**GATE GEC MEL Framework**

Project number: 5096, GATE-GEC,

Plan International UK and Sierra Leone, ActionAid, Open University, FAWE and Handicap International

Version 3

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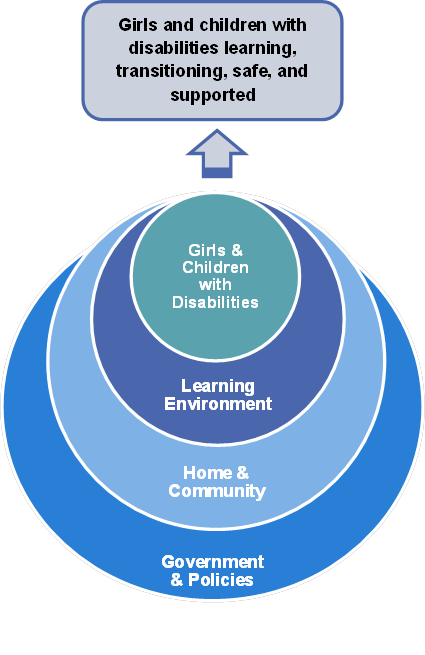
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1. Introduction

**Project’s objectives and a summary of the project activities:**GATE-GEC’s vision is for marginalised girls and children with disabilities in 6 districts (Kono, Kenema, Port Loko, Moyamba, Kailahun and Karene) in Sierra Leone to reach their learning potential and to transition through primary school, into junior secondary school and beyond. Led by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST), GATE-GEC will work at the individual, school, home, community and governance levels to ensure sustainable support and investment in education for Sierra Leone’s most marginalised children. GATE-GEC will build on current GEC interventions that have proven successful in increasing beneficiaries’ access to, transition through and learning at school, including study groups, training and support of female learning assistants and student teachers, working through CBR volunteers and school adaptations to support children with disabilities and community-based accountability systems. Sustainability will be achieved through adapting and strengthening financial support from bursaries to economic empowerment activities (VSLAs and livelihoods grants) and a structured approach to developing and implementing a partnership strategy to ensure collaboration with and value-add to state and non-state education actors. Deep-rooted social norms will be challenged through providing support to UNICEF’s GATE education media campaign and creating linkages as well as strengthening the existing formal and informal child protection structures including child rights clubs and the existing child forum networks in schools and at district level ; a new approach in this transition phase of the GEC.

**Contextual factors that have influenced the project design:**Despite steady progress in improving access to primary and secondary schools over the last decade, there are still disparities in terms of education facilities and quality between districts, due in part to inadequate quality supervision and accountability mechanisms more so in the rural and hard to reach districts where *GATE-GEC* will be implemented: Kono, Kenema, Port Loko, Moyamb, Kailahun and Karene. Primary education is free in Sierra Leone and the Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) have committed to subsidies to all government and government assisted schools. However, despite progress on access, performance at school is low and transitioning from primary to secondary education remains a challenge for many vulnerable groups, especially given the large numbers of community schools, particularly at primary level. Government does not support these schools and there can be up to a 15 year wait time for schools to be approved. The female literacy rate in Sierra Leone is one of the lowest of the world. In addition, Ebola severely disrupted the education system: schools were closed for an entire school year. Education remains one of the six priority sectors in the GoSL Post-Ebola Recovery Phase 2 (10-24 Month Plan and Transition Plan), with the overarching objective to “*Enhance learning for all children in a safe and nurturing environment*”. The impact of Ebola was evident on the beneficiaries’ learning as identified during the endline. Furthermore, community attitudes and behaviour promote unequal gender relations. Even girls that do attend school on average spend more time than boys on domestic chores, leaving less time for study. This is particularly prevalent amongst the poorest households.



**Overview of the Theory of Change (ToC) and underlying assumptions:** GATE-GEC’stheory of change is that if attendance rates are increased, if teaching and learning is more effective for all students, if beneficiaries have greater self-esteem and agency, if households have greater economic capacity and if the consortium has increased capacity to collaborate with and influence nationally and internationally with and on behalf of girls and children with disabilities in Sierra Leone, then these girls and children with disabilities will achieve sustained, improved learning outcomes and transition from primary school to JSS and from JSS to post-JSS options.

**Barriers to education for children in Sierra Leone**

The GEC 1 endline findings indicated that poverty is the greatest obstacle both boys and girls face to enrolling and remaining in education. Girls face specific barriers to education in Sierra Leone, a traditionally patriarchal society in which girls are expected to perform domestic roles from a young age, and in which early marriage and pregnancy are prevalent . Harmful practices such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) also continue to reinforce gender inequalities,[[1]](#footnote-1) and research has found that girls and children with disabilities are vulnerable to SGBV within the school environment itself, including transactional sex.[[2]](#footnote-2) These challenges are even more profound for children with disabilities from the very first years of primary school due to stigmatisation and difficulties of access.

The outbreak of the EVD virus exacerbated these trends and exposed girls and vulnerable children to further risks during school closures. Domestic pressures on girls were intensified as a result of the EVD outbreak as the high death rate of parents led to girls often taking on the role of primary caretakers within their households, leaving significantly less time for study. These factors combine to mean that girls, particularly in the rural areas in which *GATE GEC* is operating, are less likely than boys to stay in school, learn efficiently and transition through school.

**Areas and beneficiaries with which the project will work:**The project will be focusing on two key transition points: Primary 6 to Junior Secondary School for children with disabilities and Junior Secondary School to Senior Secondary School and other post JSS options (these transition points will be defined at the baseline stage through consultation with the beneficiaries) across 272 primary schools and 180 JSS schools in 6 districts in Sierra Leone: Kailahun, Kono, Kenema, Port Loko, Karene and Moyamba. The project will run for three years plus one tracking year running from May 2017-May 2021. As outlined in the proposal, years 1-3 would be direct invention with beneficiaries and year 4 would be a light touch tracking year to answer the questions of where the children are now, whether they have completed their BECE examinations, and whether they transitioned successfully. By the end of year 3 we expect that the current cohort will have reached their transition point (either end of Primary school, or end of Junior Secondary School). The budget covers district staff, support staff and fuel/transport costs in the districts. However at this stage the costs are indicative as we do not have updated beneficiary figures, or promotion rates which have never been measured on the project across the board.

**Overarching principles and aims of your MEL framework:**Our MEL Framework provides an overview of our approach and methodology formonitoring and evaluating the GATE-GEC project. Its overall objective is to provide a framework for monitoring programme activities as well as tracking the creation and usage of education opportunities amongst GEC beneficiaries. The document is structured as follows: the second part, which will follow, presents the overall M&E structure of the project. The third part describes the baseline that precedes programme roll-out. The fourth part outlines the approach for monitoring the different project activities. The fifth part outlines the ex-post evaluation that succeeds programme roll-out. The nature of this document is that of a living document. Ongoing programme reflection and monitoring might result in revision of the MEL framework.

2. Learning from GEC 1

**Establish robust beneficiary tracking mechanisms from project start-up that will be employed consistently and thoroughly throughout the project:** Tracking of beneficiaries has been a challenge throughout the life of the previous GEC projects, particularly due to transiting communities throughout Ebola. Taking learning from the previous GEC projects, tracking the level and type of support beneficiaries receive and their feedback on this support has proven difficult. Often, verification and validation of the data received from beneficiaries has highlighted some concerns. To enable us to tackle this, we would like to introduce a tracking model through the use of laminated cards with a barcode, photo and signature display. This will enable us to have more accurate data, and understand which individuals we are capturing data from that will help inform the level of impact we are making throughout the lifetime of the project. In addition, this will also provide an extra layer of accuracy and validation when it comes to distribution of bursaries and other tangible items. Laminated cards will be used by the GATE GEC project to allow for accuracy, and clear tracking of what support the beneficiary has received. You can also track the support one individual beneficiary has received over time. This will be increasingly beneficial due to the challenges faced in the current GATE GEC of the wrong beneficiaries being given bursaries and provided support etc. The staffing structure will also encourage each school to have one point of contact from the implementing partner. This individual will be accountable for updates and data collection from their caseload of schools.

From an evaluation perspective, it will also be important that evaluators have robust systems and mechanisms in place to capture beneficiary data from the evaluation points accurately. This will be particularly important at the baseline stage. As we intend to do a panel to panel evaluation, it will be important to be able to identify the same set of girls that were involved in the evaluation previously (and accurate IDs and identifying information will be fundamental).

**Procurement of consultants**: One learning from the previous GEC projects was the significant delays and challenges related to hiring consultants necessary to move forward key project activities, such as Learning Assessment consultants, radio jingle consultants, bursary uniform suppliers, the SRHR information education materials consultant and even the purchase of CCU vehicles. Activities during Ebola ramped up rapidly as a response and therefore procurement of consultants was kept at a national level and not expanded outwith. However, a few key elements made them very challenging to work with. Their supplier/consultant Selection Committee had no Chair; therefore there was minimal leadership or follow-up or impetus to drive forward and process bids. It required a lot of follow-up with them, and even still, progress frequently ground to a halt. While there were quality checks in place, we encountered unforeseen challenges such as missed timelines and poor quality reporting. Taking this on onboard it will be important that rigorous checks and balances are put in place when recruiting consultants throughout the lifetime of the project, ensuring we follow FUND MANAGER’s guidelines on recruitment and agreed consultants are vetted, with follow up of references.

**Time constraints and unrealistic expectations:** Accurate and timely monitoring and tracking of the girls in GEC 1 was very weak, as highlighted in the baseline and endline evaluations. As the project progressed we adopted more technology based monitoring (e.g. tablets) for tracking beneficiaries, thus providing more accurate, real-time comparable data. Taking this learning forward, we have ensured that innovative ways of capturing data and using technology will allow us to have increasingly accurate data, and allow for project officers to save time that can then be allocated to more meaningful activity. In addition we will not be working through local implementing partners on GATE GEC but working directly. This will allow us to reduce the layers of communication where possible. Data uploads will be tailored towards a decentralised approach ensuring that the different levels of staff across the consortium have the relevant access and review functionality as is required in their role in line with the districts they implement activities in. Ensuring all partners have access and the ability to analyse data to then take relevant learning for the project and their organisation forward will be a fundamental aspect of the MEL framework and activities. In addition to using mobile data collection, tracking of monitoring will take place through a QR coding functionality using laminated cards with the codes and photos of the girls to track the monitoring activities, when they partake and how they contribute throughout the lifetime of the project. This will enable us to tell the journey of a child’s perceptions, and enable us to accurately reflect against the output indicators and outcomes – it is important to recognise that this will be ongoing throughout the lifetime of the project, particularly when looking for communities to take ownership of areas like the scorecarding to protect children’s rights.

**Implement rigorous and accurate beneficiary verification processes:** Taking learning from the current GEC projects, timing of activities needs to be focused on from early planning staff. In particular, the annual verification exercises need to have streamlined processes in place and be timed correctly, i.e. post annual exam results, when children are transitioning and before they begin the school term. From experience, as verification can take time, particularly for children with disabilities who require a full needs assessment (and particularly as we now intend to use the Washington Group model to verify all sets of girls, not just those children with disabilities) to indicate not only the child’s schooling level but assistive device check-up and educational needs assessment.

1. Monitoring

Our monitoring system for the project is outlined below indicating the level of measurements, tools proposed for data collection, the rationale and frequency of data collection to measure the impact of the outputs and activities outlined in our project’s workplan. The project’s workplan outlines key activities involved in the project, including linking to the output and outcome indicators, who’s responsible and when these are expected to take place. This will be reported on a quarterly basis. Monitoring data will be used to inform how effective our interventions are on the beneficiaries and to inform the programmatic adaptations if required throughout the lifetime of the project

Monitoring will on the most part take place on a quarterly basis and in some instance on a bi-annual/annual basis where we are looking to measure increased engagement of stakeholders for example government and other NGO officials. We will be finalising the monitoring plan and schedule with field staff during the start up workshop. The project officers will be responsible for gathering the data and the Hub team and consortium partners’ M&E teams will be responsible for carrying out randomised and, crucially, unannounced spot checks to provide an additional layer of verification and validation of the data. MEST officials will also be an integral part of the monitoring process, during their bi-monthly joint monitoring visits with partners.

The project has district leads which mean that ActionAid, Handicap International and Plan International Sierra Leone will manage the district interventions. The field staff (Project Officers or Education District Officers) will directly roll out and collect data on the project. Therefore partners are allocated per district and will monitor all interventions. The Hub (Plan International SLE Freetown team) will coordinate partners and quality assure data to apply this to each output indicator.

The approach when using the monitoring tools with children with disabilities will be to use Inclusive Education Officers (IEO’s) through the community volunteers, who are known to the children, to explore the questions. The IEOs are trained extensively by Handicap International in using the correct approach which is acceptable when working with different scopes of disability. The volunteers also receive training throughout the year on working with disabilities within the community. The monitoring tools themselves will be inclusive centred, and ensure that the relevant questions posed are supportive and context-appropriate, particularly for children with disabilities. Handicap International will lead on the design and adaptation of the tools with the relevant expertise, with contributions and input from the consortium partners. Relevant training will also be provided to the partner field staff to ensure they understand how to engage and gather information from children with disabilities in an inclusive and sensitive manner. The IEO’s will be responsible for rolling out the more intricate and technical disability-related tools, including the district inclusiveness monitoring tool to assess model schools, and how inclusive the school environment is for children with disabilities.

*Table 1: Outputs for measurement*

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|  | **Level of measurement** | **Tool and mode of data collection** | **Rationale (with definitions)** | **Frequency of data collection** |
| **OUTPUT 1:** Marginalised girls and children with disabilities, and their parents/caregivers are provided support for beneficiaries, to attend and learn through PS, to JSS and JSS to post JSS.  **Please note:** *Findings for this output will be used to assess the impact and effectiveness of interventions in improving attendance and retention of beneficiaries and to inform programmatic adaptations accordingly.* | | | | |
| **Output Indicator 1.1** | School | **Bursary distribution monitoring survey** (are they distributed to the GEC cohort beneficiaries?) - this will take place during the distribution process, using the laminated tracking tool **Bursary** **Usage and effectiveness questionnaire:** *Bursary usage monitoring questions* (same sample, quarterly, tracking tool) and *Bursary effectiveness monitoring questions* (same sample, quarterly, tracking tool) **KIIs** with a mix of positive and negative feedback on bursary items (children, parents/carers, PVs) **Study group observation tool** (usage of bursary items) | Allows us to capture which beneficiaries have received the bursary items, have the correct bursary items been assigned, the duration of time taken for distribution.  Usage and effectiveness tools will allow us to measure the quality of the bursary items from the perspective of the GEC cohort, parents, and teachers - and allows for triangulated feedback.  Effectiveness tools could also be linked to continuing attendance through unannounced visits to monitor school attendance registers. | Annual (distribution) Quarterly (other data) |
| % of the GEC cohort receiving bursaries (disaggregate the data by gender, disability and type (severity), age (grade) and geographical location.) |
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| **Output Indicator 1.2** | Household, school and study group level | **Study group monitoring questionnaire** (questions to parents, questions to PVs) **FGDs** with mix of parents/carers/community members **KIIs** to drill down on positive and negative aspects of the questionnaire and FGDs  Survey with GEC beneficiaries on their perceptions of parent/community attitudes to enable triangulation | The study group monitoring tool will be broken into sub-tools for each stakeholder group (ie. study group monitoring (GEC cohort (disaggregated by CWDs), parents of GEC cohort, community members and other parents (non GEC cohort)). The study group tool will have a combination of quant (using scales) and qual questions around perceptions of children (girls and children with disabilities being in education), what they need, how they are supported etc | Quarterly |
| % of parents and community members (disaggregate by male and female) reporting increased awareness of girls’ and children with disabilities’ educational rights, right to protection and right to participate in life choices |
| **Output Indicator 1.3** | Household, school, study group level | **Re-verification survey** (short survey to GEC cohort beneficiaries) **Study group monitoring** **FGDs** with groups of GEC cohort (disaggregated by children with disabilities), boys in school, PVs, Parents/carers, teachers **KIIs**  (girls, Children with disabilities, boys, PVs, parents)  PS SQDs | There will be a mix of quant and qual questions posed (using scales and open ended comment boxes (honed in by theme) to gather an all-round picture. | Annual (verification) Quarterly (FGDs, KIIs and study group monitoring) |
| % of the GEC cohort reporting increased confidence and self-esteem through PSS to JSS and post JSS (disaggregated by gender, disability and type (severity), age (grade) and geographical location.) |
| **Output Indicator 1.4** | Household and community level | **VSLA monitoring questionnaire** (all targeted households) - level of knowledge and skills **KIIs** with parents (targeted households) **FGDs** with VSLA groups Observations of VSLA group meetings, review of minutes and records of group meetings, supplemented by photo evidence of items purchased/receipts | Project officers will have on-going meetings and join VSLA group meetings to observe, and gather feedback on levels of engagement in the VSLA groups, and programme, roles and responsibilities and as the group evolves, how money is being used.  Note: The criteria for the households selected for the livelihoods and VLSA component will be determined as a consortium and through guidance and agreement with communities as to those families that have the most need and are unable to support their child’s education once bursaries is phased out.  Definitions:  'Targeted households’ - the households selected based on pre-defined criteria of degree of marginalisation and need (TBC)  ‘Actively engaged’: Targeted households attend meetings, pay shares, participate in discussions and activities of the group. | Quarterly |
| % of targeted households of the GEC cohort actively engaged in livelihoods & saving in the VSLA (disaggregated by gender, age, geographical location) |
| **OUTPUT 2:** Increased number of skilled PVs, LAs and STs (who support the cohort beneficiaries) to improve learning of marginalised girls and children with disabilities. Findings for this output will be used to adapt training provided to LAs, PVs and STs in order to support improved teaching practices that will contribute to beneficiaries’ learning outcomes. | | | | |
| **Output Indicator 2.1** | School | **PV Pre and post training assessment** (participatory and gender sensitive pedagogy training & child protection) with **a 6 month follow up** (to reflect on the actions they have done using the training with case studies)MoUs with schools outlining the targeted numbers  **Study group observations and monitoring** with PVs and beneficiaries.  KIIs and FGDs with beneficiaries, parents and PVs. | Pre and post training will assess the numbers being trained and their knowledge before and after training. The 6 month follow is useful based on learning from previous use of this pre and post tool, to assess how much they have used the skills they gained from training. | At time of training (Pre and post training assessments) – TBC  Quarterly (study group monitoring ) |
| # of PVs, LA (year 1) and STs (year 2 and 3) engaged in the GATE GEC project |
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| **Output Indicator 2.2** | School | **Marked assignment results (termly)**, **LA self-assessment tool** and **End of unit tutor monitoring.** | The marked assignment provides numbers passing and the LA self-assessment and end of unit tutor monitoring allows for more narrative and context around these numbers. | Termly (for results)  Quarterly |
| # of LAs passing the marked assignment |
| **Output Indicator 2.3** | School | **Study group monitoring questionnaire** (questions to GEC cohort, parents/carers, PVs[[3]](#footnote-3))  **Report cards** from GEC cohort beneficiaries - at points when exam report cards are provided and annual NPSE exam results (in line with the verification process).  KIIs and FGDs with beneficiaries.  **KIIs and FGDs** with beneficiaries, parents and PVs. | 'Improved perceptions' - Ask questions freely, do homework, feel supported and positive in their study group, feel they have improved in their studies | Quarterly  And report cards will be gathered at the point these are distributed |
| # of GEC beneficiaries’ reporting improved perceptions of PVs teaching skills and support in the classroom |
| **Output Indicator 2.4** | School | **Study group monitoring questionnaire** (questions to GEC cohort, parents/carers, PVs[[4]](#footnote-4))  **Attendance spot checks** as captured under output 1. Review of study group registers.  **KIIs and FGDs** with beneficiaries, parents and PVs. |  | Quarterly |
| # of GEC beneficiaries engaged in study group sessions (disaggregated by gender, disability, location) |
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| **OUTPUT 3:** Marginalised girls and children with disabilities are supported to learn in a safe and inclusive learning environment.  *Findings for this output will be used to assess the impact and effectiveness of the scorecarding component, to support schools to improve child protection practices and to inform programmatic adaptations designed to create a safe and supportive learning environment for marginalised girls and children with disabilities.* | | | | |
| **Output Indicator 3.1** | School | **Scorecarding attendance registers** (disaggregated by gender, roles, disability and location).  **Study groups monitoring** to GEC cohort, parents, PVs.  **Monitoring visit reports** gathered by field staff | Definitions:  'Targeted' - the 180 schools where scorecarding is implemented during the lifetime of projects  'Specific need' will be based on a case by case basis. Need will be assessed on the final agreed action resulting from the action plans.  'Specific need' will be based on a case by case basis. Need will be assessed on the final agreed action resulting from the action plans. | Quarterly |
| # of children, parents, SMC members, HTs and teachers involved in the scorecarding process |
| **Output Indicator 3.2** | School | **Quarterly and annual scorecarding summary** sheet.  **CP referral records** and processes followed (monitoring log) and **CP analysis reports** (consortium wide).  **KIIs with head teachers and FGDs/KIIs** to members of SMCs.  Study group monitoring with GEC cohort) and KIIs with beneficiaries.  **Minutes from SMC meetings** and observations by project field staff of SMC meetings. | Quarterly |
| # of initiatives implemented by headteachers/schools committees in targeted JSS schools to address specific need as a result of action plans during the scorecarding process (disaggregated by gender, disability and type (severity), age (grade) and geographical location.) |
| **Output Indicator 3.2**  # and type of child protection incidents of child abuse, violence, neglect and exploitation reported in targeted JSS schools (disaggregated by gender, disability and type (severity), age (grade) and geographical location.) | School | **Quarterly and annual scorecarding summary** sheet.  **CP referral records** and processes followed (monitoring log) and **CP analysis reports** (consortium wide).  **KIIs with head teachers and FGDs/KIIs** to members of SMCs.  Study group monitoring with GEC cohort) and KIIs with beneficiaries.  **Minutes from SMC meetings** and observations by project field staff of SMC meetings. | Quarterly |
| **OUTPUT 4:** Programme evidence and learning is shared with key educational decision makers and actors to influence the Sierra Leonean Education sector. Findings for this output will be used to identify ways to improve the level of engagement and shared learning between GATE GEC, MEST and other education actors, strengthening the programme’s influence on behalf of marginalised girls and children with disabilities in Sierra Leone. | | | | |
| **Output Indicator 4.1** | Consortium wide level | 'Monthly consortium output reporting, Meeting agenda, attendance list, minutes, learning documents/evidence shared. Stakeholder Network mapping.  Joint monitoring visits with MEST/GATE - field reports and actions agreed.  KIIs with MEST officials (bi-annual). | The monitoring during the joint visits is real time evidence.  At district level the storage of project documents and updates from the Programme Manager will provide the MEST staff a voice to promote sustaining structures.  Definitions: 'Engagement' - involved in meetings, requests for information, acknowledge shared learning, using evidence in decision making meetings.  A communications plan will be established once the kick off workshop has taken place to engage stakeholders and understand their requested level of engagement. The plan will determine what engagement will look like, this may be through 1-1s, coordination meeting presentations on the project, quarterly lessons learned participation. The project will aim to work with the same key stakeholders over the course of the project who will be able to feedback during both internal annual project reviews, and external evaluations. | Quarterly (working groups for observations)  Bi – annually for quant and qual  This may accelerate in years 2-4 as we would expect engagement to increase |
| # (and level) of MEST officials engaged with the GATE GEC project (disaggregated by gender, geographical location) |
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| **Output Indicator 4.2** | Consortium wide level | Consortium monitoring log (events involved in or held, types of people attending, outcomes, outputs of events).  'Presentations, minutes/notes from events, invitations to events, email correspondence linked to events. Monthly consortium output reporting. | Definitions: 'Events' include presentations, briefings, conferences, seminars, working groups, meetings, publications that showcase the shared learning from the GATE-GEC project.  ‘Actively’: consortium partners regularly attend and present at meetings, conferences, seminars and working groups and contribute shared learning to publications and briefing papers | Bi- annual  This may accelerate in years 2-4 as we would expect engagement to increase |
| # of education events consortium partners 'actively' participate in to share evidence and learning from the GATE GEC project with key educational stakeholders  (disaggregated by gender, geographical location) |
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| **Output Indicator 4.3** | Consortium wide level | Consortium monitoring log (events involved in or held, types of people attending, outcomes, outputs of events)  Questions incorporated into KII with MEST officials  Attendance sheets (with roles and orgs), agenda and minutes from key events. Presentations, invitations to events, email correspondence linked to events. Monthly consortium output reporting. | Define actions as position papers, agreements during the working groups, these will evolve as we progress, but relevant monitoring and follow up of the actions agreed and whether they have been followed through will be the responsibility of the Education Adviser[[5]](#footnote-5) | Quarterly (working group)  Bi-annual)  This may accelerate in years 2-4 as we would expect engagement to increase |
| # and types of actions (e.g. position papers) (at events/meetings) agreed between consortium partners and MEST officials on girls’ and children with disabilities’ education |
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The monitoring plan attached provides further detail on a proposed plan for monitoring activities (including the type of data, frequency of collection and who is responsible for gathering data), in addition to linking with the outputs and outcomes being measured. This is currently a work in progress and will need to be agreed across the consortium and with field staff, in terms of resources and feasibility during the start-up workshop in late August/early September.

**Output 1: Attendance and learning**

Project school data including enrolment, drop out and promotion records and on-going study group attendance records of beneficiaries and peers (boys) will be collected as part of the on-going monitoring visits throughout the project. Bursary distribution records will be gathered during the distribution phase, and bursary usage forms will be used at distribution phase and the end of the school year. To ensure this data is validated and of good quality, spot checks and back checks will also take place throughout the project. Furthermore, attendance head counts of study groups will be undertaken during regular and unannounced school visits by district field staff, both at project level and with MEST, and triangulated against attendance registers. Head counts of study groups will also be undertaken during monitoring visits by the project MEL teams in the districts.

Monitoring data including on-going records kept by the groups, pre and post economic assessments of the targeted household beneficiaries, and a mix of FGDs and KIIs will be used on the VSLA groups’ to capture savings and expenditure made, income change through the livelihoods grants, impact on household income and whether they are able to effectively cope with shocks/plan and cover educational costs.

**Output 2: Skilled teaching staff to support and improve learning of beneficiaries**

Understanding the number of PVs, LA/STs and GEC beneficiaries engaged in the programme will be captured throughout the project. On-going monitoring tools such as a self-reflection pre and post training, with a 6-month follow up, will be implemented and PVs’ peer exchange cluster meeting records will be gathered to capture shared learnings and knowledge exchange. Observations of PVs’ of study group sessions will be undertaken to monitor the continuing progress of effective inclusive education teaching skills. LAs self-assessments and STs’ record cards plus feedback from mentors will be analysed and reviewed on a quarterly basis. TCC feedback and pre and post training assessments will be carried out of the teacher training (including a 6-month follow up).The record booklets will also be used to capture stories of change/ case studies of the LAs/STs journey. STs will also be observing the child’s learning on a half term basis. Registers of the LA/STs attendance to tutorials will also be captured through registers and monitored by FAWE project officers during regular tutorial spot checks. The monitoring section outlines the proposed tools to measure the impact of the work with the LAs and STs and its contribution to this project as a whole. Study group monitoring data will be captured from girls and children with disabilities around their perceptions of learning, one of a several ways (e.g. exam results, teachers and parents perceptions etc) to better evidence and triangulate the impact on learning outcomes. Random spot check testing during study group monitoring will also take place where a child will undertake a mini learning assessment on both literacy and numeracy. Parents’ and PVs’, and potentially LAs/STs’[[6]](#footnote-6) perceptions will also be captured through the study group monitoring. We will work with the consortium education specialist to design an assessment. Records from MEST visits and education working group records will also be captured. MEL monitoring visits will continue and a mix of focus groups discussions and key informant interviews with beneficiaries will be undertaken. School surveys with the HTs to capture the attendance and engagement of PVs, LAs/STs in the school will be important, as well as undertaking spot checks of the study group session registers and a review of attendance records (see output 1).

There will be a clear emphasis on the support we provide to children with disabilities, and ensuring there is a strong inclusive and participatory approach followed throughout the lifetime of the project. Handicap International will provide specialist input and guidance on how this can be effectively done.

**Output 3: Learning in a safe and inclusive environment**

A mix of focus group discussions, key informant interviews and capturing stories of significant change of beneficiaries will be undertaken to assess the impact of the study groups, use of LAs/STs and the score-carding tool. Observations at study group level will also be undertaken. The project will also be using the self-esteem and empowerment scale tools with beneficiaries. FGDs/KIIs will be also carried out with the teachers, parents and peers (including boys) to provide triangulation of impact of the work. A clear record of the scorecarding process will also be captured including the types of stakeholders involved. Minutes from the SMC meetings will also be used to track the types and level of child protection issues raised in the school, in addition to tracking of actions taken to mitigate or resolve these issues. The project officers will also observe the SMC meetings from time to time to also gage how issues are being dealt with.

**Output 4: Evidence gathered of project’s impact and shared learning across the consortium**

Given the large amount of funding going into the education system in Sierra Leone over the next 4 years, GATE-GEC will have specific activities to coordinate sharing and learning between state and non-state partners.

Following the review and implementation of the partnership strategy, data on objective progress will be gathered through our engagement with MEST officials, and other educational decision makers across the sector through national platforms. Perception scoring from government officials and other education actors of our work and level of engagement will also be captured. Tracking and monitoring will also be captured of the consortium’s influence at national education platforms sharing the evidence and learning gathered through our project. Minutes from working group meetings with relevant officials at district level will also be captured on a quarterly basis to track the agreed actions between the consortium and MEST on girls and children with disabilities’ education. A mix of FGDs and KIIs will also be undertaken with MEST officials to better understand how engagement can be sustained.

Key evaluation questions

The underlying research questions should frame the development of key evaluation questions, which is ultimately how effective has the GEC-T been in encouraging and supporting children to go to school, learn and transition in a quality and safe education environment, and transition beyond school. The consortium and baseline evaluator have identified key evaluation questions based on this underlying research question aligned with the GATE GEC project and the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria. In addition, and more specifically, they will do so based on the expected project impact outlined in the project’s Theory of change, in the context of learning, aligned with each logframe output. The key evaluation questions include:

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| GATE GEC – what impact has the programme made? |
| 1.1 Was the programme successfully designed according to stakeholders? |
| 1.2 To what extent does the programme address the needs of marginalised girls and children with disabilities? |
| 1.3 To what extent has the programme been framed within national educational priorities and policies? |
| 1.4 Is the programme logic consistent with the proposal? |
| 1.5 Does the results framework/logframe represent acceptable performance benchmarks that demonstrate or measure achievement of programme goals? |
| 2.1 Are the risks and assumptions articulated by GATE-GEC both comprehensive and realistic? |
| 2.2 Was the programme successfully implemented according to stakeholders? |
| 2.3 Do activities translate into planned outputs, thus contributing to GATE-GEC purpose and goal? |
| 2.4 To what extent has GATE-GEC reached and affected marginalised girls and children with disabilities (based on type and severity)? |
| 2.5 What was it unable to achieve? |
| 2.6 What has worked, what has not worked, why, and with what effects? |
| 2.7 To what extent were children involved in the programme, how were they selected? |
| 2.8 Gender – To what extent did the programme contribute to increased equality between boys and girls, women and men? To what extent was the programme gender transformative? |
| 3.1 Is M&E information fed back into programming? Does GATE-GEC measure value for money? |
| 3.2 What has been the involvement of parents, teachers and school administration in the implementation of the programme? To what extent has the project affected community attitudes towards the educational rights of marginalized girls and children with disabilities (disaggregated by gender)? |
| 4.1 What are the best practices and successful stories of change? |
| 4.2 What impact has the programme had on marginalised girls’ and children with disabilities’ learning? |
| 4.3 What impact has GATE-GEC had on enabling marginalised girls and children with disabilities to be in school? |
| 4.4 What impact has GATE-GEC had on indirect beneficiaries including boys within the schools? |
| 4.5 What works to increase the attendance, quality of learning and transition of marginalised girls throughout school and beyond JSS? |
| 4.6 What is the long-term impact of the programme in the life condition of the beneficiaries? |
| 4.7 What was the impact on boys and girls of their participation in the programme and how did the programme affect girls and boys, directly or indirectly, positively or negatively? |
| 4.8 Non-discrimination and inclusion – Who benefited from the programme and who was excluded, and why? |
| 4.9 How were marginalised/ vulnerable groups included? |
| 4.10 What is the impact on specific groups of children with disabilities (see Washington Group for the types of disabilities)? |
| What works to increase the attendance, quality of learning and transition of marginalised girls and children with disabilities (disaggregated by gender) throughout school and beyond JSS? And what does successful transition look like for beneficiaries, throughout and outside of the schools environment? |
| How sustainable are the proposed changes envisaged by the programme (baseline) and how sustainable are any changes the programme has led to (this will be linked to the midline and endline)? |
| What are the key factors/constraints that contribute to sustaining the programme gains in the medium-long term, with and/or without Plan intervention? |
| How effective has the sustainability strategy been? |
| What external factors (e.g. political dynamics, funding availability, other interventions) contribute (positively or negatively) to the achievement of the objectives? |
| To what extent the project have been framed within national educational priorities and policies? |
| What are the baseline values against the Logframe indicators? |
| What are the gaps, if any between what is planned and what is feasible OR what is best practice? |
| What are the likely unintended positive & negative consequences and how do stakeholders say they can be improved and/or mitigated or avoided? |

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| DAC Criteria: To what extent is GATE-GEC relevant, effective, efficient, sustainable, impactful? |
| Recommend priorities for Plan's future programming for GATE-GEC |
| Recommend appropriate changes to strategies, processes, tools & requirements for implementing these priorities, particularly with respect to externalities that may affect future programming |
| Identify any changes to organisational and programmatic efforts/investments for programme planning/ implementation (including any support systems) |

In addition to using GEC questions and OECD-DAC evaluation criteria, the following are cross-cutting

questions for Plan’s evaluations:

* Child-centeredness – to what extent were children involved in the project, how were they selected, what was the impact on boys and girls of their participation in the project and how did the project affect girls and boys, directly or indirectly, positively or negatively?
* Non-discrimination and inclusion – who benefited from the project and who was excluded, and why? How were marginalised/ vulnerable groups included? What was the impact on specific groups of children with disabilities (see Washington group for the types of disabilities)?
* Gender – to what extent did the project contribute to increased equality between boys and girls (looking at disability), women and men? To what extent was the project gender transformative?[[7]](#footnote-7)

5. Evaluation design

5.1 Research design

A baseline evaluation will be commence in September 2017 (with the fieldwork taking place in early November-early December 2017) and the findings will be used to review the project logframe and theory of change and propose any revision in project design and the MEL framework as necessary. A midline evaluation will be conducted in September 2019 to validate ongoing monitoring findings and determine the overall effectiveness of the project against the various project output and outcome indicators, and document lessons learnt. The final evaluation will be carried out in 2021 (includes the final tracking year) collect quantitative survey data and qualitative data analysed alongside the school-level data collected through the Project Monitoring System and provide an evaluation of the project outcomes and impact. At the baseline the intended design for the GEC-T evaluation will be a multi-period (Baseline – Midline – Endline) panel study with randomised control groups. The panel design will involve tracking, and measuring changes in, the learning outcomes of a specific cohort of individual learners over time (i.e. at the individual level, the score for a given learner at the Baseline will be compared with the score for that same learner at the Endline).

The external evaluations for *GATE-GEC* will adopt a quasi-experimental approach, with Treatment and Control groups to allow for difference-in-difference analysis of our results as well as looking at pre and post-test changes in key outcome indicators to assess the impact of the project. Due to the size and distribution of treatment schools, the evaluation will look to capture a representative sample of the target beneficiaries (marginalised girls across PS and a larger concentration across JSS schools, and children with disabilities (boys and girls with disabilities) across PS schools; this will be defined by the evaluator during the inception phase. We will also look to disaggregate against other marginalised sub-groups including child-headed households (female) and beneficiaries having other caring responsibilities. To ensure our evaluation is representative of all stakeholders, our MEL framework will also capture feedback from boys, parents (mothers and fathers) and caregivers, other community members, PVs, LAs, STs, teachers and MEST officials.

Due to the specific context of our current beneficiary group, in particular the number of interventions in support to primary and secondary education, the consortium will work with country partners, our external evaluators, Fund manager and MEST to establish appropriate control groups. The evaluation will also look to capture a sample of those beneficiaries that have transitioned post JSS, into SSS, employment, training or other pathways to capture sustainability of the project interventions and life choices taken post JSS education. A joint sampling approach will be used in the initial baseline evaluation to allow for a clear link between the learning and transition of the sample of beneficiaries and the impact the project looks to achieve. It is important to re-iterate the concerns flagged in the previous GEC around limited tracking of the beneficiaries over the course of the project (mainly due to the Ebola outbreak and movement of families), therefore tracking tools and structured processes will be followed at the verification stage to ensure the correct ID’s are allocated to individuals beneficiaries and accurate contact information is captured to follow up at the midline and endline phase.

GATE-GEC will be focusing on two key transition points: Primary 6 to Junior Secondary School for children with disabilities and Junior Secondary School to Senior Secondary School. The expected transition of beneficiaries throughout grades is outlined in table 9 under section 6.

It will be important to capture a sufficient sample that is representative of the total population of beneficiaries per grade and district (taking into account that nearly 75% of our beneficiaries are based in JSS schools, and 25% in PS schools, which is largely made up of children with disabilities). The learning cohort will be gathered from the girls that will be in schools for most of the duration of the project; in the case of primary schools this will be easier, but a relevant weighting will also need to be given to the JS schools, particularly as nearly 75% of our beneficiaries are based in these schools. This means that the learning cohort grades that will be tracked all the way through are PS 1- P6 and JSS 1. The transition cohort grades will be captured from the JSS schools, so mainly JSS 2-3 as these marginalised girls would be expected to transition to a post-JSS pathway by the end of the project interventions (year 3). To account for attrition throughout the project, a larger proportion of girls should be sampled in the earlier grades.

**Tracking the beneficiaries**

On tracking of beneficiaries, a beneficiary tracking tool (laminated cards with a barcode, photo and name of the beneficiary) will be distributed to the beneficiaries during the project’s verification phase. These cards will improve accuracy, and clear tracking of the beneficiaries and the support they receive. We would expect the evaluators to use this tracking tool when gathering data from the beneficiaries so that we can track them more accurately when it comes to the midline and endline. We would expect this tool to be used alongside the existing tracking process proposed by the evaluators which captures reliable information including unique IDs, addresses (with GPS) and identifying contact details of these beneficiaries , as an extra layer of ensuring we capture the same sample throughout. This will be particularly important for those girls that will be transitioning out and an appropriate process will need to be identified for in and out of school girls. The evaluators and the partners will work collectively to ensure the most appropriate questions are posed during the tracking process to identify the right beneficiaries.

5.2 Measuring outcomes

The *GATE-GEC* Theory of Change will be the analytical framework for the project evaluation. The project will aim to measure three core outcomes (learning, transition and sustainability). Improvement in literacy and numeracy results of the GEC cohort will be a measurement of success, including the completion and continued transition in and out of school.

To provide an overview, a cohort tracking tool will be implemented to track change at these key points. Project school data (on enrolment, attendance, completion, promotion, repetition and exam (NSPE, BECE, year-end) pass rates, by sex, age, disability status and grade) will be collected for all targeted schools during the course of the school year – exam results are usually issues three times in a school year – this will be identified and incorporated in the project monitoring plan. Verification data will also be gathered once exam results are published (August[[8]](#footnote-8)) to identify beneficiaries that will make a transition and those that will not, including those that may discontinue their education pathway. Alongside primary project school data, comparative secondary data will be collected and analysed on an annual basis which will allow us to compare the project results to other changes in district-level data and relative to other districts. Secondary data sources will include MEST GATE district-level data, the national School Census Report, and MICS surveys. Monitoring changes in District and Regional level data over time will allow us to compare the performance of girls in targeted schools relative to other districts.

**Learning - Improved Literacy and Numeracy**

Assessment scores will be captured during the three key evaluation points. Statistically significant improvement in literacy test scores (using adapted EGRA and SEGRA tests) compared to a counterfactual group (primary school & JSS). We aim to administer these tests to both marginalized girls and children with disabilities’. We will also use annual exam result data to ensure triangulation of the data.

For children with disabilities, the expectation would be that they are given more time to complete the tests, and the CBRVs and IEDO’s are available to support the process as agreed. We have to ensure that the level of support provided is enough without causing any bias to the results achieved. The external evaluator’s will need to identify ways to administer the tests to a sample of children with disabilities, drawing on their previous experience. It will also be useful to seek the guidance of the fund manager’s disabilities’ expert once a process has been agreed.

For this project, we will also look to capture end of term exam results on literacy and numeracy. These exams usually take place three times a year, so our aim would be to identify processes to capture this from the record cards shared with children, this will be dependent on whether the children have their report cards, but we can trial this and assess during the course of the 1st year.

Learning scores will be complemented with a mix of qualitative data through FGDs and KIIs exploring the perceptions of the beneficiaries, PVs, parents and other stakeholders on levels of performance, what contributes to improvement in performance or lack of.

**Transition**

Enrolment and completion rates of targeted girls and children with disabilities will be measured on an annual basis (enrolment in September, completion in July). Completion rates will be measured at Primary 6 and JSS 3. It will be important to recognize that transition will be defined differently across the cohort. It will be important for the evaluation to capture ways in which the cohort arrived at their decision, exploring if they experienced any persuasion and/or pressure, and how much free will they had in making their decisions. Particularly as we have limited literature and evidence on this, both nationally and from the GEC 1 project, understanding what successful transition means to our beneficiaries will be important during the baseline and as the project progresses. It will be particularly interesting to see what the JSS beneficiaries say, particularly as they will be expected to transition out of school during the project lifetime.

Some of the successful transition pathways that came out of the re-verification data from November 2017 include:

* Further education (Primary to Junior, and Junior to Secondary school, and beyond)
* Vocational training
* Employment (it will be useful to understand whether employment is in an unsafe environment, or are they being paid an appropriate wage.
* Become self-employed (start their own business) or continue the family business.
* Marriage (it will be important to understand whether they recognize getting married as a successful transition as this may be a cultural norm). It will also be important to understand what they are spending their time doing, as marriage is a state rather than an activity; for example are they employed, in education, working etc.
* The pathway of active citizenship will also be explored as to how much this is deemed a successful transition pathway for our beneficiaries. Advocacy and campaigning in the Sierra Leonean context are quite limited, and also female role models are rare, so it would be interesting to see if involvement and leadership in community related activities are of interest to our beneficiaries’ future aspirations. It will be interesting to see how this varies by gender and those affected by disability.

For children with disabilities, Handicap International highlighted the point that the education pathway is often the one that these children strive for, and during the course of the project, the biggest transition point and achievement for these children would be to get them out of PS and into JSS during the project lifetime. A small few may also move onto SSS – though there would only be a few that would achieve this during the project lifetime.

Cognisant of the sensitive nature of the issue we will use participatory methods in our ongoing qualitative monitoring tools to gauge the beneficiaries’ motivations, aspirations and perceptions of marriage, with a view to understand the different meanings that ‘successful transition’ has in different contexts. The nature of our questions around this topic will be informed by the consultants’ findings in the Household Survey. Our qualitative monitoring will also involve talking with boys and men to build an understanding of their own aspirations, expectations of girls and perceptions of marriage to build a broader picture of community attitudes. Qualitative data through the form of KIIs and FGDs will be used with the existing GEC cohort and those that have transitioned out (if we can successful retain contact with them – it will be important for the evaluators to recommend ways to retain contact once the cohort is outside of the school environment based on the baseline findings; these could include use of mobile technology and QR codes to track beneficiaries who have transitioned).

An important aspect of our evaluations will be to better understand the process that led to the decisions of this successful pathway, and whether they deem it successful. The household survey will need to include the relevant transition questions to ensure we can speak to what success means to our beneficiaries, and what impact the project has had on them in terms of making these life choices and decisions. It will also be important for the evaluators to understand how this differs for boys and girls, and children with disabilities.

During the evaluations, household surveys will be used to understand what transition means to our beneficiaries, and track the cohort’s transition throughout the schools and beyond.

The table below outlines the quantitative and qualitative tools to measure the outcomes in the project.

*Table 3: Outcomes for measurement*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Outcome** | **Level at which measurement will take place (e.g. household, school, study club)** | **Tool and mode of data collection** | **Rationale (why this is most appropriate approach for this output)** | **Frequency of data collection** |
| **Outcome Indicator 1 - Learning** | School | Learning assessment - Literacy School survey | Allows us to compare the results year on year to assess the cohort’s improvement and strengths/weaknesses in literacy knowledge | Baseline, midline and endline |
| Number of marginalised girls and children with disabilities supported by GEC with improved learning outcomes - **literacy.** |
| Number of marginalised girls and children with disabilities supported by GEC with improved learning outcomes - **numeracy.** | School | Learning assessment - Numeracy School survey | Allows us to compare the results year on year to assess their strengths and weaknesses in numeracy knowledge. |
| **Outcome Indicator 2 - Transition** | Household and community | HH survey  KIIs and FGDs | This allows us to determine where the cohort has transitioned to.Boys with improved transition will also be tracked as secondary beneficiaries. | Baseline, midline and endline |
| Number of marginalised girls and children with disabilities who have **transitioned** through key stages of education, training or employment (primary to lower secondary, lower secondary to upper secondary, training or employment) |
| **Outcome Indicator 3 – Sustainability** | School and household and system | Learning assessments and HH survey KIIs and FGDs with key stakeholders including beneficiaries, parents, teachers/LAs and government officials/other key educational actors School survey with head teachers | As per the guidelines the evaluator will score the level schools, household and system from 1-4 to assess the sustainability in the GEC-T at each evaluation.  At household level, the evaluators should look at the allocation of household funds on education and perceptions on education. At school level, look at skills set of the school staff, initiatives and actions taken by the schools to continue activities after the project lifetime.  On a system level, evaluators should look into MEST’s engagement and the initiatives/actions taken to continue supporting education activities for this cohort and beyond | Baseline, midline and endline |
| Project can demonstrate that the changes it has brought about which increase learning and transition through education cycles are **sustainable.** |

GATE-GEC’stheory of change is that if teaching and learning are more effective for all students, if beneficiaries have greater self-esteem and agency, if beneficiaries are transitioning to their chosen pathways, if households have greater economic capacity and if the consortium has increased capacity to collaborate with and influence nationally and internationally with and on behalf of girls and children with disabilities in Sierra Leone, then these girls and children with disabilities will achieve sustained, improved learning outcomes and transition from primary school to JSS and from JSS to post-JSS options.

There will be a mix of quantitative and qualitative tools and participatory methods used to capture evidence for each of the intermediate outcomes identified. Quantitative household surveys from a representative sample of marginalized GEC girls and children with disabilities will be employed. For the purposes of triangulation, it is important that both quantitative and qualitative research is conducted with boys at school level, male PVs, teachers, community members and chiefs as well as beneficiaries and female LAs, teachers and community members. We will also capture learning assessment data and, where possible, exam results from boys in both treatment and control schools in order to conduct a comparative assessment of the impact of the interventions on beneficiaries and also to endeavour to assess whether exposure to the programme in treatment schools has had any impact on boys.

There will be five intermediate outcomes to track the success of the GEC cohort over the project lifetime.

**Intermediate outcome 1: Attendance rates**

Beneficiaries are likely to be absent due to lack of fees, equipment or having to work to earn money. Therefore it is important that in year 1 and 2 of this project that bursaries are continued to be provided to the beneficiaries, and support is provided to their familiar in the form of VSLA’s to encourage them to save towards their child’s education so that they can support their child’s education in year 3 of the project and as they transition out. Increased household understanding and subsequent behaviour change around the importance of allowing beneficiaries to attend regularly is imperative to the improvement in attendance rates.

Attendance will be measured through a mix of on-going monitoring data captured throughout the project and it will be important for the evaluators to use this as part of their dataset. This will be done at a school level, and at the study group level. A mix of spot checks carried out by the evaluators (reviewing of registers in study group settings and the overall school, looking at attendance as well as exploring drop-out rates and reasons for drop outs). A head count will also be captured on the spot checks carried out by the evaluators in addition to numbers captured in the register to determine the accuracy of how data is captured. As it is unclear as to which schools have a management system, a part of the evaluations will be for evaluators to determine if attendance records are consistently kept across schools, and how these are managed. The option of how this will be gathered in control schools will be explored with the evaluators, as they are not incentives for these schools, we will need to determine ways that are practical, allow for the relevant results, and also allow for follow up in future evaluations. This will apply across all the outcomes measured.

Quantitative tools using the attendance records from general classes and specific study group session will allow us to determine an actual average. Quarterly study group monitoring includes questions around perceptions on attendance (distinctions between boys/girls/CWDs) and reasons for absenteeism will be posed to the children, parents, teachers, to gather their feedback on attendance - qualitative tool. Asking a range of stakeholders, also allows for a more triangulated measurement. Qualitative tools will also explore teachers’ understanding of the purpose of keeping accurate daily attendance records and attitudes towards school management more broadly. [[9]](#footnote-9)

A transition and sustainability tracking survey will be used to track beneficiaries who have left school through attendance register monitoring and verify with teachers/community leaders.

The QR tracking tool may also be used to track beneficiaries – this will be further explored as the project developed[[10]](#footnote-10). Qualitative tools including FGDs and KIIswith sample of girls and children with disabilities, parents of GEC-cohort will also be carried out to better understand what transition looks like and how they intend to progress. This will be undertaken on a bi-annual basis to take into account transition from JSS to SSS and time taken for exam results to be published.

**Intermediate outcome 2: Effective inclusive education teaching skills:** Increased skills and competencies of study group leaders, and resourcing and monitoring of study groups will result in increased learning outcomes. Evidence shows that structured pedagogy programmes have the largest and most consistent positive average effects on learning outcomes.[[11]](#footnote-11) Thus, a structured CPD approach (rather than ‘one-off’ teacher training) for PVs, LAs/STs. Combining structured and interactive training based on international good practice in supporting informal learning (years 1, 3), with ongoing user-led professional learning through peer support both at termly cluster meetings and through social media and with session-level technical support through regular visits from Education Officers and DDE inspectors. Training will include modules on gender sensitive approaches:

* Included will be professional ethics including teacher attendance and punctuality, as well as attendance recording
* All CPD activities will draw on examples in literacy and numeracy and the CPD course will complement the training through the DFID-funded SSEIP programme (JSS) or the EU funded primary programme. It will also impact beyond the direct beneficiary group as PVs transpose their skills beyond the study groups and into their classrooms

Pre and post training tools, in addition to 6 month follow-ups following the trainings will be undertaken throughout the course of the project. Monitoring of PVs, LAs/STs and beneficiaries will also be used through study group and tutorial (LAs) observations and study group monitoring and LA/STs self-assessment tools (record card on tablets) will be used to better understand their understanding, skills and use of inclusive learned centred pedagogy in the classroom. Stories of change will also be captured throughout the project to evidence effective practices in the school environment. For the LA/ST component, monitoring data captured by Practice Study Mentors (PSMs)[[12]](#footnote-12) will also be used to better understand the progression of the cohort in their school experience. Report cards from GEC cohort beneficiaries will also be captured where available to monitor results of the children throughout the project lifetime.

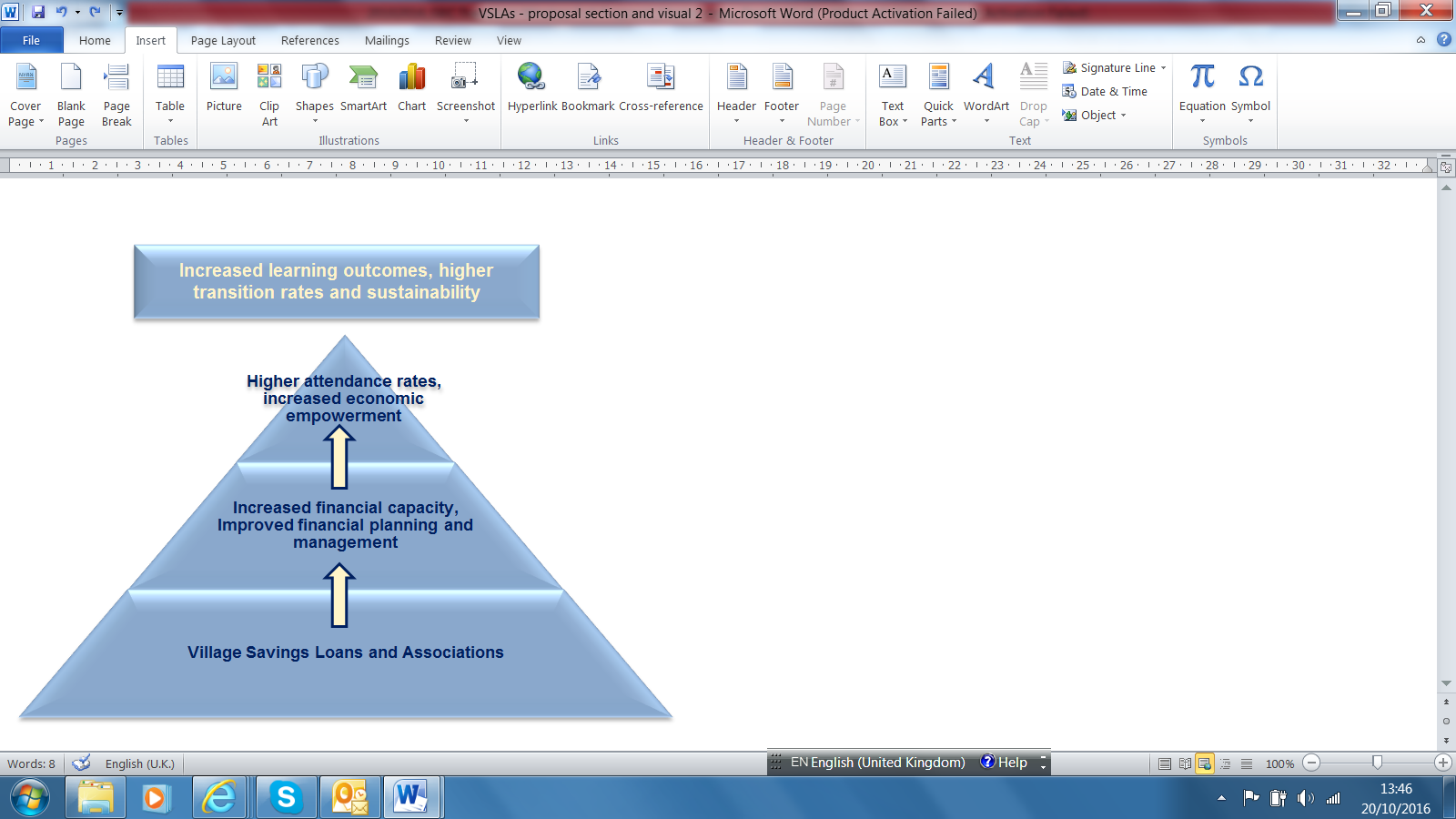
For the baseline, evaluators would use school surveys to understand what levels of trainings have been provided, and how the skills gathered are being used in schools. Household surveys to the beneficiaries and PVs will also explore the use of inclusive teaching practices in the classroom, and the effects of this on the child are learning. Additionally, evaluators would be expected to use a mix of FGDs and KIIs with PVs (teachers of study groups) to further explore some of the themes coming out from the HHS and school survey.

**Intermediate outcome 3: Greater self-esteem and confidence:**

The importance of a child’s voice to evoke change, and ensure the relevant accountability mechanisms are in place to allow a child’s voice to be heard, is a key part of this project. This outcome works on the basis that increased accountability, and an improvement in a child’s learning outcomes and positive perceptions of their learning experience felt by a child will ultimately link to a greater level of self-esteem and confidence. Self-esteem and confidence will be measured both through the HHS with the parents and beneficiaries, and qualitatively through FGDs/KIIs, with beneficiaries, parents, PVs. It will be useful to explore with the evaluators, the use of more tailored tools such as the girls’ empowerment star to enable a participatory and user-friendly method of gathering data, particularly with the younger cohort of girls in primary schools, and children with disabilities.

To better understand how safe, secure and included girls and children with disabilities feel in the schools environment, a mix of tools will be used including study groups monitoring and observations to beneficiaries, parents and PVs, and the inclusiveness monitoring tool to particularly assess the model schools on a quarterly basis. In addition the CPA will roll out the scorecarding process at the beginning of the term, and will gather data on the types of incidents and actions reported by SMCs in the schools. The CPA will also be responsible for developing an effective child protection referral system for the children and ensure this is adhered to by the teachers and SMCs. A mix of FGDs and KIIs will also be used with beneficiaries, parents, SMCs, CBRV (for children with disabilities) and teachers (and head teachers) to gather more contextual understanding of the types of issues and environment.

**Intermediate outcome 4: Increased economic empowerment:**

It will be important for the evaluators to understand this is a new component to the programme, and is heavily linked to the potential for long-term sustainability beyond the lifetime of the project.

The model here demonstrates how the VSLA and livelihoods component will contribute to the wider outcomes. Capturing feedback on VSLA data on i) savings; ii) expenditure; iii) impact on household income; iv) ability to plan household spending; v) ability to cope with shocks; vi) ability to cover educational costs will be imperative to understand how families have increased their economic circumstances and how this contributes to the children’s education and continued transition.

 As the project stops providing bursaries (year 3) and moves towards unconditional grants and VSLA financial management, the consortium will continue to advocate for children and in particular vulnerable groups to receive an education and the need for this to be prioritised particularly as the project comes to an end.

The field staff will be responsible for regular follow-up with the VSLA groups assigned to them, observing group meetings, and taking note of discussions and actions made. A quarterly VSLA monitoring questionnaire will be used with the targeted parents and groups to explore engagement and understanding of the VSLA and how it has provided support to them. Qualitative tools like KIIs and FGDs will also be undertaken with parents (targeted households) On a school level, it is anticipated that some of the children may have an insight into how finances are being run at home and therefore be able to provide some feedback (questions will need to be developed that support gathering this information and are not sensitive or intrusive). Therefore, beneficiaries of the targeted householders will be asked about their perceptions of financial planning at home. School records on payment of fees may also be gathered on an annual basis (mainly year 3 and 4) to verify whether the parents have paid for their child’s education.

**Intermediate outcome 5: Increased engagement with MEST officials and other education actors**

Engagement with government officials and other education actors will be imperative to the ongoing sustainability of the work for marginalised girls and children with disabilities to achieve positive educational attainment and transition successfully throughout their lives. Through a mix of having district MEST officials involved in monitoring visits to schools, district and national level working groups involving other education actors including the gate staff, learning events and dissemination of project findings and learning’s, we would hope to further develop our links.

Change will be measured through learning gained and shared through; consortium engagement in national and district level education events including conferences, seminars, working groups, networks and steering groups; positive advocacy and policy influencing on girls’ and inclusive education to which the consortium contributes. This will be triangulated through KIIs with stakeholders in the education sector (MEST, DFID, EU, UNICEF amongst others). Furthermore, a review of the minutes captured during working group meetings with MEST officials and other actors will determine actions agreed on further children’s education, and how these are being effected at a national and district level.

*Gathering data from Children with disabilities*

Due to the sensitive nature of working with children with disabilities and it being an important part of this project, it is important that the mechanisms outlined above are inclusive of children with disabilities. Evaluators will be required to have a clearer understanding through engaging with partners, particularly Handicap International, of the needs of this cohort, and ensure CBRVs are involved to support with linking with these children in the schools. It will also be imperative that enumerators are trained on inclusiveness ahead of the fieldwork phase.

The project will measure changes in relation to disabled children and the effectiveness of the CBR approach on a number of fronts. Through the household questionnaire, data will be collected on the attitudes of men, women, girls and boys (including some boys and girls with disabilities) to the value of education for children with disabilities. This will be strongly supported by the qualitative research. Focus group discussions include questions around attitudes to children with disabilities, their education, and the systems of support available for them. A focus group will also be held specifically with girls with disabilities. While the number of disabled girls interviewed in the household survey will likely be relatively low and will not give a statistically significant sample as a sub-group on its own, relevant questions, and the learning assessment, will be administered to a sample of disabled girls and boys supported by the project with the support of CBRVs.

The table below outlines the quantitative and qualitative tools proposed to measure the intermediate outcomes during the evaluations throughout the project.

*Table 4: Intermediate outcomes for measurement*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Outcome** | Level at which measurement will take place (e.g. household, school, study club) | Tool and mode of data collection  Please note: Baseline, midline and endline data collection tools will be used primarily. We would also encourage EE’s to look a at monitoring data will also be used in conjunction with evaluation data – this is included in this section for each IO. | Rationale (why this is most appropriate approach for this output) | Frequency of data collection |
| **Intermediate Outcome Indicator 1** | School | Baseline, midline and endline (Household survey with parents and children, School survey), attendance spot checks and Qualitative interviews: FGDs and KIIs with children, parents, teachers.  On-going project monitoring: Study group attendance tracking, attendance spot checks on school registers (monthly). Study group monitoring of beneficiaries and parents/caregivers. | School survey will allow for us to cross-check and validate findings around on-going attendance tracking/monitoring. | Baseline (2017), midline (2018) and endline (2019/2020) |
| Improvement in attendance of the GEC cohort in schools throughout the life of the project (disaggregate the data by gender, disability and type (severity) and age (grade).  Improvement in parents, caregivers and communities perceptions around girls and children with disabilities accessing education (disaggregated by gender and location).  % of the GEC cohort reporting increased confidence and self-esteem through PSS to JSS and post JSS (disaggregated by gender, disability and type (severity), age (grade) and geographical location.) |
|
|
|
| **Intermediate Outcome Indicator 2** | School, teacher training colleges (LAs) and household | Baseline, midline and endline (Learning assessments, Household survey with parents and children, School survey), classroom observations and Qualitative interviews: FGDs and KIIs with children, parents, teachers.  On-going monitoring data will also be used including:  Study group monitoring, FGDs and KIIs with children, parents, teachers (PVs), LAs and STs (that are involved in the study groups). Termly exam report cards and tracking these at relevant points post exams, classroom observations, pre and post training assessment with 6 month follow ups. LA/ST tools including self-assessments, LA termly adviser (head teacher) tool and end of unit tutor tools. Termly self-reflections on classroom practices, Termly classroom observation reports by Study and Practice Mentor (with specific look at inclusive education). In-school experience attendance monitoring. | Assess learning scores over three key points to deduce how the quality of teaching has impacted on these results. The KIIs and FGDs will highlight key strengths and weaknesses of support provided by teachers. The school survey with head teachers will also support with triangulation to give a broader picture. | Baseline (2017), midline (2018) and endline (2019/2020) |
| Improvement in teaching practices in gender sensitive learning centred pedagogy of targeted teaching (PVs) and teaching related (LA, STs) staff  % of the GEC cohort reporting improved perceptions of learning in literacy and numeracy (disaggregated by gender, disability and type (severity), age (grade) and geographical location.) |
|
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|
| **Intermediate Outcome Indicator 3** | School, Household | Baseline, midline and endline (Household survey with parents and children, School survey with girls), classroom observations and Qualitative interviews: FGDs and KIIs with children, parents, teachers.  On-going project monitoring including scorecarding data and study group monitoring can also be used. | Evaluate how the projects activities incl. study groups and scorecarding interventions have developed the cohort’s self-esteem and confidence to make choices in schools, and as they transition throughout.  KIIs and FGDs will draw out the reasons for successful transition of the cohort. | Baseline (2017), midline (2018) and endline (2019/2020) |
| Greater self-esteem and confidence of the GEC cohort to participate in their education, and make choices around their transition throughout key education points, training or employment.  % of marginalised girls and children with disabilities in the GEC cohort reporting improved perceptions of feeling safe, secure and included in the learning environment and school facilities accessible post-school adaptation (model schools) (disaggregated by gender, disability and type (severity), age (grade) and geographical location. |
|
|
|
|
| **Intermediate Outcome Indicator 4** | Community and Household | Baseline, midline and endline (Household survey with parents and children), and Qualitative interviews: FGDs and KIIs with parents,  VSLA groups including KIIs with individual group members.  Re-verification data provides details on what household’s cover in terms of outgoings. | Evaluate how the projects VSLA component has supported families financially and levels of contribution to education and supporting child's education. FGDs and KIIs will capture the perceptions of financial literacy, planning and management. | Baseline (2017), midline (2018) and endline (2019/2020) |
| % of targeted households of the GEC cohort reporting increased confidence and skills in financial planning and management (disaggregated by gender, age, geographical location)  % of targeted households cover XX% of their child's direct educational costs (disaggregated by gender, disability and type (severity), age (grade) and geographical location.) |
|
|
|
|
| **Intermediate Outcome Indicator 5** | System (community) | Baseline, midline and endline Qual interviews: KIIs and FGDs with key stakeholders including government officials/other key educational actors Interviews with consortium partners and other education stakeholders closely worked.  On-going monitoring data including consortium log , minutes from working groups and meetings, position papers and evidence of ‘event’ (as defined under output 4). |  | Baseline (2017), midline (2018) and endline (2019/2020) |
| # of actions affected by MEST officials at national and district level on girls and children with disabilities education  # of actions affected by MEST officials at national and district level on girls and children with disabilities education |

5.2.1 Sustainability

Sustainability is at the heart of GATE-GEC. Having supported the GEC beneficiaries since 2013, the GATE-GEC project will continue to overcome barriers to access, strengthen quality education to increase learning outcomes, and support with the successful transition into further education, tertiary or work, through using existing structures to roll out activities with a gradual decrease of financial dependency. We will measure the sustainability of our project at three levels - school, community and systematic - through the use of the sustainability scorecard. Sustainability will be measured at each evaluation point using a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 being minimal change and 4 being extensive and more established change. The external evaluators will need to identify the degree of sustainability achieved by the project activities at school, community and systematic level.

The GATE-GEC project will see a gradual reduction in support over the three years of direct intervention allowing the time necessary to bring the cohort of girls and children with disabilities to their transition point (BECE) while also reducing dependency on external interventions. This time is reduced to 3 years (beneficiaries currently enrolled in JSS 1 will pass the BECE in July 2019). After the third year, activities will be phased out and a skeletal staffing structure will remain for 1 year of light tracking and monitoring. The additional year of implementation (April 2020 – March 2021) will involve no direct interventions (excluding study groups that will be run until the end of the school term so not to affect the beneficiaries’ learning and transition), allowing however for a low level monitoring and tracking of the cohort of girls and children with disabilities until the end of year 4. This will allow the consortium to continue tracking the GEC-T beneficiaries after the completion of project activities beyond the life of the project and monitor how the project has sustainably impacted on their lives.

To sustainably impact on marginalised girls’ and children with disabilities’ ability to reach their learning potential and to transition through primary school, into junior secondary school and beyond, GATE-GEC at the **school level** will focus on reducing external dependency by phasing out school bursaries, providing livelihood grants and setting up Village Savings and Loans schemes to further empower the families to send their children, in particular girls and children with disabilities to school. On a school level, the expectation is that the children are actively learning in a positive learning environment, valuing the importance of education and making informed decisions as they transition in and out of schools; and teachers (PVs), LAs and STs have the relevant resource and capacity to support the children and provide quality teaching, effectively demonstrating the use of learner-centred pedagogy. Continuous professional development for PVs and training provided to LAs will entrench improved teaching practices which will continue to support learning outcomes for children beyond the lifetime of the project. The scorecarding component will also strengthen reporting and referral processes which can be sustained after the project and will improve accountability at school level. Furthermore, we expect to monitor the continued success of HI’s CBRV model (where volunteers spare their own time and manage a caseload to support children with disabilities with little financial reward) which has shown sustainability in its own merit in the previous GEC. We aim to measure the continued success of this model through the GATE GEC project. Measurement at the school level will be gathered through the school survey with the head teachers, and qualitative interviews and group discussions with children, teachers and CBRVs. The IOs that will demonstrate school level changes include the continual attendance, retention and successful transition rates of the girls and children with disabilities throughout school and beyond, as well as the increased level of knowledge and skills of the teachers to increase children’s motivations, self-esteem and confidence to effectively learn and successfully transition forward.

At a **community level**, the project will look to identify and make use of local structures alongside advocacy, using a rights based approach to providing a quality environment for learning. Community sensitisation and awareness raising, as well as engaging the community in advocacy and policy campaigns on the importance and impact of positive education will be integral. At the community level, the project will look to measure sustainability through how families and community members demonstrate their commitment to children’s education and transition through school and out of school, how the parents/caregivers fund their child’s education once bursaries are phased out; and of those involved, their engagement and involvement in the VSLA component and how this has directly contributed to the child’s education. Household surveys with parents/caregivers and children, and qualitative interviews and groups discussions with parents/caregivers of GEC beneficiaries and non-GEC beneficiaries (to provide a comparator) involved in the VLSA groups will allow the project to determine the degree of sustainability on a community level. The IOs that will demonstrate community level changes include the increased economic empowerment of the families to contribute towards their child’s education both financially and behaviourally. Financial support will be tracked in year 3 and 4 (once the bursaries have been phased out). Parents prioritising finances (through free choice) towards their child’s education shows a positive choice and demonstrates their support to education in the household. In addition, increased self-esteem and confidence of the child may also demonstrate the positive impact of having a family and community support their choice to go to school and progress.

At the **system level**, regular engagement with the government officials and other educational actors will be imperative. Through regular working groups to identify actions to take forward collectively and the dissemination of information and learning’s from the project, the expectation is that the relevant resource will be allocated to continue support provided to girls and children with disabilities’ education. To measure the impact on a systematic level, qualitative interviews including focus group discussions and key informant interview with MEST officials, Unicef (GATE) and other educational actors (INGOs) that influence and play a role in advancing children’s education will be important. As engagement was relatively limited in the original GEC, we want to ensure we capture how the engagement evolves in the project as it is a core component for our sustainability plan. A mix of questions will be posed to the MEST officials including their understanding of the GATE GEC and the consortium’s role moving girls and children with disabilities education further, and what they would propose to develop it further, in addition to what lessons they may take on board after the project ends to continue the support.

In addition, a review of on-going monitoring data gathered from working groups and other actions taken by officials may add value to the evaluation findings. It is important to note that engagement with MEST officials is limited at present; therefore considerable work will need to be undertaken over the course of the first year to address levels of sustainability at the midline stage. The project has built in mechanisms though running working groups and having the education technical specialist in country sit in the MEST offices at points in the week.

To see sustained learning post-GEC will require working hand-in-hand with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST), at both national and District level, full collaboration, involvement and a level of ownership and responsibility from communities (with a reduced reliance of external agencies) reflecting local needs and aspirations, and ensuring consistency with the local and national education approach.  The GATE-GEC Project will also seek to share key messages to as early as possible to prevent further drop-outs due to a lack of continued support.

*Table 5: Sustainability outcomes for measurement*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Sustainability Level** | **Where will the measurement take place?** | **What source of measurement/verification will you use?** | **Rationale (clarify how you will use your qual analysis to support your chosen indicators)** | **Frequency of data collection** |
| **School Level** | School level | FGDs and KIIs with beneficiaries (disaggregated by gender and disability), teachers/LA/STs and head teachers.  School survey with head teachers. | The intention is to see increased perception and prioritization of girls’ and children with disabilities’ education, through our VSLA/livelihoods component: parents reporting awareness, and allocating financial resource, to progress girls’ and children with disabilities’ educational rights, right to protection and right to participate in life choices. On the teaching side, it will allow us to identify example and successful stories of change with effective learning centred pedagogy, and effective use of learner-centered pedagogy. | Baseline, Midline and Endline |
|  |
| **Community Level** | Household | Household survey with parents and other community members  KIIs and FGDs with parents and beneficiaries (disaggregated by gender and disability) | This will allow us to determine how families and communities prioritise education, and their perceptions on education and transition. | Baseline, Midline and Endline |
|  |
| **System Level** | Local and national MEST officials and other educational actors. | KII and FGDs of MEST officials, local and national level, consortium partners, other educational stakeholders including Unicef, DFID  Desk research using the on-going monitoring data and records from on-going meetings/working groups and events | This will allow us to explore ways, in which capacity of government (local and national) officials has been developed, examples where they have prioritised or intend to prioritise education for the girls and children with disabilities. The intension is to see an increased capacity of MEST to prioritize, monitor and support vulnerable girls’ and children with disabilities’ education.  The Project will document what issues have been acted upon at the district and national levels and who has been involved in the process. | Baseline, Midline and Endline. |
|  |

5.3 Ethical protocols

### 5.3.1 Child protection

This project design is cognisant of the challenges and learnings from the current GEC 1 project. Learning, transition and safety issues can pose a risk for girls in school and the community as the process involves challenging and changing norms and practices that serve as barriers towards achieving change for girls and children with disabilities. Where there is need to coordinate activities with community based child protection mechanisms to influence community perceptions and attitudes on girls participation, this will be done. Drawing on learnings from GEC 1 regarding the potential inadvertently or otherwise to harm girls and children with disabilities, the consortium will increase the focus on safeguarding and child protection, including a thorough participatory risk assessment in the inception phase of any risks, vulnerabilities and support needs that may have been brought about by the EVD outbreak. In line with the new *Do No Harm (DNH)* policy developed by the FM and in adherence to international best practice (DFID and OECD guidance), the Child Protection and Accountability Advisor will be responsible for monitoring the mainstreaming of child protection and any protection risks within and outside the project. *GATE-GEC* aims to: i) ensure reporting is increased through provision of information on available services for children in the community and use referral mechanisms to ensure perpetrators will be held accountable through the appropriate legal authorities; ii) mainstream child rights and child protection in education and education messages in a sensitive and child friendly manner to reduce risk of harm to children; iii) at Freetown level, provide an analysis per district to the MSWGCA.

Taking into account that development interventions can have positive as well as negative impacts, the evaluators will need to engage with the Child Protection and Accountability Adviser, who will ensure that the project team staff understand and adhere to Plan International’s Global Child Protection Policy and implementation standards on *Keeping* C*hildren Safe.* Consortium partners will also be asked to sign and adhere to Plan International’s Global Child Protection Policy. Child protection training will be incorporated into staff inductions while the risk assessment will be carried out to ensure that staff, project volunteers and community members/groups have a clear understanding of project expectations. Regular follow ups with these groups will take place to address sensitive issues around barriers which children face in reporting mechanisms with special attention to children with disabilities. Such barriers include communication difficulties where a child has a speech or hearing impairment and finds reporting difficult; children with a visual impairment who may not be able to report to the same level of observational detail. Training will address potential prejudice including not believing a child with a disability or not giving them credibility; or that children with a disability have a lesser value; as well as addressing cultural issues including certain harmful traditional beliefs around disability. A component of the inclusive education teacher training addresses punishment and discipline as the prevalence of corporal punishment is high. Each of these stakeholders will ensure children are not exposed to further harm during service delivery and will jointly create a link of reporting and referral pathways. Child protection incidents/alerts will come from within schools from the children in clubs, the teachers in charge or from the community based structures and local education administrations. Annual reports will be provided to the MSWGCA at central level.

Partners, schools and key community decision makers for this project will have specific attention on children with increased vulnerabilities such as the children physically challenged, girls who might have been exposed to sexual abuse, and girls who are home carers. The consortium will seek to identify existing structures to build upon when dealing with case management. For example child welfare committee at community level must be engaged in activities and the Family Support Units who sit within the police must be involved at district level. The consortium will also conduct a review of what other INGO/NGOs/CSOs are doing to build capacity of the child welfare committees to who is operating in the district, and link with them where possible, to ensure collaborative working and effective use of resources.

In addition, during the MEST joint monitoring visits the child welfare committee will also attend and focus on child protection issues, to ensure relevant processes and action plans are being developed to tackle issues that have arisen, with the intention that MEST, CWC and field staff can all learn from each other during this process.

### 5.3.2 Ethics

Standard research ethics will be adhered to during the monitoring and evaluation activities during the lifetime of this project. In any research that deals with vulnerable or marginalized populations, it is imperative to pay close attention to the potential to do harm through asking questions or eliciting conversation. The research team will follow ethical guidelines as prescribed by the British Sociological Association. The team will be acutely aware of the need to obtain vocal informed consent from EVERY participant in the study; each participant will be told that his/her name will not be used in any project documents without their explicit permission; pseudonyms will be used in any narratives, and that we will give a unique ID to each participant, which will be linked to their names but those names will be kept separately in a password protected document. Where children are involved the questions will be tailored to ensure they are appropriate for children, by the Child Protection and Accountability Adviser reviewing all tools prior to testing. The importance of us keeping track of their individual progress will be explained to them such that they understand its import and can give informed consent. Other factors that will be taken into account include:

* If, at any point in a conversation, it appears that the participant no longer wants to speak, then it is imperative that the researcher a) can identify this easily and b) stop the research immediately. The participant should never be coerced to take part in the first place or to ‘keep answering’ while taking part.
* Certain questions might deal with sensitive topics; therefore it is important that the researcher, while obtaining informed consent, explain the types of questions that will be asked on the survey, and assure the participant that a) his/her answers will remain totally anonymous (if it will be) and b) that he/she can choose to not answer a question if he/she chooses; c) he/she can stop the interview at any point without question.
* In light with the bullet above, it will also be important that only females (where feasible) conduct interviews with girls, especially in cases where sensitive information is being discussed. The team will consist of males and females who will conduct household questionnaires; however, for the interviews with girls, one or two females on the team will be conducting only interviews with girls which are much shorter; therefore, they can visit houses specifically for these interviews.

External Consultant(s) must respect the rights and dignity of participants as well as comply with relevant ethical standards. During field work the Consultant(s) will follow Plan International Sierra Leone’s child protection guidelines. The Consultant(s) will be briefed on these before the assignment. It will also be important that the donor and fund manager uphold these ethics as a minimum standard when they are undertaking their own baseline in country. Since they will be considered a ‘project associate’ of Plan’s during this time, it will also be required that Plan’s Child Protection Policy, is signed by anyone visiting our project sites and communities for the purposes of this project.

6. Sampling framework

***Important note:*** The sample for the baseline was drawn from the re-verification data uploaded to the data collection system (KoboCollect) as of 13th November 2017. There were a total of 5585 beneficiaries at this point. Re-verification continues to take place in our project as some beneficiaries are yet to return to school, and will continue until the end of the 1st school term (mid-December 2017). We expect to have a final re-verification list by early January 2018 which will be used for the midline and endline evaluations. All the tables in this section and for the baseline have been based on the re-verification data outlined above. This MEL framework will also be updated once we have the final re-verification data.

6.1 Target groups

The GATE-GEC project will continue to support the cohort of beneficiaries identified in the GEC-1 project. This involves disadvantaged and marginalised girls (these girls are from the remotest and most rural parts of the districts) and children with disabilities (with varying types of disabilities as outlined by the Washington group survey) in approx. 240[[13]](#footnote-13) primary schools (PS) and 187 junior secondary schools (JSS) in Kailahun, Kenema, Kono, Moyamba, Port Loko and Karene districts of Sierra Leone. The table below outlines the number of girls and children with disabilities enrolled and re-verified as part of the 2017 re-verification process.

*Table 6: Breakdown of the GATE GEC cohort*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marginalised sub-group | # GEC girls beneficiaries targeted through project interventions | # boys reached through project interventions | Description of group needs and proposed activities that cater specifically to these needs |
| **Marginalised girls in rural/remote locations** | 4104 | N/A | This sub-group will have access to all the interventions offered by the GATE GEC programme including receiving bursaries, attending study groups, a sample of this group’s parents will be a part of the VSLA groups (a new intervention). We will work in rural areas and every intervention has been designed with this in mind. For example the timings of study groups allow for the fact that children will have to walk some way home after they have finished so do not run too late. Similarly, the bursary distribution takes up significant time due to the distance between schools and therefore care is being taken to learn from the delays during the first GEC to leave adequate time for this programme’s distribution. |
| **Children with disabilities** (see breakdown of types of disabilities in table 9) | 726 | 755 | The project also supports children with disabilities through the interventions outlined above (bursaries, study groups, VSLAs), as well as additional interventions as identified through our valued consortium partner, Handicap International.  Children with disabilities are given access to proven inclusive education interventions that have been successful during the first GEC. The Inclusive Education component addresses inclusion mainstreaming and disability specific needs including community awareness (stigma and attitudinal barriers), informal parental / caregiver guidance through Community Based Rehabilitation Volunteers; assistive devices and school adaptation (environmental barriers); teacher capacity and learning aids (institutional barriers) |
| **Total** | **4830** | **755** |  |

*Table 7: District-level stratification*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| District | # of intervention schools (JSS) | # of intervention schools (PS) | Total # of PS and JSS schools | % of intervention schools per district |
| Kailahun | 34 | 26 | 60 | 14 |
| Karene | 11 | 11 | 22 | 5 |
| Kenema | 29 | 37 | 66 | 15 |
| Kono | 29 | 51 | 80 | 19 |
| Moyamba | 41 | 54 | 95 | 22 |
| Port Loko | 43 | 61 | 104 | 24 |
| Total | 187 | 240 | 427 | 100% |

Table 8 below provides a further breakdown of the number of beneficiaries enrolled per grade across PS and JSS. It will be important for the evaluators to understand that although there are a larger number of PS schools, the number of beneficiaries in our project is largely concentrated in JSS schools. Almost two thirds of the beneficiaries verified (see table 9 below) are in JSS schools, with the largest population in JSS 2.

*Table 8****:*** Overall *GEC project intervention population of each targeted district by school level*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Total number of beneficiaries | % of beneficiaries per grade |
| P 1 | 112 | 2 |
| P 2 | 195 | 4 |
| P 3 | 234 | 4 |
| P 4 | 237 | 4 |
| P 5 | 257 | 5 |
| P 6 | 196 | 4 |
| JSS 1 | 655 | 12 |
| JSS 2 | 1609 | 29 |
| JSS 3 | 2049 | 37 |

The table below outlines the number of marginalised girls and children with disabilities in the GEC cohort. The marginalised girls will form a part of the learning sample for the PbR purposes, as we will be able to identify a control group for them. Children with disabilities will not form a part of the learning sample (for PbR purposes) due to the difficulty in identifying a control group for this group (see section 6.2 for further details). However, as the children with disabilities are key to this project, the project will still need learning assessments to be undertaken with a sub-set of this group in both JSS and PS.

*Table 9: Marginalised girls across GEC cohort[[14]](#footnote-14)*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Type of disability | Marginalised girls | Children with disabilities |
| Primary Schools |  | 1231 |
| Junior Secondary Schools | 4063 | 250 |

Table 10 below provides an idea of the number and types of disabilities in the GEC cohort (based on the verification data from March 2016[[15]](#footnote-15)). These will be re-verified in September/October 2017, and it has been found that in some cases where the child may have deemed a disability during the GEC 1 project, that this may be rectified for example children that may have experienced eye problems, but this was due to conjunctivitis for example, so it’s important that the evaluators are aware of some of these changes – though we do not expect them to be high.

*Table 10: Types of disabilities across GEC cohort[[16]](#footnote-16)*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Type of disability | Number of children | % of children[[17]](#footnote-17) |
| Physical | 515 | 26 |
| Hearing | 485 | 24 |
| Visual | 555 | 28 |
| Intellectual | 244 | 12 |
| Speech | 76 | 4 |
| Epileptic | 22 | 1 |
| Multiple (combination of any of the above) | 120 | 6 |

**Sample selection and construction of the sample frame**

Two separate samples are described in this section. The secondary school sample is used to measure the effects of the intervention by comparing a treatment and control group, and is the main focus of the baseline research (table 11). A separate, smaller sample consisting solely of primary school children with disabilities is described but exists primarily for descriptive, not evaluative, purposes.

### Main Sample: Secondary level students

The sample was designed to be representative of secondary level beneficiaries and schools participating in GATE-GEC. The treatment population is described below.

*Table 11*: Secondary school sample

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| District | # of intervention schools (JSS) | % of intervention schools per district |
| Port Loko | 37 | 21% |
| Kenema | 28 | 16% |
| Kono | 29 | 16% |
| Kailahun | 33 | 19% |
| Moyamba | 40 | 22% |
| Karene | 11 | 6% |
| **Total** | **178** |  |

The literacy and numeracy surveys will be directed to the secondary level students. Once the sample has been preselected using programme verification data, disability type/status of beneficiaries (assessed during verification) will be analysed to facilitate delivery of the assessments. To measure differences in learning, a sample of students will take literacy and numeracy assessments (SeGRA/SeGMA) at the baseline, midline, and endline.

**Household Surveys**

As a joint sampling approach is being used for all quantitative sampling, students that undertake the learning assessments and school-level surveys will be members of the households that comprise the household survey data. Selection will first take place at the school level, and then by students. The household heads or caretakers of participating students will be visited after the school portions of the baseline data collection are completed. In each instance, students will be asked for information on their household location, and enumerators will visit houses subsequently. GPS locations will be saved during these visits to facilitate re-identification of households and individuals for the midline and endline data collection.

### Sample Stratification

#### Schools

The number of schools has been stratified to represent the distribution of districts. The re-verification school data has been used to calculate the number of programme schools in each district. The number of schools (and, given equal cluster sizes, the number of students) selected in each district has been chosen to reflect the proportion of students in each district (see table). In Karene, Kono, Moyamba, and Port Loko, the distributions of Junior Secondary Schools are evenly split. In Kailahun, there are not enough control schools in the district to have an even number. To compensate, the balance of treatment and control schools is balanced with the neighbouring (and demographically similar) district of Kenema.

Table 12: Schools stratification against districts

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **District** | **Beneficiaries** | **Treat JSS** | **Control JSS** | **Sample Dist.** |
| Kailahun | 13.7% | 8 | 6 | 13.9% |
| Kenema | 12.7% | 7 | 10 | 12.0% |
| Kono | 12.3% | 7 | 7 | 12.0% |
| Moyamba | 26% | 15 | 15 | 25.9% |
| Port Loko/Karene | 27.6% | 20 | 20 | 28.7% |

#### Children with Disabilities

Secondary student beneficiaries include marginalized girls and students with disabilities. Children with disabilities will be stratified for in the treatment population, because beneficiary records contain information about children with disability. From the reverification data, six percent of secondary school beneficiaries report having a disability, which approximates typical official estimates of disability within the general population. The treatment group will be stratified to represent the beneficiary sample. There are no data identifying children with disabilities in the general population; the only method to select them in the control sample would be to ask at schools. To avoid stigmatizing children with disabilities not in the program by specially selecting them in front of their peers, the control sample will include children with disability as they are incidentally selected randomly to be part of the sample.

*Table 13: Children with disabilities in JSS*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Children with a Disability | | | |
|  | No | Yes | % |
| JSS1 | 529 | 126 | 15% |
| JSS2 | 1526 | 83 | 37% |
| JSS3 | 2008 | 41 | 48% |
|  | 94% | 6% |  |

#### Grade

The distributions of beneficiary students by grade are described in the table below. Two features of the outcome indicators suggested deviating from selection of a strictly representative sample from each grade:

* Firstly, gains in learning outcomes from secondary students with disabilities are excluded from the key average learning gains indicator.
* Secondly, two data points are required to measure learning gains: one assessment at baseline, and another later. Students in JSS3 will contribute to learning gains measurement in that they will typically graduate at the end of the baseline year. However, they are useful for understanding transitions and developing benchmarks for JSS2.

*Table 14: Distribution of beneficiary students by grade*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Grade** | **Count** | **Beneficiary %** |
| JSS1 | 655 | 15% |
| JSS2 | 1,609 | 37% |
| JSS3 | 2,049 | 48% |

Because of these reasons, the original MEL plan proposed a more purposeful sampling by grade. The table below includes the intended proportions (left) and the predicted proportions (right). Other values are based on the freedom to stratify between grade levels.

*Table 15: Proportions of sample design by grade*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Design Ctrl** | **Design Treat** | **Actual Design** | **Actual Treat** |
| JSS1 | 40% | 40% | 45% | 45% |
| JSS2 | 30% | 25% | 35% | 35% |
| JSS3 | 20% | 20% | 20% | 20% |
| JSS+ | 0% | 0.5 | 0 | 0 |

### Secondary sample: Primary Students with Disabilities

Apart from the secondary student sample, an ancillary sample of primary school beneficiaries will be surveyed and assessed for descriptive purposes. The almost exclusive focus of interventions in primary schools is supporting children with disabilities. The sample will only include children with disabilities that are beneficiaries of the project -- there will be no control group. Instead, improvements in learning outcomes will strictly be compared for the individual students over time. All members of the sample will complete the primary learning assessments. A total of 250 students will be interviewed out of the total of the 1,231 primary beneficiaries in the program. While the sample will comprise 20 percent of the total population, students in the sample will be selected without replacement, so there is no risk of interviewing the same student multiple times.

The primary level sample will be stratified by district and gender. No control schools will be selected. During the learning assessments, students will be provided with assistive learning aids, such as large print materials.

*Table 16: Primary School Beneficiaries by district and sample*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Beneficiaries | | Sample | | |
| District | # | % | # | % |
| Kailahun | 102 | 8% | 20 | 8% |
| Karene | 65 | 5% | 10 | 4% |
| Kenema | 170 | 14% | 30 | 12% |
| Kono | 154 | 13% | 30 | 12% |
| Moyamba | 360 | 29% | 70 | 28% |
| Port Loko | 380 | 31% | 80 | 32% |
| Total | 1,231 |  | 250 |  |

Table 17: Baseline: Primary School sample beneficiaries by Grade

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | | |
|  | Girls | Boys | % |
| P1 | 68 | 44 | 9% |
| P2 | 91 | 104 | 16% |
| P3 | 114 | 120 | 19% |
| P4 | 124 | 113 | 19% |
| P5 | 112 | 145 | 21% |
| P6 | 88 | 108 | 16% |
|  | (48%) 597 | (52%) 634 |  |

### Specific Sampling Procedures (per data collection tool)

#### Classroom Observation Surveys/School Data Sheet

One classroom observation will take place in all schools to be sampled for the intervention and control cohorts. One of each of these surveys will be conducted per sample school. The specific class to be observed will be selected on the basis of the PV presence. If multiple options are available (either multiple PVs per school, or PVs teaching multiple classes), then the survey team will strive to ensure a good representation of the grades covered at the schools by selecting a different grade on each day of surveying.

##### Selection of Students

In each school, enumerators will conduct a specific number of student assessments and surveys by gender, grade, and treatment/control selection. Students in the treatment group will be randomly pre-selected using GATE-GEC verification data. Students in the control group will be selected by taking each class list and assigning a specific number to each student, until the required number of students by gender and grade are fulfilled. Before beginning the survey/assessment period, the control group will be checked to ensure selected students are in attendance and checked against the school list of GATE-GEC beneficiaries. In cases where students are not in attendance, alternate students will be chosen.

The same students will undertake the learning assessments and student surveys. Importantly, specific identifying details of participating girls will be captured in order to match baseline survey participants at midline/endline. For GATE-GEC participants, this will entail both their personal details (name, age/DoB, household GPS location) and the unique identifier assigned to them by GATE-GEC. For non-beneficiaries, personal details will be recorded and verified via school records in order to re-identify them at a later stage. A unique identifier will be assigned to non-beneficiaries to link subsequent data collected as well.

##### Selection of Households

Household surveys will be carried out at directly at homes. Families will be recruited from the school population undertaking the learning assessments, as part of the joint sampling approach. The households surveyed will be those from which the students selected for the learning assessments are from.

The research team will conduct the Learning Assessment, Student School Survey and the ‘Girl’ section of the household survey directly with these individuals in the school context, obtain the address/location of their home, and subsequently visit their household for follow up interviews. Further details are provided under the *Data Collection Process* section below.

6.2 Control groups / Counterfactual scenario

In order to best measure the programme’s effects, research will be conducted with control groups that will not receive the treatment of Plan’s programme, and will also be outside of the intervention area for similar programs run by DFID. Using a quasi-experimental design (implementing the same pre-tests and questionnaires to both control and intervention girls throughout the various stages of data collection including baseline), we will collect data in communities with similar demographic, geographic, socioeconomic and cultural features to those of our intervention communities. These will ideally be within the six intervention districts, but this is dependent upon the project’s actual reach with JSS and PS (i.e. if any of these schools will be outside the project’s reach).

Finding sufficient control schools for the collection of school level data has presented a challenge and a risk of contamination in the past particularly in relation to JSS school, for example in the district of Kailahun, Plan and the partners will be working in 95% of eligible JSS schools, drastically reducing the number of control schools outside of this. The evaluators will therefore need to consider using control schools from a neighbouring district. It will also be important for the evaluators to identify a number of control schools and associated communities that are geographically distant enough from intervention areas, and this may prove difficult as there are not a great deal to choose from.

To overcome the challenges of identifying suitable control clusters within Sierra Leone control sites will be selected at two levels: control schools and control communities. Control schools will be identified in intervention areas that meet the same selection criteria as intervention schools but which have not been selected for project activities. Numbers will vary between districts. These schools will be located in areas close to intervention schools, and at the Primary level will likely be feeder schools for intervention JSS. This makes them unsuitable as sites for the household survey, as at the household level there will likely be spill-over and contamination with other schools located close by. Data collected from control schools will be on enrolment and learning outcomes only. This will allow us to increase the effective sample size for the control group relating to outcome indicators on enrolment, retention and learning, but not for indicators relating to changes in attitudes and behaviours at the household/community level.

Respondents will be randomly selected using the same method as that for the intervention group and clusters will be the same size and fulfil the same quotas; the same questionnaires and assessments will be used. While the data collected form control groups will not have the same reliability as that collected from intervention groups, because this approach selects representative respondents at random, it means that the results of each data unit gathered can be favourably compared between the experimental group and the control group. The priority in this sampling strategy is put on measuring learning outcomes. The school level control will not provide a larger counterfactual for the household questionnaire administered at the village level. However, this is counter-balanced to some extent as key indicators measured through the household survey (such as changes in attitudes and behaviours, some based on binary ‘yes’ or ‘no’ questions) expect to see a larger effect size.

For the baseline, identifying appropriate comparison schools and students was challenging as the only data obtainable to determine stratification was a list of schools from the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology denoting their name, level, and community in which they are located. To compensate for a lack of additional information (# of students, demographic information etc.), control schools were randomly selected (using the stratification methods described below) to populate a master sample list. Separately, the research team developed school selection criteria, largely based on the criteria applied by GEC-1 to select beneficiary schools (location, marginalisation, presence of girls in school), but also including criteria to limit spillover effects. The master sample lists and criteria were sent to programme implementation staff in district offices, with instructions to identify listed schools on the basis of their direct knowledge of the districts that did not meet the selection criteria. This feedback will be used to eliminate candidates and thus modify the list to more accurately reflect programme schools.

6.3 Cohort tracking

At the baseline evaluation the cohorts will be selected from the schools and during subsequent evaluations, the cohorts will either be identified at the household level if they have transitioned out or at the school level.

Treatment beneficiaries and schools are subject to the project’s thorough tracking tools, which are linked to provision of interventions. They link beneficiaries to schools, contain geotracking of the schools, and contain information demographic and contact information for the families.

Comparison (control) schools and students will be assigned requisite identification codes, and similar demographic and contact information will be acquired. Enumerators will collect the GPS coordinates of all households when they are visited for household surveys.

6.3.1 Learning cohort

Over the 4 year project period (taking into account that there will be no interventions taking place in year 4), the table below demonstrates the grades beneficiaries will be in as they move from primary to secondary schools and beyond. It will be important to use the girls that are in the lower grades (highlighted in orange) to ensure we track girls that remain in school over the duration of the project to track their learning outcomes throughout the school years.

It is proposed for the learning cohort, that the largest sample be drawn from JSS 1 compared as the expectation would be that these beneficiaries remain in the school for a longer duration of the project period. Smaller proportions will then be drawn from the higher grade, JSS 2 and JSS3 as they would be expected to leave between the baseline and endline stage. It is also important to note that this cohort has to be representative of the grades of the overall beneficiary population, and as outlined previously the larger concentration of our beneficiaries are in JSS schools, the sample will largely be drawn from JSS rather than primary grades – particularly as the primary grades will have a majority of children with disabilities and they will not form a part of the sample as a relevant control group will be difficult to identify (as described in section 6.2). A slightly smaller sample will be based on P6 for those marginalised girls that may repeat (see the power calculations section for further detail). Table 9 below outlines the points at which the children will be in school, and the points at which they will transition out.

*Table 18: Expected progressions of beneficiaries throughout grades*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Grade at Year 1 (Baseline)** | **Year 2**  (Interventions taking place - Midline) | **Year 3**  (Interventions taking place - Endline) | **Year 4**  (No interventions taking place) |
| PS 1 | PS 2 | PS 3 | PS 4 |
| PS 2 | PS 3 | PS 4 | PS 5 |
| PS 3 | PS 4 | PS 5 | PS 6 |
| PS 4 | PS 5 | PS 6 | JSS 1 |
| PS 5 | PS 6 | JSS 1 | JSS 2 |
| PS 6 | JSS 1 | JSS 2 | JSS 3 |
| JSS 1 | JSS 2 | JSS 3 | Transition out to agreed successful transition points |
| JSS 2 | JSS 3 | Transition out to agreed successful transition points | Transition out to agreed successful transition points |
| JSS 3 | Transition out to agreed successful transition points | Transition out to agreed successful transition points | Transition out to agreed successful transition points |

6.3.2 Transition cohort

As with the learning cohort, as this is a joint sampling approach, the transition cohort will be identified at the school level at the baseline stage and then followed up at the household or school level in subsequent evaluations. For those girls that are no longer enrolled in schools, evaluators will need to identify (with information gathered during the last GEC evaluation (endline), support of partners and schools), the locality of these girls so that they can be interviewed and tracked throughout the duration of the project. The baseline evaluators will need to identify an effective tracking and re-contact strategy to track the beneficiaries over the course of the project as they transition beyond the school environment (this will be particularly pertinent for the girls in the highest grade: JSS 3) as they will be the first set of beneficiaries if they successful transition on, that will need to be tracked outside of the school environment at the midline in 2019.

Detailed contact information will need to be captured in order for successful re-contact by evaluators at the other evaluation points. The tracking strategy used by the external evaluators during the baseline involves recording ID numbers (allocated following the 2017 re-verification phase of GATE GEC beneficiaries (this would only be applicable to the treatment group), contact details of the respondents including address with the GPS (the importance of capturing this particularly for the control communities is paramount), mobile numbers, contact details of family members.

Table 19: Progress of transition cohort throughout the project

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Grade at Year 1** | **Year 2**  (Interventions taking place) | **Year 3**  (Interventions taking place) | **Year 4**  (No interventions taking place) |
| JSS 1 | JSS 2 | JSS 3 | Transition out to agreed successful transition points |
| JSS 2 | JSS 3 | Transition out to agreed successful transition points | Transition out to agreed successful transition points |
| JSS 3 | Transition out to agreed successful transition points | Transition out to agreed successful transition points | Transition out to agreed successful transition points |

Evaluators will need to prepare for the possibility that some of the cohort may move away during the course of the project, and this may create some issues with tracking and conducting interviews at the household level. Other methods may need to be adopted including telephone-based tracking, and there may be more of a need to run more qualitative interviews with these set of girls to utilise resources effectively. The tracking process developed by the baseline evaluators is outlined at the beginning of this section.

6.3.3 Replacement strategy

It is recommended by the FM that initial sample sizes should be inflated to account for potential attrition in the transition sample. Based on learnings from the GEC1 endline, one approach that has worked successfully in the past includes oversampling the larger schools with larger populations of beneficiaries to ensure the proposed cluster size was met. The selection of individual schools was random, but at endline schools known to have small numbers of beneficiaries were replaced with schools with more beneficiaries, to ensure that most schools would meet the targeted cluster size. However it was noted that to the degree that may have been correlated with school size, there may be a slight bias for larger schools in the treatment sample. For GATE GEC we aim to include a representative sample of both smaller and larger schools, although it should be noted that the majority of the GEC cohort is now in Junior Secondary Schools which tend to be larger. Recognizing that schools will have different numbers of beneficiaries, we will confirm the sample in advance of fieldwork to begin outreach to schools and to confirm that more than a handful of beneficiaries are enrolled. Thus, the sample draw of beneficiaries will still be randomized, without bias toward large schools.

In order to achieve a mix of smaller and larger schools, where schools do not meet the targeted cluster size we propose adding additional schools with similar characteristics to the sample rather than replacing them with larger schools.

Appropriate substitution criterion will need to be established and it is recommended that the evaluators generate a set of appropriate replacement protocol prior to the start of fieldwork in order to ensure that the replacement process can be managed quickly and efficiently during the course of fieldwork. As the numbers of children with disabilities will be significantly smaller, it will be expected to oversample as far as possible to allow for a balanced and inclusive representation of this target groups in all evaluations. Evaluators will be expected to apply an attrition rate of 30% in the sample size buffer when calculating sample sizes allow for the dropout rates of beneficiaries (as we noted in the GEC 1 phase).

In order to ensure adherence to these established procedures, tracking sheets would include information on appropriate substitution criterion for different respondent types. Intensive training on how to use the tracking sheets for the purpose of substitution is essential to ensuring that the agreed protocols are followed in the field. It might also be necessary to design a substitution module into the tablet/smartphone used for data collection, such that the substitution process is facilitated by a series of prompts in the phone or tablet. Programming substitution into the tablet/smartphone has the added advantage of creating metadata on the respondent substitution process that can later be analyzed as a part of the data verification process.

6.4 Power calculations and sample sizes

For the baseline, power analyses were conducted using the parameters set forth in the GEC MEL guidance. For logistical purposes, a cluster size of seven was chosen.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| MEL Framework Proposed Learning Assessment Parameters | |
| Power (ß) | .80 |
| Significance Level (α) | .05 |
| Minimum Detectable Effect Size | 0.25 SD |
| Attrition Rate | 30% |
| Intra-Cluster Correlation | .10 |
| Cluster Size | 7 |

#### Learning Outcomes

Using simple random sampling to detect a learning gain equal to 0.25 standard deviations is 396 in a one-sided-test requires a minimum total sample size of 396.

To account for the use of cluster sampling, the design effect needs to be calculated. A cluster size of seven yields a design effect of 1.6 or a minimum total sample size of 634. When accounting for an attrition rate of 30 percent, the minimum sample size increases to a minimum of 905 observations.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| MEL Framework Proposed Transition Rate Parameters | |
| Power (ß) | .80 |
| Significance Level (α) | .05 |
| Initial Transition Rate | 20% |
| Future Transition Rate | 30% |
| Intra-Cluster Correlation | .10 |
| Cluster Size | 7 |
| Attrition Rate | 30% |

#### Transition Outcomes

To detect a change in the transition rate from 20 to 30 percent, a one-sided test requires a minimum sample size of 502. When accounting for using a cluster sampling with seven observations per cluster, the minimum sample size is 804 observations, to be sampled in 115 clusters. Once accounting for an attrition rate of 30 percent, the minimum sample size increases to 1,148 students.

While based on the suggested distributions in the MEL Plan, some practical limitations affected the distribution of students sampled.

#### Final Sample Size

Given that the research team is using the same sample to measure both outcomes, the larger of the two sample options will be selected. Thus, data will be collected from 1,148 secondary students (and households) in 115 secondary schools.

The table below proposes the sample size for the learning (of marginalised girls) and transition cohort:

*Table 20: Proposed sample size evaluations*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **School Year at baseline** | **Proposed % of sample size for learning cohort** | **Proposed % of sample size for transition cohort** | **Rationale for proposal** |
| P 1 | An ancillary sample of primary school beneficiaries will be surveyed and assessed for descriptive purposes |  | This % is based on the small minority of marginalised girls repeating and as the majority of children in PS are children with disabilities, and as they will not form a part of the learning sample (see section on target groups). |
| P 2 |
| P 3 |
| P 4 |
| P 5 |  |
| P 6 |  |
| JSS 1 | 45% | 45% | JSS 1 will have the highest weighting as they are the largest beneficiary group that will remain in school during the project lifetime. |
| JSS 2 | 35% | 35% | JSS 2 and 3 will have a split weighting as there will be more years to track transition as they will be out of the school process longer whilst during the project lifetime |
| JSS 3 | 20% | 20% |
| Former JSS 3 | N/A | 0% | As the previous JSS 3 beneficiaries had not received their BECE exam results by the time of the fieldwork phase of the evaluations, we were unable to include them in the sample. It was agreed with the fund manager that where the previous JSS 3 beneficiaries could be identified, that we would do qualitative interviews with a small sample.  A very small sample for this group is as they have already transitioned out of JSS3 and will therefore not form part of the school population undertaking the learning assessment, from whom the rest of the transition cohort will be drawn. As a result the sample size for this grade is contingent on our ability to track beneficiaries who are no longer in school. This is subject to a number of variables, notably the impact of the ebola outbreak, the lack of a standardised school management system and the absence of a robust tracking mechanism in the previous GEC. |

6.5 Benchmarking

Benchmarking with will be with respect to the performance of students across grades, or progress to transition outcomes (such as to vocational training or employment). Establishment of these ‘standard’ benchmarks via analysis of quantitative data from an appropriate number of girls (set by the fund manager at 100 in each grade) will facilitate establishment of targets for learning and transition among beneficiaries over the course of the programme. There will be no benchmarking in comparison/control schools.

For the learning sample (those students who stay within education over the course of the programme), the benchmarks will be established from data gathered from students in JSS1 and JSS 3.

For the transition cohort, the baseline research will determine from the data collected via the Household Survey and Student School Survey what the cohort deems as ‘successful transition’, either within school or beyond school (using questions related to perceptions of education, employment, training etc.). Approximately 150 girls across all target age ranges (including children with disabilities) who are *not* beneficiaries will form part of the one-off benchmark transition sample.

7. Baseline study

Plan International UK has contracted an external consultant to undertake an independent and thorough baseline study in September 2017. Because the purpose of a baseline is to collect data that specifically measures the key indicators that will be tracked over time, the instruments designed will be those that give us information about these particular project outputs. Exclusively measuring only those items that relate specifically to the log frame ensures that the actual procedure of baseline data collection is as succinct as possible, which further ensures the validity of the data collected. Any additional data collected simply out of interest for the time being will add to the time that each respondent gives to the research team and if these findings will not be used constructively, it is best to not ask the question in the first place. Validity is ensured with a succinct questionnaire, especially when working with children. The external evaluator will have a large amount of existing data to draw on (GEC 1), and will be asked to review and assess the quality of data provided, synthesise learning and use it to assess outcome level changes in the target group over time in relation to their level of marginalization, compared with internal differences in intervention exposure, the control group and national level secondary data.

Communities/schools to be included in the research will randomly selected from a master list of programme and non-programme provided to the research team, stratified by district. This applies to both treatment and control schools. In order to minimise discrepancies between control schools and treatment schools (programme schools were originally selected using a broad list of location-related criteria), GEC-T staff will be asked to review the draft list of control schools and remove those that do not meet similar broad criteria. The specific criteria to be applied are:

* Rural schools/marginalised areas,
* A population of female students,
* No other significant education programming in place.

Each school (PS or JS) represents one cluster, and within each cluster, quantitative data collection teams will be responsible for carrying out approximately 15 learning assessments and student surveys, and 12 household surveys. The student surveys and learning assessments will be carried out at the school premises. Enumerators will work with GATE-GEC staff to have a classroom assigned in each school in which to administer learning assessments and surveys to the students.

Students in treatment schools (i.e. GATE-GEC participating schools) chosen to complete the assessments/surveys will be selected per their participation in the GATE-GEC programme. Programme plans indicate that not all schools will have 12 GATE-GEC participants (in particular primary schools), so additional schools may need to be recruited to the school sample to ensure a representative value.

Girls from control groups to complete the assessments/surveys will be selected randomly from the enrolment list in the school using a randomly-generated list of numbers or similar. The same students will undertake the learning assessments and student surveys. Importantly, specific identifying details of participating girls will be captured in order to match baseline survey participants at midline/endline. For GATE-GEC participants, this will entail both their personal details (name, age/DoB, household GPS location) and the unique identifier assigned to them via GATE-GEC ID cards. For non-participants, personal details will be recorded and verified via school records in order to re-identify them at a later stage. Purposive sampling of children with disabilities within selected school (both treatment and control) will take place to ensure adequate representation of this group.

Household surveys will be carried out at directly at homes. Families will be recruited from the school population undertaking the learning assessments, and where there is a surplus of households they will be identified using a random walk method. This method does not produce strict probability samples, but in most circumstances provides virtually unbiased samples of households, and has the advantage of being very feasible and rapid.

Qualitative FGDs among students will also be carried out in the school in a private location, to encourage honest responses. Students will be selected for participation in the FGDs via a similar process as the surveys – selection of those participating in GATE-GEC in a given school.

Similarly, FGDs with caregivers will be undertaken on the basis of student participation in GATE-GEC.

FGDs with children with disabilities will require a more purposive approach. The research team will work through GATE-GEC staff in the selected communities to identify children with disabilities and seek permission from caregivers for their participation in the discussion.

Qualitative interview respondents will be selected using purposive sampling via programme staff and stakeholders to select those informants who are likely to provide the most informed feedback regarding the programme.

### Qualitative Data Collection Tools

In total, approximately 50-60 qualitative interviews and discussions will be carried out. Such a number will permit reasonable triangulation with quantitative data findings and should ensure a representative spread of views from different stakeholder groups in different locations. In each community cluster (comprising a primary and/or a junior secondary school) the research team will seek to conduct one of each qualitative interview/discussion with the different stakeholder groups, i.e. approximate 3-4 FGDs and 2-3 KIIs (this is the maximum achievable in one day). Therefore, approximately 10-12 community clusters will be visited as part of the qualitative research. These will be selected randomly, from the list of participating school clusters, stratified by district, so approximately 2-3 clusters per district will be visited.

*Table 21: Types of qualitative tools*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Evaluation Tool** | **Purpose** | **Sample** |
| FGDs with school girls (12-16) | Assessment of knowledge, attitudes and practices related to education, disability, gender. | 7 PS, 7 JSS, 8-10 participants (includes children with disabilities) |
| FGDs with school boys (12-16) | Assessment of knowledge, attitudes and practices related to education, disability, gender. | 1 PS, 1 JSS, 8-10 participants |
| FGDs with teachers | Assessment of knowledge, attitudes and practices related to education, disability, gender | 2 PS, 2 JSS, 8-10 participants |
| FGDs with caregivers of GEC participants | Assessment of knowledge, attitudes and practices related to education, disability, gender and household economy. | 1 male, 1 female, 8-10 participants |
| Total FGD sample: 22-23 discussions x10 participants total – Treatment/Control split: 70/30 | | |
| KIIs with programme/ government stakeholders | Assessment of respondents’ views on programme preparation, likely performance, what is working/likely to work and why, gaps and means to address these in the future. | 1. 8-10 programme staff, multiple participants per interview 2. 5-10 implementing partner staff 3. 2-5 KIIs with government officials |
| KIIs with head teachers | Assessment of knowledge and attitudes on education | 1. 3 KIIs with head teachers of JSS/PS schools |
| Total KII sample: 10-15 Key Informant Interviews | | |
| Direct Observation | Any activities related to ongoing programming. Determined in coordination with the GATE-GEC team | 12-15 schools. |

All of the above activities will be repeated in the identified control groups during the key evaluation points.

8. Evaluation governance

## 8.1 Evaluation steering group

All evaluation processes will be overseen by an Evaluation Steering Group which will be established at our start-up workshop in-country in August 2017. The Steering Group will comprise of the team leader, the Hub Senior M&E manager, a representative from each partner organisation and a representative from the Ministry of Education. The Plan UK M&E Specialist and GEC Programme Manager will be on the group remotely. In order to have an independent member on the group, our baseline, midline and final evaluation consultant lead will be on the group. The Evaluation Steering Group will have a comprehensive ToR outlining the members, tasks, roles and responsibilities of the group. Some of the key tasks envisaged by the group will include, creating a platform for learning from partners’ experiences and sharing of good practice, discussing how to disseminate good practice and supporting the dissemination of the findings, reviewing project performance information and making recommendations to resolve under-performance and facilitating communications and information sharing.

It is also envisaged that a bi-annual reflection and learning event (in line with output 4) will be held with all project stakeholders. The reflection and learning meetings will be the responsibility of the Hub Senior M&E Manager supported by the Evaluation Steering Group, who will feed in to the agenda and planning. Where possible, representatives of girls and boys, as well as teachers and parents, involved in the project (perhaps members from one children’s club, again changing on a rotating basis) will also be invited, as long as their meaningful and safe participation can be assured and is adequately planned for.

## 8.2 External evaluator

In line with the Fund Manager’s and Plan’s guidelines and protocol, the external evaluator has vetted through a transparent tendering process and the candidate will be selected based on selection criteria established during the inception phase and with guidance from the Fund Manager as detailed in the *GEC-T*  guidelines. International consultant(s) and local consultants and a data collection team will be engaged to collect baseline, midline and final evaluation data, with technical support from Plan UK’s MEL team. The consultants were recruited in June 2017, and are able to commence with the inception phase/desk review once the MEL framework is signed off, and the budget has been agreed which is anticipating in mid-August 2017.

The external evaluator will work directly with Plan International UK MEL team to ensure a high level of guidance and adherence to the MEL guidance, GEC framework and child protection policies. For the latter, the consultants will sign up to the Plan International UK Child Protection policy, and whilst in country will be trained and monitored by the Child Protection and Accountability Adviser. The staff member will conduct unannounced spot checks during the field work to ensure the consultants are acting, and reporting in line with Plan’s standards.

Since 2013, Plan has carried out two education project baselines and two endlines for the GEC in Sierra Leone, supported by external academic research specialists. For the baseline, midline and final evaluation, it is planned to use international consultants alongside local consultants to support data collection and analysis. Having faced some challenges with working with local consultants, we feel an international lead consultant would be required to gather the data and report writing quality required for this project.

## 8.3 Data validation

Certain measures will be taken in order to assure quality of the data being collected by enumerators who will, at times, be working unsupervised. We will ensure that not only are enumerators following procedures properly in terms of randomly selecting houses and respondents, strongly following ethical guidelines, and not rushing through questionnaires/making up answers just to get them finished, but also when conducting interviews, are accurately phrasing certain questions that are less straightforward and require explanation, and correctly coding/recording those answers when responses may not be provided verbatim on the questionnaire answer choices, and thus require a bit more thought.

During the training of enumerators ahead of the fieldwork stage, it will be expected that enumerators are briefly quizzed on the tools used, sample size, and sampling methods to ensure clear understanding of the research approach to be taken in the field. During the training, a thorough review of qualitative research will also take place, in which best practices in qualitative research will be shared, tools reviewed, and practice occurred. Following the fieldwork phase, it will be expected that enumerators return to a central discussion to discuss what they learned, focusing on what techniques they employed to encourage participation and to keep the conversation on track. In addition, enumerators will be required to collect the data using a mobile data collection tool (as used during the project), and data collected using digital data collection devices will be automatically time and location stamped for accountability purposes. This will not be possible with the learning assessments; however, other rigorous checks including spot checks by partner organisations will be rolled out.

Representatives from partner organisations and the central hub unit will also observe the practice and provide regular feedback to the consultants during the training and fieldwork phase based on their observations as well as their experiences. The central Hub M&E team and Child Protection Adviser will also be responsible for carrying out random spot checks during the fieldwork phase of each evaluation to ensure quality of the processes.

9. Data quality assurance

## 9.1 Training

Training will take place in the office and in nearby communities (taking learning from the Endline for GEC 1), a 3/4 day training seemed sufficient to ensure the enumerators felt fully equipped with the tools), and will continue in the field during the first rural pilot. The training will also involve sessions on Child Protection led by the Hub Child Protection Advisor. In the office, the research team will be briefed on the basics of the project and the goals of the evaluation study, and then will be introduced to the research instruments one by one. A ‘run through’ of all survey questions, interview questions and focus group questions will take place, allowing each member of the team to comment on strengths and weaknesses of certain questions in case they need to be removed, rephrased or elaborated upon.

Then the local research team will conduct ‘mock’ data collection activities using the international research team as subjects. The international team will give the local team a number of challenging responses in order to enable them to learn how to deal with issues they may face in the field. Special attention will be given to the ethical guidelines that every member of the research team is required to follow and also which they will have to convey and oversee when working with the district-based research assistants.

Finally, the local research team will be trained as to the best way to select key informants and identify case studies for further research. While in the field the Team Leader will be responsible for making the final decision via phone or in person when possible, the local team is expected to report to the coordinator their ideas.

## 9.2 Piloting

Pilot activities will take place in communities with schools relatively close to the capital (so Plan staff and external consultants can visit) during which all field activities will take place (focus group research, household data collection, school data collection, key informant interviews, case studies). The first will be at one targeted rural site on the way to [district to be decided or in [district to be decided (depending on selected school sites); all collected data will be thrown out. This will serve as both an extended training for the enumerators and also to enable the international research team to observe how questions are received and answered by targeted respondents. After this pilot, further training will be delivered as needed; the research team will then complete further refinement of questionnaires and interview guides. The second pilot will employ the finalized instruments and will take place in one of the randomly selected sites in [district to be decided]. If Plan project staff would like to observe the activities, then the site closest to Freetown ([district to be decided) can be visited first.

While we intend for the second pilot to yield valid data collection, until we are sure that the collected data is reliable and accurate, data will be thrown out and more schools will be randomly selected to obtain the desired sample size.

## 9.3 Data cleaning and editing

It is expected that throughout fieldwork, quantitative data will be uploaded and qualitative data will be manually entered (if devices are not used) *every night* after fieldwork activities by the local research team and field coordinator, assuming electricity is available to power computer(s). This includes all quantitative and qualitative (i.e. typed transcripts of interviews / focus group discussions). The field coordinator will be responsible for ensuring this happens and, when possible (though it is not assumed that this will be frequently possible while in the field) uploading the data to an online database that the team leader can access. The data will be reviewed as it comes in for any obvious errors and dealt with accordingly. In the event that it seems the research team requires more guidance, the Team Leader will return early to ensure activities go according to plan and data collected is valid. For the endline for GEC 1, an effective process used by the consultants was through weekly data cleaning of newly-uploaded data will occur so that other issues that may arise – such as incorrect entry of ID numbers, details – can be addressed, and comments and corrections can be made during the project officers next visit. Project officers will be required to update their log to keep track of all issues identified during data collection and steps to correct any errors, issues that need to be dealt with during final cleaning of the dataset, and points that will be important to mention in the analysis. This will also be key for learning at a district and consortium wide level.

The project officers will also be responsible for keeping track of all paper items through the duration of fieldwork. Whatever data is not entered after fieldwork has been completed will be entered from Freetown so that the team leader can access all data before it is sent to the central team for cleaning and analysis.

Additional quality assurance measures will be held at a consortium level. The consortium will undertake measures to ensure the quality of data before and during data collection, as well as before data analysis. In order to ensure high quality data, a robust quality control mechanism will be implemented to track data on a daily basis and immediately alert field supervisors to issues or problems that need to be addressed. Field supervisors will ensure that all data is uploaded at the completion of every day, assuming there is Internet connection.

10. Risks and risk management

*Table 22: Risks and mitigations*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Risk** | **Probability of risk occuring (High, Medium, Low)** | **Potential Impact** | **Mitigation** |
| Children put at risk by project MER activities | Low | Potential or real harm to children and/or other project stakeholders; damage to relationships between project partners and individuals or communities; reduced effectiveness of project interventions; damage to organizational reputation of project; legal repercussions against project staff or associates | Plan International’s Child Protection Policy signed by all project partners and associates; Ethical and CP standards agreed by all project partners and followed for all MER activities, with clear reporting and oversight; All partners and associates briefed on the CPP and Standards; Consortium CP response committee with member from each partner that meets once a month and on ad-hoc basis for emergency responses |
| Research fatigue and /or attrition of respondents for longitudinal survey / Hawthorne effect in sampled clusters | Medium | Higher attrition, Reduced ability to track a cohort; Reduced validity of findings due to positive bias within sampled communities | Ensure focus groups do not over-run; keep survey length to minimum possible, collect respondent ID data to allow re-contact, factor in additional time/resources at Endline to re-contact; Comparison and triangulation of data sources |
| Incomplete / inaccurate or non-comparable monitoring data collected | High | Gaps in knowledge of process; inability to report against activities and outputs | Agree and monitor data collection strategy between all partners; ensure data verification process followed; ensure sufficient resources for data verification. Provide sufficient capacity development trainings to all project officers and field based staff . ensuring that consutlants also mitigate against this. |
| Monitoring data overload / underutilisation | Medium | Research fatigue among respondents; inefficient use of resources and time; lack of focus on learning to improve data collection | Collect data specifically related to measuring quality and effectiveness of the project (and control); Establish project learning strategy and build in time for learning and reflection by project field staff and managers |
| Conducting learning assessments with girls receiving bursaries leads to a biased sample | Medium | Learning assessments at the school level demonstrate changes only within a specific target group of the population not the totality of all project activities | Learning assessments at the school level are complimented by learning assessments as part of the household survey, which will provide a (relatively small) sample of target girls not receiving bursaries but involved in. In addition, the exposure of individual girls receiving bursaries to other elements of the project will be measured, allowing some degree of internal differentiation. |
| High Attrition Rate between original Baseline, midline and final Endline | Medium | The GEC is a longitudinal study of learning opportunities and outcomes. However, there have been a variety of iterations of the project due to the Ebola emergency. High attrition between baseline and Endline possible. | Pre-identification of girls from baseline after initiation and verification of the GEC-T project (ensuring accurate ID’s and methods to identify the beneficiaries are effective); recruitment and preparation of Endline consultants |
| No longer able to access the beneficairies once they leave the school environment (limited tracking) | High | As we are now capturing/tracking girls outside of the schools environment, we may lose access to them, as they are no longer receiving a direct intervention from us. | Need to ensure that we identify the most suitable method of tracking consulting those beneficairies and communities. Ensure a variety of methods are used for tracking including telephone, physically going to households, maintaining contact on a regular basis, providing some level of interventions in the form of training or other support so they are still interested in providing feedback |
| Community tensions/hostility rising from GEC 2 no longer implementing and the impact on the project and gathering data | Low- Medium | Although close our messaging was rigourously undertaken across the districts, there may still be some underlying emotions by community members of support no longer being provided to the GEC 2 schools, and this may have impacted the GEC 1 communities in the overlapping districts | Enusre project officers are equipped with the relevant information to deal with tensions and hositlity displayed, provide further sensitisation within the communities to reinforce the support provided by the GEC 1 project. |
| Lack of Government engagement and no ownership of data | Medium | The Minsitry of Education, Science and Technology and the Ministry of Social Welfare and Gender Affairs often do not have the resources to travel to the communtiies to monitor inteventions. | The GATE-GEC project will work with SSEIP to ensure that data, reporting and trainings on interventions are owned at district level. The SSEIP project will work to strengthen district level Government offices to ensure they are storing and using information correctly. Regular meetings between the Programme Manager of the district, and Government Officials will focus directly on ownership.  At a monitoring level, the Ministry of Science and Technology will join the GATe-GEC teams once a quarter in the field for 3 days to conduct joint monitoring on the study groups. The Officials will follow up with a report which the Hub team will work to consolidate and analyse observations across the quarters, and across districts. |
| Operations of similar interventions in the schools where GATE GEC is not operating | High | This could lead to compromising the comparison of GATE GEC outcomes to non-beneficiaries. If the comparison group contains beneficiaries of other interventions, GATE-GEC may appear to have no effect by virtue of having no greater effect than other successful programs. | To ameliorate this problem, the surveys will obtain data on other interventions that students may be beneficiaries of |

11. Learning

## 11.1 Learning strategy

A strong emphasis on shared learning will be maintained throughout the project, through participatory monitoring and local level advocacy for example, as well as with midline and evaluation findings, and this is built into the Performance Management Framework above. The project will seek out opportunities for involving and inviting feedback from a range of stakeholders, ranging from Government actors, national and local women’s and child rights organizations and disabled people’s organisations, and other relevant members of civil society. The project’s design emphasises shared learning at project level and through consortium and learning events (output 4). Community engagement and participation are critical to many project activities and specific budgets have been allocated for sharing events relating to children’s clubs at chiefdom level, chiefdom and district-level interface meetings, and CBR best practice exchange workshops in every district.

Learning from evaluations, and all other data sources, will be actively shared with a view to improving the design and implementation of future girls’ education programmes of consortium partners and all other education stakeholders. Nationally, evidence from the project will be shared with MEST, UNICEF, MSWGCA and other NGOs and education networks. Internationally, learning from the project will be used to inform Plan International’s *Because I am a Girl* campaign, aimed at reaching four million girls globally. All partners will share learning through their own technical networks and will actively seek opportunities for disseminating learning to others in the sector. All relevant project details will be made publicly available in line with Plan International UK’s published commitment on IATI.

In addition to the Evaluation steering group meetings (see section 8.1), a bi-annual reflection and learning event will be held with all project stakeholders. The first of these is to be scheduled for July 2018, to provide a chance to look back at the work in schools in the first academic year and training carried out over the school holidays, to share experiences and to feed learning into activities scheduled for the next academic year. This will also be a good opportunity to disseminate the findings from the Baseline (once approved by FUND MANAGER following the March 2018 deadline).

The reflection and learning meetings will be the responsibility of the Hub Senior M&E manager supported by the Evaluation Steering Group, who will feed in to the agenda and planning. External stakeholders will be invited such as relevant government officials and staff from other education related projects in Sierra Leone i.e. GATE. A small number of teachers, mentors etc. also involved in the project will also be invited (possibly from one district at a time on a rotating basis – so it may be best if the event is held in the district). Representatives of girls and children with disabilities involved in the project will also be invited, as long as their meaningful and safe participation can be assured and is adequately planned for.

During inception phase the Hub team will build a communications strategy to outline what type of information stakeholders would like to know about the project, how often, and in what format. This will determine the knowledge management structure for the first year and will be reviewed during the long break in the second year.

**Learning clusters**

We will actively be involved in the learning clusters to share our results and experiences on the following themes. The Senior M&E Manger will be responsible for attending and disseminating learning at the learning clusters in Sierra Leone, and the UK M&E specialist in Plan UK will be responsible for shared learning on a UK level.

In the previous GEC, shared learning was encouraged throughout the project through the form of internal consortium meetings and steering groups to inform programmatic adaptation, however due to issues faced throughout the project, this was not as consistent during the project, and much of the learning took place during the endline and close out of the project. It is therefore a key component of the GATE GEC project from the offset; through the developing a clear learning strategy outlining the key actions and events that will take place internally and externally. Additionally a communications strategy will be developed to outline how learnings will be disseminated, this will account for the learning clusters and other key processes identified by the fund manager.

On an external level, the table below outlines the learning clusters we wish to contribute to and gather learning from. The rationale for contribution to the learning clusters is also outlined in the table below.

As these increase in 2018, we will actively identify the themes that would be most relevant to partake in.

*Table 23: Learning clusters for GATE GEC project*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Theme | Contribute to Learning | Receive learning | Rationale for chosen learning cluster |
| **School-based learning** | | |  |
| Learning Cluster 1: Teaching, learning & assessment - Literacy | X | X | Due to the increased emphasis the project will have on the development of teaching skills, particularly inclusiveness and gender sensitive pedagogy, the project will be looking to share the success of these trainings and the impact it has in the classroom on the child’s quality and level of learning. The MEL team, with the support of the education adviser in the UK programme effectiveness team will support in producing learning pieces for example youth friendly brochures highlighting a summary of findings and recommendations from our evaluation findings |
| Learning Cluster 2: Teaching, learning & assessment - Numeracy | X | X |
| Learning Cluster 3: School governance and management |  | X |  |
| Learning Cluster 4: Non-cognitive skills |  | X |  |
| **Community/HH learning** | | |  |
| Learning Cluster 5: Social norms around Education- community based attitudes |  | X |  |
| Learning cluster 6: Gender Equality & Inclusive Education (includes boys, girls with disabilities | X | X | The GEC project has taught us that there is a dire need to raise awareness of the rights of children with disabilities to go to school and this will need to be done hand-in-hand with effective support once children are sent to school. The specialist expertise of Handicap International to help inform and train other partners on how to work with children with disabilities is imperative to our work and will continue throughout this project with more specific support being provided. A new pilot is going to be developed, known as the Itinerant Teacher model, teachers are trained to develop disability-specific teaching skills such as how to teach using braille or sign language. The training will be a mixture of theory and practice. We will aim to disseminate the findings of the model on an annual basis and assess the impact it brings to the entire project and it’s outcomes. |

## 11.2 Stakeholder engagement, dissemination and influencing

Downward accountability is very important for Plan. During project start-up, close out and during the lifetime of the project, we intend to message very carefully to our girls, children with disabilities, communities (ensuring we capture boys) and schools both what exactly we believe we aim to achieve over the lifetime of the project and how they can feed into these processes. In all MEL activities, the project will be informed by a utilization-focused approach, with the explicit aim of identifying the use of, and primary intended users, of all MER outputs to increase the usability of outputs and increase buy-in from relevant stakeholders. Doing so forms part of the mandate of the evaluation steering group (see section 8.1). For example, the baseline report will be actively shared with project stakeholders, and a youth friendly summary of it to facilitate access by different groups and with girls and children with disabilities in particular. Results of the key evaluation points, beginning with the baseline will used to continue on-going discussions with duty-bearers at the local level and will feed into Plan and partners national level advocacy and campaigning at both national and international levels.

During project implementation**,** district and monitoring and evaluation staff will regularly update to communities and stakeholders on project activities and what we have achieved; this will be done through ongoing monitoring visits, visiting community meetings and structures already in place and the use of transparency boards. Through organising Annual Participatory Planning and Reflection meetings, girls, boys and other key stakeholders will be involved in designing, reviewing and adapting the programme. They will be involved in key decision making, planning for the next phase inviting beneficiaries and other stakeholders to share feedback. The project will also involve youth through theyouth advisory panels so that they will be able to monitor and collect feedback from the beneficiaries. Where possible, it will be valuable to have girls and boys support the project teams in the data collection and analysis processes as they will be able to provide a clear child-friendly focus on the tools and processes used. One model we propose is to have some beneficiaries involved in attendance tracking/data collection processes, for example supporting PVs to verify attendance in study groups. This will mean they take ownership and responsibility, further contributing to the long-term sustainability of this work.

There will be a range of different techniques used throughout the project to ensure successful stakeholder engagement, dissemination and influencing below. These will be particularly important to ensure the long-term sustainability of support to girls and children with disabilities around education.

* Participatory community workshops held to discuss project findings and discuss specific ways project legacy can continue in each community without GEC - T funding.
* Creating publications and information that is user friendly by all stakeholders, particularly the children. Taking learning from the previous GECs, low literacy Krio, child-friendly visual flyers and posters that describe project’s interventions and impact distributed and put in prominent place in communities has worked successfully. Including photos, diagrams, drawings and quotes (possibly including Stories of Change) have also proved successful.
* Consortium partners (in line with output 4) will be responsible for leading and/or participating in learning events (specific to education) and interactive sessions with key educational actors and stakeholders including the MEST, and other INGOs working in then education sector to promote the work of GEC and share learning and experience.

## 

12. Evaluation workplan

## 12.1 Timetable

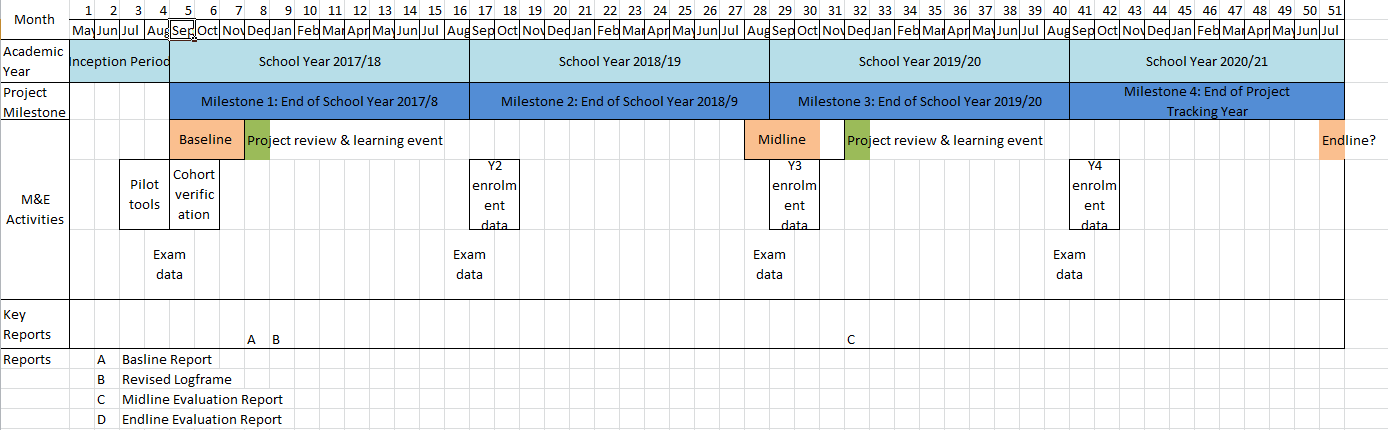
A timeline of the baseline activities are outlined below and a detailed evaluation workplan. This timeline was agreed with the external evaluator and fund manager.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Responsibility** | **Period** |
| **Phase I** |  |  |
| Kick-off meeting | AT, HOR, BO | Early Sept |
| Development of Inception Report and research tools | AT, HOR, BO | Sept - Oct |
| Desk Review | AT, HOR, BO | Sept-Oct |
| Deliverable: Inception Report | BO, AT, HOR | Oct 01 |
| **Phase II** | | |
| Field Visits – |  |  |
| Preparation/Inception visit - GATE-GEC programme and external stakeholder meetings | BO | Oct 6-13 |
| Preparation/finalisation of data collection tools | BO, HOR, AT, D | October |
| Piloting of data collection tools | BO, HOR, AT, D | 6-10 November |
| Preparation of field logistics (with GATE-GEC staff) | BO, HOR, AT, D | October |
| Field research(KIIs/FGDs/Sites visits, Observations) | HOR, AT, D | Nov 20- Dec 1 |
| Wrap up meetings, debriefing | HOR, AT, D | First week Dec |
| **Phase III** | | |
| Data processing & analysis, preparation of draft reports | AT, HOR, D, BO, | November-December |
| Deliverable: Draft evaluation reports in English | January 2018 |
| Distribution of Draft reports for review | January 2018 |
| Feedback on the Draft report from PLAN International/Cos | February 2018 |
| Development of final reports | February 2018 |
| Deliverable: Submission of Final Reports | March 2018 |

It will be expected that tracking of beneficiaries will take place at each key evaluation point following the baseline

A detailed Monitoring and Evaluation plan will be jointly drafted with all consortium project partners during the start-up workshop in August, setting out what data is to be collected, when and by whom. The basis for the monitoring plan is the detailed implementation plan developed by the project and the project level logframe output indicators. Per output indicator, the project has established key activities to be monitored consistently, and ‘intermediate outcomes,’ for example, employing simple pre and post training questionnaires with teachers to monitor changes in knowledge and attitudes as a direct result of the training component. When finalised, the complete M&E Plan and all data collection tools will be shared with the fund manager.

*Table 24: Key data collection M&E events*

[[18]](#footnote-18)

12.2 Responsibilities

The development of the MEL framework, monitoring plan and monitoring tools and approaches are to be jointly agreed by all partners during July, ahead of the project’s start-up workshop, with standardised formats and pre-agreed definitions.

Monitoring data will be captured by project officers in each district, with oversight by the agency providing technical support for the activity, the relevant M&E Officer in the district and ultimately the project M&E Manager. Data will be shared between project partners on a regular monthly and quarterly basis based on agreed templates and reporting lines. The Central Hub team will be the primary repository of all monitoring data, responsible for collating information across activities and districts. All partner organisations will be required to pro-actively share data with the hub along agreed reporting lines. The Hub will be the primary broker on information sharing and knowledge management between partners and external stakeholders. No project specific information or data relating to individual beneficiaries will be released to a third party without the prior agreement of the Hub. Key data sets will also be securely stored on Plan UK’s servers to provide data back-up. Plan UK’s Open Information Policy (in draft) and IATI commitments will further inform the external sharing of information outside of primary project stakeholders.

On the key evaluations the Consultant(s) will be responsible for:

* Timely delivery of the outputs and deliverables as outlined in the baseline ToR (Annex 4)
* Review and finalise the sample frame and methodology for the evaluation
* Identify mechanisms to accurately capture and store ID and contact information of beneficiaries and stakeholders for all sampled schools and individuals,
* Recruit and train research assistants to enumerate the assessment
* Make own arrangements to reach the selected schools and/or communities and organize interviews
* Supervise and take full responsibility of the behaviour and performance of data collectors
* Develop an approach to ensuring complete compliance with international good practice with regards to child protection, research ethics and protocols.
* Ensure the full logistical support for the entire exercise across all districts
* Design tools where necessary
* Build relations with the communities including treatment and control
* Run analysis of the findings and produce reports
* Prompt reporting and presentation of raw data, draft and final report to consortium partners and Plan International.
* Development of summary evaluation findings for the youth friendly brochure which will be shared with beneficiaries and communities and other key stakeholders.
* Ensure quality assurance on all deliverables.

The GATE-GEC Consortium partners will provide:

* The project proposal, MEL Framework and other relevant documents
* Overview of the programme, list of schools per district; list of beneficiaries per school disaggregated per sex and disabilities; contact list of key people in the field.
* Project and contextual input during the inception, training of enumerators and field work phase.
* Use of office space for checking emails etc. for the duration of the assignment.
* Support in setting up introductive meetings with relevant stakeholders and communities
* Feedback on the draft tools and reports (inception and final tools/reports).

**Annexes**

1. GATE GEC TOC diagram
2. GATE GEC Logframe
3. GATE GEC Baseline ToR for evaluators
4. GATE GEC evaluation tools
5. GATE GEC Baseline Sampling Framework

1. OECD development Center Gender Index [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. School-related Gender-Based Violence in Sierra Leone, September 2010 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. We are currently exploring how LAs (cohort 3) can be involved in the study groups taking place in PS schools. It will be important based on our learning from GEC 1 that we better link the LAs to the outcomes and impact on the GEC cohort. We will explore how to meaningfully reflect the support the LAs provide in the schools, the effect this has on learners and particularly GEC beneficiaries, and how they develop participatory, gender-sensitive and inclusive learner support practices. We need to be conscious of the effort and resource required to be involved and how to ensure this is balanced our with the already demanding programme for the LAs and aim to address some of this in the updated School Experience Handbook and include a clearer record which could be captured as part of the MEL. We will explore the options available to the programme, and agree the level of engagement and how this works practically for the LAs and schools. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. We are currently exploring how LAs (cohort 3) can be involved in the study groups taking place in PS schools. It will be important based on our learning from GEC 1 that we better link the LAs to the outcomes and impact on the GEC cohort. We will explore how to meaningfully reflect the support the LAs provide in the schools, the effect this has on learners and particularly GEC beneficiaries, and how they develop participatory, gender-sensitive and inclusive learner support practices. We need to be conscious of the effort and resource required to be involved and how to ensure this is balanced our with the already demanding programme for the LAs and aim to address some of this in the updated School Experience Handbook and include a clearer record which could be captured as part of the MEL. We will explore the options available to the programme, and agree the level of engagement and how this works practically for the LAs and schools. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The GATE GEC hub Education officer will sit in the MEST offices a few days a week to increase our level of engagement and remain involved in dialogue and decisions around children’s education. This will feed directly into our sustainability model for the project. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. This is currently being explored with FAWE and OU on how LAs (cohort 3) can be involved in the study groups taking place in PS schools. It will be important based on our learning from GEC 1 that we better link the LAs to the outcomes and impact on the GEC cohort. We will explore how to meaningfully reflect the support the LAs provide in the schools, the effect this has on learners and particularly GEC beneficiaries, and how they develop participatory, gender-sensitive and inclusive learner support practices. We need to be conscious of the effort and resource required to be involved and how to ensure this is balanced our with the already demanding programme for the LAs and aim to address some of this in the updated School Experience Handbook and include a clearer record which could be captured as part of the MEL. We will explore the options available to the programme, and agree the level of engagement and how this works practically for the LAs and schools. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. It is important that we do not look to favour or ‘single out’ our GEC cohort, as this will only further aggravate the tensions by the non-GEC cohort as identified in the endline findings. We will need to agree appropriate and sensitive ways to respond to this and other questions that are to those children that are within the treatment schools, but in the GEC cohort. Advocacy around this will be an important part of the project as a whole. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. For previous JSS 3 beneficiaries that sat the BECE exams, exam results are published at a later date. In 2017, the results were published in early December. Therefore re-verification of any GEC beneficiaries that repeat and return to the schools will take place later. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. The consortium suggests we work with Ministries to ensure teachers have resources to take registers and that teachers know how to take a register (and understand need for doing so?). Present random sampling to Ministry, school heads as part of monthly district coordination meetings. It could also be part of the District Education Officers’ role to ensure teachers are keeping attendance registers during their routine school visits; this will also increase ownership of school management systems by MEST at District level. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Exploring the potential to incorporate data on pupil dropout into enrolment registers (ie each term schools indicate which pupils are enrolled and which have dropped out since previous term)? Potential to use mobile phones to keep in contact with beneficiaries who have left school (and potentially incentivise this through paying for phones/credit)? [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Snilstveit, B et al, 2015. Interventions for improving learning outcomes and access to education in low - and middle - income countries: a systematic review , 3ie Final Review. London: International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie) [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. PSMs will be either Head teachers or programme volunteer who monitor STs during their classroom practices, and provide support and guidance where it is required. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. This is based on the 2017 re-verification data as of 13th November 2017 [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Data take from 2017 re-verification data as of 13th November 2017. These tables will be updated once the final re-verification data is available from January 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. This will be updated once the re-verification data is finalised in January 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. During GATE GEC verification, the UN Washington group questions will be applied across all GEC beneficiaries. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. These numbers will be re-verfiied during the 2017 annual verification process (Handicap International are responsible for undertaking a detailed assessment of the children with disabilities), and may be subject to change based on the findings. Handicap International is currently adapting the verification tools, to ascertain how the beneficiaries needs have progressed since the last verification in March 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. The exact dates on the midline and endline evaluations may vary slightly and will be agreed with the fund manager. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)