



Sustaining and Improving

Girls' and Boys' Clubs



Key lessons and recommendations

Adolescence is a critical stage in life, when young people develop the knowledge, attitudes and skills that influence their wellbeing, relationships and future opportunities. However, in Sierra Leone, discussions around issues such as violence, sexual and reproductive health and rights, gender equality, disability inclusion and personal wellbeing have often been limited, leaving many students without access to accurate information or safe spaces to seek guidance and support.

In the first phase of Leh Wi Lan (LWL), Girls' and Boys' Clubs (GBCs) were established to address this gap by providing safe, inclusive and learner-centered spaces where young people can learn, share experiences and discuss issues affecting their lives. Through interactive radio programmes and facilitated discussions, GBCs help students build confidence, strengthen life skills, improve awareness of safeguarding and referral mechanisms, and make informed decisions that contribute to their wellbeing and success in school.

In the second phase of LWL, the model for GBCs was refreshed and tested in 300 schools. The new model established a GBC in every grade of Junior and Senior Secondary Schools (JSS and SSS) for both boys and girls. It introduced more radio content and gave young people a much stronger role in facilitating GBC activities, supported by mentor teachers. Phase 2 also placed a strong emphasis on building capacity across the education system to establish and sustain GBCs.

What we've learned

Participation by students with disabilities in GBCs is not yet fully realised

Over 4,400 students are participating in GBCs in 300 schools, 61% of whom are girls. With support from Disability Inclusion Champions, more than 250 students with disabilities also participate in GBCs activities. However, further efforts are needed to ensure their regular attendance and meaningful participation. This includes supporting students with disabilities to become peer mentors in GBCs and developing more disability inclusive radio content on GBC topics.

Reporting incidents and concerns relating to school safety remains a challenge

Despite improvements in knowledge, attitudes and practices relating to school safety, KAP studies show that, although students appear more aware of reporting routes, their willingness to report remains a challenge.

GBCs are most effective when embedded in government systems that promote school safety

From the outset, LWL worked through existing government systems to strengthen school safety, including GBCs. Key partnerships with the Teaching Service Commission (TSC), the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE), and School Quality Assurance Officers (SQAOs) focused on:

- Aligning GBC activities with the Teachers' Code of Conduct and disciplinary frameworks;
- Reinforcing government guidance on school safety, discipline and school-related gender-based violence;
- Leveraging SQAOs as the primary accountability and support mechanism for schools.

Sustained government engagement is essential for legitimacy and sustainability. For example, school safety gains were strongest where SQAOs actively reinforced messages already introduced through LWL-supported activities such as GBCs.

300

schools implementing an updated GBCs model reaching 4,000 learners

Building

on Strong

Foundations

GBCs are having an impact on student knowledge and behaviour

Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices (KAP) Studies show that GBCs are contributing to an increased awareness of violence prevention, gender equality, disability inclusion and sexual and reproductive health and rights among participating students through regular club sessions. Between 2024 and 2026, student knowledge across all three KAP dimensions improved from 48% to 59%. Attitudes and practices also improved, although progress was more modest.

Schools require on-going mentoring and support to maintain regular and high-quality GBCs

GBCs are considered active if they meet at least four of five criteria: club existence, trained teacher mentors, regular sessions, sufficient membership, and good attendance. An independent study in 2026 found that 66% of schools the programme worked with still had active GBCs nearly a year after LWL's regular support ended. However, over time, the number of active GBCs is likely to decline without external support to resolve implementation challenges and encouragement to continue.

Recommendations

Sustain progress made	Improve progress further
School Level	
School leaders and teacher mentors to continue supporting regular GBCs sessions and ensure peer mentors are actively facilitating discussions using approved materials	Schools to allocate dedicated time in the curriculum for GBC sessions
Nearby schools to share good practice to strengthen GBCs	MBSSE to work with partners to expand the number of schools using the new model for GBCs
District Level	
District Education Office (DEO) staff, including SQAOs to continue monitoring GBC functionality and participation during school visits and routine school support activities	
Deputy Directors and SQAOs to review progress on GBC implementation during monthly Performance Management Meetings and plan action accordingly so that GBCs remain effective	
DEOs to continue supporting schools to address challenges affecting regular club implementation	
National Level	
MBSSE to continue promoting GBCs as part of national efforts to improve student wellbeing, inclusion and protection	MBSSE to develop a national sustainability and scale-up strategy for GBCs, including the replacement of learning resources
MBSSE to maintain and periodically update GBC materials, radio episodes and mentor guidance to ensure continued relevance and quality	MBSSE and partners to mobilise resources for radio maintenance, replacement and expansion of the GBC model to underserved schools
MBSSE to continue working with development partners to support implementation of GBCs nationwide	Strengthen collaboration between MBSSE, health providers, child protection actors and development partners to enhance student wellbeing, safeguarding and referral systems

Where to get more information

Information Brief on Girls' and Boys' Clubs (July 2026): <https://mbsseknowledgeplatform.gov.sl/wp-content/uploads/2026/07/4of4-New-GBCs-info-brief.pdf>

Information Brief on Girls' and Boys' Clubs (2023): <https://mbsseknowledgeplatform.gov.sl/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Girls-and-Boys-Clubs-Information-Brief.pdf>



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