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Final Research Report:

NRC's **Never Too Late to Learn** Programme in Tanzania and the DRC

empatika

Stats4SD

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About BRiCE (Building Resilience in Crises through Education)

In 2017, the EU launched the 'Building Resilience: Education Opportunities in Fragile and Crisis Affected Environments (BRiCE) Programme' to improve access to quality education in pre-school, primary and lower secondary levels for children in fragile and crisis-affected environments. At the end of 2017, four projects were selected by the EU (Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA), previously called DG DEVCO), with the following lead applicants: Oxfam/IBIS, Save the Children, and Plan International and the Norwegian Refugee Council.

The four projects were implemented as of 1 March 2018, had an initial duration of 4 years. They took place in 7 countries:

- DRC, Niger (Save the Children)
- Ethiopia, Somalia (Plan International)
- South Sudan, Uganda (Oxfam IBIS)
- DRC, Tanzania (NRC)

Whilst the 4 projects were not set up as a single programme, they all aimed at developing evidence-based models for delivering safe, quality basic education for children in fragile and protracted crisis environments.

Each of the projects had embedded research into the projects' design aiming at generating evidence on what works in crisis affected environments. The intent was to provide evidence for policy development and intervention design at national, regional and global levels and make linkages to existing global and regional knowledge management networks and initiatives.

Source: European Commission, BRiCE Launch workshop Summary Report, 2018

About NRC's Never too Late to Learn Project

The project "Never too Late to Learn": *Providing displacement affected children with quality and protective alternative education in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Tanzania*, led by NRC was one of the four BRiCE consortia.

Total budget: 6,250,000 EUR (EU contribution 80%)

The project's aim was to facilitate and enhance quality Alternative Education (AE) and Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) programmes for 8,500 Burundian refugee children in Tanzania and internally displaced and returnee children in DRC, with a focus on out-of-school children and girls.

Activities aimed at empowering 11,250 children enrolled in ECCD, Accelerated Education and formal schools with the skills to influence and advocate for their own protection.

A comprehensive Teacher Professional Development (TPD) programme was implemented to increase quality, sustain attendance, and ensure protection of vulnerable children. The project also included a research component on accelerated education and academic resilience to broaden the evidence for education in diverse crisis contexts; a system strengthening component, and collection of best practices and lessons learnt on conflict sensitive education.

Partners: NORCAP, Babawatoto Centre for Children and Youth Trust, Mouvement International des Droits de l'Enfant, de la Femme, de l'Homme Veuf et de leur Promotion Sociale (MIDEFEHOPS), War Child UK, Child Resilience Alliance, Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE), Stats4SD and Empatika

This final research report presents the findings and recommendations of the project's research component.

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List of Abbreviations

AEP	Accelerated Education Programme
AEWG	Accelerated Education Working Group
ASER	Annual Status of Education Report
CRA	Child Resilience Alliance
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CYRM	Child and Youth Resilience Measure
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
EPST	Ministry of Primary, Secondary and Technical Education
IDP	internally displaced person
INEE	Inter Agency Network for Education in Emergencies
IPOSA	Integrated Programme for Out of School Adolescents
ISELA	International Social and Emotional Learning Assessment
IRC	International Rescue Committee
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
RRI	Resilience Research Institute
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
TENAFEP	Test National de Fin d'Études Primaires
TEP	Teacher Emergency Package
WCUK	War Child UK

Photo: Ephrem Chiruza/NRC

Introduction

This report presents the results of an independent assessment of the Accelerated Education Programme (AEP) 'Never Too Late to Learn' established by the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) in Tanzania and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in 2018. The assessment, conducted by Statistics for Development (Stats4SD) and Empatika, is based on multiple data streams. These are the monitoring data made available by the NRC for 2018 to 2020, the quantitative and qualitative data that was collected independently at different points between 2018 and 2020, and some final qualitative interviews conducted by the NRC country teams in 2021 for Tanzania and 2022 for DRC. Stats4SD and Empatika took over the completion of this research in September 2021, following the culmination of data collection activities conducted independently by Child Resilience Alliance (CRA), the previous research partner involved in this project.

Based on the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 and the Minimum Standards for Education developed by the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE), Alternative Education is one of the four response areas of the NRC's Global Education Strategy 2018-2020. Through providing flexible and age-appropriate learning opportunities in an accelerated format, AEPs aim to 'provide learners with equivalent, certified competencies for basic education using effective teaching and learning approaches that match their level of cognitive maturity'.[1] Basic education refers to primary and secondary education or the first eight years of formal schooling. AEPs are intended to support over-age, out of school children in transitioning to the respective formal education.

'Never Too Late to Learn' was introduced to improve access to quality and protective basic education for displaced and refugee children who never attended school or missed considerable periods of learning. Specifically, it targets Burundian refugee children in Tanzania, and internally displaced (IDP) and returnee children in the DRC. To encourage integration of displaced children, the programme in DRC and Tanzania also provides vulnerable children from the respective host communities with learning opportunities.

The programme was designed following a 2017 participatory assessment at the Mtendeli Refugee Camp conducted by NRC Tanzania, which found the education capacity among children to be low and a severe lack of learning spaces in their environments. Similarly in the DRC, pursuant to a needs analysis, NRC and War Child UK (WCUK) identified nearly 100,000 out-of-school children without any access to educational centres. Out-of-school and displaced children are highly vulnerable to risks such as exploitation and abuse, and the various barriers to resume school present an urgent need for safe learning spaces tailored to their specific needs.

To address the aforementioned barriers to education, Never Too Late to Learn determined four broad outcome areas. These areas are based on a review of evidence from similar interventions to improve school participation and learning in Africa and build on a micro-level analysis of the core barriers to improved outcomes. They also align with global good practices as identified by the Accelerated Education Working Group's (AEWG) 10 Principles for Effective Practice.[2]

1 NRC Global Education Strategy, 2018-2020, 30 October 2018. https://www.nrc.no/resources/policy-doc/nrc-global-education-core-competency-strategy---2018-2020

2 The AEWG is part of the INEE and comprises members supporting and/or funding Accelerated Education Programmes. The AEWG aims to improve the quality of AE through developing and disseminating tools and guidance to ensure AE is a relevant response and to support a more harmonized approach.

Accelerated Education Ten Principles for Effective Practice

Learners:

- Principle 1: AEP is flexible and for over-age learners.
- Principle 2: Curriculum, materials and pedagogy are genuinely accelerated, AE suitable and use relevant language of instruction.
- Principle 3: AE Learning environment is inclusive, safe and learning-ready.

Teachers:

- Principle 4: Teachers are recruited, supervised and remunerated.
- Principle 5: Teachers participate in continuous professional development.
- Principle 6: Goals, monitoring and funding align.

Programme management:

- Principle 7: AE centre is effectively managed.
- Principle 8: Community is engaged and accountable.

Alignment with MoE and policy frameworks:

- Principle 9: AEP is a legitimate, credible education option that results in learner certification in primary education.
- Principle 10: AEP is aligned with the national education system and relevant humanitarian architecture

The programme outcome areas are:

- Creating safe learning environments for vulnerable children;
- Enhancing participation and learning outcomes through professional development;
- Gathering evidence for best practices on delivery of education during various forms of crisis;
- Strengthening systems by developing capacity to minimise the negative impacts of education in crisis situations and amplify the positive impacts.

A safe learning environment (Principle 3) is directly related to the ability of learners to attend and continue schooling. Participation and professional development of teachers (Principle 5), for instance, in the form of pedagogical or child protection training is crucial for effective and quality education. The benefits extend to the future labour market prospects of the AEP teachers and to the education system overall. Generating evidence through monitoring and evaluation activities (Principles 6 and 7) allows for assessing the programme's ability to achieve its original goals, and develop a body of knowledge on best practices that can be emulated elsewhere.

The findings of this assessment are expected to inform the NRC, its partners and other education practitioners about the extent to which the programme fosters resilience in conflict-affected and displaced children, and identify additional support needed to deliver education to marginalised children.

Analytical Framework and Methodology

Stats4SD and Empatika took over the task of analysing the data (survey and open interviews) collected by the previous Never Too Late to Learn research consortium in October 2021. The aims were to improve the initial analysis carried out by the original research partner of the NRC, draw lessons for similar programmes, and disseminate research findings. Pursuant to exploring project documents and discussions with the NRC, Stats4SD and Empatika formed an understanding of the project aims, how they would be achieved and the indicators of success that could guide the analysis of the data. The following chart represents this understanding.

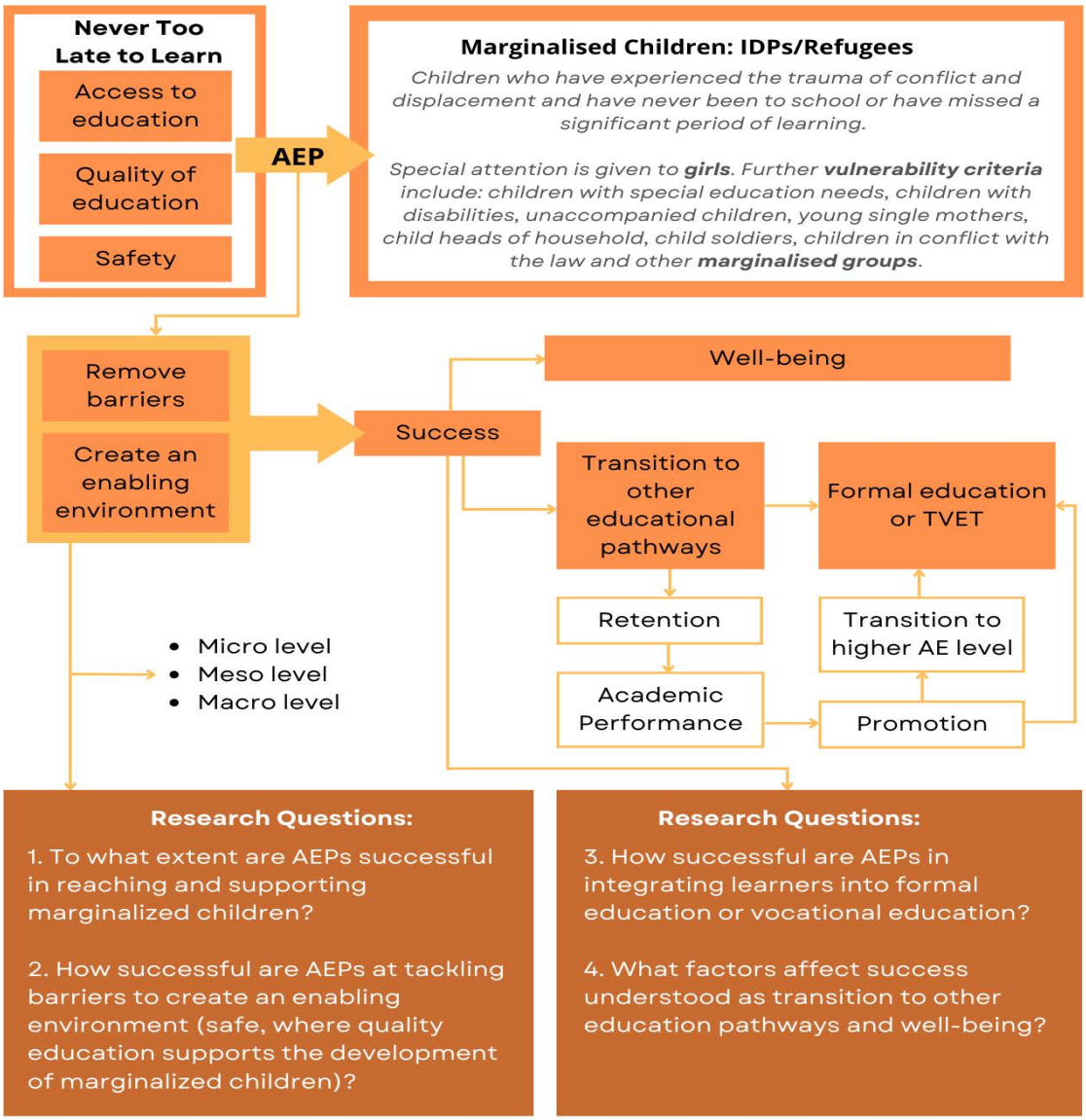

Figure 1 Diagrammatic representation of the analytical framework of the assessment

Stats4SD and Empatika followed this with multiple discussions to develop an analysis framework, share the analysis plan and results from data analysis and explore the integration of the qualitative and quantitative data streams. The teams also identified areas for additional follow-up with the project country teams which were discussed in a workshop in January 2022. The research questions highlighted in the analytical framework and the respective tools and approach to study them are briefly discussed below.

1. To what extent are AEPs successful in reaching and supporting marginalised children?

This question first asks if the AEPs were inclusive (AEWG Principle 3), i.e., if they were able to reach and target the needs of children who face marginalisation on account of being displaced, gender, disability and other vulnerabilities. This is explored through tabulation and visualisation of the demographic variables gathered as part of the monitoring and survey data collection.

The programme's success in supporting the academic learning of marginalised children is assessed through an analysis of change in learning levels of AEP students, measured through the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) assessment. The learning levels are further disaggregated by relevant vulnerability criteria and analysed.

ASER

ASER is a standardised assessment of children's learning levels. Developed by the ASER Centre in 2005, ASER and ASER-like tools have been adapted and used in varied settings, including in humanitarian emergency contexts. For instance, in 2016 the International Rescue Committee (IRC) applied the tool in Northern Syria to assess the impact of the Syrian conflict on children's education and learning outcomes. The ASER tool is not time- or resource-intensive and can be administered by enumerators with varying levels of expertise. The tool can be used to identify children's educational needs and to understand the impact of a programme by tracking learners' progress over time.

Based on the ASER approach, the Uwezo survey conducted since 2009 in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda also employs a similar assessment tool. The highest level on the tool is pegged to what children are expected to have learnt by the end of grade 2 in Tanzania. In Uwezo 2017 (conducted in 2015), around 112,000 children (ages 7-16) in the country were assessed on their Reading (in Kiswahili), Math and English competencies. However, a direct comparison of Uwezo with the results of the ASER assessment in the AEP programme is not possible.

In the ASER assessment conducted as part of Never Too Late to Learn in Tanzania and DRC, each student's Reading and Math abilities were assessed on a level between 0 and 4, with 4 indicating the highest basic competency (ability to read a story or ability to solve a subtraction problem), and 0 indicating that a student had no ability in the subject. In the DRC, the tool was used to assess children's learning levels at the start of the programme to determine which AEP Level they should be placed in, and also in subsequent years to track their progress.

To understand if AEPs were able to support social and emotional well-being, data from the International Social and Emotional Learning Assessment (ISELA) and Child and Youth Resilience Measure (CYRM) has been explored.

ISELA

The ISELA was developed by Save the Children in 2015 as a low-cost, adaptable tool to assess social and emotional well-being of children in crisis situations. The tool measures skills in relation to self-concept, stress management, perseverance, empathy and conflict resolution. Since 2015, ISELA has been adapted and used in countries including Mexico, Haiti, Iraq, Thailand and Uganda. The tool is not used for a traditional 'needs analysis' of children's social or emotional needs, instead the repeated administration of the assessment over time allows for monitoring a programme's contribution to progress in children's social and emotional well-being.

As part of the Never Too Late to Learn monitoring and evaluation activities in the DRC and Tanzania, the ISELA modules that were adapted are empathy, perseverance, self-concept and stress management. Performance is measured based on tasks specific to each module. Perseverance was assessed by recording if children were able to fully complete a difficult task assigned to them. Similarly, empathy was assessed by showing them a picture of an upset child younger than themselves and recording their responses to follow-up questions. For self-concept skills, children were asked to draw a picture of themselves in the future and answer 9 separate questions based on various scenarios. Stress management skills were determined by asking children how they dealt with stress. Based on the response, the enumerators recorded if the students were able to identify 0, 1, 2 or 3 or more appropriate ways of dealing with stress. The detailed questionnaires are provided in the Appendix.

2. How successful were the AEPs at tackling barriers to create an enabling environment (safe, where quality education supports the development of marginalised children)?

Explored here is the extent to which the programme was able to address barriers such as negative attitudes of teachers and peers, family's economic situation and other external pressures. A key component of an enabling environment being the quality of teaching itself, this section also discusses teacher-training activities in the AEP. This analysis is done mainly through analysing interviews of AEP teachers, learners and their parents. The qualitative findings are supported by data from the school environment panel survey which was administered in both DRC and Tanzania as part of the ISELA. The survey asked students to compare their experience at the AEP with previous schooling experience, and answer questions in relation to safety both at school and on the way to school as well as the conduct of their teachers and their peers.

2. How successful are the AEPs in integrating learners into formal education or vocational education?

The goal of the programme is to ultimately facilitate learners to successfully transition into the formal education systems (AEWG Principles 6 and 7) of the respective country. Hence, this section analyses drop out rates and successful transition outcomes of those who enrolled in and attended the AEP. Qualitative interviews with AEP teachers and students who complete the AEP are further used to provide a more deeper understanding of students' experiences upon transition.

2. Factors that affected success, understood as transition to other education pathways and wellbeing

This looks into the potential reasons behind the programme's success and its limitations in achieving the outcomes set out under the previous three questions. Statistical models were used to identify factors that correlate with drop out, completion and attendance rates in the monitoring data. In Tanzania, this was done using the 2020 ISELA cohort survey. As this represents a greatly reduced sample size compared to using the full database, further statistical models were developed to explore significant relationships between resilience, wellbeing and ongoing attendance. These models were built to assess the link between attendance in 2019/20 (when the ISELA was administered) and the final status of whether the students dropped out in either 2019/20 or 2020/21. The findings on dropouts and transition in both DRC and Tanzania were supported by data from qualitative interviews to provide a deeper understanding of the reasons behind dropping out, and the experiences of those who transitioned to formal schooling.

Similarly, linkages of demographic factors with ASER scores as well as with scores from ISELA were explored. In DRC, academic progress of children was analysed to observe variation between AEP schools, which was not the case in Tanzania.

Key Findings and Recommendations for Future Programming and Research Activities

- ## Finding

  The programme was able to target vulnerable and marginalised children based on the following criteria:

  1. Displacement status.
  2. Exposure to violence and conflict.
  3. Long educational disruption in both DRC and Tanzania.

  For example, in the 2018 ISELA baseline survey in Tanzania and DRC, 28% and 47% of the children respectively reported their family being affected by violent conflict. Similarly, in terms of previous education, 79% of the children in DRC had either never attended school or had been out of school for at least two years. In Tanzania, 45% had either never attended school or had been out of school for at least two years. However, data on other types of vulnerabilities (young mothers, child soldiers, children in conflict with law) identified as focus areas in the programme planning documents was not captured directly, rather only through open ended comments fields.

  ### Recommendation

  Open-ended questions to record vulnerability are not able to adequately capture this data. This can be improved by incorporating in data collection instruments more direct questions about whether the children fall under these forms of vulnerability. Doing this would allow for identifying a wider set of vulnerabilities more accurately, assess children's needs specific to said vulnerabilities which can then be addressed through targeted programme activities.

- ## Finding

  High attrition rates amongst learners were observed in Tanzania, for reasons unrelated to the AEP. 24% of those who started the AEP in Tanzania discontinued the programme on account of being repatriated to Burundi. There were also instances of families moving away from the respective camp location. The relatively infrequent nature of data collection activities, meant limited data was available to understand how well these children had been progressing through the AEP, and whether they were able to continue within education at their new location. Such events affect tracking children's progress over the course of a few years by making it difficult to plan for it in programme design and making monitoring and evaluation activities challenging.

  ### Recommendation

  While high attrition rates especially for reasons such as repatriation cannot be directly addressed by the NRC, it nevertheless constitutes an important aspect that needs to be considered while designing programmes targeting IDPs and refugee populations. Considerations for attrition could be incorporated into the program design for example with additional budget to replace teachers or other additional resources. Taking attrition into consideration would also make more realistic the expected outcomes in terms of beneficiaries reached, and guide resource allocation accordingly.

- **Finding**

  A key factor behind absenteeism in the AEPs appears to be a feeling of inferiority felt by children on account of not having clean clothes to wear to school every day. Since most children come from households with very limited economic resources, any delay in receiving school supplies from NRC or receiving insufficient supplies exacerbates this feeling and has an impact on attendance.

  Recommendation

  Reviewing the number of uniforms provided to children as well as making available the means for cleaning the uniforms can address this issue to a certain extent. Similarly, improving the timely delivery of school supplies may be beneficial.

- **Finding**

  AEP learners who transition to formal schools are stigmatised as AEPs are associated with a low socio-economic status and low academic abilities. AEP learners face discriminatory attitudes from other children and the teachers at formal schools. This was observed as a reason behind AEP learners being either unwilling to transition to formal schooling or dropping out after transition in both DRC in Tanzania. In the DRC, AEP learners are singled-out as 'NRC kids', a term used as a pejorative by their formal school peers. Further, teachers in formal schools believe that AEPs do not prepare learners adequately and view them as lacking in academic abilities. Citing this as the reason, some AEP learners who had successfully transitioned to formal schools were even returned to the AEP by school authorities.

  Recommendation

  It is crucial to continue supporting learners following transition from AEPs to formal schools. NRC should conduct regular follow-up activities with AEP learners who have transitioned, in order to fully understand and respond to the requirements of integrating learners into the formal education system. The discriminatory behaviour can be addressed by collaborating with formal school authorities to undertake sensitisation and awareness-building measures targeted at students and teachers. Similar participatory exercises for formal school teachers can be organised where their negative views about AEPs can be addressed and engaged with. Improving the overall perception of AEPs and AEP learners in the respective community may be considered as a long-term goal. To summarise, AEPs need to engage with learners progress' at each stage.

- **Finding**

  While parent-teacher interactions at the school were a common occurrence in both DRC and Tanzania, parents of AEP learners cited home visits by teachers as most helpful. Moreover, home environment and parental support are found to be a crucial reason behind students' ability to enrol and continue schooling. Findings from the qualitative interviews suggest that knowledge about their child's progress motivates parents to continue lending support to their educational journey.

  Recommendation

  Programme design should include a component to involve children's guardians beyond the parent-teacher meetings at the AEP. These interactions can be targeted towards addressing the home environment-related factors behind absenteeism among learners, and to involve parents and other caregivers in the student's overall educational progress.

Photo: Ephrem Chiruza/NRC

- ## Finding

  In the interviews, AEP teachers in DRC and Tanzania spoke positively about the behavioural and psycho-social trainings conducted by the NRC and its partners. They feel that the trainings prepared them to understand the needs of marginalised children. This finding is supported by data that students perceived positively the conduct of AEP teachers towards them. However, teachers report not receiving adequate training to teach the curriculum itself. Most AEP teachers in Tanzania had no prior teaching experience and in DRC, this was the case for half of the teachers. While those with previous teaching experience could rely on their skills to a certain extent, a substantial proportion were unable to do so. Despite NRC monitoring data indicating that all teachers had received proper training, one teacher in DRC reported not having received any training (key informant interview). However, all of the other teachers in DRC reported receiving at least 2-3 trainings.

  ### Recommendation

  Adequate pedagogical and subject content training is key to delivering quality education. Training on teaching the curriculum content as well as using appropriate pedagogy and classroom management needs more focus in future teacher training programmes, without compromising the psycho-social and sensitivity trainings. Further, the delivery of the trainings needs to be more consistent across the AEPs. This would also allow for a more robust assessment and comparison of the quality of teaching delivered at the different schools. Continuous Professional Development should ensure that teachers learn and develop skills throughout their career, through training, but also through exchange visits, peer to peer discussions, on the job coaching, and through mentoring and direct feedback.

- ## Finding

  Overall, nearly all measured aspects of children's social and emotional well-being showed improvement in Tanzania. In DRC however, there were no significant improvements. On the ASER assessment, substantial improvement in children's scores was seen in

DRC but the same could not be observed in Tanzania. In DRC, the ASER assessment was done as a level placement exercise before the AEP classes started, thus providing a true baseline to compare children's further progress over time. In Tanzania on the other hand, the first ASER assessment was administered mid-way through the AEP, thus generating only a delayed baseline which is less likely to have included students who dropped out earlier in the programme or those with low attendance. Further, being mid-way through the programme would mean that the children could be expected to have higher scores than at the beginning of the programme in Tanzania.

Recommendation

Evaluation of children's academic progress as well as developments in their social and emotional well-being throughout the AEPs requires better planning. Ensuring that assessments of academic progress are administered at equal intervals, with the first assessment implemented at the pre-AEP stage, is vital to track the AEP's success. Similarly, follow-up assessments should accurately match the previous assessment version to permit a direct comparison of results across time.

Data Limitations

As mentioned earlier, Stats4SD and Empatika were not directly involved in the formulation of data collection instruments or in their implementation. Related project documents (such as Interim Narrative Report, Education Situational Analysis Overview and Research Update Report) were subsequently made available to support the analysis. The respective NRC country offices also clarified queries which helped the team to better understand the context, design, and framework of the programme and the research undertaken. However, a lack of contextual familiarity and issues within the data (described below) limited our ability to fully interpret the findings of the analyses.

Despite these limitations there remained a large amount of robust data sources, both qualitative and quantitative, allowing analysis across different themes to draw the findings upon which this report is based.

Qualitative data

Inconsistencies in Data, Data Collection Instruments and Processes

- The interview instruments were not tailored to seek answers to the research questions specifically. Additionally, many of the questions are general/basic in nature, prone to normative answers and leave little scope for exploration of the context and experience of refugee and internally displaced children, therefore lacking the depth that could have come from a more intersectional approach.
- Marginalisation and vulnerability categories other than gender, despite being specified in the project documents, have not been explored in the interviews.
- Probing by the researchers/interviewers was very limited, inconsistently done, and/or was inappropriate (e.g. many probing questions by researchers explicitly indicated that they did not believe a child's answers). In general, this did not yield answers which lend to a robust exploration of the research questions. Additionally, some questions were not answered by some interviewees, further limiting our ability to draw conclusions.
- In some interviews, questions were asked/probed inappropriately and interviewers implied judgements (often negative) in the way certain questions were asked. The Empatika team discarded transcripts where such issues were more pronounced to protect the analysis from researcher bias or the possibility of researcher conduct severely impacting the results.
- The Empatika team was provided with an ID database of the interviewees which included their gender (both DRC and Tanzania) and ages (only DRC). However, for some interviewees, the gender of the student given in the database does not match the gender or information from the interview transcripts. For example, some students are identified as male in the ID database but the interview transcripts indicate that these are girls as interviewers ask them probing questions related to pregnancy or mention dropping out of school because they were pregnant. In addition to restricting the analysis from using a gendered lens, this raises questions about the accuracy of the data collection and transcription process.

Quality of Translated Transcripts

- The 2020 transcripts of the DRC interviews are verbatim compared to the Tanzania

interviews which are in the form of short summary notes, allowing for better analysis of the former. The 2021/2022 interview transcripts from both Tanzania and DRC were provided in the form of summarised notes (1-2 lines of answers) in Excel format which lacks the depth required for rigorous qualitative analysis.

- Translation issues in both sets of transcripts, especially in DRC, meant that some interviews were difficult to understand, with the reader often having to make assumptions/speculations about some of the content. Additionally, identical responses in some of the Tanzania transcripts (both 2020 and 2021) suggest further issues related to the integrity of the interviews and transcription process.

Quantitative Data

Limited Sample Sizes and Interruptions in Follow-up Research

- Due to higher-than-expected rates of attrition and many students registering but not attending the AEP, the cohort 1 dataset's sample size of students completing two rounds of the ISELA assessment is very small. This results in a loss of statistical power in the ability to detect changes over time.
- The planned ISELA follow up with the cohort 2 students and further ASER assessments after 2020 were not completed. For these students, there is only one cross-sectional snapshot at a point where most were mid-way through attending the AEP.
- Except for a few qualitative interviews with students transitioning to formal education, data follow-up terminates at the point of transition. Thus, no quantitative analysis can be done to determine if the integration of learners was 'successful', only whether or not it happened. For instance in Tanzania, some students who had been marked as having transitioned in year 1 or 2 returned into the database in later years, suggesting a potentially unsuccessful transition. There is a chance that this phenomenon is related to systematic data entry errors.

Quality of Data in the Files Provided by Previous Research Partner

- Metadata was inadequately recorded in all the data files. The 2020 ISELA and ASER surveys were provided in coherent and sufficiently documented data files. However, all data files from prior surveys prior did not have labelled columns and data values or were structured in a way that could not be unambiguously linked to questionnaire responses. In some cases, the data could be consolidated through comparison with previously reported analysis but many of the columns could not be unambiguously identified.
- In addition to unidentifiable columns, the datafiles contained missing sections and questions and undocumented derived columns. For instance, a section of the original ISELA concerned familial relationships of the child. The questionnaire structure implied this should result in a datafile containing 49 variables. However, only 17 variables had any data for DRC and only 3 variables had any data for Tanzania.
- Very little raw data was provided. Nearly all data files had been processed and merged in ways which, combined with the lack of metadata, meant that the contents of many of the columns could not be identified or had been corrupted. It was unclear which source many of the columns in the files had come from, and merging the files appears to have introduced irreconcilable errors since column

names were ambiguous. For instance, different questions were asked as part of the 'household inclusion' section in DRC and Tanzania, some overlapped, and some did not. The data provided is merged across both countries with columns named as "hh_inc1", "hh_inc2" etc. Despite the question numbering being different for each country, based on the contents of the data it was not possible to reconcile which questions refer to which columns.

Inconsistencies in Database Recording

- For Tanzania, the structures of the databases were very different for each of the three years that the data was recorded. For instance, columns for 'completion' and 'transition' were not consistently present in the initial versions of the database and this information was captured in an open text field. While the format was revised following requests from Stats4SD, there was potential loss of data in the restructuring process. Similarly, none of the students in Year 2 were recorded as "registered but never attended" whereas a large proportion of entries for this category were present in the database for years 1 and 3. This may be the result of differences in who was captured in the database rather than indicative of underlying trends.
- Another example of error in the data is the case of 165 students in the 2018/19 Tanzania database being marked as having "dropped out" (under attendance status) but also as having "completed" the programme (under completion status), despite the categories being mutually exclusive. In each of the 2019/20 and 2020/21 databases there was only one student each time with this combination – indicative of simple data entry error rather than a more systematic issue within these years unlike in the previous year.

Timing of Data Collection Activities and Tracking of Students

- In Tanzania, the ASER tool to measure students' learning levels was not administered at the time they registered for the AEP. This crucial step would have allowed for a robust tracking of their academic progress over time. Instead, the tool was implemented only midway through the programme meaning that ascertaining year-on-year progress at the level of individual learner was not possible.

Repatriations in Tanzania

- Analysing progress in Tanzania is challenging as around 25% of the AEP students were repatriated during the school years. These students cannot be considered as 'drop outs' nor as 'successful transitions to formal education', so exact quantification of 'transition' needs close caveats and multiple potential definitions.

Random Sampling of Selections re: Marginalisation

- The only vulnerability criteria that could be explored in more detail was gender. No other criteria were captured in the database, nor as part of the other quantitative and qualitative data collection activities. As stated earlier, the research questions ask if the AEP had been successful in "reaching and supporting marginalised learners". This was further qualified by saying, "Special attention is given to girls. Further vulnerability criteria include: children with special education needs, children with disabilities, unaccompanied children, young single mothers, child heads of household, child soldiers, children in conflict with the law and other marginalised groups."

Photo: Ingrid Prestetun/NRC

Tanzania: Overall Summary of Analysis

RQ1: To what extent are AEPs successful in reaching and supporting marginalised children?

Given the environment that students were recruited from, vulnerability levels were high particularly in relation to exposure to violence and children being out-of-school. In general, the academic learning levels of children at the time of enrolment were reasonably strong but there is less evidence of improvement in academic performance over time. There is evidence of development of emotional learning given the strong improvements seen in the ISELA modules, and in the results of the CYMR resilience assessment which was conducted mid-way through the period in which students were enrolled in the AEP.

RQ2: How successful were the AEPs at tackling barriers to create an enabling environment (safe, where quality education supports the development of marginalised children)?

The interviews with parents suggest that simply the existence of the AEP programme within the camp provided their child with access to education that would have otherwise been lacking. The survey responses indicate that the conduct of teachers in schools (hitting or yelling at students) was better than what the students had experienced in their former schools. There were a number of barriers to the on-going support being provided by the AEPs. The more significant of these – repatriation of families and the school closures due to COVID-19 – were outside the project's control. Other barriers such as limitations in the provision of school supplies and clothes, and inconsistent training activities for teachers can be addressed within the programme.

RQ3: How successful are the AEPs in integrating learners into formal education or vocational education?

Rates of transition into the formal education system were low, and interviews with those who had transitioned also indicate challenges upon entering the formal system. Low transition rates can be attributed partly to the limited capacity of the formal education system in the camps and partly to the lack of academic progress within the AEP – as seen by the large proportion of students asked to repeat an AEP Level and the marginal increases in ASER scores.

RQ4: Factors that affected success, understood as transition to other education pathways and wellbeing.

Key factors associated with successful academic progression were the age of the student and the economic or family pressures they face. Older students, likely to have been out of school for longer, were also more likely to be pressured into being economically active or providing care for other families. These pressures resulted in lower attendance in schools and eventual dropping out. Older male students, particularly in the resumption of school activities after COVID-19 shutdowns in 2020, were more likely to drop out of the AEPs.

Tanzania: Analysis

Background

In 2015, the government of Tanzania made lower-secondary education free across the country which has resulted in significant improvements in children's enrolment levels in general. Accelerated Education is also a part of the education policy in Tanzania. In 2018, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MOEST) established the Integrated Programme for Out of School Adolescents (IPOSA) to provide formal educational and vocational skilling opportunities to out-of-school adolescents and youth. However, accelerated learning models of education have existed in the country prior to the introduction of the IPOSA.

Even with robust education policy frameworks to support children's education, since they are not directly targeted at refugee children and youth, the benefits do not usually extend to them. Children with displacement backgrounds do not have access to formal education systems – both schooling and vocational skilling programmes – to the same extent as children in host communities. Among the multiple disadvantages faced by displaced children, the restriction of life to camps due to prevailing national policies around refugees is a key barrier that limits this access.

The AEPs support out of school children between the ages of 10 and 17 years (and over the age of the corresponding formal school grade level) to complete 6 years' worth of education in 3 years. It is important to note that the NRC has implemented and runs multiple AEPs across Tanzania, and this study covers only the Never Too Late to Learn programme.

The children part of this programme in Tanzania mainly live in different zones of the Mtendeli and Nduta refugee camps, either with their parents or, in case of having lost their parents during the conflict, other family members or guardians. By the 2020/2021 school year, there were 1,090 registered students in the AEP who are attending school in Umoja AEP Centre in the Mtendeli refugee camp. Since most students speak French and Kirundi, the AEP curriculum is delivered in both languages.

Photo: Ingrid Prestetun/NRC

Research Question 1: Reaching and supporting marginalised children

Reaching Marginalised Children

Age and Gender

Just under half of the students in Tanzania were 13 years of age or older and around 20% were 15 or older, substantially older than the ages of mainstream primary education. The average age of the students at the start of the academic year remained at just over 12 years throughout the 3 years. This indicates that the student population was changing consistently with new entrants and those leaving the programme; rather than the same students remaining consistently in which case we would have expected to see an increase in the average age over the project life. However, age was not recorded in the subsequent years for around a third of the students from the year 1 database meaning this implication cannot be stated with certainty.

Table 1 Tanzania: Demographic Information (Source: Database. Excludes those registered but never attending)

Demographic Factor	Response	2018/19 (n=808)	2019/20 (n=864)	2020/21 (n=974)
Gender	Male	54%	43%	37%
	Female	46%	57%	63%
Date of Birth Recorded	Recorded	69%	98%	93%
	Not Recorded	31%	2%	7%
Age	Overall mean (years)	12.2	12.4	12.2
	Girls mean (years)	12.0	12.2	12.2
	Boys mean (years)	12.3	12.6	12.2
Age Group	6-10	31%	27%	27%
	11-12	26%	25%	30%
	13-14	21%	25%	25%
	15-20	21%	22%	17%

In the first year of the programme (2018/19) the gender ratio was close to 50:50. This became increasingly female-skewed year-on-year and by the third year of the programme (2020/21), the ratio of females to males was 63:37. The change in the gender ratio was particularly apparent among older students – within the first year only 38% of the children aged 15 years or older were female but by the third year 67% in this age group were female (Table 2).

Table 2 Tanzania: Percentage of Female Students by Age and Year of Programme

	Students within age group who are female		
Age at start of academic year	**2018/19** (n=808)	**2019/20** (n=864)	**2020/21** (n=974)
6-10 years	46%	59%	62%
6-10 years	52%	62%	62%
13-14 years	43%	55%	59%
15-20 years	38%	52%	67%

Photo: Guri Romtveit/NRC

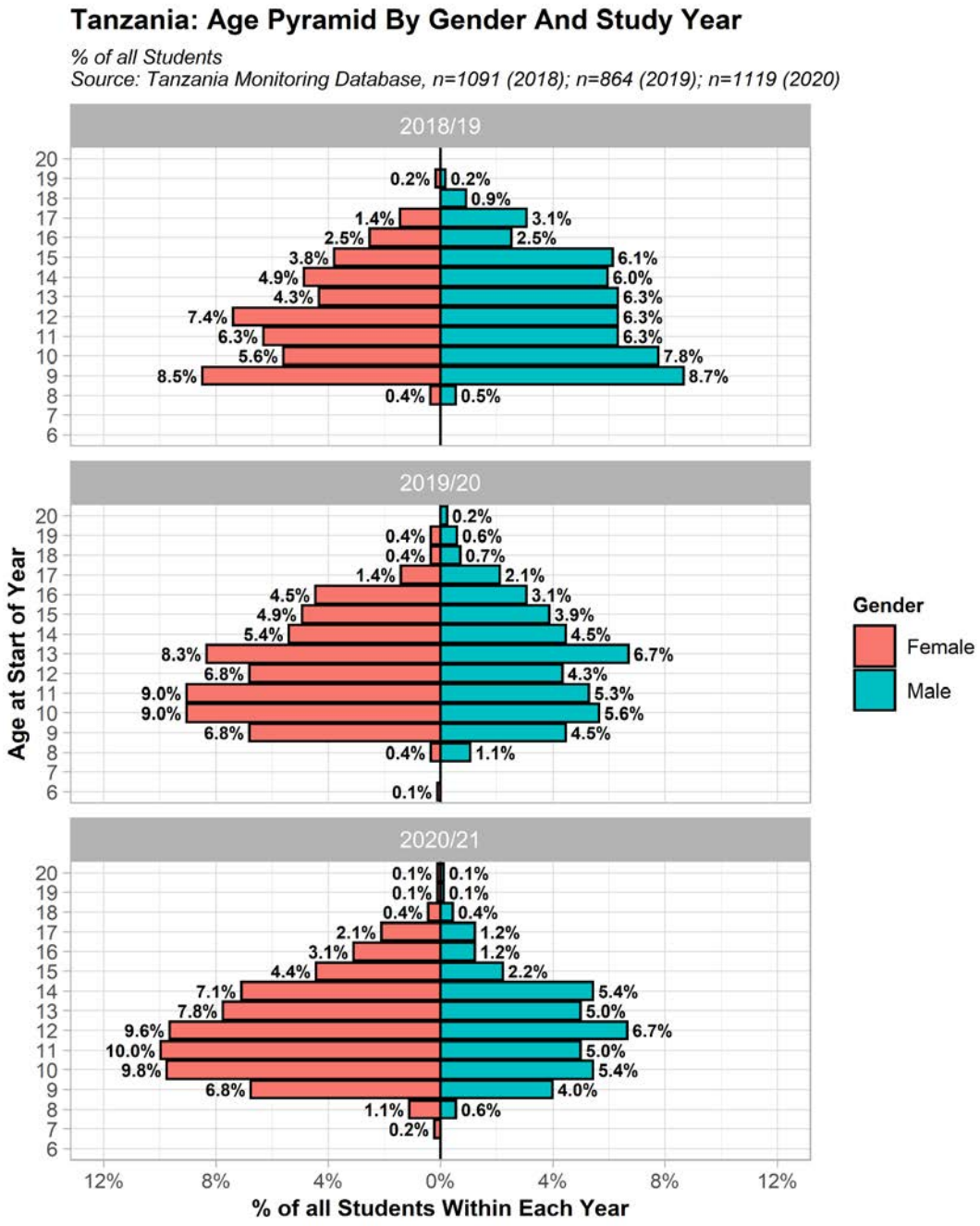

Figure 2 | Tanzania: Distribution of Age by Gender and Study Year

Other Vulnerability Criteria

Except gender, other vulnerability criteria on which data is available are students' previous education status, disability and family situation. Nearly a third of the students in 2020/21 had no prior education (Table 3). Similarly in the ISELA 2018 survey, more than half of the students either had no previous education or had been out of school for 2 years or longer (Figure 3). The proportion of students recorded as having any form of disability was very low – just 3% – in both 2019/20 and 2020/21. Children who had been orphaned or separated from their families constituted a similar proportion in the two years. However, 28% of the students

reported experiences of conflict-related violence faced by their family members (Figure 4).

Table 3 Tanzania: Previous Schooling Status, all Students (Source: Database. Excludes those registered but never attending)

Type of Status	Response	2019/20 (n=864)	2020/21 (n=974)
Previous Education Status	Some Previous Formal Schooling	NA	62&
	No Previous Schooling	NA	38%
Previous AEP Status	New Entrant to AEP	31%	34%
	Promoted	31%	4%
	Repeating Level	26%	21%
	Returning after drop-out	11%	42%
	Not Recorded	1%	0%

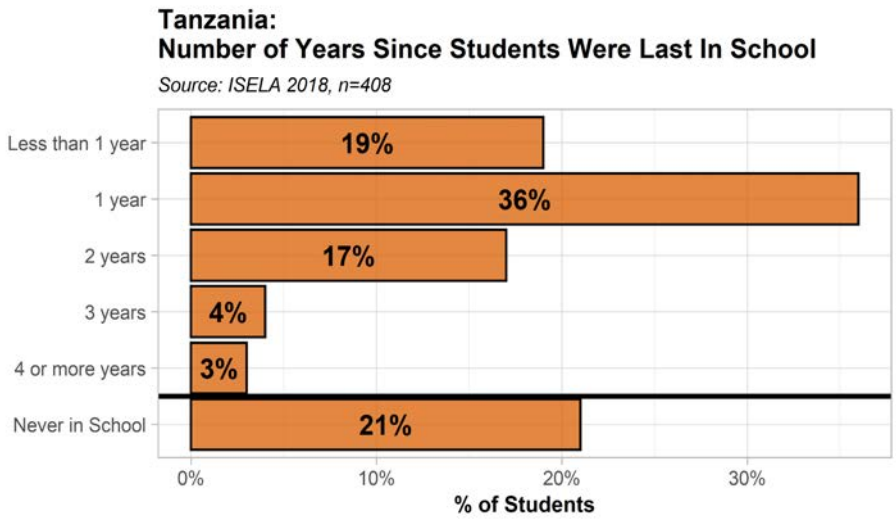

Figure 3 | Tanzania: Number of Years Since Students Were Last in School

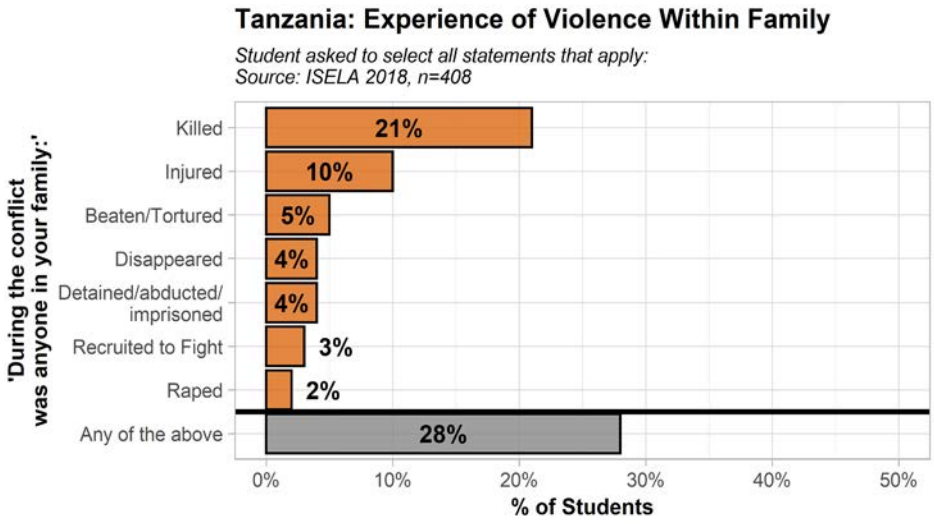

Figure 4 | Tanzania: Experience of Violence Within Family.

Academic Progression: Results from ASER

Baseline results from the 2019 ASER assessment were relatively high. Around 75% of the students attained the minimum assessment levels for Math and Reading (identifying numbers and letters respectively) and over a third were able to attain the maximum scores within the Math and Reading assessments. 197 AEP students in Tanzania were assessed with the ASER twice – in January and December 2020. An additional 94 students were assessed in December who were not linked to previous assessments. There did not appear to be systematic differences in the demographic profile or ASER results between those assessed once and those assessed twice.

There was no improvement in the proportion of children able to achieve one of the two highest ASER scores in Reading or Math. Small improvements were observed in the percentage of children able to complete the more basic levels of the ASER assessment. 92% of children could identify the single digit numbers at the follow-up assessment compared to 70% at the baseline, and 87% could read letters at the follow-up compared to 74% at the baseline.

Table 3 Tanzania: ASER Math Scores

Score	Score description	% of Students With This Score or Above	
		Baseline: November 2019 (n=197)	**Follow-Up: December 2020** (n=291)
0	None	-	-
1	Identify Numbers	79%	92%
2	Identify Multiple Digit Numbers	57%	69%
3	Complete Addition	50%	54%
4	Complete Subtraction	37%	37%

Table 5 Tanzania: ASER Reading Scores

Score	Score description	% of Students With This Score or Above	
		Baseline: November 2019 (n=197)	**Follow-Up: December 2020 (n=291)**
0	None	-	-
1	Read Letters	74%	87%
2	Read Words	51%	60%
3	Read Paragraphs	42%	48%
4	Read Full Story	34%	36%

Figure 5 shows that there were no significant changes for the Math scores between the two survey rounds, within any of the AEP teaching levels. However, there was evidence of improvement in Reading scores among the two lower levels, but not in the highest-level AEP class.

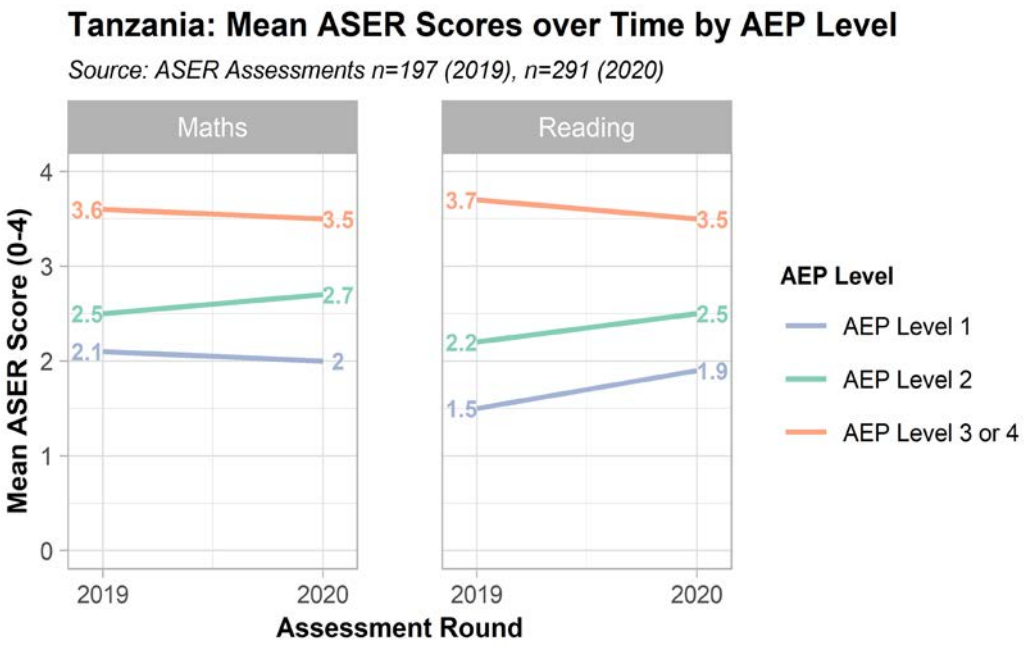

Figure 5 | Tanzania: Mean ASER Scores Over Time by AEP Level

Photo: Guri Romtveit/NRC

Social and Emotional Progression: Results from ISELA and CYRM

411 students completed the empathy and perseverance modules of the ISELA assessment shortly after enrolling in the AEP programme in 2018; 160 of the same students again completed the assessment in 2020. No significant differences could be identified in the baseline results between those who completed the follow-up assessment and those who did not.

ISELA: Empathy & Perseverance

In 2018, 56% of students were able to complete the perseverance assessment and 76% of students were able to complete the empathy assessment. The results in 2020 were substantially improved, with 95% of the students completing the perseverance exercise and 90% of students completing the empathy exercise.

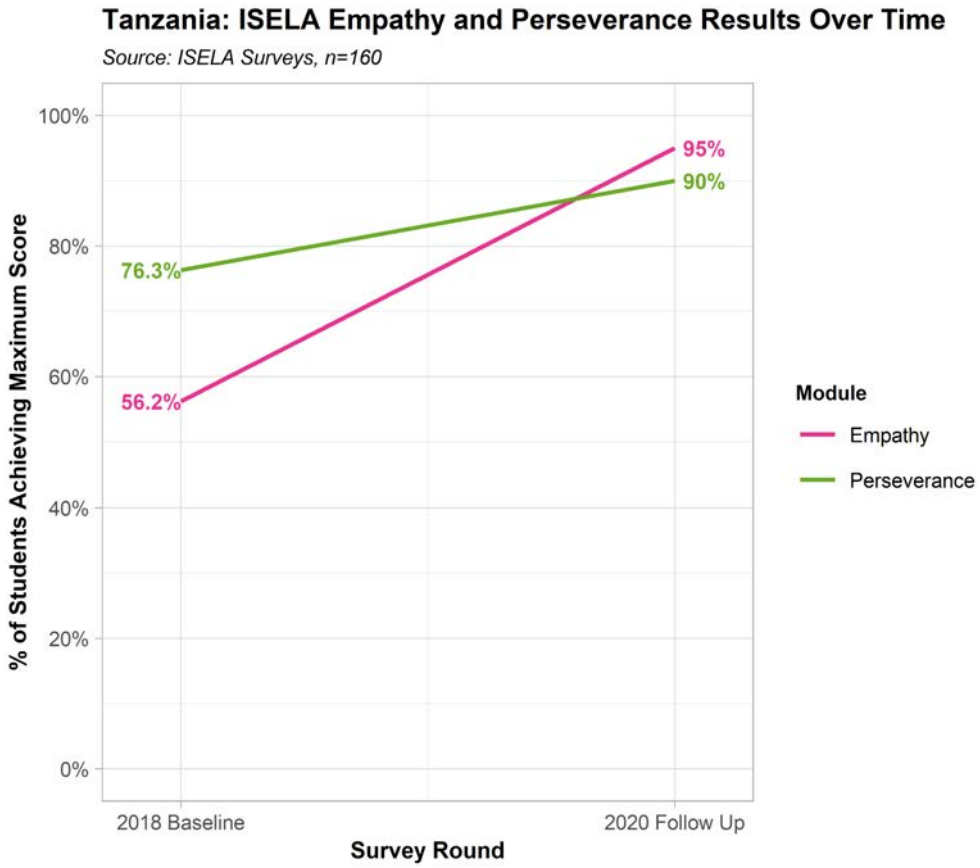

Figure 6 | Tanzania: ISELA Empathy and Perseverance Results Over Time

The 2018 results for the perseverance exercise show a significant difference in the completion rates by both age and gender. Male students performed slightly better than female students overall. Task completion increased with increasing age. Only 36% of those in the 9-10 year age group completed the exercise compared to 70% of those aged 15 and over. However, all students in the follow up 2020 survey, regardless of age or gender, scored similarly high levels of perseverance on this exercise.

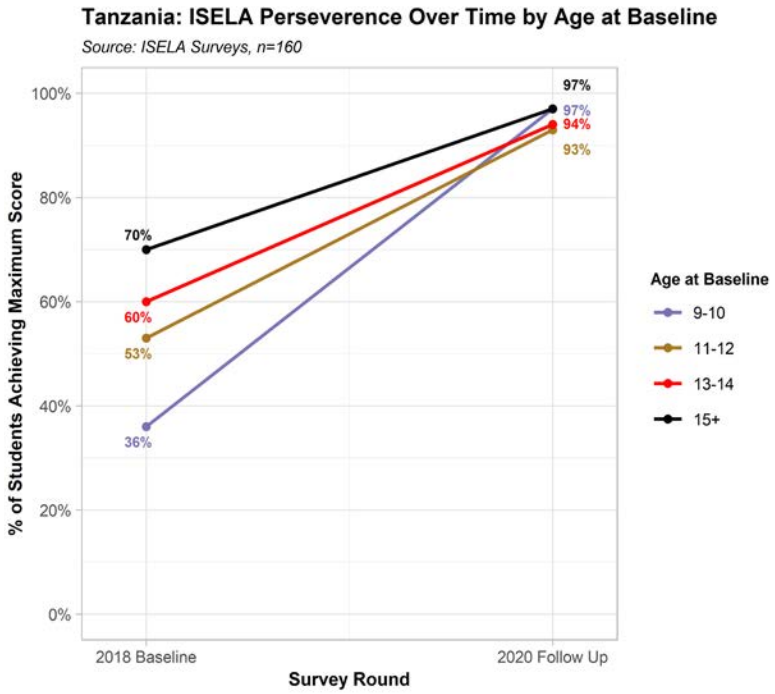

Figure 7 | Tanzania: ISELA Perseverance Over Time by Age at Baseline

Caveats are needed while interpreting the above improvement. Students were completing an exercise that they had seen before, albeit two years previously. Further, a natural progression in perseverance would have been expected to develop with the two-year period between assessment. However, the increase in the results is over and above what would reasonably have been expected from these two factors.

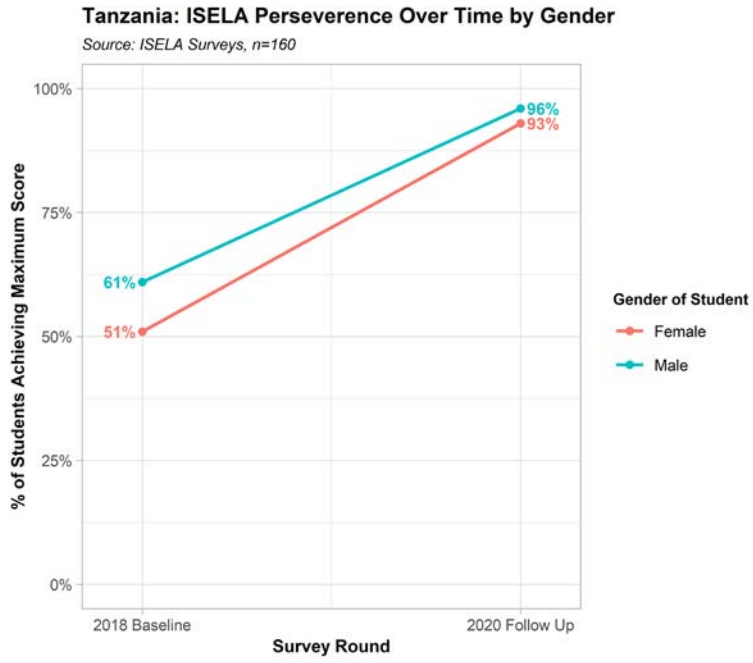

Figure 8 | Tanzania: ISELA Perseverance Over Time by Gender

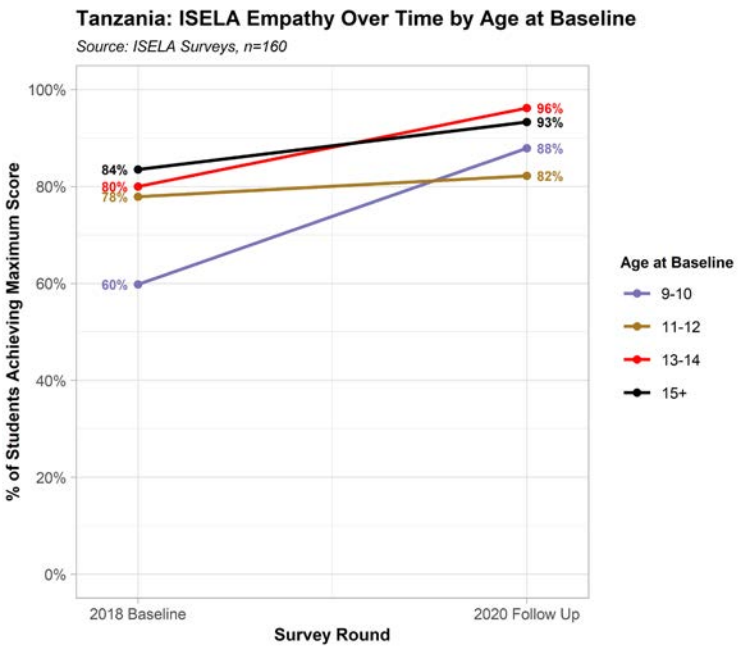

Figure 9 | Tanzania: ISELA Empathy Over Time by Age at Baseline

ISELA: Self-Concept

48% of the students could answer all 9 questions appropriately in the 2020 survey. Gender was the only demographic factor with a significant relationship to self-concept, with 56% of boys completing all 9 questions and only 43% of girls. This module was only included in the 2020 survey, but generally shows students scoring highly when asked to consider their own aspirations and self-concept.

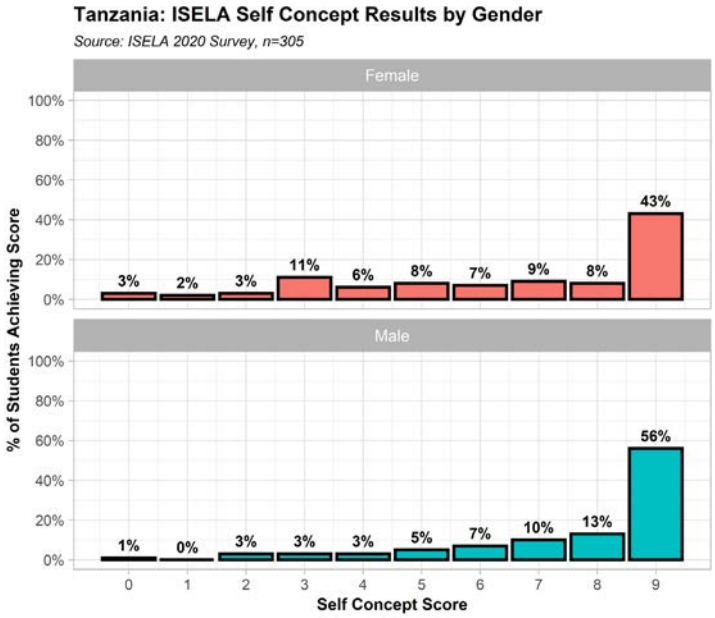

Figure 10 | Tanzania: ISELA Self Concept Results by Gender

ISELA: Stress Management

Overall, 62% of the children were able to identify 3 or more appropriate stress management techniques in the 2020 survey.

AEP level was highly correlated to successful identification of appropriate stress management techniques. Only 42% of Level 1 students succeeded in this assessment, compared to 79% of students in Levels 3 or 4. Neither gender nor age was significantly linked to stress management. Given only one time point is available for this assessment, it is not possible to isolate the extent to which students who were better able to deal with stress then went on to better academic performance or whether students increased their ability to deal with stress through increased exposure to education.

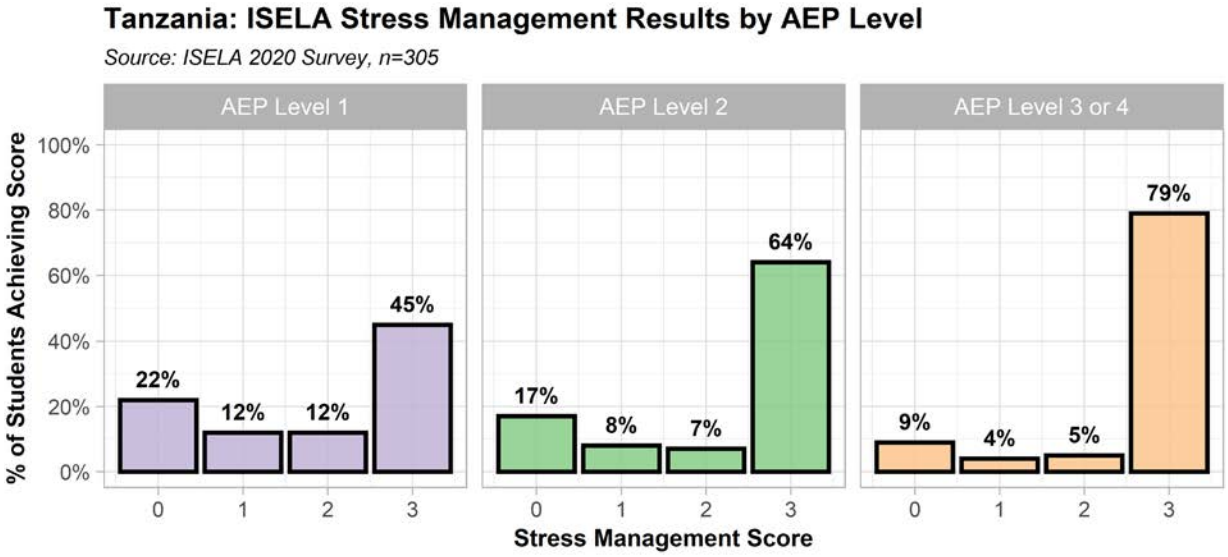

Figure 11 | Tanzania: ISELA Stress Management Results by AEP Level

CYRM: Overall Results

Table 6 summarises the average scores in each of the different components, after being standardised such that -1 represents a child giving the most negative response to all questions, and +1 represents a child giving the most positive response. Therefore, a positive score indicates that the child gave more positive than negative responses overall. Results were combined into a single composite score by averaging across the different components (Figure 12).

Table 6 Tanzania: CYRM Average Scores

CYMR Component	Average Composite Score (Standardised -1 to +1)	% With Negative Score
Overall Composite Score	0.79	0.3%
Social Skills	**0.41**	**16.5%**
Individual Capacity	**0.54**	**12.3%**
Cultural Perception	0.82	1.0%
Spiritual	0.85	1.7%
Peer Support	0.86	2.6%
Caregiver Emotional Support	0.90	0.7%
Caregiver Physical/ Material Support	0.95	0.7%
Education Perception	0.99	0.0%

The composite scores on the CYRM are generally very high. The average score was 0.8 where the possible range is -1 to +1. 99.7% of the students (meaning all except one) had a positive score on the overall composite score, although over 10% of students had negative scores on the 'social skills' or 'individual capacity' components of the assessment.

This indicates resilience among students is generally very high across all components. This is also apparent from Figure 12, with the right-skew of the distribution and all but one of the observations lying below the score of 0.

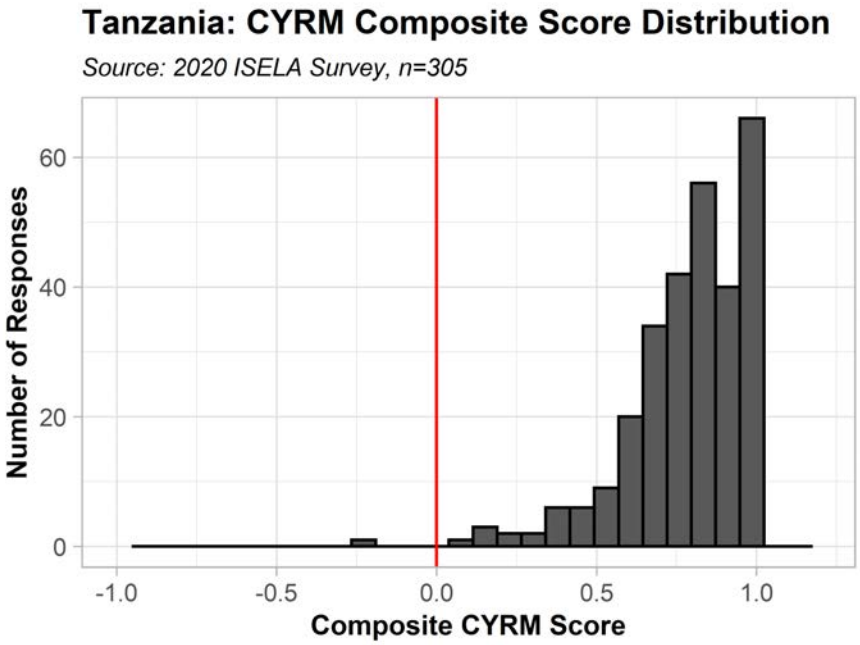

Figure 12 | Tanzania: CYRM Composite Score Distribution

The only demographic factor significantly linked to the overall score was age. No trends were identified with the overall score by gender or AEP Level. Younger children (age 9-10) scored worse overall on this index. There was not much difference among the other three age groups which reported generally high scores.

Further analysis was conducted for the social skills and individual capacity components, since these were the only components with sufficient variation in responses. There is a strong correlation between students with lower social skills and those with lower individual capacity (p-value for correlation <0.001).

CYRM: Individual Capacity

The individual capacity score increased with increasing AEP level, with higher scores within each AEP Level for students in the middle of the age range (12-14). The youngest students (ages 9-11) had significantly lower individual capacity scores than those in the 12-14 years age group. Scores for older students (15+) were similar to the latter's – slightly lower on an average but not significantly so. No effect of gender could be identified.

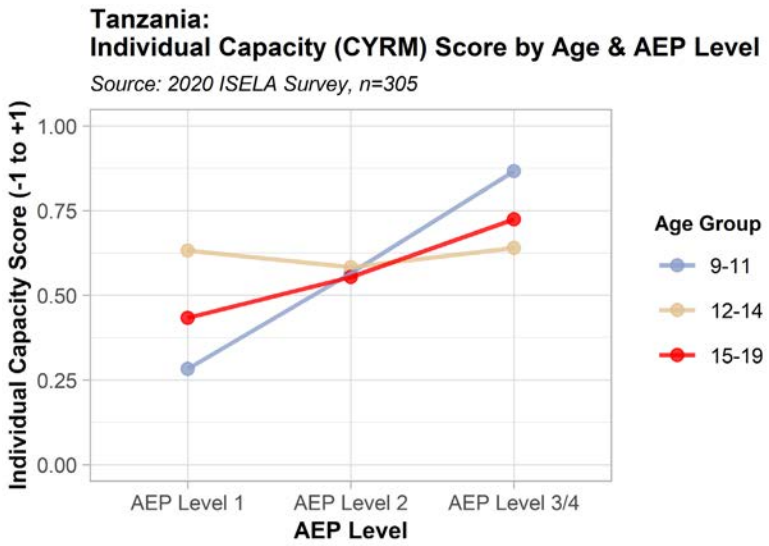

Figure 13 | Tanzania: Individual Capacity (CYRM) Score by Age and AEP Level

CYRM: Social Skills

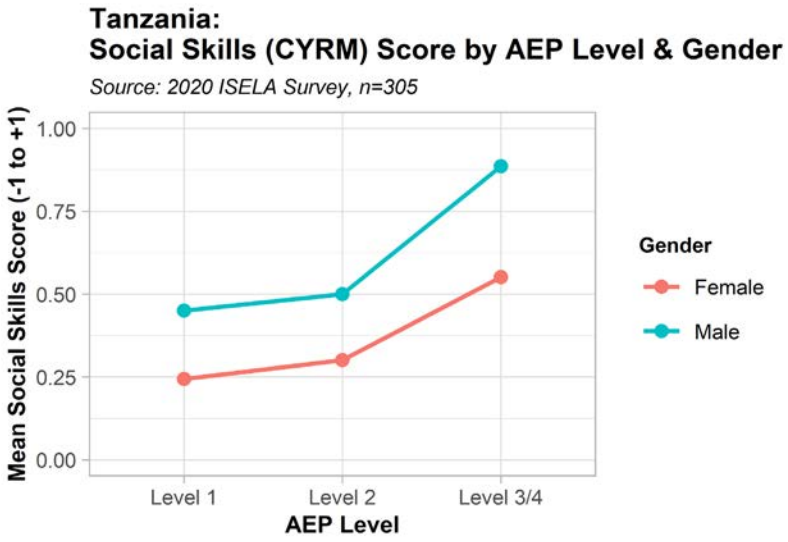

Figure 14 | Tanzania: Social Skills (CYRM) Score by AEP Level and Gender

Boys consistently scored significantly higher than girls on social skills, regardless of age or AEP Level. There was a small effect of age but this was not statistically significant. There was no observable difference between the social skills scores in the AEP Levels 1 and 2, but those in AEP Level 3 have higher scores. Younger students in higher AEP levels had better results on an average than the older pupils in the lower levels.

The impact of AEP Level (particularly the highest level), and not age, on social skills score is indicative of the importance of continuing school on the development of children's social skills.

Research Question 2: Tackling barriers to Create an Enabling Environment

'Mesosystem' / Programme Activities

Recruitment & Training of Teachers

The responses from teachers, in relation to how well they were prepared by the NRC to undertake the AEP classes, were mixed. A total of 19 teachers in Tanzania were interviewed in 2020. Fewer than half said they had teaching experience (in formal schools) prior to working with the programme.

Most said they did not receive any specific training on how to teach the AEP curriculum, and a few without prior teaching experience felt they were not equipped to teach at the AEP. One teacher remarked that the training *'helped me to know teacher's attitude before children, not teach the AEP programme'.* Those who had previous teaching experience said they relied on skills they had acquired through teaching at formal schools. Other trainings reportedly provided by the programme included crisis resolution, child rights/protection and gender and preparation of lesson plans[3].

Most teachers also received materials to aid teaching. These included teaching manuals, bags, pens and notebooks. Others mentioned receiving rain boots and bags from NRC which they said were helpful when travelling to and from school during the rains. A few teachers expressed dissatisfaction about receiving only course books but no additional materials.

School Environment and Teaching Materials

All students interviewed[4] thought that the amenities at school were adequate, including sufficient clean water and separate toilets for boys and girls. All of the 2021 cohort mention the provision of sanitary materials (although it is unclear from the transcripts if these are sanitary kits provided by the project or other sanitary items like soap, sanitary napkins etc. provided for use at the school) while some in the 2020 cohort reported not receiving sanitary kits from the project and said there were limited or no sanitary materials for use at school. Most students also thought that the classrooms were comfortable and airy with windows, but a few complained about having to share desks with three or four other students, making it difficult to take notes[5].

3 The Incentive Teacher Recruitment Report provided by the Tanzania programme team states that the following factors were considered when hiring incentive teachers: 1. Gender balance (If the Head teacher is male, assistant should be female and vice versa), 2. Relevant experiences in teaching, 3. Good performance in written interview but best in Oral interview, 4. Age of 25 years or above. According to further information by the programme team, AEP teachers are trained in NRC's code of conduct, teachers' code of conduct, Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) and Introduction to 10 Principles of AEP. Teachers are also provided with working facilities including teaching materials and manuals.

4 Questions about school amenities (classrooms, toilets, clean water) were only asked to students who dropped out (2020 interviews) and the 2021 cohort (both in school and dropouts).

5 The programme team confirms that there are no issues related to amenities like insufficient numbers of desk/chairs in AEP schools. School furniture was provided by a different donor and the programme has only maintained them and procured new furniture for additional classrooms that were established during programme implementation. NRC has also procured desks for some formal schools.

Engaging Parents and Guardians

Programme activities designed to engage with parents are appreciated by both parents and children. The programme engages with parents/guardians during enrolment, back-to-school campaigns, distribution of non-food items, and tracking of students including family visits by teachers.[6] Almost all parents have had some form of interaction (including meeting informally at the market or church) with teachers at the AEP. Those who have not interacted with teachers say this is because there hasn't been any reason to, or because they are busy[7].

While much of this interaction is standard parent-teacher meetings at school to discuss a child's progress, parents find home/family visits by teachers the most helpful. These home visits are undertaken mainly to discuss absenteeism from school, but also to discuss the child's conduct or progress at school. Both students and parents recall AEP teachers coming for home visits when a child had been absent, either for a day or longer time period, and inquire about the reasons for absenteeism and to encourage them to attend school. Findings indicate that this form of support from teachers is novel for parents as highlighted by quotes like '*it seems like teachers are taking on a parental job* (by undertaking home visits)' and '*it is double child management* (by encouraging them at school and visiting parents at home)'. While parents of drop outs also have recollection of teacher visits for similar reasons, a few mention that there was no support or follow-up from the school when parents went to report that their children had dropped out.

Another form of support provided by the programme are the 'gifts', a term used by students and parents alike to refer to the non-food items support provided to students[8]. The non-food items kits are in the form of school supplies (exercise books and other stationery, according to requirement of different levels) and sanitary kits, the latter distributed as per gender of the student. Both students and parents say they like receiving these 'gifts' from the programme, and these (and other similar gifts given by teachers or head teachers) serve as means to motivate children to attend school and perform better. These non-food distributions, however, do not seem to affect the retention of students, as findings show that even those students who had received these non-food items, in particular school kits, have dropped out of school noting reasons like lack of school supplies, indicating that these distributions are possibly infrequent and/or insufficient.

6 The Tanzania programme engages with parents for these activities. Family visit was not part of initial programme design but was incorporated later through budget revisions to the programme over time. Source: Clarification document provided by the Tanzania programme team.

7 Questions on parent teacher interactions have only been asked to students (dropouts, remainers and promoted to formal education) and parents of dropouts. Parents of remainers and those in formal education (no distinction is made in the interviews between the two) have been asked about the support provided by teachers and schools. Answers related to parent-teacher interactions have been merged for analysis purposes.

8 Year 3 Interim Narrative Report notes a total of 9,966 non-food item kits provided to students across three years of the project.

Distribution of Non-food Item Kits

While most parents and students interviewed are appreciative of the non-food items support, few complained about not receiving these at all or, in case of boys, of an 'unfair' or 'unequal' distribution of sanitary kits. Distribution of sanitary kits, as per the programme, is based on gender. These kits include sanitary napkins, clothes (*kanga*), bucket, soap, pants and shavers for girls, and for boys boxers, soap and shavers. A few boys and their parents felt that this distribution was unequal because boys should have received the same number of items as the girls, be provided with buckets and *kangas* as the girls, or with other items more suitable to boys. The programme is aware of this issue and clarification regarding distribution has been provided to the community, as per the clarification document provided to the assessment team by the project teams.

Students' Perception of Teachers

Teachers at both AEP and formal schools are generally liked by students both who are still in school and those who have dropped out[9]. Most students share that AEP teachers explain lessons clearly and are willing to repeat when a student doesn't understand what is being taught. Most students also feel motivated by home visits made by teachers to inquire about absenteeism from school and offers of tutoring or other forms of assistance.

In relation to corporal punishment meted out by AEP teachers, the responses of students are largely positive barring a few cases. Students explain that teachers often advise or caution instead of meting out physical punishments and *'treat us good and fair, no discrimination or insult'.* Only three students (two in AEP and one in formal school) shared that they had received physical punishments (hit with a stick) when they had made mistakes in class, not done well in an examination, made noise in class or got into a fight with another student, but did not dislike the teacher for hitting them. Other than these three cases of corporal punishment, students knew that teachers, particularly in AEP, were prohibited from hitting students, with one student explaining that '*the organization* (NRC) *did not allow teachers to punish students with sticks*'.

In school, the presence of teachers makes most students feel safe and they give examples of teachers asking them to report any trouble. Students also share that prohibition of corporal punishment in school[10] fosters a comfortable and trusting environment and they feel like they can approach teachers or other school authorities with problems without worrying about physical punishments, a finding that is also corroborated by the quantitative data. While most students have not approached teachers to report problems, a few who have share that they were advised by teachers on how to deal with the issue. For example, one boy reported an insulting remark by another student and was advised by the teacher to '*let it go as it was a minor issue and it was best to avoid conflict with*

9 The interview transcripts for students who have transitioned to formal education are not clear if the questions being asked are about AEP or formal school teachers.

10 The clarification document provided by the Tanzania programme team states that there is zero tolerance for corporal punishment and all schools inside the refugee camp are prohibited from hitting students. The programme has also installed a suggestion box in the camp which can be used to report any misconduct towards students by teachers.

friends and instead to respect each other'. The finding on teachers and students' conduct is supported by the quantitative findings which show that while teachers did not mete out corporal punishment, the prevalence of physical fights and bullying within the student group remained unchanged in the AEP compared to students' previous schooling.

Teachers also use positive reinforcement like giving small gifts (pens, pencils, sweets etc.) and praise them when they answer questions in class correctly or do well in examinations. However, as is elaborated in the quantitative findings, this perception of students is not significantly different from their previous school experience.

Overall School Environment: Results from ISELA

The ISELA survey contained a module where students were provided with statements about their school experience and asked whether this was something that in their experience applied "Never", "Rarely", "Usually" or "Always". 9 statements were given to students in the 2018 survey, where they were asked to consider their previous school experience, prior to joining the AEP. The same questions were given to students in the 2020 survey but they were now asked about the experience they had within the AEP. 383 students responded about their previous school experience in 2018, and 307 responded about the AEP in 2020. 197 students were members of both cohort 1 and cohort 2 and responded at both time points. The 307 students in cohort 2, who responded in 2020 are used to better understand if there are relationships between perceptions of the AEP by gender or age.

The overall level of positivity towards the AEP, when combining all statements together, was higher than that of the level of positivity towards the children's previous education but not significantly so. The composite score for all matching questions was 79% of the maximum possible score for the AEP, and 78% of the maximum possible score for the children's previous school.

6 of the statements were about negative school experiences. Responses indicate a highly significant improvement in the students' perception on 4 out of the 6 statements comparing the AEP conditions against the conditions in their previous school. The largest differences were in the two questions considering the conduct of teachers:

- In 2018, only 31% of respondents indicated that teachers 'never' 'pushed, hit, kicked or whipped' students at their previous schools. In 2020, 62% indicated that teachers 'never' did this at their AEP.
- In 2018, 57% of respondents indicated that teachers 'never' 'screamed or yelled at students at their previous schools. In 2020, 81% indicated that teachers 'never' did this at their AEP.

Table 7 Tanzania: School Environment, Negatively Worded Statements. (Source: ISELA)

Statement	% Responding "Never" 2018: "Last School" N = 383	2020: "This School" N = 197	p-value
I was bullied by other children.	88%	86%	0.826
I felt afraid on my way to and from school.	81%	92%	<0.001
I got into physical fights.	86%	79%	0.134
Teachers pushed, hit, kicked or whipped me.	31%	62%	<0.001
Teachers screamed or yelled at me.	57%	81%	<0.001
I felt afraid	82%	91%	0.001

There was a significant difference in the response to the statement about teachers helping students complete tasks and assignments between the AEP and the previous school. Only 25% of students indicated that this 'always' happened in the AEP where 55% of students had indicated that this 'always' happened in their previous school.

Table 8 Tanzania: Conduct of Teachers, Positively Worded Statements. (Source: ISELA)

Source: Tanzania ISELA 2018 / 2020	% Responding "Always" 2018: "Last School" N = 383	2020: "This School" N = 197	p-value
Teachers treated me fairly.	51%	43%	0.171
Teachers helped me complete tasks and assignments.	55%	25%	<0.001
Teachers praised me for good work.	38%	35%	0.166

None of the three positively worded statements showed significant improvement between the previous school and the AEP. There was no major change in the responses about fair treatment or praise from teachers, although both did show slightly less positive responses from students about the AEP than they provided about their previous schools. None of the responses significantly varied by gender.

The only statement significantly varying with the age of students is teachers yelling or screaming at students. Only 8% of children younger children (ages 9 or 10) noted that teachers did this rarely, and no younger students indicated it occurred 'usually' or 'always'. 25% of students aged 11 or older indicated that teachers did yell – with a small number of these indicating this happened on a regular basis. This may be linked to specific teachers at higher AEP levels. Although the differences by age were larger than those by AEP level – 14% of Level 1 students indicated the teachers yelled, compared to 24% of those in Level 2 or above.

There was also improvement in questions about safety at school and on the way to school, with a similar increase seen in both. Just over 80% of students 'never' felt afraid at school and on their way to school at their previous school; this increased to just over 90% at the AEP.

Questions related to the conduct of other students – bullying and physical fights – showed no change. Responses to these were very similar when students were asked about their previous school in 2018 and when asked about the current AEP in 2020.

Conduct of Other Students

Reasons for not liking school are similar for both in school students and children who have dropped out. Children say they dislike that fights often break out between other students and while some worry about themselves or their friends getting injured, others say it distracts them from lessons. Other students share that they dislike classes getting 'noisy', which happens when there are fights or when two or more classes get combined for subjects like French. This supports findings from the ISELA about bullying and physical fights among students, which showed that students' perception about this issue has not improved in the AEP compared to their previous schools.

External Pressures

Safety

The qualitative interviews suggest that the journey to school and the school itself is generally thought of as being safe by the students. This finding is also supported by the ISELA survey – in 2018, 81% of those surveyed reported feeling safe on their way to school and in the 2020 survey this figure increased to 92%. Most students (in school and drop outs) explain that they have not experienced safety issues because they generally walk to school in a group with friends.

Economic Factors

Family's economic situation, as will be elaborated upon later in this analysis, is the chief reason for students either dropping out of the AEP or discontinuing formal education following transition from the AEP. The qualitative findings on dropping out are mainly extracted from interviews with children who have dropped out of AEP or formal school. The interview transcripts do not explicitly state whether a particular child dropped out of

AEP or formal education, although the content of the transcripts suggest most of these students had dropped out of the AEP, anytime between one to two years after enrolment, with one student dropping out after a few months. Three parent interviews suggest their children dropped out during transition to formal school.

Low economic capacity manifests as children not having clean clothes to wear or lacking sufficient school supplies. A few children who dropped out of school share that they disliked school because they were made fun of by other students for not having new or clean clothes. These children describe feeling embarrassed or like '*an outcast*' when other students refused to play with them saying they were '*poor*'. This makes apparent the differences in socio-economic status of families living inside the refugee camp and how this might affect children's lived experience.

Enabling Home Environment: Support From Parents

The support provided by parents is in the form of the following, ranked in order of what was mentioned most frequently by both parents and students:

1. Buying school materials including pens, books, notebooks, clothes and shoes.
2. Ensuring that the home environment is conducive to study by giving children less chores to do, forbidding paid work and having other members of the family support in similar ways.
3. Ensuring that children wake up in time for school.
4. Helping with school lessons, including checking homework/exercise books.

Most students, in AEP and in formal schools, say the support from their parents or guardians has been a factor behind staying in school. Many students say they enrolled in the AEP on their parents' insistence and are continuing in order to fulfil their parents' or siblings' wish that they get an education. Parents and guardians also encourage children to go to school everyday, motivating them with aspirations for a better future and often using teachers or people that work in humanitarian aid organisations (likely those they meet through different activities or organisations at the camp) as role models.

Parents who were interviewed say they enrolled their children in the AEP schools after learning about the AEP programme in the camp. For some, enrolling their children in the programme was the only way to ensure their child got an education as they were ineligible to enrol in formal schools because of their refugee status, age for grade requirements or never having enrolled in school before. Some parents explain that they support their child being at school as they have witnessed results – children who could not read or write are doing so now and express hope that their children are able continue their education and get jobs in the future. This is perceived as resulting in 'a good life' and 'keeping the family happy'.

Research Question 3: Integrating Learners Into Formal or Vocational Education

Attendance, Completion and Transition

'Completing' is marked for AEP students who maintain attendance and complete the end of year assessments. However, since many students were repatriated from the camp while still attending the AEP programme, a clear quantification of completion and transition patterns is difficult. The rates of repatriation were higher than the rates of transition in all years. The number of students transitioning to formal education also appears to be low, but the AEP was intended to continue through to 2021/22 so a formal analysis of intermediate transition rates may prove to be misleading and of limited use.

Figure 15 gives an overview of the final recorded status of students. A total of 2262 unique IDs for students who attended at least one AEP session were captured across the 3 years of the monitoring database. 73% of the IDs appeared in just one of the three years, 19% appeared in two years and 8% appeared in all 3 years. It is likely there may be students registered under different IDs in different years, which cannot be fully consolidated. The 2018/19 and 2020/21 databases also included students who were registered for the AEP, but never attended any sessions. These students have not been included in any analysis.

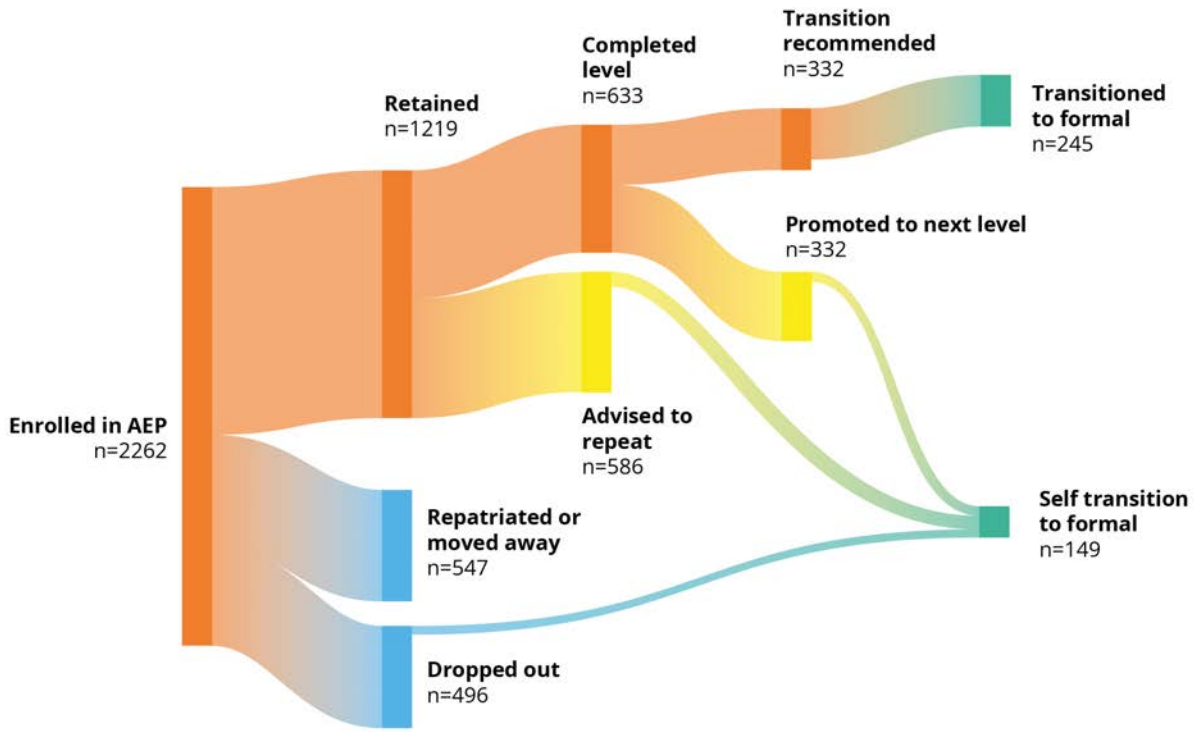

Figure 15 | Tanzania: Final Status of Students Within Monitoring Database, all 3 study years. (Based on ID linkage, so may contain students duplicated under different ID codes)

Just over half of the students maintained attendance throughout their final year within the AEP. Roughly 25% were marked as dropped out, with a further 25% marked as having been repatriated. Of those attending the programme, around half completed the AEP Level successfully in their final year, and half were advised to repeat.

Of students successfully completing the level, only around half were advised to transition – with over 80% of those advised to transition being marked as having transitioned to formal education. However, the latter represent just over 10% of the total number of students. Similarly, only 7% of the total number of students were marked as having self-transitioned into formal education. This group comprises those marked as 'drop outs', 'advised to repeat' or 'promoted to the next level'.

Table 9 **Tanzania: Attendance and Drop-Outs Through School Year (Source: Database)**

Year	Outcome	N	%
2018/19	**Students Registered in Database**	**1091**	
	Never Attended	**39 / 1091**	4%
	Students Starting School Year	**1052 / 1091**	96%
	Attended Through Year	634 / 1052	60%
	Repatriated or Moved Away	68 / 1052	6%
	Self-Transitioned	2 / 1052	0%
	Dropped Out	348 / 1052	33%
2019/20	**Students Registered in Database**	**864**	
	Students Starting School Year	**864 / 864**	100%
	Attended Through Year	498 / 864	58%
	Repatriated or Moved Away	319 / 864	37%
	Self-Transitioned	3 / 864	0%
	Dropped Out	44 / 864	5%
2020/21	**Students Registered in Database**	**1119**	
	Never Attended	**145 / 1119**	13%
	Students Starting School Year	**974 / 1119**	87%
	Attended Through Year	597 / 974	61%
	Repatriated or Moved Away	202 / 974	21%
	Self-Transitioned	37 / 974	4%
	Dropped Out	138 / 974	14%

The attendance rates recorded in the database were relatively consistent from year to year, with 2019/20 having slightly higher average attendance than the other two years. Given this year was interrupted by an enforced break due to Covid-19, the context around school attendance would be expected to be different within this year.

Table 10 | **Tanzania: Average Attendance Rates (Source: Database)**

Year	Average Attendance (Attended at least one session)	Average Attendance (Continued in AEP throughout year)	% Continuing in AEP throughout year
2018/19	46%	60%	60%
2019/20	50%	66%	58%
2020/21	44%	62%	61%

Relatively large proportions of the students were advised to repeat the AEP programme upon completion of the academic year, indicating that they had not made enough progress to be promoted to the higher AEP levels of transition into formal education. This was particularly the case in 2019/20 where over half of the children completing the academic year were advised to repeat. In part this is likely due to the lengthy school closures arising from the COVID-19 outbreak.

Table 11 | **Tanzania: Recommendations (Source: Database)**

	2018/19	%	2019/20	%	2020/21	%
Total Students 'Completing' Year	**570 / 1052**	**54%**	**436 / 864**	**50%**	**447 / 974**	**46%**
"Meets Criteria for Transition"	160	28%	72	17%	158	35%
"Promoted to next level"	212	37%	131	30%	125	28%
"Advised to Repeat"	168	29%	233	53%	164	37%

Table 12 | Tanzania: Transitions (Source: Database)

	2018/19	%	2019/20	%	2020/21	%
Total Students Starting Year	**1052**		**864**		**974**	
Transitioned/ Recommended to Transition	29	3%	73	8%	158	16%
Self-Transitioned After End of School Year	54	5%	0	0%	105	11%
Self-Transitioned During School Year	3	0%	3	0%	73	7%
Repatriated	68	6%	319	37%	202	21%

Support During and After Transition to Formal Education

For students unwilling to transfer to formal school after finishing AEP (three cases), the key reason was bullying of AEP students who were said to come *'from a stupid school'.* The parents of these children mention that they encouraged their children to transfer to formal school but students were unwilling to attend.

Multiple AEP teacher interviews state that formal school teachers often mock and insult students who have transitioned from AEP. Teachers and school authorities at formal schools are understood as *'looking down on'* the AEP programme, believing that students do not benefit from the programme. They also mention that some AEP students have dropped out because they are not accepted by formal school authorities[11]. A few interviews also highlight that there have been students who were sent back to the AEP following transition, by formal school authorities or teachers citing ineligibility to enrol as the reason.

11 Clarification provided by the Tanzania programme team states that the programme has supported yearly training of formal school teachers and evducation/school inspectors on supporting the transition of AEP learners. The document also states that during the first 90 days after transition, there is continuous tracking of the students to see if they are fitting well at formal schools.

Research Question 4: Factors Affecting Success

Attendance, Drop-Outs & Transition

Age / Education History / AEP Level

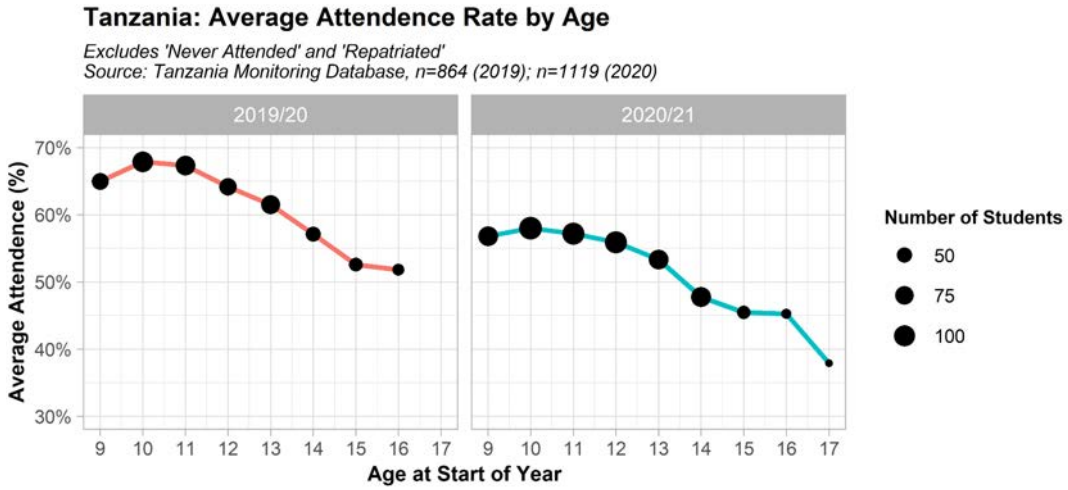

Figure 16 | Tanzania: Average Attendance Rate by Age

Attendance was strongly correlated with the age of the student – in the recorded databases children aged 9-10 years had the highest average attendance and there was a consistent reduction in average attendance for every increased year of age after that. In 2019/20, the recorded average attendance within the AEP was 60% for 10 year old students, and 36% for 16 year old students.

After excluding students who did not complete the school year due to repatriations, there was also a strong relationship between increased age of students and decreasing likelihood to complete the school year. This trend was extremely similar in both the 2019/20 and 2020/21 academic years (2018/19 not considered due to large amounts of missing data for age, with missing age correlated to lack of completion).

Students aged between 9 and 12 had similar completion rates – around 85% in 2019/20 and 65% in 2020/21. There was then a reduction in the completion rates seen for 13, 14 and 15 year olds. Around 67% of 15 year olds completed the 2019/20 academic year and under 50% of 15 year olds completed the 2020/21 academic year.

This suggests that the AEP is less successful at retaining older students within the education system. Signs of this start to become clear in 11-13 year old children, as we can see the average attendance of these students is lower compared to the younger children, but they are still retained within the AEP at similar levels. Retention levels only see signs of reduction from age 13 onwards.

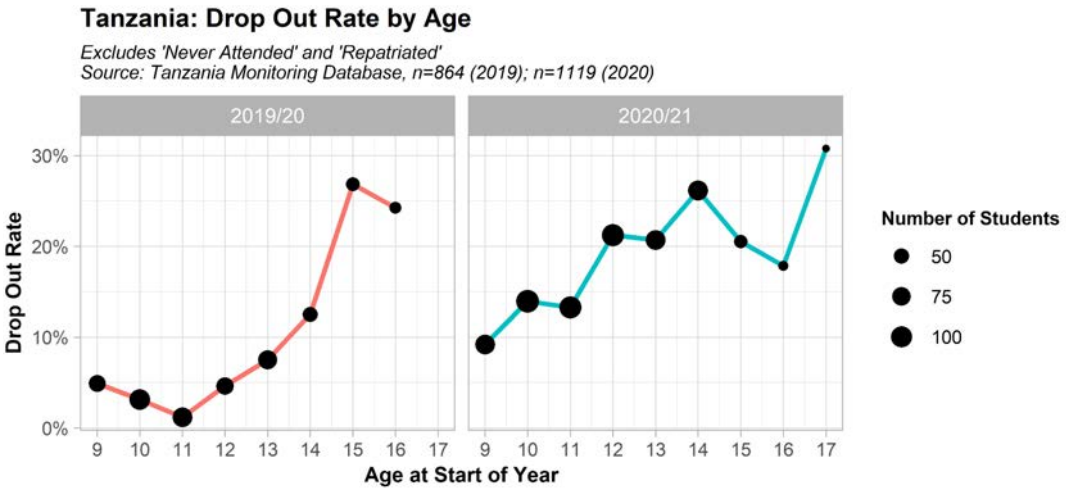

Figure 17 | Tanzania: Drop Out Rate by Age

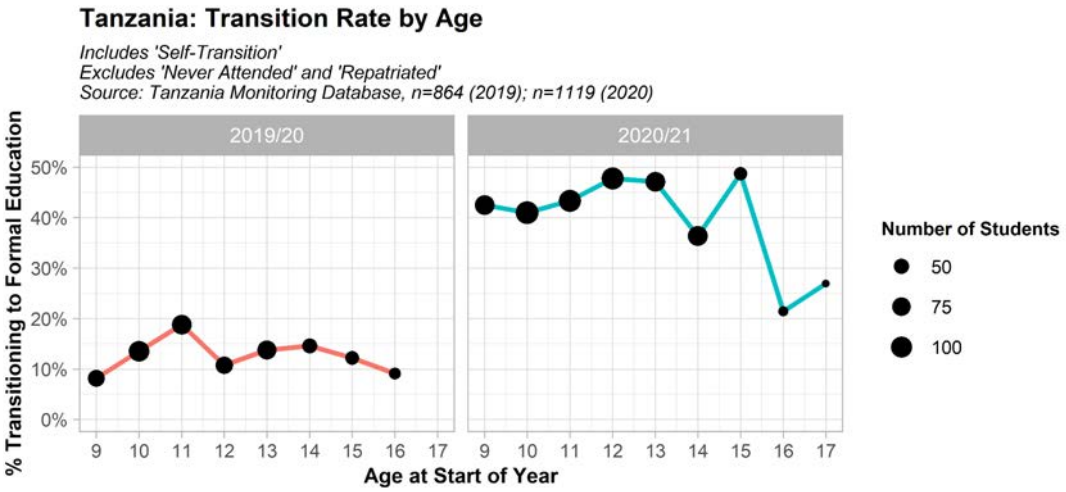

Figure 18 | Tanzania: Transition Rate by Age

The analysis also identified the relationship between students dropping out and the AEP level, independent of the effect of age. Students in the lower levels had lower drop out rates than those in higher levels. In particular, in the 2019/2020 data there was an extremely high drop out rate among male students in the highest AEP Level. Drop outs among male students were around 10 times higher in AEP Level 3/4 (drop out rate=22.7%) than for female students in Level 3/4 (drop out rate = 2.4%).

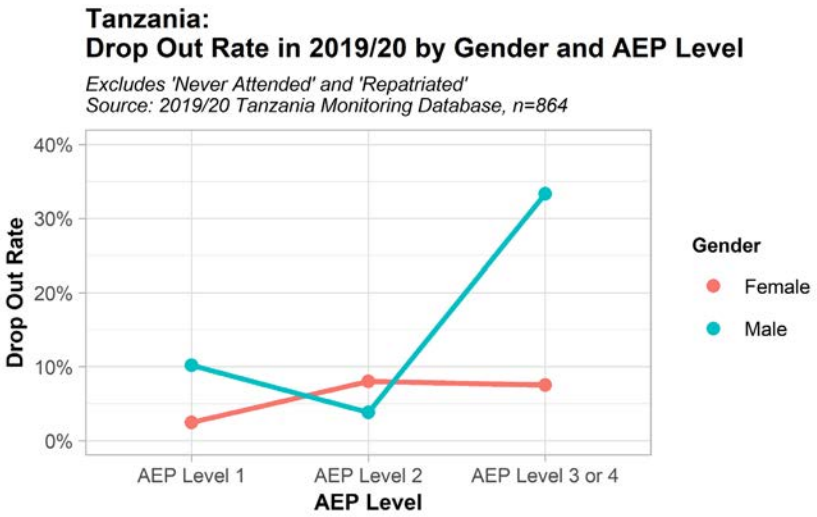

Figure 19 | Tanzania: Drop Out Rate in 2019/20 by Gender and AEP Level

The results for 2019/20 need to be placed within the context of the onset of COVID-19 midway through this academic year. Although the timing of the drop outs cannot be isolated, it appears that many of the more academically advanced male students did not return to the AEP after schools resumed following the COVID-19 break. Other variables analysed but did not show any relationships to these outcomes are disability status and whether students were orphaned or separated from their parents.

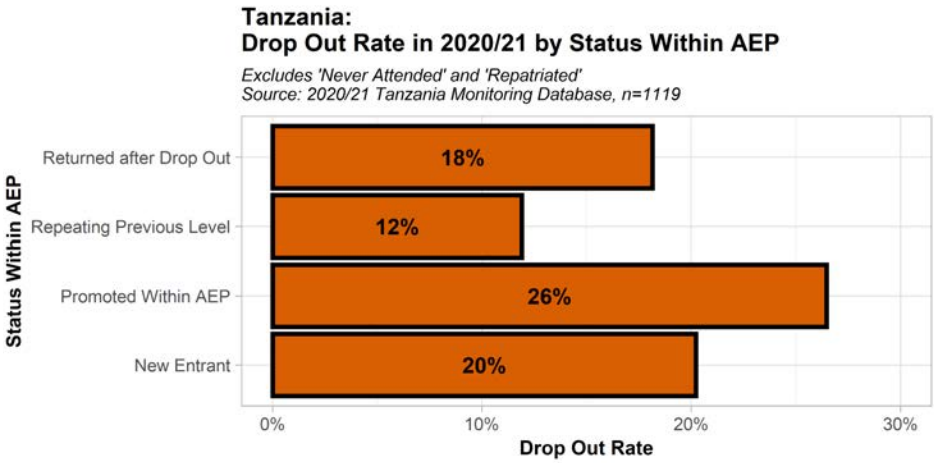

Figure 20 | Tanzania: Drop Out Rate in 2020/21 by Status Within AEP

Within the 2020/21 academic year, drop outs could also be linked to the previous year's education status of the student. Dropout rates across all age groups were highest among students promoted to a higher AEP level, followed by drop out rates from new students or students returning after having dropped out and lowest among students repeating the same AEP level.

Recorded Reasons Behind Dropping Out - Database

The monitoring database provides further reasons behind dropping out, but these are only available for some students in 2019/20 and 2020/21. These are summarised in the Table 13 below.

Table 13 | **Tanzania: Recorded Reason for Dropping Out. (Source: Monitoring Database)**

Recorded Reasons	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	Total
Total Dropouts	348	44	138	530
Dropped out – reason provided in database	1 (0%)	20 (45%)	36 (36%)	57 (11%)
No school clothes	0	8	15	23
Illness of self of family member	0	2	7	9
Marriage or birth	1	3	5	9
Lack of support from parents	0	6	1	7
Poor academic performance	0	0	3	3
Passed away	0	1	1	2
Needed to work	0	0	2	2
School too far from home	0	0	1	1
Considered self too old for school	0	0	1	1

Reasons Behind Dropping Out - Qualitative interviews

Family's financial situation is the most common reason children give for dropping out of school. Most children, regardless of gender, say they dropped out because their families are poor and could not provide enough food or buy school supplies after they ran out of the school kits provided by the programme. Others share that they did not have clean clothes or shoes for school and that families did not have enough money to buy new clothes and, in a few cases, detergent to wash the clothes they had. Lack of school supplies and clean clothes are often linked to feelings of embarrassment and inferiority in front of schoolmates *'who avoid and make fun of us',* and more than half of the children share that this is the primary determinant for them to drop out of school. Some explain that dropping out was solely their decision and they are now working to earn money to support their family and saving to be able to buy clothes and shoes, hoping to go back to school in the near future.

> ***"I felt very ashamed to have dirty school uniform and to have to wear it everyday."***
>
> Drop out Student, Mtendeli Refugee Camp

Non conducive home environment is the second most common reason for dropping out of school. Some students mention that their parents discourage them from going to school, expecting them to instead stay home and help with chores. Others speak about having to take up caregiver responsibilities for older grandparents or younger siblings in the absence of parents (death, away working). For example, one girl mentions dropping out of school to help her elderly grandparents, and another shares that she had to drop out to take care of her mother who was hospitalised with a long-term illness. Typically, this meant attending regular school was difficult and long periods of absence meant they could not catch up on lessons, thus influencing their decision to leave school.

Illness (both long and short term) is the third common reason given by both children and parents for students to drop out of school. This is particularly the case for the 2021 interviews where many children mention dropping out because they got sick, although no explanation is given of the type of illness. A few parents (2020 interviews) also mention long-term illnesses as a reason for their children leaving school. They explain that children who have been sick for a long time do not wish to return to school, likely because they are embarrassed that their peers have advanced to the next level.

Other reasons for dropping out of school:

- Repatriation of families (parent interviews)
- Poor performance at school, including one case of school asking the student to repeat a grade (student interview)
- Getting influenced by friends who have dropped out (parent interview)
- Pregnancy (one case) or wanting to get married (both parent and student interviews).

Drop Out and Attendance Rates (2019/20) Linked to Other Data Sources

None of the overall composite scores on perception of learning environment, stress management, self-concept and the CYRM were significantly linked to attendance over and above the characteristics which could be observed from the database alone.

Table 14 | **Tanzania: Comparison of Drop Out and Attendance Rates Across Databases**

Outcome	Overall Database	ISELA 2020 Cohort
Average attendance (2019/2020)	50.0%	70.1%
Final tracking status = "Drop Out"	19.7%	6%

It is worth noting that, due to the way the cohort was selected, those who participated in the 2020 ISELA survey had higher average attendance and lower rates of drop out as compared to all students in the database. This is because children had to have been attending school mid-way through the school year to be included in the ISELA survey – so those students with poor general attendance or who had already dropped out would not have been included.

It was not possible to link the data from the 2018 ISELA directly to the final status of the students in the database.

Academic Improvement (ASER)

In the December 2020 assessment data, other than the AEP Level, age was the only variable that was significantly linked to results in the Math and Reading scores. The proportion of students achieving the maximum scores in Math and Reading increased with an increase in the AEP level, as would be expected with students in higher ability AEP classes scoring better than students in lower ability classes.

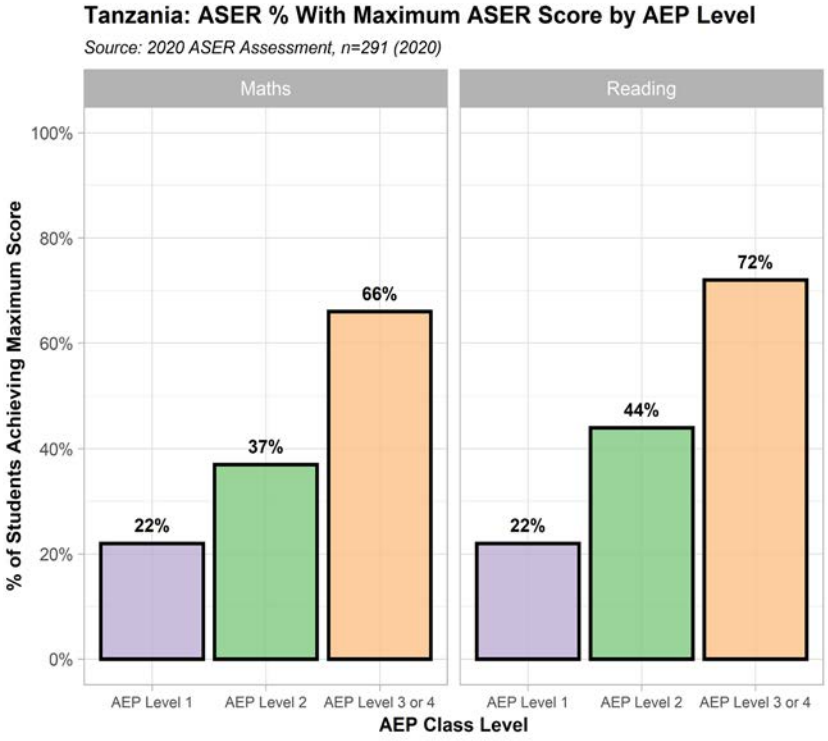

Figure 21 | Tanzania: % With Maximum ASER Score by AEP Level

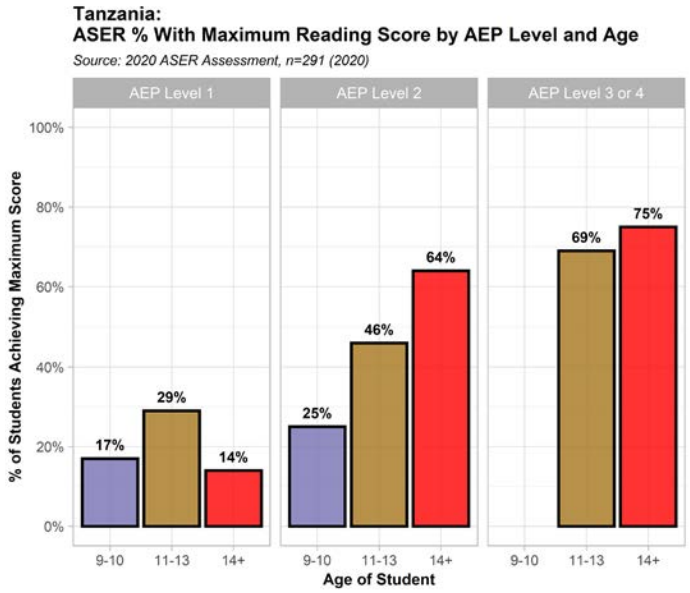

Figure 22 | Tanzania: % With Maximum Reading Score by AEP Level and Age

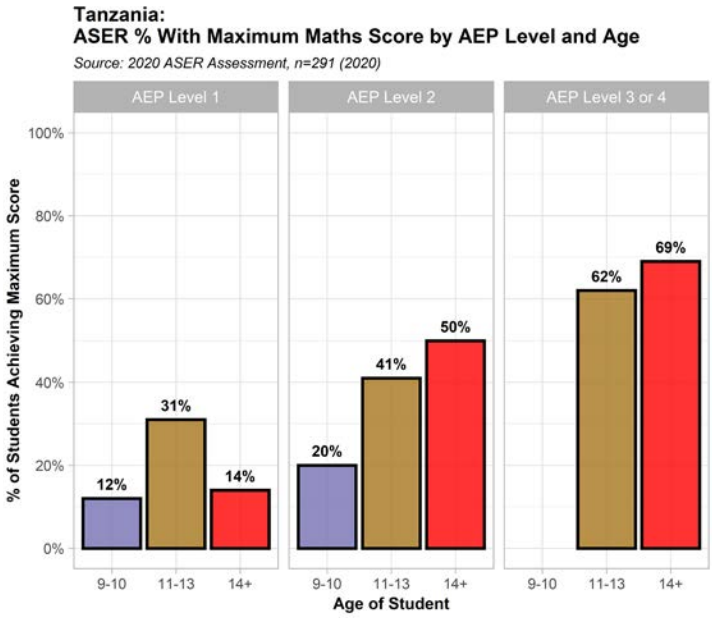

Figure 23 | Tanzania: % With Maximum Maths Score by AEP Level and Age

Within AEP Level 1, students who were in the 11-13 age group performed better than those in the other age groups. In Level 2, the results for both Math and Reading were higher in the older age groups. Younger children (9-10) placed in Level 2 performed only slightly better than the younger children in Level 1, and had results more similar to Level 1 students, rather than being similar to the older students within the same academic level.

There were only small differences by age among AEP Level 3/4 students. There was no identifiable difference in the results at baseline or follow-up ASER assessments by gender. Other variables – CYRM, school environment, stress management, self-concept – appeared to show no significant relationship to the ASER results, or the changes over time in the ASER results.

Photo: Ephrem Chiruza/NRC

DRC: Analysis

Background

In the DRC, the programme target group is IDPs and returnee children as well as children in the host communities where IDPs have been resettled. Priority for enrolment in the first year of the project was given to those who had never been in school and those aged 16-17 years who had dropped out of school. The programme also includes young people who have left armed groups, teenage mothers, and children stigmatised because of kidnapping. At the end of the 2020/21 academic year there were 3,602 students who had been enrolled in 20 AEP schools and attended at least one session over the previous 3 years.

The DRC in 2015 also made primary education free. Further, national education policies in also include primary education and vocational skilling programmes where learning is facilitated in accelerated timeframes. To gain entry into the formal secondary schools system, learners are required to gain the certificate of passing a national eligibility test called the Test National de Fin d'Études Primaires (TENAFEP) administered by the Ministry of Primary, Secondary and Technical Education (EPST).

The AEP schools in DRC are spread across seven different communities, five of which are characterised by economic impoverishment and insecurity resulting from abductions and looting. Four communities are known to have repeated cases of abduction of both children and adults, where abductors (in one case, a local militia) characteristically demand ransom from families and communities for releasing hostages. The fifth community is known to experience regular looting and burglary, particularly of agricultural goods and products. The remaining two communities are highly mobile of people owing to their location (large agricultural market areas, close to the border), which resulted in them experiencing more cases of COVID-19 in 2020/2021 compared to the other five communities.[12]

The structure of the AEP is the same in the DRC as in Tanzania, i.e., 6 years of curriculum delivered to children within 3 years, with three levels in the AEP for each year. In addition, the NRC also provides the Teacher Emergency Package+ (TEP+) where curriculum on the first three grades of the primary school is taught within 10 months. The TEP+ is meant for children in the 10-13 age group, since children above 9 years of age are not allowed to enrol in the first grade of formal schooling in the DRC. Thus, Out-of-school children in the 10-13 age group are prepared by the TEP+ to gain admission into the third grade directly. Pursuant to discussions with the project teams, the analysis here combines the children enrolled in the TEP+ with the Level 1 of the AEP.

12 Contextual information extracted from background documents sent by the DRC programme team.

Research Question 1: Reaching and Supporting Marginalised Children

Photo: Ephrem Chiruza/NRC

Reaching Marginalised Children

Age and Gender

In the DRC, the overall gender ratio remained nearly equal.

Table 15 | **DRC: Age and Gender Distribution**

Characteristic	Response	Phase 2 (n=1843)
Gender	Male	47%
	Female	53%
Age	Overall mean (years)	12.2
	Girls mean (years)	12.1
	Boys mean (years)	12.2
Age Group	6-10	29%
	11-12	30%
	13-14	26%
	15+	14%

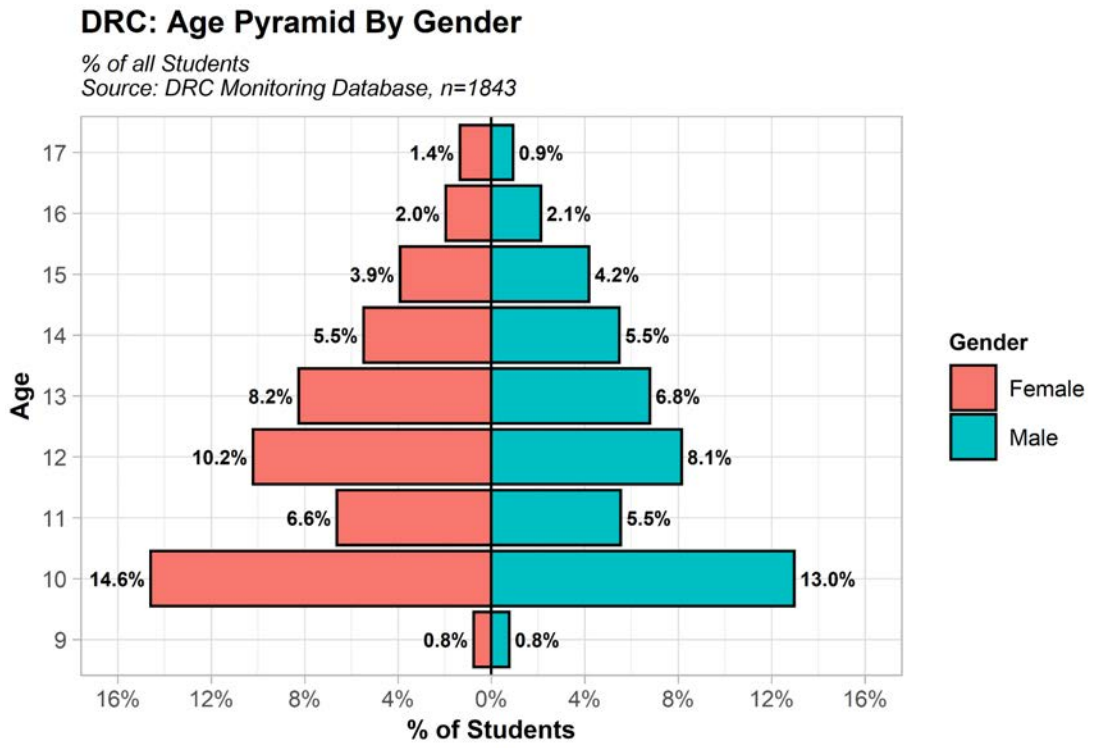

Figure 24 | DRC: Distribution of Age and Gender

Previous Schooling Status

The proportion of students who either did not have any previous schooling experience or had been out of school for 2 or more years was 77%. This is nearly double of what is observed in Tanzania where about 44% of the students had had no previous schooling.

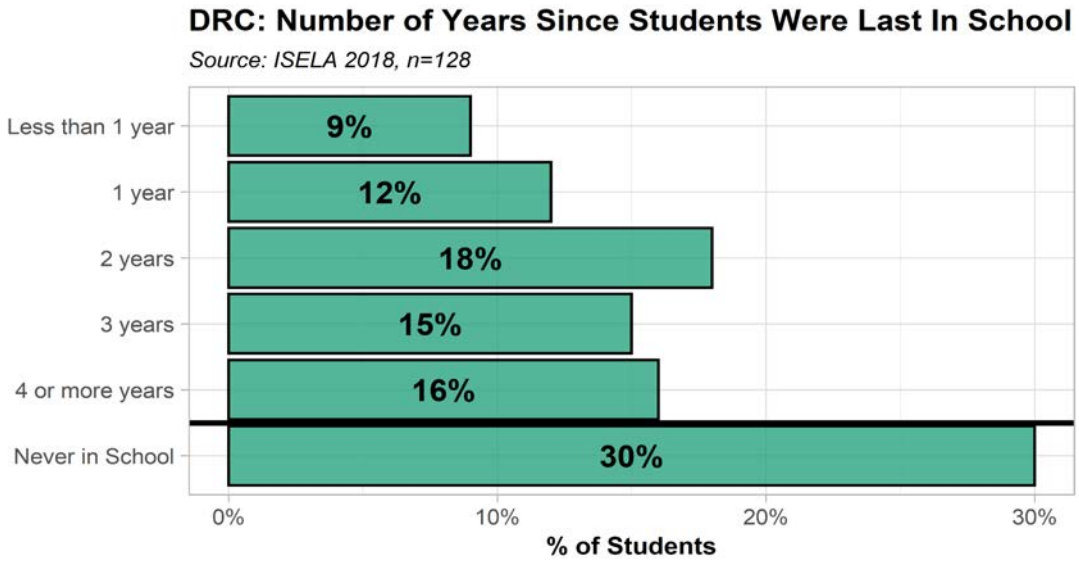

Figure 25 | DRC: Number of Years Since Students Were last in School

Other Vulnerability Criteria

Recorded levels of disability were low in the DRC – only 4% out of 1843 (Phase 2 data) This is similar to what was recorded in Tanzania. However, compared to Tanzania, there is a slightly higher proportion of students in the DRC who were either orphaned or separated from their families – nearly 18% fall under this category. In the 2018 ISELA Cohort 1 Survey, 19% out of 128 students reported as having been orphaned. At the same time, the guardians of almost all children were family members.

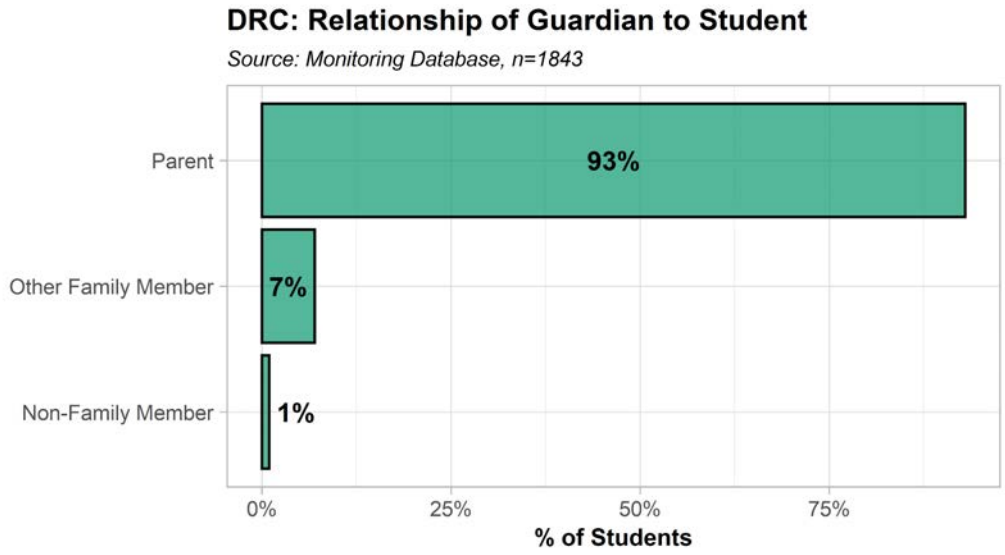

Figure 26 | DRC: Relationship of Guardian to Student

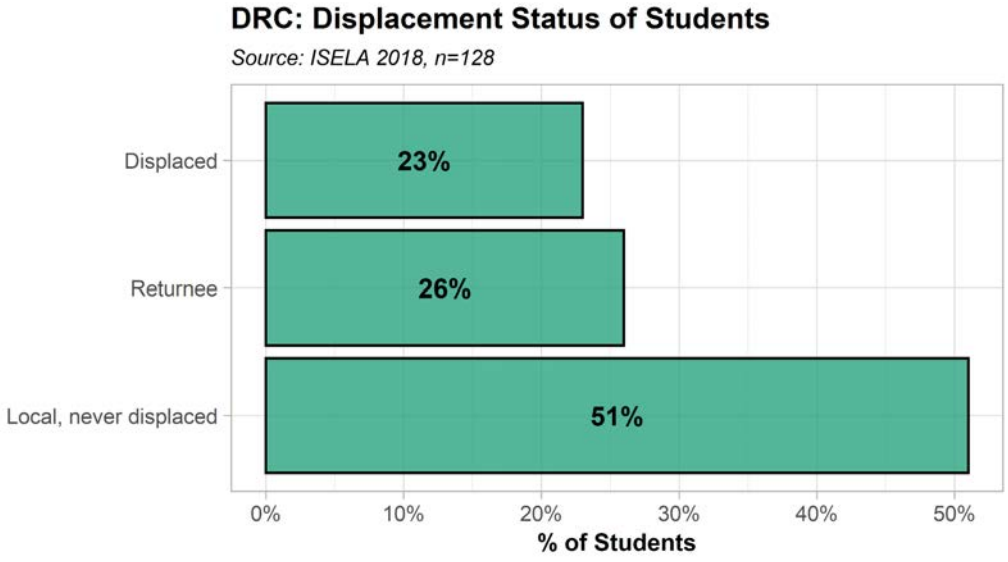

Figure 27 | DRC: Displacement Status of Students

In terms of displacement status, as shown in Figure 27 above, half of the children were from local communities but the remaining were returnees or displaced. The education levels of the parents of AEP learners (Figure 28) were also very low, with more than half of them not having any previous education.

The proportion of students in DRC with experiences of conflict-related violence was substantially higher than in Tanzania. Nearly half (out of 128) of the students reported such experience in the DRC, compared to 28% (out of 408) in Tanzania.

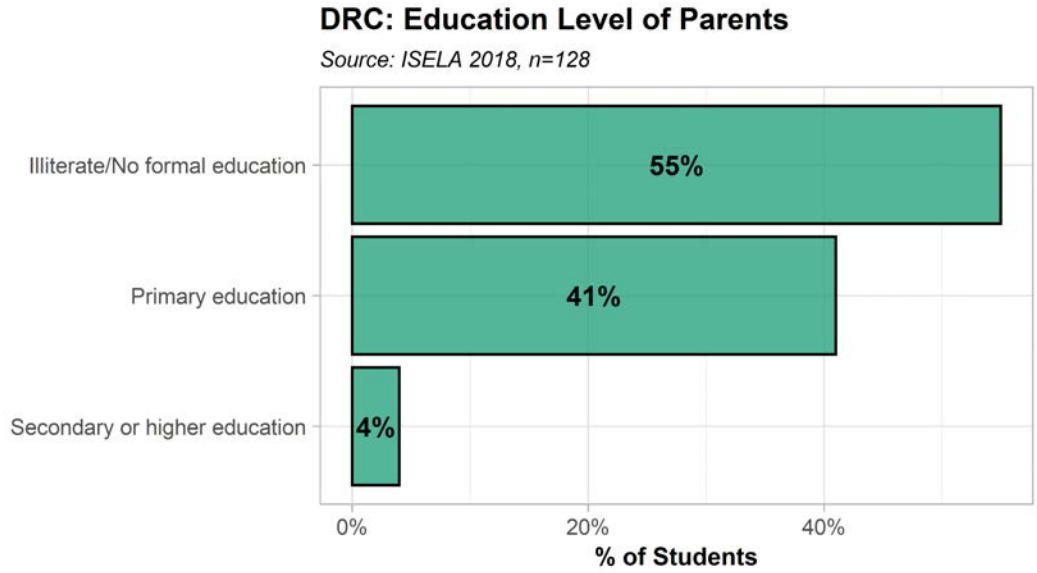

Figure 28 | DRC: Education Level of Parents

Supporting Academic Progression: Results from ASER

1,435 students in the AEP programme in DRC completed the ASER assessment in November 2019. Of these, 408 completed the follow-up assessment in October 2020. This section analyses the results of the assessments in the context of the factors (age, gender etc.) on which data was available, that are understood to affect educational outcomes.

There was no evidence of a significant systematic difference in the baseline results between the 408 students who completed the follow up assessment, and the 1,427 who completed only the original assessment. The only factor which varied significantly between the baseline and follow-up samples was how well represented certain schools were in the follow up samples. Follow-up rates per school varied from 0% to 70%, and both baseline and endline ASER results significantly varied between schools. Results presented are adjusted to account for this.

ASER: Overall Results

In 2019, 60% of students could not complete any of the basic mathematical exercises (identifying numbers, basic addition or subtraction) and only 4% could complete all the exercises. By 2020 this had changed so that only 9% of students could not complete any exercises and 61% were able to complete all of them.

Table 16 | **DRC: ASER Math Scores**

Score	Score description	% of Students With This Score or Above	
		Baseline: November 2019	**Follow-Up:** October 2020
0	None	-	-
1	Identify Numbers	40%	91%
2	Identify Multiple Digit Numbers	25%	81%
3	Complete Addition	9%	69%
4	Complete Subtraction	4%	61%

In 2019, 55% of the students could not complete any of the basic literacy exercises (identifying letters and words, and reading paragraphs and stories of text) and only 1% could complete all the exercises. By 2020 this had changed so that only 18% of students could not complete any literacy exercises and 10% were able to complete all the exercises.

Table 17 | **DRC: ASER Reading Scores**

Score	Score description	% of Students With This Score or Above	
		Baseline: November 2019	**Follow-Up:** October 2020
0	None	-	-
1	Read Letters	45%	82%
2	Read Words	25%	44%
3	Read Paragraphs	13%	23%
4	Read Full Story	1%	10%

The average ASER score improved significantly in both Math and Reading between the two survey rounds in 2019 and 2020 within all levels, as shown in Figure 29 below.

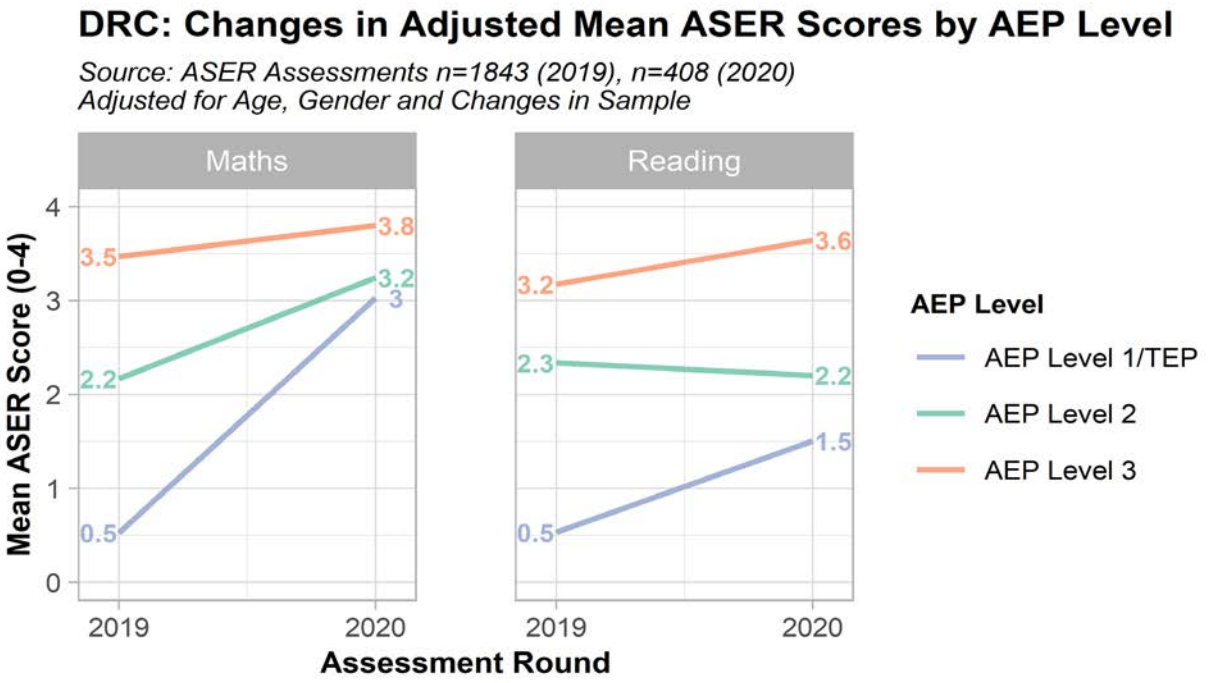

Figure 29 | DRC: Changes in Adjusted Mean ASER Scores by AEP Level

Supporting Social and Emotional Progression: Results from ISELA and CYRM

ISELA: Empathy & Perseverance

In the 2018 assessment, 77% of students were able to complete the empathy exercise and 78% of students completed the perseverance exercise. 71% of all students completed both, with only a small number of students succeeding in one of the exercises without succeeding on the other. There was virtually no change in the results between the two ISELA round. Results for both perseverance and empathy improved marginally but this difference was not statistically significant. This may be due in part to the strong baseline performance of students; however the follow-up results among the students surveyed in Tanzania were significantly higher than the results from the DRC students.

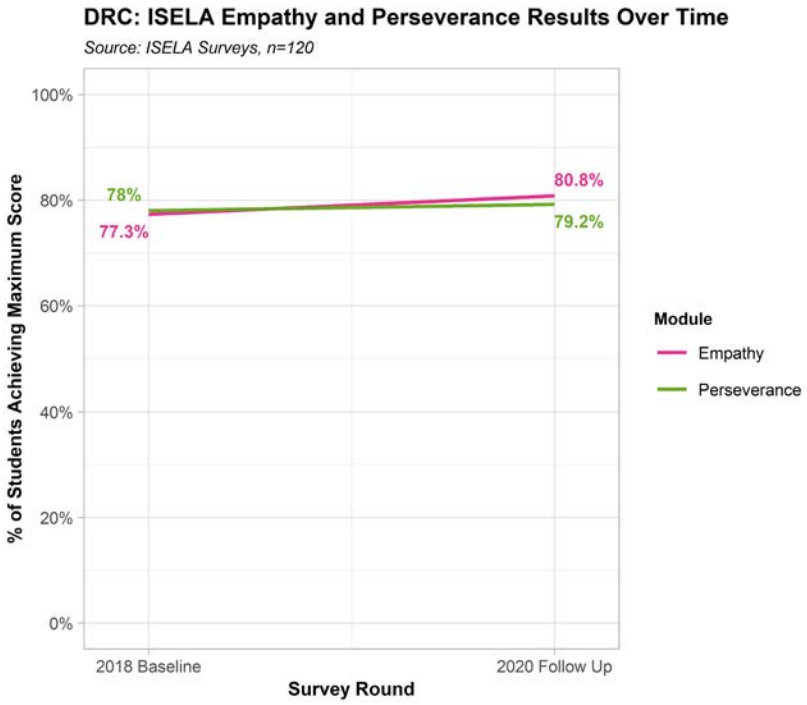

Figure 30 | DRC: Changes in Adjusted Mean ASER Scores by AEP Level

ISELA: Self-Concept

Overall, 60% of the students could answer all 9 questions appropriately in the 2020 ISELA survey. Gender was the only demographic factor with a significant relationship to self-concept, with 68% of boys completing all 9 questions and only 53% of girls.

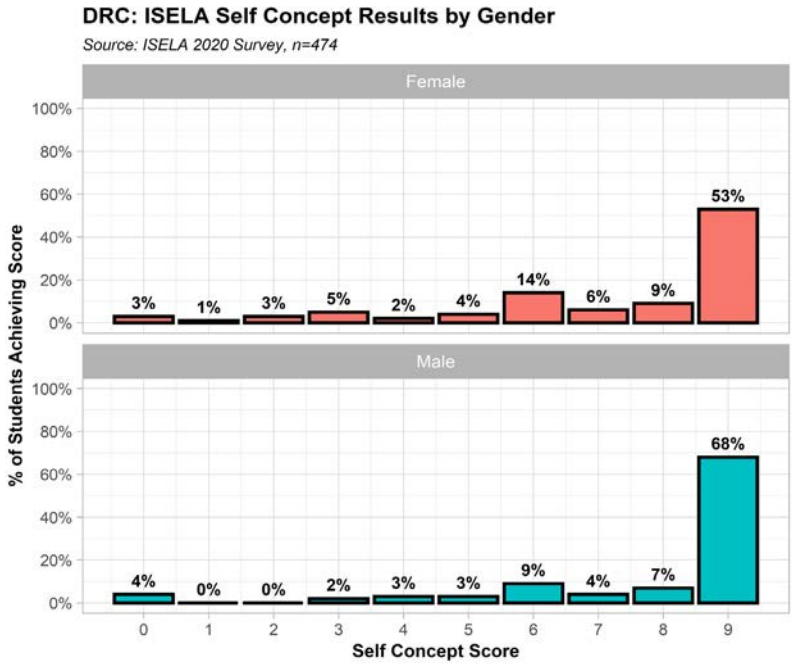

Figure 31 | DRC: ISELA Self Concept Results by Gender

ISELA: Stress Management

Overall, 72% of the students were able to identify 3 or more appropriate stress management techniques in the 2020 ISELA survey. Neither gender nor AEP level was significantly linked to stress management but age was highly correlated to successful identification of appropriate stress management techniques. Only 62% students in the 9-10 age group succeeded in this assessment, increasing with age to 78% of students aged 15+. Stress management did not vary by gender, AEP level or language of the students.

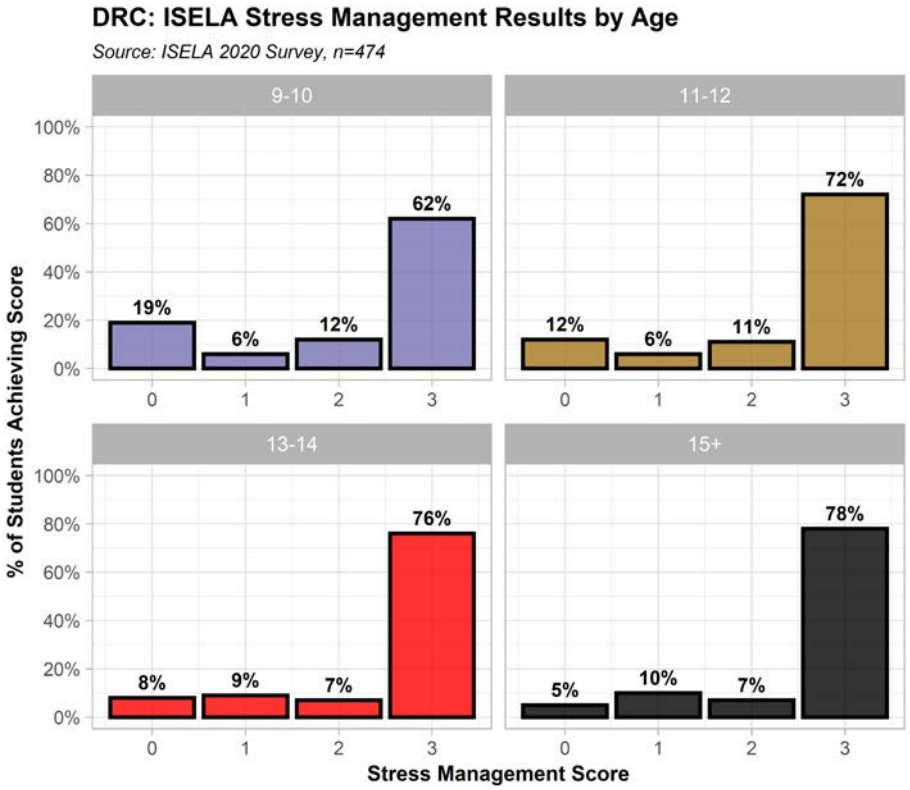

Figure 31 | DRC: Stress Management Results by Age

CYRM: Overall Results

Students in DRC generally scored much lower on the CYRM as compared to those in Tanzania, indicating an overall lower resilience capacity in the former. However, less than 1% of students had an overall negative score on the CYRM composite score.

Table 18 | **DRC: CYRM Average Scores**

CYMR Component	Average Composite Score (Standardised -1 to +1)	% With Negative Score
Overall Composite Score	0.68	0.8%
Social Skills	**0.44**	**15.4%**
Individual Capacity	**0.51**	**6.8%**
Cultural Perception	**0.67**	**5.1%**
Spiritual	**0.71**	**12.4%**
Peer Support	0.52	2.6%
Caregiver Emotional Support	0.68	2.7%
Caregiver Physical/Material Support	0.63	4.0%
Education Perception	0.95	0.2%

More than 5% of the students had negative scores within 4 of the individual components– individual capacity, peer support, social skills, spiritual perception and cultural perception (highlighted in bold in Table 18).

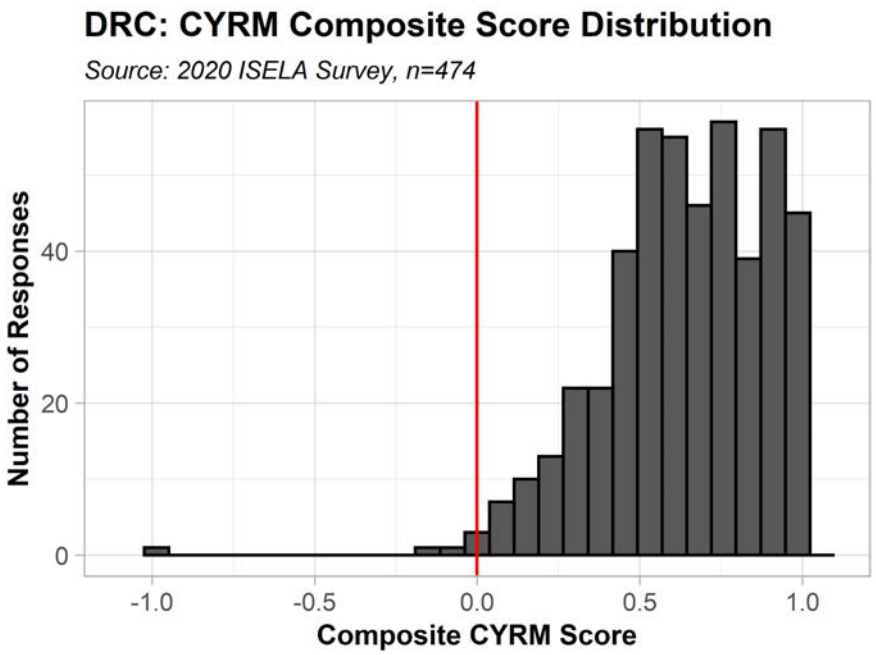

Figure 32 | DRC: CYRM Composite Score Distribution

The overall average score was higher for Swahili speakers than Kinyabwisha speakers (due to low sample size, Kinande speakers were not analysed here), but the difference was small. CYRM scores did not vary significantly with age, gender, disability status, previous education or whether the child lived with their parents. There was some variation between school and the score, which could be explained by taking into account the languages spoken by children.

Research Question 2: Tackling Barriers to Create an Enabling Environment

'Mesosystem' / Programme Activities

Recruitment & Training of Teachers

Findings from the qualitative interviews show an even split between teachers who have prior teaching experience at formal schools and those who have no experience of teaching[13]. Those who have worked as teachers previously say they left their previous jobs for different reasons — some were not being paid well or regularly, others were just out of school themselves and others saw the NRC advertisement and decided to apply or were already teaching at schools and got moved to teaching AEP. Teachers with no prior teaching experience were working as sellers or farmers.

All except one teacher reported receiving 2 or 3 different trainings, with the one teacher saying he had not received any training and relied on other teachers for support. Most remember a 10-day training, although there is some confusion on the curriculum that was delivered in it. Teachers say they were trained on the basics of the AEP programme, preparing classwork and class management, as well as understanding children contextually. Most also say there was another training on psychosocial support where they were trained on understanding that AEP students come from difficult family backgrounds and situations, using positive reinforcement when a student does well etc. Teachers think these trainings were helpful because the AEP curriculum is remedial school curriculum, which is different from the regular (national) curriculum. They also say that the psychosocial support training helped them understand ways to deal with vulnerable children who have been displaced. A few teachers note that they are at an advantage compared to formal school teachers when working with vulnerable children who come from conflict situations because of having received the psychosocial support training.

> ***"The child should not be insulted or humiliated among other children."***
>
> Teacher, Buhuri on what he learned from the psycho-social training

13 Teacher recruitment is done as per the Congolese school legislation which stipulates that to have a 6-year diploma in Pedagogical Humanities (= to have teaching skills)

- Be a man or a woman of good character
- Have experience in teaching
- Be unemployed with no occupation
- Demonstrate competence and knowledge of pedagogy

Also according to the NRC standard that stipulates that all teachers pass the written test and interview composed by the local office of Primary, Secondary and Technical Education

Teachers also receive other support from NRC to aid with teaching. All teachers say they have received books and school supplies and are also appreciative of having received blackboards (for community learning), sanitizers and soap which were provided to them when conducting classes in the communities during the pandemic. A few teachers complained about having received the school supplies late, in one case almost six months after classes had started. There were also a few complaints about their salaries (USD 80/ month) being delayed at times.[14]

> ***"If I did not have this support, it could have been hard to teach. These materials guided our teaching and assigning works to children."***
>
> Teacher, Buhuri, on the teaching materials support provided to AEP teachers.

School Environment & Teaching Materials

All children (in AEP or formal schools and dropouts) say that they like being at school albeit for varied reasons. Some children explain that they liked going to school because they learned how to read and write, *'I don't get lost now because I can read sign posts*' (girl, Tshombo AEP) as well as learning new subjects like Math, French and Swahili. Children also share that they like school because they understand what is being taught and feel good when they are able to answer questions in class and perform well in examinations. Others explain that going to school means doing well in the future. In the words of one boy, '*These courses will be the ones to help me step forward to achieve a brighter future'* (boy, Buhuri AEP).

All students except those at Rubare AEP[15] thought that the amenities at school were adequate, including sufficient clean water and separate toilets for boys and girls. In the Rubare AEP, both in-school and students who have dropped out share that they did not have access to clean water and they had to use toilets that were shared between boys and girls. All of the 2022 cohort, except those in Rubare AEP, mention the provision of sanitary materials (although it is unclear from the transcripts if these are sanitary kits provided by the project or other sanitary items like soap, sanitary napkins etc. provided for use at school) while most in the 2020 cohort share that there was no provision of sanitary materials, including sanitary napkins at school. Except for two students (both dropouts, 2020 cohort), all thought that the classrooms were comfortable and airy with windows and enough desks for them to study well. Of the two who said they did not like their classroom, one was studying out of an old church building and another was at an old primary school with a leaking roof.

---

14 The clarification documents provided by the DRC team states the following reasons for delay of school supplies and teacher payments:

- Delay of scholastic materials: delay due to logistic and access limitations
- Delay of motivation bonus and salary: NRC has committed, through a Service Contract with the teachers, to pay them an amount of 80 USD per month. There are no banks in the operational areas and NRC uses cell phones to transfer money which is often delayed due to poor connection coverage.

15 Questions about school amenities (classrooms, toilets, clean water) have only been asked to students who dropped out (2020 interviews) and the 2022 cohort (both in school and dropouts).

> ***"These courses will be the ones to help me step forward to achieve a brighter future."***
>
> Boy, Buhuri AEP

Students' Perception of Teachers

Teachers at both AEP and formal school are generally liked by students, both those who are still in school and those who have dropped out[16]. Teachers are thought of as being kind and respectful of students and most like that teachers come to visit their parents at home and tell them about their performance and conduct at school. Students also feel that teachers instruct them well and most share that AEP teachers explain lessons clearly and that many teachers make an effort to keep the lessons from getting boring, such as using games in class which the students appreciated. Most students also say they receive positive reinforcement from their teachers for doing well at school or at other times when it is needed by the student. This was appreciated by the student and was typically in the form of giving candies or having other students clap for them for performing well. One girl who has now transitioned to formal school shared that she was given books by her teacher when NRC was late in providing them to the students.

Further, most children (both in school and dropouts) interviewed in 2022[17] feel that the AEP curriculum was *'adequate'* and adapted to fit their capability. Students say the course materials were interesting and they were encouraged to ask questions if they did not understand what was being taught.

Almost all children say they feel safe at school because of the presence of teachers and other authorities. However, a few students, both boys and girls, say they do not like when they get punished by teachers. Students, in both AEP and formal schools recount experiences of teachers hitting them when they make noise in class, misbehave, do not finish homework or perform well, although these cases seem to be relatively minor and students say the same teachers also encourage and show appreciation when they do good work[18].

16 The interview transcripts for students who have transitioned to formal education are not clear if the questions being asked are about AEP or formal school teachers.

17 Questions about their perception of learning at school were only asked to the 2022 cohort.

18 The clarification document provided by the DRC programme team states that the team is aware of cases of intimidation or corporal punishment by teachers. The programme team views these reports as minor and irregular and typically as not being under control of school directors who supervise the teachers. The vsolid basis for quality learning and instances of corporal punishment are very low.

Engaging parents and guardians

The programme also engages with parents on different activities, starting with enrolment into the AEP and facilitating interactions with both teachers and programme staff.[19] Parents seem to appreciate these interactions and parents of almost all students who are at AEP say they have met with their children's teachers at least once, most often for parent-teacher meetings at school and at times more informally in the community.

A few students and parents share that the programme provides them with school-related materials and supplies like copybooks, pens etc. which supports them to continue their education by taking the burden away from the family. However, the number of people mentioning this form of support is less than those in Tanzania, where more students and parents share that the programme providing school supplies has helped students to stay in school compared to DRC.

Photo: Ephrem Chiruza/NRC

19 The DRC country team engages with parents of students in the following ways, as per clarification provided to the study team:

- Parent awareness on the importance of education: parents are sensitized on the need to enroll and retain children in school in order to protect them from all protection risks: sexual abuse, alcoholism, recruitment in local militias
- Life skills sessions: several topics are discussed during these sessions on various themes, gender, environmental protection, education of children
- Focus groups on positive parenting: parents are sensitised on the methods and ways of raising children: advice, rewards, and recreational activities
- Identification of protection cases: parents are sensitised on all cases of child protection and the alert and referral system

Overall School Environment: Results from ISELA

There were large improvements in the perception of the AEP relative to previous schools in the questions on teacher conduct. This was particularly noticeable for teachers screaming at students, threatening or assaulting them, or making them complete personal tasks.

Table 19 | **DRC: School Environment, Negatively Worded Statements. (Source: ISELA)**

Statement	% Responding "Never"		
	2018: "Last School"	2020: "This School"	p-value
I felt afraid	79%	91%	0.194
A teacher sexually assaulted/raped a student.	88%	99%	0.010
I was bullied by other children.	68%	82%	0.019
I got into physical fights.	60%	90%	<0.001
Teachers pushed, hit, kicked or whipped me.	55%	70%	0.035
Teachers humiliated me.	76%	85%	0.054
Teachers threatened to hurt me.	76%	97%	0.003
Teachers made me do personal tasks for them (i.e., clean their house, errands).	63%	79%	0.001
I felt afraid on my way to and from school.	73%	82%	0.228
Teachers screamed or yelled at me.	59%	84%	0.002

Two out of the four positive statements about teachers improved significantly when students were asked to compare the AEP to their previous schools – those relating to teachers treating students fairly and praising them for good work in class. There was no significant change in the questions relating to teachers helping students to complete tasks or assignments or to support when students were feeling sad.

Table 20 | **DRC: Conduct of Teachers, Positively Worded Statements. (Source: ISELA)**

Statement	% Responding "Always"		
	2018: "Last School"	2020: "This School"	p-value
Teachers treated me fairly.	41%	61%	0.009
Teachers helped me complete tasks and assignments.	30%	36%	0.339
Teachers praised me for good work.	42%	57%	0.005
Teachers helped me when I was sad.	28%	28%	0.727

Combining all of the questions from this section into a single percentage for 'positivity' towards the AEP school environment, the DRC AEP contained 85% of the maximum possible score; a significant increase from the 'positivity' towards the previous education environment, which was 74%.

The overall 'positivity' percentage did not significantly vary with gender, age, AEP Level or language. One question did vary significantly by gender – with just under half of the youngest children in the programme (those aged 9-10) indicating they had been bullied at least once and 30% of the oldest children (aged 16) indicating they had been bullied. Only 17% of children in the middle range, 11-15 years, reported having been bullied whilst at the AEP.

Perceptions about the conduct among students also showed noticeable improvement, particularly in relation to bullying and fights among children. The only set of questions where no major change over time could be observed was about feeling afraid at, or on the way to school. The data reflects responses in the in-depth interviews where children identified concerns of their safety, particularly when travelling to/from the AEP.

Conduct of Other Students

Having friends at school also motivates students to attend school and some students say they like going to school because they have friends they can hang out and play with. Others say their friends motivate them to stay at school, helping them with school work and to catch up on lessons they missed when absent from school.

Students, typically boys, dislike fighting amongst other students and friends, and say that they have sustained minor injuries when trying to break up physical fights. However, as shown in Table 19 above, there is a large improvement in students reporting physical fights/bullying within the AEP as compared to their previous school. This is the opposite of what has been observed in the case of Tanzania, where responses to similar statements about the conduct of other students did not show any change.

External Pressures

Safety

Children and parents in some locations (Buhuri, Nkokwe and Gisiza) shared that the journey to school is unsafe because they come across soldiers, kidnappers or robbers on the way who might try to harass children, asking them for money or to do chores for them. For example, one boy at Nkokwe AEP mentions some soldiers robbed him, while another parent says his daughter 'would run all the way to school because she was afraid of being attacked by soldiers' (Nkokwe). Another child said she walks the longer route to school (almost 1.5 hours compared to 40 minutes by the shorter route) to avoid soldiers because she had heard incidents of girls being raped by soldeirs (Camp FAC). While many students say they are aware they can report problems to teachers and school authorities, most have not reported anything beyond typical issues like fights with other students or lost books etc. A few students also give examples of being hit by teachers. They shared that they have not reported these incidents to anyone as they think the teachers will get angry or would not believe them.

Economic Factors

Almost all parents interviewed share that the only reason their child could continue education is because the AEP schools do not require a fee. Many say that their children had previously dropped out of formal school because the family could not afford the school fees needed to enrol in formal schools, a sentiment echoed by children as well. Parents say that they heard about the programme from neighbours, village leaders as well as programme staff and were encouraged to enrol their children as the school was free. A few parents share their relief at not having to pay school fees because they have big families and paying school fees for all children would be impossible.

Enabling Home Environment: Support From Parents

Most students say that they have been able to continue their education because they have supportive parents and a supportive home environment. Both boys and girls share that their parents, grandparents or older siblings encourage them to go to school, explaining to them that by doing so they can keep themselves out of 'bad habits'. Others strongly link the idea of finishing school to having a better future, sharing that 'knowing to read and write' will help them get jobs in the future. A few boys and girls share that their parents discourage them from doing paid work to focus on school now so they can become 'professionals' in the future.

Parents encourage school-going in a number of ways. These include but are not limited to help with time management, making sure the child wakes up and goes to school on time, ensuring that they have enough time to study and not overburdening them with household chores. Parents also ensure that their children are not skipping school and many share that they do their children's chores so that they can go to school on time, like one father of a boy who shares, 'I would do extra work myself than have my child leave school', indicating that those still in school have better support from their parents and other family members to balance work and school than those who had to drop out.

Most parents and children also see providing food and other necessities, including school supplies for their children as a way to support them to stay in school. Parents share that they try to ensure that their child 'never goes to school hungry' and also buy them uniforms and school supplies. Some students say they are particularly appreciative of this because sometimes there is a delay in receiving school supplies from the programme. Parents are also said to use positive reinforcement in the form of small gifts when a child does well in school which further encourages them to perform well.

Research Question 3: Integrating Learners into Formal or Vocational Education

Transition Pathways

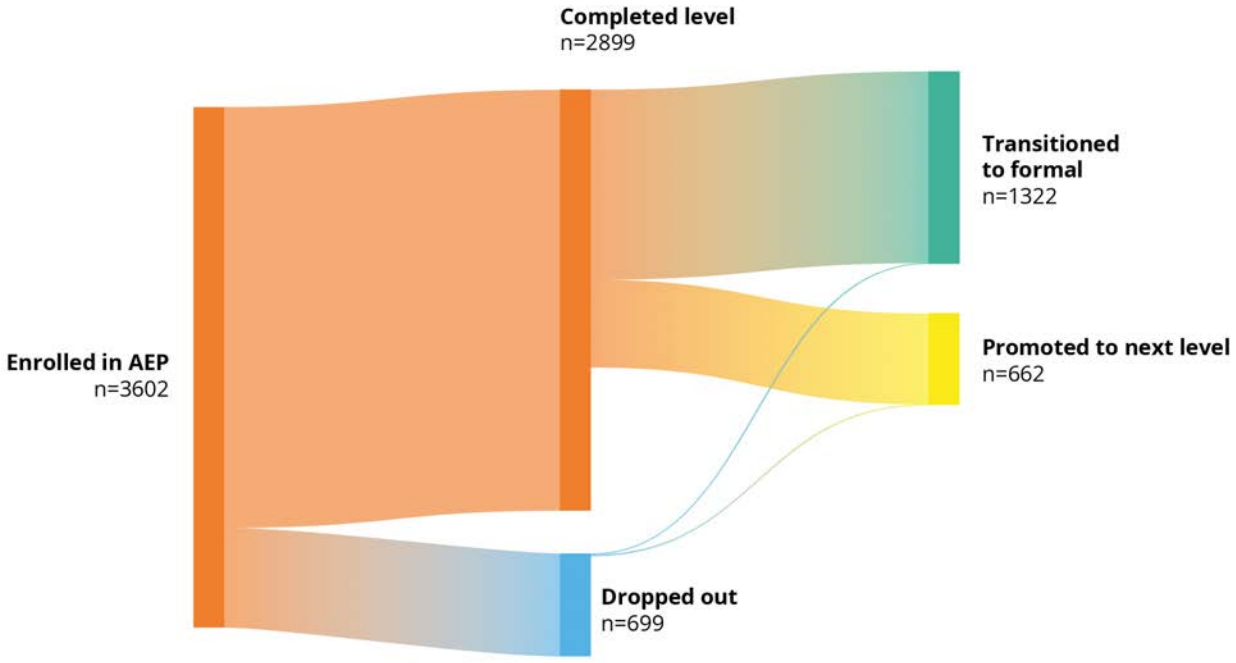

Figure 31 | DRC: Final Status of Students Within Phase Database, all 3 study years.

Support During and After Transition to Formal Education

A few students who have transitioned to formal schools explain the strength of the AEP course material saying '*this* (course materials) *is why we have been able to continue to formal school, it is adequate*' (boy, Rubare AEP). Teachers too were of the opinion that the AEP programme prepared students well for transition to formal education, giving examples of promoted students who were doing better than their formal school classmates. One teacher says the French curriculum at formal schools is better than at AEP but the rest of the curriculum is at par with formal schools and helps children transition easily. He explains that any issues children might face after transitioning are mainly because older students from AEPs might not want to study with younger classmates when they transition to formal schools but even these children are able to read and write because of the AEP schools.

Some who have transitioned also share that they were forced to miss school because their school did not let them attend telling them that NRC had delayed the payment of school fees (Buhuri and Tarika AEP). Interactions with teachers at formal schools seem to be limited beyond meeting them informally at the church or markets and some parents complain about this lack of interaction.

The attitude of students, teachers and other authorities at formal schools was highlighted as a reason behind children dropping out after transitioning. This is also corroborated through parents and teacher interviews. Students, both boys and girls, say they faced bullying from school mates and discriminatory attitudes by school teachers and authorities because they had transitioned from AEPs, whose curriculum was thought to be of a lower grade than that of formal schools. The same students also recount experiences of being mocked by fellow students and teachers for being '*NRC kids*', who are seen as being poor students. They also share incidents of teachers who would not let students attend class because their school fees had not been paid by NRC, in one instance saying such students should '*wander in the streets with your trousers falling below your waists'.* One girl who dropped out of formal school recalls the experience of being propositioned by a teacher multiple times leading her to eventually drop out of school.

AEP teachers say that although students transitioning to formal schools do well academically, they have heard of incidents where these students are bullied by their peers for being poor and older than other children in their class. They also know of instances of formal school teachers/head teachers being discriminatory towards AEP students because their school fees are not paid on time and one teacher notes that he spoke to the school authorities and asked them to take the matter up with NRC instead of punishing the students (Nkokwe). All teachers were of the view that the programme should follow up with students who had transitioned to formal schools to see how they were coping with their new environment.[20]

20 The DRC programme team clarifies that follow-up of students who are integrated into formal classes is periodically ensured by EPST and DIVAS inspectors and by NRC staff during SERNAFOR meetings (= Pedagogical Units). During the follow-ups and meetings, the teachers are reminded of the contents of the psychosocial support and positive discipline.

Research Question 4: Factors Affecting Success

Attendance, Drop-Outs & Transition

Age / Education History / AEP Level

Prior education history was also linked to completion rates. 97% of students who were returning to school were able to complete the AEP course, compared to 92% of those who were joining school for the first time. However no significant relationship could be established between the prior education history and the rates of transition into formal education.

There were strong associations between age of students, AEP Level and the specific AEP school attended with the attendance, drop out and transition rates of the students. Figure 32 shows a steady drop in attendance rates after age 11. Conversely, the drop out rate begins to climb with an increase in age, as shown in Figure 33. This aligns with the understanding that older children are more likely to attend school less often or discontinue schooling altogether due to economic pressures. As will be discussed later, this is the most prominently cited reason in both the qualitative interviews and the quantitative database.

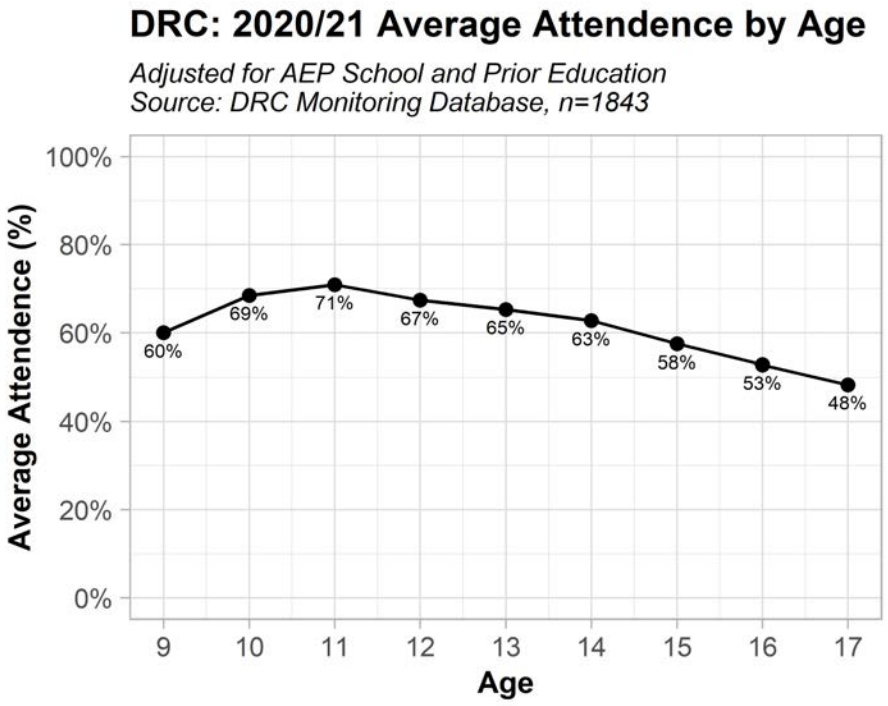

Figure 33 | DRC: 2020/21 Average Attendance Rate by Age

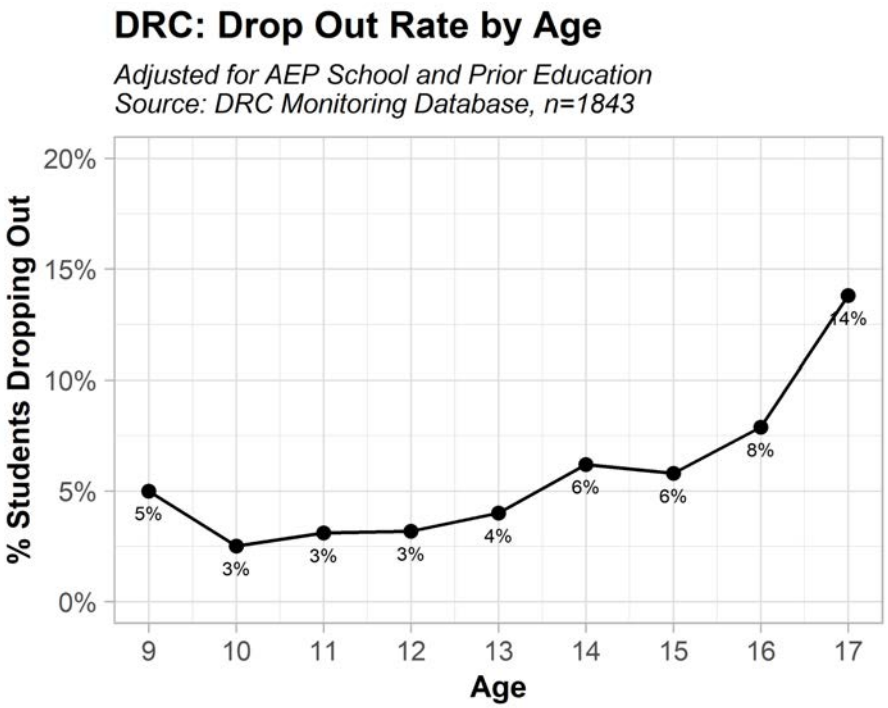

Figure 33 | DRC: Drop Out Rate by Age

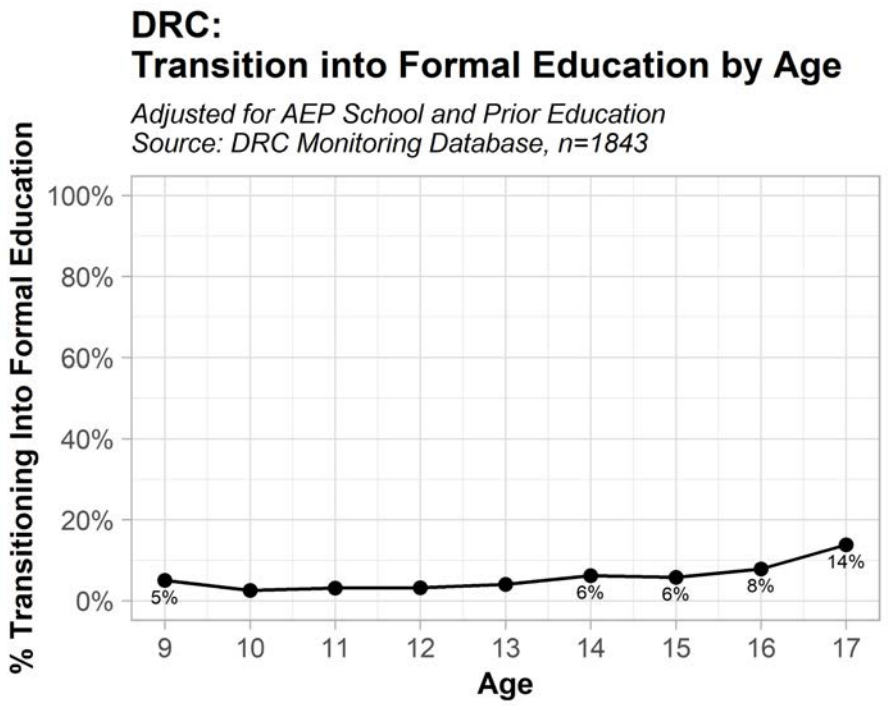

Figure 34 | DRC: Transition into Formal Education by Age.

Transition rates, as shown in Figure 34, were significantly higher among students aged 10-11; after adjusting for the effect of the AEP school and AEP Level. Transition rates were low among younger children (aged 9) and those aged 14 or over.

Other variables tested – those from the ISELA (the school environment scores, CYRM scores, stress scores and self-concept scores), the ASER variables (Math and Reading scores at follow up, and changes over time), and demographic factors (gender, vulnerabilities, disabilities or parental relationships.) – could not be significantly linked to the attendance, transition or completion rates. However, AEP Level and AEP School were found to be significantly linked to these rates.

Completion and Transition Rates

AEP Level

90% of Level 1 (or TEP) students completed the AEP course. Nearly all of these are marked as transitioning to formal education. Level 2 students had high completion rates but very low transition rates. This indicates a gap – where these students are more advanced than the entry level of formal education but not advanced enough to successfully join in higher grades. Level 3 students had lower completion rates and lower transition rates compared to the other two levels.

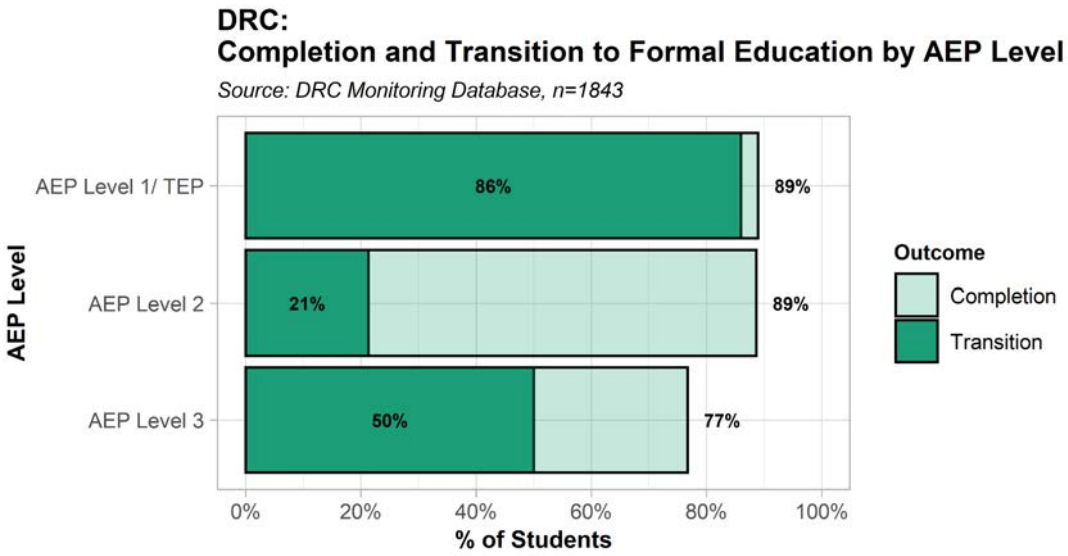

Figure 35 | DRC: Completion and Transition to Formal Education by AEP Level

AEP School

At the AEP school level, there were large variations in the completion and transition rates – with Tarika maintaining a 100% completion rate and Yatosha/Karere having the lowest completion rate of 70%. Transition rates varied from 19% at E. PMUBIRU to 90% at Buhuri.

E. PMUBIRU was an AEP centre which only taught AEP Levels 2 and 3, therefore the poor transition rates from this centre are somewhat reflective of the poor transition rates in general at these levels. Around a quarter of all Level 2 students and close to a third of all Level 3 students were based at E PMUBIRU. However, low transition rates are also common among other AEP Schools which taught at Levels 2 and 3 – Tarika, Tshombo, Nkokwe and Kazi all showed a similar pattern. The completion and transition rates for all AEP Schools is given in Figure 36 below.

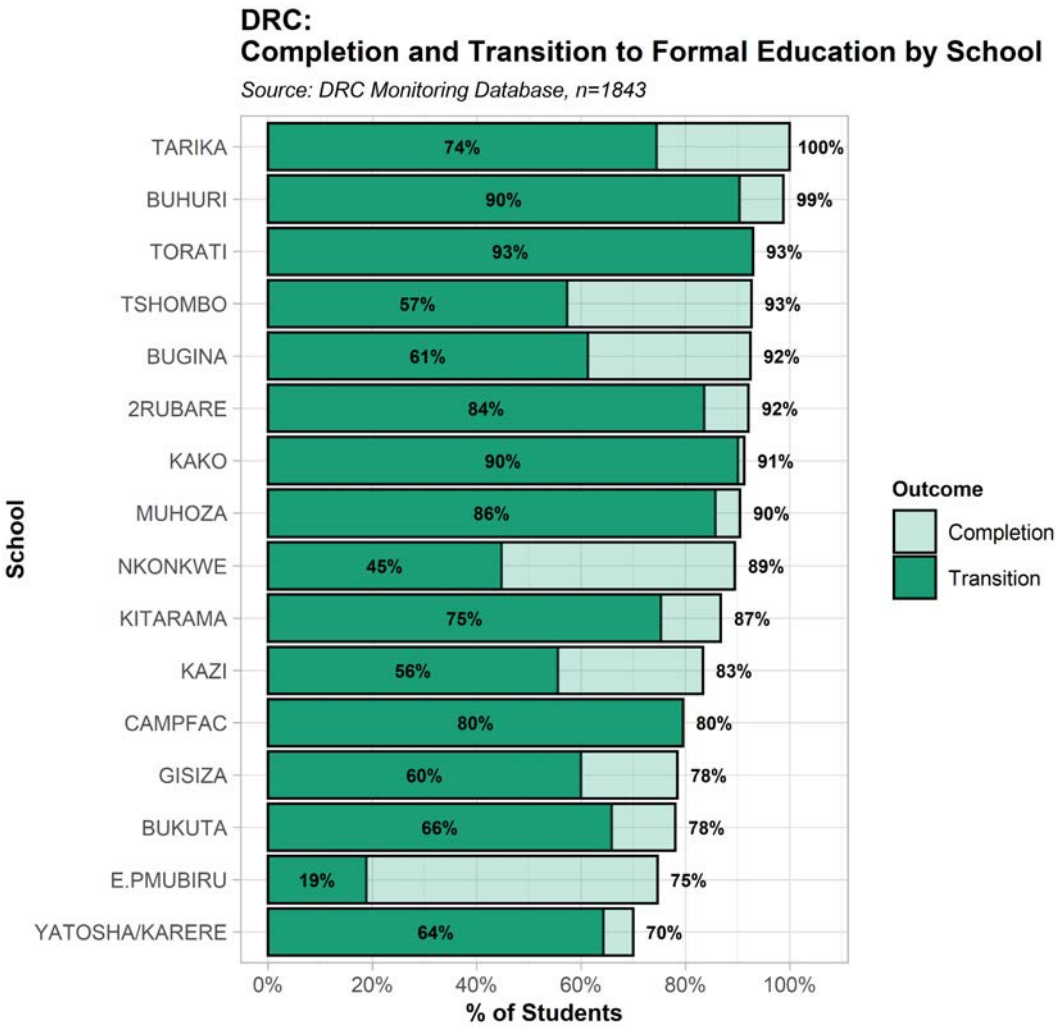

Figure 36 | DRC: Completion and Transition into Formal Education by AEP School

Attendance Rates

AEP Level

Attendance was high throughout 2019/20 in all AEP Levels, but dropped off in 2020/21. The 2020/21 Level 3 average attendance, as can be seen in Figure 37, was extremely low. Even after restricting the sample to students who were marked as having completed the programme, the average attendance remained under 30% in the year. Level 2 attendance was also substantially lower than that of the Level 1 students in 20, where attendance was at similar levels as in the previous year.

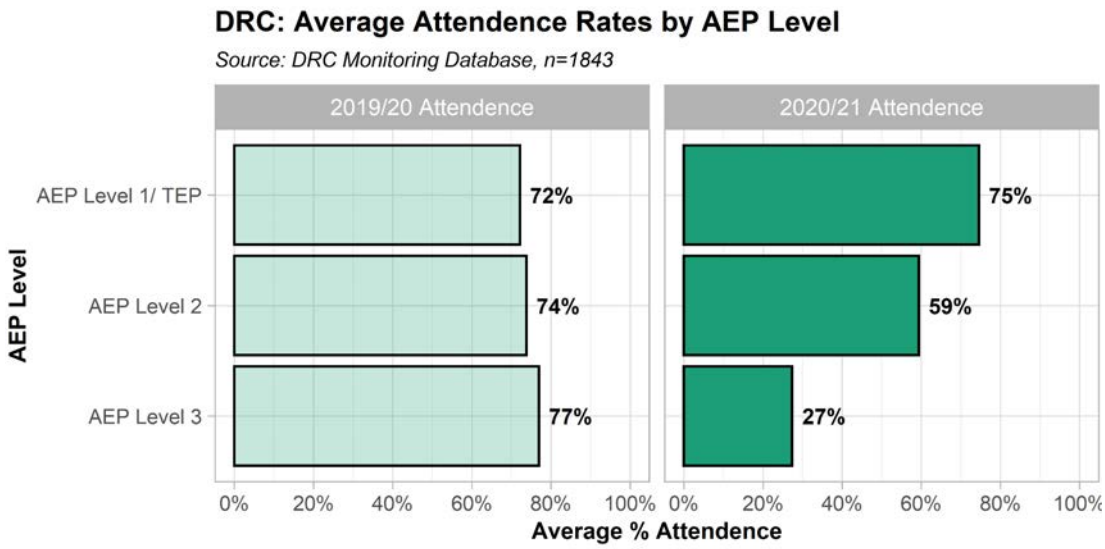

Figure 37 | DRC: Average Attendance Rates by AEP Level

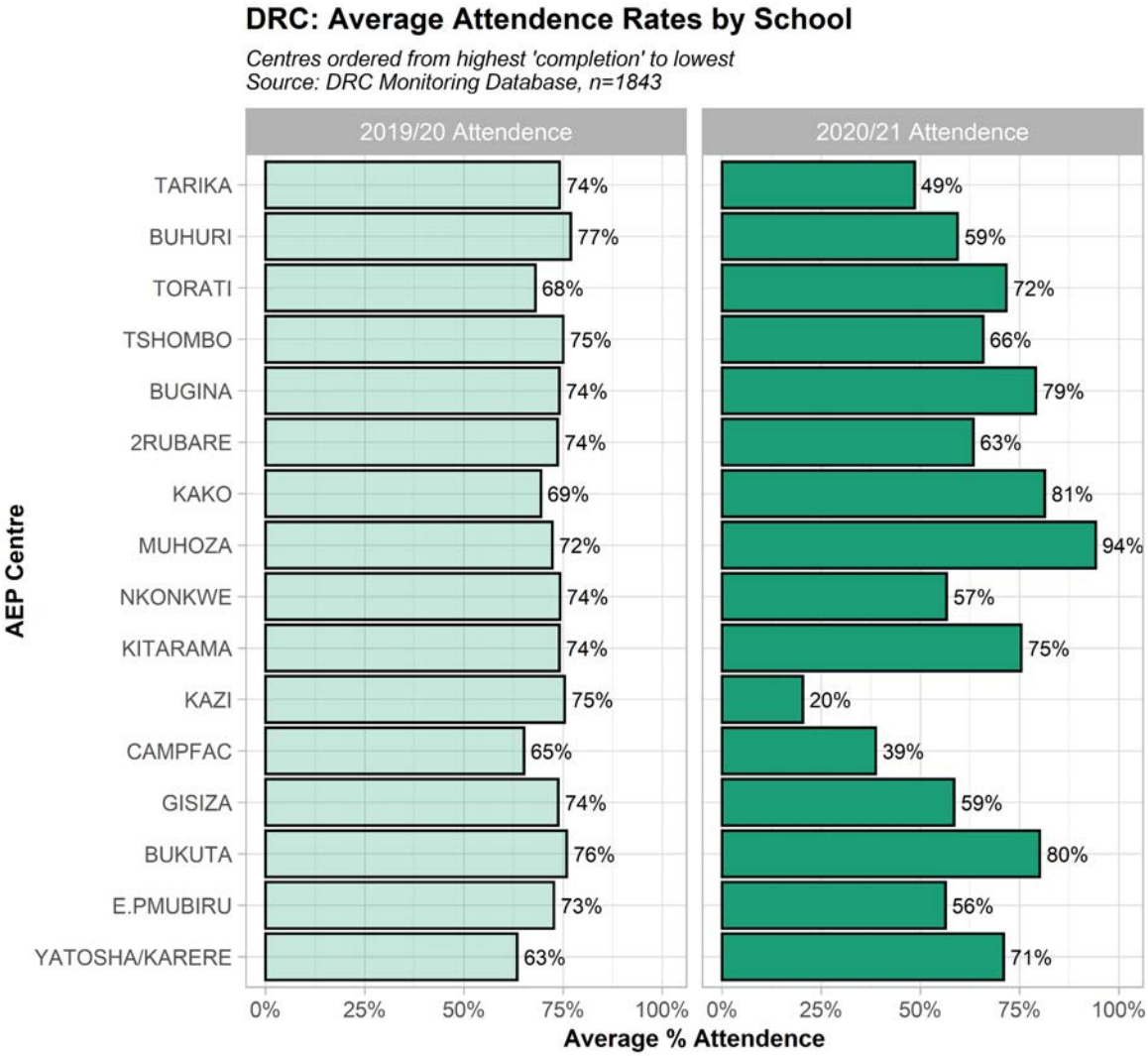

Figure 38 | DRC: Average Attendance Rates by AEP School

There was also very little variation in the attendance rates by school in 2019/20, as shown in Figure 38 above. In 2020/21 attendance rates varied far more substantially, with KAZI and CAMPFAC both having average attendance of less than 40%. KAZI was an AEP school which exclusively taught at Level 3 and had an older than average student population. Therefore the low rates at this school reflect the low average attendance more widely among both level 3 students and also among older students. However, most of the students at CAMPFAC were in level 1, with only a few in Level 2 and none in Level 3.

Reasons Behind Missing AEP Classes

The 2020 interviews with students (AEP and formal school) include questions related to absenteeism from school. While the frequency with which students were absent from school is not clear from the interviews, all but three students, regardless of gender, share that they were absent from school at least once. Students give different reasons for being absent from school, primary among which was staying home because they were ill with diarrhoea or headache with a few students being absent for longer because of malaria. Other reasons for missing school are having to stay at home and do chores when parents are away, being sent back from school for arriving late, visiting family in other places, or a death in the family. Students typically dislike missing classes saying that they miss meeting their friends and have to work harder to catch up on the missed lessons.

Recorded Reasons Behind Dropping Out

Table 21 | **DRC: Recorded Reason for Dropouts (All Years Combined)**

Reasons	n and %
Total Dropouts	n=700
No reason provided in database	n=3 (0%)
The child works to support his family financially because of the economic situation	n=444 (63%)
The child became sick during the year and could not complete	n=107 (15%)
Internal displacement	n=74 (11%)
Lack of security in the area	n=29 (4%)
Family moved residence	n=27 (4%)
Child reached marriage age /received offer for marriage	n=16 (2%)

Both children and parents give a number of reasons for leaving school, prominent among them are the family's financial condition, embarrassment because of a lack of school supplies, along with the age of the student and discriminatory attitude by formal school teachers and authorities towards students who have transitioned from AEPs.

Children who have dropped out, regardless of their gender, share that they had to do so because of difficult circumstances faced by their families, typically when an earning parent dies or abandons the family. Parents and children explain that in such cases, the older child steps up to take greater responsibility, either by helping with chores, caregiving duties or by becoming an earning member of the family. Children who left school to earn money[21] share that it is not possible to continue schooling when taking up the additional responsibility. Thus, they reason that it was best to drop out of school instead, corroborating the quantitative finding that shows family's economic situation as the dominant reason for dropping out.

Children share that another reason for them to leave school was because they faced embarrassment for not having clean clothes, appropriate school uniform and school supplies. They say that their families are poor and unable to afford these items and they feel inferior when going to school without a uniform or enough supplies. For example, one boy says he stopped going to school because all other boys in his class wore trousers but all he had were one pair of shorts and shirt. Another girl shares that she was embarrassed to go to school without a uniform. In both cases, teachers had encouraged them to come to school despite not having appropriate clothing but both children say they felt shame for not being able to afford clothes.

A few older students, both boys and girls, said that they left school because they were '*too old to go to school*', typically having been made to feel like this by other students and the community around them. For example, one girl says she left school after hearing some people in the community mock her saying '*how can a big girl like you go to school*' and another girl says she dropped out because she was older than rest of the students in her class and felt like she couldn't catch up on classwork because of her age.

Other reasons for dropping out included:

- A few children say they left school because they felt unsafe on the way to school because of the presence of bandits and kidnappers. Two girls say they met a few soldiers from the local militia who had attempted to rob them and torn their books and notebooks. One of the girls was later accosted by a soldier who tried to rape her but was helped by an older woman who chased the soldier away with a machete. One boy was accosted by a kidnapper but managed to escape and decided to drop out of school after that incident (student and parent interviews)
- A few cases where both boys and girls eloped leading to them dropping out of school (parent interviews)
- One student dropped out of formal school because the distance to school was long and he hoped to enrol in a formal school closer to his community (student and parent interviews)
- Illnesses, mainly longer term, are also given as reasons for students to leave school[22], typically because they are unable to catch up after missing school for a long period and do not wish to return because their peers have already been promoted to another level (student interviews).

21 More children from the 2022 cohort say they have dropped out of school to earn money.

22 The 2022 interviews have more children saying they dropped out of school because they were ill although there is no mention of the type of illness.

Academic Improvement (ASER)

Age / Education History / AEP Level

The largest improvements in Math and Reading were observed among those in the lowest AEP Levels (TEP/Level 1). This can be explained through the general trend observed in learning levels, i.e., children enrolled in lower grades (in this case, the AEP level) are likely to demonstrate a sharper initial improvement since the more basic tasks (e.g., identifying letters) are easier to learn. The average initial gains in learning begin to plateau as individuals move towards learning more difficult tasks (e.g., learning to read a story). Further, those already at higher levels (and consequently likely to be in a higher grade or AEP level) have relatively less scope for improvement compared to those at lower levels. This explanation is supported by the trend among AEP Level 3 students who made only small improvements in both subjects.

However, what is difficult to explain is the changes among AEP Level 2 students. The Reading scores of this group worsened from baseline to follow-up. While learning loss is a noted phenomenon, it is difficult to conclude that this is behind the drop in Reading scores since the group's Math scores improved between baseline and follow-up. Another related and puzzling finding is the lower mean Reading scores as compared to mean Math scores. The 2020 follow-up ASER scores recorded for each AEP level are higher in Math than in Reading. As a skill, basic reading is easier to acquire than numeracy/arithmetic skills. What could possibly explain the counterintuitive finding is exploring the medium of instruction for teaching Math and the respective language for the Reading curriculum. This is because first, children perform better when taught in their first languages and second, proficiency in certain languages is more difficult to acquire than in others.

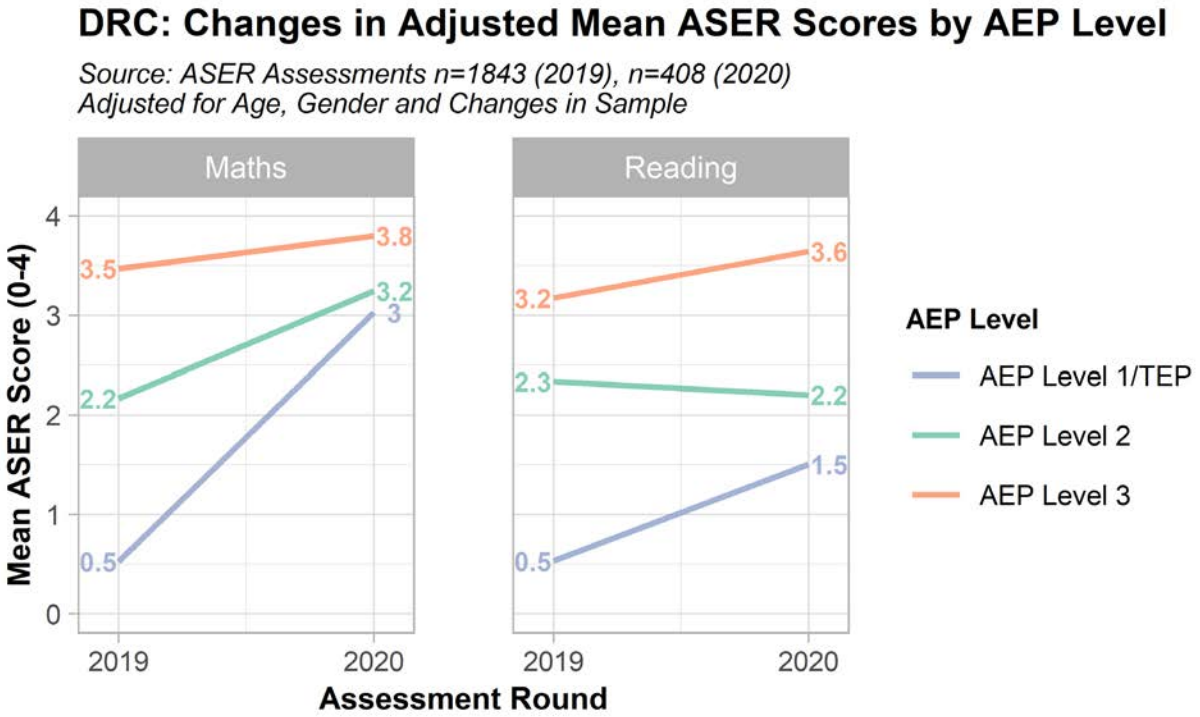

Figure 39 | DRC: Changes in Adjusted Mean ASER Scores by AEP Level

ASER scores did not vary with gender at the baseline assessment. But at the follow-up,

boys showed slightly more improvement than girls in both subjects. 63% of boys achieved the top ASER score in Math at the follow up assessment, compared to 49% of girls. 20% of boys were able to read paragraphs in the follow up assessment compared to 13% of girls.

Students who had never attended school before had significantly lower academic results at the baseline assessment. There was no significant difference in results by previous education status in the follow-up assessment. This suggests that the AEP programme was able to support those students, who had no prior education, catch-up with their peers who had previously dropped out of education.

Students aged in the middle range (11-12) improved the most in Math although there were improvements among all age groups on an average. The average Reading scores of the youngest children (aged 10 or under) did not improve.

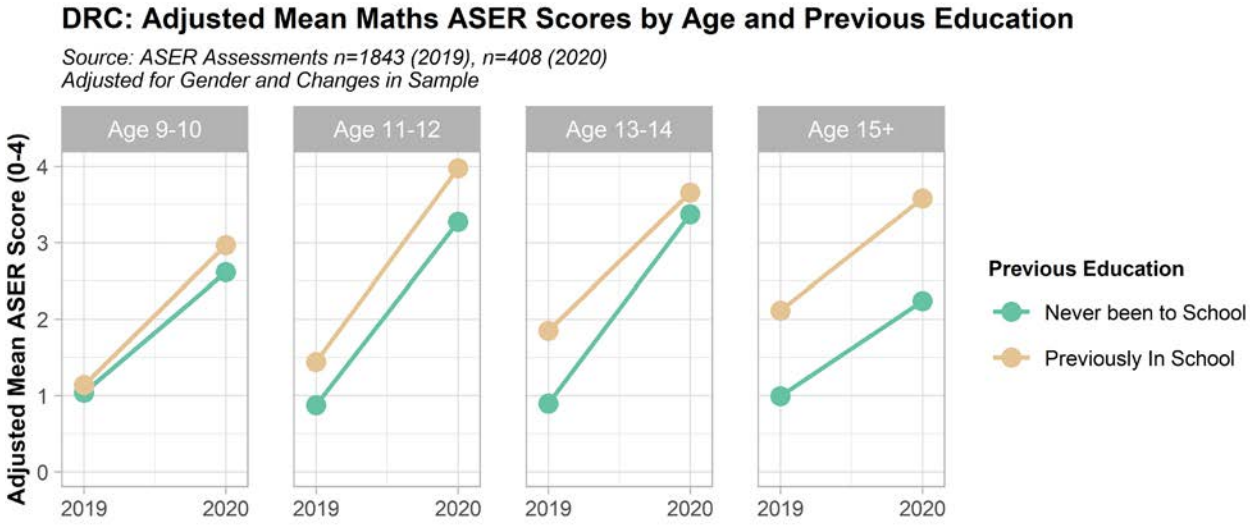

Figure 40 | DRC: Changes in Adjusted Mean ASER Scores by AEP Level

School-to-school variability

Improvements in average Math scores were consistent across schools. However, school-to-school variation in Reading scores was high. Most schools improved a little but the Muhoza school, which had the lowest reading scores at baseline, improved the most and went on to have the highest reading scores at the follow-up. 3 schools saw no improvement in Reading scores out of which one school, Tarika, reported a significant decrease in the average score at the follow up.

Table 22 | **DRC: Variation in Adjusted Mean ASER Scores Across AEP Schools**

AEP School	MATH			READING		
	Baseline	Follow Up	Change	Baseline	Follow Up	Change
MUHOZA	0.8	3.2	2.4	0.8	2.9	2.2
BUHURI	1.1	3.9	2.8	0.9	1.8	0.9
BUKUTA	1.3	3.5	2.2	1.3	2.1	0.8
TORATI	0.9	3.4	2.5	1.0	1.5	0.5
GISIZA	1.2	3.5	2.3	1.3	1.9	0.6
KAKO	0.9	3.0	2.1	0.9	1.7	0.8
CAMP FAC	1.1	3.4	2.3	1.3	1.4	0.2
BUGINA	1.4	3.1	1.7	1.5	2.2	0.7
KITARAMA	1.1	3.1	2.0	1.1	1.4	0.3
2RUBARE	1.1	2.7	1.7	1.2	1.6	0.4
TSHOMBO	1.6	3.2	1.6	1.5	1.8	0.3
E.PMUBIRU	2.5	3.6	1.1	2.4	2.6	0.1
TARIKA	2.2	3.2	1.0	2.5	1.4	-1.1

Photo: Guri Romtveit/NRC

Appendix: ISELA Questionnaire Administered at the AEPs

AEP School Environment and Safety

Assessment

I want to ask you some questions about this AEP. There are no right or wrong answers. I just want your honest answer. Okay? In a regular week of school, how often did the following items occur in the last year?

	In my last school:	Always	Usually	Rarely	Never	Comments
1	Inside this school, you have felt afraid.					
2	In this school, you have felt afraid on your way to or from school.					
3	In this school you were bullied by other children.					
4	In this school, teachers treated you fairly.					
5	In this school, your teacher visited your home.					
6	In this school, you got into physical fights.					
7	In this school, teachers helped you complete tasks and assignments.					
8	In this school, teachers praised you for good work.					
9	In this school, teachers screamed or yelled at you.					
10	In this school, teachers pushed, hit, kicked or whipped you.					
11	In this school, teachers helped you when you were sad.					
12	In this school, teachers threatened to hurt you.					
13	In this school, teachers humiliated you.					
14	In this school, teachers made you do personal tasks for them (i.e., clean their house, errands).					
15	In this school, a teacher sexually assaulted/raped a student.					

Stress Management

Description Of Sub-Task

Stress management (also referred to as "coping") is the conscious utilization of personal skills and resources to mitigate the impact of chronic stress and/or acute adversity. This sub-task of ISELA refers to the strategies that children use to control their levels of stress, especially chronic stress, with the aim of improving their social and emotional functioning. The sub-task allows us to capture the way in which children cope with adversity by managing their stress.

Materials

None

Assessment

Say: **Now I want to ask you some questions about what you do when you get angry or upset.**

1. **Is there anything that you do to help yourself calm down when you are angry or upset?**
   Wait for the child to respond and if answer is unclear ask: **How/why does this help you calm down?**

If the child cannot name one thing that he/she does to calm down then mark "Incorrect" on the scoring sheet and move to the next sub-task.

2. **Can you tell me about another thing that you do to help yourself calm down when you are angry or upset?**
   Wait for the child to respond and if answer is unclear ask: **How/why does this help you calm down?**

If the child cannot name a second thing that he/she does to calm down then mark "Incorrect" on the scoring sheet and move to the next sub-task.

3. **Is there anything else that you do to help yourself calm down when you are angry or upset?**
   Wait for the child to respond and if answer is unclear ask: **How/why does this help you calm down?**

Scoring

#	Item	Correct	Incorrect/ Do not know	No Response
	Child identifies one thing that he/she can do to calm down	1	0	999
	Child identifies second thing that he/she can do to calm down	1	0	999
	Child identifies third thing that he/she can do to calm down	1	0	999

Adaptation

- As you translate and adapt this sub-task to your context please develop a list of appropriate and inappropriate responses that we would expect from children in your context. During the assessor training present this list to assessors and create a master list of appropriate and inappropriate responses that assessors can use to code child responses.
- Below is an example of a list of appropriate and inappropriate responses that was developed in previous administrations of ISELA. This list is only meant to be an example; each country team should develop response items that are appropriate for their context.

Appropriate Responses	Inappropriate Responses
• Count to 10 • Breath in and out 10 times • Take 3 deep breaths • Shake each arm and each leg 5 times • Drink a glass of water • Go running • Listen to music • Meditate • Sing my favorite song • Imagine myself playing my favorite game	• Scream • Smoke a cigarette • Drink alcohol • Punch a wall • Find someone to tease • Throw stones at pigeons • I don't know

Self-Concept

Description of sub-task

Self-concept refers to the understanding of and ability to express personal preferences, feelings, thoughts, and abilities. It also refers to a child's growing capacity for independence and confidence in a range of routine activities. With young children, it is especially hard to measure self-concept through self-reported measures. Because of this, ISELA makes use of a drawing activity to assess self-concept. We aim to understand:

a. Whether the child can imagine a hopeful future for himself/herself
b. Whether the child can identify realistic supports and barriers to reaching this future self

Materials

- Paper
- Pencil, sharpener, eraser
- Color pencils, crayons, or colored markers

Assessment

Say: **I want you to think about something you hope will happen in your life in the future. It can be anything and at any time in the future—1 year, 5 years, 10 years, any time in the future. I would like you to make a drawing of what you hope for in the future. You can draw whatever you want. There are no right or wrong ways to do the drawing. After you finish your drawing I will ask you a few questions about your drawing.**

- *In case the child is hesitant or self-conscious about their drawing abilities, say:* **Whatever you want to create in the drawing and share with me is fine.**
- *If the child does not want to do the drawing then you can ask him/her to imagine something he/she hopes will happen in his/her life in the future.*
- *Some children may make a drawing that does not represent something in the future (e.g.: drawing a flower); this is okay. Do not try to direct the drawing of the child or give them hints on what to draw.*

Give the child about five minutes to complete the drawing. If the child is still drawing at the end of five minutes, encourage him/her to complete the drawing by saying: **I am going to give you one more minute to finish your drawing and then I want to ask you a few questions about your drawing.**

Once the drawing is complete, say something affirmative like **"You worked hard on that drawing. Thank you for sharing this with me"**

Now say, **"I would like to ask you a few questions about the drawing."** *For children who did not do the drawing but chose to imagine their future in their head, simply change "drawing" to "imagination" in the questions.*

1. **Can you describe your drawing to me?**
2. **How old are you in the drawing/in your imagination?**
3. **Can you tell me one thing that you would like to be doing when you are <age provided by child>?**

Wait for the child to respond and if answer is unclear ask, **Can you describe <insert activity> to me in more detail?**

If the child cannot name one thing that he/she would like to do then mark "Incorrect" on the scoring sheet and move to the next sub task.

4. **Can you tell me one thing that could happen that would stop you from doing this <insert activity>?**
   Wait for the child to respond and if answer is unclear ask, **Can you tell me why/how this would stop you from doing <insert activity>?**
5. **Can you tell me who or what will help support you in <insert activity>?**
   Wait for the child to respond and if answer is unclear ask, **Can you tell if there is someone or something that will help you prepare to do <insert activity>?**
6. **Can you tell me one more thing that you would like to be doing when you are <age provided by child>?**
   Wait for the child to respond and if answer is unclear ask, **Can you describe <insert activity> to me in more detail?**

If the child cannot name another thing that he/she would like to do then mark "Incorrect" on the scoring sheet and move to the next sub task.

7. **Can you tell me one thing that could happen that would stop you from doing this <insert activity from Q6>?**
   Wait for the child to respond and if answer is unclear ask, **Can you tell me why/how this would stop you from doing <insert activity Q6>?**
8. **Can you tell me who or what will help support you in <insert activity from Q6>?**
   Wait for the child to respond and if answer is unclear ask, **Can you tell if there is someone or something that will help you prepare to do <insert activity from Q6>?**

Scoring

#	Item	Correct	Incorrect / Do not know	No response
	Child attempted drawing activity • If child refused to draw and instead used his/her imagination please mark "Incorrect" • If child refused to do drawing or imagine themselves in the future, mark "No response" and skip the rest of the questions	1	0	999
	Child describes scene/details in what he/she has drawn • If child refused to draw and instead used his/her imagination please mark "Incorrect"	1	0	999
	Child includes self in drawing • If child refused to draw and instead used their imagination please circle "Incorrect"	1	0	999
	Age of child in drawing or in their imagination of the future			
	Child can describe one thing he/she will be doing in future	1	0	999
	Child can describe one thing that would stop him/her from doing activity	1	0	999
	Child can identify who/what can help support him/her in activity	1	0	999
	Child can describe second thing he/she will be doing in the future	1	0	999
	Child can describe one thing that would stop him/her from doing second activity	1	0	999
	Child can identify who/what can help support him/her in second activity	1	0	999

Ask child for permission to take a picture of the drawing and then let them keep the drawing if they wish.

Adaptation

- The word "hope" can mean different things in different languages and contexts. For this activity we want to understand if the child can imagine a positive and hopeful future for themselves and think of the things that will support them getting to this future or restrict them from getting to this future. If "hope" is a hard word to translate into the local language then please use a term that most closely reflects this idea.
- When we ask children about what they "hope for the future" most children interpret this as "what would you like to be in the future?" and give us responses like "doctor" or teacher". This is okay. However, during the assessor training please make it clear to assessors that children can interpret this question more holistically. For example, in a refugee camp setting children have previously told us that they hope that they will not be living in a camp in the future.

Perseverance

Materials

- Laminated copies of the three geometric figures
- 3 Sheets of blank paper per child
- Pencil, sharpener, eraser; timer or stop-watch

Assessment

Say: **We will now play a game. First, can you tell me which hand you use to write your name?**

The child will show you either his/her right or left hand. For this game you should ask the child to draw using their non-dominant hand. If they use their right hand to write their name, they should use their left hand in the game. If they use their left hand to write their name, they should use their right hand in the game.

Say: **I am going to show you a picture and I want you to use your <non-dominant> hand to draw that picture. You must always use your <non-dominant> hand. You can use your other hand to hold the paper but you cannot draw using that hand.**

If you get frustrated or you feel like you cannot do the drawing please let me know. We can then move to the next activity. Okay?

Are you ready to play this game?

1. *Show the child the first picture. Give the child 60 seconds to draw the picture.*
    - *If the child **gives up before 60 seconds** is over then mark **"Incorrect"** for item in the scoring sheet and do not show him/her the second and third card. Proceed to the next sub-task.*
    - *If the child **finishes the drawing within the 60 seconds OR is still drawing at the end of 60 seconds**, mark **"Correct"** for the item in the scoring sheet and proceed*

to the second card.

- *If the child is still drawing at the end of 60 seconds tell him/her that he/she has done well and that you will now move on to the next picture.*

2. *Show the child the second picture. Follow the same instructions as for picture 1.*
3. *Show the child the third picture. Follow the same instructions as for picture 1.*

Item	Correct	Incorrect/ Do not know	No response
Child completed first drawing OR was still drawing at the end of 60 seconds	1	0	999
Child completed second drawing OR was still drawing at the end of 60 seconds	1	0	999
Child completed third drawing OR was still drawing at the end of 60 seconds	1	0	999

Empathy

Materials

Picture card of a girl crying

Assessment

1. *Show the picture card and say:* **Now let's look at this picture. How do you think this child is feeling right now?**

If the child cannot name an appropriate emotion then mark "Incorrect" on the scoring sheet and move to the next sub-task.

2. *Then ask:* **What would you do to help her feel better?**
   Wait for the child to respond and if answer is unclear ask: **How/why does this make her feel better?**

If the child cannot name one thing that he/she would do to make the girl feel better then mark

"Incorrect" on the scoring sheet and move to the next sub-task.

3. *Ask*: **Is there anything else you would do to make her feel better?**
   Wait for the child to respond and if answer is unclear ask: **How/why does this make her feel better?**

Say: **Now I will tell you a story about this girl and why she is crying. One day the teacher told all the students in her class to make a line so that they can go out to play. As they were making the line the girl was pushed by another child. She fell down and hurt her knee. This is why she is crying in this picture.**

4. **Why do you think that the other child pushed the girl while making a line?**
5. **How do you think the other child felt after the girl started crying?**

Item	Correct	Incorrect / Do not know	No response
Child identifies that girl is feeling sad/hurt/upset	1	0	999
Child gives one response for how to make girl feel better	1	0	999
Child gives second response for how to make girl feel better	1	0	999
Child gives non-hostile response for other child pushing girl (e.g.: it was a mistake, the other child did not see her)	1	0	999
Child identifies that other child is feeling bad/guilty/sorry	1	0	999

Item	Appropriate Responses	Inappropriate Responses
	• Give her a hug • Tell an adult • Ask her what is wrong/talk to her • Bring her some water • Tell her a joke	• Ignore her • Run away • Make fun of her/tease her • I would not do anything • I don't know
	Non-hostile response • It was a mistake • Other child did not see her • Other child was pushed by someone else • Other child tripped	**Hostile response** • Other child wanted to get ahead in line • Other child did not like her • Other child is a bully • I don't know
	• Bad • Guilty • Sorry	• Happy • Pleased • Does not feel anything • I don't know