Danish Contribution to Early Childhood Care and Education Project in Sierra Leone

Key results:
The project's ultimate aim is to help strengthen Sierra's Leone's Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) system to allow children to achieve their full potential. Envisaged outcomes:
- **Increased access**: More children 3-5 years attending community-based Early Childhood Development (ECD) centres;
- **Improved structural quality**: Teachers and assistants are well prepared and work in a supportive environment;
- **Improved process quality**: Teachers and assistants engage with child-centred play-based activities that drive development;
- **Developmental outcomes**: 3-5 year-old children achieve adequate learning and holistic development for their age

Justification for support:
Child development outcomes in Sierra Leone have not improved sufficiently despite the Government of Sierra Leone's (GoSL) policies and political commitment to education. This project will align accountability structures with the expansion of the ECCE sector, and focus on access to quality ECCE to improve child development outcomes. The Danish support will provide insights and lessons on what works and provide evidence to improve policies for better results

Major risks are: Political unrest leading to delays in timelines; insufficient existing infrastructure affecting timelines; lack of success in raising additional outcomes funding to support learning agenda and programme scalability

Key challenges are: Limited financial resources to the sector; under developed administrative and institutional structures Infrastructure constraints and insufficient pedagogy roll outs

Mitigation measures to manage risks include continued dialogue Government to ensure commitment to policy and provision of funding; continued engagement with Learning and Engagement Team to manage budgets; contingency planning for potential reallocation of resources.

File No.	24/32473			
Country	Sierra Leone			
Responsible Unit	Accra			
Sector	Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)			
Partner	UNICEF/Education Outcomes Fund (EOF)			
DKK million	**2024**	**2025**	**2026**	**Total**
Commitment	15,0 mio.			15 mio.
Disbursement	5,0 mio.	10,0 mio.		15 mio.
Duration	25 months			
Previous grants	N/A			
Finance Act code	06.32.01.23			
Head of unit	Tom Nørring			
Desk officer	Angela Farhat			
Reviewed by CFO	YES: Allan Heldbjerg			

Relevant SDGs *[Maximum 1 – highlight with grey]*

No Poverty	No Hunger	Good Health, Wellbeing	Quality Education	Gender Equality	Clean Water, Sanitation
Affordable Clean Energy	Decent Jobs, Econ. Growth	Industry, Innovation, Infrastructure	Reduced 0Inequalities	Sustainable Cities, Communities	Responsible Consumption & Production
Climate Action	Life below Water	Life on Land	Peace & Justice, strong Inst.	Partnerships for Goals	

Objective

To help strengthen Sierra Leone's Early Childhood Care Education system to allow children to achieve their full potential by expanding access to quality learning opportunities.

Environment and climate targeting - Principal objective (100%); Significant objective (50%)

	Climate adaptation	Climate mitigation	Biodiversity	Other green/environment
Indicate 0, 50% or 100%	0	0	0	0
Total green budget (DKK)	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**

Justification for choice of partner:
UNICEF has been working in Sierra Leone for over 30 years to uphold the rights and well-being of children. Its comparative advantages include its convening power; broad outreach across multiple sectors and its strong field presence. UNICEF has a long history and strong track record of accomplishment of building cross-sectoral synergy and strengthening national systems to coordinate, manage and scale up high impact interventions. The government and population see UNICEF as a strong partner in this sector. In Sierra Leone, UNICEF is working to improve access to and the quality of Early Childhood Development programming through the Education Outcomes Fund (EOF). Since its inception in 2018, EOF has established itself as a leading global player in Results and Outcomes-Based Financing (RBF/OBF) and the only dedicated centre of expertise for OBF in education and skills.

Summary

This project aims to expand access to quality learning opportunities by paying for improvement of holistic child development outcomes, access and quality measures for children aged 3-5 years in Sierra Leone. The primary beneficiaries are children not currently attending pre-primary education. The project targets areas based on population, remoteness, and poverty levels to reduce disparities, particularly benefiting children in rural areas who have less access to pre-primary centres compared to urban children. The ultimate objective is to strengthen Sierra Leone's Early Childhood Care and Education system, allowing children to achieve their full potential through expanded access to quality early learning opportunities. This project grant through UNICEF, strategically complements the LEGO Foundation and EU grants in Sierra Leone in foundational learning to increase the quality of teaching practices.

Budget (engagement as defined in FMI):

Engagement 1 – the development project	DKK 15 million
Total	**DKK 15 million**

Sierra Leone Early Childhood Care & Education Outcomes Fund

Programme Document

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List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Long form
ASC	Annual School Census
DID	Difference-in-Difference
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
ECD	Early Childhood Development
EOF	Education Outcomes Fund
GoSL	Government of Sierra Leone
MBSSE	Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education
MoHS	Ministry of Health and Sanitation
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
OBF	Outcomes-Based Finance
RBF	Results-Based Finance

1. Introduction

The present programme document outlines the background, rationale and justification, objectives and management arrangements for development cooperation concerning the Sierra Leone Early Childhood Care and Education Outcomes Fund as agreed between the parties: the Education Outcomes Fund (EOF) and the embassy of Denmark in Ghana. The project/programme document is an annex to the legal bilateral agreement with the implementing partner and constitutes an integral part hereof together with the documentation specified below.

The proposed programme represents a collaborative effort in innovative financing, aimed at enhancing access to quality education and improving learning outcomes for children in Sierra Leone. This Programme Proposal refers to the contribution of DKK 15 million from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Sierra Leone Early Childhood Care and Education Outcomes Fund, allocated over the period of 2024-2026, and which forms part of the larger programme with a total programme budget of $17,355,137 USD.

Since its inception in 2018, the Education Outcomes Fund (EOF) has established itself as a leading global player in Results and Outcomes-Based Financing (RBF/OBF) and the only dedicated centre of expertise for OBF in education and skills. EOF has partnered with the Governments of Ghana and Sierra Leone to establish the two largest education outcomes funds to date, totalling $48m and set to impact over 300,000 children.

In 2022, EOF formed a significant partnership with the LEGO Foundation to develop a scaled portfolio of OBF programmes in early childhood care and education across three countries; Sierra Leone, South Africa, and Rwanda. The Danish Government and European Union join this collaboration in Sierra Leone as outcomes funders alongside the LEGO Foundation and the Government of Sierra Leone – which is also contributing to this programme. This collaboration supports the stated objectives in Sierra Leone, aligning partners' commitments to advancing early childhood care and education outcomes in the country. This grant strategically complements other grants in Sierra Leone aimed at improving foundational learning and teaching practices. It is particularly aligned with the LEGO Foundation and the European Union's support for the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) Compact "Foundations of Learning for All."

The Education Outcomes Fund (EOF) and the Government of Sierra Leone, represented by the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE) will be launching an Outcome-Based Financing (OBF) programme in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) sector. The programme's objective is to expand access to quality early learning opportunities for underserved children aged 3-5 years old in Sierra Leone. The programme uses Outcomes Based Finance (OBF) where payments are made to Grantees upon the achievement of pre-defined results (often referred as payment metrics). Under this model, pre-defined results are verified by an independent third-party evaluator, and payments are triggered only when results are achieved.

The programme's outcomes encompass multiple dimensions of ECCE. The selected Grantees will play a crucial role in:

- **Establishing new community-based Early Childhood Development (ECD) centres** in areas with the greatest need. This will be done by repurposing existing community-level infrastructure to provide ECCE services.

- **Ensuring increased access and regular attendance of children at these centres**.

- **Enhancing the quality of settings and practices**, including inclusive, play-based and child-centred approaches aligned with the national standards, and ultimately,

- **Improving children's holistic development outcomes**.

The programme is expected to be launched in Q4 2024, with the first centres opening in Q2 2025 and implementation going until Q4 2028.

2. Strategic Considerations and Justification

Programme Context

Since 2018, Sierra Leone has made concerted efforts to improve access to and the quality of education for all children, with an emphasis on the most marginalized and early-years learners. The commitment to quality foundational learning for all is reflected in various policies and initiatives including: i) the Education Sector Plan (ESP) 2022-2026, which emphasizes equity in access to quality education, guided by the Policy for Radical Inclusion in Schools; ii) the Free Quality School Education programme, which has enabled universal primary school enrolment, recruitment and training of thousands of teachers, and an increase in teacher salaries; iii) the National Policy on Integrated Early Childhood Development, which made a minimum of one year of pre-primary education compulsory; iv) a comprehensive overhaul of the curriculum for pre-primary and early childhood, basic education and senior secondary education, applying a 5Cs framework - Comprehension, Critical Thinking, Computational Thinking, Creative Thinking, and Civic Education - created around a learner-centred approach, aimed at empowering students to make choices and embrace the joy of learning. The Government of Sierra Leone has additionally demonstrated regional leadership through the 2022 Freetown Manifesto for Gender-Transformative Leadership in and through education, which was followed by hosting the first Foundational Learning Exchange Summit in 2023 to promote South-South exchange on the African continent.

These robust policies and strong political will have resulted in incredible development of the early childhood care and education sector (ECCE) over the past decade. The sector's progress has yielded remarkable results, with enrolment rates in pre-primary education tripling from a mere 7% of 3-5-years-olds in 2011 to an impressive 24% in 2021.[1] This has been accompanied by a solidification of its pedagogical approach, framing play-based approaches as a core part of the new ECCE curriculum and minimum standards, setting a strong foundation in these documents for the country's focus on foundational learning.

However, despite this impressive progress, 76% of children aged 3-5 are not enrolled in ECCE, and half of the children aged 3-4 are below the expected holistic child development milestones,[2] while quality standards vary between public and private provision, and formal and informal sectors. A qualitative study in six ECCE centres from the University of Sierra Leone showed that most teachers had not been exposed to play-based pedagogy, and 24% of classrooms were rated poor on gender sensitivity, while less than 8% of classrooms from this pool had a satisfactory level of pupils' participation.[3] This study shows the remaining progress to be made on quality improvements in the classroom, in addition to the remaining gaps in access to formal ECCE provision.

While the recent prioritisation of ECCE by the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE) has resulted in drastic access improvements in the past decade, this rapid expansion

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1 MBSSE, Annual School Census, 2021

2 MICS Country Report, 2017

3 IDRC, USL, GPE, "BUILDING TEACHERS' CAPACITY TO ENHANCE EARLY LEARNING -THROUGH CHILD FOCUSED AND PLAY-BASED APPROACHES IN GHANA AND SIERRA LEONE", 2023. Presentation.

has outpaced the growth of administrative and institutional structures needed to support the sector. As a result, there is limited data especially on the quality of ECCE provision and on the functioning of the more informal parts of the ECCE sector, such as community centres. While small-scale studies such as those by the University of Sierra Leone are available, limited national oversight and monitoring of informal community ECD centres has resulted in an incomplete picture of the ECCE provision. In turn, this leads to an absence of evidence to inform policy, particularly on informal provision and its quality. The limited scale of these institutional structures has also resulted in programmes focused solely on the expansion of the sector and the development of policies as two disjointed goals. In practice, this means that newly created standards and policies on age-appropriate and play-based pedagogies for children's holistic development have not yet been translated into practice. It is critical that moving forward, accountability structures focus on rolling out these policies in tandem with expansion of the sector, shifting the focus from expanding access to expanding access to quality ECCE provision to ultimately improve child development outcomes.

The Outcomes-Based Financing Model

Following EOF's partnership with the Government of Sierra Leone and under the championship of Minister David Sengeh through the launch of the Sierra Leone Education Innovation Challenge (SLEIC), [4] in 2022 the MBSSE called for an expansion of innovative financing tools to support the challenges faced by the rapid expansion of the ECCE sector. This specific programme will also use an Outcomes Fund to support the objective of increasing the number of children accessing quality ECCE services in the country, translating into early learning opportunities and child development outcomes.

In Outcomes Funds, payments are made upon the achievement of pre-specified results measured by a third-party evaluator. Designed in collaboration with senior members of the MBSSE, the outcomes fund will focus on the measurement of improvements in access, quality (including structural [5] and process [6] quality), and most notably holistic child development outcomes.[7] This will ensure that funding is spent to finance measurable results, improving the value-for-money offer and the effectiveness of ECCE spending, and unifying the results towards which ECCE programmes in the country are oriented.

As a main feature of Outcomes Funds, a variety of implementing partners are selected for the achievement of pre-agreed results with funding after the verification of results. With an

4 The SLEIC is a USD 18M Outcomes Fund that seeks to improve learning outcomes in basic education in Sierra Leone. It was launched in 2022 and will be implemented until 2025.

5 Structural quality refers to regulatory aspects of early childhood. It consists of supportive environment and physical setting, child-staff ratios, classroom size, including access to developmentally appropriate learning/play materials, trained/educated workforce, and availability of locally appropriate pedagogy and curriculum.

6 Process quality refers to children's day-to-day interactions and experiences such as with teachers, space and materials, other children, and their families and community.

7 Holistic child development: Refers to all aspects of child development including skills such as: cognitive and executive functions, language and communication, socio-emotional development, gross and fine motor and, literacy and numeracy. While we support the idea that both the improvement on the safety and suitability of settings and materials, and the improved quality in caregivers-children interaction strongly favours holistic learning outcomes, the available evidence is still mixed and based on the global North. We hope to use this programme to generate more evidence around the relation between these three aspects, in the African context.

accountability on outcomes instead of activities, interventions are not as closely prescribed, and selected implementing partners benefit from the flexibility to adjust approaches to the local context and needs, testing, learning, and course-correcting. This contributes to fostering innovation as well as a robust learning agenda around the understanding of what works in which context and at what cost.

Outcomes Funds, through a strong focus on data collection and evaluation, present an opportunity for MBSSE to collect a wide range of insights and lessons on what does and does not work in ECCE in the country, as well as an opportunity to adapt tools for future rigorous evaluations. The MBSSE will be able to use this data to directly inform its own policy on how to implement holistic interventions post-programme and achieve better results. Specifically, the programme will strengthen the evidence on how a package of child-centred interventions can promote holistic learning and development. The rigorous evaluation process characteristic of an Outcomes Fund, and its resulting intensive adaptation and validation process of measurement tools, will ensure that these tools are fit-for-purpose for future evaluations of similar programmes, in this case creating the first process quality measure adapted for the Sierra Leone context, and ensuring third-party evaluations can use tools aligned with pedagogical focuses and recently developed curriculums and standards.

Under an outcomes fund, the focus is on (1) *measuring* and (2) *verifying* results. Programme results are independently verified so that Grantees can be remunerated for achieving them. Grantees will be encouraged to test approaches, course-correct and innovate to identify the most effective interventions to achieve the desired outcomes. Impact Investors provide upfront capital for the delivery of activities by Grantees, at their own risk to support the Grantees. Another role of impact investors in the program is to help set-up strong performance management systems that support data collection and ongoing Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) to determine progress towards targets and support Grantees to achieve the goals.

Synergies with Other Programmes

This grant strategically complements other grants in Sierra Leone in foundational learning to increase the quality of teaching practices. In alignment with the LEGO Foundation and the European Union's support to the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) Compact "Foundations of Learning for All".

As part of this work, EOF and other education actors including UNICEF working as grant agent for GPE have discussed different ways in which their programmes can be complementary and mutually reinforcing in the achievement of their ultimate objective of supporting the Sierra Leone foundational learning priorities. These alignments have been clearly stated in both programmes' proposals, with GPE-UNICEF referencing EOF in different sections of its strategy, and vice-versa.

Firstly, these two programmes will be benefiting children with different, but sequencing ages. While EOF's Outcomes Fund will be focused on working with children ages 3-5, GPE-UNICEF will be mostly targeting children from ages 5-9, in a coordinated effort that builds continuity of quality education provision across different ages.

Secondly, EOF and GPE-UNICEF will be working in different spaces and institutions, with EOF's programme working to create new community based ECD centres, and GPE-UNICEF focusing on existing primaries and pre-primaries. This distinction ensures that both programmes cover different yet complementary educational needs. Supporting new children at earlier ages will help children entering primary school increase their readiness to learn.

There are important synergies that both programmes are exploring which can maximise the impact of the grants for in each programme as well as the wider benefits beyond the scope of individual interventions. EOF will benefit from and serve as a pilot of some of the GPE-UNICEF efforts already in implementation, such as the development of local teaching and learning materials for "P0" (one-year ECCE provision within primary schools for age 5), the ongoing training of pre-primary teachers, plans for a unification of teacher qualification standards, parental awareness campaigns via radio, and finally the data consolidation work to support MBSSE's internal data collection and analysis protocols.

3. Theory of Change

The figure below presents the proposed Theory of Change for the programme:
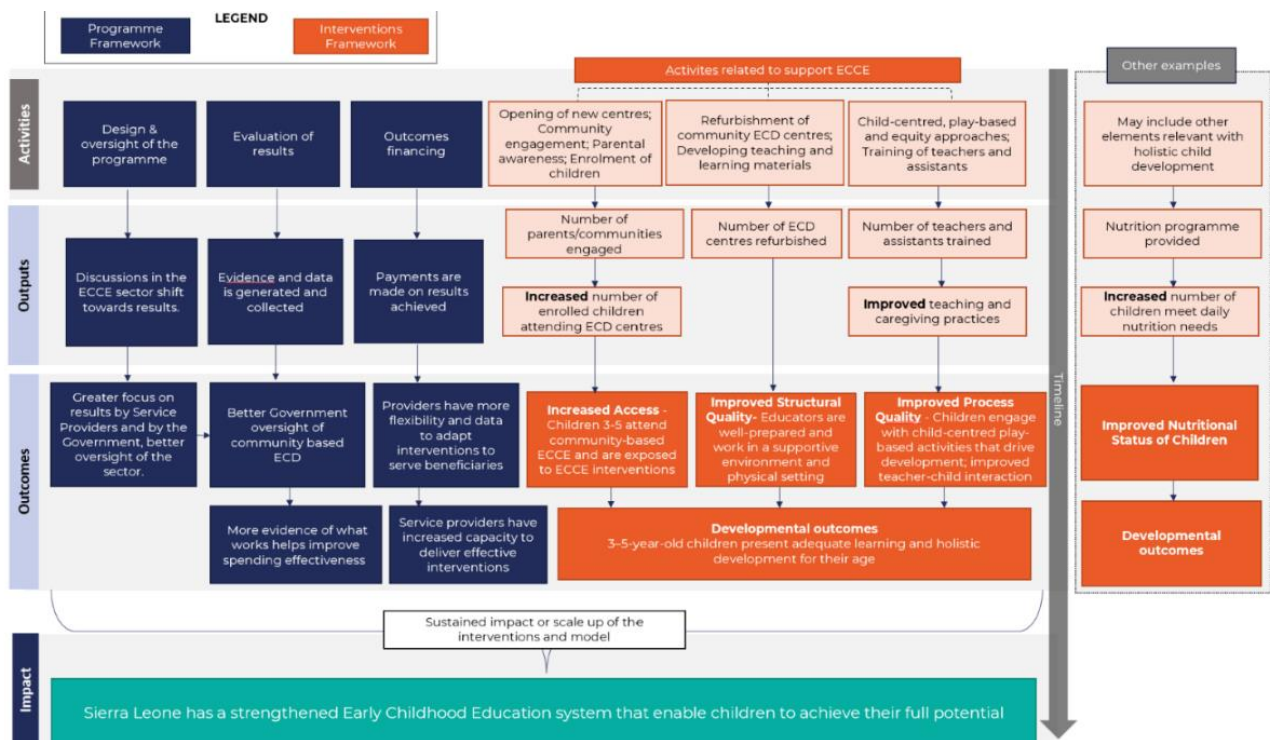
There are several assumptions that underpin the theory of change. The key ones are detailed below for reference and will inform further risk management. Assumptions have been divided into 5 categories by type, for ease of reference.

List of assumptions

Outcomes	
	• **Measurability:** outcomes can be measured accurately.
	• **Appropriateness:** targets and competencies set are appropriate for the context.
	• **Achievability:** targets and competencies are achievable for the providers.
Stakeholder engagement	
	• **Good faith stakeholder collaboration:** all stakeholders wish to collaborate and achieve common goals, no one is acting in bad faith.
	• **Alignment and understanding of programme targets:** the understanding of targets and competency-limits is the same between the outcome funders, Grantees, Impact Investors and Evaluation firm.
Programme delivery	
	• **No major disruptions during delivery:** due to unforeseeable events, such as natural disaster or any disruption.
	• **Risks and issues:** can be resolved quickly and effectively.
	• **No major bureaucracy:** that would intervene with programme delivery.

	Finance
	• **Timely disbursements:** which allow Grantees/Impact Investors to benefit from programme success.
	• **Availability of risk capital:** which allow Grantees to continue delivering interventions.
	• **No major currency exchange losses:** that would limit the total funding available for Grantees/Impact Investors.
	Local and policy environment
	• **Local environment is receptive to proposed innovation:** infrastructure, staff, and policies are reasonably flexible to adapt to new approaches.
	• **Treatment/control centres not affected by external interventions unevenly:** in a way that would skew evaluation results.
	• **Stable government and policy environment:** which does not introduce many competing priorities.

4. Programme Objectives and Summary of Results Framework

Programme Objectives

The development objective of the development cooperation among the parties is to expand access to quality early learning opportunities by paying for improvement of holistic child development outcomes, access, and quality measures for children aged 3-5 in Sierra Leone. This objective will be met by implementing partners opening new community ECD centres by leveraging existing infrastructure. This is a cost-effective solution to expanding access in a resource-constrained context in a timely fashion, as it leverages empty spaces across the country and brings them up to standards and back into use. This avoids lengthy and costly building activities, while allowing the inclusion of the vulnerable groups of the population with no access to ECCE, primarily those with high rates of poverty and rurality. During implementation, selected partners will engage communities to repurpose community buildings through light refurbishment, bringing them up to standards for quality ECCE provision. Community-based structures place the focus of the initiative on the integration of the early learning opportunities into the community itself, centring community ownership and involvement from the outset. This way, the communities can help tailor the interventions to their specific needs and context.

Multiple new Government ECCE policies and standards have been developed but not implemented, providing the programme with the unique opportunity of rolling out existing policies to allow for age-appropriate pedagogical approaches as an important component in Sierra Leone ECCE policies and standards. The adaptation and validation of measurement tools, both government tools that have never been rolled out in practice and international tools that will be used in Sierra Leone for the first time, will ensure government is equipped with validated instruments to strengthen monitoring and evaluation mechanisms beyond this programme.

The total budget for this programme is $17,355,137 USD, made up of the following contributions: LEGO Foundation ($ 11,350,000 USD), Danish Government (15,000,000 DKK/ approx. $ 2,230,006 USD), European Union ($ 2,197,391 USD) and Government of Sierra Leone (approx. $ 1,577,740 USD)

The total amount of **outcomes funding** for this programme is $9,856,508 USD. The programme will run in at least **111 new centres** across Sierra Leone from Q2 2025 to Q4 2028, launched in Q4 2024. Q1 of 2025 will be focused on mobilisation for selected Grantees. In addition to the 9M DKK ($1.35M USD), the programme has outcomes funding secured from the LEGO Foundation ($6.91M USD), which will be available for outcomes funding disbursement from Year 1 and onwards, and funding from the Government of Sierra Leone to the value of 10% of program, up to $2M USD. Funding from the Government of Sierra Leone will be available from Year 1 outcomes funding disbursement and onwards.

Programme Beneficiaries

Programme Direct Beneficiaries The direct participants of this programme are children aged 3-514 living in Sierra Leone and currently not attending pre-primary education, as is the case for 76% of children in that age range (more than 550,000 children).

Access to quality early learning opportunities in Sierra Leone is not evenly distributed, expanding existing disparities. Approximately four times as many children residing in urban areas have the advantage of living within three miles of a pre-primary centre compared to their counterparts in rural areas. Furthermore, the districts experiencing the highest levels of poverty also tend to exhibit the lowest Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for pre-primary education. These disparities in access emphasise the need for targeted interventions to ensure equitable early learning opportunities for all children in Sierra Leone.

Eligibility

Implementing targeting criteria in this programme is crucial for several reasons. Firstly, considering limited resources, it is not feasible to reach every community throughout the entire country. By focusing efforts on areas with the highest need, resources can be allocated more efficiently. Secondly, targeting based on equity ensures that the programme addresses the needs of those who require it the most and avoids reinforcing existing disparities. Lastly, aligning incentives prevents Grantees from solely focusing on easy-to-reach populations, ensuring that the programme reaches and supports communities facing significant challenges. To implement this targeting, EOF will first exclude areas that are outside the priority for this programme. Then priority communities will be identified based on fine targeting on the eligibility of the areas. Grantees will have flexibility to establish partnerships with specific communities within the eligible areas.

Eligibility of Communities

This programme has a clear focus on the inclusion of underserved populations through a geographic focus on high-need areas in alignment with the government school catchment policy. The main criteria to define eligible areas include population, remoteness, and poverty levels. The population criterion looks at the **number of underserved children**; **remoteness** or **distance to existing pre-primary provision** -- to ensure that this programme is reaching the children who are not currently accessing ECCE services and **poverty rate** at chiefdom level. These criteria overlap with many other factors of inclusion and places the geographic targeting for this programme primarily in rural areas (a priority for the Government of Sierra Leone), with lower levels of economic development than the rest of the country.

The minimum number of community-based ECD centres to be open is 111 in total across 3 lots (37 centres per lot). EOF has conducted a rigorous market engagement and extensive consultation with different stakeholders to refine a cost modelling that allows for the opening of this minimum number of centres within the defined outcomes funding size. However, Grantees are highly encouraged to open more than 37 centres within a lot depending on their capability.

Expectation for Grantees/Grantees 8

The items in the list below are highly encouraged to be included in the intervention models considering their impact on access, quality of provision and child development outcomes, although they will not be verified by the evaluation firm.

Provision of nutrition / feeding interventions

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8 Please note that Grantees are the entities signing the contract for the implementation of this programme and leading the consortium of different providers. For simplicity, Grantees and Service Providers are used interchangeably when the programme design is explained in this document.

Given the significant evidence around nutrition and child development outcomes, provision of nutrition is strongly recommended to be part of the interventions considering its impact on child attendance as well as development. This item also aligns with the Government's high interest on provision of nutrition shown in multiple policies, such as 2021 National School Feeding Policy. Grantees are strongly encouraged to work closely with each community to define the need for nutrition provision and the way it will be delivered, leveraging mothers' groups and local initiatives, for example. It is important to note that as this is not a mandatory component of this programme, the decision of how this provision will be offered remains at the discretion of each Grantee.

Shifts of Provision

Depending on the needs from each community and the infrastructure size, Grantees will be allowed to operate double shifts if they wish to (for example, a morning shift and afternoon shift).

If centres are to operate double shifts, the following requirements will apply: (i) children will only attend shift 1 or shift 2; and (ii) each shift will have a different teacher and assistance. For evaluation, the centres with double shifts will be treated as one centre and should remain with double shifts throughout the course of the programme.

Community engagement

Community engagement is paramount to ensure new centres meet the local demand for ECCE provision and that the intervention models are adapted to the needs and local customs of each community. It is crucial that Grantees develop strong relationships with local authorities, community leaders, families and parents to confirm the right to use the infrastructure (in accordance with any existing local rules and requirements), equip the centres with resources, materials and toys that make sense in that context – which will ultimately turn the learning process into an engaging and relevant experience to the enrolled children and their families, that feeding provision (if provided) leverages existing local initiatives, that enrolment of children is done in collaboration with local leaders and families to ensure children who need provision the most are not excluded, among other aspects of intervention that require community participation and decision-making. Community engagement is also crucial to build the basis for the programme sustainability, ensuring local leaders and families own the centre and can explore together different models for its continuing operations.

Enrolment criteria

No guidelines will be given for the enrolment criteria of children in case of overcrowding of the centres or in consideration of inclusion. However, given that a key pillar of the programme is the expansion of access to ECCE in the country, the Government of Sierra Leone and EOF strongly encourage Grantees to add equity and inclusion considerations for the enrolment of children, including any criteria for enrolment and mitigation plans to avoid exclusion of children. Reporting mechanisms will be put in place to ensure children are not being deliberately excluded based on their gender, income, and/or special needs, among others.

School calendar

All ECD centres and pre-primary schools in Sierra Leone need to follow the school year, being them part of formal or non-formal education. In addition of being a government requirement, this is also particularly important for evaluation purposes and to ensure children will be ready to transition to primary school at the end of the school year in the pre-primary. However, in the case of this programme, if Grantees wish to keep the centres open during school holidays, they will be

allowed to, depending on the needs of local communities and the capacity of Providers to meet them, increasing exposure to the interventions.

Staff remuneration

While in many contexts, adequately paying teachers remains a challenge since this is a main cost driver in education budgets, evidence shows that few other policy options can improve motivation among teachers without low pay being addressed first. While this will not be formally mandated and verified, the Government of Sierra Leone and EOF strongly encourages Grantees to provide adequate payment to the teachers and assistants that will be recruited to work in the new ECD centres.

Summary of Results Framework

The programme's ultimate impact is to help strengthen Sierra Leone's ECCE system to allow children to achieve their full potential. It seeks to do so by expanding access to quality early learning opportunities (including both structural and process quality).

The expected outcomes to achieve this impact are outlined in a well-defined Theory of Change (see section 4). Specifically,

IF we establish inclusive play-based ECCE centres with minimum safety and child protection standards,
IF we ensure the enrolment and regular attendance of children aged 3-5 within the standard child-teacher assistant ratio,
IF we build the capacity of ECD teachers in play-based pedagogy and maintain a quality learning environment through regular training and monitoring,
IF we ensure the sustainability of results through active engagement of parents, community, local, and central government,
THEN more children aged 3-5 years will access quality, community play-based ECD interventions in a supportive, inclusive environment and physical setting, improving teacher-child interactions and achieving adequate learning and holistic development appropriate to their age,
LEADING TO increased access to early childhood education, improved structural and process quality of ECD centres, and better developmental outcomes for children,
RESULTING IN a stronger ECCE system that supports early development, safer spaces, better learning environments, teaching practices, and long-term benefits in children's educational and personal growth, ultimately strengthening Sierra Leone's ECCE system to allow children to achieve their full potential.

The following table provides an overview of the results framework, the full version of which can be found in Annex 4.

Programme Objective	Expand access to quality early learning opportunities through the repurposing of existing infrastructure to open new community-based ECD centres in Sierra Leone
Impact Indicator	Sierra Leone has a strengthened Early Childhood Education system that enables children to achieve their full potential
Outcome 1	ECD centres meet the **minimum standards for opening**

Outcome 2	**Increased access** of children aged 3-5 to ECD centres within staff (teacher and assistant) to child ratios
Outcome 3.1	Improved **structural quality** of centres
Outcome 3.2	Setting and practices meeting **process quality** standards
Outcome 4	Improvement in **Child Development Outcomes**

This programme seeks to achieve these outcomes by supporting a variety of activities that will be implemented by implementing partners. While they will have flexibility to choose their intervention model, the programme will require the incorporation of the following key components:

- **Establishment and expansion of ECD centres by leveraging and repurposing existing infrastructure.** This model allows for a quicker and most cost-effective expansion of ECCE provision in the country.

- **Inclusion of local voices across different programme decisions and components through community engagement** is crucial to ensure the programme delivered is relevant to the local needs and context. Community engagement will be essential for the opening of the new centres, definition of rules and requirements for enrolment (including prioritisation of groups when demand exceeds offer), types of specific interventions that will be more relevant to that specific community, nutrition provision and sustainability of provision.

- **Training of teachers and assistants**, which is aligned with the Government of Sierra Leone priority of improving quality of educators, not to mention that there is a wealth of evidence showing the positive impacts of teacher training in quality of provision, ultimately leading to better child development outcomes. Training of teachers and assistants will be particularly important in the definition of sustainability pathways for the programme.

- **Play-based approaches** to support holistic early learning that adequately improve children's development. Fostering opportunities for play time during the preschool years has been shown to boost school readiness skills.

- **Equity and inclusion** embody the values, policies, and practices that support the right of every infant and young child and his or her family, regardless of ability, to participate in a broad range of activities and contexts as full members of families, communities, and society. The desired results of inclusive experiences for children with and without disabilities and their families include a sense of belonging and membership, positive social relationships and friendships, and development and learning to reach their full potential. Grantees should ensure all children receive quality ECCE provision regardless of their gender, socioeconomic status, developmental condition and any other characteristic.

In addition to the components above, other elements in the intervention will remain flexible upon the choice of Grantees, but will be highly encouraged given their positive impact on child development outcomes, such as:

- **Inclusion of nutrition / feeding interventions** to ensure children develop and can learn better.

- **Offer of single or double shifts**, depending on the community needs.

Nurturing Care Framework, UN (2024)

5. Learning Agenda

A comprehensive learning agenda will be an integral component of the programme. The primary objective of the learning agenda is to generate timely and relevant data and evidence to inform policy and programme decisions of the Government of Sierra Leone, the Grantees, the outcome funders, and other stakeholders during and after the programme.

A complementary objective of the learning agenda is to identify good practices in outcomes-based contracting for ECCE services and lessons to inform the design of future outcomes funds.

Background and Expectations

The Government of Sierra Leone, EOF and some of the outcome funders have discussed and identified some of the core components of the programme's learning agenda. In the early stages of the programme, EOF is committed to broadening and refreshing the learning agenda to ensure that the evidence generated is relevant for the Grantees and Impact Investors. The intention is to facilitate ongoing collective learning throughout the programme and to share the findings emerging from the programme with the outcome funders, Grantees, and Impact Investors, with the broader ECCE policy network in Sierra Leone and with the regional and global ECCE and OBF networks.

More specifically:

Objective 1: Generate timely and relevant data and evidence on ECCE to inform decisions during and after the programme

The programme's primary objective regarding its learning agenda is to generate findings around:

- What worked better in which contexts for improving quality of ECCE and development outcomes of young children, how and why;

- What resources were required for these efforts; and

- What challenges were encountered during implementation and how they were overcome. These findings would help inform discussions and decisions on what to replicate and how to scale up successfully.

Under this objective, some complementary topics for evidence generation may include (a) ECCE workforce (recruitment, training, motivation, professionalisation, retention); (b) measuring outcomes at scale (implementation challenges, stakeholder interactions); (c) equity and inclusion (implications, good practices); (d) integration of nutrition interventions (effects of/on nutritional status, effective models); (e) integration of parenting interventions (effects of/on caregiving attitudes/practices, effective models).

To achieve this objective, it is expected that the Grantees and Impact Investors will be open to sharing their implementation monitoring data and cost data where appropriate and relevant. Parts of data sharing by Grantees may be facilitated by an online reporting platform, which will be created in close consultation with the Grantees to avoid undue reporting requirements.

Relatedly, it is expected that the Grantees and Impact Investors will be amicable to (i) some of their implementation monitoring data and cost data, and most outcome data being made open to researchers and (ii) most programme findings being shared in widely disseminated public knowledge products. The programme intends to collaborate with research institutes,

universities, think tanks as knowledge partners to analyse, synthesise and leverage the learnings from the programme to contribute to the national and global evidence base for ECCE and OBF. Details of the data management plan will be finalised in consultation with the Grantees, the evaluation firm and the knowledge partners during the early stages of the programme.

Objective 2: Identify good practices in outcomes-based contracting for ECCE services and lessons to inform the design of future outcomes funds to improve effectiveness.

This objective encompasses multiple elements, including but not limited to understanding how Grantees, Impact Investors and other stakeholders of the programme respond to financial incentives anchored in outcomes. Related to this second objective, the learning agenda will also examine the programme's broader system - and ecosystem-level impacts. EOF also intends to commission a formative evaluation in the early stages of the programme with the aim to monitor, evaluate and improve the programme's management and governance approaches, practices, and systems.

Relatedly, it is expected that the Grantees and Impact Investors will be open to participating in interviews and focus group discussions conducted as part of the data collection and participatory analysis processes to achieve this second objective. Additionally, if relevant, Grantees may be asked to provide information and data on their similar programmes (previous and ongoing) for comparative research purposes.

6. Budget Summary

The overall program budget includes both outcomes-based (paid according to verified results) and cost-based components (direct costs). The Danish fund allocation will contribute to both these components as illustrated in the table below. It is important to highlight that the budget will be spent and tracked with a pooled fund approach. This means that we are unable to provide itemised financial reporting for the cost-based part of the budget, but rather high-level expense tracking based on the cost categories.

Outcomes funding will be used to pay directly for verified results related to the payment metrics identified during the design phase of the programme, as indicated in the table below. Direct costs include: staff costs (both remote and in country), travel, workshops costs, data platform costs, due diligence of selected Grantees, and communication and event costs.

The following tables presents the budget summary of the Danish Government's contribution to the programme. Please note that OBF programmes have a strong focus on measurement and evaluation of results. The results of the programme (outcomes) are independently verified so that Grantees can receive payment for their outcomes achieved (as opposed to paying for activities and outputs.

	Programme Components covered by Danish Government contribution					
	Mobilisation of implementors (Dec 2024 -Apr 2025)	Implementation Year 1 & 2 (May 2025 -Dec 2026)	Implementation Year 3 (Jan-Dec 2027) 2027	Implementation Year 4 (Jan-Dec 2028)	Finalisation of programme interventions (Jan-July 2029)	Total
Outcomes Funding	3,019,323.67 kr.	6,038,647.34 kr.	- kr.	- kr.	- kr.	**9,057,971.01 kr.**
Centres are safe before they open	603,864.73 kr.	1,207,729.47 kr.	- kr.	- kr.	- kr.	1,811,594.20 kr.
Access	603,864.73 kr.	1,207,729.47 kr.	- kr.	- kr.	- kr.	1,811,594.20 kr.
Structural quality	452,898.55 kr.	905,797.10 kr.	- kr.	- kr.	- kr.	1,358,695.65 kr.
Process quality	754,830.92 kr.	1,509,661.83 kr.	- kr.	- kr.	- kr.	2,264,492.75 kr.
Child development outcomes	603,864.73 kr.	1,207,729.47 kr.	- kr.	- kr.	- kr.	1,811,594.20 kr.
Evaluation, adaptation of tools and learning agenda	1,006,441.22 kr.	2,012,882.45 kr.	- kr.	- kr.	- kr.	**3,019,323.67 kr.**
Direct costs	603,864.73 kr.	1,207,729.47 kr.	- kr.	- kr.	- kr.	**1,811,594.20 kr.**
Indirect costs	370,370.37 kr.	740,740.75 kr.	- kr.	- kr.	- kr.	**1,111,111.12 kr.**
Total	**5,000,000.00 kr.**	**10,000,000.00 kr.**	**- kr.**	**- kr.**	**- kr.**	**15,000,000.00 kr.**

EOF acknowledges that the amount of DKK15 million is the total funding commitment from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs towards the Sierra Leone Early Childhood Care and Education Outcomes Fund, and confirms that no Supplementary Funding Request Notice related to shortfalls, as referenced in paragraph 25 of the SOFA, will be made before, during or after the implementation of the programme.

7. Institutional and Management Arrangement

Selection of Grantees

The selection process of Grantees (which includes non-profit implementors or non-profit impact investors) has been developed by EOF in collaboration with UNICEF and was implemented in EOF's current programmes.

The selection process is guided by the following principles shown below:

Guiding principle	Description
Transparency	The process will be clear and information at each stage will be communicated to all stakeholders including applicants and grantees in a transparent manner.
Openness	The EOI will be open to all applicants and EOF will aim to facilitate its diffusion to the widest possible audience.
Effectiveness	At each stage stakeholders will focus on the objective of the process: the selection of suitable grantees for the implementation of outcomes funds.
Efficiency	EOF aims to reduce transaction costs in the design of outcome funds by ensuring efficiency of all processes.
Diversity	EOF aims to select a diversity of interventions, implementers and investors in order to learn about what works and does not work. Diversity is essential for the sustainability strategy of each program and allows EOF to contribute to the education and results-based financing ecosystems.
Local experience	To ensure the programme is relevant to Sierra Leone context, EOF encourages organizations to demonstrate significant local experience and relationships. As such, international providers can partner with local organizations and have local teams involved in the programme implementation.

The grantee selection process is designed to mitigate and avoid conflicts of interest. A conflict of interest is any personal interest which may affect or be seen to affect impartiality in any matter relevant to duties. This includes, but is not limited to, any family or friends who may benefit or be seen to benefit personally, financially or professionally from the selection process. In case of conflict of interest of any member of the selection panel, including but not limited to the EOF team, they shall disclose such conflict and recuse themself from the selection process.

The selection process encompasses the following stages:
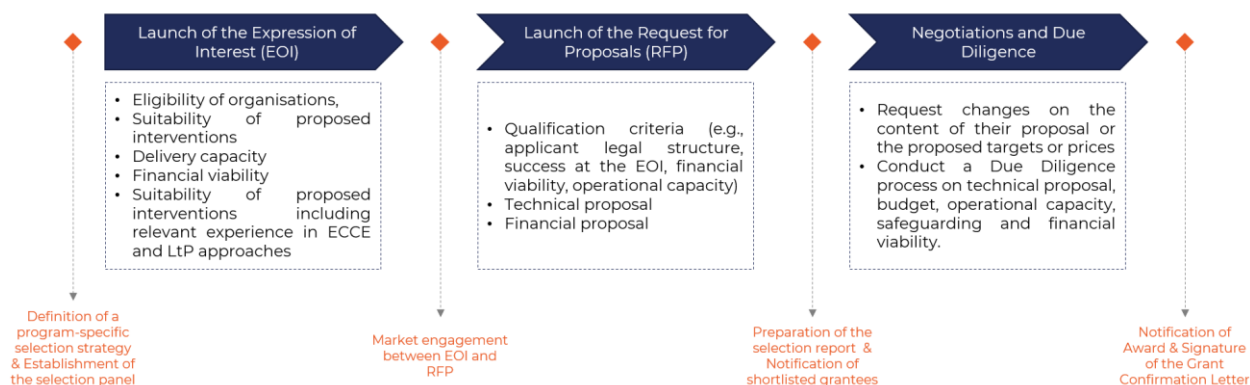
The main purpose of the EOI stage is to assess potential applicants' previous track record and experience to deliver the programme's objectives. The selection criteria will cover all the specific requirements for the programme (local participation, equity-focus, play-based approaches, etc.). In the RFP stage, only shortlisted applicants from the EOI stage are allowed to bid. The RFP stage is a much more in-depth process, with the selection panel assessing:

- Proposed interventions,
- Evidence for the proposed interventions,
- Organisational capacity to deliver results (including performance management systems),
- Cost effectiveness,
- Financial capacity to take on risks associated with outcomes funding.

Importantly, during the RFP the process remains the same regardless of the type of grantee applying. Our review process is standardized and treats all applicants equally, focusing on the comprehensive proposal rather than individual entities.

To ensure that different types of organisations can participate, including some smaller local implementors, Outcomes Funds encourages partnerships and arrangements between different types of organisations to apply as grantees for the programme. Specifically, in the proposed Outcomes Fund, the term 'grantees' refers to the organisations that will enter into a legal agreement with EOF/UNICEF and the Government. Grantees will be responsible for overseeing the implementation of the programme and receiving funding based on achievement of the outcomes. For this programme, only non-profit entities will be able to be grantees, including the following:
- Non-profit implementors; or potentially
- Non-profit social impact investors with a focus on education or children.

Importantly, grantees are allowed to:
- Subcontract parts of the intervention to other entities, including for-profit entities; and
- Choose to secure upfront funding and implementation support from social impact investors (non-profit or for profit). In addition to impact investors bearing the financial risks if outcomes are not achieved, the partnership between social impact investors and implementors also contributes to strengthening the performance management of these organisations, allowing for support in their scale-up, strengthening their monitoring and oversight practices, and ultimately contributing to more robust organisations in the ECCE space.

Importantly, for the programme to ensure a contextualised approach led by local actors, the selection of implementors will be done through a competitive selection process which will allow the Government of Sierra Leone and EOF to select implementors that support the main priorities of the Ministry. The competitive process will give preference to those implementors partnering with or led by local organisations, as well as including local staff in relevant positions. Further information around the details of this selection process can be found in the Grantee Capacity section as well as in the section under 'Programme Governance and Compliance'.

In the competitive selection process of Grantees, proposals will be evaluated based on the different proposed intervention models and previous results achieved in similar programmes. While implementors have flexibility to choose their intervention model, the following key components will be requested as part of all applications:

- Play-based approaches to support holistic early learning that adequately improve children's school readiness and skills for life. There have been some small-scale projects in the country focused on this goal, and this programme can help implement play-based approaches at scale.
- Inclusive pedagogical approaches that support all children engaging and participating in learning activities equally, supporting the Government's Radical Inclusion policy.
- Ensure local voices are included, represented, and consulted across different programme decisions and components through community engagement requirements.

Finally, a thorough due diligence process is conducted on selected implementors following the deliberation from the RFP stage, modelled after UNICEF best practices and within the policy framework regarding Core Values and Ethical Standards Assessment, Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) and Child Safeguarding. The due diligence process contains also micro assessments on operational and financial capacity of the applicant organisations. Applicants successful at the due diligence stage will then be invited to sign a contract with EOF/UNICEF and the Government of Sierra Leone for implementation.

Programme Governance

The main decision makers and responsible for the management of the program to ensure smooth implementation are the Commissioners, which consist of the Government of Sierra Leone and the Education Outcomes Fund.

Government of Sierra Leone

The Government of Sierra Leone will be represented by the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE). It will work closely with EOF´s team to oversee the programme's implementation on the ground and will provide inputs and guidance on the issues that are escalated. The Government will also work closely with EOF´s Sierra Leone team to facilitate the implementation of the programme, promote the programme amongst relevant stakeholders in Sierra Leone, facilitate communication with local governmental entities and assist in beneficiary engagement and visits to the ECD centres. A high-level officer appointed by the Minister of Basic and Senior Secondary Education will represent the Government of Sierra Leone in the governance bodies.

Education Outcomes Fund

EOF will have a dedicated team in charge of overseeing and managing the day-to-day programme-related activities in-country and will serve as the first point of contact for Grantees and Impact Investors. The team will be composed by members from EOF central team as well as an in-country team that will be able to respond to daily issues and operations. The EOF team will also manage all contracts directly with Grantees and with the independent evaluator.

Governance bodies

To ensure that decisions are being made considering the perspectives from all partners involved in the programme implementation, the programme governance structure will include four forums with specific roles and responsibilities, allowing for the programme participants to be involved in the implementation from different angles. These four forums and their objectives have been informed by the lessons learned from the governance structure of the Sierra Leone Education Innovation Challenge programme, after almost two years of implementation in Sierra Leone.

Programme governance structure
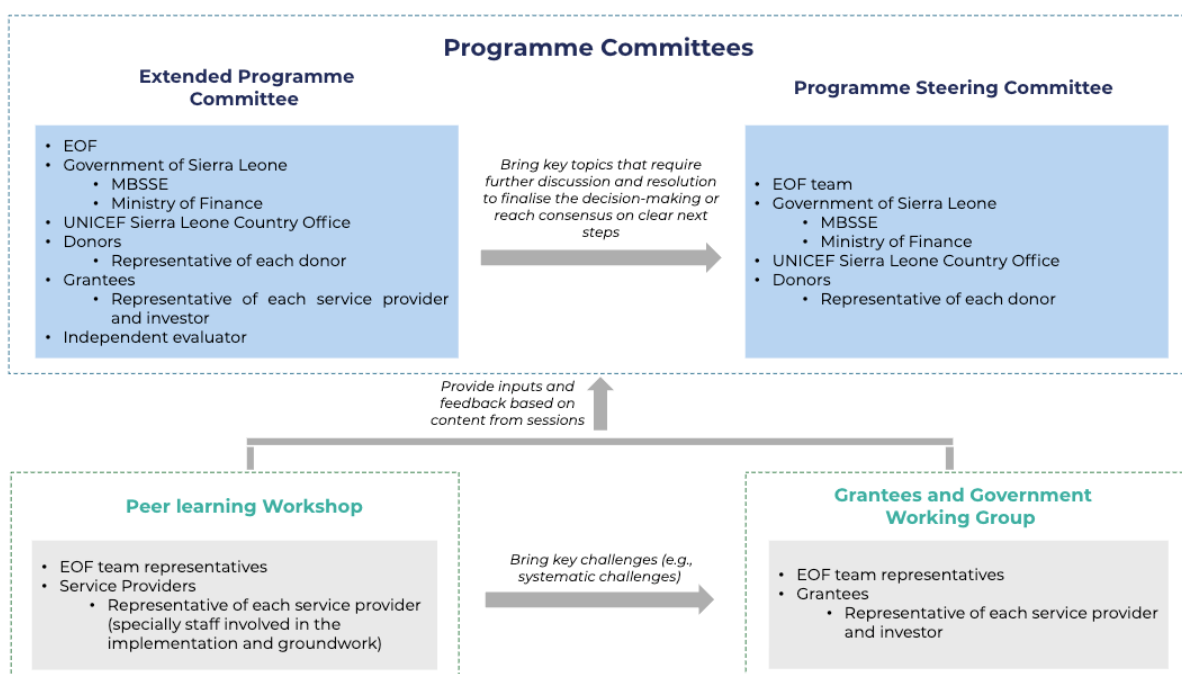
The following table describes the objective and cadence of each committee. It is important to bear in mind that these could be revised during implementation with the agreement of all partners to ensure each committee is addressing the needs of the program.

Objective and cadence of each committee

Committee	Objective	Cadence
Steering Committee	**A high-level governance body in charge of making strategic decisions.** Key topics concerning the impact and the strategic direction of the programme will be discussed. These topics will be mainly	Every two months at least during the first year of implementation,

	defined based on inputs from the Extended Programme Committee and other issues raised by partners in other forums that require high-level discussion.	could be adjusted afterwards
Extended Programme Committee	**Create a space for discussion between all partners of the programme about the implementation successes, challenges, and lessons learned, as well as potential changes to the overall programme design.** Based on these discussions, as stated above, key topics that require further discussion and resolution will be brought to the Steering Committee to finalise the decision-making or reach a consensus on concrete next steps. Additionally, the Extended Programme Committee will provide a space for discussion on the Evaluation Report provided by the independent evaluator, where additional clarifications on its content can be asked. This is in the understanding that the final sign-off and approval of the Evaluation Report lies with the Commissioners (e.g., the signatories of the Grant Confirmation Letter, which are EOF/UNICEF and the Government of Sierra Leone).	Every two months at least during the first year of implementation, could be adjusted afterwards
Grantees' Peer Learning Group	**The Grantees Peer Learning Group aims to be a collaborative space where Grantees can share their experiences implementing the programme and discuss best practices and lessons learned**. Given the innovative nature of the programme, it is key to create a forum for Grantees to learn from each other's strategies and brainstorm how to overcome challenges and leverage opportunities to achieve outcomes. Grantees are generally used to operate grants where funding is disbursed based on activities, so this forum is meant to support them and provide the space and tools for them to effectively adapt their management practices and maximise their impact.	Once a term
Grantees and Government Working Group	**The Grantees and Government Working Group aim to be a practical problem-solving space in which Grantees connect directly with the Government** to discuss	Once a term

| | sector issues that may limit the impact of the programme and discuss practical solutions to be implemented in collaboration.

The topics of discussion in this forum include challenges brought by Grantees (e.g., systematic challenges discussed in the Peer Learning group) as well as discussing the practical next steps and the implementation of the decisions agreed upon in the Steering Committee. | |
|---|---|---|

Besides the committees outlined in the table above, EOF will meet with all partners, including Impact Investors and Grantees on a monthly basis to ensure an adequate monitoring of implementation and efficient problem-solving when needed.

Decision making in the programme

The decision rights for the different bodies involved in the programme governance structure are detailed below. In general, decisions within the Steering Committee will be made by consensus and disputes resolved through amicable negotiation. However, to break potential stalemates in decision-making of the Steering Committee, the Chair (a high-level officer appointed by the Minister of Basic and Senior Secondary Education) and the Co-Chair (EOF´s Chief Programmes Officer) have veto rights.

Extended Programme Committee

As mentioned above, the Extended Programme Committee will provide inputs and feedback to the Programme Steering Committee on implementation successes and challenges as well as potential changes to overall programme design. **As such, no final decisions will be made within the Extended Programme Committee as final decisions will be made by the Programme Steering Committee and the Commissioners.**

Specifically, the Extended Programme Committee will provide a space for discussion on the Evaluation Report provided by the independent evaluator, where additional clarifications on its content can be asked. This is in the understanding that final sign off and approval of the Evaluation Report lies with the Commissioners.

Programme Steering Committee

The Programme Steering Committee will make key decisions on several topics based on the discussions and inputs from the Extended Programme Committee. In general, the discussions within the Programme Steering Committee will aim to reach consensus (in line with the discussions that took place in the Extended Programme Committee) with final decisions being formally approved by the Chair and Co-Chair as Commissioners of the Programme. However, if consensus cannot be achieved within the Programme Steering Committee, the Chair and Co-Chair will be able to make the decisions that are needed.

The main areas where the Programme Steering Committee is expected to make decisions are the following:

- Changes to programme design
- Foreseeable Significant Events

- Significant Events
- Grantee Default
- Commissioner Default
- Voluntary Termination by a Commissioner
- Calculation of the No Fault Termination Sum and the Commissioner Default Termination Sum
- Advance payments
- Evaluation disputes
- Actions following safeguarding investigation

Commissioners

The Commissioners (Government of Sierra Leone and EOF) will be in charge of final decision making on the following topics:

Sign off to the Evaluation Reports provided by the independent evaluator.
Target setting for metric 3.2.
Outcomes Payments based on the Evaluation Reports.

Additionally, as mentioned above if consensus cannot be achieved within the Programme Steering Committee, the Commissioners will be able to make the decisions that are needed. The Commissioners will also engage technical advisors when needed to make the most appropriate technical decisions aligned with the programme's ultimate goal.

Grantees' Peer Learning Group

The Grantees' Peer Learning Group is not a decision-making body but rather a collaborative space where Grantees/Impact Investors can share their experiences implementing the programme and discuss operational questions, events, challenges, learnings, best practices identified, and potential risks.

Grantees and Government Working Group

This Grantees and Government Working Group is not a decision-making body but serves as a point of escalation to EOF and the Government of Sierra Leone team for any significant issue that should then be brought to the Extended Programme Committee and the Steering Committee. In this forum though Grantees and government will discuss and agree on practical next steps and the implementation of the decisions agreed upon in the Steering Committee.

The Grantees are present in most forums, except for the Steering Committee. However, the governance structure has been designed to ensure that Grantees have several opportunities to raise concerns and challenges as well as to showcase their successes to the different partners. In this matter, while they are not present in the Steering Committee, the topics of discussion brought by them in other forums will be key inputs for the discussions and decisions to be made in the Steering Committee.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark in Ghana

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark in Ghana shall have the right to carry out any technical supervision mission that is considered necessary to monitor the implementation of the project/programme.

After the termination of the project/programme support, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark in Ghana reserves the right to carry out evaluations in accordance with this article.

8. Financial Management, Planning and Reporting

The budget provided in Section 6: Budget Summary, indicates the sequence and amounts of payments from the Danish Government to EOF. At each disbursement, EOF will be specifying the absolute amounts and percentage of funds that will be directed to outcomes funding and to the EOF Secretariat to cover for evaluation, direct and indirect costs.

Programme timelines might be revised depending on needs and circumstances, and changes will be discussed with the Danish Government teams on a case-by-case basis.

This budget includes the following milestones:

- Four months of mobilisation by Grantees including the selection of communities and facilities for the creation of new ECD centres, recruitment and training of local staff, light refurbishment, ensuring the right materials are in place, and the preparation for implementation. This mobilisation period is important as existing infrastructure may require light renovations, repairs, or modifications to make the space suitable and safe for ECD centres. This could include installing safety features, child-friendly furnishings, and creating age-appropriate learning environments. The mobilisation period will also be crucial for implementors to engage with the local community, parents, and stakeholders through community outreach, meetings, and discussions to build support and ensure a smooth launch. Additionally, during the mobilization period, implementors will hire and train qualified staff, including teachers and support personnel. Allocating a mobilization period allows time for all these preparations to be in place.
- Implementation across a bit less than four years during which Grantees will receive payments based on the results achieved in the pre-agreed outcomes. Evaluation costs include the measurement and verification of results by an external evaluation firm, the adaptation and validation of measurement tools in Sierra Leone and the programme learning agenda. Additionally, the budget also includes EOF's costs (direct and indirect) as an EOF team will be needed to manage the programme's implementation. For the purpose of this Programme Proposal, outcomes funding lines have been distributed across years under the assumption that all Grantees will be achieving all results agreed. However, in reality, these numbers will vary across years depending on the performance of Grantees compared to the performance targets to be defined. The tentative disbursements to Grantees are based on the initial payment timeline suggested for each metric:
- Centres being safe before they open will be measured and paid during the first implementation year.
  - Increased access of children aged 3-5 within teacher-child ratios will be measured and paid yearly during the four implementation years.
  - Structural quality will be measured and paid yearly starting in the second year of implementation.
- Process quality will be paid yearly since the third year of implementation. The second year will be used to collect data and adjust targets for payments in the third and last year of implementation.
- Improved holistic child development outcomes will be paid in the third year of implementation.

- Six months after the end of interventions in the last year for the finalisation of evaluation, and transition of ECD centres to local communities and any other administrative conclusion of activities related to the programme.

As a UNICEF-hosted fund, EOF must follow UNICEF reporting policies which do not allow to provide further disaggregation on the budget as presented in the table above.

In line with UNICEF's financial systems and practices, funds must be fully available and registered in our system prior to entering into any contractual commitments with staff, consultants, external evaluator and Grantees/implementors. Committing the funding upfront is required to cover the cost of the contracts in order to guarantee our capacity to honour contractual obligations and execute programme activities without financial interruptions.

Expectations related to reporting are outlined in the SOFA agreement and refer to the following reporting cycles: (a) an annual certified financial report of the Account (programme) (but not individual ledger accounts within the Account) for each calendar year or part thereof during which UNICEF operates the Account, to be provided no later than 30 June of the year immediately following the calendar year to which it relates; (b) a final financial report ("money in, money out") upon the closing of the Account, to be provided no later than eighteen (18) months after the reconciliation of all final financial reports from the Grantee(s) together with receipt of all amounts repayable to the Account and final financial closing of the Account; and (c) any internal or external audit reports of UNICEF that make reference to the Account. These reports will be provided to the Outcomes Funder and to the EOF ExCom. Reports on the progress of the Programme, including the challenges faced, risks identified, and mitigation strategies adopted, will be provided annually by the EOF ExCom to the Outcomes Funder.

Included in this narrative report will be details about the implementation and results, as well as the learning approach of the programme. Additionally, the narrative reports will include components on nutrition (which is strongly encouraged but not mandatory in this programme), child inclusion and community involvement. The monitoring will be a result of findings from the evaluation report, in loco observations from EOF Country Teams during field monitoring activities and reports from Grantees

The EOF ExCom will inform the Outcome Funder, in a timely manner of any significant modification of the Programme Proposal. To the extent practicable, the EOF ExCom will afford the Outcome Funder a reasonable opportunity to exchange views before effecting any such modification.

9. Risk Management

The objective of EOF's Programmatic Risk framework and Policies (PREP) is to consistently prepare for, assess, mitigate and monitor risks across all programmes, including this new ECCE programme.

PREP focuses specifically on the risk category of EOF programmes. EOF's Institutional Risk Management Policy outlines the risk management process for EOF's other risk categories. The two policies combined intend to help EOF identify those risks on which it needs to focus management attention and resources.

As a 'living document', PREP will continue to evolve and develop, informed by external stakeholder review, and the ongoing programme implementation experience of the EOF secretariat.

Overview of PREP
PREP incorporates and is structured around the following key elements:
- Risk identification by the programme team, according to relevant categories identified for the design and implementation phases.

- Risk assessment involves generating a risk score based on the likelihood of the risk event materializing, and severity of the impact on the programme objectives or stakeholders if it does materialise.

- Mitigating strategies developed for risks where possible, prioritising the risks ranked amber or red. During the risk review cycle, the risk score is recalculated to reflect any changes in likelihood or severity as a result of implementation of mitigating strategies.

- Risk tolerance represents the application of risk appetite to specific objectives.

- Risk ownership is designated to ensure relevant risks are monitored and reviewed with the appropriate frequency, including oversight of implementation of mitigating strategies.

Before any project can be approved to proceed by the CEO and ExCom, risks must be reviewed by the Chief Programmes Officer, who might seek input from independent technical experts. Seniority of ownership and treatment of risks varies according to the likelihood and severity of risks. The risk register is held centrally and reviewed throughout the programme.

Risk Identification
During the design process and as part of all programme design documents, risks must first be identified – both risks to achieving the intended positive development outcomes, as well as negative effects to programme participants or other stakeholders. All types of risks will be assessed through the duration of the programme, and the specific examples identified in this section are a selection and are not meant to be exhaustive.

Some example risk types include:
- Funding
- Technical
- Procurement and contracting
- Evaluation
- Management
- Sustainability

Risk assessment

Risks are assessed based on likelihood and severity, based on the judgement of the programme team and with input from independent technical advisors when needed, and oversight from the CEO and the Executive Committee. Each individual risk is classified in terms of its likelihood of occurrence (from Remote [1] to Likely [4]), and severity of its impact (from Low [1] to Severe [4]).

Each program risk identified is then logged into the central program Risk Register, and a 'risk score' multiplying likelihood and severity scores together. Based on the final score, the risk is marked from green (score 1-3) to red (score of 10+). The total risk score then informs further planning in terms of the staff member responsible (more severe risks are managed by more senior staff), the detail and content of the mitigation strategies, and other factors.

Risk tolerance
EOF will establish risk tolerance levels with key performance indicators where quantitative threshold values are clear and appropriate. Specific programs will develop risks and tolerance levels to their areas of responsibility/accountability.

Mitigating strategies
Once an initial risk register is developed with risks identified, assessed, and scored, the team will then develop mitigating strategies, to manage specific risks identified. The attention and focus will prioritise the most likely and / or severe risks (e.g., those rated amber or red).
During the risk review cycle, the risk score is recalculated to reflect any changes in likelihood or severity as a result of implementation of mitigating strategies.

Risk ownership, monitoring and oversight process

Risk ownership is designated to ensure relevant risks are monitored and reviewed with the appropriate frequency, including oversight of implementation of mitigating strategies. To do so, each project phase (scoping, design, contracting, implementation, and post-implementation) will follow a risk management process. Each of the risk management process will consist of different revisions by key stakeholders such as the CEO and ExCom and independent technical advisors when needed.

Key risks identified for this programme

For the full risk matrix, please refer to annex 4

Risk Factor	Likelihood	Impact	Risk response / mitigation	Residual risk	Background to assessment
Signature of the EU contract is delayed due to political and fiscal conditions for government to meet and/or legal contracting process proposed by UNICEF, leading to delays in the program timeline	Likely	Major	● Continue engagement with the EU to ensure any concerns are anticipated and reflected in our timeline ● Continue exploring funding options and contracting modalities with the EU (SOFA or EU standard template), prioritizing simpler modality ● Continue conversations with UNICEF Country Office for the contracting of EU funds	● Continued negotiations to reach agreed contracting format ● The risk mitigation measures will make the risk manageable.	Initial discussions with the EU have given rise to challenges around pathways to contracting

Fluctuations of currency and inflation exceed expected values with positive or negative effects on available funding for the program	Likely	Minor	● Continuous monitoring of currency and inflation ● Adaptation of financial planning and cash flow ● Regular communication with funding organizations ● Identification of contingency planning ● Negotiation with donors, grantees and government to adapt the scope of the program to adjust to resources available ● Agreement with government and donors on use of additional unplanned resources available	● Explore re-allocation of resources	Risk based on the nature of fluctuating currency markets
Evaluation budget being higher than forecasted, requiring reallocation and adjustment of budget, resources and work plan	Likely	Minor	● Run a competitive process to contract evaluation firm. Informal reach out to specific firms, email to UNICEF Long Term Agreement status holders list to warm up the market, pre-bidding conference. ● Pre-identification of contingency planning including potential reallocation of resources ● Have a rigorous negotiation process and revisit the protocols if needed be ● Potentially consider a reconsideration of protocols recommended to explore cost reduction	● Re-allocation of resources	Given the complexity of evaluation in the early childhood space we anticipate that some discrepancies in our forecasting vs final contracting may arise

10. Exit Strategy / Sustainability Plan

The link between outcomes and long-term impact will follow the sustainability pathway identified with the Government to ensure the continuity of the interventions and the systemic changes that these interventions can foster. The vision of the Government is to ensure the continuity of interventions and the local communities' ownership during and following the end of the programme. This vision focuses on two key pillars of the programme: continuity of services in the ECD centres, and continuity of funding.

The continuity of service strategy centres around empowering communities to take ownership of the ECD centres. Implementors will aim to gradually shift ownership to the communities they serve, building upon the strong relationships fostered during the programme's implementation. Transferring ownership to communities includes ensuring the establishment of oversight boards and shifting managerial duties to the community at the end of the programme so that the centre can operate independently of the implementor. By transferring ownership to the communities, it enables them to sustain and continue programme management in parallel, ensuring long-lasting impact and building local capacities. This approach acknowledges the centrality of community engagement and participation in ensuring the sustainability of the programme's interventions.

The transition of funding strategy will be continuously discussed with the Government. These discussions will focus on the goal of ensuring that newly established centres can be integrated into the formal sector and ultimately receive Government assistance. For example, implementors can be encouraged to gradually integrate the community ECD centres into the Government's support framework, seeking "Approval" status after the three years of operation. This could include aligning with the MBSSE and the Teaching Service Commission to work around the challenges of high prevalence of volunteer teachers (an approach used in EOF's Basic Education Programme "SLEIC"). As per Government's requirements, these new centres need to operate for at least three years to be recognized as part of the Government structure, which has been reflected in the recommended programme length. By gradually aligning funding needs with Government resources, the programme aims to establish feasible models where the Government could assume part of the responsibility for financing and supporting the centres through existing formal channels as funding for ECCE increases.

The Government has committed to work with EOF to co-design a smooth transition strategy to sustain the impact of this programme after its duration in parallel with the internal MBSSE work on the implementation strategy being designed to follow the Basic Education Act of 2023. The definition of an overall strategy will be agreed upon during the contracting of selected implementors and will be a key part of analysis of the proposed intervention during the selection process. However, the sustainability strategy is a component that will be further developed with the Government and implementors throughout implementation as this priority sector continues to develop, depending on the opportunities that will be identified along the way to ensure interventions can continue beyond the programme lifecycle.

In addition to the vision of provision and the vision of funding, the sustainability of the programme relies on additional key aspects including:

- EOF's experience working in Sierra Leone through the launch of the Sierra Leone Education Innovation Challenge (SLEIC), which brought Outcomes Funds to primary education, a programme that is under implementation. Due to implementation of SLEIC, the Government of Sierra Leone is familiar with this type of mechanism and has been championing the use of Outcomes Funds to help its efforts to expand quality ECCE access in the country. This first experience makes EOF well positioned to continue working with the MBSSE and leveraging the sustainability strategies from this first programme (e.g., teachers' qualifications through training from the intervention being recognised by the government) to benefit the ECCE programme.
- Contextualisation and co-creation with the Government. As mentioned earlier, in EOF's Outcomes Funds, the Government is the driving force in the definition of outcomes and alignment of design choices with local priorities, therefore this model allows for significant contextualisation and co-creation. This ensures that local voices are at the centre of the programme allowing the Fund to meet the country's current priorities and help the Government in delivering its mandate in the coming years. An example of this is how this programme will strengthen the data collected in ECCE by rolling out national standards and using learning standards as the base for the selection of a tool for measuring child development outcomes. This will help in building a nascent ECCE sector and benefit other initiatives and programmes, such as the GPE Partnership Compact 'Foundations of Learning for All' focused on existing formal pre-primaries and funded in part by the contribution of the European Union.
- Increased performance management capacity. Selected implementors, including local organisations, will also strengthen their capabilities for data-driven and performance adaptive management to respond to the incentives and the evidence generated, which will contribute to a stronger ECCE ecosystem beyond the life of the programme.

EOF will document its approach and results throughout the programme implementation period pertaining to the engagement with external consultants, in particular, documenting the process of how service providers will initiate community involvement and ownership. These results will be included in the end of programme report.

Annex 1: Context Analysis

Rationale for Launching an Outcomes Fund in Sierra Leone

The Government of Sierra Leone, in partnership with EOF, launched an Outcomes Fund at the primary level to increase learning outcomes in primary school children (the Sierra Leone Education Innovation Challenge, or SLEIC). Following the successful launch of this first OBF programme, President Bio unveiled an exciting new chapter in Sierra Leone's journey for quality education: the launch of a new OBF ECCE programme, a testament to the commitment and resolute political will driving this enduring partnership. This announcement was supported by the former Minister of Basic and Senior Secondary Education and current Chief Minister David Sengeh's and most recently by the current Minister of Basic and Secondary Education Conrad Sackey's championship on the use of innovative finance at scale to help build a nascent ECCE sector in the country and ensure the value-for-money of education interventions.

From a policy perspective, Sierra Leone presents optimal conditions for the launch of an OBF in ECCE. The government placed education at the centre of their agenda, increasing access to all levels of education through the Free Quality School Initiative, with a renewed focus on ECCE since 2018. This focus has been codified in policies such as the Education Sector Plan and the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) Compact in recent years. This has resulted in an impressive increase in access to pre-primary education, from 7% of 3–5-year-olds in 2011 to 24% in 2021 and the solidification of its pedagogical focus on child-centred approaches, such as play-based activities and a strong focus on foundational learning and holistic outcomes.[2]

EOF and the MBSSE, in extensive consultations carried with relevant stakeholders (technical partners, experts, donors, and education providers), have identified some key challenges that will be addressed by this new OBF programme:

1. Limited but growing financial resources to the sector.
2. The recent prioritisation of ECCE by MBSSE also means that several of the administrative and institutional structures needed to support the rapid expansion of the sector are still in development. Firstly, there is limited data, especially on quality of ECCE provision and on the functioning of non-formal provision, including community-based ECD centres. Limited oversight and monitoring of ECD centres have resulted in an incomplete picture of the ECCE provision. In turn, this leads to an absence of evidence to inform policy, particularly on non-formal provision and its quality. Finally, as the sector develops, interventions have been more focused on activities/inputs and outputs rather than on outcomes, such as child development. In following the GoSL existing commitment to impact, it will be critical moving forward that accountability structures focus on impact on child development to ensure that existing efforts are translated into improved outcomes for children.
3. Process and structural quality are limited due to infrastructure constraints and insufficient pedagogy rollout. There is a limited use of age-appropriate pedagogies as the new standards have not been translated into practice yet. Some pre-primary centres lack basic facilities: for example, 24% of pre-primary centres had no access to running water in 2021,3 and most teachers are not trained in using child-centred approaches. Additionally, there are also demand-side forces that impact the rollout of process quality improvements, such as limited parental awareness of the importance of ECCE. These constraints combine to create a situation of insufficient supply of quality ECCE services in the country.

Context of ECD in Sierra Leone

Since 2018, Sierra Leone has made concerted efforts to improve access to and the quality of education for all children, with an emphasis on the most underserved and early-years learners. The commitment to quality foundational learning for all is reflected in various policies and initiatives including: i) the _Education Sector Plan (ESP) 2022-2026_, which emphasizes equity in access to quality education, guided by the _Policy for Radical Inclusion in Schools_ (2021); ii) the _Free Quality School Education Programme (2018)_, which has enabled universal primary school enrolment, recruitment and training of thousands of teachers, and an increase in teacher salaries; iii) the _National Policy on Integrated Early Childhood Development_ (2021), which made a minimum of one year of pre-primary education compulsory; and iv) a comprehensive overhaul of the curriculum for (a) pre-primary and early childhood; (b) basic education; and (c) senior secondary education (2020). The new curriculum utilises a 5Cs framework - _Comprehension, Critical Thinking, Computational Thinking, Creative Thinking, and Civic Education_ – and is created around a learner-centred approach. The GoSL also demonstrated regional leadership through the _2022 Freetown Manifesto for Gender-Transformative Leadership_ in and through education, which was followed by hosting the first Foundational Learning Exchange Summit in 2023 to promote South-South exchange on the African continent.

Sierra Leone's key ECCE policy goals include:

- **Radical Inclusion:** Equity in access to quality education is recognised as a key pillar in basic education, including pre-primary. Radical inclusion plans on expanding access to basic education with a specific focus on underserved children, such as those living in rural areas, under poverty, or with disabilities.
- **Provision of quality ECCE:** This includes "structural and process quality" elements of education. For structural quality, the Government of Sierra Leone focuses on safety and accessibility of the space, encouraging the school facilities to meet the minimum standards for health and safety based on their guidelines. For process quality, the main focus is on an inclusive and nurturing 'classroom climate', with importance placed on teacher training and competencies. GoSL prioritises qualified teachers with sufficient pre-primary training, both in formal and non-formal settings.
- **Supporting positive early learning:** this includes development of age-appropriate curriculum and teaching materials, critical to supporting children's holistic development and school readiness. Many policy documents recognise the significance and highlight the role of Ministry of Basic and Secondary Senior Education in developing age-appropriate curriculum, encouraging ECD centres to adopt play-based learning and engaging the local community for responsive caregiving.

These robust policies and strong political will have resulted in incredible development of ECCE over the past decade. The sector's progress has yielded remarkable results, with enrolment rates in pre-primary education tripling from a mere 7% of 3-5-years-olds in 2011, to an impressive 24% in 2021.[4] This has been accompanied by a solidification of its pedagogical approach, framing play-based learning as a core part of the new ECCE curriculum and minimum standards.

However, despite this impressive progress, 76% of children aged 3-5 are still not enrolled in ECCE, and half of the children aged 3-4 are below the expected holistic child development milestones[5]. Additionally, quality standards vary between public and private, and formal and non-formal provision. A qualitative study in six ECCE centres from the University of Sierra Leone showed that most teachers had not been exposed to play-based pedagogy, and 24% of classrooms were rated poor on gender sensitivity, while less than 8% of classrooms from this pool had a satisfactory level of pupils' participation.[6] This study shows the remaining progress to be made on quality improvements in the classroom, in addition to the remaining gaps in access to formal ECCE provision.

Annex 2: Partner Assessment

The Education Outcomes Fund (EOF) is the first UNICEF-hosted platform for outcomes funds at scale, supporting improvements in the quality of education and skills programmes. It measures and pays for what matters – both core skills like literacy and numeracy, but also holistic child development, and other broader fundamentals of quality education. EOF particularly focuses on equity and inclusion, with a focus on girls, children with disabilities and developmental delays (CWD/DD), and low-income groups.

Since its inception in 2018, EOF has established itself as a leading global player in Results and Outcomes-Based Financing (RBF/OBF) and the only dedicated centre of expertise for OBF in education and skills. EOF has partnered with the Governments of Ghana and Sierra Leone to establish the two largest education outcomes funds in low- and middle-income countries to date, totalling $48M and set to impact over 300,000 children. EOF has since established a significant partnership with the LEGO Foundation to develop a portfolio of large OBF programmes in early childhood care and education across a diverse range of countries, as well as to amplify the movement and ecosystem of partners around this approach.

EOF's innovative approach has been featured in publications including The Stanford Social Innovation Review, The Financial Times[1], and The Economist.

Short History of EOF

- The Education Outcomes Fund was created in 2018, the first ever international Trust Fund with the mandate to champion Outcomes Based Financing for education and lead a system change towards impact-focused solutions.

- In 2020 EOF was invited to become a UN-hosted fund, allowing us to leverage their systems to ensure accountability and transparency, while at the same time being able to guarantee agility and flexibility in line with our mandate.

- In 2022 EOF launched the two largest outcomes-based education programmes worldwide to support Foundational Learning for 300,000 children in Sierra Leone and Ghana, with a budget of $50 million provided by partners such as UK International Development, Bank of America, KOICA and Hempel Foundation.

- It established a $47 million partnership with the LEGO Foundation to launch three large-scale Early Childhood Care and Education programmes using Outcome-Based financing to support up to 550,000 children in Rwanda, Sierra Leone and South Africa.

- In 2024 and in partnership with SECO, EOF is launching its first Skills for Employment OBF programme in Tunisia, focusing on end-to-end youth support from training to job placement and retention.

- EOF championed a new way impact investors could contribute to our programmes, assuming the financial risk and playing their strengths, while supporting implementing partners to achieve results. This model has demonstrated to be extremely appealing for the private sector, as our investment requests have been 2-3 times oversubscribed.

- EOF has already started to change minds and the results are outstanding: from governments changing their whole sectorial strategy to embrace OBF and putting skin in the game (governments in Sierra Leone and Ghana financing 10% and 15% of programme budget and South Africa allocating $15 million of their own budget to the ECCE programme) to INGOs experiencing a total revolution in their ways or working, making them more resilient and focused on impact.

- EOF is building the capacities of stakeholders at all levels to guarantee sustainability and complete ownership of the outcomes-based process. Governments are leading the charge for transformation, funding organisations are learning new and more flexible ways of financing, NGOs are becoming more agile and nurturing innovation and private sector is playing a new crucial role, in line with their objectives and expertise.

- EOF is now in the process of scaling up our operations and expanding our work worldwide. We are looking for like-minded champions who see the limits of the current system and want to be the pioneers of lasting change that will benefit everyone.

- As part of the Learning and Engagement Team's community building efforts, we have launched the Collective Learning Initiative (CLI), bringing together individuals and organisations engaged in OBF programmes in early childhood care and education (ECCE) to share their experiences and jointly surface learnings for future programmes. With a broader focus, EOF has been chairing the Education Finance Network's Working Group on Innovative Finance in Education.

EOF is backed by a range of world leaders, as well as leaders in education and impact investing who support our approach and achieve our ambitious aims:

High-Level Steering Group

Aïcha Bah Diallo
Former Minister of Education of Guinea

Alicia Herbert
Director of the Education, Gender and Equality at FCDO

Aliko Dangote
President & CEO of the Dangote Group

Amel Karboul
CEO of EOF; formerly Minister of Tourism of Tunisia; BCG; Mercedes Benz

Felipe Calderón
Former President of Mexico

Vikas Pota
Founder & CEO of T4 Education

Jakaya Kikwete
Former President of Tanzania & Chair of the African Union

Catherine Russell
Executive Director of UNICEF

Kimberly Gire
Founder, Global Women Leaders; Advisor to the World Bank & ICRC

Liesbet Steer
President & CEO of the Education Development Center

Phyllis Costanza
President and Co-Founder of OutcomesX

Theo Sowa
Former CEO of the African Women's Development Fund

Sir Ronald Cohen
Chair of EOF and President of the Global Steering Group for Impact Investment

Strive Masiyiwa
Executive Chairman of Econet Global

Maya Ziswiler
CEO of UBS Optimus Foundation

Summary of key partner features

Name of Partner	Core business What is the main business, interest and goal of the partner?	Importance How important is the project/programme for the partner's activity-level (Low, medium high)?	Influence How much influence does the partner have over the project programme (low, medium, high)?	Contribution What will be the partner's main contribution?	Capacity What are the main issues emerging from the assessment of the partner's capacity?	Exit strategy What is the strategy for exiting the partnership?
EOF / UNICEF	The Education Outcomes Fund (EOF) is the first UNICEF-hosted platform for outcomes funds at scale, supporting improvements in the quality of education and skills programmes. UNICEF, provides the legal and fiduciary home for EOF, as well as back-office services. Though hosted in UNICEF, EOF's governance is through its own Executive Committee, in turn supported by a High-Level Steering Group.	High The programme forms part of EOF's core portfolio and is one of three new programmes that aim to harness the potential of OBF in early childhood programming.	High As the primary convening partner and fund manager, EOF's influence on the programme running and success will be high.	EOF will oversee and manage the day-to-day programme-related activities in-country and will serve as the first point of contact for Grantees and Impact Investors.	EOF has experience in the design, launch and implementation of outcomes-based programs including legal framework and identification and measurement of outcome indicators	Over the course of the program EOF will provide capacity building support to the government and programme stakeholders so that after the conclusion of the programme they will be able to continue to implement their strategies leveraging outcomes-based financing
UNICEF Sierra Leone Country Office	The core business of UNICEF Sierra Leone Country Office focuses on improving the lives of children and women in Sierra Leone through various programs and interventions. Their work is aligned with UNICEF's global mission of	Our relationship with UNICEF Sierra Leone is critical to the smooth running of this programme. UNICEF CO will take part in the programme governance structure,	High As one of the main players in the ECCE sector in the country, UNICEF SL has had a strong engagement	EOF and UNICEF Sierra Leone are going to be co-managing the evaluation work and UNICEF SL will be taking part in the programme	UNICEF SL will be allocating dedicated teams to co-manage this programme with EOF.	Given that UNICEF SL already manages other existing community-based centres in the country, they will be able to play a key role in the programme's

	promoting the rights of every child, especially the most disadvantaged.	namely the Programme Steering Committee and the Extended Programme Committee. This will ensure a better coordination and alignment with UNICEF's other priorities in the country and a joint approach to the ECCE sector. Also, since the EU funds are likely to be channelled to the programme through UNICEF SL, EOF and UNICEF SL will be co-managing the evaluation work and firm.	with government and a crucial role in the definition of ECCE policies and standards in the country.	governance structure for a better coordination.		exit strategy and the management of the newly created ECD centres.
Government of Sierra Leone	The Government of Sierra Leone will be represented by the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE). The goal for the MBSSE is to gather evidence to inform its own policy on how to implement holistic interventions that achieve better results for early childhood programming.	High The proposed programme is a key intervention in the GoSL's early childhood strategy.	High The GoSL will provide important inputs and guidance on the issues that arise during programme implementation.	The GoSL will work closely with EOF´s team to oversee the programme's implementation on the ground.	The GoSL has launched successful policies and strategies to improve education at different levels, achieving substantial results in basic education that will be replicated in ECCE	No exit strategy is foreseen as GoSL is expected to continue its work beyond the duration of the programme
LEGO Foundation	The LEGO Foundation is dedicated to enhancing early childhood development (ECD) by harnessing the power of play. It focuses on integrating play-based learning into early education, fostering holistic growth in young children, including cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development.	High This programme is the result of a collaborative journey between EOF and the LEGO Foundation to harness the potential of OBF in promoting holistic skills, quality improvement, equity enhancement, and evidence generation in ECCE. It is the first of	High This programme – along with two other ECCE country programmes – is significant to the LEGO Foundation's exploration of innovative financing mechanisms to	The LEGO Foundation is the primary outcomes funder for the programme – as well as for two additional ECCE programmes in South Africa and Rwanda.	LEGO Foundation has extensive experience in the implementation of ECCE programmes in particular leveraging learn to play techniques.	The LEGO Foundation will participate to the capacity building and support future planning led by the GoSL.

	its kind for both organisations.	support early childhood care and education.				
European Union	The European Union's (EU) development agenda in education focuses on improving access to quality education and lifelong learning in developing countries. It aims to reduce educational inequalities, promote inclusive education, and enhance skills development, particularly for marginalized groups such as girls and disadvantaged communities.	Low	Low-medium A representative from the EU will sit on the Programme Steering Committee, contributing to strategic decision making throughout the programme implementation.	The EU's contribution to the programme is primarily financial, with funds supporting the evaluation costs.	As the EU is not involved in the delivery of the programme, there are no capacity concerns with this partner. Contracting risks as identified in the risk matrix (Annex 4).	Continue bilateral, technical and financial support with GoSL.
Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Denmark's Strategy for Development Cooperation and its specific goals contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Support for this programme thus falls under its commitment to achieve SDG4, Quality Education.	Low-medium	Low-medium A representative from the Danish MoFA will sit on the Programme Steering Committee, contributing to strategic decision making throughout the programme implementation.	The Danish MoFA's contribution to the programme is primarily financial, with funds supporting outcomes funding, as well as evaluation, adaptation of tools and learning agenda.	A wide portfolio of education programmes including ECCE in multiple countries. On top of that, the Danish MoFA has bilateral agreements with GoSL and EU.	Danish funds will support the first two years of implementation of the programme. Beyond that, EOF will ensure the successful implementation of the programme and subsequent handover to GoSL.

Annex 3: Results Framework

The programme's ultimate impact is to help strengthen Sierra Leone's ECCE system to allow children to achieve their full potential. It seeks to do so by expanding access to quality early learning opportunities (including both structural and process quality).

The expected outcomes to achieve this impact are outlined in a well-defined Theory of Change (see section 4). Specifically,

IF we establish inclusive play-based ECCE centres with minimum safety and child protection standards,
IF we ensure the enrolment and regular attendance of children aged 3-5 within the standard child-teacher assistant ratio,
IF we build the capacity of ECD teachers in play-based pedagogy and maintain a quality learning environment through regular training and monitoring,
IF we ensure the sustainability of results through active engagement of parents, community, local, and central government,
THEN more children aged 3-5 years will access quality, community play-based ECD interventions in a supportive, inclusive environment and physical setting, improving teacher-child interactions and achieving adequate learning and holistic development appropriate to their age,
LEADING TO increased access to early childhood education, improved structural and process quality of ECD centres, and better developmental outcomes for children,
RESULTING IN a stronger ECCE system that supports early development, safer spaces, better learning environments, teaching practices, and long-term benefits in children's educational and personal growth, ultimately strengthening Sierra Leone's ECCE system to allow children to achieve their full potential.

A key focus for the next few years will be to expand, but not overlap, the ongoing efforts of the Sierra Leone government and scale up success. The primary objective of the EOF programme is to increase access to ECCE quality provision for children between the ages of 3 to 5, with the ultimate goal of improving holistic child development and early learning opportunities. This will be done by repurposing existing infrastructure for the opening of new community-based ECD centres in underserved areas of the country, benefiting those who need the most. The table below illustrates the Results Framework summarising the objective, target, and impact indicator of the programme.

Programme		Sierra Leone Early Childhood Care and Education Outcomes Fund	
Programme Objective		Expand access to quality early learning opportunities through the repurposing of existing infrastructure to open new community-based ECD centres in Sierra Leone	
Impact Indicator		Sierra Leone has a strengthened Early Childhood Education system that enables children to achieve their full potential	
Outcome 1		ECD centres meet the **minimum standards for opening**	
Outcome indicator		Number of centres that meet structural quality requirements, and provide supportive environments adequate for learning, within established teacher/assistant child ratios. Centres meeting all items part of the minimum requirements will be allowed to open and remain open throughout implementation (2025-2028). Verification will be carried out against a 'checklist' that includes 15 items under the following broad headings: basic sanitation, class size/staff characteristics, safety/hazard-free, space and materials, and general items. The checklist was derived from MBSSE's minimum standards checklist and two international tools: BEQI and TEACH ECE. The MBSSE checklists' items have been retained with additional items from TEACH ECE and BEQI to create a more comprehensive tool. The final list of items will be confirmed by Q4 2024 after being piloted and adapted to the local context. Verification will primarily be based on observed results via direct observation by the independent evaluator.	
Baseline	Year	2025	0
Target	Year	2025	111 (a minimum of 37 centres per lot, in a total of 3 lots)
Output 1.1		ECD centres meet Tier 1 requirements, allowing them to open for the first time and remain open throughout implementation (2025-2028)	
Output indicator		The number of ECD centres that meet Tier 1 requirements – the minimum necessary for a centre to open and to remain open during the length of the programme. Centres to follow a list of items pertaining to basic sanitation, safety and a hazard-free environment.	
Baseline	Year	2025	0
Target	Year 1	2025	minimum of 111 centres
Target	Year 2	2026	minimum of 111 centres
Target	Year 3	2027	minimum of 111 centres
Target	Year 4	2028	minimum of 111 centres
Outcome 2		**Increased access** of children aged 3-5 to ECD centres within staff (teacher and assistant) to child ratios	
Outcome indicator		Number of children aged 3-5 years inclusive attending the centres (an average of number of enrolled children attending over the year), as reported by Grantees and verified by the evaluator, in each lot. A payment cap defined in terms of staff (ECD centre staff includes teacher and assistant) to child ratio of 1:35. Staff and child attendance data will be collected and recorded in ledgers or registers by Grantees, and these will be used to assess attendance of both children and staff. These data would then be verified by the evaluator through direct observation, by conducting a field survey of centres and measuring attendance of staff and children.	
Baseline	Year	2025	0

Target	Year	2025 - 2028	36,380 children are targeted to be provided access to all programmes across all lots across all 4 years of implementation.
Output 2.1		Child enrolment and attendance	
Output indicator		Number of enrolled/registered children of verified age and average attendance. Number of enrolled children present on day of the survey using headcounts, and children's attendance as recorded in the attendance register for the day. Attendance disaggregated by gender, age (if available) and class (where applicable) can be collected to provide additional information.	
Baseline	Year	2025	0
Target	Year	2025 - 2028	36,380 children are targeted to be provided access to all programmes across all lots across all 4 years of implementation.
Output 2		Staff employment and attendance	
Output indicator		Number of staff employed per centre and average attendance of ECD staff. Means of verification for staff employment - staff roster, with number, role, employment status (part-time, full-time, volunteer, payroll), qualifications. Means of verification for attendance - number of staff present on day of the survey using headcounts, and staff attendance as recorded in the register for the day. Staff should be collected disaggregated by role (teacher or assistant, part-time or full-time, volunteer or payroll). Data on additional variables might be collected for learning purposes.	
Baseline	Year	2025	[Situation prior to project activity]
Target	Year	2025 - 2028	Around 6600 staff will be recruited in total across all programmes across all 4 years
Outcome 3.1		Improved **structural quality** of centres	
Outcome indicator		Average Tier score of ECD centres within a lot. Tier assessment will be based on a checklist for structural quality of ECCE centre-based care in Sierra Leone. The lowest Tier is Tier 1 (relevant to Metric 1 in Year 1). This is the minimum necessary for a centre to open and to remain open during the length of the programme. Centres that meet the Tier 1 items and open in Year 1, but that don't keep the items from Tier 1 in subsequent years will need to close. To achieve a higher Tier rating, every centre will need to first meet this Tier. Tiers 2-4 then build on Tier 1 by adding additional items from the recommended checklist tool.	
Baseline	Year	2025	0
Target	Year	2028	Minimum of 2.5 target average achieved across all centres within a lot by the end of the programme. This means that during year 4's structural quality measurement, each centre will be given a tier score between 0-4. Bidders needed to submit bids of at least 2.5 to be the average tier score achieved across all centres in order to achieve full payment of funds allocated toward the structural quality metric at the end of the programme's implementation.
Output 3.1.1		ECD centres meet Tier score	
Output indicator		Average Tier score of ECD centres within a lot	
Baseline	Year	2025	0
Target	Year	2028	Minimum of 2.5 target average achieved across all centres within a lot by the end of the programme. This means that during year 4's structural quality measurement, each centre will be given a tier score between 0-4. Bidders needed to submit bids of at least 2.5 to be the average tier score achieved across all centres in order to achieve full

			payment of funds allocated toward the structural quality metric at the end of the programme's implementation.
Outcome 3.2			Setting and practices meeting **process quality** standards
Outcome indicator			Number of ECD centres that meet process quality standards. Effects of structural quality are considered to be mediated through process quality. This is, structural quality (e.g., teacher training or ratio requirements) influences process quality (e.g., early childhood professionals' interactions with children), which in turn affects child outcomes. An adapted version of the Brief Early Childhood Quality inventory (BEQI) – a checklist of 50 yes/no items - will be used as the measurement tool for process quality.
Baseline	Year	2025	0 as the centres don't exist, but the programme will be measuring the status quo of existing centres to use as a baseline
Target	Year	2025	Targets will be set and adjusted once the baseline is defined, noting that BEQI will need to be piloted for the first time in Sierra Leone
Output 3.2.1			Play-based Learning
Output indicator			Number of opportunities for children to engage in the learning process through play-based activities and approaches to learning.
Baseline	Year	2025	0 as the centres don't exist, but the programme will be measuring the status quo of existing centres to use as a baseline
Target	Year	2025	Targets will be set and adjusted once the baseline is defined, noting that BEQI will need to be piloted for the first time in Sierra Leone
Output 2			Learning through Conversations
Output indicator			Number of ways teachers help children learn through conversations. It covers things the teacher may do both during teacher-directed lessons and while children are engaging in other forms of learning, such as free play or small group activities.
Baseline	Year	2025	0 as the centres don't exist, but the programme will be measuring the status quo of existing centres to use as a baseline
Target	Year	2025	Targets will be set and adjusted once the baseline is defined, noting that BEQI will need to be piloted for the first time in Sierra Leone
Output 3			Promoting Strong Relationships
Output indicator			Elements of emotional and instructional support the teacher provides to students.
Baseline	Year	2025	0 as the centres don't exist, but the programme will be measuring the status quo of existing centres to use as a baseline
Target	Year	2025	Targets will be set and adjusted once the baseline is defined, noting that BEQI will need to be piloted for the first time in Sierra Leone
Outcome 4			Improvement in **Child Development Outcomes**
Outcome indicator			Improvement in child development outcomes including cognitive and executive functions, language and communication skills, socio-emotional development, fine and gross motor skills, and early literacy and math skills. Means of verification through adapted version of the International Development and Early Learning Assessment (IDELA) – tool shown to be psychometrically rigorous, accessible and feasible for use in low-resource settings, and internationally applicable. The standard version of the IDELA contains 22 core items that span four domains: 1) Emergent Numeracy 2) Emergent Literacy 3) Gross and Fine Motor Skills, and 4) Social and Emotional Learning. To measure the causal effect of ECD centres on holistic child development, non-randomised community-level difference-in-difference (DID) method will be used.

Baseline	Year	2025	Baseline will be conducted in October 2025, once all children are enrolled in the new centres
Target	Year	2027	0.25 standard deviation from baseline (aggregated score across all IDELA domains)
Output 4.1			Improved numeracy
Output indicator			Number of children with improved numeracy skills as a result of accessing an ECD centre.
Baseline	Year	2025	Baseline will be conducted in October 2025, once all children are enrolled in the new centres
Target	Year	2027	0.25 standard deviation from baseline (aggregated score across all IDELA domains)
Output 4.2			Improved literacy
Output indicator			Number of children with improved literacy skills as a result of accessing an ECD centre.
Baseline	Year	2025	Baseline will be conducted in October 2025, once all children are enrolled in the new centres
Target	Year	2027	0.25 standard deviation from baseline (aggregated score across all IDELA domains)
Output 4.3			Improved fine and gross motor skills
Output indicator			Number of children with improved fine and gross motor skills as a result of accessing an ECD centre.
Baseline	Year	2025	Baseline will be conducted in October 2025, once all children are enrolled in the new centres
Target	Year	2027	0.25 standard deviation from baseline (aggregated score across all IDELA domains)
Output 4.4			Improved social and emotional learning
Output indicator			Number of children with improved social and emotional learning skills as a result of accessing an ECD centre.
Baseline	Year	2025	Baseline will be conducted in October 2025, once all children are enrolled in the new centres
Target	Year	2027	0.25 standard deviation from baseline (aggregated score across all IDELA domains)

Annex 4: Risk Management Matrix

<u>Contextual risks</u>

Risk Factor	Likelihood	Impact	Risk response / mitigation	Residual risk	Background to assessment
Political					
Political unrest in the country due to outcomes of tripartite agreement (government, opposition and donors) may lead to delays in the program timeline	Likely	Minor	● Follow situation closely with country team, coordinate regularly with government and explore alternative solutions in case of delays ● Leverage EOF's and UNICEF's country teams to assess the situation from the ground and anticipate any risks that may affect the programme	● Potential programme delays will require additional management of expectation around timeframes	Risk based on conversations the EOF team has had with government partners and assessment of country political context
Environment					
Extraordinary events (natural disasters, epidemic outbreaks, conflicts, refuges influx, etc.) impact of obstacle the implementation of the program as planned	Very Unlikely	Significant	● Constant monitoring of the situation and coordination with relevant agencies and government ● Identification of contingency planning ● In case of events not preventing the continuation of the program, renegotiation of scope with Grantees considering new scenario	● Restructure or postpone programme implementation	General environmental risk to consider

Programmatic risks

Risk Factor	Likelihood	Impact	Risk response / mitigation	Residual risk	Background to assessment
Evaluation budget being higher than forecasted, requiring reallocation and adjustment of budget, resources and work plan	Likely	Minor	● Run a competitive process to contract evaluation firm. Informal reach out to specific firms, email to UNICEF Long Term Agreement status holders list to warm up the market, pre-bidding conference. ● Pre-identification of contingency planning including potential reallocation of resources ● Have a rigorous negotiation process and revisit the protocols if needed be ● Potentially consider a reconsideration of protocols recommended to explore cost reduction	● Re-allocation of resources	Given the complexity of evaluation in the early childhood space we anticipate that some discrepancies in our forecasting vs final contracting may arise

Lack of success in raising additional outcomes funding to support learning agenda and further scalability of program with potential impact on the scope agreed with the government and competing priorities in the budget allocation	Likely	Major	● Leverage current stakeholders' networks as well as outreach to additional potential funding organizations to secure additional resources ● Continue to work closely with Learning and Engagement team to estimate different levels of scope and associated budget, to identify potential scenarios in accordance with budget available ● OPM (external evaluation firm) to submit a costing deliverable to estimate budget required for the learning agenda ●Adjust the research scope agreed with the government to align with the available funds, prioritising areas that are most important for the national government	● Review of learning agenda scope ● The risk mitigation measures will make the risk manageable.	Risk based on nature of funding environment for the education sector
Existing infrastructure is insufficient or require heavier construction for the opening of new centres	Likely	Major	● Undertake a rigorous negotiation with Grantees to mitigate any risks of not finding adequate infrastructure ● Involve government in conversations to mapping existing structures, allocate them among grantees, explore solutions in case of insufficiency ● Leverage the infrastructure assessment conducted by EOF and a dedicated infrastructure consultant to prioritise communities where it has been confirmed to have available infrastructure that would require light refurbishment	● Initiate agreed contingency plan ● The risk mitigation measures will make the risk manageable.	Risk based on foreseeable potential outcome, outside of the control of the program design
Substantially low performance by one or more grantees, with impact on overall achievement of outcomes	Likely	Major	● Regular communication and monitoring of grantees' performance ● Continuous sharing of best practices and solutions among the grantees ● Identification of adjustments and corrective actions with low performing grantees ● Adaptation of financial work plan following projections on performance and related outcomes payments ● Close collaboration with impact investors supporting the grantees to make sure they will be following and actively supporting performance management	● Explore re-allocation of resources ● The risk mitigation measures will make the risk manageable.	Risk based on foreseeable potential outcome, outside of the control of the program design
One or more grantees withdraw from the program for reasons outside of program's control	Unlikely	Major	● Regular communication with grantees ● Sharing of information among grantees, including scope and status of other grantees	● Explore re-allocation of resources	Risk based on foreseeable potential outcome, outside of the control of the program design

			● Redistribution of affected lot and scope among remaining grantees ● Renegotiation of agreement with remaining grantees to take into account new scope		

Institutional risks

Risk Factor	Likelihood	Impact	Risk response / mitigation	Residual risk	Background to assessment
Signature of the EU contract is delayed due to political and fiscal conditions for government to meet and/or legal contracting process proposed by UNICEF, leading to delays in the program timeline	Likely	Major	● Continue engagement with the EU to ensure any concerns are anticipated and reflected in our timeline ● Continue exploring funding options and contracting modalities with the EU (SOFA or EU standard template), prioritizing simpler modality ● Continue conversations with UNICEF Country Office for the contracting of EU funds	● Continued negotiations to reach agreed contracting format ● The risk mitigation measures will make the risk manageable.	Initial discussions with the EU have given rise to challenges around pathways to contracting
Fluctuations of currency and inflation exceed expected values with positive or negative effects on available funding for the program	Likely	Minor	● Continuous monitoring of currency and inflation ● Adaptation of financial planning and cash flow ● Regular communication with funding organizations ● Identification of contingency planning ● Negotiation with donors, grantees and government to adapt the scope of the program to adjust to resources available ● Agreement with government and donors on use of additional unplanned resources available	● Explore re-allocation of resources	Risk based on the nature of fluctuating currency markets

Annex 5: Budget Details

	Programme Components covered by Danish Government contribution					
	Mobilisation of implementors (Dec 2024 -Apr 2025)	Implementation Year 1 & 2 (May 2025 -Dec 2026)	Implementation Year 3 (Jan-Dec 2027) 2027	Implementation Year 4 (Jan-Dec 2028)	Finalisation of programme interventions (Jan-July 2029)	Total
Outcomes Funding	3,019,323.67 kr.	6,038,647.34 kr.	- kr.	- kr.	- kr.	**9,057,971.01 kr.**
Centres are safe before they open	603,864.73 kr.	1,207,729.47 kr.	- kr.	- kr.	- kr.	1,811,594.20 kr.
Access	603,864.73 kr.	1,207,729.47 kr.	- kr.	- kr.	- kr.	1,811,594.20 kr.
Structural quality	452,898.55 kr.	905,797.10 kr.	- kr.	- kr.	- kr.	1,358,695.65 kr.
Process quality	754,830.92 kr.	1,509,661.83 kr.	- kr.	- kr.	- kr.	2,264,492.75 kr.
Child development outcomes	603,864.73 kr.	1,207,729.47 kr.	- kr.	- kr.	- kr.	1,811,594.20 kr.
Evaluation, adaptation of tools and learning agenda	1,006,441.22 kr.	2,012,882.45 kr.	- kr.	- kr.	- kr.	**3,019,323.67 kr.**
Direct costs	603,864.73 kr.	1,207,729.47 kr.	- kr.	- kr.	- kr.	**1,811,594.20 kr.**
Indirect costs	370,370.37 kr.	740,740.75 kr.	- kr.	- kr.	- kr.	**1,111,111.12 kr.**
Total	**5,000,000.00 kr.**	**10,000,000.00 kr.**	**- kr.**	**- kr.**	**- kr.**	**15,000,000.00 kr.**

Annex 6: List of Supplementary Materials

UNICEF (2022-2026), Sierra Leone Education Sector Plan (ESP)

Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (2021), National Policy for Radical Inclusion in Schools

UNICEF (2018), Free Quality School Education Programme

Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (2021), National Policy on Integrated Early Childhood Development

Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (2020), Basic Education Curriculum

Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (2020), Senior Secondary Education

Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education and the Gender at the Centre Initiative (2022), Freetown Manifesto for Gender-Transformative Leadership

Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education, Ministerial Communique (2023) Foundational Learning Exchange Summit

Annex 7: Plan for Communication of Results

Time*	Activity	Documentation	Responsible
May 2024	Announcement of partnership between EOF and LEGO Foundation	Press release Social media posting Website publication Email communication	EOF
December 2024	National Programme Launch Event	Press release	EOF and GoSL
Q1 2025	International Launch Event	Press release Social media posting Website publication Email communication	EOF and GoSL
Whole program duration	Branding of program material and events with donors' logos of funding organizations	Program material (flyers, signs, clothing, banners, etc.) Photographic evidence	Grantees, EOF and GoSL
Quarterly	Dissemination of program progress results, stories and achievements	Newsletter Social media posting Articles publication	EOF
Yearly	Yearly evaluation result report	Evaluation report Website publication	Evaluating firm, GoSL and EOF
Yearly	Yearly evaluation socialization workshop with stakeholders	Photos and videos Workshop report	EOF and GoSL
Yearly	Yearly program visit including media production	Photos and videos Interviews Case stories Articles publication	EOF, GoSL and Grantees
End of the program	Program closing ceremony and dissemination of results	Press release Social media posting Website publication Articles publication Email communication	EOF and GoSL

*The timeline provided is indicative and will be adjusted, together with the plan for communication over the course of the program, in line with program work plan, progress and with the aim to maximize visibility and impact of the action

Annex 8: Monitoring and Evaluation

Evaluation of Programme Results

As funds are only disbursed after the agreed-upon outcomes have been achieved, an independent, fair, and transparent evaluation of results achieved by a third party is a key component of every OBF programme. The evaluation firm will assess the results achieved on each payment metric and create a report that, when approved, will trigger payments. Based on this report and a defined payment formula, EOF will calculate the amount of funding to be disbursed to Grantees.

The programme will use a combination of evaluation approaches between observed results and a quasi-experimental methodology depending on the payment metric being measured and verified. Figure below provides an overview of the evaluation approach for each payment metric.

Figure 13. Evaluation approach for each payment metric

Payment Metric	Evaluation approach	Recommended Measurement Tool
1. Centres meet minimum standards for opening	Observed results	Adapted version of the ECCE minimum standards checklist (complemented with international tools) using the lowest tier of a 4-tier system
2. Increased access within capacity of infrastructure	Observed results	Attendance will be measured using centre attendance records (independently verified) compared with headcounts the day of the visits
3.1. Structural Quality	Observed results	Adapted version of the ECCE minimum standards checklist (complemented with international tools) using the 4 levels of a 4-tier system: Metric 1 (Tier 1) needs to be met for the centre to remain open
3.2. Process Quality	Observed results	Adapted version of Brief Early Childhood Quality Inventory (BEQI)
4. Child Development Outcomes	Quasi-experimental approach	Adapted version of International Development and Early Learning Assessment (IDELA)

The achievement level of the Grantees will be assessed per each metric. The measurement timeline is shown in the figure below. Please note that following the measurement of each metric, the evaluation firm requires some time to assess the collected data and produce the evaluation reports, which will then be reviewed and approved by the Government of Sierra Leone and EOF. Only then Grantees will be able to receive payments.

Measurement timeline for each metric

Data collection b = baseline	Year 1 (2025) J F M A M J J A S O N D	Year 2 (2026) J F M A M J J A S O N D	Year 3 (2027) J F M A M J J A S O N D	Year 4 (2028) J F M A M J J A S O N D
School year				
Eligibility criteria	1 2			
Metric 1: Minimum standards	1 2			
Metric 2: Attendance				
Metric 3.1: Structural Quality				
Metric 3.2: Process Quality				
Metric 4: Child Dev Outcomes	b			

For eligibility criteria and metric 1 verifications, Grantees will be given two chances of meeting the requirements for the opening of centres, with '1' referring to the first measurement and '2' referring to the second measurement. This second measurement can take place on two occasions: either Grantees have not met the eligibility criteria and had to go to a new community, and/or the centre meets the eligibility criteria but does not meet all minimum standards for the opening of the centre and needs more time to improve specific items. Please note that if Grantees do not meet the eligibility criteria and/or the metric 1 minimum standards in the second measurement, there will not be other chances to open the centre in that given community. No new centres should open after the second measurement of metric 1.

More details on the measurement timeline and evaluation approaches for each metric can be found in the following sections.

Metric 1 – Minimum Standards for Centres to Open & Metric 3.1 - Structural Quality

Given the common tool and scale for measurement that both Metric 1 and Metric 3.1. have, the two metrics have been grouped together in this section.

Indicator definition

Metric 1 will be used to verify if ECD centres meet the minimum standards for opening. Metric 3.1 will be used to verify structural quality of the centres, including an assessment whether children have a supportive environment adequate for learning, within established teacher/assistant: child ratios. In the first year of the programme, centres will need to meet the minimum standards before opening for the first time, and payments will be disbursed against the indicator for Metric 1. After centres have opened, safety and child protection requirements will be measured as part of Metric 3.1 on an annual basis. Payments will be disbursed to centres by assigning them into one of four Tiers, following a 'building block approach'. The lowest Tier is Tier 1 (relevant to Metric 1 in Year 1). **This is the minimum necessary for a centre to open and to remain open during the length of the programme.** Centres that meet the Tier 1 items and open in Year 1, but that don't keep the items from Tier 1 in subsequent years will need to close.

To achieve a higher Tier rating, every centre will need to first meet this Tier. Tiers 2-4 then build on Tier 1 by adding additional items from the recommended checklist tool (relevant to Metric 3.1).

For Metric 1, the indicator is the number of ECD centres that meet Tier 1 requirements. This means that a centre needs to follow a list of items pertaining to basic sanitation, safety and a hazard-free environment.

For Metric 3.1, the indicator is the average Tier score of ECD centres within a lot. Grantees will be paid depending on the average tier their centres meet. Centres must meet all the items in the previous Tiers to be counted for payment for a higher Tier, e.g., to receive payment corresponding

to Tier 4, centres need to meet all requirements for Tiers 1,2, and 3. Grantees will be paid based on their centres' average tiers.

Tool

EOF and the Government of Sierra Leone have worked together with renowned measurement experts on a 'Checklist for structural quality of ECCE centre-based care in Sierra Leone' as the proposed structural quality tool to be used for this programme. This structural quality tool will be referred to as the 'checklist' throughout this section. This checklist includes 39 items under the following broad headings: basic sanitation, class size/staff characteristics, safety/hazard-free, space and materials, and general items. The checklist was derived from MBSSE's minimum standards checklist and two international tools: BEQI and TEACH ECE. The MBSSE checklists' items have been retained with additional items from TEACH ECE and BEQI to create a more comprehensive tool.

During the adaptation and validation process of the measurement tool, this tool will be piloted in existing ECD centres, which may lead to certain items being moved between Tiers or be excluded entirely.

Verification approach

The verification approach for both metrics will primarily be based on observed results via direct observation by the independent evaluator, except for items related to class sizes (staff: children enrolled) and staff characteristics which will require asking a respondent in the centre or asking for records. Scoping visits to existing ECD centres in Sierra Leone were conducted by an external evaluation firm to confirm the feasibility of the proposed verification approach.

Data collection methodology and sampling strategy

Timing

- **Metric 1:** There will be two opportunities for centres to demonstrate that they have achieved minimum requirements for opening, i.e., there will be two measurements periods for Metric 1 in Year 1, roughly four months apart. The first measurement for Metric 1 will take place around May 2025. Centres which achieve Tier 1 on Metric 1 will then be permitted to open for children. Those centres that do not meet the minimum requirements for Tier 1 will be given another opportunity as there will be a 'second, last chance' measurement for these centres around September 2025. It is important to note that even though two chances will be given for the Grantees to open the centres, it is highly recommended that the centres be ready for opening as early as possible and stay within the four-month window of refurbishment, considering that delayed opening of the centres will allow less time for children to enrol for Metric 2. Two other important considerations for this metric:
- If a centre does not meet all items from Tier 1 in the second measurement, there won't be another possibility for this centre to be measured and open. No centres should open after September 2025.
- All centres that were open in 2025 will need to continue meeting all minimum standards or items from Tier 1 in subsequent years of the programme implementation. Centres that do not meet all items from Tier 1 in Years 2, 3 and 4 of implementation will be required to close as it is understood that they are no longer adequate to receive children.
- **Metric 3.1:** Metric 3.1 will be measured annually in October of Years 2, 3 and 4, with the first measurement taking place in October 2026.

Mode of data collection

Data for Metric 1 and Metric 3.1 will be collected using the checklist, which will be refined during a piloting and validation process. Most items on the checklist will be administered via direct observation by the independent evaluator. For the class size item, data on staff employed by the centre and children enrolled in the centre will be needed. This data will be collected as part of requirements for verifying Metric 2 once a year, and so this data can be drawn on for Metric 3.1.

Sampling

All centres will be visited to verify Metric 1 in Year 1. Some of centres will be visited twice in Year 1 if they did not achieve Tier 1 on the checklist.

All centres will be visited to verify Metric 3.1 during each round of data collection in Years 2, 3 and 4. Grantees should aim to ensure that they open the minimum number of centres (37) during Metric 1 measurement due to wider evaluation implications for other metrics.

Defining achievement levels

All centres will be categorised into four Tiers that build on each other, meaning that higher Tiers can only be achieved only and if all of the items on the lower Tiers are met:

- Tier 1 is the lowest Tier and contains items from two domains: basic sanitation and safety/hazard-free spaces. Centres will need to meet 50% of the items in each of these two domains to qualify as a Tier 1 centre. The items on Tier 1 will be used to verify Metric 1 before centres open. These items will also be used to verify Metric 3.1 annually after centres open. Centres will need to continue to meet Tier 1 requirements throughout the programme to remain open. Any centres that do not achieve at least Tier 1 on any of the Metric 3.1 assessments will have to close.

- Tier 2 includes all items in Tier 1 and includes additional items in the Basic Sanitation and Safety domains as well as items from the class size/staff characteristics and space and materials domains (as per current version of the tool).

- Tier 3 includes all items in Tier 2 and includes additional items in the Basic Sanitation and Safety domains, as well as items Class Size/Staff Characteristics and Space and Materials domains (as per current version of the tool). Centres must have all these items to qualify as Tier 3 centres.

- Tier 4 includes all items in Tier 3 and requires centres to have all items to qualify as Tier 4 centres.

Centres will be categorised into each of these three Tiers (as Tier 1 includes the minimum requirements for the centres to be open) based on data provided by the independent evaluator. For most items on the checklist, enumerators will mark 'yes' if an item is present at a centre and 'no' if it does not. In Year 1, if centres meet requirements for Tier 1 to verify Metric 1, they will be allowed to open. In subsequent years, the checklist will be administered annually to verify Metric 3.1.

Metric 2 - Access

Indicator definition

Metric 2 measures results in increased access of children aged 3-5 within staff (teacher and assistant) to child ratios.

The indicator on which payment will be made is the number of children aged 3-5 years inclusive attending the centres (an average of number of enrolled children attending over the year), as reported by Grantees and verified by the evaluator, in each lot. Unlike other payment metrics, the

verification approach for Metric 2 requires measurement of the reliability of providers' attendance records on which payments will be based.

The specific requirements of this metric are as follows:

- Under this metric, EOF aims to verify the age of children enrolled at centres, to ensure that payments are only made for children of eligible age (Children must be between minimum 2 years 9 months (33 months) and maximum 5 years 2 months (62 months) old as of 1st September in the year of enrolment). In case underage or overage children are found in the centres, these children will not be counted for payment.

- To discourage overcrowding and to ensure that quality is not compromised in favour of scale, there will be a payment cap defined in terms of staff (ECD centre staff includes teacher and assistant) to child ratio. In other words, payments per child will be made to Grantees up to a certain maximum ratio of teachers and assistants to children. Grantees will now have the flexibility to only add one assistant if there are up to 15 additional children above the 1:35 ratio, and then only add one teacher if there are an additional 20 children above that. In other words, for every 15 children added above the ratio, Grantees will add first one assistant, then for the next 20 children added above that Grantees will add one teacher. As an example, please see the following scenarios:

- 35 children require 1 teacher, 1 assistant

- 36-50 children require 1 teacher and 2 assistants

- 51-70 children require 2 teachers and 2 assistants

- 71-85 children require 2 teachers and 3 assistants

Note that for the payment cap ratio, the number of staff present, and the number of enrolled children present using average attendance over the year will be used to better capture what typically happens in each centre in practice.

Also, please note that unenrolled children are still allowed to go to the centres to ensure it is aligned with common practices and does not exclude children unnecessarily. However, payment will only be made for enrolled children.

Tool

Staff and child attendance data will be collected and recorded in ledgers or registers by Grantees, and these will be used to assess attendance of both children and staff. These data would then be verified by the evaluator through direct observation, by conducting a field survey of centres and measuring attendance of staff and children.

Therefore, to capture attendance from the two sources (centre registers and a headcount), a questionnaire or tool will be developed by an evaluation firm to measure the following indicators:

- **Child attendance** – a) Number of enrolled children present on day of the survey using headcounts, and b) children's attendance as recorded in the attendance register for the day. Attendance disaggregated by gender, age (if available) and class (where applicable) can be collected to provide additional information.

- **Staff attendance –** a) Number of staff present on day of the survey using headcounts, and b) staff attendance as recorded in the register for the day. Staff should be collected disaggregated by role (teacher or assistant, part-time or full-time, volunteer or payroll). Data on additional variables might be collected for learning purposes.

1. **Child enrolment/registration**: Number of children registered/enrolled for the school year, with disaggregation by gender, class (where applicable), age (ensure to include birthdate), other background information available (parent/caregiver address, contact number).

2. **Staff employed:** Staff roster, with number, role, employment status (part-time, full-time, volunteer, payroll), qualifications.

Verification approach

Verification approach for children's attendance

Verification of this metric will be based on observed results – that is, there is no intention to measure impact or change over time for the purposes of payment decisions.

As aforementioned, Grantees will collect and maintain attendance records for staff and children in all centres they are working in. Grantees are expected to submit electronic records to the evaluation firm, which will be stored in a data platform meeting all data protection and safeguarding requirements. Attendance will be calculated as the average attendance over the school year. The accuracy of the reported data (as per the centre records/registers) will be independently verified using observational data, which will be used to estimate the discrepancy between the two sources of data. This measure of discrepancy can be produced using:

- Discrepancy between observed headcounts of enrolled children present vs. attendance numbers in the register on the day of the survey in the centre.

- Additionally, a separate measure of discrepancy, discrepancy between observed headcounts of children present vs. average attendance numbers in the register over a period (e.g., the previous 2 weeks) in the centre, could be analysed to recognise the prevalence and magnitude of inflated attendance on the day of the visit.

Verification of attendance will take place once every school year.

Verification approach for staff (teacher/assistant attendance)

Similar to the approach for children's attendance, staff attendance will be measured using the average attendance over the year, as recorded by Grantees in centre's records. This data will be verified by a headcount of the number of staff (serving in the role being used to define the staff child ratio) present in the centre, and the discrepancies between the sources of data will be estimated based on **discrepancy between observed headcounts of relevant staff present vs. attendance numbers in the register on the day of the survey in the centre.**

Additionally, the discrepancy between observed headcounts of relevant staff present vs. average attendance numbers in the register of staff attendance over a period (e.g., the previous 2 weeks) in the centre will be used to check if there is any unusual pattern suggesting the inflated attendance on the verification day.

Verification of attendance for staff will also take place once every school year and will be only used for verifying the staff: child ratio, not for adjusting payment.

Age verification

The age of the children will need to be verified at enrolment. Note that children will need to be enrolled in the beginning of every school year, even if they were at the centre in the previous year. Grantees will be required to verify the age at enrolment and register the exact date of birth for every child they enrol (taking copies of birth certificates or health cards, when possible, otherwise just noting down the age). The evaluation firm, when doing the verification visits to the

centre, will rely on the centre's records that the age was verified. In case the evaluation firm perceives any risk that children are being recorded with the wrong age, the evaluator may conduct an additional verification with parents.

This data will be used for the payment of metric 2. The children who will be counted for the attendance within this metric should be **enrolled children aged from minimum 2 years 9 months (33 months) and maximum 5 years 2 months (62 months) as of September 1st in the year of enrolment.** Under-age or over-age children will not be counted for the payment of the Metric 2, noting that they can still go the centres as children should not be unnecessarily excluded from provision.

Data collection methodology and sampling strategy

Timing

Verification checks will take place once every school year in October without any prior announcement.

Mode of data collection

Data will be collected using the tool described above. The tool will be administered using Computer-Assisted Personal Interviews (CAPI) on tablets, and data will be recorded based on observations (data from records, headcounts, and interview with centre in-charge). Headcounts will be taken by enumerators by visiting each class/stream (if multiples classes or streams exist) and counting the number of children present. Photographs of relevant records will also be taken, under condition of meeting safeguarding requirements.

Sampling

All centres will be sampled, taking a census-based verification survey. Opposed to sample-based verification, which would take a sample of the centres and use the sample for verification, census-based verification survey means that all the centres will be verified for this metric.

Defining achievement levels

Achievement of this metric will be defined by the number of enrolled children attending centres within the staff: child ratio, with an upward or downward adjustment made to achievement if the Grantees' data on children's attendance is found to be substantially inaccurate (by more than 10%) through verification checks. Please note that this threshold will apply to the number of enrolled children attending. Staff attendance will not be used to adjust the payment, although verified from the spot check. In case there is a potential perceived or identified risk of fabrication or falsification of these records, the situation will be discussed by the programme's governance structure and a decision will be made on a case-by-case basis.

Payments will be affected by the level of discrepancy found between children's attendance records and observations. Priority will be given to verification check results if there is a discrepancy of more than 10%, and the attendance records will be adjusted accordingly. When the discrepancy of the observed headcount for attendance is greater than 10% of the recorded headcount provided by the ECD centre on that day, the following process will occur to adjust the payment:

- Payments will be adjusted based on the discrepancy. Payment calculations are still done as usual with attendance records, but the number of children qualifying for a payment is reduced or increased by the percentage of the discrepancy. For example, if it is found that

via observed headcount 15% less children are in the classroom than compared to the record provided by the ECD staff, then the number of children attending the centre on average will get reduced by 15% before being multiplied by the price per child to determine the payment.

- Adjustments to attendance will be made at the centre-level, given that each centre needs to comply with the staff: child ratio.

Metric 3.2 - Process Quality

Indicator definition

Metric 3.2 is defined as "setting and practices meeting process quality standards". Process quality refers to the quality of interactions and activities that children experience while they are attending an ECD centre. In addition to structural quality (Metric 3.1), the programme will incentivise process quality given its close link with holistic child development outcomes. Effects of structural quality are considered to be mediated through process quality. This is, structural quality (e.g., teacher training or ratio requirements) influences process quality (e.g., early childhood professionals' interactions with children), which in turn affects child outcomes.

Tool

EOF and the Government of Sierra Leone have worked closely with renowned measurement experts to recommend the use of an adapted version of the Brief Early Childhood Quality inventory (BEQI) as the measurement tool for process quality.

The BEQI tool contains 50 yes/no checklist items that examine teacher-child interactions, activities, materials, and health and safety indicators. The full tool takes 90 minutes to administer. The decision has been made to drop the items which overlap with the structural quality tool and using the remaining 39 items for the purpose of this metric. The 39 items broadly cover the following 3 domains:

- **Play-based Learning**: This domain focuses on opportunities to engage in the learning process.

- **Learning through Conversations**: This domain focuses on ways teachers help children learn through conversations. It covers things the teacher may do both during teacher-directed lessons and while children are engaging in other forms of learning, such as free play or small group activities.

- **Promoting Strong Relationships**: This domain focuses on elements of emotional and instructional support the teacher provides to students.

To prevent potential perverse incentives, the specific items of the tool will not be shared, although the final domains and ideal behaviours in the classrooms will be shared to support implementation, once the tool will be adapted and validated in the country – expected to take place before contracts are signed.

Verification approach

The verification approach will be based on observations via a centre-based survey carried by an independent enumerator (or a team of enumerators) who will administer the BEQI tool in the treatment centres. Payment on this metric will be conditioned on the improvement on lot-level mean BEQI score. This will be verified using the adaptive targets from the adaptation and validation process. In case the data from this process is not reliable, a baseline will be conducted. As the tool will be piloted in existing ECD centres and pre-primary schools, indicative targets and

trajectories of improvement will be defined based on what is realistic and relevant to the local context. Year 2 data will be used for calibration of targets, and Years 3 and 4 data will be based for the payment.

Data collection methodology and sampling strategy

Timing

Process quality data will be collected on a yearly basis, starting around October of the second year of implementation (October 2026). Data will be collected at the same time each year. Payments on this metric will be made only in Years 3 and 4. However, data will also be collected in Year 2, and will be used to calibrate targets in Years 3 and 4. In case data from the piloting process is not considered reliable, then a baseline on the new centres will be conducted.

Mode of data collection/ sampling strategy

Data will be collected using an adapted version of the BEQI tool by enumerators. Measurement of BEQI will be conducted in all centres (e.g. via a census) to minimise the risk of not being sufficiently powered to detect small effects. In some centres, multiple observations might be required (e.g. centres with double shifts, or multiple classrooms).

Defining achievement levels and targets

Achievement on the process quality metric will be defined as an improvement in average BEQI score. Minimum targets will be set during the adaptation and validation process (or baseline), and the Year 2 data will be used to calibrate the targets to be achieved in Years 3 and 4.

Metric 4 – Child Development Outcomes

Indicator definition

Metric 4 is defined as "holistic child development outcomes". Holistic child development outcomes refer to the outcomes that are related to child development, which include cognitive and executive functions, language and communication skills, socio-emotional development, fine and gross motor skills, and early literacy and math skills. With other metrics such as improved quality (structural and process), and improved access, holistic child development will be supported based on a variety of activities implemented by the Grantees.

Tool

EOF and the Government of Sierra Leone have worked closely with renowned measurement experts for the recommendation of an adapted version of the International Development and Early Learning Assessment (IDELA) to measure child development outcomes in this programme. While IDELA has not been validated in Sierra Leone, it has been tested and validated in dozens of Low- and Middle-Income Countries, including in West Africa. The tool has been shown to be psychometrically rigorous, accessible and feasible for use in low-resource settings, and internationally applicable. The standard version of the IDELA contains 22 core items that span four domains: **1) Emergent Numeracy 2) Emergent Literacy 3) Gross and Fine Motor Skills, and 4) Social and Emotional Learning.**

To prevent any risks of perverse incentives such as teaching to the test, the specific items of the adapted version of IDELA will not be shared. In addition to this, EOF will monitor any risk of perverse incentives.

Overview of evaluation design

For the evaluation design to measure the causal effect of ECD centres on holistic child development, non-randomised community-level difference-in-difference (DID) method will be

used. The difference-in-difference (DID) method follows two groups of communities across time—one group which has ECD centres (the treatment group) and another group which does not have ECD centres (the control group). Both groups are measured at baseline (BL)--Y1 (2025) and then again at endline (EL)—Y3 (2027). The treatment effect is the change across time in the group with ECD centres minus the change across time in the group without ECD centres. Figure 17 below illustrates the DID model for this programme. Note that in control communities, EOF will not prevent any community or children of having treatment during the lifetime of the programme if an opportunity for provision arises in the control communities. To mitigate the risk of contamination, 10 additional control communities will be selected for sampling as a buffer. Moreover, DID allows to an adjustment to draw conclusion even if more centres open in control communities.

Difference in Difference Rationale
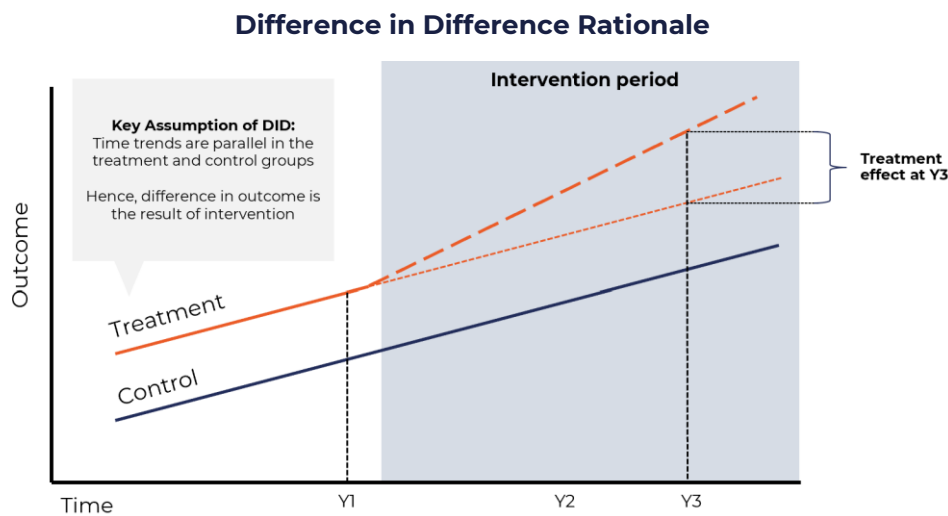
Due to the logistical complexity of panel data, for this programme, repeated cross-sectional data will be collected for the children. With repeated cross-sectional data, the population is randomly sampled anew at each round of data collection. This contrasts with panel data, in which the same random sample of the population is followed over time. With child development outcomes, which tend to exhibit substantial variation in the population, there is a strong rationale for using panel data, if feasible. However, as children only remain in the ECD centres for up to three years and the evaluation is expected to span four years, there would be a need to add new panels of children (for example, of the newly entering three-year-olds) to the evaluation at the start of each new school year. This would add to the complexity of data collection, especially as there are strong technical reasons for endline data collection to occur in June. That is, for panel data, there would have to be two round of data collection each school year (to collect baseline data on incoming children each year and to collect endline data on all children at the end of the school year). In addition, in non-formal provision, children tend to be enrolled in different points of the school year, which would make panel data even more challenging. Finaly, panel data also requires oversampling at baseline due to expected attrition (loss of children over time due to migration, health, or other issues). There would also be a need to randomly sample some additional children each survey round to avoid teachers only focusing on children that are measured children, which would ultimately lead to non-measured children received poorer quality of provision. For this reason, repeated cross-sectional data will be collected in this programme.

Regarding the community-level selection, to increase the probability that the parallel trends assumption holds, (1) stratified priority lists of potential locations will be provided to the Grantees and (2) matching methods will be used. For sampling of children, in treatment communities, the

treatment effect would be estimated for the ECD-enrolled population. However, as there is no ECD centre in the control communities, children must be sampled from the community, and then econometric techniques such as matching will have to be employed to identify the subset of children who would enrol in an ECD centre if it existed from the broader community in the control group.

Annex 9: Payment Metrics

Payment metrics are a critical element of OBF contracts since they set up the results that will be paid for once the verification is completed. The selection of payment metrics is central in the programme design since it defines what success looks like and determines the incentives given to implementors. To select appropriate payment metrics EOF has developed a framework that includes the criteria shown in the figure below.

Criteria used select appropriate payment metrics

Meaningful
For stakeholders and coherent with the results chain

Measurable
Objective and affordable to measure and verify

Malleable
Within the control of the service providers

Difficult to game
Minimize the risk of perverse incentives or unintended outcomes

In addition, the overall basket of payment metrics should:
- Transfer the appropriate level of risks to Grantees by having a fair mix of outputs and outcomes.
- Measure what matters without overly narrowing the focus of services.
- Be simple and understandable by a broad range of stakeholders, avoiding any disputes during the programme implementation.

As an outcomes funder, funds from the Danish Government are contingent upon meeting one or more of the following results which will be independently verified:

1. **Centres are safe before the open**, which will ensure the Government minimum safety requirements are verified, while de-risking the programme to Grantees by providing some earlier payments in the first year of the programme. Payments will be tied to the number of centres that are established in existing infrastructure which meet minimum safety and child protection requirements. This will be measured using a shorter and adapted version of the government developed ECCE minimum standards checklist.

2. **Increased access** of children aged 3-5 within teacher-child ratios that follow national standards. Increased access and attendance in remote areas with no access to ECCE will ensure the programme benefit those who need it the most. The programme will then pay for the number of children aged 3-5 years attending community ECD centres within teacher child ratios. Attendance will be measured using centre attendance records. These records will be independently verified by the evaluation firm through random spot checks made during the school year.

3. Setting and practice quality standards are met, including:

    3.1. Structural quality: educators working in a supportive environment, within established classroom size. The programme will tie payments to the number of ECD centres achieving defined quality levels. Desired levels of structural quality will be defined using an adapted version of the government-developed ECCE standards checklist. However, specific details of how this checklist can be translated into desired

levels of quality will be determined in close collaboration with an ECCE measurement expert and the MBSSE.

3.2. Process quality: child-centred, age-appropriate, and play-based approaches. Since the Government has not yet developed a tool to measure process quality, EOF will be using the Brief Early Childhood Quality Inventory –BEQI to measure results. Payments for this metric will be tied to the quality targets that will be defined during the adaptation of BEQI in Sierra Leone.

4. **Improved holistic child development outcomes**. These measure young children's process typically across several domains of development (i.e., motor development, emergent language and literacy, emergent math/numeracy, social-emotional development). EOF will be using International Development and Early Learning Assessment (IDELA) for measuring this outcome. Payments for this metric will be linked to the achievement of 0.25 standard deviation from baseline calculated as the average performance of the children across the lot.

By defining the programme outcomes with the Government and creating incentives for Grantees to achieve these outcomes, the programme expects to expand access to and quality of early learning opportunities (including both structural and process quality) through the following specific channels:

- More children aged 3-5 attending community based ECD centres.
- Well-prepared educators (including teachers, assistants, and caregivers) who work in a supportive environment and physical setting which will be reflected in an improved structural quality.
- Use of child centred activities, play-based approaches and social interactions in the ECD centres that will drive holistic child development. Ultimately, this is likely to be reflected in improved process quality.
- These outcomes will improve holistic child development outcomes for children aged 3-5 in Sierra Leone by helping children develop the skills they need to thrive for the next stage of education and as citizens.

ANNEX 8: PROCESS ACTION PLAN (PAP) - Early Childhood Care and Education

Action/product	Deadlines	Responsible/involved Person and unit	Comment/status
Development of draft project document	July 31, 2024	UNICEF/Angfar/Accra	Completed
Finalise Prodoc	1-8 August, 2024	Angfar/Accra	Completed
Tendering for and contracting of appraisal consultants	1-15 July, 2024	Angfar/Accra/ /CFO	Completed
**Meeting in Danida Programme Committee.			**Skipped by Unit.
Finalise comments to Prodoc and receive final submission from UNICEF	2 August 2024	Angfar/Accra	Completed
Finalise Appropriation Cover Note and send all documents including annexes to CFO for approval	2 August, 2024	Angfar/Accra/CFO	All documents sent to CFO
Quality assurance: External appraisal. Documents for appraisal to consultant. Incl. Appropriation Cover Note and all annexes	August 12, 2024	Angfar/Accra	Completed
Final external appraisal report integrating comments from the responsible unit and partner	September 25, 2024	Angfar/Accra	Completed
Quality Assurance Checklist (Annex 9): documentation of the appraisal process	September 25, 2024	Angfar/Accra	Completed
Checklist for approval by the Under-secretary for development policy: QA of required documentation	3 October, 2024	Accra	The filled-in checklist is attached to the project/programme document, appropriation cover note and Annex 9.
All documentation are sent in Pub 360 for the Under-secretary's endorsement via the Head of unit and LEARNING (Modtagelse i Bevillingssekretariatet)	3 October, 2024	Accra	
LEARNING presents the grant for final approval by the Minister	October, 2024	LEARNING	
Minister approves project	October, 2024		

LEARNING facilitates that grant proposals are published on Danida Transparency after the Minister's approval	After the Minister's approval	LEARNING	
Finalise Standard Outcomes Funding Agreement (SOFA) with UNICEF	October/November, 2024	Accra/IUNICEF	
Signing of Transfer Agreement with UNICEF) and/or other legally binding agreements (commitments) with partner(s)	November, 2024	LEARNING	
Registration of commitment and first disbursement	November, 2024	Angfar/Accra/CFO	

ANNEX 9: QUALITY ASSURANCE CHECKLIST

File number/Public 360: 24/32473

Programme/Project name: Danish Contribution to Early Childhood Care and Education

Project in Sierra Leone

Programme/Project period: Dec 2024 - Dec 2026 (25 months)

Budget: DKK 15 million

Presentation of quality assurance process:
A private consultancy company, MO Consult undertook a desk appraisal of the technical and financial aspects of the project documentation which had been jointly prepared by the Education Outcomes Fund (EOF) and UNICEF, and the Embassy of Denmark in Ghana. UNICEF was provided with all the templates for bilateral cooperation from the Aid Management Guidelines (AMG) website. The Embassy, together with its CFO, had quality assured the documentation to be sent to the external appraiser. On completion of the appraisal, the Embassy, together with UNICEF, updated the documents with the appraiser's comments.

❏ The design of the programme/project has been appraised/appraisal checklist filled out, by someone independent who has not been involved in the development of the programme/project.
Comments: A consultant was hired to undertake the appraisal of the documentation developed by the Embassy with significant input from UNICEF and the Education Outcomes Fund

❏ The recommendations of the appraisal/comments in the appraisal checklist have been reflected upon in the final design of the programme/project.
Comments: All recommendations have been reflected in the project documents.

❏ The programme/project complies with Danida policies and Aid Management Guidelines, including the fundamental principles of Doing Development Differently.
Comments: All aspects of Danida AMG have been included in the project documentation, including in all the required annexes.

❏ The programme/project addresses relevant challenges and provides adequate responses.
Comments: The project document addresses the challenges being faced by children in Sierra Leone in respect of early childhood care and education. The project activities aim to address these challenges with payments to service providers only being made after agreed objectives have been fulfilled/ met.

❏ Issues related to HRBA, LNOB, Gender, Youth, Climate Change, Green Growth and Environment have been addressed sufficiently in relation to content of the project/programme.
Comments: These have all been addressed sufficiently in the project document and the analysis has been found to be sufficient.

❑ Comments from the Danida Programme Committee (if applicable) have been addressed
Comments: N/A – below the limit for presentation to the Danida Programme Committee.

❑ The project outcome(s) are found to be sustainable and in line with the partner's development policies and strategies. Implementation modalities are well described and justified.
Comments: The project's outcomes are in conformity with the SDG on Education and aims to improve early childhood care and education in Sierra Leone according to the EOF model, by which programme objectives are delivered by service providers based on a contractual agreement with EOF. The ECCE programme (Early Childhood Care and Education Outcome Funds programme) operates within the Early Childhood Development sector in Sierra Leone. The ECCE programme is in turn part of a larger and coherent support to the educational sector in Sierra Leone. The educational sector strategy 2022-2026 sets the framework for cooperation, and a number of important policies have in recent years set the direction for a considerable strengthening of the educational sector in Sierra Leone.

❑ The theory of change (if applicable), results framework, indicators and monitoring framework of the programme/project provide an adequate basis for monitoring results and outcome.
Comments: Outcomes are clearly defined. Some indicators are quantitative while some are qualitative. The project document sets out clearly what would be the required support for the variety of activities by selected implementing partners. There is flexibility built into the design of the intervention elements to respond to the needs encountered.

❑ The programme/project is found sound budget-wise. *The Danish contribution is one out of more donor contributions to the ECCE programme and for a shorter period (2024-2026). Altogether, the LEGO Foundation, the Government of Sierra Leone, the EU and the Danish Government contribute a total of 17.4 mill. USD over the period 2024-2028. The 15 mill. DKK allocated for the period 2024-2026 therefore makes up a part of the funding for the ECCE programme.*

❑ The agreed budget and financial reporting procedures provide an adequate basis for financial monitoring of funds.
Comments: The project document shows a budget denominated in DKK and shows disbursements over a 25-month implementation period, starting from December 2024. Adequate measures are put in place for financial monitoring by EOF/UNICEF.

❑ The programme/project is found realistic in its time-schedule.
Comments: The time schedule for the Danish support to the project is realistic, starting in late 2024 and extending through 2025 – 2026. The Early Childhood Care and Education programme, of which this Danish supported project forms a part, continues until 2028, after the Danish support has ended.

❑ Other donors involved in the same programme/project have been consulted, and possible harmonised common procedures for funding and monitoring have been explored.
Comments: The Education Outcomes Fund project partners with the LEGO Foundation, Government of Sierra Leone, the EU and the Danish Government to support early childhood care and education starting

from the 3-5-year group to ensure a continuum of care and education to ensure the ultimate goal of improving holistic child development.

❏ Key project stakeholders have been identified, the choice of partner has been justified and criteria for selection have been documented.
Comments: Criteria for selection of stakeholders is based on accepted measures and justified based on previous experience with UNICEF.

❏ The implementing partner(s) is/are found to have the capacity to properly manage, implement and report on the funds for the programme/project and lines of management responsibility are clear.
Comments: The project document clearly sets out the functions of implementing partner organisations and shows the channels for funds transfer and reporting from UNICEF/EOF to the various stakeholders.

❏ Implementing partner(s) has/have been informed about Denmark's zero-tolerance policies towards (i) Anti-corruption; (ii) Child labour; (iii) Sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (SEAH); and, (iv) Anti-terrorism.
Comments: All agreements with implementing partners will be required to include the required statements regarding Denmark's zero tolerance policies listed above.

❏ Risks involved have been considered and risk management integrated in the programme/project document.
Comments: Risks have been identified and risk mitigation measures developed to avoid or minimise these.

In conclusion, the programme/project can be recommended for approval: **yes** / no

Date and signature of Desk Officer: 26/09/2024 _____ ANGELA FARHAT

Date and signature of Management: 26/09/2024 _____
TOM NØRRING

Letter of Intent

The Kingdom of Denmark and the Republic of Sierra Leone hereby express the intent to enhance dialogue and cooperation with the aim of deepening bilateral relations.

RECOGNISING our common interests and the importance of enhancing dialogue within key strategic areas such as education, green growth, climate policy and peace and security.

EMPHASISING the shared commitment to advance the global green agenda and progress within the framework of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Denmark pledges to explore further support to Sierra Leone in close collaboration with the European Union focusing on education and green transition.

This Letter of Intent constitutes a non-binding instrument between the signatories. The Kingdom of Denmark and the Republic of Sierra Leone will do its outmost to contribute to the intentions of this letter.

Signed in Copenhagen on 11 March, 2024,

David Moinina Sengeh
Chief Minister of Sierra Leone

Dan Jørgensen
Minister for Development Cooperation
and Global Climate Policy