



Volunteer Job Pack

Job Title	Unlocking Talent Research Assistant
Country	Malawi
Employer	Ministry of Education
Duration	8 months
Job Description	<p>Unlocking Talent (UT) is an EdTech project that has been implemented over the last seven years in Malawi using a literacy and numeracy app developed by onebillion in the local language, Chichewa. It has been delivered so far through the learning centre approach, where early grade learners spend a number of 60-minute-sessions a week in a purpose-built learning centre accessing the onecourse app individually through tablets. UT is developing a variety of different EdTech delivery models to find the most cost-effective model that can deliver increased numeracy and literacy gains for early grade learners at scale.</p> <p>This new delivery model of the UT project employs a solar powered projector that is connected to a tablet. The solar-powered projector delivery model places the teacher at the centre of the learning process and empowers him or her to deliver high-quality literacy and numeracy lessons by leading children through digital content provided by onebillion and Ubongo, delivered by a tablet and beamed to a large screen. The teacher actively scaffolds learning by navigating the digital content, moving around the class and selecting individual children to complete in app tasks either directly on the tablet, through interactive class activities or by indicating their response on the large screen.</p> <p>The project is looking for a research assistant who will manage and coordinate the in-country evaluation research in schools in collaboration with the research team to ensure data is acquired reliably within the specified timeframe. The research assistant will be responsible for checking data is acquired as to the research and ethical protocols, entering data into an excel spreadsheet, carrying out structured observations, analysing field notes and trends and analysing for both impact and process evaluations using SPSS. They will also be responsible for reporting and disseminating report findings.</p>

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1. Job Description

The volunteer role is to work closely with the research team and the EdTech specialists to manage and coordinate the evaluation research in the 12 project schools.

Work closely with EdTech specialists to ensure data is acquired reliably and within the specified timeframe

Record and respond to any disruptions to the research process in consultation with the University of Nottingham (UoN)

Check data is acquired as to the research and ethical protocols to ensure data security and GDPR compliance

Enter data into an excel spreadsheet, checking for accuracy in coding and data entry, then convert to SPSS

Carry-out structured class observations in participating school for part of the process evaluation

Analyse field notes collected by EdTech Specialists for thematic trends

Analyse data under the supervision of UoN for both impact and process evaluations using SPSS

Conduct review of relevant literature to project and synthesise findings in a report

Assist UoN with reporting on the evaluation research, both in written and verbal formats and assist with dissemination of research findings to donors and stakeholders

Representation of the Unlocking Talent project and VSO education programme in various stakeholders forums in the districts.

Schools develop DET plans and timetables and integrate the activities into the school routine

Teachers are confident in using EdTech within their normal literacy and numeracy lessons

School use EdTech to improve literacy and numeracy for Standard 1 learners including girls and those with special educational needs and disability

School management committees support EdTech at their schools

Teachers are able to use EdTech to improve their pedagogy and whole class teaching practice

Objectives will be confirmed in a three-way discussion between the volunteer, employer (DEM) and VSO in the first three months of the placement.

Building and Sustaining working relationships

The social skills to build and actively maintain working relationships that foster teamwork and collaboration with others for the benefit of a common goal.

Open Minded and Respectful

A non-judgemental approach that values other people and culture.

Seeking and Sharing Knowledge

Recognition that learning is a two-way and continuous process.

Facilitating Positive Change

The ability to analyse problems and develop lasting solutions in line with VSO approaches.

Adaptability

A flexible approach and the ability to adapt behaviour to different situations.

Resilience

The self-confidence to work with a variety of situations, diverse people and ambiguity.

Essential

Minimum of a Bachelor's Degree in Education, Child Development or Psychology. Those with more advanced qualifications will have an added advantage

Experience in conducting research in a school environment

Excellent organisational and communication skills in English, both written and oral.

High proficiency in Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Teams etc.)

Self-starter able to work with and quickly determine own work plan

Computer literate (MS Office) and confident in the practical use of technology for teaching and communication.

Knowledge and experience of how children learn and how to apply that to improvement of learning outcomes

You will be required to bring your own laptop as VSO is unable to provide computers for this project

A willingness to ride a motorcycle as this will be the primary method of transport when visiting schools in your district (lessons will be provided).

Desirable

Experience of developing training modules Experience and interest in use of EdTech through a projector approach Knowledge and experience in primary school teaching and/or early grade learners especially literacy, numeracy and English as an additional language.

			<p>Experience in action research, data analysis and use of data for decision making</p> <p>Knowledge and experience in monitoring and evaluation</p> <p>Knowledge and experience in financial management, arranging capacity building activities</p> <p>Experience working in sub Saharan Africa or resource poor settings</p>
<p>Responsible to:</p>	<p>The Project manager</p>		

2. Personal considerations

In addition to the job description, the following information should be used when considering whether a placement is suitable for you.

Personal health considerations

If you have a significant current or past medical condition and/or you have general concerns about staying healthy as a volunteer, please use this information to assess whether this placement will be suitable for you. All volunteers require medical clearance from a VSO medical adviser before they are able to take up a placement with VSO. Occasionally, VSO may consider that this placement is too great a risk for you in terms of your personal health and you would be advised to consider a different placement. For further guidance about medical assessment and volunteering with a medical condition please see the [frequently asked questions on VSO website](#).

Access to medical care and support

The standard and quality of local medical care and support available at this placement will depend on its location within the country. Health facilities are likely to be more poorly resourced in rural areas in terms of medical expertise, equipment, infrastructure and regular supplies of medication. However, this may not be the case in the capital city or in a larger town, where in some countries there may be a reasonable standard of medical care.

If you wish to discuss your personal circumstances or health concerns in confidence with VSO's medical team before you apply for this placement please contact medical@vsoint.org.

Accompanying partner or family: If you have a partner or children who are planning to accompany you to your placement, please use this section to assess whether this placement will be suitable for you.

VSO Malawi can not guarantee a placement or job for an accompanying partner. The cost for accompanying family members is not covered by the volunteer allowance.

In Lilongwe and some larger towns there are international, private schools. If you are considering bringing your school-age children, this can be discussed in more detail during the selection process.

It is generally fine for volunteers wishing to come with a partner. The main challenge is that volunteers may be in shared accommodation so this has to be taken into consideration.

Motorcycle requirements

Motorbike riding is essential for visiting schools to train the teachers and support them. There is no other means of transport in between schools. The volunteer must undergo professional motorbike training before coming to Malawi. Once in Malawi the volunteer will be given supplementary training to get familiar with the local terrain and road regulations. VSO will provide the motorbike and contribute to fuel use. The volunteer is also required to come along with a VSO-recommended crash helmet and also a valid international driving permit/licence to facilitate the process of acquiring a local driving/riding licence. Further information can be provided during the selection process.

Security information

Residential security guards are generally required. VSO provides guard pay. Malawi is generally a friendly and safe environment. As far as personal safety is concerned, it is easy to wander around the town and feel unthreatened; in fact most people will be only too eager to chat and make you feel at home but the normal common sense precautions apply (e.g. locking doors, keeping money in a safe place, being careful who has access to your home, being extra careful when travelling, not walking around at night etc.)

– as anywhere in the world. Keep in mind that a volunteer is likely to be perceived as rich in a community comprising many poor people. However, it is never a good idea to be openly “flashy” with personal effects such as jewellery, mobile phones, cameras etc, as that highlights the concept that ‘foreign nationals have money/wealth’. As it is, many people will approach you with demands” VSO provides in country training for all arriving volunteers to develop behaviour to reduce risk.

3. Background and contextual information

VSO has partnered with onebillion to address the issue of improving learning outcomes for primary school children at a core level: to improve the **quality** of instruction available at Standards 1 and 2 in literacy and numeracy. We propose to use a proven and innovative methodology of using mobile tablet technology in the classroom to allow for highly tailored and interactive learning platforms. Our overarching aim is to improve the **quality** of basic education for primary school age children, especially girls, in Malawi by capitalising on the most recent evidence-based innovations in digital education technology (DET). We will do so by focusing on four interrelated pillars: 1) children’s learning, 2) teacher performance, 3) community engagement to encourage learning, and 4) technological performance and effectiveness.

The software, provided free-of-charge, is carefully structured to cover the whole of the Malawi Standard 1 and Standard 2 curriculum. This project plans to put systems in place to ensure that every Standard 1 and 2 child in the project schools has access to learning on a tablet. We have an evidence base that learning takes place if we can bring together “child **plus** tablet **plus** educational software”. A Random Controlled Trial at Biwi Primary School, Lilongwe showed that “After just 8 weeks of using the Masamu tablet intervention children tripled their specific mathematics curriculum knowledge, with Standard 2-3 children raising attainment levels to a higher level than the average shown by Standard 4 with normal pedagogical practice.” Additionally, “The Masamu tablet

intervention is effective in raising mathematical standards even in low achievers... Over the 8-week intervention period, 78% of low achievers who received the Masamu tablet intervention improved their maths ability to a level typical for their Standard, whereas only 17% of children who received normal practice raised their maths attainment to within the normal range." An evaluation of tablets with the same software (but versioned into English) at a primary school in Nottingham, England showed that "At Dunkirk Primary School, after just 6 weeks of intervention with the EuroTalk maths apps, Foundation Year children (4-5 year olds) improved their maths ability by 40%, which is equivalent to 18 months of standard pedagogical practice, raising them to a level that is typical for children between Year 1 and Year 2. This equates to 3 months gain in maths ability for every 1 week of intervention."

This project is in line with Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 2 (**achieve universal primary education**), and Ministry of Education Science and Technology's Strategic Priority (**improvement of quality, equity, relevance, access and efficiency in basic education, working to meet the Education for All goals and MDGs**). Overall, we recognise that investment into **quality** primary school education for children, and especially girls, has profound long-term benefits, and stands the children in good stead to take part in, and drive, Malawi's economic growth. We estimate the cost of onebillion's tablet-based software, which is designed to take a child with no formal education and equip them with fundamental numeracy and literacy, to be below £10 per child.

This is an opportunity to participate in a unique and innovative project which has great potential to influence how children learn in Malawi. This is in line with the VSO Malawi country objectives which aim to contribute to the quality of education in Malawi.

Further information on VSO's work in each of the countries we work in can be found on the [VSO website](#).