

# Building Collaborative Capacities for Innovative Teaching and Learning in Higher Education: Lessons of NREN-Library Consortium Ecosystem in Sierra Leone

With the growing proliferation of electronic resources, fuelled especially by wider use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), Universities in Africa have increasingly come under pressure to provide their users with access to more materials and services, even as their budgets have remained flat, or worse, have contracted. National Research and Education Networks (NRENs) and Library consortia have provided a logical response to these demands for costly electronic resource packages and services, but the prerequisite for access and delivery - a robust and reliable ICT infrastructure - has not always been available in many countries.

In Sierra Leone, the Sierra Leone Research and Education Network (SLREN), is leading the effort to provide connectivity to higher education institutions and schools. The country's academic libraries, having recently formed the Consortium of Sierra Leone Academic Libraries and Information Services (ConSALIS), are leveraging on this to build national resource discovery platforms and subscribe to journal packages. Working synergistically, SLREN and the consortium are consolidating what can be termed the "triple R" priorities in higher education in Sierra Leone: **Rebuilding** (of infrastructures, systems and capacities), **Realigning** (of curricula and human capital deployment) and **Research strengthening** (through funding, partnerships and common agendas).

This paper will focus on the strategic partnership between SLREN and ConSALIS and how they are leading initiatives to strengthen research, teaching and learning capacities at the institutional and national levels. It will also provide a roadmap for how such partnerships to support the development of innovative teaching and learning systems in higher education and research community can be built and sustained.

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