



EMPOWERING EDUCATION TRANSFORMATION IN SIERRA LEONE

Data-Led Decisions | Transparency | Accountability | Equity

In 2018, the Government of Sierra Leone embarked on a radical programme of education transformation. Spearheaded by new policies and initiatives, its aim is to build a quality education system accessible to all children, including – and especially – the most vulnerable. Between 2018 and 2019 alone, it sparked a 33.9% uplift in school enrolment supported by an unprecedented 22% investment of the Government’s annual budget.

However, it had no way of knowing if educational improvements were able to keep up with this remarkable growth. No system existed to collect vital disaggregate data on individual learners and their needs, or on the teaching workforce, a large percentage of whom are either not working at their assigned schools or are unknown volunteers. Without it, efforts to transform education were limited.

To truly cement education transformation, and ensure it is radically inclusive for all, the Government recognised the need fill these data gaps.

In 2021, the Teaching Service Commission (TSC) and the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE) appointed CGA Technologies to develop and implement Wi De Ya (*We Are Here* in Krio).

Wi De Ya is an education enrolment and attendance monitoring system used to collect previously unknown, accurate, and near real-time data on learners and teachers. With it, the Government and its partners can make continuous targeted education improvements

tailored to demand and individual learner needs and improve learning outcomes through:

- Improved transparency, accountability and cost savings
- Putting the Radical Inclusion Policy into practice
- Facilitating support for individual learner needs
- Using the data for evidence-based decision making at all levels of the education system.

How Wi De Ya Works

School leaders use a Wi De Ya tablet-based app to record individual teacher and learner information and their daily attendance. The data is then uploaded to a secure cloud-based database and is available online at <https://wideya.org/> both privately and publicly. Education officials with authorised log-in access can view full disaggregate data through a series of auto-generated dashboards and graphs for analysis, action and accountability. Limited dashboards using aggregate data are available for public scrutiny.



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New Insights into Primary Education

The first national phase of Wi De Ya began in April 2023 with its rollout to 300 primary schools across the country. Data collected from the schools, including 98,000 individual learners and 3,300 inactive/active teachers, has provided significant insights and actionable opportunities, illustrating the breadth of possibilities provided by Wi De Ya to improve education.

Through Wi De Ya, we now know:

Payroll teachers

- 51% are not teaching in their allocated school or are not teaching at all
- 1,169 payroll teachers were found to have transferred to another school without authorisation.

The net total of payroll primary teachers was only 86% of those expected, indicating 14% are not teaching in any government or government-assisted school.

Without knowing where its teachers are, efforts by the TSC to address teaching gaps through recruitment and teacher deployment are unlikely to achieve the desired impact.

- 41 teachers were identified as still on the payroll but reported to have changed profession, died or retired.

Cleaning the payroll of just those who are almost certainly not teaching is likely to result in at least 1.2 million SLE (57,000 USD) every month.

Non-payroll teachers

- 43% of active teachers are not on the payroll, including 11% of school leaders.

Nearly half of all primary school teachers are unknown to the TSC and out of their management control, highlighting significant child protection challenges. Furthermore, 11% of government schools are led by people unknown to the Ministry, without known qualification, or contact details.

Opportunities For Future Development

Wi De Ya has been built to ensure it can easily be adapted to meet future needs. Opportunities to build on Wi De Ya capabilities include:

- Track exam results and school career progression
- Track the outcomes of education projects and policies
- Link to Out of School Children tracking and support programming
- Education attendance cash transfers
- Anticipatory cash
- Linking to existing data collection systems
- Adaptable to other countries education systems

Attendance

- Teacher average attendance is 75%; 81% for payroll teachers, 66% for non-payroll teachers
- Learner attendance averaged 80%; while pregnant learners averaged 52% attendance
- Yet, 96% of school leaders said teacher attendance and punctuality improved because of Wi De Ya; 90% said that learner attendance improved.

The mere act of monitoring and recording attendance reduces teacher and learner absenteeism. However, if teacher sanctions are enforced across the payroll, initial monthly savings would likely be 1.8 million SLE (91,000 USD), which can be reinvested into new teachers.

A Game Changer

Wi De Ya provides unparalleled information about Sierra Leone's education system and those working and learning within it. With it, we know:

Who and where learners and teachers are

- Track movement of teachers and learners across schools over time
- Improve payroll integrity by identifying mismatches between teacher payroll and reality, and removing non-working teachers
- Regulate unauthorised teacher transfers
- Capture data on non-payroll teachers
- Verify school subsidies based on accurate learner counts
- Ensure supply and qualification of teachers meets the demand and needs of learners.

Track daily attendance for teachers and learners

- Enable sanctions for absenteeism amongst teachers
- Empower school leaders to control teacher attendance and manage school data
- Mitigate and flag learner dropouts.

The next phase of the project – rollout to 1500 and then all 4000 Government primary schools – is expected soon.

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