

## PLAN INTERNATIONAL TECHNICAL BRIEFING

# Strengthening the Teacher Workforce through Innovation



**“Human capital development, especially the provision of free quality education for all, constitutes the main goal of our government.”**

– National Development Plan 2019–2023, pp. iv

Education is a national priority in Sierra Leone. The national policy on Free Quality School Education (FQSE) guarantees access for all children to education. This can only be achieved through a major increase in the quantity, quality and diversity of the workforce, with at least 15,000 new teachers trained and hired.

The **Learning Assistant & Student Teacher (LA/ST)** model offers a solution to the critical bottlenecks in the supply of quality teachers in Sierra Leone.

## The Education Challenge

Sierra Leone has a limited supply of quality educators, large regional inequality and a persistent lack of female role models in the classroom.

**16%** of children meet the expected level of literacy for their grade.



**36%** of students enrol in secondary school.



**18%** complete secondary school, most from urban areas.



**20%** of teenage girls are pregnant or have given birth.



**28%** of teachers are female, the 6<sup>th</sup> lowest share of female teachers in the world.



**40%** of girls are married by the age 18.



## The LA/ST Model

Solving the learning crisis in Sierra Leone requires breaking the cycle of low education outcomes and low teacher quality. Developed by the **Open University** and implemented by **Plan International**, the Learning Assistant & Student Teacher (LA/ST) model offers a proven pathway for young women in rural communities to become qualified teachers and fill a critical gap in the education system.

### Learning Assistant Phase:

Young women interested in becoming teachers identified and selected

12-month return-to-learning course with a personal tutor before Teacher Training College (TTC) entrance exam

Work placement in local primary schools to develop skills.

### Student Teacher Phase:

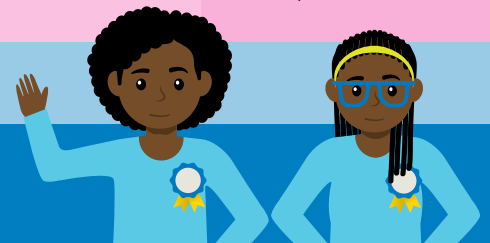
Continued work placement to develop classroom practice

Personal Mentors provide regular academic and social support

Enrolment into the TTC 3-year Distance Programme with Residential Study Camps

### Final Phase:

Pass TTC exams and become qualified teachers.



After completing both phases, certified female teachers with substantial classroom experience are ready to teach at remote schools across Sierra Leone.

The LA/ST model responds directly to critical bottlenecks that limit the supply of teachers:

- Participants do not have to be school graduates, overcoming the narrow and inequitable requirement of passing the secondary school exam.
- Integrating expert mentoring within pre-service teacher training increases quality and engagement, reducing attrition.
- Providing incentives and stipends reduces the opportunity costs for young women to train and increases family support for trainees.
- Matching newly qualified female teachers to schools where participants undertook their training supports overall retention, ensures remote and rural schools have adequate staff, and removes the high cost of teacher relocation.



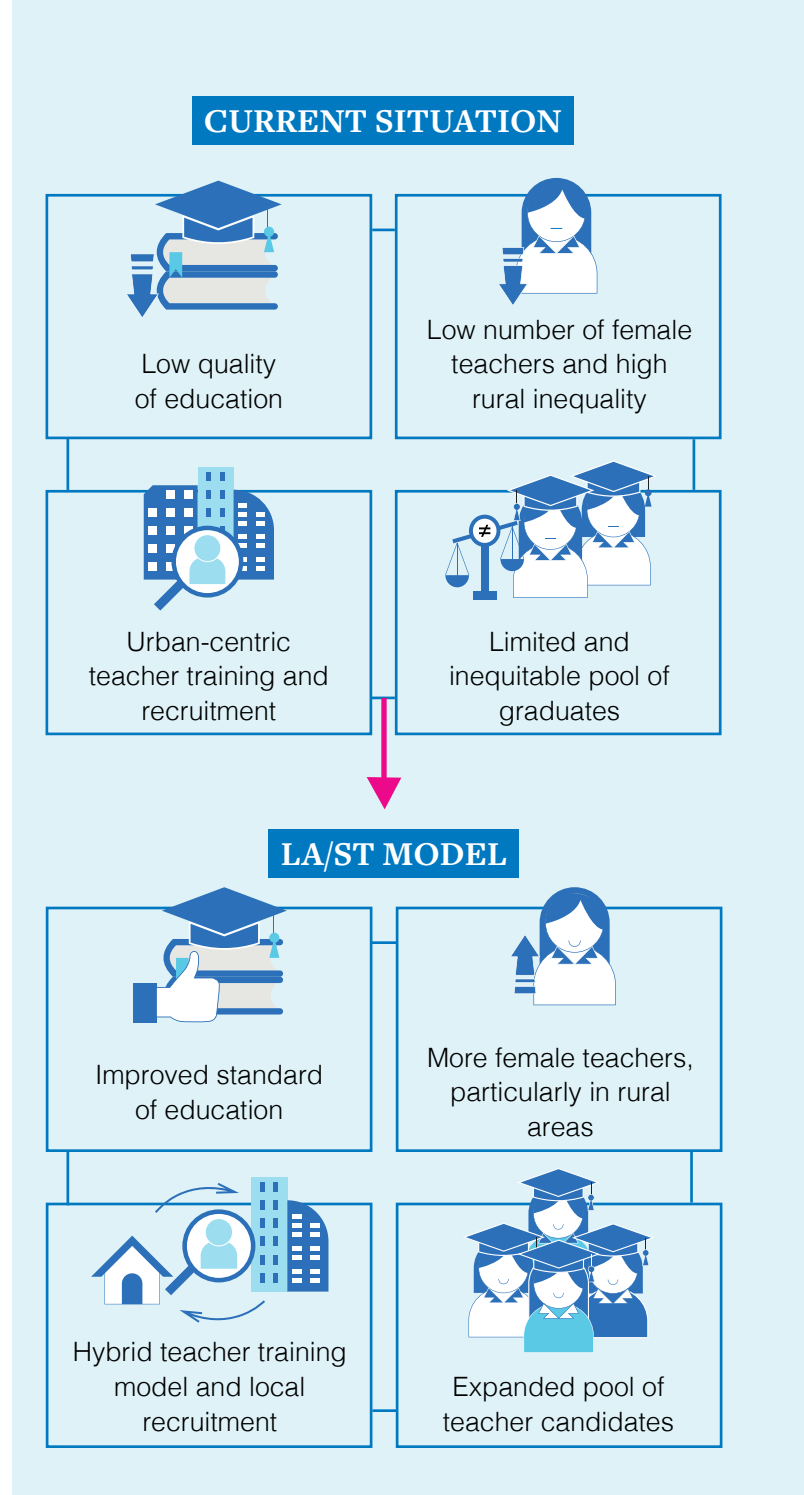
Targeting female trainees increases gender equality in the workforce and having female role models in the classroom directly supports the attendance and learning of girls.

## The Impact

The LA/ST model has been implemented in four cohorts, training almost 1,000 young women in Sierra Leone since 2014 to become qualified teachers. The model has shown significant impact across all stages of the teacher training cycle:

- LA/ST participants pass TTC entrance exams at higher rates than non-LA/ST entrants, have higher retention rates over the full three years of the TTC programme and complete their final exams at a higher standard and at a greater rate than non-LA/ST trainee teachers.
- The LA/ST model offers excellent value for money with an average annual cost per trainee of 754 USD.

The LA/ST model increases the number of qualified teachers in poorly served and remote schools, provides teachers of a higher quality, reduces teacher attrition and lessens the high costs and gender inequality associated with relocating teachers.



Learn more at [plan-international.org/sierra-leone](https://plan-international.org/sierra-leone)

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