



PRESS RELEASE

SUPPORT TO THE EDUCATION SECTOR IN SIERRA LEONE PROGRAMME FUNDS THE RENOVATION OF THE DISTRICT EDUCATION OFFICE IN KENEMA

The District Education Office in Kenema has undergone major renovation with funding from the European Union under the 11th European Development Fund. This was an outcome of a Financing Agreement signed in December 2016, between the European Union and the Sierra Leone Government for the implementation of the Support to the Education Sector in Sierra Leone (SESSiL) programme.

A major focus of the programme has been placed on increasing the capacity of the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE) which includes training activities, the facilitation of more transparent personnel and human resource management, as well as logistical support. In 2019, the District Education Office in Kenema, which had fallen into disrepair, received a complete overhaul that included changes to the roof, ceilings, walls and wall finishing, floor finishing, doors, windows and other parts of the building. The total cost amounted to €59,189.68. Also, in 2019, the SESSiL programme commissioned the installation of solar panels at the four districts offices of the Teaching Service Commission (TSC) in Bo, Kenema, Port Loko and Bombali. The supply, delivery and installation process cost €66,642.56.

In March 2020, the newly renovated District Education Office and solar installations were officially handed over in a ceremony on the office grounds in Kenema. Chairing the event, National Programme Coordinator of Free Quality School Education Mr. Amara S. M. Sowa noted that a conducive working environment is essential to the efficient delivery of quality education services. “The Kenema District Education Office lacked adequate space, convenience and proper facilities,” he said. “With the installation of solar panels in the TSC offices, we can be assured that, in the event of blackouts, work will continue.”



At the high table from left: TSC Secretary Mr. Sorie Turay, EU Education Programme Manager, Mr. Giuseppe Paglione, Mr Robert Ganda, NAO Representative Mr. Robert Ganda, National Programme Coordinator of Free Quality School Education Mr. Amara S. M. Sowa, Permanent Secretary Mr. David Banya, PROMAN Finance Expert Mr. Lameck Siage and the Representative of the Council of Paramount Chiefs Frank Neekah at the Handing Over Ceremony.

EU Education Programme Manager, Giuseppe Paglione who represented the European Union at the event, emphasized the EU's dedication to education development around the world, and especially in Sierra Leone. Making reference to the 30 vehicles donated by the EU to the MBSSE a week earlier, Mr. Paglione said that the renovated building and solar installations should also be viewed as tools and instruments to be used towards the goal of education development. He urged the staff of the District Education Office to make good use of the new facilities, in their effort to provide quality education services.



Giuseppe Paglione cuts one of the ribbons on the newly renovated ministry building in Kenema

Representing the Teaching Service Commission, the Secretary of the Commission Mr. Sorie Turay thanked the EU for the solar installations in TSC offices across the country, as well as the continued technical assistance being provided by the EU. "We have developed various policies on teacher performance management for which the EU has provided consultants," he said. "With their support, we have developed the National Professional Standards for Teachers and School Leaders. We have also developed a policy on Teacher Professional Development with EU support, including the task of transforming over 34,000 teacher management records from their hard copy state into a digitalized

format.” He took the opportunity to inform teachers in attendance, that 6,682 teachers have been recruited and put on the payroll. He also discussed some of the challenges the TSC has been facing, particularly in the area of obtaining accurate records from teachers. He implored teachers to refrain from absenteeism in schools, stressing that if, during monitoring exercises, teachers are found wanting they are liable to be taken off the payroll.



From left: National Programme Coordinator of Free Quality School Education Mr. Amara S. M. Sowa, Representative of the Council of Paramount Chiefs Frank Neekah, and MBSSE Permanent Secretary David Banya in front of the renovated building.

Giving Minister David Sengeh’s keynote address Permanent Secretary Mr. David Banya of the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education said that “Education is at the heart of governance.” To this end, he said, the current administration has been working tirelessly with partners towards education development. “One of the most valued and sustained partners in the Education Sector is the European Union,” he said. “What we’re observing here is one of the many objectives that have been achieved as a result of EU assistance.” EU assistance through the Support to the Education Sector in Sierra Leone programme, he said, has enhanced the ability of the MBSSE and its other sectors such as the Teaching Service Commission, to acquire the relevant data required for effective planning.



Solar installations on the TSC office building will ensure that work continues in the event of power failure

During the event, Deputy Director of Education in Kenema Mr. John Swaray thanked the EU for their support, noting that the improvements made on the newly renovated building could best be described as dramatic. “We know what the building used to look like and the impact created by the quality of the changes effected.” he said. “We view these improvements a challenge and I want to assure the Permanent Secretary, the EU and all other stakeholders that full advantage will be taken of these facilities to improve on the quality of our work”

The Statements were followed by a ribbon cutting ceremony to officially hand over the newly renovated building to the MBSSE and the solar installations to the TSC.