

“Opportunities and Challenges in exercising responsibility for the Catholic school network in context of Government’s new emphasis on education of women and girls”

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Bishop of Kenema

Preamble

I am grateful to the *Sierra Leone Ireland Partnership* (SLIP)

Sierra Leone is a small country on the West Coast of Africa with a landmass of 72,000 square kilometers.

7 million people

It is a secular and democratic state

On the 4th of April 2018, the country experienced a smooth transition from one civilian government to another

Preamble

Three main religions practiced in Sierra Leone:
Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religion.

Islam 60%, Christianity 30%. African Traditional Religion
10%.

High degree of religious tolerance among the different
religious traditions.

Preamble

I would like to talk about the following:

- 1. Catholic School Network in Sierra Leone**
- 2. Church and State in Educational Partnership**
- 3. My responsibility as Proprietor of Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Kenema**
- 4. The introduction of Free Quality School Education by the Government of Sierra Leone and special emphasis on young women and Girl-Child Education**
- 5. Opportunities and challenges for schools in the Diocese of Kenema**
- 6. Conclusion**

1. Catholic School Network in Sierra Leone

Church Missionary Society (CMS) established Grammar School in Freetown on 25th March 1845 and Annie Walsh Memorial Secondary School was established in 1849 before the establishment of Catholic Schools

The nineteenth century missionary activities of the Holy Ghost Fathers saw the growth of the Catholic faith through the establishment of schools

The first leader of the Holy Ghost Fathers was Fr. Edward Blanchet C.S.Sp

1. Catholic School Network in Sierra Leone

Fr. Blanchet had three plans: “Schools, Church and Sisters”

The Holy Ghost missionaries opened St. Edward’s Primary School for Boys and St Joseph’s Primary School for Girls in 1866

This girl’s School is the oldest Catholic girl’s school in Sierra Leone

St. Edward Primary School in 1868 had 13 pupils

In 1869 the number rose to 211

The Girls’ School run by the St. Joseph of Cluny Sisters in 1868 had 80 pupils

1. Catholic School Network in Sierra Leone

By 1869 it increased to about 200 pupils

The efforts of the early Catholic Missionaries were however, bitterly opposed and undermined by the Church Missionary Society

By the time Sierra Leone gained her independence from Britain on 27th April 1961, the Catholic school system had well been consolidated

In present time there are 1,148 Catholic schools in the four dioceses in Sierra Leone.

This accounts for more than 50% of all schools in the Sierra Leone

1. Catholic School Network in Sierra Leone

Summary of Catholic Schools in Sierra Leone

Diocese	Pre-school	Primary Sch.	Secondary Sch.	Vocational	Total
Freetown	18	20	10	3	60
Bo	15	203	19	2	239
Kenema	12	192	18	1	223
Makeni	35	513	78	0	626
Total	80	937	125	6	1,148

2. CHURCH AND STATE IN EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIP

Government sets and interprets the policies of education in Sierra Leone

Article 13 subsection 1 of the 2004 Education Act of Sierra Leone puts the government in control and supervision of the education system.

“The Minister shall have the control and supervision of the education system and may, after due inquiry, initiated by him take any steps he considers appropriate to restrain any action or intended action by a local authority or a proprietor, if he considers that such action is likely to impede the progress of education.”

2. CHURCH AND STATE IN EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIP

There are two categories of schools in Sierra Leone; public schools and private schools.

In the public school system, there are government schools and government assisted schools.

Our Catholic Schools, though public, fall in the category of government assisted.

Representatives are drawn from both the government and the Church to form the Board of Governors to help in the management of schools

2. CHURCH AND STATE IN EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIP

The structure of the School board is: 4 Representatives from the proprietors, 1 old student, 1 civil authority and 6 representatives from Government, principal inclusive.

The Catholic school structures belong to the church Catholic Church contributes towards school furniture, teaching and learning materials and renovation of structure with no financial returns to the Catholic Mission.

The Government pays the salaries of teachers and provides subsidy for the running of Government and Government assisted schools.

3. MY RESPONSIBILITY AS PROPRIETOR OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS IN THE DIOCESE OF KENEMA

To ensure that the ethos/identity of Catholic School stand out in the way they are managed and governed

To nominate representatives of the proprietors on the school board

To solicit funding to build new schools and the renovate old ones

To set up a coordinating office for catholic schools

4. THE INTRODUCTION OF THE FREE QUALITY SCHOOL EDUCATION BY GOVERNMENT AND SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON WOMEN AND GIRL-CHILD EDUCATION

The President of Sierra Leone launched the “Free Quality School Education” (FQ) in September 2018

The President said at the official FQ launch: “Education is an investment for personal and national development that without quality education a nation cannot get the much needed manpower for socio-economic advancement.”

The budgetary allocation has been increased to 21%

Legal actions against parents who failed to send their children to school

4. THE INTRODUCTION OF THE FREE QUALITY SCHOOL EDUCATION BY GOVERNMENT AND SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON WOMEN AND GIRL-CHILD EDUCATION

In recent times, focus has been on the education of the Girl-child. A project titled “Girls Education Challenge” (GEC) in 2013 undertook a study to look at the education of the Girl-Child highlighting successes, difficulties and barriers. The study looked at three key areas of concern:

1. Increasing access and retention
2. Ensuring that Girls are learning in an inclusive environment and safe from abuses
3. Identifying the greatest motivation to access education.

4. THE INTRODUCTION OF THE FREE QUALITY SCHOOL EDUCATION BY GOVERNMENT AND SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON WOMEN AND GIRL-CHILD EDUCATION

Outcome of the study:

1. Before this study dropout rate amongst girls in Sierra Leone were highest between grades 6-9; about 65%. But with the intervention of the GEC project, girls were now retained in school
2. The study also revealed that it was not only the retention in school but with the provision of school materials and conducive learning environment, the girls made better grades in school.
3. The study revealed further that the encouragement given to the girls made a positive difference in their lives. They could now healthily compete with their male counterparts and stayed focused.

4. THE INTRODUCTION OF THE FREE QUALITY SCHOOL EDUCATION BY GOVERNMENT AND SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON WOMEN AND GIRL-CHILD EDUCATION

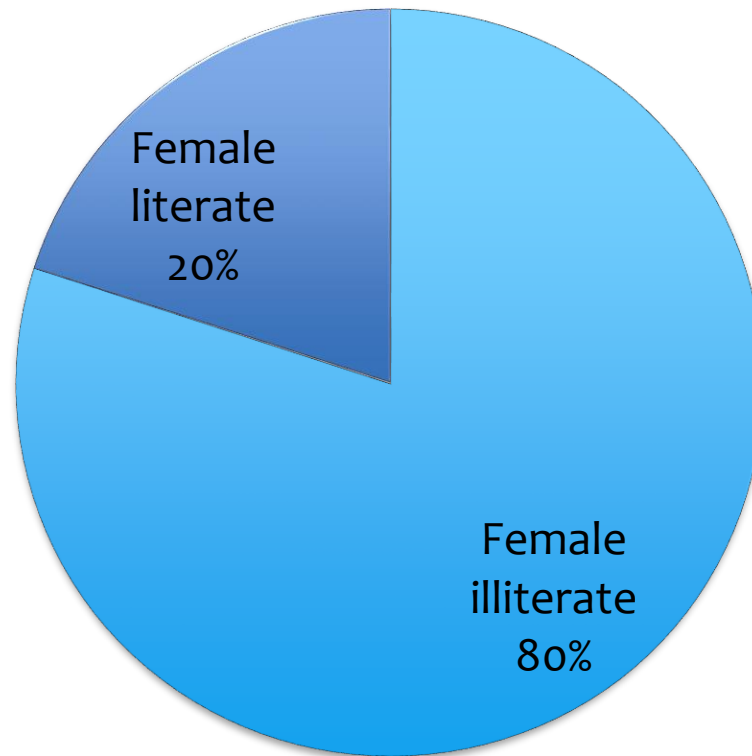
4. Another outcome of the study was that, once the girls had received positive orientation; teenage pregnancies were much more reduced.
5. Finally, the study revealed that an all-inclusive approach to education made way for girls living with disabilities to access education and drastically reduced the risk of social stigmatization.

4. THE INTRODUCTION OF THE FREE QUALITY SCHOOL EDUCATION BY GOVERNMENT AND SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON WOMEN AND GIRL-CHILD EDUCATION

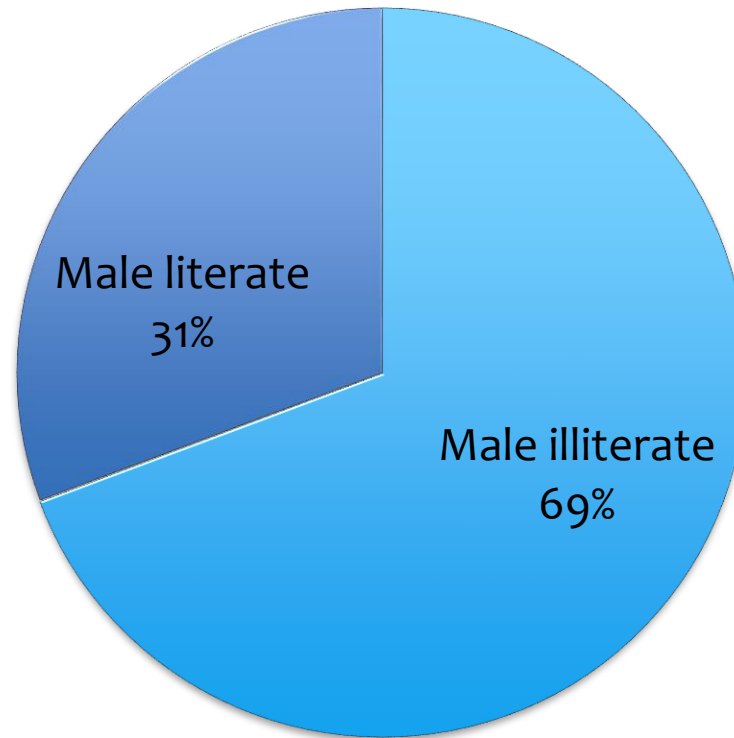
The Government of Sierra Leone should be commended for the introduction of Free Quality Education in the country.

Sierra Leone is one of the countries with the highest illiteracy rates in the world.

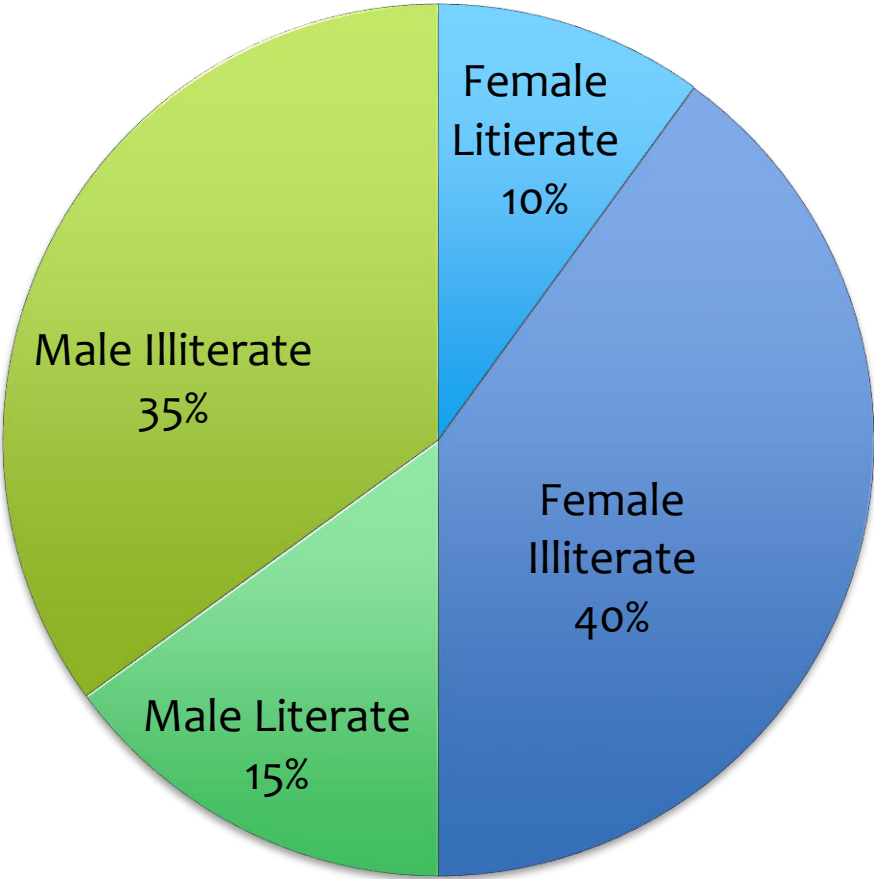
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Literacy Rate in Sierra Leone



4. THE INTRODUCTION OF THE FREE QUALITY SCHOOL EDUCATION BY GOVERNMENT AND SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON WOMEN AND GIRL-CHILD EDUCATION

With the introduction of Free Quality Education the roll of all the schools has increased dramatically

1.9 million students before the introduction of Free Quality education

2.6 million students after the introduction of Free Quality education

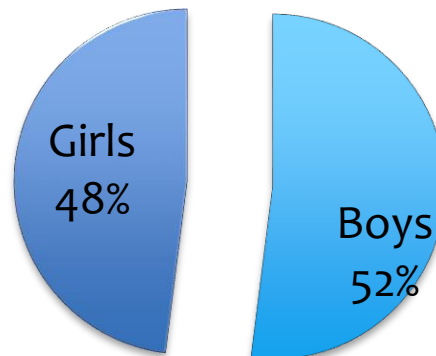
Bellow is a case study of four Catholic Schools in Kenema town.

4. THE INTRODUCTION OF THE FREE QUALITY SCHOOL EDUCATION BY GOVERNMENT AND SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON WOMEN AND GIRL-CHILD EDUCATION

School	Before F Q Education	Boys 2019	Girls 2019	No of classes	Average per class
Holy Trinity Sec	1,500	2,173	---	34	63.9
Holy Rosary Sec	1,200	--	2,049	37	55
St. Paul's Primary	500	880	---	15	58.6
Holy Rosary Prim.	460	---	777	12	51
		3,053	2,826		

4. THE INTRODUCTION OF THE FREE QUALITY SCHOOL EDUCATION BY GOVERNMENT AND SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON WOMEN AND GIRL-CHILD EDUCATION

Boys and Girls in 4 Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Kenema, Sierra Leone



4. THE INTRODUCTION OF THE FREE QUALITY SCHOOL EDUCATION BY GOVERNMENT AND SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON WOMEN AND GIRL-CHILD EDUCATION

Notwithstanding the introduction of Free Quality Education in Sierra Leone the boys still outnumber the girls in many of our schools in Kenema.

Therefore the need to strategize other methods to attract more girls into schools and to ensure equal opportunities for the girl child is still a necessity.

5. OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR SCHOOLS IN THE DIOCESE OF KENEMA.

1. **Opportunities:**

Catholic Educational services are accessible affordable.

No discriminate against anyone based on religion, tribe or sex

Catholic schools are found in every corner of the country

Some of our school facilities are very good.

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2. Challenges:

The Free Quality Education faces many challenges some of which are:

School Subsidy

Teacher Recruitment

Teacher remuneration

School infrastructure and maintenance

School Supervision.

Majority of our teachers are non-Catholics

Role model teachers in school

5. OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR SCHOOLS IN THE DIOCESE OF KENEMA.

Some schools are over-crowded

Need for more teaching and learning material

Difficult to get trained and qualified teachers to station
in remote areas

Role of the proprietors reduced considerably

The 2004 Education Act needs to be reviewed.

Some Catholic schools are in urgent need of renovation

5. OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR SCHOOLS IN THE DIOCESE OF KENEMA.



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6. CONCLUSION

The Catholic Mission is in partnership with government in the management of schools

The Church is concerned about increasing access and quality

Equal opportunities to boys and girls

Improves on infrastructure

Invest in training and teachers motivation.

Review some aspects of the 2004 Education Act



Thank You