

A Learning Assistant is in our school



Girls' Education Challenge



Developing female educators at scale in Sierra Leone: multiple impacts

In Sierra Leone, where there are few female educators, over 500 women in rural districts are on track to become fully qualified teachers. Learning Assistants follow a combined programme of tertiary college distance study and in-school work experience.

Education is embedded in the programme at two levels: learning how and what to teach children, and adult accelerated learning, so children and adults make progress together.

The programme provides interlinked resources and activities that address the multiple determinants of change to improve educational outcomes for children and adults. In schools, Learning Assistants have a practical School Experience Handbook to teach using child-friendly methods and to include all children in lessons. Their skills development, for example, in literacy, covers story-telling, making and using big books, emergent and developing writing, phonics, comprehension, developing a library, and assessing



literacy. Learning Assistants use a set of books for children created by local authors and illustrators for Pen Sierra Leone, with topics ranging from national birds to the civil war.



Learning Assistants use low-cost tablets for their own studies. The tablets contain their college modules, classroom resources from *Teacher*

Education in Sub Saharan Africa (TESSA) and a bespoke Disability Directory to identify and address different types of individual need in the classroom. Tutor mentors in colleges and communities have specially designed programme materials and training to support Learning Assistants.

Learning Assistants' comments reflect the strong connections between children's learning, teacher development, child-friendly teaching methods and creating positive classroom environments:

"I like teaching the children rhymes and songs"

"I like to see the children being happy and playing"

"I like reading stories in class with the children"

"I like showing them how to read and write and understand"

"I like to see their (children's) responses... seeing the improvement after teaching"

Headteachers and community leaders report on the multiple impacts of Learning Assistants: decreased use of corporal punishments, improved retention of girls, better attendance and achievement for all children, and a new cohort of professional women. At the teacher colleges, principles report year-on-year academic improvement of the Learning Assistants.

The Learning Assistant programme is designed by the UK Open University. The programme is managed in Sierra Leone by the Forum of African Women Educationalists (FAWE), three teacher colleges and Plan International.

See: Crisp, Martin; Safford, Kimberly and Wolfenden, Freda (2017). *It takes a village to raise a teacher: the Learning Assistant programme in Sierra Leone* The Open University and Plan International

2.3 Grammar practice: Simple Past

When we tell stories or read newspaper reports we often need to use the past tense about events which have happened a few minutes ago or years ago. Although there are several past tenses (past continuous, past perfect) for now start to revise the simple past.

