



Plan UK: Tender for Baseline

Girls' Education Challenge: Supporting Marginalised Girls in Sierra Leone to complete Basic Education with Improved Learning Outcomes

I. SUMMARY

Plan UK is looking for a research team to conduct the baseline study of the Girls' Education Challenge project 'Supporting Marginalised Girls in Sierra Leone to complete Basic Education with Improved Learning Outcomes.'

Plan is looking for researchers to carry out the baseline study between February and April 2013, with an indicative budget of 50,000 GBP. This baseline is a stepping stone towards potentially establishing a long-term collaboration in the various research, monitoring and final evaluation aspects of the programme. Please note this tender is subject to confirmation of funding.

The deadline for submitting the application is February 8th 2013

II. INTRODUCTION TO PLAN UK AND THE GIRLS' EDUCATION CHALLENGE PROJECT

Plan International is one of the leading international, child-centred community development organisations in the world with no religious or political affiliations. It supports interventions in 50 developing countries, benefiting over 11 million children and young people, their families and communities in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Plan's work, informed by the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child, is based on the recognition of children and young people as citizens with their own rights and responsibilities. In partnerships with them, their families, civil society and government, Plan supports their voices to be heard on issues that affect them, thus building understanding and promoting their rights to participate in and benefit from their societies.

Plan UK is one of the national offices in the Plan family, securing funding, providing technical support, and doing advocacy and campaigning in support of Plan's global priorities. Plan has (provisionally) secured funding from the UK Department for International Development (DFID) for a three year, £7 million project to support marginalised girls in Sierra Leone to complete basic education with improved learning outcomes, under the Girls' Education Challenge (GEC) Step Change Window. Further background information on the GEC SCW is available from DFID at: <http://projects.dfid.gov.uk/project.aspx?Project=202372>

In collaboration with consortium members FAWE, Handicap International, IRC, Plan and the Open University and with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) and targeted communities, this project will support 21,060 marginalised girls at-risk of dropping out of Basic Education in five rural districts of Sierra Leone to access education and stay in school with improved learning outcomes. It also seeks to improve learning, retention and attendance for all 62,631 girls and 71,889 boys currently enrolled at targeted schools.

The project seeks to improve life changes for marginalised girls through:

1. Increasing Access and Retention in grades 5 and 6 of Primary School and grades 7, 8 and 9 of Junior Secondary School, and of children with disabilities in Primary School.
2. Strengthening girls' learning in grades 5 and 6 of Primary School and JSS.
3. Ensuring that girls are learning in an inclusive environment and protected from harm

4. Ensuring girls' voices and needs are listened to and responded to and that girls participate in decision-making concerning their education

The project targets 21,060 of the most marginalised girls in 180 Junior Secondary Schools (JSS) and 540 Primary Schools. The project will reach 26% of all JSS in Sierra Leone and covers 77% of JSS in Kailahan, Kenema, Kono, Moyamba and Port Loko focussing on rural areas. These rural districts have extremely poor Gender Parity in enrolment at JSS level, with girl to boy enrolment ratios ranging from 0.57 to 0.75 below the national average of 0.85 (2010/11 School Census). Recognising that girls (and boys) with disabilities in rural areas face even greater disadvantages, disability will be mainstreamed and the project will specifically target Children with Disabilities, for whom enrolment in Primary is likely to be most appropriate.

The project adopts an integrated, holistic approach addressing the multiple, interrelated barriers marginalised girls face in completing quality basic education. It raises demand for girls' education through targeted financial incentives to the poorest girls and child-led community awareness, strengthens learning in and after school through in-service teacher training, mentoring and girls' study groups, provides female role models in schools and peer support mechanisms for girls, strengthens mechanisms to protect girls from Gender-Based Violence and works with children's and parents' clubs to identify and advocate for girls' access to school and needs in school.

This project will form part of Plan UK's flagship programme 'Building Skills for Life,' which seeks to empower adolescent girls, particularly through education. The programme takes a life-cycle approach, considering the challenges girls face in adolescence and deriving the programme from this according to each context.

III. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE FOR THE BASELINE

Plan UK is seeking a research team to work on the baseline study to be carried out for the DFID-funded GEC project in Sierra Leone. The GEC project has extremely high demands in terms of the quantity and quality of evidence to be collected and used by multiple-stakeholders, and will require a high level of rigour and investment to meet the M&E standards expected.

The baseline study is intended to provide programme staff with a clear picture of the current issues affecting girls' education in operational areas. This will allow Plan to further develop the design and target interventions of the programme accordingly, based on a solid situational analysis and on baseline data.

The baseline study must also provide baseline data for the project logframe and to provide the basis from which to answer the GEC evaluation questions. Broadly structured around OECD-DAC criteria, these are:

- **Process** – Was the Girls' Education Challenge successfully designed and implemented?
- **Impact and Efficiency** – What impact did the Girls' Education Challenge funding have on the retention and learning of marginalised girls? Was the Girls' Education Challenge good value for money (VfM)?
- **Effectiveness** – What works to increase the enrolment, retention and learning of marginalised girls?
- **Sustainability** – How sustainable were the activities funded by the Girls' Education Challenge and was the programme successful in leveraging additional interest and investment?

The research efforts will align as much as possible with Plan's Programme Accountability and Learning System, including additional research questions relating to child-centeredness, gender and inclusion. The design and implementation of the baseline must also take into account and abide by Plan International's Child-Centred Community Development principles. This means, for example, ensuring children are at the centre of the research, that principles of gender equality, inclusion 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. Furthermore, the assessment is required to be conducted in-line with Plan International's Child Protection Policy and internal guidelines on Child Protection and ethical standards in Monitoring, Evaluation and Research.

The research will be coordinated through the Plan UK office, with inputs from technical advisors; however the process in country will be managed by the project's Country Coordination Unit (CCU) and Evaluation Steering Group. The research will be an opportunity for capacity building in M&E in field offices. The research team may also be required to coordinate, alongside Plan, with the GEC Fund Manager (PwC) and Evaluation Manger (Coffey International) as additional independent research and monitoring of the project will be conducted as part of the wider GEC programme.

After conducting the baseline study and establishing a strong M&E system, we would look into establishing a longer-term partnership, ideally with the same organisation that works on the baseline study – subject to review and mutual feedback. The long-term engagement would be likely to include (a) technical support to the project on periodic, on-going monitoring and overall guidance for an (internal) mid-term evaluation, (b) independent representation of one member of the research team on the project Evaluation Steering Group (c) documentation and dissemination of learning – i.e. joint events, publications, discussion papers (d) the research team conducting the final project evaluation. While this Terms of Reference is solely for the baseline phase, Plan would welcome applications from research teams who would be willing to enter into discussions on longer-term engagement.

IV. BASELINE PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY

Purpose

The research team will be responsible for all aspects of the baseline research, including sampling, designing data collection tools, coordinating data collection in the field and ensuring quality of data, and analysing a large amount of qualitative and quantitative data, building the capacity of field staff in research methods and providing clear guidance on the future evaluation strategy of the project.

Specifically, the objectives of the baseline research are to:

- i) Provide detailed contextual information / situational analysis of girls' rights to education in Sierra Leone to help refine the project theory of change and intervention strategy.
- ii) Gather relevant baseline data for key project indicators to enable changes in beneficiaries' lives to be measured over the course of the project. The baseline study design needs to identify samples that enable the project to track key changes and effects amongst target groups from the baseline stage and at future points in time throughout the life of the project.
- iii) Refine the project's evaluation strategy and develop recommendations for on-going project monitoring, learning and rigorous final impact assessment.

Baseline Use

In all monitoring, evaluation and research (MER) activities, the project looks to be informed by an utilisation-focused approach, with the explicit aim of identifying the use of, and primary intended users, of all MER outputs to increase the usability of outputs and increase buy-in from relevant stakeholders. In conducting the baseline and outputs, the research team will have the following users in mind:

- Provide summarised, accessible information for girls, boys, and school communities to use in their local-level advocacy efforts
- Provide project staff with detailed evidence to initiate discussions with duty-bearers at the local level and to feed into Plan and partners advocacy activities at both national and international levels
- Provide project management with information to refine the project intervention as necessary

- Provide project management and M&E staff baseline data for project indicators and clear guidance and recommendations on ways of strengthening on-going monitoring of the project to maximise its evaluability
- Provide assurance to the GEC EM on the quality and accuracy of data collected and data to be used for GEC programme-wide M&E as appropriate
- Finally, through the process of research and involvement in data collection, provide project field staff with an in-depth understanding of the factors affecting girls' education, particularly gender and power dynamics and with regards to disability status and vulnerabilities.

Methodology

As part of the project proposal, a detailed Monitoring and Evaluation Plan has been submitted to DFID. While the project is committed to fulfilling its accountabilities as given in this document, Plan welcomes suggestions for strengthening the approach taken while ensuring methods proposed are achievable, and will be seeking further technical guidance on a number of key elements.

The baseline research methods should include general population data, school system data, and qualitative data. Baseline research will involve collecting:

Population data representative of the target group (marginalised girls) affected by the intervention (and identification of potential control/comparison groups). It is suggested that a multi-stage sampling process be used, based on the total number of marginalised girls targeted by the project, stratified by geography, disability, and school status (in and out of school) based on a 95% confidence level with a $\pm 5\%$ interval.

The household survey will collect data on and disaggregate results by risk factors affecting girls' education (e.g. wealth/asset status, religion, ethnicity, and disability). Survey questions for adults will include a household schedule covering the educational status of all household members (male and female, thus greatly increasing the overall size of the data set and allowing comparisons with boys' educational status). Questions for adults will cover their attitudes to girls' education. Questions for girls will also cover education status, attendance at school and reasons for missing/dropping out of school, perceptions of teaching methods, in-school violence, the gendered division of labour and community attitudes, and ability testing in reading and numeracy. Survey questions will be aligned with logframe indicators to allow midline and endline measurements of outcomes, along with other data sources. Questionnaires in local languages will be administered by trained young female interviewers.

Plan is exploring the use of digital data entry devices for use within the project and the baseline research consultant may be required to liaise with an ICT Consultant on the design and use of data entry software with tablets.

Qualitative study data that is representative of the target group in relevant and informative ways. This will involve baseline community focussed research to understand how economic circumstances and cultural and social norms interact with family decision-making and community attitudes on girls' education. The focus here will be on validating or challenging project assumptions about marginalisation and about the project's intervention logic. Community focussed research (involving Focus Group Discussions and Key Informant Interviews with a range of target groups and stakeholders) will feed into qualitative, longitudinal research with target groups of beneficiaries (such as girls' study groups, parent advocacy groups etc.) in a sample of schools.

School system data (that may be collected by project field staff but which will require analysis and incorporation by the research team) that is representative of the target population in schools and focussing on enrolment by year group, retention, completion and exam performance. This will involve EMIS data and an additional school survey. The short school survey of all project schools will map the physical accessibility,

social and policy characteristics of all schools (e.g. learning resources in use, the presence and functions of school clubs, student councils, school management committees and child protection systems).

School system data from a control group of schools, as above, to be identified by the research team.

Additional participatory monitoring tools and beneficiary tracking tools will be used during the project but will not form part of the baseline study (for example, monitoring of students' attendance, assessments through pre- and post-training questionnaires with teachers and learning assistants, and a basic literacy and numeracy tool to be used with specific groups of girls). However, guidance will be sought from the research team on the design of such tools and processes as part of this term of reference's requirement for recommendations for on-going project monitoring and learning.

All data, qualitative and quantitative, collected through the research must be disaggregated by sex, age and disability status as a minimum, as well as any other key determinants of marginalisation (wealth, ethnicity, location, parents' educational attainments etc.) identified by the population data. Importantly, we are also looking for how the emerging quantitative and qualitative data is analysed together to generate a multi-dimensional picture of the situation, and suggestions for the on-going triangulation and analysis of multiple data sources over the course of the project to examine changes. In addition to the baseline study, Plan UK is looking for technical advice in developing the programme monitoring, evaluation and research framework. We would like to review logframe indicators and design a strong monitoring system. The proposed baseline methodology should include considerations for evaluating impact, including attribution challenges, benchmarking, and/or repeating tools and methods in monitoring and evaluation efforts in the future. Baseline research methods should be able to provide data that is sufficiently representative, detailed and accurate for the purpose of evaluation.

The research team will be expected to coordinate all data collection activities in-country, either directly or through a third-party, with the support of the Project Coordinator and M&E Coordinator. Embedded into this research project is the intention to build capacity of project field staff involved. As field office staff may be involved in data collection (depending on their availability and the proposed approach of the research team), it is expected that the research team provides guidance and capacity building for data collection and data entry. Ideally, if possible, field staff may also assist with the analysis of qualitative data. Project staff may be involved in data collection and field interactions, but the research team will be responsible for overall coordination and quality assurance.

V. EXPECTED TASKS AND OUTPUTS

It is expected the baseline research consultancy will involve the following tasks:

- Meet with Project Manager and relevant other staff for initial briefing and discussion of TOR (either in UK, Sierra Leone or virtually).
- Review project documentation (proposal, logframe, GEC Guidance notes etc.)
- Write an evaluation protocol and workplan for the baseline, and discuss schedule with Plan
- Review existing data collection tools from similar Plan education projects and adapt existing tools where appropriate
- Design data collection instruments, including questionnaires and all data entry processes, and qualitative tools adapted for different target groups as appropriate
- In collaboration with the project Evaluation Steering Group, develop ethical and child protection protocols and appropriate response mechanisms
- Review/revise sampling strategy and draw up list of sampling points
- Discuss and coordinate proposed research methods with project partners and the GEC Evaluation Manager for final agreement

- Coordinate the recruitment (if additional enumerators required) and train data collectors in-country in quantitative and qualitative methods
- Pilot data collection tools / data entry processes (including translation if necessary) and refine as required, including individual child-ability testing in reading and numeracy appropriate to the Sierra Leone school curricula for relevant age groups
- Oversee the start-up of the baseline project ensuring quality control processes are in place
- Provide on-going (possibly remote) technical support for the duration of the data collection process and ensure the on-going coordination and management of all data collection
- Analyse all data collected
- Provide summary data for key project logframe indicators
- Write a draft evaluation report and present to Plan and partners for discussion
- Finalise baseline report based on feedback received
- Produce additional report to guide the project monitoring and evaluation strategy (including recommendations for on-going monitoring, triangulation and analysis of data collected, revisions to baseline tools for use at mid-term and end-line stages, and guidance on ensuring the ultimate evaluability of the project)
- Development of child-friendly summary of report
- Verbal presentation of findings and recommendations in workshop/meeting(s) with Plan, partner and DFID stakeholders (in UK or Sierra Leone)
- Throughout the duration of the contract, provide Plan with fortnightly written management updates on progress to date, issues and planned actions

Specific outputs of the consultancy will be:

- A. Inception report and workplan
- B. Data collection methodology, including sampling strategy and collection tools
- C. Training and capacity building for data collection and entry and comprehensive Guidance Document
- D. Data analysis of quantitative and qualitative data
- E. Baseline figures for logframe indicators
- F. Draft and final baseline reports
- G. M&E Recommendations report
- H. A 'child-friendly' summary of the baseline report to aid sharing of key findings with girls and boys and support them in the advocacy at the local level
- I. All raw data files including quantitative output and syntax files, qualitative transcripts etc.

The expected format for the final baseline report and M&E Recommendations report will be agreed during inception phase.

VI. TIMEFRAME AND FUNDING

The baseline study has to be carried out between February (depending on confirmation of funding) and May; the contract would start as soon as possible and the finalized report and logframe baseline data would have to be submitted by 31st July 2013. If the timeframe is the only constraint for an interested and qualified organisation, we would be still interested in reviewing the application and discussing alternative timeframes.

Plan UK has an indicative budget of 50,000 GBP for this work. Please note, the budget allocation is for the baseline phase only.

VII. SELECTION CRITERIA

The successful research partner will have a solid track record on the criteria below, with examples of evidence for each.

General criteria

1. Demonstrable expertise on girls rights and gender equality
2. Thematic expertise in education
3. Geographic expertise in West Africa, preferably Sierra Leone

Technical criteria

4. Experience in quantitative methods and analysis
5. Experience in qualitative methods and analysis, participatory research, action research
6. Experience in project monitoring and evaluation systems, including those using participatory approaches and 'hard to measure' indicators (i.e. empowerment, governance, well-being, etc.)
7. Experience in designing and conducting rigorous impact assessments (including using experimental/quasi-experimental and/or theory-based evaluation methodologies)
8. Evidence of strong downward accountability mechanisms used with project stakeholders/research participants to actively share results and learning
9. Evidence of use of ethical considerations and methodological measures for conducting research with girls, women, boys, men and particularly those who might be disadvantaged and marginalized (disability, HIV status, etc.)
10. Evidence of successfully designing and managing large-scale, rigorous and robust research processes and evaluations

Track record

11. Evidence of successful collaboration with NGOs, and particularly collaborations which included capacity building and 'on-the-job' training with field office staff.
12. Evidence of client responsiveness, creativity and flexibility of approaches towards clients' needs and/or challenges in research implementation.
13. Experience meeting the demands of large institutional donor-funded programmes and coordinating activities with multiple stakeholders
14. Evidence of producing high quality, published research and active dissemination of research findings

VIII. Application process and timeline

We invite interested research teams to submit the following application documents:

- a) Expression of interest addressing track record and selection criteria
- b) Technical proposal for the baseline study
- c) CVs, d) budget (separating core consultancy costs and daily rates of team members and in-country data collection costs)
- d) An example of previous similar work
- e) A statement regarding the legal, financial and professional independence of the research team from Plan, IRC, FAWE and Handicap International, and a declaration of any real or perceived conflict of interest with any project stakeholder
- f) An indication of whether or not the research team would be willing and able to be involved in a longer-term partnership leading to the final project evaluation, and if yes, a short (one page) outline of the proposed methodological and management approach to the partnership and indicative top-line budget. Please note that this is not part of the selection criteria for the baseline consultancy and if potential research teams are not willing to enter into a longer-term partnership this will not be treated as a barrier to their application for the baseline consultancy.

Please send applications to:

Maggie Korde – Girls' Education Programme Manager, Plan UK Email: maggie.korde@plan-uk.org (please copy michaela.kelly@plan-uk.org in your correspondence)

Tel: 0300 777 9777 (within the UK) or + (44) 20 7482 9777 from abroad.

The deadline for applying is February 8th, 2011. We are aiming to select the research team by the end of February. The contract would ideally start at the end of February or beginning of March.