Teaching and Learning Self-Assessment Tool for Projects

Contents

1: Objectives of the tool

The Teaching and Learning Self-Assessment Tool (T&LSAT) was developed in 2018 by the Fund Manager for the Girls' Education Challenge (GEC) and is now used by more than 40 projects across 17 countries.

Every GEC project commits to increasing girls' literacy and numeracy outcomes. The project's Theory of Change defines how this will be achieved through its teaching and learning approach. The T&LSAT was developed to support the analysis of these teaching and learning approaches. It encourages a process of self-reflection and an adaptive approach to project development. It encourages teams to reflect on how confident they are that their teaching and learning approach is 'on track' and effective, and to make adaptations as needed. The process also systematises the use of evidence and data to inform programme design decisions and adaptations, and it facilitates decisions on how to best monitor progress and improve evidence.

The tool focuses specifically on the learners (girls/young people) and educators (teachers and other education personnel), which allows discussions to focus on *their* needs and how they can best be met by the project. The tool can be adapted for use with different groups and across various contexts.

Using this tool on a regular basis (around every six months), and with clear evidence to support the analysis, helps teams to adapt teaching and learning interventions where needed to understand and optimise student learning gains, and capture and respond to the professional needs of the teachers and/or educators with whom the project is working.

2: How to use the tool

2.1: Expectations

The T&LSAT is divided into **four expectations**. Each expectation represents a fundamental step in good programming and each is integral to a strong teaching and learning approach. When a project is fully confident it has 'met' each expectation, girls are more likely to achieve their learning outcomes.

Expectation 1	**Assessment** of girls' learning needs and educators' professional development needs
Expectation 2	**Design** of teaching and learning activities
Expectation 3	**Monitoring** of teaching and learning activities
Expectation 4	**Readiness to adapt** teaching and learning activities

Through analysis of each expectation, projects can reflect on what is working well, and not working well – and delve deeper into the risks and assumptions underpinning the intervention logic. The tool is based on the principle that all projects will regularly test their assumptions and adapt to learning. This adaptive process should be built into the projects' review processes.

For expectations 1 to 3, projects are asked to think about learners and teachers/educators separately to ensure the needs of each are given due consideration.

The four expectations build upon each other and evolve over time. As such, in the early stages of a project, staff may have more clarity about needs and design (Expectations 1 and 2) and less about adaptation (Expectation 4). However, at no time will there be nothing more to learn and no more improvements possible – learning and adapting are an ongoing part of the process.

2.2: Guidance questions

The guidance questions in the tool are designed to prompt thinking and to help project staff assess and evidence their level of confidence in each expectation area.

The majority of GEC projects work in classrooms and directly with teachers to improve teaching and learning. Therefore, the guidance questions generally use the terminology of teachers/ educators and classrooms. However, where a project does not do this (for example, where instead it supports parents, mentors, coaches, tutors or other educators), any person who supports learning can be included in the cells or text that refers to 'teachers'. Similarly, interventions in the community or the wider learning environment, not just the classroom, can also be included. In such cases, guidance questions can be altered to better align with a project's activities and the local context.

2.3: Confidence levels

The T&LSAT does not seek to establish whether projects are doing the 'right' or the 'wrong' things. Instead it encourages a reflective conversation around their confidence that things are on the right track – and the basis (or evidence) for this. For each expectation, the

guidance questions help staff assess how confident they are with regards each expectation. Staff are guided to cite the evidence[1] to justify this level. The four levels of confidence are: very confident; confident; some concerns and need support. The table below outlines some descriptors for each expectation:

Levels	Description
Very Confident	A strong evidence base for the context and needs; you have identified and are testing assumptions and mitigating risks; gathering relevant data; learning to adapt.
Confident	Good and reliable evidence; some areas where you are still working towards a better approach or fuller understanding; monitoring systems are good; prepared to adapt.
Some Concerns	Identification of some concerns with available evidence; you have a plan but it needs to be reviewed and some assumptions remain untested; OR the situation is fluid/complex and needs further verification and close monitoring; gaps in clear evidence for adaptations.
Need Support	Working to build an evidence base, but unsure about all gaps; OR the situation is more complex than anticipated, you have uncovered new barriers or constraints, the situation is growing more complex; need support to design effective approaches; need support to gather important data of progress; unclear how to adapt.

The process of completing the tool should be consultative and collaborative. Whilst one person may lead (e.g. Education Expert or Project Lead), the self-assessment works best when other team members, including those from downstream partner organisations, also participate. Each person involved should have access to the framework and questions that guide the discussion.

As each expectation is discussed, it is a good idea to specifically list the evidence informing the discussion, the questions or assumptions this evidence addresses, and which questions or assumptions may still need to be tested/evidenced and how this will be done.

Types of evidence include evaluation reports, research, monitoring data, needs assessments, project documents (theory of change, logframe, risk log, monitoring and evaluation tools) and data from the school or education system.

It may also be the case that there are varied levels of confidence for each expectation. For example, staff may be 'very confident' about one aspect of the needs' assessment of girls, yet at the same time have 'some concerns' about another aspect. Once projects have

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[1] Please refer to best practice about assessing the weight of evidence to understand this concept, e.g. DFID How To Note on Assessing the Strength of Evidence, March 2014) or the BE2 guidance on Assessing the Strength of Evidence in the Education Sector.

assessed each expectation and compiled the evidence, they will need to agree the level of confidence for each expectation 'as a whole'. It is important to be as honest and objective as possible as this helps move towards improvements and progress.

2.4: Moderation process

The team's overall confidence level rating is entered for each expectation area into the **Project Self-Rating Summary Table** (p.15) and the tool is shared with an 'independent moderator/critical friend'. This person should be very familiar with the project's aims and the teaching and learning activities. Serving as a 'critical friend', they should be able to provide an informed but objective view of the self-assessed ratings. The moderation involves a discussion between the 'critical friend' and the project staff on their initial ratings. It provides an opportunity for further reflection and critical thinking around the rating of each expectation. Post discussion, the critical friend and the team should complete the **Moderated Ratings Table** (p.15) and decide if the ratings stay the same, or change. In many cases across the GEC, the moderation process has led to a change in the initial ratings given.

Summary of the T&LSAT process

- Identify the person to lead the self-assessment process (this may be the education expert or project lead).

- Invite project staff to participate, including field teams/downstream partners.

- Ensure all those participating understand the purpose and know the process.

- Using the guidance questions, facilitate collaborative, reflective discussion around each expectation.

- Record the evidence (for each expectation) in the tables on p. 8-14. Projects may find you have varied levels of confidence for different aspects of the same expectation.

- Together decide the overall level of confidence for each expectation (and any plans for follow-up) and record in the Project Self-Rating Summary Table on p. 15.

- Share the completed tool with the moderator/critical friend ahead of the T&L moderation meeting.

- Discuss the evidence and follow-up plans with the moderator in the T&L moderation meeting.

- Together with the moderator agree moderated ratings completing the table on p. 15.

- Draw on the evidence and ratings in future meetings where the project team may be planning actions that inform project adaptation.

- It is helpful if the tool is completed on a regular basis, for example, every six months. This allows time for a period of adaptation before preparing for another review.

3: Teaching and Learning Self-Assessment Tool Template

Project information

Organisation	
Project name	
Who participated in the reflection process (organisations and roles)?	
Date completed	

Expectation 1a: Teaching and learning needs assessment – Girls

Key questions	Further considerations
• How confident are you in your understanding of girls' specific literacy and numeracy learning needs? • Do you have reliable baseline data on the level of girls' literacy and numeracy for different sub-groups? • Do you have further evidence that details the specific learning needs of each sub-group of target girls (e.g. from learning assessments, baseline, marginalisation analysis)? • Have you analysed the negative social or gender norms and how these impact girls' attendance and learning, including safety barriers (on the way to, and in, school) and determined how they will be mitigated?	• What are girls' literacy/ numeracy levels compared with other learners? • How are schools and educators equipped to cater for children with disabilities? • What are girls' workloads or care responsibilities and how does this impact their education? • Are there considerations regarding the language of instruction? • Are there considerations regarding psychosocial needs? • Are you ensuring you have sought out girls' reports of their experiences of learning and the learning environment (gender equitable, safe, accessible, conducive to learning)? • What is the culture of the school environment and management? Is the school leadership aware of the challenges girls face – particularly with regards attendance and learning?

Very confident	Confident	Some concerns	Need support	Plans for follow-up

Expectation 1b: Teaching and learning needs assessment – Teachers/Educators

Key questions	Further considerations
• What do you understand about the professional development needs of educators (teachers, coaches, mentors, tutors, classroom assistants, etc.)? • How confident are you about the project's data on educators' skill level and specific professional development needs? • Do you have data about policies, plans and interventions in the school, learning space or sector that are pertinent to improving teaching? • What level of professional development support have educators received and/or have access to (e.g. mentoring, coaching, training, gender responsive teaching techniques or other professional development support)? • What confidence do you have in educators' level of subject knowledge and subject-specific pedagogy?	• How is teacher/educator supply and availability influencing the effectiveness of teaching and learning (e.g. gender ratio; pupil/teacher ratio; percentage of qualified teachers; absentee rate)? • Have you assessed if teaching and learning is gender-responsive, and supportive of girls' needs and aspirations? • Are there appropriate, quality teaching and learning materials? Have they been reviewed/ developed to ensure they are promoting gender equality? • What is educators' confidence in the use of assessment of learning and the use of formative assessment? • Do teacher professional development (TPD) opportunities facilitate effective learning and development? (Is the TPD curriculum relevant, at the appropriate level etc?) • Is there leadership and oversight of professional development?

Very confident	Confident	Some concerns	Need support	Plans for follow-up

Expectation 2a: Teaching and learning design – Girls

Key questions	Further considerations
• How do the teaching and learning interventions respond to your analysis of the identified teaching and learning needs of girls? • How will activities lead to changes that will ultimately deliver on your intermediate outcomes and learning outcome? • Are any key learning needs not addressed in your project design, and if so, why not? (i.e. possibly they will be met by another programme, in which case who will link to this work and how will you track that this is happening?)	• Why do you think your approaches will have a positive impact on girls' learning and what evidence do you have for this? • Has the project identified all the risks to and assumptions of the approach? Including the impact of the approach for girls vs boys. Is the project managing any risks of backlash, or unintended negative consequences for the girls? • After identifying and evidencing key barriers and constraints for girls, have you mapped how your interventions will overcome these? • Are you confident that the project is responding to girls' safety concerns? Are you confident that the project is responding to negative gender norms in and outside the classroom?

Very confident	Confident	Some concerns	Need support	Plans for follow-up

Expectation 2b: Teaching and learning design – Teachers/Educators

Key questions	Further considerations
- Can you show how the gaps identified in Expectation 1 are being addressed in the project design? - Are there specific needs of sub-groups of girls that are not currently being met? Do educators require new skills, behaviours or competencies or other changes in order to meet these needs? - How will activities lead to changes that will ultimately deliver on your intermediate outcomes and learning outcome? - Are there any key teaching competency gaps the project has been unable to address? If so, are there specific reasons it has been unable to do so?	- After identifying and evidencing key barriers and constraints around teacher supply and quality, have you mapped how your interventions will overcome these? - Why do you think your approaches will work for the varied sub-groups of girls and what evidence do you have for this? - Have you identified the risks and assumptions that your approach relies upon? - Do teachers recognise their role, and are they equipped, to provide gender equitable classrooms that allow equitable participation of girls and boys? For example, through their own language, classroom set up, pupil positioning, methods of interaction and feedback.

Very confident	Confident	Some concerns	Need support	Plans for follow-up

Expectation 3a: Monitoring teaching and learning – Girls

Key questions	Further considerations
• Does the project have systems, tools and mechanisms in place for the effective monitoring of each key activity and the difference they are making to girls' learning? • How is the project gathering relevant data to effectively capture girls' progress in literacy and numeracy on a regular basis? • How is the project tracking whether girls' experiences in the classroom or the learning space are changing? Is the project tracking how safe and gender-responsive learning spaces are for girls?	• Are girls more engaged in their learning and are they learning more than they would without the project intervention? • How will you track how children, parents and others in the community are perceiving the changes in learning practices and outcomes and how these changes are affecting them? Are shifting gender norms being measured? • How consultative and participatory are your monitoring approaches? Is there a platform for girls' voices to be heard and responded to?

Very confident	Confident	Some concerns	Need support	Plans for follow-up

Expectation 3b: Monitoring teaching and learning – Teachers/Educators

Key questions	Further considerations
• How is the project monitoring changes in attitudes, practice and behaviour of educators and other staff to create more equitable and inclusive environments? • How is the project monitoring how educators are using the newly acquired skills or competencies and whether girls are experiencing more effective learning? • How will you track educators' views of the value and quality of the interventions? • Is the monitoring approach gender sensitive (e.g. data disaggregated by sex, female staff consulted, gender-sensitive tools used and analysis)?	• How will you ensure educators know if they are meeting the needs of all their learners? • How will you track how girls, parents, government, etc. are better able to advocate for quality teaching? • Note how consultative and participatory your monitoring approaches are, why you believe this is appropriate, and whether you would be aware of unintended consequences of increasing agency and involvement of girls in classrooms. • Are boys engaged as allies to achieving more gender equitable environments in and outside the schools?

Very confident	Confident	Some concerns	Need support	Plans for follow-up

Expectation 4: Readiness to adapt the teaching and learning approach

Key questions	Further considerations
• Is the project planning and creating space and opportunity for learning and adaptation of its teaching and learning approach? Are girls and women involved in decision-making concerning adaptations? • Is the project reflecting on monitoring and learning data to adapt (e.g. undertaking wider consultation with beneficiaries and stakeholders to learn about their experiences, and factoring this information into activities for the next period of implementation)?	• Consider using a clear description of what 'success' looks like for girls and teachers, and adapting activities accordingly, charting progress towards this. • Are the adaptations showing strong linkages to the original aims of the project (increase in girls learning of literacy and numeracy)?

Very confident	Confident	Some concerns	Need support	Plans for follow-up

Project Self-Rating Summary Table

Please record the project's self-assessed overall confidence level ratings for each expectation (delete as appropriate).

Expectation	Confidence level – Girls (a)	Confidence level – Teachers/Educators (b)
Expectation 1: T&L needs assessment	Very Confident / Confident / Some Concerns / Needs Support	Very Confident / Confident / Some Concerns / Needs Support
Expectation 2: T&L design	Very Confident / Confident / Some Concerns / Needs Support	Very Confident / Confident / Some Concerns / Needs Support
Expectation 3: Monitoring T&L	Very Confident / Confident / Some Concerns / Needs Support	Very Confident / Confident / Some Concerns / Needs Support
Expectation 4: Readiness to adapt	Very Confident / Confident / Some Concerns / Needs Support	

Moderated Ratings Table

Following discussions with your independent moderator, record the agreed, moderated confidence level ratings for each expectation.

Expectation	Confidence level – Girls (a)	Confidence level – Teachers/Educators (b)
Expectation 1: T&L needs assessment	Very Confident / Confident / Some Concerns / Needs Support	Very Confident / Confident / Some Concerns / Needs Support
Expectation 2: T&L design	Very Confident / Confident / Some Concerns / Needs Support	Very Confident / Confident / Some Concerns / Needs Support
Expectation 3: Monitoring T&L	Very Confident / Confident / Some Concerns / Needs Support	Very Confident / Confident / Some Concerns / Needs Support
Expectation 4: Readiness to adapt	Very Confident / Confident / Some Concerns / Needs Support	

4: Findings and tips for using the tool

Findings

The use of this tool across the GEC has supported the following shifts in projects working towards a more reflective adaptive approach.

- The process has allowed project teams to engage in greater reflection and to think more critically about their teaching and learning activities. For example, initially, some projects concluded they were 'very confident' across all expectations (without presenting evidence to justify this). With more experience, the same projects have become more self-critical in their rating.

- The process has allowed for a more systematic way of ensuring the use of evidence to inform decisions and adaptations to project design. Project teams are increasingly recognising the value of providing multiple and compelling examples of evidence that underpins their self-rating.

- Projects are increasingly recognising that identifying 'some concerns' or 'need support' can be helpful. It flags issues that require attention or where greater capacity is needed. Projects have also learnt that ignoring issues can be harmful and that using evidence to foresee issues – and deal with them early – can improve the quality of interventions.

- The process reveals project teams are making the link between the different expectations and how important these are to quality programming. For example, the activities detailed within the project design (Expectation 2) must be based on evidence and correspond to the identified needs of both educators and beneficiaries (Expectation 1).

Tips for using the tool

- It is important that project teams are clear on the purpose of the T&LSAT process from the outset. If staff are clear that the objective is to encourage self-reflection to improve programme quality (as opposed to a 'scoring' of activities), they are more likely to engage more meaningfully.

- The T&LSAT process should be embedded in project workplans and review processes from the outset. The process will be complemented by, and be aligned to project's on-going, regular technical monitoring.

- Project partners should be involved as much as possible in the process, allowing field staff to share their experiences and insights.

- When possible, the process should be done with the relevant group of people in person and involve staff who are closely acquainted with the teaching and learning activities.

- This tool may be adapted to suit the needs of projects and practitioners in different contexts.

5: Examples of GEC project adaptations

Through assessments and reflective processes, GEC projects have demonstrated increased ability to make appropriate adaptations to interventions related to teaching and learning. The examples below highlight concrete adaptations that have occurred through self-assessment and other complimentary processes – including projects' own technical expertise and monitoring processes.

Adaptations to the general approach

One project, which was running a community-based education programme, documented how it was over-accelerating the school year (i.e. the programme was trying to cover too much content in one school year). The monitoring data revealed that this was too much content to cover in the given time, and that the resulting heavy homework load was leading to community backlash as girls have also domestic chores. The project partners discussed these key issues and proposed an adaptation to revise the schedule and adjust the pacing for their community-based education (CBE) students.

Adaptations to interventions at the level of the teacher

Another project analysed their data on teacher training which revealed that, post training, teachers were not showing signs of implementing many of the concepts learned through training. The project's regular monitoring of training also showed there was not enough focus on literacy and numeracy. This was discussed in detail by project staff and partners. A decision was made to narrow the focus of training to Maths and Literacy, and engage more with head teachers to strengthen teacher support strategies. This appears to have already led to an improvement in teaching quality.

Improvements and adaptations at the level of the girl

Another GEC project has strengthened all activities for inclusion and safeguarding based on the evidence of vulnerabilities of different sub-groups of girls. As well as increasing the basic needs support to particularly vulnerable girls, they also made changes to teacher training content and added dedicated capacity development for Government Officials at the District Level (Education Officers and Cluster Supervisors) to supervise and monitor schools/teachers for gender/inclusion/safeguarding responsiveness. The project engaged positively with partners at each level on all adaptations.

Improvement and adaptations to the monitoring tools and process

One project discussed the need to continuously capture data on teachers' training needs to inform the continuous professional development activities and refresher trainings. As it was recognised that new and live data was needed from the field, monitoring tools were adapted to ensure reliable and regular data on teachers' professional development needs were being captured to inform programme activities.