secondary schools**

[https://mbsseknowledgeplatform.gov.sl/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/LWL\\_Teacher-Research-Book.pdf](https://mbsseknowledgeplatform.gov.sl/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/LWL_Teacher-Research-Book.pdf)

P14: Improving Girls participation in my lesson

### **-Creating a productive environment in the classroom: Lessons from high performing secondary schools**

<https://mbsseknowledgeplatform.gov.sl/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Creating-a-Productive-Environment-in-the-Classroom-Info-Brief.pdf>

In the table below:

The 'High' column shows what behaviour each teacher should aspire to, to create an inclusive classroom.

The 'Low' column shows teacher behaviour that could damage students' self-esteem and attitudes to learning. Much of this behaviour is against the Code of Conduct for Teachers and the country's inclusion policies.

Specific aspect being observed	Quality of teacher behaviour/teaching practices	
	High	Low
<b>Classroom culture:</b> Supportive learning environment		
The teacher treats all students respectfully	The teacher treats all students respectfully. For example: The teacher uses students' names; says "Please", "Thank you", "Good morning students", and "Sorry" or shows other culturally relevant signs of respect.	The teacher does not treat students respectfully. For example: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Teacher yells at students</li> <li>2. Teachers hurls verbal abuse at students.</li> <li>3. Teacher scolds and reprimands students.</li> <li>4. Teacher shames and ridicules students.</li> <li>5. Teacher uses physical punishment e.g., caning to discipline students.</li> </ol>

	High	Low
The teacher uses positive language with students	<p>The teacher consistently uses positive language in communication with students.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The teacher consistently uses encouraging phrases such as “Great job!” when students show their work, or “Very good!” or “Let’s give student A a round of applause.”</li> <li>• Alternatively, the teacher may use gestures such as clapping or other culturally relevant signs of praise.</li> <li>• Students may also use encouraging phrases or gestures toward their peers.</li> </ul>	The teacher does not use positive language in communication with students.
The teacher responds to students’ needs	<p>The teacher promptly responds to students’ needs in a way that specifically addresses the problem at hand. For example: A student may be upset because of a bad grade. The teacher notices and asks the student if there is a problem, after which the student indicates that s/he is upset with his/her grade. The teacher then speaks quietly with the student at his/her desk, which appears to calm the student and resolve the issue. Alternatively, a student may be struggling to see written instructions on the board, so the teacher rewrites it in larger text and/or provides an alternative way for the student to access the information (e.g., on a separate sheet or orally).</p>	<p>The teacher is not aware of students’ needs or does not address the problem at hand. For example, a student may be upset because of a bad grade, and the teacher ignores the student or is dismissive of the issue (e.g., the teacher tells the student to “Get over it” or “Pull yourself together”). Alternatively, a student may say to the teacher that s/he is struggling to see the text on the board, and the teacher ignores the student’s comment and carries on with the lesson.</p>

	High	Low
The teacher does not exhibit bias and challenges stereotypes in the classroom (gender)	<p>The teacher does not exhibit bias and challenges stereotypes in the classroom.</p> <p>The teacher provides students of all genders with equal opportunities to participate in the classroom, has similar expectations for all students, and challenges gender stereotypes in the classroom. For example, the teacher calls equally on all genders to answer difficult questions and praises both boys and girls after they correctly answer. The teacher asks boys and girls to clean the blackboard and distribute learning materials (e.g., textbooks) to the class. The teacher uses examples and explanations that portray female rather than male scientists, doctors, and astronauts and/or encourages discussions with students about gender stereotypes and/or gender equality. The teacher may also actively encourage equal participation through comments such as "Let's hear more from the girls," or "Now that we have heard from a girl, let's hear from a boy".</p>	<p>The teacher exhibits bias or reinforces stereotypes in the classroom.</p> <p>The teacher could show gender bias by providing students with unequal opportunities to participate in classroom activities or by expressing unequal expectations for students' behaviours or capabilities. For example, a teacher calls only on boys or girls to answer difficult questions. Alternatively, the teacher calls equally on students of all genders to answer difficult questions but only assigns girls to clean the blackboard or hand out learning materials (e.g., textbooks) to the class. Other examples of gender bias are teachers scolding boys but not girls after incorrectly answering a question or misbehaving. Teachers may also give praise to girls but not boys after correctly answering a question.</p>

	High	Low
The teacher does not exhibit bias and challenges stereotypes in the classroom (disability)	<p>The teacher does not exhibit bias and challenges stereotypes in the classroom.</p> <p>The teacher provides students of all ability levels with equal opportunities to participate in the classroom, has similar expectations for all students, and challenges disability stereotypes in the classroom. For example, the teacher groups students with disabilities to work with others and uses examples and explanations that portray people with disabilities in important positions.</p>	<p>The teacher exhibits bias or reinforces stereotypes in the classroom.</p> <p>The teacher may provide students with unequal opportunities to participate in learning activities, use stigmatising terms, or express low expectations for students' behaviours or capabilities. For example, the teacher seats students with disabilities separately from other students. The teacher may use stigmatising terms about people with disabilities, in general, or express bias towards students with disabilities in the classroom through low expectations for their behaviour or capabilities.</p>

\*Guidance as provided by the World Bank Teach/Observers manual.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> [Teach Secondary Observer manual. World Bank Group](#)

## Activity 7: Learning from case studies



15 minutes

### Resources

- Copies of one case study for each group of teachers.
- Ibrahim on pregnant girls' video.

### Instructions for session



- Ask each group of teachers to discuss one case study. Using learning from previous discussions ask them to identify the points of exclusion in the study and discuss what can be done to support the teacher make the classroom more inclusive?
- Come together as a group and ask each group to read their case study to the whole group, then identify what suggestions they had. Use the facilitator notes to guide the discussion.
- Show the video 'Ibrahim on pregnant girls' to the group when you discuss case study 2.



[Ibrahim on supporting pregnant girls](#)

**Case study 1:** Sesay is a new learner in JSS2 and he has not been able to attend school for the last two terms as his parents could not afford to buy his uniform. His neighbour has given him a pair of uniform and he has just rejoined school. As the class teacher you have noticed that Mohamed seems to be struggling to fit in, make friends or even participate in classroom activities. What can you do to help the new learner feel included in the class?

**Case study 2:** Jamilya was pregnant and had to drop out of school for some time to take care of her baby. She has now resumed back to school but is having a hard time catching up with her studies. Other learners are also avoiding her, and she spends most time alone. Some teachers are not supportive as they think that she will not do well in her studies and might be a negative influence on other girls in the class. What can you do to support Jamilya?

**Case study 3:** The teacher notices that a particular learner is always being teased by a specific group of learners. The teacher at first did not think it was important and that the teasing would stop. However, the teasing has not stopped, and the learner seems withdrawn and participates less in class. What can the teacher do to support this learner and to encourage an inclusive classroom?

**Case study 4:** A student who has been absent for the last week is struggling to grasp a new concept and wants to ask the teacher to repeat the explanation once more but go into more details this time around. However, the learner is afraid. How can the teacher make lessons more inclusive for students who were either absent or have not understood a concept?



## Facilitator Notes - Activity 7

### Learning from case studies

#### Case study 1 response

Take time to talk to the learner, share your concerns and offer to help to introduce him or her to select students in your class that you think they would get along well, including students who would follow up on them. Sometimes, the first step to feeling included is to have someone notice there is a problem, offer some kind words and, where applicable, offer to help sort it out.

The teacher can also set up a buddy system. Some students can find it hard to make friends. This may be because they have not had many opportunities in the past to socialise with other students. It can also be because other students are not very friendly towards them. This can affect their self-confidence and have a negative impact on their learning. The buddy system involves you finding pupils who are willing to be friends (or 'buddies') with the pupil been teased. You can either identify students in your class who you think will be good 'buddies' or you can ask for volunteers. Encourage these buddies to talk to and make friends with the other student. Encourage them to help the other pupil, but only when this is necessary – for instance, the other student may not yet know classroom routines or may not be able to find their way to certain places. It is important that 'buddies' do not think they have to spend all of their time with their new friend. They are like a helper who checks that their fellow pupil is okay and supports him or her with specific tasks.

#### Case study 2 response

The Radical Inclusion Policy focusses on supporting girls who are pregnant, girls who have been pregnant and parent learners to stay in school and learn. Traditionally, in Sierra Leone girls were not allowed to attend school or sit for examinations while visibly pregnant. In 2015, when schools reopened after the Ebola outbreak, the Government of Sierra Leone imposed a ban on pregnant girls to attend school or sit for examinations. Five years later, in March of 2020, the ban was lifted with immediate effect because it was discriminatory and denied the girls their right to education. However, the stigma and the discrimination against pregnant girls and parent learners is still a barrier to their full participation in school. Principals and teachers are critical to ensure that all children, including pregnant girls and parent learners, have equitable access to education, in line with the Education Act 2004 that prohibits any form of discrimination between pupils.

Being inclusive is about balancing diversity. It is important to understand what makes one diverse, how this is leading to their exclusion, valuing their diversity and looking for ways for them to be included. It also entails ensuring that we do not point out differences and become agents for further exclusion.

There are several ways to deal with this scenario including:

- Having individual talks with the girl and offering motivation.
- Forming support groups/clubs.
- Where possible linking her to other girls who have gone through this and succeeded.
- Promoting discussions on equality and inclusion in your classroom.
- Having role plays, debates and activities with your learners to get them thinking about inequality, unfairness and exclusion.
- Being deliberate to engage those who are excluded thus demonstrating what inclusion means.

## Case study 3 response

Talk to both parties individually to understand what is happening. While listening in, a teacher should be open-minded.

### Immediate actions:

- Take time to talk to the boys teasing their fellow students. This should be the teacher in the first instance. They could call on another member of staff, if needed, to support them with the conversation.
- Take steps highlighted in case study 2 to support the learner being teased.
- Have class discussions about inclusion or organise other activities that build positive relationships between students.

### Longer term actions:

- Each school should agree in a school behaviour policy. There should be consequences for any form of harassment or violence, however, punishments are only effective if students can understand the link between the punishment and their behaviour.
- Seeking advice and help. Sometimes we may need advice or help from other professionals to deal with pupil behaviour and relations. When reporting an incident and seeking advice you must be sure to keep learner's personal details confidential.

## Case study 4 response

Creating dialogue within your lesson can be challenging yet it is a fundamental part of teaching. Part of our roles as teachers is to help build up good communication skills in our learners to enable them to speak out/up. These skills are fully transferable across other aspects of life. One way in which we can build the communication skills of our learners is to create safe, supportive and inclusive environments where learners feel comfortable to express their thoughts e.g. asking students regularly if they need help.

A teacher can also have team-building or group activities where learners get to teach each other while at the same enhance their communication and collaboration skills. Encourage students to work on group projects related to a topic they are learning. This could be a drama, a poster, a scrapbook, a challenge etc.

A teacher should move around the classroom and get involved with the learners thus getting an idea of their understanding.

Finally, a teacher should approach spiral teaching approach especially when they know some of their learners have either missed some lessons or are struggling to understand a concept. This means that a teacher should recap what they have taught previously and link this to what is currently being taught.

## Further reading

### **-Understanding exclusion in secondary schools**

<https://mbsseknowledgeplatform.gov.sl/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Understanding-Exclusion-in-Secondary-Schools.pdf>

## Activity 8: Next steps and the way forward



15 minutes

### Resources

- Inclusion findings table.
- Observation feedback format.

### Instructions for session



Explain that we often assume that exclusion is not about us or done by us but that other people are doing the excluding. Working towards making our school inclusive is the responsibility of everyone including us, as teachers, and learners too. Based on what we have learnt today, identify two things that you can do to create an inclusive environment for your students. Write your actions on a piece of paper and keep it to remind yourself what you have promised to do.

How can you be more inclusive in:

- Your lessons
- Your classrooms
- Your department
- Your school
- Your community.

Explain that, as well as their three action points, there are two other things they should now do as a result of what they have learned from this Learning Circle.



## Task 1

For us to better support our learners in the classroom, we need to first know what is going on. Over the next two weeks, reflect on and note down the answers to these questions to help you understand more about inclusion and your contribution to creating an inclusive culture.

- Who is excluded in my classroom. What are they excluded from and why? How can I, as a teacher, support them to be included?
- Is my classroom a safe, healthy and an inclusive environment? What have I done to make it a safe and inclusive space?
  - What does my class know about inclusion and how I can support them to know and practice this?
  - Do I talk to my students about their challenges? Through talking with them, you will have a better understanding of the problems they face and the ways you can help them.
  - Do I model inclusive behaviour?
  - Do I build positive relationships with my students?
  - Do I reward good behaviour and celebrate success?

Complete this table during the next two weeks to help you think about these points.

**Inclusion findings table**

Instances of exclusion	When was it observed	What did I do about this?	Discussions held with class on exclusion	What can be done to prevent future exclusion	When should suggested interventions be done	What was the impact of suggested interventions?	School leadership comments	School leadership signature



## Task 2

Work with colleagues to see if you are using the inclusive practices discussed during this learning circle in your classroom.

In this half of the term each teacher will take part in two classroom observations. One classroom observation support will be provided by a colleague and the other by a member of the school leadership team. Each teacher will also be expected to observe another teacher. Each classroom observation session will focus on two aspects of inclusion selected from one of the points discussed during today's meeting, namely:

- Treating all students respectfully.
- Using positive language with students.
- Responding to student needs.
- Not exhibiting bias and challenging stereotypes in the classroom.

After each classroom observation support, teachers should fill in the 'Observation feedback format' table (see page 44).

### Discuss and agree on:

- Who will be responsible for checking on the progress of the action steps mentioned above, including reviewing instances of exclusion in the classroom and mitigating it as well as conducting classroom observations.
  - At the department level
  - At the school level
- Timelines for each review - bi-weekly, monthly etc.



## Facilitator notes - Activity 8

### Next steps and the way forward

#### Features of an effective classroom observation

- A clearly defined purpose for the observation: what specific aspects will be observed
- A pre-observation meeting to discuss the goals and feedback desired from the teacher
- A specified setting for the observation
- A designated time for the observation
- An established method for recording data - is there an available classroom observation tool that will be used?
- A post-observation meeting to allow for teacher reflection and observation data to be shared.

#### How is a classroom observation done?

1. The teacher and the observer meet to clearly define the observation's purpose and pinpoint specific aspects of the teacher's performance or classroom environment to concentrate on.
2. The teacher and observer go through the classroom observation tool, including the questions that will guide the observations.
3. The teacher and observer set the date, time, and duration of the observation.
4. Before the observation, meet up with the teacher to discuss the purpose, focus areas, and specific instructions or expectations.
5. Actively observe the teacher deliver the lesson and engage with students. The observer should refrain from unnecessary interactions but take detailed notes on the teacher's actions, decisions, and interactions. The observer should aim to be inconspicuous as possible during the observation.
6. Following the observation, the observer should first allow the teacher to comment on their lesson/self-evaluation on what went well and areas to improve.
7. The observer provides the teacher with feedback based on their notes and observations.
8. Both the teacher and observer agree on action points that the teacher needs to work on.

## Observation feedback format

Teacher name	Observer's name	Grade Observed	Date	Aspects to be observed during lesson	What aspects were well demonstrated	Areas of improvement	Action points	Teacher's sign	Observer's sign	School leadership comments and sign

## Concluding remarks from School leadership



**5 minutes**

The facilitator gives concluding remarks and checks if teachers' expectations were met. Facilitator requests teachers to share any areas they might require additional support and to note it down for future support.

Remind teachers that a few days before each observation, they should review the rubric discussed during this learning circle and think about what behaviour the teacher's teaching should demonstrate or what the teacher observing should focus on. Remember that the purpose of the observation is to help each other develop and improve, not to try to find faults and catch each other out.

During the feedback discussion, the teacher observing should highlight teaching practices that led to inclusion/exclusion and ensure that suggestions for improvement have specific and action-oriented steps. By the end of the session, both teachers should agree on two action points to improve in the class. When the next observer comes to the classroom, they should first look at these action points and discuss them as part of the pre-lesson preparation.



# Facilitator Guide for Teacher Learning Circle 2: Creating a Safe and Inclusive Learning Environment



## Teacher Learning Circle 2

**Theme:** Creating a safe and inclusive environment for learning

**Duration:** 3 hours

**Guiding document:** The Code of Conduct for Teachers and other Education Personnel. This can be found on the [MBSSE's Knowledge Platform - Policies and research](#).<sup>11</sup>

### Learning outcomes

By the end of the Learning Circle teachers will be able to:



- Explain the Teachers' Code of Conduct.
- Implement some positive behaviour management techniques in their classrooms.
- Act positively as an individual, as a member of a department and a member of the school team to ensure that the school is safe.

### Agenda

Activity	Suggested duration
Welcome, learning outcomes and introduction	5 minutes
The Code of Conduct for Teachers and Education Personnel	40 minutes
Consequences of breaking the code of conduct	15 minutes
Negative and positive discipline	40 minutes
How should you promote positive behaviour during your teaching?	30 minutes
Learning from case studies	20 minutes
Progress of previous action steps	10 minutes
Next steps and way forward	20 minutes

<sup>11</sup> <https://mbsseknowledgeplatform.gov.sl/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Code-of-conduct-for-teachers-and-other-educational-personnel-in-Sierra-Leone.pdf>

## TLC 2 Activities

### Activity 1: Introduction



5 minutes

#### Resources

Learning outcomes written on the board or chart (see 'Learning outcomes' above).

#### Instructions to the session



- Explain that the focus of this learning circle is on the Code of Conduct for Teachers and Education Personnel and on thinking about strategies to help create a safe and inclusive culture within the school.
- Invite participants to say what they would like to get from the TLC. Keep a record on a flip chart or board so that you can check back at the end to see if expectations were met.
- Share the following learning outcomes for the TLC on a flip chart, blackboard or whiteboard, displayed where everyone can see. **Briefly**, run through them with the teachers and check everyone is clear.

### Activity 2: The Code of Conduct for Teachers and Education Personnel



40 minutes

#### Resources

The four principles of the Teachers' Code of Conduct written on a flipchart/the board.

Put the facilitators notes for this activity in a separate document and make the relevant section available to each group for their discussion. You could consider sending the section to each of the group through WhatsApp or email to save printing it.

## Before the session

Write the titles of 'Four Principles of the Code of Conduct' on a board or flipchart and display so everyone can read them. Leave a gap beneath each one.

On large strips of paper write the 'Principle descriptors'.

Use sellotape or something else to stick the strips of paper.

The 'Four Principles of the Code of Conduct' guide how teachers should behave:

- **Principle 1: Efficient and effective service delivery**

**Descriptor:** Guides and calls on teachers to ensure that they are providing high quality education and maintaining professionalism in their teaching approaches.

- **Principle 2: Commitment and attitude to the profession**

**Descriptor:** Guides teachers on the need to demonstrate dedication to continuous improvement and professional development.

- **Principle 3: Effective, efficient and proper use of school resources**

**Descriptor:** Guides and calls for teachers to effectively and efficiently utilise and manage school resources responsibly to create conducive learning environments.

- **Principle 4: School environment and work ethics**

**Descriptor:** Guides and calls for teachers to maintain safe, supportive and inclusive environment for all students.

## Instructions for this session



- Show the teachers the titles of the 4 principles of the Teacher's Code of Conduct on the board.
- Give out the 'Principle Descriptions' to 4 teachers. Ask them to read their principle descriptor with three people around them and together decide which heading they go under. Ask them to stick their descriptor under the correct heading on the board, explaining why they've chosen that heading.
- Explain that under each principle there are different points which describe the exact behaviour expected of teachers.
- Divide teachers into pairs and groups and assign each group/pair 1-2 rows of the table below to discuss using the guiding questions. Give them the facilitator notes for their relevant section to look through whilst they answer the questions (20 minutes).
- Ask each group to identify three key messages to share with the rest of the group. Come back as a whole group and ask each group to share their key messages.

Teachers and other education personnel shall...	Guiding questions
<b>1.2 (h).</b> Empower learners to develop self-esteem and academic excellence.	What is student self-esteem and why should we promote it?  What can teachers do and say to negatively impact students' self-esteem?  How can we promote student's self-esteem?
<b>2.2.1</b> At all times, maintain a professional relationship with all learners, recognising that all learners are equal and foster learners' intellectual, physical, emotional, social and spiritual potentials.	What is and what makes a professional teacher-student relationship?  What makes an unprofessional teacher-student relationship?  How can we promote better professional teacher-student relationships?
<b>2.2.3 (a)</b> Promote safe and conducive learning environments.	What makes a learning environment safe and conducive for learning?  How are we promoting safe and conducive school/classroom cultures that will promote learning?
<b>2.2.3 (c)</b> Establish and maintain zero tolerance for all forms of SGBV, exploitation and abuse, physical and humiliating forms of punishment, psychological abuse and child labour.	How do teachers establish and/or maintain SGBV in schools?  What are the effects of SGBV on learners?  What can we do as a school/class to maintain zero tolerance for all forms of SGBV?
<b>2.2.3 (d)</b> Eliminate all forms of discrimination at all times.	What forms of discrimination are there in our school?  How can we eliminate all these forms of discrimination?
<b>2.2.3 (e)</b> Employ positive methods of corrective discipline.	How should we not discipline our students?  What positive methods of corrective discipline can we use as a school/class?
<b>2.4.2 (b)</b> Encourage and work closely with the community to ensure that all children in the community access, stay in and complete school.	How are we encouraging and working with the community to ensure that out of school children rejoin school?  How are we working with the community to support pregnant girls, young mothers, children with disabilities and other marginalised children to stay and complete school?
<b>4.1 (e)</b> Not engage in unprofessional practices such as examination malpractice, favouritism, selling in classroom, bribery, corruption and soliciting gifts.	What unprofessional practices do you know?  What makes them unprofessional?  What can we do to reduce unprofessional practices in our school?



## Facilitator Notes - Activity 2

# The Code of Conduct for Teachers and Education Personnel

The MBSSE's Code of Conduct for Teachers and Education Personnel sets out standards of professional behaviour for teachers and other education personnel in their relationships with learners, colleagues, parents and the general public in Sierra Leone.

### 1.2 (h) Empower learners to develop self-esteem and academic excellence

Self-esteem is the degree to which students feel satisfied with themselves and feel valuable and worthy of respect.

Self-esteem is the foundation on which students build their confidence, resilience, and a positive mindset. These traits help students overcome challenges and achieve their full potential. When students believe in their abilities and recognise their value, they're more inclined to participate in class, take risks, and persevere in the face of adversity. Low self-esteem or lack of confidence leaves students doubting their ability to succeed, making them hesitant to engage in learning or take appropriate academic growth risks. For example, students with low self-esteem may make self-degrading comments such as "I'm stupid," "I can't do this," "I always do everything wrong".<sup>12</sup>

High or low self-esteem are shaped by students' experiences and the reaction they get out of each experience. If we keep telling our students that they are always wrong and cannot learn, it's going to be very difficult for their self-esteem to be positive and healthy.

To help nurture students' self-esteem, teachers can:

- Focus on all achievements and successes, no matter how big or small. Celebrating achievements helps students develop a positive self-image and a sense of self-worth. When students see their successes, they become more motivated to take on new challenges.
- Help students set realistic goals that match their abilities and provide opportunities for success. When students can achieve their goals, it will give them a sense of accomplishment and boost their confidence.
- Teach students to understand that their abilities are not fixed and can grow and develop over time. Instead of focusing on a student's grade, talk to them about the value of the learning process. Empathise that they will make mistakes, and there will be setbacks, but that is okay because learning is a journey.
- Provide students with constructive feedback and encourage them to reflect upon their studies. Discuss with students how they can improve their assignments, don't just give them a grade or crosses and ticks.

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<sup>12</sup> Students experiencing low self-compassion or low perceptions of competence  
<https://www.apa.org/ed/schools/primer/self-esteem.pdf>

- Share stories of failures and how different people overcame them. This will help students understand that setbacks are a normal part of life and can be overcome with determination and persistence.
- Differentiate instruction to meet the needs of each student's interests, abilities, and learning styles will enable students to experience success and feel valued as individuals.
- Creating positive classroom environments that give students a sense of belonging and spaces where they feel safe.
- Encourage students to work together on projects, assignments, or presentations. By collaborating, students not only learn from one another but also gain confidence through the support and shared knowledge of their peers. Collaborative projects provide an opportunity for students to offer constructive feedback, exchange ideas, and celebrate collective accomplishments.
- Encourage self-reflection that enable students identify their strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement, fostering a sense of personal growth and progress

### 2.2.3 (a) Promote safe and conducive learning environments

A conducive learning environment consists of a setting that supports learners' goals, thoughts, and ideas. It's a positive space that aids teaching and learning. A conducive learning environment considers the **physical, psychological, social, and cultural needs** of learners, and what they require to achieve success.

A conducive environment is also a safe place for learning. Safety does not only refer to physical safety but also refers to protection from psychological or emotional harm. Conducive learning environments are beneficial to both teachers and learners. Teachers find it much more enjoyable to teach students who are focused, happy, and comfortable in their ideal learning environment.

To create a safe and conducive atmosphere for students' learning, teachers can:

- Establish clear rules of behaviour to guide both teacher and student behaviour in and out of class.
- Diligently monitor for discrimination, bullying and exclusion and addressing all these instances. This will enable all your students to feel comfortable and empowered to learn and express themselves.
- Create a sense of belonging by taking time to connect with your students. A teacher could share something about themselves and learn student names along with something unique about them such as their strengths.
- Arrange the seating in an open manner that allows for connections with other students. Where students are seated can greatly impact their learning, behaviour, and performance.

- Find alternative ways to discipline or reprimand students that do not involve embarrassing or humiliating them in front of their classmates.
- Give constructive feedback rather than harsh criticisms to help foster a supportive learning community.
- Support classroom routines by providing daily to-do lists.
- Create classrooms that encourage interaction rather than a classroom where only the teacher speaks, and the students merely listen. A teacher should create classrooms that promotes interaction, be it amongst students themselves or between teachers and students.
- Collect regular feedback from students on what supports or discourages learning - what makes them feel safe. Teachers should then act on this information by having discussions on way forward with students and school management, addressing complex issues and conflict productively.

### **2.2.3 (c) Establish and maintain zero tolerance for all forms of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence, exploitation and abuse, physical and humiliating forms of punishment, psychological abuse and child labour**

Our learners, especially girls, are faced with extreme violence as part of their everyday lives. To make it worse, the victims of violence are often blamed for the acts perpetrated against them with systems and structures sometimes preventing victims from reporting and/or obtaining justice for violation of their rights, for example in cases of rape <sup>13</sup>.

School-Related Gender-Based Violence (SRGBV) includes acts or threats of sexual, physical, or psychological violence occurring in and around school, perpetrated as a result of gender norms and stereotypes, and enforced by unequal power dynamics .

Gender-based violence in schools, be it sexual, physical or psychological, can be perpetrated by peers, educators and other school staff, sometimes exploiting children for grades or other favours.

Types of school-related violence include:

- Violence perpetrated by teachers and other school staff – including corporal punishment, cruel and humiliating forms of psychological punishment, sexual exploitation, harassment and abuse, and other forms of bullying for example unwanted recurrence of staring, following, verbal abuse.
- Violence that takes place between peers in and around schools – such as bullying and harassment, SGBV, and physical and psychological violence.

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<sup>13</sup> Breaking the cycle: Ending gender based violence and empowering women in Sierra Leone. World Bank Blogs. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/african/breaking-cycle-ending-gender-based-violence-and-empowering-women-sierra-leone>

- Violence in the home and/or community that has an impact on schools.
- Attacks on schools carried out for political, military, ideological, sectarian, ethnic, religious or criminal reasons — against students, educators and education institutions.

This will be the topic of a future learning circle where we will look at this in more depth.

### **2.2.3 (d) Eliminate all forms of discrimination at all times**

Discrimination in education occurs when students or educators are treated differently based on their race, gender, disability, religion, or other characteristics, for example being pregnant. Discrimination can take many forms, including verbal harassment, physical assault, exclusion from educational opportunities, denial from using school resources, exclusion from activities and unfair grading or disciplinary practices.

Discrimination can also be:

- Direct - where a student or teacher is treated differently and worse than others because of who they are or because of what other people think they are. For example, discrimination by tribe, religion, status e.g. pregnant.
- Indirect - where discrimination occurs because of a rule or a way of doing things that puts students at a disadvantage when compared with others. For example, only asking boys to respond to questions in class.
- By association - when students are treated differently and worse because of people they are connected or associated with. For example, coming from poor households or having disabled relatives.
- By disability - where students are treated differently and worse because of what they can or cannot do. This can include physical barriers to access, bullying and harassment, unfair grading or disciplinary practices.
- By gender - where students or educators are treated differently based on their gender. This can include exclusion from educational opportunities, verbal harassment, and physical assault.
- Harassment - where students are treated in ways that are offensive, frightening, degrading, humiliating or distressing.
- Victimisation - where students or teachers are treated badly because they complained about discrimination or because people think that you reported them or others on discrimination.

Discrimination in education can have severe and long-lasting effects on students' mental health, academic performance, and overall well-being. Discrimination can lead to low self-esteem, anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues. Discrimination can also lead to poor academic performance, absenteeism, and dropping out of school or university. Discrimination can also affect students' future opportunities for employment and career advancement.

To eliminate discrimination, schools can begin by understanding who might be at risk of discrimination, what they can do to minimise discrimination and how they can support students at risk of discrimination. A good place to start is with an assessment of the current situation, identifying the strengths that exist in the school, but also needs and priorities. Schools can also:

- Offer support to those who have experienced any type of discrimination or are at risk. For example, ensuring that students who miss classes have a means of catching up.
- Challenge discriminatory practices through having capacity building sessions on what discrimination entails, its effects, reporting procedures and steps being taken to eliminate it.
- Celebrating diversity. For example, ensuring student leadership is well represented.
- Ensuring teaching and learning approaches are diverse and relatable by most if not all students.

### **2.2.3 (e) Employ positive methods of corrective discipline**

The goal of discipline is not to control children and make them obey. It is rather to give them skills for making decisions, learn self-control and be responsible for their own behaviour<sup>14</sup>.

Positive discipline is based on the assumption that most children want to behave. It understands that children learn with cooperation, and that the promise of rewards can be a greater motivator than the threat of punishment.

It relies on the modelling of appropriate behaviour by teachers, setting clear rules on what is acceptable and not acceptable, on rewarding children who behave well with praise, and listening to the children. It is not a system that runs away from disciplining bad behaviour, but any sanctions must be proportionate and should not involve physically harming the child or humiliating them. And it is the behaviour that is to be criticised, not the child.

Discipline should be used constructively, in which learners experience a corrective approach, encouraging them to be self-reliant and self-controlled, accepting their own responsibility for their actions.

## **4.1 (e) Not engage in unprofessional practices such as examination malpractice, favouritism, selling in classroom, bribery, corruption and soliciting gifts**

### **2.2.1 At all times, maintain a professional relationship with all learners, recognising that all learners are equal and foster learners' intellectual, physical, emotional, social and spiritual potentials**

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<sup>14</sup> UNESCO, Embracing Diversity: Toolkit for Creating Inclusive, Learning-Friendly Environments

Student-teacher relationships can be complex. Teachers are in a position of authority and can use their position to care for, gain the trust of and influence students. This same position, if misused, can compromise students' safety and bring about grave consequences for teachers.

Good student-teacher relationships are essential for positive classrooms. Teachers who foster positive relationships with their students create classroom environments which are more conducive to learning and meet students' developmental, emotional and academic needs. Positive teacher-student relationships contribute to students who are less likely to avoid school, more self-directed, more cooperative and more engaged in learning. Teachers who care about their students believe that every child can learn, but differently and at different rates. They set high expectations, are warm and trusting, and strive to keep the relationship conflict-free. They admit mistakes, set clear boundaries, and are open, honest, and approachable.

Teachers who have negative relationships with student show evidence of frustration, irritability and anger towards certain students. Teachers might display their negativity through sarcastic or disrespectful comments toward students. Negative relationships are also characterised by student victimisation or bullying. Often, teachers will describe a specific student as "one who exhausts them" or "a student who leaves them feeling drained and burned out." Negative teacher-student relationships are stressful for both teachers and students and teachers may find themselves resorting to yelling and harsh punitive control.

To ensure student safety and to build positive environments, it is important for teachers to establish and maintain these five professional boundaries in their classrooms<sup>15</sup>:

**Emotional Boundaries.** Teachers must not let emotions influence their behaviours and attitudes towards students. Establishing emotional boundaries helps teachers to:

- Consider all students equal.
- Refrain from giving preferential treatment to specific students.
- Prevent personal problems from influencing and interfering with professional duties.
- Develop emotional independence among students.

**Relationship Boundaries.** These boundaries help to keep teacher-student relationships purely professional – meaning teachers are not "friends" with their students. Relationship boundaries prevent teachers from:

- Forming personal and/or inappropriate relationships with students.
- Contacting or arranging meetings with students without informing parents. This includes meeting students in public spaces, driving students' home, or extending one-on-one sessions at school beyond permissible school hours.
- Integrating themselves into students' lives and that of their families on a personal basis.

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<sup>15</sup> [Crucial Boundaries Teachers Must Maintain in Classrooms, Professional Learning Board](#)

**Power Boundaries.** Teachers are responsible for the welfare of students. This includes ensuring that they do not misuse their position of power and authority to cause harm to students by:

- Rewarding or punishing students inappropriately, without proper basis or based on their personal grudges.
- Using students for personal benefits.
- Bribing, manipulating, humiliating or threatening students.
- Failing to respond to students' claims of bullying or abuse in a timely manner.
- Not reporting of students who are behaving inappropriately with teachers.

**Communication Boundaries.** As channels for communication increase, the need for boundaries also increases. Teachers must strive to keep all communication transparent. Some communication boundaries that must be maintained include:

- Avoiding sharing and/or requesting for personal information, pictures and videos from students.
- Giving clear instructions when students can contact (time and days) teachers.
- Avoid engaging in personal communication (text, online) with students.
- Informing parents of all communication with students.
- Avoiding addressing students with pet names or terms of endearment.

**Physical Boundaries.** Although "touching" is inevitable in the profession, teachers must:

- Refrain from touching students inappropriately, including stroking, tickling or hugging them.
- Respect proximity and physical space when interacting with students.
- Give students privacy in restrooms, locker rooms and dressing areas.

## Activity 3: Consequences of breaking the Code of Conduct



15 minutes

### Resources

Write a list of the consequences (see below in the facilitators notes) for breaking the Code of Conduct on the board in random order.

### Instructions for this session



Divide teachers into groups and have them discuss the following questions:

- What does breach of conduct mean?
- Ask teachers to work together to put the list of consequences in order of severity.
- How can a teacher or student report a breach in the Teacher's Code of Conduct? Use the facilitators notes to guide the discussion.



## Facilitators notes - Activity 3

# Consequences of breaking the Code of Conduct

Breach means violating, breaking or going against the Teacher's Code of Conduct.

Going against all that we have discussed above, for example, participating in sexual, financial and violent malpractices could lead to dismissal from the teaching profession. A breach of the [Teacher's Code of Conduct](#) could lead to:

- Query
- Warning (verbal or written)
- Withholding of salary(ies)
- Suspension of salary(ies)
- Suspension from the teaching profession
- Deletion from the payroll
- Deregistration
- Withdrawal or cancellation of the teaching licence
- Dismissal from the teaching profession and matter handed over to the Sierra Leone Police (in cases of proven sexual, financial and examination malpractices).

If you become aware of any incident that breaches the Teacher's Code of Conduct, you should report it to the relevant authorities immediately.

For extreme cases of SGBV, a teacher can follow the National Referral Protocol and report to the School Safety Committee, as well as appropriate external services: 112 Police; 117 Health; 116 SRGBV.

Other breaches of the Teacher's Code of Conduct can be reported to relevant authorities, including:

### Relevant authorities to report to in JSS/SSS in case of breach of conduct

- |   |
|---|
| 1. Form Teacher/Guidance Counsellor/Mentor                    |
| 2. Head of School Administration                              |
| 3. School Safety Committee/School Complaints Committee        |
| 4. SLTU school representative                                 |
| 5. Board of Governors   |
| 6. Community Teacher Association (CTAs)                       |
| 7. Child Welfare Committees (CWCs)                            |
| 8. Sierra Leone Teachers' Union (SLTU)                        |
| 9. District Education Office (MBSSE)                          |
| 10. Local Authority   |
| 11. Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs |
| 12. Ministry in Charge of Education/Gender Desk Officer       |
| 13. Teaching Service Commission (TSC)                         |
| 14. Relevant existing structures                              |

## Activity 4: Negative and positive discipline



30 minutes

### Resources

- Have the facilitators notes ready to read out key sections to the teachers.
- Daniel Kamara on Positive Behaviour Management.

### Instructions for this session



- Read out the section in the facilitators notes on corporal punishment and the rights of the child. Discuss it together and give people the chance to ask questions.
- Ask teachers to reflect individually and then discuss with a partner why corporal punishment is banned in Sierra Leone. Briefly discuss as a whole group.
- Read out the two definitions of punishment and discipline below without saying which is which. Ask teachers to tell you which statement describes punishment, and which describes discipline.

In managing the school environment this should be proactive and constructive. Learners should experience an educative, corrective approach in which they learn to exercise self-control, respect others and accept the consequences of their actions.

This is reactive. It is not constructive or educative, it is retribution for an offence. The goal is to inflict pain, payback time. It is disrespectful of others; it is devoid of reflection by the learner, and it does not teach self-control. It is authoritarian, it is about power and control over the learner. It is negative.



- Ask teachers to reflect individually which they think is used more often in the school and why. **Don't ask them to share their answer. This is for individual reflection only.**



Write two headings on the board 'Positive discipline' and 'Negative discipline'. Read out the following statements and ask the teachers to decide whether they are positive or negative discipline. Answers are in the facilitator's notes.

- Is controlling, negative and disrespectful. Involves a show of power, through sarcasm, beating and humiliation.
- Presents learners with possible alternatives – focuses on positive behaviour.
- Persistently punishes without seeking reasons for offences.
- Seeks the reasons behind persistent offences.
- Attempts to control learners' behaviour by punishing bad behaviour.
- Redirects behaviour by selectively ignoring minor misbehaviour, using reflection on an incident through give-and-take discussions and so on.
- Good behaviour is associated with not being caught. Learners only behave so that they don't get caught out and are then punished.
- Is based on empathy and an understanding of the individual and their needs, abilities, circumstances and developmental stages.
- Focuses on rewarding learners for their effort and good behaviour.
- Recognises that children have an innate sense of self-discipline and can be self-directed.
- Learners attempt to keep the rules because they have been discussed and agreed upon.
- The consequences of breaking a rule are often punitive, illogical and unrelated to the learner's behaviour.
- Tells learners what not to do and not offer alternatives.
- Learners follow the rules because of fear, threats or bribes.
- The consequences of breaking a rule are directly related to the learner's behaviour.
- Is respectful, dignified as well as physically and verbally non-violent.
- The needs and circumstances of learners are not taken into account and responses are thus often inappropriate and lack empathy.
- Regards children as in need of control from an external source.
- Minor issues result in constant reprimands or punishment.
- Mistakes are regarded as an opportunity to learn. Learners are treated with empathy and are given the opportunity to express healthy remorse.

- The learner is the focus and is criticised.
- Behaviour is the focus and not the learner.

Ask the teachers to say which column is more likely to lead to good behaviour in and around school and why.

Explain that in many schools in Sierra Leone teachers use punishment/negative discipline rather than positive discipline. In some schools they are trying to change the way they manage behaviour. Show them the video of Daniel Kamara on positive behaviour management and ask them to look out for the different ways they managed poor behaviour in their school.



### [Daniel Kamara on Positive Behaviour Management](#)

- Ask the group to identify the approaches he described, then show video again.
- Discuss how these approaches could be used in your school.



## Facilitator notes - Activity 4

### Negative and positive discipline

Corporal Punishment is defined by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child as 'any punishment in which physical force is used and intended to cause some degree of pain or discomfort, however light.'<sup>16</sup> Most involves hitting the child with a hand or implement such as a stick, but can involve 'kicking, shaking or throwing children, scratching, pinching, biting, pulling hair or boxing ears, forcing children to stay in uncomfortable positions, burning, scalding or forced ingestion (for example, washing children's mouths out with soap or forcing them to swallow hot spices)'. In addition, there are other non-physical forms of punishment which are also cruel and degrading and thus incompatible with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. "These include, for example, punishment which belittles, humiliates, denigrates, scapegoats, threatens, scares or ridicules the child".

It is not simply out of concern for the physical safety of children that we seek to prohibit the practice of corporal punishment. It violates their dignity as human beings, and it has emotional, developmental and educational consequences.

Corporal punishment has also been linked to the increased prevalence of self-harm among children and the acceptance of violence as normal behaviour, including bullying in school and perpetuating cycles of violence once the students' become adults.<sup>17</sup> Children who are subjected to corporal punishment are often fearful of trying new things, frequently feel ashamed of themselves, or are angry and humiliated. For students who have behavioural or learning problems or come from difficult home environments it can undermine confidence and lead to negative feelings about school. Children come to hate the teacher, the subject, the school. It interferes with the learning process and has been associated in many countries with school drop-out and truancy. Corporal punishment does not work over the long term. It achieves discipline by making children do what teachers want them to do out of fear of the consequences, not because they are learning to take responsibility for their own actions and achieving self-discipline. It creates an environment in which students are more concerned with avoiding being caught than in doing the right thing. It does not stop the behaviour being punished.

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<sup>16</sup> UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 'General Comment No. 8' (2006), CRC/C/GC/8 paragraph 11

<sup>17</sup> Creating Safer Schools: Alternatives to Corporal Punishment in Schools in Sierra Leone <https://mbsseknowledgeplatform.gov.sl/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Alternatives-to-Corporal-Punishment-in-Schools-in-Sierra-Leone.-A-Training-Booklet-to-End-Violence-in-Schools.pdf>

Many people use the words discipline and punishment to mean the same thing. Let us therefore take a closer look at these words and their associated meanings.

**Discipline.** In managing the school environment, this should be proactive and constructive. Learners should experience an educative, corrective approach in which they learn to exercise self-control, respect others and accept the consequences of their actions.

**Punishment.** This is reactive. It is not constructive or educative, it is retribution for an offence. The goal is to inflict pain, payback time. It is disrespectful of others; it is devoid of reflection by the learner, and it does not teach self-control. It is authoritarian, it is about power and control over the learner. It is negative.

## Positive discipline

The goal of discipline is not to control children and make them obey. It is rather to give them skills for making decisions, learn self-control and be responsible for their own behaviour<sup>18</sup>. Positive discipline is based on the assumption that most children want to behave. It understands that children learn with cooperation, and that the promise of rewards can be a greater motivator than the threat of punishment. It relies on the modelling of appropriate behaviour by teachers, setting clear rules on what is acceptable and not acceptable, on rewarding children who behave well with praise, and listening to the children. It is not a system that runs away from disciplining bad behaviour, but any sanctions must be proportionate and should not involve physically harming the child or humiliating them. And it is the behaviour that is to be criticised, not the child. Discipline should be used constructively, in a way that learners experience a corrective approach encouraging them to be self-reliant and self-controlled, accepting their own responsibility for their actions.

Positive discipline	Negative discipline
Presents learners with possible alternatives – focuses on positive behaviour	Tells learners what not to do and does not offer alternatives
Seeks the reasons behind persistent offences	Persistently punishes without seeking reasons for offences
Focuses on rewarding learners for effort as well as good behaviour	Attempts to control learners' behaviour by punishing bad behaviour
Learners attempt to keep the rules because they have been discussed and agreed upon	Learners follow the rules because of fear, threats or bribes
Is respectful, dignified as well as physically and verbally non-violent	Is controlling, negative and disrespectful. Involves a show of power, through sarcasm, beating and humiliation
The consequences of breaking a rule are directly related to the learner's behaviour	The consequences of breaking a rule are often punitive, illogical and unrelated to the learner's behaviour
Is based on empathy and an understanding of the individual and their needs, abilities, circumstances and developmental stages	The needs and circumstances of learners are not taken into account and responses are thus often inappropriate and lack empathy
Recognises that children have an innate sense of self-discipline and can be self-directed	Regards children as in need of control from an external source
Redirects behaviour by selectively ignoring minor misbehaviour, using reflection on an incident through give-and-take discussions and so on	Good behaviour is associated with not being caught. Learners only behave so that they don't get caught out and are then punished
Mistakes are regarded as an opportunity to learn. Learners are treated with empathy and are given the opportunity to express healthy remorse	Minor issues result in constant reprimands or punishment
Behaviour is the focus and not the learner	The learner is the focus and is criticised

<sup>18</sup> UNESCO, Embracing Diversity: Toolkit for Creating Inclusive, Learning-Friendly Environments

## Establishing discipline in your classroom

A classroom climate based on mutual respect within which learners feel safe and affirmed will decrease the need for disciplinary action and develop the learners' ability to practice self-discipline.<sup>19</sup> By implementing a proactive approach, teachers can put things in place, which will safeguard the culture of learning and teaching in their classrooms. Simple steps include:

- Establishing ground rules that direct your students' actions and clearly communicating the consequences for breaking those rules
- Preparing for lessons/preparing engaging lessons for your class
- Exercising self-discipline
- Having extension work available for those who finish assigned tasks early ensuring that teaching and learning happen consistently
- Ensuring that learners are stimulated
- Establishing class rules with the learners
- Making a space for time out or a conflict resolution corner
- Affirming learners
- Building positive relationships with learners.

The MBSSE recommends positive discipline as an alternative to corporal punishment. According to their handbook, a disciplinary response should be:

- Relevant to the misbehaviour
- Proportional to the offence
- Focused on correcting the behaviour, not humiliating the student
- Aimed at rehabilitation (learning from mistakes) not retribution (payback).

However, the teacher's first action should be to decide if discipline is even appropriate. The teacher must ask whether the poor behaviour is due to factors outside the child's control.

Alternative disciplinary techniques recommended by the government can include imposing a ten-minute 'time-out' on the student, letter writing, oral apology, withdrawal of privileges, detention, reparations, involvement of parents, limited suspension, or, as a last resort, expulsion.

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<sup>19</sup> Creating Safer Schools: Alternatives to Corporal Punishment in Schools in Sierra Leone <https://mbsseknowledgeplatform.gov.sl/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Alternatives-to-Corporal-Punishment-in-Schools-in-Sierra-Leone.-A-Training-Booklet-to-End-Violence-in-Schools.pdf>

## Activity 5: Learning from case studies



20 minutes

### Resources

- Copies of one case study for each group of teachers. These are based on true stories from research conducted by Leh Wi Lan as part of the Radical Inclusion Baseline Study.
- Jenteh working with children with disabilities video.

### Instructions for this session



- Ask each group of teachers to discuss one case study thinking about what they have learned from the previous activities and using that learning to answer the questions at the end of each case study.
- Come together as a group and ask each group to read their case study to the whole group, then identify what suggestions they had. Use the facilitator notes to guide the discussion.



Show the video [Jenteh working with Children with Disabilities](#) to the group when you discuss case study 4.

**Case study 1:** I don't feel safe in the school because one teacher always canning us. I don't want to be canned in school. That is why I am very careful with my friends so that I will not do something in school that will allow the teachers to cane me. But sometimes this teacher canes us because he is angry or just because the teacher can. The teacher does not like it when we ask questions and canes us when we do. It feels like I cannot avoid this caning and sometimes I opt not to go to school when this teacher is on duty or when I am late as the teacher is teaching.

- Which principle and standard of behaviour in the Code of Conduct is this teacher breaching?
- What can be done to ensure that such incidences do not happen in your school?

**Case study 2:** During a class survey, a teacher notes that a particular teacher has been mentioned by several students for requesting for a bribe to ensure that students pass their exams. Students report that the teacher always fails those who don't give him a bribe and makes it difficult for you in class. For those who give him what he wants, he gives them high scores.

- Which principle and standard of behaviour in the Code of Conduct is this teacher breaching?
- What should this teacher and the school do to ensure that this incidence does not happen again?

**Case study 3:** Sexual harassment occurs in our school. A teacher could choose you to be his girlfriend. If you deny then the teacher will mistreat you in school. He will call you names and make the class laugh at you. He will still touch your body. It is just because he has interest in you. He will tell you not to report it because if you do, he will do it more.

- Which principle and standard of behaviour in the Code of Conduct is this teacher breaching?
- What can be done to ensure that such incidences do not happen in your school?

**Case study 4:** I contracted polio when I was a young girl, and this made me physically handicapped. I have trouble walking and must use crutches or a wheelchair to move around. Some teachers in my school hardly involve me in the lesson. They think that I cannot perform well. They do not ask me questions and when I raise my hand, they hardly select me to answer questions. One teacher in particular keeps yelling at me and telling me I can never amount to much. Another teacher thinks that my disability is contagious and avoids even coming close to me.

- Which principle and standard of behaviour in the Code of Conduct is this teacher breaching?
- What will be the consequence for the student and the teacher?



## Facilitator Notes - Activity 5

### Tentative responses to case studies

#### Case study 1 response

Canning or flogging is banned in the country and teachers should find alternative ways to positively discipline their learners. Teachers who punish students out of their own frustration should be reported to school and education authorities.

#### Case study 2 response

This teacher is demonstrating unprofessional behaviour.

The teacher should speak to the school leadership about their concerns.

#### Case 3 response

SRGBV refers to acts or threats of sexual, physical or psychological violence occurring in and around school perpetrated as a result of gender norms and stereotypes and enforced by unequal power dynamics.

There are many ways in which SGBV can be seen. We will review three types.

**Sexual assault** is a physical invasion of a person's body. It can sometimes result in bodily harm or injury, as well as psychological and emotional trauma. The definition of sexual assault includes rape, as well as other acts that invade or hurt a person's body. Other examples of sexual assault include inappropriate touching, groping, attempted rape, forcing someone to perform a sexual act, or penetrating any part of your body with a part of their body, or with an object.

**Sexual harassment** ranges from unwanted touching, gesturing, and inappropriate jokes, to someone promising students a good grade or a promotion in exchange for sexual favours or requiring sexual favours to give students something they deserve or want in a school or work setting. Sexual harassment does not always have to be "sexual." It can also look or feel like teasing, intimidating or offensive comments based on stereotypes (e.g., about how certain people "are" or should act), or bullying someone based on their gender.

**Manipulation**, also known as “grooming”, is a deliberate and carefully orchestrated process in which sexual offenders target, initiate, and maintain sexually abusive relationships with children and adolescents. Offenders often target vulnerable or marginal students who have prior academic, emotional, or behavioural problems, because these students are more likely to keep silent or if they do “tell”, are less likely to be believed. These offenders persuade students to keep silent by manipulating students’ actions, through threats or by exploiting the power differential between themselves and students.

## Effects of SGBV

Physical	Mental	Educational
Body injuries	Depression and anxiety	Lack of concentration
Death	Post-traumatic stress disorder	Falling grades
Pregnancy	Suicide	Absenteeism
Sexually transmittable diseases	Shame	School drop-out
Addiction to drugs	Low self-esteem	Disruption in class

## How to mitigate SGBV

- Develop a school policy that condemns violence and is enforced fairly for everyone.
- Strengthen knowledge and skills of all staff, students and parents on SGBV, its effects/impact and importance of reporting any incidences. Teach children about protecting themselves from abuse.
- Establish reporting systems that will not lead to victimisation of whoever reports.
- Provide guidance and counselling to the victims.
- Challenge and transform social, cultural and gender norms that justify violence and promote those that encourage equal relationships.
- Establish a record-keeping system of incidents of violence and the school’s responses to these. Make sure that data is kept confidential. Address risk factors that enable violence for example alcohol, drugs.

**NB this will be discussed more in another learning circle.**

## Case study 4 response

It is not possible to catch a disability. They usually come from a person's own unique circumstances such as genetics, illness or an accident. They can't be passed on to another person like a cold.

Children with disabilities can perform in maths, English or any subject just the same as a child who can hear, see or walk well. It is just that they need assistance to see, hear or walk. They don't have any cognitive or intelligence problems.

To support children with disabilities, schools/teachers:

- Should treat all their students with respect, including children with disabilities, girls.
- Should set a good example that their students can follow.
- Can raise awareness of their students – for instance, about disability and gender issues.
- Can establish 'buddy systems' in their classes – for instance, they can ask a student to support another student who is facing difficulties.
- Should provide plenty of 'positive reinforcement' by praising and rewarding students who participate in class or who treat other children with respect and consideration, particularly children with disabilities.

## Activity 6: How should you promote positive behaviour during your teaching?



**30 minutes**

### Resources

Statement, questions and table for each group of teachers

### Instructions for this session



- Ask teachers to read the following statement and briefly (5 minutes) discuss the subsequent questions in groups of three.

For a teacher to have a safe classroom environment they need to set clear behavioural expectations for classroom activities, promote positive behaviour in the classroom and acknowledge positive student behaviour.

- What is meant by 'setting clear behavioural expectations'?
- If you were to observe a teacher teaching a lesson, what would you look out for to know that a teacher is promoting positive behaviour in the classroom and acknowledging positive student behaviour?

The table below picks out the key points from this statement. Ask each group to discuss and complete one row thinking about:

- What would the teacher be doing if they were displaying this behaviour?
- What would the teacher be doing if they were not displaying this behaviour?

Give each group about 10 minutes to discuss and complete their row, then discuss in a whole group for 20 minutes. Encourage the teachers to share their thoughts and then use the information in the facilitators notes to help guide the discussion.

Specific aspect being observed	Quality of teacher behaviour/teaching practices	
	High (What would the teacher be doing if they were displaying this behaviour)	Low (What would the teacher be doing if they were not displaying this behaviour )
The teacher promotes positive discipline in the classroom		
The teacher sets clear behavioural expectations for classroom activities		
The teacher acknowledges positive student behaviour		



## Facilitator notes - Activity 6

### How should you promote positive behaviour during your teaching?

Specific aspect being observed	Quality of teacher behaviour/teaching practices	
	High	Low
The teacher sets clear behavioural expectations for classroom activities	The teacher sets clear behavioural expectations throughout the lesson for classroom tasks and/or activities. For example, the teacher says: "Please, complete this assessment on your own. Keep your eyes on your own work, and do not speak to your neighbour during the assessment", before students begin to work independently. Upon introducing a group activity to the class, the teacher says: "Let's discuss this as a group, and don't talk all at once. Remember to speak one at a time, and to raise your hand if you would like to contribute." Alternatively, the teacher is not observed setting clear behavioural expectations, but students are well-behaved throughout the lesson.	The teacher does not set behavioural expectations for classroom tasks and/or activities. For example, the teacher says: "Work on your reading comprehension skills", without providing instruction on what the expected behaviour is for the activity.
The teacher acknowledges positive student behaviour	The teacher acknowledges students' positive behaviour that meets or exceeds expectations. For example, if a group is following behavioural expectations, the teacher says: "I like how the students in Group A each shared their different strategies for finding the missing angle, while the rest of the group listened and asked questions", "This group paid close attention to each step in the procedure," or "I like how responsibly your group handled the equipment during that experiment."	The teacher does not acknowledge student behaviour that meets or exceeds expectations.

\*Guidance as provided by the World Bank Teach/Observers manual.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup> [Teach Secondary Observer manual. World Bank Group](#)

## Activity 7: Progress of the previous action steps



**10 minutes**

### Instructions for this session



Ask teachers to work in groups to reflect on the following questions related to the exclusion tracking they undertook in the previous half term.

**1. For the last half term, you have been looking out for exclusion in your classrooms, your teaching approaches and in your school.**

- a. What exclusions have you noted taking place in your classrooms?
- b. Who was being excluded and why?
- c. What did you do to address this exclusion?
- d. What did you do to prevent future exclusions?
- e. What difference have you noted in your classroom since we began this exercise?

**2. You have also been conducting classroom observations. Share your experiences by answering the following questions:**

- a. What process did you follow before, during and after classroom observation?
- b. What did the observer note that you are doing well to promote inclusion during teaching?
- c. What instances of exclusion did the observer note that you need to improve on?
- d. What are you doing to remove these instances of exclusion while teaching?
- e. What areas of improvement need to be done to improve the classroom observation process?

## Activity 8: Next steps and way forward



20 minutes

### Instructions for this session

Encourage the teachers to continue collecting and filling in instances when exclusion is taking place in the school/classroom and strategies that the teacher is taking to eliminate this exclusion.

For this half of the term, teachers will also focus on the filling in the following table on positive disciplinary measures. The school leadership will be reviewing the tool as the term progresses.

**Positive disciplinary measures**

Name of student	Briefly describe what happened?	How did you manage the situation positively?	What can you do to prevent this happening again	What happened as a result of the way you managed the situation	Was there any need for further action. If yes, what and why?	School leadership comments	School leadership signature

In this half of the term, we will also continue with classroom observations, using the criteria discussed in the 'Promoting Positive Behaviour' activity. Each teacher will be expected to undergo two classroom observations. One classroom observation support will be provided by a colleague and the other by a member of the school leadership team. Each teacher will also be expected to observe another teacher.

Each classroom observation session will focus on positive behaviour management techniques including:

- Promoting positive discipline in the classroom
- Setting clear behavioural expectations for classroom activities.
- Acknowledging positive student behaviour
- Responding to student needs.

Once done, teachers should fill in the following table.

Teacher name	Observer name	Grade Observed	Date	Aspects to be observed during lesson	What aspects were well demonstrated	Areas of improvement	Teacher's sign	Observer's sign	School leadership comments and sign

## Concluding remarks from School leadership



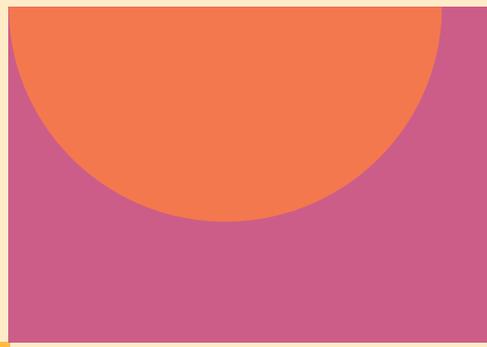
**5 minutes**

The facilitator should give concluding remarks and check if teachers' expectations were met. The facilitator should request teachers to share any areas they might require additional support and to note it down for future support.

Remind teachers that a few days before each observation, they should review the rubric discussed during this learning circle and think about what behaviour the teacher's teaching should demonstrate or what the teacher observing should focus on. Remember that the purpose of the observation is to help each other develop and improve, not to try to find faults and catch each other out.

During the feedback discussion, the teacher observing should highlight teaching practices that led to inclusion/exclusion and ensure that suggestions for improvement have specific and action-oriented steps. By the end of the session, both teachers should agree on two action points to improve in the class. When the next observer comes to the classroom, they should first look at these action points and discuss them as part of the pre-lesson preparation.





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**Module 1: Creating a Safe and Inclusive  
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