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PARLIAMENT BUILDING
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PARLIAMENT RATIFIES GRANT FOR PRE-SCHOOL SECTOR

Freetown, 19th August, 2014

The House of Parliament has today approved a motion by the Minister of State Finance, FBM Mansaray for ratification of a grant of over seventeen million dollars to the Government of Sierra Leone, for improvement to the education sector. The funds are to be used by the Ministry of Education to strengthen pre-school education in Sierra Leone.

Opening the debate, the Chair of the parliamentary Committee on Education, Hon. Suleiman Muluku Sesay, told the House that the realization of the grant was a fulfillment of the President's promise at the State Opening of Parliament in 2013. It was a further sign of the Government's commitment to improving education for new learners.

Hon. Koedoyoma, a former teacher from Kono, affirmed that before now, the education sector "was very close to the mortuary" but he was happy that the Minister of Education and his team were responding positively to the felt needs of the sector and addressing directly and proactively, the sector's challenges, long bemoaned by parents, students and teachers alike. He opined that the biggest challenge now, is implementation. "Ebola or no Ebola, these programmes must be implemented to the full," he concluded.

Hon. Dr. Roland Kargbo, Deputy Chair of the Committee on Education, thanked the Government for negotiating the agreement, which he described as unique. He referred to the Government White Paper on the Gbamanja Commission of Enquiry on the aspect of early childhood education, underscoring the importance of this foundational level for the future intellectual development of the child. For Hon. Helen Kuyembeh, the agreement shows that national leaders have been listening to expressions of felt needs in the sector.

While welcoming the grant, Hon. Frank Kposowa from Bo observed that the education sector has been "under siege" to overcrowding in schools, high cost of text books, poorly qualified teachers and an inadequate learning environment, breeding marked indiscipline. He therefore called for the learning environment to be addressed and suggested the transfer of teachers as is done in the public service.

Noting that pre-schools are largely characteristic of urban dwellings, Hon. Dr. Thomas Mark Turay appealed to the Ministry to extend the approach to remote rural areas, while Hon. Sualiho Koroma called for an oversight body from Parliament to review the implementation process so as to ensure fairness.



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The Chief Whip, Hon. Claude Kamanda, who is chair of the Transparency and NGOs Committees, respectively, stressed the importance of project monitoring, arguing that local councils should be involved from the early stages to ensure value for money.

Finally, extolling the virtues of pre-school education, the Minority Leader, Dr. Bernadette Lahai, lamented the poor state of literacy among pupils whereby among WASSCE students, some can hardly read intelligibly. For her, the Ministry must “hit the ground running” to ensure timely and effective implementation.

Putting a seal to the debate, the Leader of the House, Hon. Ibrahim Bundu, referencing section 118 of the Constitution of Sierra Leone (1991) commended both Ministries of Finance and Education for being so responsible as to promptly bring up the issue for legislative ratification. The motion was unanimously ratified.