

Developing a Values-Anchored Framework for Civic Education in Sierra Leone

Concept summary:

*In collaboration with the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education
and the National Council of Civic Education and Development*

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Foreword

In the 2018 State Opening of Parliament, His Excellency President Julius Maada Bio made a commitment to human capital development in Sierra Leone.¹ The administration aims to equip young Sierra Leoneans with innovative skills that will make them globally competitive, and will also enable them to contribute to the growth of the country. In pursuit of this vision, Sierra Leone's Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education ("the Ministry" henceforth) under the leadership of Honorable Minister Dr. David Moinina Sengeh is implementing a set of reform policies to propel student learning outcomes. One goal of the Ministry is for "one hundred percent of learners to have one hundred percent of foundational skills" in *computational thinking, comprehension, civics, creativity, and critical thinking* (known collectively as "the five Cs") by class four (age 10).²

We, a team of master's students from Yale's Jackson Institute of Global Affairs, worked during the Spring 2020 semester to support the Ministry in this effort. The objective of the engagement was to jointly develop an effective framework for the instruction and evaluation of the *civics* component of the Ministry's "five Cs" reform. Our overall findings and recommendations have been shared with the Ministry, the National Council of Civic Education and Development (NaCCED), and other education stakeholders for implementation. This report thus summarizes the key output of our work for increased awareness and public engagement.

Throughout the project, we conducted workshops and consultative sessions with the Ministry and various civil society groups, and visited schools in Freetown. We would like to acknowledge, for their feedback and guidance: the Ministry, NaCCED, Sierra Leone's National Commission for UNESCO, the National Youth Commission, the Sierra Leone Teachers' Union, local civil society organizations Purposeful Productions and Innovate Salone, civic researcher Kate Krontiris, education specialist Abdulai Conteh, and Jackson Institute Senior Fellow Clare Lockhart.

¹ Amadu Daramy, "President Bio Speech At The State Opening Of Parliament," *Global Times*, May 10, 2018, <https://www.globaltimes-sl.com/president-bio-speech-at-the-state-opening-of-parliament/> (accessed July 27, 2020).

² Consultation with the Ministry, January 2020.

1 Overview: Current landscape of civic education

A strong civic education foundation is pivotal to the wellbeing of society. The intention of civic education is to help students acquire key skills to be informed and engaged citizens, who will contribute to and strengthen their societies. However, genuine civic learning is difficult to achieve, for a number of reasons.

First, the traditional conception of civics is narrow and shortsighted in its intended learning goals. Historically, civics has been almost synonymous with nationalism and patriotism, and has focused on teaching students to obey rules and laws.³ While this is intended to encourage social harmony, it discourages self-agency and innovation; that is, it does not develop students' self-belief in their ability to make a difference, nor the drive to push for improvement in their communities and society. Moreover, it arbitrarily limits civic-minded behavior to the nation's borders, instead of teaching global citizenship.

Second, as a result of this narrow conception of civics, civic education curricula across the world have a heavy focus on rote learning. Current civic education often overemphasizes knowledge in the form of facts—such as key historical figures and dates, political structures, and laws—instead of building values, attitudes, and skills.⁴ Not only does genuine civic education extend beyond simple knowledge retention, rote learning also does not allow learners the space to reflect upon and internalize the teachings that they are taught.⁵

Finally, civic education, where it is taught, is often unintentional—civics-specific content knowledge is often taught in an ad hoc manner instead of in a holistic, integrated curriculum. Moreover, in many places across the world, the design and delivery of civic education programs have been administered by government education bodies without sufficient consultation with civil society groups, who are critical to the development of civic norms and best practice.⁶

Currently, Sierra Leone does not have a national civics curriculum. To address this gap, the National Council of Civic Education and Development was established in 2018, with the ultimate goal of developing a full syllabus and teaching materials. NaCCED has since made significant progress to date developing topics class-by-class. The Ministry and NaCCED, aware of the challenges presented by traditional civic education delivery, are aiming to integrate civics in a more comprehensive and holistic manner to produce a more intentional, innovative,

³ Frank Reichert and Judith Torney-Purta, "A cross-national comparison of teachers' beliefs about the aims of civic education in 12 countries: A person-centered analysis," *Teaching and Teacher Education* 77. (2019): 112-125.

⁴ Street Law, Inc. "Civic education in the 21st century: An analytical and methodological global overview," United States Agency for International Development. (2018): 5.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Consultation with the Ministry, March 2020.

and robust curriculum. The intention of this report is to support this effort by providing a framework to structure and focus the approach to civic education in Sierra Leone.

Our work builds upon other high impact civic education reforms across Sub-Saharan Africa in recent years that have sought to address the above challenges. In particular, Ghana's 2007 Education Reform,⁷ Zambia's various civic education efforts since 1991,⁸ and the School Civics Clubs introduced in Botswana in 2002.⁹ The Ghana study identified three key learning components to civic education: knowledge, values, and capabilities. Knowledge refers to the acquisition and retention of cognitive knowledge pertaining to government and historical facts. Values refer to the acquisition and practice of attitudes and values that foster civic engagement, social cohesion, and personal growth. Capabilities refer to the acquisition and application of analytical, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills to social issues. These components serve as the starting point upon which our framework builds. From the reforms in Botswana and Zambia, key factors for successful civic education include focus on genuine learning over topic learning, contextualization of civic values in community engagement, and self-efficacy and agency within students. These factors influenced our approach and have been intentionally integrated into our framework.

To summarize, civic education seeks to produce responsible, engaged citizens, but presently does not adequately equip students with the skills to do so. Our work aims to contribute to the growing body of literature focused on closing this gap. This report, which summarizes the key output of our engagement, describes a new framework and key implementation considerations to strengthen Sierra Leone's civic education approach to meet contemporary challenges.

Section 2 describes the new proposed framework. Section 3 overviews key implementation considerations.

2 Framework: Values-anchored civic education

Our proposed framework re-orders the traditional civics pedagogical hierarchy and places *values*, instead of knowledge, at the core of civic education. Given the ultimate purpose of this reform is to develop civic-minded citizens, internalization of civic values are key to the development of long-term social empathy and civic engagement. Presently, values are usually

⁷ Francis Hull Adams, Sophia Andoh, and Ama Mbeaba Quarshie, "Effective teaching of citizenship education in primary schools in Ghana," *Journal of Education and Practice* 4, 10. (2013): 18-23.; Kankam Baodu, "Teachers' perception on the importance of teaching citizenship education to primary school children in Cap Coast, Ghana," *Journal of Arts and Humanities* 2, 2. (2013): 137-147.; Ministry of Education Science and Sports, "Teaching Syllabus for Citizenship Education (Primary 4-6)," Republic of Ghana Curriculum Research and Development Division. (2007).

⁸ Michael Bratton and Philip Alderfer, "The effects of civic education on political culture: Evidence from Zambia," *World Development* 27, 5. (1999): 807-824.

⁹ Josiah O Ajiboye and Nthali Silo, "Enhancing Botswana children's environmental knowledge, attitudes, and practices through the School Civic Clubs," *International Journal of Environmental & Science Education* 3, 3. (2008): 105-114.

implicitly conveyed in civic curricula, and not explicitly articulated, and therefore are insufficiently internalized by students. Recognizing this shortcoming, our framework recommends explicitly articulating values as a first step, which will require rigorous deliberation among various key education stakeholders and other national social dialogue discourse. Components that typically comprise civics curricula including knowledge and capabilities are then derived directly from the values which the curriculum seeks to foster.

Ultimately, our framework aims to ensure that students are leaving the classroom having internalized lifelong civic values that will empower them to continue to contribute to national growth. To support practical implementation of this values-anchored framework in Sierra Leone, we identified an initial set of core values that will be foundational for effective civic education instruction. As a first step to designing a new civics curriculum it is important that the Ministry, along with other policy stakeholders, debate and validate this list of values.

Core values

Through consultative sessions with the Ministry, NaCCED, and other key education stakeholders, we identified and distilled the following core values:



Radical acceptance of diversity: The student recognizes, values, and celebrates all forms of difference, and promotes diversity as a source of strength.



Gender equity: The student is a strong advocate for equality of women and men, and actively strives to promote feminist ideas and actions.



Peace and tolerance: The student values the peaceful resolution of interpersonal, community, and societal challenges over all forms of personal gain.



Resilience: The student views mistakes and failures as a critical part of learning, and is able to leverage these experiences to overcome hardships.



Responsibility: The student understands and appreciates their obligation to use their talents and resources for the betterment of society.

In addition to the collectively defined values from the consultative sessions, we proffer two additional values from the civic education literature:



Self-appreciation and efficacy: The student values protecting their mental, physical, and spiritual health, and recognizes how they can make a difference in society.



Innovation and growth: The student possesses and acts on an internal desire to achieve personal, societal, national, and global growth.

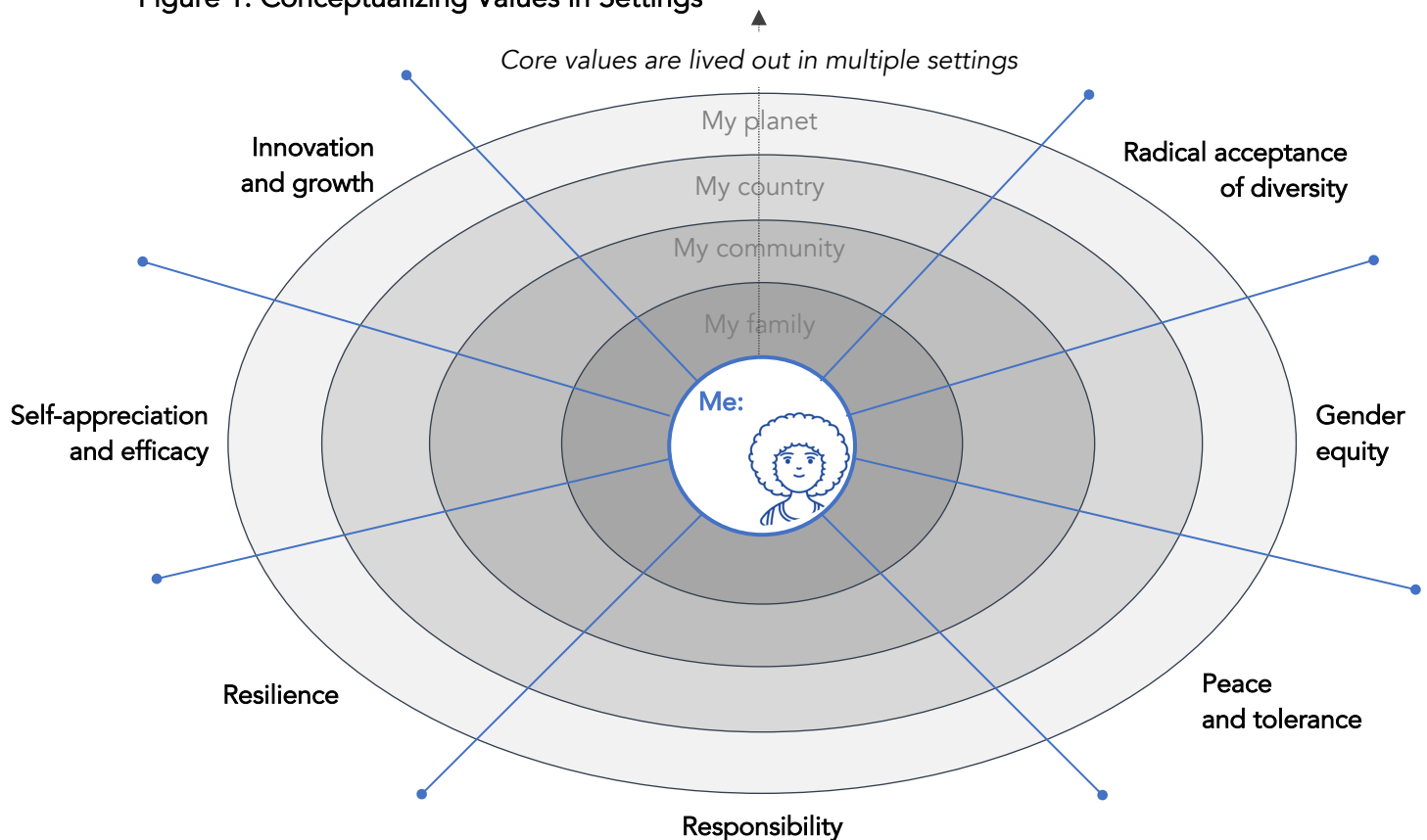
These values are in no way exhaustive and ought to be periodically revisited to reflect societal changes. It is also critical that a broad and diverse group of education stakeholders continually participate in discussions to define and redefine core civics values. Throughout these discussions, it is our view that **empathy and humility** should be the guiding principles that stakeholders utilize to define new civic values that will strengthen social cohesion and trust.

Applying values in context

For students to truly internalize the civic values that they learn, values have to be placed in contexts that are familiar to students. Specifically, under the proposed framework, students learn how the core values can be applied across different contexts that are pertinent to their life experiences.

Extending outwards from the student herself, the five distinct settings in which internalized core values will be applied are as follows: (1) the **self**, (2) the **family**, (3) the **community**, (4) the **country**, and (5) the **planet**. To show that they have genuinely adopted the values, students have to exemplify a consistent ability to act on all values across different contexts.

Figure 1. Conceptualizing Values in Settings



Once the core values are identified, the capabilities and content knowledge that support the teaching of these values will be clear. Knowledge components logically flow from values, as students will require a level of foundational knowledge in order to appropriately appreciate and internalize core civic values (e.g. such as history and cultural studies). The key capabilities necessary for students to be active and engaged citizens also logically flow from values as certain skills will demonstrate that students have adequately internalized core civic values.

There are four critical steps to implement the values-anchored framework. Under each step, curriculum designers should thoroughly address the suggested questions to ensure students achieve learning outcomes.

1. Identify key capabilities and knowledge:

- What are the key capabilities students need to possess and be able to apply in order to effectively act on specific values? For example: Cultural appreciation, empathetic & persuasive communication, analytical skills, etc.
- What specific content knowledge do students need as a foundation to develop an appreciation of this value? For example: Ethnic groups, customs and traditions, national heroines and heroes in Sierra Leone, etc.

2. Develop guiding and testing questions:

- What are the key questions teachers need to ask in order to evaluate student performance and/or ability to apply these capabilities? For example: Is the student able to provide compelling justification or reasoning to support their claims?
- How can teachers assess that the students can adequately recall, understand and apply the relevant-content knowledge? For example: Does the student identify the key rights and responsibilities of a Sierra Leonean?

3. Design teaching activities:

- What activities can teachers run with students to evaluate students' capabilities growth and knowledge retention? For example: Show and tell, songs, drama, arts and crafts, school trips, sports, debate, community projects, etc.

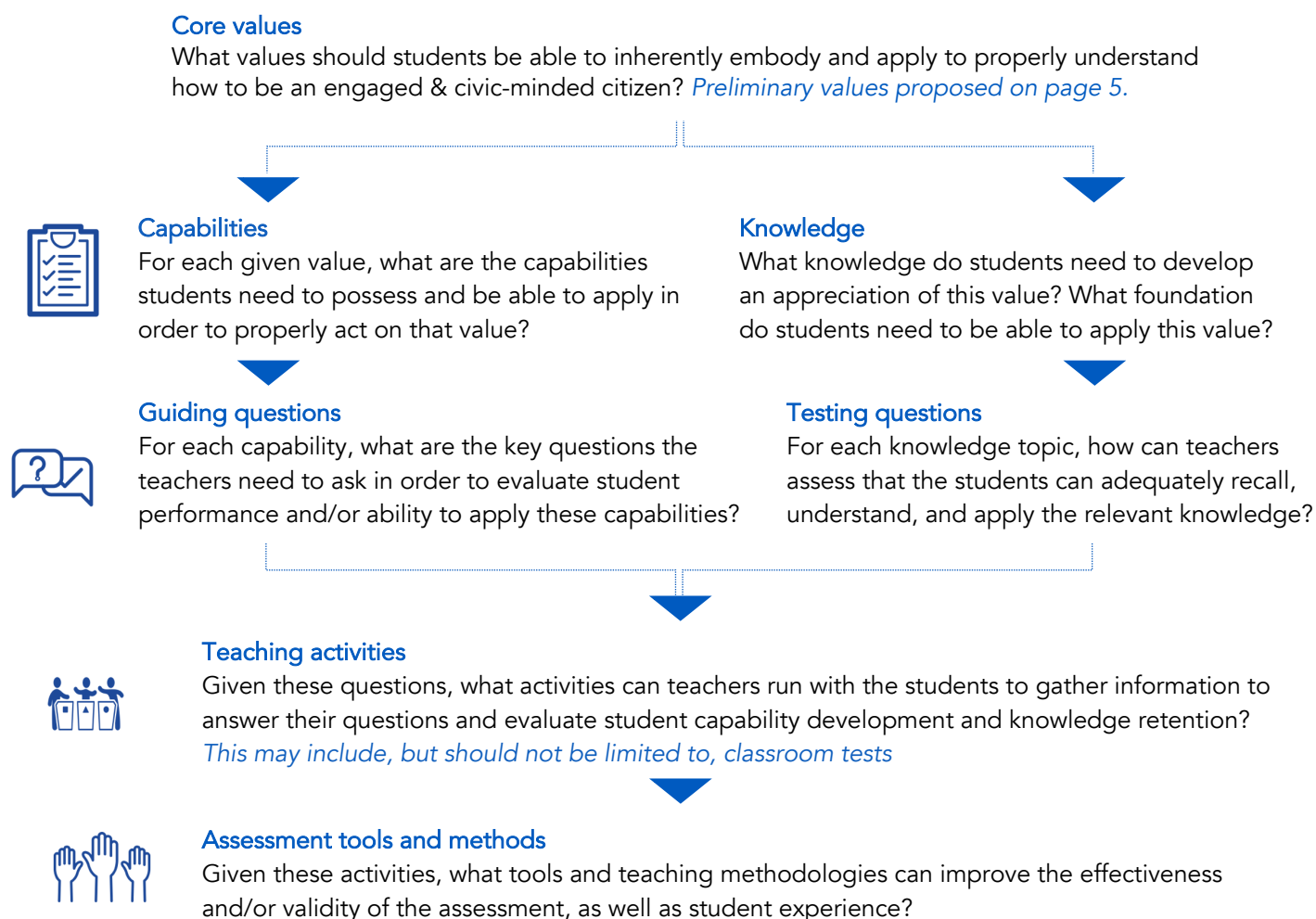
4. Create assessment tools and methods:

- What tools and teaching methodologies can improve student experience, and effectiveness and/or validity of assessments? For example: Audiovisual technology, computer games, observation, one-on-one oral conversations, etc.

An example assessment module applying these four steps in practice can be found in the Appendix. By anchoring our framework on values and then delineating specific capabilities and content knowledge that students should have, we aim to promote a civic education curriculum whose effectiveness can be readily assessed. Working through the questions outlined above allows curriculum designers to identify gaps and opportunities for continuous improvement.

It is important to note that this four-step process has to be completed for every value in every setting (i.e. every cross section in the diagram outlined in Figure 1). Once all of the core values, capabilities, and knowledge have been developed, curriculum designers and key education stakeholders can organize them in a manner that is most suited to streamlined teaching and learning.

Figure 2. Operationalizing a values-anchored teaching curriculum



“Cultural diversity is a source of enrichment.”

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3 Implementation: Key considerations

Thus far, we have outlined a stepwise path to develop a values-anchored civic curriculum. The journey to final policy implementation will be complex and undoubtedly require additional discussion and deliberation.

Under the framework advocated in this report, the first and foremost task that faces all civic education stakeholders in Sierra Leone collectively—the Ministry, NaCCED, teachers, civil society, and community members—is to **determine the core values that will anchor the new basic education civic curriculum**. Intentional consideration should be dedicated to rectifying injustices stemming from gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, socioeconomic status, ability status, and all other personal characteristics.

As these values are debated and finalized, and a full curriculum is developed around them, we have outlined a set of guiding principles and key implementation considerations that will support Sierra Leone in the next stage of the policy implementation process. These are drawn from workshops with government stakeholders, the prior education reform experiences of other Sub-Saharan African countries, and from the wider international literature on civic education.

Guiding principles

- **Instill self-efficacy as a fundamental civic education competency.** A precondition for fully participating in civic life, and positively contributing to one’s community, country or globe, is self-efficacy. Students must believe that their thoughts and actions *can* make a difference in society to be compelled to act on learned civic values. The experience of Zambia is instructive here. One core learning that surfaced as Zambia implemented its civic education reform in the 1990s was that building students’ belief in their agency is critical to advancing sustained civic engagement.¹⁰ Thus, as civic education is re-developed in Sierra Leone, curriculum designers should ask themselves if, by the end of their education, students will be able to:
 - Recognize their own agency and ability to make a difference;
 - Take pride in taking care of themselves;
 - Understand the respect owed to them by their family, country, and others.
- **Embed and emphasize gender equity in students through the civics curriculum.** Throughout our research, the necessity of emphasizing gender equity as a cornerstone of Sierra Leonean civic-life, and by extension civic education, was articulated by Ministry officials and reinforced by civil society. As such, the designers should ask themselves, at multiple points along the process, if the principle of gender equity is boldly

¹⁰ Bratton and Alderfer, “The effects of civic education on political culture: Evidence from Zambia,” 807-824.

communicated and intentionally integrated into the civics curriculum, and if not, re-evaluation may be necessary. Education policy leaders should be prepared to rethink past and current strategies that do not adequately address the root causes of gender-based inequality.

- **Promote global citizenship.** As crises of racial injustice, health, climate, migration, and income inequity have all recently shown, the challenges we face today are truly global in scope and will require citizens with a global consciousness to solve. Past standards, where civics curricula were primarily used to impart knowledge limited to the nation will not be enough to meet the demands of the future. As the curriculum is developed, keep in mind:
 - Civic education should increase students' awareness of their identities as global citizens who can positively impact the global community
 - Students should be exposed to global issues and should learn that their contributions to humanity go beyond the borders of Sierra Leone

Implementation considerations

- **Promote—and measure—genuine learning of civics education concepts not superficial topic learning by setting specific learning and teaching objectives.** Questions included in curriculum monitoring and evaluation (M&E) should target whether students can explain the impact of issues and concepts on others.
 - Genuine learning of a concept occurs when a student can grasp the **wider context that makes each content area important**.
 - For example, to evaluate the genuine learning of knowledge concepts such as **road signs and rules**, teachers can investigate the following:
 - If topic learning occurs:
 - Student fully understands all road rules taught to them, and how to comply with them.
 - *Student can state that "I know how to safely cross the road."*
 - If genuine learning occurs:
 - Student is able to articulate how they, their family, and their community is impacted if rules are not followed.
 - *Student understands and explicitly articulates that "by not following road rules I endanger the safety of others in my community."*

IMAGE: Michael Duff, Freetown, Sierra Leone (2019).

“I want every child to never be afraid to say 'I am a feminist'.”

MBSSE OFFICIAL
MARCH 10, 2020 WORKSHOP

- **Invest in teacher empowerment and training.** To successfully foster the necessary values and cultivate the requisite skills in primary schoolers, teachers must be trained in knowledge and engagement with students, including practical skill development in:
 - New ways of thinking about civics using values as an anchor
 - Creating interactive, relevant, and engaging learning activities
 - How to use assessment tools to evaluate student learning
 - How to support the growth of the civic mindset beyond the classroom
 Further, in keeping with the core principle of self-appreciation and self-efficacy:
 - Civic education teachers should continually empower students to participate and express their thoughts within and outside the classroom

Robust investments in the professional development of teachers will ensure stronger teacher commitment and will also enhance students' experience.

- **Engage civil society in civic education design and execution.** Taking the example of Zambia once again, civic education reform in the 1990s was mainly developed and delivered informally by civil society groups and NGOs focused on a range of topics such as political development, democracy and dictatorship, human rights, gender and development, government, environment, and economic development. As such, for optimal success, the Ministry and NaCCED should continually engage civil society in the curriculum design process as a constructive and accountability measure. Civil society hold expertise in specific areas that they can offer to strengthen the effectiveness of curriculum design and instruction. Additionally, student exposure to civil society groups further cements students' understanding of ways citizens can organize to strengthen governance and keep government accountable.
- **Set realistic expectations and timelines.** The Government of Sierra Leone and its civil society counterparts must recognize that civic education is a long-term investment. Thus, major education stakeholders must possess an unrelenting commitment to strengthening civic education instruction in Sierra Leone, which begins with securing buy-in at a national level. Many of the outcomes sought, including strong political participation, adherence to law, and involvement in local as well as national human development efforts will not be realized for many years if not decades. Furthermore, progress towards these objectives will not be obviously visible until young students grow in age and in capacity.

Monitoring and evaluation in aggregate

The final task in the policy-design process is to clearly establish how classroom-level and system-level monitoring and evaluation (M&E) efforts will be aggregated at the school, community, and country level.

This report thus far has provided a framework for teaching and therefore evaluating civics at the classroom level—that is, to understand whether or not civics learning has occurred in individual students. These principles can be directly translated to school-wide, community-wide, and country-level monitoring and evaluation—that is, to understand civics development in aggregate. Data from evaluations conducted in the classroom must be consolidated and centrally stored to allow the Ministry, NaCCED, and relevant partners to analyze trends in student learning outcomes across districts, communities, and regions.

There are a few strategic decisions that must be made in order to adequately aggregate M&E: operational, analytical, and governance decisions.

Figure 3. Example strategic decisions to adequately aggregate M&E at the country level

	Key strategic decisions to be made	Example considerations
Operational	What metrics will the school or the Ministry use to evaluate the success of the civic education reform? What is the standard for success?	What behavior in schools and communities exemplify civic-mindedness? Care for public spaces and property; advocate for others? Should there be a minimum satisfactory civic education score in order to pass Grade 3? Should civic education success be measured by participation?
	How will student civic education assessments be aggregated?	Sum up the grades from every individual civic education assessment? Let the teacher provide a holistic score by value at the end of term based on experience?
	How often will data on civic education be collected?	End of term? End of grade? End of primary school?
Analytical	How can we ensure that all data collected is consistent and usable for analysis?	Provide all teachers with the same template rubrics? Design a standard portal to enter civic education grades?
	What analysis should be conducted on the data?	Is there systematic bias in civic education delivery? Are certain regions, genders, ethnicities or other social groups progressing at higher rates?
	What longitudinal studies should be conducted to understand how	What metrics can be measured in adults that indicate that these values have been

	civic education influences adult life and long-term behavior?	internalized? Voter participation; political engagement?
Governance	How will the Ministry feed learnings from the data back to update the civic education curriculum as needed?	Do half-yearly working sessions to review outcomes and adjust values? Do random school visits throughout the year?
	How will the Ministry ensure cohesion of civic education with broader civic activity in society?	Involve civil society in designing values and activities? Do annual review meetings?

These decisions provide a way to collect and analyze data at scale, to understand how civics learning occurs across Sierra Leone at large, as well as the outcomes and long-term effects of civic education. These outcomes are the ultimate goals of civic education reform. As implementation progresses, further aggregation decisions may become apparent.

4 Concluding remarks

In the face of growing global challenges, there is an increasing need to revitalize civic education to equip students with values and skills to contribute to the betterment of society. To contribute to this growing body of literature and policy practice, this report proposes a values-anchored approach that aims to ensure the internalization of lifelong civic values that will empower students to improve themselves and their societies. In doing so, we proposed an initial set of core values, offered a concrete pathway to convert core values to an intentional curriculum, and provided guidance on implementation considerations. It is our hope that this work will prove useful to all stakeholders—the Ministry, NaCCED, Civil Society Organizations, and Sierra Leone’s teachers and students—as they work to develop a civic curriculum to equip young Sierra Leoneans with the knowledge, values, and capabilities needed to contribute to the prosperity of their country and the world.

Appendix: Example assessment module

Value: Radical Acceptance of Diversity in the community

Learning Objective: Develop cultural competence in students

Grade level: Primary 1 (age 6)

- **Key capabilities**
 - Appreciation for own culture and that of others
 - Empathetic and persuasive communication
 - Respectful engagement with cultural difference
 - Analytical skills (e.g. Compare and contrast, providing compelling evidence to support claims, etc.)
- **Key knowledge**
 - Customs and traditions of multiple social groups
- **Questions to guide teacher activity design**
 - Is the student able to identify and articulate the value of a unique cultural artifact?
 - Is the student able to actively listen to other students' presentations?
 - Can the student identify similarities and differences in their culture and that of others?
- **Teaching activity: Cultural Show & Tell**
 - Description: Teacher asks students to bring a cultural artifact to school to talk about and share with their classmates.
 - Format: Activity can be done orally or in written form
- **Assessment questions**
 - **For teachers to ask students:**
 - What are different features of your cultural artifact?
 - Why is this artifact important to your culture?
 - Why is the cultural artifact important to you?
 - Why is another student's cultural artifact important to their culture?
 - What are similarities between the features of your cultural artifact and that of others?
 - What are differences between the features of your cultural artifact and that of others?
 - **For teachers to observe student behavior:**
 - Does the student respectfully engage with difference?
 - Does the student celebrate the cultures of others?

Example assessment rubric

	Skill	Excellent (4)	Proficient (3)	Satisfactory (2)	Unsatisfactory (1)
Thinking about self	Identifying features of the artifact	The student talks about 3 or more features of the artifact	The student talks about 2 features of the artifact	The student talks about 1 feature of the artifact	The student does not describe the artifact
	Articulating cultural value	The student describes 3 reasons why the artifact is culturally valuable	The student describes 2 reasons why the artifact is culturally valuable	The student describes 1 reason why the artifact is culturally valuable	The student does not explain why the artifact is culturally valuable
Thinking about others	Listening with empathy (Active listening)	Student listens actively and can articulate 2 reasons why the cultural artifact of another student is culturally valuable	Student listens actively and can articulate 1 reason why the cultural artifact of another student is culturally valuable	Student listens to presentation of other students, but unable to articulate cultural value of another student's artifact	Student is unengaged during activity
	Compare & contrasts your artifact with another student's artifact	Student can identify 2 similarities and 2 differences between their artifact and that of another student	Student can identify 1 similarity and 1 difference between their artifact and that of another student	Student can only identify similarities or can only identify differences between their artifact and that of another student	Student cannot identify similarities and differences between their artifact and that of another student

Scoring

Excellent: 13-16

Proficient: 9-12

Satisfactory: 6-9

Unsatisfactory: 0-6