

# Girls' Access to Education Girls' Education Challenge

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Sierra Leone



## Guidance for Learning Assistant Advisers

Name of Learning Assistant Adviser \_\_\_\_\_

School \_\_\_\_\_



The Open  
University



Girls'  
Education  
Challenge



Girls' Access to Education—Girls' Education Challenge (GATE-GEC) is a consortium project in Sierra Leone, led by Plan International UK and implemented in partnership with Handicap International, Action Aid, Forum for African Women Educationalists and The Open University, UK.

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# Key personnel and contact information

FAWE Contacts:

Name	Phone

List of your Learning Assistants:

Name	Phone

# Introduction

Welcome to the Girls' Access to Education - Girls' Education Challenge (GATE-GEC), Sierra Leone project as a Learning Assistant Adviser. You will be contributing to this project by supporting Learning Assistants as they undertake their school placement in your primary school.

## About this programme

Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE), Plan International, ActionAid, Handicap International and the UK Open University are implementing Girls' Access to Education–Girls' Education Challenge (GATE-GEC) in close collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST).

GATE-GEC supports marginalised girls and children with disabilities, identified as GATE-GEC 'beneficiaries', in 5 districts in Sierra Leone – Kailahun, Kono, Kenema, Port Loko and Moyamba.

**The vision is to help beneficiaries reach their learning potential in primary school so they can transition into junior secondary school and beyond.**

Recruiting more women into teaching is important for improving and sustaining the school participation of marginalised girls and children with disabilities, particularly in rural areas of Sierra Leone. But few women have the required qualifications, experience or confidence to apply to teacher training programmes. To address this challenge the Open University, with FAWE, designed a unique access programme which is a component of GATE-GEC Sierra Leone, to prepare young women for application to formal primary teacher training. Women who are selected for this access programme are known as Learning Assistants (LAs).

Your role as a Learning Assistant Adviser in the school is to support the Learning Assistant to become an effective classroom helper and future teacher.

Thank you for agreeing to take on this role with the Learning Assistants. We hope you find this experience professionally rewarding, interesting and beneficial.

# Learning Assistants in GATE-GEC

Learning Assistants follow a one-year combined practice-study programme of;

- Practical experience in a primary school
- A distance learning component in English and Maths and preparation for Teacher College entrance examination.

In the primary school, Learning Assistants help teachers and pupils in the classroom and in the study groups. They are placed in classrooms where there are GATE- GEC beneficiaries. Learning Assistants learn about teaching and education, and they act as role models for all pupils. They keep evidence of their work in the school in their **School Experience Record**.

Learning Assistants work under the supervision and guidance of the Class Teacher and the Head Teacher. They are supported by an LA Adviser.

For academic distance study, Learning Assistants are organised into groups of 15–18. Each group is allocated two tutors with specialisms in English and Maths. Tutors are local secondary school teachers. They meet with the Learning Assistants each week for 2–3 hours at a school or other appropriate venue. Learning Assistants sit three marked assignments in Maths and three marked assignments in English at regular intervals through the year.

At the end of the year, FAWE helps Learning Assistants prepare to sit the Teachers College entrance exam. Learning Assistants who enter Teachers College become Student Teachers.

Your role as an Adviser in the school is to support the Learning Assistant to become an effective classroom helper and future teacher.

# The Learning Assistant Programme

The following information will help you understand what the Learning Assistants will do and what you will do:



# Learning Assistant role and activities

Learning Assistants are women who aspire to be primary teachers and who are studying to improve their academic qualifications.

Learning Assistants are not teachers. In the school the Learning Assistant is expected to do the following types of tasks – all under the clear guidance and supervision of the class teacher:

- Attend school 4 days a week for the full school day
- Support the study group at the school once a fortnight
- By her presence, help to prevent harassment of girls and promote a safe learning environment and experience
- Support and advise girls who are struggling with their studies
- Prepare and tidy the classroom materials
- Distribute books, papers, pencils and other equipment
- Encourage pupils to learn, particularly girl pupils
- Help pupils who are finding it difficult to participate in activities
- Support pupils with disabilities
- Prepare (draw, or copy) teaching and learning materials: word lists, games, diagrams, pictures
- Mark pupils' work, using the teacher's mark guide
- Help pupils with revision sessions or remedial sessions
- Write in the sick book, punishment book and the progress book – as appropriate and available
- Repair teaching and learning resources e.g. torn books covers
- Make simple displays for subjects and topics
- Monitor group work
- Read aloud to a pupil or to a group of pupils
- Listen to pupils read
- Monitor play or sport sessions
- Help organise assemblies
- Support extra-curricular activities
- Call the register
- Learn about available school policies, documents and records, including Child Protection

The LA will be a strong role model for all pupils.



# Learning Assistant Adviser role and activities

The Learning Assistant Adviser role is very important to the success of this project. Through this work you are enhancing your professional skills and contributing to the education of girls in Sierra Leone.

The Learning Assistant Adviser provides advice, guidance and supervision to the Learning Assistants.

## Key Actions:

- Support Learning Assistants in their school placement. Meet regularly with them
- Sign and comment in each Learning Assistant's School Experience Record six times and record their support for Study Group sessions
- Liaise with other teachers and the Head Teacher

Within this you will be:

- Supporting LA induction to the school
  - o Explaining the role of the LA to teachers in the school and community stakeholders
  - o Helping to build a good relationship between the LA and the class teacher; discussing with the class teacher how to introduce the LA to pupils and how the LA can work in the class
  - o Helping the LAs to develop their confidence and gain the respect of teachers and pupils
  - o Working with LAs to support programme beneficiaries in Study Group sessions
  - o Supporting the LAs in their classroom role, offering advice on the types of activities that the LAs can undertake
- Supporting and monitoring the LAs in their progress through their LA School Experience Record
  - o Helping the LAs to organise and manage their time
  - o Advising the LA when she is having difficulties
  - o Helping the LAs to identify and discuss some of the obstacles encountered by girls and pupils with disabilities
  - o Helping the LAs to develop ideas about how some of these obstacles might be overcome
  - o Encourage the LAs to support each other and share ideas and reflect on their progress

- Liaising with the Head Teacher and other teachers
  - Negotiating with the class teacher if the LA's work is not satisfactory or there are other problems.
  - Ensuring that the LAs follow the Code of Conduct (including attendance) and Plan child protection protocols
  - Reporting any problems (or successes!) to the Head Teacher and FAWE

### **Your regular activities as an LA Adviser:**

**1) Support Learning Assistants in their school placement. Meet regularly with them.** You should try to find a convenient time to meet each week, or every two weeks at least. This might be at the end of school, in the lunch break or before school. Try to find a quiet space for this conversation and somewhere you can sit comfortably. Ask the Learning Assistants to describe what has been happening in their classes. Questions you might ask them, for example:

- Describe what they did in one lesson this week, how did this help pupils to learn?
- What has gone well this week?
- When did they notice pupils making good progress with their learning?
- When did they see pupils were having difficulty, how could they help?
- Were there times when they didn't know what to do?
- Did they help particular pupils?
- How are they working with the class teacher? Is the teacher giving feedback to them?

Your role is to help them to feel confident in the classroom supporting pupils' learning and helping the teacher, whilst upholding the values of inclusion towards the LA and ensuring that the LA abides to the code of conduct.

**2) Sign and comment in each Learning Assistant's School Experience Record six times and record their support for Study Group sessions.** Each half term the Learning Assistant has activities to do and write about in her School Experience Record. Please read the School Experience Record so you are familiar with it and know what the LA needs to do each term, and see where you sign and comment on her performance.

We suggest you ask a few questions about the activities before you sign, for example:

- What did you find interesting in the activities for this term?
- Were there any new words or phrases that you learnt?
- Was there anything you found difficult?
- If you could not do an activity, tell me why this happened.

Choose questions which fit the activities for the term. Your role is to develop the LA's ability to talk about her experiences. In this conversation you might also give some tips or advice on how to overcome difficulties.

There is a separate assessment and recording form for you on page 14 of this guidebook. In here you should record:

- Grades for the LAs assessments each half term
- Dates when LAs supported project beneficiaries in Study Groups

**3) Liaise with other teachers and the Head Teacher.** Help everyone to understand the role of the Learning Assistants, and to treat the Learning Assistants as adults not as pupils. Some teachers might find it difficult at first to know what to ask the Learning Assistant to do, and you can give suggestions (see the list on page 8).

In order to be successful, Learning Assistants need support and advice. They will need to be able to talk with someone who has experience and knowledge of the primary school. For the Learning Assistants this support can develop their enthusiasm and confidence. As the Learning Assistant Adviser you provide advice and lessons from your experience.

You may need to remind other teachers that the Learning Assistant is not a teacher. She is a young woman who aspires to become a primary teacher and is studying academic subjects as well as helping in the primary school. She might have other responsibilities in her family, home or community which she must continue while she is a Learning Assistant. You can build the Learning Assistant's confidence so that she can manage her studies, help in the primary school and continue her domestic duties.

If you have questions or things are not going well you should talk to your headteacher or to your FAWE contact (p4).

### **Expected behaviour of school staff and the Learning Assistant**

Please ensure that the Learning Assistant follows the Code of Conduct for Teachers and Education personnel in Sierra Leone. See pages 10 and 11 in the LA School Experience Record.

All school staff should behave respectfully and professionally with Learning Assistants.

If you have concerns, discuss them with FAWE, referring to the Code of Conduct and Child Protection laws.

# Learning Assistants and Teachers in the classroom and in study groups: working together

The Teacher	The Learning Assistant
Is responsible for the whole class / study group	Helps the teacher
Teaches the class / study group	Supports learning and teaching
Assesses the pupils	Observes and contributes ideas appropriately
Plans lessons and resources	Works under the guidance and supervision of the teacher
Is a professional role model for teaching	Is a learner and understudy for teaching

# Learning Assistant School Experience Record: activities and assessments

Please read the School Experience Record so you know its contents and when you need to sign and comment in it.

## **Term 1 (January - March 2018)**

- Activity 1 Code of Conduct for Teachers and Education Workers
- Activity 2 What Learning Assistants do
- Assessment 1
- Activity 3 The Child Rights Act of Sierra Leone
- Activity 4 Thinking About Disability
- Assessment 2

## **Term 2 (April - July 2018)**

- Activity 5 Pupils With Disabilities
- Activity 6 Child Study
- Assessment 3
- Activity 7 Teaching Methods
- Activity 8 Subject Knowledge
- Assessment 4

## **Term 3 (September - December 2018)**

- Activity 9 Inclusive Practices
- Activity 10 Make a Teaching Resources
- Assessment 5
- Activity 11 Planning, Teaching and Self-Evaluation
- Activity 12 Pair Work
- Assessment 6

Learning Assistants also help the GATE-GEC Programme Volunteers (PVs) to support programme beneficiaries in their Study Group sessions.

In the School Experience Record, each LA will keep a brief record of her learning in Study Group sessions.

## LA assessment documents for Advisers

You need to record:

- Each time a Learning Assistant supports a Study Group (the Learning Assistant should also record this in their School Experience Record)
  - The date and grade for each Assessment the Learning Assistant completes (these Assessments are in the Learning Assistant School Experience Record)
- Grades for the Assessments are as follows:

**U: Unsatisfactory** – The LA responses show little development of understanding how to support pupils' learning.

If you have queries about the record sheet please ask the FAWE District Supervisor or GATE-GEC representative.

[illegible]

**TERM 2 (April – July 2018)**

LA Name	Dates the LA supported a Study Group during this term						Date completed School Experience Record Assessment 3	Assessment 3 grade (G, S, U)	Date completed School Experience Record Assessment 4	Assessment 4 grade (G, S, U)
1										
2										
3										
4										
5										
6										

**TERM 3 (September – December 2018)**

LA Name	Dates the LA supported a Study Group during this term						Date completed School Experience Record Assessment 5	Assessment 5 grade (G, S, U)	Date completed School Experience Record Assessment 6	Assessment 6 grade (G, S, U)
1										
2										
3										
4										
5										
6										

# LA Adviser Meeting Records

These pages are for you to keep a record of your meetings with the Learning Assistants.

Complete the following each time you meet the LAs you are supporting:

<b>Date and timing of the meeting:</b>	
<b>Names of LAs present:</b>	
<b>Name:</b> _____	<b>Name:</b> _____
<b>Name:</b> _____	<b>Name:</b> _____
<b>Name:</b> _____	<b>Name:</b> _____
<b>Topic/s of the session:</b>	
 <b>Actions from the session (e.g. Discuss issue with class teacher, Head Teacher, FAWE District Supervisor:</b>	
 <b>LA Adviser signature and date:</b>	

<b>Date and timing of the meeting:</b>	
<b>Names of LAs present:</b>	
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**Date and timing of the meeting:**  
**Names of LAs present:**

Name: _____	Name: _____
Name: _____	Name: _____
Name: _____	Name: _____

**Topic/s of the session:**

  

**Actions from the session (e.g. Discuss issue with class teacher, Head Teacher, FAWE District Supervisor:**

  

**LA Adviser signature and date:**

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Name: _____	Name: _____
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**Topic/s of the session:**

  

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