Project Evaluation Report

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Notes:

Some annexes listed in the contents page of this document have not been included because of challenges with capturing them as an A4 PDF document or because they are documents intended for programme purposes only. If you would like access to any of these annexes, please enquire about their availability by emailing uk_girls_education_challenge@pwc.com.

Girls' Education Challenge

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BASELINE EVALUATION REPORT

GATE-GEC Project in Sierra Leone

PREPARED BY:
International Solutions Group (ISG)
Brian O'Callaghan
Helen O'Reilly
Andrew Trembley

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International Solutions Group

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Abbreviations and Initialisms

BECE	Basic Examination Certificate Exam
CSE	Comprehensive Sexuality Education
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CWDs	Children with disabilities
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DFID	Department for International Development
EGMA	Early Grade Mathematics Assessment
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessment
ESP	Education Strategic Plan
FAWE	Forum for African Women Educationalists
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GEC	Girls' Education Challenge
GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
GPS	Global Positioning System
HOH	Head of Household
ISG	International Solutions Group
JSS	Junior Secondary School
KII	Key Informant Interview
LOI	Language of Instruction
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
ODK	Open Data Toolkit
OOS	Out of School
PS	Primary School
PWC	Price Waterhouse Coopers
SeGMA	Secondary Grade Mathematics Assessment
SeGRA	Secondary Grade Reading Assessment
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
SSS	Senior Secondary School
TOC	Theory of Change
TVET	Technical, Vocational Education and Training
UNICEF	UN Children's Fund
VSLA	Village Savings and Loan Association

Executive Summary

Introduction

Plan International UK's GATE-Girls' Education Challenge (GATE-GEC) aims to help marginalised girls and CWDs in six districts of Sierra Leone (Kono, Kenema, Port Loko, Karene, Moyamba and Kailahun) to reach their learning potential and transition through primary school, into junior secondary school and beyond. The project works with marginalised children that have been supported in the original GEC project (GEC 1), which commenced in 2013. With funding from DFID, Plan is leading a consortium of four organisations, ActionAid, Handicap International, Open University (UK) and Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) in implementing GATE-GEC, in close collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST). The project was designed to continue and develop GEC 1 interventions such as bursaries and study groups, training and support of female learning assistants and student teachers, support for CWDs through assistants, assistive devices and model schools.

International Solutions Group, an international monitoring, evaluation and reporting firm, was contracted by Plan International UK to conduct this baseline evaluation of the GATE-GEC project in 2017/2018.

Select key findings per Intermediate Outcome Indicator

The following summary presents selected key illustrative findings. The information provided below does not serve as a standalone documentation of key findings and serves as an adjunct to the full report.

Intermediate Outcome 1: Attendance Rates

- Qualitative findings suggest that attendance by beneficiaries is high – however the evaluators only met with beneficiaries who were in school and may not reflect the problems some beneficiaries may be experiencing. The quantitative findings also indicate high attendance rates (provided by head teachers based on school records). However, discrepancies in triangulation of data suggests inaccuracy (and likely over-reporting) of figures. The project's ongoing monitoring processes should consider the risk of inaccuracy of attendance as reported by schools, potentially instituting novel means of verification (e.g. spot-checks of actual vs. reported attendance).

Intermediate Outcome 2: Effective inclusive education teaching skills

- Qualitative data collection revealed that some teachers in both PS and JSS are applying inclusive techniques.
- While inclusive education approaches were highlighted during qualitative data collection, there were also examples of CWDs being subjected to bullying and affected by corporal al punishment—indicating that further sensitisation and training is required.
- Quantitative data collected indicate positive teaching practices in the classes under study, with 41 percent of students noting that teachers use a different language to explain a point when the students do not understand something and 47 percent of students noting that teachers often encourage them to participate. These quantitative findings correlate well with qualitative data collected. During FGDs, girls and boys reported that teachers make an effort to involve everyone (e.g. all students are called on to answer questions).
- Although carers and students assessed teacher performance to be of acceptable quality, the project's educational support (non-bursary) approach is still valid as there are some indicators that should demonstrate good improvement as the project progresses. The study group approach is endorsed by the finding that some schools, are already running study groups independently of GATE-GEC support.
- Corporal punishment is not (yet) illegal in Sierra Leone[1] and based on data collected, it appears that it is normalised in schools, with 85 percent of students noting punishment as sanction for incorrect work and almost all of these (96 percent) noting physical punishment. There does, however, appear to be a policy momentum to make corporal punishment explicitly illegal, and this presents opportunities for the project to both advocate for this policy change at MEST, and sensitise educators, communities and students against such punishment.
- The project is gender sensitive, with interventions aimed at improving the quality of education for girls. Teachers who are working as Project Volunteers (PVs) are receiving training and ongoing support to make their teaching more gender-sensitive and inclusive.

Intermediate Outcome 3: Greater self-esteem and confidence

- Greater self-esteem and confidence has been reported by many respondents during interviews and are supported by the quantitative data from student's surveys, with most respondents (76% of students ≥12 years old, 70% of students <12) reporting medium-high self-esteem.

Intermediate Outcome 4: Increased economic empowerment

- The VSLA component of the project had not begun as of the baseline but may be used to enable families to cover education-related costs in a more sustainable way than through the disbursement of bursaries.
- Qualitative and quantitative findings agreed that families face major challenges in their abilities to pay direct education expenses, thus supporting the validity of focus of the project. When primary caregivers were asked about their abilities to meet education costs in the past year, only 15 percent were able to meet all education costs.

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

- There is evidence to indicate that the relationship between the project and MEST at central level is moving into a more productive phase, with plans for better communication and closer collaboration. The ESP for 2018-2020 outlines mechanisms for participation by partners and there are areas within the ESP where GATE-GEC could contribute to policy development and implementation.

[1] *Corporal punishment of children in Sierra Leone*, Global Initiative to End Corporal Punishment of Children, 2018. Accessible at: http://www.endcorporalpunishment.org/progress/country-reports/sierra-leone.html.

Recommendations

The following recommendations have been substantially summarised to meet reporting length requirements. It is recommended that each reader refer to the detailed recommendations as presented in the full report.

Recommendation 1: Revise project logframe.

1a: Edit IO 5 to ensure the outcome text and its indicator are consistent by incorporating work with Boards of Governors, School Management Committees and Community Teachers Associations, to strengthen community participation in governance and management of schools.

1b: Under IO 5 include a separate outcome and indicator on engagement with key educational actors to support education for girls and CWDs on a national level.

1c: Include members of Boards of Governors (JSS) and Community Teachers Associations (PS and JSS) as well as School Management Committees (PS) in the score-carding process under Output 3.

1d: For future research (i.e. at midline and endline of the project), ISG recommends the following additional evaluation questions:

1. Whether there is partnership and collaboration with the MEST at central and district level and sharing of knowledge and good practices;
2. Whether there is effective collaboration and cooperation with other relevant interventions (e.g. UNICEF GATE);
3. Quantity/quality of involvement of School Management Committees, Boards of Governors, and Community-Teacher Associations in the project.

Recommendation 2: Increase engagement with MEST at all levels.

2a: Seek to deepen engagement of the Hub Education Advisor with MEST (potentially through embedding in the MEST offices).

2b: Qualitative research found reports of previously strong district-level collaboration between MEST and GEC 1. GATE-GEC should explore this previous relationship's successes and areas of improvement in order to continue and duplicate this collaborative relationship.

Recommendation 3: Define contributions to Education Strategic Plan activities.

3a: Discuss with MEST on how GATE-GEC can best contribute to specific activities set out in the ESP for 2018-2020.

3b: Undertake evidence-based advocacy to influence the Education Sector Plan for 2021-2025.

Recommendation 4: Agree communication and coordination procedures amongst consortium members.

The baseline research noted disparities between districts in terms of their capacity to organise and implement activities. All consortium members should agree on best practice in terms of communication and coordination procedures, to ensure all persons involved in the GATE-GEC project team in all districts are kept informed of activities, have access to lessons learned and good practices, and are fully involved.

Recommendation 5: Focus on close collaboration with GATE UNICEF and others.

As GATE-GEC and GATE UNICEF are working on areas of common interest, GATE-GEC should seek to deepen collaboration with GATE UNICEF at both central and district level. Further, it will be important to facilitate sharing of learning from all sources, including MEST, GATE, and Leh Wi Learn, between teaching staff in schools.

Recommendation 6: Ensure timely distribution of bursaries.

The distribution of bursaries for the academic year 2018/9 and 2019/20 for P1 to P6 and for JSS1 and JSS2 and those who have just been promoted to JSS3, should be done at the beginning of the academic year, without waiting for the results of the BECE exams. Once the BECE results are released then those students who are repeating JSS3 can receive their bursaries.

Recommendation 7: Convey criteria for project inclusion to beneficiaries and other stakeholders.

Non-beneficiaries and beneficiaries alike are unclear of the inclusion criteria and selection process. The project should organise meetings with key stakeholders including beneficiaries to explain selection criteria and the plans in place to support beneficiaries until the end of the project.

Recommendation 8: Support of former beneficiaries to formal education.

8a: The project should support the return of any beneficiaries who had dropped out of the system for any reason (e.g. pregnancy, becoming a mother, income generation) back in to formal education.

8b: Linked to re-entry of teenage mothers into school, verify #s of beneficiaries under GEC 1 who dropped out of the formal school system and entered UNICEF GATE learning centres have now returned, or are planning to return, to the formal system, and set bursaries and other supports in place as needed.

Recommendation 9: Defining and assessing children with disabilities

Comparisons of GEC 1, re-verification data and primary data on disability status of children (using Washington Group Short Set questions) indicate significant lack of correlation, notably substantial reductions in the prevalence of disability between project iterations. This is likely a limitation of using self-reporting of disability (and its severity). Cross-checking of reported disability status with robust medical assessments (potentially of a sub-sample of students currently reporting disability) would prove a useful verification measure and indeed potentially contribute to international learning on disability assessments

Recommendation 10: Inclusion of additional beneficiaries.

10a: Re-verification revealed that there are roughly 40 per cent fewer beneficiaries under GATE-GEC than from GEC 1 in 2013. The baseline evaluation identified many students in treatment schools who meet the criteria set out in 2013 for project support who are not direct beneficiaries of the project. While there is a clear GATE-GEC policy of not inducting new beneficiaries, beneficiary data and evidence from project informants indicates that beneficiaries have been added since 2013. The project should explore the possibility of adding students who meet the selection criteria as project beneficiaries.

10b: The research team does not judge it to be feasible for the project to undertake a process to identify and select additional marginalised girls at this stage but does recommend consideration of strategies to provide some support to additional CWDs.

10c: The project should determine the level of need which cannot address. The data should then be presented at a Project Steering Committee meeting, and more widely to MEST, for broader consideration of the needs and how they can best be met by a range of stakeholders.

Recommendation 11: Explore non-beneficiary involvement in study groups.

Explore the option of opening study groups to non-beneficiary CWDs or other children with specific learning support needs.

Recommendation 12: Additional areas of project focus.

12a: The project should focus attention on school staff-mediated psychosocial services to increase girls' perceptions of safety while in school.

12b: The ongoing project monitoring data should also include attendance levels of particularly vulnerable sub-groups: orphans, CWDs, girls living with caretakers other than their parents or those living independently, pregnant girls, and young mothers.

12c: The project should explore options for community-based advocacy work to effect norm change in the area of corporal punishment.

1. Background to project

Plan International UK's GATE-Girls' Education Challenge (GATE-GEC) programme aims to help marginalised girls and children with disabilities in six districts of Sierra Leone (Kono, Kenema, Port Loko, Karene, Moyamba and Kailahun) to reach their learning potential and to transition through primary school, into junior secondary school and beyond. The programme works with marginalised children that have been supported in the original GEC project (herein GEC 1), which commenced in March 2013 and concluded in 2016.

With funding from the UK Department for International Development (DFID), Plan International is leading a consortium of four organisations, ActionAid (AA), Handicap International, Open University (UK based) and Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) in implementing the GATE-GEC project in Sierra Leone, in close collaboration with the Sierra Leone Government Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST).

GATE-GEC is Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) transformative in that it actively seeks to transform fundamental inequalities in the long term for marginalised girls and children (girls and boys) with disabilities through the addressing of relations and power structures that underpin gender inequality and social exclusion – this is the essence of GESI. The project was designed to continue and develop interventions made under GEC 1, such as:

- Bursaries and study groups for beneficiaries;
- Training and support of female learning assistants and student teachers;
- Providing support for children with disabilities through community-based rehabilitation volunteers (CBRVs);
- Provision of assistive devices;
- Setting up model schools.

Further, GATE-GEC implementing agencies have demonstrated a commitment at central[2] and field levels to refine and improve these interventions, learning from the experiences and promising practices of GEC 1, to optimise the most effective and efficient interventions.

With considerations of effectiveness and efficiency in mind, a GEC 1-implemented sexual and reproductive health component which involved disseminating key messages over the radio and in public spaces regarding teenage pregnancy, early marriage, and other sexual and reproductive health and rights issues, has not been included in this project. Part of the rationale for not replicating this initiative is due to the fact that the Sierra Leone Education Sector Plan (ESP) 2018-2020 states that comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) - a rights-based and gender-focused approach to sexuality education - will be integrated in to the curriculum from upper primary to senior secondary level. As such, the existing training given to primary teachers on adolescent sexual and reproductive life skills will be expanded to cover upper primary and junior secondary level and beyond. Further, MEST has announced that the development of a new curriculum for Family Life Education is planned.

Finally, to build the sustainability of the project interventions and the resilience of households, GATE-GEC has integrated a Village Savings and Loan Association (VLSA) component, which aims to support the transition from reliance on bursaries (which cover payment of school fees and provide uniforms and other basic items for school) to the development of economic empowerment activities that can provide sustainable sources of income for household expenses (including education).

[2] The central administrative and management unit of GATE-GEC in Sierra Leone is Plan SL's central operations Hub ('The Hub'), located in Freetown.

1.1 Project context

The Government and GATE-GEC

The time required to re-establish a working relationship between MEST at central level and the GEC project implementers from the close of GEC 1, led to a hiatus between the conclusion of GEC 1 and commencement of GATE-GEC activities. Round-table discussions in late 2017 between Plan Sierra Leone, the Minister for Education, GATE-GEC staff, and MEST (concurrent with the baseline evaluation research) enabled MEST officials to familiarise themselves on the GATE-GEC interventions (notably the VSLA and score-carding initiatives) and agree to establish a Project Steering Committee and the development of joint project monitoring tools. These measures will likely lead to better communication/collaboration with MEST and other government stakeholders such as the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs.

General elections took place in Sierra Leone on 7 March 2018 to elect the President, Parliament, and local councils. It was not known at the time of research if or how the results of the elections might affect project implementation, for example as a result of any key personnel changes within MEST.

Gender inequalities and marginalisation impacts on education of girls and children with disabilities

In 2017 MEST published the 2018-2020 education sector plan, which notes that **gender parity in enrolment** within education in Sierra Leone has been achieved at primary level, but issues such as pregnancy, early/forced marriage[3], and sexual harassment negatively impact the retention of girls at junior secondary school (JSS) level. By senior secondary school (SSS) level, a wide gender gap has been measured (46 percent female and 54 percent male[4]).

Although basic education is nominally free of charge, it is acknowledged in the ESP that the *actual* **cost of schooling** (unofficial school fees and associated costs such as uniforms, books, transportation) is high and leads to the exclusion of children whose parents cannot afford those costs.

The school environment is male dominated, with very few female teachers, with widespread continued use of **corporal punishment** of students. At central level, MEST confirmed that it does not condone the use of corporal punishment, and is being 'phased out'.[5] However, its use is not explicitly prohibited in Sierra Leone law,[6] although the Sierra Leone Government has accepted the 2016 Concluding Observations of the periodic review of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child which recommends '*the State party to explicitly implement the prohibition of corporal punishment in all settings, as recommended in the Code of Conduct for Teachers and Other Education Personnel (2009), especially at home, in schools'.*[7]

Further highlighted in the ESP 2018-2020 is that many schools lack **basic water and sanitation facilities**, and often without separate toilet facilities for girls and boys. Most schools lack appropriate structures and facilities for children with disabilities.

In addition, there is a lack of **trained and qualified teachers**, and most teachers have little or no formal training on inclusive education with a focus on children with disabilities.

There are also very limited **teaching or learning materials** available for both children with and without disabilities.

Distances between homes and schools is also another barrier for children in accessing education and these distances often increase as children transition through the system.

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[3] Because in most countries children are not considered able to give legal consent, all child marriages are sometimes considered forced marriages. However, there are many instances of two adolescents under the age of 18 marrying each other voluntarily. UNFPA 2018

[4] Sierra Leone Education Sector Plan 2018-2020, pg. 19

[5] MEST's 2009 *Code of Conduct for Teachers and Other Education Personnel* notes that teachers and other education personnel shall "establish and maintain zero tolerance for all forms of sexual and gender-based violence, exploitation and abuse, physical and humiliating forms of punishment, psychological abuse, and child labour". This code also prohibits discrimination on the basis of physical disability and encourages support for parents of children with disabilities.

[6] *Corporal punishment of children in Sierra Leone*, Global Initiative to End Corporal Punishment of Children, 2018

[7] CRC/C/SLE/CO/3-5, para 17, November 2016

In addition to long distances, many girls report **heavy domestic work burdens**, in line with typical gender roles in many countries worldwide. The primary research conducted as part of this evaluation supports this finding, with, for example, former GEC beneficiaries noting the better educational performance of boys, as they have more time to study and are not obliged to undertake extensive domestic chores after school (for example, food preparation, firewood gathering, shopping, vending/income generation). Further, children both with and without disabilities are also frequently obliged to generate additional income for schooling (for example, as vendors, farms labour, selling firewood, in gold mines), either because they do not receive sufficient support from their parents/caregivers, or because they need to contribute to household income. The primary evaluation research found that this is exacerbated among children staying with non-parental caregivers.

Educational policy context

The 2018-2020 ESP focuses on the following four areas:

- improving access, equity and completion
- improving the quality and relevance of the education system
- strengthening education systems
- increasing emergency preparedness and response.

Much in this plan is of direct relevance to GATE-GEC, particularly the strategic outcomes and interventions related to improving access, equity and completion by:

- reducing the cost of schooling to parents at primary level
- increasing the transition rates from primary to junior secondary school
- expanding tuition support for girls at junior secondary school
- formalising the policy for re-entry of teenage mothers to the school system
- improving school infrastructure at primary and junior secondary level with new classrooms, clean water facilities, separate toilets for boys and girls and ramps for children with disabilities
- ensuring safety for girls by curbing sexual violence and exploitation in schools
- increasing equitable access to senior secondary education by providing scholarships to the most vulnerable groups of students, in particular girls, the poor, and children with disabilities.

The ESP presents four key areas of policy development and implementation which GATE-GEC is positioned to support:

1. Development of an Inclusive Education Policy and Strategy - learning and evidence generated by GEC 1 and GATE-GEC is well-positioned to provide primary data related to vulnerable groups to support this policy development process.

2. Formalisation of policy for re-entry of teenage mothers into the school system. The plan aims for pregnant girls to attend dedicated education centres, and after giving birth will be encouraged to return to school and continue with their formal education. Schools will be sensitised to support for the girls' re-entry into school. GEC beneficiaries who become teenage mothers will benefit from this policy change, and the project can help support their re-entry into the formal system.

3. Ensuring all schools are safe for girls through curbing sexual violence and exploitation in schools. This intervention will include sensitisation, referral channels, enforcement of the code of conduct for teachers, and the use of suggestion boxes. MEST has stated it will develop child protection mechanisms and guidelines (though no timeline for this was apparent). The ESP details some of the work currently being carried out under GATE which will support this intervention. GATE-GEC could feed into this process with work being done under GATE-GEC, including the score-carding process via the already-available teachers' code of conduct.

> *'There is the teachers' code of conduct, but it is not used effectively in schools, and people are not aware of its existence. Head teachers are given a copy, but they do not tend to put it up on a board, get further copies made, or publicise it at all.'*
>
> – MEST District Official, Kenema

4. Comprehensive sexuality education (CSE), a rights-based and gender-focused approach to sexuality education, will be integrated in to the curriculum from upper primary to senior secondary level. The existing training of primary teachers on adolescent sexual and reproductive life skills will be expanded to cover upper primary and junior secondary level and beyond. UNICEF and FAWE are mentioned in the ESP as being two of the organisations to be involved in this. In the ESP CSE is linked to the teacher training, making schools safer for girls, and it notes CSE can contribute to reducing adolescent pregnancy and drop-out rates. There is an opportunity for GATE-GEC to advocate for the implementation of this initiative, as it would contribute to the achievement of intermediate outcomes 1 and 3.

Two additional areas noted within the ESP of relevance to GATE-GEC are:

- Plans to improve the quality and relevance of the education system via implementation of revised curricula, conducting annual learning assessments, and strengthening the education system through increased accountability and monitoring;

- Establishment of a system for the professional development, induction and continuous development of teachers and school heads, making use of what has been learnt from previous interventions (such as country-wide lesson plans introduced in 2017).

The ESP clearly acknowledges the contributions of different independent initiatives and activities designed to equip teachers with new knowledge and skills to increase their performance in the classroom and enhance student learning. However, it notes that many of these activities are "*one-off and of short duration, disjointed and uncoordinated and without a clear vision of their long-term impact on change in teacher behaviour*".

To address this, the ESP commits to teacher development via "*evidence-based, holistic, transformational approach that takes into account policies and procedures, roles and responsibilities of the stakeholders in the teacher career continuum."* Further, it commits to an approach in which "*a composite set of mutually-enhancing, rather than stand-alone, disparate interventions, will form the basis of reform"* in the ESP.'

To avoid potential criticisms of being branded "disjointed and uncoordinated", GATE-GEC has the opportunity, via the established relationship with MEST, to feed into the development and implementation of ESP 2018-2020, the forthcoming ESP for the period 2021-2025, and the above processes, based on evidence and lessons derived from the project.

1.2 Project Theory of Change and assumptions

The GATE-GEC Theory of Change – barriers seeking to overcome, assumptions, key activities planning to conduct.

The GATE-GEC theory of change is that:

- if attendance rates are increased,
- if teaching and learning are 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:

…the girls and children with disabilities participating in the project will achieve sustained, improved learning outcomes and transition from primary school to JSS and from JSS to post-JSS options.

To realise this change, GATE-GEC plans to continue and develop interventions made under GEC 1, which include bursaries and study groups for beneficiaries, training and support of female learning assistants and student teachers, providing support for children with disabilities through community-based rehabilitation volunteers, and setting up model schools.

A VSLA component has been added under GATE-GEC, to facilitate the transition from bursaries to more sustainable economic empowerment activities. A score-carding initiative will be used in school as part of the increased focus on child protection. During score-carding, students will consider whether their school supports the successful teaching and learning of all girls and boys equally, is safe and free from violence for all girls and boys, promotes the health and well-being of all girls and boys, and allows all girls and boys to participate equally in school activities and decision-making. The main issues boys and girls identify within their school will then be used for scoring and ongoing monitoring.

The project acknowledges that barriers to learning and transition are "complex and multiple for children across Sierra Leone and additional barriers for those who fall under the vulnerability category".[8]

The project proposal outlines the following barriers and the associated proposed GATE-GEC responses:

[8] Plan International UK (2016). *GEC Transition Window Full Proposal Template.*

Primary School through JSS[9]	
Barriers/Reasons for not transitioning	**GATE-GEC Response**
Increased costs related to JSS – school fees introduced, more equipment needed.	- Short-term bursaries, introducing VSLAs and livelihoods grants.[10] - Phased withdrawal of bursaries
Increased opportunity costs – as girls reach puberty, culturally it is acceptable for them to marry (for a dowry) and become an 'adult' (which reduces costs for parents). They are also more capable of working – in fields or selling at the market.	- Economic empowerment solutions above - Collaboration with the UNICEF GATE nationwide campaign around girls' education influencing it to focus on children with disabilities[11]
Increased cultural discrimination and risk of abuse – lack of value placed on educating girls and children with disabilities post primary school, SRGBV including sexual abuse, teenage pregnancy	- Collaboration with GATE nationwide campaign around girls' education - Shared learning with the DFID girls' empowerment programme - Community/ youth accountability mechanisms through score-carding[12]
High repetition/ failure rates due to i) poor quality teaching; ii) lack of time to study after school; iii) lack of adaptive teaching responsive to individual learning needs	- CPD for PVs - Study groups - Mainstreaming and specific inclusive education activities (including CRBVs and model schools) - Training and support of LAs/STs - Economic empowerment solutions - Coordination with the EU
Lack of awareness and support to children with disabilities in communities and in school	- Community-based rehabilitation volunteers support programme including verification, screening and assistive device support - Targeted awareness-raising through CBRVs - Inclusive education mainstreamed and strengthened through PVs, LAs and STs
JSS through SSS	
Barriers/Reasons for not transitioning	**GATE-GEC Response**
School fees, increasing opportunity costs	Bursaries in the short-term, whilst introducing VSLAs and livelihoods grants. There will be a phased withdrawal of bursaries to allow for the VSLAs and livelihoods grants to gain momentum.
High repetition/ failure rates due to i) poor quality teaching; ii) lack of time to study after school; iii) lack of adaptive teaching responsive to individual learning needs	- CPD for PVs - Study groups - Mainstreaming and specific inclusive education activities (including CRBVs and model schools) - Training and support of LAs/STs - Economic empowerment solutions Coordination with SSEIP
Lack of role models	- LA/ ST component - Collaboration with GATE campaign and their learning centres
Increased cultural discrimination and risk of abuse – lack of value on educating girls/children with disabilities post primary school, SRGBV including sexual abuse, teenage pregnancy	- Collaboration with GATE campaign around the community groups - Community/ youth accountability mechanisms through score-carding
Lack of awareness of post-JSS opportunities	- Collaboration with GATE campaign - Content in Study Groups materials – topics and information around post-JSS opportunities in the literacy materials

[9] These barriers were identified during a planning workshop in Freetown with *GATE- GEC* partners and are consistent with problem analyses undertaken by DFID and UNICEF Sierra Leone.

[10] Evidence points to financial interventions having a strong positive impact on children's participation at school: 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).

[11] There is promising evidence that focusing on norms and inclusion has a positive impact on girls' participation in education: Unterhalter E et al (2014). *Interventions to enhance girls' education and gender equality. Education Rigorous Literature Review.* Department for International Development

[12] Q13 Reporting to the FM: Past Scorecard activities have brought about community-driven solutions for obstacles, including proactive community monitoring of teacher and student behaviour, the establishment of policies and penalties around undesired behaviours, the raising of awareness about sexual harassment issues, and the involvement of powerful local authorities in ensuring that the issues raised by students are addressed with respect at a community level. In one school, the community worked to upgrade the school lavatories and provide a more positive environment for girls after it was discovered that girls felt unsafe and intimidated when they went to the shared toilets.

The GATE-GEC MEL Framework refers to the following barriers to education in Sierra Leone:

Girls and boys	Girls	Girls and children with disabilities
- Poverty	- 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) which continue to reinforce gender inequalities.	- Vulnerability to sexual gender-based violence within the school environment.

The following table summarises the specific interventions and project logic associated with GATE-GEC.

Table 1: Project design and intervention

Intervention types	What is the intervention?	What Intermediate Outcome will the intervention will contribute to and how?	How will the intervention contribute to achieving the learning, transition and sustainability outcomes?
Material support Access (Year 1 and 2) Learning support	Distribution of **bursary items** including uniform, bag, pens, notebooks.	**Attendance** –having the materials to access and remain in school.	**Learning and Transition**: These materials will allow them to access the school learning environment and enable them to better engage in the classroom and study more effectively with the right tools and resources.
Material support Access (Year 1 and 2) Learning support	Provision of **assistive devices** to children with disabilities	**Attendance, Self-esteem.** Having the materials to access and remain in school. These devices will make children feel more positive about learning and it would be expected that if they have a supportive device that they can better engage and learn in the classroom and with teachers and other students.	**Learning and Transition**: Through having a supportive device, the expectation is that they can attend school, better engage in the classroom and with teachers and other students and ultimately improve their learning and transition. It will also make them feel empowered and confident to effectively learn with the appropriate aid.
Learning support/outcomes Teaching inputs	**Study groups** – After-school study sessions taking place twice a week focusing on numeracy and literacy, led by Programme Volunteers – GATE-GEC trained teachers in the schools	**Quality of teaching/learning, Self-esteem** The expectation is that additional support in two subjects - literacy and numeracy - gives them more time to concentrate on areas they are unclear on and/or would like to improve. Increased direct teaching and learning time leads to a better understanding of the subject. If children have more time to concentrate on specific subjects and their learning outcomes improve, they may feel more confident and have increased self-esteem.	**Learning and Transition** – Through providing additional study time and providing them with a safe and secure environment for additional learning, the expectation is that they improve their understanding and knowledge in the relevant subject area and are better equipped to successfully pass annual exams and transition to the next year. In addition, through having more support, the beneficiaries should have greater self-esteem and agency which may support them with future life choices. The expectation would also be that with the right messaging and sensitisation, that GEC schools will continue to self -sustain study groups once the project is over.
Material support Access	**School adaptations** to selected schools for improved accessibility and support through CBRVs	**Attendance, Self-esteem, Quality of learning** A selection of 20 schools will be adapted to support children with disabilities to access schools, providing the infrastructure that will enable children with disabilities to access and remain in school. These	**Learning, Transition and Sustainability:** Through easier accessibility to schools through the support of CBRVs and an adapted school environment, the expectation is that these children will be able to access the learning environment and improve their learning outcomes and transition. These schools will also help support children beyond the cohort, and beyond the lifetime of the project. The school adaptations will involve cluster inclusive

		school adaptations will make children feel more positive about learning and it would be expected that if they have supportive infrastructure that they can better engage in the classroom and with teachers and other students. In addition, dedicated support from CBR volunteers will support children with disabilities to access schools and feel comfortable and confident in the school environment. CBRVs will also be responsible for awareness and community engagement sessions to reinforce inclusive messages and dialogue on how to put inclusion into practice	training, which will be open to schools neighbouring the model schools. The presence of the CBRVs, whose support has reinforced awareness and dialogue on disability issues at community level will further support children with disabilities to attend school, learn and successfully transition with the relevant support and guidance from the volunteers.
Capacity building Learning support/outcomes	**Teachers professional development: trainings, mentoring and coaching for the teachers/PVs on literacy and numeracy, and gender responsive and inclusive pedagogy.**	**Attendance, Quality of teaching/learning, self-esteem** The importance of the teachers' continuous professional development package will be in raising the teaching skills of PVs, recognising its role to support and complement other education programmes in Sierra Leone. With a specific focus on literacy, numeracy and inclusive education, PVs and teachers will further develop their teaching capacity, knowledge and skills set and girls and children with disabilities will be supported to remain in schools and raise their learning levels.	**Learning, Transition and Sustainability:** Increased skills and competencies of study group leaders, and resourcing and monitoring of study groups will result in improved learning outcomes. It is anticipated that structured pedagogy programmes will have the largest and most consistent positive average effects on learning outcomes. If teaching and learning is more effective, students will learn and transition. In addition, the skills that these PVs are trained in will be beneficial to the broader school environment and other children in the school as these PVs (teachers in schools) will teach l other classes in the school.
Safe spaces	**Score-carding –** a participatory process where children and adults assess the school's safety through feedback and accountability mechanisms including the use of wooden feedback boxes placed in schools, for children to anonymously feedback.	**Self-esteem, Attendance**, **Quality of learning** Providing a mechanism by which children can register their concerns and provide feedback on the school environment will help beneficiaries feel that they are listened to by authority, raising their self-esteem. This may improve their experience at school, leading to improved attendance, and encourage them to engage more in class, enabling a better quality of learning.	**Learning and sustainability**: The score-carding process looks to empower children as it gives them the opportunity to express their feelings about the schools in a safe and secure way. This should in turn increase their self-esteem and confidence as they will feel their voice is being listened to and they can seek redress whenever there are safety concerns. If children are more confident in class and feel comfortable in school, this may impact on their learning in school as it creates a child-friendly learning environment. There could also be the potential that there is increased retention in schools as children are less likely to drop-out. In addition, if issues are resolved in and around schools, this will create a positive learning environment for all children and therefore there will be broader impact.
Community initiatives Access (Year 3 and ongoing)	Supporting communities in **setting up and running VSLAs**	**Attendance, Economic empowerment** In GATE-GEC, there will be the transition from bursaries (as these will be phased out by the end of year 2) to sustainable economic empowerment activities including VSLAs. The most vulnerable/marginalised parents of beneficiaries will be supported through VSLAs, including financial and entrepreneurial training. Economic barriers for the most marginalised families supported with	**Learning, Transition and Sustainability**: If households have greater economic capacity, and improved financial planning and management, they will have increased economic empowerment. Families will be able to support their children to attend school through paying for school fees, and materials for children to attend school. This will in turn have an impact on children being able to access, learn and transition throughout PS and JSS to post JSS and other successful transition points. In addition, this will also demonstrate the parents/caregivers' support to sending these girls and children with disabilities to schools, and how important education is amongst other outgoings in the household.

		VSLAs will be addressed so they can continue to send their children to school. Clear messaging on the importance of education and sending their children to school with the support of this intervention will be important.	
Learning support Community initiatives Female voice/role models	Training young women to become teachers through the Learning Assistant/Student Teacher component	**Quality of teaching/learning, Self-esteem, Attendance** Support to women to enter the teaching workforce, particularly from marginalised rural backgrounds. The LAs will also act as female role models within the schools for the boys and girls. They will have the opportunity to engage with and support the beneficiaries to feel more confident, have increased self-esteem, learn and remain in school. They may also provide inspiration to the children for future life choices.	**Learning, Transition:** Female role models in the schools (during in-school practice) may encourage girls to learn and remain in school. **Sustainability** – this component aims to contribute to an increase in the number of female teachers in schools in the future.

1.3 Target beneficiary groups and beneficiary numbers

Project contribution

Describe the project's primary target groups in terms of age range, grades, country/region, characteristics, and expected exposure to interventions over the course of the project.

The GATE-GEC project will continue to support the cohort of beneficiaries identified in the GEC-1 project. These include disadvantaged and marginalised girls (including girls from some of the most remote and rural parts of the participating districts), and children (girls and boys) with disabilities[13].

The project supports beneficiaries in a total of 6 districts across Sierra Leone: Kailahun, Kenema, Kono, Moyamba, Port Loko and Karene to transition from Primary School (P1-P6) to the end of Junior Secondary School (JSS 1-JSS 3). In educational attainment terms, 80 percent of the project cohort is in Junior Secondary School (JSS), with 20 percent in Primary School (PS). The age range of the children supported spans from 5 years to 20 years of age. Further details and characteristics of the project cohort can be found in Annex 4.

The project will run for three implementation years, with the fourth year focusing on tracking beneficiaries via a range of metrics to determine outcomes and overall sustainability of the project.

All project beneficiaries will receive bursaries in years 1 and 2, and regularly attend study groups through all three implementation years (supplementary to regular classes). Teachers (Project Volunteers - PVs) will receive continuous professional development over the course of the project in the form of structured teaching manuals, trainings and peer support/review. The project will also provide training and support to female learning assistants (year 1) and student teachers (year 2 and 3). Children with disabilities will receive additional support in the form of assistive devices, community-based rehabilitation volunteers, and participation in 'model schools' (all three implementation years).

Families will also be supported through the VSLA and livelihoods component to facilitate the transition from bursaries to more sustainable economic empowerment activities. This component will be introduced in year 1 with the participation of a total of 150 families. A score-carding initiative on teacher performance will be used in school as part of the increased focus on child protection throughout the 3 years of implementation.

Target number of girl beneficiaries (direct learning and transition beneficiaries), monitoring data that supports this number, calculations and assumptions

The number of learning and transition beneficiaries in the GATE-GEC project is 6585. This includes 4969 marginalised girls (without a disability) and 1616 children with disabilities (784 girls, 832 boys). The project supports a total of 248 primary schools and 188 junior secondary schools that serve 290 communities in the 6 districts.

The project implementation partners conducted a beneficiary reverification exercise from the beginning of the school year (September 2017) to January 2018 among 6585 intended beneficiaries. This exercise included a survey of demographic characteristics of the GEC cohort (age, gender, disability status), recent exam results and transition/promotion points of the cohort, aspirations of the cohort and details of household livelihoods Data was captured using tablets linked to an online database (Kobo Toolbox). Implementation partners use this reverification data to determine the exact numbers of beneficiaries per district that they support during the first project year. The project will repeat this reverification exercise annually over the course of the three implementation years.

Differences with respect to GEC 1, with GEC-T proposals and/or the MEL Framework.

Attrition rates, natural transition from school and margins of error among previous reverification datasets have resulted in reductions in overall beneficiary numbers between GEC 1 and GATE-GEC.

GEC 1 data collection activities experienced a limitation of inconsistencies between tools, collection times and methods across different partners. The dataset that was ultimately produced from the exercise was noted by partners

[13] Specifically those children identified as having disabilities under GEC 1. As part of the baseline evaluation the *Washington Group Short Set* disability survey was administered to all beneficiaries. Children positively identified as having a disability will be further assessed/verified by HI over the course of the project.

to be inconclusive and with some reliability limitations. As a guide, however, a total of 10,032 beneficiaries were verified in this process, providing a general basis for reverification.

The data captured during the GATE-GEC reverification phase used robust and more concise systems including a comprehensive standardised survey, applied via tablet (as opposed to the paper versions in GEC 1), and a consistent data collection period. A stronger focus on consistency and coordination meant that challenges or technical issues were immediately addressed and regularly shared amongst the consortium members. A further positive outcome of the reverification process (which includes GPS geo-location data) is that disbursement of items to and tracking progress of beneficiaries will be easier in future.

The final verified total of 6585 beneficiaries is the most accurate set of data to date in the GEC project. While this is a substantial reduction represents a 34 percent decrease in beneficiaries since GEC 1, the reverification process was unable to capture data on children that dropped out or transitioned since March 2016, which the consortium believes to account for the majority of the discrepancy.

The penultimate review of the GATE-GEC Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) framework took place in December 2017, with the reverification process completed subsequent to this, in late January 2018. Therefore, the final reverification dataset should be reflected in a revised MEL framework on approval of the baseline findings.

An overview of the beneficiaries by region, grade level, and sex is provided in the table below. For information on indirect beneficiaries, please see Annex 4.

Table 2: Overview of beneficiaries

	JSS			JSS Total	Primary school						Primary Total	Grand Total
	JSS1	JSS2	JSS3		P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6		
Kailahun	54	267	357	678	1	6	18	24	34	19	102	780
Female	41	262	355	658	1	4	9	11	11	10	46	704
Male	13	5	2	20		2	9	13	23	9	56	76
Karene	98	138	126	378	4	6	11	18	19	8	66	444
Female	96	137	126	375	1	2	6	3	7	3	22	397
Male	2	1		3	3	4	5	15	12	5	44	47
Kenema	60	193	333	587	22	30	26	34	23	35	170	757
Female	40	182	329	552	16	14	12	21	5	15	83	635
Male	20	11	4	35	6	16	14	13	18	20	87	122
Kono	30	173	334	537	15	30	32	22	34	24	158	695
Female	21	172	331	524	11	16	12	11	19	11	80	604
Male	9	1	3	13	4	14	20	11	15	13	78	91
Moyamba	207	427	520	1154	41	54	67	70	65	63	360	1514
Female	190	419	519	1128	19	24	39	43	29	28	182	1310
Male	17	8	1	26	22	30	28	27	36	35	178	204
Port Loko	245	540	479	1309	22	79	81	70	81	52	386	1695
Female	221	528	473	1267	17	34	35	37	41	23	188	1455
Male	24	12	6	42	5	45	46	33	40	29	198	240
Grand Total	694	1738	2149	4643	105	205	235	238	256	201	1242	5885

Reverification Process – Evaluator Review

The reverification process implemented by consortium partners was reviewed as part of the independent evaluation function of the baseline, which concludes it was comprehensive and well-run, with staff collecting data on a range of parameters, directly interviewing almost all project beneficiaries, and collecting specific information related to the beneficiaries themselves (i.e. photos, GPS locations) to inform a robust and reliable information management system. Thus, it represents a significant improvement on GEC 1.

The use of The Washington Group's Short Set of questions on disability directly with beneficiaries during reverification was a useful way to determine disability status.[14] Specialised training on the short set of questions was made available from the fund manager in early 2018, *after* the reverification process, but will be applicable in subsequent research.

Some key features of the beneficiary population noted by analysis of the reverification data and direct qualitative research among programme communities are as follows:

- More girls living within the project areas are facing significant barriers to education than in 2013. For example, a head teacher of a primary school estimated that of the 35 percent of his students that are now orphans, most of them are due to the death of their parents from the 2014-2015 Ebola outbreak. Staff from another school estimated that 40 percent of children are now orphans compared to 20 percent pre-Ebola. The widespread socio-economic impact of the Ebola crisis particularly affected three GEC 1/GATE-GEC operational districts (Kenema, Kailahun, Port Loko). Respondents to the evaluation noted that many more children than before are living with caretakers other than their parents, with many others being cared for by their grandmother or other relatives after the death of their parents.

- Since 2013, there appears to be an increasing trend of children with disabilities and vulnerable children/girls who are moving to GATE-GEC communities and enrolling in treatment schools. During the data collection phase, the research teams noted, but did not quantify, children with disabilities within treatment schools who are not part of the GATE-GEC-supported cohort. Further research would be necessary to determine how many children with disabilities within treatment schools are not included within the cohort, and their needs.

- Qualitative research indicated children with disabilities have entered school specifically as a result of the GEC 1 sensitisation among communities. Qualitative evaluation research indicated, however, that some such school entrants did so with an expectation of benefitting from the project under GATE-GEC – which was not guaranteed, leading to disappointment. An aspiration for inclusion of children with disabilities (that were not GEC 1 beneficiaries) was shared with the baseline evaluation team by consortium member staff, head teachers, PVs and by children with disabilities themselves. This expectation was reinforced by the smaller-than-expected cohort of actual beneficiaries. An example of this was provided to the evaluation team by a community-based volunteer, who requested inclusion of a child with a physical disability whose family had recently moved to the community and whose parents were persuaded by the volunteer to enrol their child in school. While the project aims to draw exclusively from the original GEC 1 beneficiaries, approximately 230 are between six and eight years old, indicating that some children have been added to the cohort since 2013. Thus, a precedent for adding beneficiaries exists.

- In addition, given that the baseline research identified children with disabilities in schools who are *not* beneficiaries, inconsistent screening for disability in 2013 may have also taken place, leading to misidentification (in severity terms) or non-identification. The ultimate outcome is that there are an undetermined number of children with disabilities in project communities, some of whom were enrolled in treatment schools in 2013 and others who have entered treatment schools since the beneficiaries were identified in 2013, who are not receiving any direct support from the project.

- Recognising that girls from the most impoverished households in rural areas, single-parent homes, orphaned girls, girls whose households face extra challenges (e.g. due to a family member with a disability) and school drop-outs, as well as both boys and girls with disabilities, face significant barriers to education, GEC 1

[14] It is important to note that the Washington Group's Short Set of questions should be used as an initial screen of possible disability status, not for specific diagnosis which is done through follow-up assessments.

primarily targeted these disadvantaged groups. The selection criteria were applied by community selection committees, which developed guidelines for the selection of beneficiaries in treatment schools. The criteria were:

- Girls between the ages of 10 and 20;
- Girls living in single-parent homes;
- Girls who are mothers;
- Drop-outs from poor families;
- Girls affected by cultural and traditional barriers;
- Girls living on their own with no reliable financial support;
- Children with disabilities;
- Survivors of rape;
- Orphaned girls (deceased mother/father or mother and father, or unknown);
- Girls who have at least one parent with a disability;
- Girls in the care of low-income or unemployed homes.

However, research among former GEC 1 beneficiaries and their caregivers indicated some lack of awareness of criteria for selection as beneficiaries. This correlates well with findings of the GEC 1 Endline Evaluation, that it was '*not well understood why only some girls received bursaries and others were excluded*'. The evaluation team thus restates this recommendation to the project to pay particular attention to outreach on beneficiary selection processes and criteria.

> *"We do not know who paid school fees for our daughters as beneficiaries, but we know it had something to do with Plan. We were never told why our daughters had been chosen. We were told that if our daughters got pregnant the support would stop"*
>
> - Mother of former GEC 1 beneficiary, Port Loko

- Overall, the appropriateness and accuracy of targeting is influenced by the decision to include beneficiaries from GEC 1. By defining the beneficiary population as one already known and in contact with the implementers, it made recontact relatively straightforward. However, it also means that the beneficiary population is representative of the population of marginalised children at the inception of GEC 1, rather than at the time of GATE-GEC.

2. Baseline Evaluation Approach and Methodology

International Solutions Group (ISG), an international monitoring, evaluation and reporting research firm, was contacted by Plan International in September/October 2017 to undertake the baseline research in Sierra Leone for the GATE-GEC project.

2.1 Key evaluation questions & role of the baseline

Per the assignment terms of reference, ISG implemented the baseline evaluation research in accordance with the best-practice DAC evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact.

The specific objectives of this baseline evaluation of GATE-GEC are to:

- Conduct a mixed-methods, gender-sensitive baseline evaluation that is inclusive of persons with disabilities (disaggregated by types) of the GATE-GEC project.
- Align research efforts (as possible) with Plan's Programme Accountability and Learning System, including research relating to child-centredness, gender and inclusion.
- Abide by Plan International's Child-Centred Community Development principles, ensuring children are at the centre of the research, that principles of gender equality, inclusion (particularly around disabilities) and non-discrimination are considered and acted upon throughout, and that the meaningful participation of children and other key stakeholders is promoted in the design and implementation of the baseline.
- Conduct research in line with Plan International's Child Protection Policy and internal guidelines on Child Protection and ethical standards in Monitoring, Evaluation and Research

ISG conducted the primary and secondary baseline research in late 2017, at the beginning of the current phase of the GATE-GEC programme, collating existing secondary school-level and district-level data, quantitative survey data (from primary and secondary schools, students, and households) and qualitative data from Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with stakeholders, including teachers and school staff, girls, boys, children with disabilities, parents, and community members and leaders. The research focuses on benchmarks and indicators proposed via the GATE-GEC logframe and Theory of Change (TOC) and provides a dataset that can be used for outcome/impact measurement during and after programme implementation. The findings also include proposed revisions in project design and the MEL framework. Finally, the baseline research serves as a framework to build the capacity of key Plan and partner staff in participatory data collection and use of key tools as well as the use and management of data.

Overview of Evaluation Questions

ISG, as part of the inception phase of the baseline evaluation worked with Plan to refine the specific evaluation questions in line with the project MEL framework and OECD-DAC evaluation criteria as well as cross-cutting themes of relevance to Plan International's overall programming. The following were the key evaluation questions:

Relevance - extent GATE-GEC framed within national educational priorities & policies - success of GATE-GEC design according to stakeholders - extent GATE-GEC addresses the needs of marginalised girls & CWDs - whether programme logic consistent with proposal - activities & outputs consistent with overall goal & attainment of objectives & intended impacts & effects - whether results framework/logframe represent acceptable performance benchmarks that demonstrate/measure achievement of programme goals
Effectiveness - extent reaching & affecting learning by marginalised girls & CWDs (by type & severity of disability) - extent addressing needs of marginalised girls & CWDs - how the children involved in GATE-GEC were selected - to what extent children are involved in the programme - success of programme implementation according to stakeholders - whether activities translating / likely to translate into planned outputs, thus contributing to purpose & goal - what working /not working /what is likely to work, why, & effects - what unable to achieve - whether risks & assumptions articulated by GATE-GEC comprehensive & realistic (*GATE-GEC proposal)* - to what extent contributing to increased equality between girls & boys, woman & men - to what extent gender transformative
Efficiency - whether M&E information is fed back into programming - whether GATE-GEC measures value for money (*outputs in relation to inputs, whether objectives being achieved on time, cost-efficient & implemented in most efficient way)* - level of involvement of children, parents, teachers & school administrators in programme implementation
Impact - on direct beneficiaries – marginalised girls & CWDs - enabling them to be in school, on their learning & on specific groups of children with disabilities (type & severity of disabilities) - likely long-term impact on the lives of beneficiaries - on indirect beneficiaries - including boys within the schools - how participation in GATE-GEC is affecting girls & boys, - direct & indirect, positive & negative effects on girls & boys - how project affecting community attitudes towards the educational rights of marginalised girls & CWDs - who benefits, who is excluded & why - how marginalised & vulnerable groups are included - what works to increase attendance, quality of learning & transition of marginalised girls & CWDs throughout school & beyond JSS - best practices & successful stories of change
Sustainability - sustainability scorecard (per MEL plan): scale 1-4, at sustainability at school, community & system levels - of the proposed changes envisaged by the project - external factors (political, availability of funding, other interventions) which may affect achievement of objectives - positively or negatively - the key factors /constraints that contribute to sustaining the programme gains in the medium-long term, with/ without project intervention

For future research (i.e. at midline and endline of the project), ISG recommends the following additional questions:

1. Whether there is partnership and collaboration with the MEST at central and district level and if knowledge and good practices are being shared across the project;

2. Whether there is effective collaboration and cooperation with other relevant interventions (e.g. UNICEF GATE);

3. What is the quantity/quality of involvement of School Management Committees, Boards of Governors, and Community-Teacher Associations in the project?

2.2 Outcomes and Intermediate Outcomes

The project's Outcomes and Intermediate Outcomes are presented in the following tables. In summary, the baseline evaluation determined that there is indeed a logical link between the Outcomes and Intermediate Outcomes and that all fit within the project's Theory of Change.

Table 3: Outcomes for measurement

Outcome	Level at which measurement will take place	Tool and mode of data collection	Rationale (why this is most appropriate approach for this output)	Frequency of data collection
Outcome Indicator 1 - Learning				
Number of marginalised girls and children with disabilities supported by GEC with improved learning outcomes - literacy.	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 - 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.	Baseline, midline and endline
Outcome Indicator 2 - Transition				
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).	Household and community	HH survey KIIs and FGDs	This allows us to determine where the cohort has transitioned to.	Baseline, midline and endline
Outcome Indicator 3 – Sustainability				
Project can demonstrate that the changes it has brought about which increase learning and transition through education cycles are sustainable.	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

Table 4: Intermediate Outcomes for measurement

Outcome	Level at which measurement will take place	Tool and mode of data collection	Rationale (why this is most appropriate approach for this output)	Frequency of data collection
Intermediate Outcome Indicator 1 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 PS to JSS and post JSS (disaggregated by gender, disability and type (severity), age (grade) and geographical location.)	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)
Intermediate Outcome Indicator 2 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.)	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)

Intermediate Outcome Indicator 3 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.	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 score carding data and study group monitoring can also be used.	Evaluate how the projects activities incl. study groups and score carding 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)
Intermediate Outcome Indicator 4 % 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.)	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)
Intermediate Outcome Indicator 5 # 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	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)

Sustainability of outcomes & intermediate outcomes

As the endline evaluation of GEC 1 highlighted, the level of sustainability of project interventions and positive outcomes is highly dependent on the level of ownership and commitment of MEST officials, at central and district level, as well as staff in schools, Boards of Governors (JSS), School Management Committees (PS) and Community-Teacher Associations. This, in turn, depends on the quality of evidence-based advocacy presented to MEST and to school and community stakeholders, and thus how successful the project will be in influencing policy development and implementation.

If beneficiaries feel ownership of the project and are aware of the benefits for them and their communities, then they will also be powerful advocates for sustainability. Their expectations and aspirations will be raised, and they will want those opportunities to be available to others in their families and communities.

Similarly, if VSLAs enable families to cover education-related costs in a sustainable way then this will support not only beneficiaries, but also children within the wider communities, in accessing education and continuing through to complete SSS or beyond.

Table 5: Sustainability outcomes for measurement

Sustainability Level	Level at which measurement will take place	What source of measurement/verification will you use?	Rationale – clarify how you will use your qualitative analysis to support your chosen indicators.	Frequency of data collection
School	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 prioritisation 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-centred pedagogy.	Baseline, Midline, and Endline
Community	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	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 prioritise, 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

2.3 Evaluation methodology

The baseline evaluation utilised both quantitative and qualitative approaches for data collection. The quantitative data collection consisted of randomly selected schools and students from pre-populated lists of *Treatment* and *Control* schools and students at the JSS level to allow for difference-in-difference analysis of results as well as facilitate pre-and post- test changes in key outcome indicators to assess the impact of the project at a later stage. At the primary level, schools and beneficiaries were randomly selected for a treatment group. Given that primary-level beneficiaries were all selected based on being children with disabilities, a control group for primary students would also need to only include children with disabilities that did not receive project benefits. The consortium partners decided involvement of such a group with no project benefits would not be ethical.

Project beneficiaries include children with disabilities in primary and junior secondary and marginalised girls in junior secondary schools. Student samples were selected based on their district, and grade level.

To ensure the evaluation is representative of all stakeholders, the baseline research utilised qualitative data collection to capture feedback from girls, boys, caregivers (including parents and non-parents), CBRVs and community and religious leaders, head teachers, teachers, and MEST officials.

A summary of research methods/tools/approaches is as follows:

Quantitative Methods	Qualitative Methods
▪ Reading assessments (EGRA/SeGRA) to measure literacy changes in primary schools and junior secondary schools ▪ Mathematics assessment (EGMA/SeGMA) to measure numeracy changes in primary schools and junior secondary schools ▪ Household survey to measure: o Attitudes towards girls' education and gender norms; o Attitudes and practices around children with disabilities; o VSLA data gathered 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. o Livelihoods grants data on income change and ability to cover educational costs o Survey included responses from head of household, primary caretaker, and students ▪ Student School Survey (called the Girls' School Survey but comprised both females and males) to measure: o Access to schools and school facilities o Any issues girls face around interactions with other students or teachers; o Prevalence of disability; o Self-esteem and self-efficacy perceptions; o Perceptions on the quality of their teaching. ▪ School Data Sheet to measure: o Numbers of girls and boys enrolled in primary and JSS (both in control and intervention schools); o Promotion rates: Primary to JSS, and JSS to SSS; o Dropout/repetition rates of GEC and control cohorts. ▪ Classroom Observation Survey to measure: o School teacher, PV, performance with respect to child-centred and inclusive education	▪ Focus group discussions (FGD) among groups of key stakeholders, including targeted girls, boys, children with disabilities, teachers and parents. ▪ Key Informant Interviews (KII) of a range of stakeholders, including head teachers, inspectors, community and religious leaders and CSO staff in the targeted communities, as well as stakeholders in the education sector (MEST, DFID, EU, UNICEF amongst others) ▪ Desk Review Including programme document, relevant research commissioned by Plan and Plan policy, strategic and planning documents, Logframe and the MEL framework

In addition, the primary research was supported by, and triangulated with, available national-level data on educational outputs, and outcomes/performance in Sierra Leone. District-level samples were investigated using government census data, and transition rates were investigated using UNESCO education data.[15][16] The tools above allowed the

[15] Government of Sierra Leone (2016) Provisional Results: 2015 Housing and Population Census. https://www.statistics.sl/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/2015-Census-Provisional-Result.pdf
[16] UNESCO (2013). Sierra Leone: Education Country Status Report. http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002260/226039e.pdf

research team to collect data from the individual/beneficiary level, school level, community level, and national/regional levels.

This combination of methods, supported by a detailed implementation plan, allowed the research team to:

- Reach and engage with a variety of internal and external stakeholders at different levels;
- Tackle questions from different perspectives via different methods. This permits triangulation of data and greater precision in identifying significant patterns and drawing findings and conclusions.

For quantitative data collection, ISG partnered with a third-party Sierra Leone-based research company, Dalan Consultants, to collect data using 25 experienced enumerators utilising electronic devices for data input and recording (further details provided below) under the supervision of an international quantitative data collection specialist.

For qualitative data collection, an international education evaluation specialist was supported by six national research assistants (contracted through Dalan Consultants) to support the data collection process through translation and other logistical support.

Counterfactual Analysis

The GATE-GEC project provides support to many marginalised girls and children with disabilities in rural Sierra Leone. During the initial selection process, schools in marginalised communities in Sierra Leone were selected to be part of the programme, and students from those schools were selected to be beneficiaries. While the communities served were selected purposefully as high-need areas, GATE-GEC does not cover all qualifying communities in their regions of operation. In the districts where the programme is in operation, schools that were not selected to be part of the programme serve as an adequate counterfactual scenario. The control schools were selected from these communities. In districts where there were more rural schools than required, the sample was selected randomly from a list acquired from the government through implementing organisations. When there were too few control schools, all available control schools were selected, and alternates were randomly selected from nearby districts where there were more schools to select from. Further information is provided below.

Mixed-methods

The baseline evaluation makes use of *mixed methods* in that it contains both qualitative and quantitative components used to inform the analysis. When possible, the beneficiaries and households interviewed qualitatively were selected from the quantitative sample. By doing so, it ensures that the qualitative and quantitative information are reflective of a single experience: insights from the qualitative interviews (i.e. FGDs and KIIs) truly reflect the experience of the same group as the quantitative. During baseline design data collection, and analysis, findings from the qualitative and quantitative data were discussed to identify common themes and disparities.

Longitudinal cohort tracking

The evaluation makes use of cohorts, meaning that the same students that took part in the baseline will be tracked at midline and endline. The use of cohorts ensures that the population used during baseline, midline and endline are truly comparable: without cohorts, it would be difficult to know if changes in outcomes were due to different samples or effects of the support. However, cohort attrition over time is a serious concern, as the experience under GEC 1 illustrates. To mitigate the risk of attrition, the quantitative sample size was increased by 42 percent, which maintains statistical robustness for an up to 30 percent sample attrition. Attrition also risks sample bias: some subpopulations may be more prone to attrition, such as students with uncertain housing situations or temporary caregivers. To ensure that cohorts remain representative throughout, several strategies were employed to ensure ability to recontact students. For students interviewed or assessed, GPS coordinates were taken of their homes and schools, contact information of their heads of household and caregivers were written down, and consent was requested to contact neighbours for information about the household/students' whereabouts if they cannot be found. Unique identification numbers were assigned to all students in the sample. For the treatment (beneficiary) cohort, the identification numbers assigned by the consortium of implementers were used. For the control cohort, unique identification numbers were assigned by the external evaluator. Each identification number includes a unique school identification number.

Integration of intermediate outcome and output data

The outcomes and intermediate outcomes informed what questions were asked both in the standardised surveys and during qualitative interviews. For key intermediate outcomes, the relevant findings are described below using alternate indicators of success.

Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) standards

GATE-GEC is GESI transformative, in that it actively seeks to transform inequalities in the long term for marginalised girls and children (girls and boys) with disabilities. Beneficiaries selected under GEC 1 were girls from the most impoverished households in rural areas, from single-parent homes, orphans, girls who are mothers, girls whose households face extra challenges due to a family member with a disability or are in the care of low-income or unemployed homes, girls affected by cultural and traditional barriers, girls living on their own with no reliable financial support, survivors of rape and school drop-outs, as well as both boys and girls with disabilities.

Is the beneficiary a parent?		
	Yes	No
Male	3	191
Female	40	846
Total	43	1,037

Note: Totals do not reflect entire sample due to nonresponses.

During the data collection activities, four percent of respondents (43 of 1,037) claimed to be parents. As discussed above, MEST policy regarding young mothers has now changed, so more young mothers (both beneficiary and non-beneficiary girls) should now be returning to the formal system after giving birth.

Given the substantially more robust identification process during re-verification (than under GEC 1), there is a strong likelihood of successful follow-up on children who stopped attending school, to establish why they have stopped attending, and, indeed, to encourage them to return school if possible.

Box 3: Benchmarking for learning and transition

Baseline	Midline (1 year later)	Endline (2 years later)
Project grades		
JSS1	JSS2	JSS3
JSS2	JSS3	
JSS3	SSS1/Post-School	SSS1/Post-School
Benchmark grades		
JSS1	n/a	n/a
JSS2	n/a	n/a
JSS3	n/a	n/a

2.4 Baseline data collection process

Pre-data collection

Qualitative

Prior to implementation of fieldwork in November/December 2017, ISG undertook a desk review of project documentation and related to education in Sierra Leone which provided the background and context to the baseline research for GATE-GEC.

FGD and KII guides for each stakeholder group were developed by ISG on the basis of the evaluation questions and approved by PWC and Plan UK prior to the fieldwork. The questions were designed to:

1) Provide an understanding of the barriers and challenges girls and children with disabilities face in accessing and remaining in school and receiving a quality education,

2) Explore community perceptions on the importance of education for children (including boys, girls, and children with disabilities), and

3) Capture respondents' views regarding what they believe works well within the project, areas for improvement, and identify crucial gaps along with how these may be addressed.

The sampling framework for qualitative data collection was developed in collaboration with the GATE-GEC M&E team in Plan UK and aimed to cover a wide range of stakeholders, schools, and communities across Freetown and the six project districts within the allocated time in-country.

A schedule was shared with the Hub Team and districts, with dates and details of all the FGDs and KIIs to be carried out in each district, with target groups, school level, number of participants and whether beneficiary or control. The consortium partners leading in each district were responsible for choosing the schools and communities where qualitative data collection was to take place, using the lists of sample and control schools produced for the baseline survey, and for arranging the FGDs and KIIs. For each FGD, at both primary and junior secondary school level, the evaluation team requested six to eight participants, with a mix of students from different grades.

A full list of the question schedules for each of these stakeholder groups is presented in the Annexes.

Six national research assistants were contracted to support the international qualitative data collection expert. These individuals were sourced through ISG's local partner, Dalan Consultants, and chosen due to their relevant experience including skills in specific local languages. The research assistants were split into three teams of two (one female and one male) in each district and provided translation and other logistical support to the international specialist.

All six research assistants attended a one-day briefing and training prior to data collection activities which comprised of a project overview, disability training, child protection briefing and training on the evaluation's qualitative data collection tools. The child protection briefing included reporting protocols for any child protection issues discovered. The disability input provided sensitisation and training on collecting data from children with disabilities. The training on the qualitative data collection tools contained input from HI and the GATE-GEC Hub Child Protection Advisor and included the procedures and protocols for the data collection process and familiarisation with the questions for all stakeholder groups. Additionally, the training also gave the research assistants the opportunity to ask questions and for discussion within the team about dealing with sensitive issues.

Quantitative

As noted above in the sampling framework, three groups of students were sampled: treatment (beneficiary) JSS students, control JSS students, and treatment primary students. For the purposes of measuring learning outcomes (to determine payment by results), the sample only comprised JSS level treatment and control students. For descriptive data of beneficiaries, students from both primary and JSS level were included.

The sample sizes for JSS and PS levels were determined separately. The JSS levels were used to measure transition and learning for the purposes of payment by results. The sample size needed to be large enough to reliably detect an effect size equal to **0.25 standard deviations** for learning or a **10 percent increase in transition**. Accounting for clustering seven students per school, and estimating a 30 percent attrition rate, it was determined that 1,148 JSS students would be required (See Annex 10: Sampling Framework). For primary level students, partners agreed that collecting data for 250 students would be sufficient. The number of schools was stratified to reflect the proportions of beneficiaries in each district, with exceptions only when there were insufficient control schools in each district. For example, given that only one school in Kailahun district is not a treatment school, additional control schools were selected from similar, neighbouring districts in Eastern Sierra Leone.

This plan was extended on determining early in the field research that several control schools on the master list did not exist. As such, the options were to collect more control schools from the Western side of the country, or to reduce the proportion of control schools in the sample. The latter option was selected as being the more robust. With the proportion of the sample that included control schools reduced from 50 percent to 45 percent.

Once the number of treatment and control JSS schools per district was established, schools were randomly selected from their respective school lists. Primary schools were selected using the same methodology as JSS treatment schools. In some cases, where there were insufficient beneficiaries in some treatment schools, more treatment schools within that district were added to reach the desired sample size.

Beneficiary students were selected at random within their grade levels from the beneficiary data available at the time of sampling. In cases where there were insufficient students of a given grade level but sufficient students in the school, additional students were selected from lower grade levels to maximise the size of the sample followed from early JSS to the end of the project. In control JSS schools, lists of students enrolled were unavailable; student selection had to take place by enumerators once they visited the schools. To most closely reflect the treatment sample without overcomplicating instructions, each of the two enumerators visiting a control school selected two JSS1 students, two JSS2 students, and one JSS3 students per school. Enumerators utilised a random number generator on their tablets[17] and counted down each grade's enrolment list until the selected random number was reached and selected the corresponding student. To mirror the treatment sample, only girls and children with disabilities were selected. Because selections were based on student lists, there is no risk of double-counting of students. Children with multiple disabilities or meeting multiple criteria still only would appear once in the lists from which populations were selected. There was no risk of double counting.

[17] The equivalent of a Kish Grid

Instrument Design and Piloting

Learning Assessments

As discussed further under Section 4.1, two versions of a primary-level reading assessment (EGRA), two versions of a primary-level maths assessment (EGMA), two versions of a JSS level reading assessment (SEGRA), and two versions of a JSS level maths assessment (SeGMA) were designed.

The tests were designed on the basis of the guidance provided by GEC and EGRA/EGMA international guidance and standards,[18] tailored specifically for the Sierra Leone context using the MEST Primary and Secondary Lesson Plans, provided by Plan Sierra Leone to the research team prior to tool design. Resources provided by project partner Leh Wi Learn, including lesson plans, were used to contextualise the learning assessments to the local context.

Iterative feedback rounds were solicited from Plan UK and Sierra Leone staff, Primary and Secondary School teachers in project areas and the fund manager education specialist. On approval of the test formats by the fund manager, 84 students (42 each primary and JSS) completed both versions of the test to ensure they were of an appropriate level of difficulty. The tests were piloted in four communities in four different districts (Port Loko, Moyamba, Kenema and Karene), and the responses tabulated. This facilitated adjustment to the tools to reflect de-facto educational levels amongst respondents – thus avoiding floor and ceiling effects - and also permitted a practical field-test of data entry, collation, and initial analysis procedures to help ensure smooth full-scale data collection.[19]

Only one subtask proved to be too difficult for students during instrument trials and was modified. One version was used for the baseline, and another was saved for future assessments. Initial test results (and final baseline results) confirm that all versions were of the appropriate level, with high inter-test comparability of results and most test results located in the appropriate ranges (better performance in the earlier/easier tests, poorer performance in the later/more difficult tests). Any minor differences in test results between versions were saved to improve comparability.

Finally, with the assistance of implementing partner HI, the approved final assessments were tailored for children with disabilities. Changes made to facilitate the completion of the tests were:

- Extended duration of time-bound tests, and
- Larger font sizes and clearer instructions to both students and enumerators.

Further, HI staff provided training to the enumerators on appropriate ways to interact and assess children with various disabilities.

Household, Student, Classroom Surveys

The following surveys were provided to the research team in advance of the assignment by the GATE-GEC fund manager, which developed standardised instruments for use across all GATE-GEC countries. As such, piloting of the tools was undertaken at the same time as the learning assessments for enumerator training purposes only, and no significant modification took place.

To facilitate survey data collection and entry, the research team prepared electronic versions of the surveys for use on mobile devices (using the Open Data Kit – an open-source data collection/management solution) coupled with an online data collection service, ValiData,[20] to enter collate and cross-check data in real-time. ValiData uses statistical criteria and validation rules to ensure that all survey responses are within expected parameters. It also conducts cross-checks of enumerator data entry performance, flagging any inconsistencies for potential incorrect procedures.

During fieldwork, the research team entered survey data directly into mobile devices, from which data was uploaded to the central server in Freetown daily (assuming online connectivity). Raw data was exported to pre-coded templates in an appropriate analysis software (STATA), for subsequent analysis by the baseline quantitative specialist.

[18] EGRA and EGMA toolkits, see:
https://shared.rti.org/content/early-grade-reading-assessment-egra-toolkit-second-edition
https://ierc-publicfiles.s3.amazonaws.com/public/resources/EGMA%20Toolkit_March2014.pdf

[19] See Annex 9 for more detail on the Learning Assessment Piloting and Calibration

[20] https://www.finca.org/validata/

Student School Survey

The school survey for girls provided information related to programme beneficiaries and the selected control group in the areas of:

- Demographics, including disability status (collected as part of the programme verification process);
- Student self-esteem and self-confidence;
- Perceptions of educational performance, safety/security.

Classroom Observation Survey

This survey tool provided an assessment of the performance of PVs (at baseline no Learning Assistants had commenced activities) in a classroom or study group context. This provides a quantitative measure of the actual outcomes of PV training (and LA recruitment at midline/endline) on students. The tool was applied on the basis of enumerator observation of a classroom environment over the course of one class.

The classroom observation survey consisted of an approximately 30-point checklist of key 'Learner-Centred Methodology' techniques - of which a teacher may use ten or more in any one lesson for it to be considered 'learner-centred'. The list also contained elements related to inclusiveness of children with disabilities.

The enumerator passively observed class dynamics and noted any of the techniques applied over the duration of the class.

Household survey

The household survey was based on a standardised questionnaire provided by GEC fund manager. It was undertaken among households with one or more programme participants as members, as well as an appropriate control group. The survey collected data on the following areas:

- General demographic and socio-economic characteristics of households and members, including head of household and the primary caregiver of the programme beneficiary (if different);

- Perceptions of primary caregivers around education and safety/security of school children and other factors that may influence access to education;

- Caregiver-provided details of the programme beneficiary (one randomly preselected if more than one beneficiary resided in the household) and their educational performance

- Perceptions of primary caregivers around disability and the rights of children with disabilities (disaggregated for boys and girls);

- Perceptions of the programme beneficiary (one will be randomly preselected if more than one beneficiary reside in the household) regarding the importance of education;

- Primary caregiver perceptions of school management and governance, and teaching performance;

- Status of benefits received (to date) from GATE-GEC and participation in GATE-GEC activities;

- Household income, saving and expenditure (including specific expenditure on education).

The survey tool itself consisted of approximately 200 questions and was administered to (preferably) the head of household, the primary caregiver of the selected young person residing in the household (if different to the HOH), and the programme beneficiary (or control sample individual) residing in the household. Programme beneficiaries to be surveyed utilising the tool were preselected from the full list of verified programme beneficiaries as part of the sampling process. The research team conducted oversampling of beneficiaries to provide backup interviewees if a preselected beneficiary was not present in the household. Although the survey instruments on the devices were written in English, enumerators for each district were selected based on their ability to communicate in the languages spoken in their assigned district and spoke with respondents in their preferred language.

Cohort Tracking. As discussed above, several methods were employed to increase the likelihood of re-contacting respondents in the future. At the time of recording, every household, student, and school survey saved GPS coordinates of where it took place. This provides multiple recordings of both school coordinates and household coordinates for every single observation. During each household survey, respondents were asked for a phone number to reach them, as well as consent to ask their neighbours how to reach them if they move. Similarly, contact information was obtained from school principals. This is discussed further in Section 4.5 below.

Enumerators and training. Dalan Consultants supplied 25 enumerators for data collection. All enumerators were experienced with conducting household surveys and the majority reported experience in education assessments. Enumerators were paired and worked together throughout the training period to discuss and aid each other's improvement. Training took place over five days: three full days and two half-days were spent in the firm's training centre. Centre-based training included child protection subjects, some fundamental concepts surrounding working with children with disabilities, proper data collection techniques, and proper use of the learning assessment and colour-coded household and school surveys. Implementing partners participated throughout the five-day training: they led units on disability, child protection, and the project background, and participated and supervised throughout the week. Outside of the centre-based training, two half-days were spent at local schools using the learning assessment instruments. Multiple enumerators filled out their assessment tools while one person would administer the assessment. Training included discussions between district teams to ensure a common vocabulary was used when asking questions in the languages spoken by respondents. All enumerators had multiple opportunities to administer the assessment. Afterwards, the assessment findings between enumerators were aggregated and feedback provided to ensure inter-rater reliability exceeded 90 percent on learning assessments on the final day. Trainings were highly interactive; most of the time was spent with enumerators directly interacting with the tools and conducting practice KIIs.

During data collection

Qualitative and quantitative data collection took place simultaneously (November 20 to December 15). Where possible, the qualitative data team targeted the same students as those covered by quantitative data collection at sample treatment and control schools. At primary level, 24 out of the 35 children who participated in FGDs for beneficiaries were also involved in quantitative data collection. At JSS level, 26 out of the 40 children who participated in FGDs for beneficiaries were also involved in quantitative data collection, and 9 out of the 12 girls at a sample control school. Appropriately data-secure[21] lists of the participants in all data collection activities have been retained by the research team, available on request, to facilitate the organisation of activities for the midline and endline.

A description of the specific research tools utilised for the baseline research, and copies of the tools themselves are included in Annex 7.

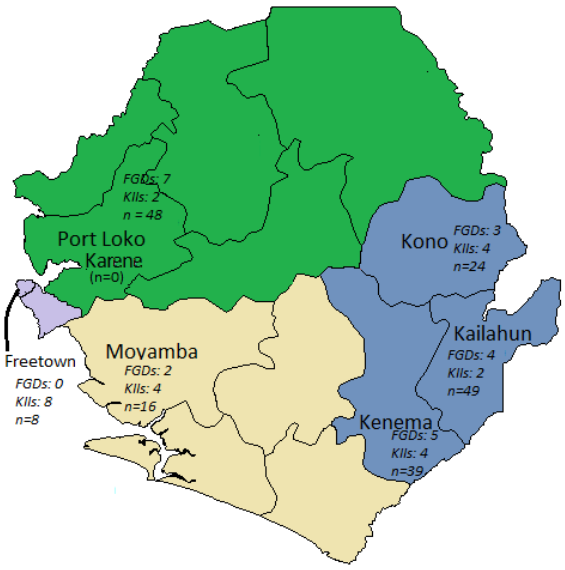
Qualitative

The qualitative research team spent 15 days in-country collecting qualitative data from stakeholders in Freetown and all project districts. During data collection, GATE-GEC staff or, in cases when no project staff were available, an individual familiar with the local communities accompanied the research team. Upon arrival in a given community, the research team was introduced to the head teacher or the person in charge if the head teacher was not present. This person then was requested to provide written consent for the data collection activity to take place. Prior to starting any discussion, the research team introduced themselves to the selected students, presented an introduction to the activity, and requested consent from each participant, noting that participation was voluntary. Adults responsible for the children were always nearby, so the children would be able to get their attention and ask for assistance if needed.

The teams were organised so that the research assistants accompanying the international specialist at any given time were fluent speakers of the main languages spoken in each of the districts. For each FGD and KII, the research assistants operated in the language preferred by the informants. The research assistants translated as discussions took place so that the international qualitative researcher could follow discussions and give direction as and when necessary.

Beginning in Freetown, the research team held KIIs with staff from the Hub Team, the Plan Country Director, representatives from consortium partner organisations Handicap International and ActionAid, the Team Leader of Leh Wi Learn, and an official from MEST. The research team then travelled to schools and communities in the project districts.

Primary and junior secondary students from all grades, P1 to P6 and JSS1 to JSS3, took part in data collection activities, together with some former beneficiaries now studying at SSS. Control activities were also conducted, both in treatment schools with non-beneficiaries at PS and JSS level, with girls in a control school, and with parents from a non-treatment community. In addition to students, teachers and head teachers, former beneficiaries and parents, data was also collected from CBRVs, community and religious leaders and MEST officials at district level. The research team also spoke with GATE-GEC, Plan and consortium partner organisation staff at district level.

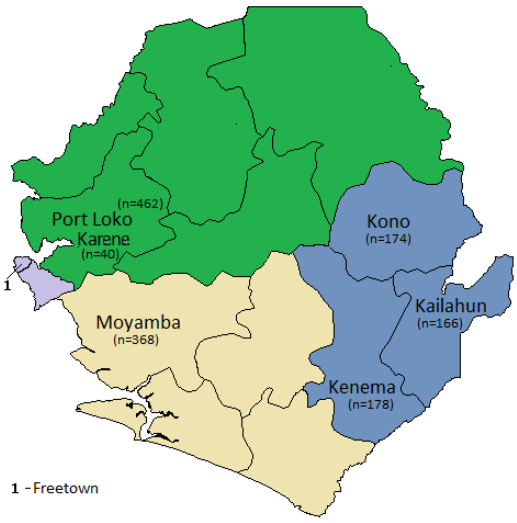


GATE-GEC Baseline Survey Data Districts

[21] I.e. retained on password-protected devices and encrypted in a cloud platform.

Quantitative

Enumerators adhered to standard practices per Plan's guidelines regarding confidentiality and informed consent during all interviews and assessments, with special care when interviewing children. GATE-GEC implementing partners provided enumerator training on child protection concepts, practices, and procedures for reporting if abuse or endangerment was witnessed or a child reported abuse or endangerment. Each enumerator signed requisite child protection agreements, per Plan Sierra Leone's procedures and policies. Enumerators travelled in teams of two to each school and community, and remained overnight in communities whenever possible, to minimise after-dark travel for security and safety purposes. Further, when visiting households, they would ensure their teammate would know where they were going.



GATE-GEC Baseline Survey Data Districts

Enumerators spent most weekends conducting additional household data collection (following up with households that may have all been absent during the week). At the beginning of collection, the list of sampled schools and beneficiaries were provided to the qualitative data team. When practicable, the qualitative team conducted KIIs with the same students. A sample 'ideal' itinerary for a daily quantitative data collection schedule is as follows:

Table 6: Sample Quantitative Data Collection Schedule

Timeline	Item	Workload per community	Team
Early AM (pre-8am)	Arrival in Community		2 x enumerators
0800-0830	Introductions to school staff, School Survey sheet	1 School per community, School Survey sheet completed with principal (15 mins)	Enumerator 1
0830-1100	EGRA/EGMA assessments Student School Survey	~7 children x 40 mins/child (15 mins EGRA/EGMA+10mins survey tool) = 2 hrs	2xEnumerators (one-on-one Learning Assessment followed by Student School Survey per child)
	Classroom Observation	1 x class x 40 mins (PV class)	1 x Enumerator
1100-1200	Lunch		
1200-1600	Household Survey	~ 7 households x 30 mins/survey = 2.5 hrs	2x Enumerators (one on one)
1630	Departure from community		
Total Data collection	EGRA/EGMA assessments x 7; Student School Surveys x 7; Classroom Observation x 1; HH Survey x 7		

As described above and given the complexity and quantity of the data collection tools, significant resources were allocated by the research team on tool preparation, enumerator training, data analysis, and feedback to ensure high quality and inter-rater reliability.

As described above, Learning Assessments underwent a piloting process to assess their accuracy and train enumerators. The enumerators were trained on the finalised quantitative survey tools over the course of one week prior to field data collection, which included two days of field testing. Real-time data analysis and feedback on the surveys also took place during the fieldwork period. As noted, all survey data was collected electronically, facilitating the following primary quality assurance mechanisms:

1. Uploading surveys to electronic devices using the ODK/ValiData platform permitted automated skip logic, calculated fields, and error-checking, thus reducing possibility of inaccurate or incorrectly entered information that did not align – for example, incorrect ages, or asking specific questions only to students over 12.

2. Data was submitted in near-real-time, allowing the research supervisors and management to assess the quality and logic of the data record-by-record, using statistical software, and machine learning to identify any cases where responses could be the outcome of enumerator bias. For example, during the first few days of collection, ValiData highlighted two enumerators with consistently skewed answers to Likert scale questions

(which are prone to bias). By communicating directly with these enumerators, their collected data measurably shifted to align with other enumerators. A key problem identified early on through quality assurance was ensuring enumerators were correctly assigning student IDs to control students, so that all five surveys and two assessments could be matched to each student.

3. Prior to fieldwork the team created a *WhatsApp* group connecting all enumerators via text message. Every day, the research supervisors connected with the enumerators, who would report their daily progress and discuss challenges they were facing. This degree of hands-on, daily quality assurance facilitated rapid solving of problems and ensured common methodologies and approaches horizontally between the 25 enumerators in the field and vertically between the established methodologies and what took place in the field. This allowed additional training and standardised responses to unforeseen issues based on enumerator feedback and the ValiData responses.

The following tables describe the types, numbers and locations of stakeholders surveyed via the baseline research. The final, cleaned data set includes 1,131 JSS students after eliminating duplicate, overly incomplete, or invalid entries. The original sampling plan set the intended sample size to 1,148 JSS students. The data set also includes 253 primary students; the original sampling plan had a goal of 250 primary students.

Table 7: Sample Size Targets vs. Achievements (raw datasets collected)

			JSS		PS	
Type of tool	Total Planned Sample	Total numbers achieved	Control	Treatment	Control	Treatment
Quantitative data						
Schools Complete	156 (revised)	156	52	62	0	42
School Targets			57	57	0	42
Learning Assessments	1,398	1,388	513	605	0	270
School Data Sheets	156	156	52	61	0	43
Classroom Observations	156	156	52	61	0	43
Student School Surveys	1,398	1,395	533	610	0	252
Household Surveys	1,398	1,377	577	549	0	251
Qualitative data						
Schools Complete	22-23	21	4	12	2	9
FGDs	22-23	21	2	9	1	8
KIIs (district interviews only)	10-15 schools	16	2	3	1	1

Table 8: Data Disaggregated by District

Type of tool	Total # achieved	Kailahun	Karene	Kenema	Kono	Moyamba	Port Loko
Quantitative data							
Schools Complete	156	19	4	21	23	37	52
School Revised Targets		19	4	24	23	36	50
% of target achieved		100%	100%	88%	100%	103%	104%
Learning Assessments	1,388	166	40	178	174	368	462
School Data Sheets	156	19	4	21	23	37	52
Classroom Observations	153	19	4	21	23	37	52
Student School Surveys	1,395	155	40	176	189	369	455
Household Surveys	1,377	167	42	176	173	368	451
Qualitative data							
Schools Complete	21	4	0	5	3	2	7
Focus group discussions	21	4	0	5	3	2	7
Key Informant Interviews	16	2	0	4	4	4	2

Post data collection

Qualitative

Following FGDs and KIIs, the information captured was reviewed and synthesised to ensure that all the detail was properly recorded against each of the evaluation questions. Discussion notes were reviewed and synthesised by:

- Highlighting key information following each KII and FGD; and
- Reviewing and summarising essential information, themes, findings and issues to further pursue at the end of each day during the field visits.

Issues and themes were shared among the international qualitative researcher and national research assistants as necessary to ensure further exploration and analysis. The analysis was performed thematically without support of software. As the same consultant was present for all KIIs and FGDs, there is a high level of consistency in the quality and detail of qualitative data collected.

Quantitative

Overview

Once data collection was completed, it underwent an iterative process of cross-checking and cleaning by both the enumerator teams and the ISG data specialist. The 11 instruments yielded over 1.4 million data points. The instruments were matched using student identification numbers, names, and demographic information. All student-identifiable data were aggregated into a single dataset and synced with the reverification data set. Classroom observation and school data sheets were combined into a second dataset. Once all data was collected, it was cleaned, aggregated, and analysed in Stata 12.

Surveys

As described above, all survey data was collected in real-time on electronic Android-based devices using ODK/ValiData versions of the quantitative survey tools. This, as discussed above, facilitated strong real-time error-checking and quality assurance. Raw data was uploaded to pre-coded (MS Excel) templates daily. On conclusion of the data collection, the data collection supervisor from Dalan Consultants cross-checked all survey data for inconsistencies, missing values or missing data blocks. This process was supervised and further cross-checked by the research team quantitative specialist between mid-December 2017 and early January 2018. In some cases, this process identified additional data on devices that had not been uploaded – this was subsequently completed and a full, cleaned and checked dataset was exported to analysis software (STATA) in early January 2018 for subsequent analysis by ISG's quantitative specialist.

Learning Assessments

To maximise the ease of students via use of a medium with which they were familiar, the learning assessments were completed in hard copy. These hard copies were returned by the research team to the central research office in Freetown on a weekly basis. The data from hard copies of the learning assessments was entered into MS Excel templates developed specifically for this baseline. Research supervisors cross-checked data entry processes directly from a 10 percent random sample of all assessment hard copies to minimise data entry error. The relative simplicity of the assessment scoring process (typically 20-30 variables per assessment) facilitated the speed and accuracy of the data entry process.

As with the survey data, the electronic data was then forwarded to the data analysis specialist for conversion to STATA and analysis per the guidance provided by GEC and the programme MEL Framework/Logframe. The completed and secured raw dataset will be provided to Plan as part of the assignment deliverables.

2.5 Challenges in baseline data collection and limitations of the evaluation design

While not necessarily a limitation of the evaluation design, it is important to call attention to the fact that nearly every school in Sierra Leone is subject to some kind of external intervention through organisations and projects within or outside GEC and this may have implications for direct attribution.

Qualitative

- The operational plan for the baseline research allocated 15 days in-country to train research assistants and collect data in Freetown as well as across the six project districts. Lists of sample schools and beneficiaries were received after the international qualitative researcher arrived in Sierra Leone. While it was agreed between the evaluator and Plan to wait until all data was received and then draw the sample, this meant that consortium partners leading in each district had limited time to choose the schools and communities and schedule associated FGDs and KIIs. If time had permitted, there are other groups who ideally would have been consulted during the baseline, such as former beneficiaries who have dropped out of school due to pregnancy, or young mothers. **Mitigation strategy:** None available.

- Longer-than-expected time to complete GATE-GEC beneficiary reverification (required to prepare the sampling plan) coupled with the conducting of school end-of-term examinations in late November/early December narrowed the available timeframe for data collection (both quantitative and qualitative). **Mitigation strategy:** The research team had built contingency time into data collection, which was used, but the data collection planning process could have benefited from additional contingency time.

- Some advance preparation by GATE-GEC staff (contact to non-project stakeholders and schools to prepare for visits/meetings) was expected by the evaluation team. In some districts this took place and greatly facilitated scheduled activities. However, in some districts limited advance preparation (i.e. no contact with external stakeholders/schools) by project staff led to delays and inefficiencies in data collection. **Mitigation strategy:** None available.

- The baseline data collection period came at a point when lots of training activities were taking place for a range of technical components, involving persons from all consortium partner organisations at central and district level. This meant, for example, that the GATE-GEC team were not available during the qualitative data collection in Kono, as they were involved in other activities. **Mitigation strategy:** The evaluation team sought to interview individuals virtually following the field visit.

- Representatives from the related UNICEF GATE programme did not make themselves available for interview as part of the evaluative component of the baseline research. The GATE-GEC project proposal outlines a level of formal collaboration with UNICEF GATE, but no evidence of this at central level was evident to the research team, albeit despite reported efforts by the Plan Hub Team to initiate collaboration. **Mitigation strategy:** The evaluation team researched collaboration and cooperation at the district level. For example, in Port Loko where both the GATE-GEC and UNICEF GATE teams are based in the Programme Unit and can thus easily coordinate and communicate.

- Poor road conditions and a national public holiday impeded the research team's ability to carry out the qualitative data collection schedule as planned. Further, the research team was unable to speak with the female MEST District Inspector in Kenema or the female inspectors working on her team, as they were participating in another activity. **Mitigation strategy:** While it was not possible to capture the female perspective which the research team had planned, they did meet with two male members of the Kenema team who provided useful insight on the project at district level.

- It was anticipated that Learning Assistants would be recruited and available for interview regarding their expectations of the programme and their motivations for joining, but the selection process had experienced some delays, so this was not possible. **Mitigation strategy:** The research team did meet some former Learning Assistants and received some feedback on the programme run under GEC 1 from a range of stakeholders.

- Ideally, qualitative data collection would have covered the same cohort used in the quantitative data collection, to facilitate follow-up with the same participants at midline and endline. However, this was not always possible,

so some non-sample students were included, as were non-beneficiaries in groups intended to include only beneficiaries. Logistical considerations also obliged the research to substitute some originally sampled schools with others. **Mitigation strategy:** Every effort was made to substitute with similar schools.

- Former beneficiaries interviewed in Moyamba and Port Loko were all girls who had moved on to senior secondary school or were awaiting their results to do so. **Mitigation strategy:** Requests were made to former beneficiaries who had moved into employment or training, or dropped out of education, however, district offices were unable to set up interviews with these girls.

Quantitative

- The final treatment sample comprises 13.4 percent of beneficiaries. It includes 15.6 percent of all children included as having a disability according to the implementers, and 17.9 percent of all male beneficiaries and 12.8 percent of female beneficiaries. This is not in line with good statistical practice[22] and **a mitigation strategy** will require standard error adjustments at the midline and endline. Statistical considerations aside, the very large sample resulted in logistical challenges in appropriate stratification of the data. The high proportion of the sample was caused by two changes in the final weeks before data collection: 1) a larger-than-planned sample size and 2) a smaller-than-expected total number of beneficiaries. Beneficiary reverification data was submitted by Plan to the research team at the time of final research preparations, with substantial decreases from an initial estimate of 8,000 to under 6,000.[23] At the same time, determination of minimum margins of error by the fund manager resulted in increases in the originally projected (by the research team) sample size.

- In many districts, insufficient control schools were available to select from in the project districts, leading to a limitation of non-random assignment of control schools. This may lead to challenges of attribution of observed results to programme interventions and not to unobserved differences between the intervention and control groups. **The research team addressed this** through selecting control schools in adjoining districts. For example, the lack of control schools in Kailahun was offset by additional control schools in Moyamba and Kenema. However, the large sample size resulted in every control school on the master sample list (provided by Plan) being surveyed. This was still insufficient as some control JSS schools had closed or were, in actuality, senior secondary schools. In the absence of credible alternates, the ratio of treatment to control schools had to be altered (see representativeness by grade section). The large sample size may influence comparability between the control and treatment schools, and this should be taken into account during the midline and endline. Further, statistical regression analysis may allow for isolation and control of observable factors that are significantly different between intervention and comparison groups.

- In addition, while it was known that some small schools would not have enough students of each level to ensure representativeness by grade, the problem was much more significant than expected once populating the student sample lists from the reverification data. The short lead time which the research team had with respect to access to the reverification data proved challenging to sampling. The good communications, access, and protocols between the field teams and supervisors/research management **mitigated this challenge**. This should have no effect on the quality of output but suggests additional lead time to collect data at midline and endline.

- The difficulties in reaching the original goals for grades will unlikely have a significant effect on the robustness of the results: although it diminishes the sample size, as stated above, the risk of biased data outweighs the risk of insufficient statistical power. The fact that stratification by district is not perfectly representative is unlikely a significant problem, **which can be mitigated by** weighting the sample when calculating outcomes at midline and endline.

- The surveys (but not the learning assessments) were originally prepared in English but were conducted in over six different languages. **To mitigate the chances of translations affecting the meanings of the questions**, survey teams established common translations for difficult-to-translate concepts and words which survey teams

[22] The Ten Percent Condition states that sample sizes should be not exceed 10 percent of the population under study. This is because statistical tests are founded on the assumption that the sample is drawn randomly, and the inclusion of any one student has no effect on the inclusion of any other. However, once 24 percent of the population has been drawn, the characteristics of the remaining 76 percent may be markedly different from the whole population. This can affect representativeness of the sample and the result of statistical tests in unpredictable ways. See https://www.ma.utexas.edu/users/mks/M358KInstr/TenPctCond.pdf

[23] Since field research planning, this figure has been updated and is shared in Section 1.3.

were then trained on and follow-up was performed in real time virtually via WhatsApp groups. That said, the effect of translated terminology cannot be known, as any differences in responses could not be untied from differences in traits linked to language, such as ethnicity, geography, and economic status.

- Reliability of attendance data is another limitation. Head teachers were asked to provide attendance rates (primary schools averaged attendance rates of 75 percent in the past year while JSS averaged 85 percent). Interestingly, reports of *overall* attendance rates, asked separately from boys and girls, were consistently 20-30 percent higher than the combined averages for boys and girls, suggesting a tendency among head teachers to over-report these figures. This is common phenomenon in developing countries with centralised educational control and disbursement of resources based on such figures. Overall, using attendance rates as self-reported by students may be a better option, but the current, standardised questionnaires as designed are problematic. They ask whether students are present most of the time but define most of the time as not missing more than one or two days per month. Mitigation strategies for collecting more accurate attendance data could include attendance spot checks. Having partner agencies conduct spot checks would be a useful source of information but should not be considered sufficient to determine whether attendance is high. Faithful and unbiased spot checks are difficult to implement and are prone to bias if conducted by partners.

3. Key Characteristics of Baseline samples

3.1 Project beneficiaries

As stated in the project proposal,[24] the GATE-GEC approach focuses on the GEC 1 project cohort (first identified in 2013) to increase learning outcomes. The marginalisation criteria used for beneficiary identification in 2013 included:

1. Girls (and boys with disabilities only) between the ages of 10 and 20 years old.
2. Girls (and boys with disabilities only) of single parent homes.
3. Girls who are mothers.
4. School drop-outs - girls (and boys with disabilities only) from poor families and girls affected by cultural and traditional barriers to schooling.
5. Girls (and boys with disabilities only) living on their own with no reliable means of financial support.
6. Out-of-school girls (and only out-of-school boys with disabilities0 who dropped out in grades 5 and 6 of Primary or are of JSS age.
7. Girls and boys with disabilities.
8. Rape victims for whom the schooling will also contribute to psychological healing.
9. Orphan girls (and only orphaned boys with disabilities) – deceased mother; deceased father; both parents deceased or unknown.
10. Girls who at least one parent is disabled.
11. Girls in the care of unemployed or low income (below statutory minimum wage) parents/carers.

The project proposal also notes: "*The GATE-GEC approach will not be selecting new cohorts but will provide activities which are linked to increased learning outcomes for direct beneficiaries from GEC 1. Based on this and PwC's guidance, the three groups of marginalisation covered by the current GEC cohort, and will continue with the GATE-GEC project are: orphaned (current status and number is unknown), children with disabilities*."

As stated in Section 1, the actual number of learning and transition beneficiaries in the GATE-GEC project is 6,585. This includes 4,969 marginalised girls (without disabilities) and 1,616 children with disabilities (832 boys and 784 girls). These children were identified and re-verification by GATE-GEC consortium partners to establish which of the 10,023 beneficiaries originally identified for GEC 1 in 2013 are still in PS and JSS treatment schools in the six project districts. As part of the re-verification process GATE-GEC assigned all beneficiaries student unique identification numbers to facilitate project implementation, for example in terms of disbursement of bursaries, allocating children to study groups, and monitoring their learning and transition.

The marginalised girl beneficiaries were originally chosen through an open and transparent process, against clear criteria. However, the Endline Evaluation (March 2017) noted that some non-beneficiary girls had not understood the process and felt resentful that they had been excluded from programme activities and benefits. Some boys also expressed their resentment at not receiving programme support. Discussions with beneficiaries, former beneficiaries and caretakers as part of this baseline research indicated that the criteria for inclusion in the project were not clearly understood by all - including those benefiting directly from the project.

The initial focus of GATE-GEC district-based activity was on reverification of project beneficiaries who had been selected in 2013 under GEC 1. This process took longer than anticipated and resulted in the number of verified beneficiaries being lower than anticipated (6,585 versus an early rough estimate by Plan of approximately 8,000). As no new beneficiaries could officially be added to those identified back in 2013, and as many of them are no longer in treatment primary or junior secondary schools, there are 34 percent fewer beneficiaries under the current phase of the project, when compared with GEC 1.

There are, however, many students in treatment schools who indeed meet the criteria set out in 2013 for receiving project support, including children with disabilities, who are not direct beneficiaries of the project.

[24] Plan International UK (2016). *GEC Transition Window Full Proposal Template.*

Some of these children have moved to the project area and thus entered a treatment school since 2013, others may have enrolled in school as a direct result of community sensitisation carried out under GEC 1, and some have reported enrolling in specific schools in anticipation of potential receipt of project support.

Many students that were selected to be direct beneficiaries in 2013 reported having disabilities under the GEC 1 criteria, but subsequent, more detailed, assessments according to criteria required by PWC do not identify them as having a disability. For example, while all male beneficiaries under GEC 1 criteria were identified as having a disability, only 9.4 percent of male beneficiaries interviewed qualified as having a disability using the PWC definition during re-verification. Some children will have developed disabilities since 2013, or their disabilities may have become more serious. Conversely, some disabilities may have improved.[25] Irrespective of the specific definition or criteria used, perceived lack of support for children with disabilities was a concern widely shared by GATE-GEC staff, head teachers, and by children themselves.

Particular concerns were articulated around the fact that provision had been made for a much larger group of beneficiary recipients than the number which had been identified through reverification, and that vulnerability/marginalisation had increased for some girls whose life circumstances have changed, for example those orphaned as a result of the Ebola epidemic. Thus, since 2013, a core target group of the project (children with disabilities and marginalised girls) has increased in size in GATE-GEC communities and in participating schools, however, these individuals are currently ineligible to become direct beneficiaries.

The clear GATE-GEC policy of not inducting new beneficiaries makes implementation of some components, such as bursary disbursements, more straightforward, but limits project flexibility to respond to the needs of those prioritised in line with the overall objective. However, beneficiary data and evidence from project informants indicates that some new beneficiaries have been added since 2013 (over 200 beneficiaries – all children with disabilities – are eight years old or under, and thus unlikely to have been in school in 2013), thus there appears to be precedent for including additional children.

[25] 183 children reporting *without* disabilities during GEC 1 reported having some degree of disability during the reverification process. Conversely, 59 children who reported *not* having disabilities of any kind during the reverification process were recorded as having a disability under GEC 1.

3.2 Representativeness of learning/transition samples across regions, age groups, grades, disability status & sex

In accordance with the sampling plan, the research team sought to ensure that the proportions of the treatment (beneficiary) and control samples reflected the proportions of beneficiaries by districts. In districts with fewer available schools than required to meet minimum control sample sizes, additional control schools were selected from nearby, similar districts (see Section 2.4). As a result, the makeup of the control and treatment (beneficiary) samples differs in some cases (see Tables 13 & 14). For example, as there was only one control JSS in Kailahun, a larger proportion of the control sample was collected from Moyamba and Kenema, which are the districts sampled that are closest and socio economically and geographically similar.

Given that boys make up such a small proportion of the JSS beneficiary population, the sample of JSS boys is particularly sensitive to small changes. One clear indication of this is that boys from Moyamba comprise 40 percent of the treatment JSS sample, but only 27 percent of the beneficiary population. Even though the sample includes one-sixth of all beneficiary JSS boys, in absolute numbers, this is the difference of only two additional boys sampled in Moyamba than would be ideally representative. In the boys' JSS control sample, Moyamba is similarly overrepresented; this is a result of oversampling in Moyamba to make up for the existence of only one control JSS school in all of Kailahun. Overall, boys comprise a higher than expected proportion of the control group (Table 9). Further analysis indicates it is likely caused by how students were randomly selected in control schools, rather than interviewer or district bias. When enumerators randomly selected boys from enrolment lists, they only added them in the sample if headmasters reported that they had a disability; it appears headmasters responded affirmatively more than expected; of boys in control schools interviewed, less than 10 percent met the GEC definition of having a disability. Chi-squared tests for equality did not indicate a significant difference between the composition by district of the treatment sample, the control sample from the beneficiary population, or between the treatment and control samples. Similar tests did not find significant differences of the gender makeup.

Table 9: Evaluation sample breakdown (by region)

	Intervention (Beneficiary) JSS (Baseline)	Control JSS (Baseline)	Intervention (Beneficiary) Primary (Baseline)
Sample breakdown (Girls)			
Kailahun	17.6%	2.5%	16.1%
Kenema	11.6%	16.5%	12.9%
Kono	10.1%	13.7%	15.3%
Moyamba	25.8%	26.1%	19.4%
Port Loko/Karene	34.9%	41.1%	36.3%
Girls (sample size)	613 (100%)	394 (100%)	124 (100%)
Sample breakdown (Boys)			
Kailahun	15%	0%	13.2%
Kenema	20%	4.8%	10.9%
Kono	15%	13.46%	17.1%
Moyamba	40%	54.81%	17.1%
Port Loko/Karene	10%	26.9%	41.9%
Boys (sample size)	20 (100%)	104 (100%)	129 (100%)

Table 10: Representation of Gender Makeup

	All Beneficiaries			Intervention (Beneficiary) Sample			Control Sample		
	Female (#)	Male (#)	Female (%)	Female (#)	Male (#)	Female (%)	Female (#)	Male (#)	Female (%)
JSS	4233	121	97%	613	20	97%	394	104	79%
Primary	597	634	48%	124	129	49%			

Grade

In accordance with the sampling framework, the sample was not intended to be a representative makeup of students by grade at the JSS level. This was because a higher proportion of students in JSS 1 and JSS 2 would allow more information about transition between students as we follow cohorts over the years. Practical limitations resulted in the sample tending to higher grades slightly more than originally planned, but still significantly lower than the beneficiary population. A chi-square test for equality did not suggest the composition of the JSS sample is significantly different by grade than the design.

Given cluster sampling at the school level, there likely was no reasonable approach to (1) sample one-fourth of the population, (2) stratify by district, and (3) oversample the lower grades, and avoid bias in some other way: the sample already comprises 192 of the 655 JSS1 beneficiaries.

Table 11: Representativeness of Grade, Junior Secondary

	Beneficiary List	Original Design	Actual Collected
JSS1	15%	45%	30%
JSS2	37%	35%	43%
JSS3	47%	20%	26%
	100%	100%	100%

Sampling at the primary level was somewhat different from the true beneficiary level, as the sample was skewed to contain slightly higher numbers of students in older grades. While greater caution should be used in understanding broad trends, additional observations in P4-P6 will allow greater insight into the grades where students often fail to transition. A chi-square test for equality did not find the composition of the sample significantly different from the true beneficiary composition by grade.

Table 12: Representativeness of Grade, Primary

	Beneficiary List		Sample	
P1	112	9%	12	5%
P2	195	16%	41	16%
P3	234	19%	46	18%
P4	237	19%	61	24%
P5	257	21%	44	17%
P6	196	16%	49	19%
Total	1,231		253	

The sampling of grades across primary schools was largely well-representative of each grade, excepting grade 1, the youngest children, who will not be progressing to secondary school within the life of the project in any case. The distribution across each grade was well correlated (within 4 percent) with the distribution per the GATE-GEC beneficiary list.

Table 13: Evaluation sample breakdown (by grade)

This table further analyses the overall sample breakdown by grade, gender and control/intervention groups, illustrating the distribution of the sample across the various target groups.

	Intervention (Beneficiary) JSS (Baseline)	Control JSS (Baseline)	Intervention (Beneficiary) Primary (Baseline)
Sample breakdown (Girls)			
Primary 1			8 (6.5%)
Primary 2			19 (15.3%)
Primary 3			23 (18.6%)
Primary 4			34 (27.4%)
Primary 5			19 (15.32%)
Primary 6			21 (16.9%)
JSS 1	174 (28.4%)	164 (41.6%)	
JSS 2	272 (44.4%)	153 (38.8%)	
JSS 3	167 (27.2%)	77 (19.5%)	
Girls (sample size)	613	394	124
Sample breakdown (Boys)			
Primary 1			4 (3.1%)
Primary 2			22 (17.1%)
Primary 3			23 (17.8%)
Primary 4			27 (20.9%)
Primary 5			25 (19.4%)
Primary 6			28 (21.7%)
JSS 1	18 (90.0%)	36 (34.6%)	
JSS 2	2 (10.0%)	41 (39.4%)	
JSS 3		27 (26.0%)	
OOS girls (%)			
Boys (sample size)	20	104	129

Table 14: Evaluation sample breakdown (by age)

	Intervention (Beneficiary) JSS (Baseline)	Control JSS (Baseline)	Intervention (Beneficiary) Primary (Baseline)
Sample breakdown (Girls)			
Aged 5 and below			1 (0.4%)
Aged 6-8 (% aged 6-8)			36 (1.42%)
Aged 9-11 (% aged 9-11)	4 (0.6%)	12 (2.4%)	122 (48.2%)
Aged 12-13 (% aged 12-13)	121 (19.1%)	147 (29.5%)	50 (19.8%)
Aged 14-15 (% aged 14-15)	316 (49.9%)	207 (41.6%)	32 (12.7%)
Aged 16-17 (%aged 16-17)	160 (25.3%)	102 (20.5%)	11 (4.4%)
Aged 18-19 (%aged 18-19)	30 (4.7%)	30 (6.0%	1 (0.4%)
Aged 20+ (% aged 20 and over)	2 (0.3%)		
Girls (sample size)			
Sample breakdown (Boys)			
Aged 5 and under			1 (0.78%)
Aged 6-8 (% aged 6-8)			12 (9.3%)
Aged 9-11 (% aged 9-11)	0 (0%)	5 (4.81%)	60 (46.51%)
Aged 12-13 (% aged 12-13)	11 (55%)	25 (24.04%)	27 (20.93%)
Aged 14-15 (% aged 14-15)	8 (40%)	35 (33.65%)	21 (16.28%)
Aged 16-17 (%aged 16-17)	1 (5%)	27 (25.96%)	7 (5.43%)
Aged 18-19 (%aged 18-19)	0 (0%)	12 (11.54%)	1 (0.78%)
Aged 20+ (% aged 20 and over)			
Boys (sample size)	20	104	129

To the extent possible, the research team sought to ensure that the sample was as representative of the overall beneficiary population as possible. Some deviations from the 'ideal' sample calculation occurred as a result of

saturation of beneficiaries (notably in the higher JSS grades) and that in primary schools all beneficiary children were those with disabilities. Further, as discussed above, some schools selected from the master list as part of the sample had closed or were not recorded correctly (e.g. an SSS recorded as a JSS) and thus alternative schools were selected from similar areas. We do not anticipate that these deviations significantly influenced the analysis. The surveys did include some outlier age ranges (one girl and one boy of 5 years old in Primary 1, and two girls of 20 years old), but these are to be expected in a typical distribution of school students.

Disability

Disparities in the data on disability call into question the external validity of the definitions and disability data. The Washington Group series of questions on disability are an internationally-accepted good practice for capturing the spectrum of varying difficulty in completing everyday tasks to assess degrees of disability. Their key contribution to standardised measurement is to (i) base definitions on how a disability affects daily life and to (ii) capture the diversity of severity and type of disability, challenging past models that treat disability is a binary state. However, for simplicity, they provide guidelines for a binary definition to include any disability, applied by the GEC fund as a student's disability status based on whether they have a lot of difficulty completing at least one activity or cannot do it at all.[26]

GATE-GEC in Sierra Leone targets marginalised girls and children with disabilities. Beneficiaries were selected as part of GEC 1, which used a complex six-step process to identify candidates and classified their difficulties using a similar set of questions to the Washington Group questions, defining disability based on the degree of difficulty to complete tasks, and during reverification collected data on whether students were classified as having a disability in the previous project. Many students who fit the definition of children with disabilities during qualification did not meet the definition used when asking the Washington Group questions.

In both Primary and Junior Secondary, the sample captured a significant number of students with disabilities, though they do not perfectly mirror the sample at large. Although only nine percent of primary-level beneficiaries in the sample qualify as having a disability under the stricter definition, all beneficiaries met the GATE-GEC definition during a verification period.

Table 15: Evaluation sample breakdown (by disability)

Sample breakdown (Girls)	Intervention (Beneficiary) JSS (Baseline)	Control JSS (Baseline)	Intervention (Beneficiary) Primary
Children with disability (% overall)	21 (3.3%)	13 (2.6%)	24 (9.5%)
Provide data per impairment			
Vision impairment	4 (0.6%)	1 (0.2%)	8 (3.1%)
Hearing impairment	7 (1.1%)	7 (1.4%)	10 (4.0%)
Mobility impairment	5 (0.8%)	4 (0.8%)	5 (2.0%)
Cognitive impairment	6 (0.95%)	3 (0.6%)	4 (1.6%)
Self-care impairment	0 (0.0%)	2 (0.4%)	2 (0.8%)
Communication impairment	8 (1.3%)	2 (0.4%)	4 (1.8%)

Note: **GEC states that the population identified as having a disability should include all those with difficulty *in at least one domain* recorded at *a lot of difficulty* or *cannot do at all*.** This applies to both the Washington Group short set of questions and the longer child functioning questions. This cut off point will provide the most accurate representation of the population that has an impairment which may interact with barriers leading to educational marginalisation.

[26] *GEC-T MEL Guidance Part 2,* p.62

Table 16: Representativeness of Disability Incidence

Level	GATE-GEC Definition			GEC Portfolio Definition					
	Beneficiary Data			Beneficiary Data			Sample		
	No	Yes	%	No	Yes	%	No	Yes	%
Junior Secondary	4,104	1,231	23%	4,782	39	1%	599	21	3%
Primary	0	250	100%	1,036	218	17%	229	24	9%

Table 16 above quantifies students with a disability according to the reverification data compared with that reported during the baseline study using the GEC fund's definition. All students in the primary level were found to have a disability during GEC 1 (left-most columns). Using the Washington Group definition, however 230 of 250 students do not have a disability (right most columns).[27]As discussed elsewhere, the qualitative research also saw cases where the 'project' disability status of students did not match with how they presented in interviews. Further, the quantitative survey (using Washington Group questions) highlighted disparities between disability status in reverification data.

A portion of the disparity can be explained by differences between the Washington Group questions' conceptual model and their use in the GEC analysis. However, the definitional change is not responsible for many of disparities between reverification and the household survey data. Of the 21 JSS treatment students who were identified as having a disability during baseline surveys, 19 of them did not have a disability according to reverification data. This suggests that responses to questions regarding disability are not stable, even though baseline data was collected very shortly after reverification. It may have been the result of fluid ideas about disability, stigma, different interview environments, or incentives regarding programme inclusion.

In terms of sub-group analysis of children with disabilities (Tables 17 and 18), the instability in these definitions suggests any analysis regarding disability should be treated with great caution. In addition, the Washington Group definition yields a much smaller subset of students – only 23 primary students and 21 junior secondary students. This subgroup is so small disaggregation severely limits statistical robustness. This report avoids over-analysis of the sample and recommends caution at cases where the data is disaggregated using the Washington Group definition. In some cases (and only where specified), data are disaggregated using the Project's disability data from reverification. When either definition is used, it should be treated with caution.

Ultimately, for future data collection, the project might benefit from independent medical assessment of beneficiaries for disability status, i.e. not relying on self-reporting, as all previous methods do. Such an assessment, while a commitment of time and resources, need not be across all beneficiaries, but might be applied to a representative sample of beneficiaries, and cross checked against existing datasets (from this baseline research and reverification data) to provide a measure of robustness of each approach.

Table 17: Disability Status According to Reverification, Primary

	GEC Fund Disability Definition		
Reverification Data	Child without Disability	Child with Disability	Total
No	0	0	0
Yes	227	23	250
Total	230	23	

Table 18: Disability Status According to Reverification, Junior Secondary

	Household Survey Responses, Washington Group Definition		
Reverification	No	Yes	Total
No	540	19	569
Yes	59	2	61
Total	599	21	

[27] Washington Group questions were not used for disability identification under GEC 1, so 'mis-categorisations' that took place under that phase may have been perpetuated across GATE GEC.

3.3 Educational Marginalisation

Multiple barriers and characteristics can precipitate or contribute to the educational marginalisation of girls and children with disabilities. These barriers and characteristics exist at family, community, school, and system levels. They largely reflect the same barriers highlighted by respondents in the GEC 1 Endline Study. By focusing on marginalised individuals, the project works to fulfil its objectives, notably the vision that marginalised girls and children with disabilities will reach their learning potential and transition through primary and secondary school, and beyond.

This analysis combines quantitative data and qualitative data to review the intersection between key characteristics and barriers. The table below presents the proportion of girls and boys in the sample who meet varying criteria of marginalisation, such as poverty, language difficulties, or parental status.

Table 19: Girls' and Boys' Characteristics (from household survey, n=1388)

	Intervention (Beneficiary) JSS (Baseline)	Control JSS (Baseline)	Intervention (Beneficiary) Primary (Baseline)
Sample breakdown (Girls)			
Orphans (%) - Single orphans - Double orphans	Single: 26.1% Double: 1.5%	Single: 18.6% Double: 0.3%	Single 13.8% Double 0.3%
Living without both parents (%)	22.8%	21.9%	19.8%
Living in female headed household (%)	44.0%	43.3	42.3
Married (%)	2.3%	1.4%	0%
Mothers (%) - Under 18 - Under 16	3.7% 3.4%	4.1% 2.6%	1.7% 1.8%
Poor households (%) - Meets any Criteria - Difficult to afford for girl to go to school - Household doesn't own land for themselves - Material of the roof - Household unable to meet basic needs - Gone to sleep hungry for many days in past year	 85.7% 79.3% 18.3% 20.3% 26.5% 24.5%	 83.3% 76.9% 29.4% 7.8% 24.4% 30.6%	 70.7% 64.7% 12.3% 9.5% 23.3% 26.7%
Language difficulties: - LoI different from mother tongue (%) - Girl doesn't speak LoI (%)	 98.1% 5.3%	 98.8% 4.3%	 97.7% 10.5%
Parental education - HoH has no education (%) - Primary caregiver has no education (%)	 62.4% 59.7%	 57.3% 49.4%	 72.1% 70.3%
Sample breakdown (Boys)			
Orphans (%) - Single orphans - Double orphans	 Single: 22.2% Double: 0.0%	 Single: 25.3% Double: 2.1%	 Single: 10.6% Double: 1.6%
Living without both parents (not orphaned) (%)	11.1%	26.3%	26.0%
Living in female headed household (%)	50.0%	29.5%	39.0%
Married (%)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Mothers (%) - Under 18 / Under 16	Not available	Not available	Not available
Poor households (%) - Yes to any of below - Difficult to afford for student to go to school - Household doesn't own land for themselves - Material of the roof (mud, thatch, or tarp/plastic) - Household unable to meet basic needs - Gone to sleep hungry for many days in past year	 72.2% 55.6% 11.1% 11.1% 16.7% 16.7%	 69.5% 63.6% 21.5% 13.7% 19.0% 21.1%	 74.8% 69.1% 16.3% 5.7% 22.0% 33.3%
Language difficulties: - LoI different from mother tongue (%) - Child doesn't speak LoI (%)	 100% 7.1%	 95.2% 2.5%	 93.8% 1.1%
Parental education - HoH has no education (%) - Primary caregiver has no education (%)	 85.8% 78.6%	 54.8% 54.2%	 59.8% 59.8%

Barriers to learning and transition

Barriers to learning were disaggregated by gender and by disability. Given that sample sizes were too small to use the GEC definition of disability, results from reverification data were used instead. Given all primary beneficiaries were selected for having a disability, only JSS students with disabilities are analysed. At the learning space (i.e. school) level, 55.5 to 79.3 percent of respondents expressed that it is difficult to afford for students to go to school (55.6 to 69.1 for boys and 64.7 to 79.3 percent for girls). Further, the use of English as the language of instruction is a potential barrier to learning and transition as the language of instruction is different from the mother tongue of between 93.8 and 100 percent of respondents. Other barriers gathered through quantitative data collection include unsafe travel to schools in the area, with over 9.5 percent of caregivers stating that it is fairly or very unsafe for girls to travel to schools in the area which aligns with student responses. Students reported a high household chore burden via both the quantitative and qualitative research – over half of all girls in JSS reported working at least one-quarter of a day, as opposed to only 15.4 percent of boys in the treatment group. High chore burdens were equally prevalent among boys and girls in the control group, a finding shared by the qualitative research; this may be an issue of comparability but a useful area for further investigation during midline and endline.

> *Two of the girls go to sell for an hour after school, and then cook, before they study. Another girl sells till 4pm, but then her mother gives her food and lets her rest, before she starts studying*
>
> *Findings from JSS FGD*

There were few differences between beneficiary and control JSS schools surveyed – most responses were within 2-5 percent of each other. Significant differences are demarcated with asterisks on the table. More substantial differences were seen in terms of time permitted to students to study (10 percent more control school students considered they had sufficient time), or in terms of home support to stay in school (10 percent fewer control school student felt they were supported). More control school students considered their school facilities to be inadequate than treatment schools, the consistency of the discrepancy (across five questions) suggesting that control schools are less well equipped than treatment schools.

The most pervasive barriers identified by primary beneficiaries are: high chore burdens, lack of parent support, and no use of water facilities. The barriers faced at the primary level are not substantively different from those at the secondary level.

Table 20: Potential barriers to learning and transition

	Intervention (Beneficiary) JSS (Baseline)	Control JSS (Baseline)	Intervention (Beneficiary) Primary (Baseline)
Sample breakdown (Girls)			
Safety:			
	N=536	N=455	N=239
Caregiver states it is fairly or very unsafe for girls to travel to schools in the area (%)	10.2%	4.9%	4.7%
Caregiver states it is fairly or very unsafe for boys to travel to schools in the area (%)	7.8%	4.1%	1.6%
Student claims they don't feel safe travelling to/from school (%)	14.7%	13.0%	9.6%
Parental/caregiver support:			
High chore burden: student spends a quarter of the day or more doing chores (%)	56.7%*	67.8%	35.1%*
Does not get the support they need to stay in school and do well (%)	21.8%	18.8%	30.4%
School level			
Attendance:			
Doesn't feel safe at school (%)	1.5%	6.1%	3.2%
School facilities:			
Not enough seats for all students (%)	13.7%*	20.8%	24.2%
Difficult to move around school (%)	5.4%	10.9%	3.2%
Doesn't use drinking water facilities	35.2%	46.2%	30.7%
Doesn't use toilet at school	13.5%	27.7%	8.9%
Doesn't use areas where children play/ socialise	4.2%	18.8%	24.2%
Teachers:			
Disagrees teachers make them feel welcome	9.5%	17.4%	1.7%
Agrees teachers treat boys and girls	14.2%	13.5%	13.7%
Agrees teachers often absent from class	19.1%	22.2%	17.5%
Sample breakdown (Boys)			
	N=20	N=104	N=129
Safety			
Caregiver states it is fairly or very unsafe for girls to travel to schools in the area (%)	7.1%	12.0%	7.2%
Caregiver states it is fairly or very unsafe for boys to travel to schools in the area (%)	5.0%	8.7%	4.7%
Student claims they don't feel safe travelling to/from school (%)	11.1%	9.4%	12.0%
Parental/caregiver support:			
Sufficient time to study: High chore burden (quarter day or more %)	56.7%*	67.8%	54.7%*
Does not get the support they need to stay in school and do well (%)	31.3%	11.5%	20.4%
School level			
Attendance:			
Doesn't feel safe at school (%)	5.0%	3.9%	2.3%
School facilities:			
Not enough seats for all students (%)	35.0%*	17.3%	27%
Difficult to move around school (%)	6.0%	11.4%	3.5%
Doesn't use drinking water facilities	30.0%	33.7%	31.0%
Doesn't use toilet at school+	10.0%	14.4%	5.4%
Doesn't use areas where children play/ socialise	4.7%	5.8%	46.5%
Teachers:			
Disagrees teachers make them feel welcome	0.0%	6.7%	4.7%
Agrees teachers treat boys and girls differently	5.0%	14.4%	20.9%
Agrees teachers often absent from class	16.7%	26.0%	17.6%

Beneficiaries with Disabilities (Reverification Definition)			
	N=61		
Safety			
Caregiver states it is fairly or very unsafe for girls to travel to schools in the area (%)	4.5%		
Caregiver states it is fairly or very unsafe for boys to travel to schools in the area (%)	4.4%		
Student claims they don't feel safe travelling to/from school (%)	11.1%		
Parental/caregiver support:			
Sufficient time to study: High chore burden (quarter day or more %)	45.5%		
Does not get the support they need to stay in school and do well (%)	30.6%		
School level			
Attendance:			
Doesn't feel safe at school (%)	1.6%		
School facilities:			
Not enough seats for all students (%)	22.9%		
Difficult to move around school (%)	6.6%		
Doesn't use drinking water facilities	27.9%		
Doesn't use toilet at school+	9.8%		
Doesn't use areas where children play/ socialise	1.6%		
Teachers:			
Disagrees teachers make them feel welcome	1.6%		
Agrees teachers treat boys and girls differently	13.1%		
Agrees teachers often absent from class	14.8%		

Note: Given that the disability data used for this table is from beneficiary reverification, no control data is available Given that 100% of primary beneficiaries have a disability according to reverification data, it cannot be disaggregated.

Gender differences among barriers faced

As with all components of the gender analysis, it is important to remember that all male beneficiaries were classified as having a disability during GEC 1, and are not representative of all boys. In addition, testing for gender incidence by barrier and treatment group results in 42 separate tests. Given that standard T-test parameters risk false positives in one in twenty tests, any such results should be treated with caution. Of the barriers described above, three were statistically significant[28] differences in responses between male and female beneficiaries for three: (i) whether there were enough seats in class, (ii) whether they had at least 2 hours of chores per day, and (iii) whether or not they used the toilet at school. The chore burden differences are particularly curious: girls report a significantly higher chore burden at the secondary level, but boys report a higher chore burden at the primary level. While this may be a result of the small sample size of boys or the overlap of beneficiary boys and disability, but it merits attention, and is not reflected in the qualitative findings. The lack of seating reported by boys is difficult to interpret, as the boys and girls in the sample attend the same schools. The difference between school toilet use is not significant between genders among JSS or primary students separately but is significantly different when testing among all beneficiaries. The qualitative research noted many cases where both teachers and students highlighted the lack or poor condition of toilets as being an impediment to education – in most cases, students were unhappy with the condition of toilets or the small number of them, but in one case the school possessed no toilets – students were expected to use the bush, a sanitation and security risk for girls.

[28] All statistical tests are Student's independent t-tests using alpha=.05 and beta= 0.80 unless otherwise specified. Statistical significance is demarcated with * if by treatment group by + if by all beneficiaries in table.

3.4 Intersection between key characteristics and barriers

As highlighted by Plan in the project proposal and MEL Framework, the key characteristics of the beneficiaries which contribute to their marginalised status are: gender (for girls), disability (for those children with disabilities or whose caregivers are persons with disabilities), low household income, and status as orphans or living with non-parental caregivers (see Section 1.3 and Section 3.1). If caregivers do not value education or are not in a position to support the children, then they are further marginalised. The level of parental education was not a predictor of their attitude towards education, in that some parents who have not received a formal education showed themselves willing to do all they could to support their children (see Table 21, below).

Table 21: Examples of barriers to education by characteristic (n=1131)

Characteristic					
Barriers:	Head of the household has no education	Girl does not speak LOI	Household is poor	Married	All Beneficiaries
Parental/caregiver support:					
Sufficient time to study: High chore burden (25%)	*47.8% of girls with a head of household with no education have a high chore burden*	49.0%	*50.2%*	33.3%	55.4%
Doesn't get support to stay in school and do well (%)	25.6%	18.4%	27.7%	30.0%	20.9%
School:					
Disagrees teachers make them feel welcome	13.2%	8.5%	16.4%	16.7%	10.3%
Attends school less than half time (%)	1.8%	4.1%	1.4%	0.0%	1.3%

Poverty. Poverty is a major barrier, which results in children not having money for school fees, uniforms, shoes, books or other items. Based on quantitative data, between 55.6 and 79.3 percent of households (beneficiary JSS, control JSS, and beneficiary primary) expressed that it was difficult to afford to send a child to school. If children cannot pay fees, then they are prevented from sitting exams. If they have no uniform, they cannot attend school. Qualitative data revealed that often children are too embarrassed to attend school when they have not paid their fees or do not have the required school supplies. This is one of the major barriers to education identified via interviews with teaching staff, education officials and students themselves. Further, students and staff linked poverty to a range of other negative coping strategies, such as prostitution or early marriage.

> *Parents might stop your education due to poverty, and get you married*
>
> *JSS girl student, Kono*

Hunger. During qualitative data collection, many children reported arriving at school hungry, attending school without food or lunch money, or missing school entirely due to hunger. In some communities, children spoke about how hunger affected their ability to enjoy their education (in addition to impacting attendance). This correlates well with quantitative data collected from boys and girls: between 16.7 and 33.3 percent of boys and between 24.5 and 30.6 percent of girls in treatment (beneficiary) and control groups stated that they have 'gone to sleep hungry for many days in past year'.

Disability. All analysis of data differentiating disability status represents a small subset of the data and therefore is of limited validity. It differs from the overall sample population by the following characteristics: it is significantly younger (approximately 50% of the group are primary school students) and is 30% male. While disability status was determined using the commonly used Washington Group questions, it does not represent how others define disability, as it excludes 80% of the beneficiaries in the sample who identified as having a disability during GEC 1 verification. The values in the above table, however, provide some interesting insights. For most barriers of interest, students with disabilities on average report lower incidence of facing barriers. This is likely due to the population characteristics noted above. For example, while 21.6% of students without disabilities say they do not feel supported by their family, only 7.8%t of students with disabilities say they do not feel supported by their family. It may be that

students with disabilities who do not feel supported by their parents do not get to attend school, and therefore are excluded from the sample. Such a conclusion is generally supported by the qualitative data, in which those students with disabilities who get to attend school note considerable efforts on the part of their family, friends, teachers to include them in education and facilitate their learning. However, they also note anecdotal cases of children with disabilities who do not attend school, with poverty as the typical underlying determinant.

Caregiver (parental and non-parental) support. Some children receive the support they need from their caregivers, but many do not – either because the caregivers do not see the value of education and would rather have the children work, or because they are not in a position to support the children.

Girls from one JSS Focus Group Discussion spoke openly about the lack of support from their parents. One girl stated that she gets no support from her mother, even for food, so she is responsible for all her living and education expenses. Another shared that if she does not trade or go to the bush, there will be no money for food or for her education. Another explained that she must work after school, otherwise she receives no food and is punished.

Children living with caregivers other than their parents also experienced lack of support. Primary school children in Kailahun mentioned that those children who are staying with people who are not their parents often arrive at school late, because of the domestic work they must perform before they attend school.

In the JSS control group, all 12 girls interviewed stated that they live with non-parental caregivers (relatives) and shared that although their caregivers provide lodging for them, none felt any responsibility for feeding or supporting them. Further, these girls expressed that they must finish all domestic tasks prior to studying.

There are also students living independently and caregiver support is non-existent.

Social stigmas towards disability. Social stigmas against children with disabilities receiving an education still exist, but amongst the stakeholders the evaluation team consulted, there was an awareness of their right to education, and the benefits of receiving a good education for them and their families.

Lack of appropriate and accessible facilities. Some schools do not have toilets or water or have toilets which are in a very poor condition and often inaccessible to persons with disabilities. Girls who are menstruating will often miss school if the toilet facilities are very poor or non-existent.

Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights. Pressures of established gender and cultural norms paired with lack of knowledge of sexual and reproductive health and rights present additional barriers for boys and girls.

Shortage of female teachers. There is a severe shortage of qualified and trained teachers, and very few female teachers, which means that in some schools there is no one for girls to go to for help and advice.

Lack of learning and teaching materials. The lack of teaching and learning materials – including those adapted for children with disabilities, makes it more difficult for children to learn. Often children are studying in large classes with a small classroom, without enough desks or chairs.

Language of instruction. While English is the primary language of instruction, none of the children interviewed spoke it as a first language. Nearly all children speak English at school, but not at home, where they use Krio, Temne, Mende, Kono, or other languages. These findings are supported by quantitative data collected which reveals that between 93.8 and 100 percent of children sampled from beneficiary JSS, control JSS, and beneficiary primary stated that the language of instruction is different from their mother tongue. Of the children sampled, 5.3 percent of girls and 7.1 percent of boys from the treatment (beneficiary) JSS do not speak the language of instruction; 4.3 percent of girls and 2.5 percent of boys from the control JSS do not speak the language of instruction; and 10.5 percent of girls and 1.1 percent of boys from the beneficiary primary school do not speak the language of instruction.

Distance to schools and public safety. Long distances to and from school as well as unsafe commuting routes present difficulties for both children with and without difficulties. All children interviewed expressed safety concerns regarding their commute to and from school (e.g. the possibility of being hit by traffic, being attacked, or being kidnapped) and between 90.5 and 96.6 percent of girls surveyed during quantitative data collection stated that there were fairly or very unsafe travel to schools in the area (within beneficiary JSS, control JSS, and beneficiary primary schools).

Peer pressure. Children interviewed expressed that peer pressure represented another barrier to education. Examples given during qualitative data collection included pressure to opt out of school for income-generating activities and for girls to become mothers before finishing school.

Break from JSS to SSS. Interviewees during qualitative data collection stated that the gap between JSS and SSS acts as an additional barrier to girls continuing their education. One head teacher argued that this break contributes to several pregnancies a year. This sentiment was echoed by a mother at a control school who explained that, based on her observations, the reason why more boys than girls continue to SSS is that some girls become pregnant in the months they are out of school between JSS and SSS.

3.5 Appropriateness of project activities to the characteristics and barriers identified

Do the most prevalent barriers identified by the analysis correspond with the project's Theory of Change?

GATE-GEC's theory 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.[29]

More effective teaching and learning for all students:

- Quantitative findings related to potential barriers to learning and transition, as presented in Table 21 above, indicate that between 18.1 per cent and 21.7 per cent of students agree that teachers are often absent from class. The qualitative findings do not contradict this, with several instances of teacher absence being noted – although the reasons given were varied (from person parental obligations, to working on the upcoming elections). Further, a lack of qualified teachers, particularly in rural areas, and particularly female teachers, was noted by many interviewees, as were more egregious violations, such as sexual harassment or assault of female students by male teachers. Trainings offered through GATE-GEC should help create more dedicated, educated, and confident teachers and other school staff in intervention schools, including application of codes' of conduct for teachers and more diligent attendance monitoring of teachers themselves. This, in turn, may decrease teacher absence and increase learning for all students in intervention schools.

- Study groups provide additional support for children who may need additional or specialised input from the teacher, and for those who have no time or place to study once they leave school. The PVs receive training on how to make them more effective teachers, providing a more inclusive and gender-sensitive environment for all their students. At the endline evaluation for GEC 1, there was no evidence that attending study groups had improved learning outcomes in either literacy or numeracy for beneficiaries. However, all the students and teachers involved with study groups under GEC 1 expressed that they had been very beneficial.

  While not yet started at the time of the baseline evaluation, study groups under GATE-GEC have been developed based on feedback and learning from GEC 1 and have been extended to PS level in addition to JSS level. With hopes of increasing their effectiveness, study groups under GATE-GEC are now much more structured than GEC 1, in terms of the materials to be covered, training and support for PVs, and arrangements for the management of study groups.

- New initiatives under GATE-GEC, such as the pilot roles of itinerant teachers in two districts, the provision of training for PVs to support children with disabilities through study groups, and the development of model schools at JSS level are all appropriate ways to facilitate a growing level of support for children's learning needs, both direct and indirect beneficiaries.

- Score-carding will be key to ensuring that schools become more child friendly, without any type of violence, where rights are respected, and discipline is positive. It would seem appropriate to involve members of School Management Committees (PS) and Boards of Governors (JSS) and Community Teachers Associations (PS and JSS) in the development and roll-out of this initiative, as that level of wider understanding and support within the school community will be needed to effect sustainable change. This will also help to increase the level of community participation and sense of ownership of the project.

- At present there are very few female teachers, and the girls – and boys – need to see positive female role models and to benefit from their presence in school. Learning assistants get the opportunity to train as teachers, taking on increasing amounts of responsibility to support students as they become student teachers and then qualify. Respondents, both girls and boys, outlined the importance and benefits of having female

[29] Plan International UK and Sierra Leone, ActionAid, Open University, FAWE, and Handicap International (2017). *GEC-T MEL Framework.*

teachers, as they did the importance of well-trained teachers, who are more willing to try new teaching techniques, particularly with students that may have some difficulties.

- The current level of only 100 children with disabilities to be given assistive devices per year over three years means that many children will not receive the items they need. At the time of the baseline, this activity had not yet started so no assistive devices had been allocated so far under GATE-GEC. That said, the urgent need for assistive devices was identified during fieldwork, so this provision is appropriate based on identified characteristics and barriers.

Greater self-esteem and agency of beneficiaries:

- Quantitative and qualitative findings both underscore the importance of increasing the self-esteem and agency of beneficiaries. For example, an increase in agency may cause a decrease in identified barriers to learning and transition such as early marriage or unplanned pregnancies. Anecdotally, many respondents noted early pregnancy as either a cause or consequence of school dropout, and there were few cases noted of early mothers returning to school.

Greater economic capacity:

- Quantitative and qualitative findings clearly indicate the prevalence of poverty in decisions to attend or not attend school, or in the capacity to engage in study after school. This underscores the relevance of financial support either through bursaries or other more sustainable mechanisms such as VSLAs to help families meet basic costs of attending school. VSLA introduction has definite potential to ensure that more families can continue covering education costs themselves through income generation rather than relying on bursaries.

Consortium's increased capacity to collaborate with and influence nationally and internationally with and on behalf of girls and children with disabilities in Sierra Leone:

- Interviews with key informants and secondary research indicate that there are clear opportunities for collaboration with both government and non-governmental organisations to link GATE GEC to national education strategies and ongoing or planned initiatives. Effective collaboration could lead to contributions to major policies and other programmes including the implementation of the ESP 2018-2020 and the development of the next Education Sector Plan for 2021-2025.

Box 2: Project contribution

Based on the findings from this baseline, it has been acknowledged that the GATE GEC Theory of Change and assumptions underpinning this are robust and continue to align with the original outcomes and outputs intended for the project. These findings reinforce that the project continues to address key barriers to education for these target groups via a range of programmatic interventions supporting quality of teaching and learning (teacher training, classroom support via Learning Assistants and study groups), direct material support to students (via bursaries) and economic support to families that can facilitate meeting of educational costs in a sustainable manner in order for girls and children with disabilities to transition from PS to JSS and from JSS to a successful transition pathway post JSS.

The evaluator's sample characteristics broadly reflect the characteristics of the wider beneficiary population.

In addition, these findings have strengthened key areas and understanding that has evolved since the beginning of the project following on from the learnings of the GEC 1 project, particularly highlighting how key barriers including poverty, payment of school fees and other educational costs, and the capacity and quality of teaching staff including the lack of female teachers needs to be addressed throughout the life of the project.

Key barriers outside of the project's control and design

The findings highlighted, and we accept, that there are certain key barriers that are outside the control and scope of the project and its interventions, for example distances that children travel to and from school, and low-quality, inaccessible, or non-existent sanitation facilities, which were identified as key barriers to the children's learning and transition. Although these are often recognised as an issue, and the project attempts to support schools where possible through school and community sensitisation and linking in with other agencies who have a specific focus on addressing these particular issues, without this being a direct programmatic intervention.

GATE GEC Theory of Change and Logframe

Based on the findings from the baseline, the ToC will remain as was originally proposed. However, the project is open to FM suggestions if they feel certain amendments are required. There will, however, be a review of its logframe based on the evaluator's recommended revisions to the work around the *"Consortium's increased capacity to collaborate with and influence nationally and internationally with and on behalf of girls and children with disabilities in Sierra Leone"*. Specifically, that the project revises Intermediate Outcome 5 to ensure the outcome text and its indicator are consistent by incorporating work with Boards of Governors, School Management Committees and Community-Teachers Associations, to strengthen community participation in school governance and management.

The project accepts this recommendation. However, the suggested revisions to this outcome and output need to be discussed with the FM as they have budget and workplan implications. We will assess whether this community engagement is best placed to sit under this outcome, or whether it should sit under outcome 3 where there is direct engagement with SMCs expected through the score carding component. This will be further explored with the FM.

It is also recognised through a separate piece of work on SMCs in Sierra Leone, that there is a clear need to strengthen community participation in governance and management of schools and the project must look to include activities with the school committees including trainings on roles and responsibilities and community engagement in school management and governance. This possibility will be evaluated from a work plan and budget point of view.

The External Evaluator also recommends that under intermediate outcome 5 the project should include a separate outcome and indicator related to increased engagement with key educational actors to support education provision for girls and children with disabilities on a national level.

The project seeks further clarity on this recommendation. As it stands, the project logframe has IO indicator 5.2: '# of education events consortium partners 'actively' participate in to share evidence and learning from the GATE GEC project with key educational stakeholders' and we feel this is appropriate as it outlines what engagement looks like with these actors. It also allows for clearer attribution and contribution. Minutes and attendance records will be captured, and relevant actions agreed will be shared as part of the stakeholder engagement tool.

4. Key Outcome Findings

4.1 Learning Outcomes

Learning Assessments

'English, we speak it! Maths we crack it!'
-Male Student, JSS, Kono

Two versions of a primary-level reading assessment (EGRA), two versions of a primary-level maths assessment (EGMA), two versions of a JSS level reading assessment (SEGRA), and two versions of a JSS level maths assessment (SeGMA) were designed per the EGRA and EGMA toolkit guidelines and GEC specifications. The tests were structured around subtasks that become more difficult and test higher orders of learning, while being appropriately cognisant of the specific challenge to educational attainment in Sierra Leone. The competencies to be tested via the EGMA/SeGMA were as follows:

Table 22: EGMA /SeGMA Test Areas

The competencies to be tested via the EGRA/SeGRA were as follows:

Component	Skill demonstrated by students' ability to:	Included on EGMA	Included on SeGMA
1. Number identification	Provide the numbers that are presented to them in random order	✓	
2. Quantity discrimination	Choose the number that is bigger out of the two numbers that are presented to them	✓	
3. Number patterns (missing numbers)	Identify the missing numbers of the series of numbers presented to them	✓	
4. Addition	Solve the addition problems	✓	✓
5. Subtraction	Solve the subtraction problems	✓	✓
6. Word problems	Solve a simple addition/subtraction/ multiplication/division story problem which is presented to them	✓	✓
7. Advanced multiplication & division	Solve more challenging multiplication and division story problem which is presented to them		✓
8. Proportions (fractions/ percentages)	Calculate fractions and percentages of specified amounts		✓
9. Space and shape (geometry)	Using geometric knowledge and spatial reasoning to calculate area, fractions, and proportions		✓
10. Measurement (distance, length, area, capacity, money)	Using geometric knowledge and spatial reasoning to calculate area, fractions, and proportions		✓
11. Algebra questions	Solve equations with whole numbers		✓*
12. Data interpretation and sophisticated word problems, solved using complex, multiple operations including algebra	Solve advanced problems with multiple operations		✓*

*excluded on baseline; planned to be included on midline and endline.

Table 23: EGRA /SeGRA Test Areas

Component	Early reading skill	Skill demonstrated by students' ability to:	Included on EGRA	Included on SeGRA
1. Letter Sound Identification	Alphabet Knowledge	Assess pupil's knowledge of the relationship between letter signs and their sounds	✓	✓
2. Familiar Word Recognition	Word recognition	Assess pupil's sight word reading vocabulary using 40 common, high-frequency words from English language reading and writing	✓	✓
3. Invented Word Recognition	Word-making skill	Assess the abilities of children to use word-making patterns to make and read words that could exist in a given language but do not. These are made-up words and hence unfamiliar to children. The objective of using nonwords is to assess the child's ability to decode words fluently and efficiently.	✓	✓
4. Assessment of Reading Comprehension	Oral reading fluency Reading comprehension	Assess children's ability to read sentences and understand what was read (words per minute)	✓	✓
5. Advanced Reading Comprehension 1	Oral reading fluency Reading comprehension Writing skill	Assess children's ability to read sentences and understand what was read – more advanced passages for older (JSS) children		✓
6. Advanced Reading Comprehension 2	Oral reading fluency Reading comprehension Writing skill	Assess children's ability to read sentences and understand what was read – more advanced passages for higher grade JSS children		✓*
7. Assessment of Writing – short essay construction	Writing skill	Assess child's writing work for phonemic awareness and print conventions		✓*

*excluded on baseline; planned to be included on midline and endline.

As discussed in Section 2.4, the learning assessments were piloted before the full data collection period. Forty-two primary students took the EGRA and EGMA, and forty-two JSS students took the SeGRA and SeGMA. As the results in Annex 9 show, the tests as originally designed were well calibrated for the abilities of the students. Each subtask covers a more challenging topic than the previous. The modal scores for early subtasks are high, the middle subtasks approach 50 percent correct, and the later subtasks are low. We calculated combined scores for each of the four assessments and found their averages to be between 40 and 60 percent. With scores so close to the mean, and so few students receiving high scores on the more advanced subtasks, we felt confident that there would be minimal risk of floor and ceiling effects. As seen below, our expectations were confirmed later by the data. All tests were administered orally. This ensures that subtasks that were shared between secondary and primary level tests will have comparable results, which will be particularly useful as part of cohort tracking. It will be possible to compare scores directly of students who took the EGRA in primary sixth and will take the SeGRA in future years. In addition, mastery of reading in English should not serve as a barrier to succeeding on the mathematics examinations; orally administered tests increased the likelihood that students understood the directions, yielding more accurate assessments of mathematics ability.

The aggregate learning scores will be used to compare overall learning levels in beneficiary and control groups and track learning progress over time. The two tables below present aggregate scores from all subtasks used in the learning task. The scores are based on a 0-100 scale.[30] All learning assessment scores are comprised of the average of the assessments' subtasks scores. These tests were not normalised or modified to follow a standard distribution: the means are near 50 because the tests were designed to be of the appropriate difficulty for the takers. These aggregate scores will be used to estimate project impact on learning, the learning target via a .25-standard deviation per year formula, and project achievement.

[30] As prescribed in the FM MEL Guidance.

As the project was designed, it was agreed that the payment-by-results agreement for learning would focus on learning by students without disabilities. As such, the initial review of learning outcome focuses on them. As boys were only included in the project if they identified as having a disability, the results below only include girls without disabilities. To ensure comparability between treatment and control, the control scores below only include girls without disabilities as well. Both the literacy and numeracy scores are very similar to each other at the JSS1 level; in both cases, control students' mean scores are slightly lower than those of treatment students. However, in both assessments, there is no gap in mean scores in JSS1, a small gap in JSS2, and a larger gap in JSS3. Upon investigation, this gap persists when controlling for enumerator, region, demographics, and barriers such as poverty.

While T-tests do not suggest significant differences in mean numeracy scores, they do show significant differences between treatment and control students at the JSS2 and JSS3 grades. One possible cause of differences at the JSS2 and JSS3 levels is that patterns of transition are different for beneficiaries than control students. Students with below-average test scores may be more likely to persist if they are receiving project support to continue, and teachers whose skills and performance improve due to project interventions are more likely to have a disproportionately beneficial effect on lower-performing students (in terms of their motivation and overall results). Given the strong effect of poverty on school attendance (discussed above), direct support via bursaries, or indirect via VSLA membership, should have a direct impact on school attendance.

If beneficiary students with below-average test scores are more likely persist in school than similar non-beneficiaries with below-average test scores, the mean scores will always be lower in beneficiary schools. Low-performing control students will self-select themselves out of the sample (i.e. drop out) over time, causing a divergence in the mean scores. Because beneficiaries have already been receiving support in the past through GEC 1, such a pattern is likely to already exist.

If the student makeup of control and treatment (beneficiary) schools is already qualitatively different in unmeasured ways, there is no way to correct for these differences; however, use of difference-in-differencing will mitigate the effects of different starting points. In addition, if future students are assessed regardless of whether they are enrolled or not, the counterfactual of the treatment and control groups will be a much more accurate basis of comparison.

Table 24: Literacy (SeGRA)

Grade	Intervention (Beneficiary) Group Mean	Control Group Mean	Standard Deviation in the intervention (beneficiary) group
JSS 1	50.9	50.8	24.3
JSS 2	48.7	57.5	26.1
JSS 3	52.8	67.2	24.4
JSS 1-3	50.4	56.8	25.1
GIRLS ONLY			
JSS 1	50.6	50.8	24.7
JSS 2	48.7	54.0	26.2
JSS 3	52.8	62.9	24.4

Table 25: Numeracy (SeGMA)

Grade	Intervention (Beneficiary) Group Mean	Control Group Mean	Standard Deviation in the intervention (beneficiary) group
JSS 1	46.3	45.4	16.7
JSS 2	48.5	49.9	15.8
JSS 3	50.5	53.9	16.0
JSS 1-3	49.7	50.3	17.2
GIRLS ONLY			
JSS 1	48.4	43.4	18.5
JSS 2	49.7	48.9	16.8
JSS 3	51.2	53.9	16.4

The two tables below represent a 'foundational skill diagnostic' for both literacy and numeracy skills per subtask. It is understood that the bands are set arbitrarily, per guidance from Plan and PWC. An exception is the Oral Reading Fluency Score (words per minute), which utilises a classification based on the observation that in most languages, when a student can read 45 – 60 words per minute, he or she will be able to understand simple text. Above 45 words per minute, the student can 'read to learn' rather than 'learn to read'. In practice, however, this may vary by language.[31] Per the MEL Guidance, these two diagnostics are important for the midline and endline as they will allow the achievements for the project to not only be measured by the value added in standard deviations of the aggregate score against the control group, but also by the shares of students who become proficient in foundational literacy and numeracy skills where, at the baseline, they were only emergent or non-learners.

The skill levels generally follow predictable outcomes: as exercises increase in level of difficulty, average levels of proficiency fall. While proficiency in literacy skills may vary between student, average levels of invented work recognition are somewhat low given the higher levels of reading comprehension. The purpose of the invented word subtask is to identify student's abilities to use phonics and understand word construction: while other tasks can rely on rote memorisation of words, it requires different teaching methods and approaches than basic memorization. Its low proficiency levels may indicate that teachers often dedicate less time than is efficient for developing literacy skills.

Table 26: Foundational Literacy skills gaps

Categories	Subtask 1 Familiar Word Recognition		Subtask 2 Invented Word Recognition		Subtask 3 Reading Comprehension		Subtask 4 Advanced Reading Comprehension 1		Subtask 5 Advanced Reading Comprehension 2	
JSS	Treat	Control	Treat	Control	Treat	Control	Treat	Control	Treat	Control
Non-learner 0%	1%	1%	20%	16%	14%	12%	33%	27%	47%	39%
Emergent learner 1%-40%	5%	6%	32%	22%	9%	7%	8%	8%	10%	8%
Established learner 41%-80%	24%	18%	39%	49%	24%	11%	13%	10%	25%	20%
Proficient learner 81%-100%	70%	74%	9%	14%	53%	69%	46%	54%	19%	33%
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Table 27: Foundational numeracy skills gaps

Categories	Subtask 1 Level 1 Addition & Subtraction		Subtask 2 Level 2 Addition & Subtraction		Subtask 3 Word Problems		Subtask 4 Advanced Multiplication/ Division		Subtask 5 Percentages & Fractions		Subtask 6 Spaces & Shapes	
JSS	Treat	Control	Treat	Control	Treat	Control	Treat	Control	Treat	Control	Treat	Control
Non-learner 0%	0%	1%	5%	7%	2%	2%	18%	21%	67%	72%	69%	60%
Emergent learner 1%-40%	6%	5%	17%	11%	14%	11%	29%	26%	0%	0%	25%	31%
Established learner 41%-80%	29%	26%	55%	54%	44%	39%	30%	30%	21%	18%	5%	8%
Proficient learner 81%-100%	65%	68%	23%	28%	40%	48%	8%	23%	12%	10%	1%	1%
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Grade Level Achieved

The following table lists the 'grade level achieved' as calculated via the guidance provided by the GATE-GEC fund manager. It characterises student learning assessment results according to the higher tiers of the specific level achieved (established or proficient), and as such provides a summary of overall proficiency per the subtasks presented in the EGRA/SeGRA and EGMA/SeGMA tests that can be utilised at mid and endline to establish comparisons of progress. Results are variable across grades and boys/girls (though given that all boys assessed were children with disabilities, variation in this cohort is expected).

[31] Abadzi, Helen (2011). *Reading Fluency Measurements in EFA FTI Partner Countries: Outcomes and Improvement Prospects.*

As shown below, fewer than half of the beneficiaries in the learning outcome sample demonstrate grade five or above reading abilities in reading or mathematics. As with all gender disaggregation in this study, caution must be exercised, as the sample of boys is small, and represents those who identified as having a disability at some point in their past. More boys achieved levels of proficiency in four of six tested grade levels in reading and one of the tested grade levels in mathematics. Caution should be exercised when attempting to draw conclusions, as boys represent a small proportion of the beneficiary learning sample. Overall, these levels of achievement demonstrate again the appropriate level of difficulty of the tests, and that there are unlikely to be significant floor or ceiling effects. The lowest grade levels have (unsurprisingly) very high levels of proficiency, but the highest grade levels have very low levels. Ceiling effects will be further mitigated when the most advanced subtasks are added to assessments at midline and endline.

Table 28: Grade Levels Achieved – All Cohorts

	Relevant subtasks	Literacy	% of Girls	% of Boys	% Overall
Grade 2 achieved	SeGRA Subtask 1	Established in Oral Reading Fluency	94.2%	100.0%	94.3%
Grade 3 achieved	SeGRA Subtask 3	Proficient in Comprehension of short fluency paragraph	59.1%	70.0%	59.5%
Grade 4 achieved	SeGRA Subtask 3	Established in Comprehension using simple inferences	57.4%	55.0%	57.4%
Grade 5 achieved	SeGRA Subtask 3	Proficient in Comprehension using simple inferences	17.2%	20.0%	17.3%
Grade 6 achieved	SeGRA Subtask 4 & 5	Established in Comprehension using complex inferences	31.2%	15.0%	30.7%
Grade 7 achieved	SeGRA Subtask 4 & 5	Proficient in Comprehension using complex inferences	2.2%	0.0%	2.1%
Grade 8 achieved		Established in Short Essay construction	Mid/Endline	Mid/Endline	Mid/Endline
Grade 9 achieved		Proficient in Short Essay construction	Mid/Endline	Mid/Endline	Mid/Endline
	Relevant subtasks	Numeracy	% of Girls	% of Boys	% Overall
Grade 2 achieved	SeGMA Subtask 1	Proficient in Additions	70.0%	77.8%	70.2%
Grade 3 achieved	SeGMA Subtask 1 & 3	Proficient in Subtractions and Words Problem	43.3%	33.3%	43.0%
Grade 4 achieved	Subtask 7 (SeGMA 1)	Established in Advanced multi and division etc.	30.6%	33.3%	53.3%
Grade 5 achieved	Subtask 7 (SeGMA 1)	Proficient in Advanced multi and division etc.	23.3%	22.2%	23.3 %
Grade 6 achieved	Subtask 8 (SeGMA 2)	Established in Algebra	Mid/Endline	Mid/Endline	Mid/Endline
Grade 7 achieved	Subtask 8 (SeGMA 2)	Proficient in Algebra	Mid/Endline	Mid/Endline	Mid/Endline
Grade 8 achieved	Subtask 9 (SeGMA 3)	Established in Data Interpretation etc.	Mid/Endline	Mid/Endline	Mid/Endline
Grade 9 achieved	Subtask 9 (SeGMA3)	Proficient in Data Interpretation etc.	Mid/Endline	Mid/Endline	Mid/Endline

Scores: Non-learner 0%; Emergent learner 1%-40%; Established learner 41%-80%; Proficient learner 81%-100%

A learning benchmark of 100 students were selected randomly from the control sample after data collection was completed: no data outside the treatment and control samples were collected. Benchmarking data were stratified by grade according to the original sample plan to include 45 JSS1, 35 JSS2, and 20 JSS3. Students with disabilities as defined using the Washington Group questions were excluded from the benchmarking exercise. Targets were determined by using the outcomes spreadsheet, and not by the external evaluators. The targets set using the standardised method appear reasonable and achievable to the evaluators.

Early Grade Assessments

Learning outcomes of primary students follow generally expected trends. Primary students, all selected as beneficiaries because they reported having some disability, show predictable trends in their learning and mathematics assessment scores. Although there are no statistically significant differences between girls' and boys' scores overall or in any grade, boys' scores are higher in higher grades. Average boys' reading scores are higher than girls scores in four out of six grades, but none are statistically significant. In addition, given the variability of severity and type of disability among students, and smaller sample size, it would be difficult to discern real differences between smaller subgroups and statistical anomaly.

Qualitative findings do not suggest that children with disabilities' performance in primary school would be significantly different than for other children, other than children with disability facing particular challenges related to participation and physical engagement. Finding from interviews with teachers and students provide many examples of how schools attempt to accommodate the needs of children with disabilities (and indeed consortium partner HI is planning specific training of trainers for those teaching children with disabilities at primary level).

> *Children with disabilities are been increasingly seen as useful to the community, and the physical structures of buildings are becoming more accessible*
>
> *Interviewee, MEST*

As with other students, the largest determinant of school attendance appears to be economic, although there is some evidence to suggest that transition of children with disabilities from PS to JSS may be limited – one PS teacher noted that there had been 25 children with disabilities previously at the school, only two of which had transitioned into secondary. Further, it may be that the primary barrier to children with disabilities is not within the school system but accessing school in the first place. Most respondents to interviews and in discussions were able to articulate that children with disabilities receive additional supports in school to help them learn, but equally many respondents noted that some children with disabilities in their communities were unable to attend school. It may be that economic constraints drive this but may also be as a result of stigma or unwillingness to invest in their education, particularly children with more severe disabilities, or those with mental disabilities, which are very poorly represented among the interviewees.

Table 29: Learning scores of primary school beneficiaries (n=245)

	Average literacy scores			Average Mathematics Scores			Sample Size
Grade	Boys	Girls	All	Boys	Girls	All	All
PS1	19.3	14.3	15.7	10.7	14.0	13.1	11
PS2	22.7	23.5	23.1	24.8	31.5	27.9	41
PS3	43.5	46.8	45.1	39.1	38.7	38.9	42
PS4	66.8	50.2	57.6	59.6	47.5	52.9	58
PS5	58.1	54.8	56.7	59.3	54.0	57.0	44
PS6	54.5	49.4	52.3	59.2	49.5	55.0	49
Overall	49.4	43.5	46.6	48.5	42.6	45.6	245

4.2 Subgroup analysis of the Learning Outcome

The following tables provide some additional analysis of the learning levels of specific vulnerable or marginalised subgroups within the project beneficiary population. Documenting or quantifying specific learning skills for these groups will enable the project team to a) identify any poorly performing subgroups that may be targeted by specific project investments to mitigate their risks of poorer outcomes, and b) provide a baseline measure of their performance that can be tracked over time (at midline and endline, when the learning assessments will be repeated).

Table 30: Learning scores of key subgroups (n=1113)

	Average literacy score (aggregate)		Average numeracy score (aggregate)	
	Characteristics:			
	JSS Treatment	JSS Control	JSS Treatment	JSS Control
All students	50%	57%	48%	49%
Living without parents	52%	57%	49%	49%
Any impairment	55%	61%	51%	52%
HOH no education	50%	55%	48%	49%
Poor Household*	51%	56%	49%	48%
District				
Kailahun	46%	23%	51%	27%
Kenema	44%	49%	46%	48%
Kono	54%	62%	46%	52%
Moyamba	50%	60%	50%	55%
Port Loko/Karene	54%	56%	51%	48%

*Student meets any of the following criteria: Difficult to afford for child to go to school; Household doesn't own land for themselves; Household unable to meet basic needs; Gone to sleep hungry for many days in past year.

The qualitative research noted accounts all of the types of vulnerability above across all districts, in particular poverty, which respondents across the board noted as an issue preventing children coming to school, and from having consistent attendance. One informant recounted how a child was almost prevented from completing her exams as she did not have money for school fees – the fees were eventually covered by a benefactor, allowing her to complete exams on time. Other informants noted how orphans are much less likely to attend school, and the increase in orphans since the Ebola crisis.

> *Hunger is a real problem for the children- not during the first term (harvest time, food at home), but during the second and third terms (rainy season) when food is scarce. There is often no good drinking water available.*
>
> *PS Teacher, Kailahun*

Table 31: Learning scores of key subgroups by gender (n=1113)

	Average literacy score (%) (aggregate)		Average numeracy score (%) (aggregate)		Sample Size	
	JSS Treatment	JSS Control	JSS Treatment	JSS Control	JSS Treatment	JSS Control
	GIRLS					
Kailahun	46	24	51	27	107	10
Kenema	43	49	46	47	71	65
Kono	54	60	46	49	61	54
Moyamba	50	60	50	51	152	101
Port Loko	52	55	49	47	168	160
Karene	65	--	60	--	40	--
Total	50	53	50	47	599	390
	BOYS					
Kailahun	52	--	53	--	3	--
Kenema	48	64	33	53	4	5
Kono	53	69	39	63	3	14
Moyamba	55	73	55	63	8	57
Port Loko	55	68	44	57	2	28
Karene	--	--	--	--	0	0
Total	53	71	47	61	20	104

The average learning scores of key subgroups presented in the tables above, also disaggregated by district and gender, indicate small differences in average literacy and numeracy scores between these groups and the overall group. While the average scores for all girls for literacy and numeracy were 46 percent and 49 percent, respectively, the specific groups had scores that were within 2-3 percent of these. The exception was those girls reporting any impairment (the learning assessment tests pre-identified students as having a disability or not, based on GATE-GEC reverification data), with children scoring slightly higher on literacy scores. This may be a result of the greater time being allocated to children with disabilities – which corresponds with the qualitative findings (noted above). Only 34 of the students that took the literacy test had a disability under the working definition: the variation is likely a statistical anomaly and did was not statistically different when using an independent T-test.[32] Higher baseline scores for students with disabilities should not affect *improvement* in learning scores, so should not have a differential effect on future analyses. This would not be true if there were a significant risk of ceiling effects when using the assessment, but as discussed below, the risk of ceiling effects is minimal.

> *'The teachers understand our difficulties and sit us three students with visual and hearing problems at the front and help the other boy with his books.'*
>
> - Male student with a disability, JSS, Kenema

On a geographical basis, there was greater, but still not substantial, difference between districts. Kailahun, Kenema and Moyamba were below the average scores (by 3, 7, and 2 percent, respectively) for literacy, with Karene[33] results being significantly higher (15 percentage points higher) in literacy and in numeracy (5 percentage points higher), All other districts were below average in numeracy, with Kenema and Kono faring worst.

During qualitative data collection, numeracy and literacy scores were not specifically discussed by students or school staff. However, in Kenema, qualitative data revealed that a majority of students interviewed believe they do well in school and attend class as often as possible. While not discussed during interviews with students, interviews with school staff including head teachers, teachers, and learning assistants revealed a common pattern of absenteeism in cases of initiation ceremonies for boys (often in December, January, and February) and girls (often in December, March and April). These initiation ceremonies can result in a break from school lasting one week to one month. Further, both students and teachers expressed that hunger is another leading cause for absence which increases in

[32] An independent T-test with alpha=.05 and beta=0.8 had a P value of 0.36.
[33] Note: Karene has the smallest sample having recently been carved out of Port Loko.

the rainy season when there is no rice. That said, despite below average numeracy scores, one primary school in Kenema stated that the pass rate for boys into JSS is 80 per cent and the pass rate for girls is 92 per cent.

These differences, albeit small, suggest that the more eastern districts of Sierra Leone have poorer educational outcomes. This is in line with the qualitative research findings which indicated overall poorer educational performance and outcomes in Kono, Kailahun and Kenema, and also with Sierra Leone's socioeconomic indicators, in which the southern and eastern districts are the poorest-performing areas of Sierra Leone.[34]

The following table cross-references learning assessment average scores of girls with some key barriers identified via the School Survey conducted amongst all students in addition to the Learning Assessments. Because boys represent only 20 beneficiaries in the sample, the table is not disaggregated by gender; because incidence of barriers among control students is not the object of interest and additional tests would likely yield more false positives, they are also excluded. As with the vulnerability assessment, differences in learning performance between those who identified these barriers as affecting them were small, though a consistent trend of poorer assessment scores can be determined. This suggests that these barriers may be an influencing factor on the learning outcomes of girls, again in line with the qualitative findings, which generated anecdotal evidence of these barriers being both present and affecting the learning of girls. Statistical tests found no significant differences between literacy and numeracy scores according to any barrier, but such tests would require tremendous statistical power or stark differences in learning achievement. The lowest average score by barriers were for students who do not use the toilet at school, find it difficult to move around, or do not feel welcome by their teacher.

Table 32: Learning scores and key barriers in beneficiaries (n=619)

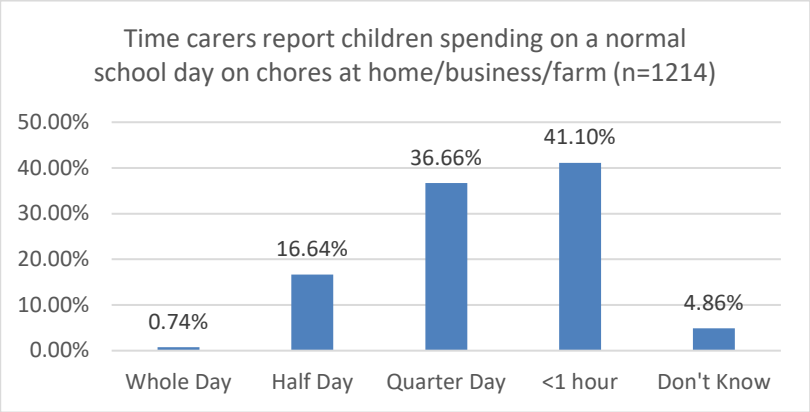
	Sample Size*	Literacy Score	Numeracy Score
All Beneficiaries	619	50.4	49.7
Caregiver states it is fairly or very unsafe for girls to travel to schools in the area (%):	50	51.5	49.6
Caregiver states it is fairly or very unsafe for boys to travel to schools in the area (%):	49	51.9	49.5
Student claims they don't feel safe travelling to/from school (%)	82	49.0	48.3
Parental/caregiver support:			
Sufficient time to study: High chore burden (quarter day or more %)	*253*	50.2	50.1
Does not get the support they need to stay in school and do well (%)	114	50.2	50.1
Attendance:			
Doesn't feel safe at school (%)	10	48.6	48.0
School facilities:			
Not enough seats for all students (%)	91	49.7	50.3
Difficult to move around school (%)	35	47.5	45.5
Doesn't use drinking water facilities	222	48.7	50.6
Doesn't use toilet at school	85	47.3	49.7
Doesn't use areas where children play/ socialise	26	55.1	52.0
Teachers:			
Disagrees teachers make them feel welcome	58	47.3	50.8
Agrees teachers treat boys and girls differently in the classroom	88	48.9	52.4
Agrees teachers often absent from class	109	48.6	48.6
Children with disabilities:			
GEC Fund (Washington Group) Definition	34	54.7	53.1
Reverification Data	61	59.1	46.6

Some items of note are perceptions of safety in school itself – those girls that stated that they do not feel safe in school had poorer literacy and numeracy assessment results (-7 percent), as did those girls who felt their teachers did not make them feel welcome in schools. This suggests that school staff-mediated psychosocial factors (perceptions of safety/security and a welcoming class atmosphere) may be related to educational performance, an area on which the project could potentially focus attention. This also links well with the theory of change which states

[34] See Sierra Leone's Demographic and Health Survey, 2013, available at: https://www.statistics.sl/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/demographic_and_health_survey_2013_final-report.pdf

that "if teaching and learning is more effective for all students … then 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".

Interestingly, there was least difference from the average literacy/numeracy scores of the 55 percent of girls who spend a quarter or more of their day doing non-school work (reported by their primary carers – see chart, right), suggesting that such chores are an accepted part of daily life and are managed more efficiently than other barriers. Indeed, over 90 percent of respondent carers noted that such work did not stop their children attending school at any time.



"Me and my daughter will do small business – selling fruit at the junction, up to 8 pm during the week, she will study after this, and 8 am to 2pm at the weekend."

Mother of GEC 1 former beneficiary, Port Loko

Early Grade Assessments

Primary level learning scores are less likely to show clear patterns among sub-groups than junior secondary scores. For example, while students who don't use a play area score 7 points lower than the average, they are also on average one grade lower than those who do. In addition, all primary beneficiaries were included in GEC 1 because of a disability: the type of disability and how it has served as a barrier to their learning or to their ability to score well on standardised assessments may vary greatly between students.

The average age of students sampled does not significantly or substantially differ between districts. While girls make up a slightly smaller proportion of Kono and Port Loko, subsamples, the girls always make up between 45-55% of the subsample. Given overall comparability in subsamples between districts, the wide disparities of average scores between districts is more likely due to actual differences in achievement. Literacy and numeracy scores are both highest in the adjacent Western districts of Port Loko & Karene, which is where over one-third of the project's primary level beneficiaries are. They are lowest in the remote and adjacent Eastern districts of Kailahun and Kenema. This suggests there may greater challenges but also greater potential for learning gains in the more remote Eastern region.

Table 33: Regional analysis of primary level learning outcomes

	Sample Size	Average Grade Level	Gender (% Female)	Literacy Score	Numeracy Score
Kailahun	37	4.7	54.1%	31.3	29.0
Kenema	29	4.0	53.3%	25.7	33.7
Kono	41	4.1	46.3%	39.9	41.7
Moyamba	43	4.0	52.2%	42.9	49.2
Port Loko & Karene	95	3.5	45.5%	63.5	56.0
All Districts	245	3.9	49.0%	46.5	45.6

Students who say they do not get the support they need from their families/households report statistically significantly lower scores than those who do not; the subgroup is not younger than average. Subgroup analysis regarding school facilities are mixed: while a lack of seats or usable water facilities are correlated with lower reading scores, a lack of usable toilets is correlated with higher reading and mathematics scores. Children with disabilities were not disaggregated for EGRA scores, as only 21 students met the Washington Group definition. According to the reverification data, all primary students have disabilities.

Table 34: Sub-group analysis of primary level learning outcomes

	Sample Size*	Literacy Score	Numeracy Score
All Beneficiaries	245	46.5	49.7
Caregiver states it is fairly or very unsafe for girls to travel to schools in the area	11	44.7	41.1
Caregiver states it is fairly or very unsafe for boys to travel to schools in the area	8	45.0	36.7
Student claims they don't feel safe travelling to/from school	25	44.3	49.1
Parental/caregiver support:			
Sufficient time to study: High chore burden (quarter day or more)	*79*	43.7	43.3
Does not get the support they need to stay in school and do well	55	33.1*	30.6*
Attendance:			
Doesn't feel safe at school	7	30.2	40.7
School facilities:			
Not enough seats for all students	62	36.0*	39.77
Difficult to move around school	14	36.6	32.9
Doesn't use drinking water facilities	74	40.2*	41.6
Doesn't use toilet at school	17	61.3*	61.1*
Doesn't use areas where children play/ socialise	9	39.7	37.7
Teachers:			
Disagrees teachers make them feel welcome	7	24.1	31.5
Agrees teachers treat boys and girls differently in the classroom	43	52.1	49.5
Agrees teachers often absent from class	41	46.6	49.3

Note: Sample sizes according to barriers questions; some students did not take both tests

4.3 Transition Outcome

Both target (beneficiary) and control groups outlined similar transition pathways and identified the same barriers – including poverty – which may prevent them from reaching their goals. The beneficiaries identified in 2013 were categorised as the most marginalised. However, since that time, the lives of many children have changed (primarily due to the Ebola epidemic) resulting in many more marginalised children within the target communities than before,[35] with inadequate measures in place to ameliorate the negative impacts of the Ebola crisis.[36]

Table 35: Transition pathways

Age	Successful Transition	Unsuccessful Transition
Ages 6-12	In-school progression Alternative learning programme Repeats grade	Drops out of school Any employment in lieu of school
Ages 13-17	In-school progression Alternative learning programme Repeats grade Gainful Employment after completing JSS (or equivalent alternative)	Drops out of school Gainful Employment but incomplete JSS Any other employment in lieu of school
Ages 18+	In-school progression Alternative learning programme Repeats grade Gainful employment	Drops out of school Any other employment status
Dropped out	Re-enrol in appropriate grade level Alternative learning programme	Remains out of school

At the baseline stage of the project, transition pathways for beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries are the same: all students in the sample (control and treatment) are currently enrolled in school. The changing socioeconomic environment in the project areas as Sierra Leone recovers from the Ebola crisis makes identification of consistent pathways challenging. From the perspective of both students surveyed and their caregivers, schooling is viewed as very important – this is confirmed across quantitative and qualitative findings. As indicated in the table below, the majority (89 percent) of caregivers expressed the desire that their children would continue on to third level education. This finding is supported by the students themselves, of whom 98.7 percent noted that going to school was important for what they want to do when they grow up. This finding correlates well with that of the qualitative research, in which parents and students alike noted that formal education was the most important pathway for career progression to them, particularly children with disabilities, many of which were aware that their (physical) disabilities put them at a disadvantage to others with respect to physically demanding work, so education was identified as a gateway to independence and a way to escape deprivation. The proposed definitions of successful and unsuccessful transition above were based on inputs from the GATE-GEC MEL Framework and GEC documents.

Table 36: Ultimate Schooling Levels Aspired to by Caregivers of Students

Level of Schooling Desired by Carer (n=852)	
None	0%
Primary	1%
Junior Secondary	5%
Senior Secondary	3%
College/University	89%
Don't know	1%

A high premium placed on formal education by community members is reflective of insufficient capacity (personnel, financial, organisational) in existing Sierra Leone institutions at the level of Technical and Vocational Education and

[35] As of 2015, a World Bank survey noted nearly 1/3 of the country's workforce reporting lower revenues than before the Ebola crisis and 2/3 of households reporting food insecurity.

[36] A school management committee member noted in World Bank-supported research (2016) that teachers *"have a lot of work to do with the accelerated syllabus, so cannot care for the victimized children [of Ebola]"*.

Training (TVET); a lack of alignment between labour market needs and curricula and a lack of strategic coherence between existing Government initiatives, private sector social investments and development partners projects. For many community members, particularly outside major urban areas, formal education is the only avenue for career progression, other than unskilled labour.[37]

Further research at midline and endline will enable the mapping and comparisons of appropriate and relevant transition pathways within the context of the treatment and control groups.

To measure successful transition outcomes, one must define what counts as success. A student is considered to successfully transitioned if they:

(i) Progress a grade in school;
(ii) Repeat a grade;
(iii) Achieve gainful employment; or
(iv) Enrol in an alternate education program.

While grade progression is the traditional definition of successful transition, repetition is included in the project's context. Repetition is systemic in Sierra Leone and may be the result of higher passing requirements than in other countries. The number of students that Sierra Leone's education system chooses to have repeat a grade is higher than most countries worldwide, including the sub-Saharan average. At the primary level, 13.3 percent of girls and 12.5 percent of boys (or one out of eight students) repeat a grade each year.[38] Thus, the average primary age girl loses 0.9 and boy loses 0.8 years to repetition. While JSS repetition rates could not be determined from the research, secondary repetition rates are typically higher than primary rates. There are no internationally-accepted standards or criteria for student progression: some education systems, such as Tanzania, promote all students, regardless of learning; others, like Guatemala and Sierra Leone, have high repetition rates. When repetition is high among a group of students in a system, it suggests poor learning; when repetition is high throughout the system, it suggests it is built into how the education system works, for example due to a gap between learning expectations and what is possible in given learning conditions. When grade repetition is normalised in a system, it may not connote a failure to learn to the degree it would in other educational systems. In addition, student repeaters are students enrolled, which suggests they are still overcoming cultural and economic barriers to education and are still investing in their future.

Gainful employment is defined as a safe, well-paying job. Gainful employment is only defined as successful if the student has either completed JSS first or is at least 18; those under 18 in safe, well-paying jobs are not included as successful transitions, as returning to school may have greater long-term benefits. Alternate education programs are considered successful transition for those of any age.

[37] Technical Vocational Education and Training – Sierra Leone, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, 2013
[38] See Sierra Leone National Education Profile (2014). https://www.epdc.org/sites/default/files/documents/EPDC%20NEP_Sierra%20Leone.pdf

4.4 Sub-group analysis of the transition outcome

Table 37: Transition Outcome, Intervention

Transition in Intervention Group (Girls)							
Age	Sample Students	School Transition	Repeat	Gainful Employment	Alternate Education	Unsuccessful Transition	Estimated Current Transition
6	2	2	0	0	0	0%	100%
7	6	6	0	0	0	0%	100%
8	7	5	2	0	0	0%	100%
9	17	15	2	0	0	0%	100%
10	13	13	0	0	0	0%	100%
11	17	15	2	0	0	0%	100%
12	23	20	3	0	0	0%	100%
13	68	56	12	0	0	0%	100%
14	96	78	17	0	0	0%	100%
15	148	122	26	0	0	0%	100%
16	76	60	16	0	0	0%	100%
17	44	36	8	0	0	0%	100%
18	24	18	6	0	0	0%	100%
19	3	1	2	0	0	0%	100%
20	2	2	0	0	0	0%	100%

Transition in Intervention Group (Boys)							
Age	Sample Students	School Transition	Repeat	Gainful Employment	Alternate Education	Unsuccessful Transition	Estimated Current Transition
5	1	0	1	N/A	0	0%	100%
6	2	1	1	N/A	0	0%	100%
7	2	2	0	N/A	0	0%	100%
8	3	3	0	N/A	0	0%	100%
9	18	16	2	N/A	0	0%	100%
10	8	6	2	N/A	0	0%	100%
11	13	12	1	N/A	0	0%	100%
12	19	16	3	N/A	0	0%	100%
13	12	8	4	N/A	0	0%	100%
14	12	12	0	N/A	0	0%	100%
15	4	3	1	0	0	0%	100%
16	0	0	0	0	0	0%	100%
17	6	5	1	0	0	0%	100%
18	1	1	0	0	0	0%	100%

Table 38: Transition Outcome – Control Group

Transition in Control Group (Girls)							
Age	Sample Students	School Transition	Repeat	Gainful Employment	Alternate Education	Unsuccessful Transition	Estimated Current Transition
11	5	5	0	N/A	0	0%	100%
12	35	32	3	N/A	0	0%	100%
13	60	56	4	N/A	0	0%	100%
14	74	62	12	N/A	0	0%	100%
15	66	57	9	0	0	0%	100%
16	29	26	3	0	0	0%	100%
17	36	32	4	0	0	0%	100%
18	15	11	4	0	0	0%	100%
Transition in Control Group (Boys)							
Age	Sample Students	School Transition	Repeat	Gainful Employment	Alternate Education	Unsuccessful Transition	Estimated Current Transition
11	5	5	5	N/A	0	0%	100%
12	35	9	8	N/A	0	0%	100%
13	60	11	8	N/A	0	0%	100%
14	74	15	14	N/A	0	0%	100%
15	66	11	11	0	0	0%	100%
16	29	6	6	0	0	0%	100%
17	36	14	13	0	0	0%	100%
18	15	10	9	0	0	0%	100%

The entire quantitative sample consists of students currently enrolled in school. As such, little can be said about transition patterns based on the general sample. The most interesting finding is that repetition reflects the national trend of high repetition rates. By definition, there are no dropouts in the quantitative sample. Similarly (though due to logistical constraints in accessing dropout) no school dropouts were included in qualitative data collection.

Qualitative evidence suggests that the key determinant of whether girls and children with disabilities will be able to transition successfully is financial, coupled with the level of encouragement and support they receive from their parents or caregivers, and their confidence in themselves and the determination and motivation they possess to achieve their goals. From the quantitative data related to self-esteem (see Section 5.5, below) many children appear confident and determined to succeed academically. That said, students expressed during interviews that if financial support is not available to them, they recognise they may not be able to pursue their studies as far as they wish. Further, several key informants highlighted early marriage and pregnancy as barriers to transition during interviews and focus group discussions. These discussions revealed that awareness of comprehensive sexuality education, including family planning, among both students and teachers is generally low. As recommended in Section 6.2 and based on the above, Plan should discuss with MEST on how GATE-GEC can best contribute to activities outlined in the ESP 2018-2020 which includes the implementation of comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) and policies related to its implementation in the revised National Education Policy. The ESP 2018-2020 states that CSE is “one of the strategic prongs towards realising the full potential of adolescents and youth and, when implemented correctly, can reduce adolescent pregnancy which could in turn reduce drop-outs”.

Qualitative data collection revealed no difference in barriers to transition between students of different ages or between those with or without disabilities.

Benchmarking

Table 39: Transition Outcome – Benchmark Group

Transition in Benchmark Group									
Age	Grade	Sample Students (schools)	School Transition	Repeat	Drop Out	Gainful Employment	Alternate Education	Unsuccessful Transition	Estimated Current Transition
9	PS 4	1,504 (28)	1,142	302	60	0	0	0%	96%
10	PS 5	1,329 (28)	936	301	92	0	0	0%	93%
11	PS 6	1,036 (28)	709	241	86	0	0	0%	92%
12	JSS 1	10,058 (110)	8,357	1,229	472	0	0	0%	95%
13	JSS 2	9,114 (110)	7395	1,231	488	0	0	0%	95%
14	JSS 3	9,315 (110)	8,278	672	365	0	0	0%	93%

Benchmark estimates are from school-level reporting on successful transitions by grade. In preference to conducting an additional household survey across a separate sample population in an attempt to establish overall enrolment and transition rates, benchmarks are calculated based on school level data on transition. While this results in a lack of data on alternate paths such as TVET attendance, they encompass a much larger student sample and therefore provide a more accurate estimate of education transition.

In addition, because they are strictly transition rates between two individual years, they are more robust and stable than the 100-person benchmark sample. At midline, the benchmark subset of beneficiary students will be available if adjustment of absolute numbers for targets is desired. While the benchmark sample is based on age, not grade, school-based benchmarks were mapped to the corresponding age according to the official most common age in each grade.

In each school visited as part of the quantitative analysis, head teachers provided enrolment data for the current and past school years. This included the number of students who enrolled last year and the number of students who dropped out last year for each grade. For grades PS4, PS5, JSS1, and JSS2, the percent of students who continued in school was calculated as the number of students enrolled in a grade this year divided by the number of students in the previous grade the year before. For example, the education transition rate for JSS2 was calculated as this year's JSS2 enrolment divided by last year's JSS1 enrolment. Though this method does not account for repeaters, if the numbers of repeaters is roughly equal in each grade, it will not affect the values. For grades PS6 and JSS3, headteachers have reported the number of last year's grade that transitioned on. Last year's transition students as a percent of last year's enrolment will be used in those grades.

As mentioned above, successful transition is defined for the targets to include progressing or repeating in school, alternative education programmes such as vocational training, completion of JSS at any age and employed, or employed from the age 18 onward.

4.5 Cohort tracking and target setting for the transition outcome

Beneficiaries in the quantitative sample were all selected from reverification data, and student and school identification codes from the verification data served as the basis for selection. As such, all beneficiaries in the baseline sample can be linked to all other information available from implementing partners. Since no student-level data exists in Sierra Leone, student selection took place in the field. Student identification codes were generated in advance for control schools and assigned to students during the standardised student selection methodology when enumerators visited the schools. GPS coordinates were collected as part of each of the five survey instruments, providing multiple sources of information on the location of the school and of each individual's household. During the household/carer survey, phone numbers were collected (where available) for future contact, and the names of carers and heads of households are recorded. In addition, consent of household heads was requested during household surveys so that in future years, enumerators may ask their neighbours for contact information and whereabouts of households if they cannot find them.

Per the guidelines from the Outcomes Spreadsheet,[39] recommended targets are based on bands, suggesting lower targets given higher starting transition levels. As per the GEC-T MEL guidance Part 2, the target for transition will be set as a percentage achievement over and above the comparison group. According to the Outcomes Spreadsheet template, baseline data starting between 90 and 99 percent should increase four percentage points. That increase was pro-rated to total four percent at the end of the project in three years, or a 1.3 percentage point increase between midline evaluations.

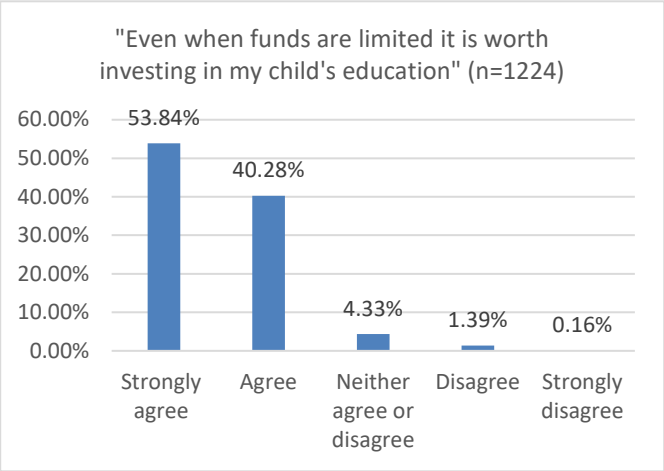
Table 40: Target setting

	Evaluation point 2	Evaluation point 3	Evaluation point 4
Target generated by the outcome spreadsheet	+10%	+12%	12%
Alternative target proposed by project (if applicable)	+1.3%	+2.6%	+4%

[39] *Outcomes Spreadsheet Template*, Sheet *2B.2 Transition Bands*.

4.6 Sustainability Outcome

The qualitative research indicated strong community-level awareness of the importance of sustainable access to schooling, with over 80 percent of community FGD participants acknowledging the importance of prioritising ways of paying for education. This is supported by quantitative findings (see chart, below) among primary caregivers of children, among whom almost 95 percent agreed that children's educational costs should be prioritised.



However, key informants reported that a high level of children who are still not in school,[40] or poorer attendance than formal statistics suggest, indicates a need for further sensitisation and awareness raising, both in terms of getting those children who are still out of school into the system and ensuring that those who are in school receive the support they need from parents or caregivers.

The VSLA component had not been introduced at the time of the baseline, but, if successful, it should reduce dependence on the bursaries and ensure that families are in a stronger position to support their children through school and all stages of transition.

At school level, qualitative findings indicate the inputs to improve teaching and learning practices are welcomed, with positive feedback from teachers interviewed regarding the initiatives almost unanimous, but the outcomes of these are yet to be determined. The increase in the number of trained female teachers through the learning assistant scheme, will bring positive and sustainable benefits, particularly if supported by MEST. Children who participated in FGDs spoke of their love of learning, and their enjoyment of school, and despite the many problems and challenges they face many seem confident, determined and ambitious, with such findings corroborated by the quantitative data (see Section 5.5, below). A substantial majority of parents, teachers, and community leaders noted improved confidence among children who participated in the previous iteration of the GEC project. However, anecdotal data gathered through KIIs and FGDs indicate that many children, especially girls, are still leaving the school system, with a resulting gap in their needs for life skills and management of their transitions and life choices. A potential means of addressing this would be via involvement of members of school management committees, boards of governors, and community teacher associations in school quality initiatives such as score-carding, to ensure that ongoing community support for the management and governance initiatives being undertaken under the project.

> *"We see our daughters are a lot more confident than we are. We want them to stay in school, so we encourage them and give them all the support they need. We want our daughters to be President or Ministers. We do not want them to leave school or get married"*
>
> *Mother of former GEC 1 beneficiary, Port Loko*

At system level, project documentation and feedback from key informants indicate that the GATE-GEC project is aligned with MEST policy, but qualitative research indicates a need for greater engagement on MEST's part, with MEST ownership being a key driver of sustainability. One government official interviewed highlighted the limited involvement by MEST in GEC 1 but emphasised MEST's ambition at central level to be more involved in GATE-GEC. The setting up of a Project Steering Committee with the active participation of MEST and a range of other government stakeholders, including the Ministry of Social Welfare, would facilitate MEST's involvement and help to ensure the sustainability of those components of the project which MEST feels should be continued. Further, should MEST take on a more active role in project monitoring, this deeper engagement may also feed in to the sustainability of project interventions (e.g. through timely identification of gaps, needs, etc.).

At district level, the qualitative research found reports of previously strong district-level collaboration between MEST and GEC 1, with regular meetings and joint activities. This should continue for GATE-GEC. MEST stakeholders interviewed during the research also highlighted the need for strong community participation to drive sustainability of

[40] Data from the last UNICEF Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (2010) indicate out-of-school rates of 23 percent of rural primary school-age children, and 34 percent of JSS school-age children. This survey was repeated in 2017 with results due in 2018.

project benefits. A perceived need for continuous sensitisation would ensure greater ownership of the project and its benefits by community members and thus promote sustainability.

Such institutional engagement with MEST should be measured and assessed comprehensively by the project consortium. The current project logframe has one indicator for engagement: 5.2: '# of education events consortium partners 'actively' participate in to share evidence and learning from the GATE GEC project with key educational stakeholders'. This indicator may not capture true engagement as, for example, joint attendance at educational events does not guarantee *actual* engagement on key issues. The evaluators recommend more nuanced indicators of engagement, such as direct GATE-GEC/MEST meetings, the presence of agenda items in meetings or events related to GATE-GEC or on policy matters related to GATE-GEC's advocacy aims, or direct advocacy activities undertaken from GATE-GEC to MEST.

MEST stakeholders also articulated a desire for the learning assistant initiative to be made permanent and scaled up, though acknowledging a requirement on its part to find ways to ensure that learning assistants stay in their communities once they have been trained, for example by speeding up approval for female teachers to be paid. The GATE-GEC implementing partners should capitalise on this ambition to advocate for concrete policies to be put in place and long-term resources allocated. Key informants report that some primary and junior secondary schools (without providing specific numbers) are already implementing study groups independently of GATE-GEC support. A commitment to the provision of additional tuition for girls is also included in the 2018 – 2020 ESP. To facilitate advocacy and technical support on these initiatives, the GATE-GEC Education Adviser should seek greater engagement with central ministry (similar to Leh Wi Learn and EU-supported education initiatives). Further, continued and deepened engagement with MEST may allow the project to contribute to the development of the next ESP for the period 2020-2025. Evidence-based advocacy will be key in policy development and implementation to support marginalised groups. A presence at central ministry would also help to develop collaboration with other related projects such as UNICEF GATE and Leh Wi Learn at central level.

Elections took place in Sierra Leone in March 2018, so any changes in key personnel or policies may affect project implementation.

Table 41: Sustainability indicators

	Community	School	System
Baseline Sustainability Score (0-4)	2: Emerging Level 2 - there is evidence of improved practice & support for girls' education in specific ways being targeted by the project. Change is not universally accepted among targeted stakeholders, but support is extending.	2: Emerging There is evidence of improved support for girls' education in classroom practice, teacher management and school management being targeted by project. The improved practice is not universal but is extending.	1: Latent – but not in all areas Local and district officials are involved in delivery & monitoring, developing knowledge & showing change in attitude towards' girls' education & project focus areas. However, at national level officials are not involved - but there are developments to indicate that that will happen shortly. The project aligns with MEST policy. The project's evidence is not yet being shared with relevant stakeholders - as implementation of interventions had not yet started at time of baseline evaluation.

Table 42: Changes needed for sustainability

	Community	School	System
Change: what change should happen by the end of the implementation period	Community members should save for and invest in children's education; girls should be encouraged to remain in school rather than drop out to engage in income generation activities	Inclusive teaching practices should be the norm; there should be increased presence of female role models in the school environment; corporal punishment should be decreasingly common; improved transition of girls and children with disabilities; improved self-esteem and confidence of girls and children with disabilities	There should be increased collaboration with other NGOs and MEST to progress advocacy efforts towards incorporating inclusive education practices into education policy and abolishing corporal punishment
Activities: What activities are aimed at this change?	VSLA groups; CBRVs; community sensitisation meetings; Learning Assistants	Score carding; inclusive education training; CBRVs; school adaptations (in model schools); Learning Assistants; study groups; bursaries; cohort tracking using ID cards; VSLA groups	MEST engagement (regular steering committee meetings), collaboration with education partners, joint MEST monitoring
Stakeholders: Who are the relevant stakeholders?	District MEST officials, Community leaders, Head Teachers, GATE-GEC district staff	District MEST officials, Community leaders, Head Teachers, teachers/ PVs, parents/caregivers, GATE-GEC district staff	Central MEST officials, District MEST officials, other education actors/programmes (Leh Wi Learn, GATE UNICEF), GATE-GEC district staff, GATE-GEC Hub staff
Factors: what factors are hindering or helping achieve changes? Think of people, systems, social norms etc.	Deeply entrenched social norms which expect girls to engage in domestic activities; widespread poverty which requires children to generate income for the household and sometimes forces girls into early pregnancy or early/forced marriage; poverty which requires households to prioritise spending on necessities for survival (food, medicine) above education. Widespread recognition of the importance of educating girls and growing recognition of the importance of education for children with disabilities will support this change.	Lack of female teachers; low levels of qualification (and sometimes education) among teachers; traditional teaching practices such as learning by rote; lack of training in positive discipline; deeply entrenched practice of physical forms of punishment; relatively new momentum towards inclusive education practices and abolishing corporal punishment. School and community ownership of study groups.	Lack of integration between GATE-GEC and MEST at central level. However collaboration is improving and GATE-GEC is also increasingly collaborating and integrating interventions with other education actors, particularly Leh Wi Learn and GATE UNICEF.

Project contribution

GATE-GEC's theory 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. 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, including Leh Wi Learn and UNICEF GATE.

At the school level, GATE-GEC will focus on reducing external dependency by phasing out school bursaries 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. Within school, 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. The presence of LAs in school will provide female role models for both girls and boys and has been shown in GEC 1 to contribute to changing attitudes towards young women in the community, as well as contributing towards the next generation of female teachers. 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 score carding component will also strengthen reporting and referral processes which can be sustained after the project and will improve accountability at school level, as well as contributing towards beneficiaries' self-esteem and confidence. Study groups will support marginalised girls and children with disabilities to remain in and achieve at school, contributing to improved self-esteem and confidence, and have already been seen to be a sustainable aspect of the project with schools and communities taking ownership of this component. The CBRV model has also been shown to be sustainable in GEC 1 and will contribute to changing attitudes towards education for children with disabilities while supporting them to attend and achieve at school.

At the 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 through regular community meetings, as well as engaging the community in advocacy and policy campaigns on the importance and impact of positive education, will be integral. The establishment of VSLA groups will promote financial inclusion and empowerment for marginalised households and, in tandem with continued sensitisation about the importance of education, will support the transition away from dependency on bursaries to encourage and enable households to allocate household budget towards their children's education and reduce the need for children, particularly girls, to drop out of school in order to generate income for the household.

At the system level, 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. This will be achieved through a mix of having district MEST officials involved in monitoring visits to schools, district and national level working groups involving other education actors, learning events and dissemination of project findings. In collaboration with other education actors including Leh Wi Learn and UNICEF GATE, we will build on momentum towards promoting inclusive education and abolishing corporal punishment in schools to influence education sector policy.

5. Key Intermediate Outcome Findings

The five GATE GEC intermediate outcomes are directly linked to the five areas of change outlined in the project's theory of change*: If attendance rates are increased, if teaching and learning are 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.*

The IOs and associated indicators were selected by the project. Barriers to the IOs are discussed in Section 3. Additional details are available in the project's MEL Framework. Sampling and measurement techniques are discussed in Section 2, and in the Baseline Evaluation Inception Report, annexed to this document.

5.1 Attendance

Intermediate Outcome 1: Attendance rates

As stated in the MEL Framework, beneficiaries are likely to be absent due to lack of fees, equipment, or having to work to earn money. Given that attendance is an important component to increased learning outcomes, attendance will be measured through a mix of ongoing monitoring data captured throughout the project at school and study group level. Additionally, attendance rate data was collected as part of this baseline evaluation. Where available, the external evaluator notes relevant qualitative data collected via the baseline.

The quantitative findings indicate high reports of attendance from schools (head teachers were asked to provide attendance rates) – primary schools averaged attendance rates of 75 percent in the past year (with girls approximately 3-7 percent lower than boys across the three grades), while JSS head teachers reported a weighted average of attendance rates of 80.6 percent, with girls approximately 0.5 percent higher than boys. Interestingly, reports of *overall* attendance rates, asked separately from boys and girls, were consistently 10-20 percent lower than the combined averages for boys and girls, suggesting a tendency among head teachers to over-report these figures. This is common phenomenon in developing countries with centralised educational control and disbursement of resources based on such figures. Overall, using attendance rates as self-reported by students may be a better option, but the current, standardised questionnaires as designed are problematic. They ask whether students are present most of the time but define most of the time as not missing more than one or two days per month. These findings correlate well with the qualitative research (discussed below), in which children were typically well-motivated to attend, though cited many examples where poverty or other marginalisation (e.g. pregnancy) inhibited attendance or led to dropouts.

More careful consideration of how to measure this parameter is warranted for future research, for example via attendance spot checks. Having partner agencies conduct spot checks would be a useful *additional* source of information to be triangulated with school and student self-reports. Accurate spot checks are difficult to implement as they can be prone to bias if conducted by partners, hence should be used as part of a combined measurement strategy, supported by qualitative data.

Table 43: Attendance Rates reported by Schools (n=92 schools)

Average Attendance Rates reported by Schools in 2016			
Primary	Overall	Boys	Girls
Grade 4 (n=17)	73.6%	65.9%	58.2%
Grade 5 (n=19)	77.6%	65.3%	63.0%
Grade 6 (n=19)	73.3%	64.4%	60.9%
Weighted Average:	74.8%	65.2%	60.9%
JSS	Overall	Boys	Girls
Grade 1 (n=73)	79.9%	63.5%	62.7%
Grade 2 (n=73)	84.0%	60.5%	63.2%
Grade 3 (n=72)	78.0%	64.7%	65.0%
Weighted Average:	80.6%	62.9%	63.4%

Similarly, with respect to students dropping out of schools, the reported rates are low, with approximately half (54 percent) of primary schools and a third (29 percent) of JSS schools who responded to the related survey questions reporting no dropouts in the past year at all. According to data collected from head teachers, the average dropout rate for primary schools surveyed was approximately 8 percent per year and that for JSS 7.5 percent per year, with dropout rates increasing slightly as students get older. Similar to attendance, rates reported separately for boys and girls were slightly higher than those reported for overall, with girls experiencing higher dropout rates than boys (boys 10 percent, girls 11 percent)

Additional data on attendance was gathered directly (via the household survey) from the primary caregivers of students related to general attendance of their children. As shown in the table, attendance among the sample was reported as very high. The attendance questions, as designed, measured what percent of students *who are attending school* attend most of the time.

It is important to note that, if the project is successful in reducing dropouts or increasing enrolment amongst marginalised girls, many students will remain (or enrol due to sensitisation and other changes as a result of the project), while potentially facing ongoing challenges to attendance. This subset of girls who remain enrolled may be more frequently absent than girls not facing such challenges. As a result, attendance rates may be confounded by this factor and decrease. For this reason, it would be an ambitious yet reasonable goal to set the target at maintaining 90 percent or more of enrolled students attending the majority of the time. Further, careful articulation of qualitative research questions around the nature of specific challenges students face with respect to attendance may provide valuable context to the quantitative data collected at midline and endline and help to determine if such confounding has taken place.

Indicator IO1A: Attendance of Children with Disabilities

Logframe Definition/Calculation: "Improvement in attendance of the GEC cohort in schools throughout the life of the project (disaggregated by gender, disability and type (severity), age (grade) and location). Definition: Average Attendance rates in schools via (self) reported school records.

Proposed Calculation: No change, but recommend internal attendance spot checks of primary data sources

Justification: The ability to accurately measure attendance was limited by the way the question is asked in the standardised household questionnaire and school data sheet. Actual attendance rates could be estimated using spot checks by the implementing partners or regular tracking. Given limitations of the question formats in the standardised household surveys, it was determined a better estimate could be given using school records. The weighted average at the primary level is 79.8 percent and at the JSS level is 90.8 percent.

Table 44: Average attendance rates according to school records in treatment schools (n=17 schools)

Beneficiary Subgroup	Sample	Average Attendance Rate
P1-P6	253	79.8%
JSS1	156	95.6%
JSS2	219	88.3%
JSS3	114	88.8%
Weighted Average JSS1-3	489	90.99%

Target: Given the risk of ceiling effects and confounding due to increased enrolment of marginalised students (discussed above), the recommended targets are set at a +1% increase per year.

The project also aims to support the return of any beneficiaries who had dropped out of the system back in to formal education – whether girls who have attended GATE learning centres due to pregnancy and becoming mothers for example, or children who have dropped out of the system completely. From the beneficiary re-verification numbers, it is clear that although some beneficiaries will have transitioned beyond JSS and others will no longer be living in treatment communities, many beneficiaries who should still be attending school are not. Therefore, the focus should not only be on those beneficiaries who are still attending project schools, but also on those who are currently not doing so.

The ongoing project monitoring data should also include attendance levels of particularly vulnerable sub-groups: orphans, children with disabilities, girls living with caretakers other than their parents or those living independently in order to access JSS, pregnant girls and young mothers. Depending on the attendance rates by these groups it may be necessary for the project to introduce activities to target support to them.

All interviewees recognised the importance of education for all children. Parents see education for girls in particular as a way of protecting their family's future, as girls are expected to look after their parents.

All children participating in FGDs were asked about their attendance and questions were also asked in discussions with head teachers and teachers. Children with disabilities noted that their attendance in general was very good, but would miss school when they were ill, often with problems related to their disabilities. Respondents in approximately one-third of communities visited as part of the qualitative research noted hunger as a barrier for them attending school, which correlates well with the quantitative findings of 30 percent of households reporting hunger 'many' (>10 days) or 'most days' in the past year. Further, respondents in FGDs (45 percent) noted that girls living with non-parent caregivers were likely to have more domestic tasks to complete before going to school, and therefore were more likely to arrive late, although the analysis of quantitative data regarding this (see Table 32) does not provide evidence of impact on learning outcomes.

Indicator IO1B: Attendance of Children with Disabilities

Logframe Definition/Calculation: "Improvement in parents, caregivers and communities perceptions around girls and children with disabilities accessing education (disaggregated by gender and disability status). Definitions: Percent of treatment households who agree that subgroup has a right to go to school."

Proposed Calculation: No change, but additional analysis on the % of respondents citing "child unable to learn" (indicative of a mental disability) or "physical/learning needs" (indicative of a physical disability) – see analysis below – will be useful.

Justification: Although the measured value for girls is at a high baseline level, the indicator accurately describes and measures the behaviour that the project seeks to influence.

Table 45: Caregivers who agree that subgroup has a right to go to school via HH Survey (n=1202)

Beneficiary Subgroup	Sample	% agreeing "has a right to go to school"
Girls	1202	98.48%
Children with a Disability	1174	90.15%

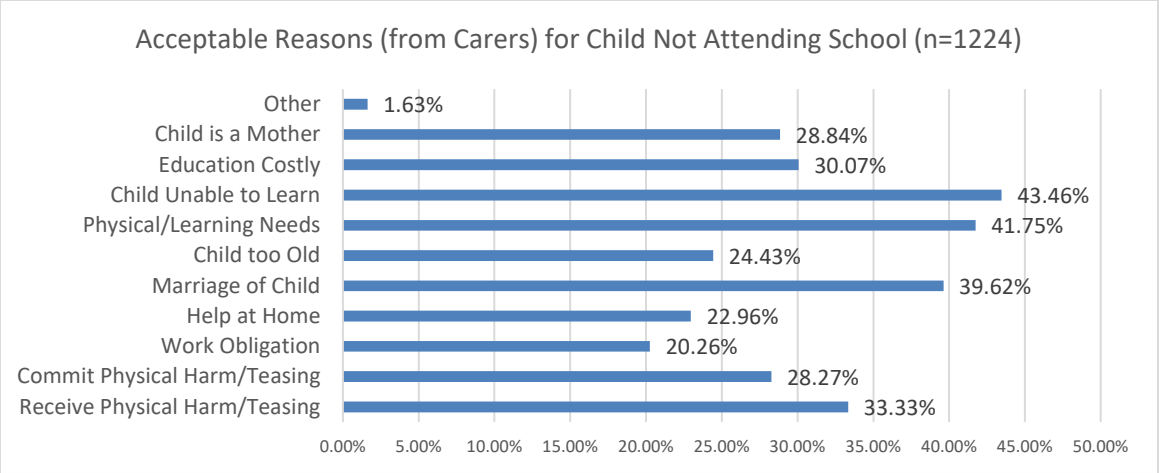
Targets: No change for girls, +1% for children with a disability, given risks of ceiling effects and potential confounding by attendance of more marginalised children.

These targets are reflective of a very substantial general consensus amongst research respondents (measured quantitatively via the household survey and corroborated via the qualitative research) on the importance for girls and children with disabilities to attend school. Increases beyond the 98.5 percent agreement on girls educational rights are unlikely, while the 90 percent value for children with disabilities is also high.

Interestingly, several of the children with disabilities interviewed expressed that it was *more* important for them to attend school than children without disabilities. They perceived that the better their education level, the less likely they would be required to do physically demanding work which could present another level of difficulty due to their disabilities.

The main barriers to attendance noted by qualitative research respondents included poverty, the attitude of some caregivers (both parents and those who are not parents) who do not value education, domestic work (especially for girls) and income-generating activities, distance to school, sexual harassment by boys, pregnancy, marriage, peer pressure, and distance to school. Many of the beneficiaries are attending school despite a lack of support from their caregivers. Even when parents and caregivers are supportive, many of the children are still having to fit their studies in around work, both domestic and income-generating activities, due to the low household income level.

These qualitative findings have some correlation with findings from the quantitative surveys. Carers of students were asked to rate whether a list of potential reasons for not attending school were justifiable or not. The chart, below, presents some analysis of the results of this question.



Contrary to qualitative findings, one of the most commonly accepted justifications for children to not attend school was that of physical and/or learning needs (42-43 percent), suggesting that disability, whether physical or intellectual, is indeed a source of educational stigma. Other issues that rated more highly were marriage, the likelihood of being harmed and expense – all were agreed by more than 30 percent of respondents as being justifications for not attending school. Those factors that were less likely to be considered justifications were work obligations (either inside or outside the home) or age of the child, though between 20 and 25 percent of respondents still considered them valid reasons.

The two sources of data to establish a baseline, school data on attendance and household surveys, suggest very different actual attendance rates. Given that the individual household data is the percent who attend school *most of the time*, it does not resemble the actual percent of students expected to be comparable to the number of students at school on any given day. Thus, the baseline value for average attendance was set as the average attendance rate at the primary and secondary levels reported through school data sheets.

Indicator IO1C: Increased Confidence and Self-Esteem of Students

Logframe Definition/Calculation: % of the GEC cohort reporting increased confidence and self-esteem through PSS to JSS and post JSS (disaggregated by gender and disability).

Proposed Calculation: Use of index score of self-esteem questions instead of percent whose score improved. Standardised questionnaire had no single reliable source to report improved self-esteem. This is measured as an index of twelve questions on a five-point scale on self-esteem asked to all students. The five-point scale varied from strongly disagree to strongly agree. For example, a student who responded “strongly agree” to all 12 questions would have a score of 100percent, and a student who responded “agree” to all 12 questions would receive a score of 75 percent; neither agree or disagree 50 percent, et cetera.

Justification: The indicator accurately captures the behaviour change being targeted using a twelve-question index.

Targets: +3 percent, equal to 0.25SD per year. With a base score of just over 50% for confidence/self-esteem, these increases represent 6% on the baseline values, which should be achievable after one year of programming.

Table 46: Beneficiaries reporting increased confidence & self-esteem via Student Survey (n=626)

Beneficiary Subgroup	Sample	% reporting increased confidence/self-esteem	Standard Deviation
Girls	622	53.2%	11.5
Children with a Disability	30	56.3%	11.5

5.2 School governance and management

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

As per the MEL Framework, 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.

At the time of the baseline, there is no quantitative or qualitative data to report for this intermediate outcome as no MEST actions have been a result of the project. That said, the qualitative research on the project indicates that relationship between the project and MEST at central level is moving into a more productive phase, with plans for better communication and closer collaboration. The Hub team also report seeking closer collaboration central level with other education interventions such as UNICEF GATE. If the Education Adviser for the Hub team succeeds in working more closely with MEST, the project may improve its capacity to contribute more effectively across a range of activities, as well as create opportunities to network and collaborate with other related interventions.

Further, the ESP for 2018-2020 outlines partner participation mechanisms, for example via working groups, and areas are outlined in the ESP where GATE-GEC could potentially contribute to policy development and implementation (as outlined in the section 1.1 above). This would then lead on to the project using evidence-based advocacy to feed in to the development of the next Education Sector Plan for 2021-2025.

5.3 Quality of teaching

Intermediate Outcome 2: Effective inclusive education teaching skills

As per the MEL Framework, increased skills and competencies of study group leaders, and resourcing and monitoring study groups will result in increased learning outcomes. This IO was chosen because 'evidence shows that structured pedagogy programmes have the largest and most consistent positive average effects on learning outcomes.'[41;42] Utilising the GEC GESI Continuum, this IO is GESI Transformative in that it will include training modules on gender-sensitive approaches.

Under the project, PVs will receive additional training and support, to encourage the use of more gender-sensitive, inclusive, learner-centred methodologies. Likewise, female learning assistants (not recruited at the time of the baseline research) will be supported by the project through trainings. In addition to trainings, provision of textbooks under GATE-GEC aims to contribute to a more structured way of teaching and foster improvements in teaching practices. That said, the challenges for untrained or underqualified teachers in applying new teaching methodologies in the classroom should not be underestimated and ongoing assistance and support is necessary. Further, it will be important to facilitate sharing of learning from all sources, including MEST, GATE, and Leh Wi Learn, between teaching staff in schools.

Whilst it is not within the scope of the baseline study to cover the details of pre-service or in-service training provided by MEST, some relevant information given by respondents at MEST include:

- Makeni University is training teachers in inclusive education. Child-centred teaching methods are being taught at teacher training colleges. Some in-service refresher courses are being given on teaching methodology, including some training on inclusive education, group work and pair work.
- One MEST official from Kenema said: 'It is especially hard to get untrained and unqualified teachers to implement new methodologies – in-service training of 3 to 5 days is just not enough.'

Qualitative data collection revealed that some teachers in both PS and JSS are applying inclusive techniques. For example, in one JSS, if a student has difficulty copying from the board, the teacher will wait until each student has copied the information down prior to erasing the board. Further, during an FGD, JSS students expressed that teachers explain topics well and make sure that all students understand by speaking loudly for those with hearing impairments, writing clearly on the board for students with visual impairments, and seating children with visual impairments at the front of the class. A KII with a head teacher at a PS revealed that the school has sensitised children not to provoke their fellow students with disabilities and explain to the children that they are all part of the community, noting that anyone could have a disability.

The views of some students may have been influenced by these inclusive education approaches. For example, one JSS student in Kailahun stated:

> *'Children with disabilities should be in school. They have the right to go to school – to learn, be with colleagues, so can earn and have money to look after themselves. If they stay at home, they will not have what they want. They will not be happy sitting at home while others are in school.'*

While inclusive education approaches were highlighted in some KIIs and FGDs, there were also cases where students and teachers expressed that children with disabilities are provoked by their classmates and that children with disabilities are also affected by corporal punishment, or, indeed (in one case), where students felt that children with disabilities should *not* come to school due to the expense involved — indicating that further sensitisation and training is warranted.

[41] Plan International UK and Sierra Leone, ActionAid, Open University, FAWE, and Handicap International (2017). *GEC-T MEL Framework.*
[42] 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)

Measuring teaching quality

Indicator IO2A: Improvement in Teaching Practices in gender sensitive learning centred pedagogy of targeted teaching (PVs) and teaching related (LA, STs) staff

Logframe Definition/Calculation: Index of percent of best practices in use according to classroom observations. Targets equal to +0.5SD per year

Proposed Calculation. No change.

Justification. The indicator adequately captures the behaviour change being targeted.

Targets: Recommended targets are set at a 0.5 standard deviation increase per year. This corresponds to an increase in observation of teaching practices of 7.7 percent for all treatment schools. This target should be achievable with an increase in skill levels among teachers, or with the additional support of LAs within classrooms – assuming the teacher capacity-building component of the project commences in sufficient time to make a difference.

The quantitative research included classroom observations via a twenty-eight-point checklist of teacher activities in the classroom.[43] The checklist includes information such as whether the teacher uses multiple methods to adapt to student learning needs, arrives on time, and has a lesson plan for that day. Indicator IO2.1 is an index, defined as the percentage of the 28 checklist items were met during the observation of a one-period lesson. When possible, the same instructional staff will be followed throughout midline and endline. When not possible, other teachers from the same school (and subject when possible) will be observed. One classroom per school was selected randomly during school visits. Note that as the tool was classroom-based, results cannot be disaggregated by student characteristics.

Measuring teaching quality at the interface of teachers and students is the ideal for monitoring the intermediate outcome of teacher quality. Alternatives such as student, parent, and teacher perceptions are subjective and prone to bias; objective quantifiable outcomes like learning outcomes vary highly with individual learners in the class. Using all 28 questions on the checklist will result in more stable findings than using any single question or subset thereof. The indicator itself will be calculated for all beneficiary schools, but additional analysis via disaggregation by level, area and/or type of activity may be useful to guide teacher capacity-building activities.

Table 47: Observation of best teaching practices (n=157)

Schools	Mean	Std. Dev.
All Treatment	70.2%	15.4
JSS Treatment	68.4%	14.8
Primary Treatment	77.6%	10.5
JSS Control	68.4%	14.8
Periurban	67.9%	13.2
Rural	70.8%	15.4

On average, teachers met 70 percent of the 28 items included on the observation checklist.

This is a high average score, considering the overall level of education attainment in Sierra Leone. Such a high average can be explained via the *Hawthorne Effect*, whereby subjects that are under scrutiny tend to perform better in their tasks due to their awareness of being observed. While this may have resulted in an upward bias of scores, the effect should also be present when the tool is reapplied during mid and endline, so should not affect overall measurement of changes.

Of potential interest is some additional analysis of the most and least common practices noted in the classrooms by the enumerators, presented in the table below. Teacher treatment of students in a friendly and inclusive manner are the most common practices, and can be grouped into 'soft' skills, and are also most like to be affected by bias (on the part of the enumerator or the teacher). The least common practices were related to 'hard' skills, or techniques for inclusive education that are taught – either by students working in groups or attending specifically to the needs of children with disabilities. This is a useful guide for consortium partners to identify specific areas on which to focus

[43] This checklist was developed for the baseline evaluation with inputs from the Leh Wi Learn technical specialist.

teacher capacity building. An interesting observation is that attendance was observed to be NOT taken (i.e. written down) in 42 percent of classrooms, suggesting potential inaccuracies among estimates of attendance provided by schools.

Table 48: Most and least positive common classroom practices (n=157)

Most Common Practices	% of classes observed	Least Common Practices	% of classes NOT observed
Teacher acts friendly	99%	Students spend time working in groups	79%
Treats all children with respect and equality	98%	All students have textbooks and materials	76%
Teacher listens carefully to the students	97%	Different methods for needs of children with disabilities	69%
Teacher gives clear instructions and simple words	94%	Teacher uses other materials or tools	58%
Teacher arrives on time	93%	CWD included in groups of children without disabilities	53%
Teacher includes all students (boys & girls)	90%	Teacher uses local materials	53%
Teacher encourages questions	88%	Teacher checks copybooks	49%
Teacher moves into the classroom	88%	Teacher sits at child's level, eye contact	46%
Class Clean & Tidy	83%	Teacher records attendance	42%
Teacher has lesson plan	83%	Teacher takes note of quiet learners	39%

Indicator IO2B: Improved Perceptions of learning

Logframe Definition/Calculation: Percent 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.) ('Improved perceptions': Ask questions freely, do homework, feel supported and positive in their study group, feel they have improved in their studies)

Proposed Calculation. To measure improved perceptions in teaching, we recommend the use of an index of two student questions: whether teachers ask more questions to boys or girls; and whether teachers ask harder questions to boys and girls. While the other outcome measures gender-blind teaching quality, this indicator can specifically measure gender bias in teaching.

Justification. There are few questions in the household survey to construct an intermediate indicator on beneficiary perceptions of teaching quality. The standardised data collection tools include four broad questions to parents and nine specific questions to students on classroom practices on teacher quality. When asked, both parents and students rate teaching quality high: 73 percent of parents rated teaching quality good or very good, with only 4 percent of boys and 4 percent of girls claiming that their teacher asks more questions of the opposite sex.

Target: The target is set at +5 percentage points for both groups, which is equal to 0.25 standard deviations per year. This target should be achievable with an increase in skill levels among teachers, or with the additional support of LAs within classrooms – assuming timely start of the teacher capacity-building component of the project.

Table 49: Beneficiaries reporting improved perceptions of learning via Student Survey (n=716)

Beneficiary Subgroup	Sample	% Index of perceptions of learning	Standard Deviation
Girls	94	55.9%	21
Boys/	622	56.1%	21

Table 50: Perceptions of Gender Bias in Teachers (n=1301)

	To Boys	To Girls	Both Equally	Don't Know
Does the teacher ask more questions to boys or girls?				
Boys' Responses	9.87	4.29	75.54	10.3
Girls' Responses	4.11	10.61	78.97	6.31
Does the teacher ask more questions to boys or girls?				
Boys' Responses	13.73	2.15	75.54	8.58
Girls' Responses	6.02	6.21	81.45	6.31

Students rated their perceptions of encouragement of participation – either in general or using the specific example of use of different languages to accommodate different skills and abilities – even more highly, with over 90 percent of students reporting their teachers encouraged participation often or sometimes, and a small number (5-6 percent) reporting rarely/never. These quantitative findings correlate well with qualitative data collected. During FGDs, girls and boys reported that teachers make an effort to involve everyone. However, some (3-4) respondents noted that many girls feel 'too shy' to fully participate.

Table 51: Teacher encouraging active participation (n=1279)

		Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Don't Know	N=
Sample Girls							
If you don't understand something, do your teachers use a different language to explain?	JSS Treat	43%	51%	4%	1%	0%	553
	JSS Control	41%	52%	6%	1%	0%	378
	PS Treat	37%	57%	4%	0%	3%	115
Does your teacher encourage you to participate during lessons?	JSS Treat	50%	46%	4%	0%	0%	553
	JSS Control	47%	47%	4%	2%	0%	378
	PS Treat	44%	52%	3%	0%	0%	115
Sample Boys							
If you don't understand something, do your teachers use a different language to explain?	JSS Treat	44%	56%	0%	0%	0%	18
	JSS Control	40%	48%	9%	1%	0%	96
	PS Treat	30%	60%	7%	1%	3%	119
Does your teacher encourage you to participate during lessons?	JSS Treat	50%	50%	0%	0%	0%	18
	JSS Control	43%	50%	3%	3%	2%	96
	PS Treat	44%	52%	8%	0%	5%	119
Sample Children with Disabilities							
If you don't understand something, do your teachers use a different language to explain?	JSS Treat	43%	52%	5%	0%	0%	21
	JSS Control	39%	54%	8%	0%	0%	13
	PS Treat	22%	70%	4%	0%	4%	23
Does your teacher encourage you to participate during lessons?	JSS Treat	33%	57%	5%	5%	0%	21
	JSS Control	31%	62%	8%	0%	0%	13
	PS Treat	35%	52%	9%	0%	0%	23

This data indicates reasonably positive teaching practices in the classes under study, with 94 percent of girls and all boys noting that teachers use a different language to explain a point when the students do not understand something. Also, 47 percent of students noting that teachers often encourage them to participate during lessons. Further, encouragement of home study was also common, with 82 percent of all respondents affirming that their teachers undertook this. These quantitative findings correlate well with qualitative data collected. During FGDs, girls and boys reported that teachers make an effort to involve everyone. Children with disabilities responded slightly less positively to both questions, but the differences were not statistically significant.

Less positively, physical punishment appears to be a common practice within schools in Sierra Leone. As noted above, corporal punishment is not illegal in Sierra Leone and physical punishment is reported to be common practice in schools, with 85 percent of students noting punishment as sanction for incorrect work and almost all of these (96 percent) noting physical punishment. There does, however, appear to be a policy momentum to make corporal punishment explicitly illegal, and this presents opportunities for the project to both advocate for this policy change at MEST level, and sensitise educational professionals, communities, and students against such punishment.

> *"We are happy at school, when we have a good relationship with our teachers and the head teacher. We enjoy being with our friends but are afraid of being beaten."*
>
> *Primary school student, Kenema*

Table 52: Teacher In-Classroom Practice (n=1361)

	JSS Treatment	JSS Control	Primary Treatment
Sample Girls			
Teacher suggests ways you can continue to study after school/at home	83%	82%	78%
Teacher disciplines or punish students who get things wrong in a lesson	84%	88%	85%
The teacher uses physical punishment to punish students	95%	94%	100%
The teacher use shouting to punish students	50%	46%	64%
The teacher use detention to punish students	20%	17%	8%
Sample Boys			
Teacher suggests ways you can continue to study after school/at home	100%	83%	78%
Teacher disciplines or punish students who get things wrong in a lesson	100%	94%	88%
The teacher uses physical punishment to punish students	100%	94%	96%
The teacher use shouting to punish students	56%	68%	51%
The teacher use detention to punish students	28%	24%	8%
Sample Children with a Disability			
Teacher suggests ways you can continue to study after school/at home	86%%	85%	78%
Teacher disciplines or punish students who get things wrong in a lesson	76%	92%	91%
The teacher uses physical punishment to punish students	94%	92%	95%
The teacher use shouting to punish students	38%	53%	64%
The teacher use detention to punish students	31%	0%	5%

This finding is supported by the frequency of physical punishment, with 83 percent of JSS beneficiaries and 78 percent of PS beneficiaries reporting experiencing physical punishment one or more times a week – a quarter of whom experienced it daily. This is a concerning phenomenon in Sierra Leone (discussed under Project Context, Section 1.1), and GATE-GEC aims to focus on changing things which girls are not happy with in school, such as corporal punishment, through score-carding.

"There is a teachers' code of conduct (UNICEF 2009) – but students do not know about it. Girls sometimes report that they are being shouted at. As punishment, students are kept in at break time, and sometimes minor corporal punishment is used – 4 to 6 strokes, more on boys. Parents are invited in if there are serious problems. If there are any complaints, teachers are called, and can be given warning letters or a warning from members of the Board of Governors, including the Chairperson".

Head Teacher, JSS, Moyamba

'"We do not know about the teachers' code of conduct. If we have problems with our fellow students we tell teachers, but if we have problems with our teachers there is no one for us to go to'.

Primary school student, Kenema

Table 53: Student Punishment Frequency (n=1112)

	Never	Once or Twice	Almost Every Day	Don't Know
In the last week you were at school, did the teacher use physical punishment on you?	14%	54%	28%	5%
In the last week you were at school, did the teacher use physical punishment on other students?	46%	47%	5%	1%

"Both girls and boys are beaten if they are late, fight in class or are noisy. Boys can be beaten, because they are stronger, girls can kneel. Kneeling, sweeping the compound and fetching water are also given as punishments".

Female student, JSS, Port Loko

"All the children are beaten, including those with disabilities".

Primary school student, Port Loko

"The teachers treat the girls and boys the same. Both girls and boys are beaten. I am shouted at, but not beaten"

Male primary school student with a disability, Kono

Learning scores varied significantly by teaching practice, and often in unexpected ways. At the secondary level, average scores followed expected trends. Average learning scores of students whose teachers suggest studying techniques were statistically significantly higher than those who did not for reading and mathematics. JSS Teachers who used physical punishment in the last week had on average 11 percentage point lower reading scores and 14 percentage point lower mathematics scores. Secondary students who had received physical punishment also had lower test scores on average. In contrast, JSS and primary students whose teachers use shouting received significantly higher scores on average. The use of detention was linked to higher average scores at the secondary level, and lower scores at the primary level, suggesting that physical punishment has an overall detrimental effect, in line with international norms and standards in education.

Table 54: Learning Assessments And Teacher In-Classroom Practice

	SEGRA Average		SEGMA Average	
	No	Yes	No	Yes
Does your teacher suggest ways you can continue to study after school/at home?	48*	54*	46*	49*
Does your teacher discipline or punish students who get things wrong in a lesson?	49*	54*	49	47
In the last week you were at school did your teacher use …physical punishment?	64*	53*	61	47
… shouting?	52*	55*	40	53
… detention?	53	56	50	44
In the last week you were at school did your teacher use physical punishment …on you?	54*	51*	49	47
… on others?	53	53	47	50
	EGRA Average		EGMA Average	
	No	Yes	No	Yes
Does your teacher suggest ways you can continue to study after school/at home?	44	49	44	48
Does your teacher discipline or punish students who get things wrong in a lesson?	49	47	49	46
In the last week you were at school did your teacher use …physical punishment?	61	47	57	45
… shouting?	40*	53*	37*	52*
… detention?	50	44	48	43
In the last week you were at school did your teacher use physical punishment …on you?	43	51	50*	41*
… on others?	48	47	47	46

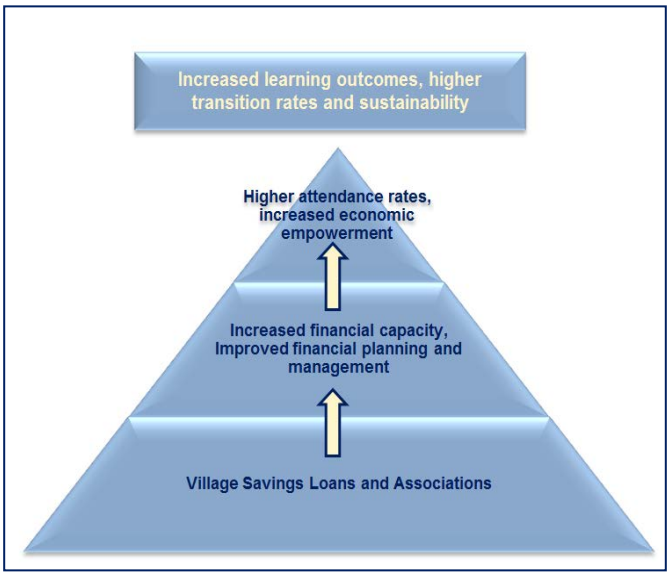
Quantitative and qualitative findings underscore the appropriateness of GATE-GEC's approach to Intermediate Outcome 2, as described in the MEL Framework.[44]

[44] *GEC-T MEL Framework Version 2.*

5.4 Economic empowerment

Intermediate Outcome 4: Increased economic empowerment

This is a new programme component and, at the time of the baseline research, no activities related to intermediate outcome 4 had begun. That said, this intermediate outcome is heavily linked to the potential for long-term sustainability following programme completion. As demonstrated in the model taken from the MEL Framework below, the VSLA and livelihoods component of the programme will contribute to the wider outcomes of the programme.



The VSLA component of the project, which has been designed to increase economic empowerment, was not yet being implemented at the time of the baseline evaluation so the research team has conducted data collection related to basic household economy.

VSLAs may be used to enable families to cover education-related costs in a more sustainable way than through the disbursement of bursaries. Given the income level of households, and the resulting inability of many families to meet the costs of essentials such as food, this component has the opportunity to help households to pay fees and meet other expenses for their children's education.

Indicator IO4A: % of targeted households of the GEC cohort reporting increased confidence and skills in financial planning and management

Logframe Definition/Calculation: Spending money according to the personal plans they develop, being able to save and contribute to their prioritised activities i.e. education of children or other pathways including employment, training. 'Targeted households - the households selected based on pre-defined criteria of degree of marginalisation and need'.

Proposed Calculation: % of household heads engaged in one or more savings activities.

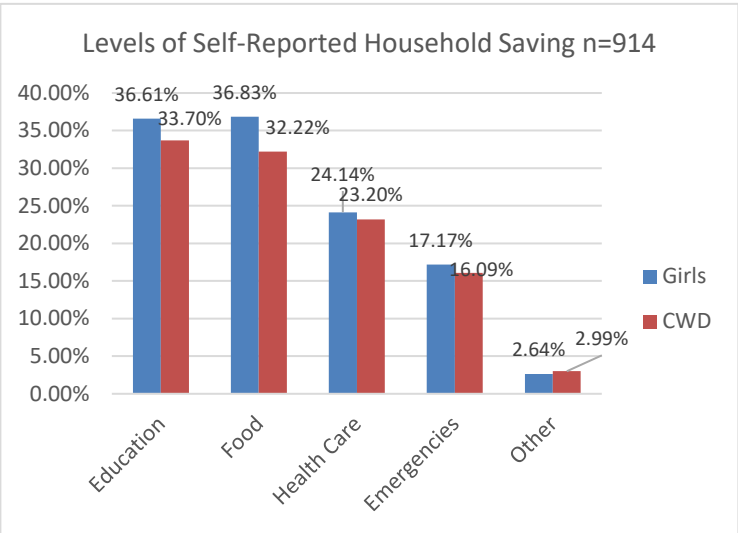
Justification: The existing survey tools do not directly assess perceived confidence of households in financial management, but instead assess actual levels of saving (for a range of items). This indicator provides a definite measure of actual savings, versus perceived levels of confidence, which are prone to subjectivity and bias.

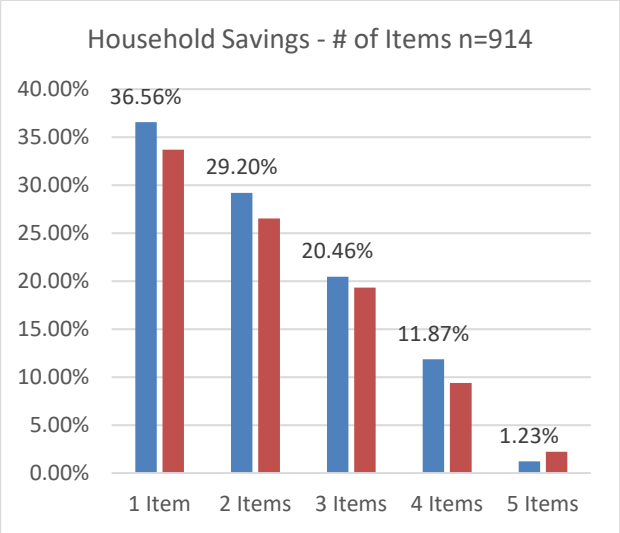
Target: The target is set at +7 percent for both groups, representing 0.5 SD. With a baseline value of between 34 and 37 percent for the savings levels of the two groups, this increase represents 20 percent on the baseline values, which is an achievable target within the first programming year.

Table 55: Beneficiary household heads engaged in at least one savings activity (n=914)

Beneficiary Subgroup	Sample	% reporting ability to	Standard Deviation
Girls	733	36.83%	14.4
Children with Disabilities	181	33.7%	12.6

Some additional analysis of these savings reports are presented in the graphs below, demonstrating the types of items that households report saving for. Food and education are the highest, followed by heath care and emergency provison. Other items included clothing, transportation and social expenditures.





In terms of *quantity* of savings, the specific amount saved by households was not measured, but analysis of the patterns of saving indicate that most households that engaged in savings, did so for only one activity, with multiple savings items becoming progressively less common, with only one in ten households saving for all four major items.

From the quantitative data collection, per the below table, one-fifth of beneficiaries claimed to have received financial support for girls' education to date. However, given the (standardised) wording in the survey instruments, it is unclear whether respondents specifically refer to support during GEC 1 or from other programmes designed to support education (of which there were several operational in Sierra Leone at the time of research). In contrast, 16 percent of non-beneficiary students reported receiving education support.

Table 56: Delivery of financial support (n=1230)

Has the beneficiary received financial support towards [their] education?		
	Yes	No
All beneficiaries	22%	78%
Beneficiary girls	21%	79%
Beneficiaries with disabilities	15%	85%
Control Group	16%	84%

Table 57: Household practices for saving for education (n=1230)

Does Head of Household have a VSLA account? If no, do they save for education?			
	Yes, I have a VSLA	No but I save for education	No and I don't save for education
All beneficiaries	26%	25%	48%
Beneficiary girls	28%	27%	45%
Beneficiaries with disabilities	31%	13%`	54%
Non-beneficiaries (Control JSS)	21%	30%	46%

Analysis of savings practices among respondent households indicate that, at the time of research, 26 percent of beneficiary households had VSLA accounts, which can help them save for education. A quarter of those who do not have VSLAs reported currently saving for education to some degree. Thus, with 50 percent of households engaging

in savings that can be used for education to some degree, there is both a solid basis of savings among households that can facilitate project interventions (as already-saving households can provide positive examples to non-saving households) and also good potential for growth of savings practices, also evidenced by the finding in the table below. Statistical tests did not find that having a VSLA made households significantly more likely to save for education, health, food, emergencies, or any other purpose. In fact, VSLA members are significantly less likely to save for health care (14 percent of respondents) than non-members (24 percent of respondents). VSLA membership was not linked to significant or substantive differences in learning outcomes.

Table 58: Household ability to pay direct education expenses (n=1230)

Last year, how much of the educational costs of child were you able to meet?			
	All (100%)	More than half (51-99%)	Half or less (0-50%)
All beneficiaries	15%	56%	31%
JSS Beneficiaries	14%	54%	32%
Primary Beneficiaries	10%	61%	29%
Beneficiaries with disabilities	18%	56%	27%
Poor Beneficiaries	12%	56%	32%
Non-Beneficiaries (Control JSS)	19%	52%	29%

The second indicator for Intermediate Outcome 4 is the percentage of targeted households that cover some proportion of education costs (note that the indicator reads *"% of targeted households cover XX percent of their child's direct educational costs*" and does not offer the covered percentage). Primary caregivers were asked directly about their abilities to meet education costs in the past year. Last year, 30 percent of beneficiary families were able to meet less than half of the beneficiary's education costs, and only 15 percent were able to meet all education costs. A lower proportion of primary education students were able to pay all their education costs, as were beneficiaries that were classified as poor. Given that the project aims to reach education self-sustainability of households, we recommend restating the indicator as *"% of targeted households cover 100 percent of their child's direct educational costs.*" Currently, 15 percent of all beneficiaries pay all educational costs, and 54 percent pay most but not all.

Indicator IO4B: % of targeted households cover half or more of their child's direct educational costs

Logframe Definition/Calculation: 'Educational costs'- Paying school fees, purchasing uniforms, text books etc.'Targeted households - the households selected based on pre-defined criteria of degree of marginalisation and need

Proposed Calculation: % of targeted households that cover 100 percent of their child's direct educational costs.

Justification: Given that the project aims to reach education self-sustainability of households, we recommend restating the indicator as above.

Target: The target is set at +4 percent for both groups. With a base score of between 66 and 69 percent for the average of the two above proposed parameters, these increases represent approximately 6 percent on the baseline values. Given the widespread acknowledgement of the challenges faced in paying school fees (85 percent of families report not being able to cover all school fee costs), more substantial numbers may not be achievable after one year of programming.

Table 59: Beneficiary HH head reporting covering >= 50% of child's educational costs (n=519)

Beneficiary Subgroup	Sample	% reporting being able to meet at least half of costs	Standard Deviation
Girls	518	68.72%	46
Children with Disabilities	21	66.67%	48

With respect to the priority that households place on education, the research inquired from primary caregivers of students the extent to which they agreed that even when funds are limited it is worth investing in their child's education. The results indicate a high priority placed on education of children, with 87 percent agreeing or strongly agreeing with the assertion.

Table 60: Educational Priority (n=1230)

How strongly do you agree with the statement "even when funds are limited it is worth investing in [CHILD]'s education?"					
Mentioned beneficiary is...	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
...a girl without a disability	60%	36%	3%	1%	0%
...a boy with a disability	79%	21%	0%	0%	0%
... a girl with a disability	55%	35%	10%	0%	0%
All beneficiaries	58%	37%	4%	1%	0%
Non-beneficiaries	48%	44%	6%	2%	0%

These findings, illustrative of the high value parents/carers place on the education of their children underscore the validity of the project's approach to education support, via both the direct funding by bursaries and also by the more sustainable approach of encouraging and facilitating savings at a household level. There are some apparent differences in perceptions of the value of education for boys versus girls via the quantitative surveys, though as most boys surveyed have a disability the results should be viewed with some caution. It is significant, however, that 10 percentage points more parents/carers of boys with disabilities than those of girls with disabilities agreed or strongly agreed that investing in their education is worthwhile. Community members, community leaders, teachers, and students all highlighted via the qualitative research that they considered education of girls to be equally valid and important as that of boys. This is a very positive finding, although findings also indicated that there are strong gendered roles and expectations with respect to work in/outside the home, and with respect to active participation of girls versus boys in classes.

> *"There are more girls in this chiefdom than boys, so more girls in schools than boys. We want to ensure that boys and girls are equally educated. At senior secondary school level, the number of girls falls and the same trend continues up to colleges and universities"*
>
> *- Community Leader, Kailahun*

> *"It is more important for girls to be educated, so they can assist their family. If I am educated, then men will not take advantage of me. I enjoy school and come every day, and I am punctual. I stopped school for one year, as there was no money for fees. The teacher asks the girls more questions than the boys"*
>
> *- Female student with a disability, primary school, Kenema*

> *'Education is important for girls and boys, but especially for girls.'*
>
> *- Religious leader, Port Loko*

> *'It is more important for girls to be educated, as they will help their parents, and education for a girl is education for the whole world.'*
>
> *- Female student with a disability, primary school, Kailahun*

5.5 Girls' self-esteem

The MEL Framework highlights that the importance of a child's voice to evoke change, and to ensure the relevant accountability mechanisms are in place to allow a child's voice to be heard, is a key part of this project. Intermediate Outcome 3 operates under the assumption 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".

Intermediate Outcome 3: Greater self-esteem and confidence

Indicator IO3A: 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

Logframe Definition/Calculation: 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 (disaggregated by gender, disability and location)

Proposed Calculation: Given that all data regarding self-esteem is captured in outcome indicator 1.3 above, sub-indicator 3.1 indicator focuses on the students' voice in making choices about school enrolment. This proposed indicator is an average of the five-point scale in how strongly beneficiaries agree that they have a voice in decisions about their own enrolment.[45]

Justification: The indicator adequately captures the behaviour change being targeted given available data.

Target: The target is set at 0.25 standard deviations per year for both groups, which equates to 6% increase annually. Given the relatively high level of confidence/self-esteem expressed by the cohort, this is an appropriate target.

Table 61: Beneficiaries reporting self-esteem and confidence via Student Survey (n=624)

Beneficiary Subgroup	Sample	% average of 5-point self esteem scale	Standard Deviation
Girls	643	73.6%	26
Children with disabilities	43	75.6%	28

Indicator IO3B: % 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).

Logframe Definition/Calculation: Student feels 'Safe and secure' - not mistreated i.e. not beaten/flogged, shouted at, stigmatized. 'Included' - involved by teaching staff, involved in discussions and asking question, CWDs felt supported post adaptation

Proposed Calculation: This indicator is calculated using the average of two yes or no questions in the data: whether the beneficiary feels safe at school, and whether the student feels safe traveling to and from school. Every beneficiary receives a score of 0 if neither are true; 0.5 if one of the two questions is true, and 1 if both are true. Alternatively, one could calculate it as the percentage of students who feel safe *and* secure (both) when traveling and at school, but this would not capture any improvements if only one (not both) parameter improves.

Justification: The indicator adequately captures the behaviour change being targeted.

Target: The target is set at +1 percent for both groups as the baseline value is very high, and only a modest increase on these high levels are likely to be feasible.

[45] As with other indicators, a five-point scale is converted as 1=Strongly agree; 0.75=agree; 0.5=neither disagree or agree; 0.25=disagree; 0.0=strongly disagree.

Table 62: Beneficiaries reporting improved perceptions of learning via Student Survey (n=669)

Beneficiary Subgroup	Sample	Feel Safe and Secure Indicator	Standard Deviation
Girls	657	91.8%	21
Children with disabilities	43	90.48%	18

As seen in the above indicator tables, existing levels of self-esteem and confidence among GEC 1 beneficiaries are high. This corresponds well with the qualitative research, via which the development of greater self-esteem and confidence (following on from GEC 1) was reported by many respondents (FGDs and KIIs). For example, secondary school teachers working with current and former beneficiaries reported that the girls are more confident and talk and participate more, not only in lessons but also in other school activities such as quizzes and debates. Parents of beneficiaries and former beneficiaries also commented on how confident their daughters are, compared to them. During FGDs, most of the girls expressed that they were happy and felt confident at school. These views are supported by the quantitative data gathered through the student's surveys (see tables 55 and 56, below). Although the complexity of the questions makes the responses challenging to interpret, overall girls of both age cohorts tended towards reasonably good confidence and self-esteem - most girls were in agreement with the positive statements and disagreed with the negative. The exceptions were with respect to confidence in reading or doing maths problems in front of others, which is not surprising of young students.

> *"Our girls are smarter than us and more ambitious"*
>
> *- JSS Student parent, Port Loko*

> *"We feel happy at school. The teachers treat us well, and try to make us understand, so we behave well in class. We like to learn, and to wear our uniform. When we have school materials, then we are happy to come to school. We feel confident at school, not shy. But we are not happy to come to school when we have not eaten any breakfast"*
>
> *- Female student, JSS (control), Kailahun*

> *"Once I am in school I feel secure. I am happy in school with my friends, and I feel confident, not shy, even though sometimes I am mocked."*
>
> *- Female student with a disability, primary school, Kenema*

The following tables present the results of the Student Surveys, disaggregated by respondents below 12 years of age and those above. The results are disaggregated by treatment and control group where applicable and summarised below.

Table 63: Life Skills & Self-esteem, Students 12 years and older (n=1124)

No.	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Treatment Group						
a.	I am able to do things as well as my friends	38.5%	55.4%	3.3%	2.6%	0.2%
b.	I want to do well in school	55.4%	40.5%	2.8%	1.1%	0.2%
c.	I get nervous when I have to read in front of others	6.5%	42.2%	11.7%	30.1%	9.5%
d.	I get nervous when I have to do maths in front of others	5.8%	41.6%	10.2%	30.5%	11.9%
e.	I feel confident answering questions in class	21.4%	48.3%	14.7%	14.9%	0.7%
f.	I would like to continue studying/ attending school after this year	58.0%	37.0%	3.5%	1.3%	0.2%
g.	I can describe my thoughts to others when I speak	9.5%	57.8%	15.4%	16.9%	0.4%
h.	I can work well in a group with other people	13.9%	68.0%	14.1%	3.9%	0.2%
i.	When I have the opportunity, I can organise my peers or friends to do an activity.	15.2%	46.8%	20.4%	17.5%	0.2%
j.	I ask the teacher if I don't understand something	25.8%	55.4%	9.1%	9.5%	0.2%
k.	When I succeed at school it is because I worked hard	57.6%	41.3%	0.9%	0.0%	0.2%
l.	If I do well in a test it is because I am lucky	27.7%	55.2%	9.1%	6.3%	1.7%
Control Group						
a.	I am able to do things as well as my friends	45.3%	43.3%	6.4%	4.3%	0.8%
b.	I want to do well in school	60.0%	34.4%	4.9%	0.8%	0.0%
c.	I get nervous when I have to read in front of others	5.2%	33.3%	14.9%	33.7%	12.9%
d.	I get nervous when I have to do maths in front of others	4.3%	30.7%	14.4%	38.0%	12.6%
e.	I feel confident answering questions in class	18.5%	40.0%	23.1%	16.3%	2.1%
f.	I would like to continue studying/ attending school after this year	59.1%	37.4%	2.7%	0.8%	0.0%
g.	I can describe my thoughts to others when I speak	18.8%	58.2%	14.1%	8.4%	0.5%
h.	I can work well in a group with other people	19.9%	61.1%	12.3%	6.1%	0.6%
i.	When I have the opportunity, I can organise my peers or friends to do an activity.	22.2%	48.0%	18.4%	10.9%	0.5%
j.	I ask the teacher if I don't understand something	25.7%	55.5%	9.7%	8.1%	1.1%
k.	When I succeed at school it is because I worked hard	57.1%	36.9%	4.4%	1.1%	0.5%
l.	If I do well in a test it is because I am lucky	28.6%	48.0%	16.0%	5.6%	1.8%

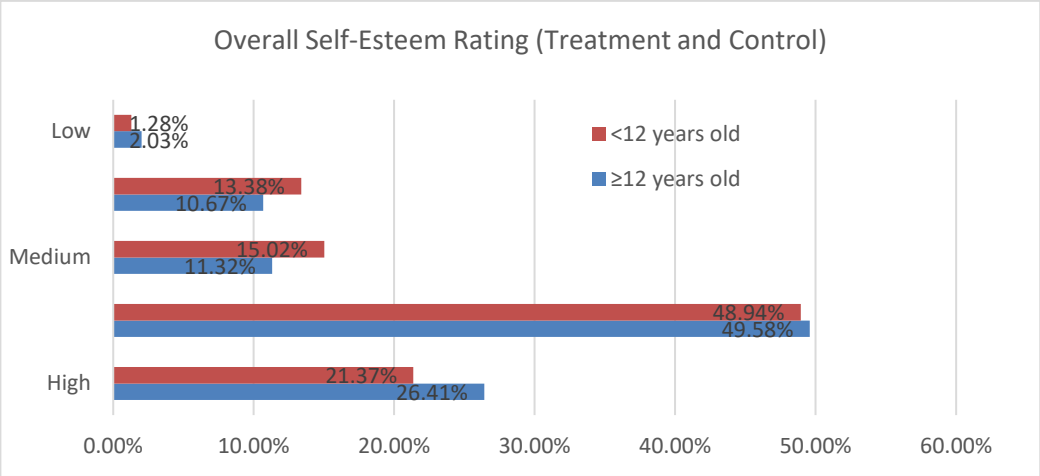
Table 64: Life Skills & Self-esteem, Students under 12 years old (n=71).

The chart, below, presents a summary of the overall self-esteem rating for all the items in the above table.[46]

No.	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Treatment Group						
a.	I am able to do things as well as my friends	15.5%	46.6%	17.2%	20.7%	0.0%
b.	I want to do well in school	51.7%	46.6%	1.7%	0.0%	0.0%
c.	I get nervous when I have to read in front of others	27.6%	25.9%	43.1%	3.5%	0.0%
d.	I get nervous when I have to do maths in front of others	32.8%	22.4%	37.9%	6.9%	0.0%
e.	I feel confident answering questions in class	12.1%	50.0%	25.9%	12.1%	0.0%
f.	I would like to continue studying/ attending school after this year	12.1%	50.0%	29.3%	8.6%	0.0%
g.	I can describe my thoughts to others when I speak	8.6%	43.1%	24.1%	22.4%	1.7%
h.	I can work well in a group with other people	20.7%	53.5%	19.0%	6.9%	0.0%
i.	When I have the opportunity, I can organise my peers or friends to do an activity.	39.7%	56.9%	3.5%	100.0%	0.5%
j.	I ask the teacher if I don't understand something	25.7%	55.5%	9.7%	8.1%	1.1%
k.	When I succeed at school it is because I worked hard	57.1%	36.9%	4.4%	1.1%	0.5%
l.	If I do well in a test it is because I am lucky	28.6%	48.0%	16.0%	5.6%	1.8%

[46] Note: As children in primary grades are traditionally under 12, there were no non-beneficiaries under 12 to analyse.

As presented below, most respondents in treatment and control groups (76 percent of students 12 years old and above, 70 percent of students under 12) are in the medium-high bracket of self-esteem, a positive finding, with 13 percent of ≥12s and 15 percent of <12s consistently noting poorer experiences in schools.



Notes:
For negative statements: Low=strongly agree; low-medium=agree; medium=neither agree nor disagree; medium-high=disagree; high=strongly disagree. For positive statements: Low=strongly disagree; low-medium=disagree; medium=neither agree nor disagree; medium-high=agree; high=strongly agree.

When disaggregated between treatment and control, the findings show that students in JSS treatment schools experience slightly higher rates of low self-esteem as well as higher rates of high self-esteem. The JSS treatment schools exhibit an increase in both low and low-medium self-esteem from Primary treatment schools, underscoring the importance of focusing on increasing self-esteem of students as they transition through their education life cycle.

Table 65: Life Skills & Self-esteem (JSS and PS by Control and Treatment)[47]

Self Esteem	JSS Treatment	JSS Control	Primary Treatment	Overall
Low	3.5%	1.8%	0.5%	2.3%
Low-Medium	12.8%	16.4%	5.9%	12.8%
Medium	8.0%	9.4%	2.7%	7.6%
Medium-High	42.7%	44.7%	51.4%	45.0%
High	33.0%	27.6%	39.6%	32.3%

[47] **Notes:** For negative statements: Low=strongly agree; low-medium=agree; medium=neither agree nor disagree; medium-high=disagree; high=strongly disagree. For positive statements: Low=strongly disagree; low-medium=disagree; medium=neither agree nor disagree; medium-high=agree; high=strongly agree.

6. Conclusion & Recommendations

6.1 Conclusions

Profile of beneficiaries and barriers to learning and transition

- Respondents noted some specific barriers to education, particularly poverty; limited value ascribed to education by caregivers (parents and non-parents; sexual or other harassment of girls by boys; social norms and practices, leading to a heavy burden of domestic work for girls; early and forced marriages; pregnancy, and both physical and intellectual disabilities of children.
- The payment of school fees and other associated educational costs is a notable barrier, together with the lack of teaching and learning materials appropriate for children with and without disabilities.
- Poor, inaccessible, or non-existent sanitation facilities add another layer of difficulty and act as a barrier to school attendance generally but particularly for children with disabilities and girls during menstruation.
- The distance to and from school is another barrier that often increases from JSS to SSS and especially impacts children with disabilities.
- There is a severe shortage of qualified and trained teachers, and very few female teachers.
- The use of English as the language of instruction is a barrier for all teachers and children in the project districts.

The GATE-GEC project seeks to address many of these barriers to education via a range of activities supporting quality of education (teacher training and study groups), direct support to students (via bursaries) and economic support to families that can facilitate meeting of educational costs in a sustainable manner. Therefore, the project logic (as articulated in the project Theory of Change and Logframe) is robust. Project activities, if effectively implemented, should lead to improvements in learning outcomes for vulnerable and marginalised students.

Baseline learning levels

- Overall baseline learning levels of the project beneficiaries (and control group) are mixed, with high levels of proficiency among the more basic literacy and numeracy skills (such as recognising letters and familiar words, basic reading, basic addition and subtraction), but becoming progressively poorer in the more advanced literacy and numeracy skills. This is expected, and the learning assessments designed for the baseline research were done so to ensure poorer results among more complex tasks so repetition of the assessments later in the project can accurately track improvements and avoid ceiling effects.
- With respect to specific subgroups, it appears that children with disabilities scored as well, or higher, than children without, potentially reflective of the relatively mild severity of the disabilities and/or the different application of the assessments to facilitate children with disabilities (they were allotted more time for many exercises). This is a positive finding, as it suggests that school entry for children with disabilities is the most substantial barrier to be overcome, and the project directly seeks to address this.

Baseline transition rates

- Both target and control groups outlined similar transition pathways and identified the same barriers – including poverty – which may prevent them from reaching their goals. In 2013, the beneficiaries were identified as the most marginalised. However, since that time, the lives of many children have changed (for example due to the Ebola crisis) and, while the research team did not have access to data to quantify levels of marginalisation, the short and medium-term effects of the Ebola crisis are likely to still be felt, with more marginalised children within the target communities than before.

Project sustainability

- Community level awareness of the importance of education is high, and of the need for sustainable measures to ensure uninterrupted education. However, as only 50 percent of households are engaged in saving money that can be used for education, and only 15 percent were able to meet all of their education costs in the last year, there is a need for ongoing sensitisation and awareness-raising, both in terms of getting those children who are still out of school into the system and ensuring that those who are in school receive the support they need from parents or caregivers.

- The VSLA component had not been introduced at the time of the baseline, but if successful it should reduce dependence on the bursaries and ensure that families are in a stronger position to support their children through school and all stages of transition by boosting the savings of those households who are already doing so and facilitating a start to saving among those households who do not. The proportion of households that do not save or have trouble meeting educational needs underscores the validity of this approach.

- At system level, the GATE-GEC project is aligned with MEST policy, but there is a need to facilitate greater engagement on MEST's part, with project sustainability hinging on MEST ownership. One government official recognised the limited involvement by MEST in GEC 1 but stated MEST's desire at central level to be more involved in GATE-GEC. The recent development of a Project Steering Committee with the active participation of MEST and a range of other government stakeholders, including the Ministry of Social Welfare, should facilitate MEST's involvement. This should also contribute to sustainability of those components of the project which MEST feels should be continued. MEST's more active engagement in project monitoring will also feed in to the sustainability of project interventions.

Changes between GEC 1 and GATE-GEC

- The research team noted some positive changes since the GEC baseline survey report was carried out in 2013, in that four key barriers mentioned in the GEC baseline were not mentioned by the respondents during the 2017 research:
    - Teachers' low expectations of girls
    - Teachers giving more attention to boys in the classroom
    - Reduced learning time in school
    - Rates of teacher absenteeism

- Students consistently noted across quantitative and qualitative research that girls and boys were treated the same in class by teachers and gave no indication that they saw girls as receiving less attention or the teachers having lower expectations of them. However, some teachers did mention that girls have more domestic tasks at home, and less time to study, so it may be that some of them have consequently lower expectations of girls than boys, but this was not explicitly stated. However, assessed learning outcomes do not demonstrate any significantly difference between those students who have a high domestic work burden (1/4 of a day or more) than those without.

- **Initiation** was also mentioned as a major barrier for girls in the baseline report for GEC 1, with particular emphasis on the negative effects of initiation activities on girls in Port Loko, leading to girls missing very extended periods of school. Initiation was not mentioned by any students during this research but was by head teachers and teachers in two primary schools and one junior secondary school. From the information they gave, initiation activities do affect attendance at school, but not to the extent as reported under GEC 1.

Baseline levels of intermediate outcome indicators

Intermediate Outcome 1: Attendance Rates

- Qualitative findings suggest that attendance by beneficiaries, reported by teachers and beneficiaries themselves, is high – however the evaluation team only met with beneficiaries who were in school and may not reflect the problems some beneficiaries may be experiencing, i.e. the data collection may have been subject to an availability bias.

- The quantitative findings indicate similarly high reports of attendance by schools (head teachers were asked to provide attendance rates) – primary schools averaged attendance rates of 75 percent in the past year (with girls approximately 3-7 percent lower than boys across the three grades), while JSS head teachers reported overall attendance rates of 85 percent, with girls approximately 5 percent higher than boys. However, discrepancies in triangulation of data from different sources suggests inaccuracy (and likely over-reporting) of figures. The project's ongoing monitoring processes should consider the risk of inaccuracy of attendance as reported by schools themselves, potentially instituting novel means of verification (e.g. spot-checks of actual vs. reported attendance).

Intermediate Outcome 2: Effective inclusive education teaching skills

- Qualitative data collection revealed that some teachers in both PS and JSS are applying inclusive techniques. For example, in one JSS, if a student has difficulty copying from the board, the teacher will wait until each student has copied the information down prior to erasing the board. Further, during an FGD, JSS students expressed that teachers explain topics well and make sure that all students understand by speaking loudly for those with hearing impairments, writing clearly on the board for students with visual impairments, and seating children with visual impairments at the front of the class. A KII with a head teacher at a PS revealed that the school has sensitised children not to provoke their fellow students with disabilities and explain to the children that they are all part of the community, noting that anyone could have a disability.

- While inclusive education approaches were highlighted in some KIIs and FGDs, there were also cases where students and teachers expressed that children with disabilities are provoked by their classmates and that children with disabilities are also affected by corporal punishment—indicating that further sensitisation and training is required.

- Quantitative data collected indicate reasonably positive teaching practices in the classes under study, with 41 percent of students noting that teachers use a different language to explain a point when the students do not understand something and 47 percent of students noting that teachers often encourage them to participate. These quantitative findings correlate well with qualitative data collected. However, bias due to the presence of an observer in the classroom is an established phenomenon in this type of assessment. Of interest is that 'hard' skills such as specific techniques, group work and use of non-standard teaching materials, rated the poorest among classroom observation, supporting project strategies on capacity building of teachers. During FGDs, girls and boys reported that teachers make an effort to involve everyone (e.g. all students are called on to answer questions), triangulating well with quantitative findings.

- The specific educational support (non-bursary) component of the project is welcomed by participating schools. Although carers and students assessed teacher performance to be of acceptable quality, the project approach still is valid as there are some indicators (participation encouragement, use of local language) that should demonstrate good improvement as the project progresses. The study group approach is endorsed by the finding that some schools, at both primary and junior secondary level, are already running study groups independently of GATE-GEC support. The provision of additional tuition for girls is also included in the 2018-2020 ESP, indicating alignment of GATE-GEC activities with national priorities for education.

- Physical punishment is reported to be a common practice within the schools. Corporal punishment is not (yet) illegal in Sierra Leone[48] and based on data collected, it appears that it is normalised in schools, with 85 percent of students noting punishment as sanction for incorrect work and almost all of these (96 percent) noting physical punishment. There does, however, appear to be a policy momentum to make corporal punishment explicitly illegal, and this presents opportunities for the project to both advocate for this policy change at MEST level, and sensitise educational professionals, communities and students against such punishment.

- The project is gender sensitive, with interventions aimed at improving the quality of education for girls. Teachers who are working as PVs are receiving training and ongoing support to make their teaching more gender-sensitive and inclusive. The skills and knowledge they are gaining through the project have the potential to benefit beneficiary girls through their attendance at study groups, and both direct and indirect beneficiary girls through improved teaching and learning when PVs are giving lessons as class teachers.

Intermediate Outcome 3: Greater self-esteem and confidence

- In FGDs, girls were asked questions relating to their confidence and self-esteem. Most of the girls consulted expressed that they were happy and felt confident at school. A few of the children with disabilities said that they were teased by colleagues, but never indicated that this was to an extent to make them not want to come to school.
- Quantitative findings correlated well with these findings, with most respondents (76 percent of students 12 years old and above, 70 percent of students under 12) reporting medium-high self-esteem. Although the complexity of the questions makes the response challenging to interpret, overall girls of both age cohorts tended towards reasonably good confidence, life-skills and self-esteem - most girls agreed with the positive statements and disagreed with the negative. Younger age students (less than 12) did exhibit lower self-esteem across the various dimensions measured, but this is to be expected given their younger age, and the difference was not sufficiently large to suggest any underlying issues.

Intermediate Outcome 4: Increased economic empowerment

- The VSLA component of the project, designed to increase economic empowerment, was not yet being implemented at the time of the baseline but may be used to enable families to cover education-related costs in a more sustainable way than through the disbursement of bursaries.

- Qualitative and quantitative findings agreed that families face major challenges in their abilities to pay direct education expenses, thus supporting the validity of focus of the project. When primary caregivers were asked directly about their abilities to meet education costs in the past year, 30 percent of beneficiary families were able to meet less than half of the beneficiary's education costs and only 15 percent were able to meet all education costs.

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

- There is evidence to indicate that the relationship between the project and MEST at central level is moving into a more productive phase, with plans for better communication and closer collaboration. The ESP for 2018-2020 outlines mechanisms for participation by partners and there are areas within the ESP where GATE-GEC could contribute to policy development and implementation (see Section 1.1).

[48] *Corporal punishment of children in Sierra Leone*, Global Initiative to End Corporal Punishment of Children, 2018. Accessible at: http://www.endcorporalpunishment.org/progress/country-reports/sierra-leone.html.

- Collaboration opportunities with other education actors and interventions including UNICEF GATE have been identified.
- The project would be able to more effectively contribute across education-related activities and have more opportunities to network and collaborate with related interventions if the Education Adviser for the Hub team was embedded in MEST at central level.

6.2 Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Revise project logframe & evaluation questions.

Priority: High ***Timeline: Short***	*Recommendation 1a:* Edit intermediate outcome 5 to ensure the outcome text and its indicator are consistent by incorporating work with Boards of Governors, School Management Committees and Community Teachers Associations, to strengthen community participation in governance and management of schools.
Priority: High ***Timeline: Short***	*Recommendation 1b:* Under intermediate outcome 5 include a separate outcome and indicator related to increased engagement with key educational actors to support education provision for girls and children with disabilities on a national level. The evaluators recommend more nuanced indicators of engagement, such as direct GATE-GEC/MEST meetings, the presence of agenda items in meetings or events related to GATE-GEC or on policy matters related to GATE-GEC's advocacy aims, or direct advocacy activities undertaken from GATE-GEC to MEST.
Priority: High ***Timeline: Short***	*Recommendation 1c:* Include members of Boards of Governors (JSS) and Community Teachers Associations (PS and JSS) as well as School Management Committees (PS) in the score-carding process under Output 3. It is important to have community understanding of and participation in this process, which will seek to address some sensitive issues, and will therefore need broad support to be achieved and sustainable.
Priority: Medium ***Timeline: Medium***	*Recommendation 1d:* For future research (i.e. at midline and endline of the project), ISG recommends the following additional evaluation questions: 1. Whether there is partnership and collaboration with the MEST at central and district level and if knowledge and good practices are being shared across the project; 2. Whether there is effective collaboration and cooperation with other relevant interventions (e.g. UNICEF GATE); 3. The quantity/quality of involvement of School Management Committees, Boards of Governors, and Community-Teacher Associations in the project.

Recommendation 2: Increase engagement with MEST at all levels.

Priority: High ***Timeline: Short***	*Recommendation 2a:* Seek to deepen engagement of the Hub Education Advisor with MEST (potentially through embedding in the MEST offices). Sustainability of the programme hinges on MEST ownership and the Education Adviser could, among other tasks, provide support to MEST as they seek a more active engagement in project monitoring. This strategy is already in place by other projects (i.e. supported by Leh Wi Learn and EU) and would allow for better facilitation of ongoing dialogue with MEST, including on the development of the next ESP for 2020-2025. Additionally, a presence at MEST would help further develop collaboration with other related projects including UNICEF GATE and Leh Wi Learn.
Priority: High ***Timeline: Medium***	*Recommendation 2b:* At district level, the qualitative research found reports of previously strong district-level collaboration between MEST and GEC 1, with regular meetings and joint activities. The project should explore this previous relationship's successes and areas of improvement to continue and duplicate this collaborative relationship in GATE-GEC. Ideally, this relationship would foster deeper community engagement and act as a driver for sustainability of project benefits.

Recommendation 3: Define contributions to Education Strategic Plan activities.

Priority: Medium ***Timeline: Medium***	*Recommendation 3a:* Discuss with MEST on how GATE-GEC can best contribute to the following activities which are set out in the ESP for 2018-2020: ▪ Development of an inclusive education policy and strategy. ▪ Implementation of the policy for re-entry of teenage mothers into the school system. ▪ Development of child protection mechanisms and guidelines, to ensure all schools are safe for girls. This intervention will include sensitisation, referral channels, enforcement of the code of conduct for teachers, and the use of suggestion boxes. ▪ Integration of comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) in to the curriculum at upper primary and JSS level, and the provision of training for teachers on adolescent sexual and reproductive life skills, to make schools safer for girls, and contribute to reducing adolescent pregnancy and drop-out rates. ▪ Establishment and implementation of a system for the professional development, induction and continuous development of teachers and school heads.
Priority: Medium ***Timeline: Long***	*Recommendation 3b:* Undertake evidence-based advocacy to influence the Education Sector Plan for 2021 – 2025. A measurable impact of advocacy efforts could be with respect to concrete policy changes that have taken place that can be attributable, at least in part, to the efforts of GATE-GEC. While attribution of policy change is generally challenging to definitively measure, qualitative research among key informants at various points can typically result in triangulated findings with an acceptable level of precision. Examples of specific advocacy opportunities are: ▪ Outlawing of corporal punishment in schools. There appears to be policy momentum in this regard, subsequent to the 2016 Periodic Review on Sierra Leone by the Committee on the Rights of the Child. ▪ Including comprehensive sexuality education in curricula. School-related gender-based violence, sexual harassment, and other factors related to sexual and reproductive health and rights can impact the attendance of girls and children with disabilities. Comprehensive sexuality education combats violence and promotes more equitable attitudes towards relationships between men and women. Further, it can reduce adolescent pregnancy, sexually transmitted infection transmission, and dropout rates. MEST's ESP 2018-2020 states that comprehensive sexuality education will be integrated in to the curriculum from upper primary to senior secondary levels. Supporting a rights-based and gender-focused approach to sexuality education will contribute to the achievement of intermediate outcomes 1 and 3 and have an indirect impact on other intermediate outcomes.

Recommendation 4: Agree communication and coordination procedures amongst consortium members.

Priority: High ***Timeline: Short***	*Recommendation 4:* The baseline research noted disparities between districts in terms of their capacity to organise and implement activities. All consortium members should agree on best practice in terms of communication and coordination procedures, to ensure all persons involved in the GATE-GEC project team in all districts are kept informed of activities, have access to lessons learned and good practices, and are fully involved. There should be agreement regarding referencing and approval procedures for all staff working for the project who may wish to move to work for the project in another district or for another consortium partner. Procedures also need to be agreed across the consortium partners regarding any disciplinary procedures and communication to community stakeholders following on from any problems.

Recommendation 5: Focus on close collaboration with GATE UNICEF and others.

Priority: Medium ***Timeline: Medium***	*Recommendation 5:* As GATE-GEC and GATE UNICEF are working on areas of common interest, GATE-GEC should seek to deepen collaboration with GATE UNICEF at both central and district level. This wold allow both projects to share their activities to reduce overlap and prevent duplication of efforts as well as identify and act on potential synergies. There is close collaboration in Port Loko, where a GATE UNICEF team is based in the Programme Unit with the GATE-GEC project team, and exploration of the usefulness of replicating this same level of collaboration should be undertaken. Further, it will be important to facilitate sharing of learning from all sources, including MEST, GATE, and Leh Wi Learn, between teaching staff in schools. EDOs/POs should document inputs from other interventions, to ensure good collaboration, and to share lessons learned and good practice.

Recommendation 6: Ensure timely distribution of bursaries.

Priority: High ***Timeline: Medium***	*Recommendation 6:* The distribution of bursaries for the academic year 2018/9 and 2019/20 for P1 to P6 and for JSS1 and JSS2 and those who have just been promoted to JSS3, should be done at the beginning of the academic year, without waiting for the results of the BECE exams. Once the BECE results are released then those students who are repeating JSS3 can receive their bursaries.

Recommendation 7: Convey criteria for project inclusion to beneficiaries and other stakeholders.

Priority: High ***Timeline: Short***	*Recommendation 7:* Both this baseline evaluation and the endline evaluation from GEC 1 found that both non-beneficiaries and beneficiaries were unclear of the inclusion criteria and selection process. The project should organise meetings with the beneficiaries and their parents or caregivers, as well as other key stakeholders, to remind them of the criteria for selection of the cohort, and the plans in place to support the beneficiaries until the end of the project.

Recommendation 8: Support of former beneficiaries to formal education.

Priority: High ***Timeline: Medium***	*Recommendation 8a:* The project should support the return of any beneficiaries who had dropped out of the system for any reason (e.g. pregnancy, becoming a mother, income generation) back in to formal education. The re-verification numbers confirm that while some beneficiaries will have transitioned beyond JSS and others may have moved outside the treatment areas, many beneficiaries who should still be attending school are not. Given this, the project should seek out these former students who have dropped out and support their return. While the project will need to investigate the most appropriate ways to do so, possible avenues include encouraging attendance at study groups, provision of additional classes to cover any key areas of the curriculum they missed while out of school, mentoring support from PVs while they readjust to being back in school, and by prioritising their involvement in VSLAs.
Priority: Low ***Timeline: Medium***	*Recommendation 8b:* Linked to the re-entry of teenage mothers into the school system, GATE-GEC should check how many beneficiaries under GEC 1 who dropped out of the formal school system and entered UNICEF GATE learning centres have now returned, or are planning to return, to the formal system, and set bursaries and other supports in place as needed.

Recommendation 9: Defining and assessing children with disabilities

Priority: Medium ***Timeline: Medium***	*Recommendation 9:* Comparisons of GEC 1, re-verification data and primary data on disability status of children (using Washington Group Short Set questions) indicate significant lack of correlation, notably substantial reductions in the prevalence of disability between project iterations. This is likely a limitation of using self-reporting of disability (and its severity). Cross-checking of reported disability status with robust medical assessments (potentially of a sub-sample of students currently reporting disability) would prove a useful verification measure and indeed potentially contribute to international learning on disability assessments.

Recommendation 10: Inclusion of additional beneficiaries.

Priority: Medium ***Timeline: Medium***	*Recommendation 10a:* The re-verification activity revealed that there are now roughly 40 percent fewer beneficiaries under the current phase of the project than from GEC 1 in 2013. The baseline evaluation identified many students in treatment schools who meet the criteria set out in 2013 for project support, including children with disabilities, who are not direct beneficiaries of the project. While there is a clear GATE-GEC policy of not inducting new beneficiaries, beneficiary data and evidence from project informants indicates that beneficiaries have been added since 2013. The project should explore the possibility of adding students who meet the selection criteria as project beneficiaries.
Priority: Medium ***Timeline: Medium***	*Recommendation 10b:* The research team does not judge it to be feasible for the project to undertake a process to identify and select additional marginalised girls at this stage but does recommend consideration of strategies to provide some support to additional children with disabilities. As a first step, IEDOs and EDOs/POs should work with all project schools and CBRVs to draw up lists of children with disabilities who are not currently beneficiaries. Once an initial assessment has been made of their needs, GATE-GEC should consider ways that the project can support these non-beneficiary children – if not by including them in the cohort or through the

	provision of bursaries or assistive devices, perhaps by prioritising their attendance at study groups and the inclusion of their families in the VSLA schemes.
Priority: Medium ***Timeline: Medium***	*Recommendation 10c*: The project should also determine the level of need which it will **not** be able to address. The data on children with disabilities should then be presented at a Project Steering Committee meeting, and more widely to MEST, for broader consideration of the needs and how they can best be met by a range of stakeholders.

Recommendation 11: Explore non-beneficiary involvement in study groups.

Priority: Low ***Timeline: Medium***	*Recommendation 11*: Depending on the numbers of beneficiaries at each school, it may be possible to open access to study groups for children with disabilities or other children with specific learning support needs, who are not direct beneficiaries. GATE-GEC should consider this possibility on a case by case basis to determine the appropriateness of allowing non-beneficiaries to participate in study groups (i.e. ensure that it will not negatively impact the effectiveness of the study group).

Recommendation 12: Additional areas of project focus

Priority: Low ***Timeline: Medium***	*Recommendation 12a*: Girls that reported not feeling safe in school had poorer literacy and numeracy assessment results, as did those girls who felt their teachers did not make them feel welcome in schools. This suggests that school staff-mediated psychosocial factors (perceptions of safety/security and a welcoming class atmosphere) are substantial determinants of educational performance, an area on which the project could potentially focus attention
Priority: Medium ***Timeline: Short***	*Recommendation 12b*: The ongoing project monitoring data should also include attendance levels of particularly vulnerable sub-groups: orphans, children with disabilities, girls living with caretakers other than their parents or those living independently in order to access JSS, pregnant girls and young mothers. Depending on the attendance rates by these groups it may be necessary for the project to introduce activities to target support to them
Priority: High ***Timeline: Medium***	*Recommendation 12c:* As noted above, the momentum for policy change on corporal punishment of children provides an opportunity for policy advocacy. Given the evidence of widespread corporal punishment of children in schools and by parents, and the normalisation of same, there are clear opportunities for community-based advocacy work to effect norm change in this important area.

Annexes

Annex 1: Logframe

Logframe_Baseline_
MAY_11.xlsx

Annex 2: Outcomes Spreadsheet

Outcomes Spreadsheet_Baseline

Annex 3: Key findings on Output Indicators

This annex should be completed by the project.

The evaluator should hand over any output-related data to the project to enable the project to populate the following tables.

Fill in the table below with every Output Indicator, means of verification/sources, and the frequency of data collection. Please include output indicators for which data collection has not yet taken place and state when data collection for these will take place.

Table 66: Output indicators

Logframe Output Indicator	Means of verification/sources	Collection frequency
Number and Indicator wording	List all sources used.	E.g. monthly, quarterly, annually. NB: For indicators without data collection to date, please indicate when data collection will take place.
Output 1: Marginalised girls and children with disabilities, and their parents/caregivers are provided support for beneficiaries, to attend and learn through PSS, to JSS and JSS to post JSS.		
Output 1.1: % of the GEC cohort receiving bursaries (disaggregate the data by gender, disability and type (severity), age (grade) and geographical location.) Definitions: 'GEC cohort '- girls and children with disability that were a part of the GEC 1 project (2013-2016)	Verification tool Bursary Distribution tool Bursaries Monitoring Form Study Group monitoring form - parents	Annually Annually (at point of distribution) Biannually (three months after distribution and at end of academic year) Quarterly
Output 1.2: % of parents and community members (disaggregate by male, female, geographical location) reporting increased awareness of girls' and children with disabilities' educational rights, right to protection and right to participate in life choices	Study Group monitoring form - parents Study Group monitoring form - PVs VSLA target household form KII – GEC beneficiaries – marginalised girls KII – GEC beneficiaries – children with disabilities KII – GATE-GEC parents KII – community leaders KII – teachers FGD – GATE-GEC cohort FGD - Community and SMC Members	Quarterly Quarterly Quarterly (following formation of VSLA groups) Quarterly Quarterly Biannually Biannually Biannually

	FGD - GEC Cohort Parents	Quarterly
	FGD – Teachers	Biannually
	HI event completion form	Biannually
		Biannually
		Monthly
Output 1.3: % 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.) Definitions: 'GEC cohort '- girls and children with disability that were a part of the GEC 1 project (2013-2016)	Verification tool	Annually
	Study Group monitoring form – beneficiaries	Quarterly
	Study Group monitoring form – parents	
	Study Group monitoring form – PVs	Quarterly
	Study Group Observation tool	Quarterly
	Score carding log	Quarterly
		Quarterly
	KII – GEC beneficiaries – marginalised girls	
	KII – GEC beneficiaries – children with disabilities	Quarterly
	KII – GATE-GEC parents	
	KII – community leaders	Quarterly
	KII – teachers	
		Biannually
	FGD – GATE-GEC cohort	Biannually
	FGD - Community and SMC Members	Biannually
	FGD - GEC Cohort Parents	
	FGD - Teachers	Quarterly
		Biannually
		Biannually
		Biannually
Output 1.4: % of targeted households of the GEC cohort actively engaged in livelihoods & saving in the VSLA (disaggregated by gender, age, geographical location) Definitions: ' 'Targeted households - the households selected based on pre-defined criteria of degree of marginalisation and need (TBC)	Verification tool	Annually
	VSLA target household form	Quarterly (after formation of VSLA groups)
	VSLA members' KII	Biannually (after formation of VSLA groups)
	VSLA members' FGD	Biannually (after formation of VSLA groups)
	Training attendance records	Annually (after formation of VSLA groups)
	Pre- and post-training assessments	Annually (after formation of VSLA groups)
	Passbook review	Quarterly (after formation of VSLA groups)
	Group attendance records	Quarterly (after formation of VSLA groups)
	Group meeting minutes	Quarterly (after formation of VSLA groups)

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 Definitions: 'Skilled:' provided support through teaching/learning materials, training and adapted learning infrastructure		
Output 2.1: # of PVs, LA (year 1) and STs (year 2 and 3) engaged in the GATE-GEC project	PV selection form LA registration form Study Group Observation tool Study Group monitoring form – PVs Study Group monitoring form – beneficiaries Pre- and post-training assessment for PVs Termly Learning Adviser report LA tutorial observation tool End of unit tutor questionnaire LA/ST self-assessment tool HI Teachers Profiling tool KII – PVs FGD - teachers	Annually Annually Quarterly Quarterly Quarterly Biannually Termly Quarterly Termly Monthly Biannually Biannually Biannually
Output 2.2: # of LAs passing the marked assignment	LA marked assignment results End of unit tutor questionnaire LA self-assessment tool	Annually Termly Monthly
Output 2.3: # of GEC beneficiaries reporting improved perceptions of PVs teaching skills and support in the classroom	Study Group monitoring form – beneficiaries Study Group monitoring form – parents Study Group observation tool KII – beneficiaries FGD – GATE-GEC cohort KII – parents FGD - parents	Quarterly Quarterly Quarterly Quarterly Quarterly Biannually Biannually

Output 2.4: # of GEC beneficiaries engaged in study group sessions (disaggregated by gender, disability, location)	Study Group monitoring form – beneficiaries Study Group monitoring form - PVs Study Group monitoring form – parents Study Group observation tool Review of Study Group registers KII – beneficiaries FGD – GATE-GEC cohort KII – parents FGD – parents KII – PVs FGD - teachers	Quarterly Quarterly Quarterly Quarterly Quarterly Quarterly Quarterly Biannually Biannually Biannually Biannually
Output 3: Marginalised girls and children with disabilities are supported to learn in a safe and inclusive learning environment		
Output 3.1: # of children, parents, SMC members, HTs and teachers involved in the score-carding process	Score-carding summary sheet Score-carding log SMC minutes review Study Group monitoring form – beneficiaries Study Group Monitoring form – parents Study Group monitoring form – PVs Review of Child Protection issues log KII – beneficiaries FGD – GATE-GEC cohort KII – parents FGD – parents KII – PVs FGD - teachers KII – community leaders FGD – community and SMC members	Annually Quarterly Quarterly Quarterly Quarterly Quarterly Quarterly Quarterly Quarterly Biannually Biannually Biannually Biannually Biannually
Output 3.2: # of initiatives implemented by head teachers/school committees in targeted JSS	Score carding summary sheet Score carding log	Annually Quarterly

schools to address specific need as a result of action plans during the score carding process (disaggregated by gender, disability and type (severity), age (grade) and geographical location.) Definitions: 'Targeted' - the 180 schools where score carding 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.	SMC minutes review Review of Child Protection issues log Study Group monitoring form – beneficiaries Study Group Monitoring form – parents Study Group monitoring form – PVs KII – beneficiaries FGD – GATE-GEC cohort KII – parents FGD – parents KII – PVs FGD - teachers KII – community leaders FGD – community and SMC members	Quarterly Quarterly Quarterly Quarterly Quarterly Quarterly Biannually Biannually Biannually Biannually Biannually
Output 3.3: # 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.)	Score carding summary sheet Score carding log SMC minutes review Review of Child Protection issues log Child Protection referral records KII – beneficiaries FGD – GATE-GEC cohort KII – parents FGD – parents KII – PVs FGD - teachers KII – community leaders FGD – community and SMC members	Annually Quarterly Quarterly Quarterly Biannually Quarterly Quarterly Biannually Biannually Biannually Biannually Biannually Biannually
Output 4: Programme evidence and learning is shared with key educational decision makers and actors to influence the Sierra Leonean Education sector		
Output 4.1: # (and level) of MEST officials engaged with the GATE-GEC project (disaggregated by gender, geographical location)	Stakeholder engagement tool Consortium monitoring log Steering committee minutes	As required Biannually Quarterly

Definitions: 'Engagement' - involved in meetings, requests for information, acknowledge shared learning, using evidence in decision making meetings,	Meeting minutes review Joint monitoring reports KII with MEST officials – national level KII with MEST officials – district level	Biannually Tbc Biannually Biannually
Output 4.2: # 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) 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	Stakeholder engagement tool Consortium monitoring log Steering committee minutes Meeting minutes review Review of presentations/outputs from events Review of correspondence linked to events KII with MEST officials – national level KII with MEST officials – district level	As required Biannually Quarterly Biannually Biannually Biannually Biannually Biannually
Output 4.3: # 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 (disaggregated by gender, geographical location)	Stakeholder engagement tool Consortium monitoring log Steering committee minutes Meeting minutes review Review of presentations/outputs from events Review of correspondence linked to events KII with MEST officials – national level KII with MEST officials – district level	As required Biannually Quarterly Biannually Biannually Biannually Biannually Biannually

Report on the Baseline values/Baseline status of each Output Indicator in the table below. Reflect on the relevancy of the Output Indicator for your Intermediate Outcomes and Outcomes and the wider Theory of Change based on the data collected so far. Are the indicators measuring the right things? What do the Baseline values/Baseline status mean for the implementation of your activities?

Table 67: Baseline status of output indicators

Logframe Output Indicator	Baseline status/Baseline values Relevance of the indicator for the project ToC	Baseline status/Baseline values
Number and Indicator wording	What is the contribution of this indicator for the project ToC, IOs, and Outcomes? What does the Baseline value/status mean for your activities? Is the indicator measuring the right things? Should a revision be considered? Provide short narrative.	What is the Baseline value/status of this indicator? Provide short narrative.
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.		
Output 1.1: % of the GEC cohort receiving bursaries (disaggregate the data by gender, disability and type (severity), age (grade) and geographical location.)	This indicator contributes to Intermediate Outcome 1 – attendance – as 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 that their distribution and usage is monitored. Timely distribution at the start of the academic year is also important. No revision is proposed to this output indicator.	Bursaries have not yet been distributed due to the suspension of project activities. Qualitative and quantitative baseline findings agreed that families face major challenges in their abilities to pay direct education expenses, thus supporting the validity of focus of the project.
Output 1.2: % 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	This indicator contributes to Intermediate Outcome 1 (attendance) and Intermediate Outcome 3 (greater self-esteem and confidence), as beneficiaries living in supportive environments are more likely to attend school, achieve in school and have the confidence and agency to progress into successful transition pathways. This indicator is relevant to all three core outcomes – learning, transition and sustainability – as improved community attitudes to the rights of girls and children with disabilities will lead to sustained improvements in learning outcomes and transition pathways. No revision is proposed to this output indicator.	94.12% of parents/caregivers interviewed for the baseline either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: 'Even when funds are limited it is worth investing in my child's education'. However, one of the most commonly accepted justifications for children not to attend school was that of physical and/or learning needs at 42%. Almost 40% of parents/caregivers also considered marriage to be an acceptable reason for a child not to attend school. Due to the project being on hold, parents have not been engaged and the relevant monitoring tools have not been administered to respond to this output.
Output 1.3: % 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.)	This indicator links directly to 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, supporting them to achieve improved learning outcomes and transition pathways. No revision is proposed to this output indicator.	According to both qualitative and quantitative baseline data, GATE-GEC beneficiaries tended towards reasonably good confidence and self-esteem. The data show that most respondents in treatment and control groups (76% of students 12 years old and above, 70% of students under 12) are in the medium-high bracket of self-esteem.
Output 1.4: % of targeted households of the GEC cohort actively engaged in livelihoods & saving in the VSLA (disaggregated by gender, age, geographical location)	This indicator contributes to Intermediate Outcome 1 (attendance), as it is important that financial support is provided to beneficiaries' families in the form of VSLAs as bursaries are phased out 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. The Baseline notes that the VSLA component of the project had not begun as of the baseline but may be used to enable families to cover education-related costs in a more sustainable way than through the disbursement of bursaries. No revision is proposed to this output indicator.	Only 14% of the parents/caregivers of JSS beneficiaries and 10% of parents/caregivers of primary beneficiaries reported being able to cover all their child's education-related costs last year. 26% of beneficiary households reported having VSLA accounts at baseline, while 25% of households without a VSLA account reported currently saving for education to some degree. VSLAs have not yet been rolled out so monitoring has not taken place.

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 2.1: # of PVs, LAs (year 1) and STs (year 2 and 3) engaged in the GATE-GEC project	This indicator contributes to Intermediate Outcome 2 – effective inclusive education teaching skills. Under the theory of change, more effective teaching will enable 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. 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. No revision is proposed to this output indicator.	1,202 PVs at JSS level and 250 LAs have been selected to participate in the project. The majority of JSS PVs have been trained. Due to the project's suspension, the selection of PVs at primary level has not yet taken place. The Learning Assistant component is also on hold.
Output 2.2: # of LAs passing the marked assignment	This indicator contributes to Intermediate Outcome 2 – effective inclusive education teaching skills. Under the theory of change, more effective teaching will enable 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. No revision is proposed to this output indicator.	The Learning Assistant component has been put on hold due to the suspension of activities. Tuition for the Learning Assistants will commence once the project approval is secured.
Output 2.3: # of GEC beneficiaries reporting improved perceptions of PVs teaching skills and support in the classroom	This indicator contributes to Intermediate Outcome 2 – effective inclusive education teaching skills. Under the theory of change, more effective teaching will enable 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. 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. No revision is proposed to this output indicator.	95% of GEC beneficiaries interviewed during the baseline said that their teachers encouraged them to participate in lessons either often or sometimes.
Output 2.4: # of GEC beneficiaries engaged in study group sessions (disaggregated by gender, disability, location)	This indicator contributes to Intermediate Outcome 1 – attendance – and Intermediate Outcome 3 – greater self-esteem and confidence. Support provided to the beneficiaries through the study groups will contribute to the core outcomes of improved learning and transition. The Baseline also indicates that this indicator will contribute to the core outcome of sustainability as the study group approach is endorsed by the finding that some schools, are already running study groups independently of GATE-GEC support. No revision is proposed to this output indicator.	Based on project monitoring data collected by the time of baseline submission, the average number of beneficiaries attending Study Groups (based on 73 Study Group observations) is 11. Study group monitoring including average attendance will recommence once the suspension of activities is lifted.
Output 3: Marginalised girls and children with disabilities are supported to learn in a safe and inclusive learning environment		
Output 3.1: # of children, parents, SMC members, HTs and teachers involved in the Score carding process	This indicator contributes to Intermediate Outcome 3 – greater self-esteem and confidence. The Score carding process is an accountability mechanism that gives beneficiaries the opportunity to express their feelings about the schools in a safe and secure way. This should in turn increase their self-esteem and confidence as they will feel their voice is being listened to and they can seek redress whenever there are safety concerns. The EE recommends including Boards of Governors and Community Teacher Associations in the Score carding process. This output will be revised to include these groups.	Due to the suspension of project activities, the Score carding process has not been fully rolled out in the schools.
Output 3.2: # of initiatives implemented by head teachers/school committees in targeted JSS	This indicator contributes to Intermediate Outcome 3 – greater self-esteem and confidence – as it measures the extent to which the voices of the beneficiaries are able to evoke change, enabling the beneficiaries to learn in a safe and inclusive learning environment. Under the Theory of Change, this in turn will lead to improved learning	0

schools to address specific need as a result of action plans during the Score carding process (disaggregated by gender, disability and type (severity), age (grade) and geographical location.)	outcomes and successful transition. No revision is proposed to this output indicator.	
Output 3.3: # 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.)	This indicator relates to Intermediate Outcome 1 (attendance), Intermediate Outcome 2 (effective inclusive education teaching skills) and Intermediate Outcome 3 (greater self-esteem and confidence). Not feeling safe in school will impact on children's attendance, confidence and ability to learn, as shown in the Baseline learning assessment results. No revision is proposed to this output indicator.	No child protection incidents were reported at the time of the baseline. However, 82% of beneficiaries interviewed reported receiving physical punishment either every day or once or twice in the past week, and corporal punishment was found to be a common practice but not considered to be a form of abuse. Furthermore, not feeling safe at school had the most detrimental impact on learning assessment scores amongst GEC beneficiaries of any of the key barriers identified.
Output 4: Programme evidence and learning is shared with key educational decision makers and actors to influence the Sierra Leonean Education sector		
Output 4.1: # (and level) of MEST officials engaged with the GATE-GEC project (disaggregated by gender, geographical location)	This indicator contributes to 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. To see sustained learning post-GEC will require working hand-in-hand with 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. Engagement with MEST has been ongoing throughout the approval and start-up phase and has included meetings to agree budgets and workplans moving forward. These have taken place at central level. The EE recommends editing Intermediate Outcome 5 to ensure it is consistent by incorporating work with Boards of Governors, School Management Committees and Community Teachers Associations, to strengthen community participation in governance and management of schools. The project feels this recommedation aligns more closely with Intermediate Outcome 3 which relates to school governance systems, including Score carding. This recommendation will be incorporated into the wording of Intermediate Outcome 3.	Monitoring of MEST engagement has not yet commenced as formal approval is pending.
Output 4.2: # of education events consortium partners 'actively' participate in to share evidence and learning from the GATE-GEC project with key	This indicator contributes to Intermediate Outcome 5 - increased engagement with MEST officials and other education actors - and the ability of the project to influence with and on behalf of marginalised girls and children with disabilities in Sierra Leone. The EE recommends that under Intermediate Outcome 5 the project should include a separate outcome and indicator related to increased engagement with key educational actors to support education provision for girls and children with disabilities on a national level.	The EE recommends that GATE-GEC should seek to deepen collaboration with GATE UNICEF at both central and district level. This would allow both projects to share their activities to reduce overlap and prevent duplication of efforts as well as identify and act on potential synergies.

educational stakeholders	The project seeks further clarity on this recommendation. As it stands, the project logframe has IO indicator 5.2: # of education events consortium partners 'actively' participate in to share evidence and learning from the GATE-GEC project with key educational stakeholders and we feel this is appropriate as it outlines what engagement looks like with these actors. It also allows for clearer attribution and contribution. Minutes and attendance records will be captured, and relevant actions agreed will be shared as part of the stakeholder engagement tool.	
Output 4.3: # 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 (disaggregated by gender, geographical location)	This indicator contributes to Intermediate Outcome 5 - increased engagement with MEST officials and other education actors The EE recommends that under Intermediate Outcome 5 the project should include a separate outcome and indicator related to increased engagement with key educational actors to support education provision for girls and children with disabilities on a national level. The project seeks further clarity on this recommendation. As it stands, the project logframe has IO indicator 5.2: # of education events consortium partners 'actively' participate in to share evidence and learning from the GATE-GEC project with key educational stakeholders and we feel this is appropriate as it outlines what engagement looks like with these actors. It also allows for clearer attribution and contribution. Minutes and attendance records will be captured, and relevant actions agreed will be shared as part of the stakeholder engagement tool.	Full engagement with MEST has not yet commenced as project approval is pending.

List all issues with the means of verification/sources or the frequency of data collection which require changes or additions.

Table 68: Output indicator issues

Logframe Output Indicator	Issues with the means of verification/sources and the collection frequency, or the indicator in general?	Changes/additions
Number and Indicator wording	E.g. inappropriate wording, irrelevant sources, or wrong assumptions etc. Was data collection too frequent or too far between? Or no issues?	E.g. change wording, add or remove sources, increase/decrease frequency of data collection; or leave as is.
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.		
Output 1.1: % of the GEC cohort receiving bursaries (disaggregate the data by gender, disability and type (severity), age (grade) and geographical location.)	No issues have been identified	Leave as is. All output indicators will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure they remain relevant.
Output 1.2: % 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	No issues have been identified	Leave as is. All output indicators will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure they remain relevant.
Output 1.3: % 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.)	No issues have been identified	Leave as is. All output indicators will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure they remain relevant.
Output 1.4: % of targeted households of the GEC cohort actively engaged in livelihoods & saving in the VSLA (disaggregated by gender, age, geographical location)	No issues have been identified	Leave as is. All output indicators will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure they remain relevant.
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 2.1: # of PVs, LAs (year 1) and STs (year 2 and 3) engaged in the GATE-GEC project	No issues have been identified	Leave as is. All output indicators will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure they remain relevant.
Output 2.2: # of LAs passing the marked assignment	No issues have been identified	Leave as is. All output indicators will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure they remain relevant.

Output 2.3: # of GEC beneficiaries reporting improved perceptions of PVs teaching skills and support in the classroom	No issues have been identified	Leave as is. All output indicators will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure they remain relevant.
Output 2.4: # of GEC beneficiaries engaged in study group sessions (disaggregated by gender, disability, location)	No issues have been identified	Leave as is. All output indicators will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure they remain relevant.
Output 3: Marginalised girls and children with disabilities are supported to learn in a safe and inclusive learning environment		
Output 3.1: # of children, parents, SMC members, HTs and teachers involved in the Score carding process	The EE recommends including Boards of Governors and Community Teacher Associations in the Score carding process.	The Boards of Governors and Community Teacher Associations at JSS level will be involved at school level in the Score carding process. We will revise the output to capture these groups also.
Output 3.2: # of initiatives implemented by head teachers/school committees in targeted JSS schools to address specific need as a result of action plans during the Score carding process (disaggregated by gender, disability and type (severity), age (grade) and geographical location.)	No issues have been identified	Leave as is. All output indicators will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure they remain relevant.
Output 3.3: # 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.)	No issues have been identified	Leave as is. All output indicators will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure they remain relevant.
Output 4: Programme evidence and learning is shared with key educational decision makers and actors to influence the Sierra Leonean Education sector		
Output 4.1: # (and level) of MEST officials engaged with the GATE-GEC project (disaggregated by gender, geographical location)	This indicator contributes to Intermediate Outcome 5 - increased engagement with MEST officials and other education actors. This remains relevant.	Leave as is. All output indicators will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure they remain relevant.
Output 4.2: # of education events consortium partners 'actively' participate in to share	The EE recommends that under Intermediate Outcome 5 the project should include a separate outcome and indicator related to increased engagement with key educational actors	

evidence and learning from the GATE-GEC project with key educational stakeholders	to support education provision for girls and children with disabilities on a national level. The evaluators recommend more nuanced indicators of engagement, such as direct GATE-GEC/MEST meetings, the presence of agenda items in meetings or events related to GATE-GEC or on policy matters related to GATE-GEC's advocacy aims, or direct advocacy activities undertaken from GATE-GEC to MEST.	Evaluator note: Additional clarity on this recommended change has been provided in response to project request
Output 4.3: # 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 (disaggregated by gender, geographical location)	The EE recommends that under Intermediate Outcome 5 the project should include a separate outcome and indicator related to increased engagement with key educational actors to support education provision for girls and children with disabilities on a national level. The evaluators recommend more nuanced indicators of engagement, such as direct GATE-GEC/MEST meetings, the presence of agenda items in meetings or events related to GATE-GEC or on policy matters related to GATE-GEC's advocacy aims, or direct advocacy activities undertaken from GATE-GEC to MEST.	Evaluator note: Additional clarity on this recommended change has been provided in response to project request

Annex 4: Beneficiary tables

Completed by the project.

Table 69: Direct beneficiaries

Beneficiary type	Total project number	Total number of girls targeted for learning outcomes that the project has reached by Endline	Comments
Direct learning beneficiaries (all) – girls in the intervention group who are specifically expected to achieve learning outcomes in line with targets. If relevant, please disaggregate girls with disabilities in this overall number.	A total of 6585 GATE-GEC beneficiaries have been verified. Of the verified GATE-GEC beneficiaries, 4969 are marginalised girls and 1616 were identified as children with disabilities under GEC 1. Boys are another sub-group within the cohort of children with disabilities. Of the 1616 children with disabilities, 784 are girls and 832 are boys.	The entire GATE-GEC cohort (6585 beneficiaries) will be targeted for improved learning outcomes by endline. However, transition rates and natural attrition mean that the cohort will be smaller at endline.	The GATE-GEC verification process involved a detailed survey conducted with each beneficiary and their parent/caregiver. Data collection was tablet-based using the KoboCollect platform. Several means of verification were used to provide assurance that beneficiaries were previous members of the GEC 1 cohort, including consultation with Head Teachers and SMC members. The verification process extended beyond the Baseline data collection process as there was a delay in the publication of BECE results (Junior Secondary leaving exams), so a number of beneficiaries did not know whether they had successfully transitioned to Senior Secondary School until early 2018. As a result, the total cohort is larger than at the time of baseline data collection and analysis.

Table 70: Other beneficiaries

Beneficiary type	Number	Comments
Learning beneficiaries (boys) – as above, but specifically counting boys who will get the same exposure and therefore be expected to also achieve learning gains, if applicable.	The GATE-GEC cohort includes 832 boys, all of whom were identified as children with disabilities under GEC 1.	
Broader student beneficiaries (boys) – boys who will benefit from the interventions in a less direct way, and therefore may benefit from aspects such as attitudinal change, etc. but not necessarily achieve improvements in learning outcomes.	58,157 (based on boys' enrolment in GATE-GEC schools as reported by Head Teachers). This is the total number of boys enrolled in GATE-GEC schools as reported by Head Teachers who may indirectly benefit from interventions including inclusive teacher training provided to GATE-GEC PVs, the presence of female role models (LAs), the impact of Score carding on child protection and accountability mechanisms, and school adaptations in the case of model schools. This figure excludes the boys in the GATE-GEC cohort.	The GATE-GEC verification process involved collecting data on all schools in which GATE-GEC beneficiaries are enrolled. There are a total of 436 GATE-GEC schools. In each verified school, the Head Teacher was asked to provide enrolment figures for girls and boys. However in many cases this was a very rough estimate and so the total figure should not be taken at face value. In addition, while some of the non GATE-GEC boys in GATE-GEC schools may indirectly benefit from GATE-GEC interventions, it is extremely difficult to provide conclusive evidence that children who are not directly targeted by specific interventions will have benefited in any way. Nevertheless, for the midline we will endeavour to provide more accurate forms of measurement for indirect beneficiaries.
Broader student beneficiaries (girls) – girls who will benefit from the interventions in a less direct way, and therefore may benefit from aspects such as attitudinal change, etc. but not necessarily achieve improvements in learning outcomes.	57,019 (based on girls' enroment in GATE-GEC schools as reported by Head Teachers). This is the total number of girls enrolled in GATE-GEC schools as reported by Head Teachers who may indirectly benefit from interventions including inclusive teacher training provided to GATE-GEC PVs, the presence of female role models (LAs), the impact of Score carding on child protection and accountability mechanisms, and school adaptations in the case of model schools. This figure excludes the girls in the GATE-GEC cohort.	The GATE-GEC verification process involved collecting data on all schools in which GATE-GEC beneficiaries are enrolled. There are a total of 436 GATE-GEC schools. In each verified school, the Head Teacher was asked to provide enrolment figures for girls and boys. However in many cases this was a very rough estimate and so the total figure should not be taken at face value. In addition, while some of the non GATE-GEC girls in GATE-GEC schools may indirectly benefit from GATE-GEC interventions, it is extremely difficult to provide conclusive evidence that children who are not directly targeted by specific interventions will have benefited in any way. Nevertheless, for the midline we will endeavour to provide more accurate forms of measurement for indirect beneficiaries.
Teacher beneficiaries – number of teachers who benefit from training or related interventions. If possible /applicable, please disaggregate by gender and type of training, with the comments box used to describe the type of training provided.	An estimated total of 2,384 teachers will benefit from training or related interventions. This figure comprises 1,202 Programme Volunteers in Junior Secondary Schools who have been selected and have received training. PVs in primary schools have not yet been trained.	

	However each primary school will have 2 trained PVs and there are 248 GATE-GEC primary schools, meaning that a further 496 PVs will receive training this year. In addition, Head Teachers in each of the 436 GATE-GEC school will receive support and training, and 250 Learning Assistants have now been selected for tuition and in-school experience.	
Broader community beneficiaries (adults) – adults who benefit from broader interventions, such as community messaging /dialogues, community advocacy, economic empowerment interventions, etc.	An estimated total of 6,722 community members will benefit from broader interventions, specifically VSLA membership and training and support as part of school management committees. This comprises an estimated 2,625 VSLA members and 4,097 SMC members. Currently under GATE-GEC it is proposed that a total of 150 VSLA groups will be formed and their members provided with support and training in personal financial management. Each VSLA will have between 15 and 20 members. Taking an average of 17.5 members we can therefore estimate that a total of 2,625 community members will benefit from membership in VSLAs during the project. During the school verification process Head Teachers were asked to provide the number of SMC members in their school. According to this data, there are a total of 4,097 SMC members operating across the 436 GATE-GEC schools (an average of 9.4).	Communities in Sierra Leone are fluid and mobile, making it difficult to calculate absolute numbers within a community. While GATE-GEC involves an element of community sensitisation, including awareness raising sessions run by Handicap International Community Based Rehabilitation Volunteers, it is not a formal component of the project. While it is currently proposed that 150 VSLA groups will be formed during the project, there is scope for the number of groups to increase to support the financial empowerment of a higher proportion of GATE-GEC households.

- Tables 3-6 provide different ways of defining and identifying the project's target groups. They each refer to the same total number of girls, but use different definitions and categories. These are girls who can be counted and have regular involvement with project activities.
- The total number of sampled girls in the last row of Tables 3-6 should be the same – these are just different ways of identifying and describing the girls included in the sample.

Table 71: Target groups - by school

School Age	Project definition of target group (Tick where appropriate)	Number targeted through project interventions	Sample size of target group at Baseline
Lower primary	✓ (P1-3)	582	253
Upper primary	✓ (P4-6)	735	
Lower secondary	✓ (JSS1-3)	5268	633
Upper secondary	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total:		6,585	886

Table 72: Target groups - by age

Age Groups	Project definition of target group (Tick where appropriate)	Number targeted through project interventions	Sample size of target group at Baseline
Aged 5 (% aged 5)	✓	7 (0.11%)	1
Aged 6-8 (% aged 6-8)	✓	234 (3.55%)	36
Aged 9-11 (% aged 9-11)	✓	581 (8.82%)	126
Aged 12-13 (% aged 12-13)	✓	1063 (16.14%)	171
Aged 14-15 (% aged 14-15)	✓	2597 (39.44%)	348
Aged 16-17 (%aged 16-17)	✓	1750 (26.58%)	171
Aged 18-19 (%aged 18-19)	✓	323 (4.91%)	31
Aged 20+ (% aged 20 and over)	✓	22 (0.33%)	2
No age given (%)	✓	8 (0.12%)	0
Total:		100%	886

Table 73: Target groups - by sub group

Social Groups (please note the GATE-GEC target groups are broken by marginalised girls and Children with disabilities)	Project definition of target group (Tick where appropriate)	Number targeted through project interventions	Sample size of target group at Baseline
Beneficiaries with disabilities (please disaggregate by disability type)	✓	1616 (784 female, 832 male) This is the total number of beneficiaries identified as a child with disability under GEC 1, as recorded in the reverification data. Each beneficiary was also asked the Washington Group Short Set questions to ascertain what type of impairment they have, but this should be treated as an initial screening process and does not give definitive data on type of disability. This will be ascertained during the follow-up medical assessment.	45
Beneficiaries living in female-headed households	✓	2096	*316*
Beneficiaries living in single-headed households (widowed or separated parent/caregiver)	✓	1540	14
Orphaned girls		This was not identified as a project target group however we intend to include this sub-group in the next reverification process for year 2.	11
Pastoralist girls			
Child labourers			
Poor beneficiaries (including marginalised girls and CWDs which are both male and female)	✓	6585 (5753 girls and 832 boys) We would contend that all GATE-GEC beneficiaries are from low-income and marginalised backgrounds, recognising that GATE-GEC beneficiaries have had the advantage of 3-4 years of GEC support under the previous phase.	886
Other (please describe)			
Total:		This would involve double- counting	This would involve double-counting

Table 74: Target groups - by school status

Educational sub-groups	Project definition of target group (Tick where appropriate)	Number targeted through project interventions	Sample size of target group at Baseline
Out-of-school girls: have never attended school		0 All GATE-GEC reverified beneficiaries were in school at the point of reverification. Only reverified beneficiaries will be targeted through project interventions.	0
Out-of-school girls: have attended school, but dropped out		0 During the reverification exercise, a very small group of girls presented at schools to be reverified, having been part of the GEC 1 cohort. However during the process of reverification it emerged that these 6 girls had dropped out for a variety of reasons including pregnancy, work and the death of a parent. Unless these girls return to school in a future academic year to be reverified they will not be targeted through project interventions.	0
Girls in-school	✓	6585 beneficiaries, comprising 5753 girls and 832 boys.	886 (all girls)
Total:		6585	886

Annex 5: MEL Framework

GATE GEC MEL Framework (approved

Annex 6: External Evaluator’s Inception Report

Inception Report V5.pdf

Annex 7: Data collection tools used for Baseline

The following data collection tools were used for the baseline:

School Data Sheet

GEC-T School Data Sheet-SL.xlsx

Classroom Observation Tool

GEC-T Classroom Observation-SL.xlsx

Household Survey

GEC-T HH survey-SL.xlsx

Student School Survey

GEC-T Student School Survey-SL.xlsx

Qualitative Questions (KIIs and FGDs)

GEC-T Qualitative Questions.DOCX

Learning Assessment

EGMA

Plan GEC EGMA - Primary v1Final.docx

EGMA (for persons with disabilities)

Plan GEC EGMA - Primary v1Final-vDisa

EGRA

Plan GEC EGRA - Primary v1Final.docx

EGRA (for persons with disabilities)

Plan GEC EGRA - Primary v1FinalDisabi

SeGRA

Plan GEC Full SeGRA - JSS v1Final.docx

SeGMA

Plan GEC Full SeGMA - JSS v1Final.docx

Annex 8: Datasets, codebooks and programmes

School Data Sheet


GEC_School_Data_SheetSL_data.csv


GEC_School_Data_SheetSL_data.sav

Student School Survey


GEC_Students_School_Survey_data.csv


GEC_Students_School_Survey_data.sav

Classroom Observation


GEC_Classroom_Observation_data.csv


GEC_Classroom_Observation_data.sav

Learning Assessment


Data Book Learning Assessments-1.xlsx


Data Book Learning Assessments-2.xlsx


Data Book Learning Assessments-3.xlsx


Data Book Learning Assessments-4.xlsx


Data Book Learning Assessments-5.xlsx


Data Book Learning Assessments-6.xlsx

Codebooks


schoolcodebook.xls


studenthhcodebook.xls

Combined Analytical Datasets


anonymized_student_data.dta


anonymized_student_data.csv

Annex 9: Learning test pilot and calibration

As discussed in Sections 2 and 4, above, two versions of a primary-level reading assessment (EGRA), two versions of a primary-level maths assessment (EGMA), two versions of a JSS level reading assessment (SEGRA), and two versions of a JSS level maths assessment (SeGMA) were designed.

The tests were designed on the basis of the guidance provided by GEC and EGRA/EGMA international guidance and standards,[49] tailored specifically for the Sierra Leone context using the MEST Primary and Secondary Lesson Plans, provided by Plan Sierra Leone to the research team prior to tool design, and resources provided by project partner Leh Wi Learn. Iterative feedback rounds were solicited from Plan UK and Sierra Leone staff, Primary and Secondary School teachers in project areas and the fund manager education specialist.

The tests were structured around subtasks that were calibrated to be more difficult and test higher orders of learning, while being appropriately cognisant of the specific challenge to educational attainment in Sierra Leone and avoid both floor and ceiling effects in the cohorts under study at both baseline and mid/endline. The competencies to be tested via the EGMA/SeGMA were as follows:

Test Areas

The competencies to be tested were as follows:

Component	Test	Component	Test
1. Number identification	EGMA	1. Letter Sound Identification	EGRA
2. Quantity discrimination	EGMA	2. Familiar Word Recognition	EGRA/SeGRA
3. Number patterns (missing numbers)	EGMA	3. Invented Word Recognition	EGRA/SeGRA
4. Addition	EGMA/SeGMA	4. Assessment of Reading Comprehension	EGRA/SeGRA
5. Subtraction	EGMA/SeGMA	5. Advanced Reading Comprehension 1	SeGRA Subtask 1
6. Word problems	EGMA/SeGMA	6. Advanced Reading Comprehension 2	SeGRA Subtask 2 (Mid/Endline)
7. Advanced multiplication & division	SeGMA (Subtask 1)	7. Assessment of Writing – short essay construction	SeGRA Subtask 3 (Mid/Endline)
8. Proportions (fractions/ percentages)	SeGMA (Subtask 1)		
9. Space and shape (geometry)	SeGMA (Subtask 1)		
10. Measurement (distance, length, area, capacity, money)	SeGMA (Subtask 1)		
11. Algebra questions	SeGMA (Subtask 2) (Mid/Endline)		
12. Data interpretation and sophisticated word problems, solved using complex, multiple operations including algebra	SeGMA (Subtask 2) (Mid/Endline)		

On approval of the test formats by the fund manager, 80 students (40 each primary and JSS) completed both versions of the test to ensure they were of an appropriate level of difficulty. The tests were piloted in four communities in four different districts (Port Loko, Moyamba, Kenema and Karene), and the responses tabulated. This facilitated adjustment to the tools to reflect de-facto educational levels amongst respondents and also permitted a practical field-test of data entry, collation, and initial analysis procedures to help ensure smooth full-scale data collection.

[49] EGRA and EGMA toolkits, see:
https://shared.rti.org/content/early-grade-reading-assessment-egra-toolkit-second-edition
https://ierc-publicfiles.s3.amazonaws.com/public/resources/EGMA%20Toolkit_March2014.pdf

Only one subtask proved to be too difficult for students during instrument trials and was modified. One version was used for the baseline, and another was saved for future assessments. Initial test results (and final baseline results) confirm that all versions were of the appropriate level, with high inter-test comparability of results and most test results located in the appropriate ranges (better performance in the earlier/easier tests, poorer performance in the later/more difficult tests). Any minor differences in test results between versions were saved to improve comparability. The survey instruments were based on those provided by the project. No substantive modifications were made.

Finally, with the assistance of implementing partner HI, the approved final assessments were tailored for children with disabilities. Changes made to facilitate the completion of the tests were:

Extended duration of time-bound tests, and

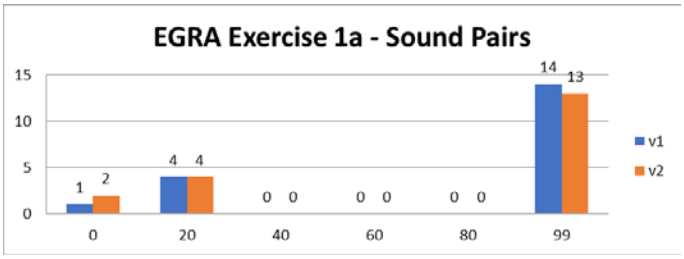
Larger font sizes and clearer instructions to both students and enumerators.

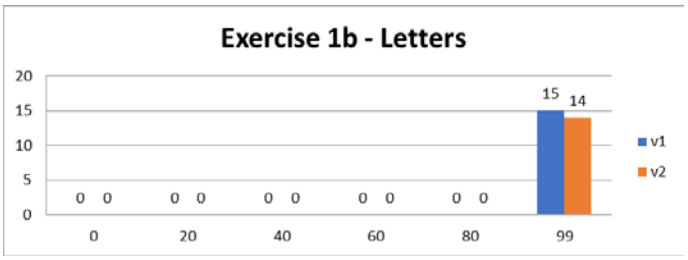
Further, HI staff provided training to the enumerators on appropriate ways to interact and assess children with various disabilities.

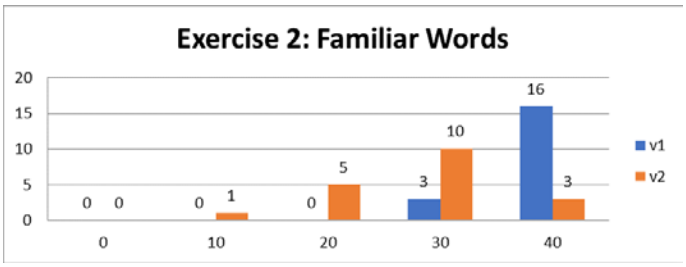
The charts of results, below. note the results (number of correct answers) of the specific subtasks for each test and version of the test.

On the basis of these results, and in particular the absence of ceiling effects in the more advanced subtasks (whereby results are skewed towards maximum scores), these assessments should be reapplied without change at mid/endline.

EGRA


EGRA Exercise 1a - Sound Pairs
15
10
5
0
1 2
4 4
0 0
0 0
0 0
14 13
0
20
40
60
80
99
v1
v2


Exercise 1b - Letters
20
15
10
5
0
0 0
0 0
0 0
0 0
0 0
15 14
0
20
40
60
80
99
v1
v2


Exercise 2: Familiar Words
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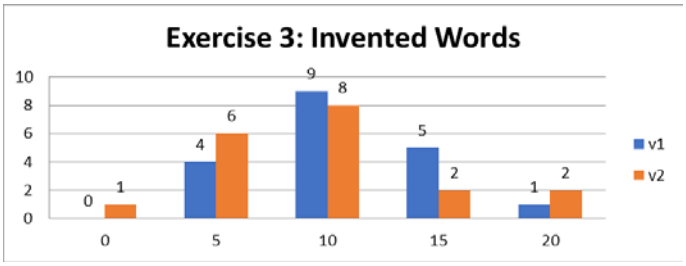
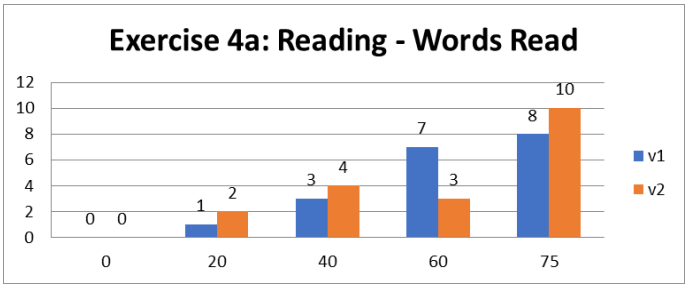
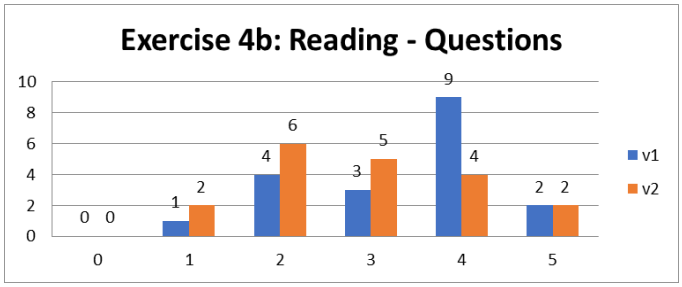
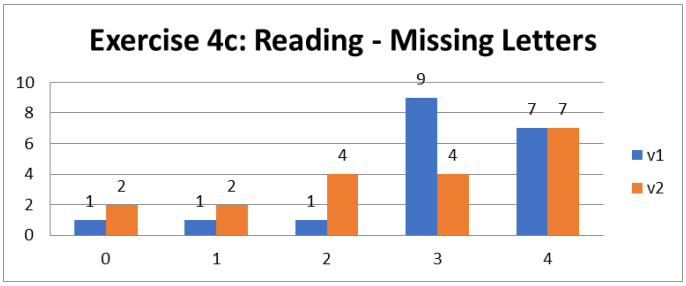
15
10
5
0
0 0
0 1
0 5
3 10
16 3
0
10
20
30
40
v1
v2

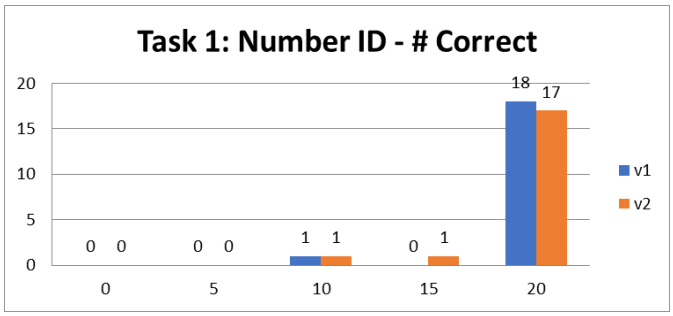

Exercise 3: Invented Words
10
8
6
4
2
0
0 1
4 6
9 8
5 2
1 2
0
5
10
15
20
v1
v2


Exercise 4a: Reading - Words Read
12
10
8
6
4
2
0
0 0
1 2
3 4
7 3
8 10
0
20
40
60
75
v1
v2


Exercise 4b: Reading - Questions
10
8
6
4
2
0
0 0
1 2
4 6
3 5
9 4
2 2
0
1
2
3
4
5
v1
v2


Exercise 4c: Reading - Missing Letters
10
8
6
4
2
0
1 2
1 2
1 4
9 4
7 7
0
1
2
3
4
v1
v2

EGMA


Task 1: Number ID - # Correct
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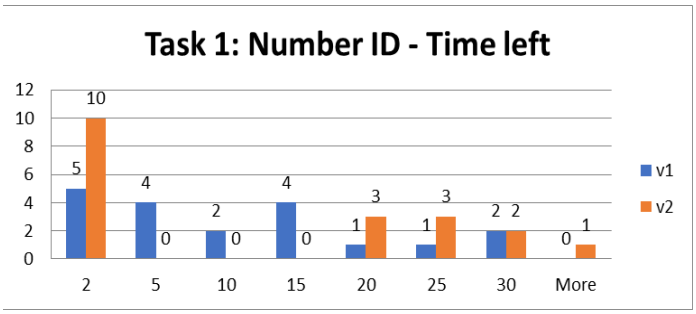
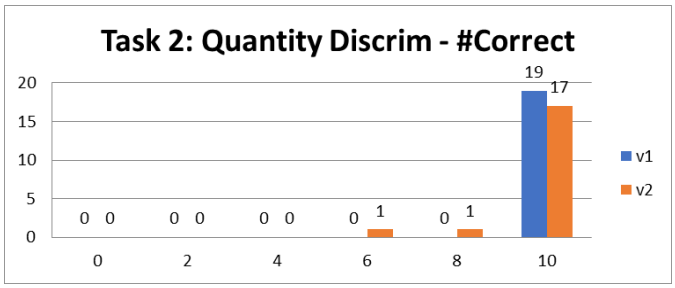
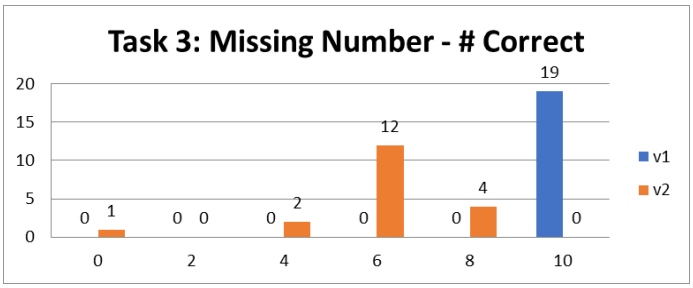
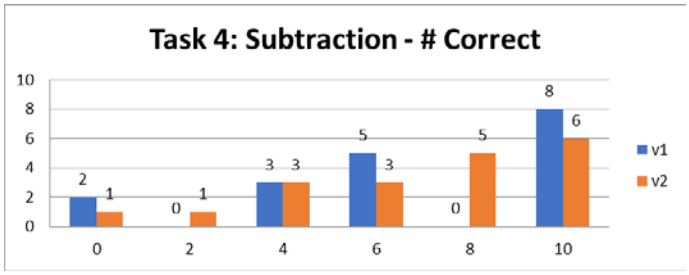
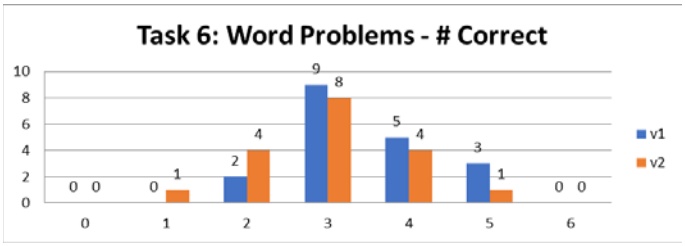
15
10
5
0
0 0
0 0
1 1
0 1
18 17
0
5
10
15
20
v1
v2


Task 1: Number ID - Time left
12
10
8
6
4
2
0
5 10
4 0
2 0
4 0
1 3
1 3
2 2
0 1
2
5
10
15
20
25
30
More
v1
v2

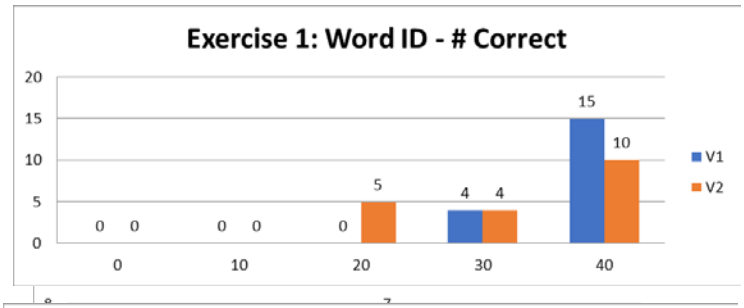

Task 2: Quantity Discrim - #Correct
20
15
10
5
0
0 0
0 0
0 0
0 1
0 1
19 17
0
2
4
6
8
10
v1
v2

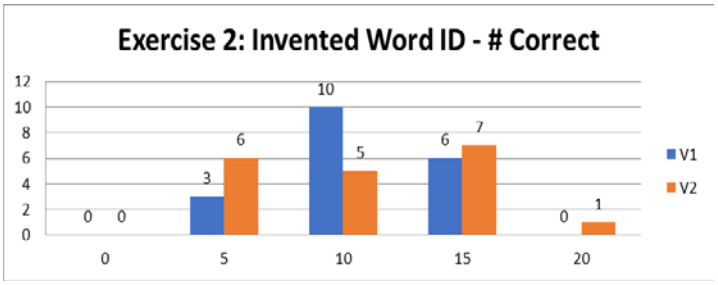

Task 3: Missing Number - # Correct
20
15
10
5
0
0 1
0 0
0 2
0 12
0 4
19 0
0
2
4
6
8
10
v1
v2

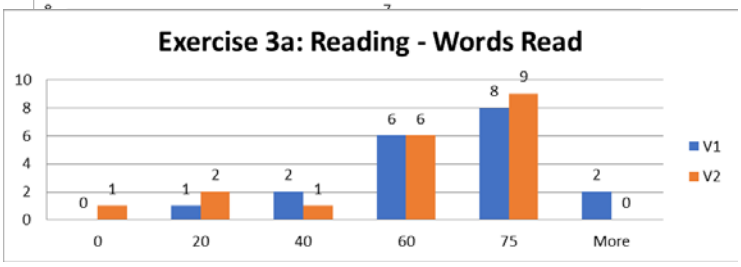

Task 4: Subtraction - # Correct
10
8
6
4
2
0
2 1
0 1
3 3
5 3
0 5
8 6
0
2
4
6
8
10
v1
v2

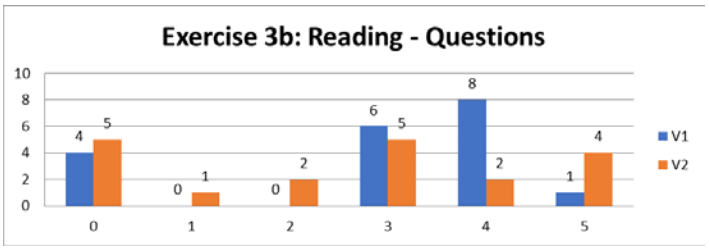

Task 6: Word Problems - # Correct
10
8
6
4
2
0
0 0
0 1
2 4
9 8
5 4
3 1
0 0
0
1
2
3
4
5
6
v1
v2

SeGRA

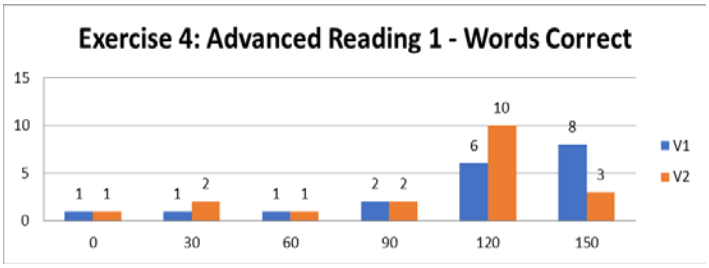

Exercise 1: Word ID - # Correct
V1
V2

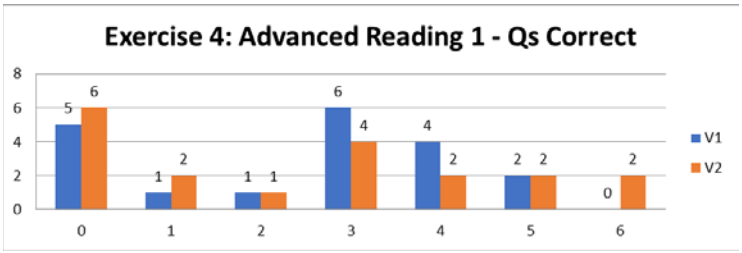

Exercise 2: Invented Word ID - # Correct
V1
V2

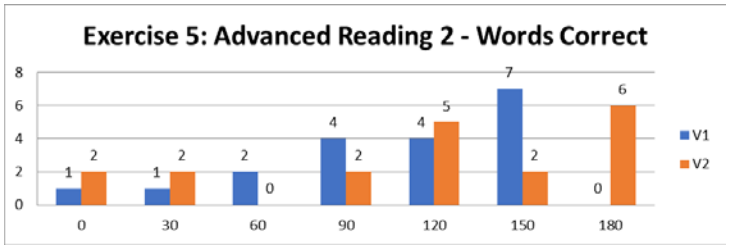

Exercise 3a: Reading - Words Read
V1
V2

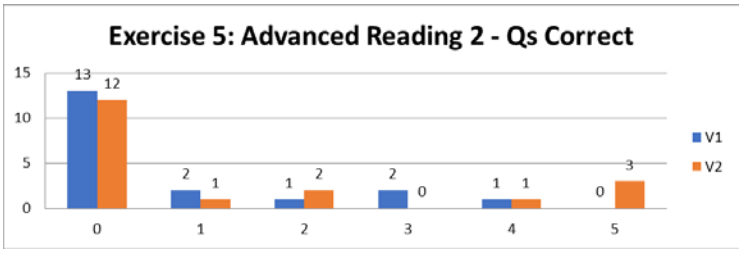

Exercise 3b: Reading - Questions
V1
V2

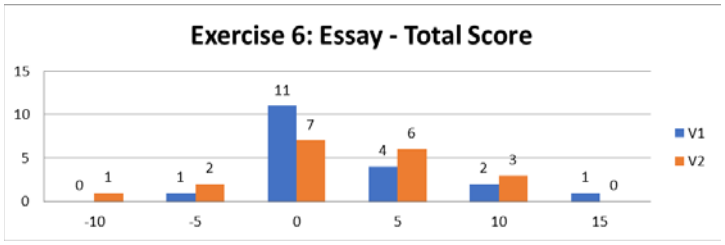

Exercise 3c: Reading - Missing Letters
V1
V2


Exercise 4: Advanced Reading 1 - Words Correct
V1
V2

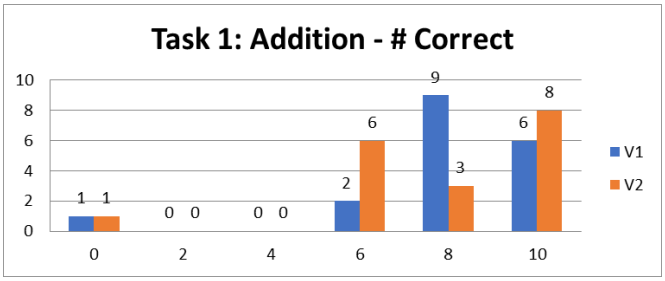

Exercise 4: Advanced Reading 1 - Qs Correct
V1
V2

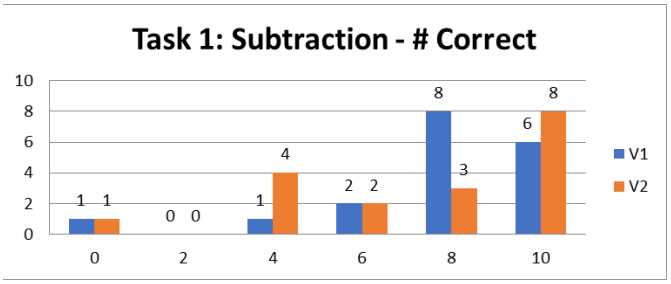

Exercise 5: Advanced Reading 2 - Words Correct
V1
V2

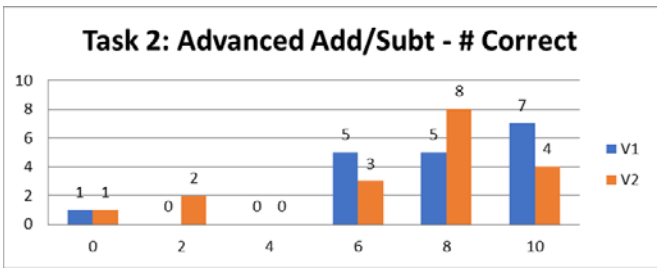

Exercise 5: Advanced Reading 2 - Qs Correct
V1
V2

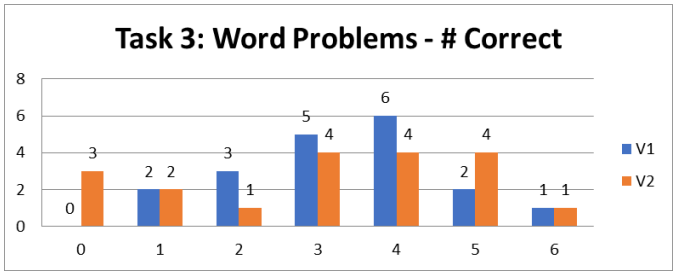

Exercise 6: Essay - Total Score
V1
V2

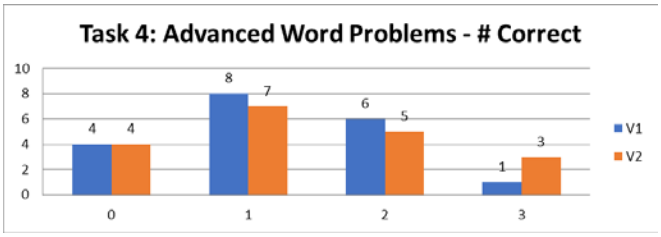
SeGMA

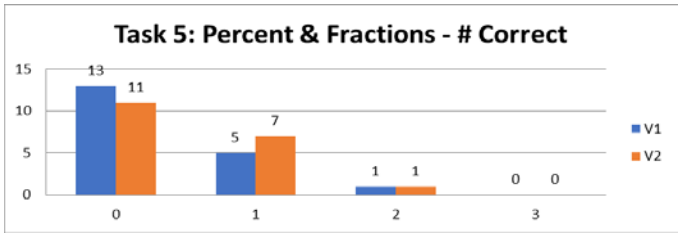

Task 1: Addition - # Correct
V1
V2

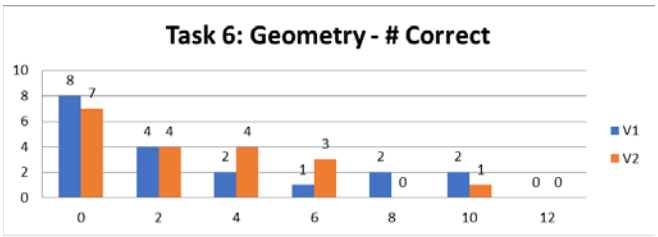

Task 1: Subtraction - # Correct
V1
V2

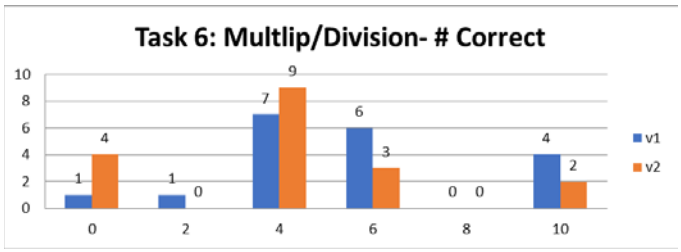

Task 2: Advanced Add/Subt - # Correct
V1
V2

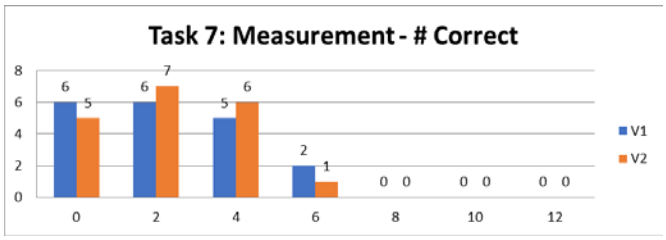

Task 3: Word Problems - # Correct
V1
V2

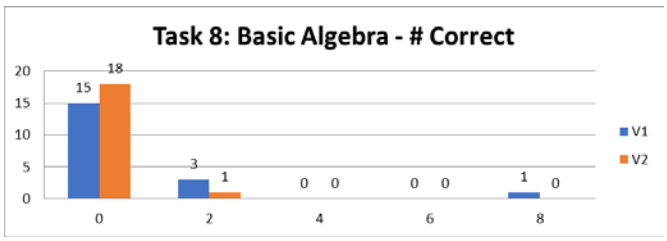

Task 4: Advanced Word Problems - # Correct
V1
V2


Task 5: Percent & Fractions - # Correct
V1
V2


Task 6: Geometry - # Correct
V1
V2


Task 6: Multip/Division- # Correct
v1
v2


Task 7: Measurement - # Correct
V1
V2


Task 8: Basic Algebra - # Correct
V1
V2

Annex 10: Sampling Framework

Sampling Framework_Baseline.x

Annex 11: Control group approach validation

Please see Section 2.4 *Baseline data collection process* and Section 4.5 *Cohort tracking and target setting for the transition outcome* for information on identification of the cohorts of girls for the intervention (beneficiary) and control group.

For information on risk to comparability of the intervention (beneficiary) and control group at midline and endline, please see Section 2.5 *Challenges in baseline data collection and limitations of the evaluation design,* subsection *Measuring teaching quality under* Section 5.3 *Quality of teaching*

For intervention (beneficiary) and control samples composition by region, age, grade, and subgroups, please see subsection *During data collection* under Section 2.4 *Baseline data collection process* and Section 3.2 *Representativeness of the learning and transition samples across regions, age groups, grades, disability status and sex of the beneficiaries.*

For an analysis of any difference between the two groups and information on issues in comparing them, please see Section 3.2 *Representativeness of the learning and transition samples across regions, age groups, grades, disability status and sex of the beneficiaries.*

For proposed mitigation strategies for issues identified see subsection *Longitudinal cohort tracking* under Section 2.3 *Evaluation Methodology,* subsection *Learning Assessments under* Section *4.1 Learning Outcomes*

Annex 12: External Evaluator declaration

Annex 12-signedBOC.pdf

Annex 13: Project Management Response

This annex should be completed by the project.

This annex gives the project the chance to prepare a short and concise management response to the evaluation report before the report is published.

What is the project's response to the key findings in the report? Make sure to refer to main conclusions (Section 6)

- This is an opportunity to describe where the project feels the evaluation findings have confirmed or challenged existing understanding and/or added nuance to what was already known. Have findings shed new light on relationships between outputs, intermediate outcomes, and outcomes and the significance of barriers for certain groups of children – and how these can be overcome?
- This should include critical analysis and reflection on the project theory of change and the assumptions that underpin it.

Project's response

Based on the findings from this baseline, it has been acknowledged that the GATE-GEC Theory of Change and assumptions underpinning this are robust and continue to align with the original outcomes and outputs intended for the project. These findings reinforce that the project continues to address key barriers to education for these target groups via a range of programmatic interventions supporting quality of teaching and learning (teacher training, classroom support via Learning Assistants and study groups), direct material support to students (via bursaries) and economic support to families that can facilitate meeting of educational costs in a sustainable manner in order for girls and children with disabilities to transition from PS to JSS and from JSS to a successful transition pathway post JSS. In addition, these findings have strengthened key areas and understanding that has evolved since the beginning of the project following on from the learnings of the GEC 1 project, particularly highlighting how key barriers including poverty, payment of school fees and other educational costs, and the capacity and quality of teaching staff including the lack of female teachers needs to be addressed throughout the life of the project.

The findings highlighted, and we accept, that there are certain key barriers that are outside the control and scope of the project and its interventions, for example distances that children travel to and from school, and low-quality, inaccessible, or non-existent sanitation facilities, which were identified as key barriers to the children's learning and transition. Although these are often recognised as an issue, and the project attempts to support schools where possible through school and community sensitisation and linking in with other agencies who have a specific focus on addressing these particular issues, without this being a direct programmatic intervention.

Baseline learning rates:

The learning assessment levels and results provide evidence that although basic levels of literacy and numeracy for both girls and children with disabilities seem to generally positive, there is still a need to support these children with advanced literacy and numeracy skills as these results were quite poor overall (although it was recognised that the learning assessments were designed at a higher level so an accurate assessment of learning progression can be made between the three evaluation points). Therefore, project interventions like the study groups, building the capacity of teachers to effectively teach children these advanced literacy and numeracy skills and additional support provided by female learning assistants in primary schools, can in-turn lead to children achieving better learning outcomes as they progress throughout school.

Baseline transition rates:

Although the children in the project cohort may have received support through GEC 1 and are therefore no longer recognised as the 'most marginalised', it is important as a project to understand the ongoing impact and consequences of Ebola on the lives of these children and their families, particularly as some of these children are still facing poverty and issues in accessing, remaining and transitioning throughout school. Ongoing monitoring of these groups, particularly at the annual reverification phase will be critical. In addition, through the VSLA component the project has developed criteria that will be primarily focused on supported the 'most marginalised' households with a clear set of criteria and indicators to support the selection of these groups, particularly as it has been highlighted that a low proportion of households are able to fund their children's education costs, and those most affected are the most marginalised families.

Baseline sustainability:

The findings have provided a clear indication that although community level awareness of the importance of education is regarded as high, the actual tangible contribution that households allocate to their child's education is not so high (as findings indicate 50% are engaged in saving activities that could be used for education, though it's

unclear as to whether the ones who are members of VSLA are doing so)). This reinforces the need for the VSLA component and appropriate awareness raising and sensitisation on how savings and household funds should be prioritised to support education, and highlights the importance that this is assessed through ongoing monitoring activities to check whether perceptions and engagement are progressing, and if required necessary actions and steps taken to enhance this intervention to reduce long term dependency on bursaries and ensure the families are in a stronger financial position to support their children in education.

This linked in with the considerably higher engagement with MEST officials at both national and local level will be critical. Therefore, the revisions proposed by the evaluators around intermediate outcome 5 (and consequently output 4) are welcomed by the project, and if we can enhance the levels of engagement and follow a multi-sectoral approach to achieving change, it will better the lives of our cohort as well as other children across Sierra Leone.

The project accepts that there is still considerable work to be done with MEST and other key stakeholders to ensure long-term policy changes come into effect to support all children in education. It has been agreed that the initial steps should be around engaging these key stakeholders and making them understand their roles and responsibilities to affect wider change. We hope to amend output 4 as this progresses in the project, and we can agree on more influential and wider changes for longer term sustainability.

What is the project's response to the conclusions and recommendations in the report?

- The management response should respond to the each of the External Evaluator's recommendations that are relevant to the grantee organisation (see Section 6). The response should make clear what changes and adaptations to implementation will be proposed as a result of the recommendations and which ones are not considered appropriate, providing a clear explanation why.
- Does the external evaluator's conclusion of the projects' approach to gender correspond to the projects' gender ambitions and objectives?

Project response

Recommendation 1: Revise project logframe.

		Programme response
Priority: High ***Timeline: Short***	*Recommendation 1a:* Edit intermediate outcome 5 to ensure the outcome text and its indicator are consistent by incorporating work with Boards of Governors, School Management Committees and Community Teachers Associations, to strengthen community participation in governance and management of schools.	The project accepts this recommendation however the suggested revisions to this outcome and output need to be discussed with the FM as they have implications on the budget and the workplan. We will need to assess whether this is best placed to sit under this outcome, or whether it should sit under outcome 3 where there is direct engagement with SMCs expected through the Score carding component. This will be further explored with the FM. It is also recognised through a separate piece of work on SMCs in Sierra Leone, that there is a clear need to strengthen community participation in governance and management of schools and the project must look to include activities with the school committees including trainings on roles and responsibilities and community engagement in school management and governance. This possibility will be evaluated from a work plan and budget point of view.

Priority: High ***Timeline: Short***	*Recommendation 1b:* Under intermediate outcome 5 include a separate outcome and indicator related to increased engagement with key educational actors to support education provision for girls and children with disabilities on a national level.	As it stands, the project logframe has IO indicator 5.2: '# of education events consortium partners 'actively' participate in to share evidence and learning from the GATE-GEC project with key educational stakeholders' and we feel this is appropriate as it outlines what engagement looks like with these actors. It also allows for clearer attribution and contribution. Minutes and attendance records will be captured, and relevant actions agreed will be shared as part of the stakeholder engagement tool. Plan International and the FM have asked for further clarity on the specific changes being requested, however none have yet been provided.
Priority: High ***Timeline: Short***	*Recommendation 1c:* Include members of Boards of Governors (JSS) and Community Teachers Associations (PS and JSS) as well as School Management Committees (PS) in the score-carding process under Output 3. It is important to have community understanding of and participation in this process, which will seek to address some sensitive issues, and will therefore need broad support to be achieved and sustainable.	We agree with this recommendation and as part of the Score carding initiative taking place in some of the JSS's, we shall engage with Board of Governors and Community teacher associations at school level. Score carding engagement activities aim at creating sustainability-action developed by children and adults focusing on making schools a child friendly environment. Through a child-led process, children will develop and present action plans to school management, community leadership and district government officials. The GATE-GEC project staff will also empower children and school management (including head teachers, board of governors, community teacher associations) through the Score carding process to follow through on recommended actions proposed by children. At chiefdom and district level, the GATE-GEC collaboratively with the GATE Unicef project will support children and school management to advocate for broader recommended actions to relevant duty bearers (MEST & Social Welfare Dep, Police.) to ensure they take ownership and ensure sustainability of the recommended actions for Government. By way of context, the Score carding process will be undertaken at three levels: school, chiefdom/community and district level. At each level, the project will target key stakeholders that play a key role in supporting the creation of a child friendly learning environment. At school level the SMC process brings on-board BOGs, safety committee members, children and parents, among others. At chiefdom level, various actors including paramount chief, members of community teacher associations,

		community welfare committee will be part of the engagements. At district level we shall include the Police Family Support Unit, Social Welfare Office, MEST inspectors of schools and other NGOs, feeding into the idea that there will be widespread understanding of and participation in this process.

Recommendation 2: Increase engagement with MEST at all levels.

		Programme response
Priority: High ***Timeline: Short***	*Recommendation 2a:* Seek to deepen engagement of the Hub Education Advisor with MEST (potentially through embedding in the MEST offices). Sustainability of the programme hinges on MEST ownership and the Education Adviser could, among other tasks, provide support to MEST as they seek a more active engagement in project monitoring. This strategy is already in place by other projects (i.e. supported by Leh Wi Learn and EU) and would allow for better facilitation of ongoing dialogue with MEST, including on the development of the next ESP for 2020-2025. Additionally, a presence at MEST would help further develop collaboration with other related projects including UNICEF GATE and Leh Wi Learn.	We hope engagement with the new administration will be strong, and considerably improve as the project is reinstated through meetings; joint working groups; steering committee at MEST level and other activities including joint monitoring with MEST officials to engage them directly with the project and its impact. We would expect the Hub Education Advisor to lead these processes alongside the Hub team leader. We may also explore the option of the Education Advisor being embedded in the MEST office, however we would need to assess how the engagement with the new administration will be, as there will be a need to assess how feasible this will be given the current budget and the staffing structure, in addition to the workload implications that may arise. It would also need to be agreed at both a programmatic and at MEST level as to how this would successfully work.
Priority: High ***Timeline: Medium***	*Recommendation 2b:* At district level, the qualitative research found reports of previously strong district-level collaboration between MEST and GEC 1, with regular meetings and joint activities. The project should explore this previous relationship's successes and areas of improvement in order to continue and duplicate this collaborative relationship in GATE-GEC. Ideally, this relationship would foster deeper community engagement and act as a driver for sustainability of project benefits.	The project agrees with this recommendation and would encourage this to continue across the districts, with the district project managers being key in coordinating and influencing at this level. In some districts, engagement has remained strong since GEC 1 and in other districts where partners have changed or are newly engaging, this engagement will need to be re-established to ensure there is continuity at the district and national level. There is also a proposal for a project partnership strategy to be developed which will report guidelines to engage with the stakeholders at national and district, community level.

Recommendation 3: Define contributions to Education Strategic Plan activities.

		Programme response
Priority: Medium ***Timeline: Medium***	*Recommendation 3a:* Discuss with MEST on how GATE-GEC can best contribute to the following activities which are set out in the ESP for 2018-2020: ▪ Development of an inclusive education policy and strategy. ▪ Implementation of the policy for re-entry of teenage mothers into the school system. ▪ Development of child protection mechanisms and guidelines, to ensure all schools are safe for girls. This intervention will include sensitisation, referral channels, enforcement of the code of conduct for teachers, and the use of suggestion boxes. ▪ Integration of comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) in to the curriculum at upper primary and JSS level, and the provision of training for teachers on adolescent sexual and reproductive life skills, to make schools safer for girls, and contribute to reducing adolescent pregnancy and drop-out rates. ▪ Establishment and implementation of a system for the professional development, induction and continuous development of teachers and school heads.	1. The project agrees with this recommendation, and recognises its importance. The areas highlighted are incredibly useful to guide future discussions with MEST and will inform ongoing consortium-wide discussions once the project is approved and running again. Some of the activities that we could contribute to through existing interventions: HI previously led a group of organisations to develop the inclusive education policy throughout 2017. This policy is now waiting for Parliament endorsement. 2. This is outside of the scope of the project and will not be addressed by the project directly, however the project is willing to link in with other organisations and provide 3. The score-carding intervention addresses some of these activities as it includes developing clear CP guidance and protocols, community and school sensitisation on CP issues, strengthening of the existing referral system and use of the suggestion boxes for children and other school staff to anonymously share their concerns. These are then addressed by the school's committees and appropriate actions are taken to rectify any issues highlighted. 4. This sits outside of the scope of the project. However, the GATE-GEC programme will assist in linking MEST with other organisations that have expertise and ongoing programming in this area. 5. Plan International is engaging with the Teacher Service Commissions to coordinate and support with GATE-GEC teacher's professional development, induction and CPD. The Education Adviser is leading this process.
Priority: Medium ***Timeline: Long***	*Recommendation 3b:* Undertake evidence-based advocacy to influence the Education Sector Plan for 2021 – 2025. A measurable impact of advocacy efforts could be with respect to concrete policy changes that have taken place that can be attributable, at least in part, to the efforts of GATE-GEC. While attribution of policy change is generally challenging to definitively measure, qualitative research among key informants at various points can typically result in triangulated findings with an acceptable level of precision. Examples of specific advocacy opportunities are:	We accept this recommendation, and in some cases, have already made some traction, for example with the Inclusive Education Policy which is awaiting Parliament endorsement. For other education policies, we concede that this may take some time to action particularly as we are in the initial stages of now engaging with the new government. The expectation is over year 1 and 2, we will be engaging with MEST through the form of meetings, joint monitoring visits, setting up a working group involving key officials. The expectation as we move throughout the project and gather more momentum of engagement with

	• Outlawing of corporal punishment in schools. There appears to be policy momentum in this regard, subsequent to the 2016 Periodic Review on Sierra Leone by the Committee on the Rights of the Child. • Including comprehensive sexuality education in curricula. School-related gender-based violence, sexual harassment, and other factors related to sexual and reproductive health and rights can impact the attendance of girls and children with disabilities. Comprehensive sexuality education combats violence and promotes more equitable attitudes towards relationships between men and women. Further, it can reduce adolescent pregnancy, sexually transmitted infection transmission, and dropout rates. MEST's ESP 2018-2020 states that comprehensive sexuality education will be integrated in to the curriculum from upper primary to senior secondary levels. Supporting a rights-based and gender-focused approach to sexuality education will contribute to the achievement of intermediate outcomes 1 and 3 and have an indirect impact on other intermediate outcomes.	key stakeholders including MEST is that we influence on critical policies affecting children's education in SLE through the form of continued dialogue with the relevant officials, and other NGOs/educational stakeholders and support advocacy, campaigning and lobbying activities. We expect this to evolve in our project design and relevant adaptations will be made once we have enough influence. Furthermore, there is also a proposal for a project partnership strategy to be developed which will report guidelines to engage with the stakeholders at national and district, community level.

Recommendation 4: Agree communication and coordination procedures amongst consortium members.

		Programme response
Priority: High ***Timeline: Short***	*Recommendation 4:* The baseline research noted disparities between districts in terms of their capacity to organise and implement activities. All consortium members should agree on best practice in terms of communication and coordination procedures, to ensure all persons involved in the GATE-GEC project team in all districts are kept informed of activities, have access to lessons learned and good practices, and are fully involved. There should be agreement regarding referencing and approval procedures for all staff working for the project who may wish to move to work for the project in another district or for another consortium partner. Procedures also need to be agreed across the consortium partners regarding any disciplinary procedures and communication to community stakeholders following on from any problems	The project agrees with this recommendation. It is imperative that the project implements consistently across the districts, and shared learning and best practice is shared with all involved. To ensure this, and to ensure clear and consistent communication is shared across the districts, a GATE-GEC communications strategy is currently being developed at both an internal and external level including looking at messaging and ways of communicating with district staff and communities to ensure messaging is clear at all levels, and the project is transparent about what's happening in and around the project. This should be finalised by July 2018. All relevant stakeholders will be consulted in its formulation.

Recommendation 5: Focus on close collaboration with GATE UNICEF.

		Programme response
Priority: Medium ***Timeline: Medium***	*Recommendation 5:* As GATE-GEC and GATE UNICEF are working on areas of common interest, GATE-GEC should seek to deepen collaboration with GATE UNICEF at both central and district level. This would allow both projects to share their activities to reduce overlap and prevent duplication of efforts as well as identify and act on potential synergies. There is close collaboration in Port Loko, where a GATE UNICEF team is based in the Programme Unit with the GATE-GEC project team, and exploration of the usefulness of replicating this same level of collaboration should be undertaken. Further, it will be important to facilitate sharing of learning from all sources, including MEST, GATE, and Leh Wi Learn, between teaching staff in schools. EDOs/POs should document inputs from other interventions, to ensure good collaboration, and to share lessons learned and good practice.	The project agrees with this recommendation. The GATE-GEC project is already engaged with the GATE UNICEF project and collaborates with the GATE project where appropriate and relevant. One example of this is our district staff directly linked in with the GATE UNICEF team during the school verification phase as it enabled us to gather information without duplicating processes. Another example of close working, is that the last consortium coordination meeting involved key GATE-UNICEF staff to develop and endorse the score-carding model and to ensure there is complementarity between the programmes. This will ensure best practice and lessons learned are shared, and support this model to be replicated across more schools in districts across SLE.

Recommendation 6: Ensure timely distribution of bursaries.

		Programme response
Priority: High ***Timeline: Medium***	*Recommendation 6:* The distribution of bursaries for the academic year 2018/9 and 2019/20 for P1 to P6 and for JSS1 and JSS2 and those who have just been promoted to JSS3, should be done at the beginning of the academic year, without waiting for the results of the BECE exams. Once the BECE results are released then those students who are repeating JSS3 can receive their bursaries.	We agree with this recommendation and recognise the importance of these items being distributed in a timely manner, to ensure these children can attend school and continue their learning. For this academic year, due to the pending programme approval by MEST, the bursary distribution process has been on put on hold. Once approval is granted, district teams will be investing considerable efforts and work to ensure children receive their bursaries at the beginning of the academic year moving forward including procurement agencies being on board and prepped, and district staff consistently following the same distribution process using the beneficiary ID tracking card to ensure the correct beneficiaries receive the correct items.

Recommendation 7: Convey criteria for project inclusion to beneficiaries and other stakeholders.

		Programme response
Priority: High ***Timeline: Short***	*Recommendation 7:* Both this baseline evaluation and the endline evaluation from GEC 1 found that both non-beneficiaries and beneficiaries were unclear of the inclusion criteria and selection process. The project should organise meetings with the beneficiaries and their parents or caregivers, as well as other key stakeholders, to remind them of the criteria for selection of the cohort, and the plans in place to support the beneficiaries until the end of the project.	The project agrees with this recommendation. Messaging is key, and consistent messaging across the districts, communities and schools is vital. It is worth noting that this point was highlighted during the first RAM. One of the proposed and approved adaptation is to develop an accountability brochure. This would be readily available in communities, possibly in the form of a poster, and translated to the local language. Key messages may include criteria for beneficiaries' selection, bursary item clarity and the close out of bursaries after year 2 to decrease dependency on material handouts (?) (or support?) and to move the support from individual child to school level to minimise the risk of community tension. Moving forward clear communication with beneficiaries, schools and communities on who will be supported by the project, and how (and when) they will be supported, in addition to key timelines/plans of activities throughout the year - for example when the school year is due to begin so children return to school and are verified more quickly - will be key to alleviate

		tensions where possible and ensure GEC beneficiaries are aware they still are a part of the programme. This messaging will be agreed by the consortium, and district staff will be responsible for cascading it to their caseloads of schools.

Recommendation 8: Support of former beneficiaries to formal education.

		Programme response
Priority: High ***Timeline: Medium***	*Recommendation 8a:* The project should support the return of any beneficiaries who had dropped out of the system for any reason (e.g. pregnancy, becoming a mother, income generation) back in to formal education. The re-verification numbers confirm that while some beneficiaries will have transitioned beyond JSS and others may have moved outside the treatment areas, many beneficiaries who should still be attending school are not. Given this, the project should seek out these former students who have dropped out and support their return. While the project will need to investigate the most appropriate ways to do so, possible avenues include encouraging attendance at study groups, provision of additional classes to cover any key areas of the curriculum they missed while out of school, mentoring support from PVs while they readjust to being back in school, and by prioritising their involvement in VSLAs.	The project accepts this recommendation to support the children that returned to school during the reverification phase, and already put the necessary action to support the return of this group of beneficiaries through the annual reverification process where any children who return to school at that point were re-included in the cohort and in future reverifications, will be reincluded. Moving forward, it will be important for the schools to understand their needs having been out of school for some time and to ensure they have the support required to return to school and to transition successfully – the district teams will also play a role to assess how schools are responding to these needs where possible. In terms of the recommendation around 'seeking out former students', the project feels this would need to be further explored as a consortium as additional resources and activities may need to be allocated to support this process. This will be discussed, amongst the other recommendations, at the next project steering committee meeting and any relevant points will then be taken forward to the FM. A piece of work currently being explored by the consortium's Education and Child Protection Working Group is working on a drop out and retention strategy which will help identify what levels of drop-outs and include actions to minimise the issue and facilitate the reintegration of children who have dropped out. This will be investigated further once the project is back up and running.
Priority: Low ***Timeline: Medium***	*Recommendation 8b:* Linked to the re-entry of teenage mothers into the school system, GATE-GEC should check how many beneficiaries under GEC 1 who dropped out of the formal school system and entered UNICEF GATE learning centres have now returned, or are planning to return, to the formal system, and set	This would need to be further explored as a consortium, as it is difficult to say without considering what is required to support this recommendation. This will be discussed, amongst the other recommendations, at the next project steering committee meeting and any

	bursaries and other supports in place as needed.	relevant points will then be taken forward to the FM. In addition, the project recognises, due to the project being placed on hold and consequent delay implementation and the low priority of this recommendation, that the focus and key attention needs to be placed on the current cohort of beneficiaries with their varying needs so they are sufficiently supported. However, we will do our best to address this recommendation within project scope.

Recommendation 9: Inclusion of additional beneficiaries.

		Programme response
Priority: Medium ***Timeline: Medium***	*Recommendation 9a:* The re-verification activity revealed that there are now roughly 40 percent fewer beneficiaries under the current phase of the project than from GEC 1 in 2013. The baseline evaluation identified many students in treatment schools who meet the criteria set out in 2013 for project support, including children with disabilities, who are not direct beneficiaries of the project. While there is a clear GATE-GEC policy of not inducting new beneficiaries, beneficiary data and evidence from project informants indicates that beneficiaries have been added since 2013. The project should explore the possibility of adding students who meet the selection criteria as project beneficiaries.	This would need to be explored with the donor and FM, and the consortium as the cohort remains as it should from GEC 1 as we are tracking the same cohort of children. Therefore, taking on this recommendation may mean a critical change to the design of the GEC project/model intended by the donor. This will be further explored at the next RAM meeting with the FM.
Priority: Medium ***Timeline: Medium***	*Recommendation 9b:* The research team does not judge it to be feasible for the project to undertake a process to identify and select additional marginalised girls at this stage but does recommend consideration of strategies to provide some support to additional children with disabilities. As a first step, IEDOs and EDOs/POs should work with all project schools and CBRVs to draw up lists of children with disabilities who are not currently beneficiaries. Once an initial assessment has been made of their needs, GATE-GEC should consider ways that the project can support these non-beneficiary children – if not by including them in the cohort or through the provision of bursaries or assistive devices, perhaps by prioritising their attendance at study	This would need to be discussed more widely amongst the consortium, FM and DFID. Although we appreciate the need, these children with disabilities were not a part of the original cohort so it would affect the design of the GEC programme and broadly the portfolio of GEC programmes. We appreciate the fact that there are many children in need of support but the project doesn't have the capacity to provide support for all of them. The Consortium can however facilitate referral of children with specific needs to other INGOs or service providers that may be able to help them.

	groups and the inclusion of their families in the VSLA schemes.	
Priority: Medium ***Timeline: Medium***	*Recommendation 9c*: The project should also determine the level of need which it will **not** be able to address. The data on children with disabilities should then be presented at a Project Steering Committee meeting, and more widely to MEST, for broader consideration of the needs and how they can best be met by a range of stakeholders.	The project agrees with this recommendation. The Consortium will focus on strengthening networking with other stakeholders and identify relevant referral processes and advocacy processes for the areas where the project is unable to provide support.

Recommendation 10: Explore non-beneficiary involvement in study groups.

		Programme response
Priority: Low ***Timeline: Medium***	*Recommendation 10*: Depending on the numbers of beneficiaries at each school, it may be possible to open access to study groups for children with disabilities or other children with specific learning support needs, who are not direct beneficiaries. GATE-GEC should consider this possibility on a case by case basis to determine the appropriateness of allowing non-beneficiaries to participate in study groups (i.e. ensure that it will not negatively impact the effectiveness of the study group).	The project accepts this recommendation. This is already being considered for our primary schools particularly as the numbers are much smaller per school, so we feel it will make sense to include non-beneficiaries. This is being developed further with the schools this affects and further details of which schools will be involved can be provided once the project is approved, and the study groups are reinstated.

Recommendation 11: Additional areas of project focus

		Programme response
Priority: Low ***Timeline: Medium***	*Recommendation 11a*: Girls that reported not feeling safe in school had poorer literacy and numeracy assessment results, as did those girls who felt their teachers did not make them feel welcome in schools. This suggests that school staff-mediated psychosocial factors (perceptions of safety/security and a welcoming class atmosphere) are substantial determinants of educational performance, an area on which the project could potentially focus attention	This recommendation is taken on board and is children's safety is regarded as paramount in the project as we know children that feel safe and more like to learn better. The project feels the project's Score carding initiative will respond to this recommendation through the form of trainings, awareness raising and sensitisation of key actors in the schools and communities of child protection, and children's rights in the school environment in targeted JSS schools To further enhance the Score carding initiative across more schools, project staff will coordinate activities with the UNICEF GATE

		'safe school initiative' project working with peer mentors and safe school committees across more GATE-GEC schools so that more children are aware of their rights and avenues to share their concerns around safety in the school Furthermore, child friendly teaching methodology and pedagogy with a clear CP component is also mainstreamed in the trainings organised for the Programme Volunteers, Head teachers and Learning Assistants.
Priority: Medium ***Timeline: Short***	*Recommendation 11b*: The ongoing project monitoring data should also include attendance levels of particularly vulnerable sub-groups: orphans, children with disabilities, girls living with caretakers other than their parents or those living independently in order to access JSS, pregnant girls and young mothers. Depending on the attendance rates by these groups it may be necessary for the project to introduce activities to target support to them	This will need to be explored further with the FM and consortium more widely; we currently disaggregate by CWDs and marginalised girls and our verification data and tracking ID card will allow us to distinguish between more categories for example those that may be orphans or carers so we can gauge what their needs are as we progress in the project. The project will also be willing to include additional questions to identify these sub-groups to the reverification tool in future reverifications (where they don't already exist), to ensure a broader scope of sub-groups are captured as appropriate. However, the project feels agreeing to introducing new activities based on these sub-groups currently sits outside the scope of the project, as we are currently targeting the most marginalised target groups. We may be able to adapt the existing activities to support some of the findings, however this can be assessed once we have the data and evidence.
Priority: High ***Timeline: Medium***	*Recommendation 11c:* As noted above, the momentum for policy change on corporal punishment of children provides an opportunity for policy advocacy. Given the evidence of widespread corporal punishment of children in schools and by parents, and the normalisation of same, there are clear opportunities for community-based advocacy work to effect norm change in this important area.	This is an important recommendation, however not directly linked to our TOC or original interventions proposed. We may want to explore what other stakeholders are doing that have expertise in this area, and see whether we can work collaboratively together on addressing this issue.

What changes to the logframe will be proposed to DFID and the Fund Manager?

- The management response should outline any changes that the project is proposing to do following any emergent findings from the baseline evaluation. This exercise is not limited to outcomes and intermediate outcomes but extends also to outputs (following completion of Annex 3 on the output indicators).

Project response

As proposed by the baseline evaluator's, the following amendments to the project logframe will be explored further with the wider consortium, taking into consideration the impact, how this aligns with the existing interventions and planned activities, any timelines and/or budget implications. Amendments will be agreed with FM and updated in the relevant project documentation:

- Amend Intermediate outcome 5: Add additional stakeholders including Boards of Governors, School Management Committees and Community Teachers Associations, to strengthen community participation in governance and management of schools. We will need to assess whether this is best placed to sit under this outcome, or whether it should sit under outcome 3 where there is direct engagement with SMCs expected through the Score carding component. This will be further explored with the FM.

- Amend output indicator 3.1 to include Board of governors and Community teaching association so it will instead be, “Number of children, parents, SMC members, **Board of Governors, Community teaching association**, HTs and teachers involved in the Score carding process.”