



Sustaining and Improving

The quality of support provided by the SQAQ Cadre



Key lessons and recommendations

Effective school monitoring, support and supervision are essential for improving teaching quality, strengthening school leadership, enhancing learner wellbeing, and ultimately improving learning outcomes. Schools that receive regular, high-quality support are more likely to identify and address weaknesses in teaching and learning, implement improvement plans, and create positive learning environments for all learners.

In recent years Sierra Leone has moved from an almost non-existent middle-tier school support system, to a still nascent one that is showing signs of improvement and impact. Under the first phase of the Leh Wi Lan (LWL) Programme, the first cadre of School Quality Assurance Officers (SQAQs) was recruited nationally and supported to visit schools. However, visits were irregular, inconsistent and, in many cases, still focused on compliance rather than improvement.

A major focus of LWL 2 has been strengthening the capacity and effectiveness of SQAQs through training, coaching, improved supervision tools, professional learning opportunities, and performance monitoring systems.

Outcomes

- Developed an SQAQ Competency Framework that outlines priority functions and a progression from limited to excellence performance.
- Providing external Continuous Professional Development (CPD) to SQAQs on new tools, approaches and systems.
- Building a low/no cost peer learning process where SQAQs can raise challenges, share insights and good practice and support each other to improve.

What we've learned

The SQAQ cadre is still very new and needs consistent support

The SQAQ cadre was established roughly five years ago and is still a new position in Sierra Leone's education system. As a result, the role of SQAQs – functions and skills required – is still evolving. Each year, the role of SQAQs becomes better understood and more visible, but they need continued support in the long term and focus to help ensure that the cadre is achieving its potential.

175 SQAQs

received structured support to improve the quality and consistency of school supervision



**Building
on Strong
Foundations**

The SQAQO cadre needs structures and systems to help it professionalise and improve

The SQAQO cadre started with almost nothing in terms of systems, processes and structures to underpin it, support it and help it professionalise and improve. Under LWL 2 and with other partners, some of these systems, processes and structures have been introduced in key areas, including an SQAQO Competency Framework, an SQAQO CPD mechanism, national tools, planning and accountability processes and so on. But there is still much more that can and should be done to build the systems and processes that underpin a continuously improve SQAQO cadre.

SQAQOs also need external input to bring new ideas and skills

Low cost SQAQO peer learning circles have been an important way to share ideas, lessons, practice and build skills within the cadre. This needs to continue. But as the cadre is so young and the role still emerging and evolving there is also a need for external ideas and training to help expand their notion of what can be done and how.

There needs to be greater clarity and coordination from the centre

SQAQOs are currently being assigned more duties and roles than they have the time for, given the number of them vs the number of schools. This can lead to them being stretched in too many directions and spread too thinly, thus limiting their impact. There can also be quite substantial variation on the function and focus of SQAQOs in different districts based on local dynamics. In addition, there are other aligned new cadres such as the Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) SQAQOs, and potentially teacher monitors in future. This means that there is a need for greater coordination from the centre to provide clarity on the focus for SQAQOs. Otherwise, there is a risk of increased confusion, duplication and a fragmentation of a national system.

Recommendations

Sustain progress made	Improve progress further
School Level	
	Get more feedback from schools on which aspects of support from SQAQOs are most useful and how they can improve, and integrate this into SQAQO CPD
District Level	
Sustain the low/no cost peer learning circles as an affordable mechanism to enhance SQAQO competencies	
National Level	
Continue to use the SQAQO Competency Framework to review strengths and areas for development	Build new pathways for SQAQO career progression and performance-based recognition
	Update the SQAQO Competency Framework as the role of SQAQOs is refined
	Continually review and improve the SQAQO Competency Framework to ensure that it accurately reflects the role of SQAQOs

Where to get more information

The SQAQO Self-Assessment Competency Framework is on the Education Knowledge Platform: <https://mbsseknowledgeplatform.gov.sl/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/SQAQO-Competency-Self-Assessment-Framework.pdf>

For further information, you can also review: <https://mbsseknowledgeplatform.gov.sl/material/school-monitoring-support-and-supervision/> and <https://mbsseknowledgeplatform.gov.sl/material/digital-monitoring-systems-to-strengthen-accountability-and-data-use/>



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