



Sierra Leone

McGovern-Dole International Food for
Education and Child Nutrition
Lan for U Future Project

Midterm Evaluation

10/23/2024

Lan for U Future Midline Evaluation Report

Program: McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition

Agreement Number: FFE-636-2021/008-00

Funding Year: Fiscal Year 2024

Project Duration: October 2021 to September 2025

Implemented by: CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES

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Table of Contents

List of Acronyms.....	10
Executive Summary.....	11
Project Background and Purpose.....	11
Evaluation objectives, questions and methodology	11
Data collection	12
1. Introduction and Purpose	18
1.1. Project Context	18
Project Description.....	20
1.2. Results Framework.....	21
Source: L4UF Project Baseline Report	22
Purpose of the Evaluation.....	22
1.4.1. Objectives of the Evaluation	23
2. Evaluation Design and Methodology	24
2.1. Evaluation Questions	24
2.2. Evaluation Design.....	25
2.3. Sampling methods	25
Quantitative Sampling	25
Sampling methodology	25
Participants selection criteria	27
Observations	28
Data collection Methods.....	28
Quantitative Data Collection.....	28
Qualitative Data Collection	29
Data Analysis.....	30
Quantitative Data Analysis:.....	30
Qualitative Data Analysis	30
Evaluation Limitations.....	31
3. Findings	32
Sample Demographics	32
SO1 Improved Literacy of School-aged Children	38
Teacher and student targeted approaches that contributed to improved literacy	64
Findings from the Qualitative Analysis	64
IR1.1 Improved Quality of Literacy Instruction.....	68
IR1.2 Improved Attentiveness	112
IR1.3 Improved Student Attendance	121
SO2 Increased Use of Health and Dietary Practices	135
IR2.1 Improved Knowledge of Health and Hygiene Practices	135
IR2.2 Increased Knowledge of Safe Food Prep and Storage Practices	139
IR2.3 Increased Knowledge of Nutrition.....	148

IR2.4 Increased Access to Clean Water and Sanitation Sources.....	153
IR2.5 Increased Access to Preventative Health Interventions.....	156
IR2.6 Increased Access to Requisite Food Prep and Storage Tools and Equipment (See MGD 1.3.3/2.4)	157
Foundational Results.....	158
SO3 LRP 1.3: Improved Utilization of Nutritious and Culturally Acceptable Food That Meets Quality Standard.....	161
4. Evaluation/Learning Questions.....	164
5. Conclusion.....	178
6. Recommendations	180
Annex:	183

List of Figures

Figure 1: CRS intervention zones	19
Figure 2: Theory of Change	22
Figure 3: Head-teacher gender distribution	34
Figure 4: Head-teacher age group distribution	34
Figure 5: Food preparers gender distribution.....	34
Figure 6: Food preparers age group distribution.....	34
Figure 7: Distribution of sampled schools by ownership type.....	35
Figure 8: Distribution of sampled schools by status type	36
Figure 9: Baseline and midline comparison of gender differences in reading comprehension	38
Figure 10: Baseline and midline comparison of district differences in reading comprehension	39
Figure 11: Comparison of baseline and midline gender differences in reading comprehension across districts.....	40
Figure 12: Reading comprehension indicator performance tracking	40
Figure 13: Gender-based comparison of zero scores across all tasks	42
Figure 14: Letter recognition by gender	45
Figure 15: Initial Sound Identification by gender.....	47
Figure 16: Familiar word identification by gender.....	49
Figure 17: Non-word reading by gender.....	51
Figure 18: Distribution of correct answers on reading comprehension.....	54
Figure 19: Distribution of correct answers on reading comprehension.....	54
Figure 20: Reading comprehension performance by gender	55
Figure 21: Reading comprehension performance by gender and age	55
Figure 22: Reading comprehension performance by district and gender	56
Figure 23: Reading comprehension performance by school approval status and gender	57
Figure 25: Reading comprehension performance by school ownership and gender.....	58
Figure 25: Listening comprehension performance by gender.....	60
Figure 26: Listening comprehension performance by gender and age	60
Figure 27: Listening comprehension performance by district and age	61
Figure 28: Listening comprehension performance by school approval status and gender.....	62
Figure 29: Listening comprehension performance by school ownership status and gender.....	62
Figure 30: Teacher attendance rate by gender	69
Figure 31: Teacher attendance rate by district.....	69
Figure 32: Teacher attendance rate by grade level	70
Figure 33: Teacher attendance rate on the day of assessment.....	70
Figure 34: Frequency of teacher school attendance	71
Figure 35: Time book availability	72
Figure 36: Time book availability by district	72
Figure 37: Comparison of teacher motivation: Baseline vs. Midline	74
Figure 38: Access to desk/benches in classrooms	75
Figure 39: Examples of typical classrooms with desks and benches	76
Figure 40: Access to desk/benches in classrooms by district	76
Figure 41: Access to desk/benches in classrooms by class type.....	77

Figure 42: Reading comprehension performance by classroom seating arrangement.....	78
Figure 43: Distribution classroom basic resource	78
Figure 44: Access to slate by district.....	79
Figure 45: Showing slates used within the classrooms.....	79
Figure 46: Access to slate by school ownership.....	80
Figure 47: Classroom literacy instruction resources: Baseline vs Midline comparison	81
Figure 48: Reading outcome by schools that display pupils work in classroom.....	81
Figure 49: Reading outcome by schools that display alphabet strips in classroom	82
Figure 50: Reading outcome by schools that display health messages in classroom.....	82
Figure 51: Classroom learning resources by district	83
Figure 52: Pictures showing various learning resources within the classrooms	83
Figure 53: Classroom learning resources by school ownership.....	84
Figure 54: Provision of textbooks by CRS.....	85
Figure 55: Access to textbooks	86
Figure 56: Access to textbooks by district	86
Figure 57: Access to textbooks by school ownership	87
Figure 58: Establishment of reading clubs.....	88
Figure 59: Reading outcome by reading club membership	88
Figure 60: Pupils reading club membership.....	89
Figure 61: Availability of lesson plans	90
Figure 62: Teacher satisfaction with literacy resources	91
Figure 63: Headteacher recommendation to improved quality of literacy instruction	92
Figure 64: Teacher training participation	93
Figure 65: Teacher training participation by district.....	95
Figure 66: Proportion of teacher knowledge and confidence on teaching literacy methodologies	96
Figure 67: Proportion of teacher knowledge and confidence on general teaching methodologies	96
Figure 68: Proportion of teacher knowledge and confidence on teaching literacy methodologies across districts.....	97
Figure 69: Proportion of teacher knowledge and confidence on general teaching methodologies across districts.....	98
Figure 68: Teacher coaching and mentoring	99
Figure 69: Teacher coaching and mentoring frequency	100
Figure 70: Teacher training motivation	100
Figure 71: Teacher satisfaction with training methods	101
Figure 72: Certified teachers: Baseline vs Midline comparison.....	102
Figure 73: Teaching certification type	102
Figure 74: Teaching certification type by district.....	103
Figure 75: Teaching certification type by school approval status	103
Figure 76: Teaching certification type by school ownership status.....	104
Figure 77: Teacher highest level of education	106
Figure 78: Teacher highest level of education by district.....	106
Figure 79: Headteacher participation in DTM training	107
Figure 80: Headteacher participation DTM training by district.....	108
Figure 81: Impact of DTM training on headteachers (single response question)	108

Figure 82: Images showing the Master timetable and a classroom timetable	109
Figure 83: Headteacher school management practices	109
Figure 84: Headteacher life skills training participation	110
Figure 85: SMC training participation	111
Figure 86: Level of pupil attentiveness	112
Figure 87: Level of pupil attentiveness by district	113
Figure 88: Pupil attentiveness by grade level	113
Figure 89: Proportion of pupils with access to food	115
Figure 90: School meal distribution schedule	116
Figure 91: Hunger level after meal consumption	117
Figure 92: Satisfaction with school meal	117
Figure 93: Image showing a school meal consisting of rice and lentils	118
Figure 94: Availability of school gardens	119
Figure 95: Types of food grown in the garden	120
Figure 96: Students attendance rate	121
Figure 97: Midline student attendance rate by district and gender	122
Figure 98: Midline student attendance rate by grade level	122
Figure 99: CRS school rehabilitation	124
Figure 100: Main roof material	124
Figure 101: Main wall material	125
Figure 102: Main floor material	125
Figure 103: Storage room and kitchen facilities	126
Figure 104: Showing classroom blocks made of concrete walls	126
Figure 105: Showing storage facilities for food received from USDA	126
Figure 106: Showing open kitchen areas where school meals are prepared	127
Figure 107: Proportion of functional drinking/portal water facilities by district	128
Figure 108: Image showing a water facility at a school fitted with a manual pump	128
Figure 109: Pupil enrollment by gender: Baseline vs Midline comparison	129
Figure 110: Pupil enrollment by gender and grade level	130
Figure 111: Grade 3 to 6 dropout rates: Baseline vs Midline comparison	131
Figure 112: Grade 3 to 6 dropout rates by district	131
Figure 113: Grade 3 to 6 dropout IPTP	132
Figure 114: Reasons for school dropout	133
Figure 115: Proportion of learners who passed the health and hygiene test	136
Figure 116: Percentage of learners exercising health and hygiene practices by district	137
Figure 117: Showing different hand washing points set up within the school	138
Figure 118: Image indicating safe food handling and storage practices displayed in schools	140
Figure 119: Proportion of food preparers experiencing certain challenges in their food preparation activities	141
Figure 120: showing typical open kitchen areas in the schools with thatched and Iron sheets roofing ..	144
Figure 121: Kitchen areas showing a hand washing points and dish rack	145
Figure 122: Showing the lockable storage facilities with food stored on palate crates	146
Figure 123: Proportion of pupils taking different food types	149
Figure 124: Proportion of children living in child food poverty by day	150

Figure 125: Proportion of teachers taking different food types in the night	151
Figure 126: Different water sources used within the schools	153
Figure 127: Frequency of functionality of drinking/portable water facility on premise at midline	153
Figure 128: Toilets separated by gender, accessible to people living with disabilities, and differentiated for teachers and pupils.	155
Figure 129: Proportion of schools with cleaned toilets	155
Figure 130: Commodity pipeline tracking.....	162
Figure 131: Adequacy of food supply	163
Figure 132: Sample calculation parameter from a binary calculator	185

List of Tables

Table 1: Result trend baseline vs. midline	14
Table 2: Result Framework	21
Table 3: Evaluation criteria	24
Table 4: Target and achieved sample distribution per category	27
Table 5: Pupil demographics by district	32
Table 6: Teacher demographics by district	33
Table 7: Themes and Program activities	37
Table 8: Average number of correct items out of 51 in the letter identification task.....	44
Table 9: Average number of correct items out of 10 words in phonemic awareness task	46
Table 10: Average number of correct items out of 40 in familiar word reading task	48
Table 11: Average number of correct items out of 25 words in nonword reading task	50
Table 12: Average number of correct items out of 41 in oral fluency task	52
Table 13: Average number of correct answers out of 5 in reading comprehension	53
Table 14: Average number of correct answers out of 4 in listening comprehension task	59
Table 15: Regression Output.....	63
Table 16: Midline average teacher attendance by gender	71
Table 17: Average number of students without basic furniture	77
Table 18: Distribution of slates and exercise books in the classroom	80
Table 19: Teacher training support sources	105
Table 20: Proportion of food preparers practicing different food preparation and storage practices by district	139
Table 21: Proportion of target schools whose food preparers achieved pass criteria	141
Table 22: Kitchen characteristics across schools in the district.....	143
Table 23: Kitchen Hygiene characteristics per school within districts.....	144
Table 24: Food storage characteristics per school across districts.....	145
Table 25: SMC members trained on food preparation and food storage across districts.....	147
Table 26: Proportion of MSGs heads knowledge on infants and young child feeding practices	152
Table 27: Average number of kitchen equipment and tools per school by district	157
Table 28: Regulations and laws passed to support school going children	158
Table 29: LRP Commodity Pipeline Summary	161

Table 30: The revised allocations for each year were determined using the initial percentage allocation.	162
Table 31: IPTT Results Trends from baseline to Midline.....	183
Table 32: Literacy Indicators	183
Table 33: Improved utilization of nutritious and culturally acceptable foods that meet quality standards	184
Table 34: Distribution of all intervention schools.....	186
Table 35: Baseline sample and difference with proportionate sample.....	186
Table 36: Midline sample.....	187
Table 37: Replacement sample schools.....	187
Table 38: List of midline survey schools.....	188
Table 39: Qualitative sample breakdown	189
Table 40: Midline average teacher attendance by district, approval status and school ownership	190

List of Acronyms

Acronym	Full Term
<i>DEC</i>	Development Experience Clearinghouse
<i>DR</i>	Dalberg Research
<i>FFE</i>	Food for Education
<i>FFPr</i>	Food for Progress
<i>FY</i>	Fiscal Year
<i>GoSL</i>	Government of Sierra Leone
<i>HTC</i>	Higher Teacher Certificate
<i>IR</i>	Intermediate Result
<i>IECD</i>	Integrated Early Childhood Development
<i>KII</i>	Key Informant Interviews
<i>M&E</i>	Monitoring & Evaluation
<i>MBSSE</i>	Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education
<i>MGD</i>	McGovern-Dole
<i>MoE</i>	Ministry of Education
<i>MSG</i>	Mother Support Group
<i>PMP</i>	Performance Monitoring Plan
<i>SILC</i>	Savings and Internal Lending Committees
<i>SMC</i>	School Management Committee
<i>SO</i>	Strategic Objective
<i>TALLE</i>	The Association of Language and Literacy Education
<i>TaRL</i>	Teaching at the Right Level
<i>TC</i>	Teacher Certificate
<i>TEC</i>	Teacher Elementary Certificate
<i>TOC</i>	Theory of Change
<i>SOW</i>	Scope of Work
<i>USDA</i>	U.S. Department of Agriculture

Executive Summary

Project Background and Purpose

This midline evaluation assesses the progress of the McGovern-Dole (MGD) Food for Education (FFE) Phase V project, titled "Lan for U Future" (L4UF), which is being implemented from 2022 to 2024. The project is executed by the Catholic Relief Services (CRS) as the primary recipient, alongside other partners, including the government of Sierra Leone, which provides an enabling environment and leadership. Additional collaborators include Caritas Makeni, the University of Makeni (UNIMAK), and Teach for Sierra Leone (TFSL). The MGD L4UF project aims to improve literacy, health, and dietary practices among school pupils in the target communities.

By comparing baseline and midline results, this evaluation seeks to determine the extent of change in literacy skills among school pupils, as well as their health and nutrition behaviors. It highlights key achievements, contrasts baseline and midline data, and offers actionable recommendations to enhance the program's effectiveness and sustainability. This report will examine the project's success in achieving its objectives, assess its operational efficiency, and evaluate its alignment with gender and intersectional needs from baseline to midline. Through this analysis, we aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of the project's overall impact and relevance from baseline to midline.

Additionally, the midline evaluation identifies key obstacles and challenges that have affected the program's effectiveness and progress, comparing these findings with baseline data. The report also proposes potential solutions to address these challenges and improve the program's literacy and health-related outcomes.

Evaluation objectives, questions and methodology

The midline evaluation sought to conduct a thorough and independent assessment that compares baseline values with midline values to gauge the progress and impact of the "Lan for U Future" project.

Specific objectives:

- i. To assess the degree to which the project has met its interim goals concerning school feeding and nutrition.
- ii. To identify obstacles or challenges that have impeded progress and suggest potential solutions.
- iii. To measure changes in literacy among school pupils as well as health and dietary practices among the target population in the community.
- iv. To evaluate the sustainability of interventions following the project's conclusion.

Evaluation questions

The midline evaluation questions aim to evaluate the "Lan for U Future" project's alignment and effectiveness.

1. The first question assesses the validity of the project's objectives, examining whether they are relevant and appropriate for the target community's needs.
2. The second question investigates the consistency of the project's activities and outputs with its overall goals and intermediate objectives, ensuring that all efforts are aligned towards achieving the desired outcomes.

3. The third question focuses on whether these activities and outputs are in line with the intended impacts and effects, thereby gauging the project's potential effectiveness in producing significant results.

4. Lastly, the fourth question evaluates the program's responsiveness to emergency contexts or unexpected events, assessing its adaptability and resilience in the face of challenges that could affect implementation.

Together, these inquiries provide a comprehensive framework for assessing the project's design and operational effectiveness.

Evaluation methodology

The midline evaluation was designed to assess the progress of the MGD L4UF school feeding program by identifying and analyzing obstacles and challenges affecting its implementation and effectiveness. The evaluation employed a mixed-methods approach to provide a comprehensive understanding of the L4UF project's impact and areas needing improvement.

Data collection

To effectively evaluate the progress and impact of the "Lan for U Future" (L4UF) project, we implemented a comprehensive data collection strategy that integrated both quantitative and qualitative methods. This multifaceted approach included surveys, interviews, focus groups, and field observations to ensure that the perspectives of all stakeholders were considered. Surveys were administered to school pupils, parents, and staff to gather essential quantitative data on literacy levels, health and nutrition behaviors, and program participation. Meanwhile, interviews and focus groups with key stakeholders, such as the school management committee, community leaders, and government officials, provided qualitative insights into the challenges faced during implementation. Field observations complemented these efforts by assessing logistical and operational challenges encountered in schools, offering a clearer picture of the program's on-the-ground realities.

Additionally, midline evaluation incorporated secondary data to enhance the analysis's comprehensiveness. This included reviewing existing reports, studies, and statistics from governmental and non-governmental organizations related to education, health, and nutrition in Sierra Leone. By integrating these sources, we gained a broader understanding of the educational landscape and public health indicators, which facilitated more effective interpretation of primary data. The desk review also highlighted gaps in existing literature concerning the specific needs of the communities served by the L4UF project. Overall, this holistic approach enriched our findings and provided a nuanced understanding of the challenges and opportunities influencing the program's effectiveness, ultimately enhancing the reliability of the evaluation and its insights into the project's impact on the target population.

Data analysis

Quantitative analysis: Statistical comparison within subgroups was conducted on the midline data. In the absence of granular baseline data, the available matric forms the baseline, used for the calculation at midline were related to those from the baseline to show changes in literacy, health, and nutritional outcomes. The key subgroups used for school-level comparisons included district, type of school management, and school ownership. For pupil-level comparisons, additional subgroups such as gender and age were also considered.

Qualitative analysis: Thematic analysis was used to identify common themes and issues from interviews and focus groups, providing a deeper understanding of the challenges and potential solutions. Our approach was mainly deductive based on the program's strategic objectives.

Reporting

Both quantitative and qualitative results were cross-referenced and triangulated to offer a complete perspective on the challenges and improvement opportunities of the L4UF project. Based on the analysis, practical recommendations were developed to tackle identified obstacles and improve the effectiveness and sustainability of the L4UF project.

Limitations

We designed our quantitative data collection to ensure a representative sample across various locations, schools and genders. While we managed to gather data from 72 schools, the overall representation may not fully encompass the diversity of experiences within the target communities. Additionally, the lack of comprehensive raw baseline data significantly limited our analytical capabilities. Without this foundational information, we were unable to perform more advanced statistical analyses, such as regression modeling, which could have offered deeper insights into trends and causal relationships over time. This absence hampered our ability to accurately measure the program's impact, as we could not reliably compare pre- and post-intervention data.

Another limitation involves potential response and recall bias in the self-reported data from surveys and interviews. Participants might have provided socially desirable answers, which can distort the accuracy of the findings and affect the evaluation's validity, necessitating careful interpretation of the results. Furthermore, logistical challenges during data collection could have impacted the consistency and quality of the data. Variations in data collection methods across different schools and regions may introduce inconsistencies, complicating comprehensive analysis. However, DR enhanced research reliability by developing standardized operating procedures (SOPs) for all stages, ensuring that team members adhere to the same guidelines. Comprehensive training and regular calibration sessions helped maintain consistency in data collection and analysis. Additionally, we implemented quality control checks, including random audits and thorough documentation of all procedures, to track adherence and identify areas for improvement. Finally, the evaluation timeframe may not have adequately captured the long-term impacts of the program, as educational and health outcomes often take time to manifest. This limitation highlights the need for ongoing monitoring and evaluation to assess the program's sustainability and long-term success.

Findings and Conclusions

This report summarizes the findings from the descriptive analysis conducted during the baseline and midline assessments of the project intervention. The results indicate significant improvements across various metrics related to pupil performance, attendance, and health knowledge.

Table 1: Result trend baseline vs. midline

Evaluation area	Baseline 2022	Midline
Literacy improvement	12%	37%
Pupil Attentiveness	0%	61%
Students Attendance rate	62%	98%
Teacher Attendance Rate	84%	89%
Grades 3-6 Dropout rates	4%	2%
People's Knowledge on Health & Hygiene	59%	81%

From Table 1, there is a notable increase of 25 percentage points in pupils' reading comprehension scores, suggesting enhanced instructional strategies or targeted interventions that improved literacy skills. Pupil attentiveness saw a dramatic rise, indicating that interventions may have effectively engaged students in the learning process, fostering a more conducive learning environment. The attendance rate improved significantly by 36 percentage points, reflecting successful strategies in promoting school attendance and possibly increased motivation among students. While there was a modest increase of 5 percentage points in teacher attendance, this improvement is crucial as consistent teaching staff contributes to better student outcomes. Interactions with parents and teachers provided evidence that supports this claim. A parent said, "we have seen significant improvements in literacy levels since we introduced reading interventions alongside our feeding program. Continuing to expand these efforts is crucial for sustaining those gains." A teacher mentioned that, "as a teacher, I noticed that students who participated in reading groups were more focused and enthusiastic about learning. They began to help each other, which created a supportive learning environment."

Strengthening Educational Outcomes

The midline evaluation of the school feeding project has revealed significant progress in enhancing educational outcomes, particularly in literacy skills and health behaviors among school-aged children. As one teacher aptly noted, "The nutritious meals have not only filled the students' stomachs but have also filled their minds with the energy to learn." This critical feedback highlights the positive impact of adequate nutrition on academic performance. The insights gathered through this evaluation will be instrumental in refining strategies that further promote long-term educational success, ensuring that every child has the opportunity to thrive academically. Also, the baseline assessment revealed that students exhibited low phonemic awareness, with an average score of only 2 out of 10, indicating less than 20% accuracy in identifying initial sounds. However, a midline assessment showed significant progress, with scores improving to an average of 6 out of 10, suggesting that the implemented teaching interventions effectively enhanced this crucial literacy skill, without any observed gender-based differences.

The impressive improvements in reading comprehension scores indicate effective strategies are being implemented, particularly benefiting a substantial number of students. However, addressing the gender

disparities, especially among older girls, is crucial for ensuring equitable outcomes and fostering a love for reading in all learners.

Empowering Teachers through Professional Development

Targeted professional development is crucial for fostering teacher confidence and effectiveness. A project partner from TFSL articulated, “When teachers are trained to meet the needs of all learners, our children feel valued and included.” Providing tailored training that focuses on differentiated instruction empowers educators to create inclusive learning environments. Moreover, equipping teachers with essential resources, including local content learning materials and methodologies like the Teaching at The Right Level (TaRL) framework, will enhance classroom dynamics. As noted by a member of the school management committee, “Equipping our teachers with the right tools is key to transforming our classrooms into vibrant learning spaces,” underscoring the importance of resource availability in achieving educational goals.

The collaborative efforts of CRS literacy coaches, head teachers, and MBSSE inspectors are fostering a more supportive and developmental environment for teachers, leading to sustained growth in teacher mentoring activities.

Fostering Community Engagement and Support

Community engagement is pivotal for the sustainability of the school feeding program and enhancing overall educational outcomes. A local partner emphasized, “When we work together with schools and communities, everyone benefits.” Building strong partnerships with local organizations not only enriches the resources available to schools but also fosters a culture of collaboration that encourages high student attendance and engagement. Teachers have observed that recognition programs significantly motivate students, with one stating, “When students are recognized for their attendance, it motivates them to come to school and learn.” This sense of community ownership will be vital in ensuring the longevity and effectiveness of the program. Also, the cost efficiency of utilizing local resources approaches is both noteworthy and impactful, demonstrating a sustainable model for implementation.

Enhancing Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks

The continuous improvement of the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework is essential for adapting the program to the evolving needs of the community. As a project staff member remarked, “Listening to students and parents will help us adapt and improve.” By integrating frequent feedback mechanisms and developing digital tools for data collection, the project can respond to insights gathered from stakeholders. This proactive approach fosters a culture of accountability and continuous enhancement, ultimately driving both educational and health outcomes for all students involved. In doing so, the project can lay the groundwork for a more responsive and impactful school feeding program that meets the needs of every child, ensuring they are well-equipped to succeed in life.

Recommendations

The project intervention has yielded significant improvements across all assessed areas, demonstrating its effectiveness. By following the outlined recommendations, stakeholders can ensure continued success and enhance the overall educational and health outcomes for students and the community. Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed to sustain and further improve these positive trends.

Enhancing Educational Outcomes Through Comprehensive Support: To sustain and improve educational outcomes, it is essential to continue to implement targeted professional development for teachers, focusing on differentiated instruction and adaptive techniques for diverse learners because of its impact. Providing teachers with essential resources, such as local content learning materials and frameworks like Teaching at The Right Level (TaRL), will enhance classroom engagement and effectiveness.

Enhancing Teacher Development and Targeted Literacy Interventions: Collaboration among literacy coaches, head teachers, and education inspectors must continue to support teacher development, while effective interventions to enhance phonemic awareness should be expanded and monitored to ensure ongoing progress across all student demographics. Targeted initiatives aimed at improving reading comprehension among older girls should also be implemented, featuring engaging materials and positive role models in literature.

Strengthening Administrative Support and Collaborative Practices in Education: Prioritize strong administrative support is crucial for fostering a collaborative environment that integrates resources from initiatives like the school feeding program and enhances teacher development through regular observations and feedback. Also, expanding and monitoring effective interventions for phonemic awareness, along with implementing targeted initiatives to improve reading comprehension among older girls, will ensure sustained progress across all student demographics.

Continue to Promote Sustainable Resource Utilization and Integrated Literacy Instruction: Continue to emphasize the efficient utilization of local resources, as this sustainable model supports educational initiatives. Additionally, strategies should be developed to integrate literacy instruction within the broader curriculum, ensuring a well-rounded education for students. Flexibility in scheduling dedicated literacy instruction will further enhance student learning outcomes.

Empowering Girls and Strengthening Community Support for Educational Success: Design and implement targeted programs for girls that focus on preventing early marriage and teenage pregnancy, along with community initiatives that emphasize the importance of education for all genders and strengthen economic support systems for families, will empower students and contribute to long-term societal benefits. Promoting health education and targeted programs for girls are essential for student well-being and empowerment. Strengthening community initiatives and economic support systems will further alleviate poverty and enhance educational outcomes for all students.

Strengthening Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks: To ensure the continuous improvement of the program, it is recommended to enhance the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework by incorporating regular feedback mechanisms from stakeholders. This can be achieved through the development of simple digital tools or mobile applications for quick data collection, allowing for real-time insights into program effectiveness. Capturing feedback from students and parents will enable adaptations that align with the community's evolving needs, fostering a culture of continuous

improvement. Ultimately, these recommendations aim to enhance educational and health outcomes for all students, ensuring the long-term success of the initiatives in place.

Comprehensive Training Integration: Develop comprehensive training programs focused on innovative teaching methodologies and provide mentorship programs to enhance teacher support. These programs should include hands-on workshops and easily implementable resources for teachers.

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Enhance Engagement Strategies: Develop and implement more interactive teaching methods to maintain high levels of pupil attentiveness. Consider training teachers in innovative pedagogical techniques.

Maintain Attendance Initiatives: Continue to promote attendance through incentives and parental engagement. Regular monitoring of attendance patterns can help identify and address barriers promptly.

Mentorship and Collaborative Learning: Establish a mentorship program that pairs experienced teachers with those looking to enhance their skills in innovative teaching and food management. This initiative fosters personalized guidance and encourages continuous learning. To further promote collaboration, encourage teachers to share lesson plans and resources through regular workshops, creating a supportive community where successful strategies can be showcased and adopted.

Strengthening Literacy through Targeted Skill Development: To enhance reading success, educational programs should focus on developing both listening comprehension and oral reading fluency through structured activities and practice. Additionally, a comprehensive literacy curriculum that incorporates diverse reading skills will better support student learning and achievement.

Sustain Health Education Efforts: Continue to promote health and hygiene education through workshops and community outreach programs, ensuring that knowledge translates into behavior change.

1. Introduction and Purpose

1.1. Project Context

Young children in Sierra Leone are malnourished due to inadequate dietary intake. In poor households (more than 60% of the country's population) that experience food insecurity, there is low enrolment of children into schools, low class attendance and a high dropout rate which in turn lowers the level of education. A child who is hungry may not pay attention to a learning task. Relieving the child's hunger may therefore improve his/her ability to concentrate and consequently, facilitate learning. The quality of teachers and school infrastructure was also reported to influence student enrolment and attendance. In addition, the low access to water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) services significantly contributes to diarrhea, acute respiratory infections (ARIs), under-nutrition, and worm infestations. This leads to students missing school due to sickness, or due to tending to chores such as fetching water for the family and reduced cognitive attention due to worm infestations. It may also pose additional challenges for girls over the use of toilets and how to manage their menstrual hygiene.

The Catholic Relief Services (CRS) Sierra Leone country program set a 10-year strategy (2020-2030) with four priority goals under the themes of agriculture and livelihoods, education, health, and urban resilience. These initiatives are spread throughout the country with Koinadugu and Falaba identified as districts that require a focus on three out of the four core strategic priorities (agriculture and livelihoods, education, and health) based on their needs. To achieve these goals, CRS works closely with relevant partners in the public and private sectors, including the ministries of Basic Education, Health and Sanitation, Agriculture and Food Security, and Development and Planning. The aim is to establish a sustainable home-grown school feeding program and an improved government monitoring and evaluation system.

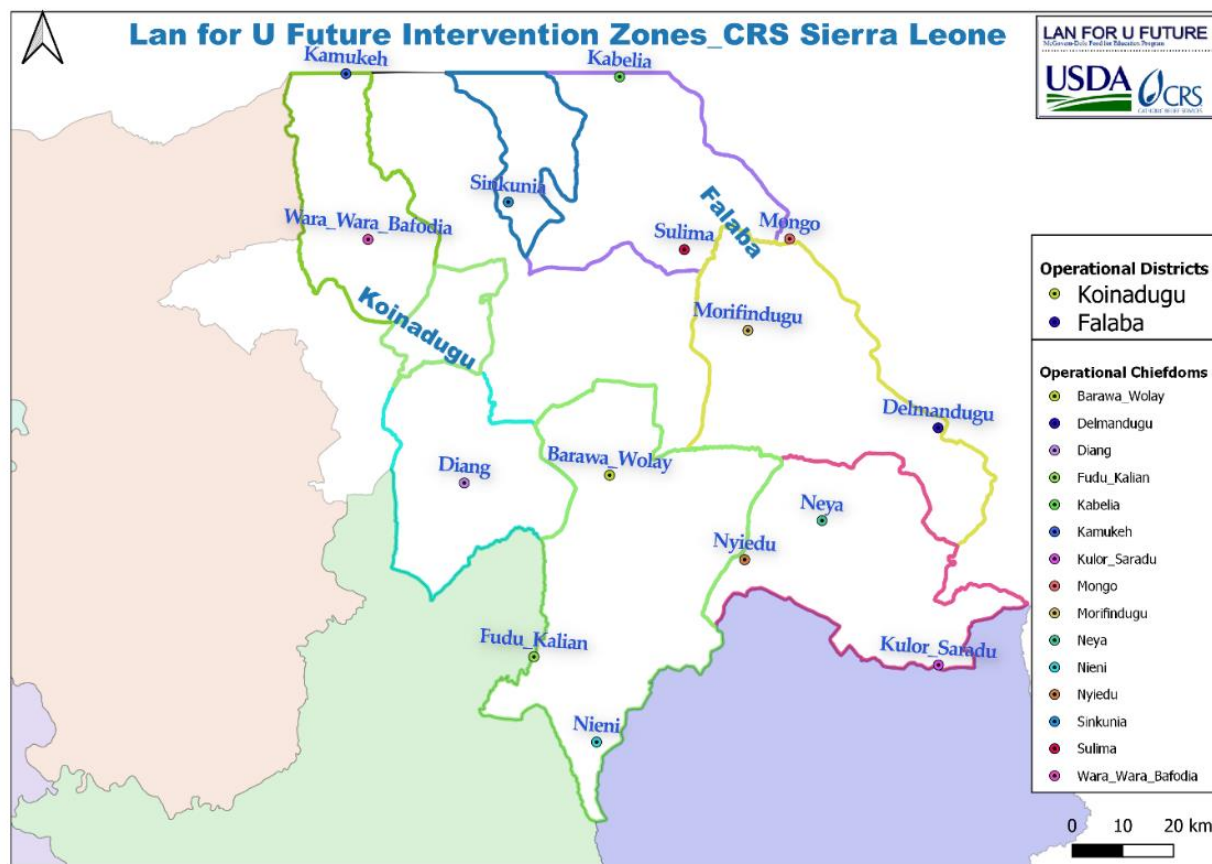


Figure 1: CRS intervention zones

The project process began with the McGovern Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program run by CRS in partnership with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST). Their focus was on improving the quality of literacy instruction to primary school children and their health and dietary practices. CRS interventions were integrated in that they provided school meals for students and staff and improved the education infrastructure of Koinadugu district. The Government of Sierra Leone supported CRS in the advocacy and literacy components of the program, while the communities and school management committees were involved in all phases of the project and were critical to their success.

¹ Source: CRS

Project Description

The Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) has committed to increasing its investment in education. In support of this initiative, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) has been running school feeding programs in the country since 2008 and will continue through the LAN 4 U Future project (L4UF) from 2021 to 2025. Funded by the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) McGovern-Dole Food for Education program, the L4UF project aims to reduce hunger while enhancing literacy and primary education.

Building on lessons from previous feeding programs, L4UF focuses on strengthening capacity and leveraging resources for sustainable outcomes. The project targets improved literacy and healthy dietary practices for 69,731 primary school children, in 310 schools supported by CRS from 2018 to 2023. It aims to enhance sustainability while pursuing three strategic objectives: improving literacy, promoting health and dietary practices, and ensuring the use of nutritious, culturally appropriate food.

The current phase of the project emphasizes building local capacity and ensuring the sustainability of school feeding and literacy efforts, preparing for a transition to government ownership. Dalberg Research has been contracted to help CRS evaluate midline indicators against baseline measures.

In September 2021, the "Lan for u future" project was approved for four years, covering five chiefdoms in Koinadugu and ten in Falaba district. This phase seeks to achieve two main objectives: increasing literacy among school-aged children in select schools and improving health and nutrition practices. A new Local and Regional Procurement (LRP) component will focus on sourcing local food items such as rice, pigeon peas, palm oil, and orange-flesh sweet potatoes to complement donated commodities. The LRP component was piloted in twenty-eight schools, and insights from this pilot will inform the full implementation through 2025.

The project collaborates with local communities to strengthen School Management Committees, Mothers' Support Groups, and Saving and Internal Lending Communities. Collaboration with the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE), Teach for Sierra Leone (TFSL), and the University of Makeni (UNIMAK) is vital for teacher training. Additionally, the project partners with the District Health Medical Teams (DHMT) and Caritas Makeni for health and nutrition activities, enrollment campaigns, and the Savings and Internal Lending Committee (SILC). Dalberg Research will support CRS in comparing midline indicators to baseline measures through performance evaluation.

1.2. Results Framework

The "Lan for u future" V project result framework aligns to USDA's program level frameworks. It outlines a hierarchy of interventions and outcomes that lead to the overall strategic objectives which include:

- I. SO1: Improved literacy of school-aged children.
- II. SO2: Increased use of health and dietary practices of school-aged children
- III. SO3: Improved Utilization of Nutritious and Culturally acceptable food that meets quality standards.

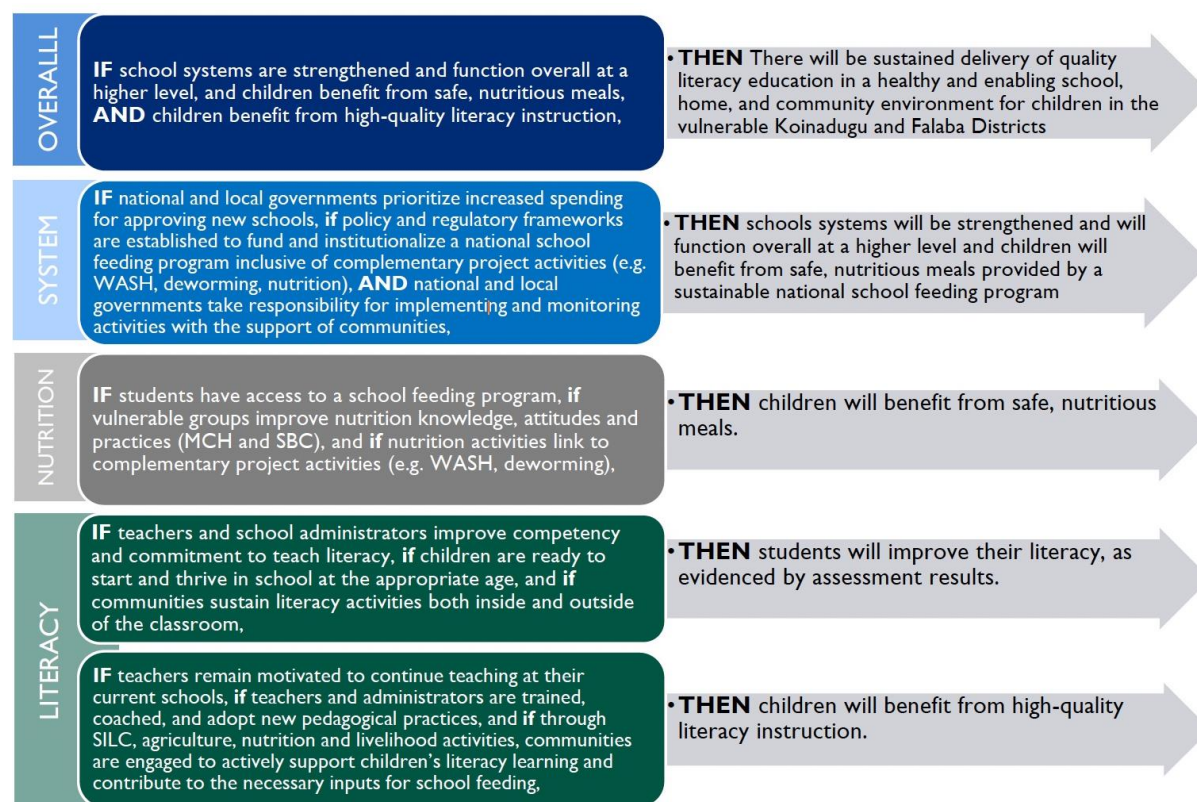
All of these strategic objectives have project outcomes that will help measure them, as per the table below.

Table 2: Result Framework

Strategic Objectives	Outcomes
SO1: Improved literacy of school-age children	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Improved Quality of Literacy Instruction2. Improved Pupil Attentiveness3. Improved Pupil Attendance
SO2: Increased use of health and dietary practices of school-aged children	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Improved Use of Health and Dietary Practices2. Increased Capacity of Government Institutions3. Increased Engagement of Local Organization and Community Groups
SO3: Improved Utilization of Nutritious and Culturally acceptable food that meets quality standards.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Improved access to culturally acceptable food2. Improved access to nutritious food

The Theory of Change explains the logical assumptions that holds to enable children benefits from high-quality literacy instructions, with prioritized increased spendings and efforts from all stakeholders including government, partners, beneficiaries. Increased investments in institutionalizing school feeding program aimed at improving literacy and health/nutrition behaviors among school-aged children and other beneficiaries.

Figure 2: Theory of Change



Source: L4UF Project Baseline Report

Purpose of the Evaluation

The main objective of the midline evaluation is to assess whether the project is on track to meet its objectives. The following purpose defines the midline evaluation:

- The evaluation will assess the progress of the program's implementation of activities using the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and coherence using sampling design and methodology described in respective sections of this document.
- The midline evaluation will compare baseline to monitoring data using various methods specified in the evaluation plan. It will identify indicators of the progress during the project intervention.
- The midline evaluation will also provide lessons learned and provide recommendations focused on overcoming any potential issues or challenges identified, or other suggestions for improving the program design and implementation.

1.4.1. Objectives of the Evaluation

The midline evaluation aims to conduct a comprehensive and independent evaluation that will compare the baseline values with the subsequent midline values to determine the progress and impact of the "Lan for u Future" program. Specific objectives include:

- a. Assess improvement in literacy among benefiting pupils
- b. Assess the increase in knowledge and adoption of health and dietary practices and
- c. Measure the improvement in the use of culturally and nutritionally acceptable foods.

2. Evaluation Design and Methodology

2.1. Evaluation Questions

The evaluation followed the OECD/DAC criteria. Table 3 outlines the key research questions the assessment sought to answer, aligned with the strategic objectives of the project.

Table 3: Evaluation criteria

Evaluation focus	DAC Criteria	Data source	Research questions
To measure improved quality of literacy instruction	Relevance Effectiveness Efficiency Sustainability	Teacher observation tool, lesson plans, timetables,	What proportion of teachers devote adequate time to literacy instruction? Are the teachers/educators/teaching assistants incorporating new and quality teaching techniques in their classrooms?
To measure improved literacy of school aged children	Effectiveness Efficiency Impact	Student literacy assessment scores	What proportion of students can read and understand what is taught in their grade level?
To measure improved attentiveness of students	Effectiveness Impact	Classroom observation tool	What percentage of students are classified as either attentive or very attentive in the classrooms?
To measure improved student attendance in schools	Relevance Effectiveness Impact	Students Enrolment registers, student headcounts form, School attendance tracker/register	Has the average number of students that are enrolled and attending supported classrooms increased? What is the student dropout rate in supported classrooms for grades 3-6?
To measure improved knowledge of health and hygiene practices, nutrition, and safe food preparation and storage practices	Relevance Effectiveness Impact	Interviews, training attendance list and reports, Survey of students from classrooms and those in school health clubs	What proportion of individuals trained in child health and nutrition integrate it into practice? What percentage of individuals trained in safe food preparation and storage practice have integrated the practice? What proportion of students have an improved/good nutrition status?
To measure increased access to nutritious food, and equipment/tools required for food preparation and storage	Relevance Impact Efficiency Coherence	Mother Support Group (MSG) survey	To what extent does the feeding program provide for school meals? What proportion of students' self-report as hungry or very hungry during school days? What proportion of beneficiary MSG parents/caregivers incorporate the learnings from the nutrition specific interventions?

2.2. Evaluation Design

The evaluation used a mixed-method approach to meet the project objectives, conducting program literature review and gathering information from participants across the beneficiary schools and stakeholders. Data was collected through in-person quantitative interviews with pupils, headteachers, teachers, school food committee heads, school management committee heads, food preparers, and mother support club heads. To complement the quantitative data, qualitative interviews were conducted in the form of focus group discussions with the parents; in-depth interviews with beneficiaries such as reading club facilitators/ teachers, food preparers, school management committees, community health workers, and key informant interviews with key program stakeholders from CRS program staff, University of Makeni, Caritas Makeni, Teach for Sierra Leone, the National School Feeding Secretariat, Chiefs, among others.

The study was conducted in different phases: first, the design phase, which involved aligning on methodology, followed by literature review. Next were data collection, data analysis, and synthesis leading to the reporting phase. Finally, a validation and dissemination workshop was held to review the findings.

2.3. Sampling methods

The evaluation used different sampling methods to select participants for both quantitative and qualitative data collection.

Quantitative Sampling

The quantitative interviews were conducted amongst the grade 3-6 pupils, teachers, and food preparers from the beneficiary schools. The sampling methodology outlined below was used during quantitative data collection.

Sampling methodology

DR used a multi-stage sampling technique to ensure the results from the study are generalizable for the 310 schools and 79,704 beneficiaries. The sample size (n) was estimated using the McConnell and Vera

Hernández (2015) equation for a binary outcome with a binary covariate. See

Sample size calculations	
Input Parameters:	
Covariate takes 2 values	
Covariate values:	.5 .5
Proportions (thetas):	.5 .5
Effect Size:	.2 .2
Control Group Rates:	.38 .415
Cluster design:	yes
Cluster size:	10
Intra Cluster Correlation:	.52
Significance level:	.05
Power level:	.9
Treatment Gr sampling rate (Pi):	.5
Sample Size:	
Number of Clusters =	143.3
Number of Observations =	1433.4
Number of Treatment Clusters =	71.7
Number of Control Clusters =	71.7
Number of Treatment Observations =	716.7
Number of Control Observations =	716.7
Overall Impact =	.2
Overall Success Rate for Treatment=	.6
Overall Success Rate for Controls=	.4

Figure 134 in the annex for the key parameter used in the sample calculator.

$$\text{Sample size } (n) = 2m \cdot k = (gM^{-1}g') \frac{(Z_{\beta} + Z_{\alpha/2})^2}{(p_1 - p_0)} (1 + (m - 1)p_x)$$

where m = the number of pupils sampled per school (10); k = the number of schools sampled (72 schools); g and M are defined in equation (24) of McConnell and Vera Hernández (2015).²

The midline school selection followed the baseline sampling frame to ensure comparability of results. However, four schools were replaced to correct oversampling issues from the baseline: two schools in Falaba district's Kabelia chiefdom and two schools in Koinadugu's Kulor-Saradu chiefdom. This adjustment was made to ensure proper stratification. This revised approach resulted in a target of 720 pupils, with 10 pupils surveyed and assessed per school. To achieve this, we selected a representative sample of 72 schools across the Koinadugu and Falaba districts. Schools were proportionally distributed based on the

² McConnell B., Vera-Hernandez M. (2015) Going beyond simple sample size calculations: a practitioner's guide, https://ifs.org.uk/sites/default/files/output_url_files/WP201517_update_Sep15.pdf

number of intervention schools in each district and chiefdom. This resulted in approximately 42 schools from Falaba and 30 schools from Koinadugu.

In addition, to maintain consistency in comparing outcomes between baseline and midline evaluations, we adopted the same sample structure used at baseline for other stakeholder groups. This structure included:

- Teachers from grades 2, 3 and 4
- School leaders (Headteacher, SMC chairperson, CTA chairperson)
- School staff (Food preparers)
- Community members (MSG heads)

The sample sizes for these groups were determined during the baseline assessment and we applied it again for the midline to ensure comparable data across evaluations.

Table 4: Target and achieved sample distribution per category

Respondent Category	Tools used	Baseline target sample	Baseline achieved sample	Baseline response rate	Midline target sample	Midline achieved sample	Midline response rate
Schools		72	71	98.6%	72	72	100%
Pupils	Pupil Survey (Grade 2 pupils)	720	712	98.9%	720	714	99%
Teachers	Teacher Survey (Grade 2, 3 & 4)	216	193	89.4%	216	205	95%
Classroom observation	Classroom Observation Checklist	216	205	94.9%	216	193	89%
School Observations	School Observation Checklist	72	71	98.6%	72	72	100%
Head Teachers	Head Teacher Survey	72	72	100.0%	72	72	100%
Food Preparers	Food Preparer Survey	144	144	100.0%	144	161	112%
School Management Committee (SMC) Chairpersons	SMC Chairperson Survey	72	72	100.0%	72	72	100%
Community-Teacher Association (CTA) Chairpersons	CTA Chairperson Survey	72	70	97.2%	72	72	100%
Mother Support Group (MSG) Representatives	MSG Head Survey	72	71	98.6%	72	72	100%

Participants selection criteria

Two-stage cluster selection of the target groups was conducted in the following steps:

1. **Selection of Schools:** We revisited the 72 schools chosen at baseline using a stratified random sampling approach. This ensured proportional representation across the two districts and their 15 chiefdoms, maintaining consistency with the baseline selection.
2. **Selection of Teacher and Food Preparer:** To maintain consistency in our evaluation, we conveniently selected teachers and food preparers from the same schools chosen at baseline. Whenever possible, our aim was to interview the same teachers from grades 2, 3, and 4 who participated in the baseline assessment.
3. **Selection of pupils:** Ten pupils from each selected school formed the primary cluster for data collection through interviews. Similar to the baseline, these pupils were randomly chosen from grade 2 using class registers. To ensure a balanced sample, we used random selection to choose 5 boys and 5 girls per school.
4. **Pupils' attendance and enrollment:** We utilized class registers from grades 3 to 6 to determine the percentage of pupils who dropped out of school by the end of the year. (Note: This step is not part of the two-stage cluster sampling process, but rather a separate data collection method.)
5. **Selection of school administrators and community members:** We selected one head teacher, one SMC chairperson, one CTA chairperson, and one MSG head per school. Whenever possible, we aimed to interview the same school administrator and community members (SMC, CTA, MSG) who participated in the baseline assessment.

Observations

Students within the classrooms and who have children aged below two years were observed directly by trained observers. Specific observation checklists were reviewed and tailored for each observation area to ensure comprehensive assessment.

- **Classroom observation Tool:** Dalberg used a checklist that included specific behaviors indicative of attentiveness, such as maintaining eye contact, actively participating in classroom activities, among others. The percentage of children identified as "attentive" or "very attentive" was calculated based on the total number of observed children.
- **School Observation Tool:** We used a checklist that assessed the school infrastructure including the WASH facilities, school buildings, school gardens, kitchen and food storage facilities, and basic school furniture such as desk

Data collection Methods

This section describes the data collection methods and instruments (both qualitative and quantitative) and analysis tools that were used in the evaluation. The actual instruments themselves (e.g. full surveys, interview guides, and observation checklist) are described below. Detailed tools can be found in the annex.

Quantitative Data Collection

Training the field team and pilot interviews: The evaluation conducted a comprehensive five-day training session for all midline evaluation recruitment led by a Dalberg Research Assistant. The training covered both paper-based and script-based survey instruments, objectives, target areas, applicable protocols, and duration. DR invited the CRS project team to attend, facilitating a thorough understanding of the study nuances and background.

Following the plenary sessions, participants engaged in a one-day piloting exercise at selected pre-sampled schools in enumeration areas separate from the main survey. A one-day debrief session was conducted to discuss participants' experiences, observations, and challenges encountered. These insights, along with recommendations, were compiled into a brief report and shared with the CRS project team.

Data Collection: DR in collaboration with CRS and all the relevant stakeholders employed mixed methods to collect and verify the data. Primary data was collected qualitatively through participatory discussions and conversations, (key informant interviews, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions); and quantitatively through surveys and observations.

Qualitative Data Collection

For all the qualitative methods, the evaluation employed the golden rule of saturation, in that, data collection continued until no new themes or insights emerged from the respondents. This was useful in ensuring that the data collected is valid, reliable, and representative of the participants' experiences or perspectives.

Key Informant Interviews

The interviews were conducted face to face or virtually in English, based on the participant's preference, and audio recorded after obtaining consent. The audio recordings were transcribed verbatim into English. The evaluation expected conversations to last for about 60 minutes. DR leveraged on CRS's contacts with the project implementing partners and other stakeholders while selecting participants. DR in consultation with CRS also developed inclusion criteria to guide participant recruitment.

The evaluation had conversations with a total of 22 individuals as KIIs within the categories:

- Local leaders (Paramount chiefs, section chiefs, chiefdom speakers, town chiefs),
- CRS project staff and partners (chief of party, grant manager, education manager, UNIMAK, TFSL, Caritas Makeni)
- Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) representatives (District Council chair, Directorate of nutrition at Kabala and Freetown level, Water resource representative, Kabala, and National School feeding secretariat, District Directorate of education).

In depth Interviews

These were conducted face to face. After receiving participant consent, audio recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim into English. All interviews were conducted in convenient locations for participants in the intervention zones. The conversations were in the applicable local languages used. DR had conversations with a total of 18 individuals, from the groups below.

- Reading Club Facilitators
- School Management committee representatives
- Local and Regional Procurement (LRP) suppliers
- Loans and Savings group officials
- Community Health Workers
- Food handlers

Focus Groups Discussions

The FGDs were conducted face to face to elicit gender norms, social expectations, values and perceptions. Each FGD comprised of 6-10 participants, a moderator, and a notetaker. The discussions were held in carefully selected locations within the intervention zones. Upon receipt of participant consent, the audio recorded data from the discussions were transcribed verbatim into English.

Where possible, the FGDs involving women were moderated by fellow women while FGDs involving men were moderated by men in the applicable local languages. Discussions lasted for 120 mins on average.

We conducted a total of 12 FGDs split between the two intervention zones with the caregivers/parents of the beneficiary pupils, including those who have taken home rations from school.

Data Analysis

The collected data underwent stringent quality control measures. Daily quality reviews were conducted by the data reviewers to assess the survey data sent to by the data collection team. Key checks included logic assessments, duplication, and the accuracy and completeness of interviews. Any anomalies identified during this process were flagged, and interviewers were promptly notified through their supervisors to correct errors. The Data Processing (DP) Supervisor and Project Manager oversaw the cleaning and finalization of survey data into formats recommended by CRS, ensuring both raw and final datasets were submitted to CRS while addressing any data queries. Clean data was subsequently prepared for analysis.

Quantitative Data Analysis:

A detailed analysis plan aligned with the project objectives was developed to ensure comprehensive coverage of all desired outcomes. The impact analysis toolkit adhered to the framework established by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the OECD, focusing on relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability, equity, gender equality, and resilience to generate insightful analyses.

The following analyses were conducted:

Exploratory analysis: Descriptive analysis technique was used to identify potential patterns in the data. Descriptive analysis was used to reveal the performance of the measured indicators. The analysis output is presented using graphical methods.

Association analysis: To test for the hypothesis that the school feeding program made a significant contribution in improving the indicators of interest. The study also carried out series of inferential statistical analysis such as paired sample t-test and chi-squared test for independence. Here, outcomes were compared by different subgroups such as school type, gender of pupil among others.

Magnitude of change analysis / Regression: regression analysis on the midline data was conducted to determine the association of different factors with outcome indicators such as association of class attendance to passing literacy and numeracy tests, attendance to training with passing health and nutrition assessment. The data was analyzed using Stata and R software.

Qualitative Data Analysis

IDI, KII and FGD audio-recordings were transcribed verbatim. The transcripts were reviewed in several phases of analysis to assess the most common themes, less common themes, and similarities and differences within the subgroups. Data from all discussions was analyzed and organized into categories of interest. DR conducted thematic analysis as it is highly inductive and allows for deep knowledge and insights with context generated from the data. We generated a codebook that iterated codes and themes from the research questions. These were further uploaded to Dedoose to analyze the various codes and themes from the transcripts.

A preliminary analysis was conducted to get a general sense of the data and reflect on its meaning. Next, a more detailed analysis was performed, and the data was divided into segments or units that reflected specific thoughts, attitudes, and experiences of participants. At the end of this analysis process, a list of topics was generated and compiled into categories labeled as key findings.

Generated insights and study findings were triangulated with quantitative data and integrated into the report. The level of analysis and depth of reporting was determined and agreed upon with the CRS team during the project's inception phase.

Evaluation Limitations

The field data collection exercise experienced some limitations that were mitigated using appropriate strategies. Some of the limitations experienced are outlined below:

Lack of baseline data

Lack of baseline data for some indicators limited the way in which we could determine the magnitude of improvement across the indicators. Furthermore a few indicators were not measured in the baseline making there were no meaningful benchmarks to measure progress and success. The midline evaluation explored and used existing secondary data from CRS and other sources that provided insight into the initial conditions related to literacy and nutrition. The evaluation used historical data to serve as proxy baseline information, while also exploring other secondary data related to the project to gather insight. Also, the evaluation collected qualitative data through interviews, focus groups, and in-depth interviews with community members and stakeholders to understand the starting conditions and needs of the target population. Though, not as quantifiable as baseline surveys, qualitative insights helped provide valuable context.

Seasonal unavailability of key informants

The evaluation experienced seasonal unavailability of some key informants due to agricultural cycles, holidays, and health crises, potentially affecting data collection and analysis. This led to scheduling delays and impacted reporting and decision-making. However, the evaluation team, in collaboration with CRS, adjusted data collection schedules to align with informants' availability and coordinated closely to minimize disruptions. Strong partnerships with community members also helped mobilize informants when needed. Regular communication and periodic reviews allowed the team to address availability issues, make timely adjustments, and improve planning for future evaluations.

Temporal Bias

Results may reflect a specific point in time and may not capture the full impact or trends over the project's duration. The evaluation engaged with stakeholders to gather qualitative insights on changes over time, providing context to quantitative findings and helping to interpret the data more holistically.

3. Findings

Sample Demographics

This section outlines the demographics of the evaluation participants and the classification of schools.

A total of 72 CRS benefiting schools were sampled from a list of 310 schools for the midline study, with 42 schools (58%) from Falaba and 31 schools (42%) from Koinadugu.

Pupil demographics

A total of 714 pupils from 72 sample schools in the Falaba and Koinadugu districts participated in the survey.

Table 5: Pupil demographics by district

Distribution of pupils by district	Falaba	Koinadugu	Total	P-value
n (%)	412 (58)	302 (42)	714 (100)	
Gender of pupil (%)				
Boy	51	50	51	0.82
Girl	49	50	49	
Age (in years) of pupil as at last birthday (%)				
6 years	2	1	2	0.00*
7 years	16	30	22	
8 years	38	30	34	
9 years	26	21	24	
10 years	19	18	18	
Age (in years), mean (sd)	8.4 (1.0)	8.2 (1.1)	8.4 (1.1)	0.02*

**Implies statistically significant*

Based on **Error! Reference source not found.**, the gender distribution of the pupils was nearly equal, with close to one-third of the pupils being 8 years old. Koinadugu had a significantly younger pupil population compared to Falaba

Teacher demographics

Of the total sample of 205 teachers, 81% were male.

Table 6: Teacher demographics by district

Teacher demographics by district	Falaba	Koinadugu	Total	P-value
n (%)	117 (57)	88 (43)	205 (100)	
Sex of teacher (%)				
Male	78	85	81	0.18
Female	22	15	19	
Teachers' age, mean (sd)	29.0 (8.1)	31.8 (8.1)	30.2 (8.2)	0.01*
Teacher age category (%)				
18-25 years	41	26	35	0.05*
25-35 years	45	51	48	
35+ years	14	23	18	
Teacher with certificate (%)	36	50	42	0.04*
Type of certificate held by teachers (%) – n=				
TEC (%)	0	2%	1%	0.33
TC Lower (%)	33	14	23	0.03*
TC (%)	55	66	60	0.29
HTC (%)	14	25	20	0.21
Other (%)	2	2	2	0.97

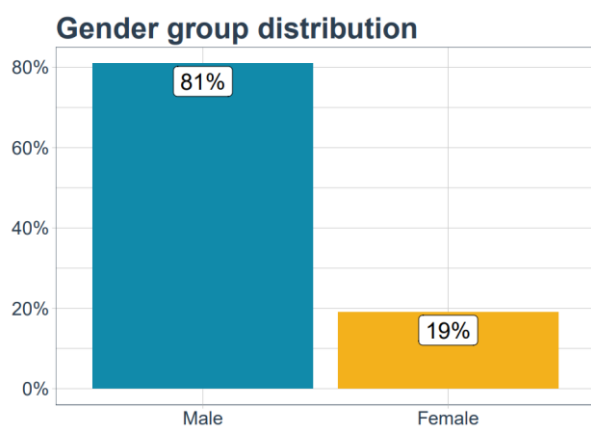
**Implies statistically significant*

Based on

, a significant portion of the sample, 83%, were aged between 18 and 35, indicating a relatively youthful demographic among teachers in CRS-sampled schools. Additionally, 42% of the interviewed teachers had obtained a certification, with the most common being the TC (Teaching Certificate), held by 60%, followed by the HTC (Higher Teaching Certificate) at 20%. The distribution of teachers across grade levels was fairly balanced, with 34% teaching grade 2, 32% teaching grade 3, and 34% teaching grade 4.

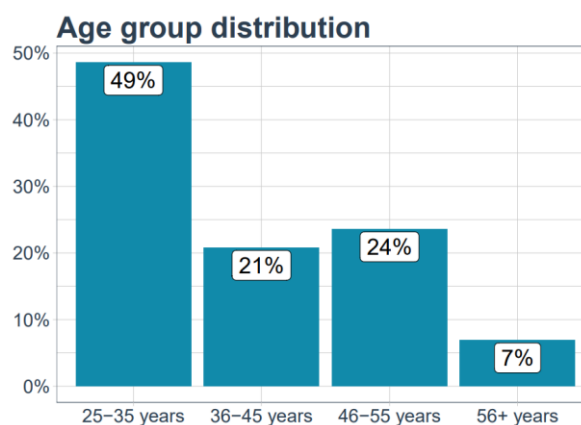
Head-teacher demographics

Among the sampled headteachers, 81% were male, and nearly half (49%) were between the ages of 25 and 35 (Figure 4).



Source: L4UF–Midline assessments (2024)

Figure 3: Head-teacher gender distribution

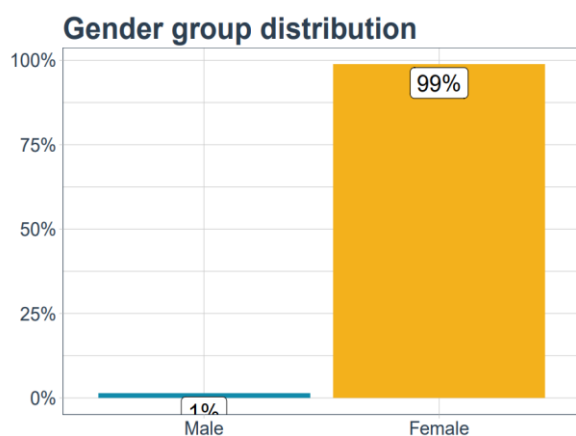


Source: L4UF–Midline assessments (2024)

Figure 4: Head-teacher age group distribution

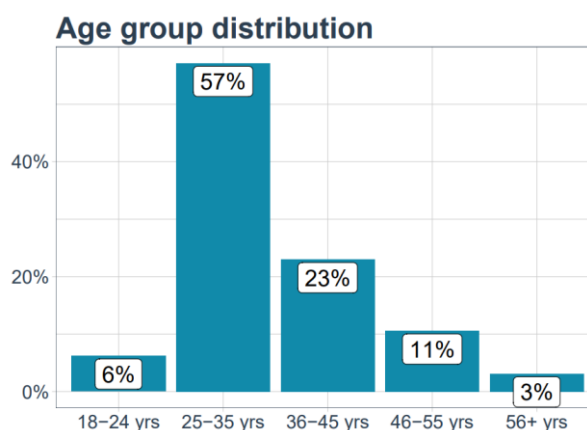
Food preparers demographics

Almost all the sampled food preparers, 99%, were female, and over half, 57%, were between the ages of 25 and 35 (Figure 6).



Source: L4UF–Midline assessments (2024)

Figure 5: Food preparers gender distribution



Source: L4UF–Midline assessments (2024)

Figure 6: Food preparers age group distribution

Classification of schools

For this evaluation, our findings are allowed grouping schools into two main categories as described below:

i) Classification by school ownership

The MBSSE defines government schools as those that are exclusively or completely owned by the central government or local council in which the school is found. These schools receive financial support and are considered public schools. Mission/Religious group schools are owned or founded by religious organizations or religious bodies. Community schools are established by the community and are founded as public schools with the aim of receiving government support. Not all mission-owned or community-owned schools are public and thus do not receive financial support from the government³. For this evaluation, we retrieved the schools' ownership status of our sample schools from the 2017 School List from MBSSE⁴. Their ownership status is as shown below.

³ Beoku-Betts, Iman and James, Mohamed. Sierra Leone Learning outcomes and School ownership Analysis for Basic Education Examinations (NPSEand BECE) 2021, MBSSE.

<https://slobserver.org/wp-content/Library/220101%20MBSSE%20-%20Sierra%20Leone%20Learning%20Outcomes%20and%20School%20Ownership%20Analysis.pdf>

⁴ <https://mbsse.gov.sl/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/2017-School-List.pdf>

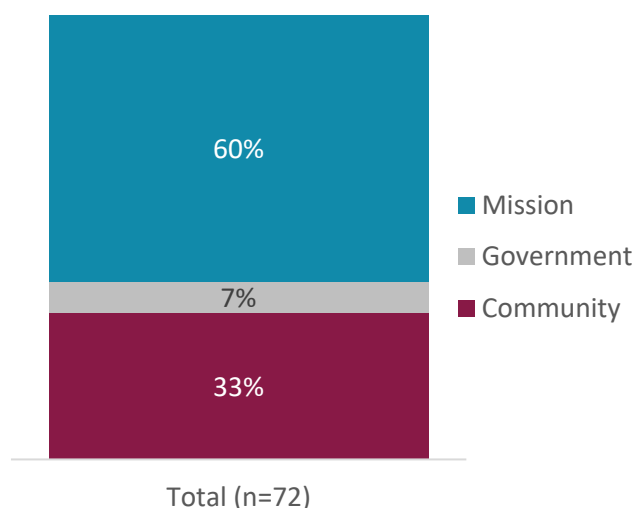


Figure 7: Distribution of sampled schools by ownership type

Findings from Figure 7 show that more CRS sampled schools were mission owned especially in Koinadugu.

ii) Classification by MBSSE Approval

The Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE) recognizes approved schools with Level 2 approval as eligible for financial support, whereas Level 1 approval is required for the school to operate and become eligible for financial support in the future. Approved schools must meet the following criteria:

- Proprietor and headmaster must be free of criminal records
- Evidence of entitlement to use the land for educational purposes
- Have a functioning oversight committee (i.e. School management committee or board of governors with evidence of minutes from meetings)
- Availability of safe/potable water source either piped or from a borehole
- Adequate playing space (2.5m² per learner)
- Safe school building as per the MBSSE regulations
- A comprehensive child safeguarding policy
- Proper and hygienic WASH facilities (with a separate provision for female teachers and girls)
- Be aligned with the School Infrastructure and catchment area policy
- Appropriate number of pupils to qualified teacher ratio (20 for pre-primary, 40 for primary and junior secondary)
- Compliance with the radical inclusion policy including physical infrastructure and an adequately trained workforce
- Evidence of a school improvement plan
- A bank account to receive funds and a designated finance officer approved by the oversight committee

For this evaluation, the headteacher provided the approval status of the schools sampled within this study. Majority of the schools (92%) were MBSSE approved, while 8% were not MBSSE approved.

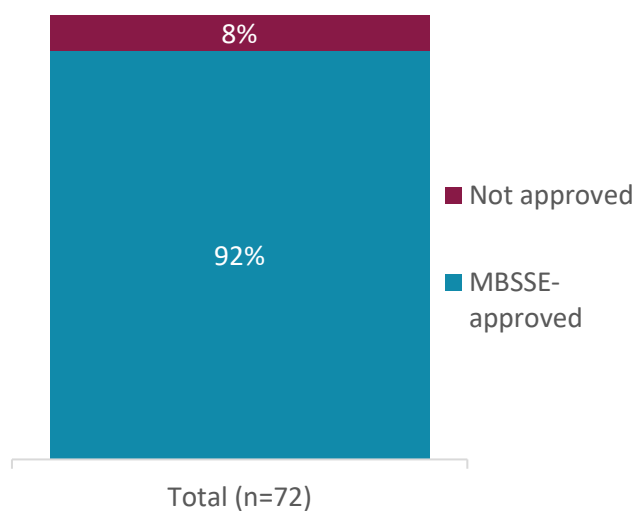


Figure 8: Distribution of sampled schools by status type

Program activities and associated themes

We list the various intervention activities that the program employed to achieve the set strategic objectives. We further classify them into four themes depending on who they target. We also list the relevant (but inexhaustive) list of implementing partners.

Table 7: Themes and Program activities

Themes/ contributors to literacy	Evidence in the project (Phase 5 formal activities)	Beneficiary initiatives/activities	Implementing Partners
Teacher targeted	i) Supply of teaching and learning materials ii) Supporting distance learning and teacher training, ii) Coaching & mentoring of teachers, v) Promoting teacher attendance	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach for Sierra Leone (TFSL) • University of Makeni (UNIMAK) • Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE) • Teaching Service Commission (TSC)

Student targeted	i) School feeding, ii) Formation and training of reading clubs, ii) Formation and training of school health clubs, v) Enrollment campaigns v) Distribution of deworming medication	Remunerative pupil incentives: offering books, pens, money and food stuff to consistent attendants and high performers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caritas Makeni
School targeted	i) Training of SMCs, CTA and other school admins ii) Construction of school infrastructures (WASH facilities and food stores), ii) Training on good health and nutrition practices WASH v) Supporting construction of kitchens for schools v) School gardens vi) Storage & handling of food, ii) Provision of take-home rations	Parents contribute condiments and offer labour for construction, and cooking of school meals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caritas Makeni
Household targeted	i) Supporting Private Service Providers (PSPs) for establishing Savings and Internal Lending Communities (SILC) & training SILC members ii) Training of MSGs ii) Social and behavioral change (SBC) through radio jingles, radio discussions, etc. on child health & nutrition including WASH and menstrual hygiene,	By-laws and associated fines ensuring pupils enroll and attend school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caritas Makeni

The following subsections explore the program's specific objectives and how different aspects were evaluated and their respective outcomes.

SO1 Improved Literacy of School-aged Children

This section outlines the first strategic objective (SO1) of the L4UF project, which aims to improve literacy among school-aged children and details the methods used to assess progress. This objective is crucial to the program's overall literacy strategy. The project tracks progress using Indicator 1.0.0.1 (*Percent of students who, by the end of two grades of schooling, demonstrate that they can read and understand the meaning of the grade-level text—MGD Indicator #1*). This measures the percentage of students who attain the benchmark of correctly answering at least four out of the five reading comprehension questions by the end of two grades of primary schooling.

To evaluate the L4UF project's success in enhancing early-grade literacy, a literacy assessment was conducted using the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) tool, an internationally recognized reading assessment adapted to the local context. The EGRA reports on foundational student learning, focusing on the initial steps students take in learning to read. As part of this formative assessment, seven critical subtasks were used to evaluate literacy outcomes: letter name identification, phonemic awareness,

familiar word identification, nonword reading, oral reading fluency, reading comprehension, and listening comprehension.

Grade 2 pupils were assessed against the reading comprehension benchmark, which requires students to read and comprehend at four out of five Grade 2-level text for them to be considered as passed.

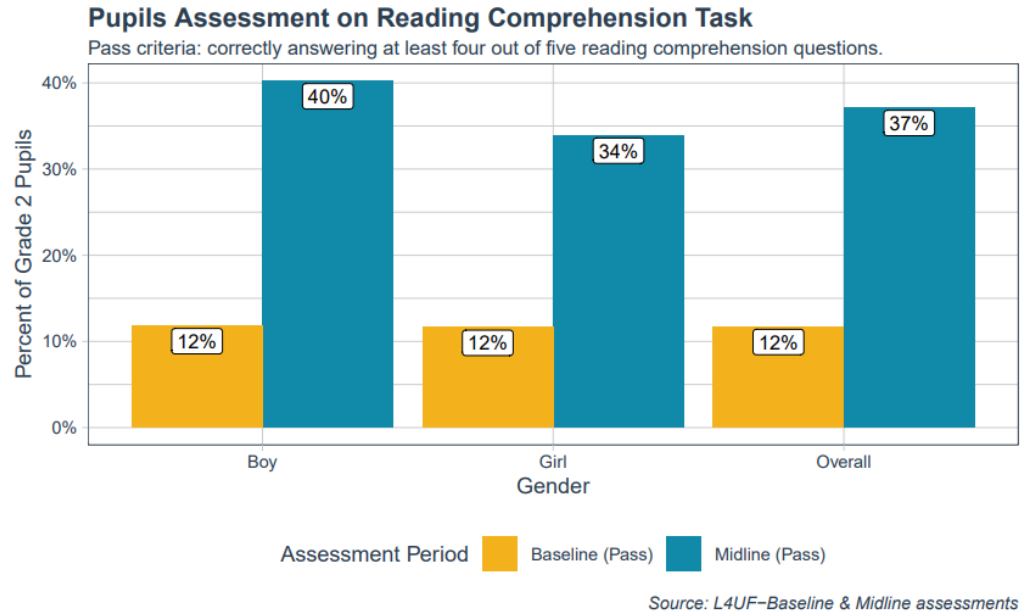


Figure 9: Baseline and midline comparison of gender differences in reading comprehension

As shown in Figure 9, **reading comprehension among Grade 2 students improved significantly at midline, rising from 12% at baseline to 37%, more than tripling the initial percentage.** This improvement was seen in both genders, with 40% of boys and 34% of girls compared to just 12% for both boys and girls at baseline. The significant improvement in reading comprehension at midline demonstrates the effectiveness of interventions implemented since the baseline. However, the slight gender gap, with boys outperforming girls (40% vs. 34%), indicates that additional support may be needed to further boost girls' reading comprehension.

Midline outcomes revealed substantial progress in reading comprehension for both districts.

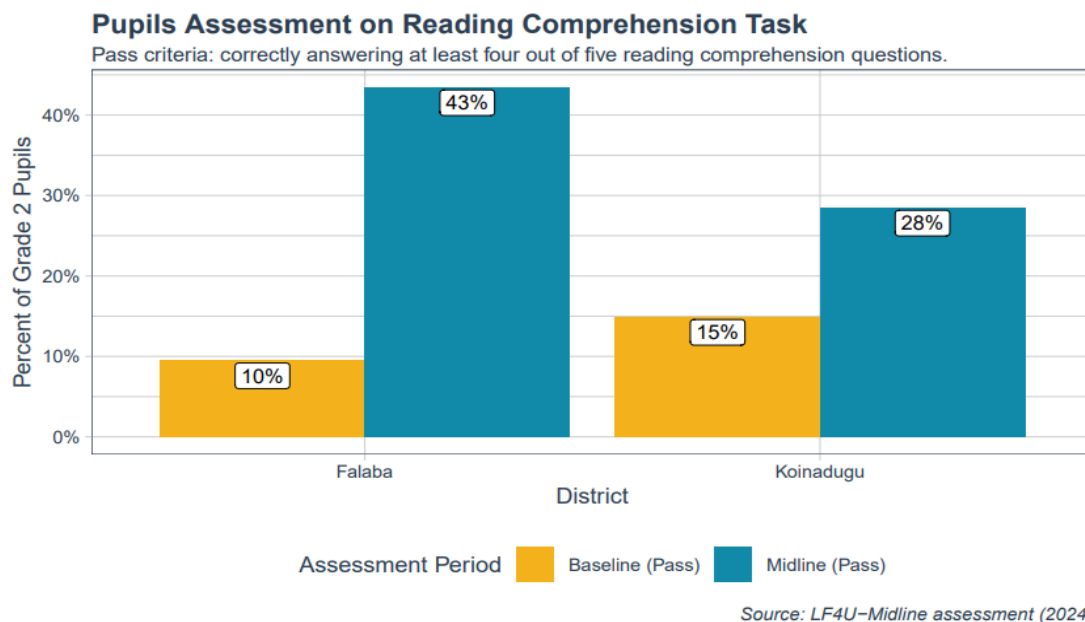


Figure 10: Baseline and midline comparison of district differences in reading comprehension

Figure 10 shows that pupils in Koinadugu had lower reading comprehension scores compared to those in Falaba. By midline, both districts saw improvements, with Falaba's comprehension scores increasing fourfold (from 10% to 43%), while Koinadugu's improvement was slower, rising from 15% to 28%. This indicates that while both districts made progress, Koinadugu is lagging behind, highlighting the need for greater efforts and targeted interventions in Koinadugu to close the performance gap.

A comparative analysis of gender performance at the district level shows notable improvements for both boys and girls.

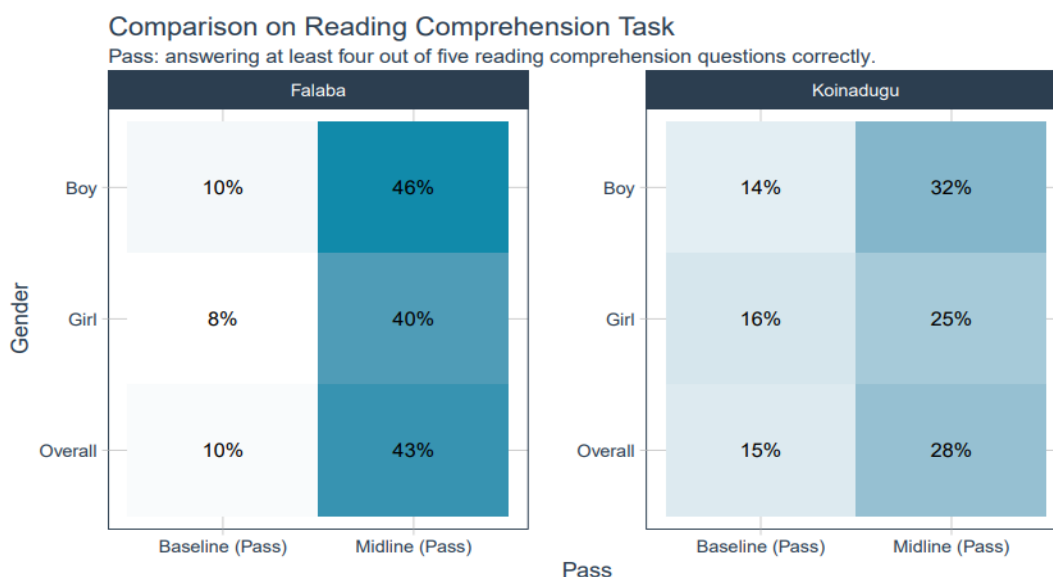


Figure 11: Comparison of baseline and midline gender differences in reading comprehension across districts

Findings in Figure 11 indicate that in Falaba district, boys experienced a significant 36 percentage point increase in performance, reaching 46% by the midline, while girls saw a substantial 32 percentage point rise, improving to 40%. Although Koinadugu district also recorded positive gains, the growth was more modest, with an 18 percentage point increase for boys, reaching 32%, and a 9 percentage point increase for girls, reaching

A comparison of reading comprehension performance across the different periods shows the midline reading comprehension rates have surpassed the projected Financial Year (FY) 2024 target of **11%** by 26 percentage points to **37%** and surpassed the end-of-project FY2025 target of 13% by 24 percentage points.

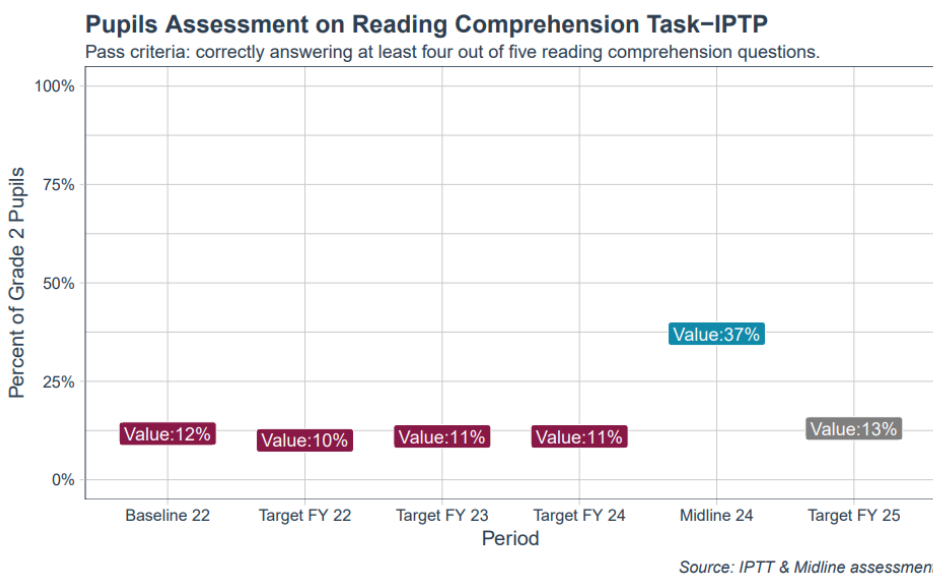


Figure 12: Reading comprehension indicator performance tracking

EGRA Subtasks

This subsection outlines a comparative analysis of pupil performance across the seven EGRA subtasks at baseline and midline, providing findings into the progress made over time. It further explores the differences in performance by pupil demographics at midline, highlighting key trends and variations across various groups.

There was a substantial improvement observed across all literacy tasks assessed across both genders. **Students demonstrated significant improvement in initial sound identification, with the percentage of students scoring zero decreasing by 42 percentage points, from 57% at baseline to just 15% at midline.** This suggests that foundational phonics skills have strengthened considerably since the baseline.

Reading comprehension also showed great progress, indicated by a substantial decrease of 42 percentage points in students unable to answer any questions correctly, dropping from 66% at baseline to 24% at midline.

Nonword reading saw similar improvements, with a notable **reduction of 39 percentage points in students unable to correctly read any nonwords, falling from 68% at baseline to 29% at midline.** The improvement in nonword reading further supports the notion of enhanced phonemic awareness and decoding skills, which contributes to improved reading fluency and comprehension.

Oral reading fluency demonstrated significant gains as well, with a marked **decrease of 36 percentage points in students unable to read any words fluently from a short story, reducing from 60% at baseline to 24% at midline.**

Familiar word reading also showed improvement, with a 27-percentage point decline in the number of students unable to read any familiar words, dropping from 47% at baseline to 20% at midline.

Lastly, letter name identification showed significant progress, with a 10-percentage point decrease in students unable to correctly identify at least one letter, falling from 12% at baseline to just 1% at midline. These findings collectively point to a positive shift in the quality of literacy instruction.

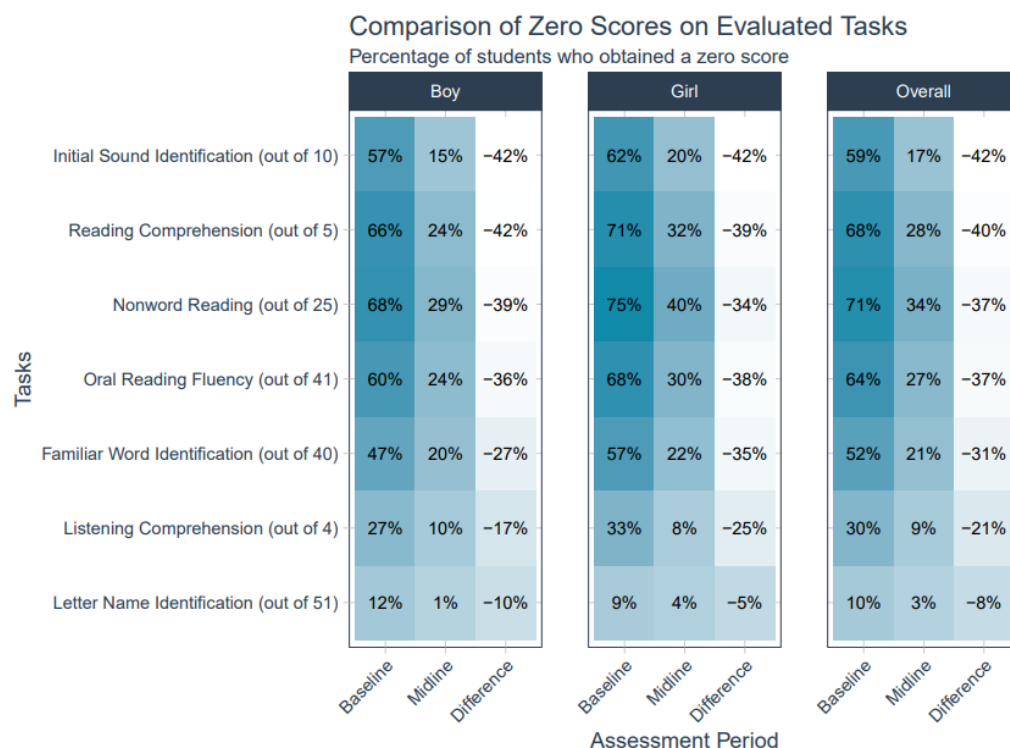


Figure 13: Gender-based comparison of zero scores across all tasks

The overall improvement in the EGRA subtasks points to an improvement in the reading and comprehension capabilities of the pupils. This was also reported by their teachers who double up as reading club facilitators. Reading literacy is an important ability that learners acquire as they progress through their early school years. It is the foundation for learning across all subjects and can also enhance recreation and personal growth, while simultaneously providing young children with the ability to participate more extensively in their communities and societies⁵. The pupils also showed improvement in three areas as noted from various qualitative interviews. These are outlined below.

i) **Better performance in assessment tests and exams administered.**

The teachers noted an improvement among the pupils when they conducted assessment tests and exams indicating that the children were reading more adequately than in previous terms.

The overall success has been great because, at the end of every term we conduct assessment tests and exams, and the feedback we received from the grades, proves that there is an improvement; the children are now reading effectively as compared to before. I normally teach them based on the guidelines I received from the training.

-Reading Club Facilitator IDI, Kakoya, Koinadugu

ii) **Increased capacity in practical reading activities within classrooms.**

⁵ Surette van Staden (2014) Factors that affect South African Reading Literacy Achievement: evidence from prePIRLS 2011; South African Journal of Education, Volume 34, Number 3, August 2014.

The teachers reported that pupils were able to better identify letters, pronounce words and read out passages during class lessons. These point to specific sub-tasks that were assessed in which the pupils showed a general improvement.

Interviewer: Okay, so how has the reading club impacted the pupils?

Interviewee: It has impacted them a lot because even when I write on the board, even if I don't read for them, they can read for themselves and understand, they can pronounce words for themselves, and the alphabets they can identify them without me showing them.

-Reading Club Facilitator IDI, Gbindi, Falaba

iii) Overall improved performance in schools and in national examinations, and improved school enrollment and attendance

Parents and the local government representatives reported that the pupils recorded better performance in national examinations and cited school feeding program as a major contributor. They indicated that this program especially the feeding interventions had boosted the retention of pupils in schools until the end of the school day, and also improved enrollment of pupils in schools.

At first, before the coming of CRS in our community, the number of failures in school was very alarming but since their intervention with the school feeding and other benefits, we noticed a huge number of passes on the NPSE exams. It was very hard to retain pupils in school till 2:00 pm but since the school feeding started, a huge number of pupils now stay in class till the said time for classes to end for that day. This method has led to the growth in enrolment in school. Parents are now motivated to send their children to school because of this initiative by CRS.

-FGD with Men, Bafodia, Koinadugu

Like I told you earlier on that with CRS the plan for a future project has improved the academic performance in the chieftdom like the NPSE, the external exams, their performance has been improved compared to before now during our own days we don't go to school sometimes, because we are hungry sometimes we go to the farm where they cook so that we can eat but now the children don't care about that because they have food in school they eat...

-KII with the Chief, Bafodia, Koinadugu

The subsequent sections further describe the reading tasks administered and the present performance of the pupils with reference to the project targets, and the baseline findings.

Task 1. Letter Name Identification

EGRA assesses children's alphabet knowledge in several ways, beginning with the letter identification subtask, a core component of EGRA. The letter identification subtask tests children's ability to recognize the graphemic features of each letter and accurately map it to its corresponding name or sound. Either or both letter identification subtasks can be selected, depending on what is appropriate for a given context: letter name identification or letter sound identification. In both options, children are given a written list of capital and lowercase letters (and diphthongs or digraphs if appropriate) in random order and asked to articulate either the name or the sound of each⁶. For this assessment, letter naming was specifically evaluated.

The letter name identification subtask assessed students' foundational literacy skills by evaluating their letter recognition and naming abilities. Results indicate a substantial improvement in students' capacity to identify and vocalize uppercase and lowercase letters across all age groups. **Correct letter name**

⁶ [Early Grade Reading Assessment \(EGRA\) Toolkit: Second Edition | SharEd \(rti.org\)](#)

identification increased from 61% (31 letters) at baseline to 86% (44 letters) at midline, marking a substantial advancement in early literacy development.

This consistent progress, observed across male and female students in the below table, suggests that the implemented interventions effectively targeted letter knowledge, a crucial building block for subsequent reading skills.

Table 8: Average number of correct items out of 51 in the letter identification task

Category	Gender		Overall
	Boy	Girl	
Age Groups			
6-7 years	37.0	37.0	37.0
8-9 years	44.9	44.9	44.9
10 years	48.7	46.9	47.8
Approval Status			
MBSSE-approved	43.5	43.1	43.3
Not approved	47.1	46.6	46.8
School Ownership			
Community	45.0	44.1	44.5
Mission	43.1	42.9	43.0
Government	44.2	44.6	44.4
Districts			
Falaba	47.9	47.2	47.5
Koinadugu	38.1	38.3	38.2
Overall	43.8	43.4	43.6

There is no statistically significant difference in median scores between boys and girls ($p = 0.087$, $\alpha = 0.05$). Additionally, no statistically significant difference is observed in median scores between MBSSE-approved and non-approved schools ($p = 0.758$, $\alpha = 0.05$) or across different types of school ownership ($p = 0.076$, $\alpha = 0.05$).

More pupils struggled to recognize the letters q, g, j, and r, suggesting underlying challenges in visual discrimination. The similar shapes of these letters, particularly g and q and j and y, can create confusion for young learners still developing fine-tuned visual perception skills. To enhance letter recognition skills, particularly for letters like q, g, j, and r, it is recommended that ample opportunities be provided for students to practice identifying and writing these letters. This can be achieved through various activities and exercises incorporated into daily lessons.

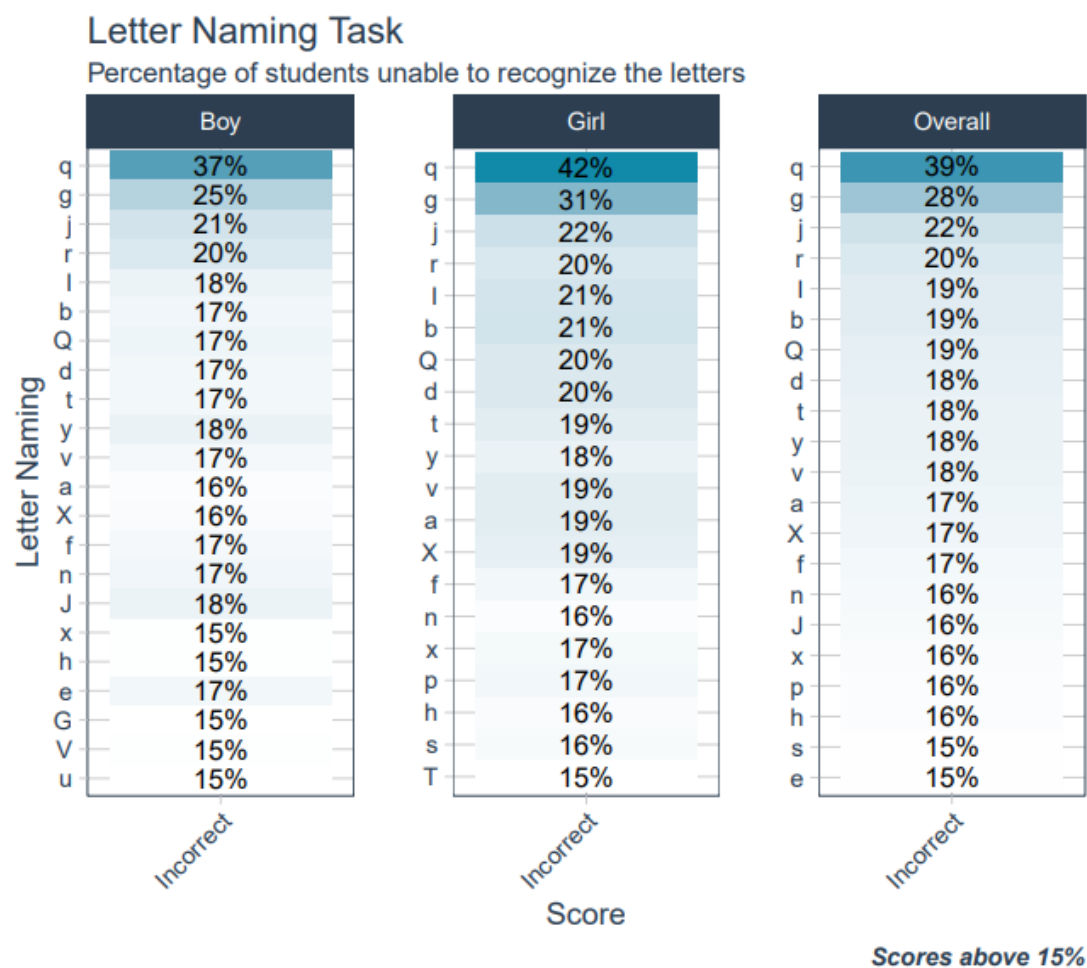


Figure 14: Letter recognition by gender

Task 2. Phonemic Awareness

Phonemic awareness, a term often used interchangeably with phonological awareness refers specifically to the awareness of phonemes, which are the smallest units of sound that distinguish the meaning of a word in each language.⁷

Phonemic awareness, the ability to identify individual sounds within words, is a critical precursor to reading. Baseline assessment revealed a low level of phonemic awareness among pupils, with an average score of only 2 out of 10, indicating that they could accurately identify fewer than 20% of initial sounds. However, a significant improvement was observed at midline, with scores rising to an average of 6 out of 10, representing a 60% accuracy rate. This substantial growth in phonemic awareness is encouraging and suggests that the teaching interventions implemented contributed to the development of this essential literacy skill.

Importantly, there were no gender-based differences in phonemic awareness development as observed in the table below.

⁷ [Early Grade Reading Assessment \(EGRA\) Toolkit: Second Edition | SharEd \(rti.org\)](#)

Table 9: Average number of correct items out of 10 words in phonemic awareness task

Category	Gender		Overall
	Boy	Girl	
Age Groups			
6-7 years	4.9	4.7	4.8
8-9 years	6.3	5.8	6.1
10 years	7.7	7.4	7.6
Approval Status			
MBSSE-approved	6.2	5.9	6.0
Not approved	6.6	5.2	5.9
School Ownership			
Community	5.7	5.8	5.8
Mission	6.4	5.8	6.1
Government	7.3	5.7	6.5
Districts			
Falaba	7.0	6.6	6.8
Koinadugu	5.2	4.8	5.0
Overall	6.2	5.8	6.0

There is no statistically significant difference in median scores between boys and girls ($p = 0.223$).

Additionally, no statistically significant difference is observed in median scores between MBSSE-approved and non-approved schools ($p = 0.707$, $\alpha = 0.05$) or across different types of school ownership ($p = 0.083$, $\alpha = 0.05$).

Over 50% of pupils struggled to identify the initial sounds of familiar words like “fowl” and “rice”, indicating gaps in phonemic awareness. This difficulty suggests potential underlying challenges in both phonological processing and visual discrimination. A lack of familiarity with words can hinder a child’s ability to segment them into individual sounds. Additionally, the complex visual features of certain letters, such as the letter ‘r’ as evident in the letter naming task, may contribute to difficulties in identifying initial sounds. These underscore the need for comprehensive phonics instruction that addresses both phonological and visual aspects of letter-sound relationships.

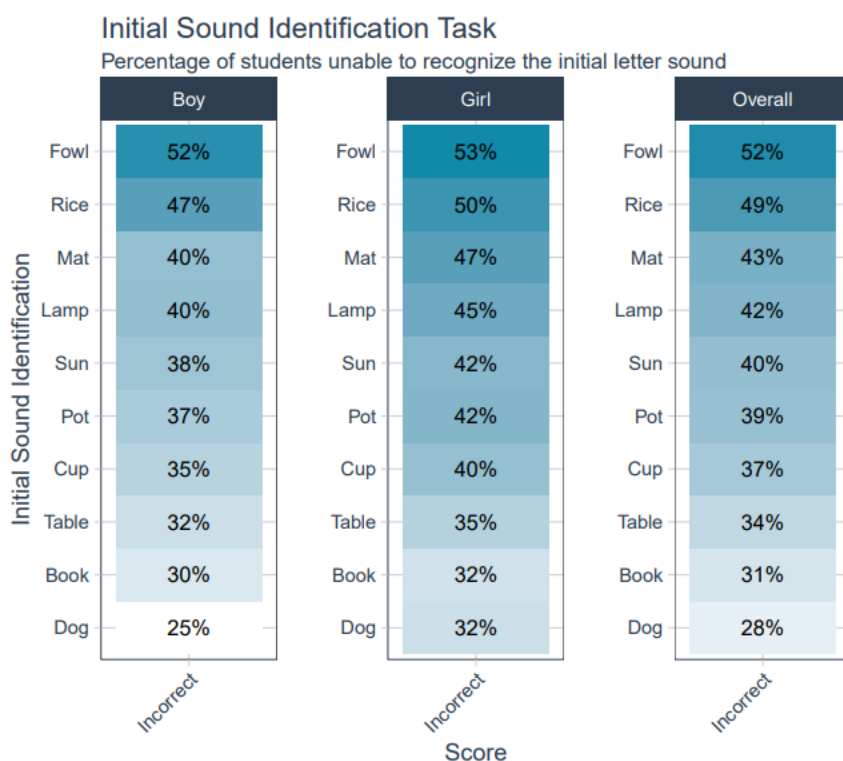


Figure 15: Initial Sound Identification by gender

Task 3. Familiar Word Identification

The familiar word reading subtask is similar in format to the nonword reading subtask except that it presents a list of words that students are expected to be able to read at their grade level and will have likely encountered before.⁸

The familiar word reading subtask assessed students' ability to recognize and pronounce common words, a foundational skill for fluency and comprehension. Baseline results indicated a relatively low average of 11 correct words out of 40 (28%). However, midline assessment revealed a significant improvement to an average of 24 correct words (60%), demonstrating the contribution of the implemented interventions.

As shown in the table below, gender and age-related differences emerged, with older and male students exhibiting significantly stronger performance.

⁸ [Early Grade Reading Assessment \(EGRA\) Toolkit: Second Edition | SharEd \(rti.org\)](#)

Table 10: Average number of correct items out of 40 in familiar word reading task

Category	Gender		Overall
	Boy	Girl	
Age Groups			
6-7 years	17.7	17.4	17.5
8-9 years	27.4	24.9	26.1
10 years	32.5	29.1	30.8
Approval Status			
MBSSE-approved	26.0	24.0	25.0
Not approved	26.8	23.3	25.0
School Ownership			
Community	26.8	24.2	25.5
Mission	25.4	23.2	24.3
Government	28.5	28.9	28.7
Districts			
Falaba	30.8	26.4	28.6
Koinadugu	19.5	20.6	20.1
Overall	26.1	23.9	25.0

There is a statistically significant difference in median scores between boys and girls ($p = 0.025$, $\alpha = 0.05$). Additionally, a statistically significant difference is observed in median scores across different types of school ownership ($p = 0.03$, $\alpha = 0.05$). However, there is no statistically significant difference between MBSSE-approved and non-approved schools ($p = 0.31$, $\alpha = 0.05$)

More than half of the pupils struggled to read familiar words such as “numb,” “here,” “does,” “head,” “that,” and “leg”, which suggests some underlying challenges in early literacy development. Despite their familiarity, difficulties in decoding these words indicate potential weaknesses in phonological awareness and letter-sound correspondence. To build sight word fluency and overcome these challenges, consistent practice of reading and writing familiar words is essential, both in the classroom and home environments.

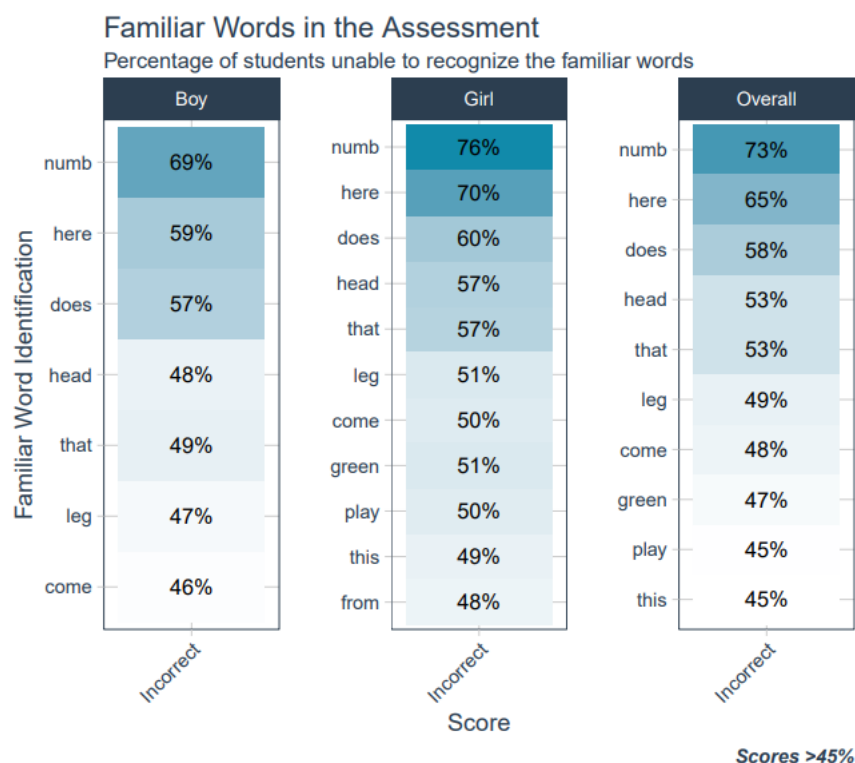


Figure 16: Familiar word identification by gender

Task 4. Nonword Reading

The nonword reading subtask, another core EGRA subtask, provides indirect insight into student's ability to decode unfamiliar words. The nonword reading subtask presents the student with a written list of pseudowords that follow the phonological and spelling rules of the language but are not actual words in the language. Students are asked to read out loud as many of the nonwords as they can, as quickly and carefully as they can.

The nonword reading subtask assessed students' ability to apply phonics skills to decode unfamiliar words. **The midline assessment revealed a significant improvement in decoding abilities, with participants achieving an average of 12 correct words out of 25 (48%), compared to a low baseline average of just 3.5 correct words (14%). This substantial progress highlights the effectiveness of the phonics instruction implemented through the program.**

Notably, there were significant gender differences in performance at midline as shown in the table below. On average, boys correctly identified 13 words compared to 11 for girls.

Table 11: Average number of correct items out of 25 words in nonword reading task

Category	Gender		Overall
	Boy	Girl	
Age Groups			
6-7 years	8.5	7.4	7.9
8-9 years	13.6	10.8	12.2
10 years	16.6	13.8	15.2
Approval Status			
MBSSE-approved	13.2	10.8	12.0
Not approved	10.4	8.3	9.4
School Ownership			
Community	13.8	11.6	12.7
Mission	12.3	9.7	11.0
Government	15.0	13.1	14.1
Districts			
Falaba	15.8	13.2	14.5
Koinadugu	9.0	7.0	8.0
Overall	13.0	10.6	11.8

There is a statistically significant difference in median scores between boys and girls ($p = 0.002$, $\alpha = 0.05$). Additionally, a statistically significant difference is observed in median scores between MBSSE-approved and non-approved schools ($p = 0.018$, $\alpha = 0.05$) or across different types of school ownership ($p = 0.015$, $\alpha = 0.05$).

The significant number of pupils struggling to read nonwords like “zeg”, “shab”, “nuk”, “vob”, “pog”, and “daf” underscores the importance of ongoing, explicit phonics instruction. To effectively address this challenge, incorporating phonological awareness activities and games is essential for building strong letter-sound connections. A systematic approach to phonics teaching, complemented by word sorts and targeted decoding practice, will empower students to apply phonics rules confidently and accurately when encountering unfamiliar words.

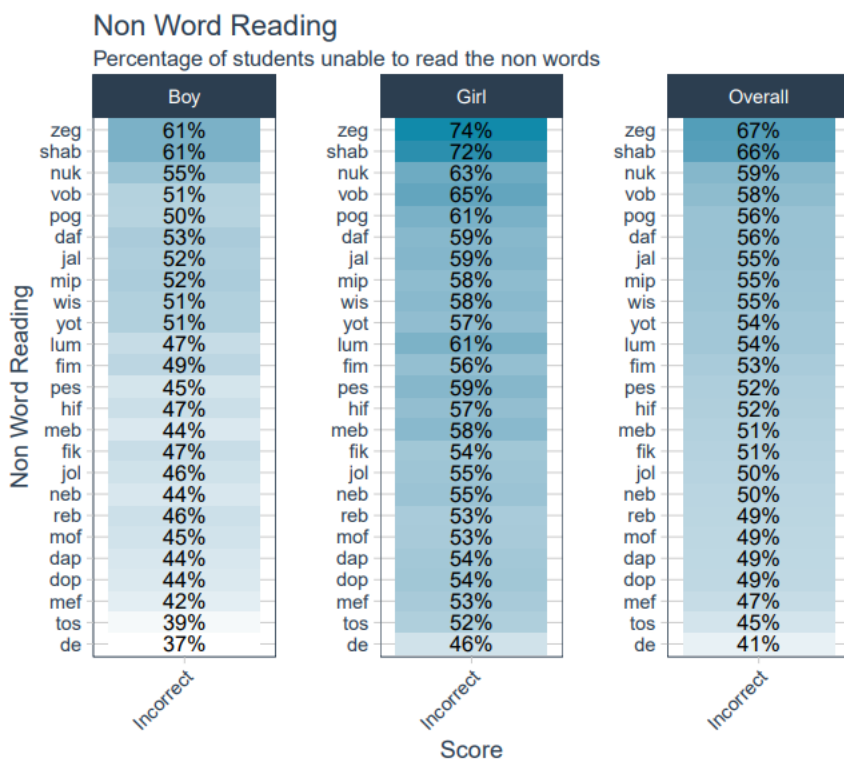


Figure 17: Non-word reading by gender.

Tasks 5 & 6. Oral reading fluency with comprehension

Oral reading fluency is a measure of overall reading competence: the ability to translate letters into sounds, unify sounds into words, process connections, relate text to meaning, and make inferences to fill in missing information.⁹

Reading comprehension, the ability to understand written text, is contingent upon foundational reading skills. A positive correlation exists between the mastery of these lower-level skills and the capacity to comprehend written passages.

At midline, oral literacy had significantly improved, with pupils reading over half of the text (54%), compared to only 20% at baseline. No significant gender disparities were observed at either midline or baseline.

⁹ [Early Grade Reading Assessment \(EGRA\) Toolkit: Second Edition | SharEd \(rti.org\)](#)

Table 12: Average number of correct items out of 41 in oral fluency task

Category	Gender		Overall
	Boy	Girl	
Age Groups			
6-7 years	17.0	16.7	16.8
8-9 years	24.5	21.6	23.0
10 years	28.6	24.5	26.5
Approval Status			
MBSSE-approved	23.5	21.2	22.4
Not approved	23.2	18.4	20.8
School Ownership			
Community	23.8	22.9	23.3
Mission	23.2	19.7	21.4
Government	25.0	23.0	24.0
Districts			
Falaba	27.7	24.5	26.1
Koinadugu	17.7	16.2	16.9
Overall	23.5	21.0	22.2

There is no statistically significant difference in median scores between boys and girls ($p = 0.08$, $\alpha = 0.05$) based on approval status ($p = 0.086$) or across different types of school ownership ($p = 0.076$).

Reading comprehension at baseline was limited, with pupils answering only 1 out of 5 questions correctly, and no significant gender differences were observed.

However, a significant improvement was observed in the midline, where the average number of correct answers increased to 2.7 out of five. Although boys marginally outperformed girls (2.7 vs. 2.64), this difference was statistically significant as demonstrated in the table below.

Table 13: Average number of correct answers out of 5 in reading comprehension

Category	Gender		Overall
	Boy	Girl	
Age Groups			
6-7 years	1.7	1.9	1.8
8-9 years	2.8	2.4	2.6
10 years	3.2	2.4	2.8
Approval Status			
MBSSE-approved	2.6	2.4	2.5
Not approved	2.8	1.7	2.2
School Ownership			
Community	2.4	2.3	2.3
Mission	2.7	2.2	2.5
Government	3.0	3.0	3.0
Districts			
Falaba	3.0	2.5	2.8
Koinadugu	2.1	2.0	2.0
Overall	2.6	2.3	2.5

There were statistically significant difference in median scores between boys and girls ($p = 0.024$, $\alpha = 0.1$). Additionally, no statistically significant difference is observed in median scores between MBSSE-approved and non-approved schools ($p = 0.321$, $\alpha = 0.05$) or across different types of school ownership ($p = 0.052$, $\alpha = 0.05$).

The graph below presents a comparative analysis of pupils' ability to answer reading comprehension questions correctly at baseline and midline. At baseline, over two-thirds (68%) of pupils were unable to answer a single comprehension question correctly. However, this figure decreased significantly by 40 percentage points to 28% at midline. Additionally, the proportion of pupils who answered four questions correctly rose by 11 percentage points to 18%, while those who answered five questions correctly increased by 15 percentage points, reaching 19% at midline.

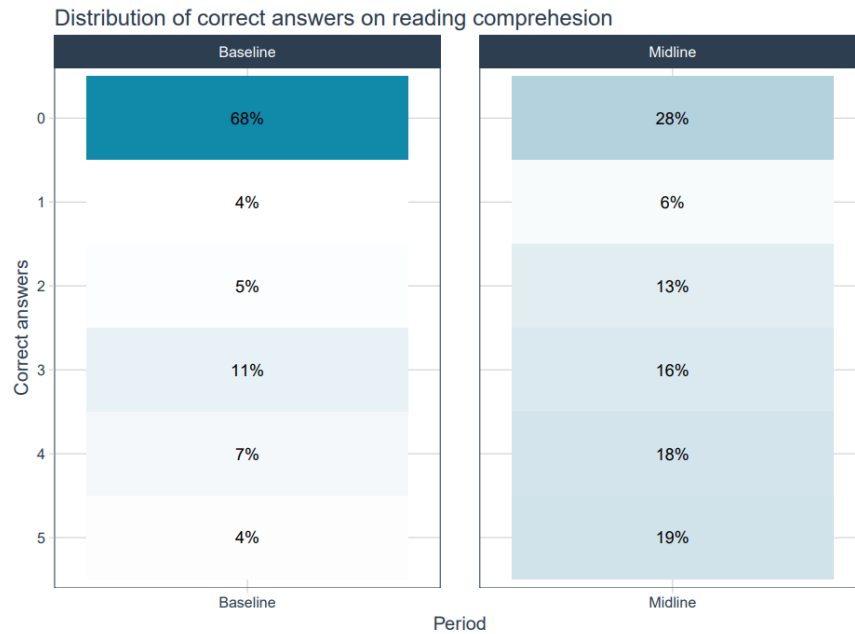
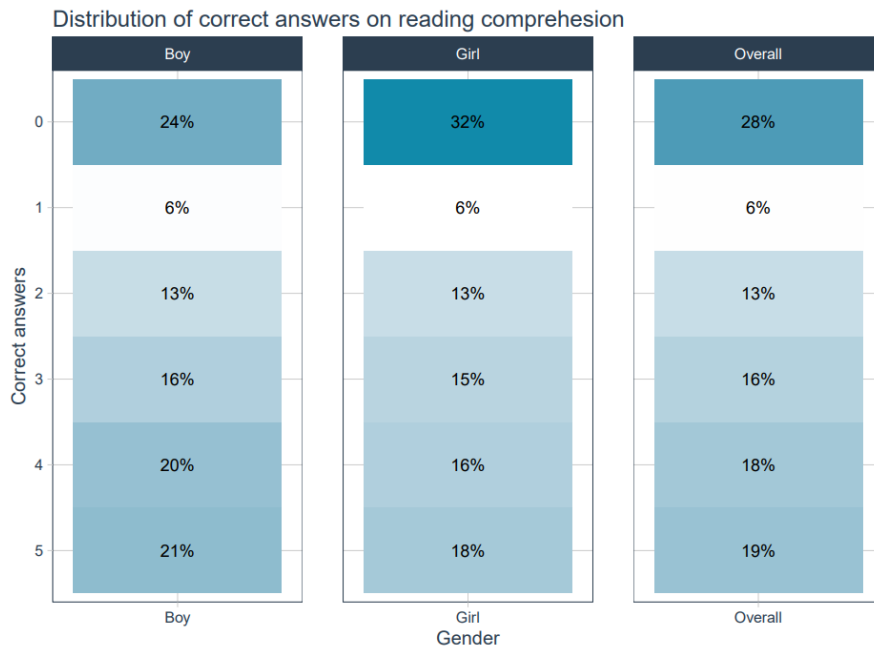


Figure 18: Distribution of correct answers on reading comprehension

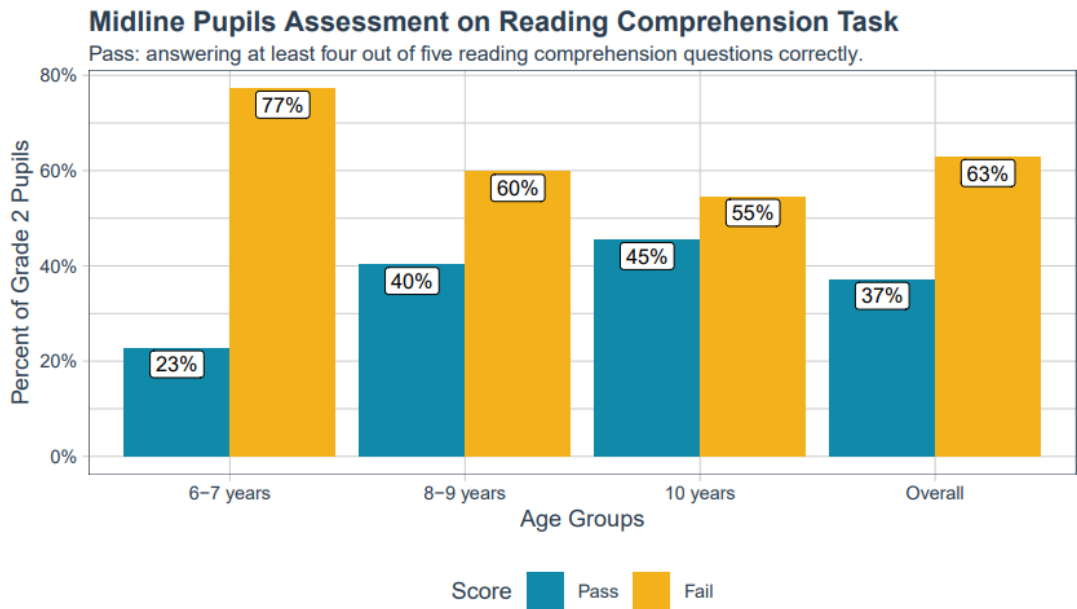
At midline, 32% of girls were unable to answer any of the reading comprehension questions correctly, compared to 24% of boys. Overall, boys were 1.4 times likely to read fluently when compared to girls.



Source: L4UF-Midline assessments (2024)

Figure 19: Distribution of correct answers on reading comprehension

A clear association between age and reading comprehension performance was observed, with older pupils consistently performing better than younger ones.

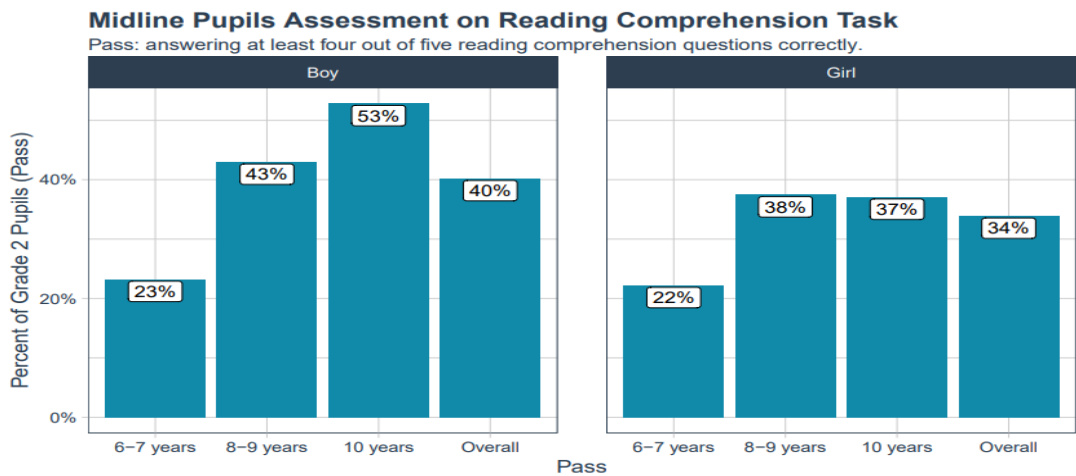


Source: LF4U-Midline assessment (2024)

Figure 20: Reading comprehension performance by gender

According to Figure 20, pupils aged 8-9 were 1.96 times more likely to read fluently than those aged 6-7, while pupils aged 10 were 2.36 times more likely to read fluently compared to the 6-7 age group. This indicates developmental progression in reading comprehension abilities as children grow older. This trend suggests that older students benefit from increased cognitive maturity, vocabulary development, and exposure to a wider range of texts, all contributing to enhanced comprehension skills.

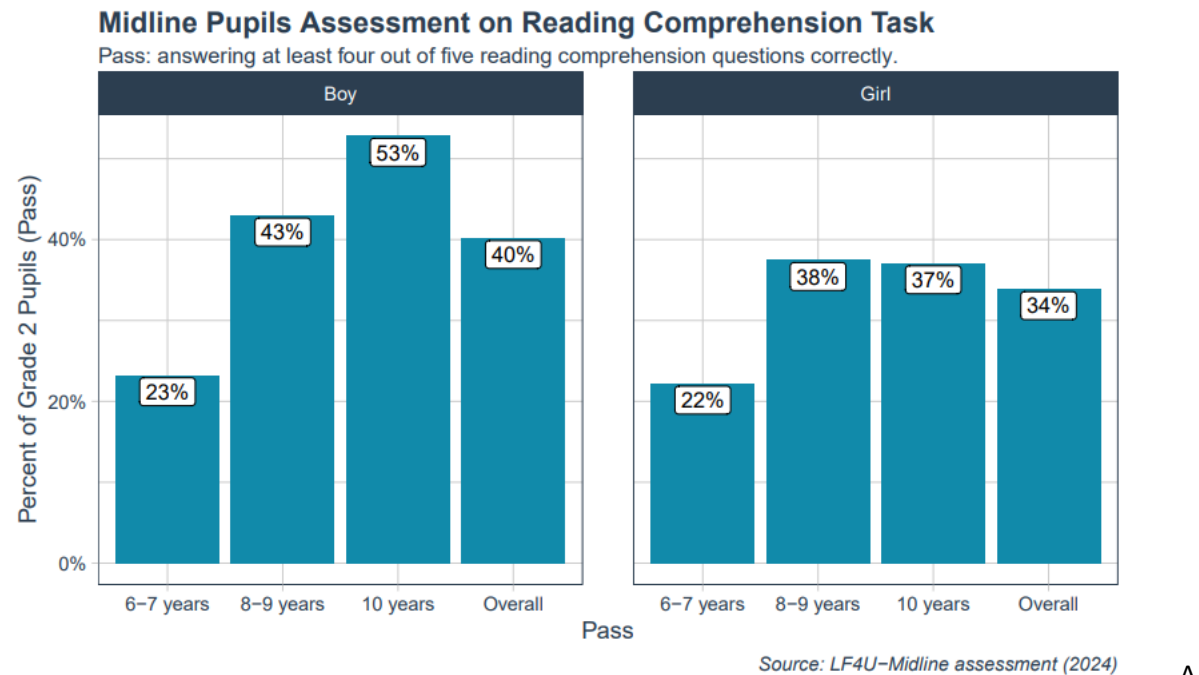
A gender gap in reading comprehension emerged between boys and girls aged 8-10, with boys demonstrating higher performance.



Source: LF4U-Midline assessment (2024)

Figure 21: Reading comprehension performance by gender and age

Based on Figure 21, disparity was most evident among the 10-year-old age group, where the pass rate for boys exceeded that of girls. While there was little difference in reading comprehension between boys and girls aged 6-7, both groups underperformed compared to older pupils.



significant disparity in reading comprehension performance was also observed at a district level between pupils in Falaba (43%) and Koinadugu (28%) districts. Based on regression analysis, pupils in Falaba were 1.7 times more likely to read fluently as compared to those in Koinandugu.

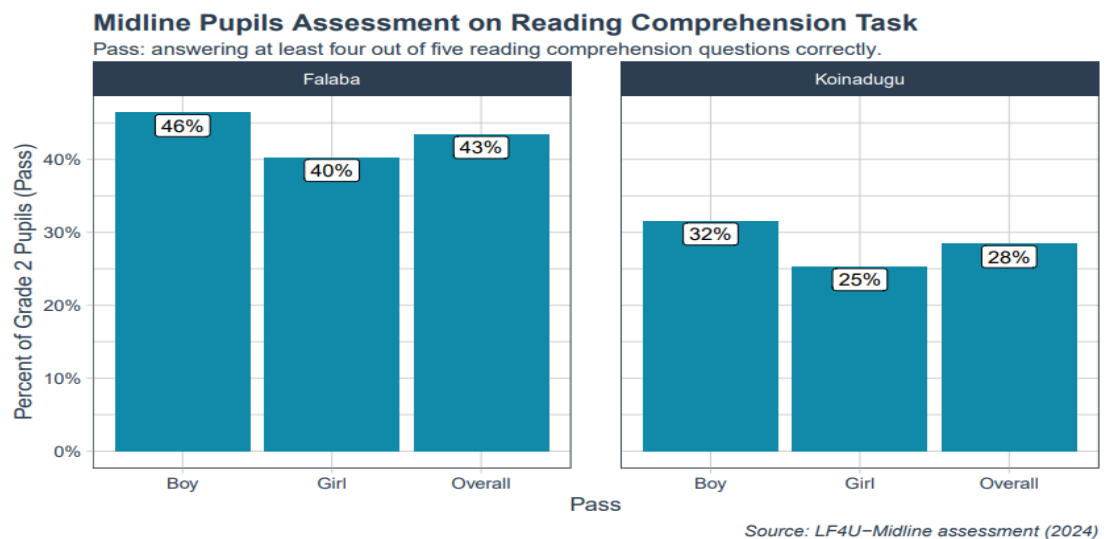


Figure 22: Reading comprehension performance by district and gender

Findings in Figure 22 show that in Falaba, boys had a pass rate of 46%, while girls achieved a pass rate of 40%. In contrast, Koinadugu reported lower performance, with boys at a 32% pass rate and girls at 25%. This notable regional discrepancy highlights the need for targeted interventions in post-midline

programming, especially for girls in Koinadugu, who underperformed significantly compared to their peers in Falaba. When reading comprehension was examined by the school approval status, there were significant disparities in reading comprehension proficiency as shown in Figure 23 below.

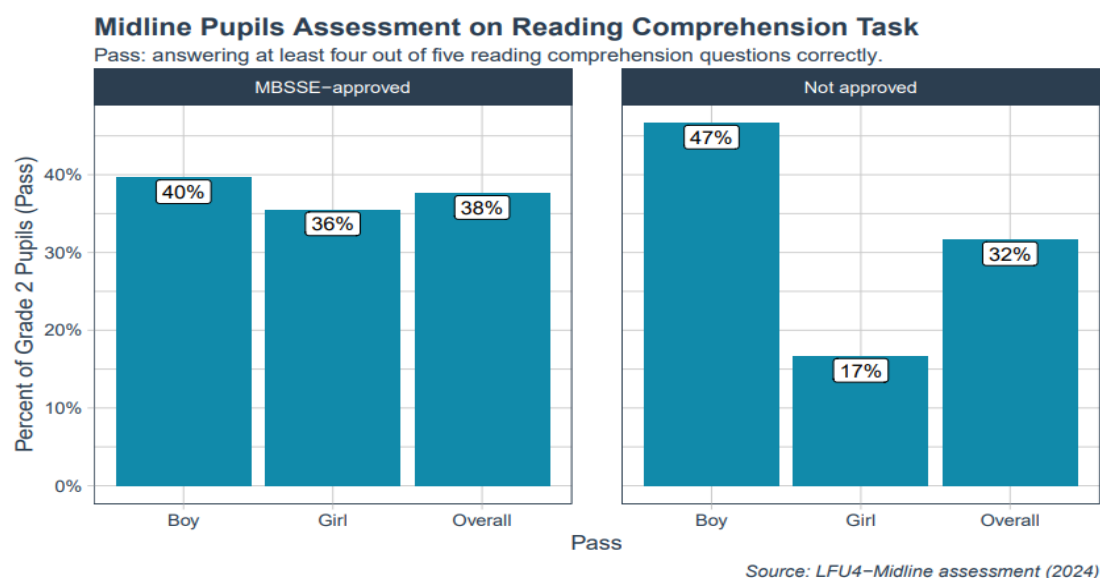


Figure 23: Reading comprehension performance by school approval status and gender

Notably, pupils from MBSSE-approved schools demonstrated higher reading comprehension levels, with 38% passing the task compared to 32% in not-approved schools. Additionally, the gender gap was more pronounced in not-approved schools, where only 17% of girls passed the reading comprehension task, significantly lower than the 36% rate of girls observed in approved schools.

To explain this, we note that approved schools are eligible to receive in-kind material, school feeding, financial support including school subsidies and teacher salaries, and all exam fees (NPSE, BECE, WASSE). According to the MBSSE, schools with the approval status must have entitlement of the land occupied by the school, a functioning oversight committee, safe clean water, adequate playing space, safe buildings, proper WASH facilities, a school improvement plan, a bank account to receive funds, and an adequate number of qualified teachers (ratio of 1:40 for primary schools)¹⁰. Approved schools therefore have better personnel, infrastructure and financial support which provide a conducive learning environment for pupils and contribute to better performance of pupils in the MBSSE-approved schools than not-approved schools.

Across school ownership types, there exists a significant disparity in performance. Pupils in government schools consistently outperformed their peers in mission and community-owned schools. Over half of pupils in government schools (52%) passed the assessment, while only 37% and 33% from mission and community schools achieved passing grades. This trend was evident among both boys and girls in government schools, who both demonstrated significantly higher pass rates than their counterparts in other school types. These suggest that government schools may have systemic advantages that contribute

¹⁰ Policy Guidelines on school approvals, Ministry of Basic and Senior secondary education (MBSSE)
https://mbsse.gov.sl/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/MBSSE-School-Approvals-Policy-Guidelines_final.pdf

to improved student outcomes which explains the sustainability efforts being pursued by CRS and the government of Sierra Leone to transfer the schools in the project area to the government management.

Findings from regression analysis indicated that pupils who reported having access to textbooks during class were significantly more likely to pass reading comprehension assessments compared to those without textbooks ($p = 0.011$). Additionally, pupils who were members of a school reading club were 2.12 times more likely to read fluently ($p < 0.001$), underscoring the positive influence of structured reading activities. However, the provision of slates did not show a significant contribution to reading comprehension ($p = 0.9$), suggesting that while slates may have other educational uses, they do not directly impact reading outcomes.

This analysis highlights the critical role of providing students with adequate reading materials and the benefits of fostering a reading culture through clubs. Access to textbooks and active participation in reading clubs significantly enhance students' reading fluency, while other materials, such as slates, may not directly affect literacy development. Schools should prioritize ensuring students have access to reading materials and encouraging participation in reading clubs to improve reading outcomes.

Task 7. Listening Comprehension

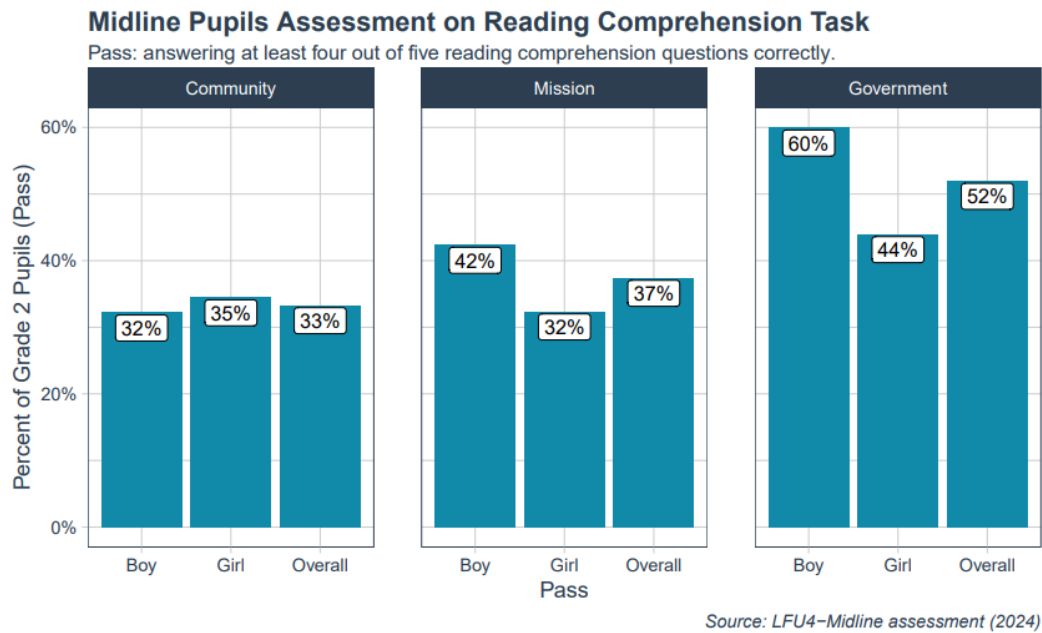


Figure 24: Reading comprehension performance by school ownership and gender

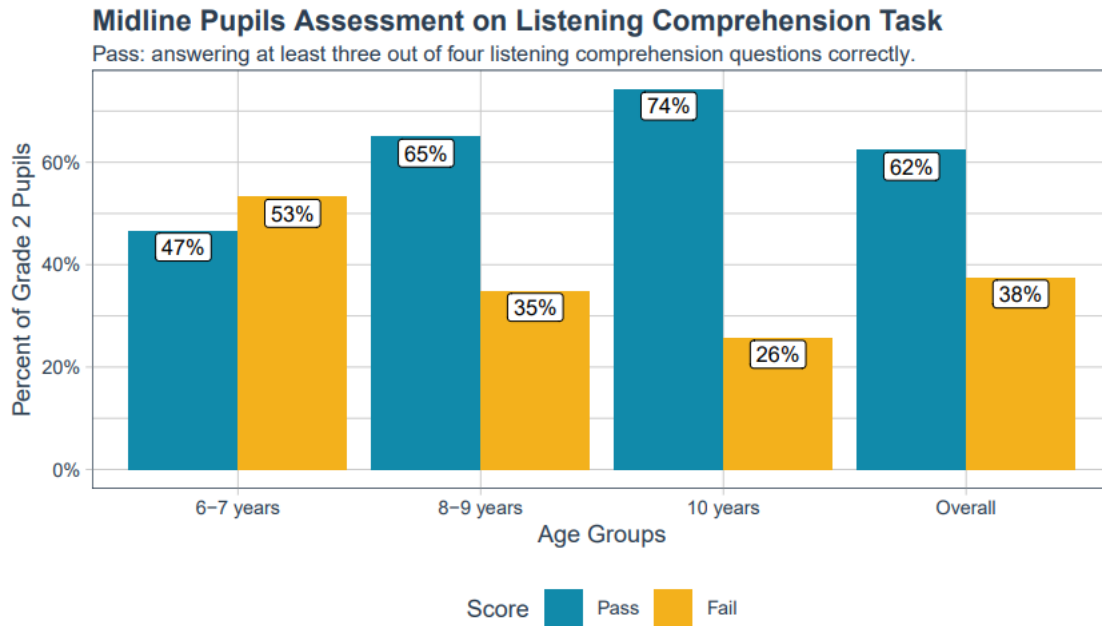
The listening comprehension subtask assessed pupils' ability to understand spoken language and answer questions based on a short auditory text. Baseline results indicated a low average of *1.7 correct answers* out of four, with no gender differences. However, a notable improvement was observed at midline, with the average increasing to **3 correct answers**, suggesting that the interventions effectively enhanced pupils' listening comprehension skills.

Table 14: Average number of correct answers out of 4 in listening comprehension task

Category	Gender		Overall
	Boy	Girl	
Age Groups			
6-7 years	2.0	2.4	2.2
8-9 years	2.8	2.7	2.8
10 years	3.1	2.7	2.9
Approval Status			
MBSSE-approved	2.7	2.7	2.7
Not approved	3.2	2.4	2.8
School Ownership			
Community	2.7	2.6	2.6
Mission	2.8	2.6	2.7
Government	2.4	3.0	2.7
Districts			
Falaba	2.9	2.8	2.9
Koinadugu	2.4	2.4	2.4
Overall	2.7	2.6	2.7

There is no statistically significant difference in median scores between boys and girls ($p = 0.227$, $\alpha = 0.05$). Additionally, no statistically significant difference is observed in median scores between MBSSE-approved and non-approved schools ($p = 0.404$, $\alpha = 0.05$) or across different types of school ownership ($p = 0.673$, $\alpha = 0.05$).

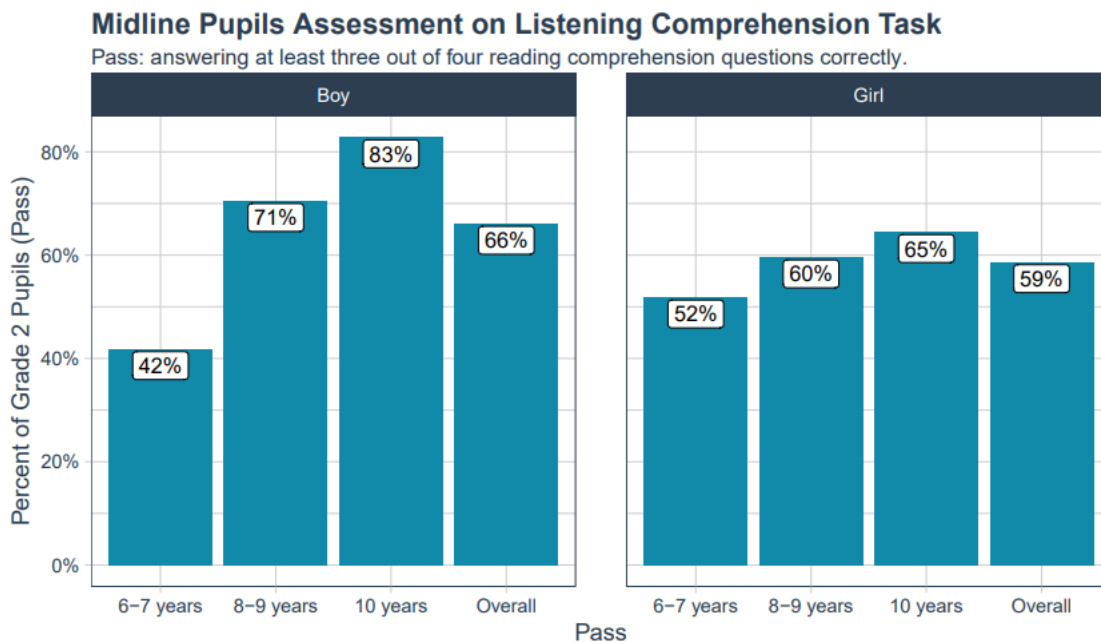
Similar to reading comprehension, a clear correlation between age and listening comprehension performance was evident. Younger pupils aged 6-7 exhibited lower scores than older peers, suggesting a developmental progression in auditory processing and comprehension skills. Notably, overall listening comprehension scores were slightly higher than reading comprehension scores across all age groups, indicating that students may have stronger auditory processing abilities than reading-based comprehension.



Source: LF4U-Midline assessment (2024)

Figure 25: Listening comprehension performance by gender

Gender interaction was observed across age groups. While boys consistently outperformed girls in older age brackets (above 7 years), a notable trend emerged among younger children (6-7 years). In this age group, girls performed better than boys in listening comprehension.



Source: LF4U-Midline assessment (2024)

Figure 26: Listening comprehension performance by gender and age

When examining performance across districts, a clear difference in listening comprehension emerged. Falaba district outperformed Koinadugu district, with boys achieving a 74% pass rate and girls reaching 66% compared to 55% and 49%, respectively.

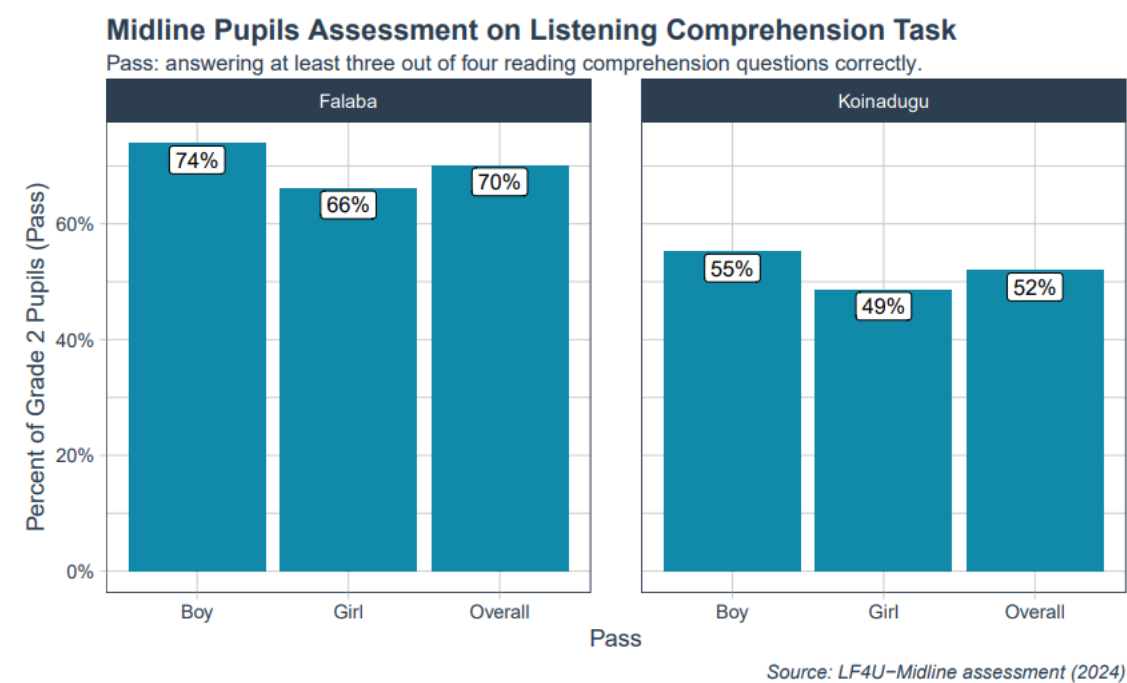


Figure 27: Listening comprehension performance by district and age

A comparison of MBSSE-approved and not-approved schools reveals contrasting trends in listening comprehension proficiency. Surprisingly, pupils from not-approved schools outperformed their counterparts in MBSSE-approved schools, with 67% passing the listening comprehension task compared to 62%. However, this advantage was primarily driven by higher performance among boys in not-approved schools, who achieved a remarkable 83% pass rate. Girls in not-approved schools exhibited lower proficiency, with only 50% passing the task. Interestingly, the gender gap was less pronounced in MBSSE-approved schools, where both boys and girls demonstrated relatively high pass rates.

While not-approved schools may have specific strengths in certain areas, such as listening comprehension, they also face significant gender disparities in performance that require targeted interventions to ensure equitable learning opportunities for all students.

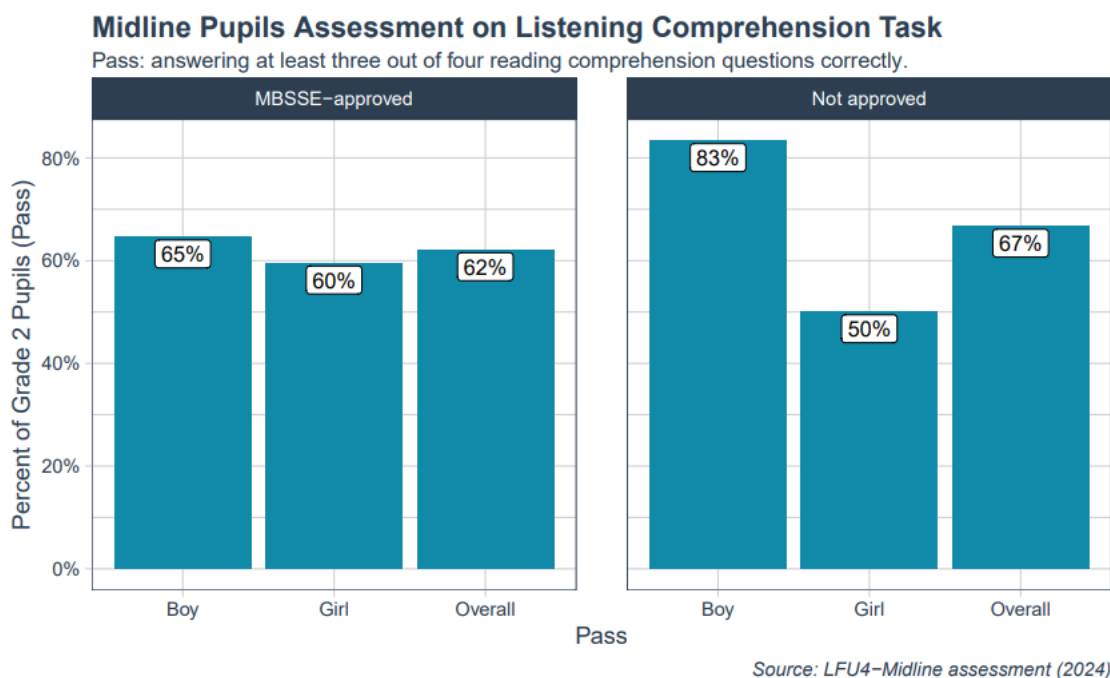


Figure 28: Listening comprehension performance by school approval status and gender

Analysis of listening comprehension performance across school ownership types indicates a relatively homogenous distribution of results. Government schools demonstrated slightly higher proficiency, with 68% of pupils passing the assessment. However, mission and community schools exhibited comparable levels of achievement, with 63% and 61% of pupils passing, respectively.

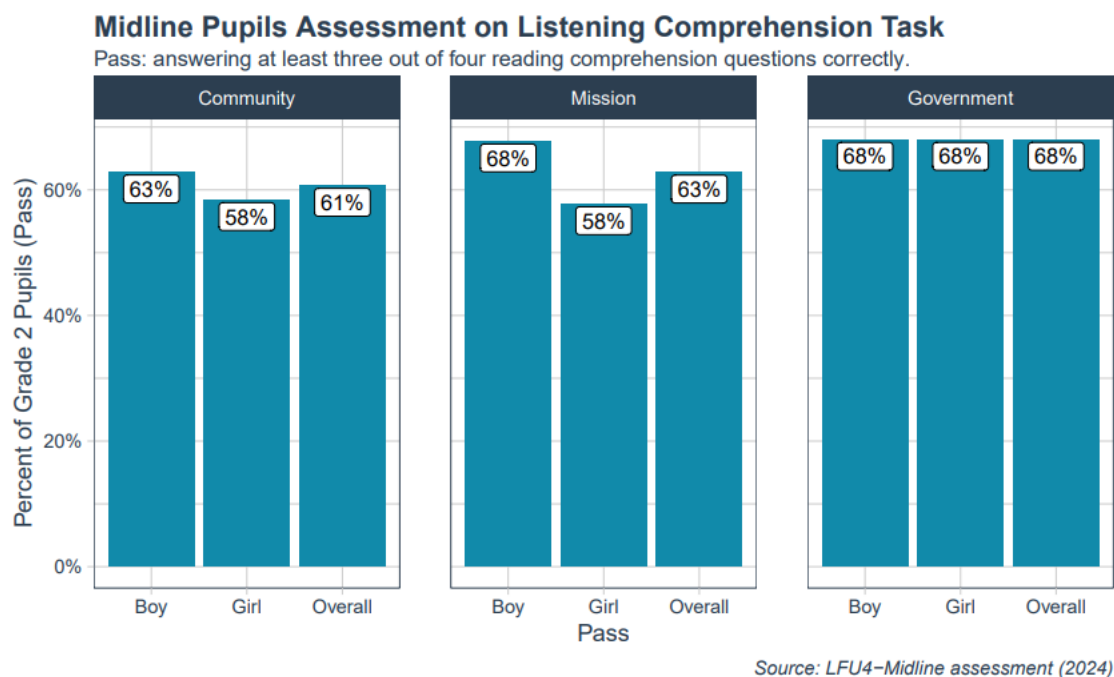


Figure 29: Listening comprehension performance by school ownership status and gender

Analysis of factors associated with reading fluency and comprehension

Results of regression analysis shown in **Error! Reference source not found.** indicate that several significant factors contributed to students' success in reading comprehension assessments. Notably, strong performance in listening comprehension was a key predictor, with students who passed the listening comprehension threshold (answering at least three out of four questions correctly) having 30% higher odds of passing the reading comprehension assessment, indicating a strong link between auditory and reading skills.

Additionally, proficiency in oral reading fluency, demonstrated by correct word reading rates, had a substantial and statistically significant effect. Each correctly read word was associated with an 80% increase in the odds of passing the reading comprehension assessment.

While performance in tasks such as familiar word reading and letter name identification showed positive associations with reading comprehension, these increases of 15% and 16%, respectively, were not statistically significant. Similarly, each additional year of pupils' age corresponded to a 10% increase in the odds of achieving the reading comprehension threshold, though this too was not significant.

Participation in extracurricular activities also showed positive results. Membership in reading clubs was associated with an 11% increase in the odds of reaching the reading comprehension threshold, and participation in life skills lessons showed a 15% increase in the odds.

These findings collectively support the importance of a multifaceted approach to enhancing reading comprehension, encompassing auditory skills, vocabulary development and fluency.

Table 15: Regression Output

Outcome variable (Reading comprehension threshold (Ref = Pass). Note: The highlighted variables are statistically significant at (p=0.05).						
Variables.	Coefficients	Standard error	Z value	P value (significance)	Standardized coefficients	Odds ratios
Intercept	-9.5982	1.6575	-5.7909	0.0000	-3.3849	0.0339
Oral reading fluency: number of correct items	0.1410	0.0290	4.8638	0.0000	2.0378	7.6734
Listening comprehension: Pass (Ref = Fail)	1.0960	0.2987	3.6687	0.0002	1.0960	2.9921
Life skills training: Yes (Ref = No)	0.4546	0.2559	1.7765	0.0756	0.4546	1.5756
Letter name identification task: number of correct items	0.0350	0.0266	1.3145	0.1887	0.4448	1.5602
Slate provision: Yes (Ref = No)	0.3281	0.2546	1.2889	0.1974	0.3281	1.3884
Familiar word identification: number of correct items	0.0273	0.0238	1.1475	0.2512	0.3983	1.4892
School Ownership: Mission (Ref = Community)	0.4069	0.2518	1.6159	0.1061	0.4069	1.5021
School Ownership: Government (Ref = Community)	0.6015	0.5349	1.1245	0.2608	0.6015	1.8248
Initial sound identification task: number of correct items	0.0472	0.0541	0.8719	0.3833	0.1607	1.1743
Textbook provision: Yes (Ref = No)	0.3362	0.6112	0.5502	0.5822	0.3362	1.3997
Age in years	0.0601	0.1168	0.5142	0.6071	0.0634	1.0655
Reading club membership: Yes (Ref = No)	0.0833	0.2935	0.2839	0.7765	0.0833	1.0869
Gender: Girl (Ref = Boy)	-0.0611	0.2333	-0.2620	0.7933	-0.0611	0.9407
Nonword reading: number of correct items	0.0032	0.0207	0.1552	0.8767	0.0304	1.0309

Note: Listening comprehension: Pass criteria is correctly answering at least three out of four questions

Regression model metrics:

Logloss: 0.527, AUC: 0.829, giniCoef: 0.657, Accuracy: 0.791, Precision: 0.624, Recall: 0.892, Specificity: 0.744

Teacher and student targeted approaches that contributed to improved literacy

Findings from the Qualitative Analysis

An education case study of Sierra Leone in 2021 identified teaching, inspiring and motivating teachers of the early grade level as a strategy to strengthen the pupils' skills in both literacy and numeracy. These foundational skills are important for higher learning, productive employment and civic engagement¹¹. For this phase of the project, CRS contracted Teach for Sierra Leone (TFSL) and the University of Makeni (UNIMAK) as partners to implement teacher targeted activities including providing distance learning, teacher training, coaching and mentoring.

Insights from the implementing partners

Our conversations with the key informants from TFSL and UNIMAK gave us an overview of their role in this project, the activities that they implement, the type of training that they offer to the teachers and their view of improvement areas. Both institutions focus on developing teachers who are actively teaching in primary schools within CRS intervention zones.

TFSL is a leadership development organization that trains 'student-teachers' and thereafter places them 'in the hearts of rich communities where they impact learning outcomes in terms of enrolment, attendance, retention, literacy development and numeracy'¹². In addition, they offer support to slow learners and girls who are out of school through remediation, strengthen reading clubs, and celebrate success as appropriate. For the L4UF project, they trained trainers and deployed them within the intervention zones, and thereafter provided supportive mentorship, coaching and supervision to teachers including hands-on training as well as peer-to-peer learning support. Their training included the following;

- i. **Collective leadership model** which considers students as leaders, and teachers as learners, with a focus on continuous improvement and learning.
- ii. **Print rich classrooms** where students interact with printed learning material and can learn even when the teacher is not in the classroom. They encourage the use of local content and locally available materials to promote learning.
- iii. **Planning and management** with regard to effective classroom management, lesson planning, basic digital skills, child-friendly environments, and child safeguarding.
- iv. **Teaching at the right level (TaRL)** which is a remediation approach that helps teachers to identify differences in the skills and abilities of the students, and according to them the support that they need without embarrassing them.

UNIMAK is an accredited university in the Northern part of Sierra Leone. For this L4UF program, their primary aim is to organize distance learning as a way of bringing the 'education to the doorstep of the teachers, especially in remote villages'¹³. In addition to internal examinations that the institution administers to the teachers, they also prepare them for the National Council for Technical Vocational and

¹¹ Education case study Sierra Leone (2022) UNICEF Sierra Leone/ Education development trust.
<https://www.unicef.org/media/124501/file/Sierra%20Leone%20case%20study%20FLN.pdf>

¹²Key Informant Interview, Chief Operating Officer, Teach for Sierra Leone

¹³Key Informant Interview, Director of Academic Affairs, University of Makeni

other Academic Awards¹⁴ (NCTVA) examinations to attain Teaching Certificates (TC). With the TC, the teachers fully qualify to teach in primary schools. Their training included;

- i. **Student-centered approach** that puts the student as the ‘protagonist in the learning process’¹⁵ ensuring that they are fully involved and contributing.
- ii. **The cooperative method** which focuses on student collaboration rather than competition and encourages them to support each other.

These partners also suggested areas of improvement around training, coaching and mentorship. This included provision of supportive mentorship after teachers are trained. TFSL offers hands-on mentorship for up to 3 months after training is completed within the academic year. This can be enhanced by offering refresher courses once or twice a year to identify successful areas, and areas of improvement through feedback from the teachers. Additionally, offering continuous professional development for certified teachers who are on payroll in government approved/supported schools through training and mentorship from experts will contribute to expanding the capacity of the teachers.

Insights from the teachers/reading club facilitators

From our findings of the pupil reading assessment, we report improvements in pupil literacy levels across all reading subtasks assessed. Our qualitative findings are aligned with the teacher targeted strategy outlined above and show how better teaching approaches have likely contributed to the improved literacy outcomes in USDA/CRS supported schools in Koinadugu and Falaba. We categorized the factors into four as reported by the reading club facilitators (Our conversations were with a total of 5 participants from the 2 districts).

1. Training benefits which positively impacted both the teachers and the pupils.

a. Better understanding of pupils’ learning capabilities

Teachers reported that they had a better understanding of their students and their capacities which helped to classify them as either ‘slow’ or ‘fast’ learners. This understanding allowed the teachers to accommodate the students with different learning capabilities in the same class and allowed each of the students to learn in line with their capabilities.

The training that I received as a reading club facilitator is to come and teach the children how to read well like the slow learners and the fast learners. Through the training I have been able to understand that we should not only focus on the fast learners but also the slow learners so that they can also feel that they belong and they will have the confidence to learn.

Reading Club Facilitator Gbindi, Falaba

The training these teachers receive is an ongoing process with Teach for Sierra Leone (TFSL) who aim to provide holistic training that covers the basics such as lesson planning to more intricate activities such as setting exams and preparing grade appropriate questions. Though this has contributed to the observed improvement, the TFSL team hopes to contribute to further to develop teachers with a ‘positive leadership mindset, and who can also implement positive leadership practices within their classrooms, schools, and communities to positively impact learning outcomes’¹⁶. Disparities observed in the

¹⁴ NCTVA provides accreditation, validation, examination and certification services for awards in certain specialised and professional programmes in tertiary education institutions in Sierra Leone.

¹⁵ Key Informant Interview, Director of Academic Affairs, University of Makeni

¹⁶ Key Informant Interview, Chief Operating Officer, Teach for Sierra Leone

performance of pupils in EGRA and EGMA assessments has led TFSL to develop their own assessment tools as well. This involves a combination of tools which they intend to refine and upscale with the aim of better measuring and improving learning outcomes.

b. Materials received that facilitate learning

Technical learning/teaching materials received after the training included textbooks, reading guides, exercise books, pens, calculators, van cards, story books, among others. To facilitate learning at night, the participants reported that they received solar lights.

They also gave us a reading guide. They provided me with a T-shirt and cup and they also provided a very big light that has Bluetooth features and this is what we use to read at night as reading club members. They also provided us with some CRS readers or textbooks as they are presently in the cupboard. They help us with other materials like exercise books. The last time they brought us some van cards, calculator and other things.

Reading Club Facilitator Kakoya, Falaba

c. Improved teaching methods employed

The teachers cited that they improved their teaching methods by using appropriate speeds and simple language to deliver the lessons, use of lesson plans and timetables, as well as checking the level of understanding of the pupils by asking questions.

Well, it has improved on me a lot because before this time I used to teach at a faster speed but through this training I have been able to understand that I should not teach like that. I should make sure that I ask questions to the children and try to know if they understand. I should also have in mind that I am not teaching for myself it is for the kids so I should try to make sure that they understand what I am teaching.

Reading Club Facilitator Gbindi, Falaba

2. Pupil-centered approaches that encourage them to learn

a. Pairing or grouping of pupils for support

Participants reported that they paired or grouped the pupils who are ‘fast’ learners with the ‘slow’ learners for peer-to-peer teaching. This also included grouping the younger (class 2, 3) with the older (class 5, 6) pupils in the reading club sessions. The pupils are encouraged to practice reading, teach and lead their groups.

Well, I structure my own reading club by group, I don’t just come and bring them together I will have to put them into a group like the class four, five and six, and also make sure that the faster learners in class four five and six they help me to teach the class two and three.

Reading Club Facilitator Gbindi, Falaba

b. Offering incentives to motivate the pupils

This approach was used by the teachers to encourage attendance and participation in class as well as award good performance. Some of the incentives offered include applause from fellow pupils, learning

One of the things that you can adapt to the children is motivation, if you are in class and you ask question and the child answers the question, and you as the teacher you give money to that child, or ask the class to give that child a round of applause that is a very good motivation for that child, so if you continue with this a lot of children may want to come to the class.

Reading Club Facilitator Mongo, Falaba

materials such as books and pens, certificates issued, and money. Some schools may also give food items such as rice and oil to high performing pupils.

3. Teachers were inclined to prepare for better lesson delivery as well as facilitate reading club meetings

a. Growing the skills of the teachers was a major motivation

The teachers stated that they had experienced growth in their skills and were more confident in their capabilities to teach and their ability to appropriately respond to questions from pupils. They report that they spent time learning ahead of the class that they are set to teach. They also reported improved capabilities and performance of the pupils.

Well, it helps you to also gain more knowledge because you as the facilitator you read at home before coming to the class you must be able to learn something. You cannot just take a book and come and teach the children you must be able to read and understand first before doing that.

Reading Club Facilitator Mongo, Falaba

b. Teachers who were appreciated were encouraged to grow their teaching capabilities

Both the parents and the schools that showed appreciation to teachers further encouraged them to improve their skills and continue with the reading club sessions, some additionally provided condiments such as oil.

Well, sometimes it is by motivation. Some of the parents will tell you that 'what you are doing has greatly, helped my child because that has helped my child to be able to read and understand', when they go home they can read for their parents. So, that gives you the zeal to continue what you are doing.

Reading Club Facilitator Mongo, Falaba

4. Community buy-ins have allowed for increased support for the reading clubs

Parents and other community stakeholders offered their support for the reading club sessions after understanding their importance and receiving assurance from the teachers. This understanding was achieved through community participation.

How I solved this particular challenge was that I talked the school authorities, we called community meetings to invite parents and guardians, and we explained to them about the importance of the club performed by CRS. In this meeting, we now agreed to adjust the time for the session from 4 pm to 2 pm immediately after normal school hours and this adjustment has helped a lot.

Reading Club Facilitator Kakoya, Koinadugu

The main challenge that the facilitators indicated was irregular attendance of the reading sessions. One was unfavourable meeting times which the facilitators and pupils were able to adjust. The other was to inform the parents of these activities so that they allow their children to attend the reading clubs. This was resolved when meetings were held with the parents to explain the activity and its importance. This helped to stabilize pupil attendance.

IR1.1 Improved Quality of Literacy Instruction

This section presents midline findings and compares them to baseline data for key outputs linked to the first intermediate result under Strategic Objective 1: Enhanced Literacy Instruction Quality.

Specifically, we examine changes in teacher attendance, literacy instructional materials, teacher skills and knowledge, and school administrator capacity.

The L4UF project focused on improving teacher performance, attendance, and the quality of literacy instruction through various strategies. These included awarding high-achieving teachers with solar lamps and certificates and recognizing the best-performing schools each year. In partnership with the District Basic Education Inspection teams, CRS carried out joint monitoring visits to target schools to assess teacher attendance and classroom management. They also conducted annual assessments of uncertified teachers, covering their certification fees and providing identification cards for the most qualified educators throughout the project's duration.

Emphasis was placed on encouraging female teachers to participate in the Distance Education Program (DEP). To support this, community sensitization efforts were enhanced to motivate women to pursue careers in teaching through inclusive public engagement, stakeholder meetings, and events such as the International World Literacy Day Celebration.

Additionally, CRS organized national and district-level advocacy campaigns in collaboration with other education sector stakeholders and partnered with Teach for Sierra Leone (TFSL) to place new cohorts of fellows in target schools annually. These fellows were trained in Teaching at the Right Level (TARL) and other educational programs, including training of trainers. TFSL fellows delivered on-the-job training and capacity-building support to primary-level volunteer teachers in remote communities.

Output. 1.1.1 More Consistent Teacher Attendance

Teacher attendance for the 2023/2024 academic year

Teacher attendance, a crucial indicator of teacher competency and commitment to literacy instruction, was assessed through head-teacher interviews and school attendance records for the 2023/2024 academic year. **Overall teacher attendance across the academic year was high at 89%, with a slight difference between genders, at 90% for male and 85% for female teachers.**

This points a generally positive teacher attendance culture within the study area that is due to the support provided to teachers by the School Liaison Officers (SLOs), Field Monitors (FMs) and Teach for Salone through classroom observation, coaching and mentoring and modelling classroom instruction. MBSSE and Teaching Service Commission (TSC) of Koinadugu and Falaba districts with their teams of school inspectors also supported this achievement through their routine monitoring visits to schools in their respective zones to support teachers.

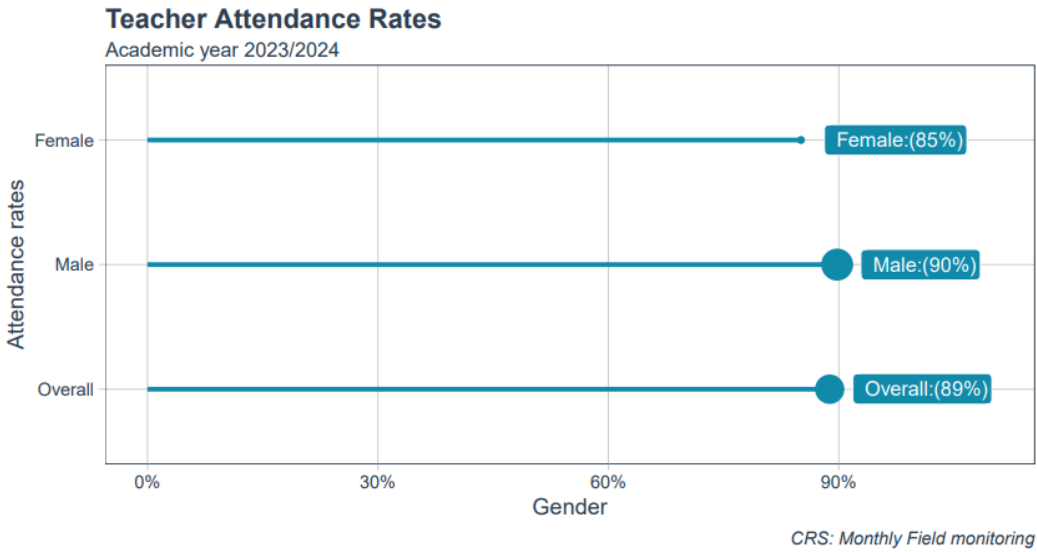


Figure 30: Teacher attendance rate by gender

This positive trend was consistent across both districts, with Falaba reporting 90% attendance and Koinadugu at 88%.

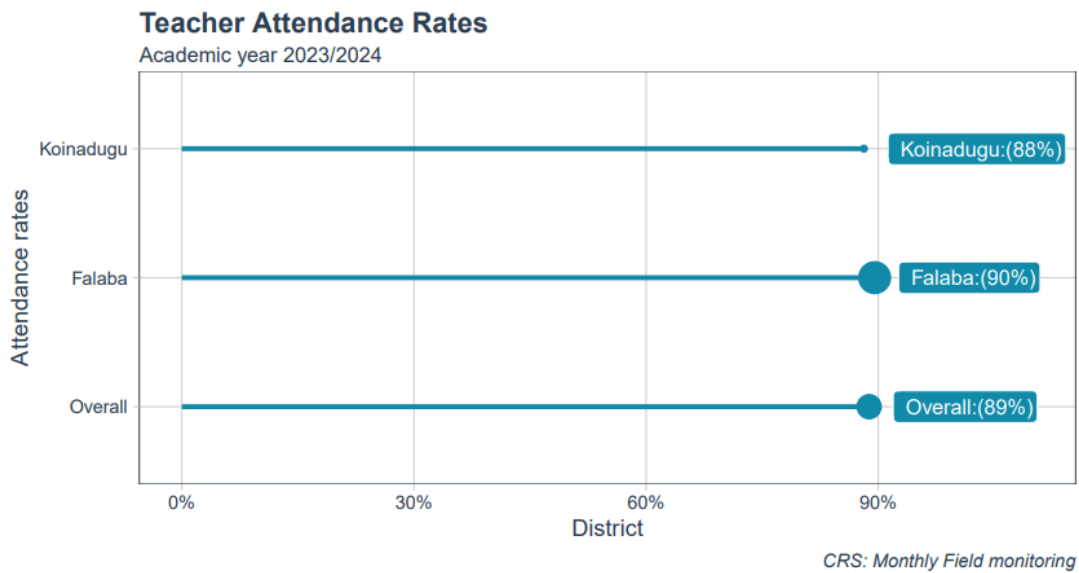


Figure 31: Teacher attendance rate by district

Furthermore, attendance rates were similarly high at the classroom level, exemplified by a strong 88% attendance rate in Grade 2.

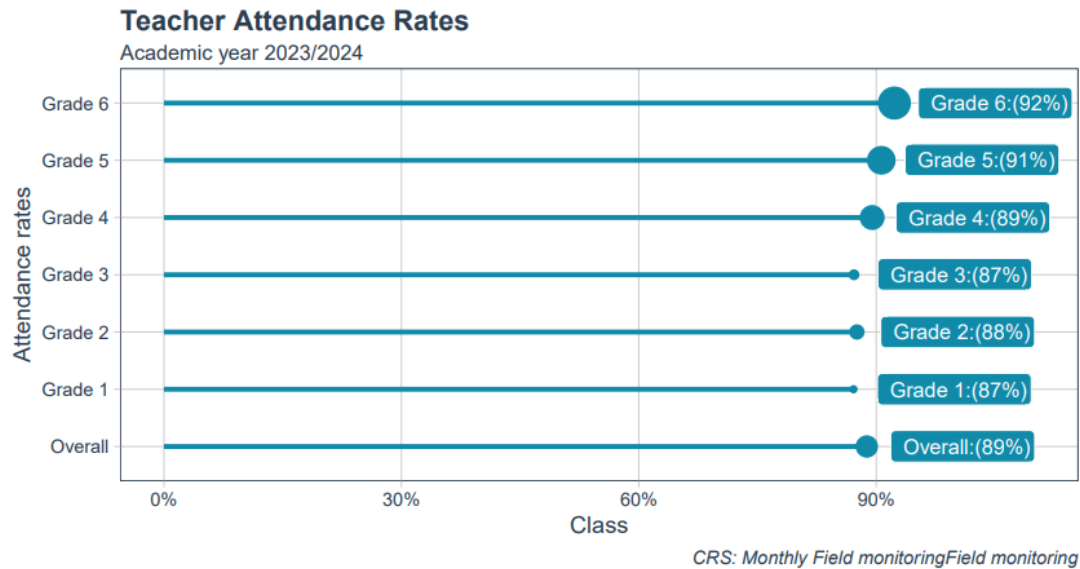
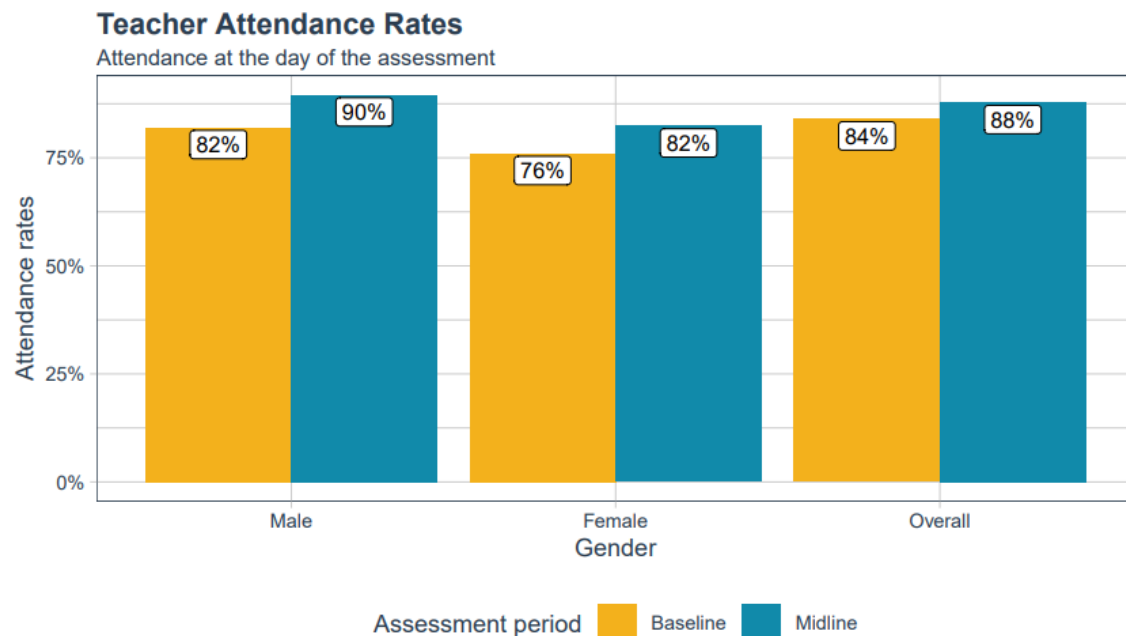


Figure 32: Teacher attendance rate by grade level

Teacher attendance on the day of the assessment

Teacher attendance on the day of the assessments was generally high but exhibited variability. At baseline, 84% of teachers were present, with a slight gender disparity favoring male teachers (82%) over female teachers (76%). Notably, attendance improved at midline, reaching 88% overall, including 90% for male and 82% for female teachers.



Source: LF4U-Midline assessment (2024)

Figure 33: Teacher attendance rate on the day of assessment

Moreover, a substantial majority of head teachers—96%—indicated that teachers were present in school every day of the week.

The positive relationship between increased teacher attendance and higher student comprehension scores at midline supports the program’s theory of change, which posits that more consistent teacher attendance directly improves quality of literacy instructions, improving student literacy outcomes.

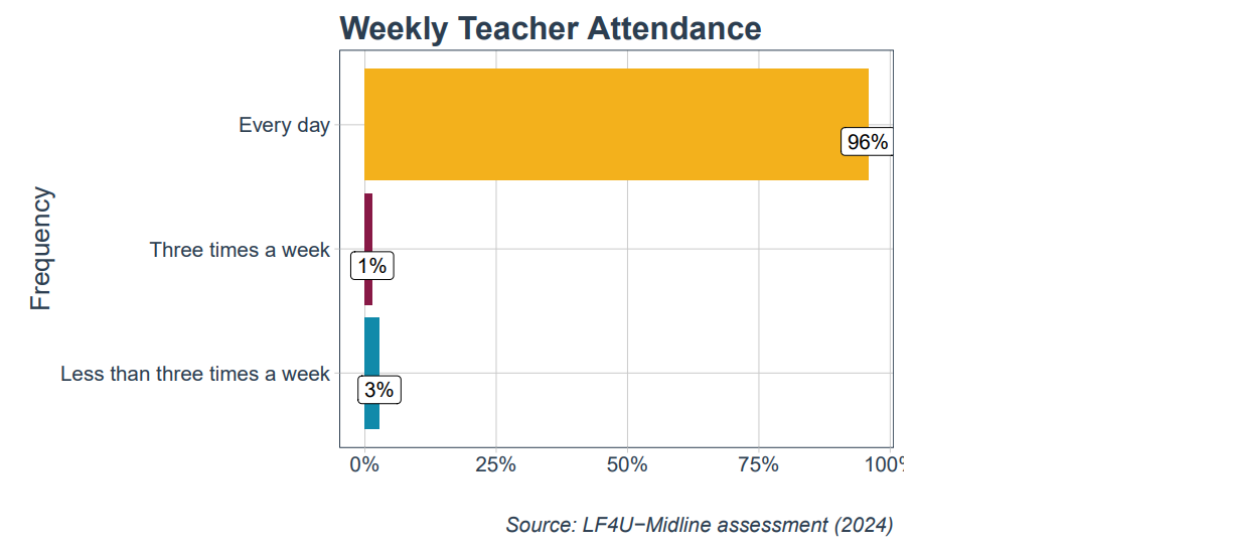


Figure 34: Frequency of teacher school attendance

Teacher composition within sampled schools exhibits a pronounced gender imbalance on the day of the assessment as shown in the table below. On average, four male teachers were present for every female teacher, a statistically significant difference. Considering all teachers, regardless of presence on assessment day, the average school exhibits a pronounced male-to-female teacher ratio of approximately 2:1. This disparity underscores the underrepresentation of female teachers within the schools. As a result, it is recommended that CRS continue efforts to recruit and support female teachers through the Distance Education Program (DEP) and enhance community sensitization efforts to encourage more women to enter the teaching profession through inclusive public engagement and stakeholder meetings.

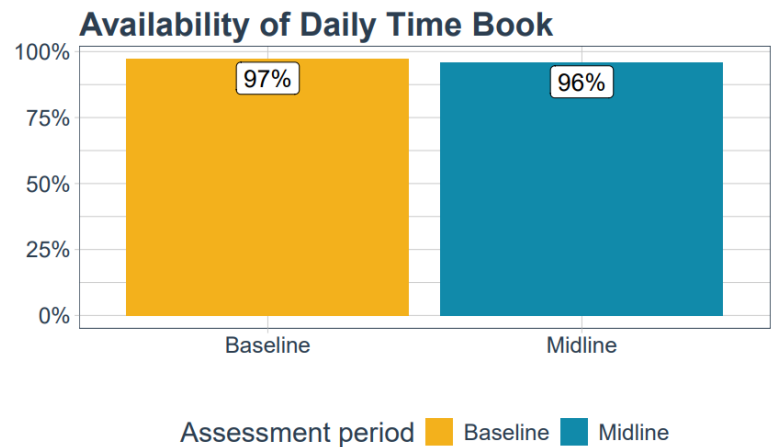
Table 16: Midline average teacher attendance by gender

Gender	Present (Mean)	Total (Mean)
Male	4	4
Female	1	2
Total	5	6

There is a statistically significant difference in the average number of male and female teachers present at the school ($p = 0.000$, $\alpha = 0.05$).

Teacher attendance documentation

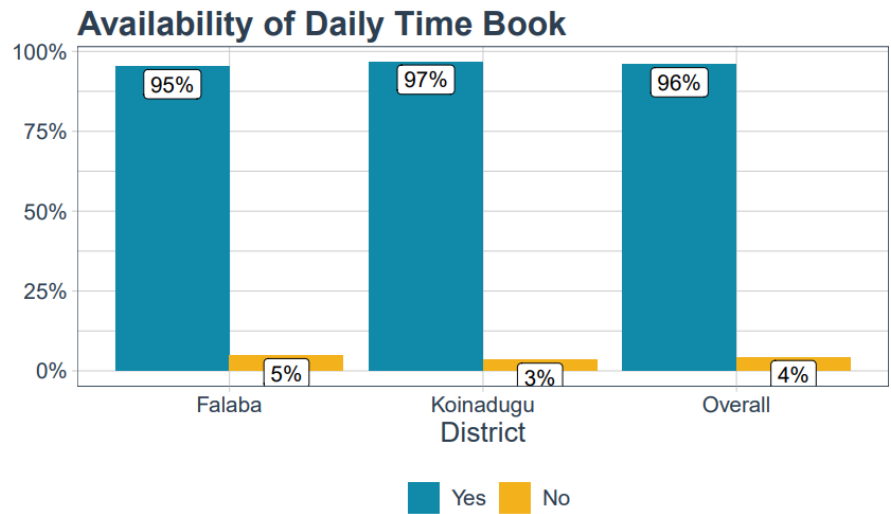
Overwhelmingly, schools in the sample maintained consistent practices for documenting teacher attendance. At both baseline and midline assessments, nearly all head teachers (97% and 96%, respectively) reported utilizing a time book to record daily teacher presence. This indicates a strong institutionalization of teacher attendance tracking systems within the schools.



Source: LF4U–Baseline & Midline assessment

Figure 35: Time book availability

The consistent use of time books to record daily teacher attendance was prevalent across both Falaba and Koinadugu districts. At midline, no significant difference was observed in the proportion of headteachers reporting the availability of these books between the two districts.



Source: LF4U–Midline assessment (2024)

Figure 36: Time book availability by district

Teacher motivation

Overall, teacher motivation has improved, with a notable 9 percentage point increase in areas such as awareness of MBSSE policies (overall effects of the MBSSE as an organization), teacher recognition, and the professional status of teaching.

Recognizing high-achieving teachers with prizes like solar lamps and certificates is a key motivator, encouraging teachers to continue delivering their best in classroom settings for the benefit of the students. Additionally, sponsoring teachers through the Distance Education Programme (DEP) to obtain teaching certificates has significantly motivated them to enhance their professional qualifications by acquiring higher-level certification. In the past academic year (2023-2024), fifteen (15) teachers, one per chiefdom were identified and received awards for their outstanding performance during the 2022-2023 school year.

Notably, the perceived importance of salary as a motivator decreased by 11 percentage points among teachers from the baseline to the midline, indicating growing dissatisfaction with teacher compensation as shown in the figure below. Dissatisfaction was also noted among teachers and parents as reported in the qualitative conversations.

...secondly, I considered myself as a community teacher, the government is not paying me so I don't care ...but I realized that the teaching can help you to learn a lot and through the reading club I have been able to learn a lot and improve on myself.

Reading Club Facilitator Gbindi, Falaba

Respondent 3: *Not 100% satisfied as the community needs to do more for the community teachers because not even 30% is catered for looking at the sacrifices made to teach our children in school. The sum of 200 new Leones is too small to upkeep them considering the economic situation in our country. If more is provided for them, that will augment even to carry out some agricultural activities to sustain their lives and families.*

FGD with Men, Bafodia, Koinadugu.

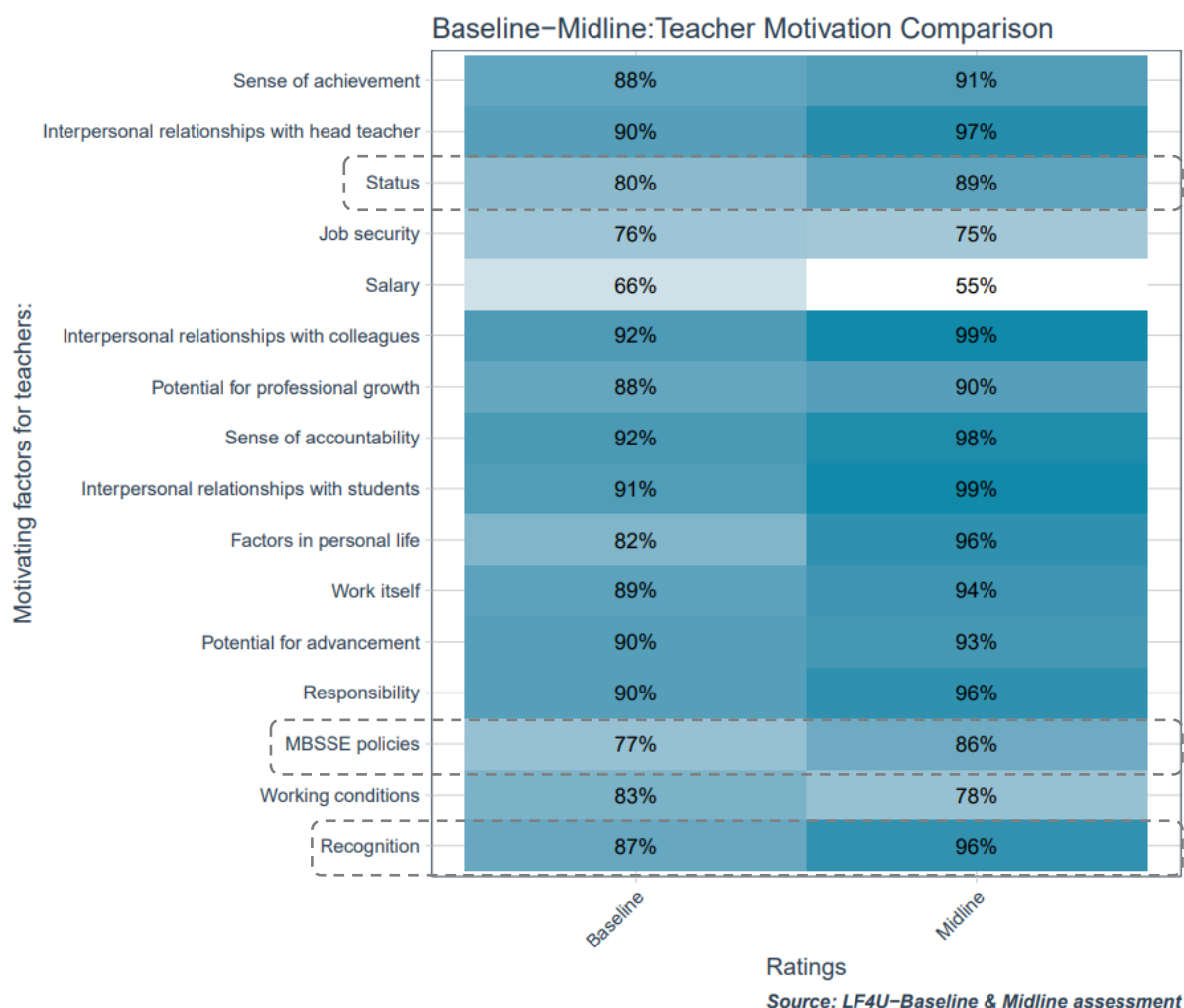


Figure 37: Comparison of teacher motivation: Baseline vs. Midline

Output 1.1.2: Better Access to School Supplies & Materials

Classroom supplies and materials (pupil furniture)

The L4UF project implemented activities aimed at enhancing the availability of teaching and learning materials to improve literacy instruction quality in target schools. CRS distributed new textbooks, report cards, and chalk to both unapproved schools and Approved Without Support (AWS) schools. To ensure proper use of these materials, the School Management Committees (SMCs) received training and support, enabling them to track and manage the resources effectively through newly formed subcommittees.

Additionally, CRS provided national government curriculum materials for all subjects, along with specialized guides for literacy teacher training. A key part of the project involved lobbying efforts with the government, encouraging them to take over the responsibility of supplying teaching and learning materials to approved schools.

This sub section examines the progress made in enhancing access to school supplies and materials, a key component of the program’s efforts to create a conducive learning environment. The evaluation is based on data collected from the classroom observation tool.

Classroom observations conducted at midline revealed most schools in the sample have access to basic furniture items. Notably, only 1% of classrooms did not have desks or benches for pupils, indicating broad access to seating. In 44% of classrooms, desks or benches were shared by three students, while 31% of the classrooms had more than three students sharing a single desk or bench. This reflects generally broad access to seating, though some instances of congestion may persist in some classrooms.

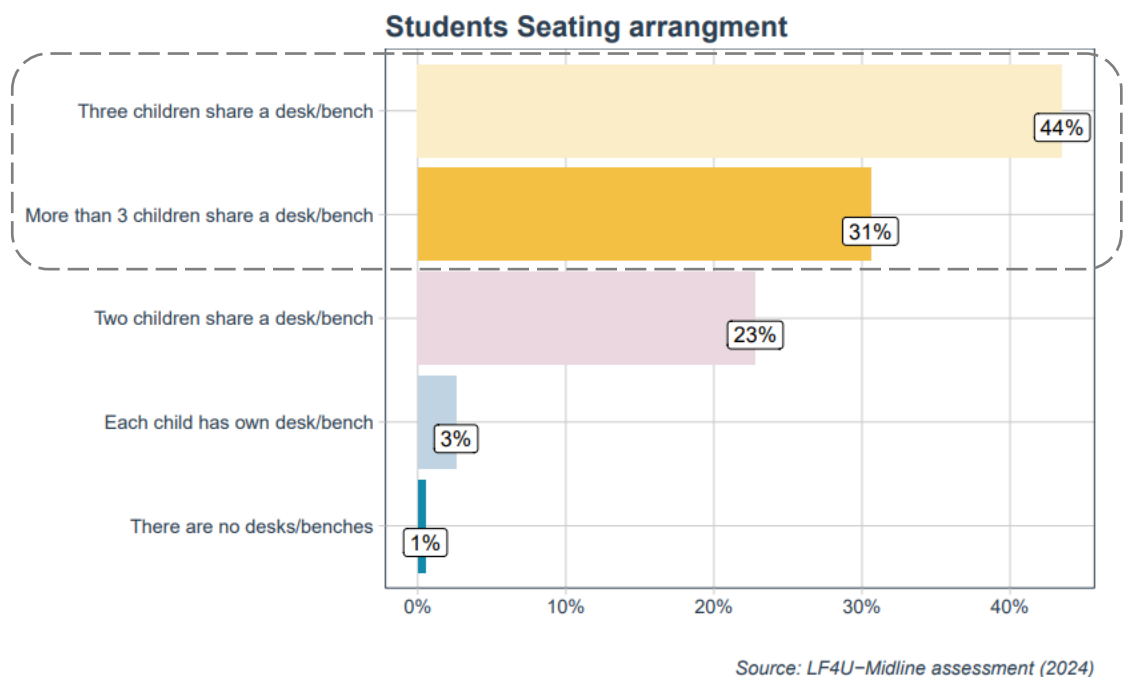
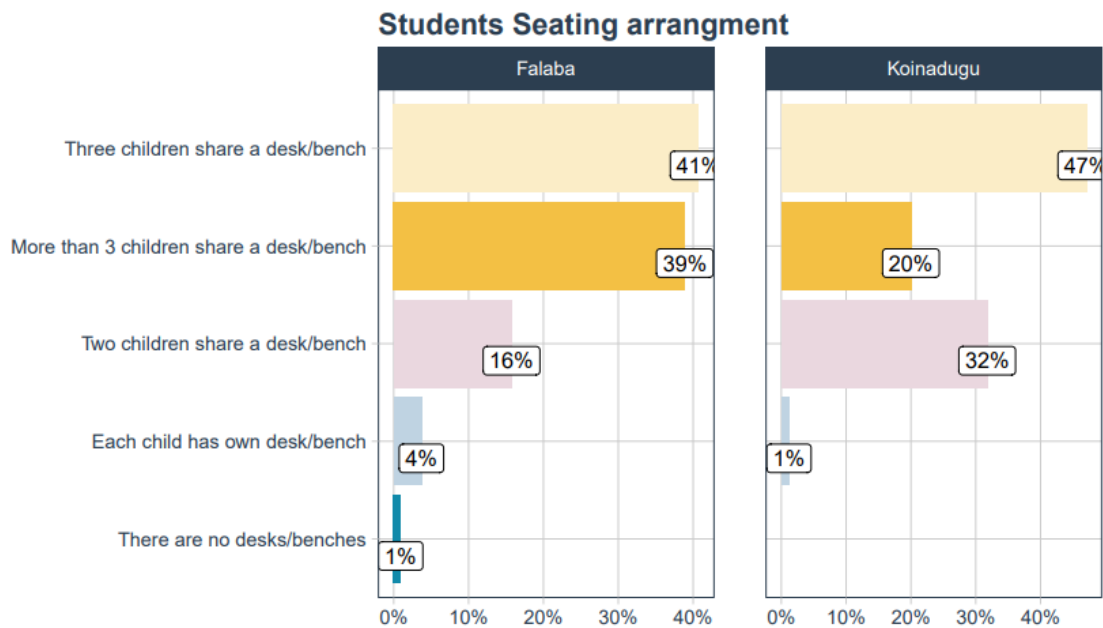


Figure 38: Access to desk/benches in classrooms

At district-level, Falaba exhibited a higher proportion of classrooms (39%) with more than three pupils sharing a desk compared to Koinadugu (20%). Moreover, the average number of pupils without access to a desk was notably higher in Falaba (n=3) than in Koinadugu (n=1).



Figure 39: Examples of typical classrooms with desks and benches



Source: LF4U–Midline assessment (2024)

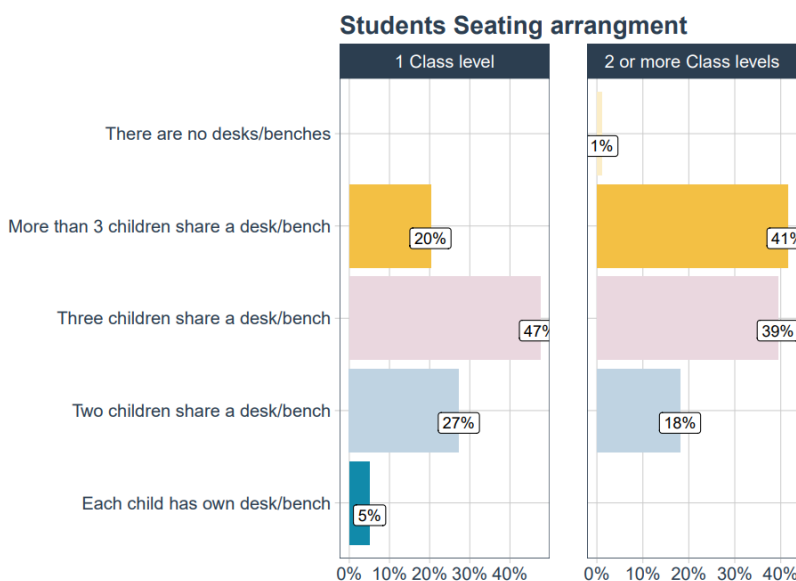
Figure 40: Access to desk/benches in classrooms by district

Table 17: Average number of students without basic furniture

Category	Without Desk	Without Bench
Falaba	3	1
Koinadugu	1	1
Community	3	1
Mission	2	1
Government	1	1
Overall	2	1

1). There is a statistically significant difference in the average number of students without access to a desk across the districts ($p = 0.000$, $\alpha = 0.05$) 2). There is no statistically significant difference in the average number of students without access to a bench across the districts ($p = 0.381$, $\alpha = 0.05$).

In multi-grade classrooms, 41% had more than three students sharing a desk or bench, while in single-grade classrooms, 47% had three students per desk or bench. This seating arrangement suggests that multi-grade classrooms may experience higher levels of seating congestion. The strain on infrastructure could lead to accelerated wear and tear of school furniture. Therefore, it is recommended that the student-to-desk ratio be reduced to improve comfort and preserve the longevity of school resources.



Source: LF4U–Midline assessment (2024)

Figure 41: Access to desk/benches in classrooms by class type

Schools where more than three pupils shared a desk or bench saw slightly lower performance, with 38% of students passing the reading comprehension threshold, compared to 40% in schools with fewer than three pupils sharing desk or bench as shown below.

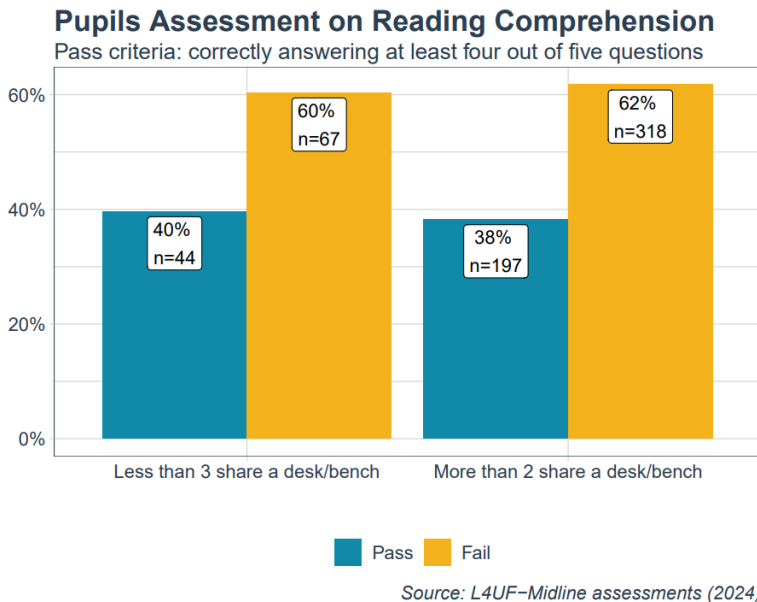


Figure 42: Reading comprehension performance by classroom seating arrangement

Classroom supplies and materials (chalkboard and teacher furniture)

Classroom inventories were also conducted at baseline and midline to assess the availability of basic resources such as chalkboards and teacher furniture. Significant improvements in classroom resource availability were observed between baseline and midline. The proportion of classrooms equipped with chalkboards or blackboards increased from 76% to 95%. Moreover, teacher access to essential furniture, such as tables and chairs, rose from 50% to 78%.

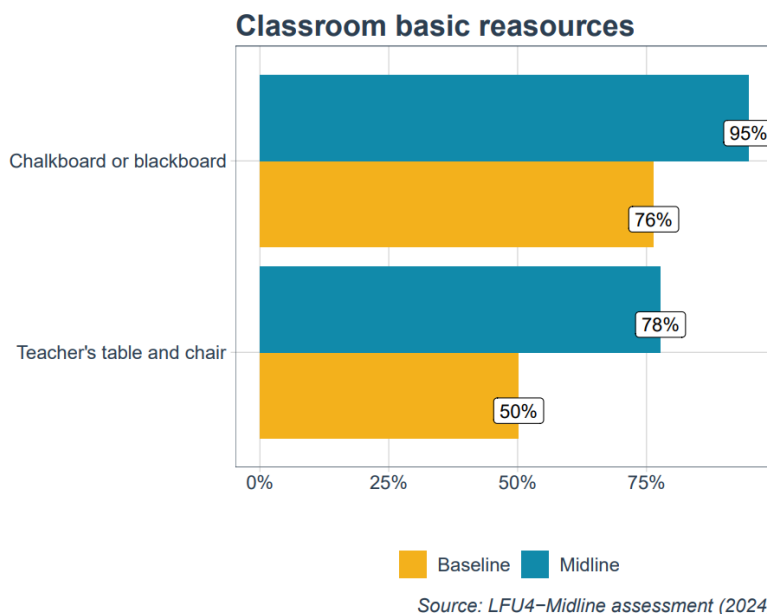
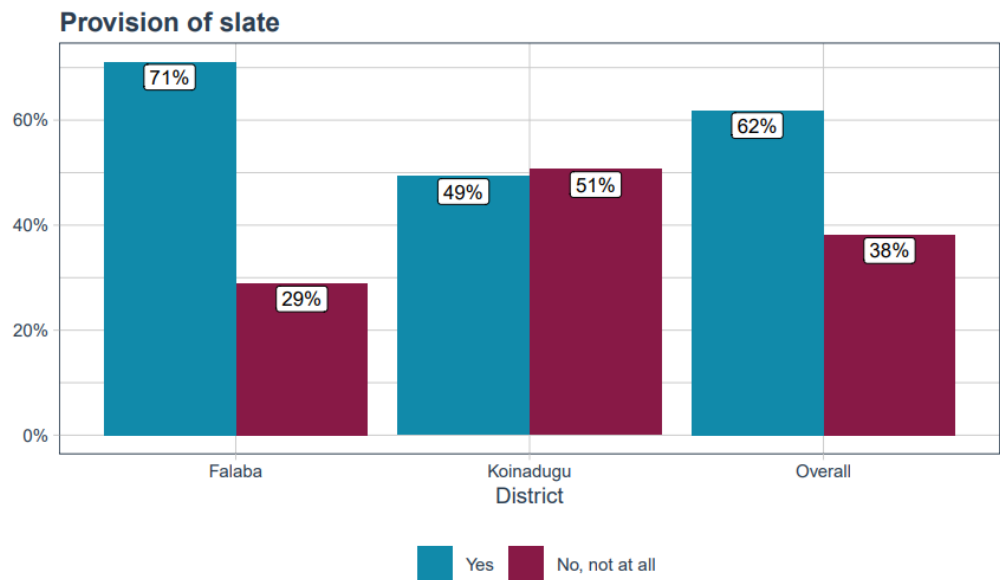


Figure 43: Distribution classroom basic resource

Classroom supplies and materials (slates)

At midline, 62% of pupils had been provided with slates during the current school year. Despite the overall positive trend, geographic disparities persist. Falaba district demonstrated a higher rate of pupils who had used slate (71%) than Koinadugu (49%).



Source: Midline assessment (2024)

Figure 44: Access to slate by district



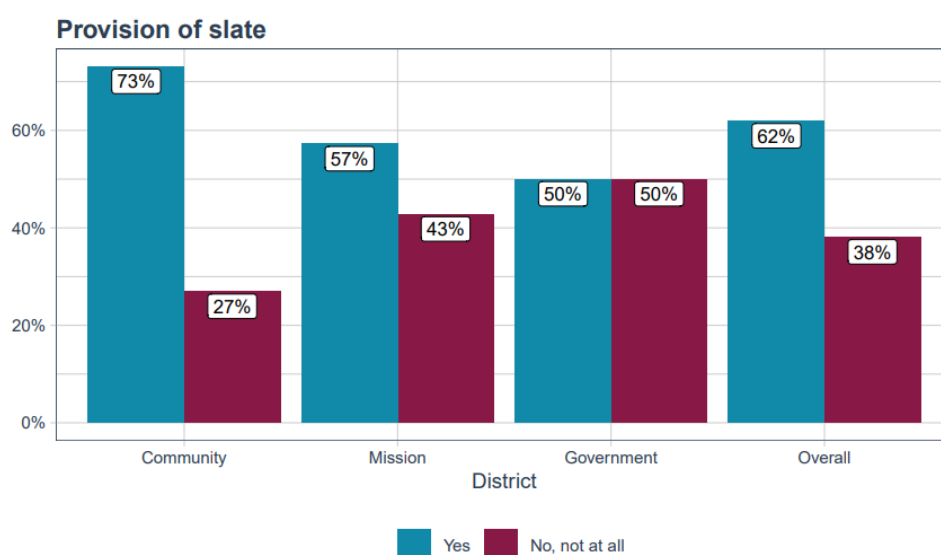
Figure 45: Showing slates used within the classrooms

During classroom observations, an average of three pupils were seen using slates, while 20 pupils had exercise books. Slates were often used as substitutes for exercise books when students lacked other writing materials during lessons.

Table 18: Distribution of slates and exercise books in the classroom

District	Average number of pupils in class	Number of pupils with exercise books	Number of pupils with slates
Falaba	29	25	4
Koinadugu	21	15	1
Overall	26	20	3

Community schools' pupils were more likely to use slates (73%) than mission (57%) or government schools (50%).



Source: Midline assessment (2024)

Figure 46: Access to slate by school ownership

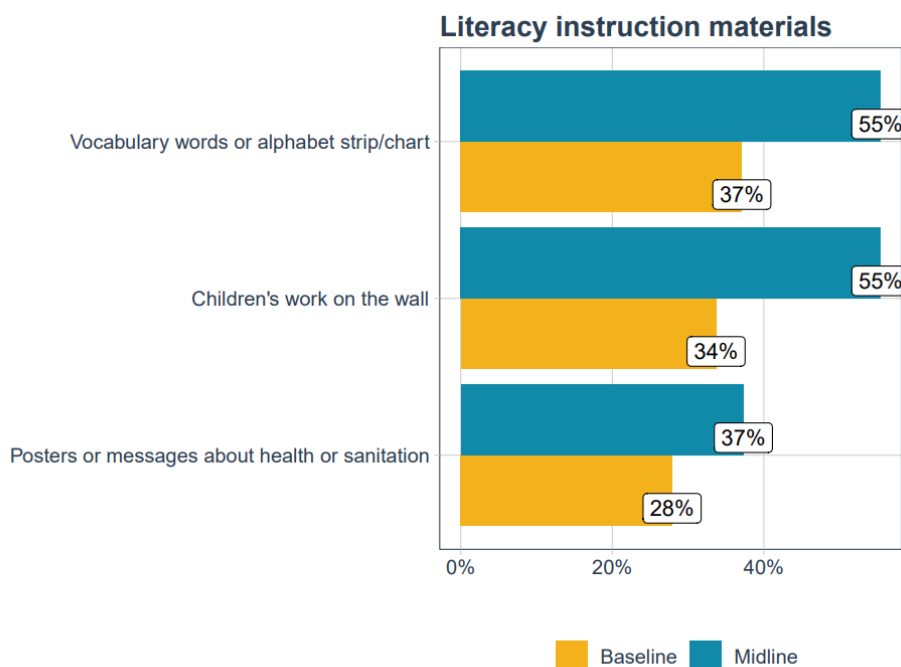
Output. 1.1.3. Improved Literacy Instructional Materials

Access to literacy instructional materials

Classroom inventories were conducted at both baseline and midline to assess the availability of literacy instruction materials such as vocabulary words/alphabet strips, displays of children's work, and health and nutrition posters.

Notably, there was significant progress in the display of pupils' work on classroom walls, which increased from 34% at baseline to 55% at midline, suggesting a growing emphasis on showcasing student output and creating a more interactive learning environment.

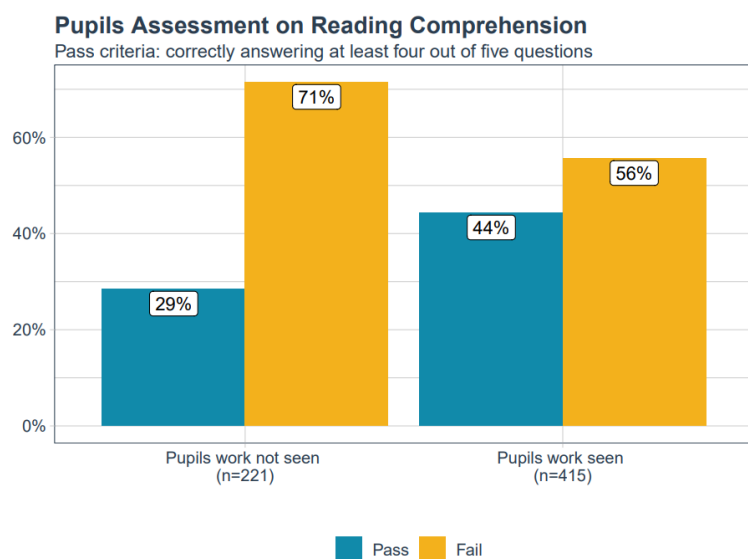
Similarly, schools displaying vocabulary words or alphabet strips saw an increase from 37% to 55%, highlighting a stronger focus on developing early literacy skills. However, less than half of the schools had health and sanitation posters at both points, indicating room for improvement in promoting well-being.



Source: LFU4–Midline assessment (2024)

Figure 47: Classroom literacy instruction resources: Baseline vs Midline comparison

The presence of these instructional materials appears to have a positive contribution to student performance. Schools that displayed pupils' work on the walls had a higher proportion of students passing the reading comprehension threshold (44%) compared to those that did not (with only 29% passing).



Source: L4UF–Midline assessments (2024)

Figure 48: Reading outcome by schools that display pupils work in classroom

Similarly, schools with vocabulary words or alphabet strips posted in the classrooms had 49% of students passing the reading comprehension benchmark, while only 29% passed in schools lacking these resources.

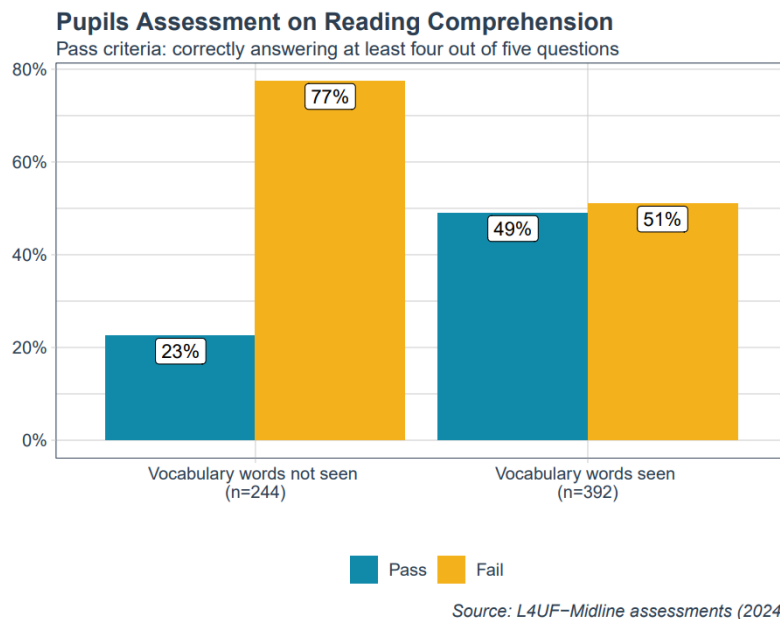


Figure 49: Reading outcome by schools that display alphabet strips in classroom

Additionally, schools displaying health or sanitation posters saw 45% of students passing the threshold, compared to just 36% in schools without these messages.

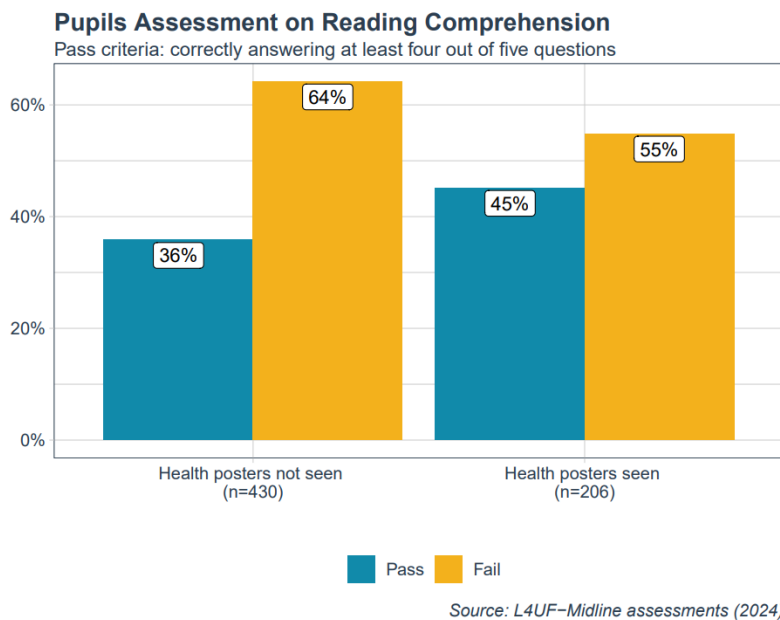


Figure 50: Reading outcome by schools that display health messages in classroom

The observed improvements align with the program's theory of change, which posits that better access to literacy instructional materials directly supports enhanced student literacy outcomes.

Continued efforts to provide adequate literacy instruction resources are essential. Promoting the display of pupils' work and incorporating vocabulary and alphabet strips fosters a more engaging and stimulating learning environment. However, there is still room for improvement in health and sanitation education. Schools should prioritize the display of posters and messages related to these topics to raise awareness and promote healthy practices among students.

At a district level, significant disparity in the availability of vocabulary words or alphabet charts was observed between the two districts. Falaba district demonstrated a higher prevalence of these essential learning resources, with 69% of classrooms equipped, compared to 38% in Koinadugu district. This suggests a potential correlation between the availability of these literacy instruction materials and regional differences in the observed literacy outcomes.

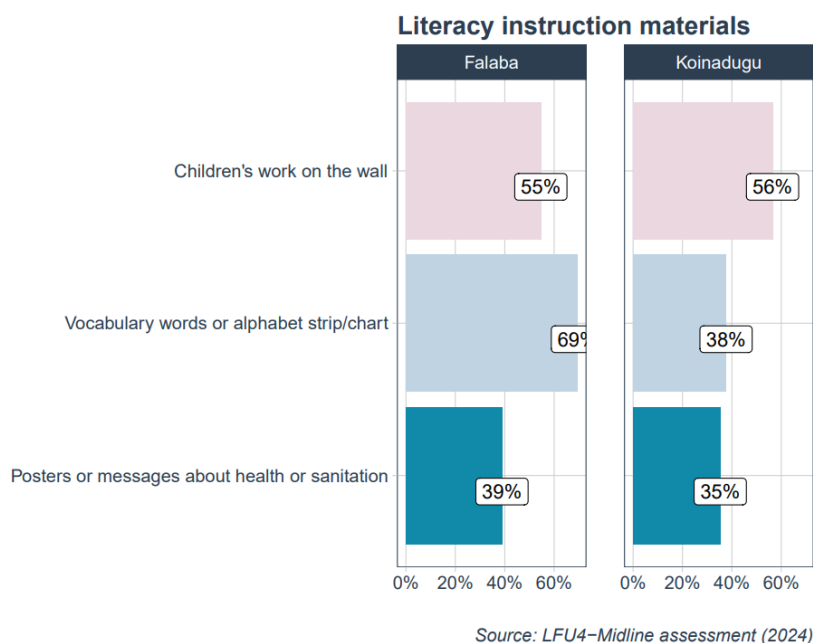


Figure 51: Classroom learning resources by district

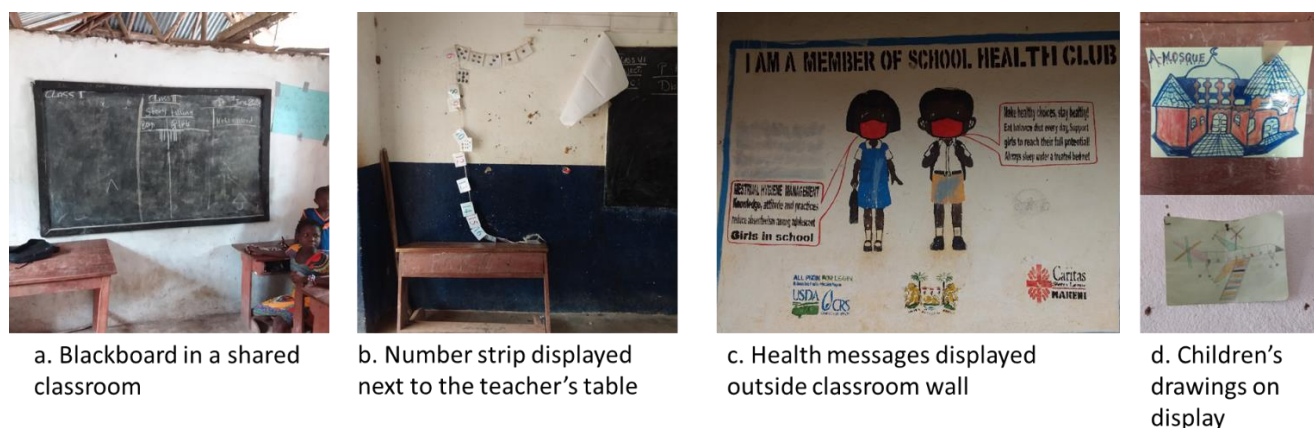


Figure 52: Pictures showing various learning resources within the classrooms

Government schools were significantly more likely to have posters or messages about health and sanitation than mission and community schools. Over half (56%) of government schools displayed these materials, while only 35% of mission and 38% of community schools had them. The higher prevalence of health and sanitation posters in government schools suggests that these schools may be placing a greater emphasis on promoting health awareness and practices among students.

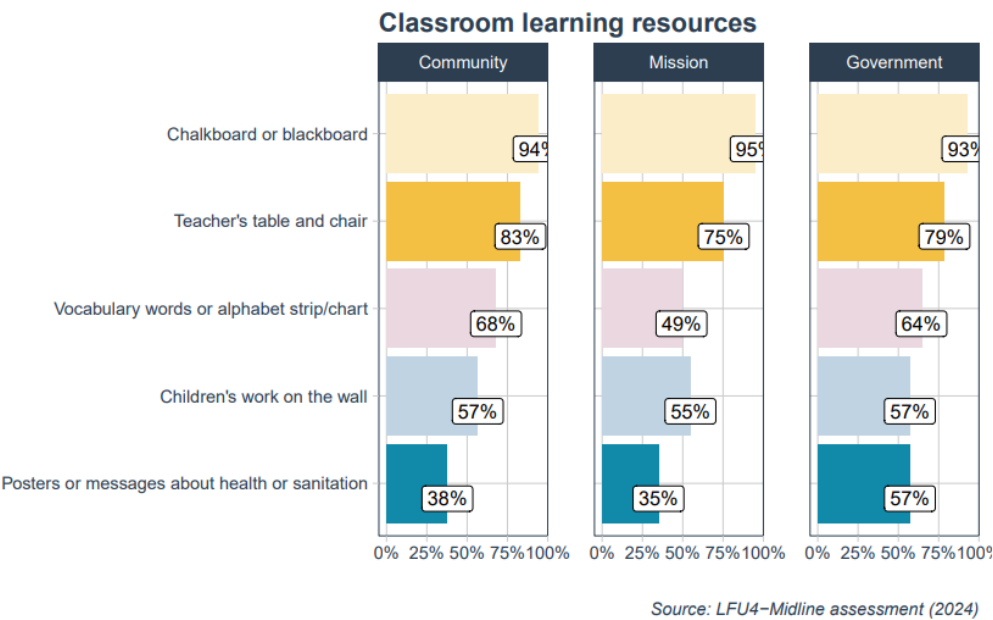
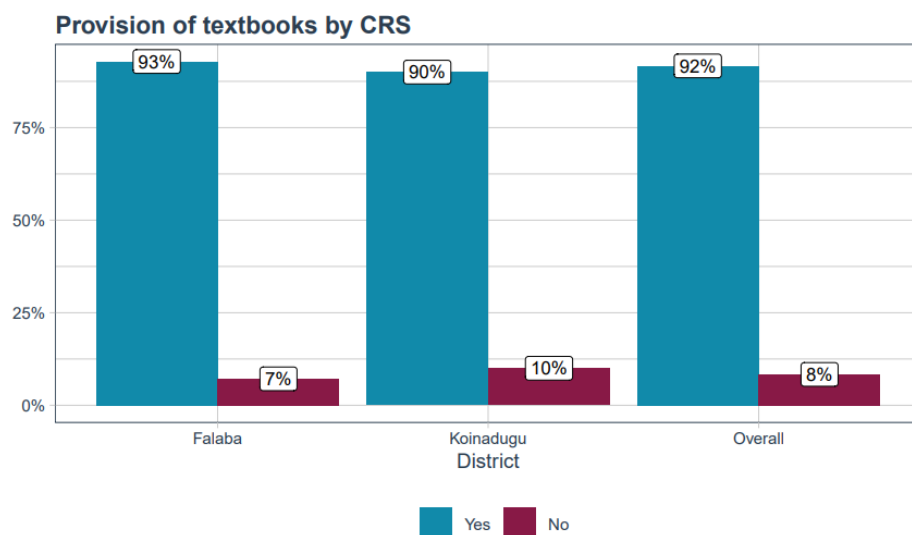


Figure 53: Classroom learning resources by school ownership

Provision of textbooks

During the FY2023 reporting period, the program supported 130 unapproved schools by distributing a total of 14,091 teaching and learning materials. These included reference materials, reading books, exercise books, and boxes of chalk, aimed at enhancing educational resources in these institutions.

At midline, over 92% of headteachers reported receiving textbooks from CRS, indicating a positive trend in educational resource availability. The distribution of textbooks appears to be relatively equitable across Falaba and Koinadugu districts with no notable differences observed.



Source: Midline assessment (2024)

Figure 54: Provision of textbooks by CRS

One-to-two textbook-to-pupil ratio

However, textbook availability in classrooms showed a slight decline between baseline and midline, and a significant gap persists in meeting the government's ideal one-to-two textbook-to-pupil ratio. Close to half, 43% of classrooms achieved this standard at midline, compared to 49% at baseline. Only 6% of classrooms at baseline and 9% at midline were observed to have no books.

There is a need to ensure adequate textbook provision for all students to facilitate effective learning and enhance educational outcomes. Additionally, school administrators and teachers must prioritize the proper care and maintenance of textbooks by students.

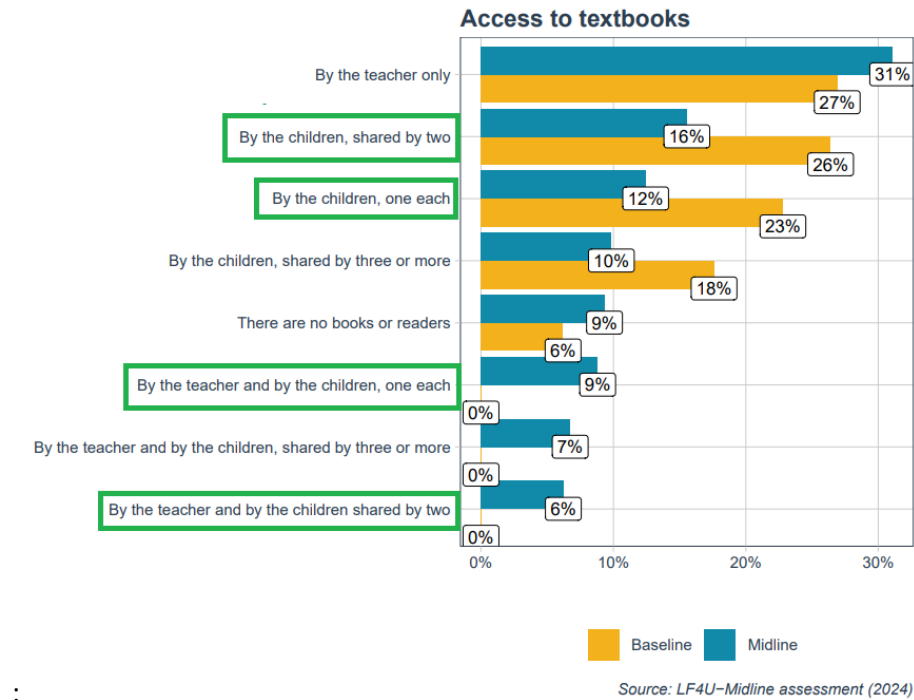


Figure 55: Access to textbooks

The ideal one-to-two textbook-to-pupil ratio was not met in either Falaba or Koinadugu districts, with both districts falling below 50%.

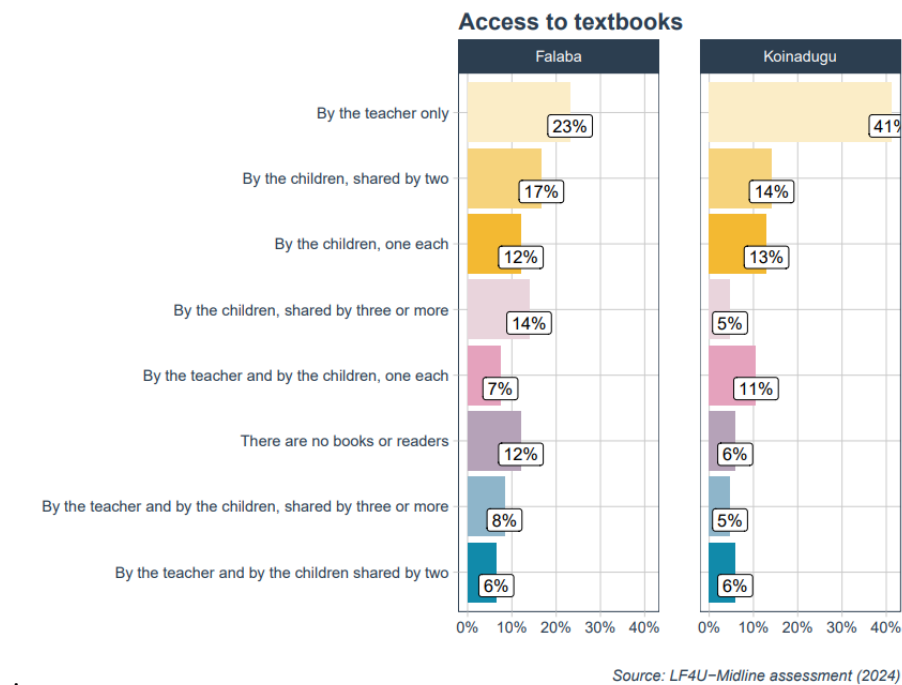


Figure 56: Access to textbooks by district

However, government schools were more likely to achieve this ratio compared to community and mission schools. While 50% of government schools met the standard, only 49% of community schools and 44% of mission schools reached it.

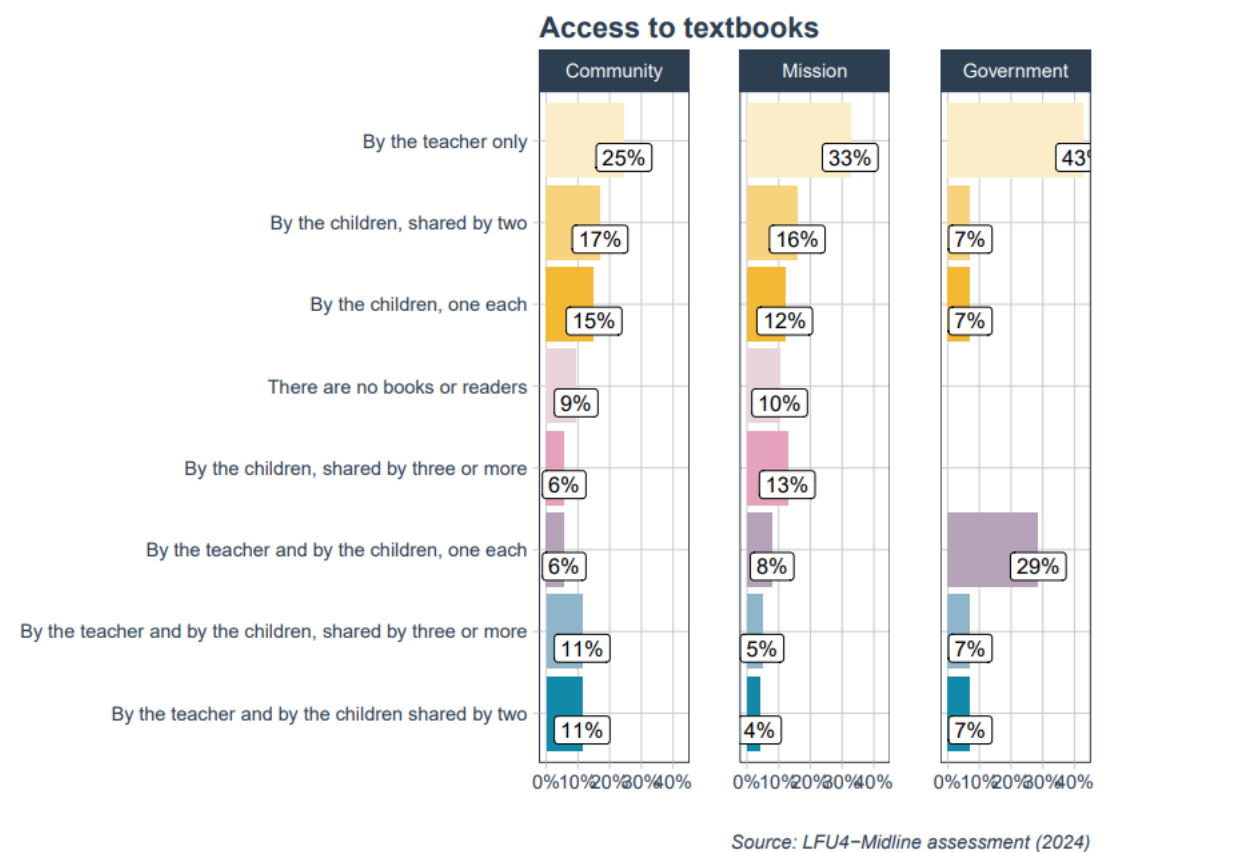


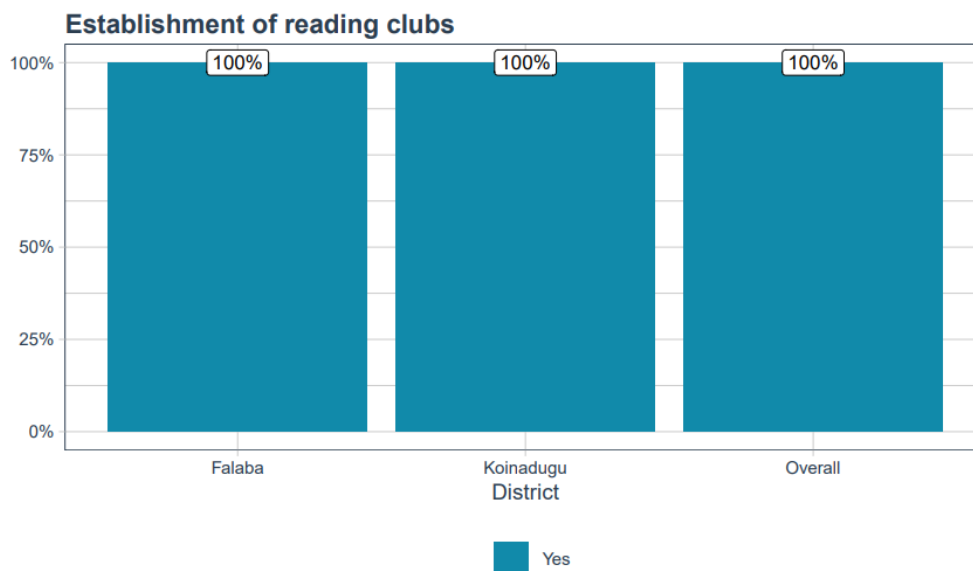
Figure 57: Access to textbooks by school ownership

School reading clubs

The program intervention was designed to address literacy challenges by enhancing both teacher capacity and pupil engagement through targeted initiatives. One key component involved the establishment of Reading Clubs across 310 intervention schools. These clubs were provided with books and reading materials tailored to Sierra Leone’s developmental needs, fostering a culture of reading among pupils. Special attention was given to pregnant girls and parent learners, encouraging their participation in the clubs to help them regain literacy skills lost during school absences.

Teach for Sierra Leone (TFSL) fellows were embedded in the schools, where they provided mentorship and coaching to lower primary teachers. These fellows played a vital role in supporting reading club facilitators, helping to organize catch-up classes for pupils who were behind in their literacy development.

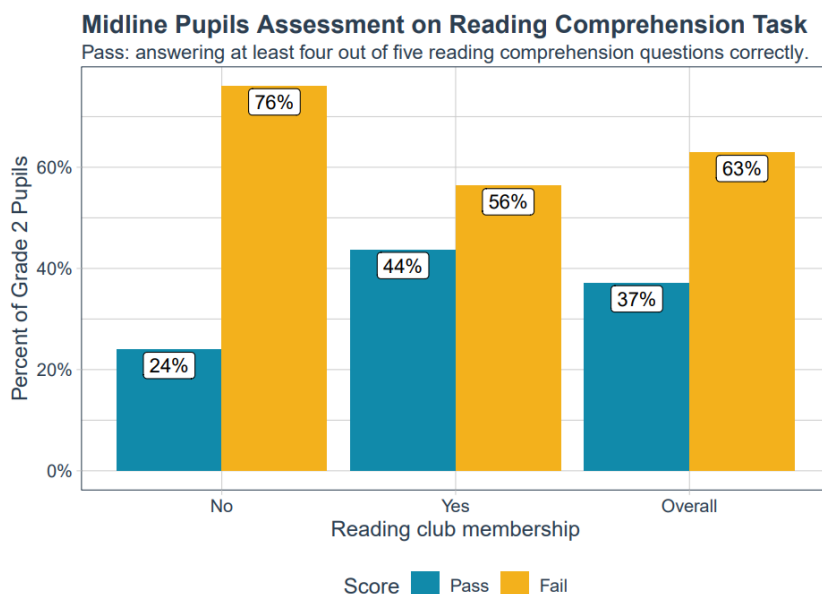
At midline, all the sampled headteachers reported the formation of reading clubs within their schools, with 67% of pupils indicating membership in these clubs (No baseline metric available).



Source: Midline assessment (2024)

Figure 58: Establishment of reading clubs

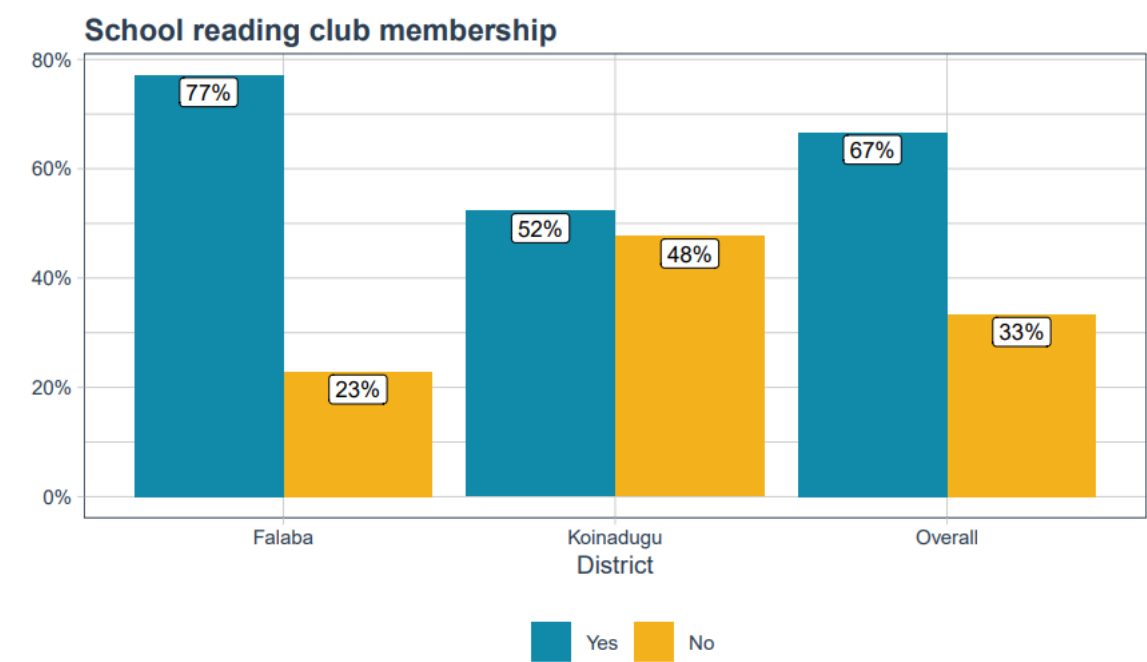
The reading clubs have proven to be a positive initiative in promoting literacy among pupils. A notable 44% of pupils who participated in the reading clubs successfully passed the reading comprehension threshold, compared to only 24% of pupils who were not involved in the clubs. This demonstrates the significant impact that these clubs have on improving literacy.



Source: Midline assessment (2024)

Figure 59: Reading outcome by reading club membership

There is also a noticeable regional difference in participation, with 77% of pupils in Falaba reporting membership in the reading clubs, compared to 52% in Koinadugu. The high participation rate in Falaba suggests that the clubs are effectively engaging students and fostering a love for reading as observed in the literacy performance outcome. However, efforts should be made to increase participation in Koinadugu to ensure that all pupils have equal access to these literacy-enhancing reading clubs. Encouraging participation will help create more equitable outcomes and further strengthen the program's impact on pupil literacy.



Source: Midline assessment (2024)

Figure 60: Pupils reading club membership

MBSSE-formulated lesson plans

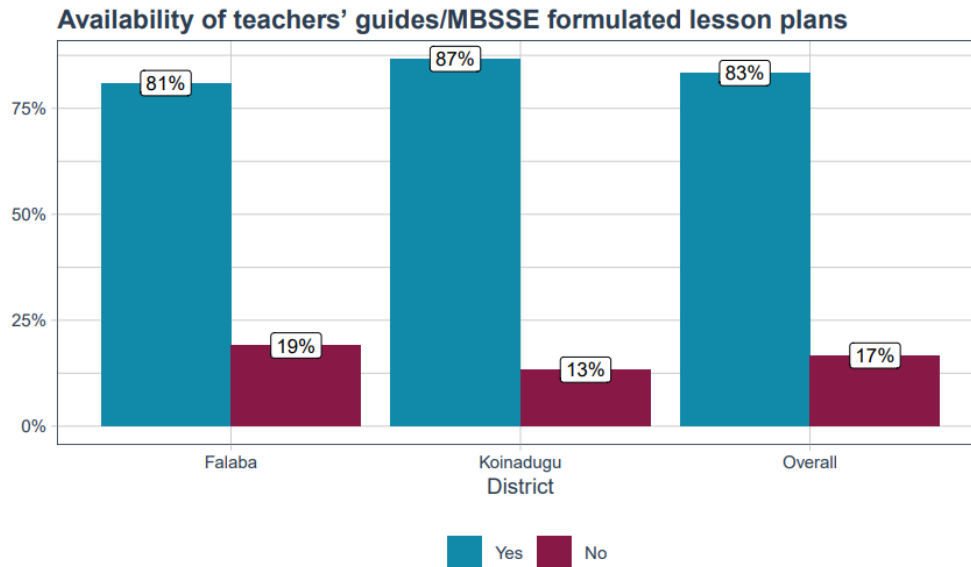
The capacity of heads of schools across the 310 schools was built to provide supportive supervision and monitoring of teachers. This support includes ensuring teachers prepare and use lesson notes in class, teach at grade level, enhance participatory learning and use texts books in the teaching and learning process.

Heads of schools now provide the required support to their teachers, while the School Management Committees also support by managing the resources of their respective schools appropriately. All of these were attained as a result of the training and mentorships provided by Teach for Sierra Leone.

At midline, most headteachers (83%) reported the availability of MBSSE-formulated lesson plans within their schools. The high prevalence of MBSSE-formulated lesson plans across the sampled schools indicates a strong commitment to providing teachers with standardized instructional resources. From the conversations with the reading club facilitators/teachers, they reported that they teach with reference to the lesson plans and timetables which helps them to cover different subjects during the day.

...I don't teach randomly again like before, now I teach with reference to my lesson note and I check my timetable before I teach, I don't teach one subject for the rest of the day I teach the different subjects for the day.

Reading Club Facilitator Gbindi, Falaba

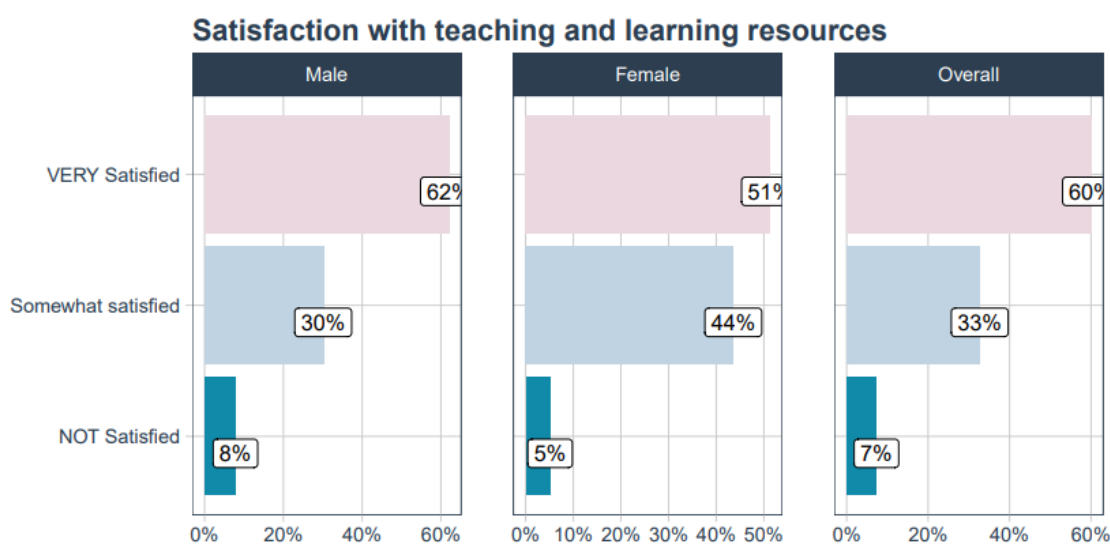


Source: Midline assessment (2024)

Figure 61: Availability of lesson plans

Teacher satisfaction with learning resources (overall)

Teachers were asked to rate their satisfaction with various aspects of the L4UF program. Satisfaction with the provision of learning resources was particularly high, with 60% of teachers expressing approval. In contrast, only 7% reported dissatisfaction. These findings indicate an overall positive perception of the availability and quality of resources among the teaching staff, though there remains room for further improvement.



Source: LF4U–Midline assessment (2024)

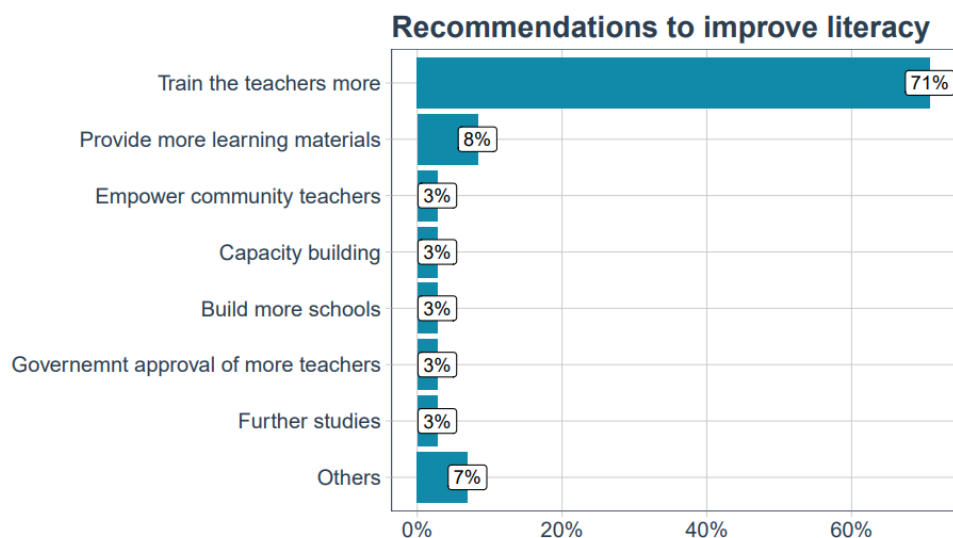
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Figure 62: Teacher satisfaction with literacy resources

Headteacher recommendation on improving the quality of literacy instruction

Headteachers were asked to provide their top-of-mind recommendations for improving the quality of literacy instruction. A significant number of headteachers (71%) highlighted that increased teacher training is the most vital factor for enhancing literacy instruction quality.

The qualitative findings report that in addition to the training, the teachers formed networks within their communities for peer-to-peer learning support where they exchanged ideas as well as helped on-board new teachers. Teach for Sierra Leone is a key player in the subsequent activities after training. They provide hands-on mentorship, facilitate peer-to-peer learning, help strengthen relationships between teachers and school governance structures, observe teachers in the classrooms and provide counselling. These will contribute to further elevate literacy outcomes. It is crucial to prioritize ongoing professional development for teachers to equip them with the necessary skills, knowledge, and strategies to effectively teach literacy.



Source: Midline assessment (2024)

Figure 63: Headteacher recommendation to improved quality of literacy instruction

Output. 1.1.4. Increased Skills and Knowledge of Teachers

Teacher knowledge, skills, and the support they receive are critical determinants of student learning outcomes. To assess these factors, teachers were interviewed at both baseline and midline. This section delves into teacher qualifications, instructional practices, support mechanisms, and motivation.

In this current phase of L4UF program implementation, CRS established two partnerships with Teach for Sierra Leone (TFSL), and the University of Makeni (UNIMAK). TFSL and UNIMAK are teacher training institutions focused on teacher in-service training, coaching and mentoring, and Distance education training programs respectively.

During the FY2023 reporting period, the program surpassed the target for the indicator measuring the *percentage of teachers who devote adequate time to literacy instruction (CRS Custom #11)* by 6 percentage points, achieving a total of 56%. A total of 930 out of 1,653 teachers were consistently trained and supported by Teach for Sierra Leone throughout this period. These teachers, selected from lower primary classes (I, II, and III) across 310 schools, were accompanied by TFSL fellows for three consecutive months. As a result, these teachers exhibited a strong commitment to conducting six hours of reading sessions per week and fulfilling their responsibilities in delivering materials to enhance literacy in their schools. The dedication of these teachers has led to many students displaying increased interest and confidence in reading, as observed during routine classroom evaluations.

Additionally, in the reporting period FY2023, the L4UF program surpassed its target of 735 for the indicator measuring *(1.1.4.1 Number of teachers/educators / teaching assistants in target schools who demonstrate use of new and quality teaching techniques or tools as a result of USDA assistance-MGD Indicator #4)* by 272 teachers to reach 1007 teacher who demonstrated new teaching techniques while delivering their lessons in the classroom during teachers observations. Some of the new teaching techniques demonstrated by the teachers included "teaching at the right level", child centered teaching techniques

(CCTT), and diagnostic teaching methodologies (DTM) including pair and group readings. This target was exceeded because of the professional trainings and nurturing of teachers and head teachers on quality instruction and school management respectively by Teach for Sierra Leone. Additionally, the Field Monitors and School liaison officers, worked in collaboration with Teach for Sierra Leone (TFSL) to ensure that teachers use skills and knowledge they gained from trainings in the classroom. This was done through regular coaching and mentoring of teachers and school heads on a routine basis.

Teacher training

Teacher training and development have increased between baseline and midline. Notably, there has been an increase in the proportion of teachers participating in Diagnostic Teaching Methodologies (DTM) training, rising from 68% to 71%. Additionally, engagement in distance education programs has grown substantially, with a 16 percentage point increase in participation rates from baseline to midline. Furthermore, a larger percentage of teachers 63% at midline have received training in life skills than 54% at baseline, indicating a growing emphasis on holistic teacher development.

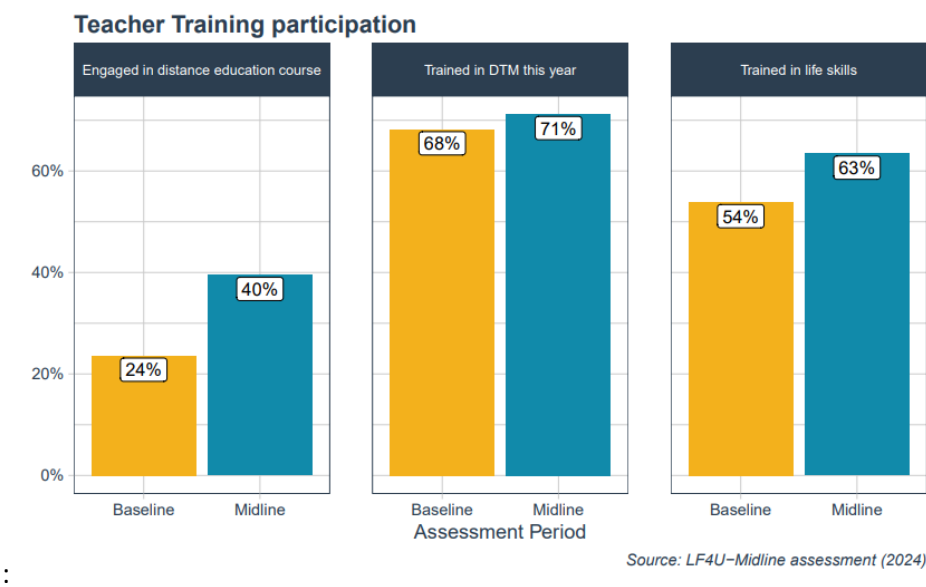


Figure 64: Teacher training participation

From the qualitative interviews, participants affirmed the importance of training teachers and appreciate how the training has contributed to an increase in the number of trained teachers with better teaching approaches, which also aligns with the quantitative findings. This has consequently led to various levels of certification for the teachers (explained in a subsequent section) which is a requirement for them to receive salaries from the government. This was acknowledged among parents, local government and other community workers who interact with the teachers.

Respondent 6: *...this project has brought a lot of teachers and learning materials, and they also called our teachers for training*

FGD with Men, Bafodia, Koinadugu.

Respondent 5: *The distance learning program for teachers has increased the number of teachers in our community.*

FGD with Men Barawa Wolay, Falaba.

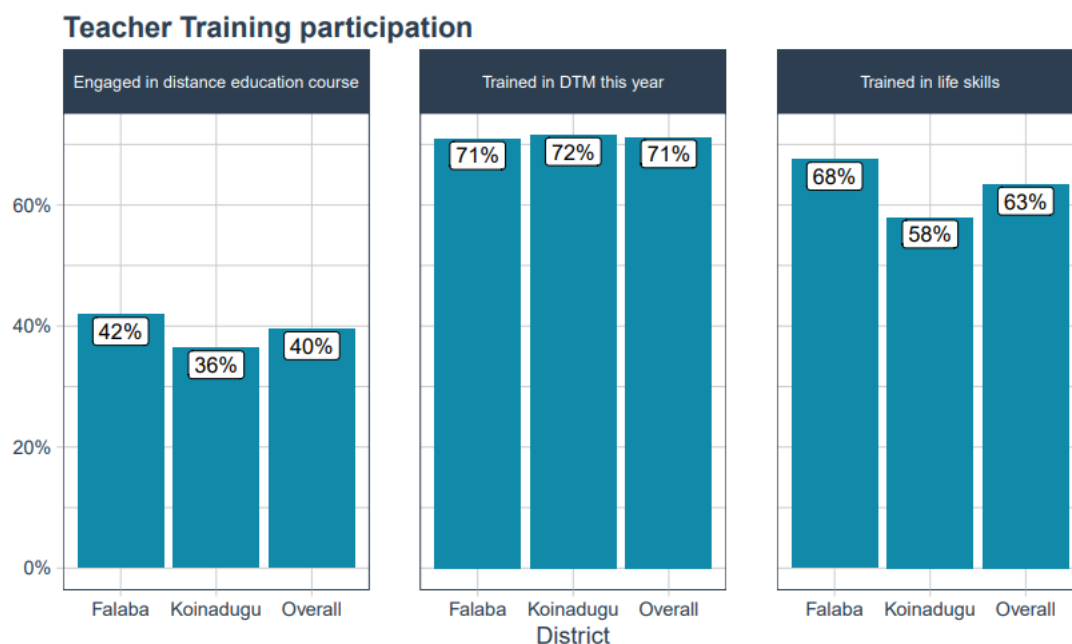
Also, again CRS has been providing training for teachers. Before we used to have a lot of community teachers that were not trained but with the intervention of CRS, now we only have few of them because CRS has been providing training for them. They have also helped most of them to be on the pay roll (pin code teachers), so there are so many things that CRS is doing in our community.

Chief KII Bafodia, Koinadugu.

Previously, most of my teachers were volunteers but with the DTM from CRS, there is a drastic improvement in their performances. The DTM training is conducted at their doorstep. Manuals are given to each teacher serving as a guide in the teaching and learning process. This training has lessened the workload on me. Teachers who benefited from this training are very happy and as a result of that always give me an appraisal. My school is one of the schools that was opportune to send a teacher for Distance Education through this project. The Teaching method has changed completely, and I am well pleased as my teachers are well grounded with the DTM training that has minimized my mentorship. I just go around to add small flesh on the bone.

CHW IDI Kambalia, Koinadugu.

A disparity in teacher training participation exists between Falaba and Koinadugu districts. Teachers in Falaba District have demonstrated greater access to professional development compared to their counterparts in Koinadugu. Specifically, Falaba has a 4% higher rate of teacher participation in distance education courses and a 10% higher in life skills training. These differences may contribute to variations in the student assessment outcomes between the two districts.



Source: LF4U–Midline assessment (2024)

Figure 65: Teacher training participation by district

Teacher knowledge and confidence in teaching techniques

Teacher knowledge and confidence in teaching techniques have significantly improved from baseline to midline. There has been a notable decline in the proportion of teachers reporting ‘no knowledge’ in key areas, accompanied by a substantial increase in those expressing confidence.

Knowledge on literacy instruction: Teachers exhibited high levels of confidence and knowledge in specific literacy techniques, particularly in comprehension, word recognition, and phonics. More than half of the teachers (56% and 51%, respectively) expressed confidence in these areas. While there has been progress in other areas like fluency and vocabulary instruction, fewer than half of the teachers reported confidence, suggesting a need for further improvement in these essential literacy skills.

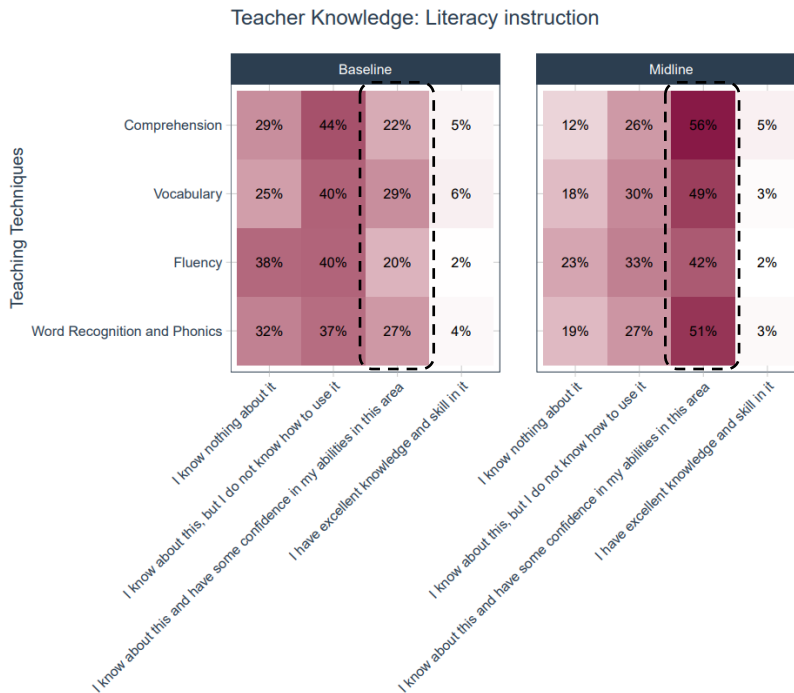


Figure 66: Proportion of teacher knowledge and confidence on teaching literacy methodologies

General teaching instructions: In broader teaching practices, motivation, assessment, and effective questioning emerged as the techniques where teachers displayed significant knowledge and confidence, with 61%, 60%, and 50% respectively in these areas. However, there are opportunities to enhance teachers' skills in areas such as adapting lessons for individual differences, grouping students for instruction, and encouraging independent learning, where teachers showed more limited expertise.

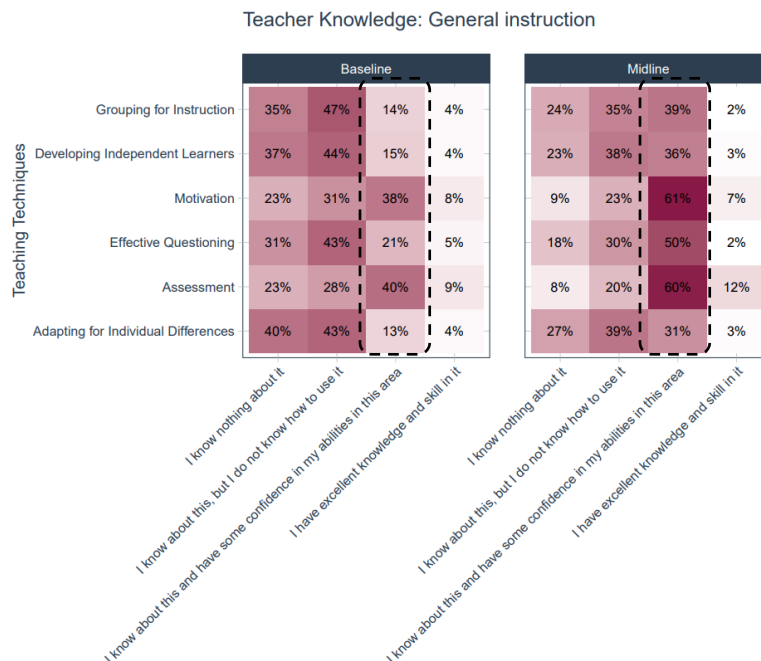


Figure 67: Proportion of teacher knowledge and confidence on general teaching methodologies

These enhanced teacher capabilities on literacy instructions relate with improvements in student outcomes, particularly in phonemic awareness, word recognition, and reading comprehension. The positive relationship between increased teacher confidence in comprehension and higher student comprehension scores supports the program's theory of change, which posits that improved teacher competency and commitment directly impact student literacy outcomes.

Teaching techniques in which teachers demonstrated lower levels of knowledge and confidence, such as grouping for instruction, fostering independent learners, effective questioning, fluency, and adapting lessons for individual differences, can serve as key focus areas for future training programs. Strengthening these areas will help enhance overall teaching effectiveness and better equip educators to address diverse classroom needs.

At the district level, more teachers in Koinadugu consistently demonstrate lower levels of knowledge and confidence across both general and literacy teaching methodologies compared to their counterparts in Falaba. A higher proportion of teachers in Koinadugu reported that they did not know essential teaching techniques, which may contribute to the observed variation in student literacy outcomes between the two districts.

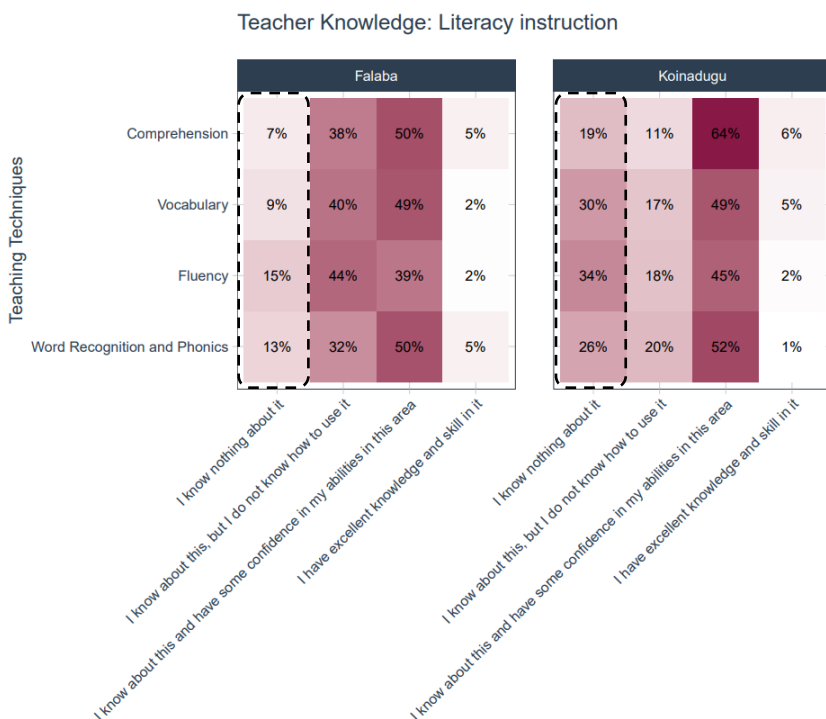


Figure 68: Proportion of teacher knowledge and confidence on teaching literacy methodologies across districts

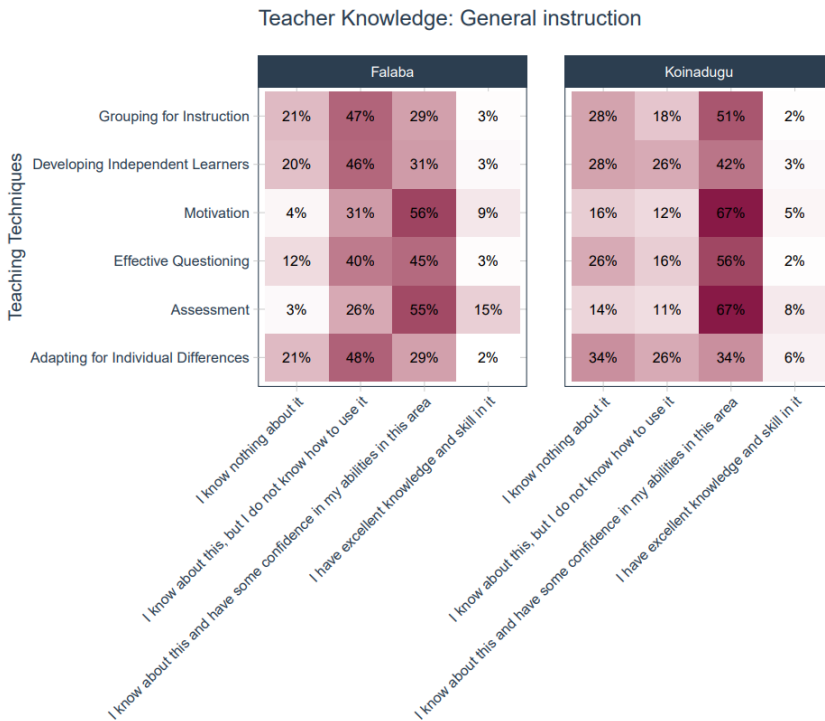


Figure 69: Proportion of teacher knowledge and confidence on general teaching methodologies across districts

Teacher coaching and mentoring

Teacher coaching and mentoring have increased in frequency and consistency. A substantial majority of teachers (92%) reported to have received coaching and mentoring from TFSL in collaboration with CRS school liaison officers within the past month; a notable increase from the baseline (85%). While the most common coaching frequency remains monthly, this consistent engagement suggests a strengthening of the support systems. Head teacher-led coaching and mentoring remain ubiquitous, with nearly all teachers (96%) reporting such interactions.

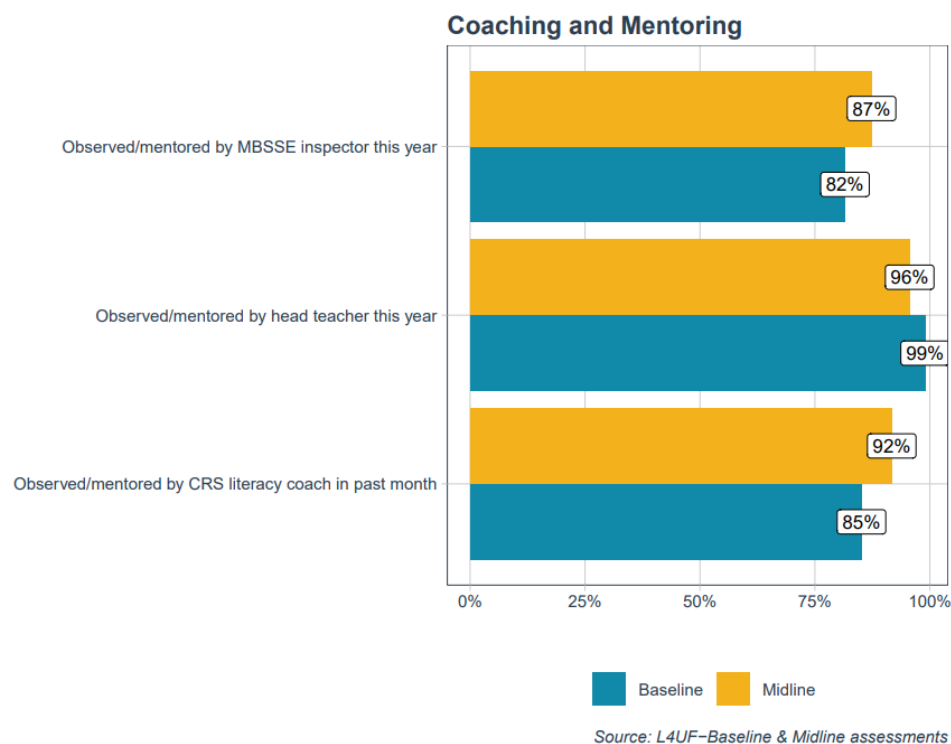


Figure 70: Teacher coaching and mentoring

Additionally, the frequency of coaching and mentoring sessions for teachers has remained consistently high. At midline, 90% of teachers, compared to 91% at baseline, received coaching or mentoring from their head teacher more than twice a year. Similarly, the involvement of CRS literacy coaches in these activities has been stable, with 48% of teachers at midline and 45% at baseline receiving monthly support. Notably, the percentage of teachers receiving MBSSE inspector-led coaching or mentoring more than twice a year increased from 49% at baseline to 58% at midline, signaling a rise in both the frequency and intensity of these sessions. This could be driven by the MBSSE 2022-2026 strategic partnerships around ‘Foundations for learning for all’. In their theory of change, their second outcome is centered around ensuring that that foundation level teachers are properly trained and routinely use lesson plans with aligned teaching and learning materials and teaching practices. One of their activities geared to satisfy this second outcome is to provide regular continuous professional development support and coaching¹⁷.

The collaborative efforts of CRS literacy coaches, head teachers, and MBSSE inspectors are fostering a more supportive and developmental environment for teachers, leading to sustained growth in teacher mentoring activities.

¹⁷Sierra Leone 2022-2026 Partnership Compact: Foundations of Learning for All (2022) MBSSE- Ministry of Technical and Higher Education. <https://assets.globalpartnership.org/s3fs-public/document/file/2022-10-SierraLeone-partnership-compact.pdf?VersionId=Gdp1Xe2QFrHqM0XHgfzsuBo83rsVA4Vr>

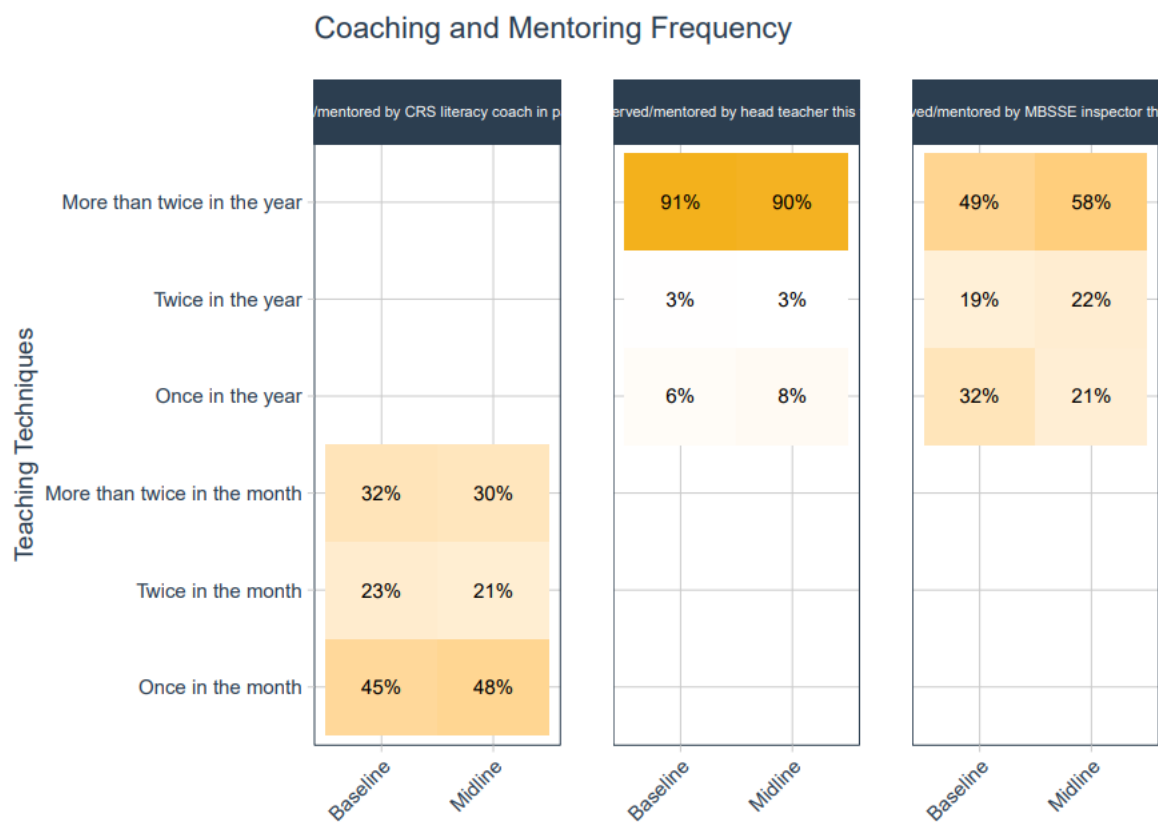


Figure 71: Teacher coaching and mentoring frequency

Teacher evaluation and supervision, persist as powerful motivators for teachers with 97% and 99% mention at midline as shown below.

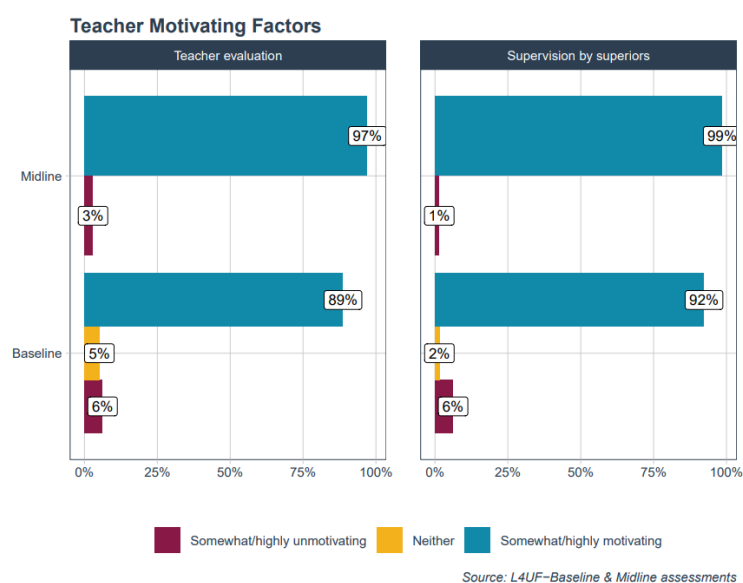
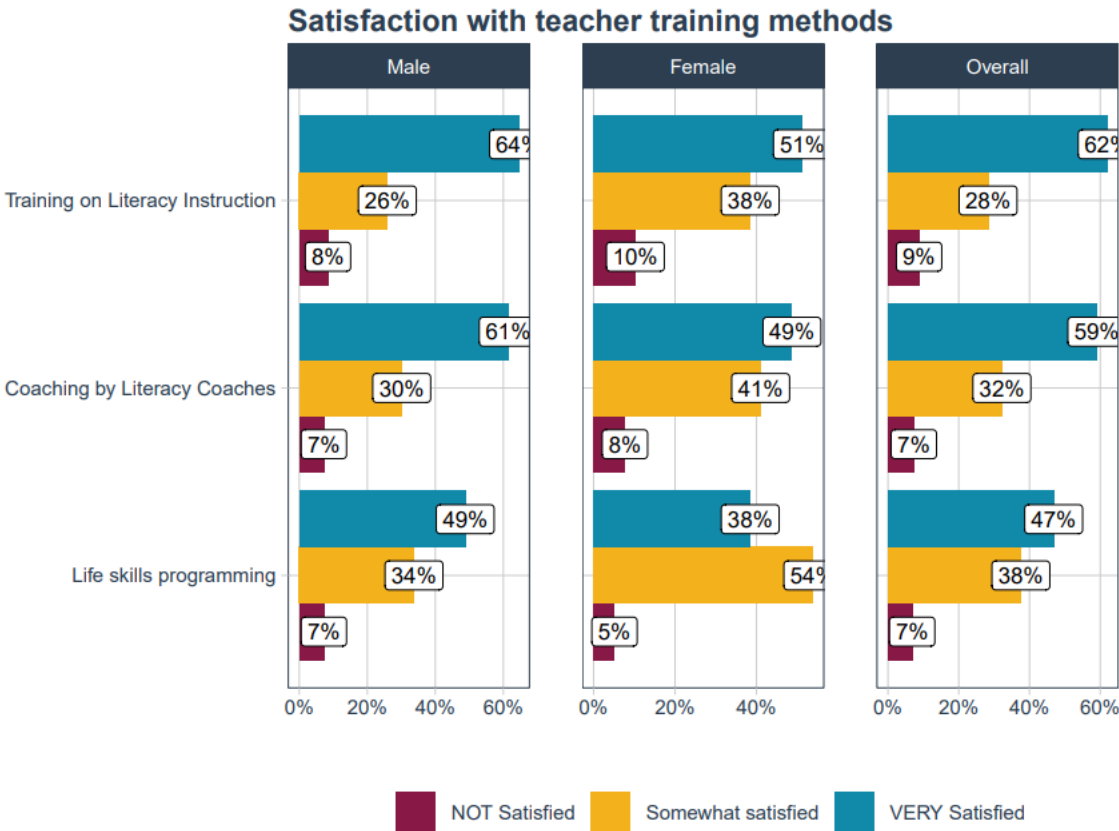


Figure 72: Teacher training motivation

Training satisfaction

Additionally, teacher satisfaction with literacy instruction training and coaching was high. However, there is a need for improvement in life skills programming training.



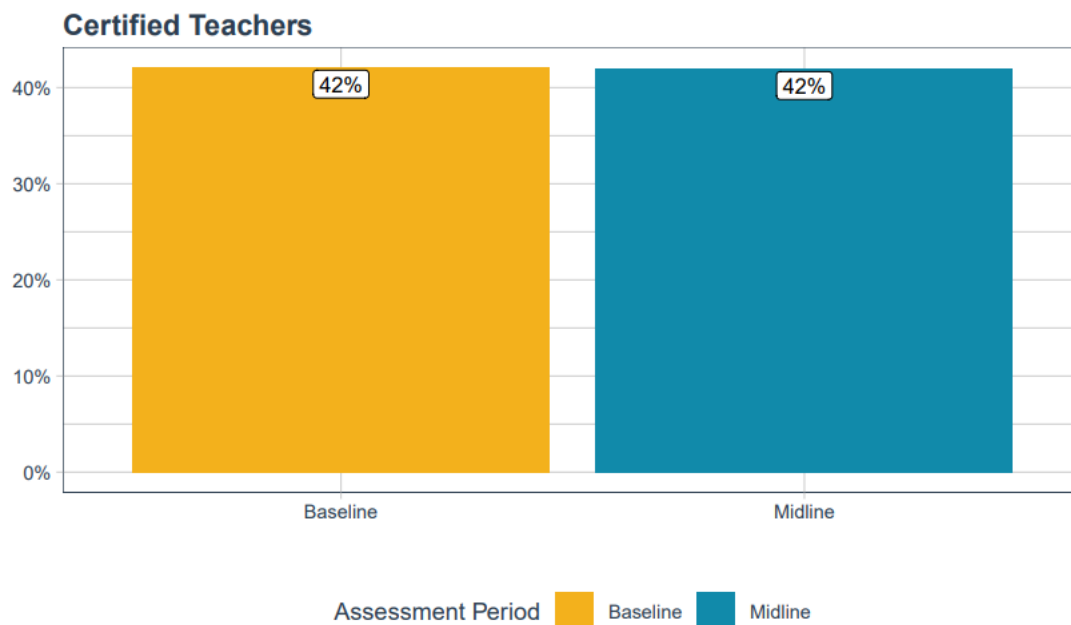
Source: LF4U–Midline assessment (2024)

Figure 73: Teacher satisfaction with training methods

Teacher certification

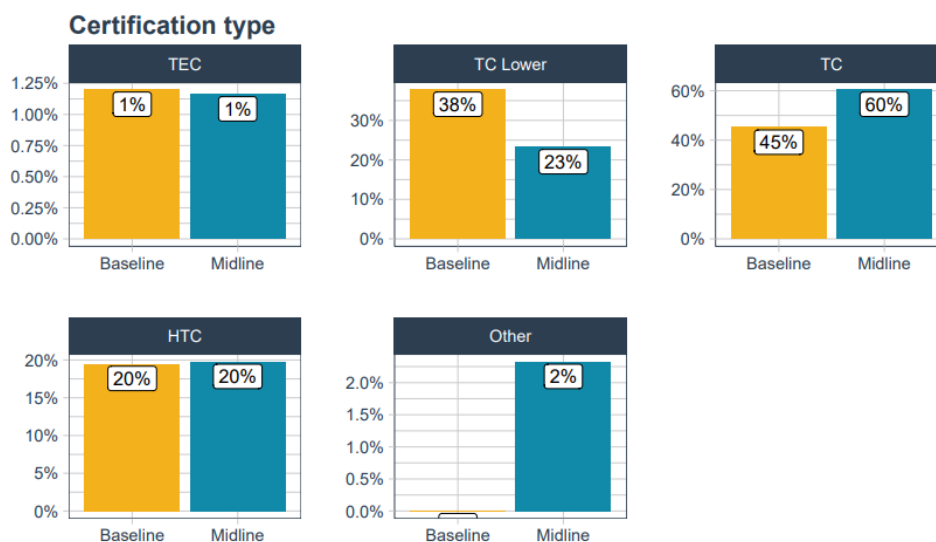
At midline teacher certification levels remained relatively the same compared to baseline with 42% of teachers in grades 2 to 4 holding a teaching certificate at both assessment points.

Figure 74: Certified teachers: Baseline vs Midline comparison



Source: L4UF–Baseline & Midline assessments

However, a notable shift in teacher qualifications occurred between baseline and midline. The proportion of teachers holding a Teacher Certificate (TC) increased significantly from 45% to 60%, while the percentage of those with a Teacher Certificate Lower (TCL) decreased from 38% to 23%. This indicates an overall improvement in the teacher workforce’s formal qualifications, driven by the L4UF project's initiatives of capacitating community teachers through pre-service training to attain Teacher’s Certificate (TC) general, a course which lasts for two years.



Source: LF4U–Midline assessment (2024)

Figure 75: Teaching certification type

There is a district-level difference in teacher qualifications at the midline. Koinadugu district had a higher proportion of teachers with Teacher Certificates (TC) compared to Falaba district, with 66% in Koinadugu and 55% in Falaba.

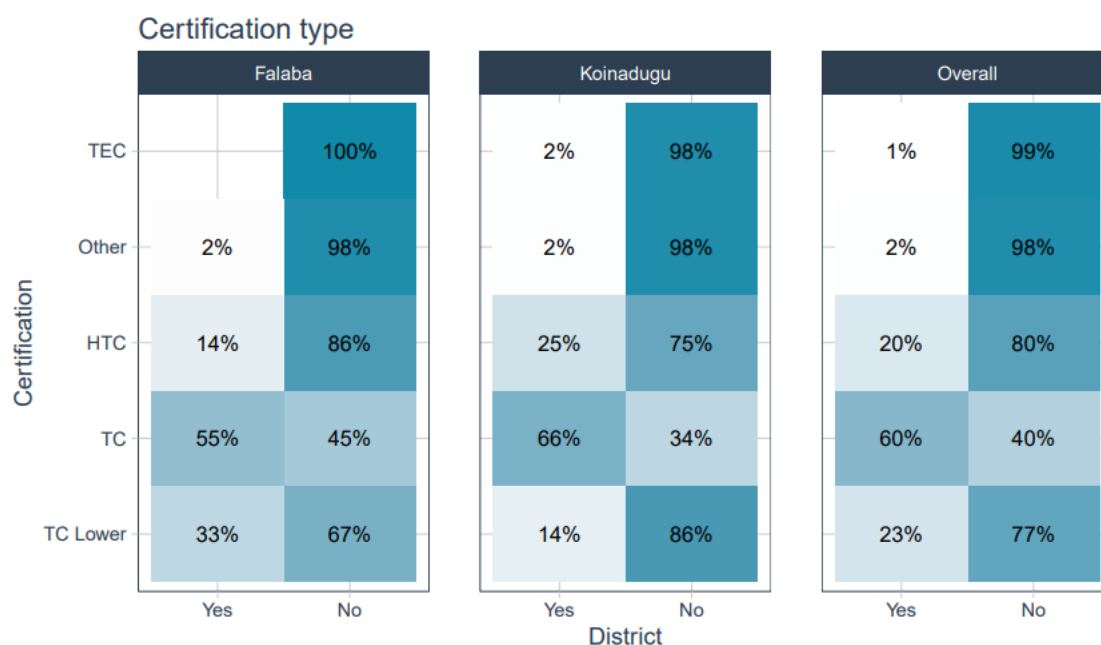


Figure 76: Teaching certification type by district

Additionally, MBSSE-approved schools were more likely to have teachers with Higher Teaching Certificate (HTC) qualifications, with 21% of approved schools having HTC-certified teachers compared to none in non-approved schools.

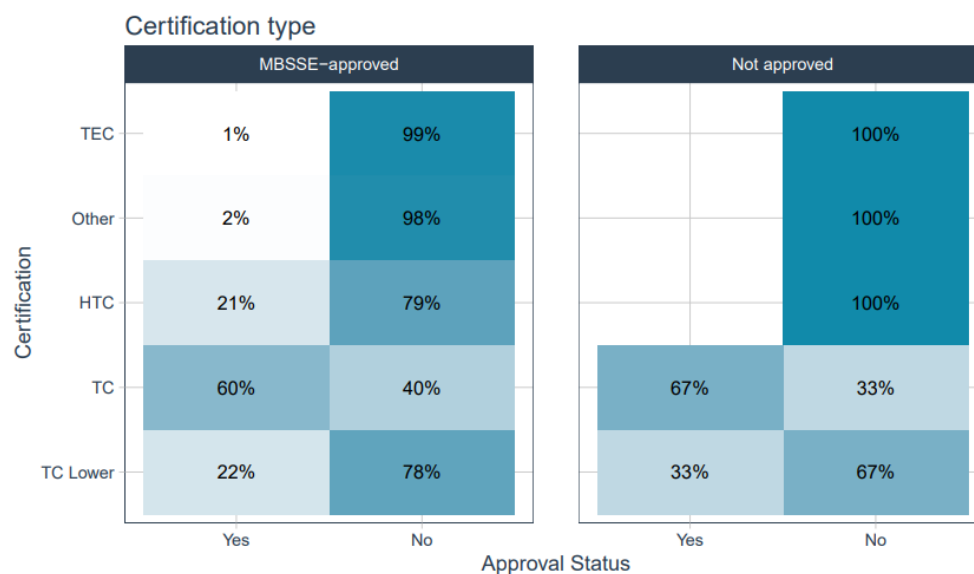


Figure 77: Teaching certification type by school approval status

More teachers in government schools had a TC certification than mission or community schools. While 78% of government school-teachers held a TC, 56% of mission school teachers and 65% of community school teachers had the same qualification. Interestingly, mission schools had a higher percentage of teachers with HTC certification (25%) compared to government (11%) or community schools (10%).

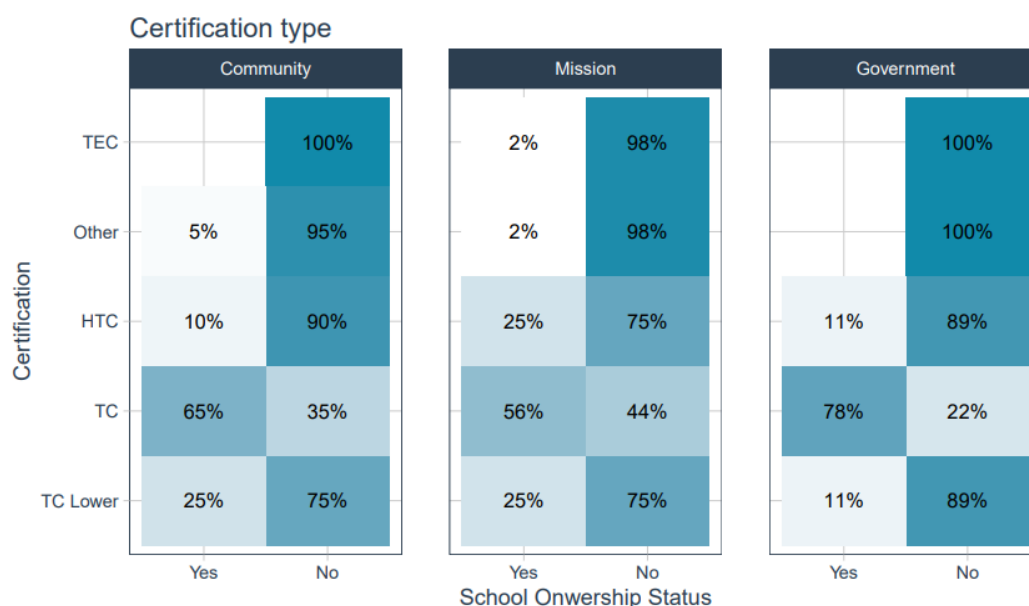


Figure 78: Teaching certification type by school ownership status

CRS distance learning and teacher training programs emerged as the primary catalyst for teacher professional development as shown in the table below. A substantial majority (90%) of teachers who attained TC Lower certification and over half (55%) of those who achieved TC certification reported having utilized these programs. Additionally, these programs also played a role in the development of teachers pursuing Higher Teacher Certificate (HTC), with nearly a third (29%) citing them as a support source. This underscores the significant impact of CRS initiatives on enhancing teacher qualifications and potentially improving overall educational outcomes.

We noted some unintended outcomes of training teachers and the resulting certification. A positive outcome is that once teachers receive their certification, they are eligible to apply for licensing and registration with the Teaching Service Commission (TSC). This licensing opens further doors for the teachers to be recruited by the TSC, is a requirement for teachers who wish to progress along the teacher career path and allows for them to practice in other countries where TSC has existing agreements¹⁸. A negative outcome, however, also stems from certification and having teachers on payroll. In Sierra Leone, a government payroll position is tied to the teacher, and not the school. Teachers can therefore change to other schools once they go on the payroll. This leads to certain schools especially those in remote areas being understaffed¹⁹.

¹⁸ <https://tsc.gov.sl/faqs/>

¹⁹ <https://edtechhub.org/2023/03/22/where-do-teachers-go-and-where-do-they-stay/>

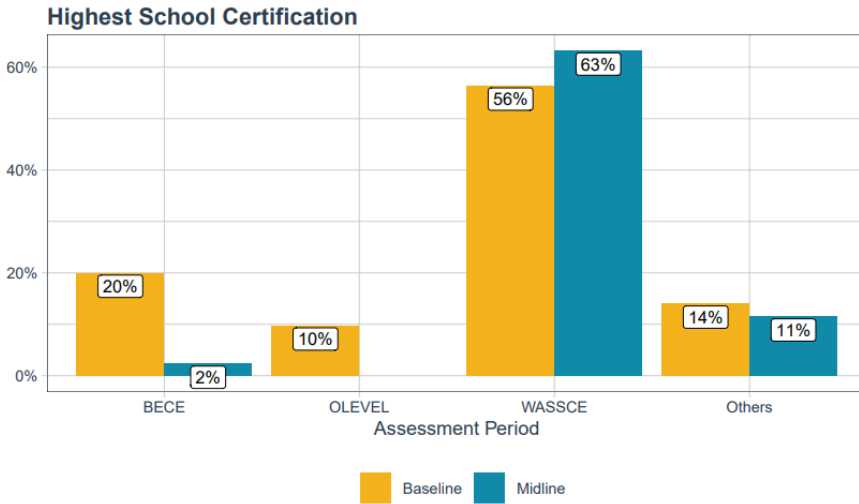
Table 19: Teacher training support sources

Certificate and source of support	Number of teachers	%
TEC		
Other support	1	100%
TC Lower		
CRS distance learning/training programme	18	90%
Other support	2	10%
TC		
CRS distance learning/training programme	29	55%
Other support	24	45%
HTC		
CRS distance learning/training programme	5	29%
Other support	12	71%
Other		
CRS distance learning/training programme	1	50%
Other support	1	50%

Teachers' highest education level

A shift in teachers' highest educational qualifications occurred between baseline and midline. The proportion of teachers holding a West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) increased from 56% to 63%. In contrast, the percentage of teachers with Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) or Ordinary Level (O-Level) qualifications decreased significantly.

Assumption: Initially, a sizable percentage of teachers chose the "other-specify" option, but they made it clear that they were TC certified. To recategorize the degree of education of these teachers, we looked at the minimal requirements for TC certification which is a senior secondary school education certificate (WASSCE). As a result, we classified the "other-specify" option as WASSCE.



Source: L4UF-Midline assessment (2024)

Figure 79: Teacher highest level of education

A higher proportion of teachers in Koinadugu district had attained the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) as their highest level of education compared to Falaba district. 68% of teachers in Koinadugu held WASSCE, while 58% of teachers in Falaba had the same qualification.

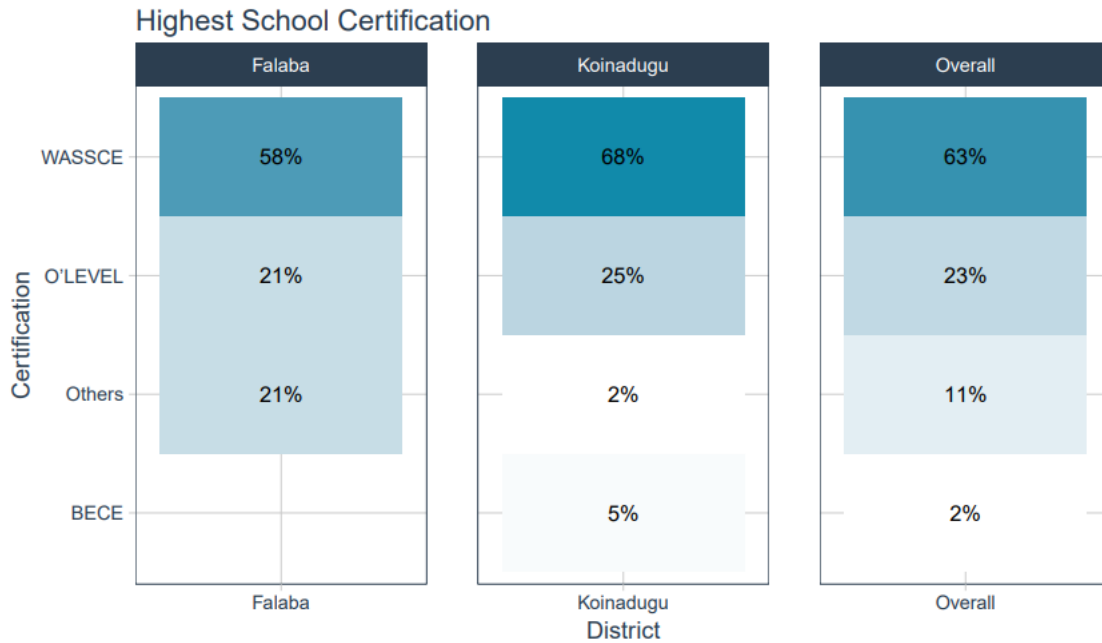


Figure 80: Teacher highest level of education by district

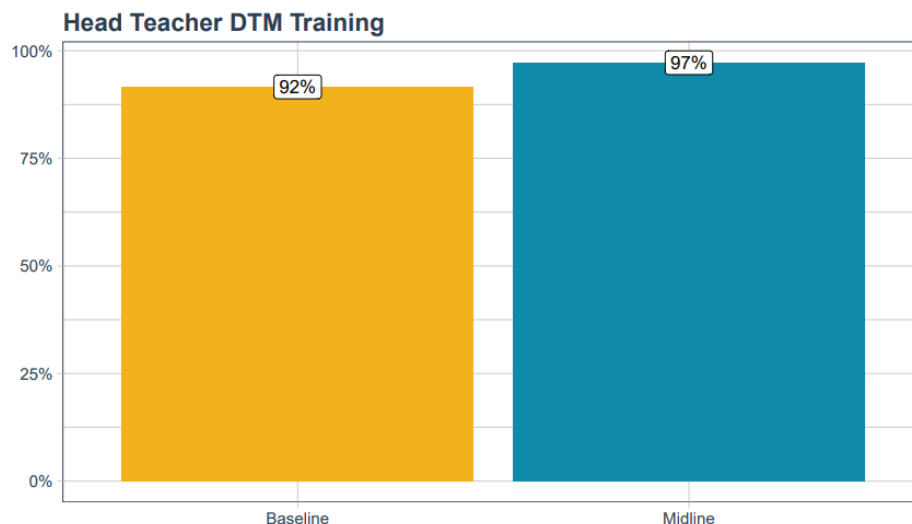
Output. 1.1.5. Increased Skills and Knowledge of School Administrators

Effective school leadership is a cornerstone of educational quality. To understand the role of head teachers in driving improved learning outcomes, this section examines the training and capacity-building initiatives they have engaged in.

To enhance the skills and knowledge of school administrators and improve the quality of literacy instruction, the project focused on building their capacity to monitor and support teachers effectively. CRS facilitated a review of the MBSSE Administrator's manual and provided annual training to two administrators from each school. These trainings, using adapted versions of the manual, emphasized school management and teacher support to strengthen overall literacy instruction.

Headteacher training

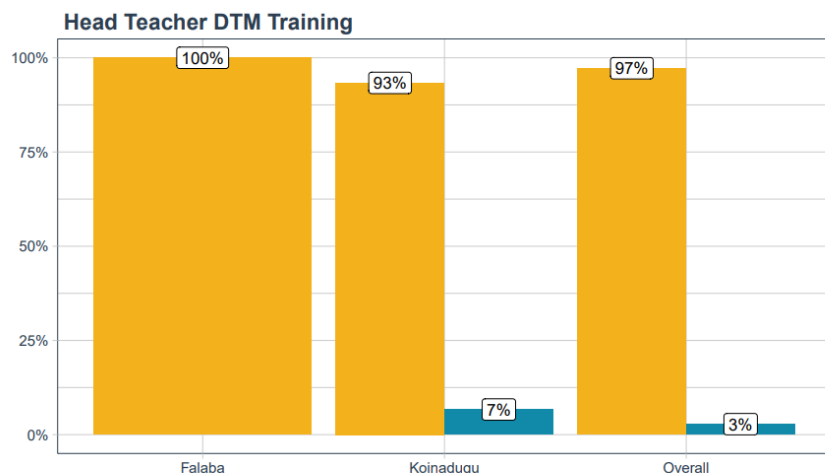
Headteacher participation in professional development has markedly improved. A significant proportion (97%) of head teachers surveyed at midline reported benefiting from CRS-led training in diagnostic teaching methodologies, this represents an increase from the 92% at the baseline.



Source: L4UF-Baseline & Midline assessments

Figure 81: Headteacher participation in DTM training

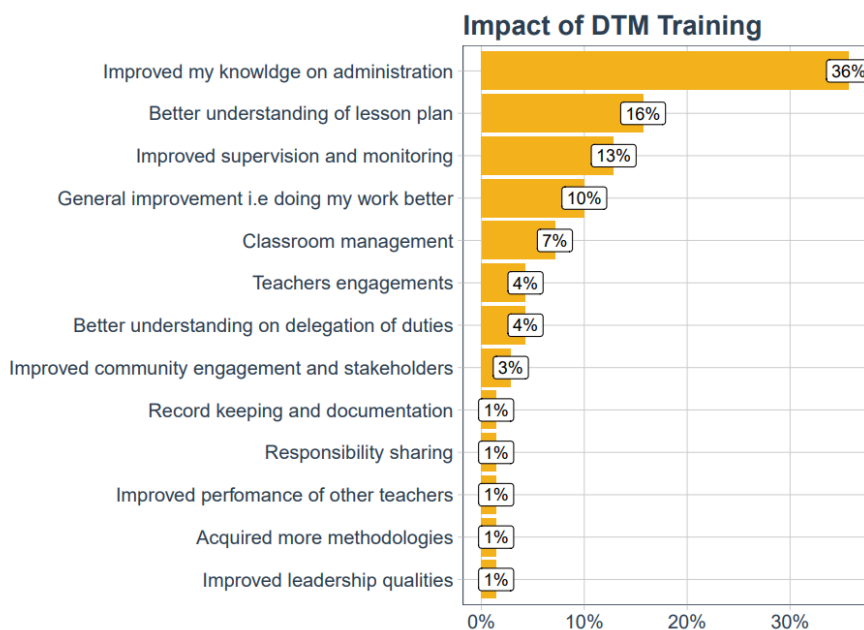
There is a consistently high level of participation by head teachers in diagnostic teaching methodologies training across districts.



Source: L4UF-Baseline & Midline assessments

Figure 82: Headteacher participation DTM training by district

These training programs have had a positive impact on headteacher competencies, with a larger proportion (36%) reporting improved administrative skills, 16% demonstrating a better understanding of lesson planning, and 13% enhancing their supervision and monitoring abilities. This reflects the top-of-mind influence these programs have had on the headteachers within schools.



Source: LF4U-Midline assessment (2024)

Figure 83: Impact of DTM training on headteachers (single response question)

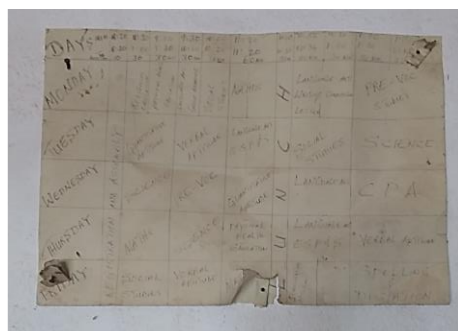
School management practices

Evidence of improved school management practices is emerging. A significant increase in the availability of teacher attendance logbooks in head teacher offices—from 78% at baseline to 97% at midline—

indicates enhanced school management systems. This positive trend suggests that head teachers are effectively applying the skills and knowledge acquired through CRS led training on school management and teacher support to improve school operations. Furthermore, a similar upward trajectory is observed in the presence of other essential tools and techniques in head teacher offices.



a. Master timetable displayed at the headteacher's office (for class 1-6).



b. Timetable displayed at the front of the classroom.

Figure 84: Images showing the Master timetable and a classroom timetable

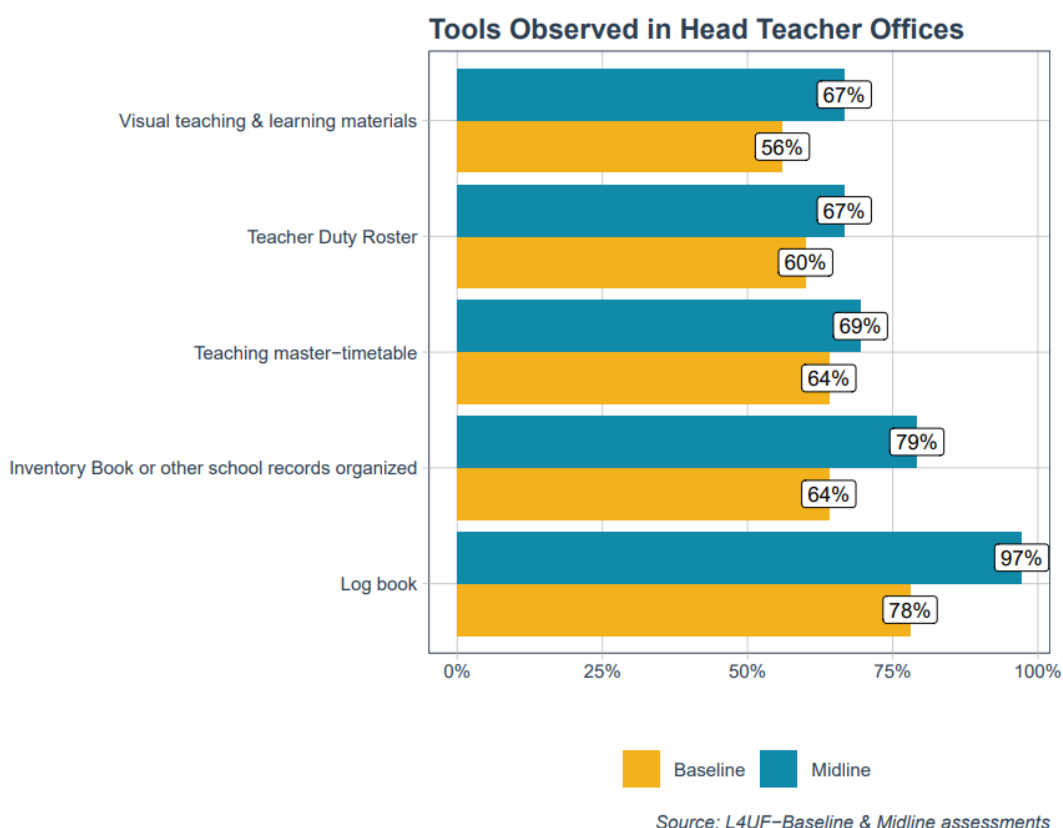
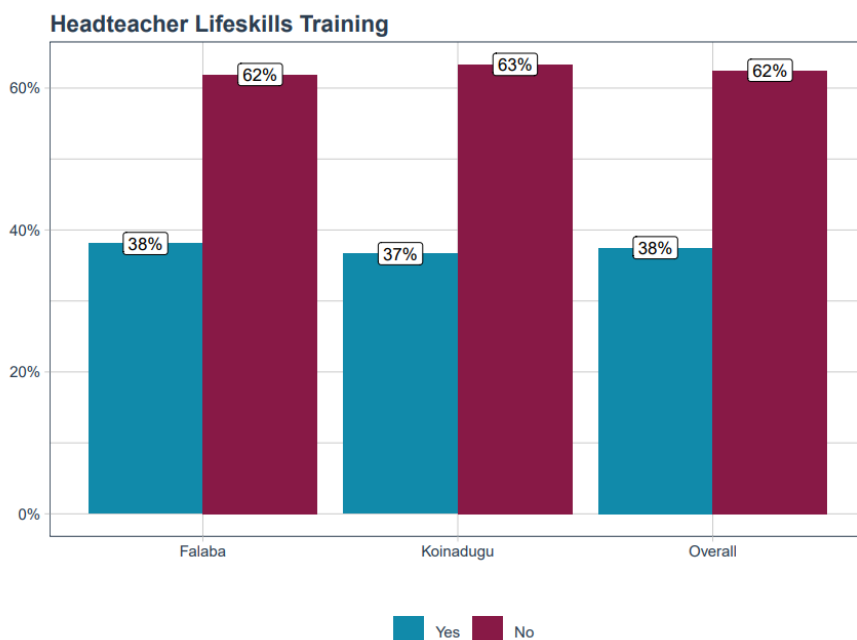


Figure 85: Headteacher school management practices

Overall, a larger proportion of teachers (63%) have undergone life skills training offered by CRS.



Source: LF4U-Midline assessment (2024)

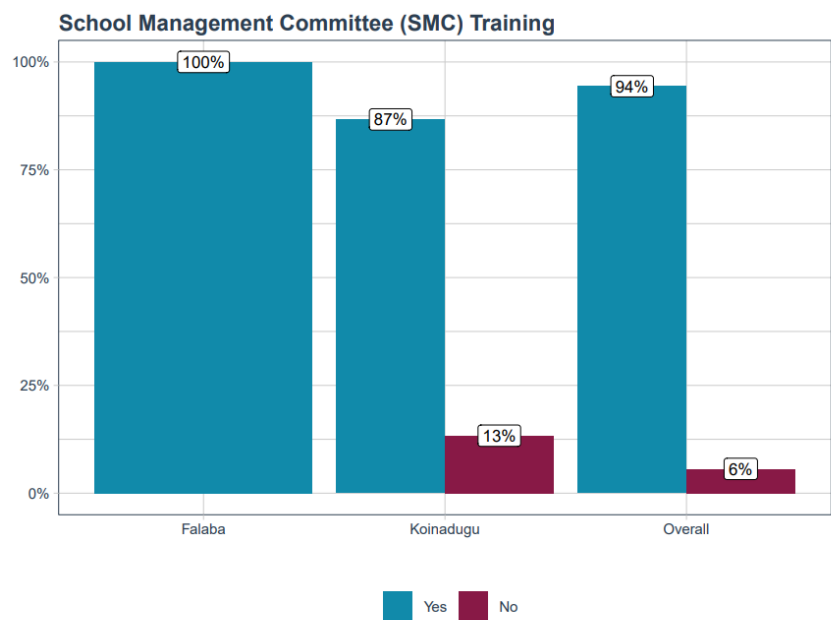
Figure 86: Headteacher life skills training participation

School Management Committee training

The L4UF project focused on strengthening the functionality of School Management Committees (SMCs) to improve the management of schools. CRS worked to enhance collaboration among SMCs by revitalizing non-functional structures and ensuring that chairpersons were literate, boosting their overall effectiveness. In partnership with district MBSSE Directors, CRS reviewed the SMC handbook and assessed existing governance structures. Based on the assessment, training content was developed, and SMC leaders were trained in governance.

School administrators and SMCs across the 310 program schools were trained to support the management of their respective schools. This training, led by Teach for Sierra Leone in collaboration with CRS Field Monitors and School Liaison Officers, focused on empowering SMCs due to their crucial role in assisting school administrators. Their responsibilities include managing financial resources, overseeing teachers, maintaining school infrastructure, and ensuring a conducive environment for teaching and learning.

Nearly all (94%) School Management Committees (SMCs) chairpersons at midline reported participating in CRS-led school management training, indicating strong engagement from community stakeholders in school governance.



Source: LF4U-Midline assessment (2024)

Figure 87: SMC training participation

IR1.2 Improved Attentiveness

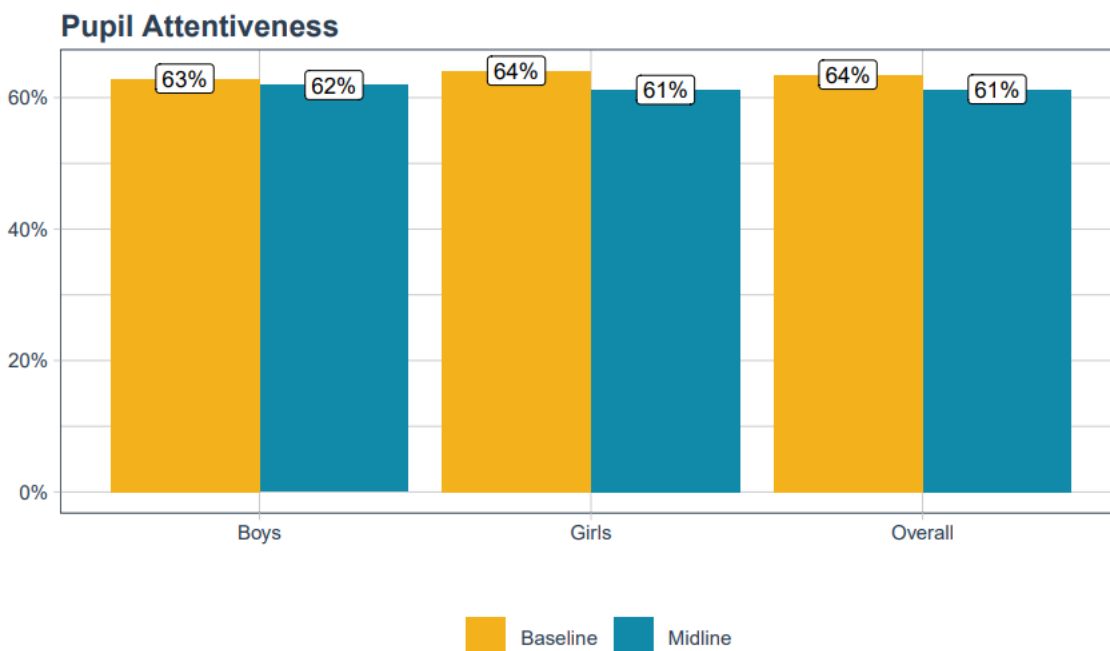
Pupil attentiveness is a critical factor influencing learning outcomes. This section examines pupil attentiveness as a proxy indicator of learning engagement and classroom dynamics. Additionally, the relationship between pupil attentiveness and two key outputs—reduced short-term hunger and increased access to food through school feeding—will be explored.

The classroom observation tool was used to assess pupil attentiveness based on four criteria:

- Ability to follow instructions.
- Listening and working without distractions.
- Active participation in lessons (e.g., reading passages, contributing to discussions, taking notes).
- Asking questions or seeking help.

Enumerators observed student attentiveness during class sessions, recording how many pupils met each of these criteria.

Pupil attentiveness was measured at both baseline and midline, with no significant change in the proportion of attentive pupils. At midline, approximately 61% of girls and 62% of boys demonstrated attentiveness, similar to the 64% of girls and 63% of boys observed at baseline.

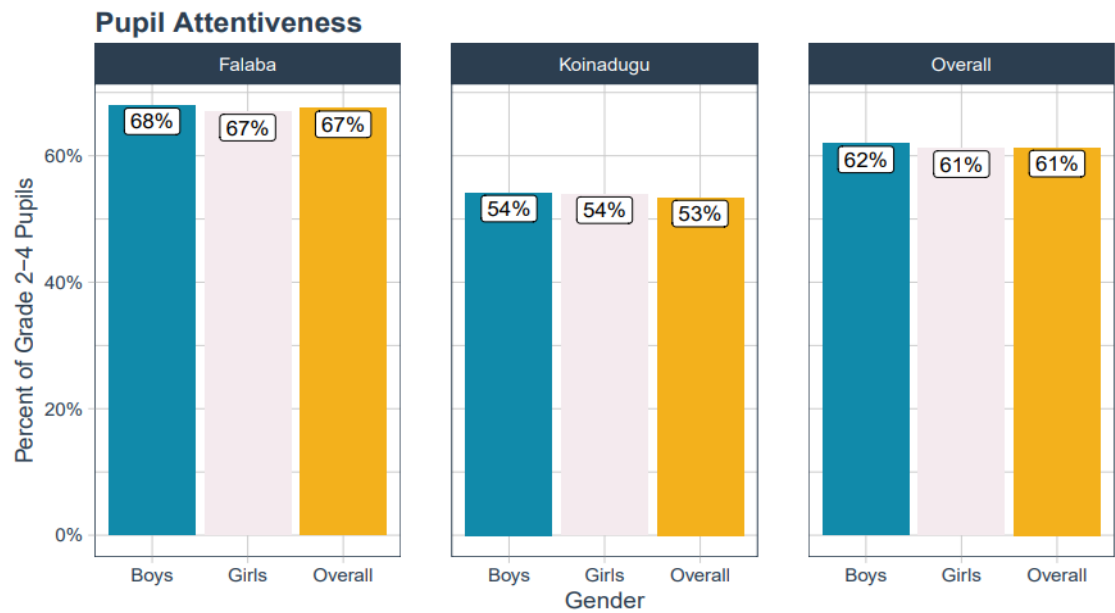


Source: L4UF–Baseline & Midline assessments

Figure 88: Level of pupil attentiveness

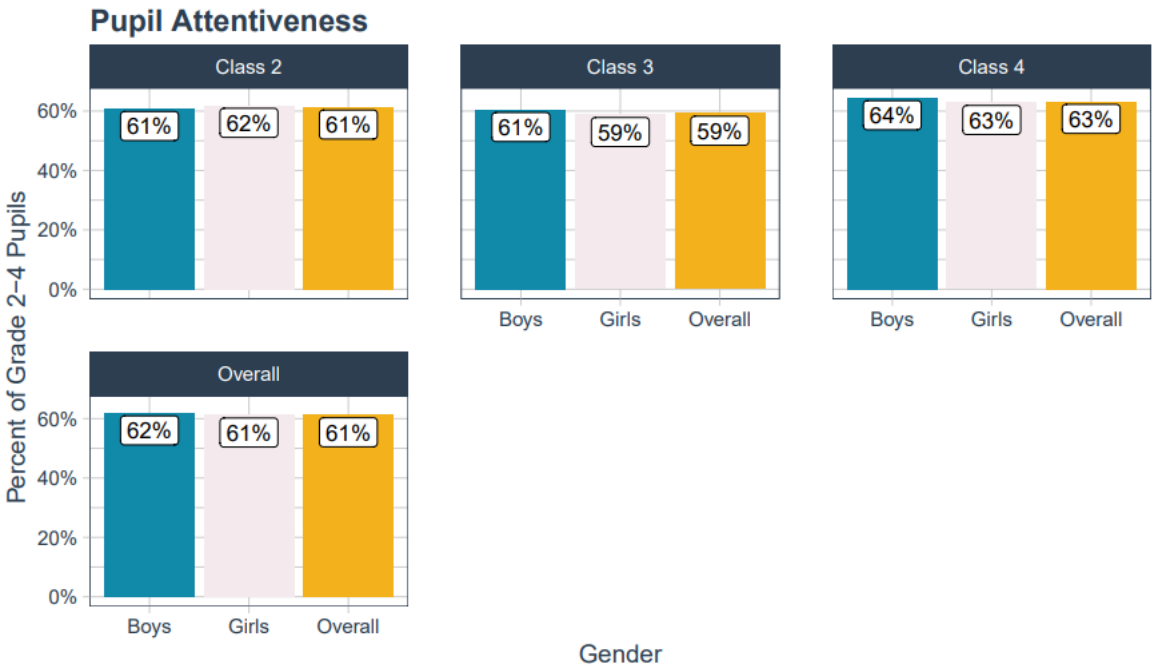
Pupils in grades 2-4 from Falaba district consistently displayed greater attentiveness in class, as evidenced by their ability to follow instructions, work autonomously, actively engage in lessons, and seek clarification, when necessary, compared to students in Koinadugu district.

Figure 89: Level of pupil attentiveness by district



Source: LF4U-Midline assessment (2024)

There were no significant gender differences in attentiveness among students across all grade levels.



Source: LF4U-Midline assessment (2024)

Figure 90: Pupil attentiveness by grade level

Output 1.2.1 Reduce Short Term Hunger

Hunger remains a significant obstacle to effective learning, and school feeding programs are an essential intervention to tackle this issue. To alleviate short-term hunger and improve student attentiveness, CRS implemented a daily hot meal program for pre-primary and primary students in all McGovern-Dole project schools across Koinadugu and Falaba districts. This initiative utilized both USDA-donated commodities and locally procured goods to ensure consistent access to nutritious meals for students.

During the FY2023 review period, the L4UF project was able to distribute a total of 189.58 MT as take-home (THR). This was distributed as follows 4.45MT (Reading Clubs Facilitators) 4.41 MT (School Health Clubs Facilitators) 12.79 MT (Best Performing Pupils) 4.34 MT(School Garden Focal Persons) and 163.59MT (Cooks and of which 119.85 MT of rice,7.79MT of Vegetable oil and 35.95 of Lentils). The target (23.90MT) was exceeded because part of the THR distributed in June 2023 was meant to be distributed in December 2023 (at the end of the first term of FY24). Indeed, the program brought the THR distribution forward because the Vegetable Oil was weeks from reaching its Best Used By Date (BUBD). The program distributed the vegetable oil as THR which was consumed by the communities before they reach their BUBD.

For the MGD indicator *(1.2.1.1.1 Quantity of take-home rations provided (in metric tons) as a result of USDA assistance-MGD Indicator #14)*, the L4UF project distributed a total of 189.58 metric tons of take-home rations (THR) during the FY2023 review period. The distribution was allocated as follows: 4.45 MT to Reading Club Facilitators, 4.41 MT to School Health Club Facilitators, 12.79 MT to Best Performing Pupils, 4.34 MT to School Garden Focal Persons, and 163.59 MT to Cooks, comprising 119.85 MT of rice, 7.79 MT of vegetable oil, and 35.95 MT of lentils. The target of 23.90 MT was exceeded due to the early distribution of THR initially planned for December 2023, which was advanced to June 2023 to avoid the vegetable oil reaching its Best Used By Date (BUBD). This proactive approach ensured that the vegetable oil was consumed by communities before it expired.

Output 1.2.1.1 Increased Access to Food (School Feeding)

Additionally, for the MGD indicator *(1.2.1.1.4 Number of school-age children receiving daily school meals (breakfast, snack, lunch) as a result of USDA assistance-MGD Indicator #17)* during the FY2023 review period, there was a significant increase in the number of school-age children receiving daily meals (breakfast, snack, and lunch), reaching 97.94% of the targeted 60,567 beneficiaries. This rise in the number of beneficiaries was as a result of extensive enrollment campaigns and heightened awareness regarding the importance of education at both district and chiefdom levels. The massive campaign aimed at addressing out-of-school children, along with the government's Free Quality Education (FQE) initiative, encouraged parents to send their children to school. Additionally, stakeholders enforced by-laws holding parents accountable for failing to ensure their children's attendance.

While access to food at home remained relatively stable between baseline and midline, with approximately 85% of pupils reporting having eaten before coming to school, the impact of school feeding programs is evident. A substantial increase in the proportion of pupils receiving school meals was observed between baseline and midline. At midline, 96% of pupils reported receiving food at school daily, compared to 84% at baseline.

Moreover, the provision of meals on the day of the assessment at midline was significantly high at 97% than baseline 18%. The baseline value of 18% is misleading because the evaluation took place mid-morning before the pupils received their meals at lunch time, which does not accurately reflect their usual access to food and therefore presents a less valid baseline figure.

For the MGD indicator (1.2.1.1.3 Number of daily school meals (breakfast, snack, lunch) provided to school-age children as a result of USDA assistance- MGD Indicator #16)," the L4UF project delivered a total of 9,253,119 meals during the FY2023 review period, representing 84.87% of the target of 10,902,060 meals set for the year. The shortfall in meeting this target was largely due to the reduction in school days resulting from the general elections held in June 2023, which included Presidential, Parliamentary, Mayoral, and Local Council elections. Despite this, the school feeding program demonstrated a positive impact by significantly increasing students' access to meals.

Overall, there is an indication that the school feeding program has contributed to increasing access to meals for students.

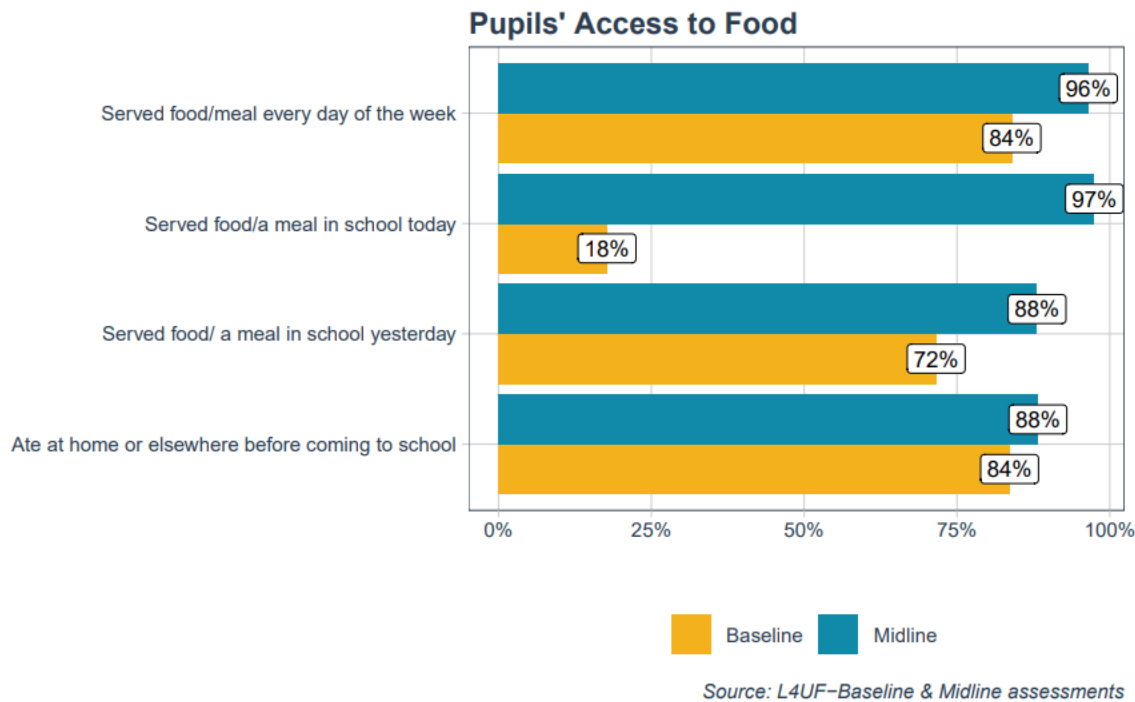
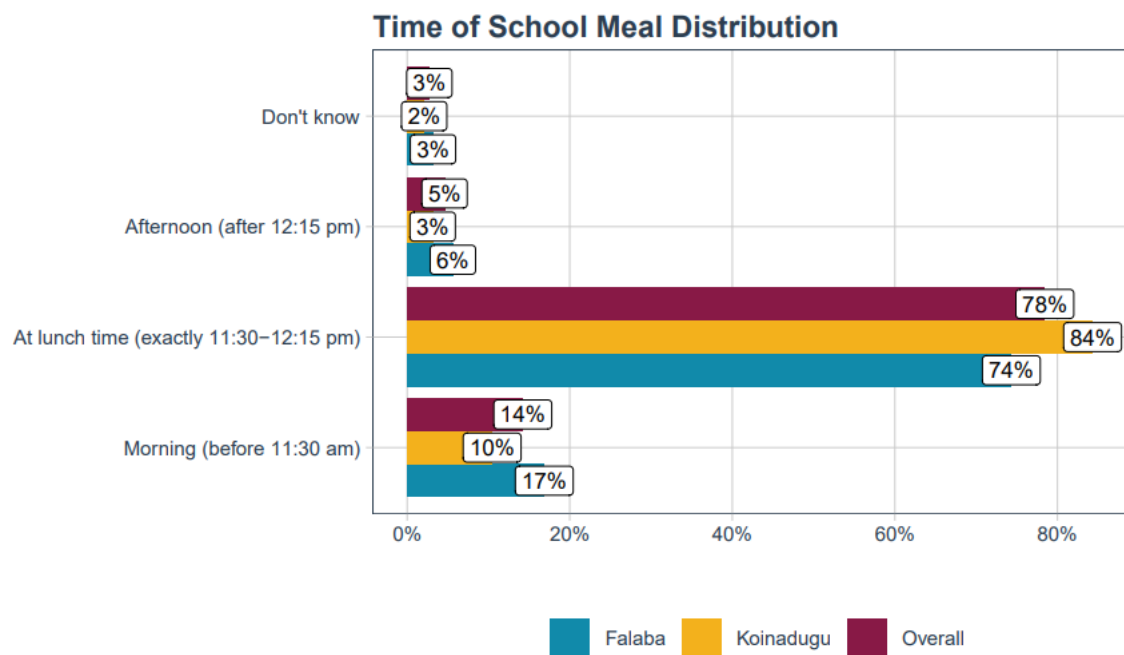


Figure 91: Proportion of pupils with access to food

Most schools (78%) distribute meals during lunchtime (11:30 AM - 12:15 PM), with a smaller proportion (14%) providing breakfast options (before 11:30 AM).



Source: LF4U–Midline assessment (2024)

Figure 92: School meal distribution schedule

School feeding programs effectively address immediate hunger needs. A substantial increase in the proportion of students reporting no hunger after consuming a school meal has been observed between baseline and midline. While 90% of students reported being satisfied at baseline, this figure surged to nearly all students (99%) at midline. This indicates that the meals provided are effectively addressing short-term hunger and supporting the program's theory of change, which posits that when students have access to a school feeding program, they will benefit from safe, nutritious meals, thus fostering a more conducive learning environment.

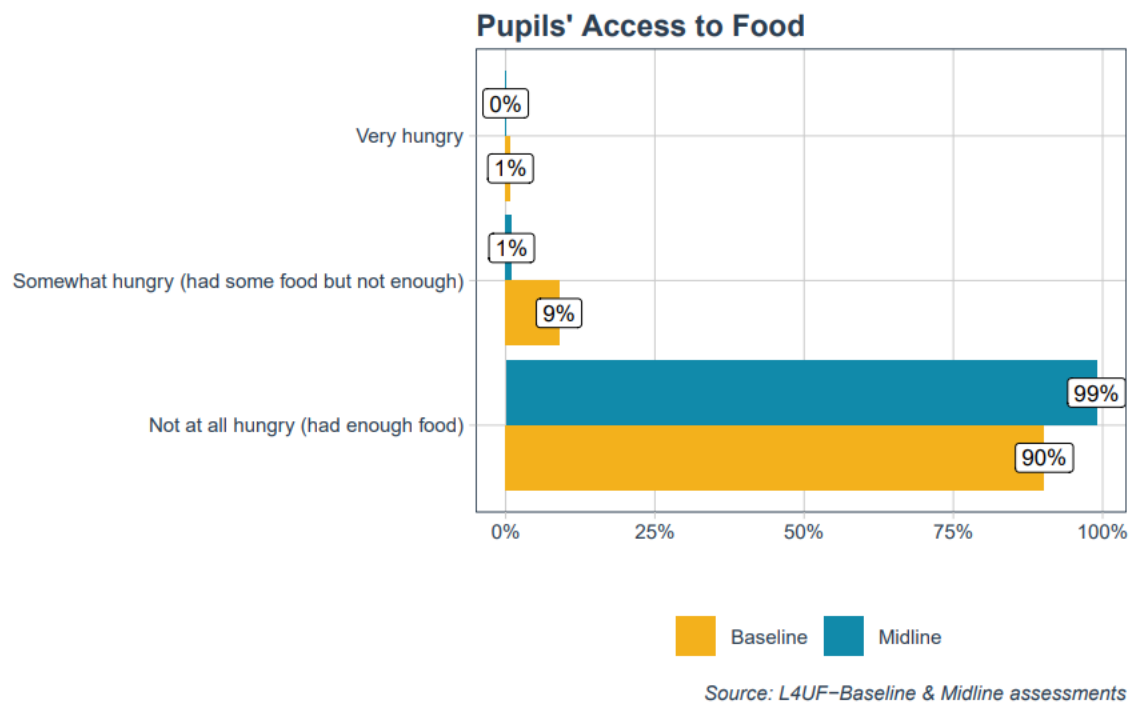


Figure 93: Hunger level after meal consumption

An overwhelming majority of pupils, constituting 90%, expressed high satisfaction with the food or meals provided. This indicates a positive perception of the school feeding program among beneficiaries.

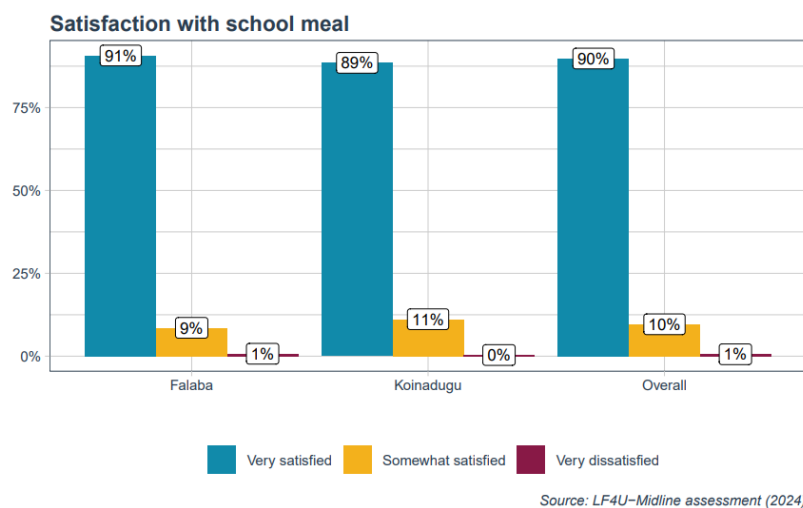


Figure 94: Satisfaction with school meal



Figure 95: Image showing a school meal consisting of rice and lentils

The chiefs also were of the same opinion that school meals helped the children concentrate in class and helped improve their overall performance.

...because we are hungry sometimes we go to the farm where they cook so that we can eat but now the children don't care about that because they have food in school they eat, so they know that they prepare food for them in school and they do concentrate. For us before we don't concentrate because we were hungry and when someone is hungry that person cannot concentrate but now the children do concentrate and that has improved on their performance in external exams.

Chief KII Bafodia, Koinadugu.

Interviewer: In what ways do you think access to nutritional meals can impact pupils' education and overall well-being?

Interviewee: Access to nutritional meals has a profound impact on pupils. It helps improve their concentration in class, which in turn leads to better academic performance. Some pupils are naturally clever, but without adequate food, they struggle to focus and learn effectively. The school feeding program has helped many pupils stay in school, improve their grades, and lead healthier lives.

Chief KII Mongo Falaba

Establishment of school gardens

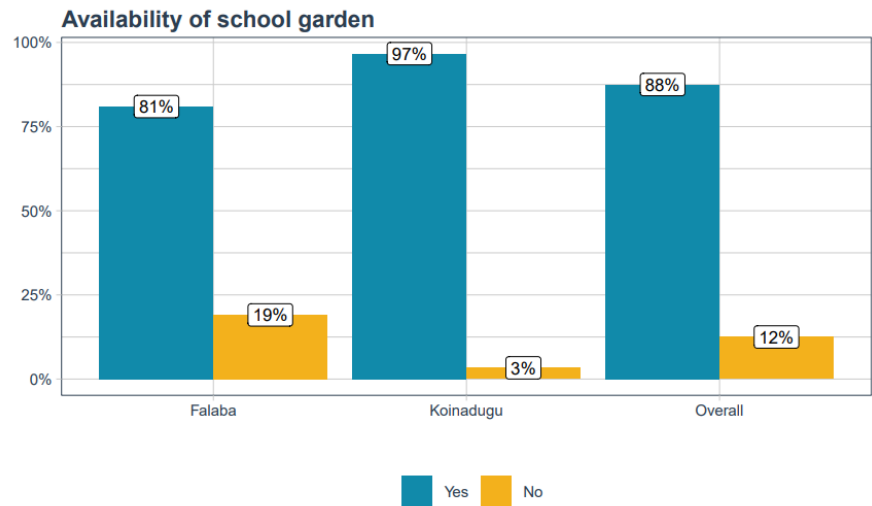
The L4UF project aimed to establish model school gardens in each of the 15 chiefdoms, with the goal of enhancing food production, nutrition education, and dietary diversity among students. CRS implemented several key activities:

1. **Model Gardens and Irrigation:** Each model school garden was equipped with low-cost, adaptable irrigation technologies, including water wells and connected sprinklers. Rainwater harvesting systems were also installed to facilitate year-round cultivation.
2. **Seasonal Crop Cultivation:** The cultivation of crops was aligned with the school calendar to integrate agricultural education into students' learning experiences and to complement the preparation of daily school meals.
3. **Scaling Up Activities:** CRS expanded school garden activities to support school feeding initiatives and educate children about nutrition. The project leveraged existing partnerships to procure agricultural inputs for the establishment of 15 model school gardens and an additional 100 school gardens.

Between October 1st to September 31st, 2023, the L4UF program succeeded in establishing 175 school gardens across Falaba and Koinadugu Districts. Out of the 175 school gardens established, 11 schools harvested groundnut, leafy vegetables, fruits, and tubers which amount to approximately 2.43 metric tons, 0.484 and 1.70 metric tons were used for direct consumption and condiment provision respectively, 0.204 metric tons were distributed to school garden actors as incentive for their effort In school activities.

At midline, most schools (88%) had established school gardens, with a slightly higher prevalence in Koinadugu district (97%) compared to Falaba (81%). The widespread presence of school gardens across the sampled schools demonstrates a positive initiative to promote sustainable agriculture and food production.

These gardens have served as valuable sources for food production complementing the school feeding program. The variety of crops grown, including vegetables, tubers, fruits and others²⁰ suggests that these gardens are well-suited to local agricultural conditions and dietary needs.



Source: LF4U–Midline assessment (2024)

Figure 96: Availability of school gardens

²⁰ Other foods categories include watermelon, okra, cucumber, corn, rice, groundnuts, carrots, Krain krain.

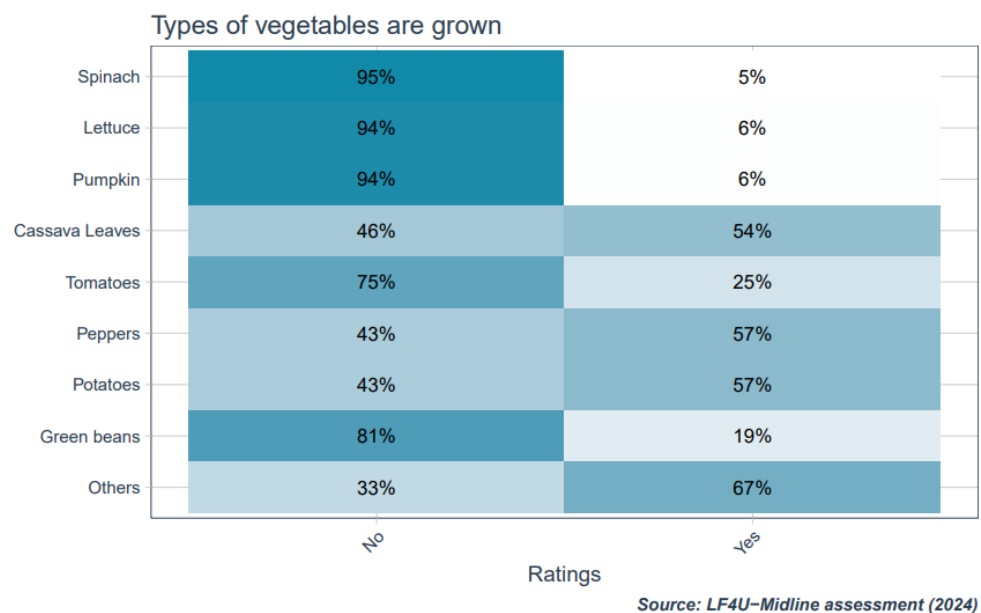


Figure 97: Types of food grown in the garden

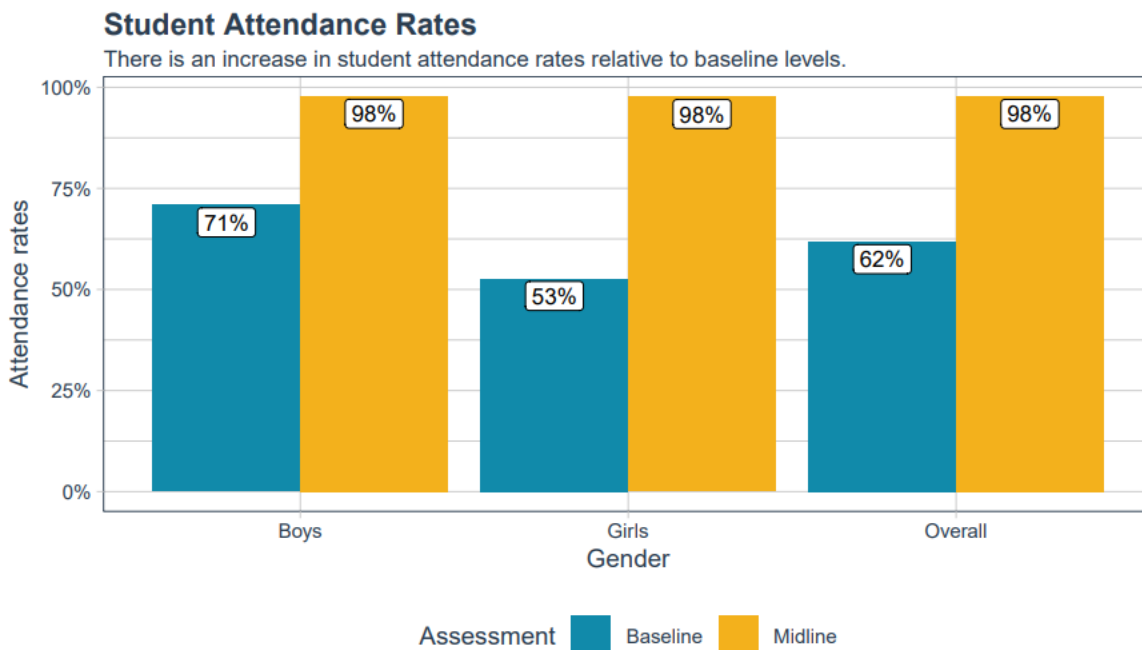
IR1.3 Improved Student Attendance

MGD 1.3.0.1 Average student attendance rate in USDA supported classrooms/schools - MGD Indicator #2

Pupil attendance, a critical indicator of learning opportunities, has significantly improved in the 310 intervention schools. The midline CRS monitoring data for the 2023/2024 academic year reveals a remarkable overall attendance rate of 98% for both boys and girls. This represents a substantial 36 percentage point increase compared to the baseline rate of 62% and surpasses the FY2024 annual target of 85%.

This improvement is largely due to the contribution of the school feeding program, a school targeted factor, which has encouraged parents to send their children to school by addressing short-term hunger. This supports the theory of change, which posits that increasing access to food through school feeding programs can help reduce short-term hunger and improve attendance.

From the qualitative analysis, we identified an additional household/community targeted factor that includes enforcement of regulations and by-laws that may have contributed to improved pupil attendance. The most widespread by-law enforced is whereby parents are required to pay a fine if their children do not attend school. Further details on this are described in the [foundational results](#).



Source: CRS Field monitoring

Figure 98: Students attendance rate

There were no discernible differences in attendance rates between districts or between boys and girls or across grade levels.

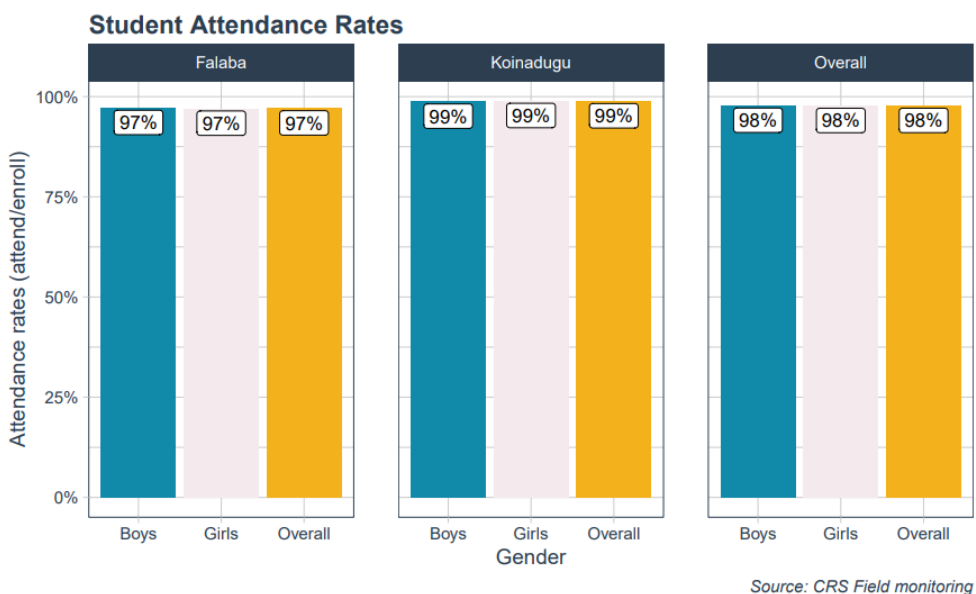


Figure 99: Midline student attendance rate by district and gender

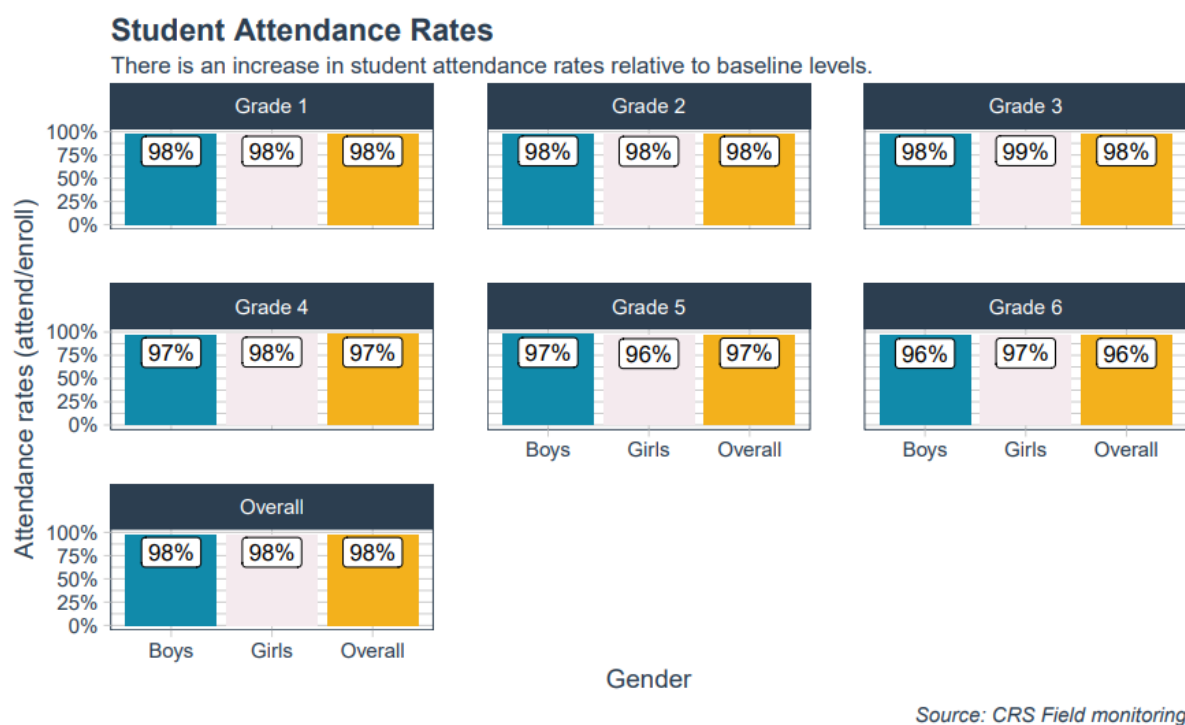


Figure 100: Midline student attendance rate by grade level

From the qualitative surveys, various community stakeholders also reported that the program motivated both parents and pupils to attend school and reduced their worry about what they would eat allowing the pupils to freely attend school.

Before we don't feel like we belong but with CRS and the school feeding, it has encouraged a lot of children to go to school. Before this time some of the children will be at the age of eight years without going to school, they will tell you that the child is young for now, they don't want the child to go and get hungry in school but now everyone has the awareness that even if they don't give anything to their child when they go to school they will have something to eat so there is that awareness now.

FGD with Women, Mongo Falaba

One thing that I have learnt from the school feeding program it has become the bell that they ring for the children to go to school because in our own days they had to ring the bell but now it is the school feeding. When the children wake up in the morning they think about the food and also the school feeding has helped to increase the number of children that are enrol in the school, it is not easy to have a left-out child at home that is not going to school.

Chief KII Bafodia, Koinadugu

This school feeding activity prompted us as a community to open a nursery school to capacitate or prepare children at an early stage so that they will be used to the Educational System Just like others in the urban settings. Parents in the rural setting don't know how to take care of these nursery pupils by then but it's because of this school feeding activity implemented by CRS that they are now sending pupils of that stage to nursery school. Initially, they take their kids along with them to the farm.

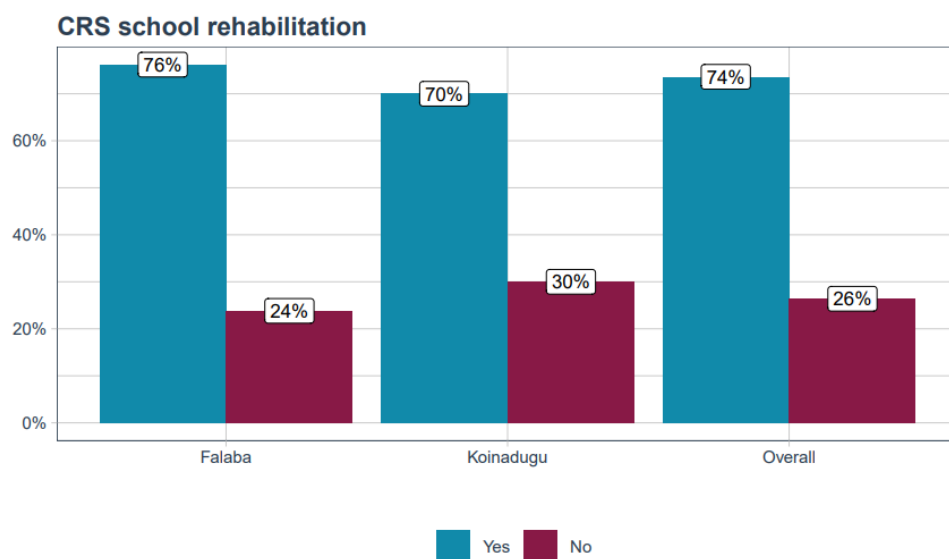
CHW IDI Kambalia, Koinadugu

Output. 1.3.3 Improved School Infrastructure

The L4UF project aimed to enhance the school environment, which was expected to result in increased enrollment and attendance rates. To achieve this, CRS partnered with private construction companies to build classroom blocks in both approved and unapproved schools, as well as Early Childhood Development (ECD) centers. Following the completion of the infrastructure projects, school management committees (SMCs) took on the responsibility for repairs and rehabilitation. Additionally, CRS assessed the furniture needs of the newly constructed and rehabilitated schools and ECD centers, supplying essential items such as benches, desks, blackboards, chairs, and cupboards.

This section examines the progress made in enhancing school infrastructure, a key component of the program's efforts to create a conducive learning environment. The evaluation is based on data collected from the head teacher survey and the school observation tool.

The midline assessment revealed that a significant proportion of head teachers (74%) reported that their schools had benefited from rehabilitation work or new construction projects implemented by CRS. In Falaba district, 76% of head teachers noted improvements, while in Koinadugu district, 70% reported positive impacts. This demonstrates the significant contribution of CRS to improving school infrastructure in both Falaba and Koinadugu districts.

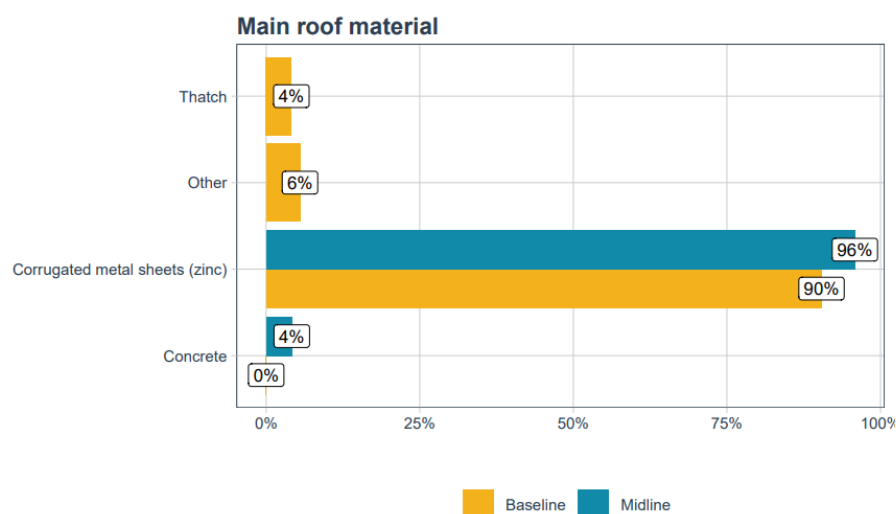


Source: LF4U-Midline assessment (2024)

Figure 101: CRS school rehabilitation

Additionally, significant strides have been made in upgrading school facilities. A substantial increase in the proportion of schools with corrugated metal roofing from 90% to 96% indicates a marked shift away from less durable roofing materials. Similarly, the prevalence of concrete walls and floors has risen significantly, replacing mud-walled and earthen-floor classrooms. This transformation has created a more hygienic and conducive learning space for students.

The availability of essential facilities, such as kitchens and storerooms, has also improved significantly. The universal presence of kitchens in all sampled schools at the midline is a notable achievement, supporting the school feeding program. Additionally, the near-ubiquitous availability of storerooms demonstrates improved school management and resource management capabilities.



Source: L4UF-Baseline & Midline assessments

Figure 102: Main roof material

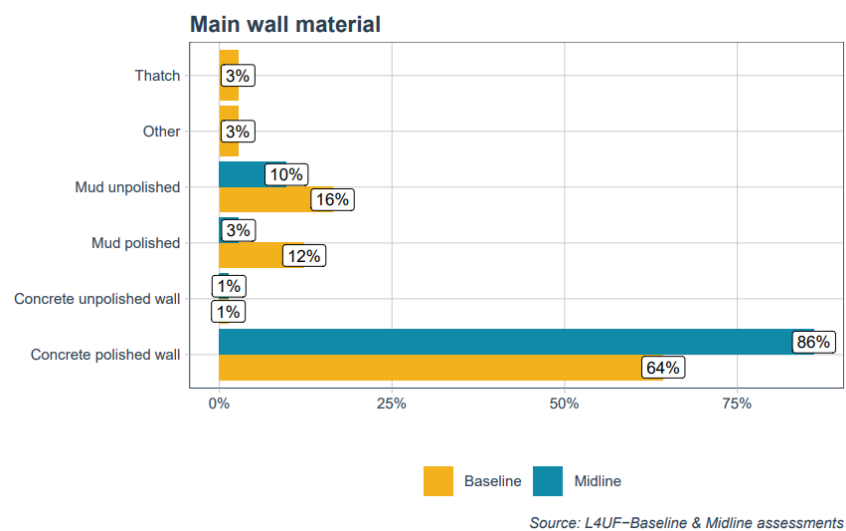


Figure 103: Main wall material

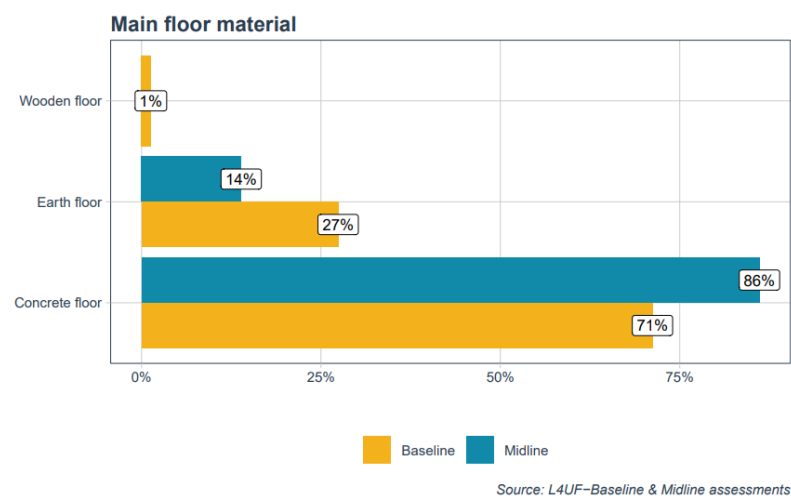
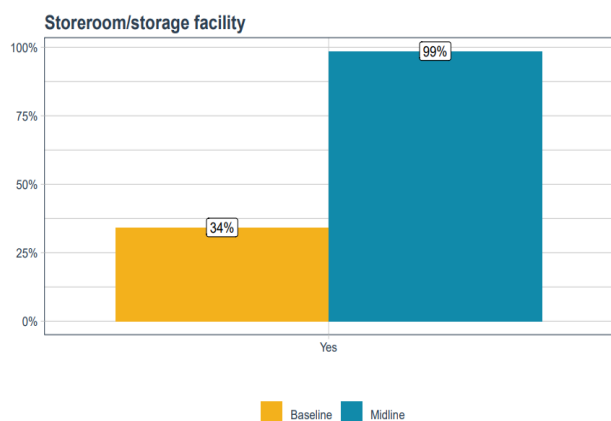
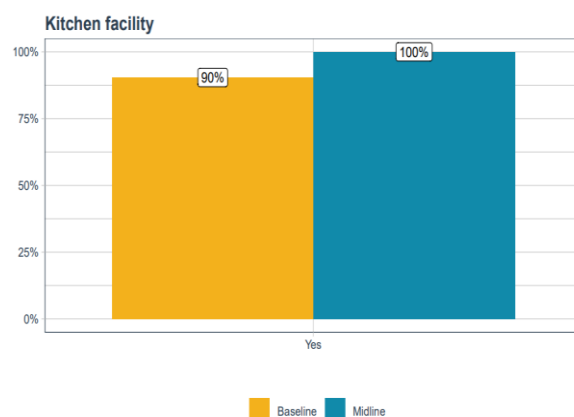


Figure 104: Main floor material



Source: L4UF-Baseline & Midline assessments



Source: L4UF-Baseline & Midline assessments

Figure 105: Storage room and kitchen facilities



Figure 106: Showing classroom blocks made of concrete walls



a. Food store with a lockable door.



b. Rice, lentils and vegetable oil stored in tins and sacks, and placed on top of pallet crates during storage.



Figure 107: Showing storage facilities for food received from USDA



Figure 108: Showing open kitchen areas where school meals are prepared

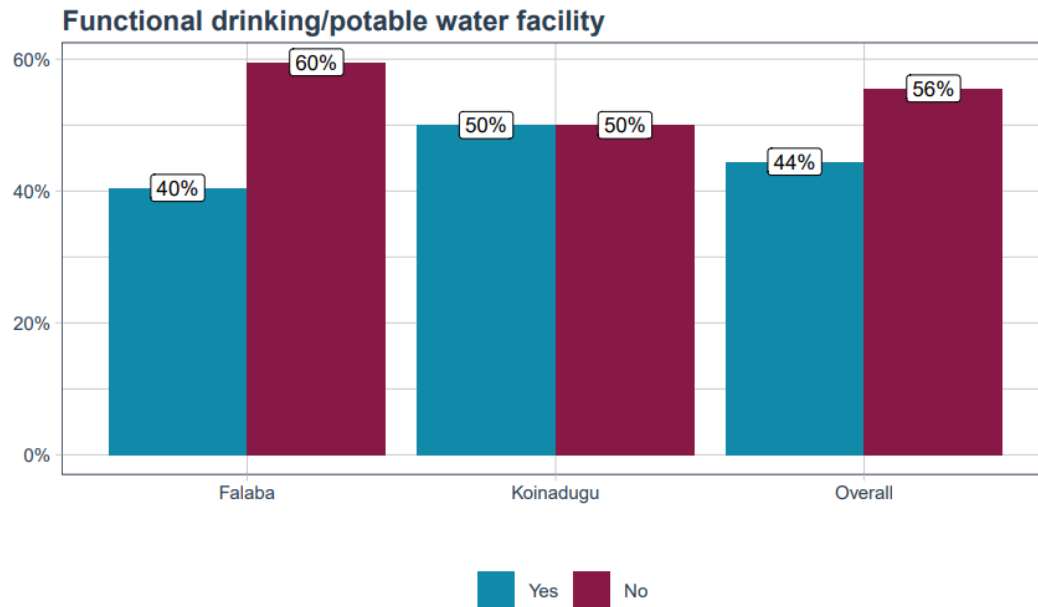
Water facilities

The L4UF project aimed to enhance access to water in schools by collaborating with the district education office and community leaders. CRS conducted a participatory analysis to select schools for borehole construction based on identified needs, the school's commitment to supporting project initiatives, and the potential for multi-purpose use. Stakeholders, including teachers, parents, students, and local school authorities, engaged in a needs assessment to develop a school action plan for the construction, improvement, operation, and maintenance of water infrastructure.

Following this, CRS constructed and rehabilitated boreholes, ensuring water quality testing for all new wells, and jointly conducted post-construction monitoring and supervision of the established infrastructure.

Assessment findings revealed at midline, less than half (44%) of schools had functional drinking water facilities. Koinadugu district had a slightly higher proportion of 50% of schools with functional water facilities compared to 40% in Falaba district. The most common type of water facility was the hand pump well, accounting for 72% of all facilities. While a significant proportion of water facilities were consistently functional, particularly in Falaba district (82%), nearly half (40%) of the facilities in Koinadugu district were rarely functional.

There is a need to improve access to functional drinking water facilities in schools, especially in Koinadugu district. Efforts to maintain and increase the number of functional facilities, ensuring regular maintenance, and promoting water conservation.



Source: LF4U–Midline assessment (2024)

Figure 109: Proportion of functional drinking/portal water facilities by district



a. A water point within the school surrounded by a stone wall with a single entrance.



b. The manual hand pump installed at the water point.

Figure 110: Image showing a water facility at a school fitted with a manual pump

Output 1.3.4. Increased Student Enrollment

MGD 1.3.4.1 Number of students enrolled in schools receiving USDA assistance MDG Indicator #9

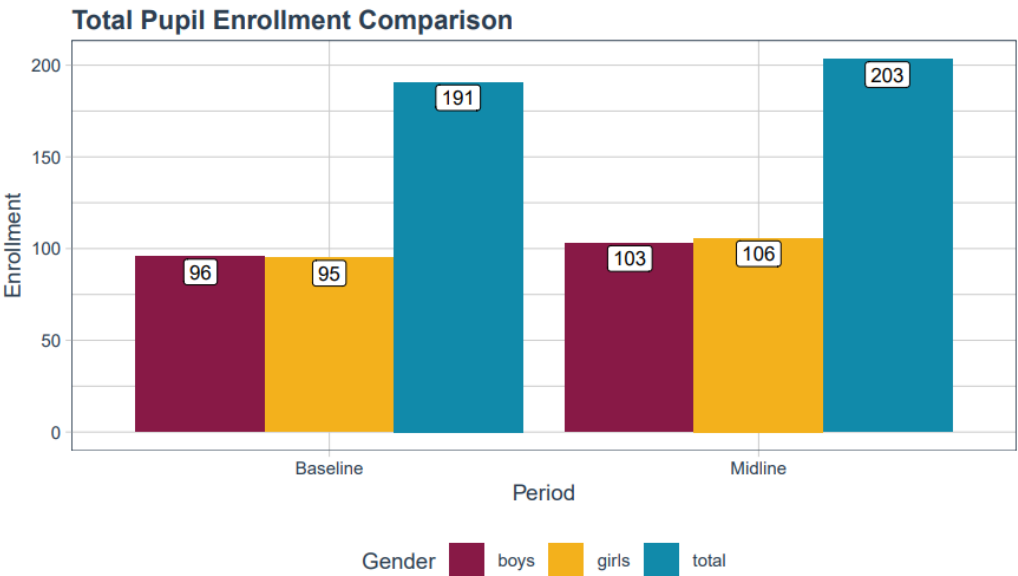
Pupil enrollment serves as a crucial indicator of program reach and potential impact. By tracking enrollment trends, we can assess the program's effectiveness in attracting and retaining students.

The L4UF project aimed to increase school enrollment and attendance by collaborating with various stakeholders, including District Officers, MBSSE district offices, community leaders (such as paramount chiefs, section chiefs, and ward councilors), TSCs, school administrators, and Caritas Makeni. The initiative focused on raising awareness and disseminating the government’s Radical Inclusion policy and other education policies that challenge harmful norms affecting girls' education and child protection.

CRS also worked with established community structures like MSGs to identify and support pregnant girls and parent learners in target communities, facilitating their re-enrollment in schools. Selected beneficiaries received school supplies, access to extra classes, and registration for end-of-course examinations for those in class 6. Additionally, CRS collaborated with TFSL fellows to initiate after-school classes to help pregnant girls and parent learners catch up on lessons and improve their literacy through reading clubs. Advocacy efforts were made for local authorities to identify community caregivers and care centers to provide care for the children of parent learners while they attended school.

For the indicator (*MGD 1.3.4.1: Number of students enrolled in schools receiving USDA assistance, MGD Indicator #9*), during the FY2023 review period, the number of students enrolled in schools receiving USDA support reached 59,408, which represents 99% of the target enrollment of 59,685.

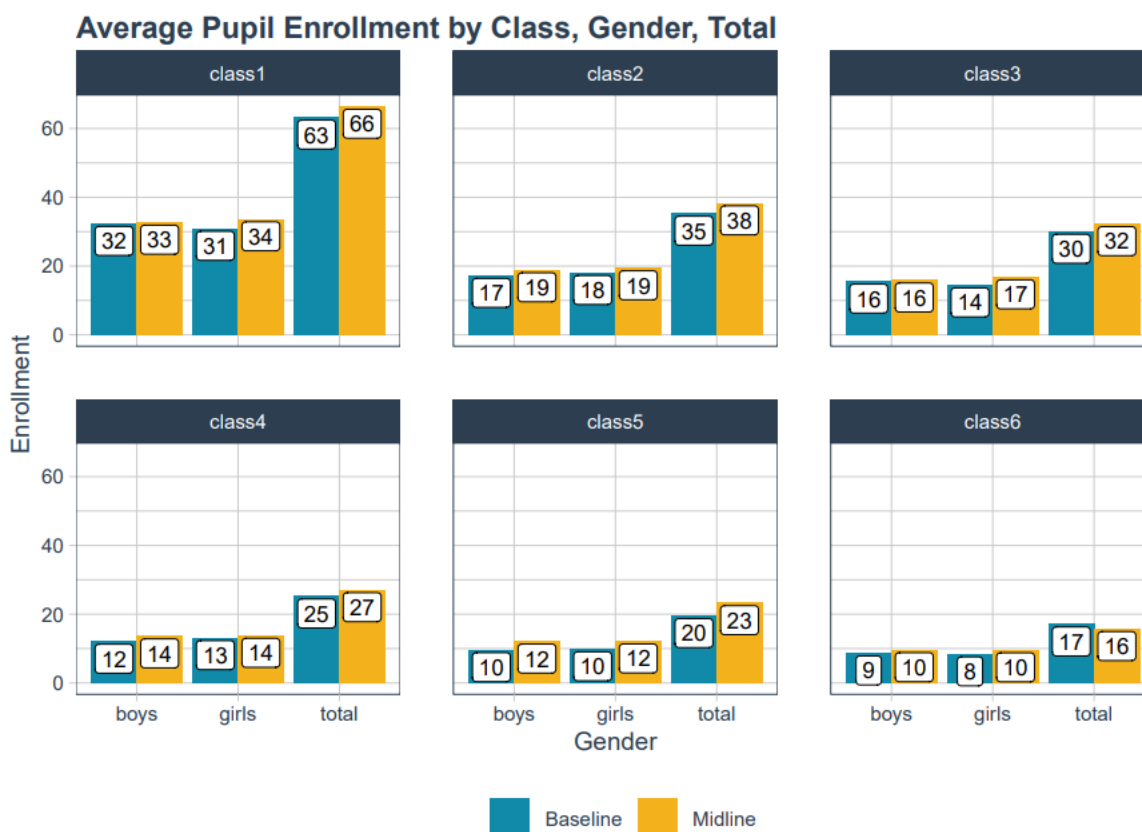
The midline assessment findings indicate an encouraging increase in average school enrollment has been observed between baseline and midline. The average number of enrolled pupils per school increased from 191 to 203, with a relatively balanced distribution between boys and girls, reflecting the contribution of the project's initiatives in promoting access to education.



Source: CRS Field monitoring

Figure 111: Pupil enrollment by gender: Baseline vs Midline comparison

Additionally, increase in student enrollment was observed across the different class levels.



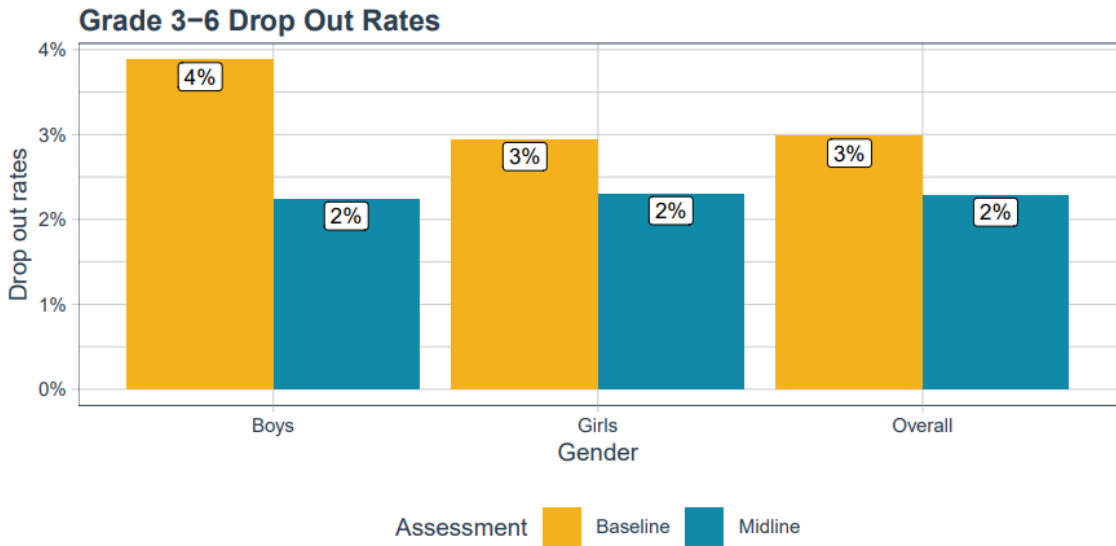
Source: CRS Field monitoring

Figure 112: Pupil enrollment by gender and grade level

Output 1.3.5: Increased Community Understanding of Benefits of Education

1.3.5.3 Percentage of students grades 3 to 6 who dropped out of school at the end of the school year - CRS Custom Indicator #9

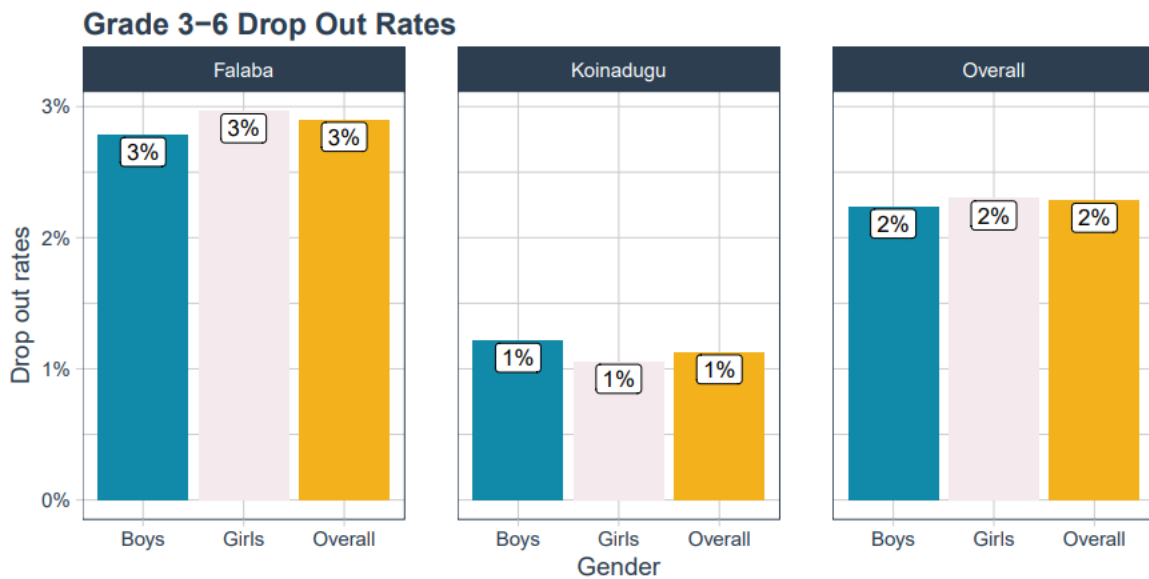
Dropout rates, a critical indicator of school retention, have shown a decline. The overall dropout rate for students in grades 3 to 6 decreased from 3% at baseline to 2% at midline, surpassing the target rate of 3.6%. This positive trend is consistent across both genders, with dropout rates for boys and girls falling from 4% and 3% at baseline to 2% at midline, respectively.



Source: CRS Field monitoring

Figure 113: Grade 3 to 6 dropout rates: Baseline vs Midline comparison

There are no significant differences in student dropout rates observed between the districts.



Source: CRS Field monitoring

Figure 114: Grade 3 to 6 dropout rates by district

There has been a decrease in grade 3-6 dropout rates, falling 1.7% below the projected FY2024 target.

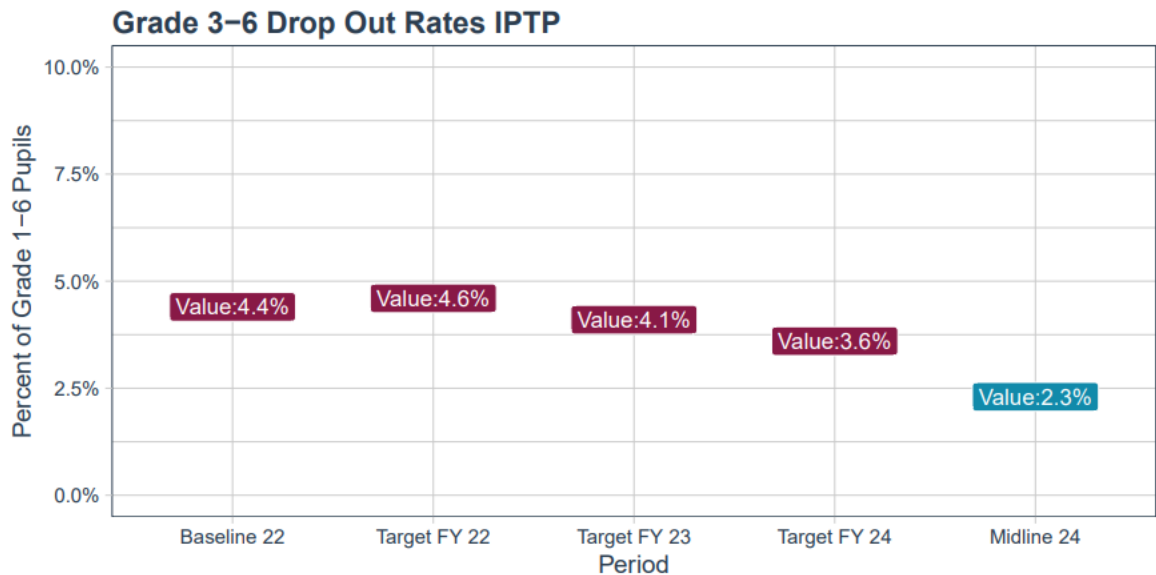


Figure 115: Grade 3 to 6 dropout IPTP

Family migration, economic pressures, and gender-specific challenges are primary drivers of school dropout. Approximately 43% of head teachers identified family migration and involvement in mining or farming activities (20%) as the main reasons for student dropout. For girls, these factors are compounded by early marriage (16%), teenage pregnancy (11%), and family migration (26%). Poverty is a cross-cutting issue affecting both boys and girls.

From the focus groups, the parents mentioned the following general challenges to school attendance and/or enrollment.

- Financial constraints limit the parents' ability to pay school fees, buy learning materials such as books and pens, buy school uniform.
- Pupils left unattended to during school hours in some schools that do not have adequate teachers discourages their attendance. In addition, unpaid community teachers may miss classes.
- Pupil transport to the schools is a challenge due to the distance and unsafe paths for those who live in the forest areas.
- Social challenges such as initiation ceremonies conducted during school hours, and children given to early marriage also interfere with enrollment and attendance.
- A high unemployment rate of graduates may discourage younger pupils from learning.

Additionally, the parents mentioned a few gendered challenges. For the school going girls, the main challenge identified was teenage pregnancy which led to dropping out as well as early marriage. This seems to be more common among pupils in junior secondary school (JSS) than in primary school. Some of the reasons cited by the parents include; maturation of the girls as perceived by themselves and the men in their community, peer pressure, households lacking a father figure to lead the discipline of children, and poor households that leave the girls vulnerable to be lured away by low amounts of money to meet her necessities. Among school going boys, the main challenge was around drug/substance abuse.

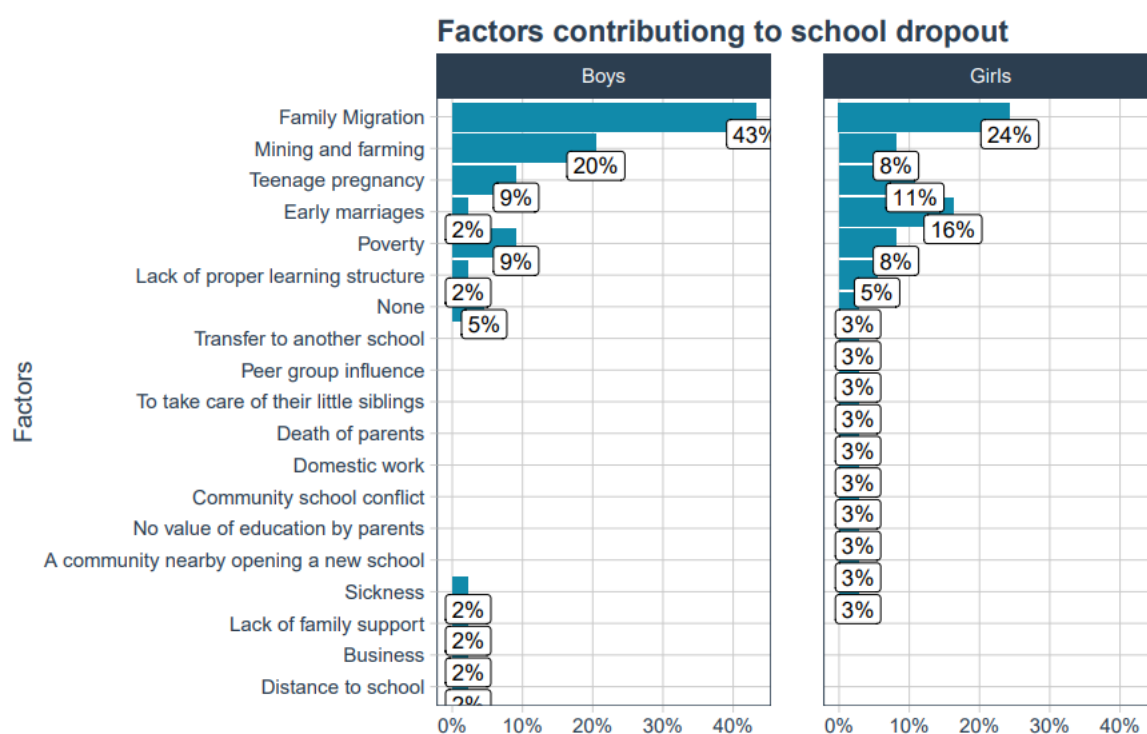
For the boys in this community, it is the drug abuse that is one of the factors that is now preventing some of the boys in this community from going to school. Some of them now, they easily challenge their elders. That is why they said that if you are smoking you should not send children to buy cigarette for you, so we have noticed that drug abuse is what is preventing most of the boys in this community from going to school.

FGD with Women Mongo, Falaba.

There are differences as when a girl child is matured, they are easily impregnated within the community and when such happens, the child now moves or escapes from home to settle with the person who impregnated her.

FGD with Men Bafodia, Koinadugu.

These underscore the complex interplay of social, economic, and cultural factors contributing to the school dropout rate. Addressing these challenges requires a multi-faceted approach that includes poverty alleviation, gender equality, and community engagement.



Source: L4UF–Midline assessment (2024)

Figure 116: Reasons for school dropout

Nearly all (99%) of the Mother Support Groups (MSGs) have actively engaged in community outreach by visiting households to emphasize the value of education and encourage parents to send their children to school. The CRS team together with Caritas Makeni and various community stakeholders including the SMC, the head teachers, and the ‘mummy queen’ also engaged in enrollment campaigns. These involved door-to-door visits to emphasize the relevance of education, as well as to caution parents and guardians on the consequences of not sending their children to school. This was repeated by the same stakeholders when schools were in session with the aim of identifying school aged children not attending schools and

understanding why they were not in school. The KII conversation with the CRS senior project officer - Education highlighted these campaigns as activities that contributed to improved enrollment and attendance, and consequently reduced the dropout rate. He affirmed that 'the strategies are working well'²¹.

²¹ Key informant Interview, Senior project officer - Education, CRS L4UF project.

SO2 Increased Use of Health and Dietary Practices

The second outcome of the Lan for U Future project assesses how interventions have enhanced participants' knowledge and application of health and hygiene practices, and dietary practices. This includes improvements in their living environment (water and sanitation), food practices (preparation and storage), health and nutrition practices, and access to preventative health measures. Below are the specific indicators used to measure this outcome.

IR2.1 Improved Knowledge of Health and Hygiene Practices

Nearly all schools (99%) have established a health/WASH club to raise awareness among learners and teachers. There are no significant differences in the number of students or teachers participating in these clubs across districts, indicating balanced program implementation.

Over the past year, **most teachers (93%) involved in these school health/WASH clubs have received training, with 95% trained in Falaba and 90% in Koinadugu, showing no significant differences based on district, gender, or school type.** Additionally, 86% of schools have provided training to pupils in their health/WASH clubs within the last year, with 90% of schools in Falaba offering training compared to 79% in Koinadugu, although this difference is not statistically significant.

Below are the specific indicators used to measure these result areas.

2.1.1 Percent of students in target schools who achieve a passing score on a test of good health, nutrition and hygiene practices - CRS Custom Indicator #10

This indicator measures the percentage of school children participating in school health clubs who score at least 50% on a health and hygiene test. The test consists of a checklist with hygiene and health practices. Each time a learner correctly identifies a good health and hygiene practice, they earn one mark. The total number of "yes" responses is calculated as a proportion of the total possible responses. Learners who score more than 50% on this test are considered to have passed.

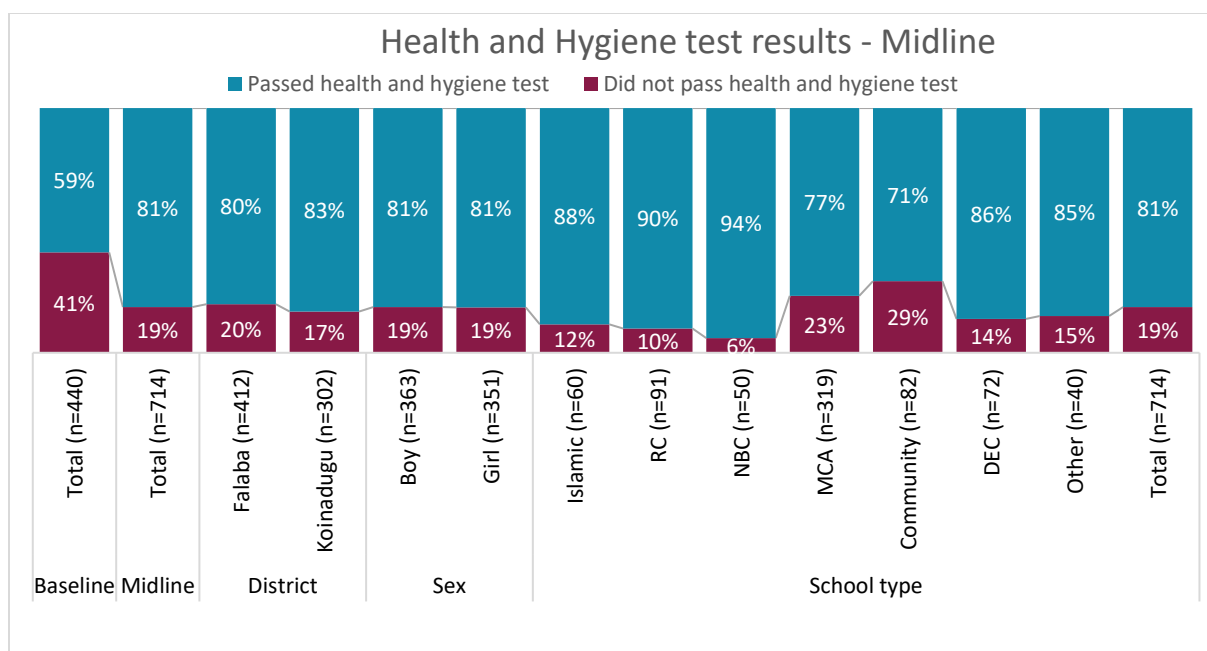


Figure 117: Proportion of learners who passed the health and hygiene test

Findings on Figure 117 suggests that there is an improvement in students' understanding of health after attending health club sessions. At midline, 81% of learners were able to successfully identify multiple hygiene practices they had learned, a significant increase from the 59% who could do so at baseline. This improvement was not significantly different by district, the sex of the learners or ownership of the school. However, there was a notable variation by the type of school. Learners from NBC (94%) and RC (94%) schools were more likely to score high compared to those from other schools, with MCA (77%) and Community schools (71%) having lower scores in comparison.

Figure 116 below shows analysis of the different assessment areas by district:

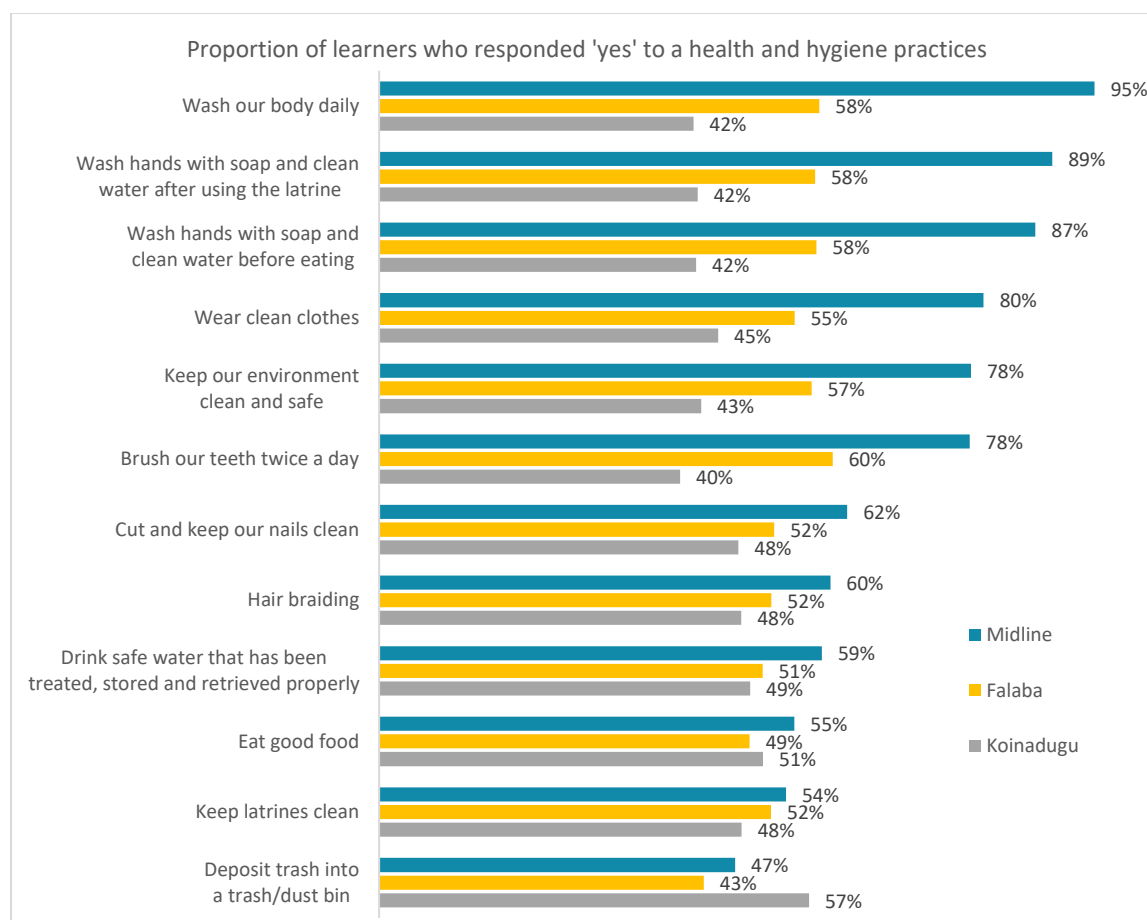


Figure 118: Percentage of learners exercising health and hygiene practices by district

Findings from Figure 118 show that the majority of pupils reported engaging in washing practices, such as washing their bodies daily and washing their hands before eating and after using the toilet, which aligns with baseline findings. Notably, 95% of pupils now mention washing their bodies daily, an improvement from 76% at baseline. The percentage of pupils who reported washing their hands with soap and clean water after using the latrine more than doubled, increasing from 37% to 89%. Similarly, those who mentioned washing their hands with soap and clean water before eating improved from 73% to 87%. Although all practices showed positive improvements, with most mentioned by more than 50% of pupils, only 47% mentioned depositing trash into a trash/dust bin—a positive increase from 33% at baseline. Although there was no significant variation by gender of the pupil, across the two district, significant changes were observed across all measures except for *wash hands with soap and clean water after using the latrine* ($p=0.92$), *wash hands with soap and clean water before eating* ($p=0.71$), *keep our environment clean and safe* ($p=0.69$), and *wash our body daily* ($p=0.14$).

Well, before they eat, they make sure they wash their hands before that was not happening, and also they share the plates among themselves but now that has been stopped every child has his/her own plate and we have a lot of plates even though some of them have been missing so as I speak to you those things have been abolished.

Food handler IDI Mongo Falaba).

Continued emphasis on consistent hygiene education is recommended, particularly focusing on increasing awareness and practices related to proper trash disposal, where improvement is still needed. Imbalance in the improvement on practices is evident, with students from Falaba district showing higher improvements in most hygiene and health practices at midline. It is advisable to transfer successful strategies from Falaba to Koinadugu to address the imbalance and enhance overall program effectiveness post midline.



Tippy-taps and veronica buckets placed at different points within the school.

Figure 119: Showing different hand washing points set up within the school

Health and hygiene practices among of teachers, food preparers, SMC-chairs, MSG-heads

The analysis of teachers, food preparers, SMC-chairs, and MSG-heads ability to identify different hygiene and health practices using the checklist revealed promising results. A majority of the teachers (95%) were able to identify key health and hygiene practices, with compliance being consistent across districts, teacher gender, and school type. Notably, teachers from Islamic, RC, and NBC schools identified the practices excellently (100%), while MCA schools had a lower compliance rate of 82%.

Nearly all food preparers (99%) successfully identified practices to improve health and hygiene, increasing the likelihood of clean food being served in participating schools.

SMC chairs also demonstrated good understanding of hygiene and health practices, with 90% identifying health and hygiene practices. There were no significant differences observed by districts, gender, or school types. In Falaba, 88% (n=41) were compliant compared to Koinadugu at 93% (n=30).

MSG heads showed similar understanding levels, with (94%) identifying good practices, including 93% (n=42) in Falaba and 97% (n=30) in Koinadugu, with no significant differences across demographics.

We also learned about health and sanitation, which involves prevention of children and parents from harmful diseases by introducing Hand washing practices, and also good health practices. SMC monitors the way children are dressed to come to school; ensures they are dressed well, clean, fingernails cut off, and hair plated or well maintained.

SMC IDI Diang, Koinadugu.

IR2.2 Increased Knowledge of Safe Food Prep and Storage Practices

The IR was evaluated by ascertaining the number of individuals trained or certified on food preparation and storage as a result of USDA program and examining whether food passed the safe food preparation and storage test across the different schools.

2.2.1 Percentage of food preparers at target schools who achieve a passing score on a test of safe food preparation and storage

The indicator assessed the percentage of food preparers in schools who could mention at least 8 out of 11 food preparation and storage practices. The results were then summarized by the proportion of food preparers in each school who met the pass mark (8 out of 11 practices) to evaluate the impact at the school level.

The majority of the food preparers (93%, n=161) were able to identify at least 8 out of 11 practices at midline. In Falaba, 90% met the pass criteria compared to 97% in Koinadugu.

Table 20: Proportion of food preparers practicing different food preparation and storage practices by district

Food preparation and storage and preparation practices	Falaba	Koinadugu	Midline	P-value
(%)	93	68	161	
Wash hands with clean water and soap before handling food (%)	100	100	100	.
Wash the cooking utensils & all dishes with clean water and soap (%)	100	100	100	.
Sweep the kitchen and environment where food is prepared (%)	98.9	100	99.4	0.39
Wash the food items before cooking (%)	97.8	100	98.8	0.22
Kitchen or environment should be free from animals (%)	81.7	92.6	86.3	0.05*
Cover the cooked food after dishing (%)	92.5	98.5	95.0	0.08
Store the cooked food in a clean place (room or dinning) (%)	84.9	86.8	85.7	0.74

Storage should be free from flies (%)	71.0	88.2	78.3	0.01*
Put cleaned utensils on a platform (rack/pallet) (%)	89.2	100	93.8	0.01*
Wear kitchen apron or apparel when handling food (%)	94.6	95.6	95.0	0.78
Cooked/ ready-to-eat food shouldn't be handled with bare hands (%)	63.4	95.6	77.0	0.00*

Note: * means statistically significant

Findings in Table 202 show that almost all food preparers recognized the importance of 'washing hands with clean water and soap before handling food', 'washing the cooking utensils and all dishes with clean water and soap', 'sweeping the kitchen and environment where food is prepared', and 'washing the food items before cooking. Although most of the food preparers successfully identified at least 8 food preparation and storage practices, food preparers in Falaba perform less than those in Koinadugu.

It is recommended to continue emphasizing on practices that are still lagging to reduce the differences in schools within the two districts.

Interviewer: As a Food handler, did you receive any training supported by CRS at the beginning of this project?

Respondent: I received training from CRS that has to do with proper management of food, the daily head count of pupils at school, record keeping, and quantification of food for daily preparation.

Food Handler IDI Nyawulia, Koinadugu.

I think that a lot of colleagues have been telling me that they appreciate the training that CRS has been doing. They told me that it was difficult for them in terms of how they should do the calculation, and how to handle the food and the hygiene aspect but now they said that it is easy for them and even the supervisors when they come, they have been seeing some improvement.

Food Handler IDI Mongo Falaba.



Figure 120: Image indicating safe food handling and storage practices displayed in schools

Table 21: Proportion of target schools whose food preparers achieved pass criteria

Pass criteria	Proportion of food preparers in a school who achieved passing score (n=72 schools)			P-value
	Falaba	Koinadugu	Midline	
Above 50%	98%	100%	99%	0.39
Above 75%	81%	93%	86%	0.13
Above 90%	81%	93%	86%	0.13

Based on **Error! Reference source not found.**21, it is evident that most schools had most of their food preparers successfully meeting the safe food preparation and storage criteria. Nearly all schools (99%) had over half of their food preparers achieving this standard, while 86% of schools had 90% of their food preparers meeting the criteria. Most food preparers at schools in both districts meet the standards, but those of the schools in Koinadugu perform slightly better on this aspect.

Challenges among food preparers:

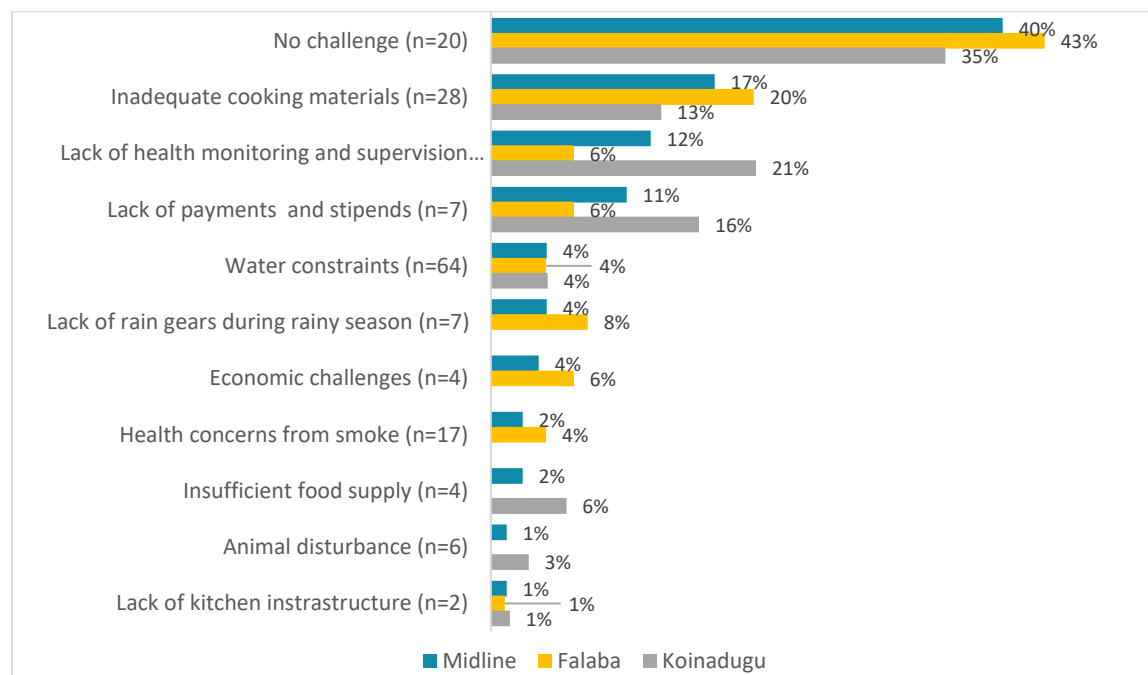


Figure 121: Proportion of food preparers experiencing certain challenges in their food preparation activities

Findings in Figure 121Error! Not a valid bookmark self-reference.

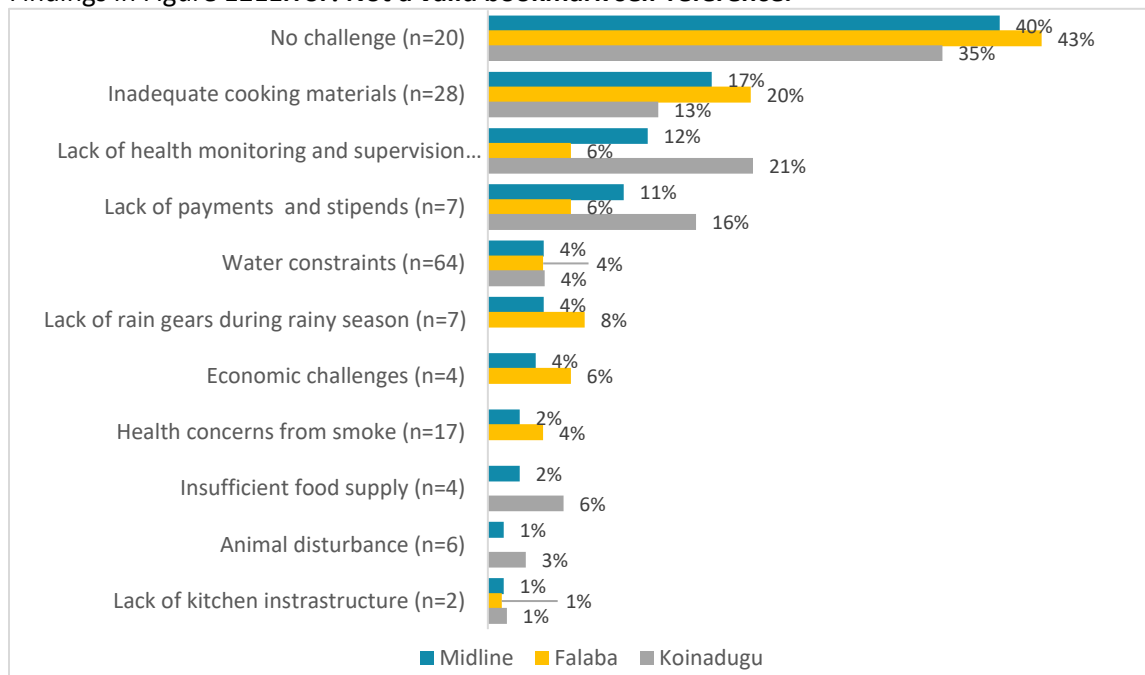


Figure 121 shows that while more than one third of the food preparers did not face any challenge in their duties, top challenges identified by others include inadequacy of cooking materials, insufficient health monitoring and supervision on prepared food, and challenges revolving around WASH such as water.

Kitchen Facility Observation:

Food preparers were asked about the kitchen areas' features to ascertain the environmental contribution to health and hygiene practices.

Table 22: Kitchen characteristics across schools in the district

Kitchen features by: District	Falaba	Koinadugu	Midline	P-value
n (%)	42 (58.3)	30 (41.7)	72 (100)	
Does the school have a kitchen available for cooking food?, n (%)				
Yes	42 (100)	30 (100)	72 (100)	.
What material is the roof of the Kitchen made of?, n (%)				
Corrugated metal sheets (zinc)	31 (73.8)	10 (33.3)	41 (56.9)	0.00
Concrete	1 (2.4)	0 (0.0)	1 (1.4)	
Thatch	10 (23.8)	20 (66.7)	30 (41.7)	
What material is the wall of the Kitchen made of?, n (%)				
Concrete polished wall	9 (21.4)	0 (0.0)	9 (12.5)	0.00
Concrete unpolished wall	2 (4.8)	0 (0.0)	2 (2.8)	
Mud unpolished	2 (4.8)	3 (10.0)	5 (6.9)	
Metal sheets (pan body)	1 (2.4)	0 (0.0)	1 (1.4)	
Thatch	0 (0.0)	11 (36.7)	11 (15.3)	
Tarpaulin	1 (2.4)	0 (0.0)	1 (1.4)	
No wall	27 (64.3)	16 (53.3)	43 (59.7)	
What material is the floor of the kitchen made of?, n (%)				
Concrete floor	8 (19.0)	1 (3.3)	9 (12.5)	0.09
Earth floor	33 (78.6)	29 (96.7)	62 (86.1)	
Wooden floor	1 (2.4)	0 (0.0)	1 (1.4)	
Does the kitchen have spoon and plate shelves?, n (%)				
Yes	36 (85.7)	30 (100)	66 (91.7)	0.03
No	6 (14.3)	0 (0.0)	6 (8.3)	
Does the kitchen have rack/pallet for drying plates and spoons?, n (%)				
Yes	37 (88.1)	29 (96.7)	66 (91.7)	0.19
No	5 (11.9)	1 (3.3)	6 (8.3)	

According to **Error! Reference source not found.**, all schools across the districts had a designated kitchen area for cooking food. Most kitchen roofs were made of either corrugated sheets (57%) or thatch (42%). At baseline, 35% of the kitchens had corrugated sheet roofing, which improved to 57% at midline, while thatched roofs decreased from 59% to 42%, indicating a significant shift towards more permanent structures. Koinadugu had 67% of kitchens with thatched roofs, while Falaba had 74% with corrugated sheets, highlighting a stark difference in development and an opportunity for program interventions to promote permanent kitchen construction in Koinadugu.

The proportion of kitchens with no walls decreased from 70% at baseline to 60% at midline, reducing the risk of food contamination from dust, dirt, and other airborne pollutants, as well as the pest and animal infestations challenge noted by some food preparers. However, most kitchens still had earthen floors, which complicates cleaning and managing food spills, creating a breeding ground for bacteria and increasing the risk of contamination. The proportion of kitchens with earthen floors barely decreased from 87% at baseline to 86% at midline, indicating a continued need for programmatic focus in this area post-midline.

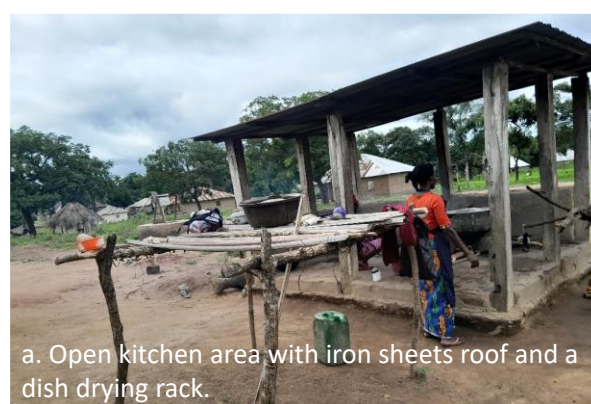


Figure 122: showing typical open kitchen areas in the schools with thatched and Iron sheets roofing.

Additionally, the presence of shelves for spoons and plates in kitchens increased from 53% at baseline to 92% at midline, and the availability of racks or pallets for drying plates and spoons improved from 74% to 92%.

Table 23: Kitchen Hygiene characteristics per school within districts

School Kitchen Hygiene	Falaba	Koinadugu	Midline	P-value
n (%)	42 (58.3)	30 (41.7)	72 (100)	
Is there handwashing facility or place around kitchen or cooking area?, n (%)				
Yes	32 (76.2)	26 (86.7)	58 (80.6)	0.37
No	10 (23.8)	4 (13.3)	14 (19.4)	
Is there water and soap available at the handwashing facility/place?, n (%)				
Water & soap available	18 (56.3)	22 (84.6)	40 (69.0)	0.02
Water available only	14 (43.8)	4 (15.4)	18 (31.0)	

If there is no handwashing facility, is there soap available for handwashing, n (%)

Yes, soap available (seen)	4 (40.0)	3 (75.0)	7 (50.0)	0.69
Yes, soap available (not seen)	1 (10.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (7.1)	
No, not at all	5 (50.0)	1 (25.0)	6 (42.9)	

Based on **Error! Reference source not found.**, most of the kitchens (81%) had a designated handwashing facility or area near the cooking space, with 69% of these having both water and soap available. However, among the kitchens lacking a handwashing facility, six out of fourteen did not have soap available, raising concerns about the effectiveness of hygiene practices.



Typical Kitchen area with a dish drying rack and a tippy tap.

Figure 123: Kitchen areas showing a hand washing points and dish rack

Food storage facility observation:

Similar to baseline, almost all schools (99%) had storerooms or storage for storing food. In most cases (81%), the storeroom was away from the school, while 18% of the schools had the storeroom within the school. This implies that extra measures to ensure food safety and hygiene are required across most of the schools.

Table 24: Food storage characteristics per school across districts

Food storeroom characteristics	Falaba	Koinadugu	Midline	P-value	Baseline
n (%)	42 (58.3)	30 (41.7)	72 (100.0)		71(100)
Does the school have a storeroom or storage facility used for storing food?, n (%)					
Yes, at the school	6 (14.3)	7 (23.3)	13 (18.1)	0.53	-
Yes, away from the school	35 (83.3)	23 (76.7)	58 (80.6)		-
No	1 (2.4)	0 (0.0)	1 (1.4)		-
Storeroom has a metal/steel door with a lock, n (%)	41 (100.0)	30 (100.0)	71 (100.0)	-	70(98.6)
Does the storeroom have ventilation blocks?, n (%)					
Yes, with mesh	31 (75.6)	26 (86.7)	57 (80.3)	0.34	4 (5.63)
Yes, without mesh	7 (17.1)	4 (13.3)	11 (15.5)		63 (88.73)
No ventilation blocks at all	3 (7.3)	0 (0.0)	3 (4.2)		4 (5.63)
What is the main material the roof of the storeroom is made of?, n (%)					
Corrugated metal sheets (zinc)	41 (100.0)	29 (96.7)	70 (98.6)	0.42	71(100)
Concrete	0 (0.0)	1 (3.3)	1 (1.4)		0 (0.0)
What is the main material the wall of the storeroom is made of?, n (%)					
Concrete polished wall	38 (92.7)	30 (100.0)	68 (95.8)	0.26	70(98.6)
Concrete unpolished wall	3 (7.3)	0 (0.0)	3 (4.2)		0 (0.0)
Mud polished	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)		1 (0.4)

What is the main material the floor of the storeroom is made of?, n (%)					
Concrete floor	41 (100.0)	30 (100.0)	71 (100.0)	0.26	71(100)
Earth floor	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)		0 (0.0)
Wooden floor	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)		0 (0.0)
Food stacked on pallet, n (%)	39 (95.1)	30 (100.0)	69 (97.2)	0.51	69(97.2)
Food store clean?, n (%)	40 (97.6)	30 (100.0)	70 (98.6)	1	67(94.4)
Has the food store ever been fumigated in the last 6 months (since December 2, n (%))	39 (95.1)	17 (56.7)	56 (78.9)	0	49(69.0)

Findings on **Error! Reference source not found.** indicate that there were no significant differences in the availability of food storerooms across the districts. Most storerooms were locked (100%), had mesh (80%) for air circulation and dry conditions, were made of corrugated sheets (99%), had concrete walls or floors (100%), had food stacked on pallets (96%), and were clean (99%).



Exterior view of the food store showing concrete walls, corrugated sheet roofs and lockable doors



Interior view of the food store showing rice, lentils, vegetable oil and palm oil stored on pallet crates. The top posterior part of the store has meshed ventilation shafts.

Figure 124: Showing the lockable storage facilities with food stored on pallet crates.

Overall, a 10-point improvement was observed between the midline to baseline on fumigation in the past half a year. However, fumigation practices varied significantly by district, with 95% of schools in Falaba having fumigated stores compared to 57% in Koinadugu. **It is encouraged for the program to consider storeroom fumigation interventions for schools in Koinadugu past the midline.**

Training of SMC chair:

The majority of the School Management Committee (SMC) chairpersons (93%) had been trained in safe food preparation and storage by CRS. There was no significant variation of those trained in Falaba (95%) and Koinandugu (90%) districts.

Table 25: SMC members trained on food preparation and food storage across districts

	Falaba	Koinadugu	Midline	P-value
n (%)	41 (57.7)	30 (42.3)	71 (100.0)	
Has the SMC ever been trained by CRS in safe food preparation practices, food storage, n (%)				
Yes	39 (95.1)	27 (90.0)	66 (93.0)	0.64
No	2 (4.9)	3 (10.0)	5 (7.0)	
How many members of SMC have been trained in food preparation by CRS? mean (sd)	4.5 (2.8)	3.3 (1.9)	4.0 (2.5)	0.05
How many members of SMC have been trained in food storage practices by CRS? mean (sd)	4.1 (2.8)	3.6 (2.5)	3.9 (2.7)	0.46

As per **Error! Reference source not found.**, on average, four members of each School Management Committee (SMC) were trained in food preparation through CRS, with the highest number being ten members. Specifically, the average was four members in Falaba and three in Koinadugu who received training in food preparation.

On food storage practices, an average of 4 SMC members in either Falaba or Koinandugu were trained by CRS with the highest being ten members.

Interviewer: Have you received training from C.R.S. on cooking, food storage, and feeding schedules?

Interviewee: Yes, we have received training.

Interviewer: How would you describe the training?

Interviewee: The training was comprehensive. It covered not only cooking but also food storage and hygiene management.

Interviewer: How do you apply this knowledge to educate others who were not present at the training?

Interviewee: We teach our community members about hygiene and proper food preparation to prevent illness.

SMC IDI, Serekolia Falaba.

Interviewer: How many S.M.C. members are trained as health supervisors?

Interviewee: Five members are trained as health supervisors: three (3) female and two (2) male.

Interviewer: How many S.M.C. members have been trained in food management?

Interviewee: Nine members have been trained in food management.

Interviewer: How many of these are male and female?

Interviewee: Four (4) are female and five (5) are male.

SMC IDI, Barawa Wolay Falaba.

IR2.3 Increased Knowledge of Nutrition

The survey revealed a notable change in knowledge on nutrition among school pupils, supported mothers groups highlighting the positive impact of recent educational interventions.

2.3.1 Number of individuals trained in child health and nutrition as a result of USDA assistance - MDG Indicator #23

The indicator is measured by taking account of the number of community health officers (CHOs), community health workers (CHWs), members of MSGs, SMCs & Cooks trained or certified in child health and nutrition directly as a result of USDA funding in whole or in part. Training should be at least two working days (16 hours in duration).

Midline observations among 71 schools established that **on average 4 members of the SMC have been trained**: an average of 5 in Falaba and 3 in Koinadugu in the observation schools.

Interviewer: As CHW, did you receive any training supported by CRS at the beginning of this project?

Interviewee: Yes. We received training on personal Hygiene by CRS at Talia community and during this period the following measures were outlined to prevent diseases, effective hand washing after touching anything that may contain germs.

CHW IDI Kambalia, Koinadugu.

Interviewer: As a CHW, have you received any training supported by CRS?

Interviewee: Yes, I have received training from CRS.

Interviewer: What kind of training did you receive?

Interviewee: The training focused on educating pregnant women about the importance of visiting the hospital for regular check-ups. It also covered how to counsel breastfeeding mothers on proper childcare practices. We learned how to communicate effectively with the community and address their health concerns.

CHW IDI Brimaya, Falaba.

Pupils minimum acceptable diet:

The indicator assesses the acceptability of a pupil's diet based on its micronutrient adequacy and meal frequency.

Overall, **close to three quarters of the pupils (72%) are consuming adequate nutritious meals in day** (at least 4 food groups used in the Minimum Dietary Diversity indicator in a day), with 74% in Koinadugu and 71% in Falaba. By gender, 70% of the girls and 74% of the boys met this threshold. There were no significant differences in minimum acceptable diet by district, gender or by school the pupils attended.

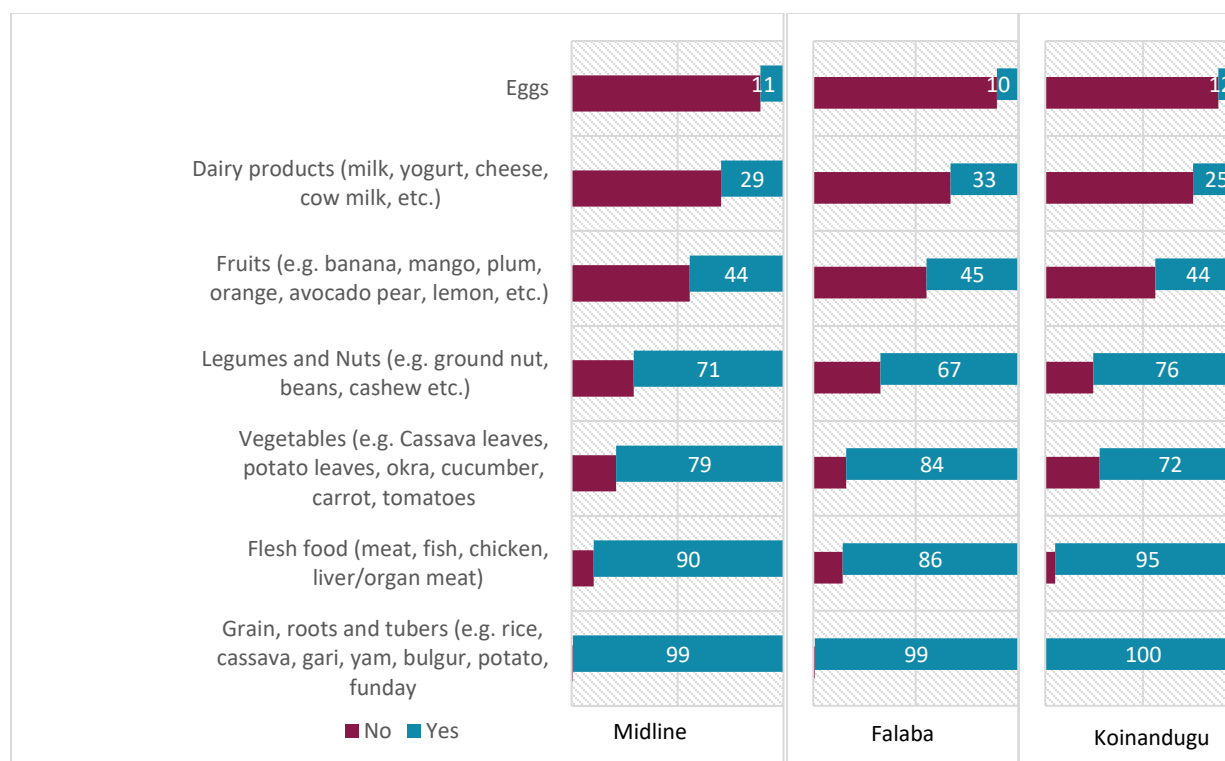


Figure 125: Proportion of pupils taking different food types

As indicated in Figure 125, among the food groups consumed during the day, the most common were grains, roots, and tubers; flesh foods; vegetables; and legumes, which were eaten by more than 70% of the pupils. Eggs and dairy products, which are rich in proteins and essential minerals, were less commonly consumed. Significant differences were found in the types of food consumed by pupils across different districts, for legumes and nuts ($p=0.02$), dairy products ($p=0.01$) flesh foods ($p<0.01$), and vegetables ($p<0.01$). Additionally, no significant differences were observed based on the pupils' sex.

Measures such as targeted nutrition and food fortification programming, educational campaigns could emphasize the nutritional benefits of the less consumed food groups to both pupils and their families, will go a long way in enhancing nutritional intake in the study area. Pursuing partnerships with local farmers to supply schools with fresh fruits, eggs, and dairy products in areas with deficiencies is encouraged in programming post midline.

Child food poverty:

According to UNICEF'S concept of child food poverty, if children are fed: 0–2 food groups/day they are living in **severe child food poverty**; 3–4 food groups/day they are living in **moderate child food poverty** 5 or more food groups/day they are **not living in child food poverty**.

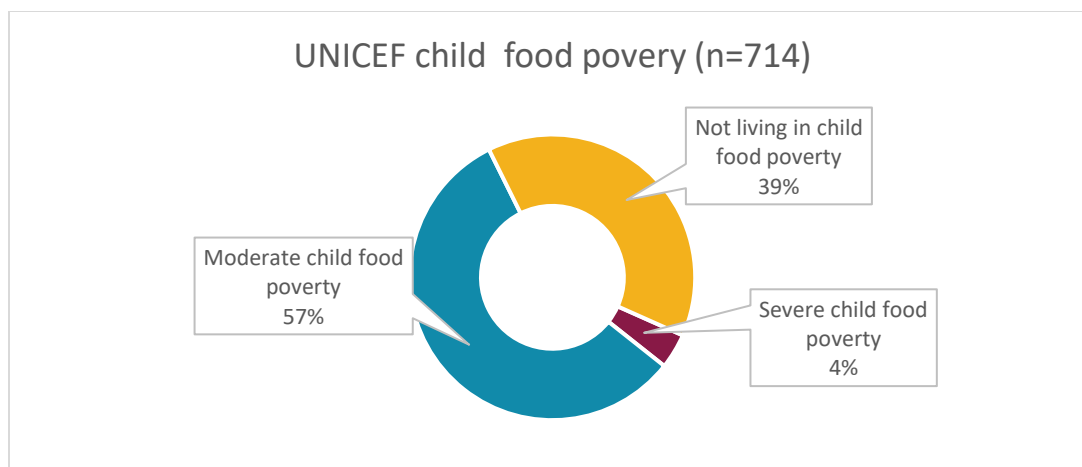


Figure 126: Proportion of children living in child food poverty by day

As per Figure 126, 61% of the children were living in child food poverty, with 4% in severe child food poverty. This difference is not statistically significant across the districts ($p=0.26$), with Falaba having a higher proportion of children living in severe child food poverty (5%, $n=21$) compared to Koinadugu (3%, $n=31$)

Teacher minimum acceptable diet:

Overall, more than two-thirds (69%) of the teachers met the minimum food requirements. However, there were significant differences between the two districts: a higher proportion of teachers in Falaba (83%) met the minimum diet threshold compared to only half (50%) of the teachers in Koinadugu ($p<0.01$). No significant differences were observed based on the gender of the teachers or the type of school they were teaching at.



Figure 127: Proportion of teachers taking different food types in the night

As indicated in Figure 127, at least 70% of the teachers consume flesh foods, grains, roots, tubers, and vitamin A-rich foods. Significant differences in food intake between teachers in the two districts were observed across all food types, except for flesh foods (meat, fish, poultry, liver/organ meat), which were consumed by at least 80% of the teachers ($p=0.19$). There were no significant differences in food group consumption based on the gender of the teachers or the type of school they were teaching at. To improve dietary diversity among teachers, especially in Koinandugu, targeted nutrition awareness can be considered. This awareness could focus on the benefits of a varied diet, including the consumption of underrepresented food groups such as dairy products and fruits. Schools could also consider initiatives like teacher meal plans assessments.

Food preparer minimum diet:

Food Preparers across the districts showed significant differences in minimum acceptable diet ($p<0.01$). Majority of those in Koinadugu (82%, $n=56$) were above minimum acceptable diet as compared to 61%, $n=57$) of those in Falaba. There were no significant differences by gender of the food preparer given that majority were male. Most common foods consumed by food preparers are grain, roots and tubers; flesh foods; vitamin-A rich foods including vegetable oils, fruits and vegetables often consumed by more than 70% of the food preparers. Half of the food groups assessed showed significant differences by district except for grain, roots and tubers ($p=0.31$); dairy products($p=0.17$); and eggs ($p=0.57$)

SMC chair minimum acceptable diet:

Among the 71 SMC chairpersons interviewed, there were no significant differences either by district or gender of the SMC chairperson in terms of the minimum acceptable diet.

Number of members of SMC trained in child health and nutrition:

On average 4 members of SMC committee were trained on child health and nutrition across the 71 schools sampled. There were no significant differences in the number of members trained by district or the type of school.

MSG minimum acceptable diet:

Among the 72 Mother Support Group (MSG) heads interviewed, there were no significant differences either by district or gender of the MSG chairperson in terms of the minimum acceptable diet.

On average the MSG heads had 4 children, with those in Falaba (mean=4.3) having significantly higher number of children than those in Koinadugu (mean=3.4, $p=0.04$). There was no significant difference in the number of children below 5 years old across the districts. On average, MSGs heads had 1 child below 5 years.

Infant and young child feeding practices:

Most of the MSG heads (97%) could identify at least one infant and young child feeding practice. The variation on ability to identify these practices did not vary significantly between the districts under review.

Table 26: Proportion of MSGs heads knowledge on infants and young child feeding practices

By District	Falaba	Koinadugu	Midline	P-value
n (%)	42 (58.3)	30 (41.7)	72 (100.0)	
Early initiation of breastfeeding within 1 hour of birth, n (%)	25 (59.5)	17 (56.7)	42 (58.3)	0.81
Exclusive breastfeeding for the first 6 months of life, n (%)	39 (92.9)	21 (70.0)	60 (83.3)	0.01
Introduction of complementary (solid) foods at 6 months together, n (%)	34 (81.0)	15 (50.0)	49 (68.1)	0.01
Continue frequent, on-demand breastfeeding until 2 years of age or beyond, n (%)	20 (47.6)	19 (63.3)	39 (54.2)	0.19
Gradually increase food consistency and variety, n (%)	24 (57.1)	16 (53.3)	40 (55.6)	0.75
Use fortified complementary foods (solid foods) or vitamin-mineral supplements a, n (%)	25 (59.5)	15 (50.0)	40 (55.6)	0.42
During illness, increase fluid intake including more breastfeeding, and offer so, n (%)	17 (40.5)	14 (46.7)	31 (43.1)	0.60

Based on **Error! Reference source not found.**, Most of the MSGs heads could identify; ‘exclusive breastfeeding for the first 6 months of life’ and ‘Introduction of complementary (solid) foods at 6 months’ among other good infant and young child feeding practices.

IR2.4 Increased Access to Clean Water and Sanitation Sources

The results section highlights the project's impact on increasing access to water and sanitation by improving or constructing new water sources.

MGD 2.4.1 Number of schools using an improved water source - MGD Indicator #27

This indicator counts the number of targeted schools using an improved water source (piped water, public taps/standpipes, boreholes, protected hand dug wells, protected spring and rainwater collection).

By the midline, 94% of the schools (291 out of 310 of CRS schools) had improved water source compared to 52% at baseline (161 out of 310). The most common type of water facility was a hand pump well, used by 76% of the schools, which is an improvement of 10 percentage points from the baseline of 66%. Other facilities included boreholes with pumps (13%), piped water (9%), and the least common was stream water, used by 6% of the schools.

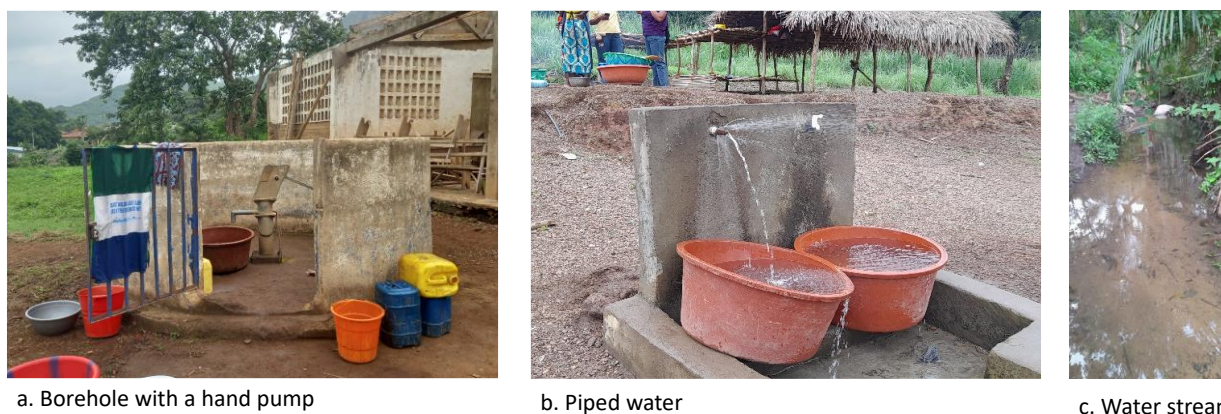


Figure 128: Different water sources used within the schools

At midline, out of 72 schools sampled, only 44% (32 schools) had a **functional drinking or potable water facility** on the premises, showing a decline compared to the baseline figure of 49%.

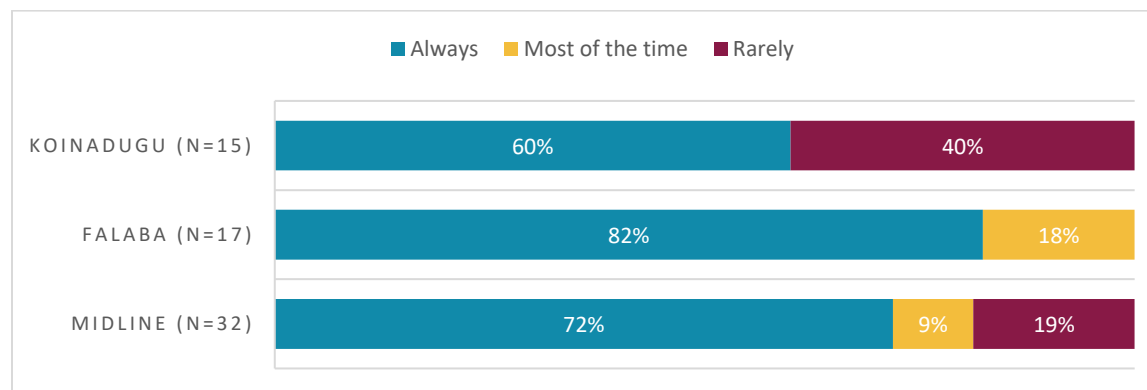


Figure 129: Frequency of functionality of drinking/portable water facility on premise at midline

As indicated on Figure 129, most of the drinking water facilities were operational all year-round (81%), though 2 out of every 10 schools had facilities that were rarely operational. There was a significant difference in the functionality of these water facilities between districts: none of the schools in Falaba had non-functional water facilities, while 40% of the facilities in Koinadugu were rarely functional ($p=0.004$).

Main water facility:

At the time of the visit, 69% of the **main water facilities** were functional, with a higher functionality rate in Falaba (82%) compared to Koinadugu (53%). Among the non-functional facilities, the main reason for dysfunction was breakdowns (80%).

More than two thirds (69%) of the water facilities were not chlorinated by the time of visit.

To improve access to safe drinking water in schools, the program should focus on increasing the functionality of water facilities, particularly in Koinadugu where a significant proportion of facilities are rarely operational. Emphasis should be placed on regular maintenance and repair of these facilities to prevent breakdowns, which are the main cause of dysfunction. Additionally, ensuring that water sources are consistently chlorinated will help safeguard the health of students. Priority should be given to enhancing the reliability of water facilities, especially in areas where they are currently underperforming.

MGD 2.4.2 Number of schools with improved sanitary facilities - MGD Indicator #28

The purpose of this indicator is to monitor whether each project or targeted school has adequate sanitary facilities that meet improved sanitation standards. Improved sanitary facilities include flush toilets connected to piped sewer systems, septic systems, pit latrines with slabs, composting toilets, and ventilated improved pit latrines. "Adequate" means the school must have separate improved sanitation facilities available for both males and females.

At midline, 82% of the schools (285 of 310 schools in the CRS program) had a functional toilet, compared to the baseline where over two-thirds had functional toilets or latrines. Specifically, 79% of schools in Falaba had functional toilets, compared to 87% in Koinadugu. Among the schools with functional toilets (59 out of 72 sampled), the majority (92%) were always functional, 3% were functional most of the time, and 5% were rarely functional. There was no significant difference in toilet functionality by district or type of school.

In most cases (90%), toilets were separated by gender, with the vast majority (96%) of schools in Koinadugu having separate toilets, compared to 85% in Falaba. Regarding the separation of toilets for teachers and students, 85% of the schools had separate toilets, with Koinadugu leading at 92%, compared to 88% in Falaba.



Figure 130: Toilets separated by gender, accessible to people living with disabilities, and differentiated for teachers and pupils.

Overall, 90% of functional toilets were accessible to PLWDs, with Koinadugu leading at 92% of schools having accessible toilets, compared to 88% in Falaba.

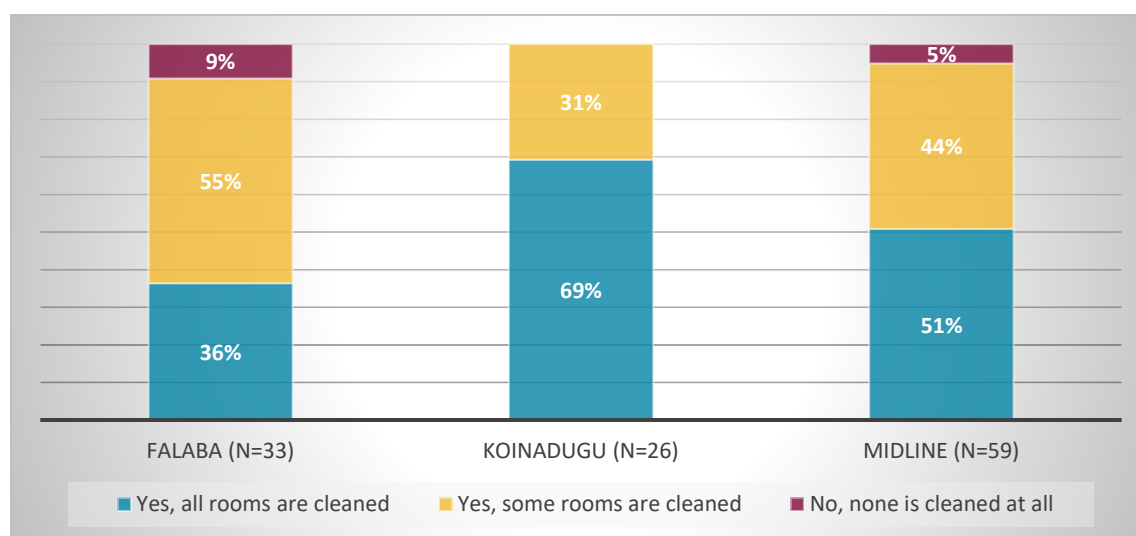


Figure 131: Proportion of schools with cleaned toilets

In terms of cleanliness, as per Figure 131, slightly more than half (51%) of the schools had all toilet rooms cleaned, 44% had some rooms cleaned, and very few (5%) had no rooms cleaned. Koinadugu was observed to have more schools maintaining toilet cleanliness, contributing to overall school health and sanitation measures.

The majority of schools (90%) had a handwashing facility, such as a wash hand basin, bowl, or Tippy tap. Specifically, in Koinadugu, 92% of schools had a handwashing facility compared to 88% in Falaba. At the time of the midline visit, 57% of schools had water and soap/detergent available at the handwashing facility, 42% had water only, and 2% had neither. In Koinadugu, three-quarters (75%) of the schools had water and soap at the handwashing facilities, while only 41% of the schools in Falaba had soap and water at the handwashing facility.

To enhance sanitation and hygiene standards in schools, the program should prioritize increasing the availability and functionality of sanitary facilities, particularly in Falaba, where improvements are needed. Efforts should focus on ensuring that all schools have separate and functional toilets for both genders and for teachers and students, with a specific emphasis on accessibility for People Living With Disabilities (PLWDs). Additionally, there should be a targeted effort to improve the availability of water

and soap at handwashing facilities, particularly in Falaba, to ensure that all schools meet basic hygiene standards. Regular monitoring and maintenance of facilities, along with education on the importance of cleanliness, will be crucial in sustaining these improvements.

IR2.5 Increased Access to Preventative Health Interventions

Access to preventative health interventions is crucial for promoting long-term health and well-being, particularly in vulnerable populations such as school children. This indicator aims to measure the extent to which students within targeted schools have received essential preventative health services, including nutrition supplementation through Vitamin A and deworming. By ensuring that these interventions are widely available and utilized, the program seeks to reduce the incidence of preventable diseases, enhance student health, and create a healthier learning environment. This focus on prevention is not only cost-effective but also foundational to fostering resilient communities and improving overall public health outcomes.

MGD 2.5.1 Number of students receiving deworming medication(s) - MGD Indicator #29

This indicator measures the number of students who receive a dose of deworming tablets at school in a fiscal year. At midline, **79% of pupils had received deworming medication, which is relatively similar to the 80% reported baseline.** In Falaba, 87% of the interviewed pupils had received deworming medicine within the year, a significant difference compared to 67% in Koinadugu ($p < 0.01$). There was no significant difference in deworming rates by the gender of the pupil, which coincides with baseline findings.

In the last one year, **71% of pupils (43053 of the 60638 students within schools in CRS program) had received Vitamin A capsules;** an improvement from the baseline value of 67%. There was a significant variation by district, with 77% of students in Falaba receiving the capsules, compared to 62% in Koinadugu ($p < 0.01$). Similar to deworming, there were no significant differences by gender (matching baseline result).

When head teachers were asked if their students had received deworming medicine in the past year, 75% confirmed they had, with significant variation by district (88% in Falaba compared to 57% in Koinadugu ($p = 0.003$)). **The discrepancy between the proportion of students who received deworming medicine and the number of schools reporting this in Koinadugu may suggest that some students received the medication outside of school interventions.**

In terms of the frequency of deworming, teachers from two thirds of the schools reported that their students had received the medicine once, 22% twice, and 11% reported three times. There was no significant difference in the frequency of deworming by district.

When asked about receiving Vitamin A capsules, 69% of head teachers reported that their school had received them. In Falaba, 81% of schools had received Vitamin A capsules as compared to 53% in Koinadugu ($p = 0.019$). In terms of the number of times Vitamin A capsules were received, 62% of head teachers reported their school received it once, 26% twice, and 12% three times.

The midline assessment of deworming and Vitamin A supplementation in intervention schools revealed a constant trend for deworming and improvement in Vitamin A capsule administration, with 79% of students receiving deworming medication and 71% receiving Vitamin A capsules. Notably, Falaba

district demonstrated significantly higher uptake of these preventative health interventions compared to Koinadugu, with significant differences in access noted across districts but not by gender. The lower coverage in Koinadugu suggests a need for targeted efforts to ensure all students receive these vital health services. Constant results in deworming indicate extra efforts are necessary to encourage the remaining 20% to uptake deworming services. Given that some students in Koinadugu may have received deworming medication through surveillance programs out of school, it is crucial to coordinate with community health initiatives. To enhance coverage and consistency, the program should focus on strengthening school-based health services, particularly in underperforming districts like Koinadugu.

IR2.6 Increased Access to Requisite Food Prep and Storage Tools and Equipment (See MGD 1.3.3/2.4)

Access to essential food preparation and storage equipment is crucial for enhancing the efficiency of food preparation and ensuring food safety and hygiene practices. The assessment of this area involved observing the availability of aprons for kitchen attendants and the availability of necessary utensils in schools.

A significant majority of schools (97%) had access to aprons for food preparers, and a similar proportion had the required kitchen equipment and tools.

Table 27: Average number of kitchen equipment and tools per school by district

Kitchen equipment by District	Falaba	Koinadugu	Midline	P-value	Baseline	Diff (Mid – Bas)
n (%)	42 (58.3)	30 (41.7)	72 (100.0)		n=66	
Big Pots, mean (sd)	2.1 (0.5)	1.8 (0.4)	2.0 (0.5)	0.02*	2	0
Big Bowl for storing cooked food, mean (sd)	1.5 (0.8)	1.8 (1.2)	1.6 (1.0)	0.32	1.78	-0.18
Big Bowl for storing sauce, mean (sd)	1.1 (0.6)	1.2 (0.7)	1.1 (0.6)	0.74	1.78	-0.68
Cooking (wooden) spoons, mean (sd)	1.7 (0.8)	1.6 (0.8)	1.6 (0.8)	0.50	1.69	-0.09
Serving/scooping Spoons, mean (sd)	1.8 (1.9)	1.3 (0.8)	1.6 (1.6)	0.25	1.33	0.27
Serving Plates, mean (sd)	126.2 (96.0)	116.1 (72.9)	122.0 (86.7)	0.64	7.43	114.57
Spoons for pupils, mean (sd)	136.5 (103.9)	122.4 (74.8)	130.7 (92.6)	0.53	9.41	121.29
Buckets, mean (sd)	1.4 (1.5)	1.2 (1.9)	1.3 (1.6)	0.51	1.52	-0.22
Towels, mean (sd)	1.2 (1.5)	1.1 (1.4)	1.2 (1.5)	0.62	1.36	-0.16
Cups, mean (sd)	123.8 (92.6)	125.8 (81.1)	124.6 (87.4)	0.92	1.93	122.67
Knives, mean (sd)	0.7 (0.7)	0.6 (0.9)	0.6 (0.8)	0.50	0.98	-0.38
Mortar, mean (sd)	0.6 (0.5)	0.3 (0.6)	0.5 (0.6)	0.13	0.59	-0.09
Mortar pestle, mean (sd)	0.6 (0.7)	0.3 (0.6)	0.5 (0.7)	0.12	0.57	-0.07

Note: sd- standard deviation, * means statistically significant difference by district

According to , there are variations in the availability of other utensils, such as serving plates, cups, and spoons, with large standard deviations reflecting differences in school sizes and their corresponding

needs. Overall, there was a decline on the average number of utensils between the baseline and midline with higher change observed on ‘big Bowl for storing sauce’ and ‘knives’.

This variation highlights the importance of ongoing program monitoring to ensure all students have access to adequate utensils, reducing the likelihood of using unwashed hands and reinforcing efforts to maintain food hygiene standards.

Foundational Results

MDG 1.4.2.1/2.7.2.1. Number of policies, regulations, or administrative procedures in each of the following stages of development as a result of USDA assistance - MGD Indicator #10

From the qualitative conversations, we found that parents, the SMC and the local government had passed several by-laws and regulations that support school going children. This community targeted factor may have contributed to improved attendance. These regulations are outlined in the table below. The most widespread by-law ensures that all school going children attend school failure to which the parents are held responsible and required to pay a fine.

Table 28: Regulations and laws passed to support school going children

Regulation/by law	Quote(s)
i. Mandatory school attendance for all school aged children	<p>Interviewer: do you have any by-laws here to foster education in this community? Respondent: Yes, we have by-laws. Interviewer: so, what are those laws? Respondent: if your child does not go to school for any reason, we have a fine attached to this which is NLe500. Interviewer: what else? Respondent: the law that we enforce is that if children who are at the age to attend school and are not attending, we hold their parents accountable and summon them to the chief and there is a fine for this also. For this reason, enrolment has increased drastically.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">SMC IDI Kakoya, Koinadugu.</p> <p>Respondent: Yes, if any parent removes his or her child from the school unceremoniously, he/she will pay a fine of fifty Leones, and there is also a fine placed on any parent who gives his/her child into early marriage and also, on society initiation during school period.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">SMC IDI Diang, Koinadugu.</p> <p>Interviewer: Do you have any by-laws that promote education in this community? Respondent: Yes, we have by-laws. Interviewer: What are the laws regarding school enrolment? Respondent: There is a fine of NLe 50 for parents who fail to send their children to school. Interviewer: Are there any laws concerning early child marriage? Respondent: Yes, we have such laws.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">SMC IDI, Barawa Wolay, Falaba.</p>

	<p>Respondent 4: one, there is a law that children should not follow us on the farm during school hours.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">FGD Women Bafodia, Koinadugu.</p> <p><i>If your child has reached the age to attend school and you the father or mother refused to send that child to school, we will fine you the parent, that is one of our great by-laws.</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">Chief KII Bafodia, Koinadugu.</p> <p><i>As stakeholders, we put a law that requires every parents to send their children to school and we make sure that if they don't do it there will be a fine for them and we also hold a meeting to those who come to interview us so that they can help us.</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">Chief KII Kabelia, Falaba.</p>
ii. Abolished early marriage	<p>Interviewer: do you also have any bylaws to abolish early marriage for schoolgirls?</p> <p>Respondent: yes.</p> <p>Interviewer: what're they?</p> <p>Respondent: we agreed that if parents remove their children from school for marriage, it is the same price they should pay as a fine (Nle 500.00).</p> <p style="text-align: right;">SMC IDI Kakoya, Koinadugu.</p> <p>Interviewer: what about promoting girls' education in this community, what have you done?</p> <p>Respondent 3: we have developed a bylaw that prohibit early marriage and a fine is attached to this.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">FGD men Bafodia, Koinadugu.</p>
iii. Mandatory participation in school food contribution and school garden activities	<p>Interviewer: okay are there any other bi-laws for the provision of other food condiments that CRS does not provide?</p> <p>Respondent: yes, the law is that if parents didn't contribute, their children wouldn't be entitled to the food, but we feel sorry for those affected, so now we engage the parents directly.</p> <p>Interviewer: Okay, are there any other laws like when the community comes together to make school gardens for those who deliberately refuse to participate?</p> <p>Respondent: Yes, we have fines, if you don't take part it's an NLe100 fine. Back then, we used to beat the young boys, but we Don't do that again. We're now afraid to beat that's why they now pay fines.</p> <p>Interviewer: okay so how about the children in the upper class, is it compulsory for them to be part of the school garden work?</p> <p>Respondent: well... yeah but most of them are happy to go with us.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">SMC IDI, Kakoya Koinadugu.</p>
iv. Compulsory membership of reading clubs for upper primary pupils	<p>Interviewer: is it compulsory for students in the upper class to be part of the reading club in the schools?</p> <p>Respondent: yes</p> <p>Interviewer: why?</p> <p>Respondent: It is a way to learn and to improve their reading skills.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">SMC IDI, Kakoya Koinadugu.</p>

v. Motorbike riding disallowed for children under 18 years	<p><i>Well, bike riding is one of the activities that prevent children from going to school. The moment that they become okada riders they don't want to go to school but now the bike has been very expensive it was before this time when bike was very cheap during the time when they were doing the timber business but all that has been stopped. So, they are willing to learn now. When I became a Paramount Chief, I passed a law that all children who are below 18 years they should not ride a bike, that has taken effect.</i></p> <p>Chief KII Bafodia, Koinadugu.</p>
vi. Expectant young girls allowed to continue attending school	<p><i>The other challenge is that the teenage pregnancy but thank God for the radical inclusion that allows a pregnant child to attend school, so that has been of help to combat that kind of challenge, so it has been a little bit of help now to improve on education and encourage the children to attend school.</i></p> <p>Chief KII Bafodia, Koinadugu.</p>

Number of MSGs trained as a result of USDA assistance CRS Indicator #20

This indicator was assessed by counting the number of mother support groups that were trained in food preparation within the schools of intervention and the number of individuals trained by gender.

Across the 72 schools observed during the midline assessment, the majority of mother support groups (89%) had received training, courtesy of CRS. In Falaba, 88% of the 42 mother support groups had been trained, compared to 90% in Koinadugu (n=30). Specifically, 53% of the School Management Committees (SMCs) had received advocacy training, 77% had been trained in raising awareness on the importance of education, 86% in community mobilization, and 80% in child health and nutrition topics, including WASH, food preparation, and family planning.

All the mothers indicated that the training improved their knowledge of the topics covered, and the vast majority (98%) reported being able to apply the knowledge to perform tasks more efficiently.

SO3 LRP 1.3: Improved Utilization of Nutritious and Culturally Acceptable Food That Meets Quality Standard

LRP: 1.3.1 Improved access to culturally acceptable food

The quantity of LRP food commodity purchases within Sierra Leone has seen a significant increase since the baseline, rising from 35.85 MT to 999.33 MT. This represents 64% of the total agreed quantity of 1,567 MT, with one year remaining in the program.

Table 29: LRP Commodity Pipeline Summary

Commodity	Source Country	Agreement (MT)	Quantity Procured for Pilot (MT)	Quantity Received (MT) at midline	Balance Quantity (MT)	Baseline Quantity (MT), (%)	Midline Quantity (MT), (%)
Local Rice	Sierra Leone	936	23.00	602.85	333.15	23, (2.5%)	602.85, (64.4%)
Pigeon Peas		312	5.90	219.00	93.00	5.9, (1.9%)	219, (70.2%)
Palm Oil		64	2.00	46.48	17.52	2, (3.1%)	46.48, (72.6%)
OFSP (orange-fleshed sweet potatoes)		255	4.95	131.00	124.00	4.95, (1.9%)	131, (51.4%)
Total		1567	35.85	999.33	567.67	35.85, (2.3%)	999.33, (63.8%)

Source: CRS internal data

While this growth is substantial, it falls below the four-year target of 1,243 MT, which represents 79% of the overall target. The remaining 567 MT required to meet the total goal exceeds the FY 2025 target of 323 MT, indicating that the program may struggle to meet its final objectives.

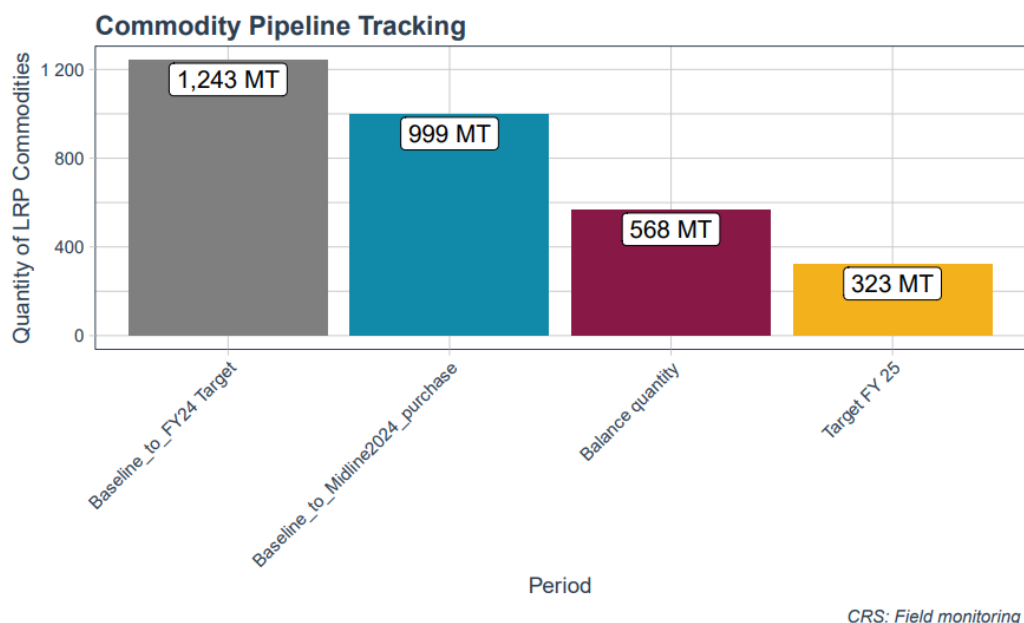


Figure 132: Commodity pipeline tracking

Table 30: The revised allocations for each year were determined using the initial percentage allocation.

	Baseline	Target FY 22	Target FY 23	Target FY 24	Target FY 25	Target MGD V
Initial allocation (MT)	-	37	704	762	391	1,894
Initial allocation (%)	0%	2%	37%	40%	21%	100%
Revised allocation (MT)	-	31	582	630	323	1,567

LRP:1.3.3 Improved Access to Nutritious food

On the day of the assessment, headteachers reported that there was an adequate food supply from CRS across all food types except for OFSP, which had been received by less than half of the schools (33%). Additionally, OFSP was the least purchased commodity, with only 51% of the total agreed quantity procured, compared to other commodities, which had over 60% of their agreed quantities purchased.

While the food supply from CRS has been generally sufficient, there is a notable shortfall in the distribution and procurement of OFSP, with less than half of the schools receiving it and only 51% of the agreed quantity purchased. This indicates a potential issue in the procurement for OFSP, which may require targeted solutions to ensure all commodities are consistently delivered and meet the program's goals.

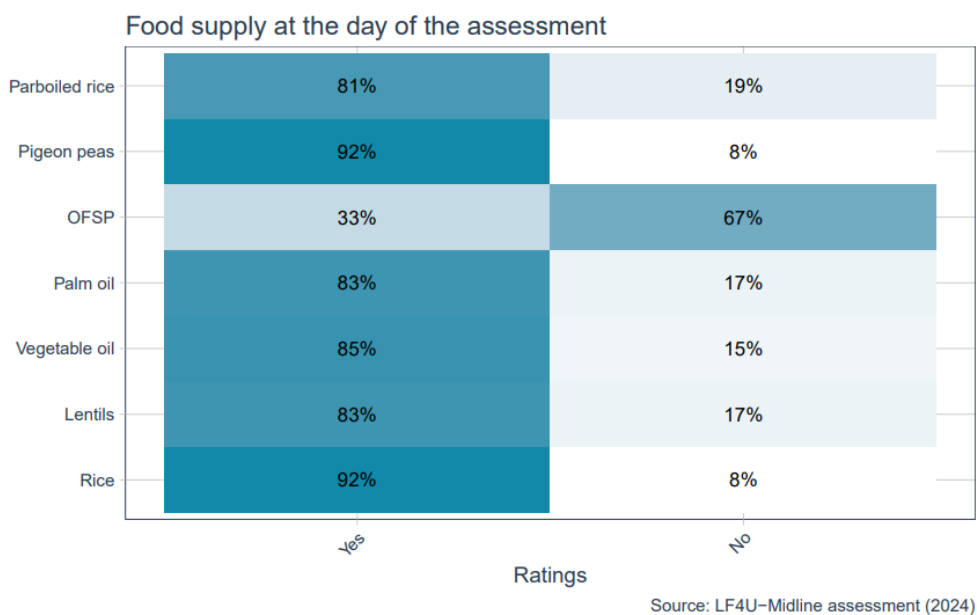


Figure 133: Adequacy of food supply

4. Evaluation/Learning Questions

The evaluation assessed the “Lan for U Future” project phase V project activities, outputs, outcomes and goals through interviews and surveys of the different beneficiaries and stakeholders of the projects. Government of Sierra Leone officials from various ministries and directorates including Ministry of Education, Ministry of Water Resources and Environment, Directorates of Nutrition, National School Feeding Secretariat, and Paramount Chiefdoms were interviewed for the evaluation. Other stakeholders such as community members, parents, teachers, food preparers, farmers group, School Management Committees, Mother Support Groups, Regional and Local Procurements, Reading Club Facilitators, and CRS L4UF project team were also interviewed for the evaluation. Different research questions were used to determine the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability as well as internal and external coherence of the CRS L4UF project.

4.1. RELEVANCE

The midline evaluation of the "Lan for U Future" school feeding project aimed to assess the relevance of its objectives in enhancing literacy skills and improving health/nutrition behaviors among school-aged children. The findings indicated a strong alignment between the project's objectives and the needs of the target population, as highlighted by stakeholder feedback and community assessments. Key stakeholders, including parents, teachers, and community leaders, identified the focus on literacy and nutrition as highly relevant, with surveys showing that a significant majority viewed these issues as critical in their communities.

To what extent are the objectives of the 'Lan for U Future' project valid?

Qualitative feedback from focus groups further reinforced this alignment, with stakeholders expressing appreciation for the project's efforts to address local challenges through school feeding programs. The evaluation highlighted the project's compatibility with national policies such as the Integrated Early Childhood Development (IECD) policy, confirming its support for broader government strategies aimed at promoting education and health equity. Interviews with government officials underscored that the project aligns with significant initiatives like the national school feeding program and radical inclusion policies.

Are the activities and outputs of the project consistent with the overall goals, objectives, and intermediate objectives?

The evaluation also assessed whether the activities and outputs of the school feeding project are consistent with its overall goals and objectives. Findings demonstrated a strong correlation between project activities and intended outcomes, showcasing effectiveness in addressing the needs of beneficiaries. The school feeding program, particularly regular meal provision, was found to significantly enhance school attendance and student engagement, thereby promoting improved literacy skills.

The various (seven) EGRA subtasks, highlights significant progress from baseline to midline. Improvements were observed across all assessed literacy tasks for both genders. Notably, initial sound identification improved dramatically, with the percentage of students scoring zero decreasing by 42 percentage points, from 57% at baseline to 15% at midline, indicating a strong enhancement in foundational phonics skills.

Reading comprehension also showed marked progress, as the percentage of students unable to answer any questions correctly fell by 42 percentage points, from 66% to 24%. Nonword reading improved similarly, with a 39-percentage point reduction in students unable to read any nonwords, decreasing from 68% to 29%, reinforcing better phonemic awareness and decoding skills. Oral reading fluency demonstrated significant gains as well, with a 36-percentage point drop in students unable to read any words fluently, reducing from 60% to 24%. Familiar word reading improved, showing a 27-percentage point decline in students unable to read familiar words, falling from 47% to 20%. Lastly, letter name identification also saw progress, with a 10-percentage point decrease in students unable to identify at least one letter, from 12% to just 1%. Collectively, these findings underscore a positive shift in the quality of literacy instruction and significant advancements in literacy skills among school-age children.

Feedback from teachers indicated that students were more attentive and participative in class, further contributing to better literacy outcomes. Surveys revealed increased awareness of healthy eating practices among pupils, with positive shifts in dietary choices both at school and home, demonstrating that project activities are effectively impacting health behaviors for 99% of school-aged pupils.

Similarly, the evaluation of the school feeding project demonstrates a strong consistency between its activities and outputs and the overall goals of improving literacy instruction, attentiveness, and student attendance. Quantitative data reveal significant advancements in literacy skills, with notable improvements in tasks such as reading comprehension and phonics. This improvement aligns closely with the project's objective to enhance the quality of literacy instruction.

Qualitative findings complement these quantitative results, as feedback from teachers and parents highlights the correlation between improved nutrition and increased student attentiveness in the classroom. Educators reported that students who participated in the feeding program demonstrated greater focus during lessons and were more active in classroom discussions. This heightened level of engagement is directly related to the nutritious meals provided, which not only sustain students physically but also enhance their ability to learn. Such insights reinforce the idea that the feeding program is a critical factor in achieving the project's objective of fostering a conducive learning environment.

In terms of student attendance, quantitative data indicate a clear upward trend in school attendance rates since the implementation of the feeding program. Schools reported a reduction in absenteeism, particularly among vulnerable populations, including girls. Many families expressed that the incentive of receiving meals at school motivated them to send their children regularly, thereby increasing overall attendance rates. This finding aligns with the project's goal of ensuring that all children, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, have access to education.

Overall, the activities and outputs of the school feeding project are strongly aligned with its stated goals and objectives. The combination of improved literacy skills, increased attentiveness, and higher attendance rates demonstrates that the project is effectively addressing its intermediate objectives. By integrating nutritional support with educational initiatives, the project not only meets its immediate goals but also lays the groundwork for sustainable improvements in educational outcomes.

Are the activities and outputs of the project consistent with the intended impacts and effects?

The evaluation confirmed a strong connection between project activities and the intended impacts and effects. Data from surveys and focus groups indicated that the school feeding initiative significantly boosted student attendance and engagement by 36% points at midline, correlating with improved literacy rates. Teachers noted enhanced class participation and academic performance, reflecting the project's successful efforts to create a supportive learning environment.

The program also promoted healthier eating habits among students, as evidenced by increased awareness and preference for nutritious foods. Parents observed positive changes in their children's dietary choices, attributing these shifts to the integrated nutrition education within the feeding program. These outcomes align well with the project's objectives, reinforcing its effectiveness in enhancing both academic performance and overall health behaviors.

How responsive is the program design to an emergency context and/or unexpected events that may impact program implementation?

The evaluation examined the program's responsiveness to emergency contexts and unexpected events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Findings showed that the project design is adaptable, enabling effective navigation of such challenges. Stakeholder feedback indicated that the program implemented essential health protocols to ensure student safety while continuing to deliver critical services.

The evaluation learned that, the project team demonstrated flexibility in operations, adapting to health guidelines with measures like social distancing and safe meal distribution. Parents reported that these adjustments were crucial in maintaining their children's educational engagement, highlighting the project's commitment to continuity in learning during external disruptions.

4.2. EFFECTIVENESS

The midline evaluation of the school feeding project aimed at improving literacy skills and enhancing health and nutrition behaviors among school-aged children has yielded promising findings regarding the effectiveness of the initiative. The evaluation sought to measure the extent to which project results and yearly benchmark indicators have been achieved or are likely to be achieved. Preliminary data indicated a significant positive impact on both literacy rates and health behaviors among participating pupils, suggesting that the project is on track to meet its objectives.

What extent are the project results and the yearly benchmark indicators achieved/likely to be achieved?

Survey results and feedback from key stakeholders, including parents and teachers, revealed notable improvements in school attendance and student engagement, directly correlating with enhanced literacy outcomes. Teachers reported a relatively stable level of attentiveness between baseline (64%) and midline (61%) and increased participation in class, which further supports the idea that the school feeding program is effectively creating a conducive learning environment. Additionally, there has been a marked increase in students' awareness of healthy eating practices, showing improvement in the minimum acceptable diet for 78% of school-aged pupils indicating that the project's nutritional education components are successfully influencing dietary choices both at school and home.

In terms of benchmark indicators, the project is performing well against its targets. Data show that 98% of students at midline are meeting literacy benchmarks compared to 62% of school pupils at baseline, while health and nutrition behaviors have also improved, as evidenced by positive shifts in dietary habits for 78% of school pupils. Stakeholder feedback further underscores community satisfaction with the quality of meals and the educational support provided, reinforcing the likelihood of sustained success as the project continues. Interview with one of the community leaders revealed that, “the town chief and the youths advise the community to help the teachers with their domestic work (KII, Chiefdom, Falaba), We contribute by providing some financial support and assisting with activities in the school garden when CRS supplies the condiments (IDIs, SMC, Falaba).”

Overall, the findings of the midline evaluation affirm that the school feeding project is effectively addressing its goals. Continued monitoring and adaptive strategies will be essential to ensure that the project maintains its momentum and fully achieves its intended impacts as it progresses.

How effective have the implementation strategies been in improving pupil literacy, enrolment and attendance (especially for girls), health and nutrition practices, access to nutritious food, community engagement, and the capacity of the national school feeding program, and what factors influenced the achievement or non-achievement of these objectives?

The midline evaluation of the school feeding project, designed to enhance literacy skills and improve health and nutrition behaviors among school-aged children, has yielded significant insights into the effectiveness of its implementation strategies. Key findings reveal that the project has indeed been relevant and effective in achieving its primary objectives. Notably, improvements in pupils' literacy levels were observed, with standardized test scores indicating enhanced reading and comprehension skills of 25% points increase. The provision of regular, nutritious meals has created an environment conducive to learning, where students are more engaged and attentive.

The evaluation showed the integration of phonics-based instruction, targeted approaches like TARL (Teaching at the Right Level), formative assessment, and support from school-based literacy coaches has significantly enhanced pedagogy, leading to improved literacy skills among school-aged children. Results from the midline evaluation demonstrates that Phonics-based instruction lays a solid foundation for reading by emphasizing sound-letter relationships, while TARL ensures that instruction is tailored to each student's current level, promoting effective learning. Formative assessments provide ongoing feedback, allowing teachers to adjust their strategies in real time. Additionally, literacy coaches facilitate professional development through training and coaching, creating a collaborative environment for teachers to refine their practices. Frequent monitoring visits ensure accountability and support, while the provision of materials and incentives for both students and teachers foster a motivating learning environment through reading clubs. Together, these factors create a comprehensive and dynamic approach to literacy education, resulting in measurable gains in student performance.

Additionally, the regression analysis demonstrates that listening comprehension and oral reading fluency are significant predictors of reading comprehension success. Students who meet the listening comprehension threshold have more than three times the odds of passing reading assessments, while each correctly read word enhances the likelihood of success by a staggering 80%. Other factors, such as membership in reading clubs and participation in life skills training, show positive associations but lack

statistical significance. Collectively, these findings highlight the critical need for a focus on auditory and reading fluency skills to improve overall literacy outcomes among students.

Enrolment and attendance rates have also shown marked improvements, particularly among girls. Surveys indicated that families are more inclined to send their daughters to school, a shift attributed to the incentive of receiving daily meals as well as formation and training of school reading clubs, school health clubs and distribution of deworming medication. This has not only increased overall enrolment figures from 191 at baseline to 203 pupils per school, but has also addressed gender disparities in education, reinforcing the project's role in promoting gender equity. The school feeding program has thus emerged as a vital mechanism in breaking down barriers to education for girls, fostering an inclusive learning environment.

From Interview with teachers, the evaluation gathered that the active involvement of TFSL fellows in executing L4UF activities has significantly boosted teacher participation by fostering a collaborative and supportive environment for literacy initiatives. Their role in ensuring fidelity to implementation and producing tangible results has encouraged not only teachers but also students, school administrators, and district-level staff to engage more fully in creating a literacy-rich atmosphere. As educators witness the positive outcomes of these initiatives, their commitment to participation strengthens, leading to a more unified effort in enhancing literacy across the board. Also, after-school reading clubs helped pregnant learners and parent learners catch up on lessons that facilitated their re-enrolment in schools. So, it was also used as a catch-up program.

The implementation of bylaws and fines for parents who do not send their children to school has had a significant positive impact on student attendance, particularly when combined with the provision of meals and enhanced educational quality. Additionally, targeted initiatives such as sensitization efforts to promote the re-enrollment of girls who have dropped out, along with the distribution of learning materials, have contributed to increased participation among female students. These combined strategies highlight the effectiveness of structured interventions in fostering higher attendance rates and promoting gender equity in education.

In terms of health and nutrition practices, the project has effectively raised awareness among pupils about the importance of balanced diets and healthy eating habits. Feedback from students and parents suggests that children are making better dietary choices, influenced by the nutrition education integrated into the feeding program. This has also led to improvements in overall health behaviors, with students reporting increased knowledge about nutrition and its impact on their well-being.

Access to nutritious and culturally acceptable food has been a cornerstone of the project's success. The meals provided are not only nutritious but also align with local dietary customs, which has been critical for acceptance within the community. This alignment has ensured that children are receiving meals that they enjoy and that contribute positively to their health, thus enhancing participation in the feeding program.

Community participation and engagement have significantly strengthened due to the project's initiatives. Parents and local leaders have become more involved in supporting the feeding program, fostering a

sense of ownership that is essential for its sustainability. This increased engagement has led to collaborative efforts in monitoring the program's implementation, further enhancing its effectiveness.

However, the evaluation identified several challenges that influenced the achievement of objectives. Unexpected events, particularly the COVID-19 pandemic, posed significant disruptions. The project team had to adapt rapidly, implementing health protocols and modifying delivery methods to ensure continuity. This experience underscored the importance of flexibility in program design and the need for ongoing communication with stakeholders to navigate unforeseen challenges effectively.

4.3. EFFICIENCY

The midline evaluation of the school feeding project aimed at improving literacy skills and health behaviors among school-aged children assessed the cost efficiency of its activities. Overall, the findings indicate that the project has demonstrated a commendable level of cost efficiency, effectively utilizing resources to achieve significant outcomes. Budget analyses showed that the allocation of funds for meal provision, educational materials, and training sessions has resulted in measurable improvements in both student literacy and health practices.

Were activities cost efficient?

The midline evaluation of the school feeding project revealed a strong level of cost efficiency in its activities aimed at enhancing literacy skills and health behaviors among school-aged children. Budget analyses demonstrated that funds allocated for meal provision, educational materials, and training sessions were effectively utilized, resulting in notable improvements in both student literacy and health practices. The cost per meal provided was well within acceptable limits, enabling the procurement of nutritious and culturally appropriate food without compromising quality. By leveraging local suppliers, the project not only reduced logistics costs but also supported community businesses, thereby contributing to local economic resilience.

Additionally, the integration of nutrition education into the feeding program emerged as a cost-effective strategy. By utilizing existing school resources and staff, the program minimized additional training costs while maximizing the impact of both nutrition and literacy initiatives. Stakeholder feedback underscored the high value placed on these educational components, reinforcing the notion that investments in nutrition yield significant returns in student engagement and health outcomes. Overall, the evaluation affirms that the project activities were cost-efficient, laying a solid foundation for sustainable impact.

Were results achieved on time?

The midline evaluation assessed the timeliness of results achieved in the school feeding project and found that the program successfully met its implementation timelines. Key milestones were achieved as scheduled, primarily due to effective planning and coordination among various stakeholders, including schools, community leaders, and local government officials. Data collected indicated that meal distribution commenced promptly at the start of the school year, positively impacting student attendance and engagement from the outset. Furthermore, the early introduction of nutrition education initiatives ensured that students received vital knowledge about healthy eating habits in a timely manner. A project

team member interviewed stated that, “results were generally achieved on time, with minor delays in one or two areas due to the overlap between projects FFE4 and FFE5. Approval for implementing FFE5 was not granted until the second year, causing some delays. However, the team was proactive in managing results and expenditures, successfully catching up with current implementations.

The timeliness of results in the school feeding project has been a critical factor in enhancing its efficiency and overall impact. The project's timeline was meticulously managed, with nearly all milestones achieved according to schedule. Initially, during the baseline assessment, the project set ambitious targets for improving access to quality literacy instruction, boosting teacher attendance rates, and ensuring better access to school supplies and instructional materials. By the midline evaluation, these targets were not only met but often surpassed. This success was evidenced by the increased skills and knowledge of teachers and school administrators, which directly contributed to improved literacy instruction. Moreover, the project's structured approach facilitated enhanced attentiveness among students, mitigating short-term hunger through increased access to nutritious school meals.

Feedback from teachers highlighted improvements in students' literacy skills within the expected timeframe, emphasizing the project's efficiency in delivering results. The project team employed regular monitoring and adaptive management strategies to maintain the schedule, allowing for swift responses to emerging challenges. This proactive approach facilitated timely interventions, which were crucial for sustaining the program's momentum. In conclusion, the evaluation confirms that the school feeding project achieved its results on time, effectively positioning itself for continued progress toward its goals.

Is the project being implemented in the most efficient way compared to alternatives?

The evaluation sought to determine whether the school feeding project's implementation strategies were the most efficient compared to alternative approaches. Findings indicated that the integrated model, which combines nutritional support with educational initiatives, has proven to be highly effective in addressing both literacy and health outcomes among school-aged children. Compared to alternative models—such as standalone nutrition programs or educational interventions without nutritional support—this cohesive approach demonstrated superior results in improving student engagement and overall well-being.

Cost analyses revealed that the project maximized resources effectively, delivering substantial benefits without excessive expenditure. Utilizing local food sources not only supported the local economy but also ensured culturally acceptable meals, enhancing student participation. Feedback from stakeholders indicated that this combined strategy fostered stronger community involvement, as parents and local leaders recognized the dual benefits of improved nutrition and educational support. Overall, the midline evaluation confirms that the school feeding project is being implemented in a highly efficient manner, outperforming alternative approaches and achieving measurable improvements in literacy and health behaviors.

How well has the program Monitoring and Evaluation system supported program efficiency?

The midline evaluation also assessed the effectiveness of the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system in supporting the project's efficiency. The findings highlight that the M&E framework has been pivotal in enhancing operational efficiency through real-time data collection and analysis. This capability has enabled project managers to track progress against key performance indicators, allowing for timely adjustments to strategies based on emerging insights. As a result, the program has been able to respond swiftly to challenges, optimizing resource allocation and ensuring that objectives are met efficiently. A project team member, when interviewed on the M&E system how it supports efficiency revealed that, “their commitment to monitoring project implementation and requiring justifications for any unmet objectives. They conduct monthly coordination meetings that include the M&E team and program teams to review project performance against actual results. During these meetings, they assess indicators reported by both teams and discuss any areas that are not meeting expectations. If goals are not achieved, they revisit the strategies to re-implement them in future plans.”

Additionally, the M&E system has fostered accountability among stakeholders by providing transparent reporting mechanisms. Regular feedback loops have encouraged community participation, allowing members to voice their perspectives on program implementation. This inclusive approach not only strengthens community engagement but also aligns the program with local needs, maximizing its effectiveness. By involving stakeholders in the evaluation process, the program has identified best practices and areas for improvement, further enhancing operational efficiency.

4.4. IMPACT

The midline evaluation of the school feeding project aimed to assess both the intended and unintended effects of the intervention on various stakeholders, including school-aged children, local councils, chiefdom authorities, mothers' support groups, school management committees, the National School Feeding Secretariat, and local farmers. The intended effects focused on enhancing literacy skills and improving health and nutrition behaviours among children. Findings revealed significant positive changes, particularly in students' academic performance, attendance rates, and overall engagement in classroom activities. Vulnerable and at-risk youth benefited notably from the program, as consistent meal provision mitigated barriers to learning and fostered a supportive educational environment.

What were the intended and unintended positive and negative effects/changes?

The evaluation identified several unintended positive effects, including increased community cohesion and enhanced collaboration among local councils, farmers, and mothers' support groups. This initiative fostered stronger relationships, leading to greater community investment in local food sources and agricultural practices. For example, local farmers reported improved market opportunities due to heightened demand for nutritious, locally sourced food, creating beneficial outcomes for both students and the agricultural community. One of the project team members when asked about this stated that, “and maybe another one I can mention, is like all these local farmers that now can improve on their income generating activities so the SILC components and the ERP I think these are from my point of view, yeah they really capture my attention when it comes to the program intention and positive impact in the future.”

Conversely, some unintended negative effects emerged, such as dependency on the feeding program for meal provision, potentially undermining local food security efforts. Concerns about the sustainability of these benefits were raised, emphasizing the need for a balanced approach that also supports broader educational and nutritional initiatives.

How many stakeholders have been positively or negatively impacted?

The evaluation assessed the broader impact on stakeholders, revealing significant positive effects across various groups. Local councils and chiefdom authorities reported enhanced community cohesion and collaboration, which strengthened governance structures around educational and health initiatives. Mothers' support groups also saw improvements, with many members reporting increased awareness of nutritional practices and active involvement in their children's education. School management committees noted positive changes in student attendance and engagement, attributing these improvements to the feeding program. However, some local farmers expressed concerns about competition with larger suppliers involved in the program, highlighting potential market dynamics that could affect their livelihoods. Additionally, indirect beneficiaries raised issues regarding dependency on school meals, which may hinder their motivation for home food production.

What do beneficiaries perceive as the effects of the intervention?

Beneficiaries perceived that improved access to school supplies and materials has directly enhanced the quality of literacy instruction. This access provides teachers and students with the necessary resources to engage effectively in learning activities. Improved literacy instruction materials have enabled educators to deliver more relevant and engaging lessons, while the increased skills and knowledge of both teachers and school administrators have fostered a more supportive and effective learning environment. Together, these elements have created a comprehensive framework that ensures students receive high-quality education, that explains the better literacy outcomes within the school feeding program. Interaction with teachers during the evaluation further back this claim, as one of the teachers said, "With the new supplies and improved materials, I feel much more confident in my teaching. The students are more engaged, and I can see their understanding of literacy deepening every day. It's not just about the food; having the right resources makes all the difference in creating a positive learning environment."

In addition, beneficiaries and stakeholders largely viewed the school feeding project positively. Parents, teachers, and community leaders reported significant improvements in children's health, literacy, and engagement in school due to regular meal provision. Teachers noted increased attentiveness and enthusiasm among students, linked to improved nutritional status. Moreover, the integration of nutrition education within the initiative empowered students with knowledge about healthy eating, further enhancing their overall health behaviours. However, concerns about potential dependency on the program were voiced by some stakeholders, highlighting the need for complementary initiatives that promote sustainable food production and self-sufficiency alongside immediate nutritional support.

To what extent can changes be attributed to the program intervention?

The midline evaluation assessed the extent to which changes in literacy skills and health behaviors could be attributed to the school feeding intervention. Findings indicated a strong association ~~correlation~~ between the program's implementation and notable improvements in academic performance and nutritional practices. Specifically, participating students exhibited a 25%-point increase in literacy levels, suggesting that regular meals significantly contributed to enhanced focus and engagement in the classroom and a 30%-point increase in the consumption of balanced meals. This comprehensive approach—providing meals along with education on healthy eating—created lasting impacts on dietary choices and overall well-being. While external factors, such as community-wide health initiatives, may have contributed to these changes, stakeholders unanimously recognize the pivotal role of the school feeding project in achieving these positive outcomes.

The project's results and goals can be largely attributed to the strategic implementation of the Teach for Sierra Leone (TFSL) responsible for training, coaching teachers, which has significantly motivated educators and enhanced their competencies. Survey results have shown a marked improvement in teachers' confidence and competency in teaching literacy and phonics, with one teacher stating, "I never believed I could make a real impact in my students' literacy skills, but the training has changed that for me." The role of TFSL not only provided targeted training but also fostered a collaborative culture among teachers, school administrators, and community members, enhancing their collective commitment to student success. Additionally, the support provided to Private Service Providers (PSPs) in establishing Savings and Internal Lending Communities (SILC) has created a sustainable framework for financial empowerment, allowing educators to focus on teaching without the distraction of financial instability.

Moreover, interventions such as training for School Management Committees (SMCs) and the use of social and behavioral change (SBC) initiatives have reinforced the project's objectives. The integration of radio jingles and discussions on child health, nutrition, and hygiene has effectively raised community awareness and engagement. A parent shared, "Hearing about the importance of education on the radio has motivated us to support our children more actively." These collective efforts have created a supportive ecosystem that not only enhances the quality of literacy instruction but also improves overall student well-being. The ongoing coaching and mentoring for teachers have ensured they remain engaged and responsive to the needs of their students, further solidifying the project's impact.

Additionally, there was a 12% rise in the number of children consuming balanced meals, directly linked to the nutritional education provided within the program. While some external factors may have influenced these outcomes, feedback from teachers, parents, and local leaders consistently highlighted the program's pivotal role in driving these positive changes.

Did the theory of change hold?

Overall, the midline evaluation confirmed that the theory of change underpinning the school feeding project was effective in promoting improved literacy and health behaviors among school-aged children. The successful integration of nutritional support and educational initiatives not only met but exceeded expectations, demonstrating the potential for such programs to drive significant outcomes in child development. While some external factors influenced the results, the project's approach to combining nutrition and education has proven to be a robust model for enhancing both academic success and health, ultimately benefiting the broader community.

4.5. SUSTAINABILITY

The midline evaluation of the school feeding project highlighted the sustainability of both expected and unexpected outcomes stemming from the initiative aimed at improving literacy skills and health behaviors among school-aged children. The sustainability target for the project aims to transfer 30% of program schools to government at the end of the project. Key findings indicated that several activities, particularly those related to improved literacy and enhanced nutritional practices, are likely to be sustained over time. The integration of regular meal provision with educational support has fostered a conducive learning environment, evidenced by increased student attendance and improved academic performance.

What Activities and Outcomes Are Likely to Be Sustained?

The improvement in the quality of literacy instruction, reading clubs, trained teachers and other factors are likely to contribute to sustained literacy outcomes. The consistent provision of meals has been linked to heightened concentration and engagement in classroom activities, crucial for academic success. Teachers noted increased motivation and participation from students, creating a positive learning atmosphere. This trend is expected to persist with ongoing teacher training initiatives and the introduction of modalities like reading clubs, which reinforce the educational gains made through the feeding program.

Unexpected outcomes, such as increased community involvement, increased teacher motivation, increased students' education and health behaviours and collaboration, also show promise for sustainability. The project has fostered relationships among local councils, mothers' support groups, and farmers, creating a supportive network that emphasizes child welfare. This increased community cohesion is likely to promote ongoing efforts in local food production and nutritional education, extending the benefits of the school feeding initiative beyond the classroom. Other factors that contribute to sustainability include the engagement of the Ministry of Education (MOE) at all levels in implementing the literacy training, as well as the establishment of reading clubs and the presence of well-trained facilitators.

What Are the Major Factors Influencing Sustainability?

The evaluation identified several critical factors influencing the sustainability of project outcomes, particularly institutional support and governance structures. A key factor is the commitment from local government and educational authorities, essential for securing the funding and resources needed for the continuation of meal provision and nutritional education. Strong institutional backing fosters an environment where stakeholders feel empowered to advocate for the program's benefits, increasing its chances of sustainability.

Community governance structures, including local councils and school management committees, also play a pivotal role in mobilizing resources and coordinating efforts to support the school feeding initiative. Engaged and well-functioning governance structures enhance community buy-in, which is vital for ensuring that the benefits of the program are widely shared. Also, the need for robust connections between the school feeding project and local agricultural efforts informed the L4UF project to start implementing Local and Regional Procurement with the aim to source for rice, pigeon peas, palm oil and orange flesh sweet potatoes. This has led to increased meals for school aged pupils leading to improved

attendance and literacy skills. Other factors sustainability is engagement of the MOE at all levels in rolling out the literacy training. The establishment of reading clubs and well-trained facilitators will likely promote sustainability.

What Exit Strategies Were Implemented?

The midline evaluation revealed several exit strategies incorporated into the project design to ensure sustainability beyond its initial funding period. Key strategies included establishing partnerships with local government bodies and community organizations to foster local ownership of the program. By involving local councils and school management committees in planning and implementation, the project aimed to create a supportive network that would advocate for and sustain the feeding initiative.

Training components were also integrated, aimed at building the capacities of local stakeholders, including teachers and community members. Workshops focused on nutrition education and the importance of regular meals for children's learning. This knowledge transfer equipped the community with the necessary tools to maintain healthy practices and advocate for the program's continued support. The implementation of a monitoring and evaluation system further aimed to demonstrate the program's impact, thus securing ongoing interest from local government and potential funders.

What elements of the sustainability strategy have been effective, and what capacities and strengths do community structures and the National School Feeding Secretariat possess to support program sustainability, including the extent of government ownership of the school feeding program in Sierra Leone?

The midline evaluation of the school feeding project assessed various elements of the sustainability strategy that contributed to its results. One of the key findings is that the active involvement of community structures, such as local councils, mothers' support groups, and school management committees, has significantly strengthened the program's sustainability. These groups have demonstrated capacities for mobilizing resources and fostering community ownership, which are essential for maintaining the momentum of the school feeding initiative. Their collaborative efforts have enhanced local engagement and investment, ultimately leading to improved health and literacy outcomes among children.

The evaluation also highlighted the strengths of the National School Feeding Secretariat, which has played a pivotal role in coordinating program implementation and facilitating partnerships with stakeholders. The Secretariat's ability to provide technical support and training to local councils and community groups has empowered these entities to take on greater responsibilities, ensuring that the program is rooted in local contexts and needs. This capacity-building approach has fostered a sense of ownership among community members, making them more likely to support and sustain the program.

In addition, the transition to the government-approved status has results in improved literacy outcomes because they receive more funding and support from the government. Also, preparing teachers for certification and producing qualified teachers, even if they transfer from L4UF-supported schools contributes to improved literacy instruction and reading outcomes

Furthermore, the extent to which the Government of Sierra Leone has embraced the school feeding program has been crucial for its sustainability. Government commitment is evident in the allocation of

resources and policy frameworks that prioritize school nutrition as part of broader educational and health initiatives. The evaluation found that this ownership has not only legitimized the program but also facilitated alignment with national development goals, further securing its future viability.

Did the Theory of Change Hold?

The evaluation assessed whether the theory of change—improving educational outcomes through enhanced literacy and better health practices—held true. The findings largely affirm this theory, as the integration of nutritional support and educational initiatives significantly contributed to improvements in literacy skills and health behaviors. The dual focus on nutrition and literacy not only created a supportive environment for learning but also reinforced the program's effectiveness.

4.6. COHERENCE

The midline evaluation of the school feeding project in Kabala district reveals significant external coherence with existing educational and nutritional initiatives. By aligning its goals with local educational authorities and health organizations, the project creates a cohesive framework that supports the holistic development of school-aged children. This approach ensures that improvements in literacy are complemented by enhanced nutrition, ultimately contributing to sustained educational gains.

Synergistic Partnerships

Key partnerships identified in the evaluation bolster the project's coherence with other interventions. Collaborations with local NGOs and government agencies have facilitated resource sharing and expertise, resulting in amplified impacts across all involved programs. For instance, joint efforts with health organizations have led to nutrition education workshops and health screenings that reinforce the nutritional aspects of the school feeding initiative. This integrated approach not only addresses immediate nutritional needs but also fosters a supportive learning environment that enhances overall well-being.

Community Involvement and Capacity Building

Community engagement is another critical component of the project's coherence. By involving local councils and mothers' support groups in its implementation, the program ensures responsiveness to the community's unique needs. Capacity-building initiatives empower community members with skills and knowledge, enabling them to advocate for both the feeding program and broader educational improvements. This sense of ownership fosters a more robust educational ecosystem in the Kabala district, ensuring long-term support for children's welfare.

Internal Coherence with National and International Standards

The evaluation also highlights the internal coherence of the school feeding project, aligning it with government initiatives and international school feeding norms. By emphasizing the dual goals of enhancing literacy and improving health, the project adheres to national policies prioritizing child health alongside educational outcomes. This consistency with the national School Feeding Policy reinforces the

project's legitimacy and supports a unified approach to addressing child malnutrition and literacy challenges.

Coordination with Other Actors

The project effectively coordinates with various stakeholders to meet students' needs beyond school feeding. Partnerships with local health clinics facilitate access to health screenings and nutritional counselling, while collaboration with educational NGOs provides supplementary resources, such as reading materials and teacher training. This coordinated effort addresses the multifaceted challenges faced by students, enhancing overall educational outcomes.

5. Conclusion

The findings affirm that the "Lan for U Future" school feeding project is not only relevant to community needs but also effectively addresses its objectives. The activities and outputs are consistent with intended impacts, showing significant improvements in both literacy and health behaviours among participating students. The project's adaptability to emergency contexts further underscores its resilience and capacity for sustained success. Ongoing stakeholder engagement and periodic reassessments of community needs will be essential to maintain its relevance and effectiveness in the future.

Also, the findings affirm that the implementation strategies of the school feeding project have been both relevant and effective in addressing its objectives. The positive impacts on literacy, enrolment, health, and community engagement highlight the project's critical role in supporting the education and well-being of school-aged children. The evaluation confirms that the activities of the school feeding project were cost-efficient, enabling the effective use of resources to support its dual objectives of enhancing literacy and improving health behaviors among pupils. Continued monitoring of cost-efficiency measures will be essential to ensure that the project remains sustainable and impactful in the long term.

The regression analysis reveals that strong listening comprehension and oral reading fluency are crucial predictors of reading success, with each correctly read word significantly boosting the odds of passing the reading assessments. These findings emphasize the need for a comprehensive approach to literacy development that addresses multiple dimensions of reading skills.

Furthermore, the phonemic awareness—essential for reading—was initially low among students, as evidenced by a baseline assessment average score of just 2 out of 10, indicating less than 20% accuracy in identifying initial sounds. However, a midline assessment showed significant improvement, with average scores rising to 6 out of 10, reflecting a 60% accuracy rate. This encouraging growth suggests that the teaching interventions played a key role in enhancing this vital literacy skill. Notably, there were no gender-based differences observed in the development of phonemic awareness, as detailed in the table below.

More so, the midline evaluation confirms that the school feeding project achieved its results on time, reflecting efficient implementation practices. By adhering to planned timelines and maintaining stakeholder engagement, the project has positioned itself to build on these achievements in subsequent phases, ensuring continued progress toward its goals. The midline evaluation confirms that the school feeding project is being implemented in a highly efficient manner. The integrated strategy of combining nutritional and educational objectives has resulted in measurable improvements in literacy and health behaviours, demonstrating the project's effectiveness in utilizing resources and fostering community engagement.

Similarly, the M&E system has significantly bolstered the efficiency of the school feeding project by enabling timely adjustments, fostering stakeholder accountability, and providing robust data on program outcomes. These components collectively ensure that the project remains responsive to the needs of its beneficiaries, continuing to achieve its dual objectives of improving literacy and health among school-aged children.

Additionally, the evaluation confirms that the theory of change underlying the school feeding project was effective in promoting literacy and health behaviours among school-aged children. The successful combination of nutritional support and educational initiatives not only met but also exceeded expectations, demonstrating the potential for such integrated programs to drive significant outcomes in child development. The midline evaluation indicates that a significant portion of the improvements in literacy and health behaviours can be attributed to the school feeding intervention. By providing not only nutritious meals but also essential strategies such as new teaching approaches (TaRL) as well as education on health practices, the program has fostered a supportive environment for children, demonstrating its effectiveness in achieving its dual objectives. Also, after-school reading clubs helped pregnant learners and parent learners catch up on lessons that facilitated their re-enrolment in schools. So, it was also used as a catch-up program.

The beneficiaries and stakeholders generally perceive the school feeding project as having a substantial positive impact on children's health, literacy, and overall engagement in school. Nonetheless, concerns about dependency and market dynamics highlight the importance of integrating strategies that promote sustainability and community empowerment alongside the immediate benefits of the feeding initiative. Addressing these insights will be crucial for maximizing the program's long-term effectiveness and community support. Similarly, the evaluation highlights that while the school feeding project positively impacted a majority of stakeholders, fostering community collaboration and improving nutritional awareness, it also raised concerns about dependency and market dynamics for local farmers. Addressing these challenges will be essential for ensuring the program's long-term sustainability and maximizing its benefits across all involved groups. The evaluation highlights a range of impacts from the school feeding project, showcasing significant intended benefits for children's literacy and health, alongside unintended positive changes in community dynamics and local agriculture. However, it also raises important considerations regarding dependency and sustainability, emphasizing the need for a balanced approach that continues to support not only school feeding but also broader educational and nutritional initiatives within the community.

Again, the midline evaluation indicates that the success of the sustainability strategy derives from strong community engagement, effective governance, and robust government support. These elements enhance the program's capacity to achieve lasting impacts on children's literacy and health, ensuring that the benefits of the school feeding initiative are sustained over time.

Furthermore, the midline evaluation illustrates that the school feeding project operates with both internal coherence and external consistency with other educational and health initiatives in Kabala district. By fostering synergistic partnerships, engaging the community, and aligning with national and international standards, the project addresses the diverse needs of children. This comprehensive approach not only enhances the effectiveness of the school feeding initiative but also contributes to sustainable improvements in child development across the region.

The midline evaluation demonstrates that the school feeding project effectively coordinates with other actors to create a comprehensive support system for students in Sierra Leone. By complementing school feeding with additional health and educational initiatives, the program addresses the diverse needs of children, fostering an environment conducive to learning and well-being. This external coherence not only enhances the impact of the school feeding initiative but also contributes to a more integrated approach

to child development in the community. Again, the midline evaluation demonstrates that the school feeding project is both internally coherent and externally consistent with government initiatives and international norms. By aligning its objectives with national policies and global standards, the program fosters a comprehensive approach to improving literacy and health outcomes for children in Sierra Leone. This coherence not only enhances the project's effectiveness but also strengthens the overall educational framework in the country, paving the way for sustainable improvements in child development.

6. Recommendations

The midline evaluation of the school feeding project aims to assess the effectiveness and relevance of its initiatives in enhancing literacy skills and improving health and nutrition behaviors among school-aged children. This evaluation serves as a critical checkpoint to analyse progress against established objectives, gather stakeholder feedback, and identify areas for continued growth and adaptation. By examining the interplay between nutritious meal provision and educational outcomes, this evaluation seeks to provide valuable insights that will inform future strategies and ensure the long-term success of the program in fostering both literacy achievements and health and nutrition behaviors among students.

Targeted professional development: Continue to offer tailored training that emphasizes differentiated instruction and adapting techniques for diverse learners to build teacher confidence and effectiveness.

Resource availability: Ensure that teachers have access to essential resources and materials to support the implementation of innovative teaching strategies. This includes promoting local content learning materials and practical approaches like the Teaching at The Right Level (TaRL) framework.

Enhancing Reading Comprehension for Older Girls (targeted strategies and role models): To address the observed gender differences in reading comprehension performance, particularly among older girls, we recommend implementing targeted reading initiatives that engage girls through relevant materials and collaborative learning opportunities. Additionally, promoting positive female role models in literature can inspire and motivate older girls to enhance their reading skills.

Administrative support: Foster strong administrative backing for new teaching methods and provide ongoing support, particularly in integrating classroom resources from programs such as feeding initiatives.

Monitoring and feedback: Implement a system for regular classroom observations and feedback to support teachers in experimenting with and refining their instructional practices, ensuring that learning continues effectively, even in the absence of a teacher.

Community engagement: Encourage partnerships with local organizations to enhance training opportunities and resource availability, fostering a supportive environment for both teachers and students.

Strengthening Literacy through Targeted Skill Development: To enhance reading success, educational programs should focus on developing both listening comprehension and oral reading fluency through structured activities and practice. Additionally, a comprehensive literacy curriculum that incorporates diverse reading skills will better support student learning and achievement.

Sustain high attendance: Continue to promote a positive attendance culture through recognition programs and support for teachers to maintain their commitment to literacy instruction.

Enhance resource availability: Ensure that schools are equipped with necessary learning materials, including health and sanitation posters, to foster a holistic learning environment. This can be achieved through targeted resource allocation and partnerships with local organizations.

Fostering Local Food Production for Sustainable School Feeding: To reduce dependency on the school feeding program and promote sustainability, it is recommended that the team implement initiatives to cultivate local food sources, such as training community members in sustainable agriculture practices and establishing partnerships with local farmers to supply nutritious meals for students.

Support literacy instruction: Develop strategies to integrate literacy instruction effectively within the broader curriculum. Provide teachers with training on balancing various subjects while maintaining a focus on literacy.

Sustaining Phonemic Awareness Growth: Continue and expand the effective teaching interventions that have demonstrated improvement in phonemic awareness, while monitoring progress to ensure sustained development across all student demographics.

Leverage feeding program benefits: Use the school feeding program as a model for improving student engagement and focus. Consider ways to further support flexibility in scheduling to allow for dedicated literacy instruction.

Promote health education: Prioritize the display of health and sanitation resources to raise awareness and educate students on healthy practices, ensuring a comprehensive approach to student well-being.

Targeted interventions for girls: Develop programs focused on preventing early marriage and teenage pregnancy, providing girls with education on health and life skills to empower them to make informed choices.

Community awareness programs: Implement community education initiatives to raise awareness about the importance of education for both genders, particularly focusing on the long-term benefits of delaying marriage and childbearing.

Economic support programs: Strengthen economic support systems for families to alleviate poverty, such as vocational training and job placement services that can help both boys and girls pursue sustainable livelihoods as well as the savings and internal lending committee (SILC).

Improvement of learning structures: Invest in enhancing the quality and accessibility of learning environments for all students, particularly targeting schools that serve higher percentages of girls facing inadequate facilities.

Enhance community engagement initiatives: To further strengthen community ownership and support for the project, implement regular community meetings and workshops focused on nutrition education and literacy. This could involve training parents and local leaders to facilitate discussions and activities that reinforce the program's objectives, ensuring sustained community involvement and advocacy.

Enhancing Professional Development and Community Collaboration for Sustained Success: To sustain and enhance these successes, it is recommended that the project expand its professional development offerings for educators while fostering deeper community involvement through regular workshops and feedback sessions. Increasing collaboration between SMCs, community members, and teachers will create a stronger support network for students and educators alike, ensuring ongoing improvements in literacy outcomes and overall educational quality.

Strengthen monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework: Enhance the M&E system by incorporating more frequent feedback mechanisms from stakeholders, including students and parents, to capture real-time insights into program effectiveness. This could involve developing simple digital tools or mobile applications that allow for quick data collection and feedback, ensuring that the program can adapt promptly to meet the evolving needs of the community.

Annex:

Table 31: IPTT Results Trends from baseline to Midline

Project Intervention	Baseline	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024	Midline
Pupils Assessment on Reading comprehension Task	12%	10%	11%	11%	37%
Pupil Attentiveness	0%	60%	70%	80%	61%
Students Attendance rate	62%	70%	80%	85%	98%
Teacher Attendance Rate	84%	65%	70%	75%	89%
Grades 3-6 Dropout rates	4.4%	4.6%	4.1%	3.6%	1.9%
People Knowledge on Health & Hygiene	59%	54%	65%	75%	81%

Table 32: Literacy Indicators

Literacy Indicators	Baseline	Midline
Letter name identification	61% (31 letters)	86% (44 letters)
Phonemics awareness	Average of 2 out of 10 (20%)	Average of 6 out of 10 (60%)
Familiar word identification	Average of 11 correct word out of 40 (28%)	Average of 24 correct words out of 40 (60%)
Non-word reading	Average of 3.5 correct words (14%)	Average of 12 correct words out of 25 (48%)
Oral reading fluency with comprehension	20%	54%

Table 33: Improved utilization of nutritious and culturally acceptable foods that meet quality standards

Types of LRP Commodities	Quantity of LRP Commodities		
	Agreement (MT/%)	Midline-Received (MT/%)	Quantity Procured for Pilot (MT/%)
Local Rice	936 (100.0%)	602.85 (64.4%)	23 (2.5%)
Pigeon Peas	312 (100.0%)	219 (70.2%)	5.9 (1.9%)
Orange Flesh Sweet Potatoes	255(100.0%)	131 (51.4%)	4.95 (1.9%)
Palm Oil	64 (100.0%)	46.48 (72.6%)	2 (3.1%)
Total	1,567 (100.0%)	999.33 (63.8%)	35.85 (2.3%)

Sample size calculations	
Input Parameters:	
Covariate takes 2 values	
Covariate values:	.5 .5
Proportions (thetas):	.5 .5
Effect Size:	.2 .2
Control Group Rates:	.38 .415
Cluster design:	yes
Cluster size:	10
Intra Cluster Correlation:	.52
Significance level:	.05
Power level:	.9
Treatment Gr sampling rate (Pi):	.5
Sample Size:	
Number of Clusters =	143.3
Number of Observations =	1433.4
Number of Treatment Clusters =	71.7
Number of Control Clusters =	71.7
Number of Treatment Observations =	716.7
Number of Control Observations =	716.7
Overall Impact =	.2
Overall Success Rate for Treatment=	.6
Overall Success Rate for Controls=	.4

Figure 134: Sample calculation parameter from a binary calculator

Midline replacement sample for Kulor-Saradu chiefdom

During the initial baseline sample selection process, we identified a critical oversight: the baseline sample lacked representation from intervention schools in Kulor-Saradu chiefdom within Fabala district. Including schools from this chiefdom is crucial to ensure the program indicators accurately reflect the program's impact across the entire target population.

To address this gap, we employed a multi-step approach that balances representativeness while minimizing disruption to the existing sample:

1. **Proportionate Sample Size Calculation:** We utilized the intervention schools' sample frame to calculate the proportionate sample size for each district and chiefdom. This ensured a fair distribution of schools across the program area.
2. **Baseline Sample Comparison:** We compared the calculated proportionate sample size for each chiefdom with the actual number of schools included in the baseline sample. This revealed a slight discrepancy, indicating either oversampling or under sampling in other chiefdoms.

3. **Strategic Sample Adjustment:** To address the missing representation in Kulor-Saradu and minimize disruption to the overall sample size, we identified Kabelia chiefdom as having the highest oversampling (3 schools). We then reduced the sample size in Kabelia by 2 schools and allocated those schools to Kulor-Saradu.
4. **Maintaining Rigor Through Randomization:** To eliminate selection bias and ensure a fair chance of inclusion for all schools, we employed random selection procedures to choose the additional schools in Kabelia and Kulor-Saradu chiefdoms.

Table 34: Distribution of all intervention schools

CRS SCHOOL SAMPLE FRAME SUMMARY				
District	Chiefdom	Number of schools	% Number of schools	Number of sample schools (<i>rounded up values*</i>)
Falaba				
	Barawa Wolay	21	6.8%	5
	D/Sinkunia	19	6.1%	4
	Demandugu	20	6.5%	5
	Kabelia	8	2.6%	2
	Kulor- Saradu	11	3.5%	3
	Mongo	21	6.8%	5
	Morifindugu	15	4.8%	3
	Neya	37	11.9%	9
	Nyiedu	9	2.9%	2
	Sulima	25	8.1%	6
		186	60.0%	44
Koinadugu				
	Diang	27	8.7%	6
	Fudu Kalian	20	6.5%	5
	Kamukeh	9	2.9%	2
	Nieni	47	15.2%	11
	WW/ Bafodia	21	6.8%	5
		124	40.0%	29
Grand Total		310	100%	72

Table 35: Baseline sample and difference with proportionate sample.

BASELINE SCHOOL SAMPLE						
District		Chiefdom	Number of schools- Baseline	Proportionate sample (Table 1)	Diff from proportionate sampling	
Falaba	1	Barawa Wolay	6	5	1	Over-sampled
	2	D/Sinkunia	4	4	0	Under-sampled
	3	Demandugu	6	5	1	Over-sampled
	4	Kabelia	5	2	3	Over-sampled
	5	Mongo	6	5	1	Over-sampled
	6	Morifindugu	4	3	1	Over-sampled
	7	Neya	8	9	-1	Under-sampled

	8	Nyiedu	1	2	-1	Under-sampled
	9	Sulima	2	6	-4	Under-sampled
	10	Kulor- Saradu	0	3	-3	Under-sampled
			42	44		
			58%	61%		
Koinadugu	1	Diang	5	6	-1	Under-sampled
	2	Fudu Kalian	5	5	0	Under-sampled
	3	Kamukeh	4	2	2	Over-sampled
	4	Nieni	14	11	3	Over-sampled
	5	WW/ Bafodia	2	5	-3	Under-sampled
			30	29		
			42%	40%		
Total			72	72		

Table 36: Midline sample

MIDLINE SCHOOL SAMPLE					
District		Chiefdom	Number of schools-Baseline	Number of schools-Midline	Diff is baseline and midline sample
Falaba	1	Barawa Wolay	6	6	0
	2	D/Sinkunia	4	4	0
	3	Demandugu	6	6	0
	4	Kabelia	5	3	2
	5	Mongo	6	6	0
	6	Morifindugu	4	4	0
	7	Neya	8	8	0
	8	Nyiedu	1	1	0
	9	Sulima	2	2	0
	10	Kulor- Saradu	0	2	-2
			42	42	
			58%	58%	
Koinadugu	1	Diang	5	5	0
	2	Fudu Kalian	5	5	0
	3	Kamukeh	4	4	0
	4	Nieni	14	14	0
	5	WW/ Bafodia	2	2	0
			30	30	
			42%	42%	
Total			72	72	

Table 37: Replacement sample schools

BASELINE SCHOOL SAMPLE				
No.	School	District	Chiefdom	Village
19	DEC School Mesendinkuday	Falaba	Kabelia	Masedaykuday
20	MCA School Nomokoya	Falaba	Kabelia	Nomokoya

MIDLINE SCHOOL SAMPLE- Replacements				
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No.	School	District	Chiefdom	Community/ Village
71	MCA primary school Durukoro	Falaba	Kulor- Saradu	Durukoro
72	DEC primary school Yarawadu	Falaba	Kulor- Saradu	Yarawadu

Table 38: List of midline survey schools.

MIDLINE SCHOOL SAMPLE				
No.	School	District	Chiefdom	Community/ Village
1	Community School Banbugu	Falaba	Barawa Wolay	Banbugu
2	MCA Primary School Bandakarifaya	Falaba	Barawa Wolay	Bandakarifaya
3	MCA Primary School Barawa Kanoya	Falaba	Barawa Wolay	Barawa Kanoya
4	MCA School Brimaya	Falaba	Barawa Wolay	Brimaya
5	MCA Primary School Kulanko	Falaba	Barawa Wolay	Kulanko
6	MCA Primary School Tiamberan	Falaba	Barawa Wolay	Tiamberan
7	DEC School Fatafie	Falaba	D/Sinkunia	Fatafie
8	DEC School Gbindi	Falaba	D/Sinkunia	Gbindi
9	Ansarul Islamic Gbindi	Falaba	D/Sinkunia	Gbindi
10	DEC School Sogoria	Falaba	D/Sinkunia	Sogoria
11	MCA School Deldu Kamaron	Falaba	Demandugu	Deldu Kamaron
12	MCA School Fankaia	Falaba	Demandugu	Fankaia
13	MCA School Farakofeh	Falaba	Demandugu	Farakofeh
14	MCA School Fayia	Falaba	Demandugu	Fayia
15	MCA School Kondeya	Falaba	Demandugu	Kondeya
16	RC Primary Konkowakoro	Falaba	Demandugu	Konkowakoro
17	DEC School Duraya	Falaba	Kabelia	Duraya
18	MCA School Kaliyere	Falaba	Kabelia	Kaliyereh
19	MCA School Simithia	Falaba	Kabelia	Simithia
20	RC School Bendugu	Falaba	Mongo	Bendugu
21	Ansarul Islamic School Bendugu	Falaba	Mongo	Bendugu
22	RC School Danyoroh	Falaba	Mongo	Danyoroh
23	Ansarul Islamic Primary Karifasania	Falaba	Mongo	Karifasania
24	RC School Karifaya	Falaba	Mongo	Karifaya
25	Ansarul Islamic Trimafeh	Falaba	Mongo	Trimafeh
26	MCA Primary Sorokoro	Falaba	Morifindugu	Ballia-Sorokoro
27	Community School Gbenekoro	Falaba	Morifindugu	Gbenekoro
28	Ansarul Islamic Serekolia	Falaba	Morifindugu	Serekolia
29	Community School Tuba	Falaba	Morifindugu	Tuba
30	Community School Bendu	Falaba	Neya	Bendu
31	MCA Primary School Faragbema	Falaba	Neya	Faragbema
32	MCA Fayimba Kondeya	Falaba	Neya	Fayimba Kondeya
33	Community School Kenewa	Falaba	Neya	Kenewa
34	MCA Primary School Kumbawuleballia	Falaba	Neya	Kumbawuleballia
35	RC Primary Mamudya	Falaba	Neya	Mamudya
36	MCA Primary School Mania	Falaba	Neya	Mania
37	Community School Maralia	Falaba	Neya	Maralia
38	RC Primary Nendu	Falaba	Nyiedu	Nendu
39	DEC School Limbaya	Falaba	Sulima	Limbaya
40	DEC School Yogobain	Falaba	Sulima	Yogobain
41	Community Pri. Sch. Fogo	Koinadugu	Diang	Fogo
42	Lake Sofon Pri. Sch.	Koinadugu	Diang	Kansikoro
43	M.C.A. Pri. Sch. N'yanwulia	Koinadugu	Diang	N'yanwulia

44	Sandia Community Pri.	Koinadugu	Diang	Sandia
45	Primary School Worowaya	Koinadugu	Diang	Worowaya
46	MCA Primary School Borekoro	Koinadugu	Fudu Kalian	Borekoro
47	MCA Primary School Gbangbafera	Koinadugu	Fudu Kalian	Gbangbafera
48	MCA Primary School Keindeya	Koinadugu	Fudu Kalian	Keindeya
49	MCA Primary School Liroh	Koinadugu	Fudu Kalian	Liroh
50	MCA Primary School Yerelanfe	Koinadugu	Fudu Kalian	Yerelanfe
51	N.B.C. Pri. School Daliporator	Koinadugu	Kamukeh	Daliporator
52	N.B.C. Pri. School Kambalia	Koinadugu	Kamukeh	Kambalia
53	N.B.C. Pri. School Kambia	Koinadugu	Kamukeh	Kambia
54	N.B.C. Pri. School Serekunday	Koinadugu	Kamukeh	Serekunday
55	MCA Primary School Boikalia	Koinadugu	Nieni	Boikalia
56	MCA Primary School Fankoya	Koinadugu	Nieni	Fankoya
57	RC Primary Funmbakura	Koinadugu	Nieni	Funmbakura
58	Community school Gbenekoro 2	Koinadugu	Nieni	Gbenekoro 2
59	MCA Primary School Kilala	Koinadugu	Nieni	Kilala
60	MCA Primary School Kombaya	Koinadugu	Nieni	Kombaya
61	MCA Primary School Krutor	Koinadugu	Nieni	Krutor
62	MCA Primary School Nyanakolia	Koinadugu	Nieni	Nyanakolia
63	RC Primary Safinya 2	Koinadugu	Nieni	Safinya 2
64	DEC Primary School Samaia	Koinadugu	Nieni	Samaia
65	MCA Primary School Soya	Koinadugu	Nieni	Soya
66	Ansarul Primary School	Koinadugu	Nieni	Sumbaria
67	RC Primary School Yiffin	Koinadugu	Nieni	Yiffin
68	MCA Primary School Yiffin	Koinadugu	Nieni	Yiffin
69	WCSL Pre School	Koinadugu	WW/ Bafodia	Kakoya
70	N.B.C. Pri. School Kamakumba	Koinadugu	WW/ Bafodia	Kamakumba
71	MCA primary school Durukoro	Falaba	Kulor- Saradu	Durukoro
72	DEC primary school Yarawadu	Falaba	Kulor- Saradu	Yarawadu

Table 39: Qualitative sample breakdown

Interview type	Koinadugu	Falaba	Totals
Focus group Discussions			
Men	3	3	
Women	4	2	12
In-depth Interviews			
Community Health Workers	2	0	
Food Handlers	1	1	
MSG head	3	0	
Reading Club Facilitators	2	3	
SILC head	1	1	
SMC Chair	3	1	
LRP representative	1	0	19
Key Informant Interviews			
Chief/Chiefdom Speaker	2	3	
District Directorate of Education	2	2	
Directorate of Nutrition	1	1	
District Council	1	1	
Water Resources Representative	1	0	

National School Feeding Secretariat	1	-	
Implementing partners (L4UF)	3	-	
CRS L4UF Project Staff	3	-	21
Total interviews			52

Table 40: Midline average teacher attendance by district, approval status and school ownership

Category	Gender	Present (Mean)	Total (Mean)
District			
Falaba	Male	4	4
	Female	1	2
	Total	5	6
Koinadugu	Male	4	5
	Female	1	2
	Total	5	7
Approval Status			
MBSSE-approved	Male	4	5
	Female	1	2
	Total	5	6
Not approved	Male	2	3
	Female	1	1
	Total	3	4
School Ownership			
Community	Male	3	4
	Female	1	1
	Total	4	5
Mission	Male	4	5
	Female	2	2
	Total	6	7
Government	Male	5	5
	Female	2	2
	Total	7	7

While there is a notable gender disparity in teacher composition, the overall number of teachers per school is relatively consistent across districts. Falaba and Koinadugu reported average teacher counts of 5 and 6, respectively, a difference that is not statistically significant.