



## EVALUATION

# Final Evaluation Report: Phase III of the McGovern-Dole Food for Education Program in Sierra Leone

**August 2018**

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# **FINAL EVALUATION OF PHASE III OF THE McGOVERN-DOLE FOOD FOR EDUCATION PROJECT (MGD III) IN SIERRA LEONE**

August 8, 2018

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# ACRONYMS

CRS	Catholic Relief Services
CSR	Country Status Report (on Education)
CTA	Community Teacher Association
DEO	District Education Office
DTM	Diagnostic Teaching Methods
FWR	Familiar Word Reading
GOSL	Government of Sierra Leone
LOP	life of project
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MC	Mother's Club
MEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
MGD	McGovern-Dole
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
NP	Northern Polytechnic
PA	Phonemic Awareness
PQTR	Pupil Qualified Teacher Ratio
PTR	Pupil-Teacher Ratio
SCR	School Census Report
SILC	Savings and Internal Lending Committee
SMC	School Management Committee
TALLE	The Association of Language and Literacy Educators
TLM	Teaching and Learning Materials
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
WAEC	West African Examination Council
WASSCE	West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examination
WFP	World Food Programme

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## BACKGROUND

This report presents the findings of the final evaluation of Catholic Relief Services' (CRS) implementation of Phase III of the McGovern-Dole Food for Education (MGD III) project in Sierra Leone. CRS has been implementing this project, which is funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), in selected chiefdoms in Koinadugu district since 2008. The McGovern-Dole Program aims to reduce hunger and improve literacy and primary education, especially for girls. The MGD III project in Sierra Leone has two overarching goals: (1) to improve the literacy skills of children in the 192 schools targeted by the program and (2) to improve health and hygiene practices in targeted school communities. It is a 3-year project and this evaluation comes at the end of the third year. The project aims to achieve these goals by providing school meals, teacher training, improving water and sanitation environments, and improving skills and knowledge of various beneficiaries. For Sierra Leone, which is one of the poorest countries in the world that is also recovering from a recent Ebola epidemic, this partnership with CRS/USDA has been constructive.

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this final evaluation was two-fold: (1) to measure the overall results of the project strategies in terms of their effectiveness, relevance, efficiency and sustainability; and (2) to recommend actions for future iterations of the project.

## METHODOLOGY

The final evaluation used a mixed-method approach, which combined the use of qualitative and quantitative data. Quantitative data was collected from pupil surveys, reading assessments, classroom observations, and school observation checklists. The qualitative data came from semi-structured interviews with key informants and focus group discussions. The team interviewed head teachers, government officials, CRS staff, and staff of other partner organizations and held focus group discussions with community members.

## FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION



The most important findings from the final evaluation are provided below.

### ***Effectiveness***

The project met and surpassed its overall goal of having 25 percent of boys and girls being able to read and understand grade-level text at the end of grade 2. The project achieved 56 percent of girls and 61 percent of boys reading with understanding; a remarkable improvement from the baseline evaluation where only 8 percent of boys and girls could read with understanding.

In addition to meeting its overall goals, the project also saw remarkable improvements in its intermediate results such as increased skills and knowledge of teachers, improved student and teacher attendance, reduced hunger, increased attentiveness, and improved teaching and learning conditions in schools. The changes were all positive and large, even though not all the LOP targets were met.

### ***Relevance***

The MGD III project, to a very large extent, conforms to the needs and priorities of the government, communities, and donor. There was a change in government during the implementation of the MGD III program, and the new government has made a commitment to education, recently unveiling its flagship project – providing free, quality education for all children in government-supported schools. Parents, teachers, and community members are all very satisfied with their participation in the program, mostly because they can see improvements in the schools and the capabilities of students. Students are not hungry in school, and they can read. Where communities expressed dissatisfaction, it was because they wanted MGD III to do more for the schools, whose needs are greater than this one project could satisfy.

### ***Efficiency***

The MGD III integrated interventions in education and health to improve the overall wellbeing of students in the school, and ultimately improve reading outcomes in the schools. Children who are healthy and do not miss school due to illness have a higher opportunity to learn. Efficiency also has to do with cost-effectiveness of the

intervention – trying to understand the cost-benefit of the interventions and whether the results could have been achieved at a lower cost. Because of the complexity of the theory of change and the limitations of the available funding data, it was difficult for us to do a cost-benefit analysis. However, there are some areas in which some efficiencies could be realized such as (1) improving the pass rates of teachers who take the teacher certification exam by NP; (2) providing targeted support to schools who need it the most rather than spreading scarce resources unnecessarily; (3) transitioning government-supported schools from the MGD III program; and (4) reducing number of indicators being tracked to focus only on the most important ones.

### ***Sustainability***

Sustainability is an important feature of McGovern-Dole programs worldwide, and for USDA, this means that schools served by MGD III can continue the activities on their own or with support from other sources such as the government or local community partners after USDA's support ends.

CRS took several steps to ensure sustainability of the MGD III project, including aligning the project objectives to the goals of the government, developing the capacity of various stakeholders, and helping schools through the formal approval process that qualifies them to receive government support.

During the focus group discussions, communities expressed a willingness to continue the activities after the project ends by developing school gardens, maintaining school infrastructure, and continuing to send their children to school. While their willingness is encouraging, communities still struggle till now with providing basic condiments and utensils to support the CRS school feeding program. It is unlikely that they will continue with many of the MGD III activities.

For government-approved schools, it is possible that the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) and its partners will continue some of these activities. With the new Free Quality Education program that will launch in September 2018, the GOSL will provide tuition-free education, textbooks and uniforms for students, and expand the national school feeding program. Schools that are not approved will not be eligible for

these supports. A key strategy for sustainability will be to intensify advocacy efforts to get these schools approved and government-supported.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations in this section are derived from the findings and suggest ways to strengthen key areas of the project to improve the chances of meeting or surpassing the end of project targets. The main recommendations are as follows:

### *Improved Literacy Skills*

- *Gender differences in reading:* there are still some gender differences in reading, with boys performing better than girls. The project should promote gender equality by ensuring that there is no discrimination in terms of gender in teaching practices, curriculum materials, or school culture. Gender responsiveness should be an integral part of all training. The teaching staff is overwhelmingly male, and some affirmative action may be needed to encourage more women to enter teaching as that has been shown to have positive effect on the learning outcome for girls.
- *Use of teaching and learning materials:* in at least a third of classrooms, only the teacher had and used a textbook. The project team should continue to encourage teachers to distribute textbooks in the classrooms for children to use. Use of textbooks should be an integral part of teacher training and coaching.
- *School approval:* the MGD III has made good progress in terms of getting schools to submit an application for approval from the GOSL. However, there are still too many schools that are not approved. It is critical that all schools submit their application, even as they work towards meeting the eligibility criteria.
- *Community engagement:* engage parents and communities in support reading (and not just the feeding program). Parents and caregivers, who can, should read to their children. Those who can't, should encourage their children to read to them, tell them stories, or encourage their children to join a reading club.
- *Reading clubs:* encourage children to join reading clubs as children who are members of reading club tend to perform better. This is likely because these clubs provide children with an opportunity to practice their reading and introduce them to different kinds of reading materials. For children who cannot join reading clubs, they should be encouraged to take some reading materials home.

### ***Improved health and hygiene practices***

- Intensify efforts to complete the construction of wells and reduce delays in the process. Access to safe water is needed.
- Care should be taken while constructing wells to ensure that it is done at the right time of the year. Many schools had wells that had dried up at the time of the evaluation, which sometimes suggests that the well was dug at the wrong time, and not when the water table is at its lowest.
- Work with communities to ensure that the needed cooking and eating utensils are provided.
- Ensure that children from the poorest families are not penalized because their parents cannot afford to pay the cost of condiments.
- Better measures are needed for some of the indicators – for example, asking children about the foods they ate the previous day as a proxy for increasing knowledge of nutrition is not a very good measure as children don't usually have control over what food they eat in these contexts.

### ***Other recommendations***

- Develop an exit and sustainability plan with communities, local government and MEST.
- The role of literacy coaches has proved to be instrumental in providing much-needed support for teachers. The sustainability strategy should identify who in the school community (head teacher, deputy head teacher, another teacher) can provide peer coaching to other teachers.
- Evaluation of any future MDG project should include an experimental or quasi-experimental design with a control group to improve the project's ability to make causal claims.
- Simplify the theory of change for this intervention. The current theory of change is complex and difficult to test.
- Continue to work with the current government to design and test the national school feeding program and gain commitments that they will include the MGD III schools in the national school feeding programs when CRS phases out.
- Encourage cross-chiefdom learning as there are differences in performance on both objectives across the various chiefdoms. For example, some communities have strategies for ensuring utensils are provided for children and cooks, while others do not. This provides an opportunity for learning across chiefdoms that could be facilitated by CRS.



# INTRODUCTION

## COUNTRY CONTEXT

Sierra Leone is one of the poorest countries in the world, ranking 179 out of 188 countries in the 2016 UNDP Human Development Index (United Nations Development Programme UNDP, 2016). It is also one of the most food insecure countries in the world, ranking 109 out of 113 countries on the 2017 Global Food Security Index from the Economic Intelligence Unit (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2017). Part of the reason for the poor social and economic conditions is that the country was engulfed in a civil war lasting over a decade that officially ended in 2001. Unfortunately, in 2014, even as Sierra Leone was trying to rebuild its social and economic systems, the country was hit by the largest Ebola outbreak the world has ever seen. This outbreak led to a period of economic decline that the country is just trying to recover from.

Education performance is low, and progress in achieving learning outcomes has been slow. A national assessment of reading in the early grades showed that many children could not read simple words or comprehend simple passages after three years of schooling (Montrose International, 2014). In addition, while remarkable progress had been made in enrolments at the primary level, the 2015 Population and Housing Census showed that 35 percent of children of primary-school age were not attending school (Statistics Sierra Leone, 2016). Literacy rates are also among the lowest in the world, and the same census data showed that just 51 percent of the population over aged 10 was literate, with a mere 41 percent literacy rate for women.

Presidential elections held in April 2018 was won by Julius Maada Bio of the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP), while the All People's Congress (APC) retained their majority in Parliament. President Bio has said that education is a key priority for his administration and declared Free Quality Education as the flagship programme of his government (Julius Maada Bio, 2018). During the budget speech by the new Minister of Finance, additional funding was allocated to the education sector to fund the Free Education Programme, which will become active in 2018/19 school year. The increased allocation will support free tuition for primary and secondary schools,

provision of teaching, learning materials and textbooks; school feeding for primary schools, and examination fees for NPSE, BECE and WASSCE. While it is unclear exactly how this Free Quality Education programme will be implemented, education is a priority for the new administration.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has been supporting Sierra Leone through the McGovern-Dole Food for Education (MGD) program for almost a decade in the Koinadugu District of Northern Sierra Leone. The MGD program helps support education, child development and food security in low-income, food-deficit countries around the globe. Its key objective is to reduce hunger and improve literacy and primary education, especially for girls, by providing school meals, teacher training, and related support, and boosting the health and nutritional status of primary school pupils.

## **PROJECT BACKGROUND**

Catholic Relief Services (CRS) has been implementing the MGD project in Koinadugu District of Sierra Leone since 2008. Koinadugu was chosen because of the district's food insecurity status, high malnutrition rates amongst children under age five, and below average education performance. The MGD program has been implemented in three distinct phases.

Phase 1: The first phase of the MGD program (MGD I) ran from 2008 to 2012 in four chiefdoms in Koinadugu - Sulima, Mongo, Neini, and Neya. These chiefdoms were chosen because they were the most marginalized in the district. Between 2008 and 2012, the MGD I program distributed almost 1,500 metric tons of food, corresponding to 5,780,201 meals served to 18,610 pupils. The project also included take-home rations for girls in upper primary from which over 5,000 girls benefitted. In addition to food aid, the MGD I project trained school management committees (SMCs) and improved on school infrastructure. The MGD I project also distributed teaching and learning materials (TLMs) and furniture to schools.

Phase II: The second phase of the program (MGD II) began in September 2012 and ended in January 2016. In Phase II, the program expanded to include a fifth chiefdom

(Dembelia Sinkunia) and to include an additional 75 schools from existing program chiefdoms. Phase II also included additional activities such as in-service teacher training on Diagnostic Teaching Methods (DTM) to improve literacy instruction and established Savings and Internal Lending Communities (SILC) to help strengthen the financial status of households. The food aid component continued in Phase II using the same two modalities: (1) two in-school meals per day; and (2) take-home rations for girls in upper primary who maintain at least an 85 percent attendance rate. The Ebola outbreak created a public health emergency that challenged the implementation of MGD II activities and diminished its potential impact.

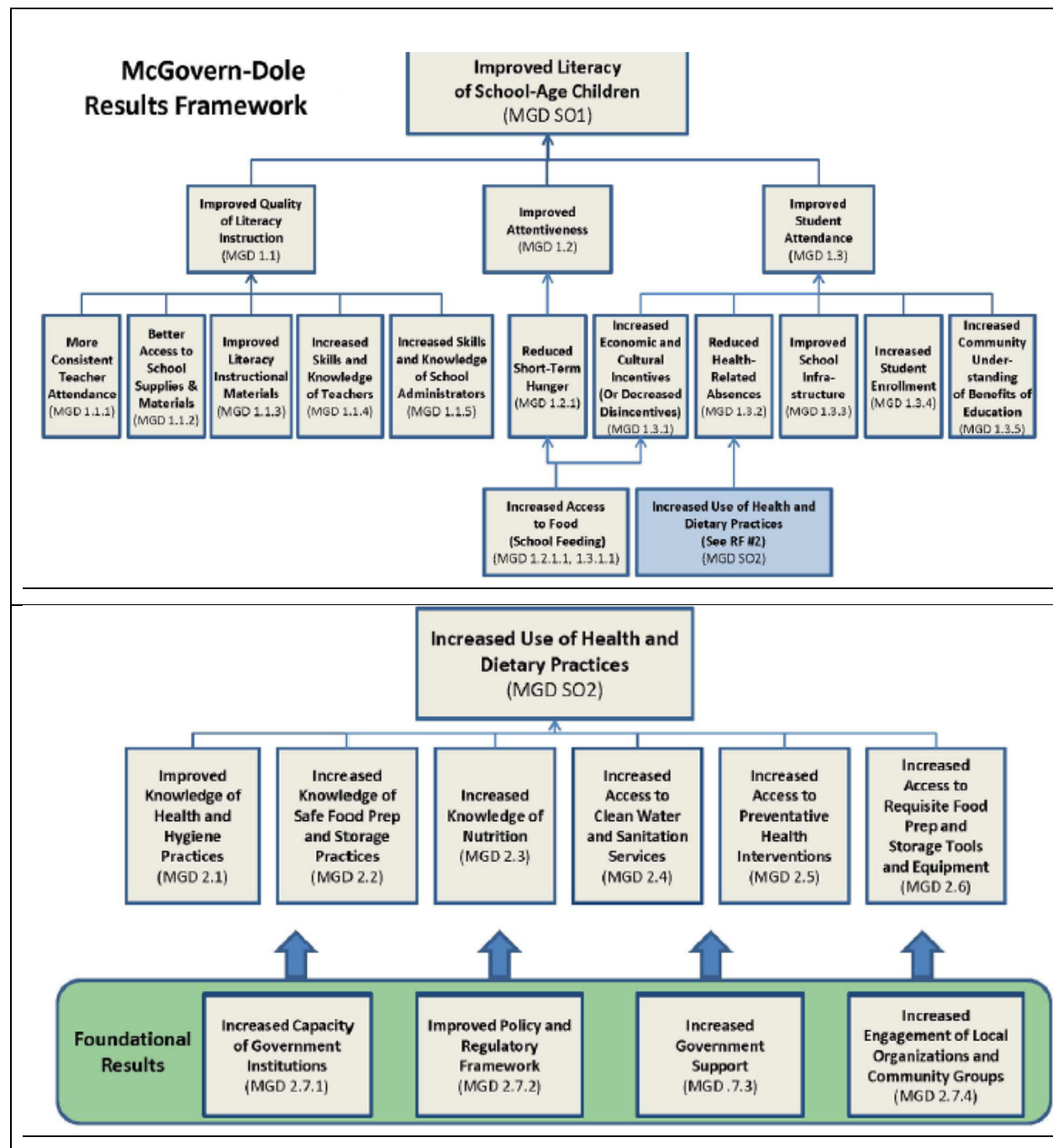
Phase III: The third phase (MGD III), which is the focus of this final evaluation is being implemented in the same five districts as MGD II and will run from December 2015 to December 2018. The MGD III was intended to help the schools and communities rebuild after the effects of the Ebola epidemic, which included a 1-year closure of schools. Most of the activities remain the same as in MGD II, but there are important differences. First, MGD III provides one school meal daily, whereas MGD II provided two. The project also switched from bulgur to fortified rice as the staple food. These changes were made to align the school meals component more closely with the Government of Sierra Leone's (GOSL) planned school feeding program. Second, MGD III intensified the attention paid to the literacy component of the program by hiring 25 literacy coaches, who provide professional development support (training, coaching, mentoring) to teachers of the early grades. Third, the MGD III introduced reading clubs in all the schools, which provides a space for students to come together after school to read and study. The project also provided 2 solar light per school as the reading clubs tended to meet in the evening. Lastly, in response to the Ebola crises, MGD III includes a second strategic objective that focused on improving health and dietary practices of learners and the wider school communities.

## **INTERVENTION LOGIC**

The MGD program is a school feeding program with two main goals: (I) improved literacy of school-aged children and (II) improved health and dietary practices of pupils and communities. Figure 1 illustrates the intervention logic of the MGD III program.



Figure 1. Results Framework for the MGD III Program



Under goal 1 (improved literacy), there are three sub-objectives (improved quality of literacy instruction, improved student attentiveness, and improved student attendance) and multiple activities (e.g. teacher training, school feeding, provision of teaching and learning materials). Under goal 2 (increased use of good health and dietary practices), there are six sub-objectives; three are related to increased knowledge of good health

and hygiene practices, safe food preparation, and nutrition, and the other three are related to increased access to clean water, food preparation and storage tools, and preventative health services. CRS summarizes the theory of change of the MGD III project as follows:

IF the quality of literacy instruction is improved, AND children, having received school meals, have their short-term hunger reduced AND their attentiveness and attendance improved, THEN the literacy of school-aged children in the project area will be improved.

Also, IF pupils learn about improved health and hygiene practices at school AND cooks learn about safe food preparation and storage practices AND schools have improved access to clean water and sanitation sources AND pupils have increased access and knowledge to preventative health interventions AND food preparers have increased access to requisite food preparation and storage facilities, tools and equipment, **THEN** the use of health and dietary practices will improve.

In the implementation of the MGD III, CRS partners with local and international organizations such as The Association of Language and Literacy Educators (TALLE), Northern Polytechnic (NP), and Caritas. TALLE supports the coaching on literacy instruction, Caritas provides Life Skills Training and implements the WASH activities, and NP provides teacher certification through a distance education program. Throughout the implementation, all parties focus on the development of capacity in schools and communities, national and local government agencies and departments.

# REVIEW PURPOSE & QUESTIONS

## EVALUATION PURPOSE

The purpose of the final evaluation was to measure the overall results of the project strategies in terms of their relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability. The final evaluation also documents successes and lessons learned in implementation and management.

## REVIEW QUESTIONS

The main questions for the final evaluation, which followed the DAC evaluation criteria, were:

**EFFECTIVENESS:** To what extent has the project has achieved its objectives?

- To what extent are the project results and the yearly benchmark indicators achieved?
- Have the implementation strategies been relevant and effective enough to improve:
  - student's literacy level
  - enrolment and attendance among pupils, particularly girls
  - community participation and engagement
- Are there some internal and/or external factors that are hindering the efficient implementation of project activities?
- Is the management system effective?
- Has program implementation been effectively monitored? How well has the monitoring and evaluation mechanism facilitated project implementation?

**RELEVANCE:** To what extent does the project conform to the needs and priorities of target groups and the policies of the country and donor?

- Are the activities and outputs of the project consistent with the overall goals and the attainment of its objective?
- Are the activities and outputs of the project consistent with the intended impacts and effects?
- Does the program meet community and government expectations(?)?

- Are stakeholders (school management committee, parents, teachers, local authorities) satisfied with their participation in the program? Why or why not?
- How well does the project complement and link to activities of other donors at the local level?

**EFFICIENCY:** To what extent did project inputs lead to expected results, and could the results have been achieved with fewer inputs or resources?

- Have activities been cost efficient?
- Are results achieved on time?
- Is the project being implemented in the most efficient way compared to alternatives?

**SUSTAINABILITY:** To what extent will the benefits of the project continue after the end of the project life?

- What activities and/or outcomes (both expected and unexpected) of the program are likely to be sustained? What evidence is there to suggest this?
- What are the major factors that can influence the achievement or nonachievement of the sustainability of the project?
- How do the government's capacities, policies, procedures, and priorities contribute to sustainability?
- What strategies should be used to obtain long-lasting support from communities and local/central administration that goes beyond the time of the project

**IMPACT:** What were the positive or negative effects, both intended and unintended, of the project? Are these effects the direct result of the project intervention?

- What were the intended and unintended positive and negative effects of the intervention on children, communities, and institutions?
- How did the intervention affect the well-being of different groups of stakeholders?
- What do beneficiaries and other stakeholders affected by the intervention perceive to be the effects of the intervention on themselves?
- To what extent can identified changes be attributed to the intervention?

# EVALUATION METHODS

The final evaluation adopted a mix of both quantitative and qualitative research methods. The quantitative survey design consisted of pupil survey, reading assessment, cook assessment, teacher and classroom observation and school observation checklist. The qualitative component had two parts: in-depth interviews with key informants (head teachers, project staff, MEST officials, and partner organizations) and focus group discussions with community members. Insights from the qualitative interviews and discussions complemented data obtained through the surveys and allowed researchers to examine certain topics in more depth.

The final evaluation, like the interim review, did not include a comparison group because it was difficult to find schools that were disadvantaged as much or in the same ways as the targeted MGD III schools. Because the available communities didn't provide a good comparison, the ethical issues of continuing to visit schools who did not receive the same resources while taking information from them became problematic. Therefore, management decided to use a pre/post design rather than a comparison group design.

## **SAMPLING AND SAMPLE SIZE**

A two-stage cluster sampling approach was employed to select pupils, teachers and cooks. At the first stage, schools were randomly selected as clusters and then pupils, cooks, and teachers within schools were selected at the second stage. The advantages of cluster sampling are that it is more economical, time-efficient, and easier to manage than a simple random survey. The disadvantage of this sampling technique is that individuals (teachers or pupils) within a cluster (school) tend to have similar characteristics, and there is a chance that they may not be representative of the overall population.

### ***Sample Size***

Pupils, teachers and food preparers were the sampling units of the quantitative survey. The sample sizes for the sampling units were computed using four (4) key indicators.

MGD III baseline and midline results for these indicators were used for computing sample sizes for the sampling units.

### Pupils

The formula below was used to compute the sample size for pupils:

$$n = \frac{4 \times p \times (1 - p) \times deff \times 1.2}{(Margin\ of\ error)^2}$$

where,

- $n$  is the required sample size (i.e., number of pupils to be surveyed)
- 4 is the factor required to achieve a 95% level of confidence;
- $p$  is the value of the key indicator; in this case, the '*percent of pupils identified as attentive during classroom activities (boy & girls)*' (0.58)<sup>1</sup>;
- $deff$  (*design effect*) is the factor by which the precision of the estimates of the key indicators decrease due to the sampling design relative to a survey that uses simple random sampling (2)<sup>2</sup>;
- 1.2 is the factor necessary to raise the sample size by 20% for the expected non-response<sup>3</sup>. This assumes 80% response rate;
- The margin of error ( $\pm 5$  percentage points) i.e., Alpha  $\alpha=0.05$ .

Using the formula, the sample size for pupils was estimated at 900 for pupil survey and the reading assessment. The decision was made to select 15 children per school across grades 2-6 as too many learners from one school would reduce the variability in our sample, which meant that we needed to have 60 schools in our sample.

The schools were the primary sampling unit and were targeted for the following surveys:

- Pupils survey,
- Reading assessment,
- School observation checklist,
- Key informant interviews (with head teachers, SMCs, CTA & Mothers club)

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<sup>1</sup> MGD III baseline result.

<sup>2</sup> The design effect, estimated at 2, is chosen because of the large cluster sample size (i.e. 15 pupils per school).

<sup>3</sup> The 20% non-response is assumed to increase the sample size sufficiently large to be able to detect an effect on the following groups: meals only, meals + THR, meals + SILC and nothing.

- Teacher and classroom observation.

Once the schools were selected, a maximum of 3 teachers and 3 cooks per school were also selected. The surveys used are included in full in Annex B, and, except for a few questions, they are the same as those used during the baseline and midline. This makes it possible to compare the responses at final evaluation to those of earlier evaluations.

Table 1 shows the number of schools and pupils to be sampled by chiefdom.

**Table 1. Number of sample units allocated by chiefdom**

Chiefdom	No. of MGD Schools	Number of schools to sample	Number of pupils to sample	Number of Teachers	Number of cooks
Dembelia Sinkunia	18	6	90	18	18
Mongo	43	13	195	39	39
Neya	37	12	180	60	60
Neini	65	20	300	36	36
Sulima	29	9	135	27	27
<b>Total</b>	<b>192</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>900</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>180</b>

The schools were selected by systematic random sampling, while the pupils, teachers, and cooks were chosen by simple random (ballot) method.

### Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

FGDs were held in all survey clusters/school communities with community stakeholders including women and men from SILC and non-SILC households.

Discussions were held separately for men and women and each FGD had between 7 and 12 participants. Enumerators were instructed to select a wide range of ordinary community members as well as community leaders (chiefs, women's leaders, and headmen). Community members who had already been interviewed because of their membership in SMCs and Mothers Groups were not included to increase the diversity of opinions.

Table 2 gives the response rates for schools, teachers, cooks, and pupils. Response rates were high and ranged from 91 to 100 percent.

**Table 2. Response Rates for different units of analysis**

Group	Target number	Number of responses	Response rate
Schools	60	60	100%
Teachers	180	164	91%
Pupils	900	900	100%
Cooks	180	163	91%

### ***Recruitment and Training of Enumerators***

Forty-two data collectors (36 enumerators and 6 supervisors) were recruited for the data collection. The supervisors and most of the enumerators had participated in previous evaluations of the MGD program, and therefore had experience with the tools and methodology. All enumerators had at least a post-secondary qualification and many had participated in other surveys and/or had taught in schools.

The supervisors and enumerators attended a 5-day training on the administration of the evaluation tools/questionnaires and general survey protocols to equip them to collect appropriate and quality data for analysis. For this survey, quantitative data collection was done using mobile devices (iPad minis), and the enumerators had additional training on collecting data using mobile devices. Training also included role-play to deepen practice on the administration of the tools and translation of keywords into the lingua franca (Krio) to help in the focus group discussions (FGD) and pupil interviews.

Another focus of the training was on ethical issues in conducting surveys with children and vulnerable populations. The training included the importance of consent and protecting the rights and dignity of all those interviewed. This meant that each child had to agree to proceed with the survey and we did not take personally identifiable information (e.g., names) from them. We also asked that each child be interviewed in a public place, but away from their teacher and others who could hear their answers. Finally, if it appeared children could not do a subtest, the enumerators were trained to stop that subtest and move to something else.



Furthermore, at the end of the training, arrangements were made for enumerators and supervisors to practice administering the tools in nearby schools and communities. This allowed for data collectors to practice administering the tools in ‘real-life’ situations and gave an opportunity to test the appropriateness of the questions. After the pretesting, final revisions were made to the tools and rendered on the tablets before the start of the field research.

## **DATA QUALITY, MANAGEMENT, AND ANALYSIS**

The first step in ensuring that the evaluation produced good quality data was to develop well-defined questions that helped to capture accurate and relevant data for analysis. The evaluation tools/questionnaires had been reviewed multiple times since many of them were used in previous evaluations. The new questions added also went through multiple reviews. In addition, the questionnaires and surveys were piloted in the field before being adopted and administered to collect the data for the evaluation. During the administration of the survey, supervisors visited enumerators in their various sites to ensure that data collection was proceeding as planned and to provide quality assurance to the evaluation process. The use of mobile devices to collect data helped to produce good quality quantitative data.

Quantitative data collected in the iPads were exported to Excel and then into SPSS software package in which further cleaning of data was carried out. Errors and mismatches due to inconsistencies during data collection were checked and corrected; this enhanced logical consistency and quality of data. The cleaned data was then exported to Stata 14 (a statistical software) for analysis. All programs created to analyze the data and produce tables have been saved so that the findings can be reproduced by other researchers.

## **FINDINGS**

This section summarizes the major findings from the final evaluation organized by the evaluation questions. The data used in this analysis were collected between Monday, June 4<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>, about a month before the end of the 2017/18 school year.

## **EFFECTIVENESS: TO WHAT EXTENT HAS THE PROJECT ACHIEVED ITS OBJECTIVES?**

The MGD III project has two main strategic objectives and numerous sub-objectives. Below are the findings organized based on these objectives and sub-objectives. Where possible, we have reported the starting point of the indicators, as measured during the baseline, the status during this interim review, and the final target at project end.

### ***MGD S.O.1 Improved Literacy of School-aged children***

One of the main strategic objectives (SO) of MGD III is to improve the literacy skills of children in the program. USDA's standard indicator to measure literacy skills is: the "percentage of children, who at the end of two grades of schooling, demonstrate that they can read and understand grade-level text." Although the children in class 2 were the population of interest, children in class 3 were also sampled because previous assessments had shown that children in class 2 had minimal reading skills and scored zero in several of the reading subtests.

The literacy assessment tool used was adapted from a nationally developed and validated test developed by Dr. Johanna Kuyvenhoven, a literacy educator from Calvin College. As a consultant with UNICEF, the assessment tool was used to assess children all over Sierra Leone. The skills assessed include: phonemic awareness, letter identification, familiar word reading, and listening and reading comprehension. It does not test oral reading fluency since the reading tests are not timed. For ease of comparison, the reading assessment remained the same across the baseline, midline and final evaluations, with only changes to the order of letters and words.

In order to test reading comprehension, learners were given a short, grade-appropriate story to read aloud after which the enumerators asked five comprehension questions. The grade 3 text was slightly more difficult than the grade 2 text to account for grade progression. Only learners who could read the first sentence of the text correctly

proceeded with the reading comprehension test. The number of questions asked from each pupil depended on how far in the story each child could read. Children were asked only those questions that could be answered from the text that they read. Four questions in this subtask were literal and could be answered directly from the information provided in the story. The last question was an inferential question and required pupils to combine information from the story with their background knowledge to derive a correct answer. A learner is said to be able to “read and understand grade-level text” if they answer at least 4 of 5 questions correctly on the reading comprehension test.

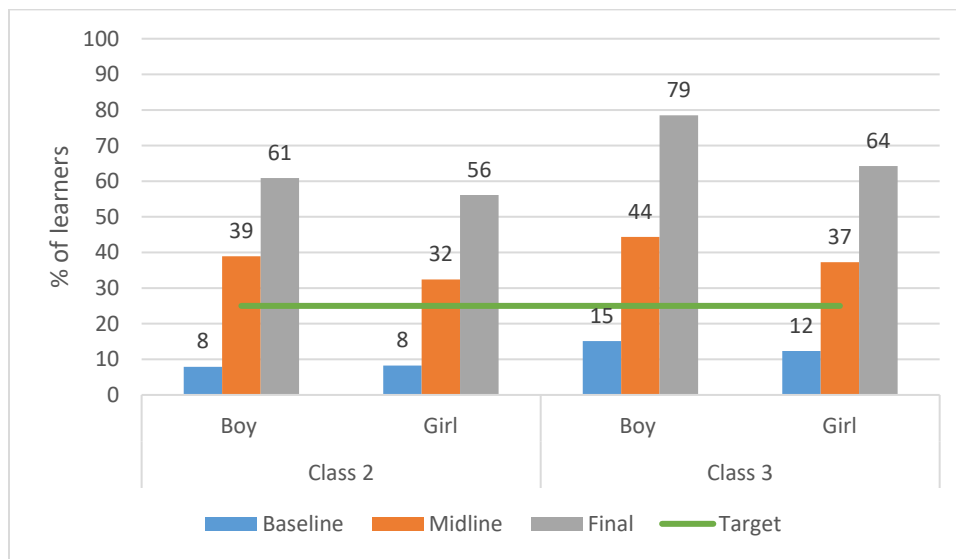
In total, 951 pupils (474 in class 2 and 477 in class 3) took the reading assessment, of which 54 percent were boys. Table 3 shows the distribution of scores on the reading comprehension. About 17 percent of class 2 students and 6 percent of class 3 students scored zero on the comprehension subtest; 37 percent of class 2 students and 46 percent of class 3 students answered all the 5 questions correctly.

**Table 3. Distribution of scores in the reading comprehension test (%)**

Number Correct	Class 2			Class 3		
	Boy	Girl	Total	Boy	Girl	Total
0	16.2	18.6	17.3	3.5	8.1	5.7
1	3.6	3.6	3.6	0.4	2.7	1.5
2	4.7	6.3	5.5	4.3	11.3	7.6
3	14.6	15.4	15.0	13.3	13.6	13.4
4	21.3	23.1	22.2	29.7	22.6	26.4
5	39.5	33.0	36.5	48.8	41.6	45.5

Based on the indicator definition, the percentage of children who can read and understand grade-level is depicted in Figure 2 below. The table shows remarkable achievement over the course of the MGD III. At the final evaluation shows that 61 percent of boys and 56 percent of girls could read and understand grade-level text at the end of class 2, compared with only 8 percent during the baseline. The project has far exceeded its target of 25 percent of class 2 students being able to read and understand grade-level text. A lower percentage of girls than boys can read with understanding in both classes (32 percent vs. 39 percent in class 2), but the difference is statistically significant for only class 3 learners (64 percent vs. 79 percent).

Figure 2. Percentage of boys and girls who can read and understand grade-level text

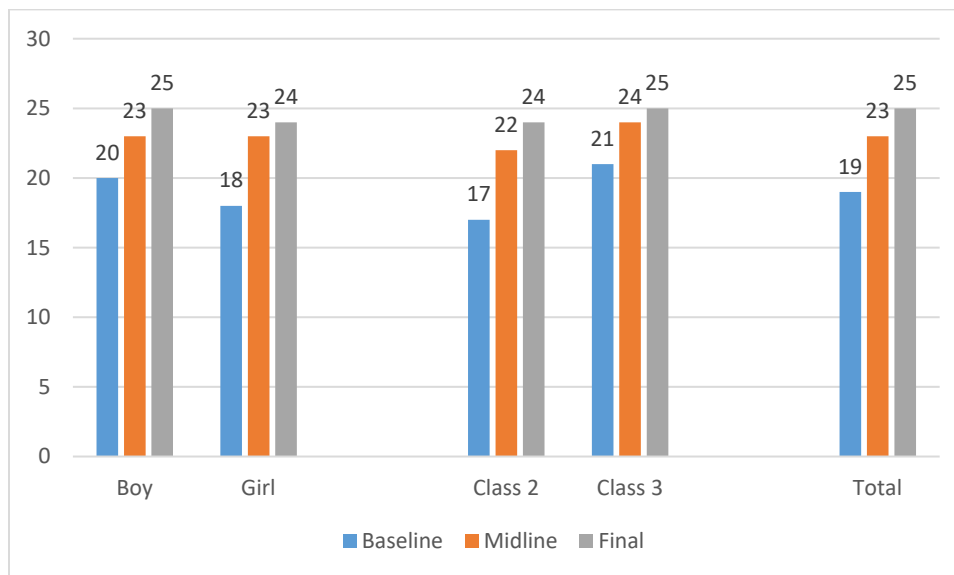


In addition to the reading comprehension sub-test, we also assessed learner's progress in several reading skills such as alphabet naming, phonemic awareness, phonics, and listening comprehension.

### Alphabet Naming

In this task, children were presented with a random list of the 26 letters of the alphabet (in mixed upper and lower case) and were asked to name the letters. The average number of letters identified correctly was 25, improved from 19 at the baseline (Figure 3). Boys scored higher than girls and students in class 3 higher than those in class 2. However, these differences are not statistically significant.

**Figure 3. Mean Number of letters identified correctly (out of 26)**

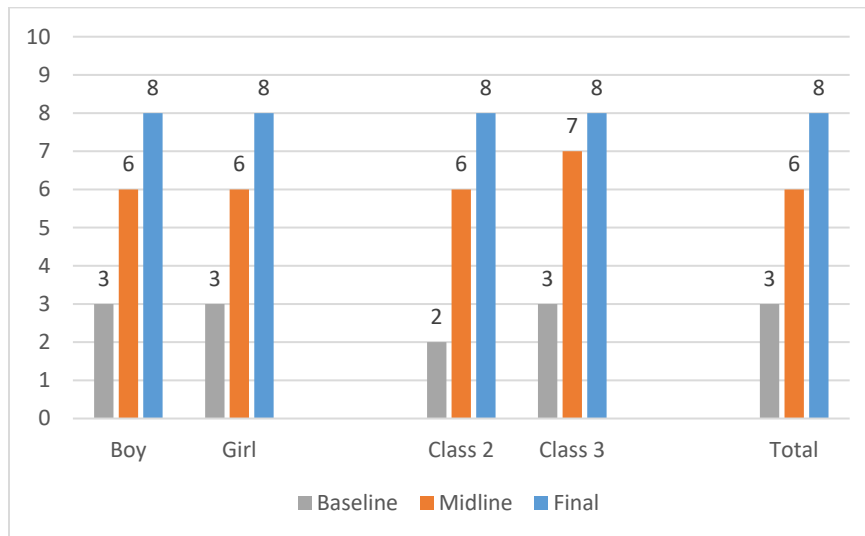


### Phonemic Awareness (PA)

There were two types of PA tasks. In the first, the learner was given pictures of 10 common objects, told the names of the object, and asked to say the initial sound. In the second PA task, the learner was asked to read a set of invented words or nonwords (e.g. 'kum'). The second task is a new task introduced in the final evaluation.

Figure 4 compares the mean scores in the test of beginning sound and shows strong improvement over the year. The mean score at the final was 8 out of 10 compared to 3 at the baseline, and there was no gender difference in the score.

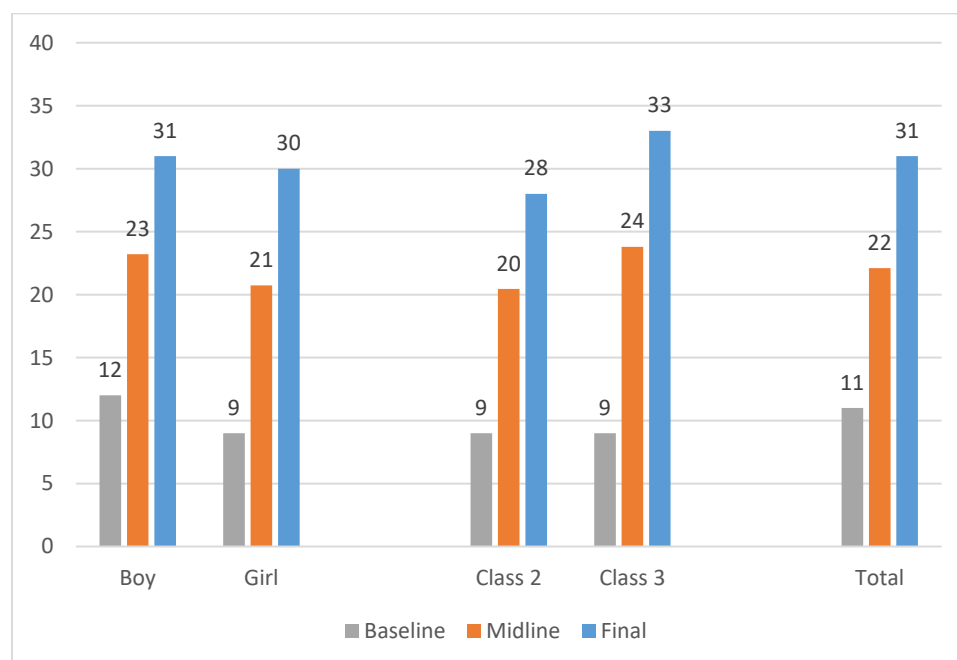
Figure 4. Mean scores in Phonemic Awareness subtasks (out of 10)



### Familiar Word Reading

In this sub-task, learners were presented with a list of 40 familiar words and were asked to read the words. The test was discontinued if the pupil couldn't read any of the first ten words. Learners in class 2 and class 3 had a different set of words, but with some overlap. Again, there was a remarkable improvement in this sub-task over the course of the project, as shown in Figure 5. There was no gender difference in performance.

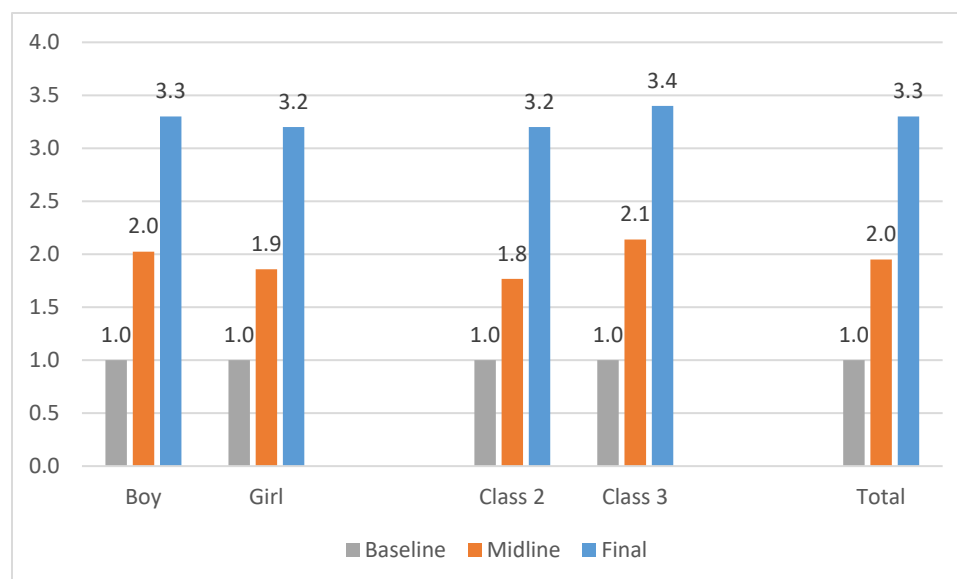
**Figure 5. Mean number of familiar words correctly read (out of 40)**



### Listening Comprehension (LC)

For this sub-task, the assessor read a passage to the learners, and the learners were asked questions about the story they listened to. The mean score for boys was 3.3 and for girls 3.2, and this difference is not statistically significant. Listening comprehension scores have increased quite dramatically since the start of the program.

**Figure 6 Mean Listening Comprehension Score (out of 4)**



To summarize, pupils performed remarkably better on all sub-tests at the end of the project. The reading comprehension target of 25% of boys and girls reading with comprehension at the end of grade 2 was surpassed with 57 percent of girls and 61 percent of boys reading with comprehension. While there was a difference between boys and girls in terms of reading performance, the difference wasn't statistically significant in class 2. The difference between boys and girls do appear to be widening as they progress in school – by class 3, the gap between the performance of boys and girls had increased, and the difference was statistically significant. In the following subsections, we consider what has changed in instruction and the teaching and learning environment that might help explain the improvements we see in reading outcomes.

#### MGD.1.1 Improve quality of instruction

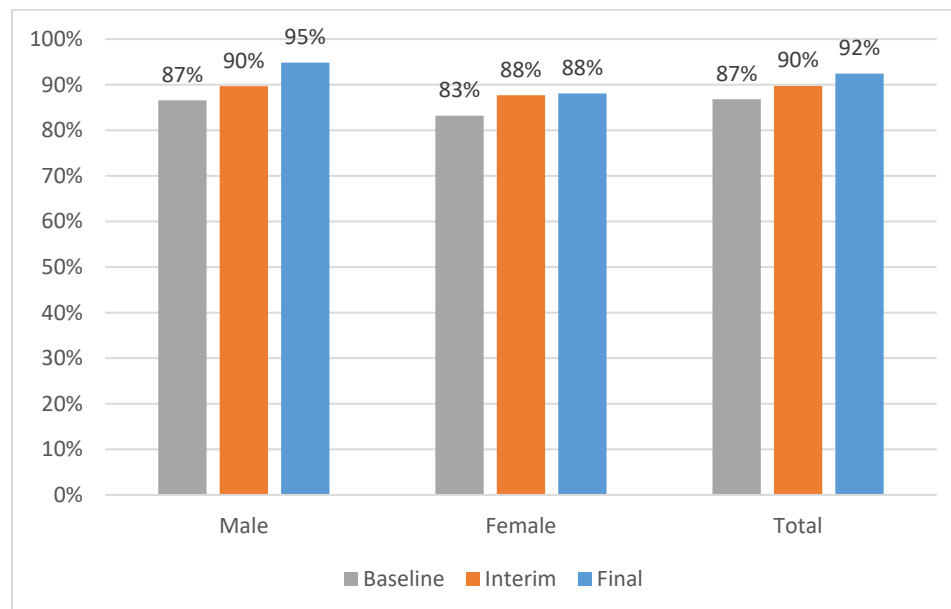
Improving the quality of literacy instruction is a major part of the implementation strategy of the MGD III program. The program aims to develop the skills of teachers in several ways including sponsoring teachers to acquire their teaching certificate from Northern Polytechnic; providing in-service training in Diagnostic Teaching Methods (DTM) designed by the by International Literacy Association (ILA); and coaching of teachers in literacy instruction by TALLE.

##### **MGD 1.1.1 More consistent teacher attendance**

For teaching and learning to take place at a minimum, pupils and teachers must be present in school. Almost all schools (97 percent) had a book for recording teacher attendance. The teacher attendance rate on the day of the survey, based on the attendance register, was 92 percent overall (95 percent for men and 88 percent for women). This was up from the attendance rate at the baseline survey (see Figure 7).

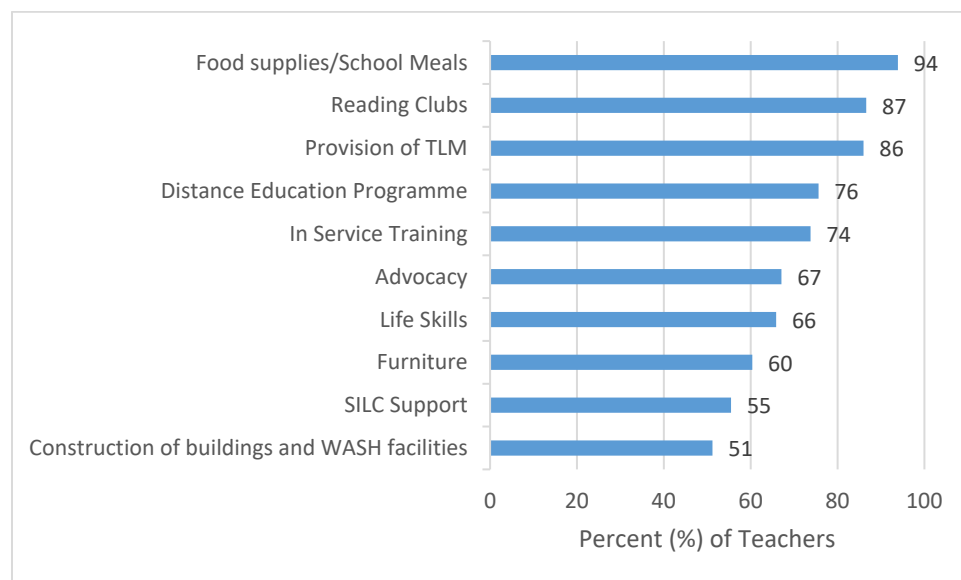


Figure 7. Teacher attendance rate on the day of the survey.



The increased attendance rate may reflect teachers' satisfaction with the MGD III program. As shown in Figure 8, most teachers are very satisfied with all aspects of the program, with the highest level of satisfaction being with the school meals, reading clubs and provision of TLMs and the lowest being with the construction of school buildings and WASH facilities and SILC support. In areas where teachers said they were not satisfied with any aspect of the program, it was usually because they did not have those elements in their schools or communities. For example, they might not have SILC groups formed or their school buildings had not been rehabilitated or they needed more classroom buildings than they had. It is also possible that teachers and head teachers knew the evaluation was taking place, and therefore tried to be present. However, on-going monitoring data also suggests that teacher attendance is relatively high.

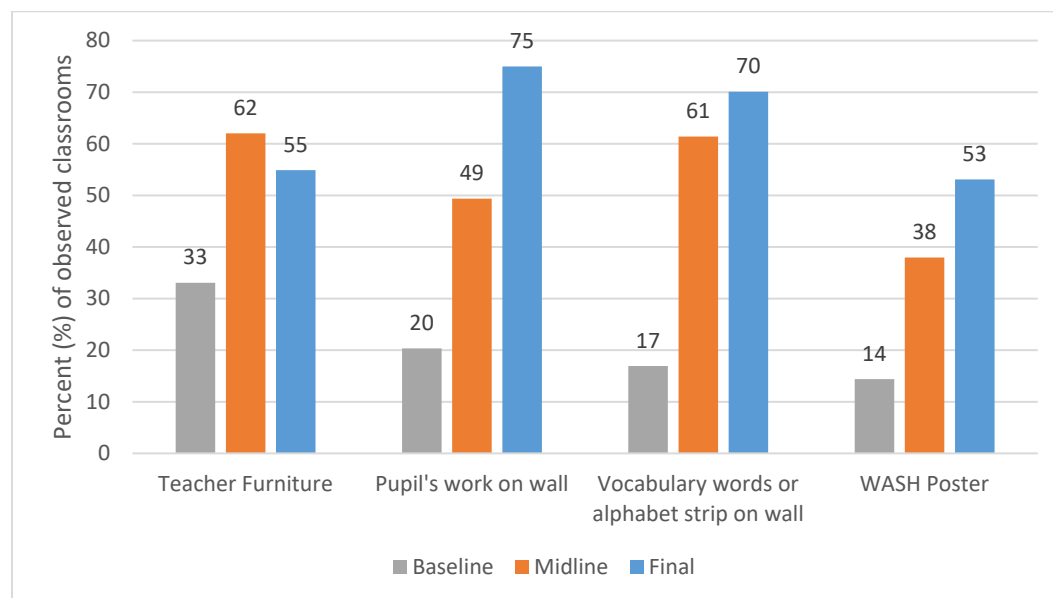
**Figure 8. Level of Teachers' Satisfaction with Various elements of the MGD III program (% of teachers VERY satisfied)**



#### **MGD 1.1.2 Better access to school supplies and materials**

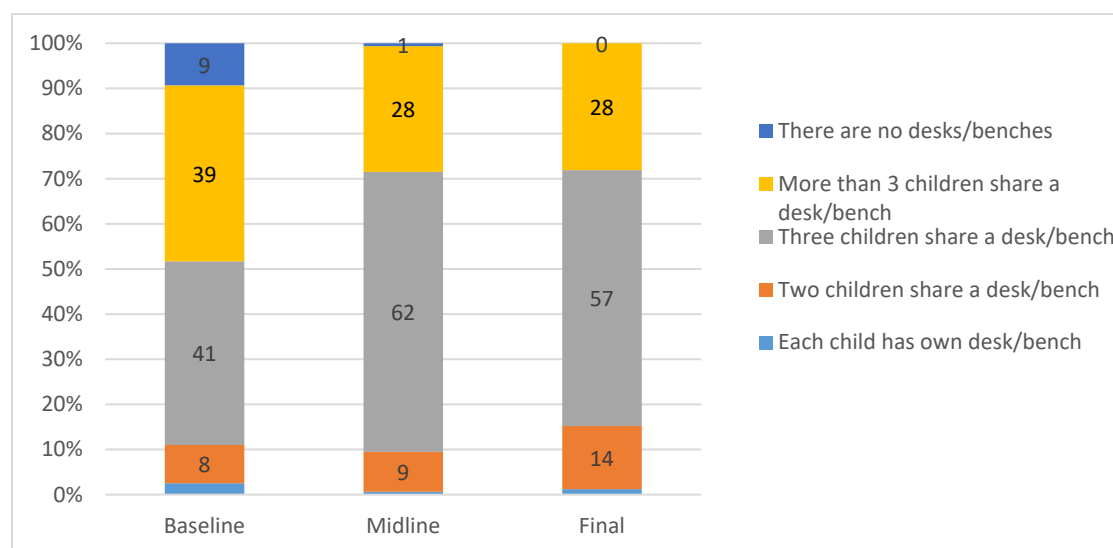
To be effective, teachers need materials to help them teach. At the final evaluation, classrooms were print-rich with a higher percentage of classrooms featuring children's work, vocabulary words or alphabet strips, and WASH posters on the wall (Figure 9).

**Figure 9. Availability of teaching and learning materials and supplies**



The seating arrangement in schools had improved since the baseline, when 9 percent of schools had no seating for students (Figure 10). At midline and final, 71 percent of classrooms had students seated either 2 or 3 to a desk, which is adequate seating; 28 percent or 28-29 percent of classrooms had more than 3 children sharing desk. Most of the classrooms (70%) where more than three children were sharing a desk/bench were in Mongo and Neini chiefdoms. The situation had improved since the baseline, when 48 percent of classrooms did not have adequate seating.

**Figure 10. Availability of desks and benches in observed classrooms**

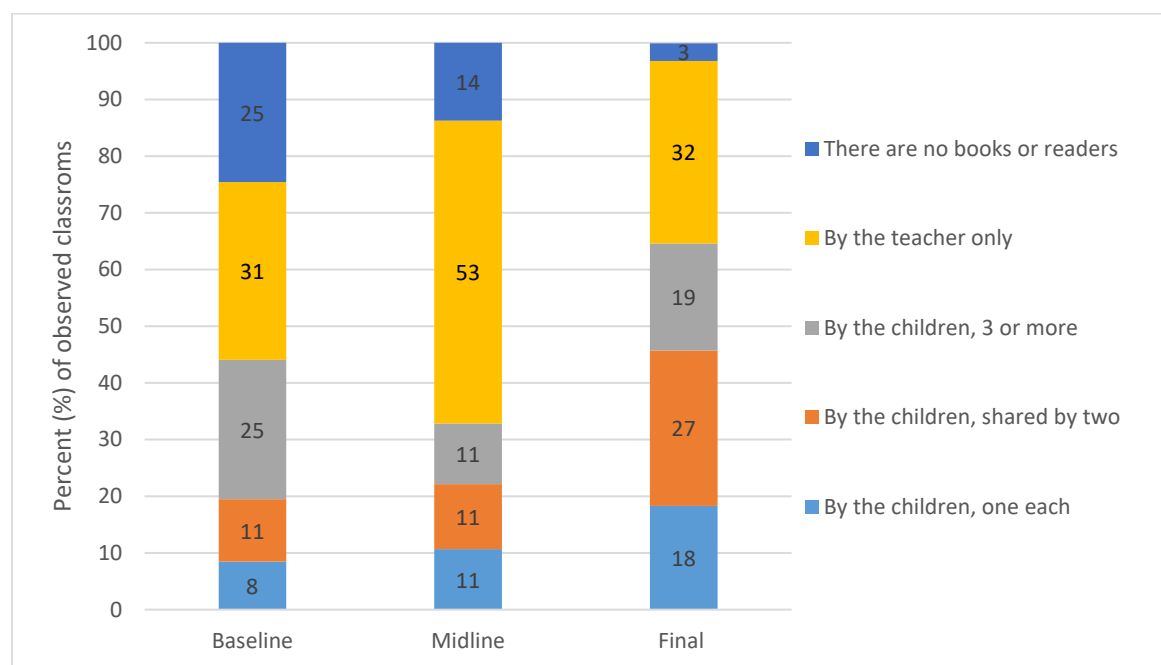


### **MGD 1.1.3 Improved literacy instructional and learning materials**

This year, the MGD III project delivered over 470,000 texts and other teaching and learning materials (TLMs) to schools, surpassing its life-of-project (LOP) target of 270,000. These TLMs included slates, chalk, exercise books, and reader and textbooks for the four core subjects (Maths, English, Social Studies, Science). All head teachers reported receiving some TLMs from the MGD III project. The availability and use of textbooks in the observed classrooms are shown in Figure 11 below. The percentage of observed classrooms with no texts being used dropped from 25 percent at baseline to 3 percent at the end of the project, which is good progress. However, in at least a third of classrooms, only the teacher was using a textbook even though all head teachers reported that their schools had received texts from CRS. This means that even though schools had the textbooks, they were not being used in the classroom.

Enumerators reported that in some schools, the textbooks are kept in stores or head teacher offices, with limited access to children. In other schools with no office, the head teachers keep the TLMs in their homes, which also makes it inaccessible for children's use during class time.

**Figure 11. Availability of textbooks or readers in observed classrooms**



#### MGD 1.1.4 Increased skills and knowledge of teachers

During this final evaluation, enumerators observed and interviewed 164 teachers in their classrooms. The teaching workforce is mostly male (87 percent) and only 38 percent of them had a teaching certificate. Ninety-five percent were teaching classes 2 to 4, while 5 percent taught classes 5 to 6.

**Table 4 Summary of Teacher Characteristics (N=164) (Percentage)**

Teacher Characteristics	Final	Baseline
% Male	87	92
% Has Teaching Certificate	38	31
Highest Qualification if no Teaching Certificate		

Teacher Characteristics	Final	Baseline
% BECE	38	21
% WASSCE	53	44
% O'LEVEL	7	27
% Other	2	7
Class level		
% Class 2-4	95%	100
% Class 5-6	5%	

### *Teacher training*

The MGD III project invested significant resources in improving the quality of instruction through training and coaching of teachers. Monitoring data showed that 701 teachers were trained in Year 2 and 975 teachers in Year 3 of the project, surpassing the LOP target of 701. These teachers were trained in Diagnostic Teaching Methods (DTM) for literacy instruction. In addition to the DTM training, eligible teachers were enrolled in a Distance Education Programme (DEP), led by Northern Polytechnic. The DEP is a one-year program, at the end of which enrolees take a national examination. Those who pass the exam receive a teaching certificate (TC-Lower) from the National Council of Technical and Vocational Awards (NCTVA). Project records showed that there were 530 teachers trained or certified as of Year 3, surpassing the LOP target of 450. The results of the 2017 NCTVA exam was released in July 2018, and 60 percent of MGD-III supported teachers passed and should be receiving their certificates. 13 percent will need to resit one or two subjects, while 26 percent failed.

As Table 5 shows, 90 percent of teachers in the final evaluation sample reported having attended training on DTM and 52 percent were participating in the DEP. Seventy percent of teachers received training on life skills instruction as part of the MGD III program. These training rates were much higher than the training rates reported during the baseline.

**Table 5 Teacher Training Profile**

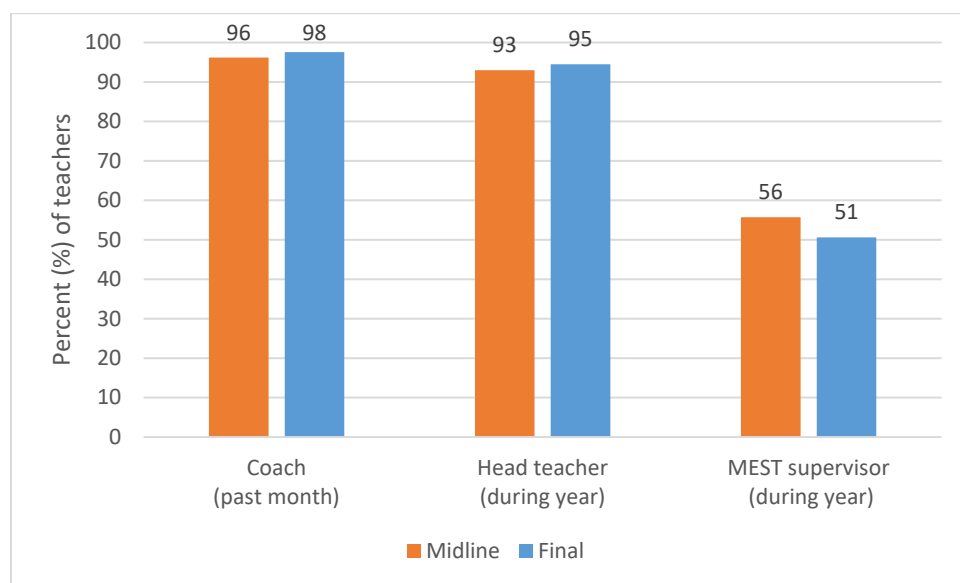
Training	Final	Baseline
% Diagnostic Training Method (DTM)	90	28
% Distance Education Program	52	20
% Life Skills Training	70	40

### *Coaching and Mentoring*

In addition to the training, MGD III also hired 20 literacy coaches and 5 coach supervisors, who were responsible for training teachers and providing classroom-based coaching and support. Each literacy coach covered 8-11 schools in a geographic cluster and spent at least 3 weeks per month in the schools giving direct support to teachers. During these coaching visits, they observed teachers in their classrooms and provided feedback on their teaching. Where needed, they also provided demonstration lessons to help struggling teachers. Ordinarily, MEST supervisors are supposed to be doing this task, but there are not enough of the supervisors and their resources to visit schools are limited.

Figure 12 shows that teachers received visits from coaches, head teachers, and MEST supervisors, but the frequency of these visits differed. 98 percent of teachers reported that they were visited by a coach in the month prior to the survey, 95 percent reported visits by the head teacher during the year, while 51 percent reported visits by a MEST supervisor. The results show that MEST supervisors still struggle to visit school, but the coach visits make up for their absence.

**Figure 12. Supervisory visits to teachers in the month and year prior to the survey**



### *Observation of Teaching Skills*

The skills and knowledge of teachers were assessed using teacher surveys and teaching observations. The rubric used for the teaching observation and teacher's knowledge of pedagogy combined tools developed by International Literacy Association (ILA) and MEST. Teachers' competencies were assessed in 2 broad areas as outlined below:

1. The teacher uses a variety of pupil (formative) assessment techniques during the lesson
2. The teacher demonstrates good instructional practice (explores prior knowledge, uses lesson plans, a variety of teaching methods)

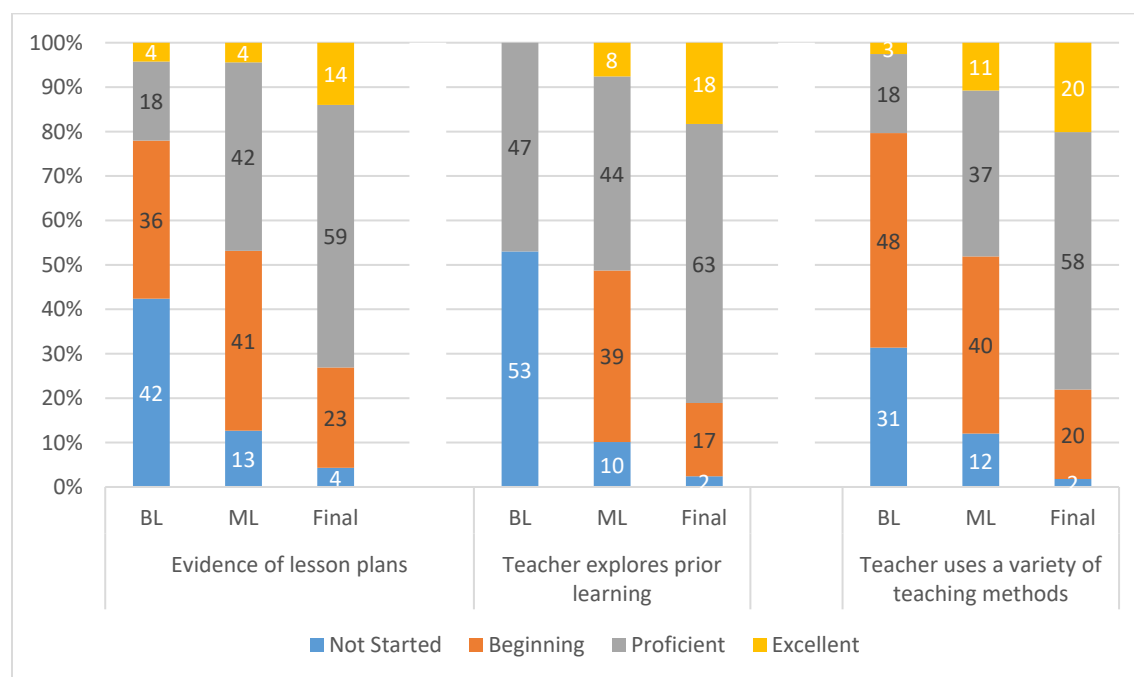
Teacher performance was scored using the guidelines shown in Table 6.

**Table 6 Scoring guidelines for teacher observations**

<i>1 Not yet Started</i>	<i>2 Beginning</i>	<i>3 Proficient</i>	<i>4 Excellent</i>
There is no evidence of desired behavior. The teacher needs significant support to develop practice.	The behavior is attempted, but not consistent. The teacher needs ongoing support to develop practice	The behavior is acceptable and somewhat consistent and could be used as a model for others.	The behavior is consistent and exemplary. The teacher could teach others to develop this behavior.

Figure 13 below shows how teachers performed in Area 1, and across all areas, teachers show marked improvement over time. For example, at the final evaluation 73 percent of teachers were judged to be proficient in lesson planning, compared to 46 percent at midline and 22 percent at baseline.

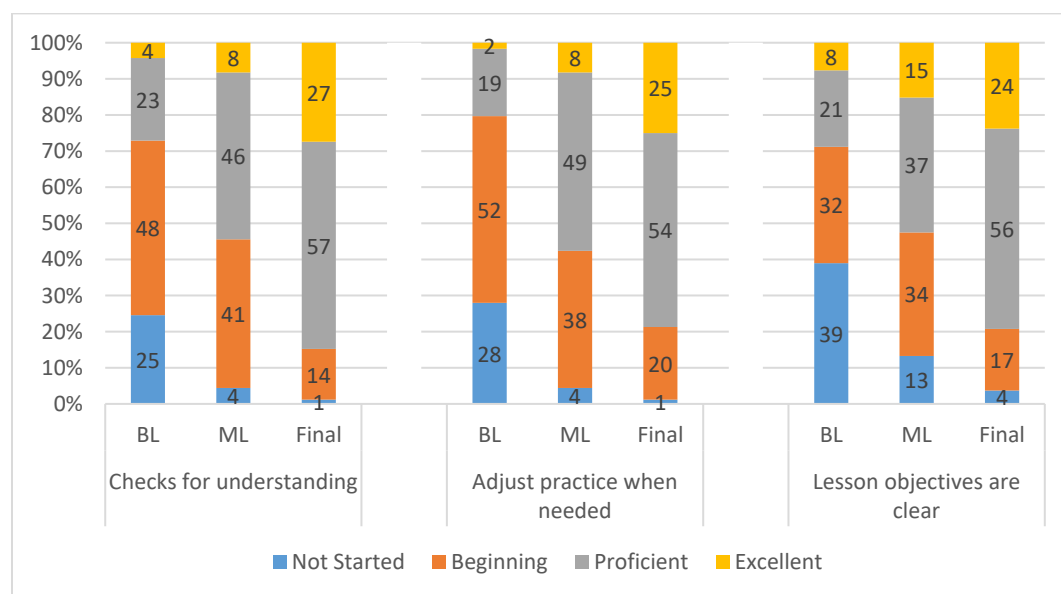
**Figure 13 Area 1: Teachers Demonstrate good instructional practice**



Area 2 focused on teachers' proficiency in using a variety of pupil assessment techniques during the lesson, which is one of the foundation skills of the DTM training. Figure 14 shows that 84 percent of teachers were proficient in checking for pupil understanding at final, compared to 54 percent at midline and 27 percent at the baseline. Similar improvements are seen in other areas such as adjusting practice based on the assessed need of students and setting clear objectives.

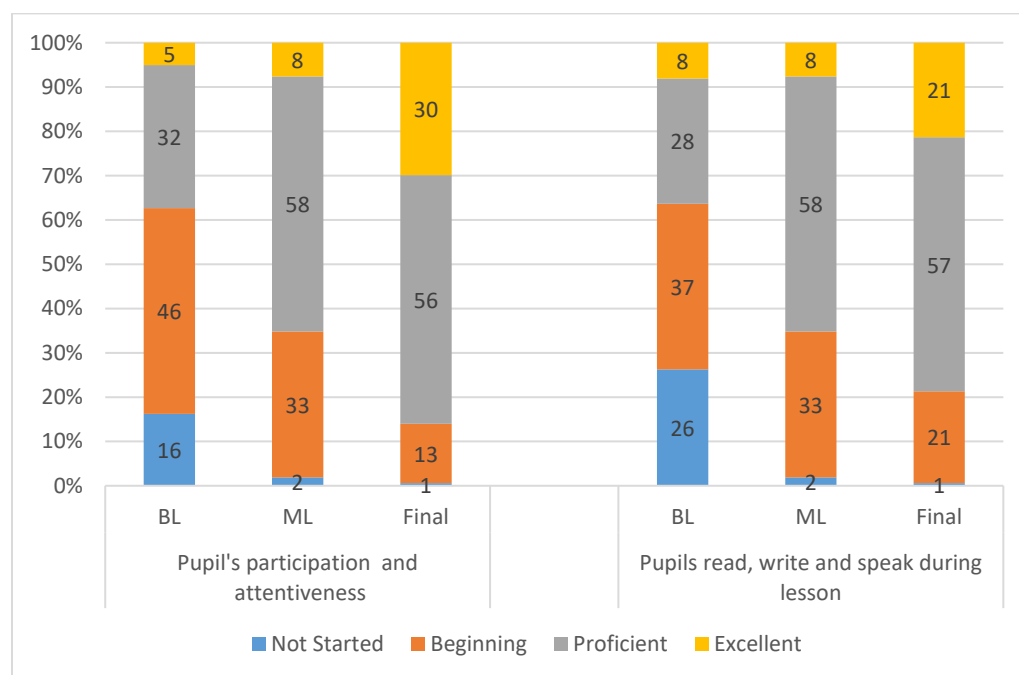


**Figure 14. Area 2 Teacher uses a variety of pupil assessment techniques**



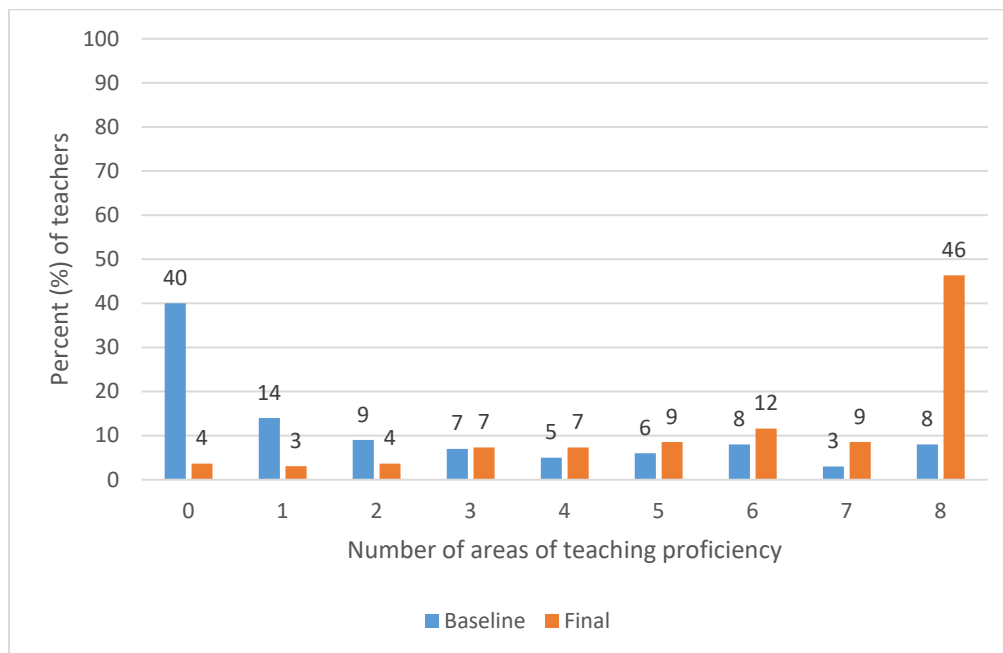
The final practice area (Area 3) observed was how well the teacher engaged the pupils during the lesson. Here again, we see marked improvement in proficiency in these skills over time. 86 percent of teachers were reported to be proficient in getting pupils to participate and stay engaged in the final evaluation, compared to 66 percent at midline and only 37 percent in the baseline (Figure 15). Similarly, 78 percent of teachers got pupils to read, write, and speak during the lesson as compared to only 36 percent in the baseline.

**Figure 15. Area 3 Teacher engages pupils throughout the lesson**



Across all 8 teacher behaviors highlighted above, at the final evaluation, only 4 percent of teachers did not show proficiency in any area, and 46 percent of teachers were proficient in all eight teaching areas assessed (Figure 16). This is in sharp contrast to the baseline evaluation where 40 percent were not proficient in any areas, and only 8 percent were proficient in all areas. Whilst the project did not meet the LOP target of 100 percent of teachers demonstrating the use of new and quality teaching technique, 96 percent is very close and quite remarkable.

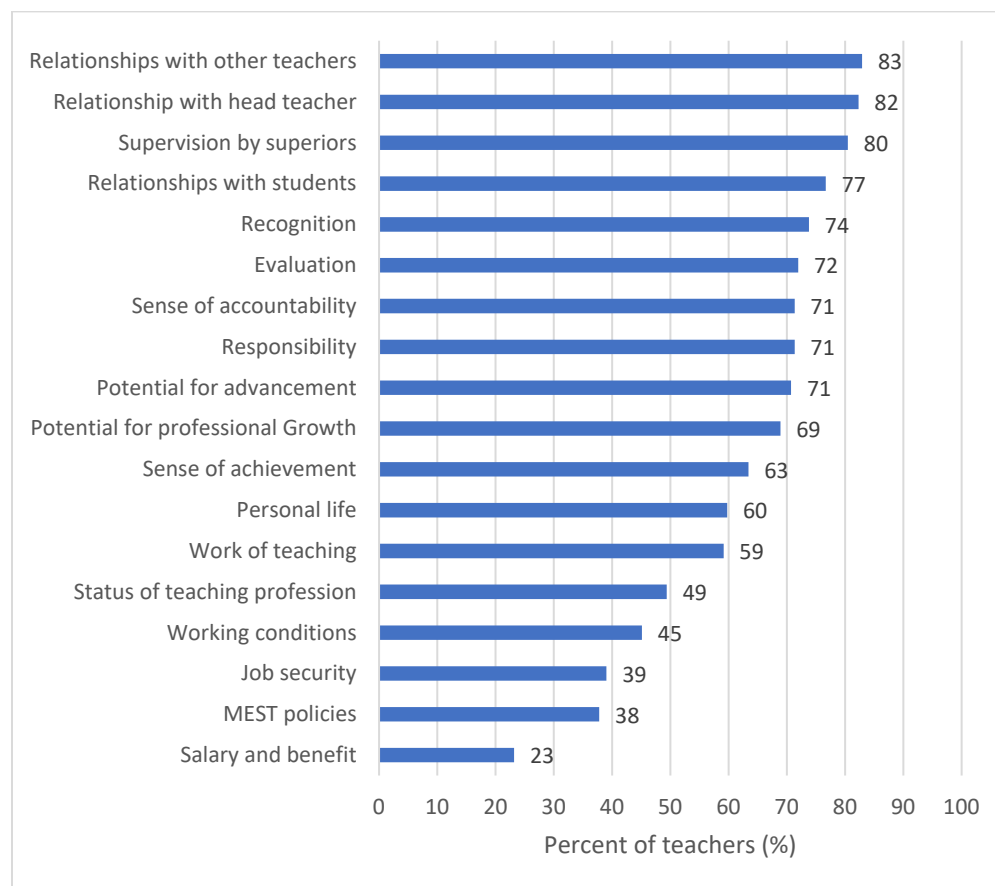
**Figure 16. Teacher proficiency across all 8 teaching practice areas**



#### *Teacher Motivation*

To better understand what inspires teachers in their jobs, we asked teachers what aspects of their job they found motivating. When presented with the job aspect, teachers had to rank it from 1 to 5, with 1 being NOT motivating to 5 being highly motivating. Figure 17 reveals that most teachers are highly motivated by the interpersonal relationships they have with colleagues, head teachers, and students. The most demotivating aspects of their jobs relate to salaries and benefits, MEST policies, job security and working conditions. The latter is not surprising since most schools are not approved, and therefore teachers are not receiving salaries and/or benefits from MEST.

**Figure 17. Aspects of their jobs that teachers find “motivating” or “highly motivating”**



#### **MGD 1.1.5 Increase knowledge and skills of administrators**

Head teachers are school administrators who manage the daily operation of the school and serve as a link between the school and community. The MGD III project trained the head teacher and deputy head teacher from each of the 192 schools on DTM, instructional leadership, teacher management, and the management of school records.

All head teachers surveyed (100 percent) reported attendance of training provided by MGD III. In terms of the benefits perceived, most reported that the training helped them improve their teaching skills and their supervision and support of other teachers. Other benefits mentioned included improvements in school management, lesson planning, teacher observation and supervision, record keeping, and building relationships with teachers. As discussed above, 95 percent of teachers reported that they received a supervisory classroom visit from their head teacher during the school year, and 92 percent of these reported more than two visits. Not only have head

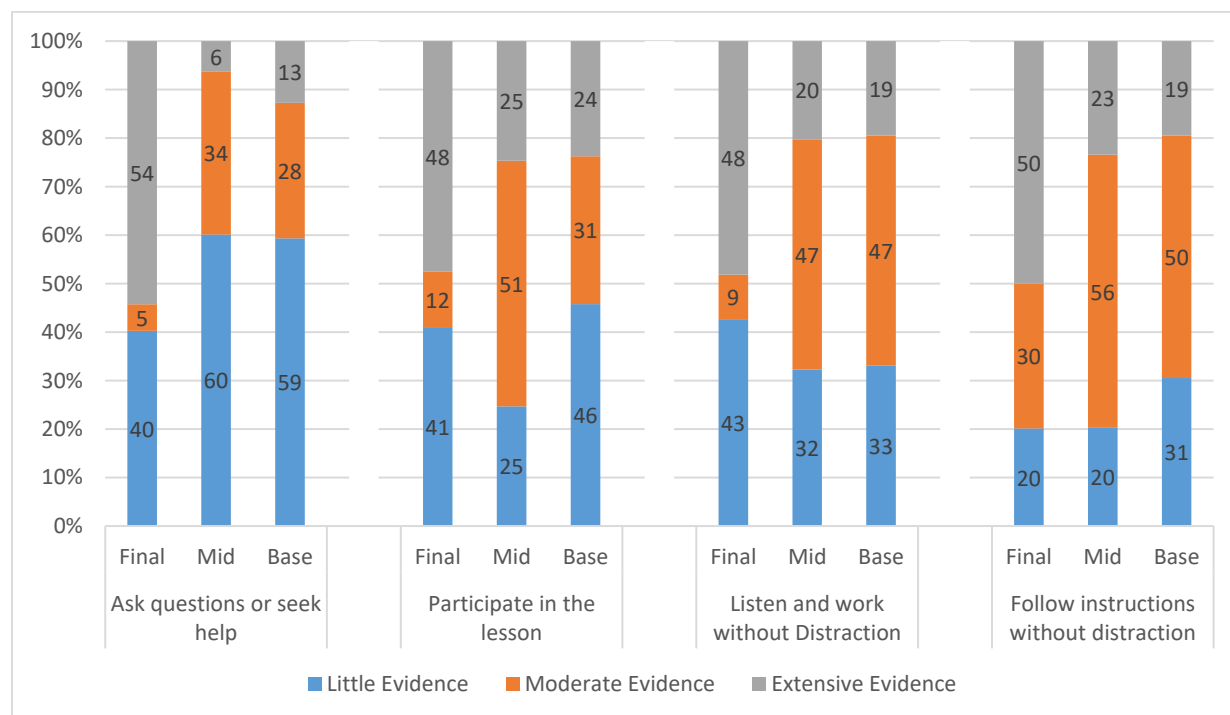
teachers increased their knowledge, but they are also putting that knowledge into practice. The MGD III tracks, as a key indicator, *the number of administrators who demonstrate at least one new administration skill*. Monitoring data suggests that this LOP target of 192 was surpassed by the end of the project.

#### MGD 1.2 Improve pupil attentiveness

Attentiveness was defined as pupils asking questions, actively participating in lessons, and following instructions without distraction. Enumerators assessed the level of student attentiveness and categorized classrooms based on their observation: little evidence (less than a third of students were attentive), moderate evidence (about half the class was attentive), or extensive evidence (more than a half of the class was attentive). Pupils observed during the final evaluation were more attentive than in previous evaluations. For example, 54 percent of classrooms showed extensive evidence of students asking questions or seeking help compared to only 6 percent at midline and 13 percent at baseline. The pattern is similar to the other areas studied. That said, in about 40 percent of classrooms, there was still little evidence of attentive students (in terms of asking questions, participating in lessons, or working without distraction); instead, students mostly followed the teacher's instructions.

On average, across all behaviors, 64 percent of classrooms in the final evaluation showed moderate or extensive evidence of student attentiveness, and this is reported in the key indicator table. This is improved from 34 percent at midline and 42 percent at baseline. The key indicator of student attentiveness, with LOP of 80 percent, is the *percent of pupils in targeted schools who are identified as attentive or very attentive*. The measure used in the evaluation uses the classroom and not the student as the unit of analysis.

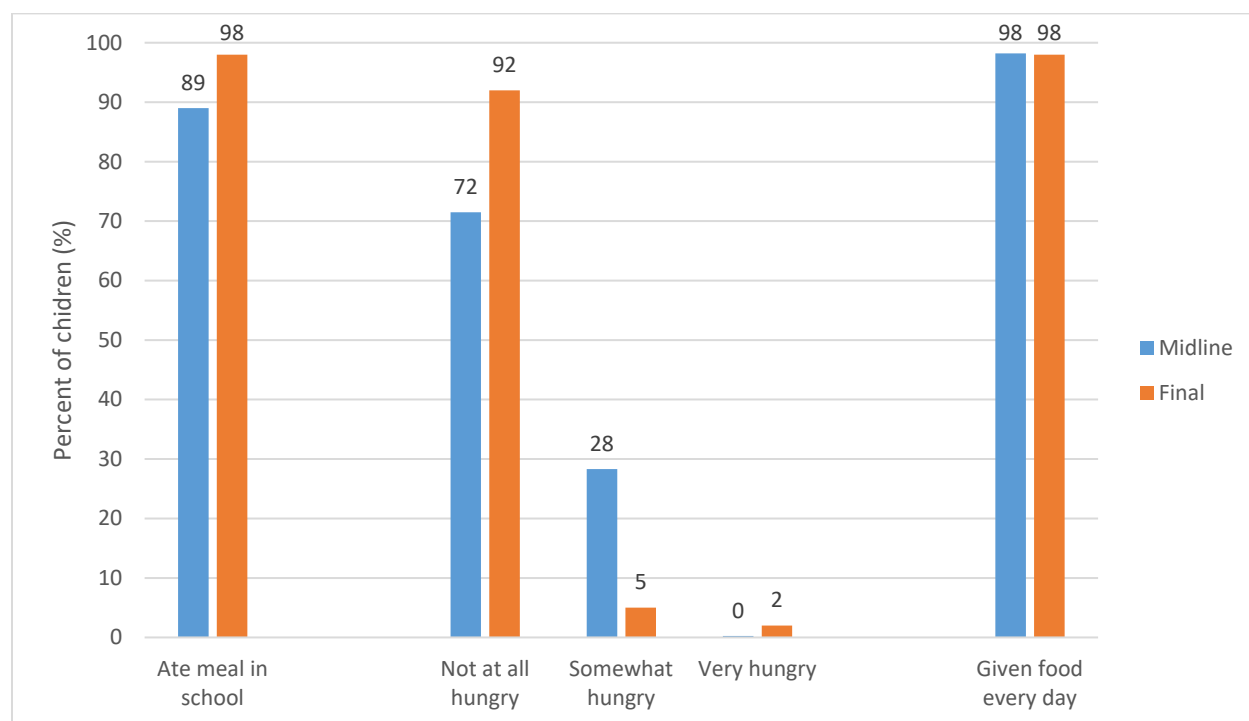
**Figure 18. Percentage of classrooms that had (little/moderate/extensive) evidence of student attentive behaviors**



#### **MGD 1.2.1 Reduced short-term hunger**

All schools were serving meals to children daily. At the time of the final survey, 98 percent of children reported that they had eaten a meal in school, compared to 89 percent at midline (Figure 19). 92 percent of kids reported that they were not at all hungry, again an improvement from the midline. The 8 percent of learners who reported being somewhat hungry or very hungry were either fasting or said they did not receive enough food. On this indicator, the project met and surpassed its LOP target, which was 10 percent of children indicating they were hungry or very hungry.

**Figure 19 Hunger status of children**



Schools varied in serving meals with 33 percent of children reporting meal times in the morning (before 11:30 a.m.) and 67 percent reported having meals in the afternoon.

### MGD 1.3 Improve pupil attendance

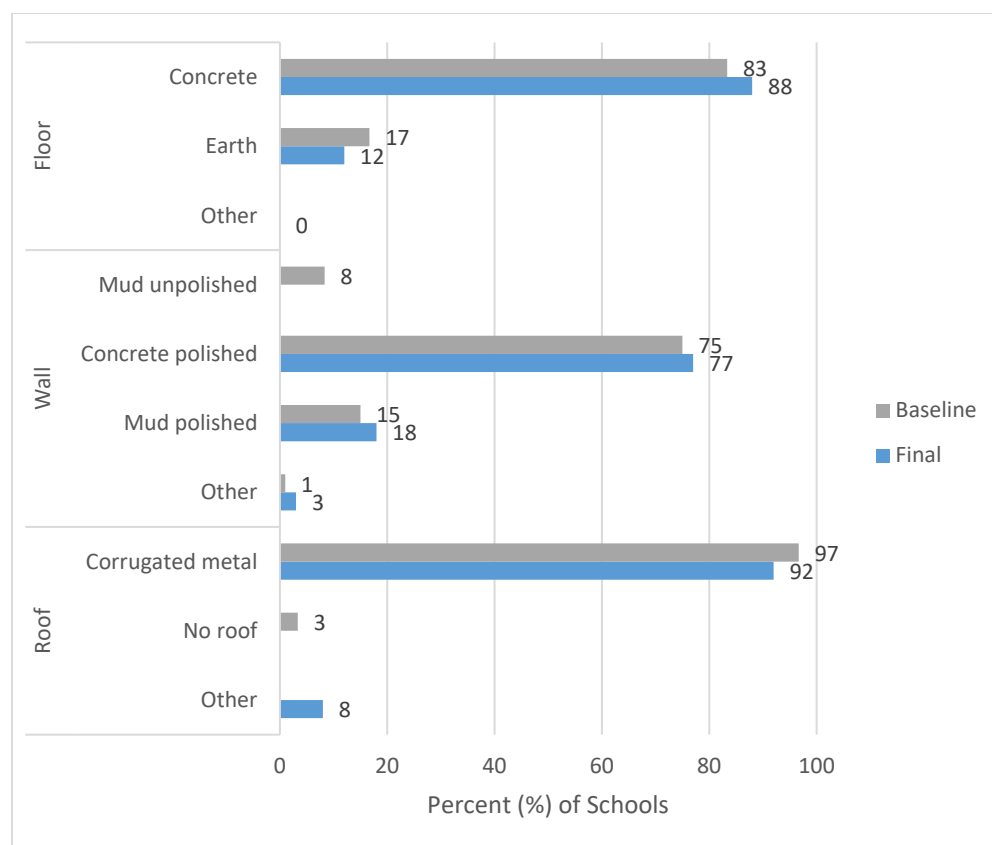
According to monitoring data from CRS, pupil attendance has increased significantly from the baseline. In 2016, about two-thirds of students were reported to be attending schools regularly - defined as students whose attendance rate is above 80 percent. A year later, 100 percent of students were reported to be attending school regularly. At the final evaluation, 89 percent of students were deemed to be regularly attending school, which is less than the midline, but much better than in 2016. During the day of the survey, the attendance registers showed that attendance rate at 86 percent, and there was no difference between attendance rate for boys and girls. The attendance on the day of survey (86%) is what we would expect from the monitoring data, which suggests that 89 percent of students attended school regularly.

### MGD 1.3.3 Improved school infrastructure

According to project monitoring reports, the MGD III project has constructed or rehabilitated up to 182 school facilities, including 69 latrines, 37 food stores, 24 boreholes, and 52 classroom blocks. They have done this with the support of communities who contributed labor and materials to the construction totaling almost \$140,000. The MGD III project has met its target in terms of construction of latrines (69 of 62), food stores (37 of 37), and classroom blocks (52 of 52). Only in the provision of a safe water source did the project not meet its indicator (24 of 30 completed)

The final evaluation assessed the status of school infrastructure in the visited schools. Figure 20 shows that the school infrastructure is solid – 88 percent had concrete floors, 95 percent had concrete or mud polished wall, and 92 percent had a corrugated metal roof.

**Figure 20. Status of School Infrastructure**



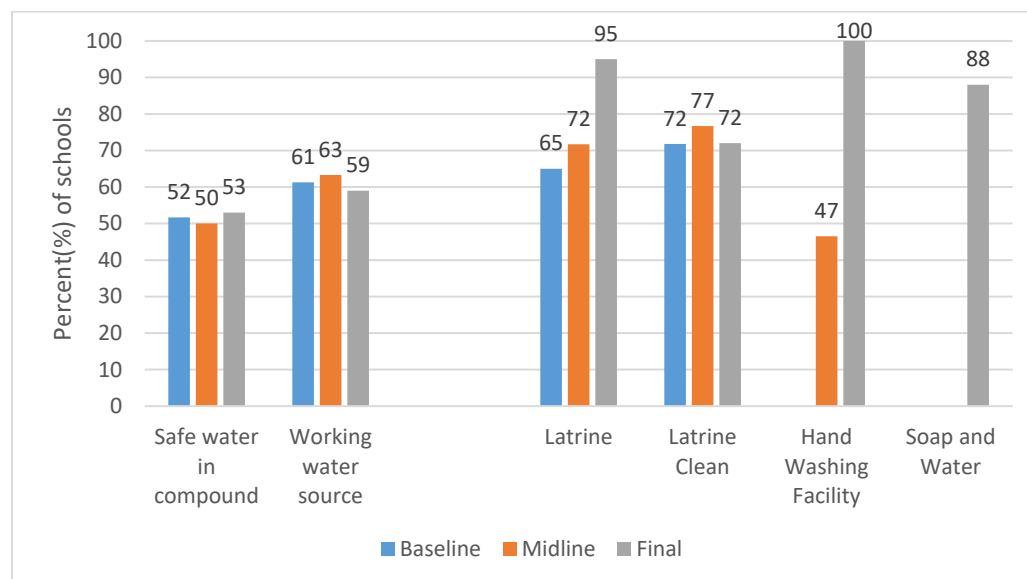
Despite progress in the provision of latrines and boreholes, there are still many schools without access to water, sanitation, and hygiene facilities. Only 53 percent of



schools had a (potentially) safe source of water within the school compound, and for most, it was a hand pump well. Furthermore, of those with water facilities in the school, 41 percent were not functioning (Figure 21). In most cases, the water had dried up or the hand pump was broken.

Latrine facilities have improved, with 95 percent of observed schools having a latrine, with separate ones for boys and girls. All latrines had a hand washing facility in or close by, and 88 percent of schools had soap and water at those hand washing facilities.

**Figure 21. Status of water and toilet facilities in observed schools**



#### **MGD 1.3.4 Increased pupil enrollment**

Pupil enrollment is tracked via project monitoring. Trends in enrolment over the course of the MGD III project is shown in Table 7. As of June 2018, there were 32,053 children enrolled in MGD III-supported schools, of which 49 percent were girls. The enrolment decreased slightly (-1.4%) since its highest point at the midline. The project staff attributes the reduction in enrolment to insecurities associated with the 2018 presidential and parliamentary elections, which took place between March and April 2018. It could also be due to normal transferring of children and families to other

areas. The project has met and surpassed its LOP target (15,186 girls; 15,733 boys) for student enrolment.

**Table 7 Trends in Enrollment, 2016-2018**

	2016	2017	2018
<b>Female</b>	13,715 (48%)	15,797 (49%)	15,564 (47%)
<b>Male</b>	14,748	16,702	16,489
<b>Total</b>	28,463	32,499	32,053

### ***Factors affecting reading performance***

Overall, we can conclude that the MGD III has achieved its strategic objective on improved literacy. The data show remarkable increases in the percentages of children who can read, and the project targets were exceeded. Logistic regression analysis was conducted to understand factors that contributed to whether a child can read based on individual (gender, age, member of reading club), school characteristics (whether the school is approved, and percent of teachers qualified), and chiefdom characteristics. The result is presented in Table 8.

**Table 8. Factors that predict whether a student can read and understand grade-level text**

Logistic regression	Number of obs		951			
	LR chi2(10)		238.23			
	Prob > chi2		0.000			
Log likelihood = -494.82326	Pseudo R2		0.194			
	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	Z	P>z	[95% Conf. Interval]	
Male*	1.554	0.243	2.82	0.005	1.144	2.111
Class 3*	1.564	0.261	2.68	0.007	1.127	2.169
Age 6-11 yrs	0.954	0.231	-0.19	0.846	0.593	1.534
Member of Reading Club*	3.179	0.574	6.4	0.000	2.231	4.529
School is approved by MEST	0.828	0.157	-1	0.319	0.571	1.200
Percent of qualified Teachers	1.402	0.488	0.97	0.332	0.709	2.774
Chiefdom (base: Neini)						
Mongo*	1.815	0.400	2.71	0.007	1.179	2.795
Dembelia Sinkunia*	7.094	2.112	6.58	0.000	3.958	12.714
Neya*	2.252	0.481	3.8	0.000	1.482	3.424
Sulima*	18.405	8.238	6.51	0.000	7.655	44.249

_cons	0.268	0.087	-4.06	0.000	0.142	0.506
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Notes \* Statistically significant at the .05 level. N= 951; Adjusted R2 = 0.194

The logistic analysis presents the odds ratios, and we can derive the following from the table:

- The odds that a student can read is predicted by their gender, class level, membership in a reading club, and the chiefdom in which they live.
- The odds of being able to read is 1.6 times more for a boy than a girl
- The odds of being able to read is 1.6 times more for a pupil in class 3 than in class 2
- The odds of being able to read is 3.2 times more for members of reading clubs than non-members
- A child attending school in Neini is the least likely to be able to read and Sulima is the most likely. Compared to students attending school in Neini, children in Mongo are 1.8 times more likely to read; Neya 2.2 times more; Dembelia Sinkunia 7.1 times more; and Sulima 18.4 times more.

While the above analysis does not provide evidence of causation, the model is robust enough to inform our understanding of what predicts that a child in the MGD targeted schools will be able to read. One area that could use further exploration is trying to understand the differences between chiefdoms in terms of progress made by pupils. From discussions with field staff, differential efforts by literacy coaches in supporting teachers to improve reading instruction may play a role in the differences amongst schools and chiefdoms.

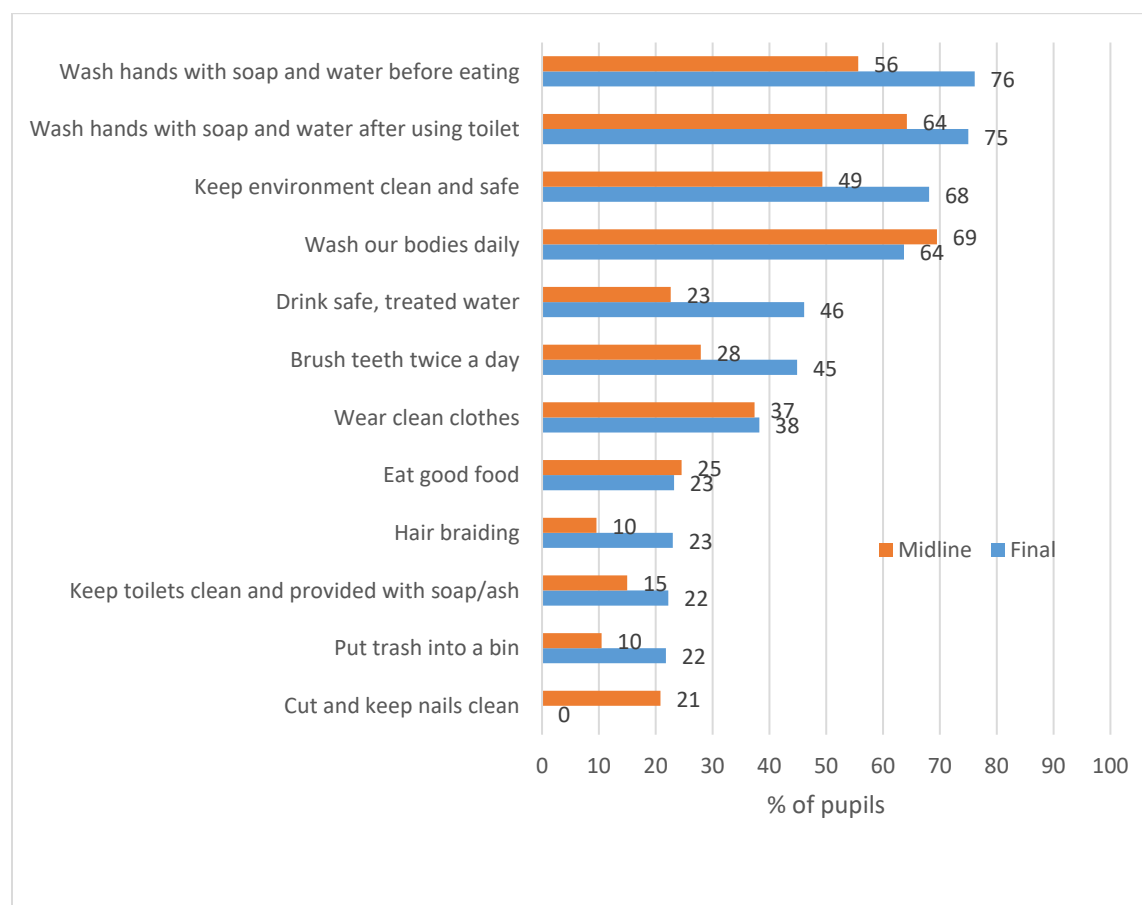
### ***MGD S.O.2. Increased use of good health and dietary practices***

Under this strategic objective, MGD III trained the school communities on good practices related to health and dietary practices. Students and teachers were trained on good health and hygiene practices, and cooks were trained on techniques for safe food preparation and storage. The project was also to provide better access to clean water through the development of wells. Finally, the project collaborated with partners such as Helen Keller International and UNICEF in the provision of deworming services to schools. Below, we consider what effect these activities had in the increasing use of good health and hygiene practices

## MGD 2.1 Improved knowledge of health and hygiene practices

Pupils were asked about their knowledge of good health and hygiene, and their responses are shown in Figure 22. The most mentioned practices at the final evaluation were: washing hands with soap and water before eating (76 percent) and washing hands with soap and water after using the toilet (75 percent). The least mentioned practices were keeping nails clean (no mention); putting trash into bins (22 percent) and keeping toilets clean (22 percent). Pupils fared better in the final than in the midline evaluation: at midline, 12 percent of pupils could name 6 of 10 practices, compared to 20 percent of pupils at final. However, 20 percent is still a very low percentage, especially since this question was about knowledge and not about behavior.

**Figure 22 Pupils' knowledge of good health and hygiene**

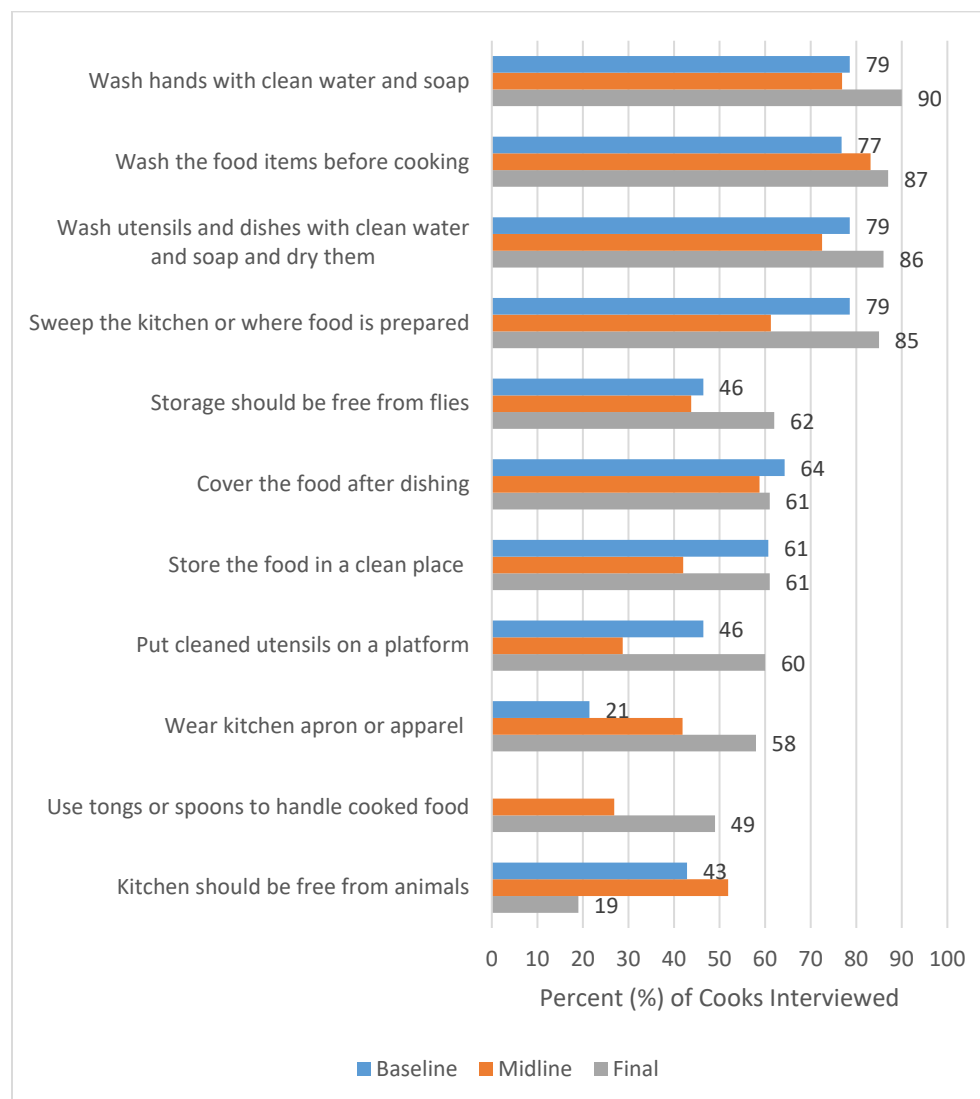


## MGD 2.2. Increased knowledge of safe food preparation and storage practices

The team surveyed cooks to determine their knowledge and skills in safe food preparation and storage practices. A total of 163 cooks were interviewed, and of those, 99 percent (all but 2) reported having been trained on safe food preparation and 98 percent (all but 4) were trained on food storage practices and child health and nutrition. Those who had not been trained were new cooks. Those who attended the training reported having benefitted from the training in several ways, including that it made them better cooks and that it helped them improve hygiene practices.

Cooks were asked to list good practices in safe food preparation and storage practices, and these were checked against the main messages delivered in the training delivered by CRS. Their responses are shown in Figure 23. The most commonly mentioned practices were: washing hands with clean water and soap (90 percent), washing food before cooking (87 percent), washing utensils and dishes with soap and water and drying them (86 percent). The least mentioned practices were: kitchen should be free from animals (19 percent); using tongs or spoons (and not bare hands) to handle cooked food (49 percent) and wearing of kitchen aprons (58 percent). Cooks' knowledge of good hygiene practices show marked improvement at final as 82 percent of cooks could recall at least 5 of 10 practices, compared to 46 percent at midline, and 60 percent at the baseline. The LOP target of 75 percent was achieved by the project.

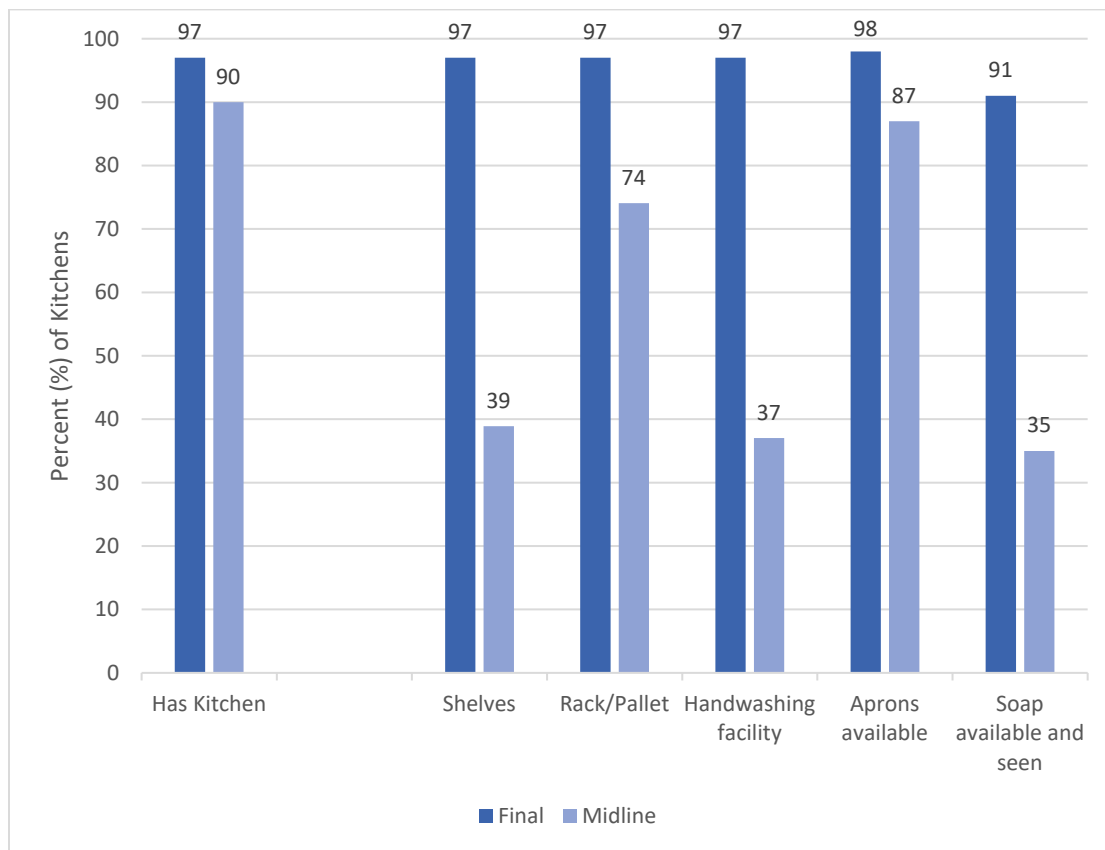
**Figure 23. Cook's knowledge of safe food preparation and storage practices**



When asked about challenges encountered as a cook, the main challenges identified were: lack of salary, lack of utensils, lack of condiments, and lack of water. Some cooks also mentioned having to fetch firewood, too much smoke in the kitchen, and being disparaged by other members of the community as challenges.

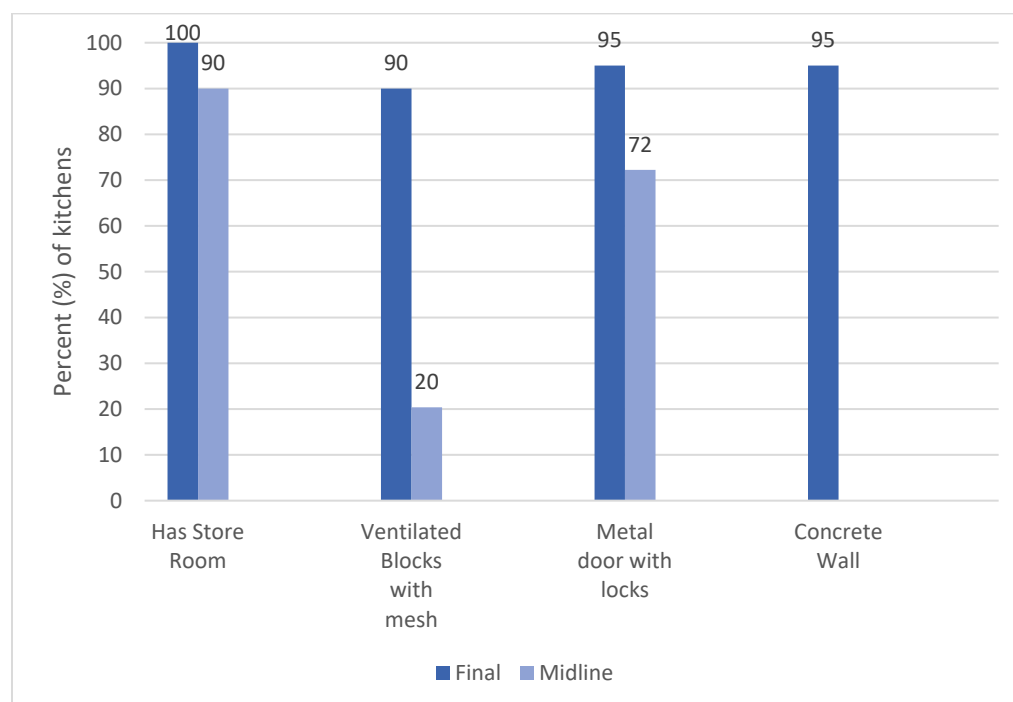
The status of kitchens had improved since the midline evaluation (see Figure 24). Almost all schools were equipped with a kitchen that had shelves, racks, handwashing facilities, aprons, and soap and water.

**Figure 24. Status of Kitchens in Schools**



All schools had a storage facility: 90 percent had ventilated blocks with mesh, 95 percent had a metal door with locks, and 95 percent had a concrete wall (Figure 25). The status of storage facilities had improved greatly over the year since the midline survey.

**Figure 25. Status of Storage Facilities**

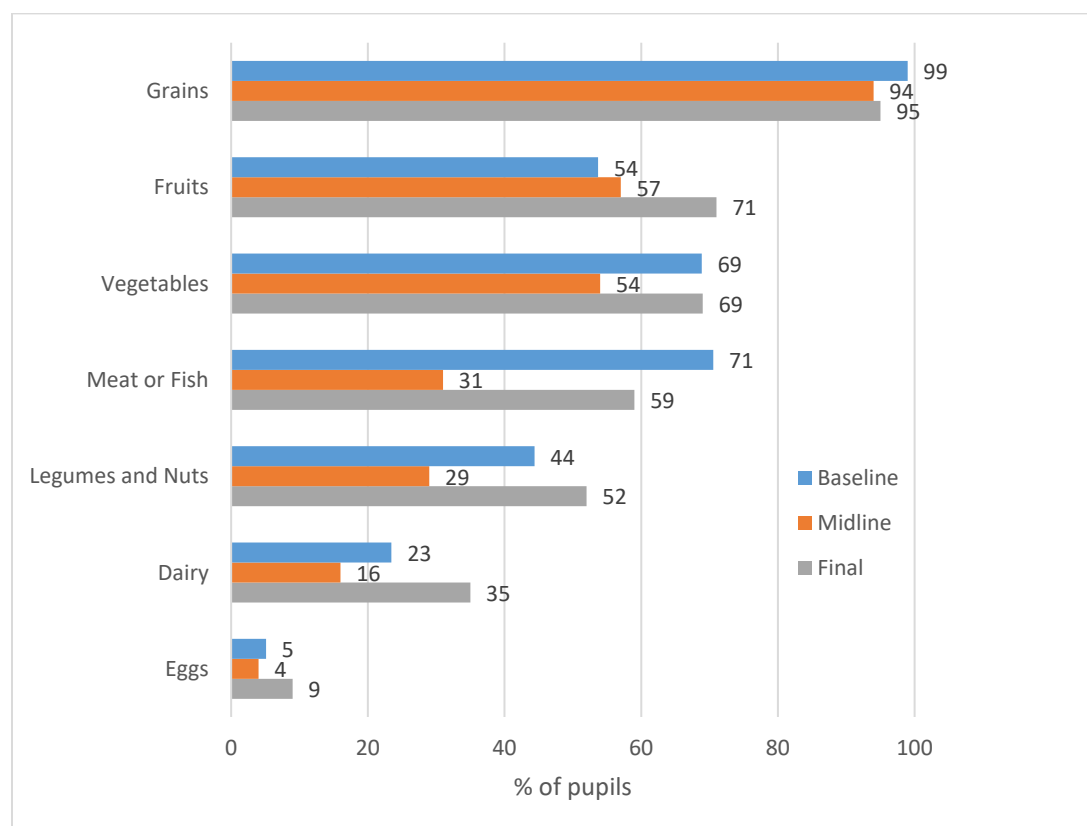


### MGD 2.3 Increased knowledge of nutrition

Pupils were not asked about their knowledge of nutrition, but they were asked about the types of foods they ate on the day before the survey. As Figure 26 shows, almost all pupils reported eating grains (rice, cassava, etc.); 71 percent ate fruits, and 69 percent ate vegetables. Sixty percent of pupils reported eating a minimum acceptable diet that included at least 4 of the 7 identified food groups, which is the highest across all the evaluation.



**Figure 26. Food groups contained in pupils' diet on the day prior to the survey**



#### MGD 2.4 Increased access to clean water and sanitation services

As mentioned above in Section MGD 1.3.3, only 53 percent of schools have access to a safe water source within the school compound, and of those, only 59 percent were working. This means less than a third of schools had access to a working source of safe water within the schools.

Access to latrines have improved with 95 percent of schools having a working latrine, and the project surpassed its LOP target for the number of latrines built. Availability of soap for handwashing is much better as 91 percent of kitchens were observed to have soap and water available compared to only 13 percent at midline; in addition, 88 percent of latrines had soap and water available compared to only 18 percent at midline.

#### MGD 2.5. Increased access to preventative health services

The GOSL, with support from its donor partners, provide preventative health services, including deworming and preventative health services to school children. The Ministry of Health and Sanitation carries out the deworming exercise twice in a school year. CRS gives collaborative support to the process in terms of sensitization to communities and logistical support to enable medical staff to reach MGD-supported schools. About half of schools received including deworming services during the 2017/18 school year.

#### MGD 2.6. Increased access to requisite food preparation and storage tools and equipment

Table 9 shows the availability of food preparation and serving utensils across the various schools. There are large differences amongst schools in terms of the quantities of kitchen equipment and serving utensils available. For example, while some schools had no spoons, another had 930. Per project staff, CRS does not provide utensils and it is up to the communities to provide the necessary utensils. Clearly, some communities struggle with this, and during interviews with cooks, the lack of utensils and kitchen equipment came up as one of the challenges faced.

**Table 9 Availability of kitchen equipment and Utensils**

Utensils	Final			Midline		
	Avg.	Min	Max	Avg.	Min	Max
No. Big Pots	2	1	6	2	0	3
Big Bowls for cooked food	1	0	8	1	0	4
Big bowls for sauce	1	0	6	0	0	8
Wooden spoon	4	0	50	2	0	30
Scooping spoon	3	0	6	3	0	55
Serving Plates	41	0	343	29	0	250
Spoons	60	0	930	25	0	250
Buckets	3	0	8	2	0	10
Towels	3	0	8	2	0	6
Cups	34	0	500	24	0	250
Knives	1	0	4	0	0	3
Mortar	1	0	2	0	0	1
Mortar pestle	1	0	4	0	0	2

In some schools, students had to share utensils or take turns eating because there were not enough utensils to go around. This slowed down the lunch process and caused some children not to have enough food.

### ***Progress on Key Performance Indicators***

As part of the project monitoring of outputs and outcomes, the MGD III project has selected several indicators that will be used to monitor progress. During the baseline survey in 2016, information was collected on the starting point of several of these indicators and these are shown in Table 10. The values of these indicators were updated in June 2018 with data from CRS monitoring and the final evaluation.

Significant progress has been made on many of the key indicators, especially on the literacy measures. The percentage of children who can read and understand grade-level text quadrupled since the baseline, and the project has exceeded its 'Life of Project' (LOP) targets.

**Table 10. Key Performance Indicators: Midline, Baseline and End of Project Targets**

Indicator	Baseline (2016)		Midline (2017)		Final (2018)		Life of Project (LOP) Target		Comments
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	
Percent of pupils who, by the end of two grades of schooling, demonstrate that they can read and understand the meaning of grade-level text (girls/boys)	8.3%	7.9%	32%	39%	56%	61%	25%	25%	Percent of class 2 pupils who scored at least 80 percent in a reading comprehension test
Percent of pupils in target schools who are identified as attentive or very attentive during class/instruction (girls/boys)	42%		34%		64%		80%		This is the percent of classrooms in which pupils were attentive or moderately attentive. Updated baseline and midline figures
Percent of pupils in target schools who indicate that they are hungry or very hungry during the school days (boys/girls)	92%	95%	26%	30%	8%	8%	10%	10%	This question was only asked from pupils who had been provided a meal
Percent of school-age children receiving a minimum acceptable diet (boys/girls)	55%	52%	28%	27%	63%	58%	100%	100%	Percent of school-aged children who report consuming at least 4 out of 7 food groups on the day prior to the survey
Percent of pupils in target schools who achieve a passing score on a test of good health and hygiene practices (boys/girls) – 6 out of 10 practices	55%	44%	11%	13%	19%	21%	70%	70%	Percent of pupils who could name at least 6 of 10 good hygiene practices.
Percent of food preparers at target schools who achieve a passing score on a test of safe food preparation and storage	71%		46%		82%		75%		Percent of cooks who could name at least 5 of 10 safe food preparation practices

Indicator	Baseline (2016)		Midline (2017)		Final (2018)		Life of Project (LOP) Target		Comments
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	
Percent of participants demonstrating at least 3 out of 5 social/life skills			78%		97%		95%		CRS Indicator Performance Tracking Table
Percent of teachers in target schools who demonstrate the use of new and quality teaching techniques or tools because of USDA assistance	60%		79%		96%		100%		Percent of teachers that demonstrated proficiency in at least one new teaching technique
Percent of pupils in target schools who attend school at least 80% of scheduled school days per school year	67%	66%	96%	96%	89%	89%	100%	100%	CRS Indicator Performance Tracking Table
Number of teachers in target schools who demonstrate the use of new and quality teaching techniques or tools	0		701		975		701		CRS Indicator Performance Tracking Table
Number of teachers trained or certified as a result of USDA assistance (MGD I-6)	0		296		530		450		CRS Indicator Performance Tracking Table
Number of school administrators (head teachers) in target schools who demonstrate the use of new teaching technique or tool	0		192		384		192		CRS Indicator Performance Tracking Table
Number of SILC groups sharing out and starting a new cycle	0		47		58		75		CRS Indicator Performance Tracking Table
Percent of Parent-Teacher Associations or similar "school" governance structures contributing to their school as a result of USDA assistance			98%		100%		100%		CRS Indicator Performance Tracking Table
Number of WASH Clubs formed	0		55		192		192		CRS Indicator Performance Tracking Table

Indicator	Baseline (2016)		Midline (2017)		Final (2018)		Life of Project (LOP) Target		Comments
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	
Number of pupils receiving deworming medication(s)	28,463		32,042				30,919		CRS Indicator Performance Tracking Table
Number of schools using an improved water source (MGD I-19)	0		0		24		30		CRS Indicator Performance Tracking
Number of latrines constructed or rehabilitated with USDA assistance (MGD Indicator 7)	0		52		69		62		CRS Indicator Performance Tracking
Number of kitchens or storerooms constructed or rehabilitated with USDA assistance (MGD Indicator 7)	0		34		37		37		CRS Indicator Performance Tracking Table
Number of individuals benefiting directly from USDA funded intervention (male/female)	35,008		39,105		39,128		37,766		
Number of individuals benefiting indirectly from USDA funded intervention (MGD Indicator 26)	42,476		49,011		49,018		40,473		CRS Indicator Performance Tracking Table
Number of social assistance beneficiaries participating in productive safety nets with USDA assistance (male/female) (MGD I-17)	35,310		39,076		35,350		37,737		CRS Indicator Performance Tracking Table
Number of daily school meals provided to school-age children because of USDA assistance (MGD I-15)	0		3,883,887		8,164,834 (cumulative)		12,585,158		CRS Indicator Performance Tracking Table
Number of pupils regularly (80%) attending USDA supported school (male/female)	9,169	9,776	15,647	16,541	13,136	14,063	15,156	15,686	CRS Indicator Performance Tracking Table

Indicator	Baseline (2016)		Midline (2017)		Final (2018)		Life of Project (LOP) Target		Comments
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	
Number of textbooks and other teaching and learning materials provided because of USDA assistance	0		181,317		471,235		290,000		CRS Indicator Performance Tracking Table
Number of schools with improved early grade literacy instructional materials	0		192		192		192		CRS Indicator Performance Tracking Table
Number of community meetings held (CRS I-33)	0		57		218		52		CRS Indicator Performance Tracking Table
Number of literacy coaches trained in Diagnostic Teaching Methods (CRS I-6)	0		25		25		25		CRS Indicator Performance Tracking Table
Number of teachers trained in Diagnostic Teaching Methods because of USDA assistance (male/female) (CRS I-7)	0		701		975		701		CRS Indicator Performance Tracking Table
Number of school buildings or classrooms constructed or rehabilitated because of USDA assistance. (MGD I-7)	0		19		52		52		CRS Indicator Performance Tracking Table
Number of classrooms in project schools receiving new school furniture (CRS I-18)	0		145		241		240		CRS Indicator Performance Tracking Table
Number of pupils enrolled in school receiving USDA assistance (male/ female)	13,715	14,748	15,797	16,702	15,564	16,489	15,186	15,733	CRS Indicator Performance Tracking Table

Note: Green-shaded cells show that Life of Project targets was exceeded

## **RELEVANCE: TO WHAT EXTENT DOES THE PROJECT CONFORM TO THE NEEDS AND PRIORITIES OF TARGET GROUPS AND THE POLICIES OF THE COUNTRY AND DONOR?**

The MGD III project, to a very large extent, conforms to the needs and priorities of the country, communities and USDA. At the policy level, providing school meals for all children, improving WASH facilities, and improving learning are all priorities of the GOSL as outlined in the Education Sector Plan (ESP) 2018-2020. While there has been a change in government and administration since the ESP was prepared, we have no reason to believe that the new government will abandon these policy priorities.

### ***Are the activities and outputs of the project consistent with the overall goals and the attainment of its objective?***

The MGD III project conforms to the objectives of the donor, USDA, whose McGovern-Dole program seeks to reduce hunger and promote literacy and primary education. This evaluation has shown that the MGD III goals and objectives have been achieved in the targeted schools in Koinadugu – more children are reading, staying in school, and have reduced hunger.

### ***Do the program meet community and government expectations?***

The interviews and focus group discussions at the community and schools also confirm that the MGD III project meets the needs of the communities. Community members mentioned that they were involved in the discussions about the design of the project, and that they are frequently consulted about the project activities. They believe that the MGD III project tries to address the educational needs of the communities such as the need for qualified teachers, safe drinking water, safe learning environments, ensuring their children are learning, and encouraging regular attendance of teachers. Although some community members feel that CRS should be doing more, the current activities do conform the needs and priorities of communities.

### ***Are stakeholders (school management committee, parents, teachers, local authorities) satisfied with their participation in the program? Why or why not?***

Various stakeholders were largely satisfied with the program. CRS field staff are satisfied with the program because they can see the impact it is making in the lives of



children and communities. Learners are very satisfied with the meals they get during school hours.

Teachers expressed high-level of satisfaction with all aspects of the MGD III project, but they were most pleased with the school meals, reading clubs, provision of TLMs, and the teacher training programs. When they expressed dissatisfaction, it was because certain aspects of the program were not available in their schools or communities such as SILC or the life skills program or for aspects that were beyond the project's control such as the fact that they do not receive salaries.

Head teachers also expressed satisfaction with the MGD III project especially with the areas related to advocacy, provision of TLMs, in-service training, and school meals. They were most likely to express dissatisfaction with the construction activities and the provision of school furniture because they needed more furniture to meet the growing enrolments and WASH facilities had not been upgraded.

Parents and communities also expressed high levels of satisfaction with their participation in the MGD III program. They appreciated the fact that their children were fed and that they were learning to read and write. Because the needs of communities are large, many communities would like the MGD III to do more – provide more school buildings, WASH facilities, provide condiments, etc.

***How well does the project complement and link to activities of other donors at the local level?***

The MGD III activities were the largest program active in these chiefdoms in Koinadugu. Nonetheless, the project did coordinate with other partners by attending education sector coordination meetings at the national and district level with other partners supporting education.

**EFFICIENCY: HOW COULD INTEGRATION OF THE TWO STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES BE ENHANCED OR FURTHER LEVERAGED TO DEEPEN POSITIVE PROGRAM RESULTS?**

***How well have the two strategic objectives been integrated to deepen positive program results?***

Schools play a critical role in promoting health and safety of young children and helping them to establish good health practices for a lifetime. Integrating health and education program within schools is an effective and efficient way to improve the overall well-being of children in the community. The Ebola crisis showed that whole communities could be at risk from poor health and hygiene practices. Children who are healthy are more prepared to learn as they attend school more regularly.

The MGD III project supports the healthy development of children in many ways including: providing nutritional meals, improving on WASH facilities, coordinating with other programs that provide deworming, and training pupils and teachers on good WASH and nutrition practices.

The health outcomes, while showing some improvement, did not meet the expected targets. For example, only 20 percent of students could name at least 6 good hygiene practices. On the other hand, food preparers are more knowledgeable of safe practices for handling food, although many claims to lack the wherewithal (utensils, water, etc.) to put into practice.

**SUSTAINABILITY: TO WHAT EXTENT WILL THE BENEFITS OF THE PROJECT CONTINUE AFTER THE END OF THE PROJECT LIFE?**

***What activities and/or outcomes (both expected and unexpected) of the program are likely to be sustained? What evidence is there to suggest this?***

As mentioned earlier in the report, the new government has made the provision of free, quality basic education its flagship project starting September 2018. While the details of the implementation are unclear, approved government and government-assisted schools will receive support to ensure that tuition is free including free textbooks in the core subjects. The GOSL will also implement a national school feeding program, initially targeting vulnerable communities in every district. CRS has been working with the MEST in developing the national school feeding implementation

protocol. Approved government-assisted schools will benefit from some of these interventions.

If teachers trained by MGD III stay in the schools, then they are likely to continue with improved teaching practices. However, teachers who have been trained and certified are unlikely to stay in a school if they don't receive a salary. There is a risk that teachers will leave for other schools where they can be on the payroll.

When asked about what activities they might be able to continue after the project comes to an end, communities highlighted the following:

- continue to enforce bye-laws around school attendance
- SILC activities
- School gardens
- Activities of the mothers' groups

***What are the major factors that can influence the achievement or nonachievement of the sustainability of the project?***

One of the major factors that will influence the achievement or nonachievement of sustainability is whether the school will be approved by the government to receive government assistance. While communities have expressed interest in continuing to support the schools, additional resources from the government will be needed. Schools that are government-assisted are more likely to receive salaries for teachers, TLMs, professional development for teachers, and school meals.

It will also be important that MEST at the district level have the capacity to undertake their roles and responsibilities, which include monitoring and supervising schools and teachers. For now, they are only able to visit some of these schools with support from MGD III. Literacy coaches have been instrumental in providing much-needed support to teachers and with the cessation of the project, MEST officials and head teachers will need to be capacitated to provide this support. Head teachers or deputy heads should be trained on providing coaching support, and for MEST officials, they will need support in also developing the logistical capacity to get to schools.

Finally, CRS will have to develop a solid exit strategy that helps communities off MGD III support onto government support. After so many years of MGD III support, communities have come to rely on the project for supporting education. During this fourth year, the project must work actively with communities to seek other sources of support.

***How do the government's capacities, policies, procedures, and priorities contribute to sustainability?***

As mentioned, the GOSL has committed to providing free, quality education to all students in government and government-assisted schools. These policies are aimed to remove barriers to accessing education, especially for the most marginalized. The government's plan, while not fully funded, is being supported by donors and external partners. The GOSL also will be implementing a national school feeding program, and CRS with support from the MGD III has been instrumental in helping them develop their strategy. The successful implementation of these policies will contribute towards sustaining some of the activities and outcomes produced by this project

***What strategies should be used to obtain long-lasting support from communities and local/central administration that goes beyond the time of the project***

The ongoing support provided by coaches have been key to realizing the improved outcomes. The literacy coaches are employees of CRS, and if the program ends, their support will cease. The likely officials to do the work of the coaches are the MEST supervisors and inspectors; however, they are currently not able to provide the level of support the CRS coaches provide, due to lack of resources. The MGD III project should work closely with MEST at district level on planning to take on this task. This means not only providing technical support but working with them on budgeting and prioritizing their work to ensure that this support continues. The MEST already see the benefits of the coaching support to teachers. At the school level, head teachers can also provide peer-based coaching to teachers.

During the FGDs, the community members were optimistic that they would be able to continue providing some of the benefits that the MGD III program provided. For example, they suggested that they would develop school farms or gardens, enforce

bye-laws to ensure parents send their children to school, mothers clubs will continue to monitor attendance, and parents can continue to reinforce good hygiene practices. However, it should be noted that even now, communities struggle to provide even condiments and serving utensils to the schools.

As mentioned in previous reports, obtaining government approval of schools is the most important strategy for long-term success. The project has made significant progress in getting schools to apply for approval, but only 32 percent of the schools in this sample were approved. Of those that were not approved, 41 percent had applied for approval and 59 percent had not. Their reasons for not applying included: not knowing or understanding the procedures, the head teacher being new to the school, the school not meeting the eligibility criteria such as having trained teachers and waiting on someone from the Ministry to inspect the school.

Of the schools who did apply for approval, 71% (or 10) applied in 2017, reflecting that CRS did help schools with their approval process. However, more can be done especially for schools who said they don't know the process and others who said they don't meet the criteria.

### **IMPACT: WHAT WERE THE POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE EFFECTS, BOTH INTENDED AND UNINTENDED, OF THE PROJECT?**

#### ***What were the intended and unintended positive and negative effects of the intervention on children, communities, and institutions?***

The most remarkable achievement of the MGD III is that reading skills of children have increased, surpassing the targets that were set in terms of the percentage of children who could read with understanding at the end of grade 2. The project has also improved the teaching skills of teachers in the communities, ensured that learners and teachers are not hungry, provided teaching and learning materials for schools, and through the SILCs provided a way for parents to save and access financial resources to improve the well-being of their family. These have all been positive effects, for which all stakeholders are grateful.

This project has also contributed to developing the capacity of MEST at the national level and the district level through the provision of technical and financial assistance. The secondment of a technical adviser at the School Feeding Secretariat at MEST and opportunities provided for MEST officials to meet with and learn from other countries' experiences with school feeding have had a positive effect on the development of MEST's own school feeding program.

Negative effects of the intervention are minimal. One potential negative effect is that communities have become dependent on the MGD III for their support, thereby reducing their agency to do more for themselves. From the FGDs, communities continue to look to CRS to do more for their schools and to expand to even more areas. This means communities have also contributed significantly to the program through providing their labor and in-kind donations to schools in support of the school feeding and construction activities.

Another unintended and potentially negative effect is the fact that some children are denied food in school because their parents cannot afford to contribute towards the cost of condiments. In some communities, parents are asked to contribute up to Le 5,000 (less than US\$1) a month, and while this amount is small, it is possible that some parents may still not be able to afford it. School communities should ensure that the learners are not penalized because their parents cannot afford this monetary contribution.

#### *To what extent can identified changes be attributed to the intervention?*

Because the evaluation did not use a control group or randomized control, the identified challenges cannot be concretely attributed to the intervention. However, comparing the performance of children in targeted schools over time is much better than the average performance on reading by learners nationally.

## **CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **CONCLUSION**

The results from the MGD III Final Evaluation shows that the project met its first strategic objective of improving the literacy skills of learners in targeted schools in Koinadugu district. The life of project target was that 25 percent of boys and girls, by the end of two grades of schooling, would be able to read and understand the meaning of grade-level text. The final evaluation found that 56 percent of girls and 61 percent of boys could read grade-level text with understanding. This is remarkable progress given that at the baseline evaluation, conducted two years earlier, only 8 percent of boys and girls could read. The project met most of the intermediate results based on the theory of change including improved teacher attendance, better access to TLMs, increased skills and knowledge of teachers, and increased skills and knowledge of teachers.

The activities around strategic objective 2 were also largely completed although there were some gaps. The project surpassed its LOP targets for the construction of latrines but did not meet its targets for the construction of boreholes. Many schools still do not have access to safe drinking water on the premises. The cooks demonstrated improved knowledge of safe practices for preparing and storing food, but many schools still don't have the requisite utensils or equipment for preparing and storing food.

Whilst the overall goal of increasing reading skills was met, it is impossible to say whether the theory of change as outlined by CRS holds. This is because it is difficult to isolate the effects of the various components or to know what combination of activities resulted in the improved performance. Also, because the evaluation did not include control schools, one cannot conclusively say that the changes in literacy are due to the MGD III intervention.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### ***Improved Literacy Skills***

- *Gender differences in reading:* there are still some gender differences in reading, with boys performing better than girls. The project should promote gender equality by ensuring that there is no discrimination in terms of gender in teaching practices, curriculum materials, or school culture. Gender

responsiveness should be an integral part of all training. The teaching staff is overwhelmingly male, and some affirmative action may be needed to encourage more women to enter teaching as that has been shown to have positive effect on the learning outcome for girls.

- *Use of teaching and learning materials:* in at least a third of classrooms, only the teacher had and used a textbook. The project team should continue to encourage teachers to distribute textbooks in the classrooms for children to use. Use of textbooks should be an integral part of teacher training and coaching.
- *School approval:* the MGD III has made good progress in terms of getting schools to submit an application for approval from the GOSL. However, there are still too many schools that are not approved. It is critical that all schools submit their application, even as they work towards meeting the eligibility criteria.
- *Community engagement:* engage parents and communities in support reading (and not just the feeding program). Parents and caregivers, who can, should read to their children. Those who can't, should encourage their children to read to them, tell them stories, or encourage their children to join a reading club.
- *Reading clubs:* encourage children to join reading clubs as children who are members of a reading club tend to perform better. This is likely because these clubs provide children with an opportunity to practice their reading and introduce them to different kinds of reading materials. For children who cannot join reading clubs, they should be encouraged to take some reading materials home.

### ***Improved health and hygiene practices***

- Intensify efforts to complete the construction of wells and reduce delays in the process. Access to safe water is needed.
- Care should be taken while constructing wells to ensure that it is done at the right time of the year. Many schools had wells that had dried up at the time of the evaluation, which sometimes suggests that the well was dug at the wrong time, and not when the water table is at its lowest.
- Work with communities to ensure that the needed cooking and eating utensils are provided.
- Ensure that children from the poorest families are not penalized because their parents cannot afford to pay the cost of condiments.
- Better measures are needed for some of the indicators – for example, asking children about the foods they ate the previous day as a proxy for increasing knowledge of nutrition is not a very good measure as children don't usually have control over what food they eat in these contexts.



### ***Other recommendations***

- Develop an exit and sustainability plan with communities, local government and MEST
- The role of literacy coaches has proved to be instrumental in providing much-needed support for teachers. The sustainability strategy should identify who in the school community (head teacher, deputy head teacher, another teacher) can provide peer coaching to other teachers.
- Evaluation of any future MDG project should include an experimental or quasi-experimental design with a control group to improve the project's ability to make causal claims
- Simplify the theory of change for this intervention. The current theory of change is complex and difficult to test
- Continue to work with the current government to design and test the national school feeding program and gain commitments that they will include the MGD III schools in the national school feeding programs when CRS phases out.
- Encourage cross-chiefdom learning as there are differences in performance on both objectives across the various chiefdoms. For example, some communities have strategies for ensuring utensils are provided for children and cooks, while others do not. This provides an opportunity for learning across chiefdoms that could be facilitated by CRS.

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# ANNEXES

The following annexes are included in a separate document.

- A. Scope of Work
- B. Field data collection instruments
- C. Responses to recommendations from the baseline survey
- D. Evaluation Questions

