



Research to improve the quality of teaching and learning inside Syria

Compendium to the Final Report

Submitted to: Department for International Development

24 January 2019



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Acknowledgement

The nature of the Syrian conflict means that the mass majority of people who made this study possible cannot be named as it could put their and their families' security at risk. In recognition of the inability to name most key contributors to this study, the team has decided it most appropriate to name no one. Rather, the Integrity team acknowledges and expresses deep appreciation and respect for the thousands of Syrian children, teachers, parents/caregivers, school administrators, Local Council members, International Non-governmental Organisations (INGO) staff members, and education authority representatives who opened the doors to their schools, classrooms, and homes for this study.

Recognising that the study could not reach a truly randomised sample due to both operational and security challenges, the team is pleased to have reached as representative and non-biased a sample as possible given the referenced challenges. The team recognises the millions of Syrians in non-Government of Syria (GoS)-held areas whose own voices were not directly captured by the study, but whose sentiments were hopefully captured through those of their neighbours.

The team further acknowledges the 12 enumerators who tirelessly collected hundreds of thousands of data points, and who were the true eyes and ears of the project on the ground in contexts of ongoing instability. The team remains inspired by their ongoing resilience and commitment to helping strengthen the Syrian education sector.

The team also thanks the hundreds of unnamed informants outside of Syria who helped frame this study with careful consideration for the implications of shifting geopolitical interests, and without losing sight of both humanitarian principles and the standards to which we hold ourselves in Education in Crisis and Conflict (EICC) programming.

Finally, Integrity is most grateful to the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID), the funder of this study, for its thoughtful foresight to allocate resources to such a comparatively in-depth and unique look at a critically under researched part of EICC.

This report has been written by Integrity. Due to the sensitivity of both the topic and findings, we request that caution is taken before referencing or circulating this document.

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Acronyms

| | |
|----------|--|
| ACU | Assistance Coordination Unit |
| ALP | Accelerated Learning Programme |
| ASER | Annual Status of Education Report |
| DFID | Department for International Development |
| ECCN | Education in Crisis and Conflict Network |
| ED | Education Directorate |
| EGMA | Early Grade Mathematics Assessment |
| EGRA | Early Grade Reading Assessment |
| EICC | Education in Conflict and Crisis |
| EMIS | Education Management Information System |
| FCAS | Fragile and Conflict-Affected States |
| GoS | Government of Syria |
| GDP | Gross Domestic Product |
| HTS | Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham |
| ICT | Information and communication technology |
| IDP | Internally Displaced Person |
| IED | Improvised explosive device |
| INEE | Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies |
| ISIS | Islamic State of Iraq and Syria |
| KII | Key Informant Interview |
| M&E | Monitoring and Evaluation |
| MoE | Ministry of Education |
| (I)NGO | (International) Non-Governmental Organisation |
| NORRAG | Network for international policies and cooperation in education and training |
| PSS | Psychosocial support |
| SDF | Syrian Democratic Forces |
| SEL | Social and Emotional Learning |
| SIG | Syria Interim Government |
| SSG | Syrian Salvation Government |
| ToR | Terms of Reference |
| UK NARIC | United Kingdom National Recognition Information Centre |
| UN | United Nations |
| USAID | US Agency for International Development |
| VBIED | Vehicle-borne improvised explosive device |
| WASH | Water Sanitation and Hygiene |
| WoS | Whole of Syria |
| YPG | People's Protection Unit |
| ZoC | Zone of Control |

Key Terms

Banking/rote style of education: The rote style of education that educational philosophers such as Dewey, Piaget, Freire, and Montessori railed against as tools for oppression, arguing that such styles of education foster memorisation rather than critical thinking skills. Freire termed it the “banking” style of education, in which teachers attempt to “deposit” information into the minds of children.

Community-based education: Education that takes place in community-based learning spaces often share a number of features such as: a) these spaces are far from other formal learning spaces (often characterised as at least more than three kilometres; b) consequently, many of these learning spaces are in remote and often rural areas; c) relatedly, many children in these areas have been disconnected from formal education for a long period of time; d) sociocultural aspects of the local society may contribute to some of the limitations of access to schooling for certain parts of the population, such as girls or children with special needs; and e) the community decides to establish a space for themselves-though often with (I)NGO support, in the absence of other formal government support.

Conflict sensitivity: The ability to design and implement education activities with consideration for the two-way relationship between education and conflict, aiming to mitigate and minimise negative impacts and maximise positive impacts.

Education For All: The Education For All concept grew out the World Education Forum meetings in 2000 in Dakar Senegal, in advance of the establishment of the Millennium Development Goals. The idea was to ensure that all children received a primary education by 2015.

Formal education: Formal education is that which is a part of an accredited system with (broadly) recognised certification of learning.

Formative assessment: Formative assessment is the practice of frequent, informal assessments of student learning using multiple forms of assessment that recognize multiple intelligences. It enables teachers to provide “real-time” feedback to students to help progress their learning.

Informal education: Informal education happens organically and/or through informal interactions with no structure.

Learning spaces: This term is used to refer to any space dedicated to teaching and learning. It includes spaces where formal and non-formal education takes place, including schools. There are occasions where the term “school” is used, mainly because the term school was used in questionnaires, especially with children, to help keep terminology simple and familiar.

Multiple intelligences: The concept that there are multiple ways in which humans view and construct information. Gardner identified eight in his seminal work: linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, musical, bodily-kinaesthetic, naturalistic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal intelligences (David, Christodoulou, Seider, & Gardner, 2011). He noted, with criticism, that formal education had focussed on and valued only linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligences for too long. Gardner’s work launched much related research, but this piece simply wishes to recognise the existence of multiple intelligences and the need to appeal to them and differentiate teaching practice as a result.

Non-formal education: Non-formal education is organised learning that is not affiliated with an accredited system.

Opportunity to learn: The opportunity to learn, as defined and measured by Gillies & Quijada (2008), identifies a series of key elements of the teaching and learning environment that need to be in place to provide children with even a chance to learn while in learning spaces. These include proximity of the learning space to concentrations of people, the number of hours a learning space should be open a year, and on what topics teachers should focus (reading and maths, at the early primary level).

Parents/caregivers: This term is used consistently to refer to either the biological or adoptive caregivers of children aged 0-18.

Peer support networks: Peer support networks can take many forms and be formal or informal, with a purpose of bringing together colleagues and/or classmates to support learning, motivation, practice, and wellbeing.

Self-efficacy: A person's belief in his or her ability and capacity to accomplish goals and address challenges.

Social and emotional learning: The process through which children and adults understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions. (Source: CASEL, n.d.)

Summative assessment: Summative assessment is the practice of using infrequent, often high stakes, examinations of student learning covering topics introduced over a long period of time.

Wellbeing: How satisfied we are with our lives, our sense that what we do in life is worthwhile, our day to day emotional experiences (happiness and anxiety) and our wider mental wellbeing. (Source: <https://whatworkswellbeing.org/about/what-is-wellbeing/>)

List of Tables

| | |
|--|-----|
| Table 1: Activities and achievements, organised by phase | 3 |
| Table 2: Challenges and adopted mitigation measures..... | 5 |
| Table 3: Overview of inception and methodology development phase activities and achievements | 22 |
| Table 4: Challenges and mitigation strategies, organised by ZoC | 23 |
| Table 5: Challenges and management / contingencies per context..... | 24 |
| Table 6: Respondent types..... | 30 |
| Table 7: Early grade literacy and numeracy outcomes..... | 46 |
| Table 8: Progression statistics by ZoC | 48 |
| Table 9: Informant perspectives on the quality of education service providers efforts | 75 |
| Table 10: Informant opinions on intervention sequencing according to stage of crisis..... | 140 |

List of Figures

| | |
|--|----|
| Figure 1: Project objectives | 2 |
| Figure 2: Project phases..... | 2 |
| Figure 3: Zones of Control in Syria, as of 21 October 2018 (Source: Al Jazeera)..... | 25 |
| Figure 4: Beneficiaries reached by the education sector according to the severity of the areas where they live as of May 2018 (Source: OCHA, 2018)..... | 26 |
| Figure 5: People in need concentrations by geographic area as of June 2018 (Source: OCHA, 2018) | 26 |
| Figure 6: Overview of UN-declared hard-to-reach areas (as of 21 October 2018) (Source: OCHA, 2018)..... | 27 |
| Figure 7: Concentration profile of the food insecure (as of December 2018) (Source: WFP, 2018)..... | 27 |
| Figure 8: Map of data collection team hubs and reach..... | 29 |
| Figure 9: Comparison of respondent type or data source by representative sample, planned reach, and actual reach..... | 31 |
| Figure 10: Total number of interviews in all three geographic areas | 31 |
| Figure 11: Reliability ranking by informant and methodology type | 32 |
| Figure 12: Incident frequency during period of data collection | 36 |
| Figure 13: Preponderance of security incidents during the data collection period, by area | 36 |
| Figure 14: Nature of incidents recorded during the data collection period | 37 |
| Figure 15: Nature of targets of security incidents recorded during the data collection period..... | 37 |
| Figure 16: Grade completion documents and certificates provided by the GoS, by area..... | 41 |
| Figure 17: Wellbeing status of total child population assessed under the DFID-funded Manahel Project | 50 |
| Figure 18: Abnormal or borderline wellbeing status of the total child population as assessed under the DFID-funded Manahel Project, organised by governorate | 50 |
| Figure 19: Gender profile of wellbeing, of the total child population as assessed under the DFID-funded Manahel Project..... | 51 |
| Figure 20: Parental scores for child (age 5-10) wellbeing in Syria compared to norms in the UK..... | 51 |
| Figure 21: Teacher scores for child (age 5-10) wellbeing in Syria compared to norms in the UK..... | 52 |
| Figure 22: Location of data collection sites, by governorate..... | 53 |
| Figure 23: Records by ZoC and governorate | 53 |

| | |
|---|----|
| Figure 24: Type of communities where respondents lived | 54 |
| Figure 25: Learning spaces' location (community type) | 54 |
| Figure 26: Learning spaces with shifts that were gender specific or learning spaces that were solely gender specific..... | 55 |
| Figure 27: Data records by respondent type | 56 |
| Figure 28: Respondents, of which are female (as a percentage of total) | 56 |
| Figure 29: Internally displaced respondents as a percentage of total | 57 |
| Figure 30: Profile of respondent by governorate | 57 |
| Figure 31: Location of education authorities visited, by governorate..... | 58 |
| Figure 32: Type of degree held by education authority representatives..... | 58 |
| Figure 33: Displacement status of education authority representatives | 59 |
| Figure 34: Location of Local Councils visited | 59 |
| Figure 35: Location and origin of NGOs visited..... | 60 |
| Figure 36: Profile of (I)NGO representatives, by governorate and gender..... | 60 |
| Figure 37: Profile of school administrators, by gender | 61 |
| Figure 38: Highest level of formal education amongst school administrators..... | 61 |
| Figure 39: Grade 2 and Grade 3 teachers, by gender and governorate..... | 62 |
| Figure 40: Education level of teachers | 63 |
| Figure 41: Nature of teaching contract type..... | 64 |
| Figure 42: Percent of teachers that had received training within the past six months, by governorate..... | 66 |
| Figure 43: Use of performance assessments by school administrators, by governorate | 67 |
| Figure 44: Teachers' main reasons for changing their teaching practices after the start of the conflict..... | 68 |
| Figure 45: Teacher reports on their sources of stress..... | 69 |
| Figure 46: Teacher confidence levels in ability to be responsive to children's needs | 70 |
| Figure 47: Teachers responses about stress management methods..... | 70 |
| Figure 48: Parent/caregiver perspectives on what risks teachers faced at school..... | 71 |
| Figure 49: Children interviewed, by governorate | 71 |
| Figure 50: Location of displaced children, by governorate | 72 |
| Figure 51: Percent of displaced children, per governorate..... | 72 |
| Figure 52: In which types of communities children were based | 73 |
| Figure 53: Composition and location of parent/caregiver informants, by gender | 73 |
| Figure 54: Composition of parent/caregiver informants, by governorate..... | 73 |
| Figure 55: Gender profile of enrolled primary school students, overall and by governorate | 75 |
| Figure 56: Gender profile of attendance rates of primary school students, overall and by governorate | 76 |
| Figure 57: Annual hours allocated to learning while in school..... | 77 |
| Figure 58: Positive perceptions of parents/caregivers regarding the value of the learning content, by governorate..... | 78 |
| Figure 59: School administrator reports on the use of summative and formative assessments in their schools, by governorate..... | 80 |
| Figure 60: Teacher reports on the use of summative and formative assessments in their schools, by governorate..... | 80 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| Figure 61: Child to teacher ratios, by governorate..... | 81 |
| Figure 62: Children's perceptions of safety in learning spaces, by governorate | 83 |
| Figure 63: How positively children felt in learning spaces, by governorate | 84 |
| Figure 64: Children's reports of their causes of fear while at school | 84 |
| Figure 65: Concentration of children's fear, by governorate and ZoC | 85 |
| Figure 66: Children's specific fears, by governorate and ZoC..... | 85 |
| Figure 67: Reports by children of the frequency of corporal punishment and verbal abuse, by governorate . | 86 |
| Figure 68: Children's concerns about teacher abuse, by displacement status and gender | 86 |
| Figure 69: Profile of children's fear of abuse from teachers, by gender, displacement status, ZoC, and governorate..... | 86 |
| Figure 70: Children's fear of airstrikes, by governorate | 87 |
| Figure 71: Children's fears of airstrikes, by gender and displacement status | 87 |
| Figure 72: Profile of children's fear of airstrikes, by gender, displacement status, ZoC, and governorate..... | 87 |
| Figure 73: Parents/caregiver comments on the types of risks faced by children in learning spaces..... | 88 |
| Figure 74: Learning spaces found to be accessible | 92 |
| Figure 75: Percentage of school administrators who stated that their school served the following populations of especially vulnerable children..... | 94 |
| Figure 76: Percentage of school administrators that stated they put forth the following efforts to help vulnerable children access, participate and/or stay in school | 95 |
| Figure 77: Parent/caregiver and teacher reports on how parents/caregivers support children to stay safe and learn..... | 97 |
| Figure 78: Enumerator observations of teacher monitoring practices, by governorate, grade, and teacher gender..... | 98 |
| Figure 79: Enumerator observations of teacher practices relating to redirection of negative behaviour, by governorate, grade, and teacher gender | 98 |
| Figure 80: Teacher self-efficacy as measured by their confidence in their ability to teach despite distractions, by governorate and by gender and governorate..... | 99 |
| Figure 81: Enumerator opinions of teacher subject matter expertise, by governorate and gender..... | 100 |
| Figure 82: Teacher reports on the materials they used when preparing their lesson plans. | 101 |
| Figure 83: Teacher reports on practicing their lesson plans before implementation, by governorate | 102 |
| Figure 84: Enumerator observations of the appropriate allocation of time to classroom activities, by governorate, Grade level, and teacher gender..... | 102 |
| Figure 85: Teacher confidence in ability to secure child participation in innovative learning activities, by governorate and gender | 103 |
| Figure 86: Teacher self-efficacy regarding their abilities to lead innovative activities when opposed by colleagues, by governorate and gender | 103 |
| Figure 87: Teacher observations of participatory methods amongst their peers, by governorate..... | 104 |
| Figure 88: Child reports on experiential learning at school..... | 104 |
| Figure 89: Frequency with which children answered that the following teaching practices were common in their classrooms..... | 104 |
| Figure 90: School administrator observations of teaching and learning materials used by teachers | 105 |
| Figure 91: Observations by school administrators of teaching and learning material use..... | 105 |
| Figure 92: Percent of teachers that agreed or strongly agreed that they can reach all children with their teaching, by governorate and gender..... | 107 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| Figure 93: Percentages of teachers that agree or strongly agree that they can create inclusive lesson plans, by governorate and gender..... | 108 |
| Figure 94: Percentages of school administrators and teachers identifying as “often” and “always” the frequency of teaching methods aimed at recognising multiple intelligences..... | 109 |
| Figure 95: Enumerator observations of teachers creating different opportunities for the children to express themselves and share thoughts and opinions | 109 |
| Figure 96: Incidents of exclusion witnessed by children, by school type and community type..... | 110 |
| Figure 97: Observations of dialectic engagement, organised by geography and subject | 111 |
| Figure 98: Teacher reports on assessments of child understanding and modification of lessons in real time, by governorate..... | 111 |
| Figure 99: Observations of the frequency with which teachers checked for child understanding throughout lessons, by governorate and gender | 112 |
| Figure 100: Teacher reports on the frequency with which they support children who are struggling on particular topics, by governorate | 113 |
| Figure 101: Observations of the frequency with which teachers asked children to explain their answers | 113 |
| Figure 102: Observations of the frequency with which teachers helped children understand wrong answers | 114 |
| Figure 103: Observations of the appropriate use of language by teachers, by governorate and gender..... | 115 |
| Figure 104: Observations of the frequency with which teachers provided opportunities to elevate phonemic awareness, by governorate and gender | 116 |
| Figure 105: Observations of the frequency with which teachers helped children expand their vocabulary, by governorate and gender | 116 |
| Figure 106: Observation of teacher practice in relation to opportunities for language manipulation amongst children, by governorate and gender..... | 117 |
| Figure 107: Frequency of observed use of tracking by teachers, by governorate..... | 118 |
| Figure 108: Enumerator observations on the use of a variety of teaching techniques to help children with reading comprehension | 118 |
| Figure 109: Support to the development of number sense, by governorate..... | 119 |
| Figure 110: Teachers' perceptions of their abilities to positively influence child wellbeing, by governorate and gender..... | 120 |
| Figure 111: Frequency of observations of class rule setting, by governorate, gender, grade level, and subject | 121 |
| Figure 112: Stated frequency of involvement by children in classroom rule-setting, by governorate..... | 121 |
| Figure 113: Frequency of observations of the use by teachers of routines, by governorate, gender, grade level, and subject | 122 |
| Figure 114: Frequency of observations of the use by teachers of positive words and praise, by governorate, gender, grade level, and subject..... | 122 |
| Figure 115: Frequency of observations of the use by teachers of respectful and courteous behaviour, by governorate, gender, grade level, and subject | 123 |
| Figure 116: Word Cloud: What teachers liked about the observed sessions | 124 |
| Figure 117: Word Cloud: What teachers disliked about the observed sessions..... | 124 |
| Figure 118: Teacher perspective on how typical the observed lesson was..... | 125 |
| Figure 119: Feasibility of systematic formative assessment..... | 126 |
| Figure 120: (I)NGO representative reports on the feasibility of online video lessons for children..... | 127 |
| Figure 121: (I)NGO representative opinions of the feasible of online Interactive Learning Programmes with educational games focusing on literacy and numeracy | 127 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| Figure 122: Education authority and (I)NGO representative opinions on the feasibility of the establishment of an EMIS system..... | 128 |
| Figure 123: Respondent opinions on the helpfulness of SMS by school systems to update parents/caregivers on children’s learning and wellbeing..... | 128 |
| Figure 124: Respondent opinions on the helpfulness of using Tablets, Smartphones, Radio, TV, and/or SMS as learning tools for marginalised groups | 129 |
| Figure 125: Respondent perspectives on there being gendered differences in the effective use of ICT | 130 |
| Figure 126: Respondent opinions on the use of tablets as supplemental rather than primary teaching and learning tools | 130 |
| Figure 127: Respondent opinions on whether tablets should be used primarily by children instead of teachers | 131 |
| Figure 128: Perspectives on the value of community-based education | 141 |

Table of Contents

| | | |
|----------|--|-----------|
| 1 | Introduction | 1 |
| 1.1 | How to use this compendium to the final report | 1 |
| 1.2 | Purpose of the research | 1 |
| 1.3 | Project phases | 2 |
| 1.4 | Limitations | 4 |
| 2 | Theoretical Framework | 7 |
| 2.1 | Syria-context power dynamics and their theoretical underpinnings | 7 |
| 2.2 | Humanitarian financing trends..... | 7 |
| 2.3 | The changing nature of conflict and its impact on traditional humanitarian response practices..... | 8 |
| 2.4 | The impact of conflict and crisis on education and school-age children | 8 |
| 2.5 | The opportunities for education for children in FCAS..... | 15 |
| 2.6 | The returns to investing in education as both a private and social good, and primarily at the lowest levels of education | 17 |
| 2.7 | Summary | 17 |
| 3 | Research Questions | 18 |
| 3.1 | Technical themes | 18 |
| 3.2 | Operational theme | 20 |
| 3.3 | Best practice theme..... | 20 |
| 4 | Methodological Framework | 22 |
| 4.1 | Phase I (Inception): Literature review, stakeholder mapping, and KIs | 22 |
| 4.2 | Primary, field-level data collection challenges and mitigation strategies..... | 23 |
| 4.3 | Dealing with change | 24 |
| 4.4 | Geographic focus | 25 |
| 4.5 | Sampling criteria..... | 29 |
| 4.6 | Sample sizes | 30 |
| 4.7 | Phase II: Data collection tool design | 31 |
| 5 | The Syria Context | 34 |
| 5.1 | Syria Context: Security Profile..... | 34 |
| 5.2 | Security Incidents | 35 |
| 5.3 | Syria Context: Education Sector Profile | 37 |
| 6 | Overview of data collection context | 53 |
| 6.1 | Governorates..... | 53 |
| 6.2 | ZoC..... | 53 |
| 6.3 | Type of community | 54 |
| 6.4 | Profile of learning spaces visited | 54 |

| | | |
|-----------|---|------------|
| 7 | Findings | 56 |
| 7.1 | Profile of service providers and stakeholders..... | 56 |
| 7.2 | Perspectives on education service provider practices | 74 |
| 7.3 | Education Sector Profile..... | 75 |
| 7.4 | Nature of the school environment in support of wellbeing..... | 82 |
| 7.5 | Teaching behaviours and practices: child-centred and experiential pedagogy..... | 97 |
| 7.6 | Teaching behaviours and practices: in support of literacy | 114 |
| 7.7 | Teaching behaviours and practices: in support of numeracy | 118 |
| 7.8 | Teaching behaviours and practices: in support of wellbeing..... | 119 |
| 7.9 | Teachers' perspectives on enumerator-observed classes | 123 |
| 7.10 | Best practices: existing and potential practices for scale-up or transfer | 125 |
| 8 | Conclusions | 142 |
| 8.1 | Correlative analysis: teaching, learning, and wellbeing..... | 142 |
| 8.2 | Correlative analysis: the nature of the learning environment and its surroundings and their impact on teaching, child learning, and child wellbeing | 144 |
| 8.3 | Practice against standards | 146 |
| 8.4 | Practice in light of GoS MoE standards..... | 147 |
| 8.5 | Implications for other FCAS contexts | 148 |
| 9 | Recommendations | 148 |
| 9.1 | Invest in teacher professional development | 149 |
| 9.2 | Invest in helping school administrators and parents create better learning and wellbeing environments for children..... | 150 |
| 9.3 | Shift funding and programming priorities, by investing in:..... | 151 |
| 10 | Work cited and reviewed | 152 |
| 11 | Annexes | 152 |

1 Introduction

1.1 How to use this compendium to the final report

This compendium supports the final report. It provides the rich detail that the study captured, enabling the study team to identify nuances when analysing challenges, successes, and appropriate investments within the sector, such as by activity type, geographic area, or the gender of potential beneficiaries. Whilst averages are provided across key areas of inquiry and stakeholder profiles, where the profile of the informant, geolocation of the data collected, or other more granular information provides helpful nuance, this information is presented in detail.

The compendium is not designed to be read in one sitting. Rather, it serves as a reference for readers looking to find more information on a specific aspect of the study after reading the final report. The compendium enables readers interested in reviewing analysis of the data at a more granular level to find stratified analysis based on their specific interest areas.

The Table of Contents is hyperlinked to enable ease of navigation. Furthermore, the following guide provides suggestions for specific sections that might be of particular interest to certain readers.

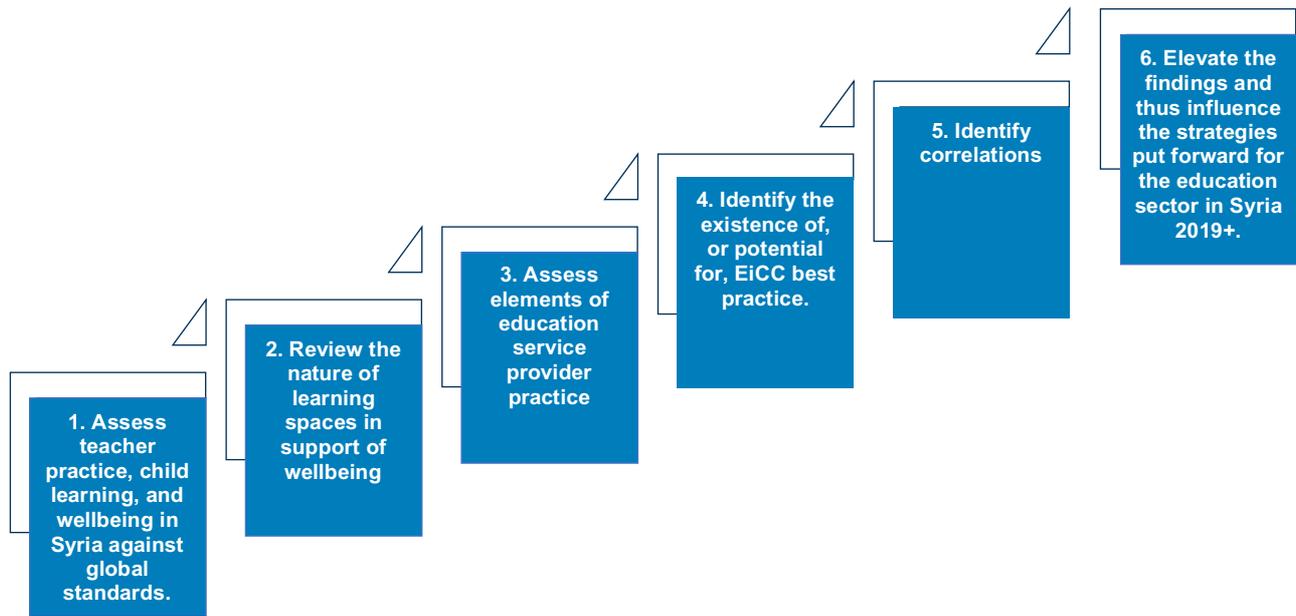
1. A broad profile of the Syrian education sector: If the reader is interested in the most up-to-date overview of the Syrian education sector, which does *not* include the findings of this study, the section [Syria Context-Education Sector Profile](#) would be of greatest interest.
2. For a more granular assessment, using this study's data, of teaching practices and behaviours-as well as the nature of the school environment-in support of learning and wellbeing, the [Education Sector Profile](#) would be a helpful read.
3. For readers interested in the methods used to design and successfully carry out classroom-based and child-and teacher-focussed data in active conflict Syria, the section on [the Methodological Framework would be of most interest](#).
4. Policy makers, academics, researchers and implementing partners looking for top line conclusions and recommendations would best benefit from the [conclusions and recommendations section](#).

Furthermore, in the findings section, each sub-section *has a summary paragraph at its start, in italics*, followed by detailed information in regular font. This approach allows the reader to skip any nuance that is not of interest.

1.2 Purpose of the research

The objective of the 'Research to improve the quality of teaching and learning inside Syria' project was to improve understanding of how learning spaces can promote children's learning and wellbeing in Syria, and to encourage best practices to then be replicated, where useful, in other fragile and conflict-affected states (FCAS). Therefore, the study aimed to: i) strengthen the evidence base regarding teacher practice, child learning and wellbeing, and correlations amongst these three areas of inquiry; and ii) elevate evidence about best practices in these contexts. The research is meant to support the Department for International Development (DFID), its implementing partners, and other donors in their work throughout 2019 and beyond.

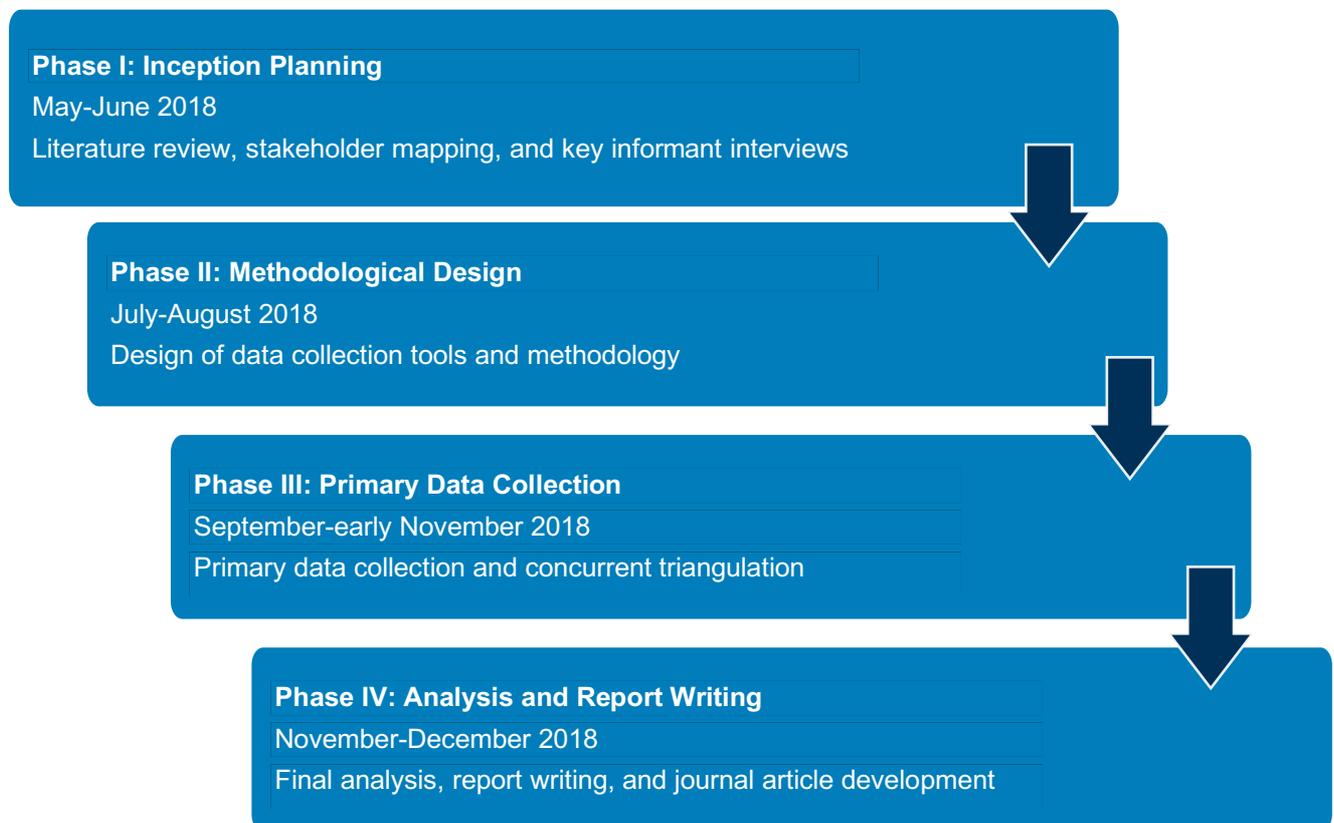
Figure 1: Project objectives



1.3 Project phases

To achieve these objectives, the team proposed a four-phased research approach.

Figure 2: Project phases



The following table outlines the specific activities undertaken during each phase.

Table 1: Activities and achievements, organised by phase

| Activity | Achievement |
|---|--|
| Phase I: Inception Planning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The team identified, collected, and analysed 150 pieces of relevant literature in English and Arabic to better understand the available evidence base. The team compiled pertinent findings from the Literature Review in a bespoke database. The team analysed gaps in the available literature to refine research questions and geographic areas of focus for the primary data collection. The team reached out, through a snowball methodology, to stakeholders and depending on their profiles: i) conducted an online survey, ii) conducted a Key Informant Interview (KII), and/or iii) invited them to attend the first participatory workshop. The first participatory workshop was held in Amman in June 2018 and sought to obtain buy-in from key stakeholders and ensure their support throughout the project. In parallel, the Senior Researcher conducted context and conflict analyses. These allowed the team to draft a project-specific Risk Matrix, and to refine strategies for safeguarding, risk mitigation, and contingency planning. |
| Phase II: Methodological Design | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The team refined the technical and geographic focus of the research, based on discussions with the DFID and activities conducted during Phase I. The team used 32 existing tools to inform the design of a bespoke data collection toolkit to answer research questions using various methodologies and informant profiles. The result was a matrix of 339 questions, coded by theme, area of inquiry, methodology, question source, and informant type. The Team Lead facilitated two half-day participatory workshops in Amman and Gaziantep on the methodological framework in mid-August 2018. Through presentations and group activities, the team and participants jointly reviewed the draft data collection methodology and tools and identified necessary modifications. The team used those to further refine the data collection tools and methodology. The team undertook data collection planning through ongoing cooperation with implementors and respondents inside and outside Syria. It selected a representative sample of learning spaces and informants, using a confidence level of 95% and a margin error of 5%. Integrity recruited and trained 12 enumerators covering the selected data collection sites. All had experience in education, data collection, and Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E). |
| Phase III: Primary Data Collection | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enumerators interviewed a total of 5,580 respondents over eight weeks. Informants included: children, parents/caregivers, teachers, school administrators, education authority representatives, Local Council members, and (International) non-governmental organisation ((I)NGO) representatives. The Field Coordinator cleaned all data on a weekly basis. The team then uploaded the coded data into an analysis matrix. |
| Phase IV: Analysis and Report Writing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Arabic speaking members of the team coded the qualitative data. The Team Lead analysed the data and drafted the final report and journal article. The team also monitored opportunities to present the findings of the research, both through publication and through presentations. The Team Lead was invited by the Institute of Education at University College London to present the research findings at a conference at the end of January 2019. The Team also submitted an article to Network for International Policies and Cooperation in Education and Training (NORRAG). |

1.4 Limitations

As with any study undertaken in a conflict-affected context, there were a number of limitations worth noting to better frame the design and outcomes of the study.

1.4.1 Security-driven challenges and their implications

The Syrian context posed several challenges to conducting field-level primary data collection. Some of these challenges were security-related. Firstly, as presented in Section 4.4 [Geographical Focus](#), the team determined the geographic scope of the research according to where it was safe to deploy enumerators. Even in areas deemed safe, sampling was linked to locations accessible to enumerators without crossing checkpoints and risking being questioned by armed factions. The sampling was therefore based on snowball, purposeful, and time location approaches. While the team calculated the values for what would be a representative sample, the final sample could not be fully representative given the inability to randomly select participants. As a result, the final sample size came in slightly under the target for the following informants: male teachers, male and female parents/caregivers, Local Council representatives, education authority representatives, and male children.

Even in areas considered safe enough to visit, access to learning spaces was not guaranteed. Before data collection, the team asked for letters of introduction from (I)NGOs and Education Directorates (ED). However, some school personnel did not accept the letters, or asked to check the enumerators' identities before allowing any interaction with teachers or children. These incidents prevented enumerators from visiting some learning spaces.

Finally, school and classroom-level data could not be collected in Ar-Raqqa for security reasons. As a result, when only Idleb and Aleppo are mentioned in the findings section of the report, it is because Ar-Raqqa-specific data is not available.

1.4.2 Data collection-related challenges and mitigation methods

Due to budget constraints, the primary data collection phase took place over a short timeframe (eight weeks) with only 12 enumerators. Due to the short timeframe and limited number of enumerators, the team decided to conduct group interviews to collect data from as many respondents as possible. All data from children and parents/caregivers was collected using this methodology, meaning that only the most common or majority answers were quantified (although qualitative data, including descriptions of divergent viewpoints, was also collected from individuals and noted by enumerators). For teachers and school administrators, enumerators also conducted individual KIIs to collect more nuanced and qualitative data, as well as to pose sensitive questions.

Every effort was made to triangulate the data, however the team took the socio-cultural context into account while designing the tool. As such, not all questions asked for triangulation purposes could be asked in the same way for each respondent, nor could the response codes be exactly the same. Furthermore, not all questions regarding support for wellbeing could be asked of all respondents.

The project developed detailed contingency plans to mitigate the risks associated with the rapidly shifting dynamics inside Syria. The table below highlights the main challenges throughout the data collection phase, as well as the adopted mitigation measures.

Table 2: Challenges and adopted mitigation measures

| Area | Challenges | Adopted Mitigation Measures |
|---|---|---|
| In all areas of data collection | Enumerators could not find enough school administrators in the same location to conduct group interviews. | This was an anticipated challenge, and enumerators made every effort to conduct group interviews when possible. Three such group interviews were conducted, with a total of 13 respondents. The remaining 294 school administrators comprising this respondent cohort participated in individual KIs. |
| Non-GoS-held Idleb and Aleppo governorates | Avoiding interaction with affiliates or supporters of armed groups and the Government of Syria (GoS) was a criterion of the study. | Enumerators were advised to avoid known geographic areas where such respondents might be located, and/or to stop interviews if such affiliations were identified. The need to stop an interview or a site visit due to such circumstances occurred on a few occasions. |
| | Enumerators faced difficulties accessing some learning spaces. This primarily occurred in learning spaces supported by more than one organisation, which caused temporary confusion amongst school administrators on whether or not to grant access. | The team obtained written approvals from the Idleb and Aleppo EDs to facilitate access to all learning spaces. |
| | Last minute suspensions in education service delivery occurred on occasion. | When this occurred, enumerators undertook data collection with parents/caregivers until learning spaces reopened. |
| YPG/SDF-held areas | Due to strict oversight from local authorities, access to education sites was difficult to obtain. | Data collection amongst education sector stakeholders was conducted outside of education spaces. |
| | Due to strict oversight from local authorities, education authorities and Local Council members were hesitant to participate in interviews. | Enumerators were selected in part based on their education experience and connections within the education sector, and thus they were able to conduct a limited number of interviews with education authorities and Local Council members in Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)-held areas. |
| | Due to sensitivities amongst local authorities, the study's affiliation with a foreign government-funded project presented a risk to enumerator safety. Any reporting documents could be perceived as unwanted or unauthorised reporting and/or a criticism of local authorities. | The team developed a separate safeguarding protocol specific for YPG (People's Protection Unit)/SDF-held areas. This reporting protocol provided unbranded email addresses linked to Integrity safeguarding focal points. |

| Area | Challenges | Adopted Mitigation Measures |
|------------------------------|--|---|
| Euphrates Shield area | Due to strict Turkish government oversight, access to learning spaces in the Euphrates Shield area was difficult to obtain. | In coordination with the Stabilisation Committee, ¹ enumerators visited learning spaces deemed appropriate by the Committee. |
| | Due to strict Turkish government oversight, education authorities and Local Council members were hesitant to participate in interviews. | With support from the Stabilisation Committee, enumerators were able to conduct a number of interviews with education authorities and Local Council members. |
| | Due to sensitivities amongst local authorities, the study's affiliation with a foreign government-funded project presented a risk to enumerator safety. Any reporting documents could be perceived as unwanted or unauthorised reporting and/or a criticism of the Turkish administration and local authorities. | The team developed a separate safeguarding protocol specific for Turkey-administered areas. This reporting protocol provided unbranded email addresses linked to Integrity safeguarding focal points. |

1.4.3 Resource-related challenges:

Project design and budget meant that only 12 enumerators could be hired to collect data. When combined with the time limitations for data collection, a fully representative sample was not possible. Furthermore, only secondary data that was freely accessible and not behind a paywall could be sourced. Time and financial resource limitations prevented the study team from having all qualitative data translated by a native Arabic speaker to English for analysis. As such, a mix of sampled translations by native speakers and Arabic second language speakers were used to code the content for analysis.

¹ The Stabilisation Committee is part of the Aleppo Provincial Council.

2 Theoretical Framework

A literature review, along with stakeholder interviews and surveys, helped establish the theoretical framework of the study. A key outcome of the literature review was the criticality of situating the design of the research within an understanding of and consideration for the political economy of the context. Novelli, et. al (2014) provided the study team with a framework for analysis via "The Political Economy of Education Systems in Conflict-Affected Contexts: A Rigorous Literature Review." The concept of the political economy of agenda setting was most relevant, as it relates to how various stakeholders interact with one other in the shared space of research design and end use. The known and anticipated impact of various stakeholder agendas helped frame the research plan.

When establishing the research's theoretical framework, a few influencing factors were considered:

2.1 Syria-context power dynamics and their theoretical underpinnings

- The role of (shifting) power brokers in Syria and the reality of a proxy-war (amongst Iran, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), Russia, and Turkey) as part of this context;
- The marginalisation of technocrats in positions of power or influence over these decisions and actors in favour of decision-making based on political economy considerations (Dunne, 2013; Larivé, 2013; Combaz, 2015; Hamid, 2015; Freear, 2016); and
- The interplay of various theories of economic development and humanitarian assistance that underscore the policies and practices of these actors (Novelli, et. al, 2014):
 - Modernisation theory which espouses a prescriptive and linear development process, in which education plays a critical role in human capital development in a nation-state context;
 - Dependency theory which recognises a more globalised world in which there can be local, regional, and global markets;
 - Neoliberal theory, which has had a particularly impactful effect on education budgets, which proposes the liberalisation of the 'education' market and devalues sole state provision of education services;
 - The political economy of institutions theory, which elevates the role of good, effective governing institutions to enhance the effectiveness of the services for which they are responsible to deliver; and
 - The critical political economy theory, which recognises the 'potential for transnational solidarity to challenge unequal power relations' in these contexts.

2.2 Humanitarian financing trends

- The interplay of humanitarian and stabilisation funding from these donors, and the political and/or sociocultural motivations that influence how they are defined (interviews with various confidential donors, 2018);
- The use of these funds by military actors (confidential donor interview, 2018);
- The preponderance of humanitarian aid within the education sector that is directed at refugee rather than internally displaced populations, and the question of mandate amongst United Nations (UN) agencies with education remits with respect to reaching such populations (Dryden-Peterson, 2011);

- The relatively low status of the education sector as an investment area (The International Commission on Financial Global Education Opportunity, 2015);
- A dwindling percentage of assistance as a proportion of national budgets (The International Commission on Financial Global Education Opportunity, 2015); and
- The increasing need to justify the allocation of such funds, and thus a focus on accountability (McGee, 2013) which proves to be difficult to measure in high-risk environments such as humanitarian response during crisis.

2.3 The changing nature of conflict and its impact on traditional humanitarian response practices

- The increasingly protracted nature of conflict (Walter, 2013; Wood, et al. 2012; Fearon & Laiton, 2007; Wucherpfenning, et al. 2012; Fisher, 2013), and thus multiple and non-linear displacements (Strickland, 2015), and the impact of these factors on how responses are defined and prioritised;
- The topic of neutrality in humanitarian response, and where donors and implementing agencies find themselves in relation to it (with reference to the classic distinction made between the ICRC's approach and that of Medicines Sans Frontieres);
- The challenges faced by donors and implementing partners in the decreasing relevance of splitting humanitarian and development funding, and the increasing relevance of programming at the humanitarian-development nexus; and
- The disconnect between 'Western'-inspired priorities (such as integrating male and female schools at the primary level and non-secular education), and the significant shifts required in sociocultural and religious norms in the areas of implementation if such priorities are to be to be operationalised.

2.4 The impact of conflict and crisis on education and school-age children

2.4.1 Introduction

A review of key literature about the impact of conflict and crisis on education, and the (potential) impact of education during conflict and crisis, helped frame the team's design of the research. Mundy and Dryden-Peterson (2011) note the plethora of evidence about the correlative relationship between education and conflict. Firstly, a more educated population is more likely to create peaceable communities, and to have better health and socioeconomic indicators of wellbeing (Mundy and Dryden-Peterson, 2011). Secondly, education can be (and, in FCAS, often is) politicised. It can therefore exacerbate conflict (Shields, R. & Paulson, J., 2015).² Importantly, as explored by Barakat, et. al. (2013) and Burde, et. al. (2011), the study was influenced by evidence that education can play a positive role in stabilisation and recovery, including peacebuilding and conflict mediation.

² This argument is predicated on the idea that high enrolment and high learning outcomes are always positively correlated, which is not the case. As such, the theoretical framework used the characterisation of crisis negatively impacting education rather than education negatively affecting peace.

Such correlations help provide a nuanced understanding of the push and pull factors that children and teachers in the classrooms being studied would be facing with respect to teaching, learning, and wellbeing.

Mundy and Dryden-Peterson note in their 2011 book *Educating children in conflict zones: Research, policy, and practice for systemic change—a tribute to Jackie Kirk* that, unsurprisingly, children in conflict receive a lower quality of education than those outside of it. Dryden-Peterson supports this statement in her 2009 report for Save the Children, identifying some of the significant barriers to accessing basic/primary education in FCAS contexts. These include:

- Sectoral underinvestment ([as discussed above in Humanitarian Financing Trends](#));
- Sociocultural, socio-political, socioeconomic, ability, gender and/or religious identity;
- Poverty;
- Geolocation (urban versus rural,³ for example);
- Mother tongue language;
- Forced displacement;
- Insecurity ([including targeting of learning spaces, discussed below](#)); and
- Systematic discrimination within the education system.

These barriers and other related challenges facing children in conflict are reviewed briefly below.

2.4.2 Education under attack

Learning spaces are under attack in FCAS contexts. In recent years, learning spaces, students, and teachers have been affected by attacks across more than 74 countries, and such violence has increased between 2013 and 2017 (Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, 2018). Such is the case in Syria. The Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack's 2018 report summarises years' worth of education sector damage-related information for Syria and noted that in 2018 alone "(s)everal hundred educational institutions were damaged or destroyed during airstrikes that killed more than 1,000 students and education personnel" (p. 225).

2.4.3 Financing of education in crisis and conflict

As briefly noted earlier, education as a percentage of humanitarian finance is usually low. Nicolai and Hine (2015a) found that between 2004 and 2013, allocations of humanitarian funding to education stayed in the range of 1-2%. Thanks in part to recommendations made by Nicolai, Hine, and Wales (2015b), and commitments made at the 2015 Oslo Summit on Education for Development and the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, a number of changes in humanitarian-related education finance have been actualised. First, a number of donors, and particularly ECHO, have made commitments to increase their allocations from current averages of less than 2% to upwards of 4%. Additionally, the establishment of the Education Cannot Wait (ECW) Fund in 2016 has helped inspire

³ There is a preponderance of evidence that shows that children in rural areas have lower quality educational experiences for reasons both related to the supply side of the equation—such as insufficient numbers of well-trained teachers (see Atchoarena & Gasperini, 2003; and Mlama, 2005), as well as the demand side—such as the indirect costs of education.

improved financing for the education sector. While comparative data showing shifts in the value and nature of humanitarian-related education funding since the establishment of the ECW fund is not yet available, anecdotal evidence from donors interviewed during the inception phase suggested that many are funneling their allocations through the fund and leaving it unmarked. This means more funding is likely to be in line with the Paris Declaration and the Grand Bargain commitments made at the World Humanitarian Summit, both in terms of streamlining allocations as well as upholding commitments to longer-term, more reliable funding.⁴

Unsurprisingly, from 2013-2015, the majority of humanitarian education efforts funded at greater than the USD5million level supported access efforts (such as infrastructure and materials), and school feeding (OCHA, 2015). Burde (2015) also noted this trend in her review of what works in EICC. While elements of access-related programming, such as the provision of basic materials and availability of teachers, have been shown to have an impact on learning, a number of studies (including Burde 2015) have found that teacher practices, such as time-on-task and differentiation, tend to be more impactful. This topic is the main area of interest for this study and explored in further depth through a literature lens in section 2.4.6 below.

2.4.4 The scale of the problem of out of school children

The number of children affected by crisis and out of school as a result continues to rise. Fifty-eight million children are out of school globally; half of them are girls (UNESCO, 2018) and at least 33.5 million live in FCAS (Global Partnership for Education 2015). Importantly, more displaced children tend to be internally displaced than refugees—54% of UNHCR’s persons of concern in 2016 were internally displaced (UNHCR, 2017). This means that the greatest numbers of people in need are located in countries in which state sovereignty may complicate responses, and in which relying on locally-based civil society actors might become increasingly critical. This is exactly the case in Syria.

2.4.5 The challenges of quality education service provision in conflict-affected areas

Studies, including that by Nicolai and Hine (2015a), have found that there is little literature that looks at programming quality in EICC programmes, and policy papers such as that by Talbot (2013) suggest that further investment in this area is necessary, both supporting programmes interventions and studying their efficacy. This study aims to contribute to this gap in the evidence base.

2.4.6 Teachers are not being sufficiently supported

Teachers are the often underappreciated and under-supported foundation of quality education. Training, and other forms of support to teachers, underpins most other areas that contribute to the improvement of the quality of children’s learning experiences.

One of the key challenges facing teachers in all settings, but which is often acute in FCAS contexts, is the ability to work, and the ability to work for sufficient (or any) pay. In crisis contexts, and especially during the critical early days and transitional periods of displacement, it is important to have teachers that are familiar with the children’ learning background, curricula, and language in order to sufficiently support them. However, in many contexts this is not possible due to issues around required legal documentation (either legitimate regulations or those constructed to further marginalisation certain

⁴ While the study team acknowledges concerns about the increased fragmentation of education finance with the establishment of the ECW fund and others (Edwards, 2018), the focus of this section is simply on the traditional low allocations to EICC work and the attempts to address that.

populations). Furthermore, teachers are often not paid well enough to cover their basic costs and thus need to take on additional jobs to supplement their incomes (Kirk, et al. 2013). These barriers for teachers lead to an erosion of one of the key foundations of the opportunity to learn, as formalised by the Academy for Educational Development (AED): the consistent availability of the teacher (Gillies & Quijada, 2008). It then has knock-on effects, such as decreased availability of time that people can devote as teachers to cover topics (called time-on-task). As a result, key elements of the opportunity to learn foundation can go missing.

Another challenge for teachers in FCAS contexts is the poor consideration of their own wellbeing, which research by Kirk and Winthrop (2007) demonstrates is needed to not only support the wellbeing of their students, but the learning of their students as well. Teachers in FCAS contexts are subject to multiple sources of pressure that can cause (toxic) stress. These challenges are even more prevalent in areas close to the actual conflict, such as schools that are located near targets of war, areas of forced child-recruitment, threat, extortion, and forced displacement. (Toxic) stress negatively affects health and wellbeing. Emotionally exhausted teachers can work without dedication, develop hostile relationships with students, and turn to punitive disciplinary practices. Teachers are often ill trained, if at all, in the use of effective child-centred learning techniques, nor are they equipped to handle many of the other responsibilities that are needed during times of crisis and displacement. A study on teachers in Aceh, Indonesia (Cardozo, M. & Shah, R. 2016) highlights how they were “fruit caught between two stones;” struggling to manage the impacts of the civil war on their own lives while trying to provide effective education for their students.

Teachers in FCAS contexts are also often not supported with mentoring and ongoing technical assistance. A study by Frazier, Frisoli, & Hansen (2013) has shown that this type of support is particularly helpful in improving not only teacher performance, but teacher motivation and wellbeing as well. Such support can become even more important during times of instability, as the type of support they are expected to provide children and their families might change due to the changing nature of the crisis, and they may have little to no experience in these areas. This can include support condensing lessons or supporting children suffering from social and emotional challenges. Social and emotional learning practices integrate psychological, emotional and social wellbeing with academic performance (Entwistle & Hayduk, 1998; Miles & Stipek, 2006; and Durlak, et al. 2011.)

Importantly, the literature shows that teachers in these contexts also suffer from circumstances with which they are not familiar, or for which they are not prepared. These include:

- Over-age learners;
- Increasingly heterogeneous student profiles (including cultural, linguistic, religious, and tribal profiles) (Mendenhall, 2017); and
- Being disconnected from supervisory (Burns & Lawrie (eds), 2015) and/or psychosocial support (IRC, 2017).

2.4.7 There are limited progression opportunities for post-primary learners

The EICC community, in line with the Dakar Framework and the Education for All campaign, has tended to provide more services for the basic education level than for other levels. Burde (2015) notes the preponderance of evidence around basic education over secondary education, and in fact highlights the paucity of information on the latter level. The implications for the lack of progression opportunities translate to issues with decreased demand amongst parents/caregivers, who understandably often make their investment decisions based on how those investments translate into later education and income generating opportunities for their children. This was the case

amongst parents/caregivers in an unpublished survey by Save the Children in northern Syria in September 2013, who noted that the lack of later learning opportunities for their children negatively influenced their prioritisation of basic education, as that time could be spent earning income for the family.

2.4.8 Older children are at greater risk than younger children of being disconnected from education

Older children are more likely to be negatively affected by crisis than younger children, often because of the greater risks they face such as recruitment into fighting forces, sexual assault, and the pull of the labour market. For example, there are higher dropout rates and lower enrolment rates for secondary school age children in areas of conflict, such as northern Syria, where the late-2013 secondary school attendance rates were approximately 43% compared to primary rates of 73% (OCHA 2013).

2.4.9 Certification of learning is neither reliably available nor reliable

Certificates and diplomas are forms of extrinsic motivation. They serve as incentives for autonomous motivation, which can often help lead to dedication to academic success (National Research Council 2011; Jalava, Joensen & Pellas, 2015). Certification and its role as the main motivator (over learning) for parents/caregivers to engage their children in formal education systems, particularly so in developing countries, was famously explored by Dore in his 1976 piece *The Diploma Disease: Education, Qualification, and Development*.⁵ Secondary school leaving certificates remain the main goals for pre-tertiary school completion. Certification more broadly, is a coveted indicator of success and continues to be pervasive in lower income and developing contexts, (Cooksey & Riedmiller, 1997; Hargreaves, 1997; and Little & Singh, 1992). Strong anecdotal evidence, as well as literature on motivation and incentives, suggest that course completion documents, such as certificates and diplomas, serve as an incentive for investing in education, and that they are a major motivator for parents/caregivers to send their children to schools (Oxenham, 1984; Allan & Fryer, 2011). Furthermore, a critical motivator in determining schooling preferences for their children is how widely these documents are recognised.

The provision of learning certification for children affected by crisis is incredibly complicated and has proven to be one of the greatest challenges to the sector. Many would argue that uncertainties around certification lead a lot of parents/caregivers and children to perceive education as being less valuable and thus decreases their demand for the service.

Providing certification of learning during crises can help protect and sustain children's wellbeing and learning by serving as a motivating factor to keep them in schools, which can serve a protective function (Segerstrom, 1995; Tolfree, 1996; Winthrop & Kirk, 2005; Kirk & Winthrop, 2007). Certification of learning is also increasingly critical in enabling children affected by crisis to have a durable solution to their displacement, creating a generation able to contribute to future socioeconomic stability. Talbot (2013) further notes that certification "(...) increase(s) the economic and social contribution of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), refugees and returnees to their respective communities" and "(...) is a powerful tool for successful social and economic integration." There are indeed opportunities for certification for internally displaced Syrian children, but significant

⁵ Criticisms of Dore's piece as lacking in analysis of nuance are noted (such as Lee & Ninnis, 1995), as are significant aspects of his argument that diplomas serve to "wag the educational dog" (Little & Dore, 1982) but are not addressed in this piece, which instead focuses on the role of diplomas as motivators.

shifts in practice amongst mandated humanitarian actors would be required, as noted by Steele in her 2016 piece on the topic. At the time of the writing of this report, UNICEF was starting a follow-on assessment on the topic of certification and education pathways, picking up where its 2015 study (*Curriculum, Accreditation and Certification for Syrian Children in Syria, Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt*) left off.

2.4.10 The impact on children of limited access to quality education

When conflict happens, the social fabric holding communities together is often ripped apart. Schools, and school communities, are often victims of these crises. When funding is not available to help rebuild these systems, children can fall into challenging circumstances, often becoming further disconnected from their families and communities and participating in unhealthy behaviours. The evidence demonstrates that there are negative long-term impacts of toxic stress on children (often called childhood adversity) (Shonkoff, et al. 2012), and that there are negative impacts of violence on children's education success (Fry, et al. 2017). In stable countries, approximately 9% of children are out of school, while in FCAS, this figure is at least 33% (Save the Children, 2012). The costs of lost education are significant, with some experts putting the figures in the billions of dollars. Some researchers estimate that for every one year of education a child loses results in 7-10% of lost Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita (Dollar & Gatti 1999).

2.4.11 Children are more likely to be at risk of harm

Children who are out of school are at greater risk of harm than children who are in school. When disconnected from the physical safety that schools can provide, they are also at risk of exposure to other health risks. These risks can range from declining access to clean water, perhaps due to bombing of water and sanitation facilities, to the collateral effects of being in the wrong place at the wrong time, to exposure to practices and behaviours such as physical and sexual abuse from which schools and school communities might have helped protect them (Save the Children, 2014; Save the Children and the Norwegian Refugee Council, 2014; and Nicolai & Hine, 2015a).

Children without access to schools also lose opportunities to learn about basic health and hygiene practices, sexual and reproductive health, and healthy eating habits. Furthermore, as parents/caregivers struggle to put enough nutritious food on the table, children are more likely to become malnourished, and those children score 7% lower in maths tests, and are 19% less likely to be able to read by age eight (Save the Children and the Norwegian Refugee Council, 2014).

2.4.12 Children already vulnerable pre-conflict will be even more vulnerable

Girls are more negatively affected by instability than boys (Nicolai & Hine, 2015a). This is especially true if they remain disconnected from education, in which case they are more likely to become pregnant, marry earlier, have higher infant mortality rates, and have more children over time, all of which have negative consequences on their physical wellbeing as well as that of their own children (Inter-agency Standing Committee, 2007; UNESCO, 2013a; UNESCO, 2013b; UNICEF, 2014; and Global Partnership for Education, 2015). Particularly vulnerable children (such as the poor, minorities, and children with disabilities) are also more likely to be negatively affected by instability and crisis than other children. For example, poorer households often need to turn to their children to help bring money into the household when a crisis hits (Nicolai & Hine, 2015a)

The study needed to develop a framework to collect data and assess responses regarding teacher's perceptions of their own levels of knowledge about equitable practice in the classroom. As such, it was important to: a) consider the prevalence of disability in Syria; b) review the sociocultural

characterisations of disability; c) assess how such characterisations influenced teacher training on identifying and supporting children with special needs; and d) become familiar with attitudes in learning spaces about disability. Globally, the average percentage of the population with moderate to severe disabilities is 15-20%. In Syria, the estimate can be placed between 18 and 20%, considering it is a conflict-affected space and this is the range identified by experts on the topic (Skinner, 2014 in Thompson, 2017). Despite these numbers, anecdotal evidence suggests that training on how to identify and manage children with disabilities in classrooms is minimal in Syria. Furthermore, sociocultural norms often keep children with disabilities out of school or learning poorly while in them, as explored in-depth by Vygotsky and summarised by Gindis (2003). The status of educational access for children living with disabilities in FCAS is unknown. However, based on existing data about the status in developing countries, where 90% are out of school, (Save the Children, 2016), it is possible to assume that even larger numbers are out of school in FCAS contexts.

2.4.13 The longer children are out of school, the worse their outcomes become

The longer a child is out of school, the less likely it is that s/he will return. A recent study found that the majority of children out of school as a result of a conflict do not return to school when the conflict is over (Nicolai & Hine, 2015a). Children who have been exposed to trauma or continue to be as a result of crisis, and who do not have access to safe spaces like schools or other support networks, can have negative long-term psychosocial issues, which affect their productivity and society at large (Inter-agency Standing Committee, 2007; American Academy of Children and Adolescent Psychiatry, 2011). As a result of these and other factors, children in conflict, especially those protracted in nature as Syria's conflict has become, often suffer from toxic stress that can have life-long impacts on their overall learning and wellbeing. For example, according to the INGO FHI360's 2016 study on education inequality and conflict, girls in crisis settings, likely affected by toxic stress, are nearly 2.5 times more likely to be out of school than those living in countries where there is no crisis.⁶

Without a solid academic education, children are also more likely to engage in conflict later on in life. Firstly, as crisis erodes learning opportunities and sends children out onto the street, fewer children have opportunities to participate in an equitably educated society. Studies have found that, where education inequality doubled, so too did the chance of conflict (Barakat & Burdal, 2009). Secondly, and especially in situations of conflict, armed factions can take opportunities to engage out of school children in education that is not of a purely academic purpose. These children can be exposed to extreme types of content that can foster behaviours that are not supportive of peace (Østby & Urdal, 2011).

2.4.14 Years of experience in relation to the quality of teaching

There is much debate about the value of years of experience, as well as formal versus informal training, in the education sector. A number of studies have found that aspects of teacher profiles, such as degree levels and years of experience, do not have positive correlations with student learning outcomes (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Schacter & Thum, 2004; Xu & Gulosino, 2006). In some cases, teachers with few years of experience outperformed those with many years of experience (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Furthermore, it is not uncommon for the preponderance of pre-service teacher training foci to be on rote learning practices (Davies & Iqbal, 1997).

⁶ Because conflict affects teachers as much as it does children and their families, factors such as fewer female teachers can impact household demand for girls' education, especially at later ages when female teachers for female students is more important in sociocultural contexts like Syria.

2.5 The opportunities for education for children in FCAS

Research shows that accessible, quality education taking place in safe spaces can enhance children's social-emotional wellbeing and learning. It can promote a sense of normalcy and safety in the day-to-day lives of conflict-affected children, providing important inputs to support wellbeing, such as daily structure and stability in contexts that are often unpredictable, while also protecting children from physical, psychosocial, and cognitive harm (Betancourt & Khan, 2008). Elbedour, ten Bessel and Bastien (1993) found that, in such settings, safe learning spaces could serve as a "security base."

Furthermore, education can restore hope, contribute to continued social development and build essential survival skills for young people. Betancourt (2005), for example, notes that schools enable children to set medium- and long-term benchmarks, allowing them to measure their progress in a positive direction and subsequently promoting feelings of hope. Importantly, education in safe spaces can allow children to define new narratives for themselves—meaning they can be in environments that allow them to be kids, play, learn and have fun and begin to refine their ideas about who they are and what they can be. Betancourt and Khan (2008) noted that attending school afforded former child soldiers the opportunity to "reverse some of the moral corruption" they had faced while at war (Betancourt & Khan, 2008).

The positive correlative relationships amongst teacher practice, child learning, and child wellbeing is well established. This is also the case for the positive relationship between teacher wellbeing and teacher practice, a topic reviewed in some depth in the EICC community, but on which this study was not able to collect data, as discussed in [the limitations section of this report](#). In both stable and conflict-affected contexts, teachers can play an important role in creating a climate where learners can heal and have their emotional needs met. They can provide mentorship by promoting positive social interaction among peers in the classroom and building academic and social skills to prepare the future generation for the challenges in their communities (Focus on Refugee Children, 1996; Focus on Refugee Children, 1997; Focus on Refugee Children, 1998).

2.5.1 Safe, flexible, community-based learning opportunities

Numerous studies have shown that establishing schools in communities increases the chance that children in those communities will go to and stay in school. Studies have also found that this happens because schools that are closer to communities attract more children, are more in touch with the needs and resources of parents/caregivers, enable more active parental/caregiver engagement, and have more motivated teachers (and Attanasio & Verna-Hernandez, 2004; Duflo, 2004; Mocan & Cannonier, 2012; Save the Children, 2012; and Burde & Linden, 2013). According to UNESCO (2013a), flexible learning opportunities, such as Accelerated Learning Programmes (ALP), help children get and stay engaged with learning, especially during periods of (protracted) instability. This is especially true for particularly vulnerable children in difficult circumstances, such as girls, the disabled, and children who have been out of school for some time.

2.5.2 Social and emotional learning (SEL) support

Social and emotional learning research has been ongoing in the United States for decades. A foundational meta-analysis covering 317 studies and more than 300,000 children proved that SEL-focussed activities were effective in both formal and non-formal settings, for children with and without behaviour problems, through all primary school levels, in racially and ethnically diverse settings and in urban, rural, and suburban environments (Alexander, Entwistle, & Dauber, 1993). It further showed improvements in children's social and emotional skills, inter-personal skills, self-esteem, engagement in school, and academic performance (Alexander, Entwistle, & Dauber, 1993). Further

studies have found that these skills are also needed to help children acquire other skills, such as reading and math (Entwistle & Hayduk, 1998; and Miles & Stipek, 2006).

Numerous studies have shown the importance of promoting social and emotional wellbeing as a psychosocial intervention in and of itself during recovery from traumatic events (Elbedour, ten Bessel, & Bastien, 1993; and Betancourt, 2008). Teachers can play an important role in promoting wellbeing by creating a climate where learners heal and have their emotional needs met. They can provide mentorship by promoting positive social interaction amongst peers in the classroom and building academic and social skills to prepare the future generation for the challenges in their communities (Focus on Refugee Children, 1995; and Focus on Refugee Children, 1996). This can ultimately contribute to more peaceful and productive societies as well as effective, equitable, student-centred education systems.

Work done by SEL and wellbeing experts has found that efforts to strengthen skills in these areas of human development, learning and wellbeing, can further strengthen resilience (Entwistle & Hayduk, 1988; Alexander, et al. 1993; Segerstrom, 1995; Tolfree, 1996; Elias, et al. 1997; Elias, 2003; Betancourt, 2005; Winthrop & Kirk, 2005; Miles & Stipeck, 2006; UNHCR, 2007; Kirk & Winthrop, 2007; Betancourt & Williams, 2008; Winthrop & Kirk, 2008; and Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). This type of support involves helping children develop social, emotional, cognitive, and physical skills, and can and should be done in concert between the home and school. A child who feels resilient can effectively mitigate, navigate, negotiate, cope with, and recover from shocks, stresses, and crisis of all types. Importantly, studies have shown that children who are safe, protected, and supported can learn better (Elias, et al. 1997; Elias, 2003; Winthrop & Kirk, 2008). For example, Ashdown & Bernard (2012) found a statistically significant impact of improvements in children's abilities to read as a result of their involvement in classrooms that support social and emotional wellbeing. The reverse is also true: Burde (2015) found that children who are learning tend to be better socially and emotionally.

2.5.3 Literacy and numeracy skill development must be a priority

Once children are settled in safe and supportive environments, reengaging them in active learning is a critical part of resilience building and recovery. Early literacy is one of the most critical determinants of later school success. For example, focussing efforts in the classroom on literacy and numeracy helps students improve their test scores and reduces their dropout rates (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1997; Juel, 1998; Scarborough, 2001; Abadzi, 2008; Gove & Cvelich, 2010; and Moore, et al. 2010). In studies that Save the Children conducted in conflict-affected areas of Mozambique, Malawi, Nepal, and Pakistan, all children in Save the Children schools were reading at higher levels than children in other schools, meaning that these children had better chances as adults in areas such as employment and health (Rosenberg, 2012).

2.5.4 Supported teachers are a valuable asset

Numerous studies have shown that motivated teachers whose wellbeing and professional development are supported do better in the classroom (Entwistle & Hayduk, 1988; Alexander, et al. 1993; Segerstrom, 1995; Tolfree, 1996; Elias, et al. 1997; Elias, 2003; Annenberg, 2004; Betancourt, 2005; Sergiovanni, 2005; Winthrop & Kirk, 2005; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006; Miles & Stipek, 2006; Kirk & Winthrop, 2007; UNHCR, 2007; Betancourt & Williams, 2008; Winthrop & Kirk, 2008; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Kyriakides, et al. 2009; and Emerson, et al. 2010). Other factors that affect teacher wellbeing and motivation, such as timely and equitable remuneration, must also be prioritised (INEE, 2009; Burde, 2015; and Burns & Lawrie, 2015).

Research into the relationship between teacher professional development, teacher motivation and wellbeing, child learning, and child wellbeing in FCAS contexts was pioneered by Kirk and Winthrop in a series of studies before Kirk's murder in Afghanistan in 2008. Notable publications based on their research include their 2006 piece on teacher development and quality education in Ethiopia, and a few broader pieces on the topics in 2005 ("Teacher development and student wellbeing"), 2008 ("Learning for a bright future: Schooling, armed conflict, and children's wellbeing"), and 2013 ("Teaching in contexts of emergency and state fragility"). The study team affiliated with the IRC's assessment of the impact of wellbeing and learning-related programme in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) found positive impacts on teacher wellbeing (Wolf, et al. 2015), teaching practice, child learning, and child wellbeing (Aber, et al. 2015).

2.5.5 Parental/caregiver engagement in learning

There is a strong evidence base that parental/caregiver involvement in children's learning is important (Xu & Gulosino, 2006; Moser & Martinsen, 2010; Harris & Goodall, 2008; and Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017). There is also evidence to suggest that while parental education levels can impact learning, this is not always the case, and that while socio-economic status might negatively influence the time available for parents/caregivers to engage, it is not necessarily an indicator of absolute generational poverty (Bempechat, 1992; Beblo & Lauer, 2002). In other words, what matters most is parental/caregivers involvement in learning activities.

2.6 The returns to investing in education as both a private and social good, and primarily at the lowest levels of education

The returns to education have long been documented, and succinctly so on a number of occasions by Psacharopoulos & Patrinos (2004). In one of their last joint pieces on the topic, they confirmed that: i) greater levels of educational completion tend to produce greater rates of return to the investment in said education, both to the individual as well as to society; and ii) women and those in lower income countries see even greater returns on their investment than their male and higher-income counterparts.

Over time, and with the benefit of longitudinal studies such as the High Scope/Perry Preschool Study, the evidence about the greatest returns resulting from investment in the earliest levels of education and in the most disadvantaged, has become apparent (Heckman, Moon, Pinto, Savelyev, & Yavitz, 2010). Heckman has been a leader in this field (Heckman, 2008; Doyle, Harmon, Heckman, & Tremblay, 2009; and Heckman, 2011) and Psacharopoulos has also helped elevate understanding. As Psacharopoulos confirmed in a 2006 piece on the topic, the general standard is for a 10% return on every USD1 that is invested in education, with much higher returns in lower income countries as well as for investments in the most basic levels of education. His education finance policy recommendations from 2006 are still relevant for donors reading this piece in 2019. Namely, invest more in the lowest levels of education (mainly pre-primary and lower primary education) and invest in that which improves educational quality (importantly, teacher quality).

2.7 Summary

Considering the totality of the evidence presented above, the study team refined the ToR proposed by DFID found in Annex 10.1 and defined the research methodology. The following sections outline the implications of the theoretical framework on the final research questions, as well as how the theoretical framework influenced the data collection methods.

3 Research Questions

The following section reviews how the research questions proposed by DFID in the study's ToR were refined in light of the establishment of the theoretical framework resulting from the literature review.

3.1 Technical themes

3.1.1 Teaching practices and behaviours

Question 1. What teaching practices and behaviours are in use across different areas of Syria?

DFID's latest education policy, *Get Children Learning*, published in 2018, references its focus on improving the quality of teaching at least six times. Given the plethora of evidence that it cites regarding how critical teaching is to improving learning,⁷ and how significant the dearth of evidence about teaching practice is in Syria, this was the primary area of focus of the study. While certification of teacher training is often used as an indicator of teacher capacity, this research focussed more on teacher skill and experience.

The sub-questions or areas of inquiry included:

1. How teaching practice influenced academic skill development, as well as socioemotional and related life skills development.
2. To what degree teaching and learning was conflict-sensitive. The research assessed how conflict-sensitive the pedagogy in Syria primary learning spaces was using work done by the Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) and its partners, such as the Teachers in Crisis Contexts (TiCC) Working Group's teacher competencies and the Conflict Sensitive Education Guidance Notes on Standard 3: Instruction and Learning Processes.
3. What equity dimensions of education provision exist in Syrian learning spaces (i.e. to what extent is the classroom environment and teaching inclusive, including for children with disabilities? Is learning support differentiated?) While there are tools for FCAS contexts to measure the safety of learning environments, guidance on supporting inclusive education, a draft tool to support the measurement of equitable access to education, and tools to measure equity of learning environment and teaching practice for such contexts do not exist. As such, the study used components of the INEE Guidance Notes on Inclusive Education and USAID and Education in Crisis and Conflict Network's (ECCN) Safer Learning Environments Toolkit to answer this question.

3.1.2 Learning outcomes

Question 2. What are children learning in learning spaces?

As detailed in the [status of early grade learning section](#), there was sufficient data regarding what children were learning in non-GoS-held areas. This exists from 2017 studies by the DFID-funded Idarah Project, Save the Children, IRC, and People in Need, as well as 2018 studies by People in Need and Save the Children. The 2018 studies show similar results to the 2017 studies: children are

⁷ Including UNESCO's 2014 Global Education Monitoring report, *Teaching and Learning: Achieving Quality for All* and the World Bank's 2018 piece *Learning to Realize Education's Promise*.

not reading or doing maths at levels appropriate to their grade levels. As such, additional primary data on literacy and numeracy rates was not necessary.

3.1.3 Socioemotional wellbeing of children

Question 3. What levels of socioemotional wellbeing do children have in Syrian learning spaces and what additional needs do they have?

To the extent possible, and with reference to Burde, et al's similar focus in their 2015 piece, the research analysed wellbeing data through two lenses:

1. First, what the wellbeing profiles of children looked like, and
2. Second, what elements were in place in the school environment that supported wellbeing.

Additional primary data collection on the first topic—the wellbeing profiles of children—was not required due to data collected by: a) the DFID-funded Idarah Project in 2017 through its classroom-based War Stressors Questionnaire; b) Save the Children through its 2017 report *Invisible Wounds*; and c) the DFID-funded Manahel Project's wellbeing assessment in 2018. [The summary of these findings is available here.](#)

On the second topic, the study looked at:

- The existence of creative arts and play therapies;⁸
- The existence of and training on codes of conduct;
- The existence of psychosocial support (PSS) policies or practices in the classroom;
- Specific support programmes and referrals for the most vulnerable;
- Parental and caregiver support;
- Inclusive teaching practices;
- Opportunities for student leadership;
- SEL approaches; and
- The nature (if any) of expectations in the school space for high performance (the 'school climate').

3.1.4 Correlations between teaching practice, learning outcomes, and socioemotional skills

Question 4: What associations exist between teaching behaviours and education outcomes focusing on academic learning (Early Grade Reading Assessment-EGRA/Early Grade Mathematics Assessment-EGMA and Annual Status of Education Report-ASER) and socioemotional skills (as measured by assessments influenced by Youth In Mind's Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire)?

⁸ Play-based learning and unstructured play, as well as opportunities for creative expression are well-supported elements of a healthy learning environment with a strong evidence base (see Golinkoff, Hirsh-Pasek & Singer, 2006; Elkind, 2008; and Barblett, 2010).

While there is some existing evidence in the Syrian context about poor learning outcomes and poor levels of wellbeing, this research sought to determine what is, or is not, happening in teaching practice to support improved outcomes and skill development.

3.2 Operational theme

Question 5: How do different education providers operate within the fragmented education system and how does this constrain or support the quality of implementation?

As previously noted, UNICEF and the Whole of Syria (WoS) cluster were planning, at the time of this study's launch, to conduct a study examining the governance profiles of education authorities in Syria. With consideration for informant fatigue and the existence of this planned research, the team asked only a few questions on this topic.

3.3 Best practice theme

Question 6: Are there examples of best-practice or low-cost adaptations that could be translated to other parts of the education system?

This study was designed with consideration for the varying operating contexts in which education might be taking place in early 2019. Therefore, it aimed to consider some of the implications for the current status of teaching and learning in non-GoS-held areas through the lens of either:

1. Consolidated control of education service delivery by the GoS; or
2. Further consolidation of education service delivery under the Zone of Control (ZoC) as they were defined at the start of data collection.

Through such lenses, lessons such as those drawn from Lodi's 2011 assessment of successful transition from non-formal to formal education spaces in Puntland, Somalia were explored. The following areas of inquiry were used as lenses to analyse both existing and possible best practice in Syria:

- **Area of inquiry lens 1:** Effective service provision tactics, influenced by UNRWA's standard practices;
- **Area of inquiry lens 2:** The use of information and communication technology (ICT) as a teaching and learning tool;
- **Area of inquiry lens 3:** Teacher professional development;
- **Area of inquiry lens 4:** Tools and practices used to support psychosocial and socioemotional wellbeing;
- **Area of inquiry lens 5:** The role of Accelerated and Alternative Learning Programmes in supporting learning improvements;
- **Area of inquiry lens 6:** Strategic response planning along the humanitarian to development continuum, and most critically at the humanitarian development nexus; and
- **Area of inquiry lens 7:** Opportunities presented by community-based education.⁹

⁹ Also referred to as "low-cost private learning spaces" or "affordable non-state learning spaces"

The following areas of inquiry of relevance to the study were not covered in the research:

- The correlation between teacher wellbeing and practice; and
- The critical issue of teachers' pay in conflict-affected contexts.

Regarding teacher wellbeing, teacher practice, and their correlates, there is a growing body of evidence from stable and developing country contexts that demonstrates that teacher wellbeing and motivation influence their practice. Experts in the field of Education in Conflict and Crisis (EICC) suggest that this correlation is true in FCAS as well. These points are explored in more detail [in the theoretical framework section](#). This study did not research this topic, noting that the IRC has long been conducting research on this subject, and is looking for opportunities to do so in Syria. It was also not a part of the originally envisioned Terms of Reference (ToR) developed by DFID, and resource constraints prevented an in-depth exploration of the topic. Still, the team looked at tools regarding teacher stress and teacher's senses of self-efficacy and used them to influence questions asked to teachers (Schwarzer, Schmitz, & Daytne, 1909; Bandura, 2006; Gaumer Erickson & Noonan, 2018). Further research on this topic would be beneficial, noting the IRC's plans for the same.

On the topic of teacher pay, a UNICEF-sponsored teacher stipend in Syria consultancy was underway at the start of the study, and duplication of research was unnecessary. This is a topic that is extremely complicated and has been thoughtfully explored by the likes of Brandt (2014), Brannelly & Ndaruhutse (2013); Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE, 2009); Sinclair (2001; 2002), Sommers (2004; 2005), and others (including Crisp, Talbot & Cipollone, 2001; Caillods, Phillips, Poisson & Talbot, 2006; and Ring & West, 2015). A brief introduction to the topic can be found [in the theoretical framework section on challenges that teachers face in EICC](#).

4 Methodological Framework

4.1 Phase I (Inception): Literature review, stakeholder mapping, and KIIs

The team undertook an in-depth stakeholder mapping and engagement exercise, identifying key informants who were based both within and outside Syria and engaged in EICC service delivery. This effort aimed to consider donor, policy maker, researcher, and implementor priorities both at the time of the design of the study and their anticipated priorities at the release of the study (a timeframe spanning nine months, from May 2018 through January 2019). The outcomes of the stakeholder engagement helped frame the technical and methodological frameworks of the study, and as such are infused throughout this report.

More than 250 informants were engaged through KIIs, surveys, and workshops to secure their input into the focus and design of the study. The majority of stakeholders involved in the inception phase were based in Syria, including implementers and Syrian Interim Government (SIG) representatives, but importantly, also included respondents with global and regional perspectives on EICC. The team ensured a wide variety of respondent profiles with respect to institution affiliation and respondent identity in order to include varying perspectives and better triangulate information. Details of the profiles of these stakeholders can be found in Annex 10.2, Inception Report. The following table summarises the methods and outcomes of this phase of the study.

Table 3: Overview of inception and methodology development phase activities and achievements

| Activity | Achievement |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Literature Review | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The team identified, collected, and analysed 150 pieces of relevant literature¹⁰ in English and Arabic to better understand the available evidence base.¹¹ Pertinent findings from the Literature Review were then compiled in a bespoke database. The team relied on stakeholders to gain access to non-public documents. The Literature Review was therefore carried out in parallel with the Stakeholder Mapping and Engagement activity. The team analysed gaps in the available literature to refine research questions and geographic areas of focus for the primary data collection. |
| Stakeholder Engagement and Mapping | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The team contacted 298 stakeholders, 133 in Syria and 165 abroad. This was done using a snowball method, starting with the team's vast network of Syria-specific education stakeholders. Depending on stakeholder profiles, the team either: i) conducted an online survey, ii) conducted a KII, and/or iii) invited them to attend the first Participatory Workshop. Key informants were very supportive, sharing programme/project documents, previous research, and information about planned research. This allowed the team to fine-tune the research methodology to avoid duplication and meet the needs of implementers. Due to key informants' availability and preferences, the envisioned fortnightly coordination calls were held monthly. |

¹⁰ The types of documents reviewed were diverse. They included academic articles and books, humanitarian and stabilisation programme/project documents, and curricula.

¹¹ The majority (83%) of the literature was in English. Furthermore, the majority (85%) of the literature was Syria-specific, although the team also reviewed literature from other FCAS, as well as broader EICC-related literature.

| Activity | Achievement |
|------------------------|--|
| Participatory Workshop | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The first Participatory Workshop was held in Amman on 12 June 2018. In total, 13 stakeholders attended, either in person or remotely. Most of the attendees were implementers. The workshop sought to obtain buy-in from key stakeholders and ensure their support throughout the project. The team presented the project and achievements to date, and discussed initial findings with attendees to validate them and identify gaps. The nature of response needs in Northwest Syria at the time of the project's launch meant that the WoS Gaziantep Cluster leads and the team were not able to organise a workshop. The team therefore engaged stakeholders involved in northwest Syria cross border work through surveys and KIIs. |
| Context Analysis | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Senior Researcher conducted 14 KIIs with conflict experts, both in Syria and abroad, to draft governorate-specific conflict analyses and forecasts for ZoC of interest for the primary data collection. The team used these analyses to draft a project-specific Risk Matrix and refined strategies for safeguarding, risk mitigation, and contingency planning. |

4.2 Primary, field-level data collection challenges and mitigation strategies

The team undertook detailed access and data collection analyses and developed mitigation strategies therefrom. The following table summarises these considerations.

Table 4: Challenges and mitigation strategies, organised by ZoC

| ZoC | Challenges | Mitigations and research approach |
|--|--|--|
| GoS-held areas | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Despite some stability and reduction in hostilities, access by enumerators to these areas was not possible. Identification and recruitment of field teams was deemed highly risky, both to those conducting recruitment and the potential recruits. High levels of GoS control meant it was not possible to identify reliable local organisations to provide neutral data. | No engagement. |
| ISIS-controlled areas | Inaccessible to international organisations. | No engagement. |
| Non-GoS-held areas in Idlib and Aleppo | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> General safety and security was manageable away from frontlines. Access was often contingent on approval from local authorities. Checkpoints could act as barriers to conducting data collection in some areas. Enumerators could be targeted if their work was perceived to be related to intelligence gathering. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enumerators sought approval from local authorities. The Field Coordinator developed field plans and identified checkpoints and other threats in advance. The team developed conflict-sensitive survey tools. |

| ZoC | Challenges | Mitigations and research approach |
|-----------------------|---|--|
| YPG/SDF-held areas | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> General safety and security was manageable. Registration was required prior to overt research activities, and the likelihood of successful registration was low. Access to education sites was tightly controlled by local authorities. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The enumerators used their trusted networks to obtain access to respondents. |
| Euphrates Shield area | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> General safety and security was manageable. Access to education sites was tightly controlled by local authorities. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The enumerators used their trusted networks, with support from the Stabilisation Committee, to obtain access to respondents. |

4.3 Dealing with change

In addition to the challenging operating environments outlined above, the Syrian conflict remained fluid. As the frontlines continued to change, accessibility barriers and shifting affiliations could impact the viability of collecting meaningful data. As such, each data collection activity requiring field work was assessed in detail to ensure safety. Extremely detailed contingency plans were developed and can be reviewed in the Mid-Term Report, available in Annex 10.3. The processes and structures that supported this effort are outlined in broad terms in the table below.

Table 5: Challenges and management / contingencies per context

| Status | Challenges | Management / Contingencies |
|---|--|--|
| Steady State: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No change in control or in affiliation of controlling group within the last month. Frontlines within 20 miles are static. No change in levels of terrorist/asymmetric attacks within area. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access: Challenges as described in Table 4 above. Data quality: Challenges as described in Table 4 above. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan in detail prior to fieldwork. Monitor enumerators throughout deployment. |
| Conflict Proximity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moving frontlines within 20 miles. Recent change or anticipated change in the affiliation of controlling group. Increase in terrorist/asymmetric attacks within area. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access: Safety and security challenges likely too high to allow fieldwork. Requires detailed assessment of local threat levels and clear extraction routes prior to data collection. Data quality: High probability that education activities will be on hold and respondents pre-occupied. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fieldwork may be halted. Detailed field coordination plans to be developed prior to approving any fieldwork. Plans to contain routes, medical facilities, evacuations plans and proximity to frontlines. Redirecting research activities to more secure areas. |

| Status | Challenges | Management / Contingencies |
|--|---|--|
| <p>Change of Control:</p> <p>Any area where control has changed, either through a shift in the frontlines or change in affiliation, in the last month.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access: Acquiring permissions to access and conduct research likely to be difficult. • Stability and, therefore, security will be difficult to assess and manage. • Teaming: May require new team members, difficult to coordinate at short notice. • Data quality: Difficult to triangulate and verify data with new stakeholder relationships. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information gaps due to change in control of areas will have to be filled by remote KII's input and/or secondary literature. |

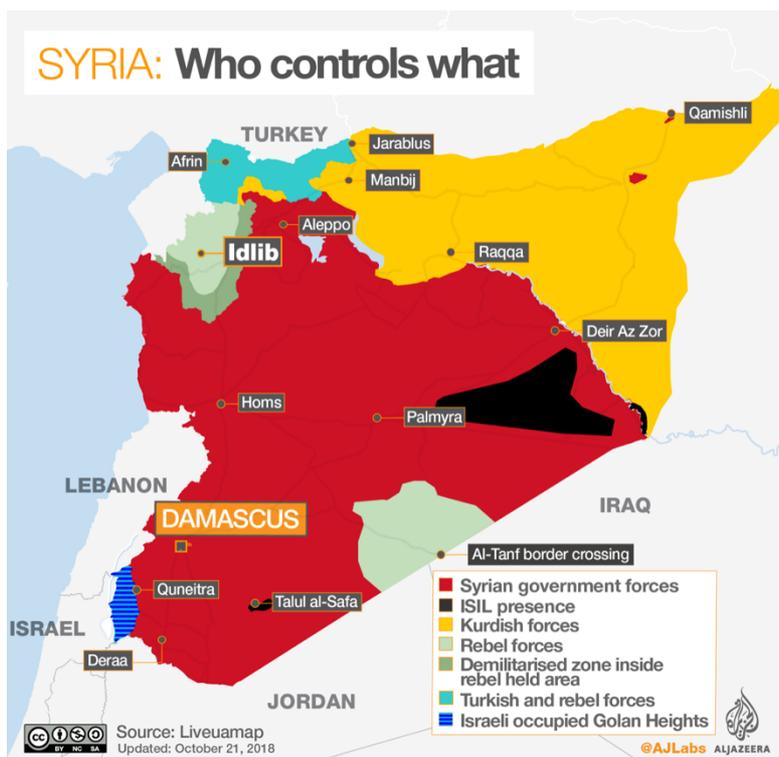
4.4 Geographic focus

The following section explains how the study identified its geographic targeting in light of security issues and with consideration for concentration of people in need.

4.4.1 Zones of Control, hard to reach areas, and concentrations of people in need

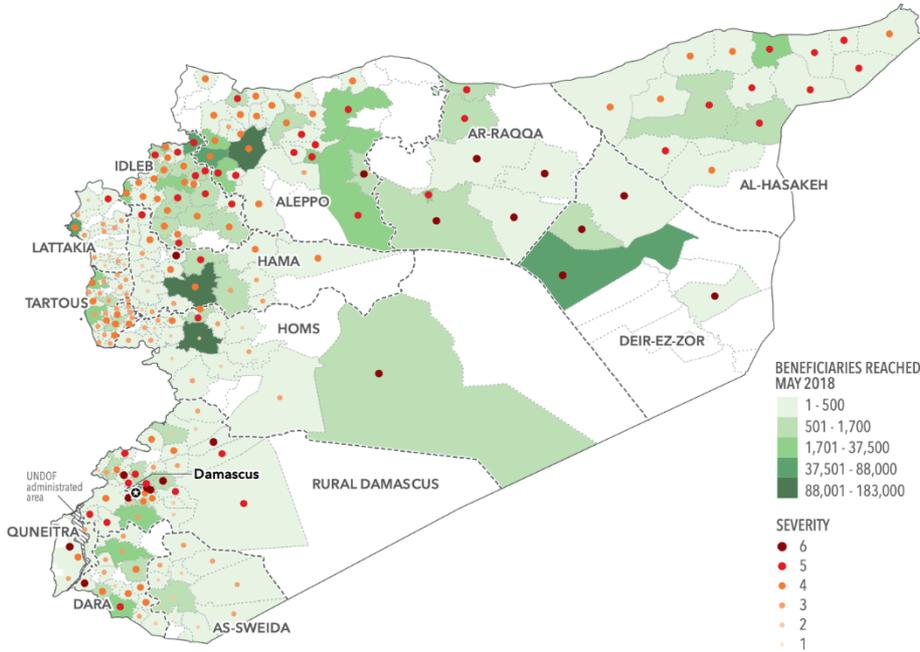
By the end of June 2018, the GoS controlled most of the territory of the state of Syria. Al Jazeera provided a helpful map updated as of 21 October 2018 that shows the operating context during the study's primary data collection phase of September-early November 2018 (Chugtai, 2018). This map shows the limited areas in which data could be safely collected

Figure 3: Zones of Control in Syria, as of 21 October 2018 (Source: Al Jazeera)



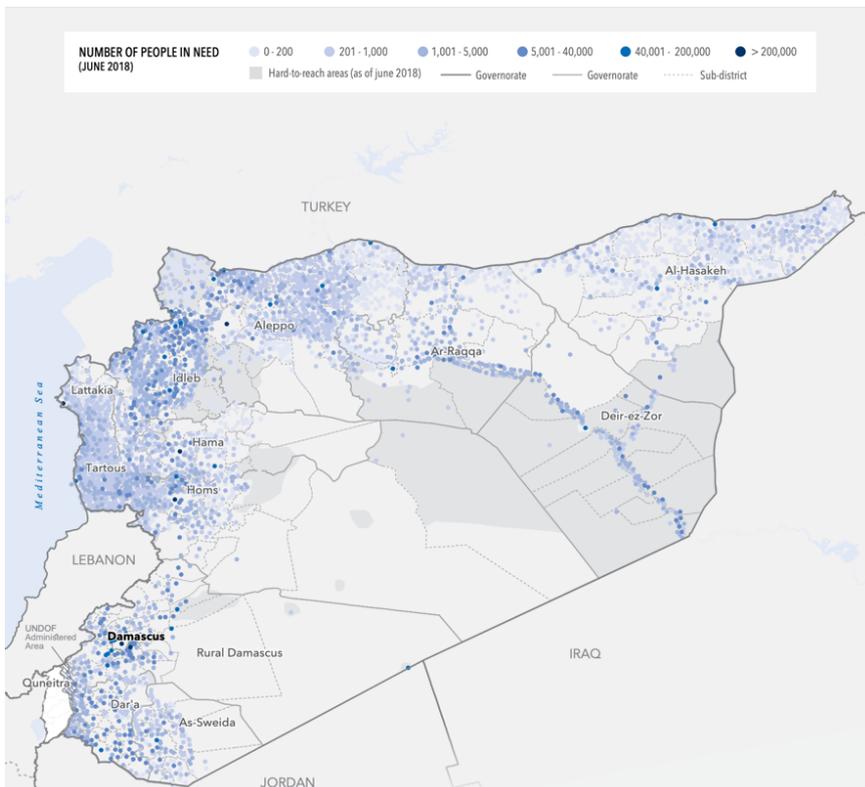
The figure below shows education sector efforts through the Whole of Syria cluster as well as concentrations of need.

Figure 4: Beneficiaries reached by the education sector according to the severity of the areas where they live as of May 2018 (Source: OCHA, 2018)



A map from June 2018 shows the concentrations of people in need, highlighting the preponderance of them in non-GoS-held areas.

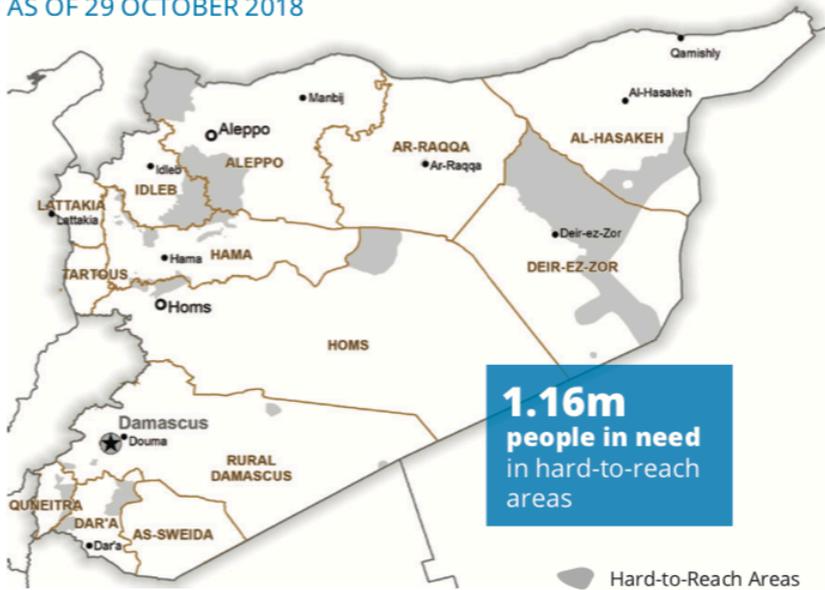
Figure 5: People in need concentrations by geographic area as of June 2018 (Source: OCHA, 2018)



A map from October 2018 shows the hard to reach areas, again mainly outside of GoS control.

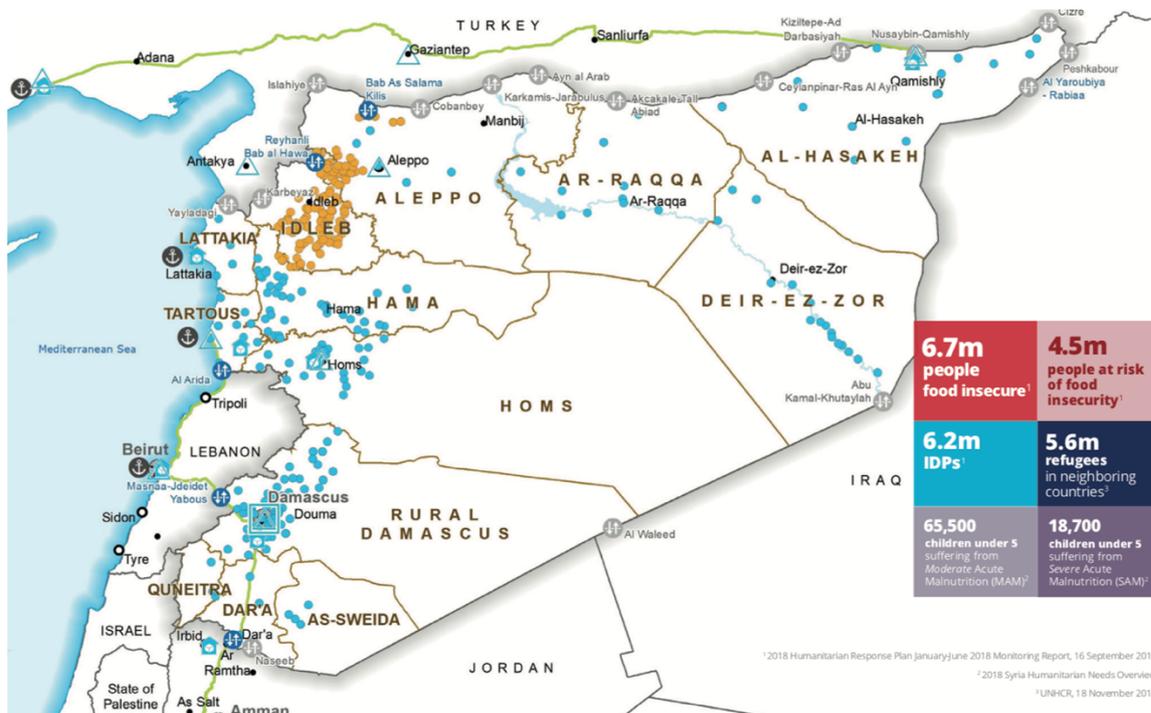
Figure 6: Overview of UN-declared hard-to-reach areas (as of 21 October 2018) (Source: OCHA, 2018).

HARD-TO-REACH AREAS
AS OF 29 OCTOBER 2018



Finally, a map from December 2018 shows, using food insecurity as a proxy indicator, show the concentrations of need by the end of the year (yellow and blue dots). This is the most recent publicly available people in need profile at the time of the report's writing, as the 2019 Syria Humanitarian Needs Overview has not yet been released. This map again reaffirms that the areas accessible to the study team had high concentration of people in need.

Figure 7: Concentration profile of the food insecure (as of December 2018) (Source: WFP, 2018)



It is critical to understand the geographic concentrations of the people in need figures for Syria in order to appreciate the geographic targeting of the study.

- GoS-controlled areas: 7.8 million people in need (60%) (OCHA, 2017).
- Non-GoS-controlled areas: 5.35 million (41%). Of which, the areas covered by the study include 3.97 million (30% of the total population in need figure and 74% people in need figure of accessible areas of the study) (OCHA, 2017).

Forty-nine percent of the 2018 people in need figure were in the education sector (6.1 million school age children and 300,000 teaching personnel (OCHA, 2018).

Furthermore, during the first half of 2018, the distribution of the people in acute need figure, according to the UN, increased in Aleppo and Idlib from 382,695 in January 2018 to 437,747 in May 2018 (OCHA, 2018). Following on these trends, of the 68 confirmed attacks on schools and education personnel during the first half of 2018, the majority occurred in Idlib, Rural Damascus, Aleppo, and Dar'a and the vast majority of the 30 unconfirmed attacks took place in Idlib (OCHA, 2018).

Finally, through a lens of internally displaced persons, 60% are in Idlib and Aleppo (OCHA, 2018).

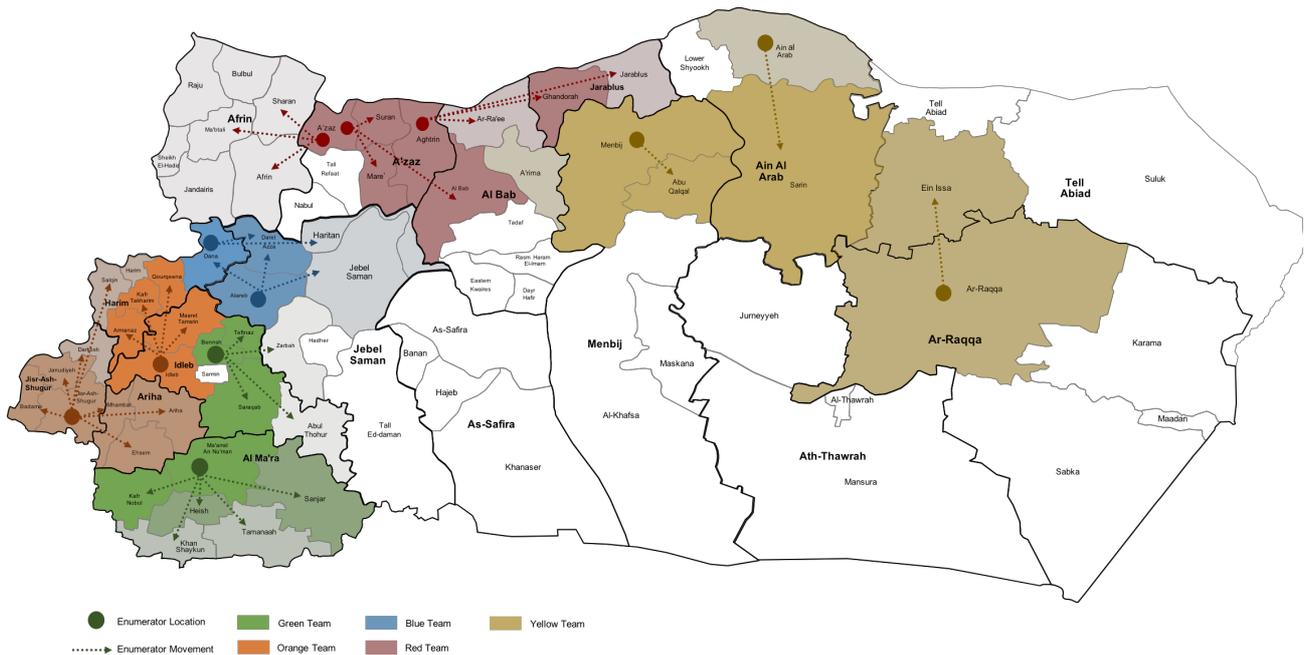
4.4.2 The study team's geographic targeting decisions

Despite the ultimate goal of assessing education services across all of Syria, the geographic scope for Phase III of the study, the primary data collection phase, was restricted due to political, conflict, and security factors. Therefore, the following areas where the focus for primary data collection: non-GoS-held areas (including Idlib governorate and western Aleppo), the northwest countryside of Aleppo area (known as the Euphrates Shield), and YPG/SDF-held areas in Raqqqa and Aleppo governorates.¹² More specifically, the team collected primary data in the following locations:

- **Non-GoS-held Idlib and Aleppo:** All locations were accessible.
- **YPG/SDF-held areas:** Access to education facilities varied in these areas according to local political dynamics. For example, the GoS divides administrative oversight with the SDF in al-Hasakeh and Quamishli districts, which restricted access to formal education facilities there. However, access to education facilities in Menbij, Ain al Arab (Kobani), and Ar-Raqqqa was possible.
- **The Euphrates Shield area:** Due to strict Turkish oversight, access to education facilities in the northwest countryside of Aleppo area was more difficult than in other non-GoS-held areas. As such, the team conducted light-touch research, including KIIs and group interviews, with support from the Stabilisation Committee.

¹² The team assessed the viability of conducting primary data collection in other areas of the country, but found the associated risk too great. While GoS-held areas witnessed a significant reduction in hostilities during the study period, access to these areas is highly sensitive. Identification and recruitment of field teams would have likely endangered them, and could have jeopardised data neutrality and confidentiality. For similar reasons, areas under ISIS-control were inaccessible.

Figure 8: Map of data collection team hubs and reach



4.5 Sampling criteria

The study team sought to reach as representative a sample as possible in the data collection phase. The team confirmed during the first participatory workshop that it would be difficult, due to the security situation, to do random sampling. As such, the study used the following types of sampling methods, which are best practices to collect information in hard-to-reach populations (Education Equity Research Initiative, 2018):

- **Snowball Sampling:** Initial informants nominate other informants from their network, these individuals in turn nominate those they know.
- **Time Location Sampling:** Takes advantage of the fact that the priority population attend a universe of venues at identifiable and specific days and times.
- **Targeted Sampling:** “Controlled lists of specified populations within geographical districts are developed and detailed plans are designed to recruit adequate numbers of cases within each of the targets” (Watters & Biernack, 1989, p. 420).

Furthermore, the Senior Researcher and Field Coordinator selected a sample of communities using the following filters:

- **Location:** Urban, rural, host communities, and IDP camps;
- **Education Setting:** Formal or Non-Formal;
- Education Service Provider/Curriculum;
- **Gender:** Mixed-gender or female/male only; and
- Accessibility of trusted enumerators.

4.6 Sample sizes

The team refined the research strata and identified respondent types and locations as described below:

Table 6: Respondent types and geographic locations

| Respondent types | Geographic types |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students at Grade 2 and/or 3 levels • Teachers of Grade 2 and/or 3 levels • School administrators • Parents/caregivers of Grade 2 and/or 3 students • Education authorities, including Education Directorates (ED) and Education Assemblies' inspectors • Local council members • (International) Non-governmental organisations (I)NGO representatives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School offices • School play areas or open areas • Classrooms • Community spaces • Education authority offices • Local council offices • (I)NGO offices |

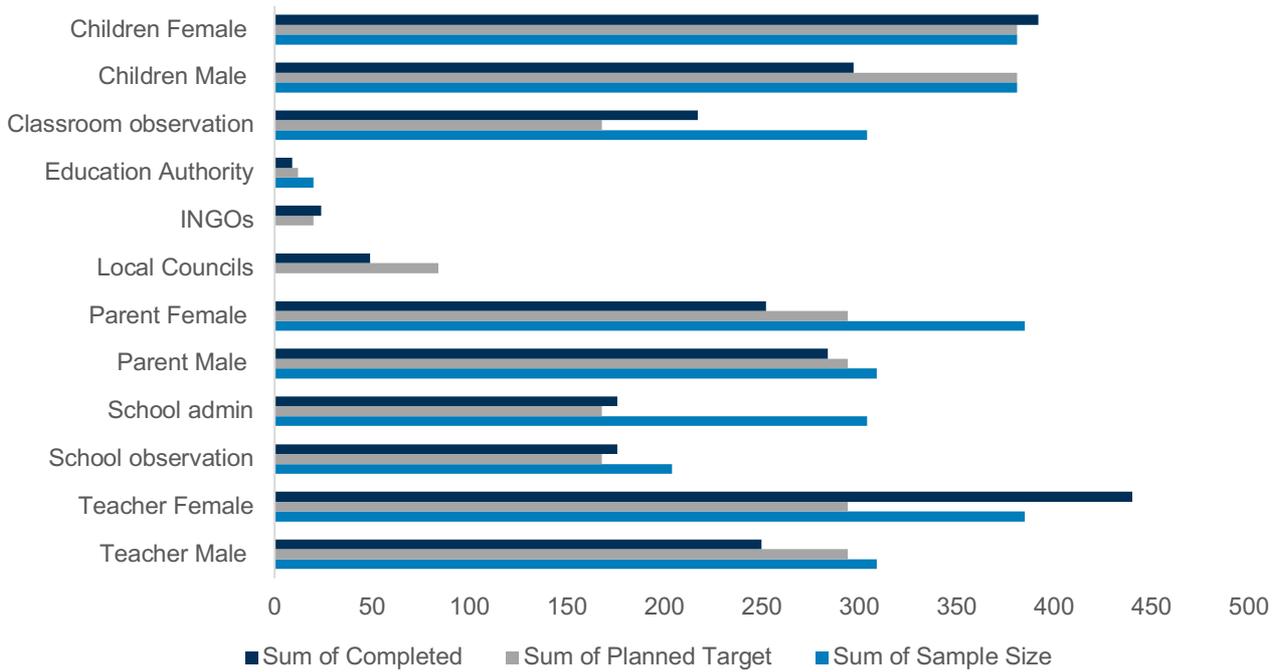
The team selected the sample of learning spaces using the above filters, and respondents were selected using data provided in the Assistance Coordination Unit (ACU) 2018 report on Learning Spaces in Syria. The team calculated the sample size using a representative sampling methodology with a confidence level of 95% and a margin error of 5%.¹³

The figure below illustrates the desired sample size for each respondent type, compared to what the team was able to accomplish in non-GoS-held Idleb and Aleppo.¹⁴

¹³ According to data from the ACU, the number of male students aged 6-11 in Idleb and western Aleppo was 156,710. The team estimated that 25% of this figure would likely be students in Grades 2 and 3. Using a sampling methodology with a confidence level of 95% and a margin error of 5%, the required sample size for Grades 2 and 3 students in Idleb and western Aleppo was estimated to be 381 students.

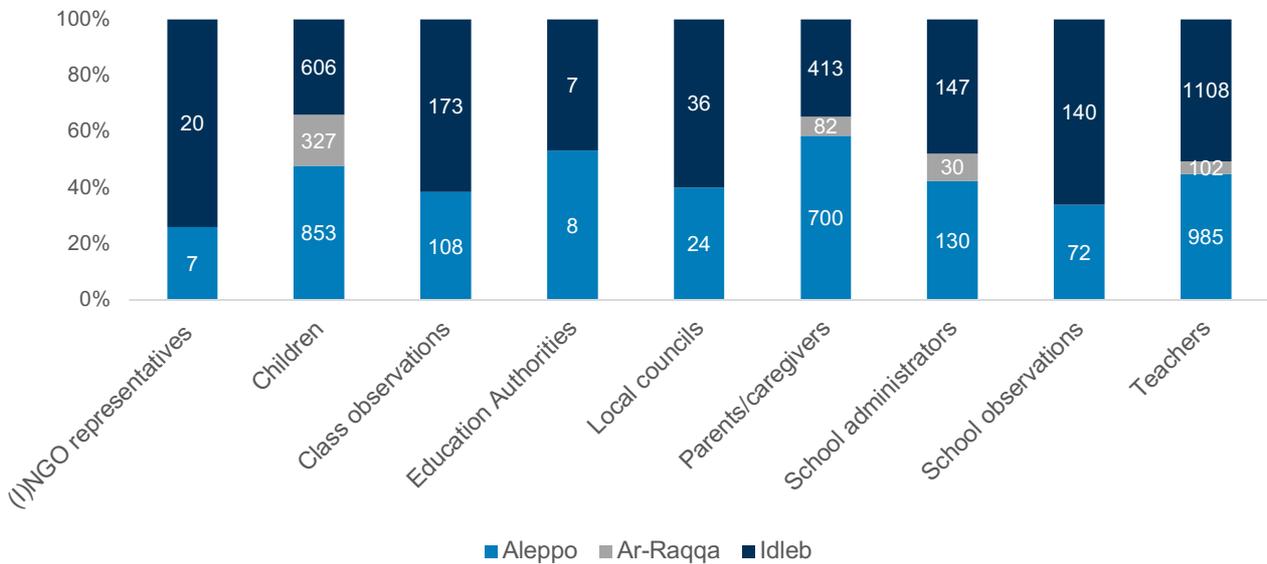
¹⁴ Targets were only feasible in Idleb and Aleppo as detailed demographic information was available there, and learning spaces could be identified prior to data collection. In the YPG/SDF-held and Euphrates Shield areas, the highly controlled nature of access overseen by governing authorities required a completely snowball sampling approach, which did not allow for target setting.

Figure 9: Comparison of respondent type or data source by representative sample, planned reach, and actual reach



The figure below shows the total number of interviews in all three geographic areas, including non-GoS-held Idleb and Aleppo governorates, YPG/SDF-held areas, and the Euphrates Shield area.

Figure 10: Total number of interviews in all three geographic areas



4.7 Phase II: Data collection tool design

In July and August 2018, the study team used 32 existing tools to design a data collection toolkit to answer the research questions. The result was a matrix of 339 questions, coded by theme, research question, area of inquiry, methodology, source, and informant type. The majority of the questions were quantitative, response coded, and answer-weighted, to allow for ease of analysis. With input

from workshop participants, the study team ensured that a large proportion of these response coded questions provided space for qualitative responses as well “why”, “other”, or “explain” boxes. In designing the toolkit, the team was particularly careful to ensure that the triangulation of data would be feasible.

Four means of data collection were used:

1. **Self-reports – surveys:** Literate respondents could answer quantitative questions, notably the ones covering sensitive topics, directly on the enumerator’s smartphone. Such forms could also be completed by enumerators.
2. **Self-reports – KIIs:** Enumerators conducted face-to-face KIIs with respondents to cover more qualitative questions.
3. **Group interviews:** To collect a significant amount of data in a relatively short period, enumerators organised group interviews gathering each informant sub-type (such as female caregivers of Grade 2 or 3 children), to discuss non-sensitive questions.
4. **Observations:** Enumerators were asked to answer specific questionnaires while observing schools, classrooms, and lessons.

4.4 Enumerator reliability ranking

Each enumerator was asked to rank the reliability of each record of data collected on a scale from one to three, with mostly reliable getting a score of three, somewhat reliable a score of two, and not very reliable a score of one. The overall average was 2.72, suggesting that the majority of information was reliable.

Figure 11: Reliability ranking by informant and methodology type

4.5 Data analysis

The data analysis was designed to use concurrent triangulation. The protocol below outlines the team’s data analysis and reporting processes for the 2,525 records collected, which represented approximately 242,707 cells of data.

On a weekly basis, the project’s Field Coordination aggregated all data received on the project’s bespoke database. This database, and automated analysis of its content, allowed the team, and especially the Team Lead, to benefit from real time visualisation of the findings. The team took the following actions on a weekly basis, where “Day 1” represents any day on which a field visit was conducted.

- **Day 1:** Enumerator finalised the field visit.
- **Day 1:** At the end of the field visit, the Field Coordinator received the data (directly uploaded on an Excel sheet), reviewed it, and debriefed the enumerator. He reported any major issues to the Senior Researcher (questions that seemed to not be understood by the respondents, reports of misconduct, respondents unwilling to answer, and context issues). The Senior Researcher then flagged significant issues to the Team Lead.
- **Day 2:** The external translator translated the qualitative data (there was no need for quantitative data to be manually translated, as it was done automatically in KoBo).

- **Day 3:** The Field Coordinator cleaned the data and sent a copy of the database to the team.
- **Day 4:** The Senior Researcher and Programme Manager analysed the data.
- **Day 5:** The Team Lead received the analysed data, conducted a primary assessment, discussed any main findings with the team, and identified if any aspects of the data collection protocol or enumerator support practices need to be modified.

5 The Syria Context

5.1 Syria Context: Security Profile

In order to effectively and safely conduct data collection inside Syria, the team maintained accurate, up-to-date analysis related to the conflict dynamics and trends in the areas of data collection. In summary, there was relative calm in Northwest Syria during the data collection, thanks in large part to the Sochi Agreement of September 2018. The GoS retook most of Southern Syria, and its presence made data collection in Dar'a and Quneitra governorates impossible. Turkish oversight of the Euphrates Shield area continued throughout the study, allowing stability for data collection, although it was limited by stringent oversight by local authorities. While there were ongoing tensions in Northeast Syria during the period of the study, data collection was feasible, though limited, due to stringent oversight by local authorities.

The following sections provide a brief overview of the evolving trajectory of the conflict over the course of this study, organised by ZoC.¹⁵

5.1.1 Northwest Syria

Conflict in Northwest Syria, which includes Idlib governorate and non-GoS-controlled areas in the western Aleppo countryside and northern Hama, remained relatively stable and predictable throughout the study. While hostilities increased around July and August 2018, Turkey and Russia reached an agreement (called the Sochi Agreement) by 17 September 2018 which prevented a large-scale offensive in the area. By mid-October 2018, the agreement established a 15-20 kilometre-deep demilitarised zone along the Idlib border, and armed groups subsequently withdrew heavy weaponry from the area. While minor violations to the agreement were witnessed on all sides, namely shelling (especially in parts of southern Idlib and western Aleppo), and extremist groups remained present in the zone despite calls for their removal, the agreement was considered successful in reducing the levels of violence. This relative calm persisted throughout most of September, October, and November 2018, and allowed the team to undertake primary data collection in the area. However, in November and December 2018, the area witnessed an increasing number of violations, with sustained GoS shelling and several Hay'at Tahrir al Sham (HTS) and extremist-led operations against nearby GoS positions. As of the writing of this report, rumours of a GoS-led assault on the Northwest, dubbed "Idlib Dawn", were growing, and predicted to start in early 2019.

5.1.2 Southern Syria

The GoS and its allies established full control of opposition and ISIS-held areas in southern Syria in July 2018, including Dar'a and Quneitra governorates. The GoS campaign to regain control consisted of a combination of military operations and reconciliation agreements, and resulted in a relatively small amount of displacement to Northwest Syria. Media reports and local observers indicate that since regaining control, GoS intelligence agencies have conducted search and arrest campaigns against both opposition and ISIS figures in Dar'a governorate. As a result, the majority of activities supported by local and international organisations remain suspended in this area. Accordingly, the team was unable to conduct primary data collection in these governorates, and instead refocused efforts on the available remaining areas.

¹⁵ This section is based on the team's networks in Syria, various media outlets, and approximately 40 KIIs across potentially relevant areas of primary data collection.

5.1.3 The Euphrates Shield area

Turkey has indirectly administered the Euphrates Shield area in northern Aleppo since March 2017. Spared from airstrikes, the main source of instability over the study's lifetime was occasional infighting amongst local armed groups. While low-level clashes occurred sporadically, the area remained relatively stable over the course of the primary data collection period. However, as of mid-December 2018, Turkish troops were rumoured to be grouping on the Turkey-Syria border at key crossing points, likely in preparation for attacks on YPG/SDF-held areas in Northeast Syria.

5.1.4 Northeast Syria¹⁶

The majority of Northeast Syria, which includes al-Hasakeh, ar-Raqqqa, Deir-ez-Zor, and parts of Aleppo governorate, continues to be controlled by the YPG/SDF-affiliated forces.¹⁷ While control of areas east of the Euphrates River was relatively stable over the lifetime of the project, Turkish opposition to YPG/SDF control in Menbij and other areas west of the Euphrates led to a tense security situation. While the US and Turkey have held negotiations over security arrangements in Menbij since April 2018, little progress has been made. Turkey continues to threaten a campaign to retake Ain Aissa and Menbij, and repelled hundreds of Syrian armed groups north of the area in a show of force in October 2018. The US has continued to resist any handover, and established observations points along the perimeter of YPG/SDF-controlled areas west of the Euphrates in November 2018. Despite the rising tensions in areas west of the Euphrates, the field team did not encounter any security incidents during data collection, and work progressed without interruptions caused by military clashes. As of late December 2018, the US President had signalled his intention to withdraw the 2,000 US troops from the area, and Turkish troops had positioned themselves at the border in anticipation of an escalation of violence.

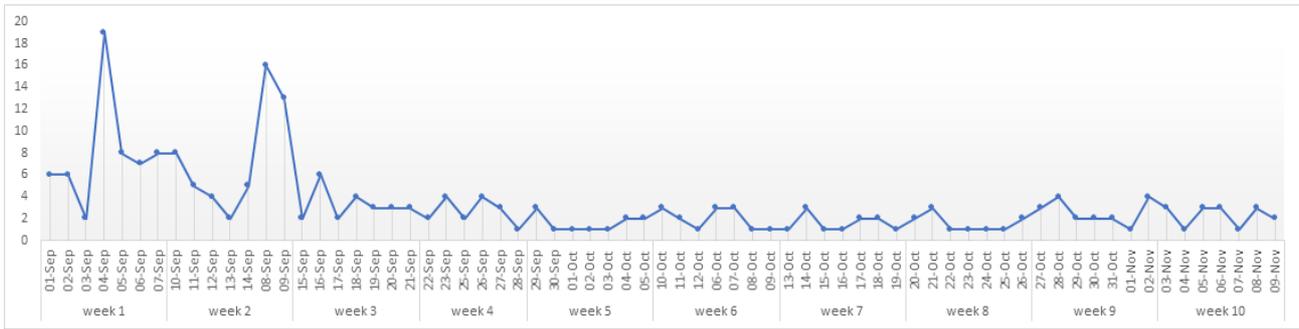
5.2 Security Incidents

As a result of the Sochi Agreement, non-GoS-held areas of Idlib and Aleppo governorates witnessed a significant reduction in hostile activities, and especially of airstrikes. Please see below a figure representing the incident intensity throughout the data collection phase.

¹⁶ Prior to December 2016, authorities in Northeast Syria were known as the Kurdish Self Administration and/or the Autonomous Administration, popularly known as Rojava. In December 2016, authorities announced the establishment of the Democratic Federation of Northern Syria (DFNS).

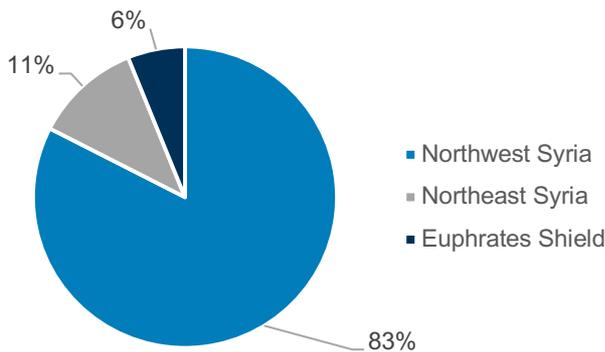
¹⁷ Which is a led by the YPG (also known as Yekîneyên Parastina Gel of the People's Protection Units), the armed wing of the Kurdish Democratic Union Party (the Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat, or PYD). The YPG now includes Arab forces and is backed by the US with the aim of defeating ISIS in Northeast Syria. The Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê (PKK) is also an affiliate.

Figure 12: Incident frequency during period of data collection



In an effort to ensure the safety of the enumerators and the quality of the data collection, security incidents were logged daily and analysed weekly. Throughout the data collection period, the team recorded 229 incidents in the project’s operational areas.¹⁸ Of these, 189 were reported in non-GoS-held areas of Idleb and Aleppo, 26 in YPG/SDF-held areas of Northeast Syria, and 14 in the Euphrates Shield area. Regarding the types of incidents, 52% were artillery shelling, 19% improvised explosive devices (IEDs), 16% airstrikes, 6% vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (VBIEDs), and 6% armed clashes. Furthermore, 82% of the targets were reported to be civilian housing, 12% public spaces, and 2% education facilities.

Figure 13: Preponderance of security incidents during the data collection period, by area



¹⁸ Security incidents were recorded throughout data collection through daily media monitoring done by the Senior Researcher. Media monitoring entailed a daily review of Syrian news organisations and social media accounts, and follow-up with the field team to assess the validity and severity of incidents.

Figure 14: Nature of incidents recorded during the data collection period

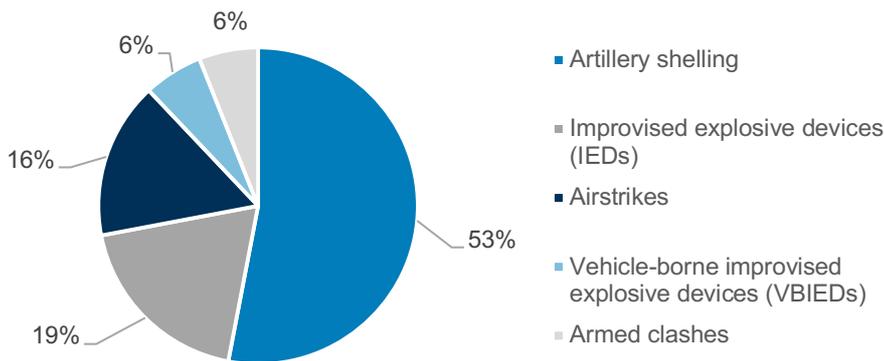
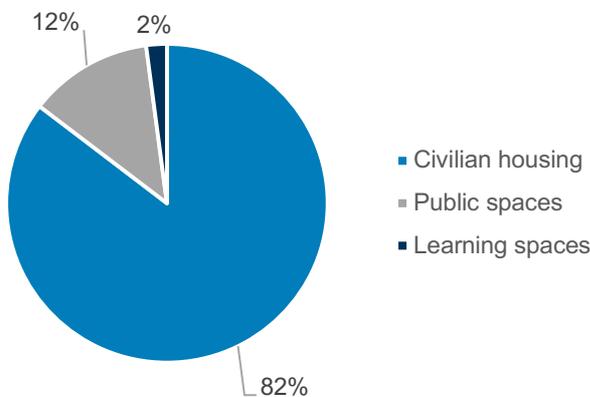


Figure 15: Nature of targets of security incidents recorded during the data collection period



5.3 Syria Context: Education Sector Profile

5.3.1 Overview

The following section provides information gleaned from the literature review undertaken by the study team. It serves to highlight what information was available to the team before the launch of primary data collection. However, it does also include information released after the design of the study that is of value. Any number of standard indicators paint a picture of degradation in Syria’s education sector since the start of the war. This section serves to frame the more granular data that this study obtained, which is described in depth in the findings section of [later in this report](#).

By 2014, the ranking of Syria in the education index of the United Nations Human Development Index dropped from 124 to 168 out of 187 countries (UNDP, 2014). Multiple factors have led to a decline in the quality of the education sector. Declining school attendance rates and lower expected completion rates contributed to this change (Syrian Centre for Policy Research (SCPR) with UNDP and UNRWA, 2015).

The gross enrolment rate in Syria prior to the crisis was 106%; as of 2013, it was down to 78.6% (UNICEF, 2015a). UNICEF noted in its 2016 fact sheet on out of school children in the region that another challenge to resource management is the uneven distribution of children amongst governorates, with some areas having high influxes of displaced children and thus higher enrolments, and others witnessing severe declines in enrolment (2016). In Tartous, for example, cases of more

than 70 students per classroom (which have a maximum capacity of 35 students) are not uncommon (UNICEF, 2015a). Multiple displacements, fewer teaching resources, insecurity, growing impoverishment, and the physical degradation of the school infrastructure has led to a large cohort of OOSC. The United Nations' Human Rights Council's 2016 Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic identified at least three million children out of school on a regular basis (United Nations' Human Rights Council, 2016). A confidential 2017 NGO assessment of OOSC and the 2018 Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) both found roughly 27-30% of all school age children to be out of schools (OCHA, 2018). The NGO assessment found OOSC figures to be lower in GoS-held areas and higher in non-GoS-held areas, especially IDP camps, suggesting that there is likely greater access and stability in GoS than non-GoS-held spaces. It estimated that a further 23% of children are at risk of dropping out in non-GoS-held spaces (OCHA, 2018).

By 2015, 25% of schools had been destroyed, damaged or used for purposes other than education (UNICEF, 2015b). Another critical factor is the loss of large numbers of the teaching cohort; by 2016, approximately 20% of the teaching cohort had fled the country (Save the Children, 2017b). In the same year, at least four different curricula were being used in just one of Syria's governorates, Al-Hasakeh, meaning that children were being educated in different languages, with different values, historical narratives, scientific, and social content (Syrian Centre for Policy Research (SCPR) with UNDP and UNRWA, 2015).

Non-GoS-held areas also suffer as a result of insufficient access to aid. A 2015 piece developed with the support and endorsement of 21 INGOs explored the paucity of aid reaching these areas, despite the existence of UN Security Council resolutions demanding access to them. The piece graded progress against these resolutions, given all failing or no improvement grades (Hartberg, Bowen, Gorevan, 2015). These conclusions were confirmed by Save the Children in 2016 when describing the challenges facing teachers and students in non-GoS-held Syria, including the use of underground schools to protect from bombardment (Save the Children, 2016b).

A 2015 economic loss study undertaken by Mizunoya (2015) found that the estimated cost of the loss of human capital formation due to the ongoing crisis in Syria was roughly USD10.7 billion, representing 17.7% of the Syrian GDP in 2010. In terms of direct impacts on children's lives, another study in the same year found that Syrian children who do not complete primary school will earn 32% less in their first job than those who complete secondary school (American Institutes for Research, CfBT Education Trust and Save the Children, 2015).

A series of analyses in 2015 reflected on the status of the education sector in Syria nearly seven years after the start of the crisis. One such review was UNICEF's *Curriculum, Accreditation and Certification for Syrian Children in Syria, Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt*. It touched on realities in Syria, such as the concern that access to widely recognised certification of learning was only available through GoS-affiliated learning spaces. Other analyses found an uneven use of various curricula in non-formal spaces, limited considerations for addressing psychosocial wellbeing needs within any of the curricula, low teacher numbers, and issues around the 'safety' (softly defined) of the learning spaces (American Institutes for Research, CfBT Education Trust and Save the Children, 2015); Syrian Centre for Policy Research (SCPR) with UNDP and UNRWA, 2015; and UNICEF, 2015b).

In 2016, qualitative and quantitative analysis led by Mizunoya and West looked at access and quality issues in both non-GoS-held and GoS-held areas of Syria. From a quality perspective, some of the concerns raised related to teacher training (with priorities on classroom management, pedagogy, and stress management), the protection and wellbeing of children, the fragmented nature of multiple

forms of curriculum and the implications from this on certification of learning, double shifting resulting in low numbers of contact hours, and stressful contexts for teachers. Feedback on teacher training from GoS-held areas noted that 40% of teacher respondents "saw little relevance in the training courses that they attended" and that "(t)here is also scant evidence of teachers having benefited from NGO trainings" (Mizunoya & West, 2016). Perhaps unsurprisingly, a "difficult curriculum that required changes in teaching practices was also named as a challenge to providing quality education, with 28% of teachers' groups naming this factor" (Mizunoya & West, 2016). Remedial education was often referenced as the solution to the aggregate challenges facing student learning outcomes.

A 2017 evaluation of an education programme in northwest Syria by a (confidential) NGO found that teacher practice under their oversight was negatively impacted by the large ratio of students to teachers.

Prior to this study, little was known about the equity of learning opportunities for Syrian children. The ACU's 2018 report, "Governance and Gender Baseline Assessments Overview," covering Dar'a and Aleppo governorates, found that broader sociocultural norms likely created challenges in the education sector around equity and inclusion. For example, only 8% of respondents felt that Local Councils considered gender or vulnerable groups when providing jobs, and 57% of females had never participated in community engagement activities (ACU, 2018a). Such statistics suggest a learning environment in which girls, children with special needs, and other vulnerable populations struggle to engage in quality education.

The ACU released its 2018 Learning Spaces in Syria report in June 2018. As one of the widest reaching reports on the broader profile of the Syrian education sector, its findings will be summarised here, along with a similar study undertaken by Orange, also in 2018.

Functionality of learning spaces: Nineteen percent of the learning spaces assessed in 99 sub-districts were non-functional. This shows a marked improvement from past reports (41% in 2017 amongst 90 subdistricts and 48% in 2016 amongst 85 subdistricts). With the ACU having largely stable access to the same ZoC across the past three years, this suggests improvements in infrastructure rehabilitation, significantly so between 2017 and 2018. The highest areas of functionality were found in Dar'a and Quneitra (97%), followed by the Euphrates Shield (96%). The ACU's report also looked at functionality of classrooms and found that 92% of those in Euphrates Shield were fully equipped, followed by 89% in the southern governorates, and only 67% in YPG/SDF-controlled areas and 62% in Idleb.¹⁹

Gender-segregation of learning spaces: 16% of learning spaces in Idleb and its countryside were gender segregated.

Accessibility of learning spaces (Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) perspective): Before the conflict, 80% of learning spaces accessed their water needs through public networks. At present, the estimate is 22%. As a result, the majority of learning spaces now rely on trucked-in water for their needs, elevating the instability of access to potable water. A more striking figure is that only 42% of learning spaces provide drinking water for children, and that more than 31% of learning spaces have only enough taps to provide a 1:100 tap per child ratio. Idleb has the highest percentage of taps that need replacement, at 61%. Similarly, only 50% of assessed toilet blocks were operational, with the

¹⁹ The ACU defined Idleb as including "its adjacent countryside" which covers parts of Aleppo as defined by this study.

Euphrates Shield having the most functioning blocks at 74%, Idleb at 49%, and YPG/SDF-held spaces at 47%. Similar concerns regarding waste management were found: YPG/SDF-held areas were 66% cesspools, Idleb was 45% cesspools, and the Euphrates Shield was 19%.

Accessibility of learning spaces (children with special needs perspective): The ACU's 2018 report on learning spaces in camps found that 94% of said learning spaces did not have resources to support children with special needs.²⁰ The ACU's 2018 report on schools in camps found that 10% of children in learning spaces were orphans, and its 2018 report on learning spaces outside of camps found that 4% were. The latter report also found that 62% of orphans in learning spaces were in Idleb and rural areas around it. It also found that support services were lacking in areas such as school feeding (99% of the learning spaces surveyed in their report found no meals provision) and materials provision (84% of learning spaces surveyed did not provide basic school supplies). School administrators interviewed for this study presented slightly different figures (51% said they provided meals for school feeding). The ACU found that only 1% of learning spaces had specialist teachers to support the 24% of learning spaces found to have children with special needs. Furthermore, only 14% had counsellors, and only 21% had teachers who had attended psychological support services trainings.

Safety of learning spaces: Seventy-four percent of schools were assessed as safe.²¹ According to the ACU, the largest numbers of learning spaces deemed to be safe were found in the southern governorates (97%),²² followed by the Euphrates Shield (90%), YPG/SDF-controlled areas (84%), and finally Idleb (74%). Furthermore, 87% of children surveyed felt safe in school: 100% in Euphrates Shield, 91% in Idleb, and 64% in YPG/SDF-controlled areas.

Codes of conduct: A recent study by Orange (2018) of 2,781 self-identified teachers through an online survey found that only 49% of teachers reported the existence of a code of conduct, and only only 25% stated that codes of conducted were being fully implemented.

Infrastructure and materials: Seventy-one percent of student seats were usable, in Idleb and its countryside, 46% of learning spaces required blackboards and 47% required printers, and 52% of classrooms in Idleb and rural areas of Idleb, Aleppo, and Hama did not have heaters. The assessment undertaken by the ACU (2018) found that 58% of learning spaces in Idleb required additional textbooks, followed by 19% in YPG/SDF-held areas, and 7% in the Euphrates Shield. The ACU found that learning spaces in camps had the following requirements, listed in order of priority: i) textbooks (41%); ii) books and stationery (22%); iii) staff salaries (18%); iv) heating fuel (10%); and

²⁰ The ACU delineated special needs profiles as follows: 31% of such children had mental disabilities, 47% had motor disabilities, and 21% had "loss of one of the senses".

²¹ The ACU's thoughtful definition of "safe" as contextualised for Syria follows: "When the education process did not endanger learners' life (e.g. if the sub-district in which the learning spaces exists is not being shelled, is located far from the frontlines, etc.). This definition of the 'safe' learning spaces does not match the international standards (INEE, the Safe Learning spaces Declaration) of 'safe learning spaces'. The IMU team have judged that 'safe learning spaces' definition as per the international standards is not applicable in the Syrian context, by which the majority of learning spaces included in this study would not be ranked as safe. In this judgement, the IMU team have rather adopted and are closer to the judgement of Syrian parents, who see the learning spaces as 'safe' enough to allow their children to attend."

²² The June 2018 GoS assault on the southern governorates had not yet taken place when this data was collected.

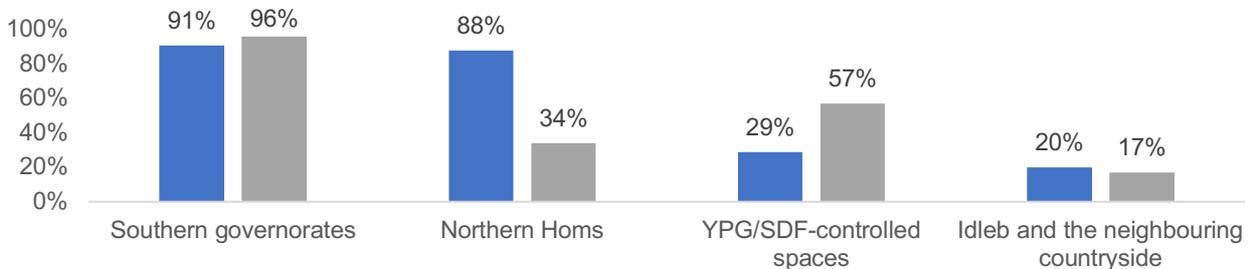
v) other (9%). In their 2018 study, Orange asked school administrators about their biggest challenges, and the most common response was lack of logistical and financial support.

School administrator and teacher profiles: Male school administrators account for 85% and females account for 15% of the total school administrator cohort. The ACU’s report also found that secondary level education was the terminal degree for 35% of contract teachers, while 41% held university degrees. Orange’s 2018 study of 2,781 self-identified teachers through an online survey²³ had a similar finding; that a majority of teachers held university degrees. It found that 23% of teachers were contract teachers, 79% were regularly employed, and that 16% were unpaid volunteers. The study by Orange (2018) found that most teachers had three to five years of teaching experience.

Student to classroom/student to teacher ratio: The ACU’s Learning Spaces in Syria report from 2018 found a large difference amongst learning spaces by area in regard to overcrowding.²⁴ The overall findings, however, roughly confirm the findings of this study: 33% of classrooms in Idleb were semi-overcrowded, 29% in Euphrates Shield, and 15% were in YPG/SDF-controlled areas.

Certification: The ACU’s 2018 assessment of the education sector (2018b) showed that there did not appear to be consistency with respect to which education authority provided certification or course completion documents by area or by grade level. For example, the GoS grants report cards at the primary level and in other “transitional” grades as follows: Southern governorates (91%), Northern Homs (88%), YPG/SDF-held spaces (29%), and Idleb and the neighbouring countryside (20%). The remainder of certificates are largely granted by the SIG, with the exception of the YPG/SDF-controlled spaces. The GoS provides lower and upper secondary certificates as follows: Southern governorates (96%), YPG/SDF-held spaces (57%), Northern Homs (34%), and Idleb and the neighbouring countryside (17%). The remainder of certificates are largely granted by the SIG, with the exception of the YPG/SDF-controlled spaces.

Figure 16: Grade completion documents and certificates provided by the GoS, by area



At present, the SIG provides certificates that have been benchmarked by the UK’s National Recognition Information Centre (NARIC) to facilitate access to the British tertiary education system for Syrian secondary school graduates. The assessment found the grade nine exams to be equivalent to Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) levels one and two, and grade twelve to be equivalent to RQF level three respectively, or roughly General Certificate of Secondary Education

²³ From Idleb (57.57%); Aleppo (31.32%); Hama (1.98%); Rural Damascus (5.14%); Homs (3.34%); Dar’a, Quneitra, and Lattakia (all less than 1%).

²⁴ The ACU defined semi-overcrowded as classrooms where there were 30-40 children, considering that most classrooms in Syria were designed before the conflict to hold 30 children.

(GCSE) and "A" levels (UK NARIC, 2017b). As previously mentioned, Turkey has started recognising the SIG certification, and reportedly allows SIG-accredited students to enrol in Turkish universities. In YPG/SDF-held areas, respondents reported that the authorities issue certifications for grades nine and twelve. However, this certification is only recognised by SDF-affiliated universities.²⁵

Parent Teacher Associations: Fifty percent of school administrators surveyed for the ACU's 2018 report on learning spaces in Syria stated that they did not hold regular meetings with parents, suggesting that such structures are not commonplace in Syria.

5.3.2 Education Service Providers

The following sections review the education service providers and the status of learning, progression, and wellbeing amongst Syrian children, based on secondary data. When analysing the status of education service providers in Syria, it is critical to note the changes that took place after the start of the conflict in 2010. While the GoS has remained the primary education service provider throughout Syria during the conflict, the success of various non-state armed groups in securing ZoC for themselves meant that a fracturing of the education sector occurred from roughly 2012 and continued through mid-June 2018, when Southern Syria returned to GoS control. As such, the GoS curriculum has been the primary framework for learning across the country, and has provided teacher salaries and student certifications to the majority of Syrian children. However, it was not uncommon across varying ZoC for parents/caregivers and education authorities to use modified versions of the GoS curriculum. In many ZoC, the section of the curriculum dealing with the history of Syria was deleted and replaced with locally acceptable narratives. Amongst YPG/SDF-affiliated authorities, Kurdish language classes were introduced from the elementary stage and several private institutes to teach the Kurdish language were established, something that was not feasible under GoS rule prior to 2011. The situation was more complex in non-GoS-held areas in Idlib, Aleppo, Dar'a, and Quneitra governorates. There, gender segregation became increasingly common in learning spaces, and new children enrolled without having passed the necessary exams. Furthermore, both informal and religious education increased. Separate certification pathways were established through the SIG and the YPG/SDF authorities.

By late 2014, five distinct education service providers existed in Syria. The GoS remained the main provider in areas under its control, as well as the secondary provider in a notable percentage of non-GoS-held areas. The YPG/SDF was the main provider in areas under its control, while the SIG and a variety of NGOs were the main providers in non-GoS-held areas. Finally, ISIS was the sole provider in areas under its control.

The following sections describe education service delivery under each main service provider.

²⁵ This helps explain why residents in YPG/SDF-held areas prefer to send their children to GoS learning spaces (to broaden their children's access to universities).

GoS-controlled areas

The GoS continues to be the main provider of education support in these areas, with (I)NGOs, UNICEF, UNRWA, UNESCO, and, to some extent, Syrian NGOs supporting its work.²⁶ The modification of the GoS curriculum was completed in early 2018. While the modifications were intended to be significant in scope, they have thus far been minor. To date, the modifications have primarily focussed on further development of sciences and mathematics. Efforts by an unnamed agency to help introduce topics related to psychosocial wellbeing into the curriculum revision did not come to fruition. The final set of revised textbooks will be released in 2019. The Ministry of Education (MoE) is also reportedly open to shifting their focus toward the kindergarten and early primary levels, and to receiving outside support in modifying their curricular content for those levels. Furthermore, they are apparently open to including more life skills-related content in the curriculum at a later time.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that learning outcomes and psychosocial wellbeing is poor amongst children in GoS-controlled areas (Confidential informant, 2018). Furthermore, the relative safety of GoS-affiliated learning spaces means that IDPs have sought to enrol their children in these spaces (Al Hessian, M., 2016). This has resulted in double and sometimes triple shifts, which have a negative impact on teacher practice and learning outcomes.

Teacher training by the MoE has been minimal over the period of the conflict (Confidential informant, 2018). However, now that the curriculum revision has been finalised, there is a shift in investment areas, at least from UN agencies, toward strengthening teacher training efforts, and an apparent willingness by the MoE to do the same. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the MoE is open to shifting its teacher training practices toward more active methods of pedagogy in the classroom. Respondents consider this a positive development, as until now traditional rote practices have been pervasive in GoS-affiliated learning spaces. The MoE has supported UNESCO's efforts to train teachers in psychosocial support for children, as well as remedial education initiatives in all but one governorate (UNESCO, 2018b).

YPG/SDF-controlled Northeast Syria²⁷

Although education provision in Northeast Syria is consolidated through the Kurdish Self Administration's MoE, it offers different curricula depending on local demographics. At present, two curricula are being used in these areas: the Kurdish Self Administration's curriculum, which was formally introduced into elementary learning spaces in academic year 2015-2016, and the GoS curriculum (without modifications) in private learning spaces and institutes throughout Arab-majority areas. According to key informants, many parents/caregivers prefer to send their children to the learning spaces with the GoS curriculum, even across control lines, as their children will receive GoS certification. The gradual introduction of the Kurdish Self Administration curriculum was accompanied by intensive preparation courses for teachers. The Kurdish Self Administration established several academies for training on the use of the new curriculum, focussed on both subject and cohort-level specialisation. The new curriculum differs significantly from other curricula in Syria, as it has removed National Education and Religious Education textbooks, and added subjects such as Women's

²⁶ Two confidential informants familiar with the operations of the MoE and these Syrian NGOs suggests that the capacity of these NGOs is weak, while that within the MoE is comparatively stronger. This is likely due to the lack of a civil society in Syria prior to the conflict, and the limited resourcing available to build said capacity in these areas of Syria.

²⁷ The information in this section is based on KII's with six residents in YPG/SDF-controlled territories, including three teachers.

Science, Moral Science, and Sociology and Life. In addition to the new curriculum, the Kurdish Self Administration has adopted a new methodology for considering elementary school progression rates, in which elementary students are not subject to failure at elementary school levels, and progression is not related to test results.

The language of instruction in the classroom in YPG/SDF-held areas also differs depending on local demographics. For example, learning spaces in Kurdish-majority areas, such as Ain al Arab (Kobani), teach the curriculum in Kurdish, with Arabic introduced as second language in the fifth grade. Conversely, in Arab-majority areas, such as Menbij, the curriculum is taught in Arabic, while Kurdish is introduced as a second language in the first grade. In both instances, English is introduced in the fourth grade. In al-Hasakeh and Quamishli, where the Kurdish Self Administration coordinates with the GoS on education, the curriculum in Kurdish is limited to primary school, while lower secondary and upper secondary learning spaces are taught in Arabic. The Syriac Christian minority has also sought to have its own schools, preferring to teach children in the Syriac language. Like many of their Kurdish neighbours, there is at least anecdotally a preference for the GoS curriculum given the link to the GoS school completion certificate, which is widely recognised, unlike the Kurdish one (Agence France-Presse, 2018).

Non-GoS-held areas in Idleb and Aleppo

While the education sector in many non-GoS-held areas in Northwest Syria continues to receive support from the GoS, the SIG and (I)NGOs are the leading education provider in these areas.²⁸ The support (I)NGOs provide to the formal education sector is significant, and many have established a number of non-formal education centres as well, mainly concentrated in IDP camps.²⁹ Most (I)NGO-supported learning spaces use the modified-GoS curriculum developed by the SIG's MoE.³⁰

In 2015, the SIG established several Provincial EDs to oversee education districts in non-GoS-held areas. These EDs are primarily responsible for distributing support to learning spaces in their governorates, and for coordinating amongst local learning spaces, (I)NGOs, and education sector staff to discuss and determine priorities. EDs are believed to provide salaries to approximately 20% of teachers in non-GoS-held Northwest Syria, with the remaining 80% relying on (I)NGOs, the GoS, or not receiving salaries.³¹

²⁸ Survey data from Northwest Syria-based respondents found that 64% of the respondents selected (I)NGOs as main education service provider in their areas, 36% selected the SIG, and only 5% selected the Syrian Salvation Government (SSG), which is affiliated with HTS. This data is not likely representative of the actual profile of service provision, as only 5% of the learning spaces visited under the study were (I)NGO-supported.

²⁹ The non-formal education centres intend to provide programmes to meet the acute need in IDP camps, which are found mostly in border areas.

³⁰ In addition to the modified-GoS curriculum, some NGOs use, or support learning spaces which use, the Al-Rashidi accelerated curriculum, which is an old curriculum used to teach the principles of reading and writing through the Quran.

³¹ According to KIIIs with members of the EDs in Aleppo, Dar'a, and Idleb governorates.

Despite the establishment of the HTS-affiliated SSG³² in October 2017, SIG Provincial EDs and (I)NGOs continue to operate in Northwest Syria without significant interference. Furthermore, the SSG does not provide much support to the education sector in non-GoS-held areas of the country.

The Euphrates Shield area³³

While administratively affiliated with the SIG, the Euphrates Shield area's education sector is closely overseen by the Turkish government. For example, although learning spaces in the area teach the SIG's modified curriculum, some of the content and political references have been further modified by Turkish authorities. Additionally, Turkish language classes have been introduced at all levels as a second language, and most learning spaces have been given Turkish names and fly the Turkish flag. Furthermore, the Turkish MoE has announced its intention to replace the existing curriculum with the Turkish state curriculum on several occasions, and has discussed recognising the SIG's graduation certifications in Turkish universities.

UNRWA-supported schools for Palestinian children

UNRWA's education sector data shows that it continues to provide high quality services to its Palestinian beneficiaries in Syria. The attendance rates show that there is a high demand for, and easy access to learning spaces: the primary school net attendance ratio was 96.3%, slightly higher for girls (96.6%) than for boys (96.0%) (UNRWA, 2016). Progression, transition, and completion statistics suggest that the health of the education system is strong: the survival rate from the first to the last grade of primary school was 97.8% and the primary completion rate 93.7% (UNRWA, 2016). The transition rate to secondary school was 96.8% (UNRWA, 2016). A statistic regarding literacy of young women aged 15-25, further supports this claim of strong quality, with a literacy rate of 95.3% (UNRWA, 2016).

5.3.3 The status of early grade learning

Stakeholders surveyed during Phase I of this study noted that the majority of learning spaces have a curricular focus on early grade literacy (67%) and numeracy (81%), as well as functional literacy (52%) and numeracy (67%). This suggests that there are indeed efforts underway by teachers to help children establish basic literacy and numeracy skills. However, these efforts do not appear to be translated into learning outcomes. Four separate agency assessments in 2017³⁴ looked at learning outcomes in Northwest Syria, and two assessments³⁵ looked at learning outcomes in Northwest, Northeast, and Southern Syria in 2018.

The overall finding is that children are nowhere near grade-level appropriate learning outcome targets, for either literacy or numeracy. People In Need's 2018 report *Literacy and Numeracy in PIN-supported Learning spaces in Northwest Syria: Analysis of ASER Endline Results* summarises the dire state of learning at the primary level:

³² HTS established the SSG following its defeat of rival armed factions in July 2017. While the SSG was meant to supplant the SIG and other governance and service bodies in northwest Syria, it failed to gain enough popular and material support to do so, and thus has had little impact on the administration of non-GoS-held Northwest Syria.

³³ Based on KIIs with eight residents in the Euphrates Shield area, including two teachers.

³⁴ Chemonics, IRC, People in Need, and Save the Children.

³⁵ People in Need and Save the Children.

Literacy:

- Over 60% of children in Grade 3 and above are not reaching literacy competencies expected of children at a Grade 2 level.

Numeracy:

- Above Grade 2, only 1-9% of children in each grade could recognise numbers between 0-9.
- Boys typically scored lower than girls did by 4-16%.

While obtaining accurate figures for Syria’s overall profile of learning outcomes at the lower primary level is difficult, given the challenging nature of data collection in Syria, these findings are indicative of the scale of the problem. These figures take on even greater meaning when contrasted with pre-crisis figures, when Syria had a 95% literacy rate (OCHA, 2014). These findings are particularly concerning at the Grade 2 and Grade 3 levels, where measurement of literacy and numeracy against grade-level targets serve as indicators of the likelihood of later learning success. The reasons behind such low levels of achievement are likely numerous, ranging from psychosocial to educational to health³⁶ concerns. From the education perspective, the following types of issues are likely at play:

- Limited access to quality pre-primary education³⁷, during which time pre-literacy and pre-numeracy skill development can and should be well-established;
- Limited access to the requisite number of hours in school actively learning (a key indicator of the Opportunity to Learn Index);
- Learning environments that do not support wellbeing;
- Insufficient amounts of appropriate teaching and learning materials; and
- Poor quality of teaching practices in support of literacy and numeracy.

The following table summarises the findings of the above referenced six learning assessments in Syria from 2017 and 2018.

Table 7: Early grade literacy and numeracy outcomes

| Grade Level | Literacy | Numeracy | Location |
|-------------|--|---|--------------------|
| n/a | Accuracy: 35% of children were able to read correctly (61-100 words) from a passage of 129 words (Save the Children, 2017c). | Place value: 40% got all correct (Save the Children, 2017c). Number sense: 36% achieved a 50% rating (Save the Children, 2017c). | Dar’a and Quneitra |

³⁶ The ACU’s 2018 report on learning spaces in Syria found that 76% of surveyed students did not eat meals before going to school in the morning.

³⁷ The best data on the availability of pre-primary education is from the ACU’s 2018 report on learning spaces in Syria, which found that only 6% of learning spaces had kindergartens. Notably, 15% of learning spaces in YPG/SDF-controlled areas had them.

| Grade Level | Literacy | Numeracy | Location |
|-------------|--|--|-----------------------------------|
| | <p>Fluency: 62% were unable to read more than 10 words correctly per minute (Save the Children, 2017c).</p> <p>Above Grade 2, up to 2% of students in each Grade scored a level 0, and up to 12% scored a 1. (Save the Children, 2017c).</p> | <p>Missing numbers: 94% scored 50% and above (Save the Children, 2017c).</p> <p>Addition and subtraction: 42% and 40%, respectively, scored either 0 or 1 out of 3 (Save the Children, 2017c).</p> | |
| G2 | <2% could read in Arabic (Save the Children, 2018). | 20% of grade age appropriate students could count in the double digits (Save the Children, 2018). | Northeast Syria |
| | 14% could read in Kurdish to the standard for literacy (Save the Children, 2018). | 80% of Grade 2 students have not yet achieved a Grade 2 level in math (People In Need, 2018) | Aleppo and Idleb |
| G3 | 10% reading at grade level (DFID-funded Idarah Project, 2017). | Not available | Rural Damascus, Idleb, and Aleppo |
| G4 | 62% were unable to read at G2 level (Save the Children, 2017a). | Not available | Urban areas of Aleppo and Idleb |
| | 50% able to read at a Grade 2 level (People In Need, 2018). | Not available | Aleppo and Idleb |
| G5 | 62% were unable to read at G2 level (Save the Children, 2017a). | Not available | Urban areas of Aleppo and Idleb |
| G6 | 59% were unable to read at a G2 level (IRC, 2017). | 64% were not able to solve a subtraction problem at the G2 level (IRC, 2017). | Idleb |
| G7 | 52% were unable to read at a G2 level (IRC, 2017). | 63% were not able to solve a subtraction problem at the G2 level (IRC, 2017). | Idleb |
| G8 | 35% were unable to read at a G2 level (IRC, 2017). | 46% were not able to solve a subtraction problem at the G2 level (IRC, 2017). | Idleb |
| | | 38% are still below a Grade 2 level (People In Need, 2018) | Aleppo and Idleb |

The following table breaks down the progression statistics by ZoC, showing that, with the exception of the Euphrates Shield and YPG/SDF-controlled areas,³⁸ most children progress based on their end of year exams. Considering that learning levels against global standards are very low in Syria, as detailed above, it might be surprising to see that progression is still high and determined mainly by exams. However, as is the case in many contexts, progression and learning statistics are not necessarily correlated. In some cases, progression is internally politicised to give the appearance of a healthy education system. As detailed in the literature around some of the negative implications of high stakes testing systems, curriculum narrowing can occur, in which the focus in the classroom shifts to teaching to the test. This might be the case in Syria.

Table 8: Progression statistics by ZoC

| | Passing exams | First time registration ³⁹ | Exhaustion of repeating the same grade ⁴⁰ | Placement test |
|---|---------------|---------------------------------------|--|----------------|
| IDP camp schools (ACU, 2014) | 65% | | | |
| Idleb (ACU, 2018b) | 82% | 11% | 2% | 5% |
| Eastern Ghouta (ACU, 2018b) | 73% | 19% | 4% | 5% |
| Southern Governorates (ACU, 2018b) | 88% | 9% | 1% | 1% |
| Euphrates Shield (ACU, 2018b) | 39% | 22% | - | 39% |
| Northern Countryside of Homs (ACU, 2018b) | 97% | - | 3% | - |
| YPG/SDF-controlled Areas (ACU, 2018b) | 37% | 47% | 5% | 11% |

³⁸ In the Euphrates Shield, it is possible that because of the shift to Turkish government oversight, the use of placement exams is higher there than in other governorates with longer-established systems. A similar case might be found in the YPG/SDF-controlled spaces, where the establishment of new schools under their oversight might lead to their higher use of first time registration.

³⁹ First time registration is the same as being placed into a grade through an assessment when you have not attended that school in the past school year.

⁴⁰ Such considerations may be made for students who show academic promise but struggle with summative assessments.

5.3.4 The status of child socioemotional wellbeing⁴¹

Existing literature suggests that children in Syria have been affected by toxic stress since the start of the conflict. A 2015 report from one of the WoS education cluster hubs described the environment in which children were going to school (Southern Turkey Education Cluster (Syria response), 2015):

"Even when learning spaces remain open, in the context of such violence many children are too terrified to attend. They may be afraid of walking to school, fearing of being hurt, killed or kidnapped. Parents may also be afraid of sending their children to school. Some children may have to stay at home because loved ones have been injured."

The statistics from the only comprehensive assessment of children's mental health and wellbeing, published by Save the Children in 2017, *Invisible Wounds: The impact of six years of war on the mental health of Syria's children*, provided rigorously sourced, quantitative data to back up this profile of wellbeing. Almost all children surveyed said that aerial bombardments were their primary cause of stress and 50% of children said when in school they either "never" or "rarely" felt safe (Save the Children, 2017b). Eight-nine percent of adults said that the nature of children's wellbeing worsened over the course of the war (Save the Children, 2017b). A majority of adults (80%) said that more aggressive behaviours and bedwetting/involuntary urination had become common—both of which are symptomatic of toxic stress and post-traumatic stress disorder in children (Save the Children, 2017b).

Additional data from 2017 confirms these findings: 80% of assessed children in Aleppo, Idlib, and Rural Damascus governorates reported feeling anxious, worried, or stressed (DFID-funded Idarah Project, 2017). Considering that teachers are a critical support to wellbeing, it is not surprising that 73% of teachers were found to have no psychosocial support courses available to them (ACU, 2017b). Furthermore, across all 14 governorates surveyed by Save the Children for the Invisible Wounds report in 2017, "60% of adults cited the loss of education as one of the biggest impacts on their children's daily life." The NARIC study from 2017 flagged concerns about student motivation, including for higher performing students, due to issues ranging from instability and insecurity to the resulting gaps in contact hours (NARIC, 2017a).

Significant evidence exists to prove that toxic stress experienced in early childhood has permanent, lasting effects later in life, affecting physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development (Shonkoff, et al. 2012; Frank, 2014). More recent data suggests that, while many Syrian children likely experienced toxic stress as described in data from 2015-2017, the overall status of wellbeing is likely improving. The ACU's 2018 report on learning spaces in camps found that only 15% of children had difficulty concentrating and 11% of children suffered from nervousness and agitation (ACU, 2018b). Teachers largely confirmed such findings. When asked what issues negatively affected children in their learning spaces, 17% said poor marks, 14% said difficulty concentrating, and 12% expressed

⁴¹ The study uses the following definition of socio-emotional skills from Jones and Bouffard (2012), which underline measurements of socio-emotional wellbeing measurement. Socioemotional skills, sometimes referred to as non-cognitive or 21st century skills, can be defined within these domains of child development: i) emotional processes: for example, emotion recognition and regulation, empathy, and perspective taking; ii) social and interpersonal processes: for example, interpreting others' behaviour, communicating clearly, respecting others; and iii) cognitive processes: for example, working memory, inhibiting inappropriate responses, attention control, and higher-level executive functioning skills. They can be measured through an assessment of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.

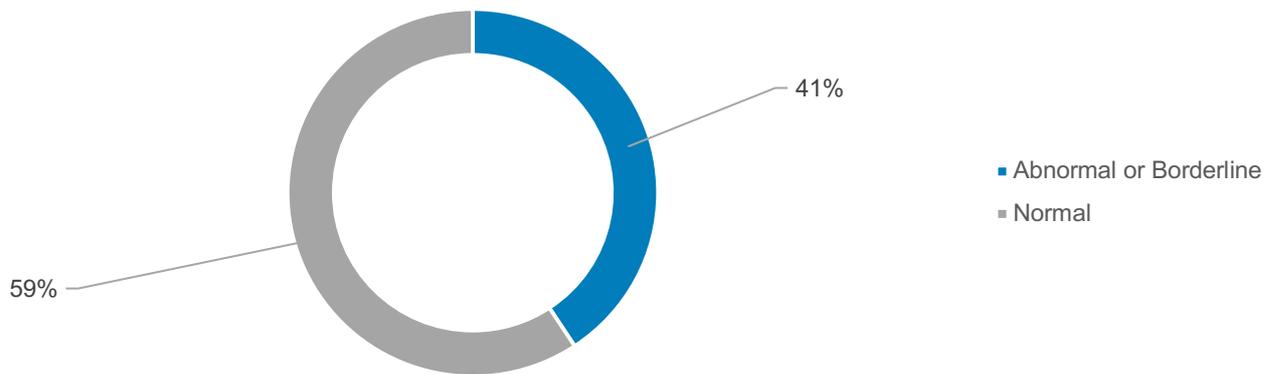
children’s difficulty in “memorising”. The prevalence of such concerns was highest in Eastern Ghouta and Idleb and its surrounding areas.

A recent assessment of wellbeing amongst roughly 600 primary school children in Idleb and Aleppo in August 2018 found that, while higher rates of abnormality in relation to wellbeing status exist, they are at lower levels than seen in the past (DFID-funded Manahel Project, unpublished). This study found that 41% of children across Aleppo and Idleb were found to be in the abnormal to borderline range for wellbeing.

Ten percent of parents/caregivers surveyed by the ACU for its 2018 study on learning spaces in Syria said that their children always express unwillingness to go to school, and 54% said they sometimes express such concerns (ACU, 2018c).

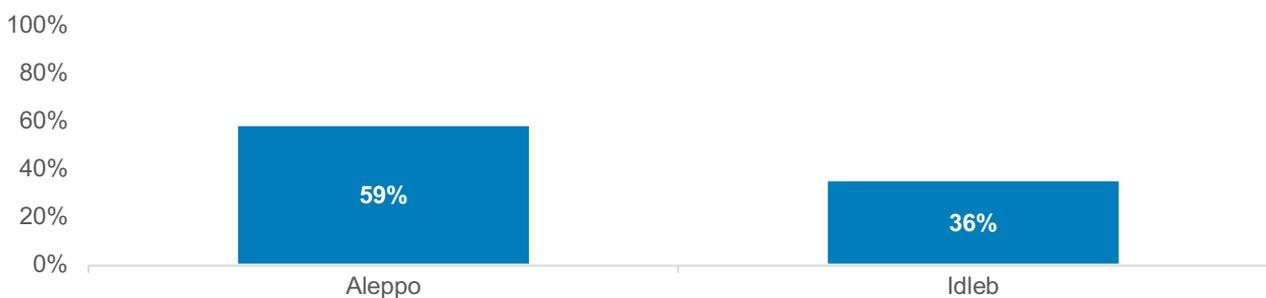
The following figures show the status of wellbeing under the assessment conducted by the DFID-funded Manahel Project.

Figure 17: Wellbeing status of total child population assessed under the DFID-funded Manahel Project



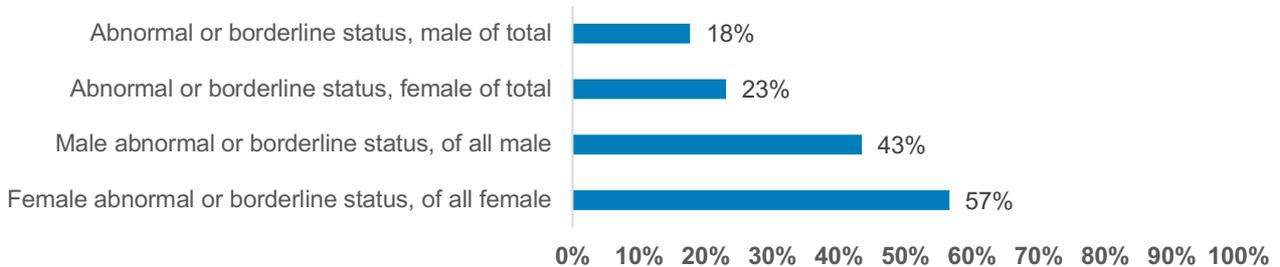
Children in Aleppo were far less likely than their counterparts in Idleb to be well: 59% (compared to 36%) were found to be in the abnormal to borderline range (DFID-funded Manahel Project, unpublished).

Figure 18: Abnormal or borderline wellbeing status of the total child population as assessed under the DFID-funded Manahel Project, organised by governorate



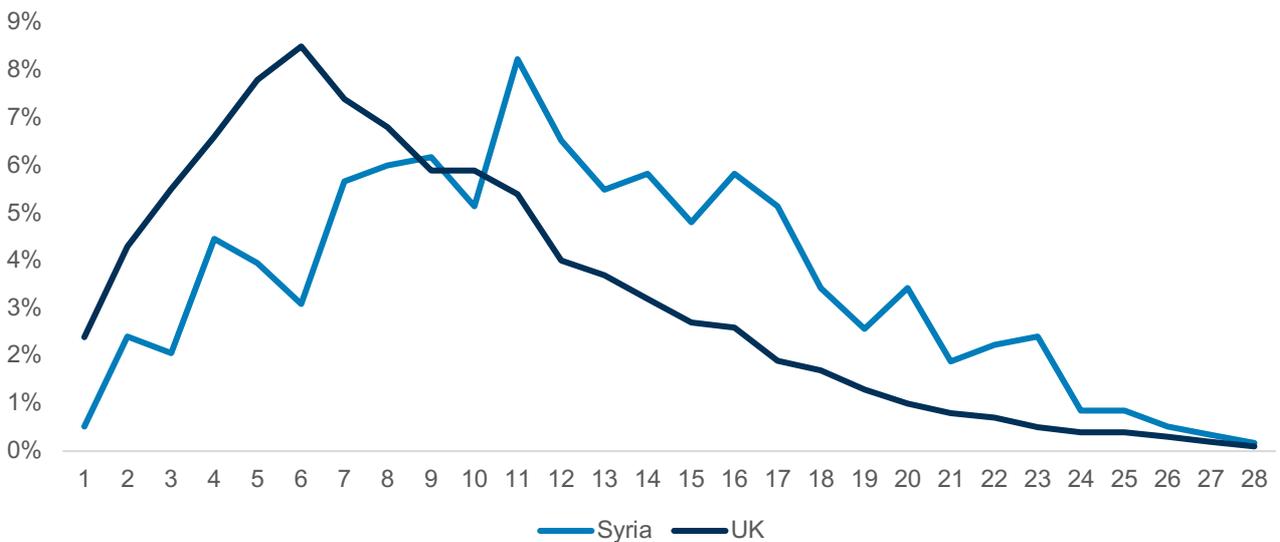
Girls were more likely to be in the abnormal to borderline wellbeing range than boys, at 23% and 18% respectively, of the total population assessed. Fifty-seven percent of all girls and 43% of all boys fell in the abnormal to borderline range⁴² for wellbeing.

Figure 19: Gender profile of wellbeing, of the total child population as assessed under the DFID-funded Manahel Project



For comparison, the rankings for these children are compared to the norms for children in the United Kingdom (Youth In Mind, 2018), using the total difficulties scores.⁴³ At their highest rates of stress, primary school age children (age 5-10) in Syria are at least three to four percentage points above their UK colleagues.

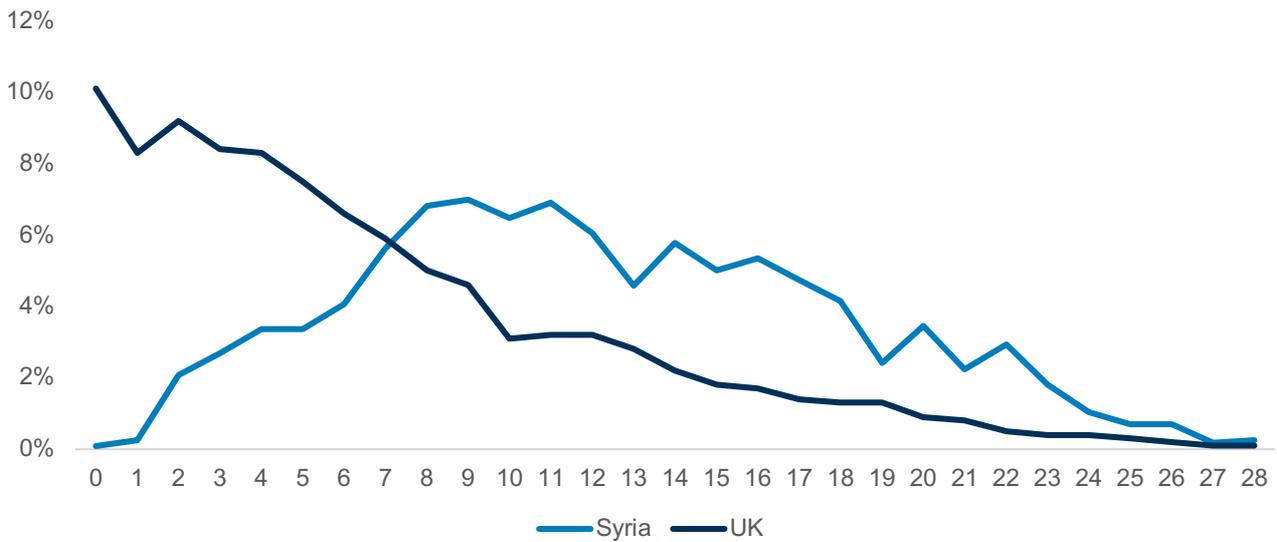
Figure 20: Parental scores for child (age 5-10) wellbeing in Syria compared to norms in the UK



⁴² As defined by a scale developed for the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire.

⁴³ The higher the number on the X axis, the more the child is struggling. Parents/caregivers tend to rate their children as being under more stress than do teachers, and thus these charts are presented separately.

Figure 21: Teacher scores for child (age 5-10) wellbeing in Syria compared to norms in the UK



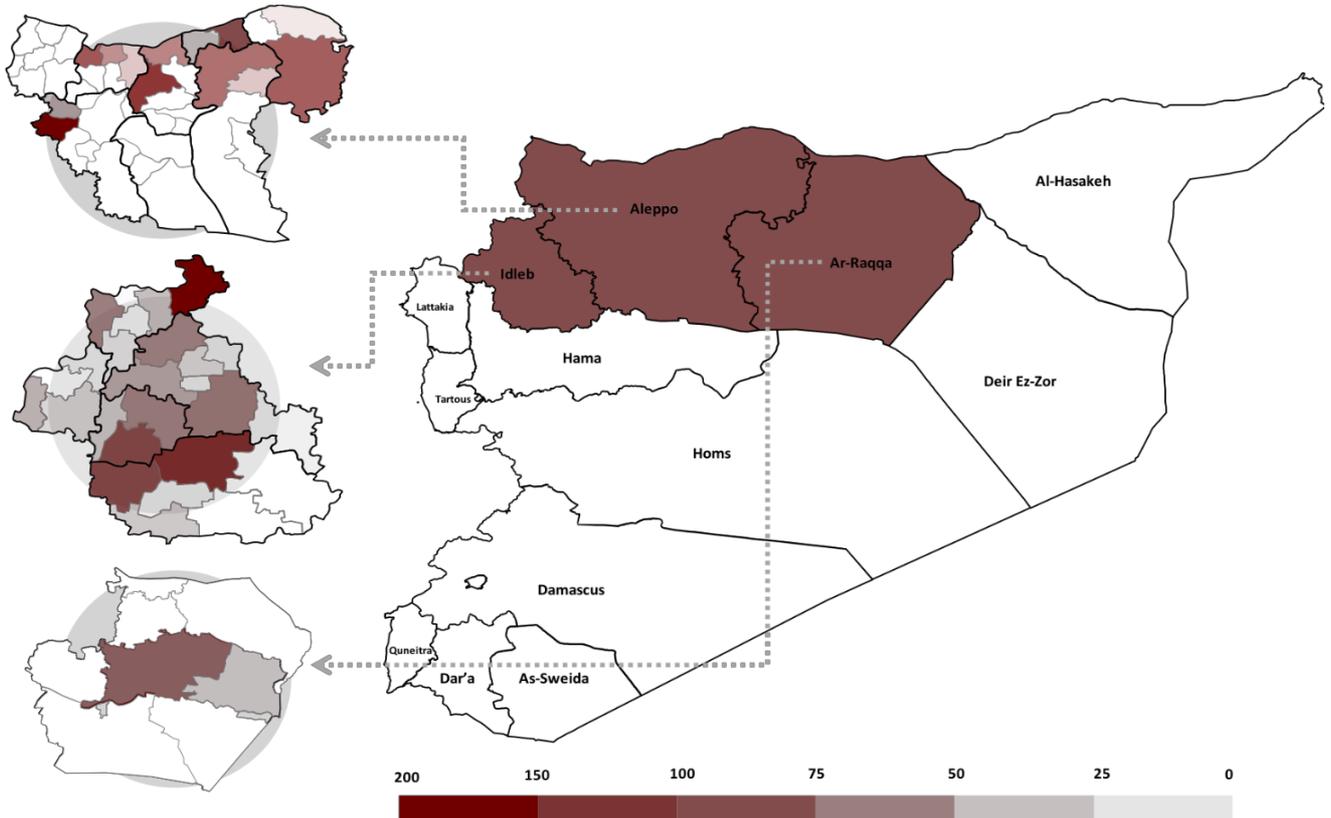
These statistics are not surprising given the context in which teaching and learning is taking place. However, the fact that only 19% of this project’s Phase I survey respondents said that child social and emotional wellbeing efforts were taking place in 50-100% of learning spaces in their areas of operation, and that less than 11% of respondents said the same for teacher wellbeing, helps explain that gaps that exist in effective child wellbeing-related service provision. This topic is further explored in the sections on the [nature of the learning environment in support of wellbeing](#) as well as [teacher practices in support of wellbeing](#).

6 Overview of data collection context

6.1 Governorates

Forty-eight percent of the data collected was from Idleb, 41% was from Aleppo, and 10% was from Ar-Raqqa. Darker subdistricts reflect higher numbers of sites visited.

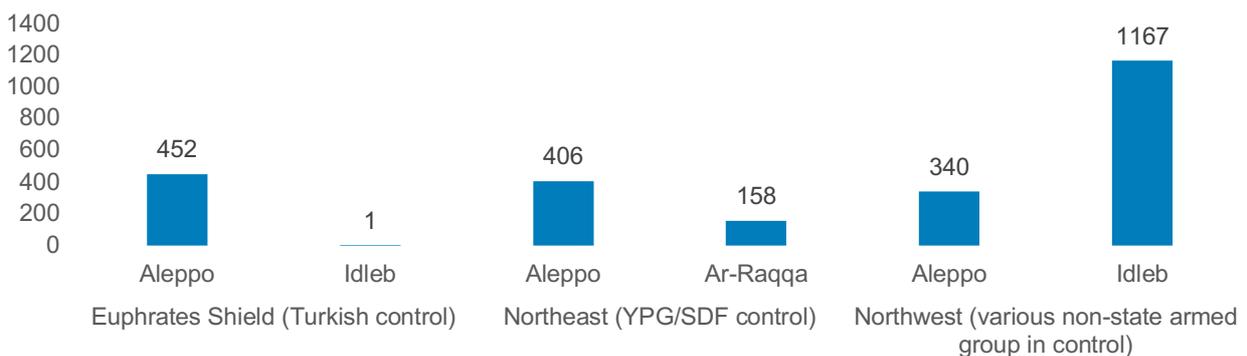
Figure 22: Location of data collection sites, by governorate



6.2 ZoC

The following figure shows the number of records collected by ZoC rather than administrative boundaries. Sixty-one percent of data was collected from non-GoS held Northwest Syria, 23% from YPG/SDF-controlled Northeast Syria, and the remaining 16% from the Turkish government-controlled Euphrates Shield.

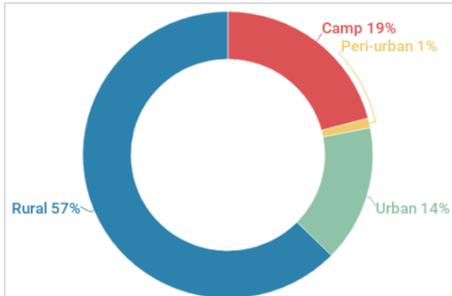
Figure 23: Records by ZoC and governorate



6.3 Type of community

The majority of respondents were in rural areas (57%), followed by these other community types: camps (19%), urban areas (14%), and peri-urban areas (1%).

Figure 24: Type of communities where respondents lived

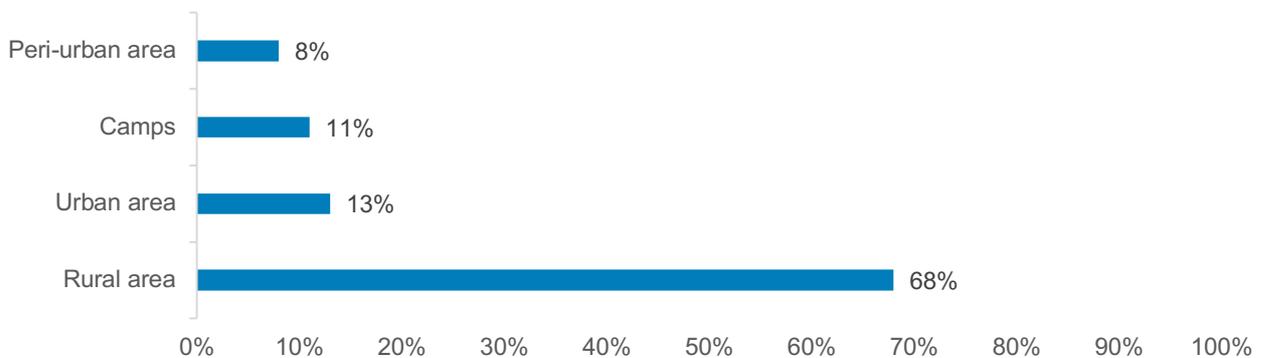


6.4 Profile of learning spaces visited

6.4.1 Overview

Enumerators visited 294 learning spaces. They undertook 281 classroom observations of reading or maths lessons. They also conducted 212 school observations to review the nature of the safety of the space in support of children’s wellbeing. The following figure shows where the learning spaces were located, by community type

Figure 25: Learning spaces’ location (community type)

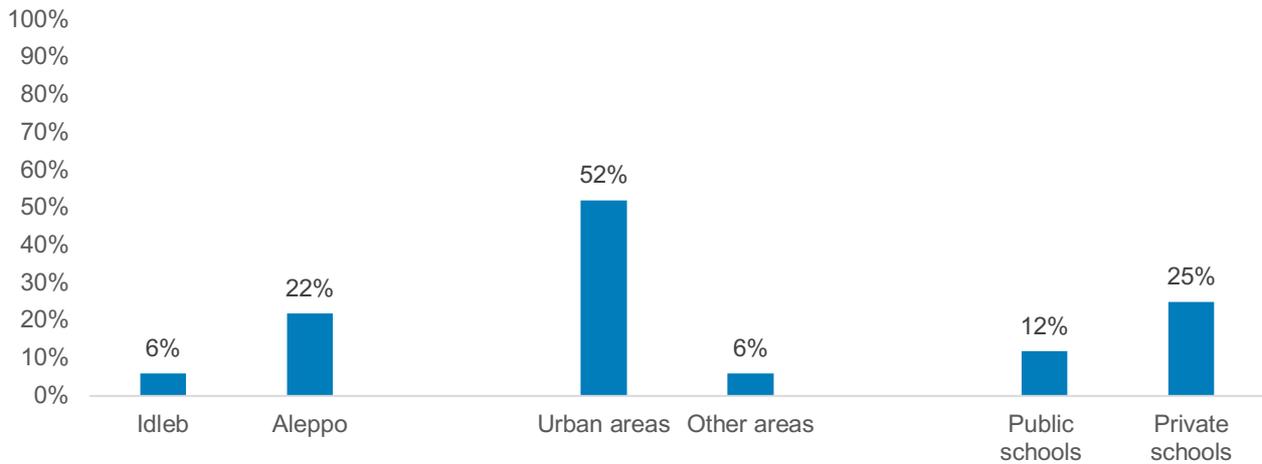


The majority of rurally-based learning spaces were in Idleb (73%). The majority of learning spaces in peri-urban areas were in Ar-Raqqa (30%). In Aleppo, 36% of learning spaces were in urban areas, and in Ar-Raqqa 28% were in urban areas.

The mass majority of learning spaces were public (98%), with only a small percentage in Aleppo characterised as private (2%).

Twenty-two percent of learning spaces in Aleppo had shifts that were specific to boys or girls, or were either all-girl or all-boy learning spaces; this was the case for 6% of learning spaces in Idleb. Fifty-two percent of learning spaces in urban areas had such gender-specific divisions, while other community types had 0-6% of spaces with such divisions. Twelve percent of public learning spaces had shifts that were gender specific or were solely gender specific; this was the case for 25% of private learning spaces. The following figure summarises these findings.

Figure 26: Learning spaces with shifts that were gender specific or learning spaces that were solely gender specific



6.4.2 Grade 2 and 3 classes

Enumerators observed roughly a 50% split between Grade 2 and Grade 3 classes, with four more Grade 2 classes observed than Grade 3 classes.

6.4.3 Subject

More Arabic classes (59%) were observed than maths classes (41%).

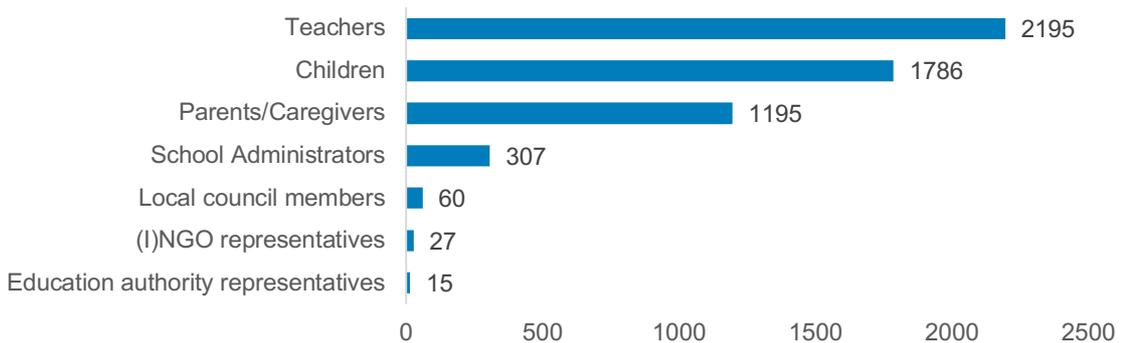
7 Findings

7.1 Profile of service providers and stakeholders

7.1.1 Summary of informant profiles

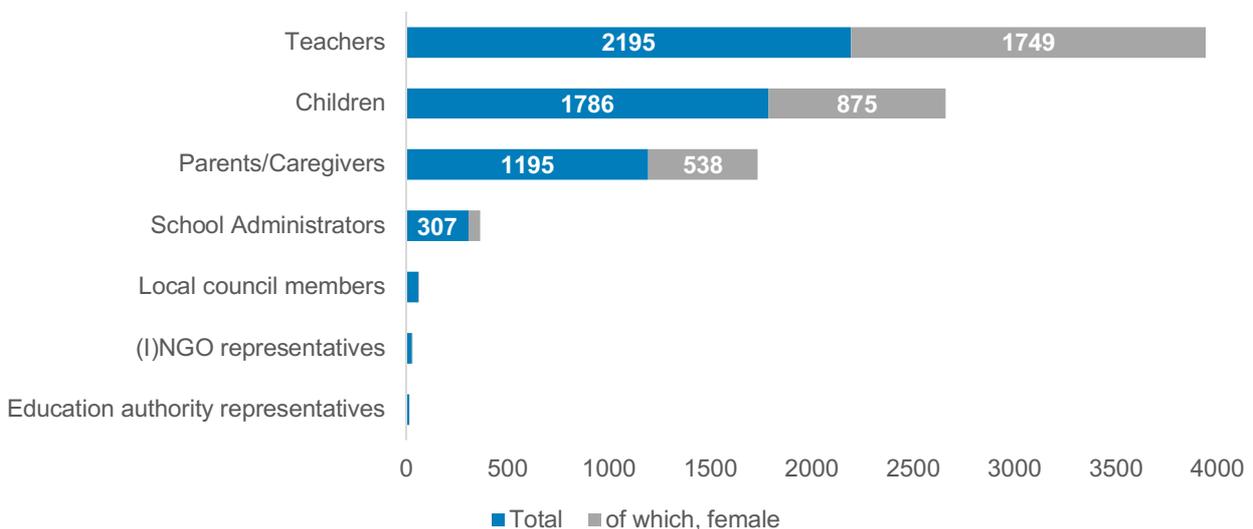
Primary, field level data was collected from 5,580 informants, with a prioritised focus on teachers, children, and parents/caregivers. The numbers of representatives from entities such as education authorities and Local Councils was lower, as they were only meant to provide broader perspectives. The profiles of respondents are provided below, quantified by record numbers.⁴⁴

Figure 27: Data records by respondent type



Females represented 49% of the total respondents of the study, which is roughly representative of demographics for the area.

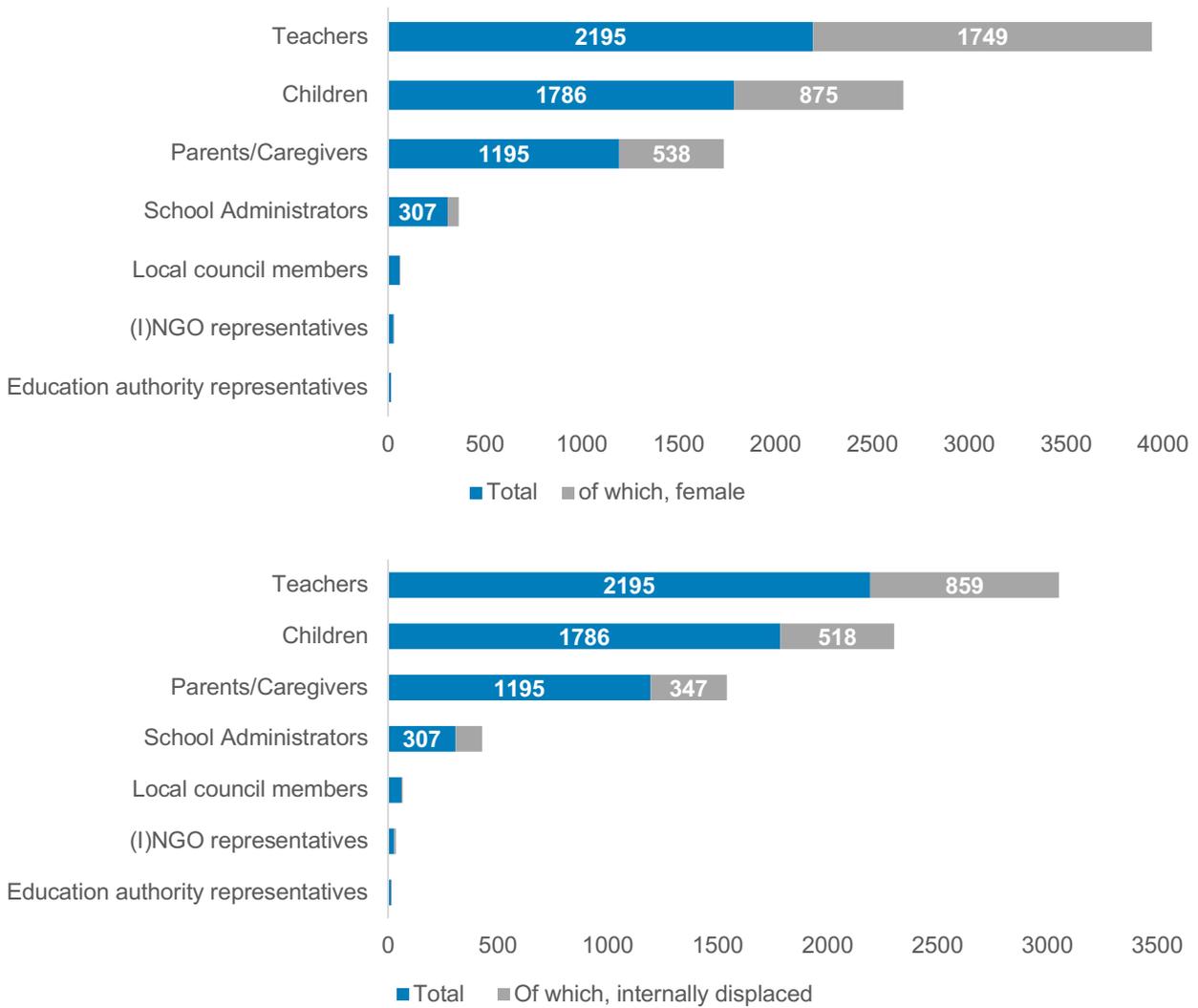
Figure 28: Respondents, of which are female (as a percentage of total)



⁴⁴ Because children, parents/caregivers, teachers, and school administrators were interviewed in groups, the below figures do not capture every informant but rather records from interactions with respondents, whether individual or not.

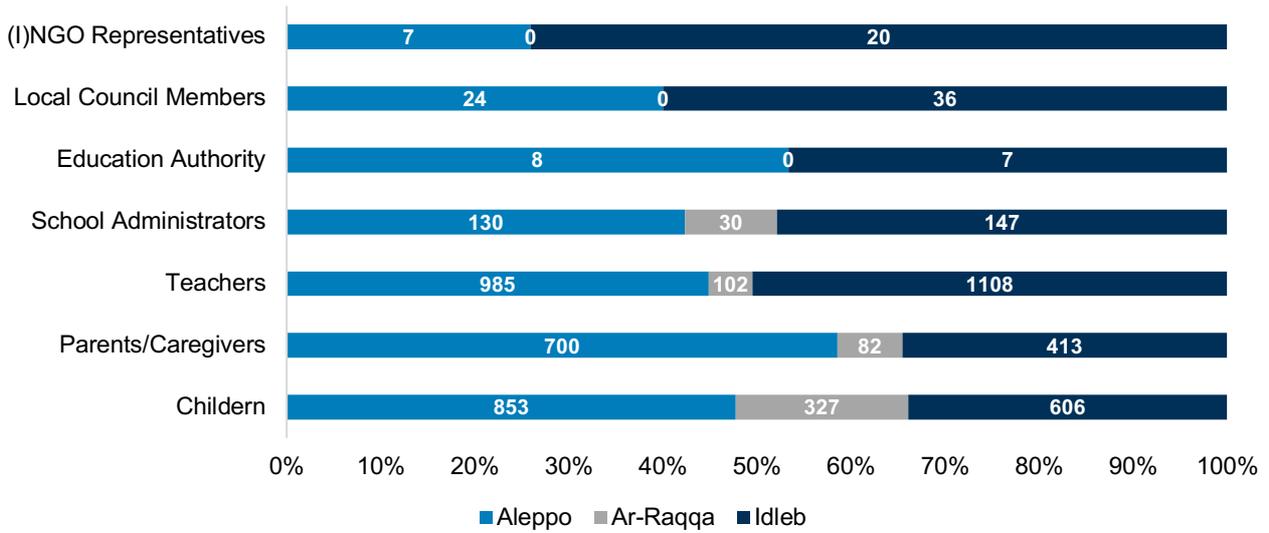
Approximately 29% of all respondents were internally displaced, again roughly representative of the demographics of the area.

Figure 29: Internally displaced respondents as a percentage of total



The following figure shows the breakdown by of respondent type, by governorate. While there were quite a few more parents/caregivers and children interviewed in Aleppo than in Idleb, all other respondent types were roughly equal in number.

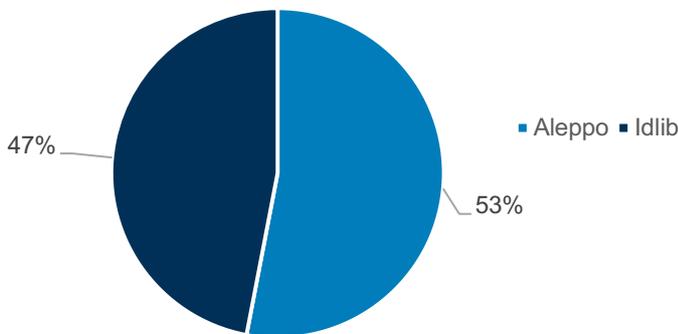
Figure 30: Profile of respondent by governorate



7.1.2 Education Authorities

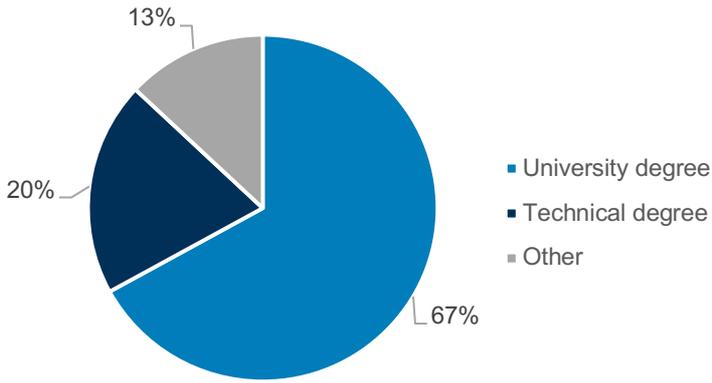
Enumerators visited 15 education authority offices in seven districts; 53% in Aleppo and 47% in Idlib. Examples of titles they held included Director of Education and Secretary of the Guidance Office.

Figure 31: Location of education authorities visited, by governorate



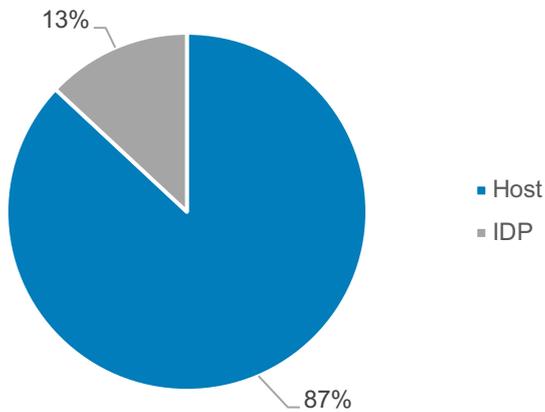
Sixty-seven percent held university degrees, 20% held technical degrees, and 13% held ‘other’ degrees, such as a Diploma in Philosophy.

Figure 32: Type of degree held by education authority representatives



The majority (87%) were not internally displaced, and the two that were (13%) were from Idleb.

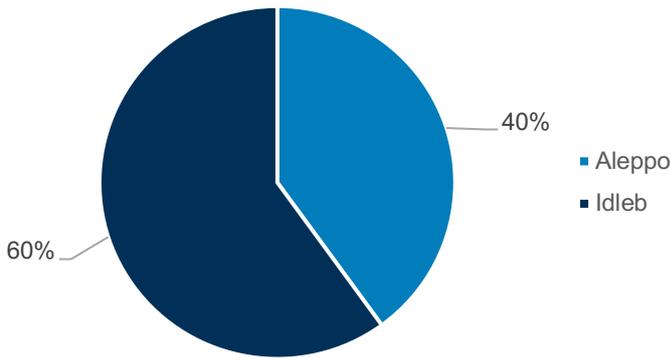
Figure 33: Displacement status of education authority representatives



7.1.3 Local Council representatives

Enumerators visited 60 Local Councils; 40% in Aleppo and 60% in Idleb. Respondents held the following titles: Member of Local Council (15), Head of Local Council (14), President (12), Director of Education Office (10), and Chairman (3).

Figure 34: Location of Local Councils visited



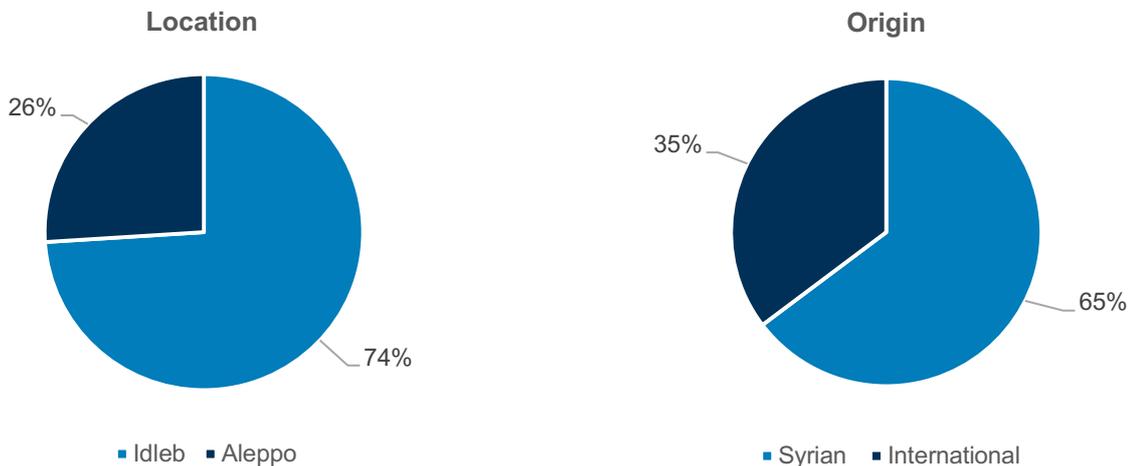
Most representatives had university degrees (64%). Representatives in Idleb were more likely to have higher degrees than those in Aleppo. Seventeen percent and 19% held technical degrees in Aleppo and Idleb respectively. Furthermore, There was a greater chance of someone having a secondary degree in Aleppo (29%) than in Idleb (3%).

Fifteen percent were internally displaced, with those in Aleppo being more likely to be as such (21%) than those in Idleb (8%).

7.1.4 (I)NGO representatives

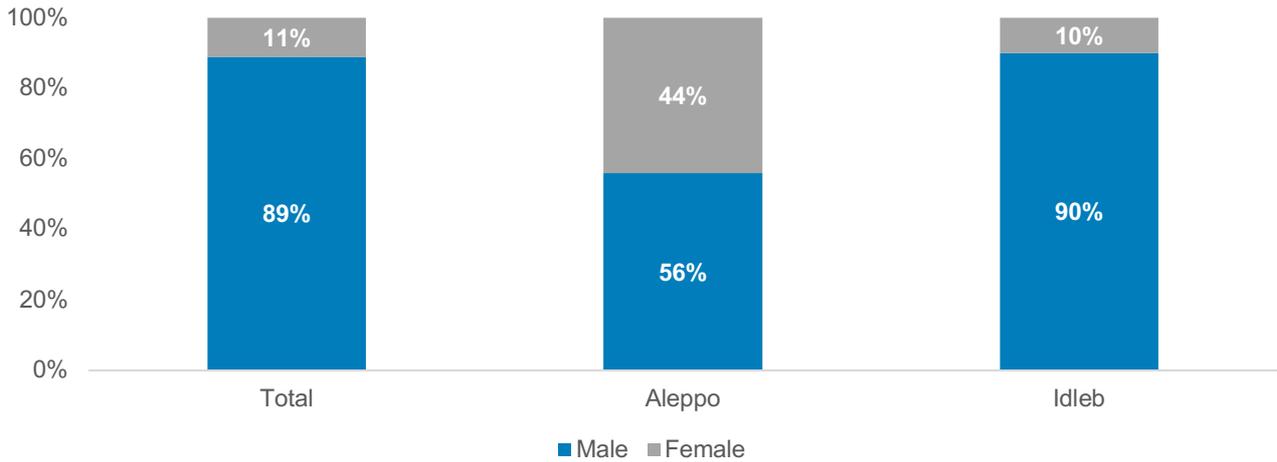
Enumerators visited 27 (I)NGO offices (from 17 (I)NGOs in five districts). The majority, 11, were Syrian NGOs, and six were INGOs. Seventy-four percent were in Idleb and 26% in Aleppo.

Figure 35: Location and origin of NGOs visited



Males represented 89% of the respondent group, though women in Aleppo were more likely to be (I)NGO representatives (44%) than in Idleb (10%).

Figure 36: Profile of (I)NGO representatives, by governorate and gender

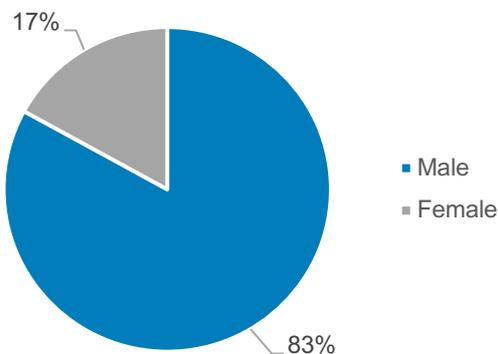


The majority held university degrees (93%), with a higher percentage in Idleb (97%) than Aleppo (82%). Thirty percent were internally displaced, with a 50% split between men and women in Aleppo, whereas 100% of the displaced population in Idleb was male.

7.1.5 School administrators

The study engaged 307 school administrators as respondents. On contrast to the preponderance of female teachers, school administrators tended to be male (81-85%⁴⁵ male, 15-19% female).

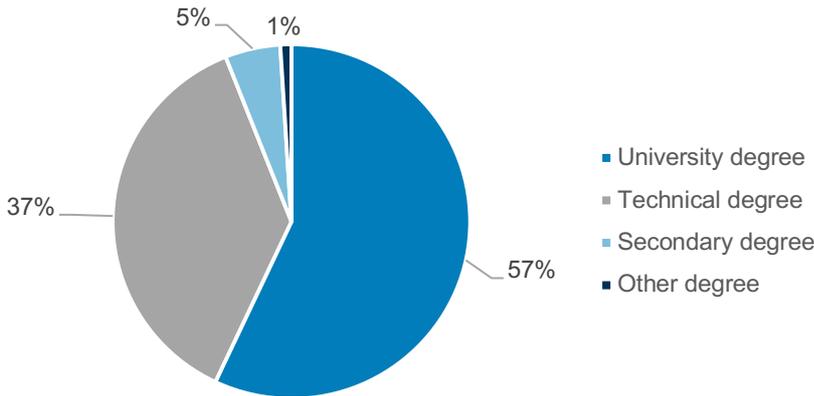
Figure 37: Profile of school administrators, by gender



The vast majority (94%-100%) were certified teachers (96% of women and 94% of men). The majority of school administrators had university degrees (57%), followed by technical degrees (37%). A small percentage held only secondary degrees (5%) or another degree (1%), for example a Diploma from the Institute of Business Administration. Men were far more likely to have university degrees than women (63% and 29% respectively).

Figure 38: Highest level of formal education amongst school administrators

⁴⁵ The ranges presented come from the difference between the figures presented in individual interviews versus those presented in group interviews.



Of the school administrators, 38-39% were internally displaced, with men more likely to be so (37-100%)⁴⁶ than women (0-2%). Those in Idleb were more likely to be internally displaced (25%) than those in Aleppo (11%) or Ar-Raqqa (3%).

7.1.6 Teacher profiles

Enumerators interviewed 2,195 teachers as part of the study, and observed a lesson taught by 281 of those.

Gender⁴⁷

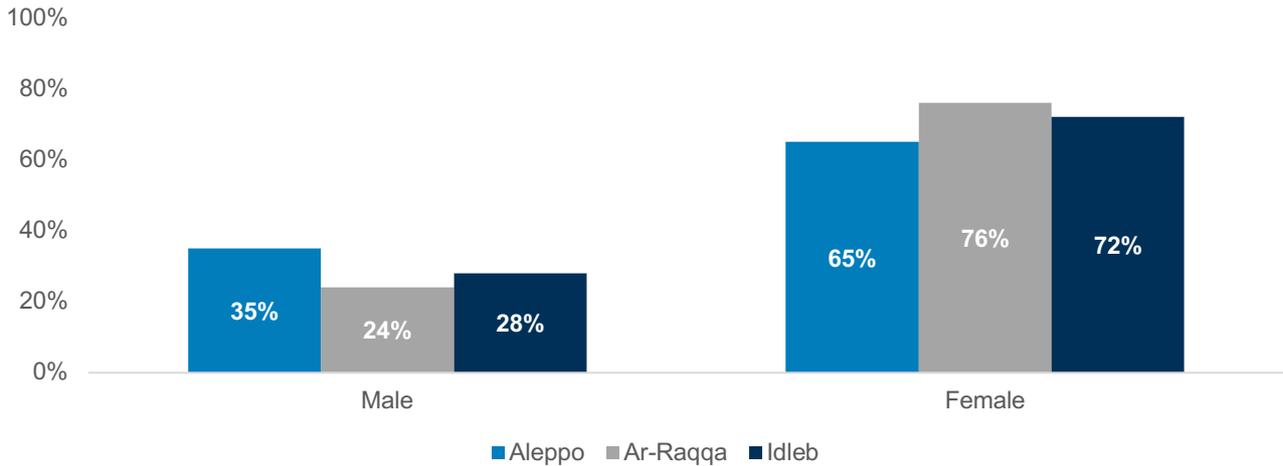
Female teachers outnumbered male teachers by more than 2:1 at the Grade 2 and Grade 3 levels. While this appears to be a positive finding from a gender equality perspective, it masks the sociocultural and financial challenges that put more women than men in the classroom. As in many other countries, anecdotal evidence suggests that the teaching profession is a traditionally gendered role for women, often not highly valued, and under supported in Syria (Bastick, 2000; Darling-Hammond, 2003; Hoffman, 2003; Glewwe & Kremer, 2006; Vegas, 2007; Drudy, 2008; Ingersoll & Perda, 2008; Skaalvik, & Skaalvik, 2011; Hagedorn & Akoush, 2018). As such, persons with lower social capital or lower cognitive capacity are not uncommon in the teaching profession. The high percentage of male school administrators (versus female administrators), makes it clear that there is not equity with regards to positions of higher professional value (and pay) within the education system. This is concerning in terms of the advancement of female teachers to management roles.

The majority of Grade 2 and 3 teachers were female (71%) compared to men, who only represented 29% of that workforce.

Figure 39: Grade 2 and Grade 3 teachers, by gender and governorate

⁴⁶ The ranges presented come from the difference between the figures presented in individual interviews versus those presented in group interviews.

⁴⁷ This section is written with an understanding that, for the most part, the gender of the teacher-while it may have an effect on access to education, does not tend to impact learning (Ehrenberg, Goldhaber, & Brewer, 1995).



Nature of displacement

The displaced population was the minority (though a sizeable one) in the areas assessed. As with in many other areas of forced displacement, there tended to be a marginalisation of the needs of the displaced in favour of the needs of host communities. While this study did not collect data regarding the morale of displaced versus host populations, literature and anecdotal evidence from this study suggests that the wellbeing of displaced populations tends to be lower than that of host populations (Hassan, Ventevogel, Jefee-Bahloul, Barkil-Oteo, & Kirmayer, 2016; Quosh, Eloul, & Ajlani, 2013).

Approximately 28% of teachers were displaced. Of this percentage, approximately 57% were male and 43% were female.

Education level⁴⁸

Only a few teachers were teaching with a primary school completion certificate.⁴⁹ Between 22-28%⁵⁰ were teaching with a secondary level education and 39-42% were teaching with a university degree. Only 30-34% were teaching with a teaching certificate.⁵¹

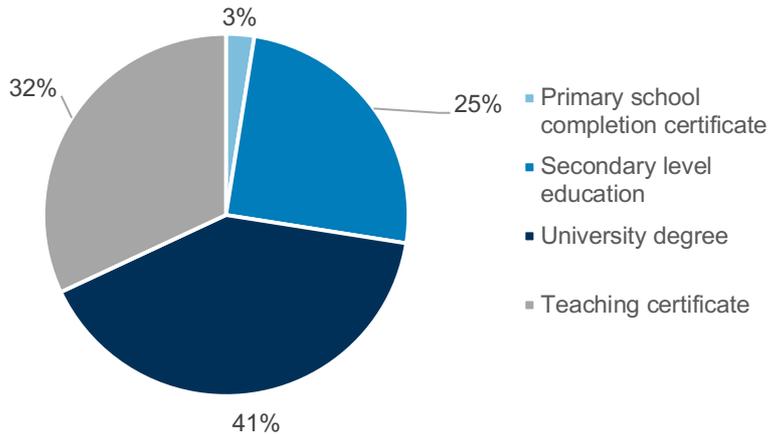
Figure 40: Education level of teachers

⁴⁸ The section is presented with recognition of the ongoing debate about the correlation (or lack thereof) between degree levels and subject matter expertise of teachers and the impact they have on the quality of their teaching and thus student learning outcomes (Goldhaber, & Brewer, 1996; Goldhaber & Brewer, 2001; Darling-Hammond, Berry, & Thoreson, 2001; Goldhaber & Anthony, 2003). It is, however, based on the belief and practice that teachers of primary level students should have at least a secondary level certificate.

⁴⁹ In Menbij and Ain al Arab (Kobani), four teachers (0.6% of the total population of group interviews) identified as having a primary level education as their terminal degree.

⁵⁰ The range represents the range of findings between the individual and group interviews with teachers.

⁵¹ A teaching certificate is awarded to graduates of a programme that focuses specifically on preparing students to become teachers. These programmes are often a government-run but can sometimes be private programmes accredited by governments.

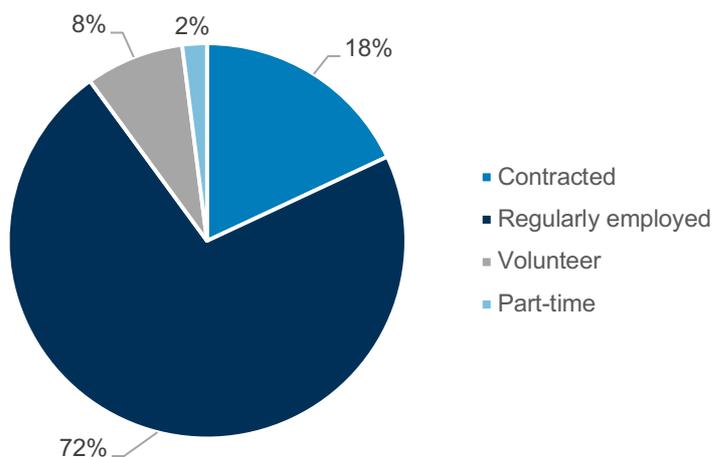


However, only 34% of all teachers had been exposed to training in the fundamentals of teaching practice. This finding could help explain some of the behaviours identified in the study, discussed later in the report. Another argument is that the approximately 68% who do not have teaching certificates could simply be modelling the teaching practices they experienced as children, likely containing practices no longer supported by the education sector as being effective.

Contract type

The study found the majority of teacher respondents to be either contract teachers (18%) (also known as para-professionals) or regularly employed (72%). Volunteer teachers accounted for only 8%, and part-time teachers accounted for only 2%. Teachers in Idleb had the most mixed profile, whereas their colleagues in Aleppo and Ar-Raqqa were more likely to be regularly employed. However, during group interviews, concerns over the prevalence of teachers identifying as unpaid volunteers came up often. Therefore, it is possible that more teachers who identified as contract teachers might actually be unpaid.

Figure 41: Nature of teaching contract type



All teachers in Ar-Raqqa were regularly employed, and the majority in Aleppo were as well. The picture was more mixed in Idleb, where 55% were regularly employed, 26% were contract teachers, 3% were part-time, and 16% were volunteer.

Salary source and value⁵²

The GoS accounted for 46% of teacher salaries and the SIG accounted for 27% in areas assessed by the ACU in its 2018 report on learning spaces in Syria. The source of the remaining 27% of payments was not identified. The SIG-paid salaries averaged at USD 111 per month and the GoS at USD 71 per month.⁵³

Years of teaching experience

Forty-three percent of teachers had one to three years of experience, 23% had between three and four years of experience, and 33% had six to 10+ years of experience. This means that the majority of teachers (67%) started teaching shortly after, or approximately mid-way through the conflict. This figure is particularly interesting when contrasted with the 30 years of experience noted as the average amongst Syrian teachers surveyed in 2000 (Ayyash-Abdo, 2000). Many teachers in the study stated that they were selected through lotteries or joined without formal training. As such, absent exposure to often government-funded and led training programmes, teachers with fewer years of experience might in fact be more effective than teachers with many years of experience, underpinned by training in traditional and ill-founded methods of pedagogy.

The average was slightly higher in Idleb (between four and five years), and slightly lower in Ar-Raqqa (between two and three years).

Motivation to become a teacher

As previously noted, most teachers started teaching after the conflict began. A female teacher from Aleppo said that she started teaching voluntarily in 2014 when there was a particularly large number of vacancies. Another female teacher from Idleb had a similar motivation, saying she began teaching part-time in 2016 when she noticed that children were struggling significantly as a result of the conflict. A number of teachers talked about how their love for children motivated them to become teachers, many of whom were part-time at first. Some teachers spoke about their particular love for a subject, such as science or the Arabic language, and their worries about children not performing well in those areas. A number of other teachers talked about how important it was for them to help rebuild their society and address the underpinnings of ignorance. A few teachers spoke about how it was their only income generating option, or the only career they could access with their grades from secondary school or university.

⁵² A separate study on teacher stipending is available through the WoS Education Cluster. As such, this study did not go into that topic in detail.

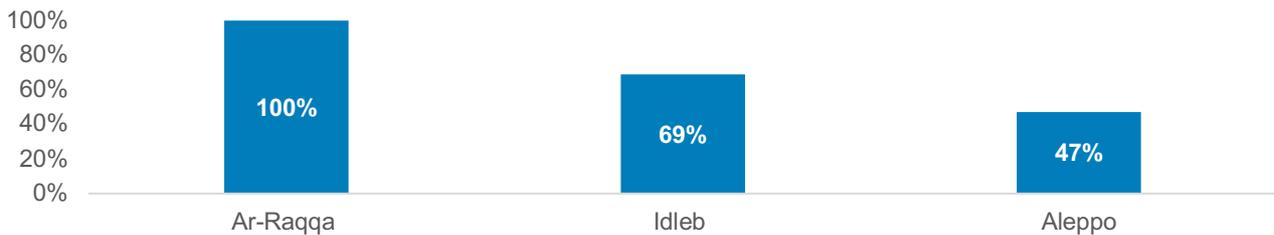
⁵³ The payment per month before the conflict by the GoS was USD 250.

Recent training

Training appears to be frequently available to at least three quarters of teachers, and apparently more accessible for or better accessed by female teachers.⁵⁴ The nature of the topics covered also appears to be relevant and appropriate. Its efficacy, however, is another issue and one that is discussed in [the sections on teacher behaviours and practices section of the report](#).

Between 60% and 71%⁵⁵ of teachers said they had received training in the past six months. Ninety-two to 100%⁵⁶ of respondents in Ar-Raqqa had received training, while the figures were lower in Aleppo (64-72%), and much lower in Idleb (44-50%).

Figure 42: Percent of teachers that had received training within the past six months, by governorate



In both Aleppo and Idleb, 54% of male teachers received training, whereas female teachers in Aleppo appeared to have better access to it (72%) than those in Idleb (48%). Topics of training included: Effective Communication, Classroom Management, Child Protection, Distance Learning, Positive Discipline, Reading, Lesson Planning, and Learning in Crisis.

Performance assessments

The use of performance assessments by school administrators appeared to be relatively sound, with 77% of school administrators saying they used such tools. This finding suggests that there are structures and processes in place, at least theoretically, to enable teachers to receive feedback on their performance, and for such assessments to facilitate career pathway definitions.⁵⁷ Male school administrators, those with university degrees, school administrators with teaching certificates, and displaced school administrators were the most likely to use these practices.

Seventy-seven percent of school administrators said they conducted regular staff performance appraisals/evaluations. Such responses were most common in Ar-Raqqa (83%), followed by Idleb (74%), and then Aleppo (66%).

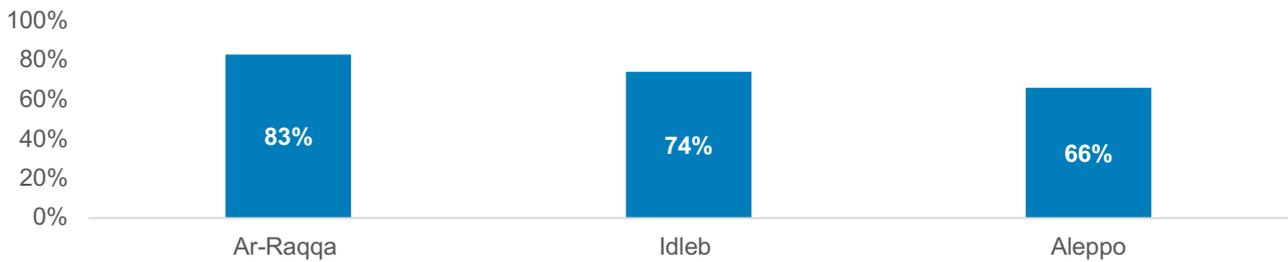
⁵⁴ Questions of value for a later assessment would be the quality of the training and on what topics teachers were receiving training, as well as why there appears to be inequity of access amongst male and female teachers.

⁵⁵ The range represents the range of findings between the individual and group interviews with teachers.

⁵⁶ The range represents the range of findings between the individual and group interviews with teachers.

⁵⁷ The extent to which such a solid theoretical approach is used in practice is an area for further assessment.

Figure 43: Use of performance assessments by school administrators, by governorate



School administrators in rural areas were the least likely to respond saying that they used performance assessments for their teachers (72%), but the rates in the other community types⁵⁸ were approximately the same (82-86%).

Male school administrators were more likely than female respondents to respond stating that they used performance assessments for their teachers (80% compared to 64%). There was no discernible pattern on the influence of years of experience on such practices, with those with the most experience almost as likely to implement performance assessments as those with the least experience (79% and 77%, respectively).

There was a bell curve pattern of response regarding the degree of level and practice, where those with university degrees were more likely than both those with only secondary degrees and those with teaching degrees to use performance monitoring.

Respondents that were certified teachers were more likely than those who were not to undertake this practice (78% compared to 65%). Displaced school administrators were more likely than their host community counterparts to use performance assessments (88% and 75%, respectively).

Perceptions of skills

Eighty-eight percent of teachers felt that they had the skills to recognise and support the individual needs of all children, including those with disabilities. This response likely speaks to self-efficacy and self-esteem more so than actual skill level, considering other indicators of concern regarding equity, [discussed later in the report](#).

Of the 88%, 60% “agreed” and 28% “strongly agreed” that they had the requisite skills. Approximately 6% percent disagreed and felt they did not have the requisite skills to recognise and support the individual needs of all children, and 4% felt neutral on the topic. There were no remarkable differences in results amongst Aleppo, ar-Raqqa, and Idleb respondents, nor were there any significant differences amongst male and female respondents.

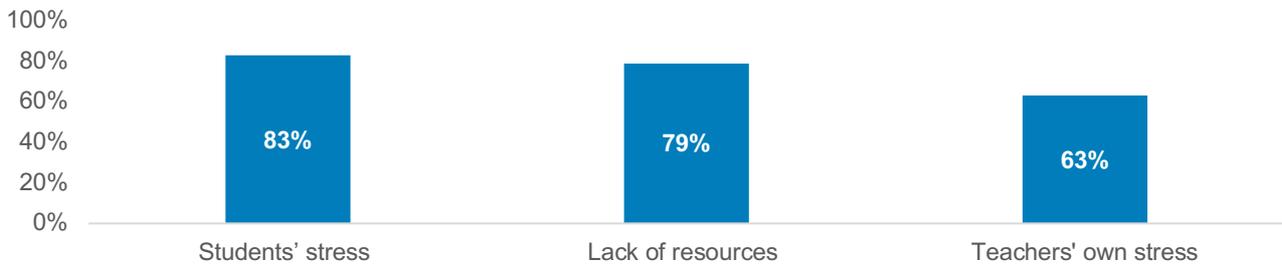
Perceptions of changes in teaching practices from pre to post conflict

Of the 33% of teachers who taught prior to the conflict, the majority (82%) said that their teaching practices had changed since the start of the conflict.

⁵⁸ Classified as: i) camps; ii) rural areas; iii) peri-urban areas; and iv) urban areas.

This question was only relevant to teachers with six or more years of teaching experience (33%). Of those, 18% said they had not changed their practices, while 82% said that they had. The majority of the respondents who said they had not changed their practices were men (89%). When asked to identify why their practices had changed, teachers noted that children’s stress was the main cause (83%), followed by lack of resources (79%), and their own stress (66%).

Figure 44: Teachers’ main reasons for changing their teaching practices after the start of the conflict



Teachers noted that the conflict forced them to be creative and learn new methods, including teaching rapidly and trying to simplify lessons to help children who had been out of school for a while. The need to be creative in their teaching practices, however, mainly came as a result of the limited materials available, compared to what was feasible prior to the conflict. Many teachers talked about how much more time is required to “distract” children from their anxiety. A few teachers also mentioned changing donors, education authorities, and thus curricular modifications as reasons they had to adapt.

Teacher screening

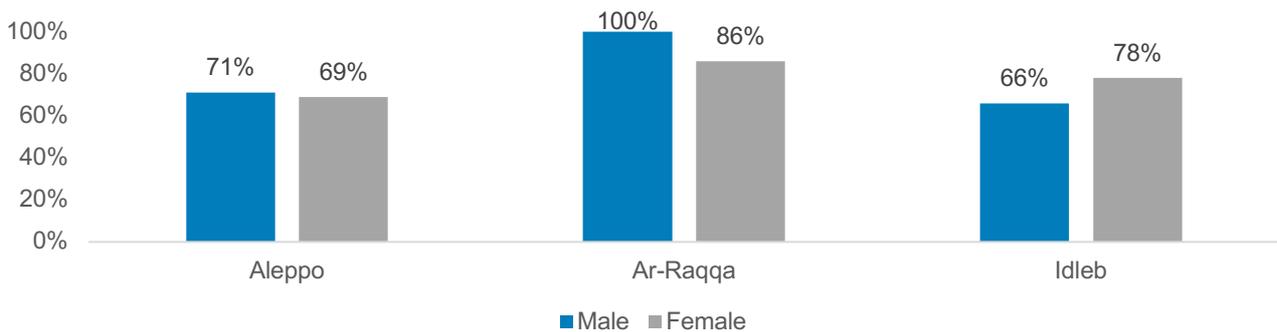
The study did not find any consistent approaches to screening teachers to ensure that they were not rights violators, specifically with respect to children. Education authorities and school administrators were more likely to note that screening was done than teachers were. School administrators in Idleb were more likely than their counterparts in Aleppo and Ar-Raqqa to report such practices. As a result, it is possible that teachers may have been involved with activities (or have attitudes) not conducive to supporting wellbeing and learning in the classroom.

A number of respondents were asked whether screenings happened. Teachers had the lowest positive response, with 42% saying that such screenings “always” happened. The average response from school administrators showed that a screening was “sometimes” done (62%). The figure was more concerning in Ar-Raqqa, where 40% answered “never”. It was slightly better in Aleppo, where 56% of respondents said there was “periodic testing”, and best for Idleb, where 72% of responses were “often”. Education authorities appeared to think such screening was done more frequently, with 80% saying this was the case.

School administrators stated that the biggest issues faced by teachers were salary, transportation, lack of teaching and learning materials, and lack of training. Poor parental engagement and fragmentation of support for education services was also mentioned.

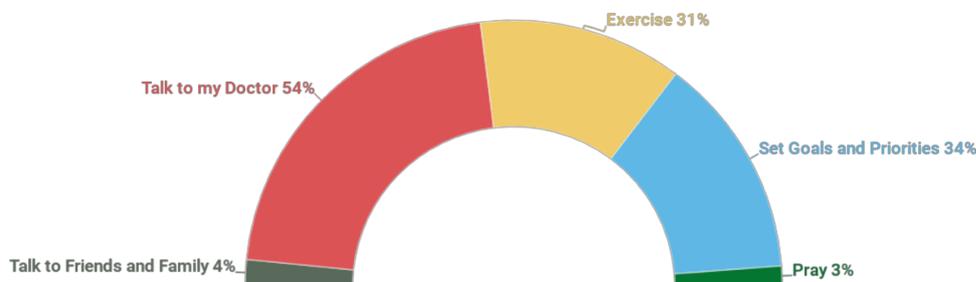
Seventy-three percent of teachers “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that they felt confident in their ability to be responsive to children’s needs, even if they were having a bad day. There was disparity amongst governorates on this question though (Aleppo: 70%, Ar-Raqqa: 94%; Idleb: 74%), as well as amongst male and female teachers. Male teachers in Aleppo were slightly more confident than their female colleagues (71% and 69%, respectively), and male teachers in Ar-Raqqa were quite a bit more confident than their female colleagues (100% and 86%, respectively). The reverse was true in Idleb (males: 66% and females: 78%)

Figure 46: Teacher confidence levels in ability to be responsive to children’s needs



When asked how they handled their stress, the majority of teachers identified the following methods:

Figure 47: Teachers responses about stress management methods

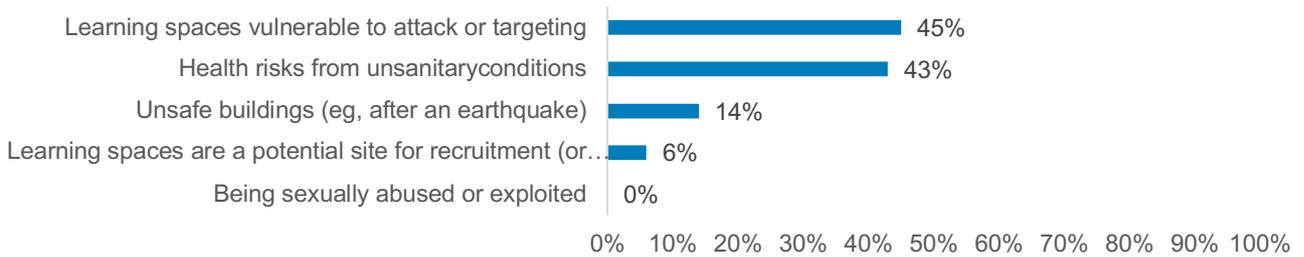


Quite a few also mentioned anecdotally that they liked to go for walks, read, sit alone, sleep, or surf the internet.

Risks for teachers while at school

When parents/caregivers were asked what risks they thought teachers faced at school, the most significant concerns identified were that learning spaces were vulnerable to attack (45%), and that there were unsanitary conditions that could lead to health concerns (43%). Such concerns appear reasonable for the context. When asked to mention any other risks, the most frequent was kidnapping or military conscription. Teachers were also asked if students ever threatened to hurt them, and 80% said that this “never” happened. Those who did experience such threats noted that it was often the sons of men in the military and armed groups who did so.

Figure 48: Parent/caregiver perspectives on what risks teachers faced at school.



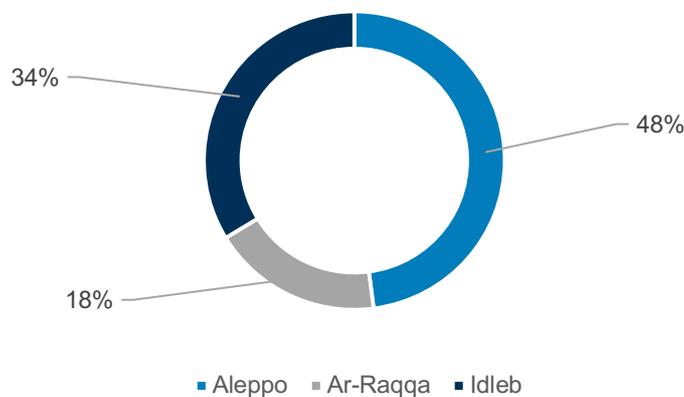
Supervisory Support

The majority of comments from school administrators and teachers in group interviews focussed on the disconnect between the existence of supervisory visits and the actual mentoring services provided, which were deemed to be low.⁶⁰ In other words, it appears as though supervision exists but that mentoring as part of it is limited.

7.1.7 Children

The study team interviewed 1,779 Grade 2 and Grade 3 children, 48% of whom were in Aleppo, 34% in Idleb, and 18% in ar-Raqqa.⁶¹ Fifty-one percent were male and 49% were female, reflecting a representative sample from a gender perspective.⁶² Twenty-nine percent of the children were internally displaced.

Figure 49: Children interviewed, by governorate



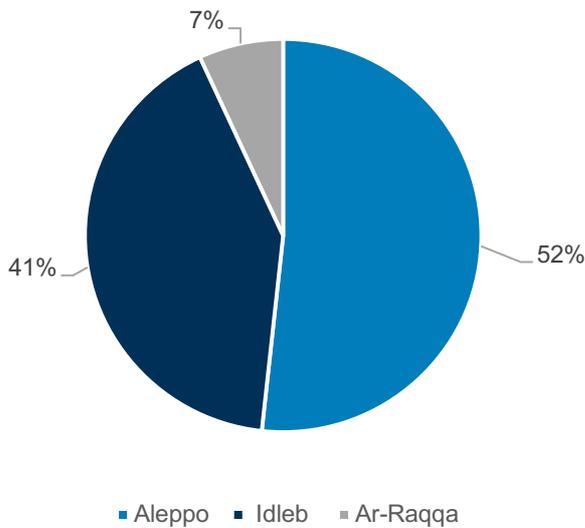
Of the total number of displaced children, the highest concentrations were in Aleppo (15%), followed by Idleb (12%), and then Ar-Raqqa (2%).

⁶⁰ In Orange’s study (2018), 88% of teachers stated that their learning spaces were visited regularly by education authority supervisors.

⁶¹ These figures roughly align with the ACU’s findings of concentration of children, which found 51% of all assessed children in rural Idleb (which covers large parts of the area codified as Aleppo in this study), and 19% in YPG/SDF-controlled areas of Ar-Raqqa.

⁶² Another recently completed assessment, undertaken by People In Need, found this same percentage of boys to girls in their work in Idleb and Aleppo. The ACU’s “IMU Learning Spaces Report: In the Northern Syrian Camps” found that 52% of children were girls.

Figure 50: Location of displaced children, by governorate



However, as a percentage of the total of number of children per governorate, children in Idleb were more likely to be displaced (38%) than in Aleppo (26%) and Ar-Raqqa (10%).⁶³ Boys were more likely to be internally displaced than were girls: 58% of the displaced children were male and 42% were female.

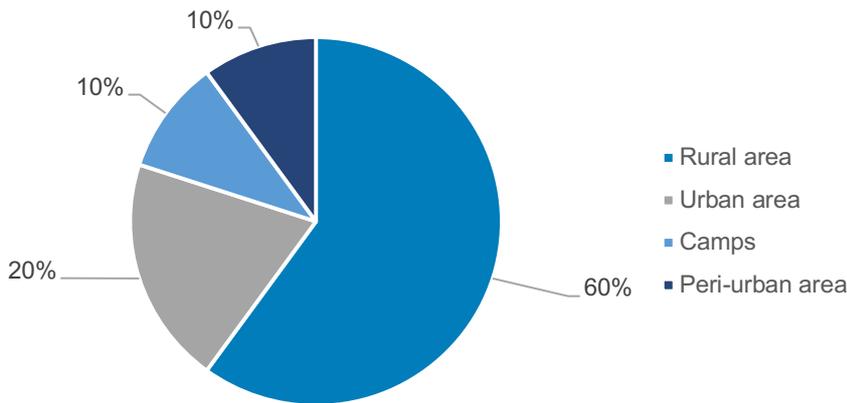
Figure 51: Percent of displaced children, per governorate



Most children were based in rural areas (60%). There was a greater chance of a child being in an urban area in Aleppo (27%) than in Ar-Raqqa (15%) or Idleb (10%). In ar-Raqqa, a child was more likely to be in a peri-urban area (25%) than in Aleppo or Idleb (both 9%).

⁶³ Sampling strata likely influences these allocations.

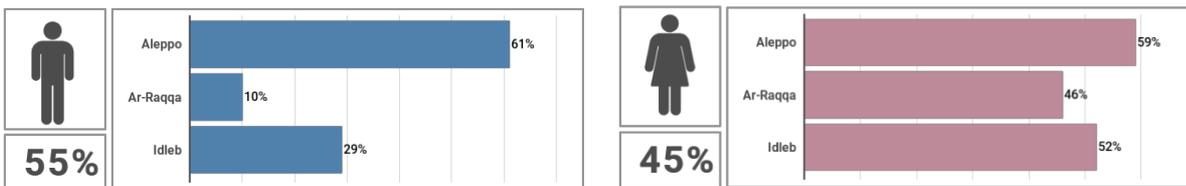
Figure 52: In which types of communities children were based



7.1.8 Parents/Caregivers

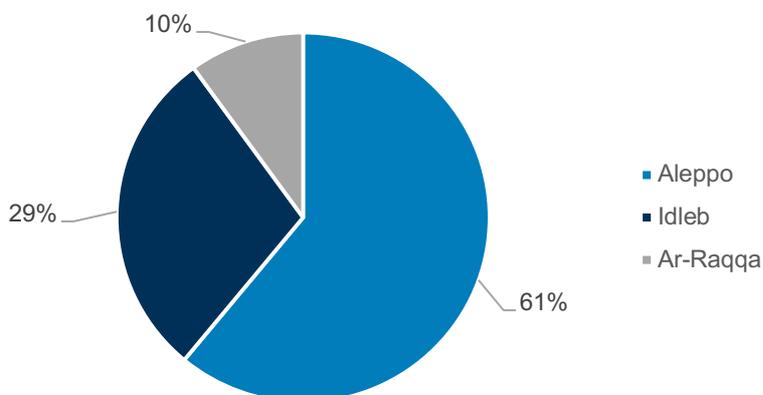
A total of 1,195 parents and/or caregivers participated in the study as respondents, slightly more were male (55%) than female (45%). Women were more likely to participate as respondents in Aleppo (59%) than they were in Idleb (52%) and Ar-Raqqa (46%).

Figure 53: Composition and location of parent/caregiver informants, by gender



The majority of parent/caregiver respondents (61%) were in Aleppo, followed by 29% in Idleb and 10% in Ar-Raqqa.

Figure 54: Composition of parent/caregiver informants, by governorate



7.2 Perspectives on education service provider practices

As noted in the section on [research questions](#), at the time of the design of this study, another WoS Education Cluster study was planned to review the nature of education service providers in Syria. As such, a simple perceptions survey was designed to capture broad stakeholders feedback on how (I)NGOs were viewed with respect to their implementation of education programmes. This section provides an overview of the nature of their support to the sector. The chosen respondents were those most likely to interact with these kinds of service providers, namely: education authority representatives, Local Council members, school administrators, and (I)NGO representatives themselves.

With respect to the project cycle, the following chronological steps were identified as common amongst all respondents:

1. Needs and assets assessments: Identifying gaps in service delivery, in partnership with the relevant local authorities.
2. Establishing working relationship and agreements:
 - a. Securing approvals from authorities.
 - b. Establishing memoranda of understanding (MOU) with learning spaces.
3. Implementation:
 - a. Developing training guides and other forms of technical content.
 - b. Continuous training for staff and beneficiaries.
 - c. Establishing and deploying cadres of child protection and education supervisors to learning spaces.
4. Monitoring:
 - a. Ongoing security assessments.
 - b. Using questionnaires as a means of securing feedback.

Respondents were asked to assess the quality of the work done by these types of agencies, and their responses are provided in the table below. In summary, it appears that (I)NGOs had more positive perspectives of the quality of their work than other stakeholders did. For example, they thought they were working more collaboratively with local partners than education authority representatives thought. They also, perhaps unsurprisingly, believed that the quality of their work was higher than other informants did.

Table 9: Informant perspectives on the quality of education service providers efforts

| | Quality of Implementation Methods ⁶⁴ | Monitoring | | Evaluation | |
|--|---|-----------------------|--------------|-----------------------|------------|
| | | Collaborative nature | Quality | Collaborative nature | Quality |
| Education Authority Representatives | 47% | Independently (33%) | Medium (47%) | Independently (47%) | Low (47%) |
| Local Council Representatives | 35% | | High (47%) | | High (42%) |
| (I)NGO Representatives | 67% | Collaboratively (48%) | High (67%) | Collaboratively (48%) | High (74%) |
| School Administrators | 33% | | | | |

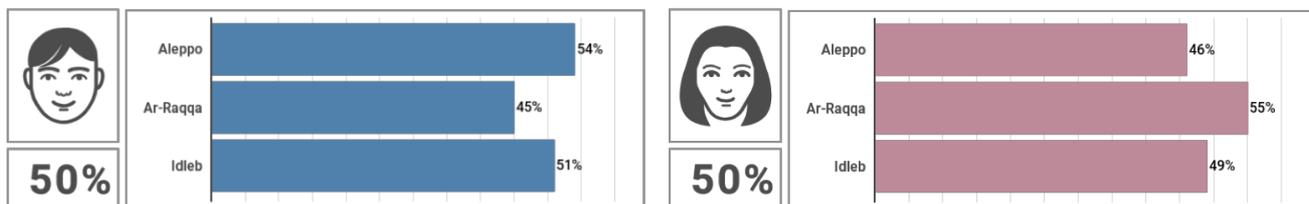
7.3 Education Sector Profile

7.3.1 Enrolment Rates

When asked to provide figures to illustrate the net and gross enrolment rates for both male and female primary school students, only 14% of education authority informants in Idleb and 66% in Aleppo appeared to understand the difference between the two types of measurement. None of the informants provided a ratio, rather all provided numbers of students. In these cases, there was a reasonable difference between the net and gross enrolment numbers provided. In terms of enrolment figures for Grade 2 and 3 at the school level, 50% were boys and 50% were girls.

Regional specifications showed that Ar-Raqqa had more girls enrolled in school than boys, perhaps attributed to the YPG/SDF’s tendencies toward elevating gender equity. Idleb had roughly gender parity, whereas in Aleppo more boys than girls were enrolled.

Figure 55: Gender profile of enrolled primary school students, overall and by governorate

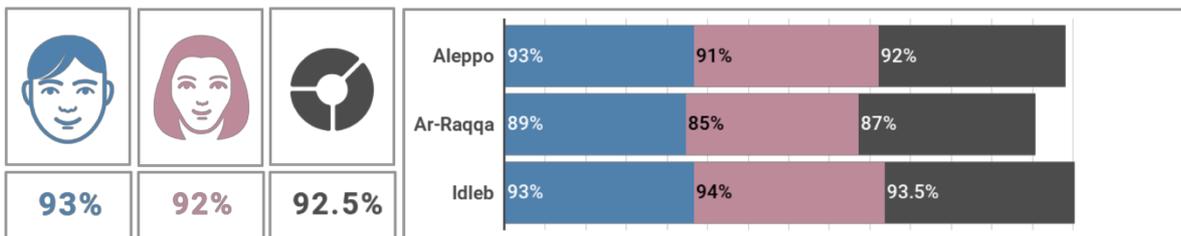


⁶⁴ The questions were asked about how the quality of implementation and monitoring affected the quality of the programmes.

7.3.2 Attendance Rates

In FCAS contexts, attendance rates above 80% are often seen as reasonable and acceptable. The following table shows the average attendance rate by gender in each governorate. While the table represents point in time data, it suggests that attendance rates in relation to enrolment rates are relatively good, at roughly 93% for Grade 2 and 3 boys and 92% for girls.⁶⁵

Figure 56: Gender profile of attendance rates of primary school students, overall and by governorate



7.3.3 School calendar

The majority of school authorities start their school year in the beginning to middle of September and end it between mid-May and mid-June (Idleb: 100% of informants; Aleppo: 83% of informants).⁶⁶ This amounts to roughly seven to eight months that learning spaces are in session, adjusted to six to seven months considering holidays. This appears to be an appropriate amount of time for a school to be open. However, when digging deeper into the numbers of hours that learning spaces are open and how much of that time is allocated to learning, there appears to be significant issues with the concept of the opportunity to learn.⁶⁷

7.3.4 Shifts per school

Across Aleppo, Ar-Raqqa, and Idleb, the average number of shifts per school was 1.5 (Aleppo: 1.7, Ar-Raqqa: 1.3, and Idleb:1.3.) This indicator suggests it is unlikely that children in these areas of Syria are getting sufficient time to learn, thus reducing their opportunity to learn.

7.3.5 Hours per shift per day and allocated time to learning

Assumptions about lower than required learning time were confirmed when analysing the answers given by school administrators, who were asked how many hours per day children are in school. The average appeared to be 3.3 hours per child per day (Idleb: approximately 4.5; Aleppo: approximately 3.5; Ar-Raqqa: approximately 2 hours).⁶⁸ According to the Opportunity to Learn index, a student needs to be exposed to instructional time between at least 850-1,000 hours per year (Gillies &

⁶⁵ The ACU's 2018 report on learning spaces in Syria had a similar finding, with 95% of children attending more than four (of the total five) days of school per week.

⁶⁶ The ACU's 2018 report on learning spaces in Syria found that 71% of the assessed learning spaces in Idleb and 7% of those in YPG/SDF-controlled areas had 1-15 days of unplanned school suspension between September and December of 2017.

⁶⁷ The concept of the opportunity to learn is informed by a series of indicators, such as proximity of the school to population centres and hours of day the school is open, which helps paint the picture of how feasible learning is under certain conditions.

⁶⁸ The ACUs 2018 report on learning spaces in Syria found that children attended between 4-5 hours of school per day, amounting to approximately 640-800 hours in school per year, still below the minimum threshold.

Quijada, 2008). The average calculated for the children in the areas studied is 560 hours (Idleb: 756, Aleppo: 588, Ar-Raqqa: 336). This means that the average child is receiving approximately 66% of the minimum time required for learning.

In other words, even if the requisite teaching and learning materials were in place, infrastructure was sound, teachers were well-trained and motivated, and children had strong levels of wellbeing, they would not have enough time in school to be developing the skills and knowledge required to progress adequately. The situation becomes more dire when reviewing the amount of time school administrators stated was allocated to instruction, rather than other administrative tasks required of teachers during the school day. That figure amounted to 51-75% of the hours per shift.

The following table summarises the amount of time children are exposed to learning opportunities.

Figure 57: Annual hours allocated to learning while in school

7.3.6 Teacher absences and class coverage

Unsurprisingly, the conflict has had a negative impact on teachers' absences, with 31% of teachers who taught before the conflict saying that there were more absences during the conflict than before. When a teacher is absent, the most common practice is to use substitute teachers (73% of respondents), followed by combining classes (33% of respondents).

7.3.7 Curricula

One hundred percent of education authorities in Idleb and Aleppo are using the SIG's curriculum,⁶⁹ itself a derivative of the GoS curriculum, while in Ar-Raqqa there is use of both the Kurdish Self

⁶⁹ The SIG's version removes the components of the curriculum that deal with themes of nationalism. A "revised" version of the curriculum was completed in 2018, updating that which was last updated in 2010. KIIs

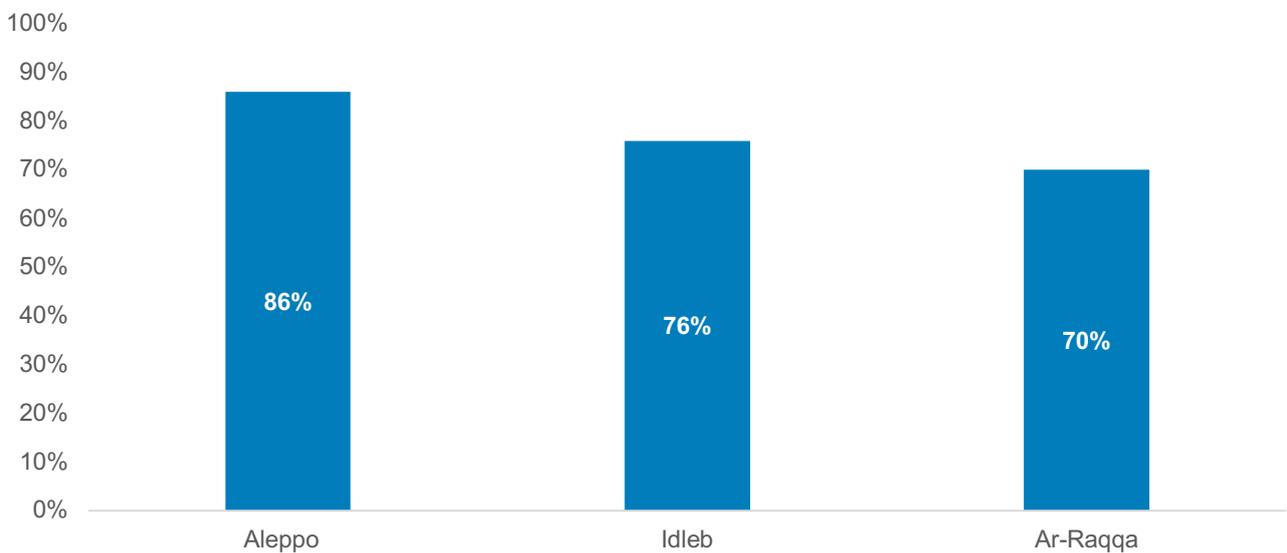
Administration curriculum and the GoS curriculum.⁷⁰ This reality is helpful in terms of providing a common curricular framework within which to analyse cross-regional learning outcomes. It also provides benefits for children who might be forced to migrate multiple times across regions, and/or for consideration of the ease of absorption of teachers and students into GoS-held spaces again.

7.3.8 Perceptions on the value and equity of the learning content

The majority of parents/caregivers (77%) and children (99%) felt that what they were learning in school was of value to them. Parents/caregivers in Aleppo, female parents/caregivers, and those with children in private schools were most likely to be positive about the learning content.

Seventy-seven percent of parents/caregivers reported that they felt their children were “often” or “always” learning what they needed to in school in order to live a happy and healthy life. These sentiments were more common in Aleppo (86%), than in Idleb (76%) and Ar-Raqqa (70%).

Figure 58: Positive perceptions of parents/caregivers regarding the value of the learning content, by governorate



The frequency of this observation was higher for parents/caregivers of children in private learning spaces (88%) than those in public learning spaces (81%). Female parents/caregivers appeared to have this confidence level at higher rates than did males (80% and 70%, respectively).⁷¹

with respondents familiar with the updating process noted that there werw very little changes of significance. Furthermore, anecdotal evidence suggests that amongst educationalists and parents familiar with the curriculum developed in 2010, the quality was reasonably high.

⁷⁰ This study was not able to obtain exact figures from education authorities in Ar-Raqqa due to sensitivities about such data collection. The ACU’s 2018 report on learning spaces in Syria found that 38% of the learning spaces covered in its report (including those in Idleb, Eastern Ghouta, the southern governorates, the Euphrates Shield, Rural Homs, and YPG/SDF-held areas) were using the SIG curriculum. Parental/caregivers perceptions found that 56% thought their children’s learning spaces were using this curriculum and 68% wanted their children’s learning spaces to use it.

⁷¹ As measured only in all female or all male group interviews. It is not possible to parse unique female and male responses from the mixed gender group interviews.

Quite a few respondents noted the importance of literacy and numeracy, and felt that support for these types of skill development was sound. Some references were made to the lack of inclusiveness of the curriculum, and that it worked for the majority but not everyone. A number of respondents suggested that they had little faith in the teaching cohort, and a few mentioned their concern about the low degree of holistic support for children, namely for their physical and emotional wellbeing. A few respondents also suggested that science education was lacking. Some parents/caregivers raised concerns about the limitations of certificates only recognised by the SIG. Other learning pathway-related concerns were also raised. Such respondents suggested that the curriculum was not “market-facing” enough in terms of developing skills for the 21st century. Another series of comments related to the limitations of formal schooling beyond the primary level.

Ninety-nine percent of children reported that they felt what they were learning in school would be useful to them. The only notable figures were that children in camps felt less certain about the value of their learning (93%). Many children noted that they felt they were learning to read, write, and do maths. One child said with pride that this enabled him/her to help his/her parents read street signs. Others also spoke with hope that their learning would help them be important and productive adults, and many had ambitions to be doctors, teachers, and engineers. A few children said that they knew what they were studying was important, but that they struggled to learn it. Only 5% of children felt that some of the content were unfair to some students.

7.3.9 Assessment⁷²

Exams are required by education authorities at the Grade 2 and Grade 3 levels, and the majority take place on a semester basis (Idleb: 71%; Aleppo: 100%).⁷³ School administrators and teachers reported at roughly the same levels (62% and 63%, respectively) that they used both formative and summative assessment in their schools. They had significantly different perspectives on how frequently summative assessment was used as the primary form of assessments: 37% of school administrators said it was used exclusively, whereas only 1% of teachers did. While it would be preferable to have a stronger focus on formative assessments and a decreasing focus on summative assessments (especially as an exclusive tool for child assessment), these findings are understandable. The traditional use of summative assessments, as well as the overall effect of the conflict on teacher professional development and systems strengthening, suggest that the pre-conflict inertia on the topic of assessment would continue. Anecdotal comments from school administrators and teachers suggest that neither cohort are clear on what appropriate formative assessment is, suggesting a need for skill building on the concept, as well as the practice.

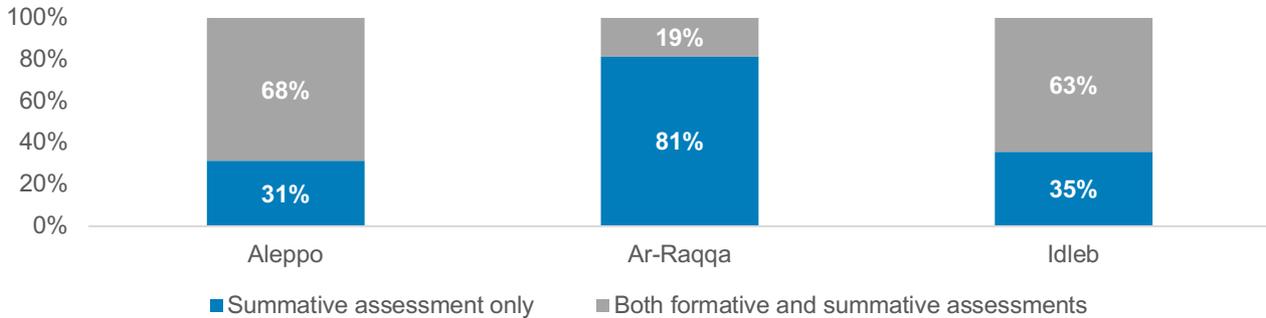
School administrators in Aleppo and Idleb stated that they used both formative and summative assessment more often than they used only summative assessment. In Ar-Raqqa, however summative assessment was the predominant form of child assessment. However, school administrators’ understanding of formative assessment appeared limited and still equated to formal examinations rather than what it actually is (periodic and ongoing informal assessments). Further assessments of teacher and school administrator understanding of formative assessment is

⁷² This section is written through the lens of analysis that suggests the challenges that “high stakes” and/or summative testing present as the primary means of assessing student learning, and particularly for marginalised groups, as described by Madaus & Clarke, 2001; Amrein & Berliner, 2002, and others.

⁷³ KIs with education authority respondents in Ar-Raqqa were not possible due to sensitivities around the study topic.

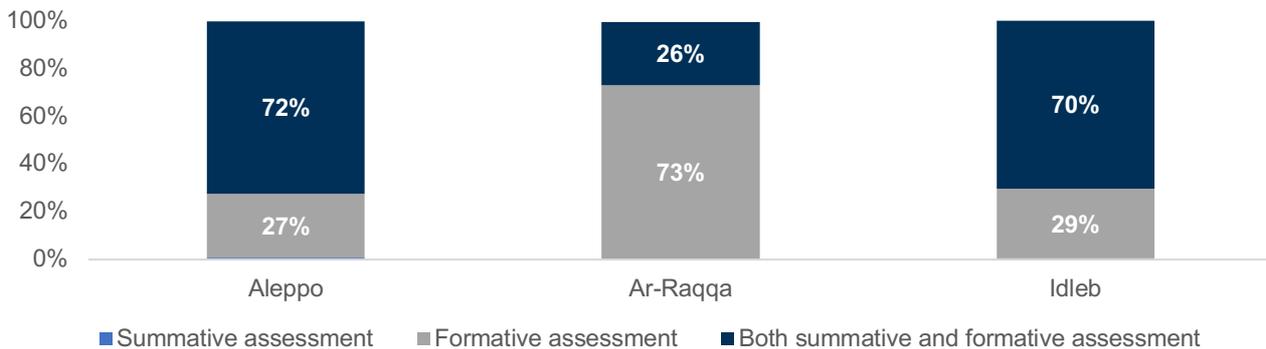
warranted. All private school administrators used both formative and summative assessment, and none relied only on summative assessment.

Figure 59: School administrator reports on the use of summative and formative assessments in their schools, by governorate



Teachers saw themselves as doing more formative assessment and more of both formative and summative assessment in the classroom than school administrators did. However, comments from teachers suggested that like school administrators, they were not terribly clear on what formative assessment was, with some stating that it was only done in the form of exams at the start of the school year, or when new children joined to help with their placement.

Figure 60: Teacher reports on the use of summative and formative assessments in their schools, by governorate



7.3.10 Course completion documents

Opportunities for widely certified education,⁷⁴ and thus future upward mobility through secondary and tertiary education, are limited for conflict-affected Syrian children, with the GoS certifications being the most recognised.

Children in GoS-supported learning spaces⁷⁵—learning spaces in which personnel and teachers are still on the GoS payroll—can have their exams certified. Some organisations providing learning opportunities facilitate access to these exams, but this is a dangerous and untenable solution for

⁷⁴ An education system that provides certification is one in which students need to have, and can provide, proof that they are part of an accredited system. The certificates then enable students to progress through that system and to other systems.

⁷⁵ Either in GoS-held spaces or learning spaces supported by the GoS in non-GoS-held spaces.

most children and not a long-term solution for such a large population viewed as affiliated with the ‘opposition’. Other organisations facilitate access to examinations provided by the SIG.

All Idleb and Aleppo education directorates representatives interviewed for this study stated that they provide course completion documents to all students that attended their learning spaces, which are recognised by the SIG. In Ar-Raqqa, 80% of respondents said that such documents were provided. Anecdotal evidence obtained through this study from Northeast Syria found that whilst the YPG/SDF-affiliated authorities were able to establish an education system and to certify learning therein, parents/caregivers found the recognition of those documents to be too limiting, an issue discussed in some depth in the [recommendations section](#). They therefore often preferred Arabic language learning spaces with certifications by either the SIG or the GoS, both of which have recognition that goes beyond national borders.

7.3.11 Language of instruction

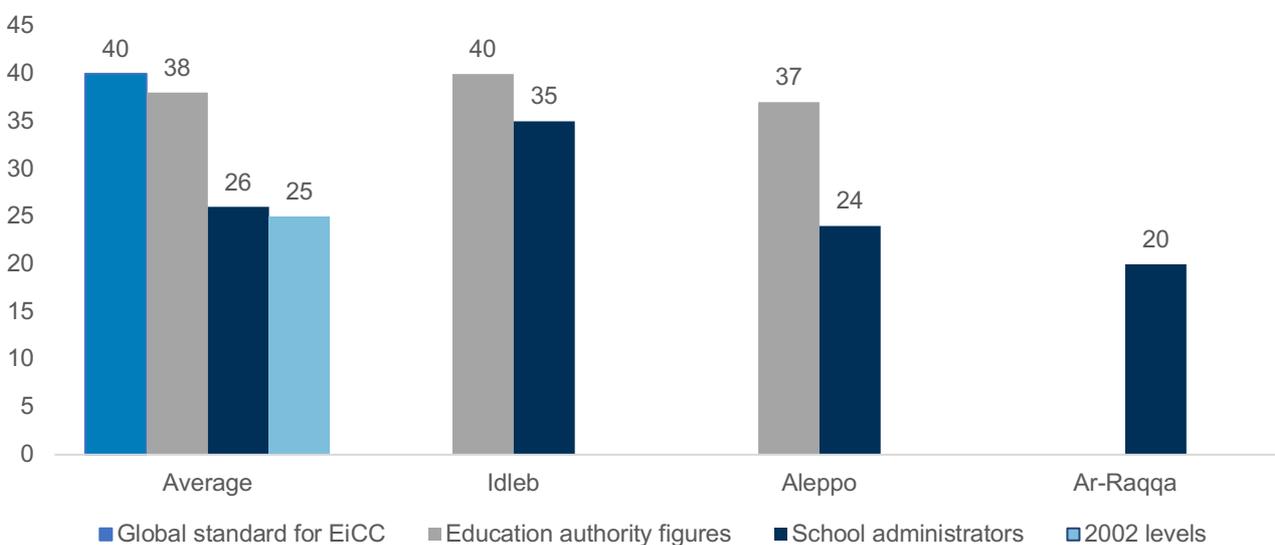
In 100% of the spaces covered under the study, the language of instruction was Arabic. While not specifically tested, Arabic is also the mother tongue of the majority of the child and teacher population in which the study was carried out. Ninety-six percent of children stated that all children in the class understood the language the teachers were using. This profile of language use in the classroom suggests that the myriad complications that come about with the use of languages of instruction are moot points in this context.

7.3.12 Children per classroom/child to teacher ratio

The child to teacher ratio appears reasonable and much lower than international standard of 40:1 (INEE, 2010). Education authorities noted that the average across Idleb and Aleppo was 38:1. School administrators, however, provided slightly lower ratios, with an average of 26:1. Still, it is understood that these figures are higher than what the ratios were prior to the crisis, which was 25:1 in 2002, the most recent pre-conflict data available (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2018c), and thus represent increased challenges for teachers.

Education authorities stated that the average ratio in Idleb was 40:1 and in Aleppo it was 37:1. School administrators stated these ratios as: Idleb: 35:1; Aleppo: 24:1, and Ar-Raqqa: 20:1.

Figure 61: Child to teacher ratios, by governorate



The stated average number of children per class differed based on respondent type, but none of the respondents suggested figures that were unreasonable to manage if the teachers were well trained, had sound senses of wellbeing, and if the children themselves had a good sense wellbeing. However, such circumstances are not in place, according to data gathered during this study. This point is touched on in various sections of this report, such as [teacher profiles](#), [children's perceptions of their safety and fears in learning spaces](#), and [teaching behaviours and practices: child-centred and experiential pedagogy](#).

While one would assume school administrators had better information, it is helpful to explore potential explanations for the differing numbers at directorate and school levels. Firstly, education authorities could simply not have the most updated information. Secondly, education authorities might be inflating figures to present a direr situation when it comes to the need for larger numbers of teachers or more classrooms. Thirdly, education authority figures are more likely to be more familiar with enrolment figures than they are with attendance figures, and enrolment figures are often higher than attendance figures.

7.4 Nature of the school environment in support of wellbeing

The following sections explore, at the most granular level possible, the environment and practices in which children are learning, through the lens of what supports wellbeing.

7.4.1 Attitudes about learning spaces as safe places for children

All teachers stated that they “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that all children should feel safe at school. This is a positive finding, though it does mask some of the sociocultural norms unearthed in the qualitative data and feedback from other respondents that suggest the disconnect between teachers’ stated beliefs and their actual practice, as detailed in [this section](#).

7.4.2 Use of school space

Learning spaces are becoming safer spaces for children in Syria, after many years of being known targets for both state and non-state armed actors. The majority of respondents noted that learning spaces are usually safe. This finding suggests that children should feel increasingly positive about being in school spaces, meaning that anxiety levels should decrease and thus enable improved environments for learning. That said, qualitative references to the types of fears respondents faced, or perceived school-goers to face, were significant, as detailed [here](#).

The majority (87%) of learning spaces were portrayed by education authorities in Idleb and Aleppo as not being used for purposes other than education. Parents/caregivers supported this finding, with 76% stating that learning spaces were “never” used for purposes other than education. However, parents/caregivers noted that it was somewhat common for learning spaces to be used for vaccine campaigns. Only a few mentioned the use of learning spaces to house displaced persons and some, especially those in camps, noted that learning spaces were used for community events.

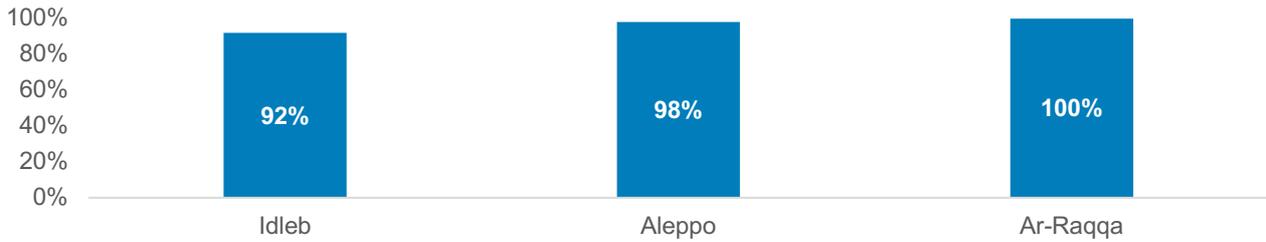
7.4.3 Children's perceptions of their safety and fears in learning spaces

Ninety-six percent of children said they felt safe at school. Girls appeared to feel slightly safer than boys did. Further supporting these findings, confirmational questions were asked about how well children felt in school. Sixty percent of children said that they felt “very good” in school, and 32% said they felt “good.” While most children expressed a sense of safety and positivity about being in learning spaces, the study team also asked more specific questions to identify if there were any

specific fears while at school. Ninety-nine percent of all children expressed fear of at least one of these threats,⁷⁶ and the prevalence of teacher verbal and physical abuse was unfortunately mentioned frequently. Displaced children were more likely to express concerns than local children.

Children in Ar-Raqqa (100%) and Aleppo (98%) felt safer in school than those in Idlib (92%). There was an 11% spread between the lowest and highest response rates amongst different types of communities (89% in camps and 100% in peri-urban areas). Children in private learning spaces felt safer than those in public learning spaces (100% and 96%, respectively).

Figure 62: Children's perceptions of safety in learning spaces, by governorate



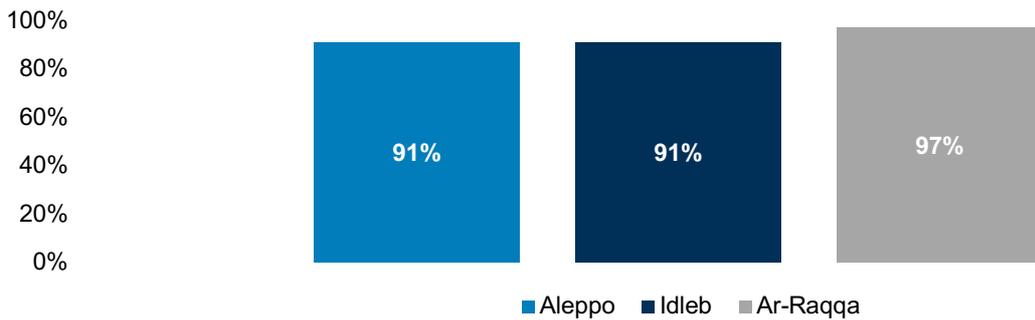
Some children said that they had guards at their learning spaces which helped them feel safe. Others said that because learning spaces were close to their homes, they felt safe. Relatedly, some children said that they worried about the walk to and from school because some children were aggressive with them on the route, because of car accidents, or because it was difficult to get to learning spaces that were far away, especially during winter.

Children stated that learning spaces felt like a second home to them, and that they enjoyed being there to play and see their friends. Some children explained that they were happier in their school this year compared to last year, because it felt more secure, had been renovated, or had more supplies.

Children were also asked how they felt about being in their learning spaces. Children in Ar-Raqqa expressed more positive feelings (97%) about being in learning spaces than their colleagues in Idlib and Aleppo (each 91%). Children in camps appeared to feel far less positively than their colleagues outside of camps (78% compared to a range of 90-98%). Children in private learning spaces felt better about their learning spaces than those in public learning spaces (100% compared to 91%). Girls, including the internally displaced, all stated that they felt “good” in learning spaces, whereas only 92% of displaced boys and 94% of host community boys felt the same.

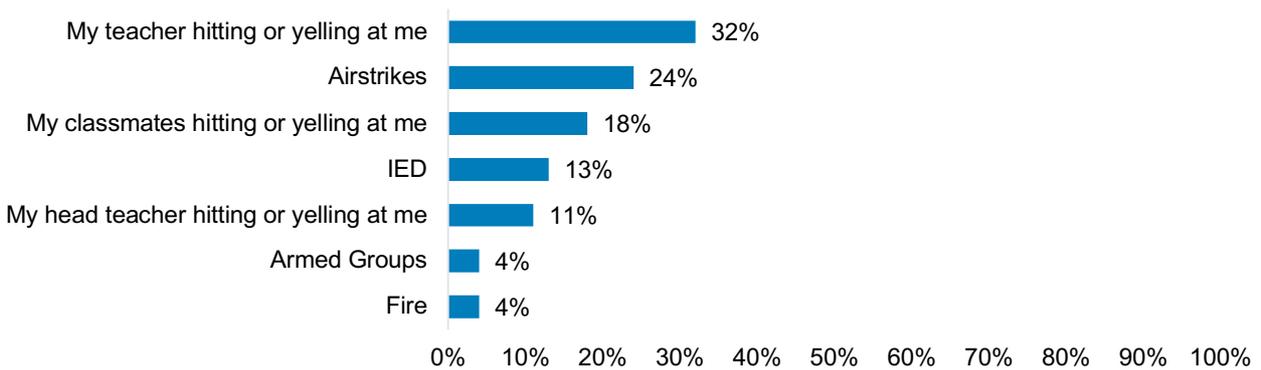
⁷⁶ Teacher abuse, school administrator abuse, airstrikes, fire, IEDs, bullying, and the presence of armed groups.

Figure 63: How positively children felt in learning spaces, by governorate



Children were asked what caused them to feel afraid when they were in school. The following table summarises their responses, with teacher-led verbal or physical abuse and airstrikes being the greatest areas of concern. Incidents of corporal punishment and verbal abuse⁷⁷ appeared to be prevalent in learning spaces, though the exact rates were unclear. Children reported higher rates of these concerning practices than did school administrators and parents/caregivers, who in turn reported higher rates of concern than did teachers.

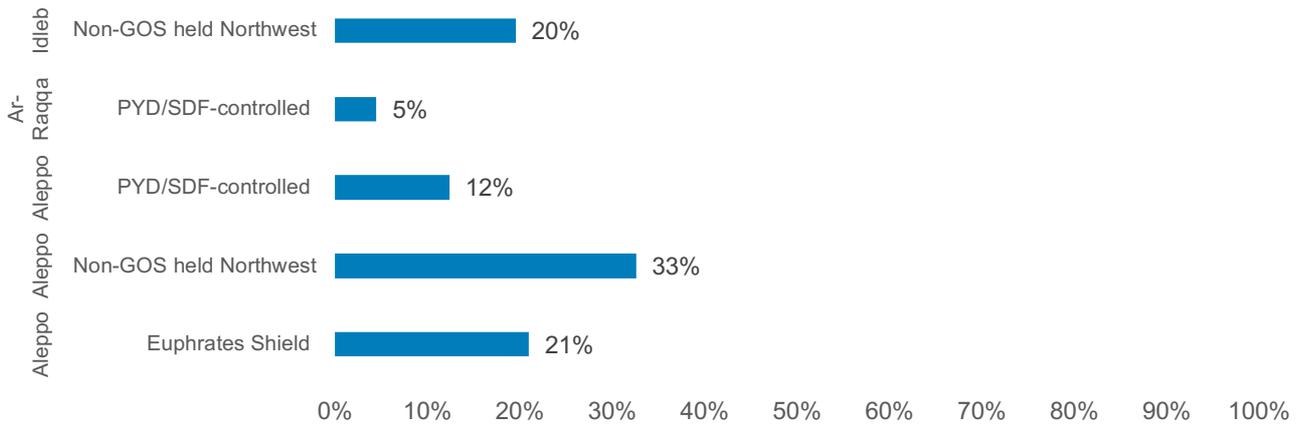
Figure 64: Children’s reports of their causes of fear while at school



Of note, the geographic area covered by this study is heavily fractured by ZoC, with different threats being faced by children within them. As such, it is important to look at the variety of concerns amongst children by both governorate and ZoC. For example, children in non-GoS-held Aleppo tended to have the greatest concerns amongst all children regardless of the type of threat. Beyond these specific fears, children also mentioned fears of gunshots, kidnapping, armed groups in the learning space, insufficient or low-quality toilets, and (for children in camps) issues with the structural soundness of tents, flooding, as well as vector-borne illnesses.

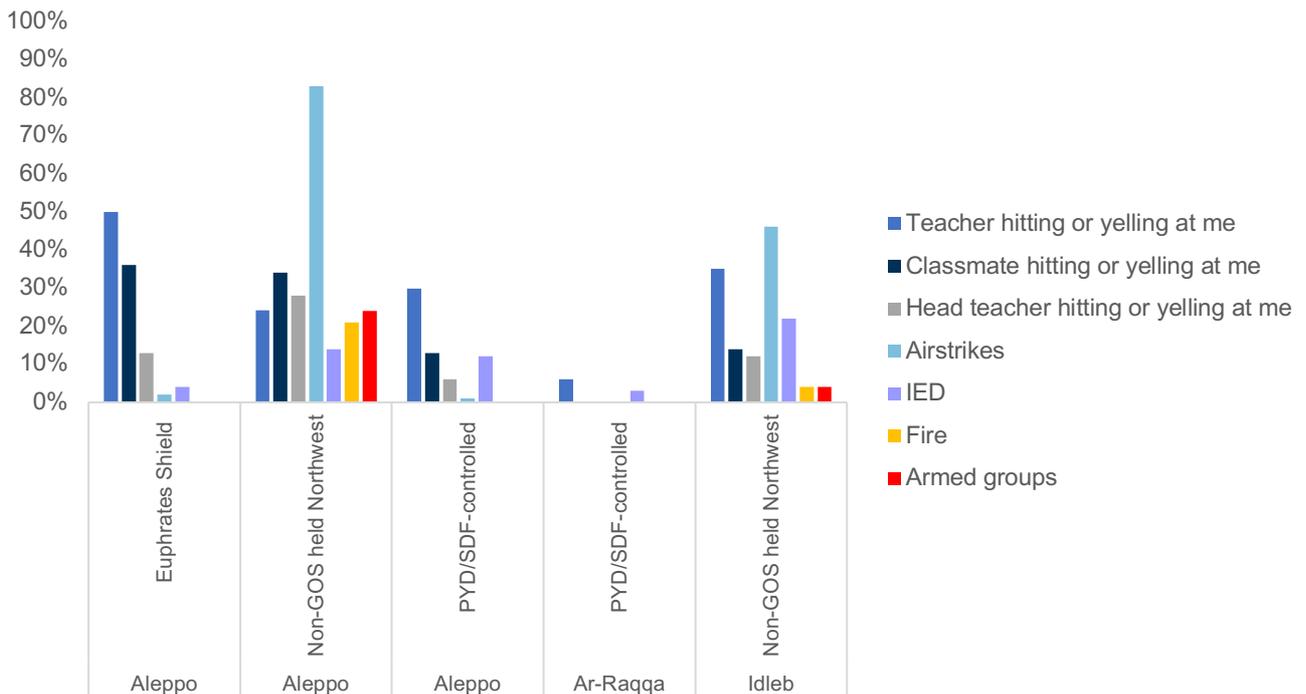
⁷⁷ Assessing the existence, extent, nature, and perpetrators of abuse is difficult. Asking (too many) pointed questions could trigger difficult emotions amongst respondents, and there are socio-cultural norms about what does and does not constitute abuse or concern to consider in the design and delivery of questions on the topic. This study attempted to use triangulation and context-informed ways of asking about the harmful treatment of children.

Figure 65: Concentration of children's fear, by governorate and ZoC



The following table breaks down each of the specific fears, by governorate and ZoC, showing that airstrikes are of significant concern to children in non-GoS-held parts of Aleppo and Idlib, for example, and less so in other areas.

Figure 66: Children's specific fears, by governorate and ZoC



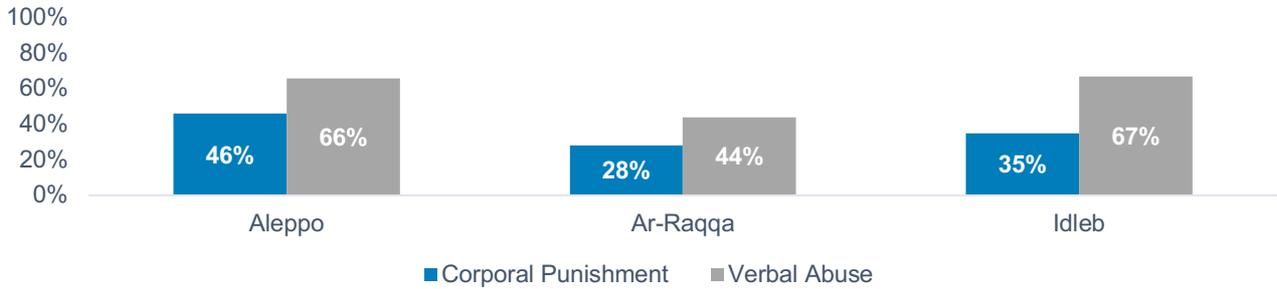
A sample of respondent and locational profiles was reviewed amongst the two top scoring areas of concern: teacher abuse and airstrikes.

Teacher abuse

Unfortunately, 41% of children reported that “some” or “all” teachers or school personnel hit children, and 64% stated that they shouted at, or threatened children. Respondent location suggests that corporal punishment was more common in Aleppo (46%), than in Idlib (35%) and Ar-Raqqa (28%). Verbal abuse appeared to be equally common in Aleppo and Idlib (66% and 67%, respectively), whereas in Ar-Raqqa the prevalence was lower (44%). Children in rural areas were more concerned

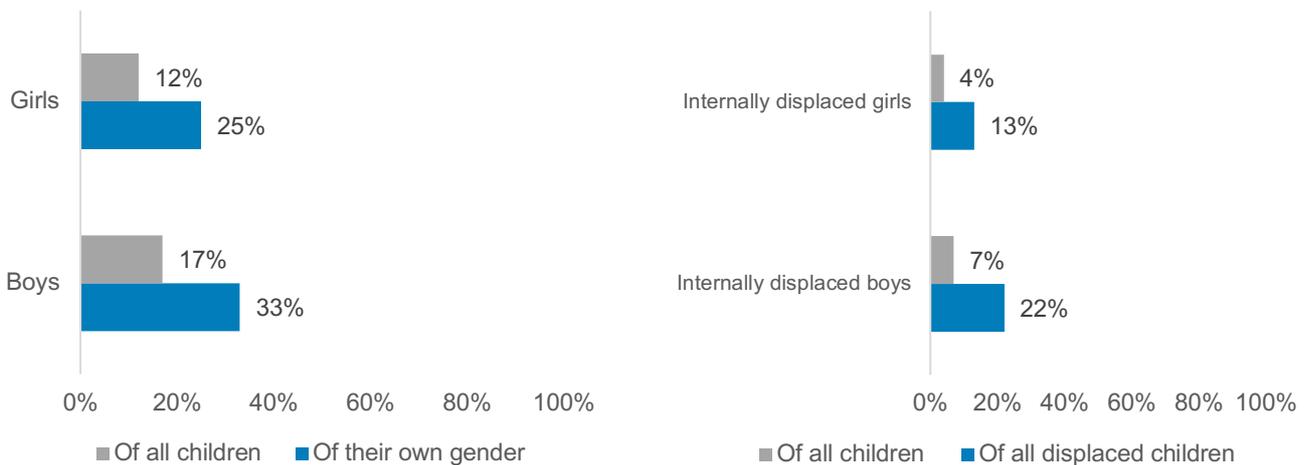
about this threat than in other community types, though the spread between highest (72%) and lowest (peri-urban: 58%) was only 14. Incidents of corporal punishment in public learning spaces was greater than that in private learning spaces (41% compared to 25%).

Figure 67: Reports by children of the frequency of corporal punishment and verbal abuse, by governorate



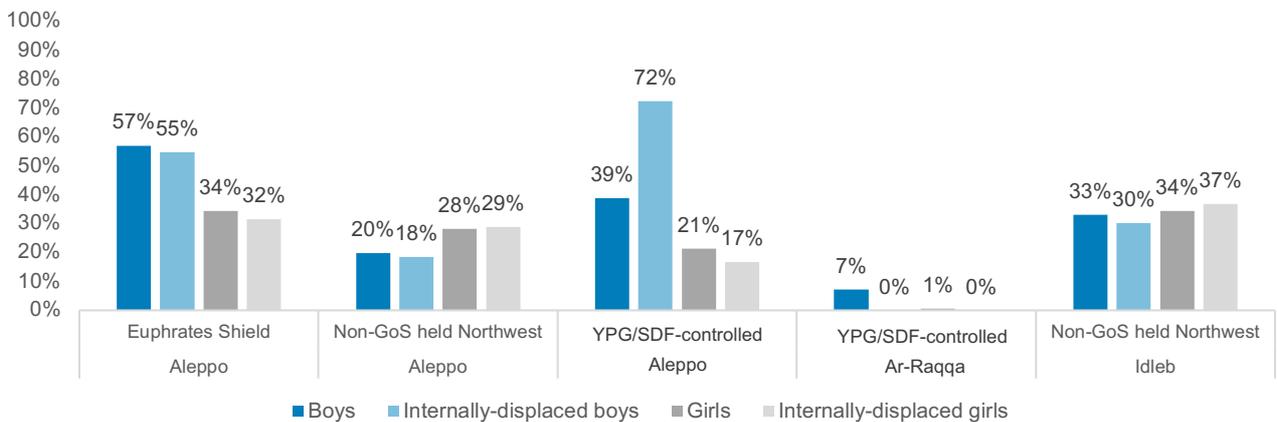
Boys were more likely to be concerned about teacher abuse than girls, but not by much.

Figure 68: Children's concerns about teacher abuse, by displacement status and gender



Internally displaced boys in Aleppo had the greatest concern about teacher abuse (49%). Within Aleppo, the majority of those boys were in areas controlled by the YPG/SDF.

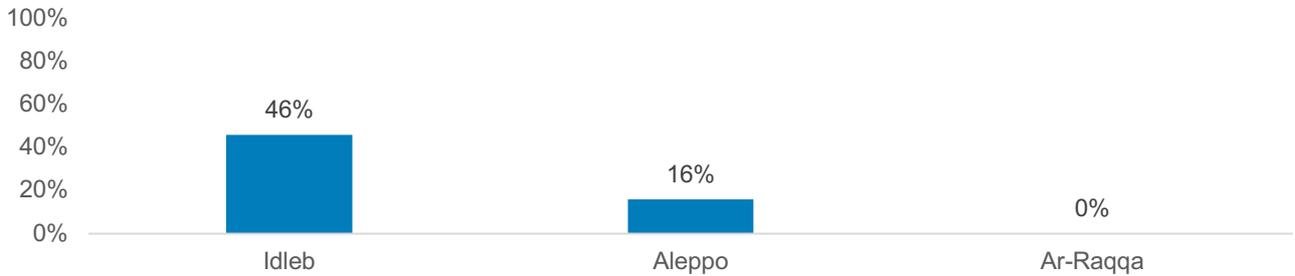
Figure 69: Profile of children's fear of abuse from teachers, by gender, displacement status, ZoC, and governorate



Airstrikes

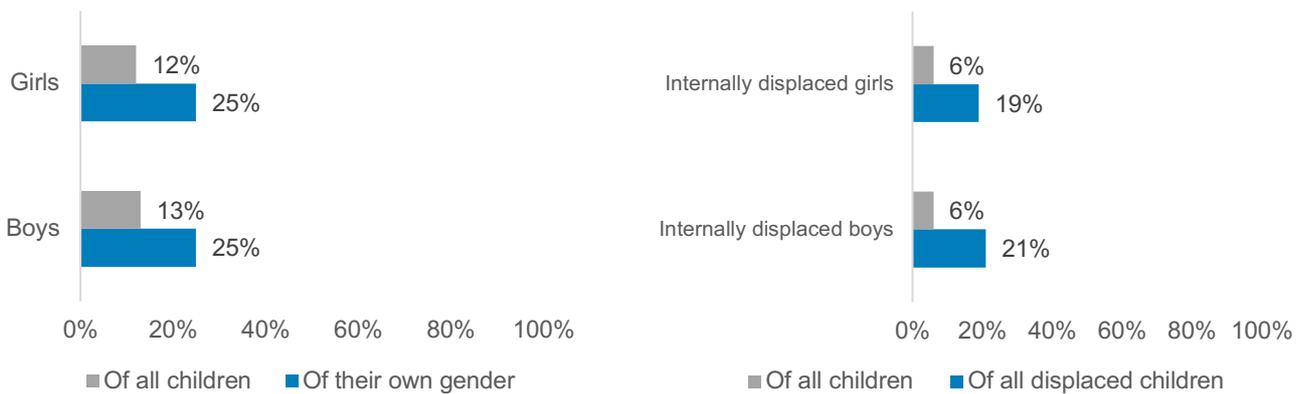
Children in Idleb were the most fearful of airstrikes. Forty-six percent stated airstrikes were a fear, compared to 16% in Aleppo, and none in Ar-Raqqa.

Figure 70: Children's fear of airstrikes, by governorate



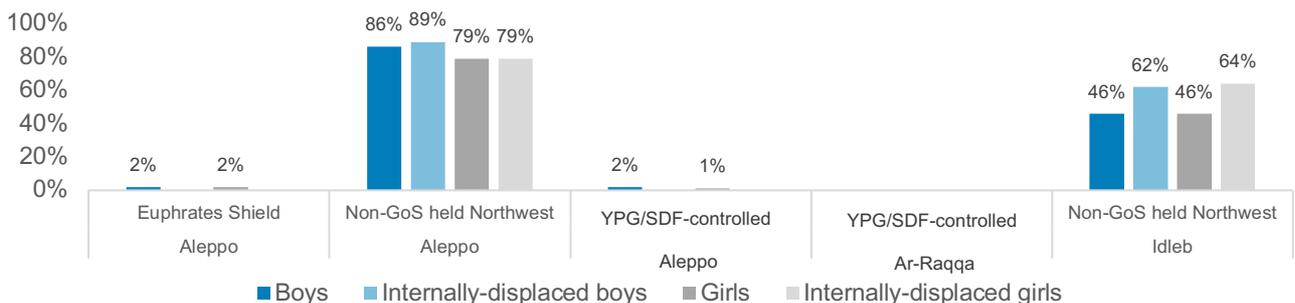
Boys and girls had roughly the same levels of fear, but within that, displaced boys were slightly more worried about airstrikes than displaced girls.

Figure 71: Children's fears of airstrikes, by gender and displacement status



Children in camps were far more concerned than those in other areas (63% compared to 9% in urban areas). There was not a significant difference amongst children in public or private learning spaces. There was a very significant difference by ZoC, with children in non-GoS-held areas of Aleppo and Idleb far more concerned about airstrikes than any other region. Internally displaced children in these areas of Idleb appeared to be more concerned than their local counterparts, whereas the concerns were roughly the same in these areas of Aleppo.

Figure 72: Profile of children's fear of airstrikes, by gender, displacement status, ZoC, and governorate

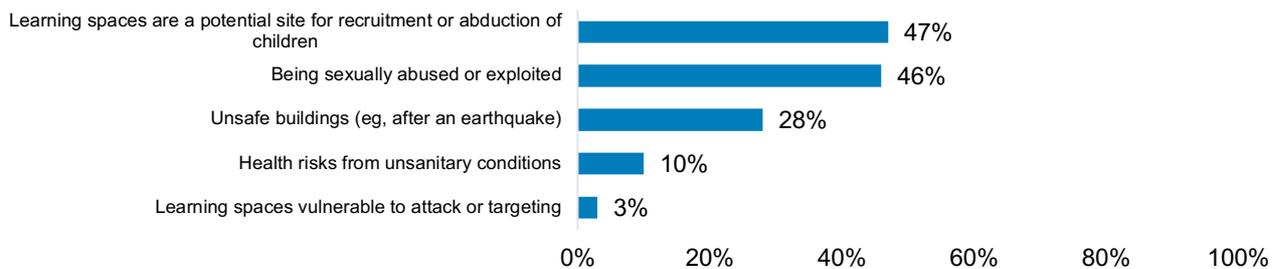


7.4.4 Adult perspectives on children’s safety in learning spaces

Parents/caregivers felt that both girls and boys were “often” or “always” safe in learning spaces (96% and 95% respectively). However, parents/caregivers suggested that boys were greater targets for verbal and/or corporal abuse by teachers, and especially male teachers, in learning spaces. A few parents/caregivers mentioned specific incidents of kidnapping as a particular concern for boys. Sixty-seven percent of education authority representatives stated that they had never heard of incidents of girls being unsafe in learning spaces. There were greater concerns amongst respondents in camps and in Idleb, where the nature of the conflict was more intense than in the other areas covered under the study. Trends in the frequency, propensity, and nature of possibly abusive behaviours could not be identified by geography or community type.

When asked to comment on the types of risks that children might face at school, parents/caregivers identified recruitment and/or abduction of children and sexual abuse and/or exploitation as their greatest concerns. The fact that sexual abuse or exploitation,⁷⁸ as well as learning spaces being used as recruitment sites, rank as concerns for close to 50% of respondents is concerning, and highlights that learning spaces, while safer than in past years in Syria, are not completely safe.

Figure 73: Parents/caregiver comments on the types of risks faced by children in learning spaces



For the respondents who mentioned risks other than those identified in the questionnaire, the types of risks reported were concerning. For example, the frequency of references to shootings, explosive devices, and armed attacks in group interviews was alarming. Quite a few respondents noted that the learning spaces their children attended were close to military centres.⁷⁹ Parents/caregivers living near the Turkish border noted the frequency of bombs, including one that exploded near the learning space a few days before the group interview.⁸⁰ In areas where airstrikes were becoming infrequent, parents/caregivers were more likely to comment on health-related concerns, such as smallpox or

⁷⁸ This study did not aim to explore the topic of sexual abuse or other forms of gender-based violence. This is a specialised area of research and not one on which ToR proposed by DFID was focussed. Unfortunately, such forms of abuse are a common aspect of conflict and other crisis-affected contexts, well documented in media reports. Kirk (2007) explored the topic around schools in her piece *Gender-based violence in and around schools in conflict and humanitarian contexts*.

⁷⁹ Harim and Idleb districts in Idleb were areas where such comments were common.

⁸⁰ Such as the Menbij district in Aleppo.

vector-borne diseases.⁸¹ Respondents in camps noted health-related concerns as well as poor infrastructure as issues, including the fragility of the tents used for classrooms.

Parents/caregivers were also asked to reflect on rumours of abuse⁸² and reported lower degrees of concern than did children: 59% said that children and young people were never abused or harassed at school. However, of those parents/caregivers who had heard of cases, they were concerning. At least two mentions were made of girls being kidnapped in the days before the group interviews took place. There were quite a few mentions of teachers insulting, humiliating and/or beating children, particularly boys, which aligns with the findings from boys in section 7.4.3. One concerning reference was made, stating that corporal punishment happened, but that it was done “lightly.” Another reference was made to the idea that complaints systems were used for such incidents to help hold the teacher accountable. However, with reference to the [section on the low existence and limited functionality of such systems](#), accountability is likely low. Some respondents noted that such behaviours were more common in learning spaces overseen by the GoS, and less so in SIG-supported learning spaces. There were only a few references to sexual abuse, with one mention being that it was unheard of, and another being a concern that displaced populations would perpetrate it.

Seventy-four percent of teachers said that they had been trained in positive discipline. Sixty-seven percent of them said they avoided corporal punishment “76%-100%” of the time, and 57% said they did the same for verbal abuse. A confirmational question was asked to help reduce respondent bias: teachers were not asked about their own practices but about their observations of other teacher practices. The findings suggest that teachers think they do better than other teachers do with respect to positive discipline. Sixty percent of teachers said that they had rarely or never heard rumours⁸³ of verbal abuse, humiliation, and/or physical abuse in learning spaces. There was little differentiation by governorate. Teachers in private learning spaces were more likely to say that they often heard about such types of abuse (44%), whereas only 13% of those in public learning spaces heard about it often. It was more common for female teachers to say they “rarely” or “never” heard about such abuse (78%) than male teachers (72%). Trends in teacher reporting on this topic did not appear to be influenced by their years of experience, the grade level they taught, or whether or not they had received training recently.

7.4.5 Bullying and violence amongst children

The data suggests that incidents of verbal discord, abuse, and/or physical violence amongst children happen in learning spaces. While figures are difficult to ascertain, it appears that up to 30% of respondents witness such issues of concern. These types of incidents are indicators of issues around child wellbeing. They are detrimental to child wellbeing, and foster lower levels of safety in the learning space.

Unfortunately, 67% of school administrators said that the child behaviour they typically witnessed in classrooms was worrying. Thirty-three percent stated that child-on-child abuse occurred. School administrators noted that children behaved better in school, but would get into conflicts outside of

⁸¹ Examples of these areas include: Aleppo (Jebel Saman, Ain Al-Arab, and Aza districts) and Idleb (Saraqab and Al Ma’ra districts).

⁸² Stakeholders who helped design the data collection toolkit noted that asking questions about abuse indirectly would be the most appropriate in the context to get indicative figures of concern.

⁸³ Stakeholders who helped design the data collection toolkit noted that asking questions about abuse indirectly would be the most appropriate way in the context to get indicative figures of concern.

class. This statement aligns with some made by children, who noted that they worried about their safety on the way to and from school, sometimes due to other classmates.

Thirty percent of children said that “some” children got into fights with one another. There were no significant differences amongst responses when reviewed by governorate, type of school, or gender. Children in peri-urban areas were least likely to report such incidents (16%).

Twenty-six percent of teachers said that children “often” or “always” worry that other children will be mean to them, and 23% said that children “often” or “always” threaten their peers, and are verbally abusive. These overall findings align with a confirmational question on the topic, which was how frequently children got along with one other, to which 86% of teachers responded “often” or “always”, and 53% of teachers said that children treat each other with respect.

Quite a few teachers stated that protocols were in place to talk to children about treating one another respectfully. Thirty-five percent of teachers said that children are “often” taught how to solve conflicts with each other. They also noted the following as likely contributing factors: psychological stress emanating from their exposure to the conflict, poor parental support, displacement, being out of school for long periods of time, and other forms of vulnerability. Teachers also mentioned that new students were more likely to be anxious, and that there were more tensions at the start of the school year. A few teachers noted that bullies were usually children with bigger physical stature. Large disparities in age were also said to contribute to bullying, with older children mistreating younger children.

In terms of managing these issues, one teacher suggested that social integration programmes would be helpful in areas with displaced populations.

7.4.6 Displays of children’s work

Roughly 50% of teacher and enumerator informants said that displays of child works were common. Such findings suggest that children are not often provided with opportunities to see their efforts displayed as a source of pride within the school community, which can be a demotivating factor.

Only 58% of teachers said that children’s work (drawings, writing, and other work) is “often” or “always” displayed in the school. Teachers in private learning spaces were far more likely to note such practices than public learning spaces (75% compared to 52% in Aleppo, and 100% compared to 15% in Ar-Raqqa). Anecdotes from teachers suggest that some learning spaces have a special room where child works are displayed (one might suspect this would be the teacher workroom, where children are not commonly found). Such work is also sometimes displayed in libraries, or displayed periodically (sometimes only annually at the end of the second semester) in the school hallways. They noted that when classrooms were in tents, it was more difficult to display children’s work. A number of respondents said that only “distinctive” or “outstanding” works were displayed.

Enumerators observed slightly fewer displays (roughly 50% said that learning spaces had such displays “51-100%” of the time). Enumerators found such displays to be slightly more common in Idleb (51%) than Aleppo (49%). Learning spaces in rural areas were more likely than those in other areas to display children’s work (59%). There was no difference observed amongst public and private learning spaces.

7.4.7 Timetables

Like class rules and codes of conduct, timetables help provide a sense of control for children (and school personnel), and facilitate a sense of order in the school space. Such practices, however, were not found to be common in the assessed learning spaces.

Twenty-eight percent of enumerators noted that a timetable and/or student schedule was clear and visible to children “76-100%” of the time. This was the case far more frequently in Aleppo (57%) than in Idleb (14%). Urban learning spaces and private learning spaces were found to use this practice more than other community types or public learning spaces (37% and 50%, respectively).

7.4.8 Availability of recreational resources and equipment

Play, both structured and unstructured, has been found to have great value in emotional regulation and stress reduction for children (Moser & Martinsen, 2010.) Unfortunately, the study found resources to support such activities to be lacking in the assessed learning spaces, a finding further supported by recent studies by the ACU (2018) and Orange (2018).

Only 31% of teachers reported that there were “often” or “always” recreational resources or equipment (hula hoops, footballs, etc.) available in the play area.⁸⁴ Where they were available, teachers said that basketball courts and football fields existed, as did games like chess, and some had jumping ropes. However, most noted that the existence of such resources was limited and of poor quality, and thus insufficient. Furthermore, 96% of teachers said that when resources were available, children did not have access to them, or only had access to them during break time, suggesting that neither unstructured play nor learning through play were priorities in these spaces.

Teachers appeared to overstate the availability of such resources, however, when reviewing the findings of enumerator assessments. Enumerators noted a lower percentage of available play materials (18%). There were no significant values differentiating these circumstances as viewed through geographic, community, or school type lenses.

7.4.9 Equity: School infrastructure, school policies, and community resources in support of equitable access to education

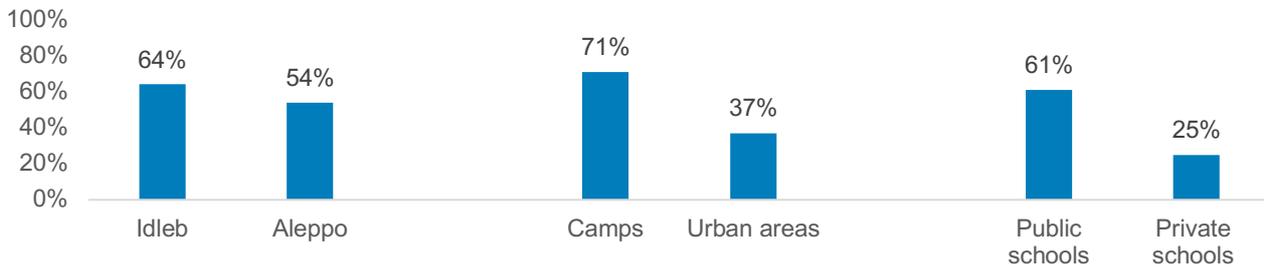
The accessibility of learning spaces for children with special needs appeared to be mixed, depending on respondent perspective. Anecdotal evidence suggests that most learning spaces are not well designed for children with special needs, due to socio-cultural norms, limited resources, and limited understanding of the types of modifications helpful for various types of disabilities. The study team did not observe significant differences amongst ZoC or types of communities.

Learning spaces were found to be accessible to “all” children 59% of the time; 64% of time in Idleb, and 54% of the time in Aleppo. Accessibility for all children was found to decrease by community type, with camps being the most accessible at 71% and urban areas being the least at 37%. Interestingly, 61% of public learning spaces were found to be accessible, compared to only 25% of private learning spaces (noting that the sample size of private schools in this study was small).

⁸⁴ The ACU’s report on learning spaces in Syria (2018) found that only 12% of learning spaces provided such resources.

The following figure summarises these findings.

Figure 74: Learning spaces found to be accessible



Sixty percent of enumerators said that “76-100%” of the school was easily accessible for all children, including children with mobility issues. However, only 10% of noted that latrines were accessible to children with mobility differences “76-100%” of the time. Such latrines appeared to be slightly more available in Aleppo (17%) than in Idleb (6%), in rural areas (13%) than in other community types, and in public learning spaces (10%) than in private learning spaces.

Forty-one percent of enumerators stated that there were separate latrines for teachers and children “76-100%” of the time. Only 15% of enumerators found that latrines were clean “76-100%” of the time. Learning spaces in Aleppo, as well as those in peri-urban areas, were found to have clean latrines more often than in Idleb or other community types (25% and 38%, respectively).

School administrators were asked if support teams existed within learning spaces to help children with special needs. The finding was largely negative, with only 11% stating that such teams existed. Teachers were asked a similar question: whether individual assistance and/or psychological counselling was provided to children. Only 38% responded that such assistance was “often” or “always” available. Teachers were more likely to respond positively in Idleb (46%), than in Aleppo (33%) or Ar-Raqqa (20%). Teachers reported that they tended to provide this type of support, even though they were not qualified to do so and the number of children requiring support was high. A few teachers mentioned that their learning spaces had protection officers.

7.4.10 Code of conduct

Codes of conduct are helpful tools for fostering shared understanding of expectations of behaviours amongst school personnel, and provide references when assessing behaviours and holding personnel accountable. An extensive review of teacher codes of conduct and their development was produced by UNESCO in 2009, and highlighted that while codes of conduct can be aspirational and inspirational, they cannot, on their own, foster accountability to the principles they promote. Learning spaces in Idleb were more likely to have such codes than learning spaces in other regions. In terms of operationalising the concepts included in codes of conduct, however, practices such as training, documentation, and accountability appeared to be minimal.

Only 60% of teachers stated that their learning spaces had a code of conduct or similar policy in place that specified the standards for school personnel’s behaviour. “Verbal” codes of conduct were mentioned by a number of teachers. It appears that codes of conduct are far more common in Idleb (81%), than in Aleppo (47%) and very low in Ar-Raqqa (20%). Fifty-three percent of teachers said that “51-100%” of teachers had been trained on the code of conduct/policy.

School administrators were asked what happened when violations were identified. The most common sequencing of events was a series of actions, depending on how and to what degree the suspected violator modified his/her behaviours. These actions often started with alerting the violator via an oral warning, reducing the salary, suspension from work with a suspended salary, and if no progression was seen, termination of their contract.

7.4.11 Complaints systems, including for identifying, monitoring, and/or reporting on cases of abuse

Complaints systems are an accountability tool in institutions such as learning spaces, and are especially helpful for children, who might not have other resources or soft skills for dealing with their concerns. While formal complaints systems appeared to be limited, there were informal means of reporting concerns in school spaces with which children felt comfortable. Children in Ar-Raqqa, however, appear to have limited information about how to handle their concerns, with only 16% saying they knew how to do so. Learning spaces in Idleb appear to have more formalised systems, according to 67% of school administrator respondents. According to school administrators themselves, any such systems are unlikely to be accessible to children with special needs. School administrators who were themselves displaced appeared to be more likely to establish complaints systems than their local counterparts.

Only 39% of children stated that they knew that there was a complaints system. However, 74% of children said they knew where to go to tell someone if they saw or heard of a child being hurt. Teachers and school administrators were the most common people that children went to for help. Only a few mentioned the availability of a security guard or protection officer. Children in Ar-Raqqa were far less likely to know how to report their concerns (16%), compared to 78% for Aleppo and 87% in Idleb. There was a 31% spread between the lowest responses by community type (peri-urban: 58% and camps: 89%). There was little difference amongst responses by type of school or gender.

Only 51% of school administrators said that there was a system for identifying, monitoring, and/or reporting cases of abuse within their school. Fifty-nine percent of school administrators stated that existing complaints systems were not accessible to children with special needs. Those in Idleb were more likely to report the existence of such a system (67%) than those in Aleppo (40%) or Ar-Raqqa (20%). There was little difference in responses amongst community types, though rural areas appeared to have in place such systems more than other areas. Male school administrators were more likely to report such a system than females (56% compared to 30%). School administrators who were displaced were more likely than their host community colleagues to state that such systems existed (62% compared to 49%).

Sixty-eight percent of parents/caregivers said they knew where to go to report cases of abuse, and they most frequently reported going to education authorities or the police. A few respondents in Idleb noted the use of Islamic courts as an option, as well as Local Councils.

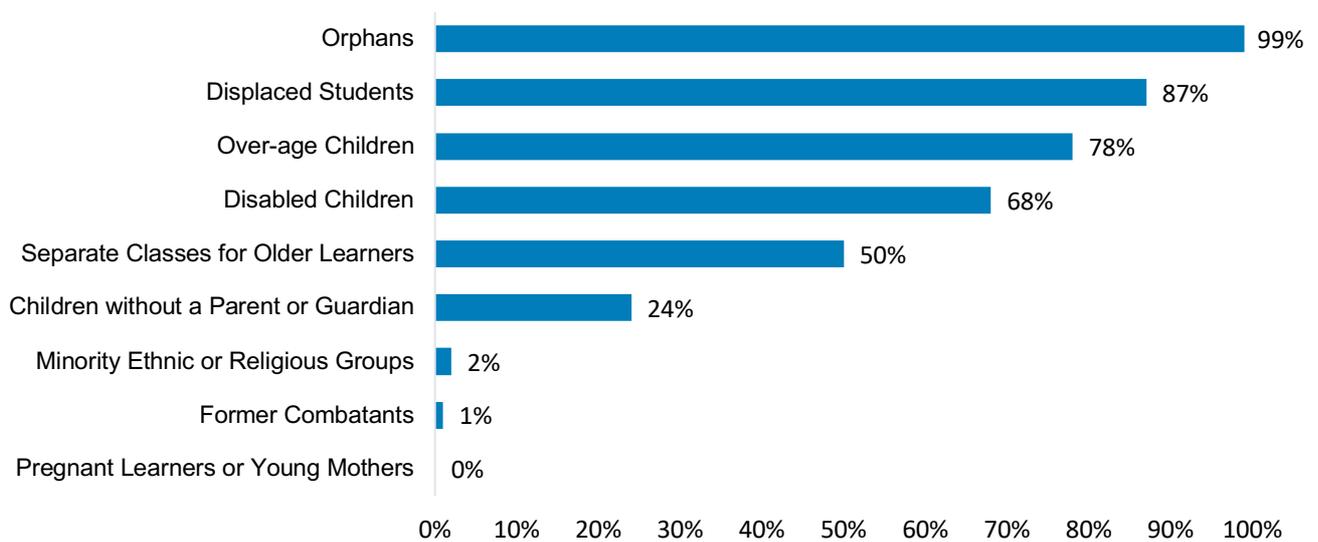
7.4.12 Facilitating access to learning spaces for vulnerable groups

The term “inclusive education” considers indicators of access and quality of education service delivery. The guide for the sector is INEE’s 2009 pocket guide on the topic Education in Emergencies: Including Everyone. Indicators used to measure the inclusiveness of learning spaces include the types of services provided to facilitate practical, logistical, and socio-cultural engagement in learning activities. This study looked at the types of actions school personnel stated they took to facilitate such access. It did not examine the inclusivity of such practices. While it is difficult to ascertain exactly

how inclusive education spaces and practices are for vulnerable children, anecdotal evidence and proxy indicators suggest that, even though efforts are made by school personnel to be inclusive, in reality underlying socio-cultural norms and resource limitations limit their effectiveness or quality.

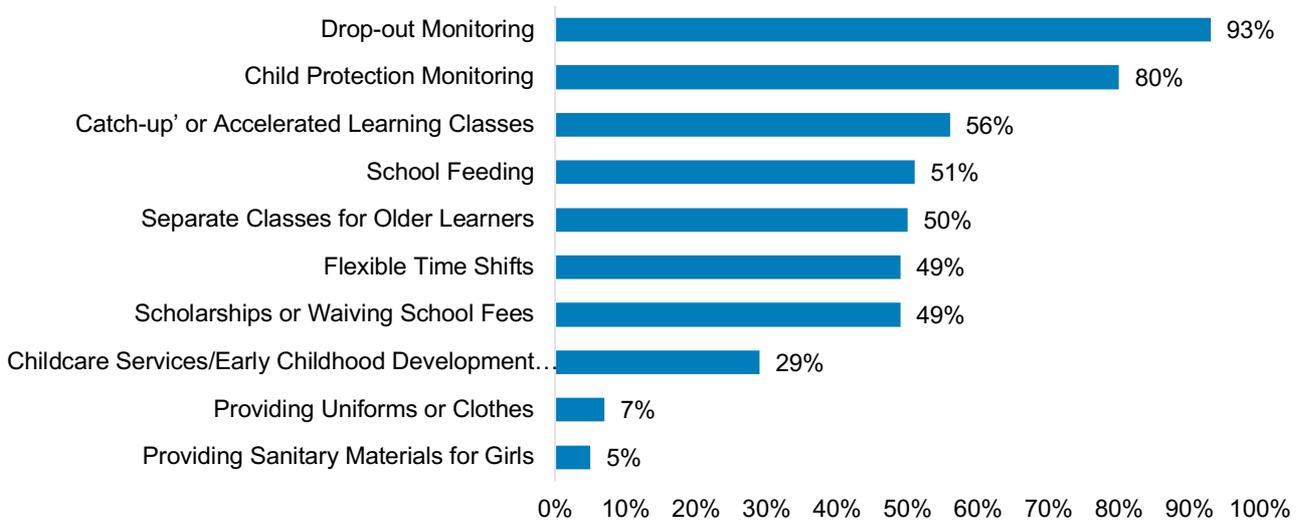
One education authority representative represented the comments of many colleagues by noting that “cognitive disparity” amongst children was an issue as a result of both the conflict and different levels of access by children to learning spaces, particularly those from families with limited financial means and those who were displaced. Education authority representatives and teachers identified overage children, or those who had been out of school for a while (often the same cohort), as the most difficult to engage in equitable learning. Children with special needs were also cohorts of consideration in the “vulnerable groups” category.

Figure 75: Percentage of school administrators who stated that their school served the following populations of especially vulnerable children



School administrators said they provided entertainment activities, private toilets for the disabled, and stationary and school bags as means of helping vulnerable children engage in school. They also stated they did community awareness raising on child rights and health care. Drop-out and child protection monitoring appeared to be the most common forms of support.

Figure 76: Percentage of school administrators that stated they put forth the following efforts to help vulnerable children access, participate and/or stay in school



7.4.13 Screening of and specialist support for children with special needs

Both the availability of services to which children can be referred for specialist support outside of the school and the practice of screening for needs and making referrals appear to be minimal. Such practices appeared to be more common in Idleb than in other areas. The availability and practice of referring to specialist support in camps was an area of uncertainty, as data shared by respondents was unclear.

Child screening: The study asked school administrators if they screened children for mental and physical support needs, either upon enrolment or on an annual basis. The majority (56%) said this was a practice they undertook only “sometimes”, and only 8% said they “always” did so.

Availability of agencies to accept referrals: Only 26% of school administrators stated that such services were available in their areas. The likelihood was highest in Idleb (36%) and lowest in Ar-Raqqa (10%), with 18% of Aleppo school administrators stating that such services existed. School administrators in peri-urban areas were more likely to state that such services were available (32%), and interestingly, those in camps stated the lowest availability rate at 14%, even though the same people had the highest referral rate (25%).

Referral practice: Only 25% of school administrators stated that they referred children with special needs. Referrals were more than twice as likely in Idleb (36%) than in Aleppo (16%), and only 10% in Ar-Raqqa. Such practices were more common in camps (25%) and then declined moving through rural, peri-urban, and finally the lowest in urban areas (15%). Displaced school administrators were more likely than their host community counterparts to refer children (38% and 22%, respectively), but male school administrators were more likely than their female counterparts to do so (26% and 18%, respectively). The more formal education the respondent had, the more likely s/he was to refer a child, but certification status had no bearing.

7.4.14 Peer networks

Peer support networks have been shown to be valuable resources for mentoring and other forms of support for all age groups. This section focuses on peer networks amongst children, and is supported by literature such as Gensemer, 2000; Karcher, 2005; and Thompson & Smith, 2011. Unfortunately, as suggested in the [section on peer lesson planning](#), such practices or networks did not appear to be common in the assessed learning spaces, neither for adults nor for children.

Just as many respondents suggested that such networks existed as said they did not. At the governorate level, the greatest gaps in such support services were in Ar-Raqqa (60% of school administrators stated that such support systems existed “less than 50%” of the time).

7.4.15 Parental/caregiver engagement in support learning and wellbeing

There appeared to be a disconnect between teachers and parents/caregivers in terms of how each cohort saw parent/caregiver roles in support of learning and wellbeing. Teachers had a more negative perspective on the quality and degree of engagement by parents/caregivers, and saw much room for improvement. Parents/caregivers, on the other hand, believed that there was little reason or room for them to be more involved, even if they had the time. Parent teacher associations (PTAs), and variations of them, can serve as helpful means to support the school to home learning and wellbeing continuum.

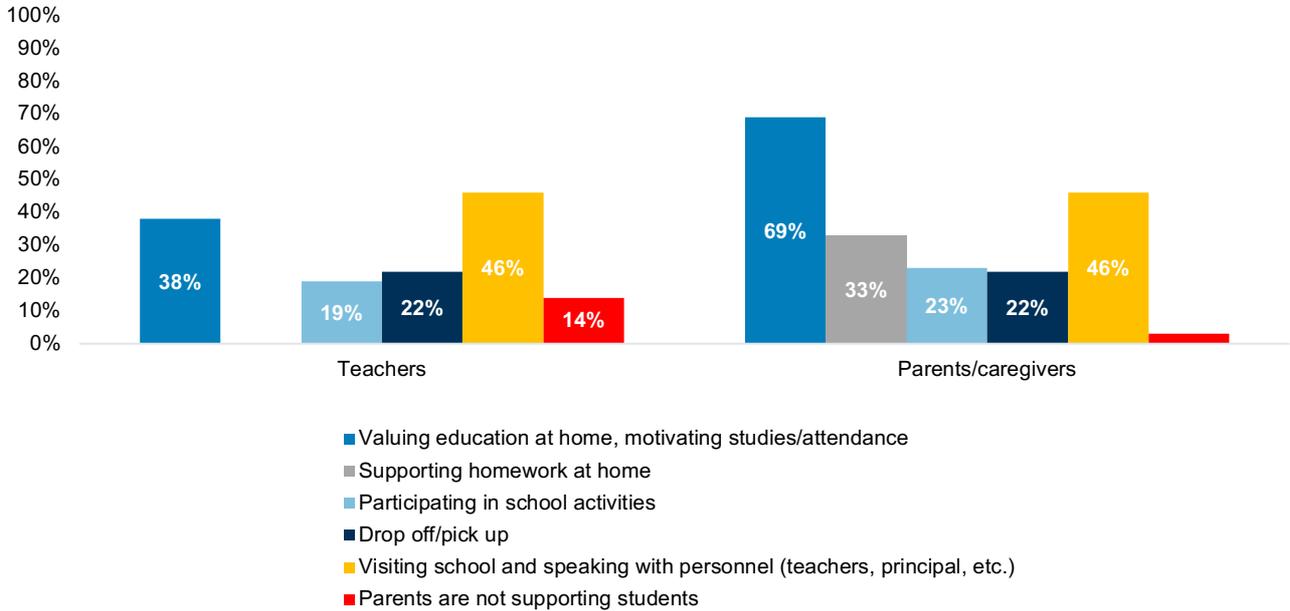
Teachers and parents/caregivers were asked how parents/caregivers supported children to stay safe and learn. Even though they were able to identify areas of engagement, teachers had a largely negative opinion of the quality of support that parents/caregivers were providing. “Teachers noted that parents/caregivers were invited “every now and then” to review child progress, suggesting infrequency and low prioritisation of parent-teacher cooperation. Other teachers mentioned that the extent of parental involvement was usually some engagement in homework and school pick-up and drop-off. Teachers often made disparaging comments about the quality of parental support, and particularly about displaced families. Quite a few teachers noted that parents/caregivers did not care about their children’s education, but did care about their children’s future. They did not appear to connect the two. Some teachers mentioned that the type of parental encouragement given was more figurative than literal or practical.

Teachers in Ar-Raqqa perceived parents/caregivers to be much more involved than those in Aleppo or Idleb, which consistently fell 20-30% below Ar-Raqqa responses in all but one case. Parents/caregivers also perceived their engagement in Ar-Raqqa to be higher than parents/caregivers in other areas. Amongst both respondent types, there were no significant differences amongst responses based on type of community. In all cases, parents/caregivers with children in private learning spaces reported being significantly more engaged in the above activities than those in public learning spaces, with a spread between 17% and 43%. Male respondents consistently stated higher rates of involvement than their female counterparts, with the exception of participating in school activities, where they were on par.

Parents/caregivers had more positive opinions of their engagement in supporting their children’s learning than did teachers, noting with frequency that they supported their children with their homework. Some parents/caregivers expressed an idea also identified by teachers—that the best way they could support their children was through encouragement rather than practical support (such as being more actively involved in volunteering at the school). Quite a few parents/caregivers mentioned visiting the school on occasion to check on their children, but in the absence of formal parent-teacher meetings and formal PTAs, it is likely that such visits play no real role in supporting

learning. A number of parents/caregivers noted that they did not have time to help their children, or that distances to learning spaces were long for mothers, and/or that they sent their children to tutors who could help them more than they themselves could.

Figure 77: Parent/caregiver and teacher reports on how parents/caregivers support children to stay safe and learn



Parents/caregivers were asked if they felt that home visits to support wellbeing would be helpful, and 92% responded that they “agreed” or “strongly agreed”. Only 1%, however, stated that this practice was already taking place, and their comments suggested that it only happened in the case of severe illnesses. Parents/caregivers commented that such visits would help improve the psychological state of the children and help them feel better supported by both their teachers and their parents/caregivers. They also rightly noted that visits leading to improvements in wellbeing would also likely translate to improvements in learning and motivation. They noted the potential for a positive impact on parents/caregivers as well, to better understand the needs of their children and how to support them. Some parents/caregivers commented on how they were the duty bearers most responsible for children’s wellbeing, and that their increased involvement with learning spaces would be important to fulfil their responsibilities.

Quite a few others, however, noted that such responsibilities should rest only with the education authorities. The concerns that were raised were diverse. Some related to the tribal nature of villages and closed opinions about such interactions. Other parents/caregivers noted the existing requirements of parents and the limited time and energy remaining after they finish work and other commitments. Many parents/caregivers suggested that they were hesitant about such involvement because they did not feel skilled to support their children in more specialised ways.

7.5 Teaching behaviours and practices: child-centred and experiential pedagogy

Teaching practices and behaviours

As noted in the section detailing the findings of the desk review on the profile of the Syrian education sector, several assessments of the quality of education have been undertaken in Syria within the last two years. These assessments provided helpful foundations to tailor the focus of this study and build

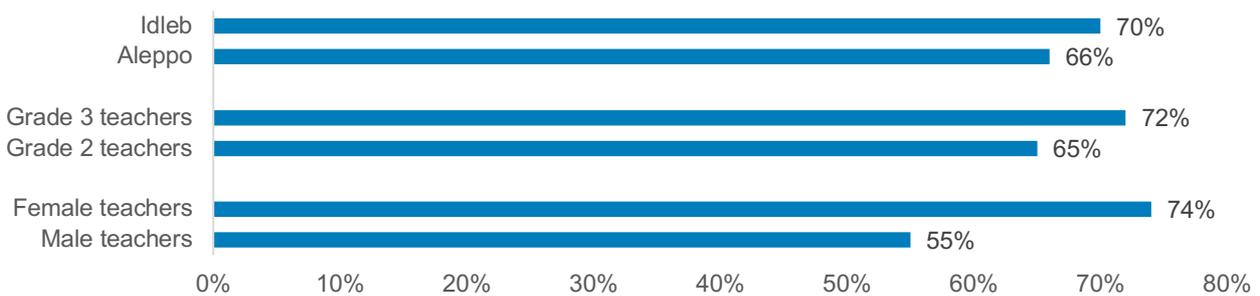
on existing datasets. The following sections use classroom level data to elucidate information sourced during the study’s inception phase, which suggested serious concerns about the quality of education provided to primary level students.

7.5.1 Classroom management

Data from enumerators and teachers suggest that at least two thirds of teachers are using practices that aim to ensure calm and order in the classroom, and that teachers feel confident in their abilities to maintain their composure when disrupted while teaching. These findings relate to practices such as behaviour monitoring, positive discipline, and a sense of self-efficacy.

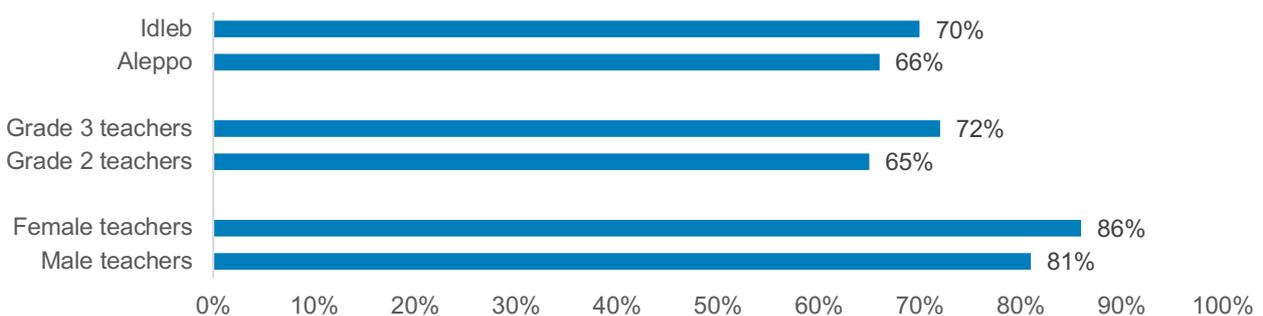
Teachers were observed to “often” or “always” move around the room to monitor child behaviour and interactions 68% of the time. There was a significant difference in the frequency with which female teachers did so (74% of the time) versus male teachers (55% of the time). Teachers of Grade 3 classrooms were more likely (72%) to show these behaviours than teachers in Grade 2 classrooms (65%). There was a negligible difference between observations of this practice in Arabic (69%) versus maths (68%) classes. Teachers in Idleb were more likely (70%) than their Aleppo colleagues (66%) to use this practice.

Figure 78: Enumerator observations of teacher monitoring practices, by governorate, grade, and teacher gender



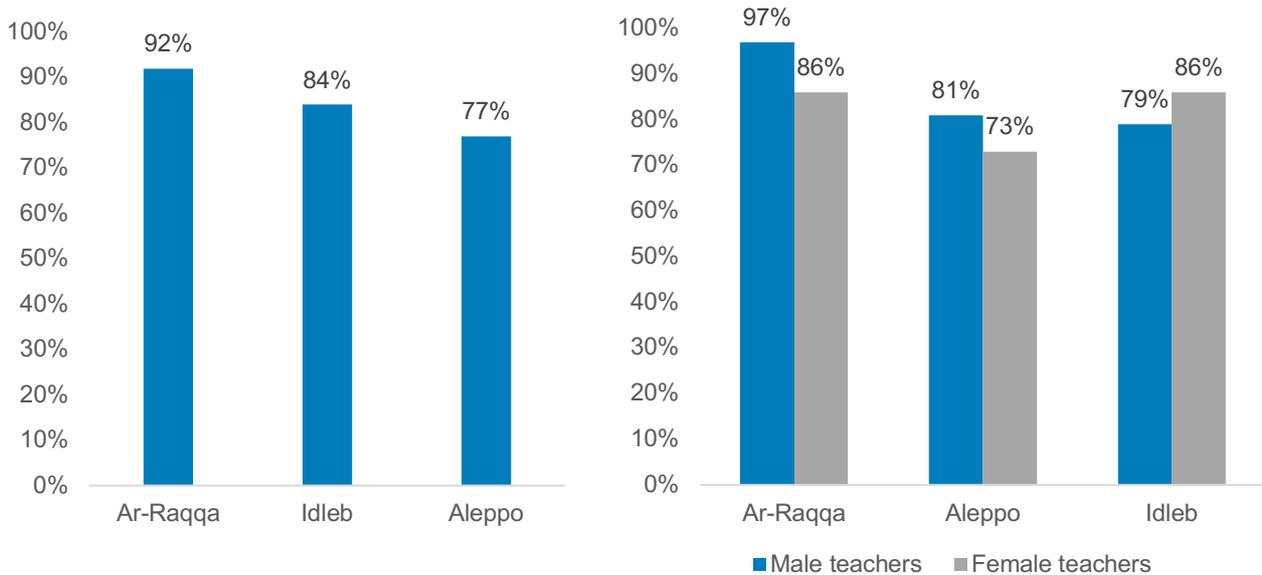
Enumerators observed teachers positively and patiently redirecting children’s negative behaviour “often” or “always” 85% of the time. There was a small difference in the frequency with which female teachers did this (86% of the time) versus male teachers (81% of the time). Teachers of Grade 3 classrooms were more likely (72%) to show these behaviours than teachers in Grade 2 classrooms (65%). There was a negligible difference between observations of this practice in Arabic (69%) versus maths (68%) classes. Teachers in Idleb were more likely (70%) than their Aleppo colleagues (66%) to use this practice.

Figure 79: Enumerator observations of teacher practices relating to redirection of negative behaviour, by governorate, grade, and teacher gender



Eighty-one percent of teachers stated that they agreed or strongly agreed that, when disrupted while teaching, they felt confident in their ability to maintain composure and continue to teach well. There was disparity amongst governorates on this question (Aleppo: 77%, Ar-Raqqa: 92%; Idleb: 84%), as well as amongst male and female teachers. Male teachers in Aleppo and Ar-Raqqa were more confident than their female colleagues (81% and 73% and 97% and 86%, respectively), whereas female teachers in Idleb were more confident than their male colleagues (86% and 79%, respectively).

Figure 80: Teacher self-efficacy as measured by their confidence in their ability to teach despite distractions, by governorate and by gender and governorate



7.5.2 Subject matter expertise

There appeared to be a disconnect amongst:

- *Teacher and school administrator beliefs about teacher subject matter expertise are higher than observed levels of teacher subject matter expertise.*
- *Actual skill level and the ability to foster learning through effective teaching practices; and*
- *Strong delivery of academic content by teachers but limited uptake by children due to wellbeing issues.*

Study data showed relatively high rates of observed⁸⁵ subject matter expertise with relatively low learning outcomes data,⁸⁶ suggesting that teachers' ability to deliver content was more of an issue than their comprehension of the content. This, and related reasons why learning uptake might be low, are reviewed in the [correlative analysis section](#).

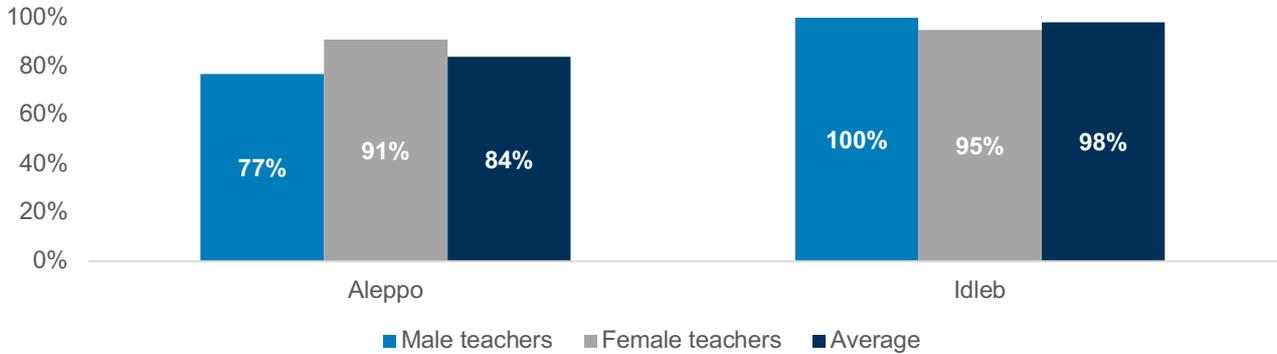
Ninety-five percent of school administrators believed that teachers in their learning spaces understood the subject matters they covered “well” or “very well”. Enumerator observations of teacher practice confirmed this opinion; teachers were observed to “often” or “always” demonstrate strong knowledge of the material they were covering 93% of the time. Teachers in Idleb did better

⁸⁵ It is important to note that this finding is based only on observations, and not on subject knowledge assessments.

⁸⁶ Reviewed in the sections on literacy and numeracy levels, found [here](#) and [here](#).

than their Aleppo colleagues, overall, but female teachers in Aleppo were more likely to be characterised as doing so (91%) than male teachers (77%). In Idleb, male teachers were observed as doing so 100% of the time, compared to female teachers (95%). Teachers in Idleb were more likely than those in Aleppo to be characterised as doing so (98% compared to 84%). There was only a 9% spread amongst the lowest and highest percentages of observed practice by community type.

Figure 81: Enumerator opinions of teacher subject matter expertise, by governorate and gender



Enumerators observed that the lesson was “often” or “always” academically correct and appropriate to the developmental level of the students 93% of the time. There were insignificant differences when data was reviewed by teacher gender, grade level, subject, or geolocation.

7.5.3 Lesson planning

Lesson planning is a common practice that helps teachers ensure that they have the strategies and resources in place to introduce the required content to learners in effective ways (Farrell, 2002). As Rusznyak & Walton (2011) point out, inexperienced teachers (including student teachers) often underestimate the complexity of the topics they need to teach, and effective lesson planning can help them unpack and address critical teaching steps. Most teachers and many school administrators interviewed for this study noted that lesson planning was a common practice. However, it appears the value placed on joint lesson planning with colleagues was not high, suggesting that many teachers continue to bear the full weight of planning individually, and thus lose out on opportunities to improve their work through collaboration and the consideration of different perspectives. Female teachers appeared more open to joint lesson planning than their male colleagues. The teacher’s guide was deemed to be the most useful material when developing lesson plans.

Ninety-one percent of teachers reported that they “often” or “always” prepared lessons plans.⁸⁷ Sixty-seven percent of school administrators noted that teachers in their learning spaces were often willing to collaborate with each other when developing lesson plans, but stated that willingness and practical cooperation were not correlated. Teacher-reported data confirmed school administrators’ suggestion that, while they were open to the idea of joint lesson planning, it was not something they did often or enjoyed. Teacher responses suggested that they found it unenjoyable, even if somewhat helpful, to work with their peers on lesson planning: only 46% said they enjoyed it and only 61% found it helpful.

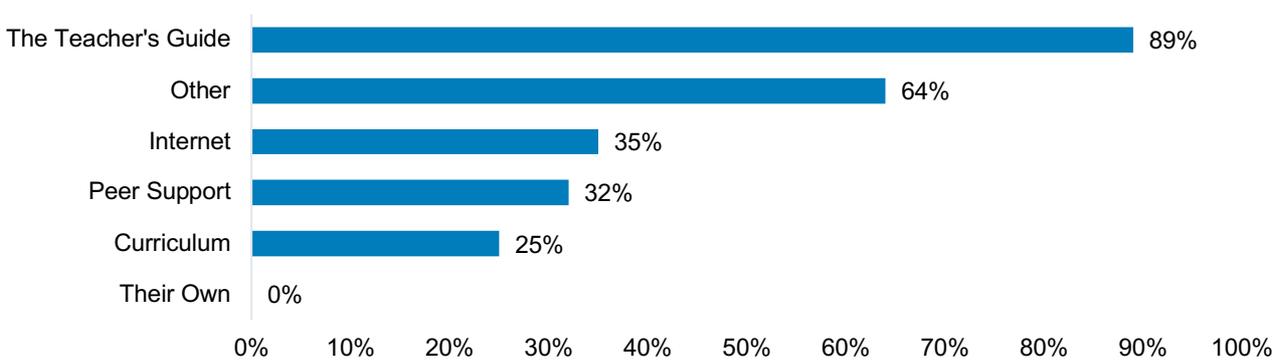
⁸⁷ A recent study by Orange (2018) of 2,781 self-identified teachers through an online survey found that only 74% of teachers reported using lesson plans.

Female teachers in Aleppo and Idleb enjoyed peer lesson planning slightly more than their male colleagues (45% and 40%, respectively), while male teachers in Ar-Raqqa enjoyed it far more than their female colleagues, albeit at very low levels (39% compared to 18%). The difference in perceived usefulness of joint lesson planning identified across Aleppo, Ar-Raqqa, and Idleb was minimal (60-62%).

The comments provided by teachers, as well as the fact that most had only three to five years of experience, help to understand these sentiments. Some teachers stated that they felt embarrassed about their lack of formal training or experience, especially when faced with the prospect of working with a more experienced colleague. The disconnect between displaced populations and host ones also appeared as influential in the comments of some teachers, who noted the lack of “harmony” amongst teachers from different parts of Syria. Quite a few teachers, however, noted that there was a good potential for skill development in such practices.

When asked what materials they used when preparing their lesson plans, teachers mentioned the teacher’s guide as the primary source of support.

Figure 82: Teacher reports on the materials⁸⁸ they used when preparing their lesson plans.



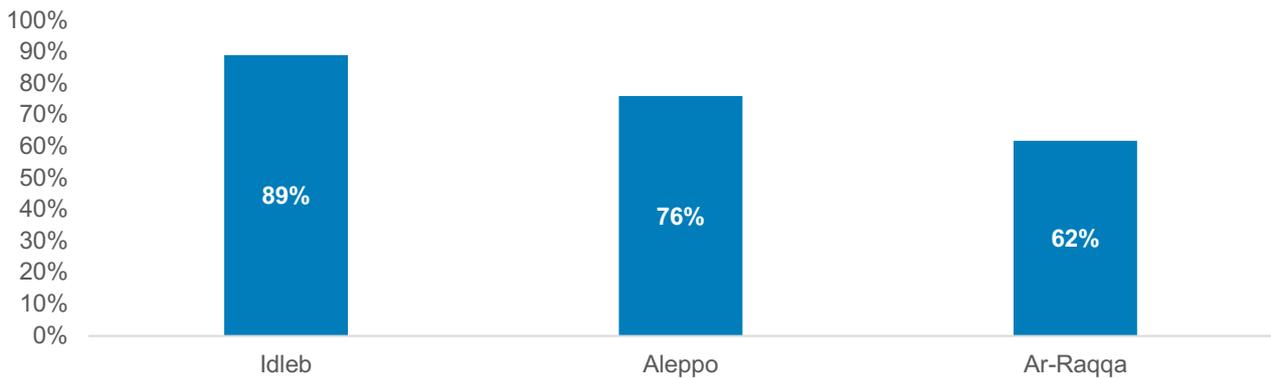
7.5.4 Operationalisation of lesson plans

Most teachers stated that they practiced their lessons before implementing them. Male teachers were more likely than their female colleagues to make these statements, and teachers in Idleb were more likely to do so than their colleagues in Aleppo and Ar-Raqqa. However, enumerators observed female teachers to do a better job, compared to their male colleagues, in how well they allocated time to specific activities in the lessons. This finding suggests a relatively strong operational practice for most teachers and a strong technical skill, at least for most female teachers, in thoughtfulness with lesson planning.

In terms of putting teacher’s lesson plans into practice, 82% of the teachers said that they “often” or “always” read and practiced the steps of the activities recommended in the lesson plan before daily lessons. Male teachers in Ar-Raqqa were slightly more likely to use this practice than female teachers (65% compared to 59%). The differences between male and female teachers in Aleppo and Idleb were not significant. There were differences across the three governorates, with teachers in Idleb more likely (89%) to use this practice than those in Aleppo (76%) and Ar-Raqqa (62%).

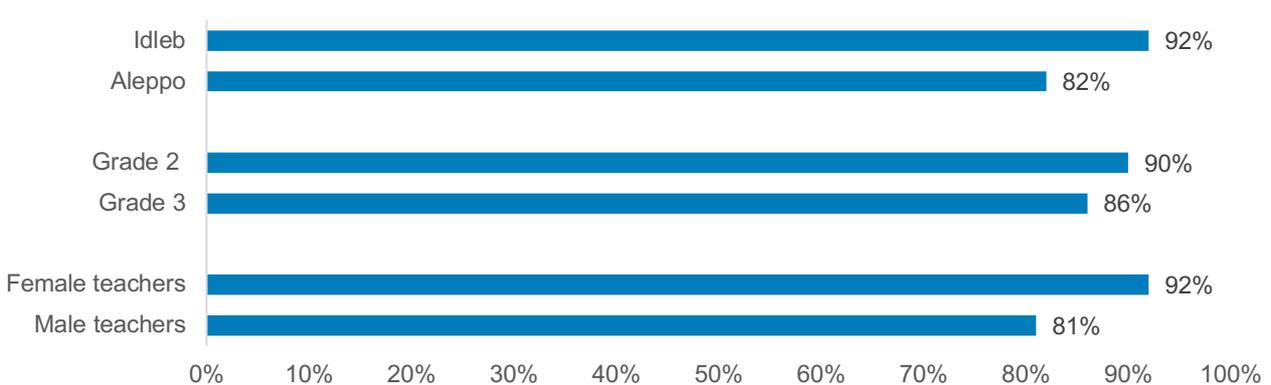
⁸⁸ The ACU’s 2018 report on learning spaces in Syria found that 83% of teachers used guidebooks.

Figure 83: Teacher reports on practicing their lesson plans before implementation, by governorate



Eighty-eight percent of enumerators deemed each activity to be allocated an appropriate amount of time, suggesting thoughtfulness in the planning of classroom-based activities. Female teachers were observed to be more likely than male teachers to allocate time as such (92% compared to 81%). There was a slightly higher observation of such practices in Grade 2 classes (90%) compared to Grade 3 classes (86%), and a 10% spread between the observation of those practices in Idleb (92%) and Aleppo (82%).

Figure 84: Enumerator observations of the appropriate allocation of time to classroom activities, by governorate, Grade level, and teacher gender

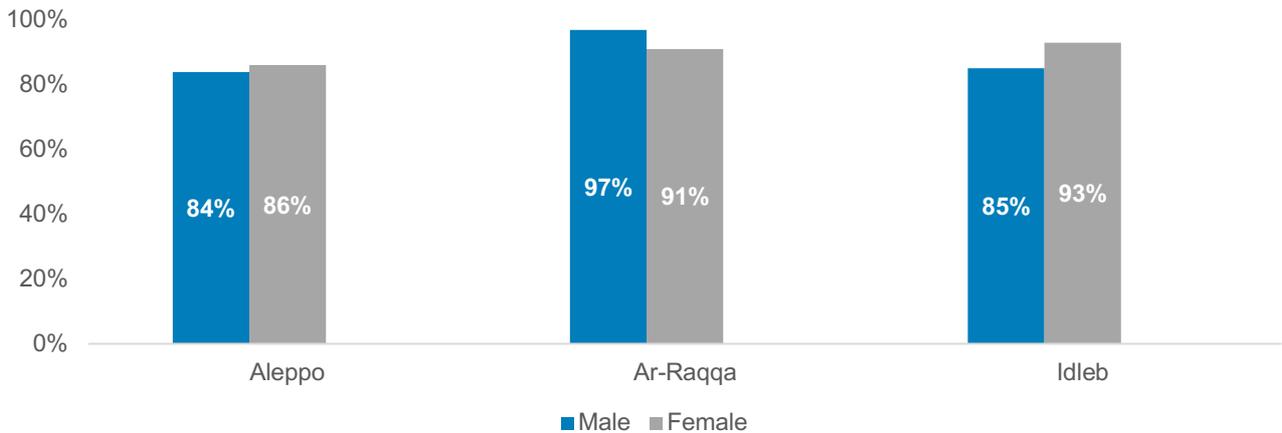


7.5.5 Experiential learning activities

The sense of self-efficacy amongst teachers with regard to their ability to lead experiential learning activities appeared to be higher than their actual implementation of such activities.

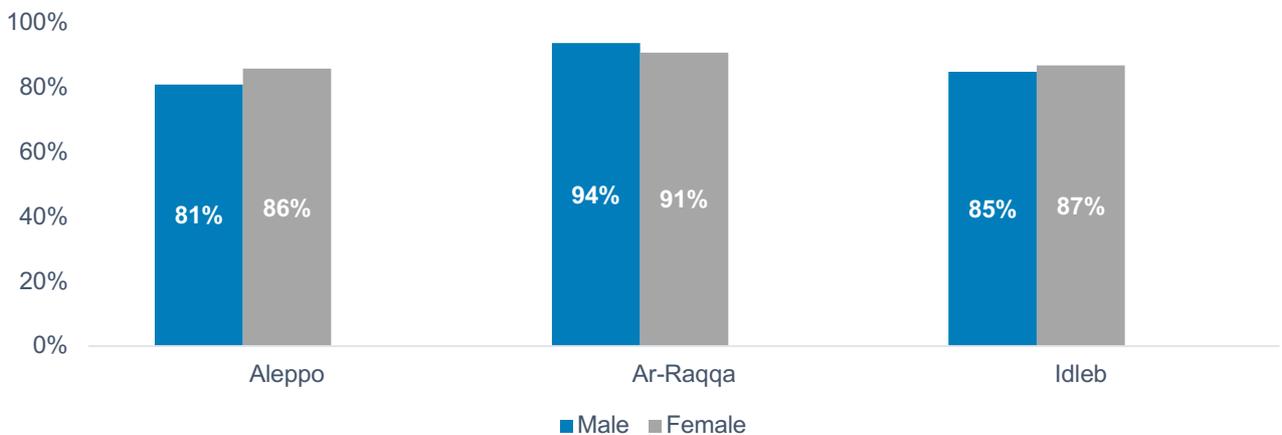
Eighty-five percent of teachers “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that they could motivate their students to participate in innovative activities. Female teachers in Aleppo were slightly more confident than their male colleagues (86% compared to 84%), and those in Idleb were even more so (93% compared to 85%). Male teachers in Ar-Raqqa, however, were more confident than their female colleagues (97% compared to 91%). Ar-Raqqa teachers were more confident (94%) than their colleagues in both Idleb (90%) and Aleppo (85%).

Figure 85: Teacher confidence in ability to secure child participation in innovative learning activities, by governorate and gender



Seventy-six percent of teachers stated that they “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that they could carry out innovative activities, even when opposed by sceptical colleagues. Female teachers in Idleb were slightly more confident than their male colleagues (87% compared to 85%), and those in Aleppo were even more so (86% compared to 81%). Male teachers in Ar-Raqqa, however, were slightly more confident than their female colleagues (94% compared to 91%). Ar-Raqqa teachers were more confident (92%) than their colleagues in both Idleb (86%) and Aleppo (83%).

Figure 86: Teacher self-efficacy regarding their abilities to lead innovative activities when opposed by colleagues, by governorate and gender



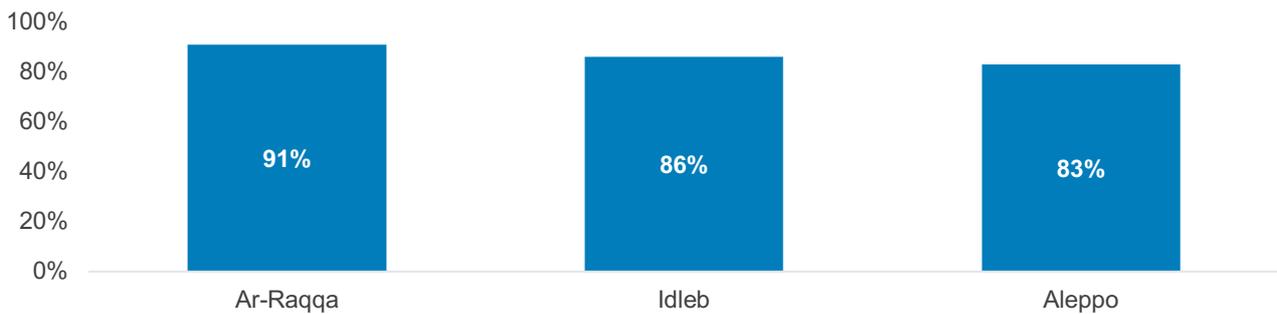
However, despite these assertions and beliefs, only 38% of teachers stated that they “often” or “always” saw their teaching colleagues use participatory methodologies in their classrooms, suggesting that such practices are not common. It was slightly more common in Idleb (40%) than in Aleppo (36%) and Ar-Raqqa (28%)

Figure 87: Teacher observations of participatory methods amongst their peers, by governorate



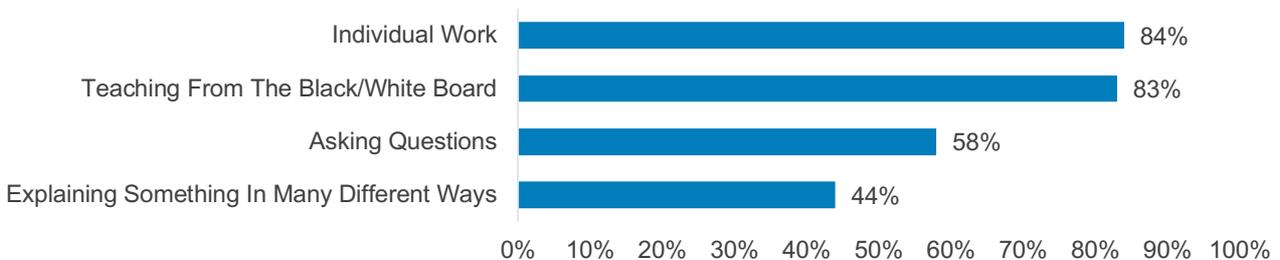
Eighty-five percent of children who were asked if they had opportunities at school to make and invent things in class said they did, affirming that while participatory and experiential learning activities were low, they did exist. Children mentioned drawing, some drama, singing, and the creation of a wall magazine. Many children noted, however, that there were not many materials to support such activities, such as games and sporting equipment. Such practices appeared to be more common in Ar-Raqqa (91%) than in Idleb (86%) or Aleppo (83%).

Figure 88: Child reports on experiential learning at school



To explore this area of inquiry further, children were asked about the types of activities common in their classes. The following table summarises the frequency with which they answered that such behaviours were “common”. The fact that teaching from the board and individual work were the most common practices provides evidence that the “chalk and talk” method of rote instruction is likely the most prevalent.

Figure 89: Frequency with which children answered that the following teaching practices were common in their classrooms



Children often mentioned teachers writing on the chalkboard or dictating the lesson, and then assigning them to do individual work in a workbook. Some children said that their teachers asked them questions, but others noted that there was not time for anything other than the teacher talking

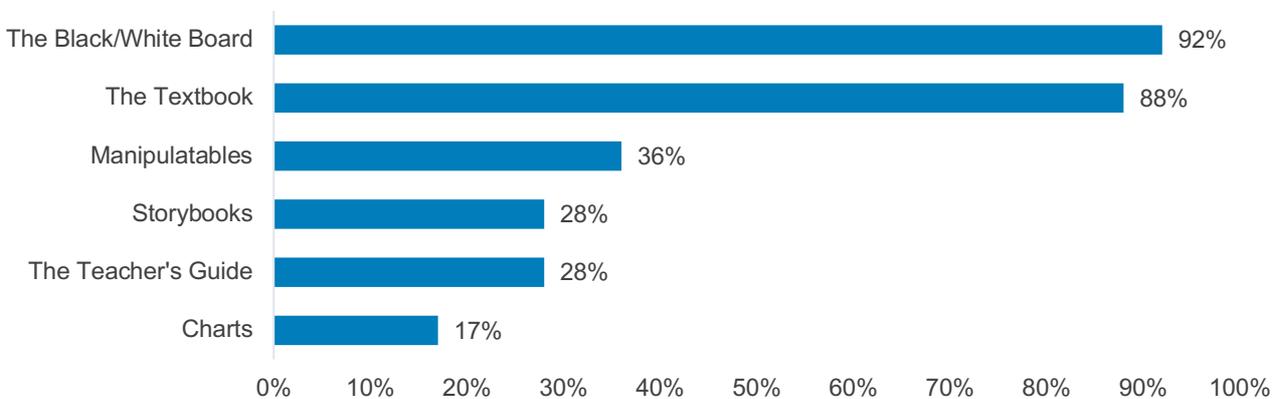
to them. Many children mentioned that teachers often assigned a lot of homework. Many children noted that their teachers read to them and that they enjoyed reading quite a bit.

7.5.6 Use of teaching and learning materials

Feedback from school administrators suggested that they more commonly observed “chalk and talk” methods of rote instruction than engaging and experiential methods of teaching and learning. Comments about resource limitations likely relate to this finding, and are explored later in this section. Observations of teacher use of teaching and learning material use was highest in urban areas (59%), possibly because urban schools tend to be better resourced than other areas, as explored in the [Theoretical Framework](#).

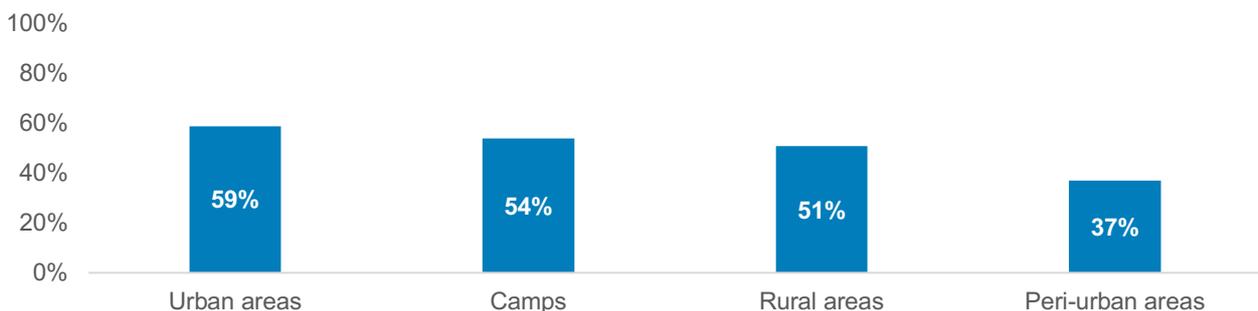
School administrators noted that black (or white) board and textbooks were by far the most common teaching and learning tools used by teachers in their schools.

Figure 90: School administrator observations of teaching and learning materials used by teachers



School administrators also observed material use more often in urban areas compared to other types of communities (urban: 59%; camps: 54%; rural areas: 51%; and peri-urban areas: 37%).

Figure 91: Observations by school administrators of teaching and learning material use



7.5.7 Equity: perceptions of teacher knowledge, attitude and beliefs, self-efficacy, and behaviour

The following section explores how equity in learning relates to teacher knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and practices in the classroom. In short, the study suggests that while teachers have positive self-perceptions about their capacities to support all learners, their practices do not necessarily translate into positive, equity-supporting environments for learning.

Knowledge⁸⁹

Most teachers stated that they felt they had the skills to reach “most” children who needed extra support in their classroom. Female teachers were likely to feel more confident about their skills than their male colleagues, and teachers in Ar-Raqqa and Idleb were more likely to feel this confidence than their colleagues in Aleppo. Interestingly, there was a bell curve finding when comparing teacher statements to their years of experience. Those with four to five years of experience were the most likely to identify higher percentages of children with needs they could not address (24%), and teachers with less than four years and more than six years of experience identified lower percentages. This finding suggests that newer teachers and those with the most experience felt better prepared to handle children with special needs.

When asked to identify the percentage of children in their classrooms requiring extra support that they were unable to provide, the majority of teachers (55%) stated the figure was less than 5%, with 30% stating it was between 6-15%. These figures reveal a few concerns. Firstly, that it is likely that children with special needs are not common in classrooms (approximately 18-20% of all children would likely be as such according to Skinner, 2015 in Thompson, 2017). Secondly, it is possible that teachers are overconfident in their abilities to reach all children.

Male teachers were more likely to suggest higher percentages of children they could not support than female teachers. Fourteen percent of male teachers said that they could not reach 16-25% of their students who needed extra support, while 10% of female teachers said the same. Seven percent of male teachers said that they could not reach more than 26% of their students who needed extra support, while 2% of female teachers said the same. Teachers in Aleppo were more likely than those in Idleb and Ar-Raqqa to identify a higher percentage of children whose needs they were unable to address (<5%=38% of teachers, 6-15%=34% of teachers, 16-25%=20% of teachers, and >26%=8% of teachers).

Attitudes and beliefs

Teacher attitudes about inclusive and equitable education were positive, when measured by a number of indicators, including their beliefs in the concept of education for all and the inherent potential amongst all children to learn.

Teachers reported that they had positive attitudes about learning for all. Ninety-nine percent of teachers reported that they “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that all children had the right to a quality education. There were no notable variances amongst male or female teachers or governorates. Furthermore, the majority of teachers also suggested that they believed that each child has educational potential, with 93% “strongly agreeing” or “agreeing”.

Sixty percent of teachers believed that it was possible to use simple language to communicate more clearly to children who had learning difficulties, and stated that they were putting these practices into place. Thirty-eight percent agreed with the statement, and expressed hopes to put the practices in place in their classrooms. The remainder (2%) did not agree with the statement.

⁸⁹ When reviewing this section, it is important to remember the sociocultural norms that define disability in Syria, and how these norms influence teacher perspectives and their training on the topic of inclusive education, discussed in the [Theoretical Framework](#). In short, there are limited opportunities for teacher training on inclusive education and awareness of how to identify and address children with special needs is low.

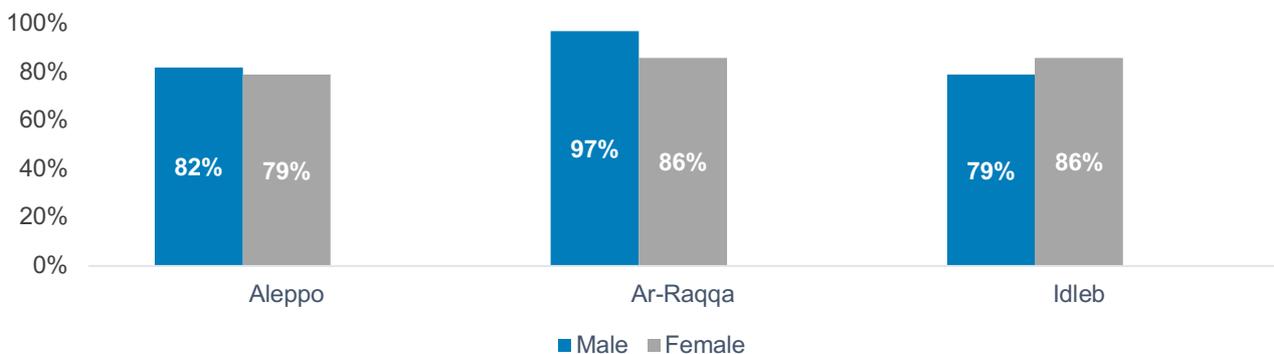
Self-efficacy

Teacher self-efficacy appeared to be strong when it came to their abilities to reach all children regardless of need, creating differentiated lessons plans, and specifically helping promote literacy and numeracy amongst children with special needs. There were largely insignificant differences when data was analysed by geography or by teacher gender, except that teachers in Ar-Raqqa, and especially male teachers, appeared to feel more confident in their ability to reach all children than their colleagues.

Ninety-seven percent “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that, over time, they would become increasingly capable of addressing children’s needs. There was very little difference amongst the three governorates (96%-100%), or between male and female teachers (93%-99%). Male teachers in Aleppo were more confident (98%) than female teachers (93%), whereas female teachers were slightly more confident in Idleb (99%) than male teachers (97%).

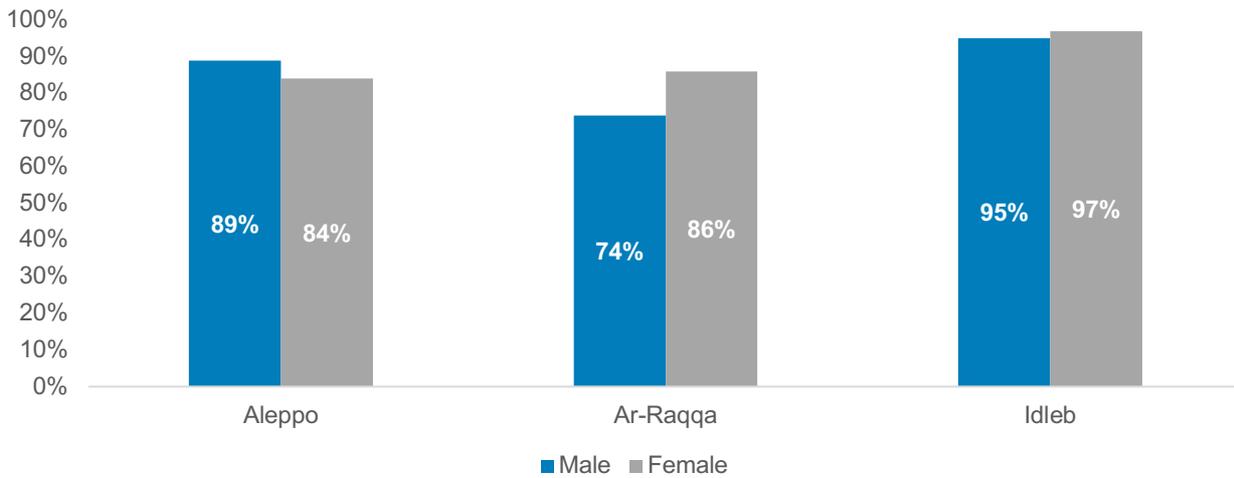
Eighty-two percent of teachers “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that they could reach all children with their teaching. Teachers in Ar-Raqqa as a whole expressed such agreement at higher rates (92%) than those in Idleb (84%) or Aleppo (80%). Male teachers in Aleppo and Ar-Raqqa were more confident than female teachers (82% compared to 79%, and 97% compared to 86%, respectively). In Idleb, the opposite was true (86% for female teachers and 79% for male teachers). A confirmational question was asked to reassess their beliefs about their skills, and the finding further affirmed strong senses of self-efficacy. When asked to assess their own abilities to recognise and support the individual needs of all children, including those with disabilities, most teachers felt that they had the skills (61%) with a further 28% feeling strongly that they had the skills

Figure 92: Percent of teachers that agreed or strongly agreed that they can reach all children with their teaching, by governorate and gender



Eighty-two percent of teachers “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that they felt confident creating lesson plans that catered to different types of learners. Teachers in Idleb were more confident (96%) of these abilities than their colleagues in Aleppo (86%) and Ar-Raqqa (79%). Confidence level of male teachers in Aleppo were higher than their female counterparts (89% compared to 84%), but in Ar-Raqqa and Idleb the reverse was true (Ar-Raqqa-female:86%; male:74% and Idleb-female: 97% and male: 95%).

Figure 93: Percentages of teachers that agree or strongly agree that they can create inclusive lesson plans, by governorate and gender



Further supporting the concept of strong self-efficacy with respect to equitable treatment of children, 96% and 86% of teachers “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that they could teach reading and maths, respectively, to all children. There was a very small difference in responses on the reading question between male and female respondents as well as amongst governorates (0-3%). For maths, however, female teachers in Idleb were more confident (90%) than men (81%). The spread between male and female teachers in Aleppo and Ar-Raqqa was smaller, at 4% and 2% respectively.

Behaviours

Despite the positive attitudes, beliefs, and strong senses of self-efficacy with respect to teaching practices that reach all children regardless of need and respect multiple intelligences, it does not appear that teachers actually practiced differentiation and equity in their classrooms. Parents/caregivers’ perceptions of teacher practice was the highest, followed by teachers’ own views of their practises, followed by school administrators. Children’s opinions and enumerator observations were not as positive.

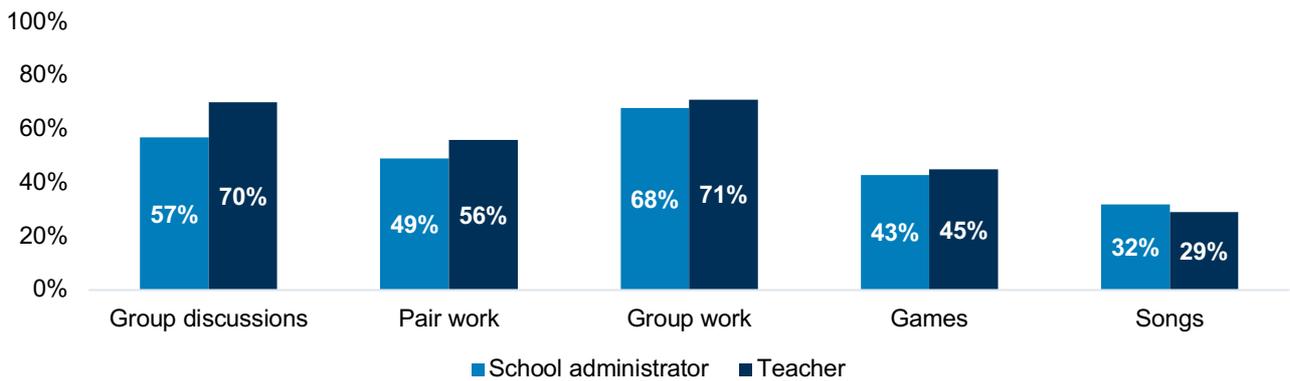
Sixty-eight percent of parents/caregivers said that teachers were “often” or “always” able to reach all children regardless of the children’s needs. The majority of comments suggested that parents/caregivers thought teachers were doing the best they could with the resources they had, but some suggested that additional training was needed. They also said that specialist support was important to supplement teacher’s efforts. Only 4% of parents/caregivers said that the materials teachers used were “often” or “always” culturally inappropriate. Of these responses, the most common answer was about the imposition of the Kurdish language materials in YPG/SDF-controlled areas.

School administrators largely believed that teachers in their learning spaces were using behaviours that promoted equity. The majority (62%) stated that teachers treated all children equally “76-100%” of the time, and a further 29% stated that they witnessed such behaviours “51-75%” of the time. Some school administrators stated that teachers provided extra time to children who needed it and used encouraging language. Some stated that teachers differentiated, while others stated that all children were treated equally.

Teachers responded in a similar vein, with 64% saying they treated all children equally “76%-100%” of the time. Teachers were asked to reflect on their own practices. In all but one type of activity designed to acknowledge multiple intelligences, they reported higher frequencies of the use of these practices than school administrators observed. In all but one case (pair work), female teachers self-reported higher frequencies of these activities than males did.

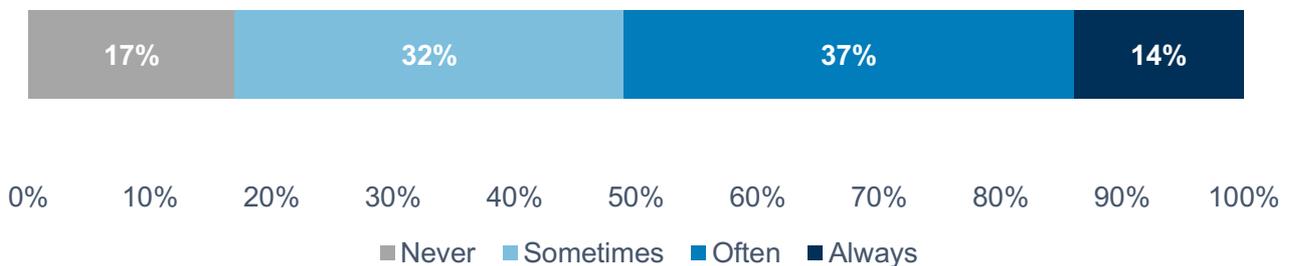
The percentages of school administrators and teachers identifying the frequency of these types of methods as “often” and “always”, as discussed above, follow.

Figure 94: Percentages of school administrators and teachers identifying as “often” and “always” the frequency of teaching methods aimed at recognising multiple intelligences



The trend in observations or reports of poor teacher practice with respect to equity was first identified through enumerator reports. While enumerators observed that 51% of teachers “often” or “always” created different opportunities for children to express themselves and share thoughts and opinions, they were almost just as likely to only do this “sometimes” or “never” (49%). There did not appear to be any trends when data was reviewed by grade level. Teachers in Idleb were found to utilise these practices significantly more often than those in Aleppo (64% compared to 31%).

Figure 95: Enumerator observations of teachers creating different opportunities for the children to express themselves and share thoughts and opinions



Children’s comments further suggested that the issue of equitable treatment of all children might be more problematic than the picture painted by parents/caregivers, teachers, and school administrators.

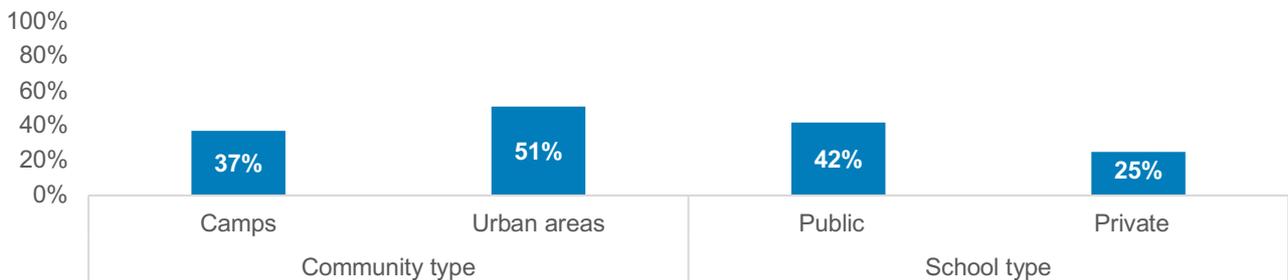
Forty-two percent of children said that there was discrimination in the classroom. They often mentioned the following profiles of children that struggled the most and/or were not supported:

- Children who were new (often displaced);
- Children who had been out of school for a long time (overage children);
- Children who were dealing with psychological trauma; and/or
- Children who have special medical needs.

These profiles of more vulnerable children align with comments made by adult stakeholders. Children also commented that those who appeared to receive preferential treatments were often the children of other school personnel, children with more money, and children who appeared to find school easier than others.

When asked if they felt their teachers liked some children more than others, 35% of children said this was the case. This question was asked in a different way to help reduce respondent bias and confirm this finding, which it did: 87% of children reported that their teachers did not speak to all children in the same way. To further explore the topic of inclusive and equitable practise in the classroom, children were asked if they knew or saw some children who seemed unable to join in the same activities as others in the class, and 42% said “yes”, further suggesting issues with equitable access to learning for all children. This was most prevalent in Aleppo (47%) and least prevalent in Ar-Raqqa (42%). There was a 14% spread between the lowest and highest reports by type of community (camps: 37% and urban areas: 51%). Children in public learning spaces were more likely than those in private learning spaces to report these concerns (42% compared to 25%). There did not appear to be a difference in opinions based on the informants’ gender.

Figure 96: Incidents of exclusion witnessed by children, by school type and community type

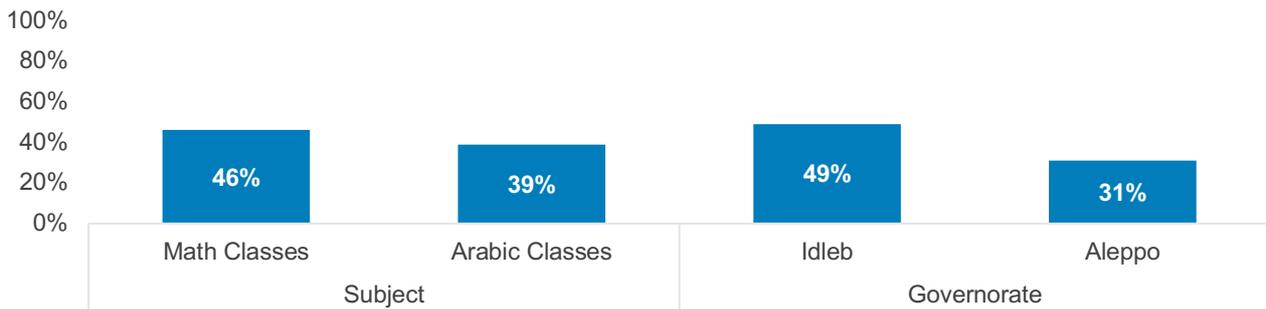


7.5.8 Dialectic engagement

The study found that teachers and school administrators also had higher opinions of their abilities to be inclusive and to differentiate in their practices than children and enumerators did. It appears that “chalk and talk” methods are still the primary means of teaching in Syrian learning spaces.

Eighty-seven percent of teachers stated that their students asked questions “51-100%” of the time. However, enumerators observed children asking questions “often” or “always” only 42% of the time. Children were observed asking questions “often” or “always” with slightly more frequency in maths classes (46%) than in Arabic classes (39%). Children in Idleb were much more likely to ask questions “often” or “always” (49%) than those in Aleppo (31%). There were no significant differences in practice when the teacher’s gender or the grade level were reviewed (1-2%).

Figure 97: Observations of dialectic engagement, organised by geography and subject



7.5.9 Formative assessment

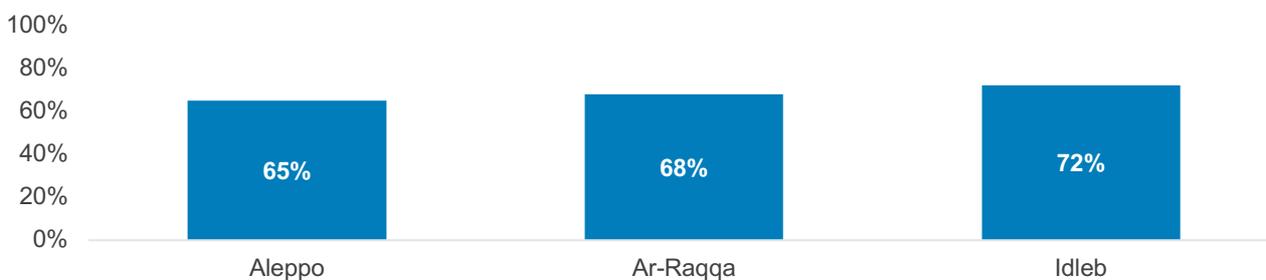
The study used a series of indicators to assess the frequency with which teachers continually assessed child learning. It appeared that: i) teachers go through the motions of checking for understanding and asking children to explain their work; and ii) teachers state that they modify their practice either in real time or through later reflection. However, observations by enumerators suggested that the quality of their efforts to assess and help elevate child understanding was not high.

Checking for understanding throughout the lesson and modifying practice in real time

Data from enumerators, teachers, and children suggested that teachers did a good job checking for understanding during lessons and modifying lessons in real time accordingly. Interestingly, teachers reported lower frequencies of such behaviours than enumerators observed. However, the fact that most children said they understood the lessons and teacher’s explanations both did not correlate with their low levels of learning, as detailed in [the section that summarises the status of early grade learning](#). While most children said they understood their teachers, these statements appeared to mask concerns that they raised in their qualitative feedback, which suggested they perceived many challenges to their own learning.

Teachers were asked to report the frequency with which they observed child understanding throughout the lessons and adapted lessons according to need. Sixty-nine percent stated that they “often” or “always” did this. Teachers in Idleb rated themselves more highly (72%) than those in Ar-Raqqa (68%) and Aleppo (65%).

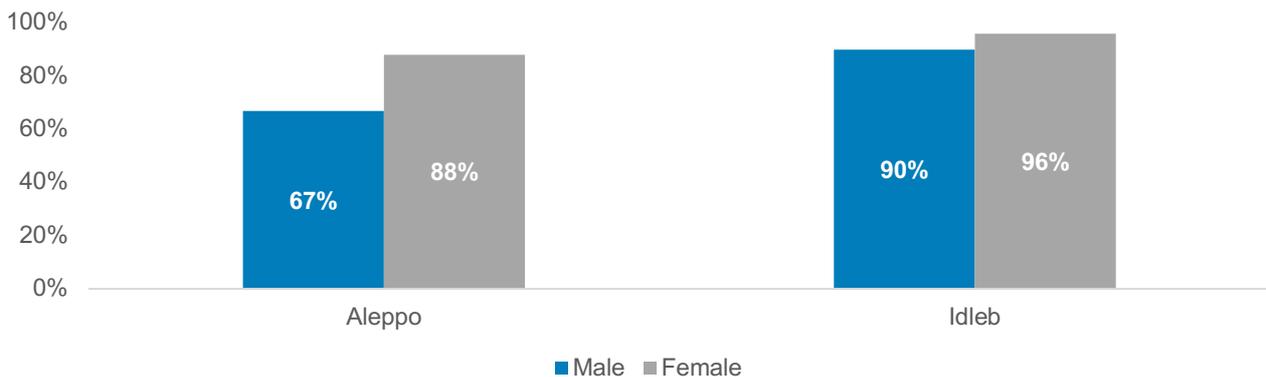
Figure 98: Teacher reports on assessments of child understanding and modification of lessons in real time, by governorate



With the exception of Ar-Raqqa, female teachers appeared to have better practices than male teachers (overall: 43% versus 26%, but in Ar-Raqqa: 26% versus 42%). There did not appear to be consistency across the governorates regarding how years of experience influenced this practice.

With respect to actual practice as observed by enumerators, teachers in Idleb performed at a higher level than teachers in Aleppo. Classroom observations found that the majority of teachers checked for understanding throughout the lesson (90%). Ninety-four percent of Idleb teachers did this compared to 82% in Aleppo. Female teachers in both governorates tended to do a better job of checking for understanding than did male teachers (88% versus 67% in Aleppo and 96% versus 90% in Idleb).

Figure 99: Observations of the frequency with which teachers checked for child understanding throughout lessons, by governorate and gender



Again, there did not appear to be a correlation between years of experience and practice. In Aleppo, the cohort with the greatest tendency to “often” or “always” check for understanding and modify practice in real time was that with four to five years of experience (17%). In Ar-Raqqa it was the cohort with two years of experience (30%), and in Idleb it was the six to 10 years cohort (18%).

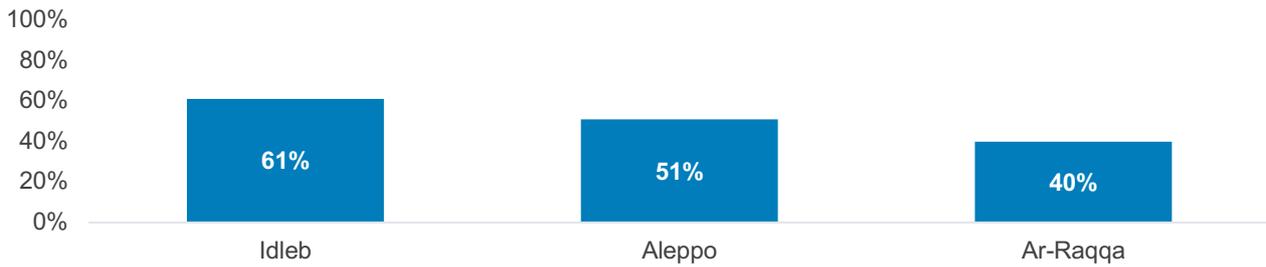
Children were asked if they usually understood the lesson and the teacher’s explanations, and 98% of stated that they did. There was a negligible difference amongst the three governorates (1-3%). However in this case, the quantitative and qualitative data differed greatly, with the qualitative answers demonstrating that children struggled with their learning. Quite a few of the comments suggested that children often have to ask their teachers to repeat the lessons. Of those who struggled, many stated that overcrowding, limited resources (like books or visual aids), limited classroom time, and the aggressive or abusive attitudes of teachers were contributing factors to their comprehension. Quite a few children mentioned that they found maths more difficult than Arabic.

Making note of skills children struggled with and reviewing them another day

Teachers reported that while they made note of the issues that their students struggled with, they were not likely to return to these topics if they felt that the children were really struggling. These statements suggest a concerning behaviour regarding child follow-up and support on difficult topics, and one could extrapolate that their abilities to differentiate in the classroom were poor.

Fifty-six percent of teachers stated that they “often” or “always” made note of skills with which children were struggling and reviewed them later. Teachers in Idleb, reported that they did this “often” or “always” 61% of the time, compared to Aleppo (51%) and Ar-Raqqa (40%). Female teachers tended to have better practice than men (34% versus 22%, respectively).

Figure 100: Teacher reports on the frequency with which they support children who are struggling on particular topics, by governorate



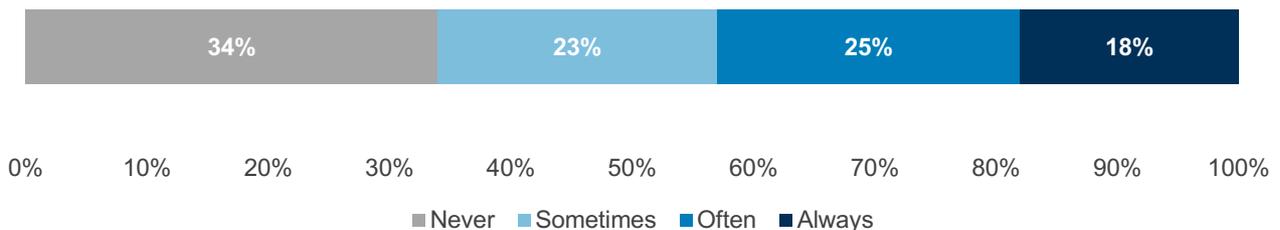
Once more, years of teaching experience did not correlate with performance. While there appeared to be trends in Aleppo and Idleb of teachers improving their practice as their experience increased from one to 10 years, this was not the case in Ar-Raqqa, where the teachers with two years' experience undertook this practice most frequently (19% of the total cohort that did this "often" or "always" had two years of experience).

Asking children to explain how they reached their answers and helping them understand wrong answers

It appears teachers were not likely to support metacognition in their students, by asking them to explain how they reached their answers. When they did, female teachers were more likely to do so than males, and teachers in Idleb were more likely to do so than those in Aleppo. Enumerators observations of teachers' practice in helping children understand wrong answers showed better outcomes. Enumerators observations of these types of practices and children's reports on them were not well correlated, with children reporting more positive interactions with teachers than were observed by enumerators. This disconnect is reminiscent of how children reported quantitatively that they understood lessons but their qualitative comments suggested that they actually struggled with learning, as discussed in the section above, [Checking for understanding throughout the lessons and modifying practice in real time](#).

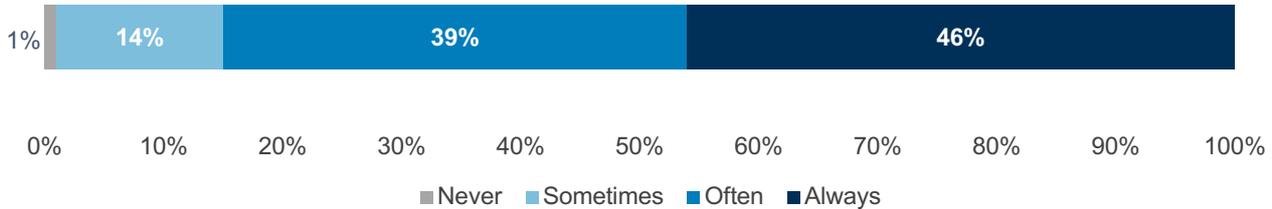
During classroom observations, enumerators found that teachers were more likely to "never" or "sometimes" ask children to explain how they reached their answers (57%) than they were to "often" or "always" do so (43%). Teachers in Idleb were more likely to put this practice into place "often" or "always", compared to teachers in Aleppo (79% versus 54%). Female teachers were also observed to use this practice far more frequently than male teachers (57% versus 17%). No male teachers in Aleppo were observed to "always" use this practice.

Figure 101: Observations of the frequency with which teachers asked children to explain their answers



Enumerators observed teachers “often” or “always” helping children understand wrong answers 85% of the time. Teachers in Aleppo were far less likely to practice this behaviour than those in Idleb (35% and 83%, respectively). Female teachers again used better practices than male teachers when it came to helping children understand wrong answers “often” or “always” (46% compared to 19%).

Figure 102: Observations of the frequency with which teachers helped children understand wrong answers



Ninety-three percent of children said that their teachers helped them when a lesson was difficult. There were some common practices identified that helped motivate children to feel comfortable answering questions in class. These included:

- Classmates applauding;
- Teachers giving praise;
- Teachers listing children’s names and putting stickers next to their names for participating.

7.6 Teaching behaviours and practices: in support of literacy

7.6.1 Overall findings

Enumerators were asked to look for a few common teaching practices that support literacy; namely teachers’ own appropriate uses of developmentally appropriate mother tongue language phonemic awareness, vocabulary development, opportunities for language manipulation, teachers’ use of and support for children’s use of tracking, and opportunities to practice reading comprehension.

Again, self-efficacy for teachers was high: 96% “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that they could successfully teach reading to all children. However, classroom observations found that their practices in support of reading skill development likely needed improvement in order to see better literacy-related learning outcomes. Again, while teachers appeared to go through the motions of appropriate practice, the quality of that practice is in question, considering the poor literacy levels of children in these areas. This and related topics are reviewed in the [correlative analysis section](#).

Classroom observations of teacher practice were more positive in peri-urban communities than in any other community type. With one exception, practice in rural areas was always ranked second best. Classroom observations found that the lowest and second lowest observations of practice were taking place in learning spaces in urban areas or camps.

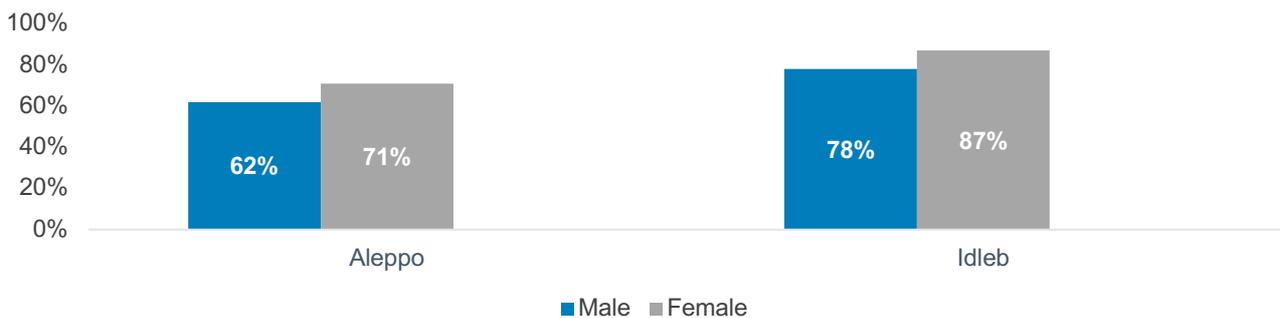
In all but one type of behaviour,⁹⁰ teachers in private learning spaces were observed to “often” or “always” undertake the appropriate practices 100% of the time. There were no observable trends in the differences between practice in Grade 2 or Grade 3.

7.6.2 Teachers’ appropriate use of language

Approximately three quarters of all teachers used mother tongue language in a way that was developmentally appropriate. Female teachers and those teaching in Idleb were observed to more frequently use appropriate, age-specific language to help children learn and express themselves.

Teachers were observed to see how appropriate and age specific their language was to help children learn and express themselves. Appropriate use of language was observed to happen “often” or “always” 77% of the time. Female teachers were observed to use this practice more than male teachers. Female teachers in Idleb used appropriate language more (87%) than male teachers (78%). Female teachers in Aleppo used appropriate language more (71%) than male teachers (62%). Teachers in Idleb scored higher than those in Aleppo (84% compared to 68%). The spread amongst community type was 12%, suggesting that there were no significant differences in practice depending on the type of community.

Figure 103: Observations of the appropriate use of language by teachers, by governorate and gender



7.6.3 Phonemic awareness

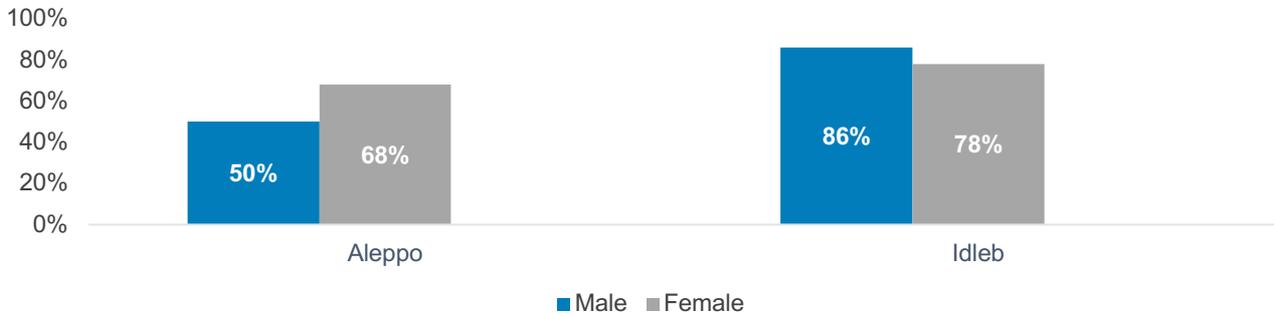
Nearly three quarters of teachers were observed to “often” or “always” use behaviours that helped children elevate their phonemic awareness.

Seventy-four percent of teachers were observed to “often” or “always” create opportunities for children to use their knowledge of sounds and letters to decode words (such as to identify the sound that makes a letter and decode new words). Male and female patterns of practice are not clear in this case, but teachers in Idleb were again found to have better practice than those in Aleppo. Male teachers in Aleppo were observed to use practices to support phonemic awareness 50% of the time, whereas male teachers in Idleb were observed as such 86% of the time (female-related practice: Aleppo: 68%; Idleb: 78%) Teachers in Idleb were found to utilise these practices more often than those in Aleppo (80% compared to 63%).

⁹⁰ Appropriate use of mother tongue language, observed only 75% of the time.

There was a 56% spread between the lowest and highest observations in different community types, with teachers in camp-based learning spaces having the lowest rate of “often” or “always” observation (44%) and peri-urban areas having the highest (100%).

Figure 104: Observations of the frequency with which teachers provided opportunities to elevate phonemic awareness, by governorate and gender



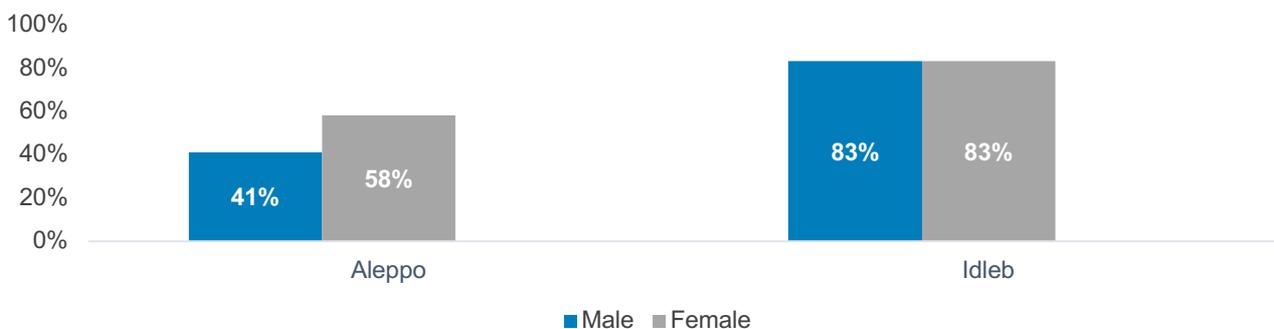
7.6.4 Vocabulary

Nearly three quarters of all teachers were observed to “often” or “always” create opportunities for children to learn new vocabulary.

Enumerators found that 71% of teachers “often” or “always” created opportunities so that children could learn new vocabulary words (using vocabulary word activities, finding the meaning of a word, and searching for frequently used words). There did not appear to be clear patterns of practice amongst male and female teachers, nor were there clear trends for practice by community type. Again, teachers in Idleb outperformed their colleagues in Aleppo. Male teachers in Aleppo were observed to support the acquisition of vocabulary words 41% of the time, whereas male teachers in Idleb were observed as such 83% of the time (female-related practice: Aleppo: 58%; Idleb: 83%). Teachers in Idleb were found to utilise these practices more often than those in Aleppo (83% compared to 52%).

There was a large disparity in observed practice amongst community type (a 48% spread). Teachers in camp-based learning spaces were observed to use these practices the least (52%) and teaches in peri-urban areas the most (100%).

Figure 105: Observations of the frequency with which teachers helped children expand their vocabulary, by governorate and gender



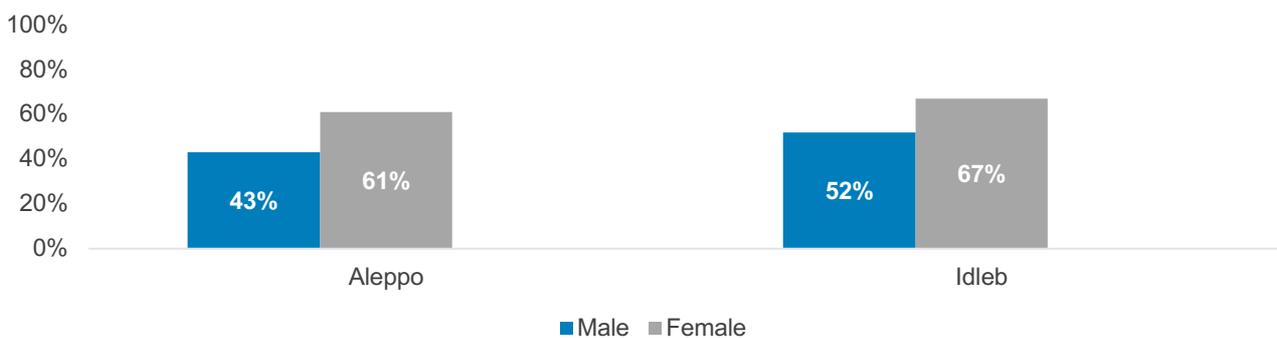
7.6.5 Language manipulation

Slightly more than half of the teachers gave children opportunities to practice and develop their skills in reading and reading aloud, suggesting that more focus on this pedagogic area would be beneficial for improved literacy. As with other practice areas, female teachers and those in Idleb were more likely to provide such opportunities, and there was a wide disparity in practice amongst community types.

Sixty percent of teachers were observed to “often” or “always” provide children opportunities to manipulate language (fluidity and expression) individually, in pairs, or in sub groups during lessons. Female teachers were more likely to support this practice than male teachers (67% in Idleb and 61% in Aleppo; 52% in Idleb and 43% in Aleppo, respectively). Teachers in Idleb were found to utilise these practices more often than those in Aleppo (63% compared to 55%).

There was a 29% spread between the lowest ranking community type (teachers in urban areas: 40%) and the highest (teachers in peri-urban areas: 83%).

Figure 106: Observation of teacher practice in relation to opportunities for language manipulation amongst children, by governorate and gender



7.6.6 Tracking

Eighty-seven percent of teachers were observed to do a good job of helping children follow along during read aloud sessions. Such a practice helps children connect the sound they hear when a word is pronounced to its written form, and is a part of developing phonemic awareness. Again, teachers in Idleb were more likely to use these sound practices than were those in Aleppo. There did not appear to be any trends when data was reviewed by grade level. There were also no notable differences between male and female teacher practice.

Enumerators observed teachers “always” tracking with a pointer or a finger under words while reading aloud from the board, a poster, a book, or any displayed print material 53% of the time. Thirty-four percent of the time, they were observed to “often” undertake such practice. Teachers in Idleb were found to utilise these practices more often than those in Aleppo (92% compared to 79%).

Figure 107: Frequency of observed use of tracking by teachers, by governorate

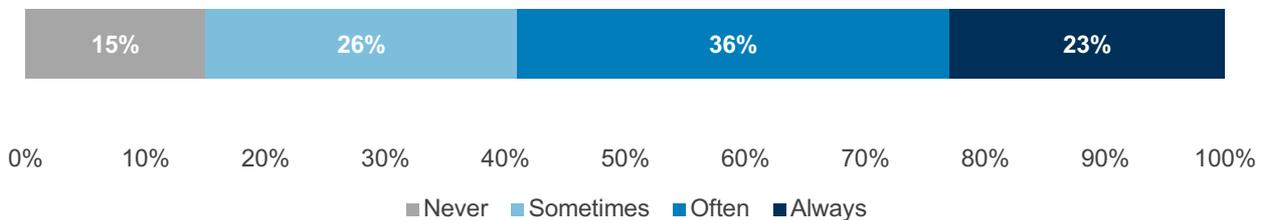


7.6.7 Reading comprehension

There were mixed results regarding how well teachers supported reading comprehension.

Fifty-nine percent of teachers were found to “often” or “always” use a variety of teaching techniques to help children with their reading comprehension (i.e. reflective reading, making predictions and hypotheses, and verification of acquired knowledge). However, they were more likely to only “sometimes” do this (26%) than to “always” do it (23%). Teachers in Idleb were again found to utilise these practices more often than those in Aleppo (67% compared to 48%). There were no notable differences between male and female teacher practice and there did not appear to be any trends when data was reviewed by grade level.

Figure 108: Enumerator observations on the use of a variety of teaching techniques to help children with reading comprehension



7.7 Teaching behaviours and practices: in support of numeracy

Enumerators were asked to assess teacher practice in relation to supporting numeracy. This included their work regarding supporting number sense and learning multiples, comparison, and estimation. Self-efficacy amongst teachers with respect to their abilities to teach maths was high. Eighty-six percent of teachers “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that they could successfully teach maths to all children. However, enumerators observed sound practices approximately 70% of the time, demonstrating that teachers again had more confidence in their abilities to teach maths than their actual abilities. In all but one practice area, female teachers were observed to use good practices approximately 5% more of the time than male teachers. The exception was helping children count in multiples, where male teachers were observed only slightly more frequently than female teachers (2% more) to use good practice. There was very little differentiation between observations in Aleppo and Idleb and there did not appear to be any trends when data was reviewed by grade level.

7.7.1 Number sense

Number sense is one of the most fundamental aspects of numeracy, and teachers were found to only be focusing on this skill development 61% of the time, suggesting that the foundations for numeracy might not be strong.

Enumerators found that teachers in maths classes helped children make connections between number symbols (1,2,3,4, etc.) and items or objects “often” or “always” only 61% of the time. Teachers in Idleb were found to utilise these practices more often than those in Aleppo (94% compared to 83%).

Figure 109: Support to the development of number sense, by governorate



7.7.2 Multiples

The study also saw another fundamental of numeracy, supporting the ability to count in multiples, to only be practiced “often” or “always” by 61% of teachers. This is another data point to suggest that teachers are not focusing sufficiently on helping establish core maths skills.

Enumerators observed teachers helping children practice counting in multiples “often” or “always” 61% of the time. Teachers in Aleppo and Idleb were observed to undertake this practice roughly the same amount of the time (60% and 61% respectively).

7.7.3 Estimation and Comparison

Enumerators observed teachers doing a better job of helping children learn how to estimate and to make comparisons than they observed them to be helping children with the more fundamental skills of number sense and counting in multiples, with 79% of teachers doing this “often” or “always”.

Teachers in maths classes were observed to help children estimate quantity or value “often” or “always” 79% of the time. Teachers in Aleppo and Idleb were observed to undertake this practice roughly the same amount of the time (80% and 78% respectively). Similar observations were made for teachers helping children make comparisons. Enumerators observed teachers helping children make comparisons “often” or “always” 79% of the time. Teachers in Aleppo and Idleb were observed to undertake this practice roughly the same amount of the time (89% and 87%, respectively).

7.8 Teaching behaviours and practices: in support of wellbeing

Teachers expressed a strong sense of self-efficacy in their ability to support the wellbeing of children. However, they were observed using practices that support wellbeing less frequently than might be expected considering their high levels of confidence in the topic. There were also wide disparities across the various strata of the study, from how male and female teachers behaved in the classroom to how practices were observed in geographic areas, types of communities, grades, and subjects.

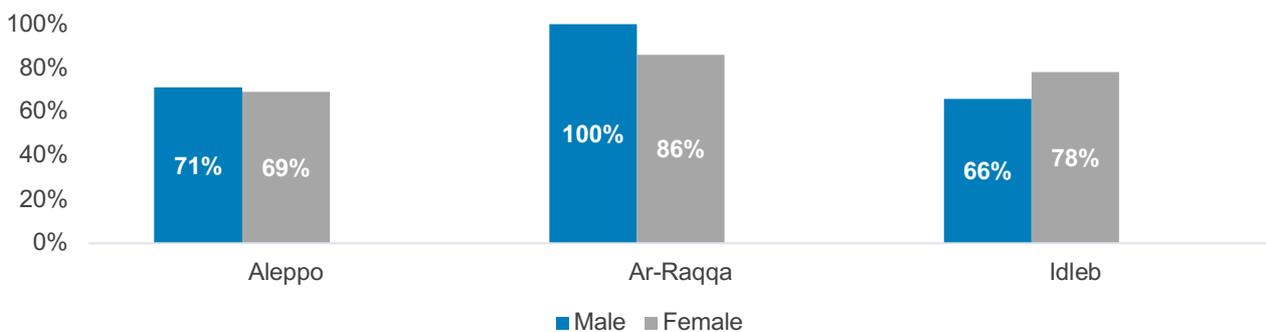
Of greatest concern is the apparent frequency and normalisation of forms of verbal and physical abuse in learning spaces.

7.8.1 Self-efficacy: teacher conceptions of their ability to influence child wellbeing

Eighty-eight percent of teachers “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that they could exert a positive influence on both the personal and academic development of their students. There appeared to be more positive self-perceptions amongst male teachers than female teachers, except in Idleb.

Male teachers in Aleppo felt slightly more positively about their abilities than their female colleagues (71% compared to 69%), whereas male teachers in Ar-Raqqa felt quite a bit more confident than their female colleagues (100% compared to 86%). However, female teachers in Idleb were more confident than their male colleagues (78% to 66%). There were also notable cross governorate differences, with teachers in Ar-Raqqa feeling the most confident (94%) and teachers in Idleb (74%) and Aleppo (70%) following.

Figure 110: Teachers' perceptions of their abilities to positively influence child wellbeing, by governorate and gender



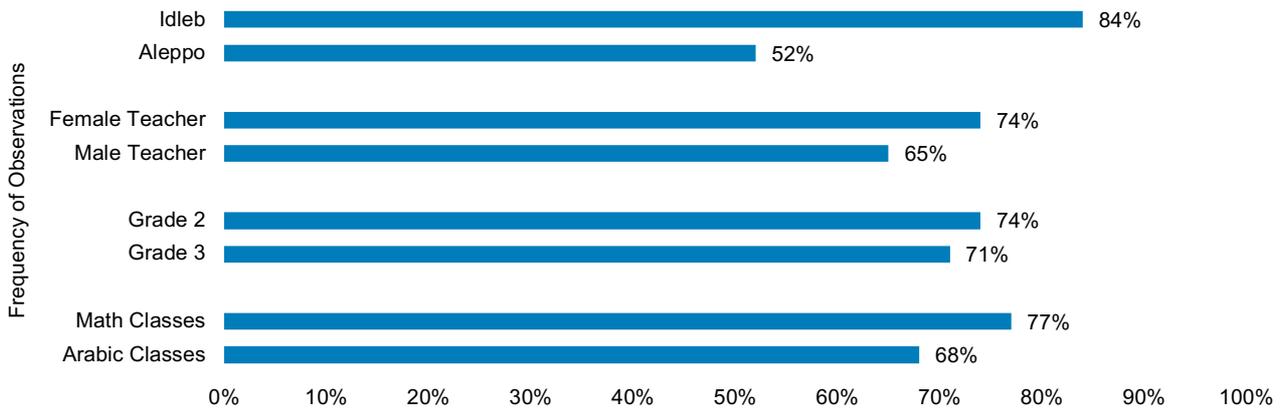
7.8.2 Sense of control: setting expectations about child behaviour

Teachers appeared to do a good job setting clear expectations about child behaviour. Such a practice is not unusual in contexts in which more authoritarian and didactic methods of communication, decision making, and classroom management are common, as is the case of Syria. Opportunities for children to participate in framing the rules of their environment were unsurprisingly low.

Seventy-two percent of teachers were observed to “often” or “always” set clear expectations for child behaviour, including being clear about classroom rules. Children confirmed this behaviour, with 87% saying that classroom rules were in place. Teachers presented a similar perspective, with 88% saying that children “always” or “often” knew the rules in the class and school. Teachers also felt that children were obedient, for the most part, with 74% saying that most children “often” or “always” followed the rules.

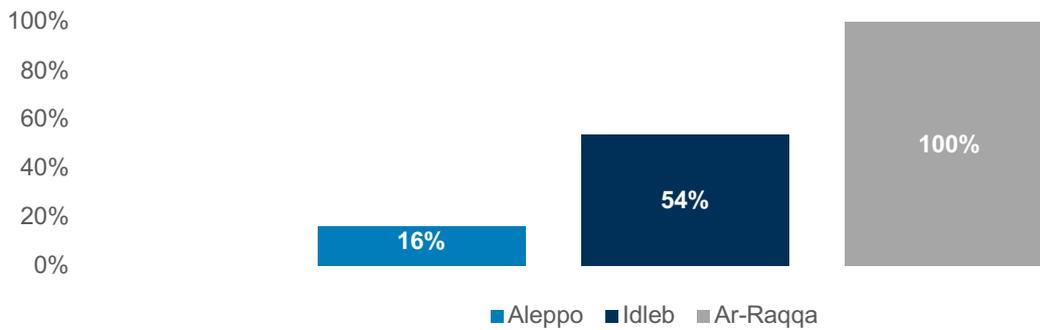
Female teachers were more likely to establish class rules (74%) than male teachers (65%). While there was a difference between the frequency of the practice in Grade 3 classrooms (71%) and in Grade 2 classrooms (74%), the difference was not significant. There was also a difference between the frequency of the practice in maths classes (77%) and in Arabic classes (68%). The frequency of observations of such practice was of sizeable difference between Idleb (84%) and Aleppo (52%).

Figure 111: Frequency of observations of class rule setting, by governorate, gender, grade level, and subject



Sixty-five percent of teachers said that children “sometimes” or “often” help decide what is best for the class or the school in terms of developing rules. When considering that only 56% of children said they helped to co-create the rules, the study findings suggest that reality of true participatory engagement of children is likely lower than teachers state. When adjusting for the fact that only 18% of the children in the study were from Ar-Raqqa, and looking simply at the figures for Aleppo and Idleb, roughly 35% of children helped co-create rules. Children in Ar-Raqqa were more likely to participate in the co-creation of rules than children in other governorates (100% in Ar-Raqqa versus 54% in Idleb and 16% in Aleppo.) A very small number of children commented qualitatively that they had teachers who asked them if they thought the rules were fair and/or should be changed. Differences in the frequency of engagement of girls or boys in this activity were not significant.

Figure 112: Stated frequency of involvement by children in classroom rule-setting, by governorate

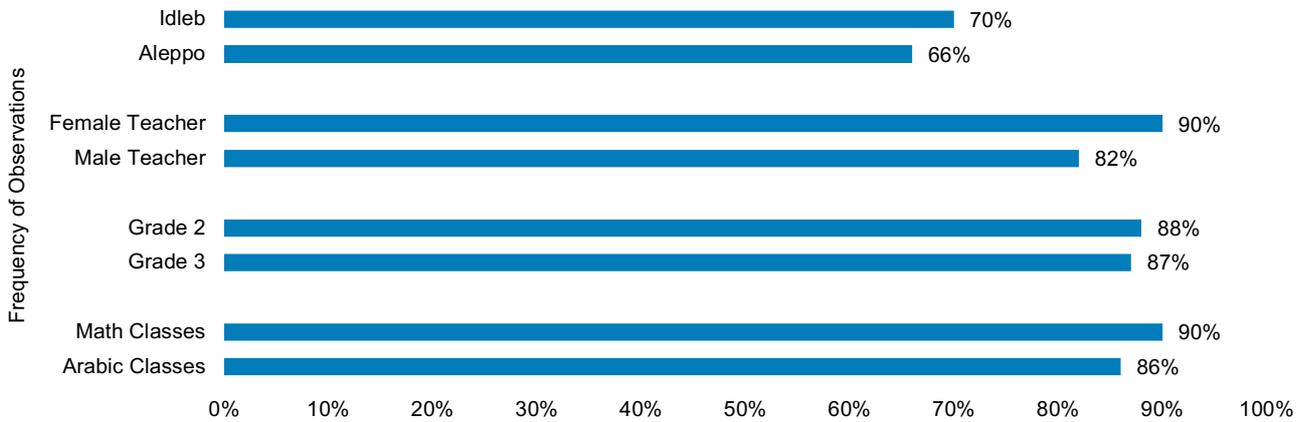


7.8.3 Sense of control: the use of routines and procedures

Teachers appeared to do a good job using routines in the classroom. Such a practice is to be expected in a context of traditional rote learning practices.

Eighty-eight percent of teachers were observed to “often” or “always” use routines and procedures. Female teachers were observed to use these practices more frequently (90%) than male teachers (82%). There was virtually no difference between these practices at the Grade 2 (88%) or Grade 3 (87%) levels. There was a difference between the frequency of the practice in maths classes (90%) and in Arabic classes (86%). Teachers in Idleb were more likely to use these practices (70%) than those in Aleppo (66%).

Figure 113: Frequency of observations of the use by teachers of routines, by governorate, gender, grade level, and subject

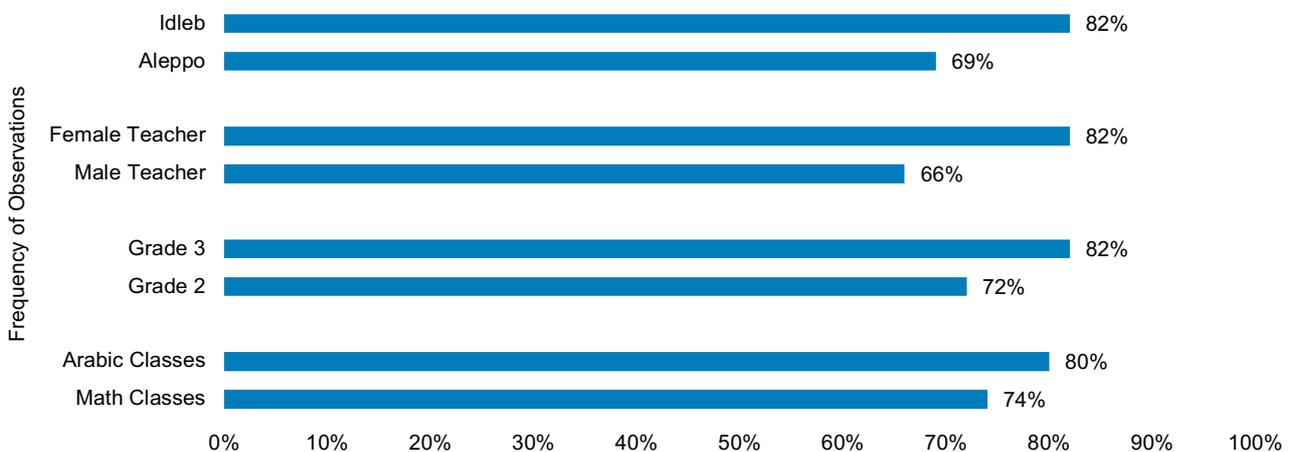


7.8.4 Pro-social behaviour modelling: use of positive words and praise of children

Practice around the use of positive words and praise was slightly lower than the practices that relate to classroom and lesson structure. This is not surprising considering the context. It is important to review this finding in relation to the findings about verbal abuse, discussed [in the section about children's perceptions of their safety and fears in learning spaces](#). Analysing these two related findings together suggests that teachers are actually less likely to model pro-social communication for children than they were observed to do by the enumerators. In other words, teachers were likely displaying better behaviour when they were observed than they do most of the time, and children's reports of the frequency of teacher abuse, particularly verbal abuse, are critical to keep in mind.

Observations of teacher practice found that 68% "often" or "always" used positive words and praised children. Female teachers were observed to use these practices significantly more often (82%) than male teachers (66%). There was more frequent use of these practices at the Grade 3 (82%) than the Grade 2 (72%) level. There was also a difference between the frequency of the practice in maths classes (74%) and Arabic classes (80%). Again, teachers in Idleb were more likely to use these practices (82%) than those in Aleppo (69%).

Figure 114: Frequency of observations of the use by teachers of positive words and praise, by governorate, gender, grade level, and subject

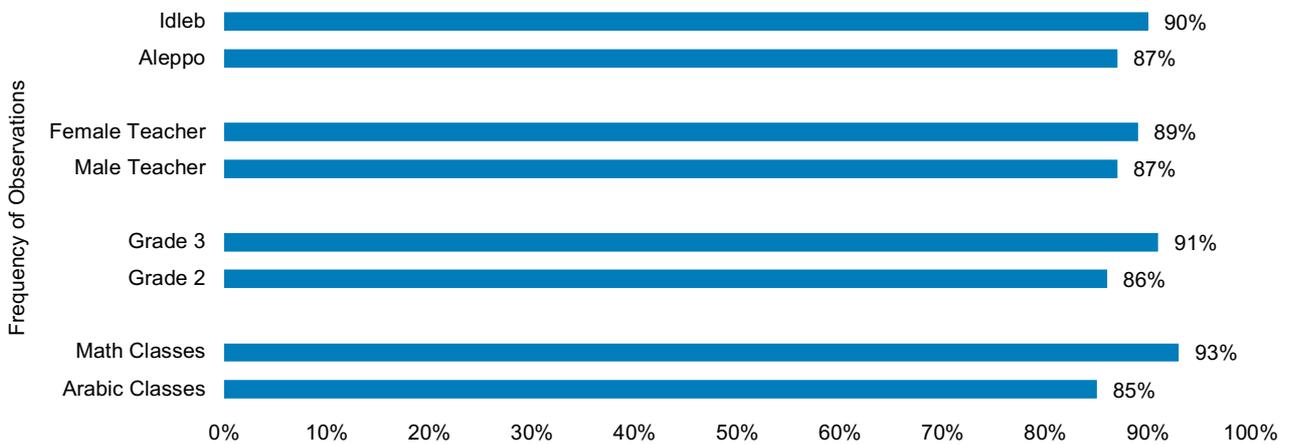


7.8.5 Pro-social behaviour modelling: respectful and courteous behaviour

Teachers were observed to be modelling respectful and courteous behaviours most of the time. It is important to review this finding in relation to the findings about verbal abuse, discussed [in the section about children's perceptions of their safety and fears in learning spaces](#). As discussed in section 6.12.4, teachers are probably less likely to model pro-social communication for children than they were observed to do by the enumerators.

Eighty-nine percent of teachers were observed by enumerators to “often” or “always” be modelling how to be respectful and courteous to others in class. Female teachers were observed to use these practices slightly more often (89%) than male teachers (87%). There was slightly more frequent use of these practices at the Grade 3 (91%) than the Grade 2 (86%) level. There was also a difference between the frequency of the practice in maths classes (93%) and Arabic classes (85%). Again, teachers in Idleb were more likely to use these practices (90%) than those in Aleppo (87%).

Figure 115: Frequency of observations of the use by teachers of respectful and courteous behaviour, by governorate, gender, grade level, and subject



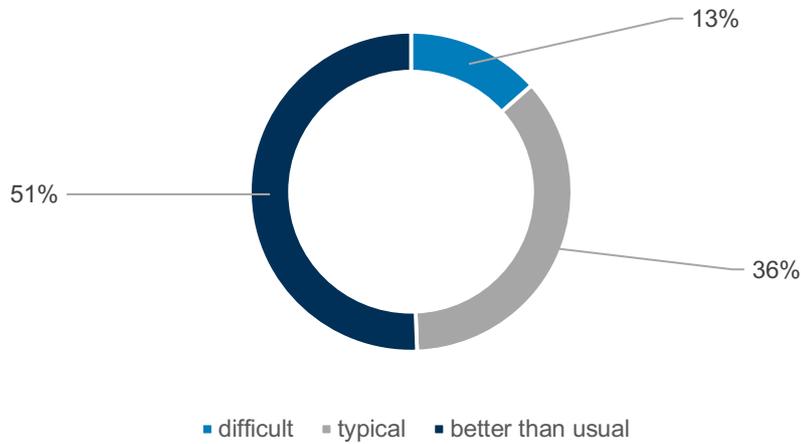
7.9 Teachers’ perspectives on enumerator-observed classes

The parameters of the study made infeasible the possibility of undertaking longitudinal observations of teacher practice. As such, after each observation, teachers were asked to reflect on their opinions of how the observed class went in contrast to a “normal” class for them. The following section highlights the teachers’ responses in their own words.

What they liked about the observed sessions: most teachers were happiest when they saw children in their classes understanding, learning, interacting, sharing ideas, and being responsive. These terms were the most common when analysed for word frequency.

How typical the observed sessions were: most teachers reported that the lesson observed went “better” than normal. This is not unexpected, as children might show better behaviour when guests are in the room.

Figure 118: Teacher perspective on how typical the observed lesson was



7.10 Best practices: existing and potential practices for scale-up or transfer

7.10.1 Area of inquiry lens 1: Effective UNRWA EICC service provision tactics

UNRWA's education service delivery is often touted as a model for the EICC sector. Positive community perceptions, the implementation of continuous professional development programmes, the integration of wellbeing through various threads of its education service delivery, innovations in the provision of multiple pathways for flexible learning, and consistently strong learning outcomes and progression statistics serves as indicators for the model (Pontefract, Dabit, Vandekerckhove, & Aedy, (n.d). This endeavoured to explore these examples of best practice by testing with non-UNRWA constituents how feasible such methodologies or practices would be in their contexts, and how open they would be to shifting existing practices in the direction of UNRWA's investment areas.

The study recognises that UNRWA's education-related cost per child is higher than the average cost for UN agencies and (I)NGOs. UNRWA spends USD346 per child per Syrian-based school year for the basic level cohort, and an average of USD841 across all its operating spaces for the basic level school year (UNRWA, 2018). As such, when asking respondents to comment on the feasibility of practices such as continuous professional development and constant threads of wellbeing programming, the team asked (I)NGO representatives to provide current information on cost per child using their existing intervention methods. Interestingly, Syrian NGOs identified an average cost per child per year as USD197, whereas their western counterparts stated their average cost at USD151, for an overall average of USD175. In other words, UNRWA spends roughly twice what most agencies do on its services. This finding is important to raise for thoughtful consideration by investors in EICC, and will be explored more in the [recommendations section](#).

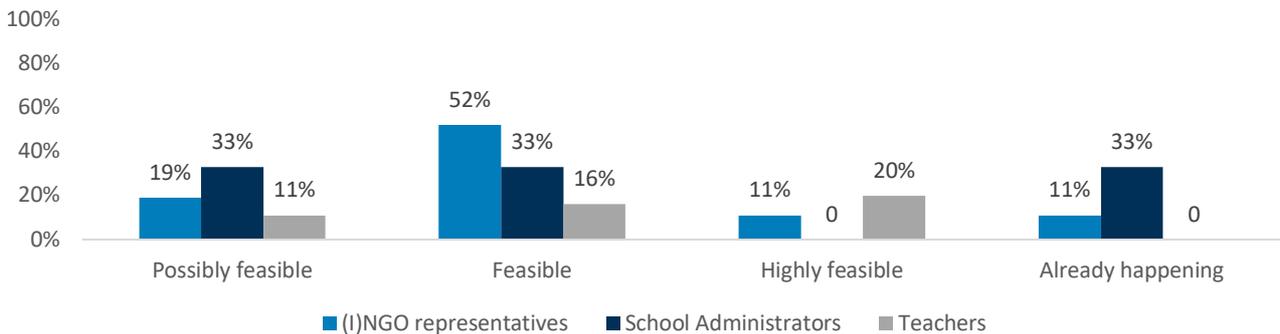
The feasibility⁹¹ of the following elements of some of UNRWA’s standard EICC practices were assessed with a variety of respondents. In summary:

- There appears to be some feasibility around improving the use of formative summative assessment in classrooms, but it will require significant capacity building at the school level.
- (I)NGO representatives believe that their delivery of digital content is feasible in the context.
- The establishment of Education Management Information Systems (EMIS) appears to be feasible.

Systematic formative assessment

Considering the [findings presented earlier in the report](#)—that school administrators and teachers do not appear to understand what formative assessment is—the following data from those same respondents has somewhat limited value. The input from the (I)NGO representatives is probably more reliable, considering they likely had more knowledge of what formative assessment looks like considering its focus in the EICC community. As such, it appears that while formative assessment is not likely to be happening much in learning spaces, it is feasible to introduce it. Lessons from other geographies about how to effectively introduce formative assessments in contexts that value and are accustomed to summative assessment are discussed in the [recommendations section](#).

Figure 119: Feasibility of systematic formative assessment



Digital content delivery

Only (I)NGO representatives were asked about the feasibility of delivering lessons to children via video lessons and through games. Related questions were asked to other respondents, but in this case the study focussed on exploring the practical aspects of such services delivered by (I)NGOs, including considerations around bandwidth, content development, and cost of such service types. Such approaches appeared to be feasible or highly feasible.

⁹¹ While respondents were asked to share if they felt ideas were not feasible, only elements of feasibility and current practice are detailed in this study. As such, figures will not add up to 100%.

Figure 120: (I)NGO representative reports on the feasibility of online video lessons for children

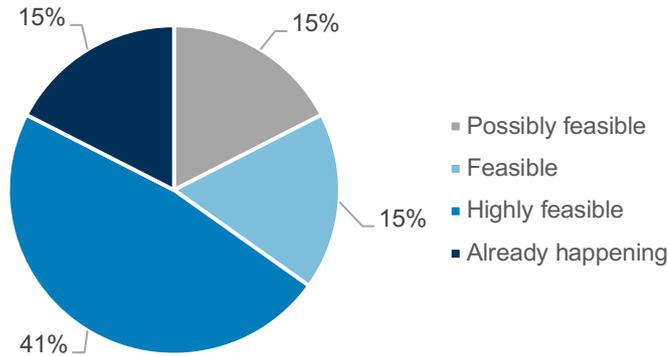
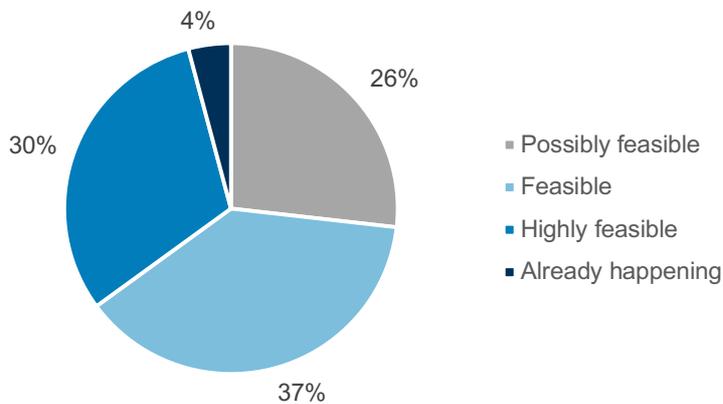


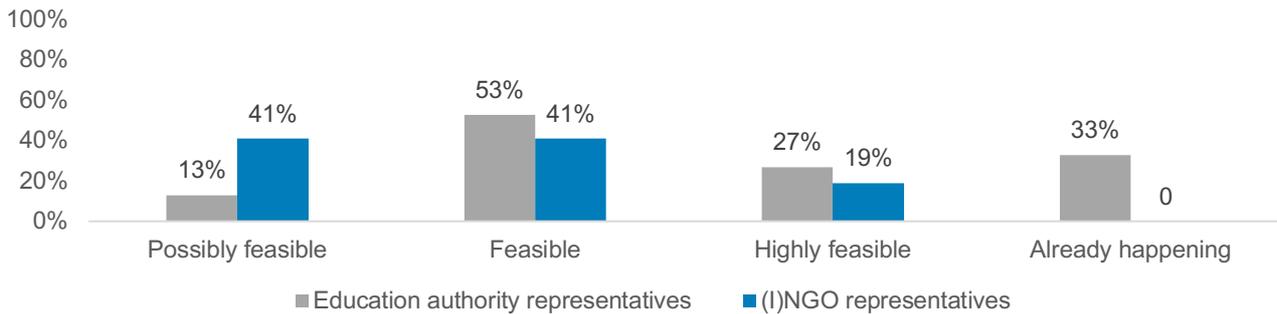
Figure 121: (I)NGO representative opinions of the feasibility of online Interactive Learning Programmes with educational games focusing on literacy and numeracy



EMIS

Considering that the majority of the data was collected in areas supported by the relatively newly-established SIG and its EDs, it is not surprising that most of the responses from respondents were forward looking, with most suggesting EMIS system establishment to be feasible. However, it is notable that (I)NGO representatives and education authority representatives had quite different responses to the question about the existence of EMIS systems. This disparity will be explored further in the [conclusions](#) and [recommendations](#) sections.

Figure 122: Education authority and (I)NGO representative opinions on the feasibility of the establishment of an EMIS system



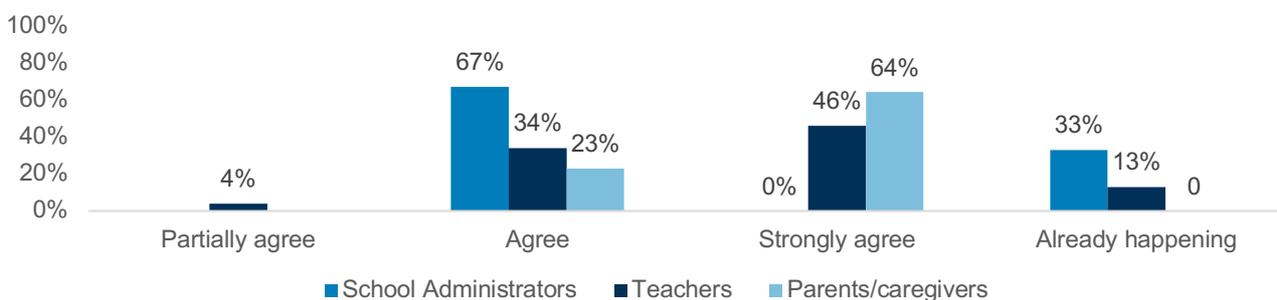
7.10.2 Area of inquiry lens 2: The use of information and communication technology (ICT) as a teaching and learning tool

The team collected data to see how feasible the application of best practices were in the use of ICT solutions in FCAS, using lessons from Mausen and Stannard's 2018 piece on the topic. Sample considerations included:

1. ICT as a supplemental tool for learning only;
2. The impact of how social constructs of ICT (how people perceive ICT socially, culturally, and through a gender lens) can affect uptake; and
3. The effectiveness of ICT in ALP settings.

The study team also looked at best practices identified in Dahya's 2016 "Education in Conflict and Crisis: How Can Technology Make a Difference?: A Landscape Review." Such potential best practices include the Connect To Learn teacher resource programme run by the IRC for Syrian refugee teachers in Iraq, the use of an SMS alert system in Gaza developed by SoukTel and used by UNESCO to help keep parents updated about security concerns relating to learning spaces, and the use of ICT to help marginalised groups (such as girls and children with disabilities) stay engaged in learning activities remotely.

Figure 123: Respondent opinions on the helpfulness of SMS by school systems to update parents/caregivers on children's learning and wellbeing

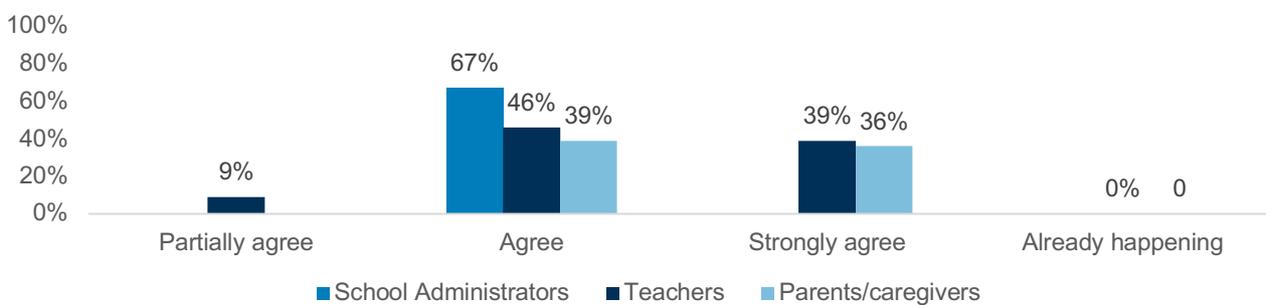


A number of teachers mentioned their concern with parents/caregivers' literacy, and some noted that keeping the parents/caregivers involved via face-to-face meetings was also important. They noted that if face-to-face meetings were difficult to organise, they were not sure if remote communication would be helpful.

School administrators noted that such tools are especially helpful to notify parents/caregivers of children who are facing particular difficulties.

Comments from parents/caregivers on this idea were largely positive. Many parents/caregivers had not considered the idea and saw great value in it. Parents/caregivers in public learning spaces noted that it was already done in some private schools. Many respondents suggested that the addition of this type of communication could save them time, could update them on their children’s progress, and could show that teachers were really engaged in supporting individual learners. A number of parents/caregivers said that they received the information they needed already through visits to the learning spaces themselves. Respondents based in camps noted that it was difficult to get cellular coverage. Parents/caregivers with lower education levels were hesitant, saying that they struggled to read and write, and that this method of communication could lead to additional challenges for them.

Figure 124: Respondent opinions on the helpfulness of using Tablets, Smartphones, Radio, TV, and/or SMS as learning tools for marginalised groups



Teacher respondents shared a wide range of opinions on this topic. A number of teachers thoughtfully noted the importance of these methods being used only as tools, and that oversight and follow-up with a teacher was critical. Some teachers noted that with security issues like shelling or the mobility challenges of some children, such tools would be helpful. Some teachers noted the particular importance of one-on-one support for children with special needs.

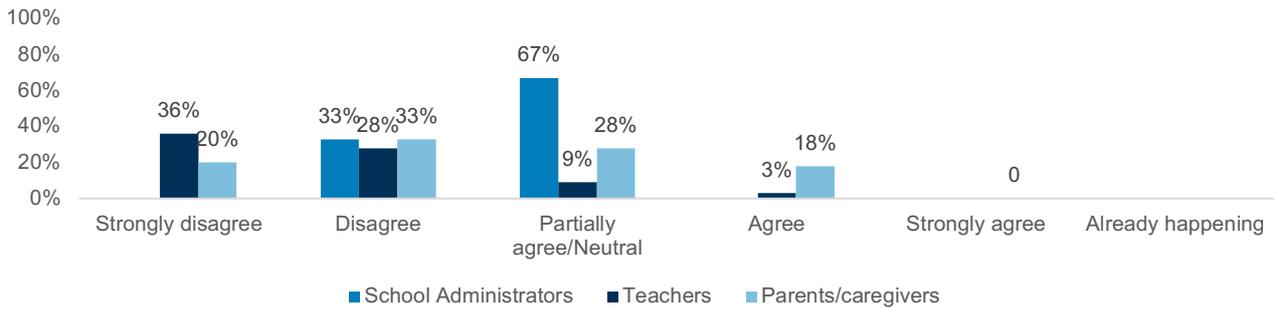
Parents/caregivers, like teachers, were also very thoughtful in considering this approach as an option. Many noted that the tools could be helpful in a supplementary format, but that one-to-one interaction with teachers was critical. Others noted that supervision would be necessary so that time was not wasted. There was a good degree of hesitation amongst parents/caregivers who worried about their and their children’s ability to understand how to use such technology, as well as the costs associated with it.

Perspectives on ICT use and gender

This study asked respondents to reflect on whether gender was a factor in considering in whose hands to place ICT-based learning tools, such as tablets. Teachers and parents/caregivers were in better alignment with the evidence, which suggests that there are no inherent advantages for such tools to be used by one gender or another.⁹²

⁹² The concept of the digital divide in relation to men and women has been found to be more sociocultural than related to inherent intellectual differences between men and women (Hafkin & Huyer, 2007).

Figure 125: Respondent perspectives on there being gendered differences in the effective use of ICT



Most teachers stated that access to such tools should not be based on the gender of the child or adult. A small number of respondents stated that women and girls could benefit more from access to such tools in the home, since that is where they were most likely to be. Some also commented that men and boys were more likely to be adept at using such tools.

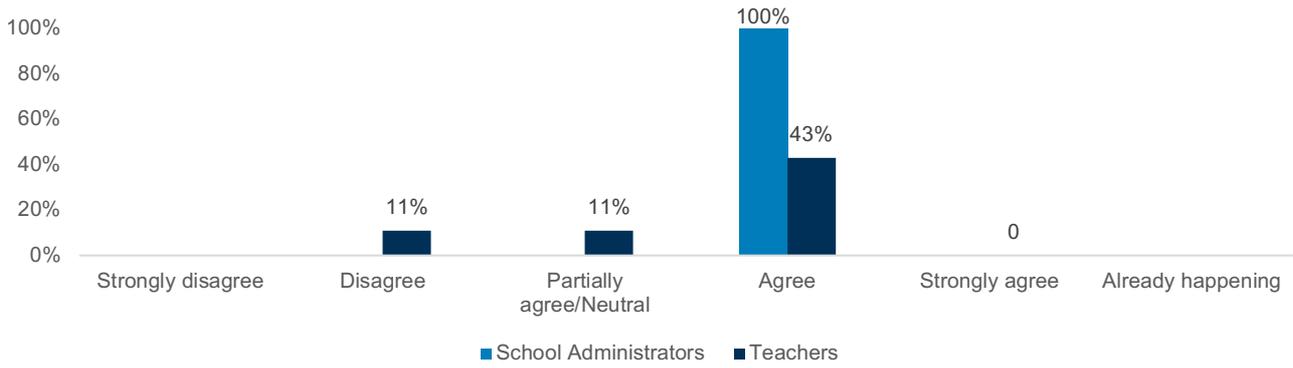
Many school administrators appeared to think that there might be gender considerations. Many also noted the importance of monitoring tablet use and having one-to-one supervision and support for children.

Most parents/caregivers noted that both genders should have equal access to such tools. They also noted that good supervision was important, and that such tools should be used in a supplementary manner to teacher instruction.

Opinions for the use of tablets as supplementary (rather than primary) teaching and learning tools

Many teachers stated that tablets’ best use was supplemental, and noted the importance of the traditional teaching and learning materials as well. All school administrators agreed, noting that otherwise such tools could become distractions. These responses are in line with the evidence which suggests that the best use of the ICT hardware, such as tablets, as a tool in classrooms is for teaching and thus in the hands of teachers, but only as a value-add to regular practice. Much of the evidence came about as a result of the literature that addressed the failure of the one laptop per child (Shamu, 2012; Fajebe, Best & Smyth, 2013; Kremer, Brannen & Glennerster, 2013; Evans & Popova, 2015; and Cistia et al., 2017). Evans and Popova (2015) noted that “computer-assisted learning programs which are tailored to each student’s level of knowledge, tied to the curriculum, and that provide teachers with training on how to integrate the technology into their instruction are most effective”

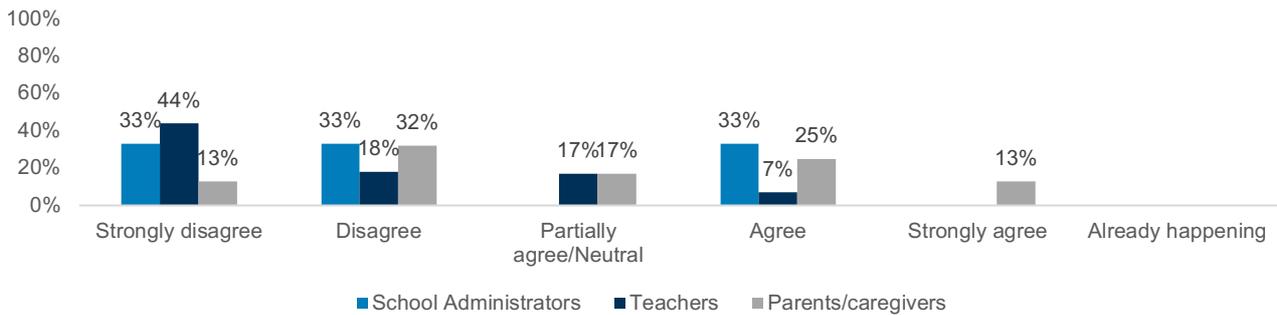
Figure 126: Respondent opinions on the use of tablets as supplemental rather than primary teaching and learning tools



Opinions on the best user of tablets: children or teachers

Respondents were asked if it was better to put tablets into the hands of children as learning tools or into the hands of teachers as teaching tools. As above, most respondents' opinions were in line with the evidence, which states that the outcomes of such tools in classrooms are higher when the main user is the teacher.

Figure 127: Respondent opinions on whether tablets should be used primarily by children instead of teachers



School administrators were divided on this question, though the majority believed that teachers should be the primary users of such tools. Many also noted that the most critical element for learning is the interaction with the teacher. Most teachers talked about the risk of misuse in the hands of children, and spoke of the importance of student-teacher dialogue and interaction in the learning space. Some parents/caregivers noted that using these devices for both teaching and learning was important. Others thought that it was most appropriate to have teachers use these devices as supplemental tools for teaching. The majority worried that the devices could be distracting when in the hands of children, and reinforced the value of face-to-face time with teachers.

7.10.3 Area of inquiry lens 3: Teacher professional development

In identifying teacher professional development best practices for review in the Syria context, the study team considered recommendations from a series of studies. Enumerators then asked respondents to reflect on the existence of such practices, or their feasibility in the context. The recommendations considered were:

Distance education

- Elevating the use of distance education for teachers to support continuous skill development and improve practice,⁹³ especially for those in rural areas.⁹⁴

Face-to-face (peer) mentoring programmes

- Increasing face-to-face contact between student-teachers and their mentors, and preferably that close to teachers' learning spaces.⁹⁵
- Establishing multi-layer and heterogeneous learning groups amongst teachers to ensure that stronger teachers can mentor weaker ones.⁹⁶
- Encouraging mentors to advance the method of positive modelling.⁹⁷

Teacher and supervisor involvement in the design of the teacher training curriculum

- Involving both teachers and mentors in the curriculum design: seen as being “essential to make the upgrading programme effectual in adapting to location circumstances. Special attention must be given to the adaptation of child-centred, participatory teaching methods in classrooms where teaching materials are scarce and pupil/teacher ratios are very high.”⁹⁸
- Focusing training around literacy and numeracy skill building.⁹⁹

Revised teacher training methods

- Revising teacher training methods,¹⁰⁰ especially considering:
- Moving away from ineffective one-off training models and toward more continuous and peer supported models (including mixed methods models).¹⁰¹
- Focusing more on in-service training, seen as “vital to upgrading programmes, both for practical reasons and to enhance contextualised learning and practice.”¹⁰²
-

⁹³ In Education International's 2007 study on teacher supply, recruitment, and retention from sub-Saharan Africa and from the Norwegian Refugee Council's (NRC) CREPS programme evaluation from Sierra Leone.

⁹⁴ Developed by Mogollón as documented in the 2011 memorial article on the model.

⁹⁵ Education International's 2010 piece on teacher professional development.

⁹⁶ A 2017 assessment of teacher professional development and recommendations for improvements in Eritrea.

⁹⁷ A 2017 assessment of teacher professional development and recommendations for improvements in Eritrea.

⁹⁸ Education International's 2010 piece on teacher professional development.

⁹⁹ Developed by Mogollón as documented in the 2011 memorial article on the model.

¹⁰⁰ Developed by Mogollón as documented in the 2011 memorial article on the model.

¹⁰¹ Recommendations from the Promising Practices in Refugee Education piece, with relevance for IDP teachers, NRC CREPS programme evaluation from Sierra Leone, and The Teachers for Teachers programme in Kenya.

¹⁰² Education International's 2010 piece on teacher professional development.

Supporting mentors and teacher trainers

- Supporting mentors and teacher educators in recognition of them having multifaceted identities as trainers, researchers, practitioners, and students.¹⁰³
- Certification pathways for teacher training.¹⁰⁴

The following section outlines respondents' thoughts on these types of support. In summary, respondents were open to changing the ways in which teacher professional development is handled in Syria. This includes:

- *Better involving teachers and supervisors in the design of mixed methods (head) teacher training programmes and curriculum;*
- *Aligning these programmes with certification schemes for (head) teachers;*
- *Better supporting (head) teacher trainers;*
- *Strengthening existing mentoring and coaching programmes, in part by establishing heterogeneous peer learning circles; and*
- *Exploring the enhanced use of distance methods for connecting (head) teachers both to learning content as well as to each other and to their mentors using ICT.*

Respondents tended to have differing opinions on whether or not the following practices were already happening, with school administrators and education authorities suggesting more often than (I)NGO representatives that practices such as certification schemes and mentoring and coaching were already happening.

Teacher and supervisor involvement in the design of the teacher training curriculum

Respondents who were more likely to be involved in making decisions about teacher training were asked about the feasibility of involving teachers in the design of such programmes or curriculum. Most respondents found the idea feasible (44% of INGO representatives) or highly feasible (67% of school administrators and 26% of (I)NGO representatives). Interestingly, no (I)NGO representatives thought that such behaviours were already underway, while 33% of school administrators did. School administrators noted that they could undertake joint efforts with other learning spaces, and they also said that teachers know best what they and their students need. Respondents in the Euphrates Shield area noted that the Turkish authorities took responsibility for all training. A number of (I)NGO representatives suggested that, considering patterns of ongoing displacement, “exchanges” could be facilitated. When asked what types of training opportunities they would suggest, the following topics and methods were most frequently mentioned:

1. Free, regular training courses through teacher training centres on topics such as:
 - The English language;
 - ICT for education;
 - Teaching methods;

¹⁰³ From the Ugandan context, by O’Sullivan (2010).

¹⁰⁴ NRC’s CREPS programme evaluation from Sierra Leone.

- Classroom management;
 - Experiential learning, namely through play;
 - Differentiation;
 - Child protection;
 - Inclusive education;
 - Positive discipline;
 - Education supervision; and
 - School administration.
2. Supporting the development of teaching-related skills for para-professionals—i.e. teacher assistants.

The feasibility of a formal certification scheme for teachers

Respondents who were in a position to help facilitate a certification scheme (such as (I)NGOs and education authorities) were asked to reflect on the feasibility of such an effort. Overall, such a scheme appeared feasible and likely already happening to a small degree. (I)NGO representatives were slightly more hopeful than education authorities (66%) about the establishment of such a scheme (71% found it feasible or highly feasible), and had a lower response rate for the question about the existence of such schemes already (7%) than did their colleagues at education authorities (33%).

The feasibility of mixed methods leadership courses for head teachers

The respondents who could help establish this kind of a training programme were asked to reflect on the feasibility of such an effort. Overall, this kind of a course appeared highly feasible. Education authority representatives were more positive about the feasibility of such a course than were (I)NGO representatives (80% thought it was feasible or highly feasible, compared to 67% of (I)NGO representatives). Again, education authority representatives stated that such a course was already happening (though only 7% did so) and (I)NGO representatives thought no such courses currently existed.

The feasibility of teacher educators supported as trainer, researcher, practitioner, and student

School administrators and (I)NGO representatives were asked how feasible they thought it would be to modify how teacher educators were treated, with a focus on shifting toward more professional development support for them. While both respondent groups felt that such an approach would be feasible or highly feasible (approximately 66% for school administrators and 70% for (I)NGO representatives), it is important to note that 33% of school administrators found such an approach to be infeasible. By means of explanations, some school administrators commented on the challenges they faced dealing with education authorities on these types of topics, suggesting that whole scale change of leadership would be required before such attitudinal and practical changes could be actualised.

The feasibility of mentoring and coaching programmes for teachers

The value of peer learning networks in contexts such as Syria's is strong. School administrators and (I)NGO representatives were asked to reflect broadly on the feasibility of mentoring and coaching programmes, regardless of delivery methodology. (I)NGOs were hopeful, with 74% saying they were feasible or highly feasible. Sixty-seven percent of school administrators said such programmes were feasible, and 33% said they were already happening. A number of school administrators said that such programmes were extremely important, but noted that although theoretically in place, mentoring was not happening in a meaningful way. Building on this sentiment, an (I)NGO representative suggested that there was room for better coordination amongst civil society, the EDs, and teachers, particularly in relation to the formation of mentoring groups. A series of questions were then asked about the type of mentoring and coaching programmes for teachers.

1. The feasibility of establishing peer-to-peer/teacher-to-teacher learning circles as part of continuous professional development.
 - School administrators were asked to assess the feasibility of helping to form and support peer learning circles as part of teacher professional development. The idea appeared to be possibly feasible to 33% of respondents and feasible to 67%. Some respondents noted that removing logistical barriers to establishing such groups would be helpful, and that teachers are usually motivated to participate in activities that help raise their level of expertise.
2. The feasibility of heterogeneous learning groups amongst teachers.
 - School administrators and (I)NGO representatives were asked to reflect on how feasible heterogeneous learning groups would be, to ensure that stronger teachers could mentor weaker ones. Overall, the approach appeared feasible. (I)NGO representatives were much more hopeful about the idea, with 74% saying such groupings were feasible or highly feasible. Sixty-six percent of school administrators thought they were feasible or highly feasible, but 33% also thought they were not feasible. As a means of explaining their thinking, school administrators stated that community integration-related behaviour change work might be necessary to help reduce barriers amongst host and displaced teacher populations.

The feasibility of distance education as part of teacher professional development

Such a modality for knowledge transfer appears to be feasible, according to school administrators (67% feasible) and (I)NGO representatives (44% said it was feasible and 11% said it was highly feasible). Seven percent of (I)NGO representatives said such methods were already being used, but no school administrators said so, and the latter noted that logistical and technical difficulties should be expected. A series of questions were then asked about the type of distance education that might be considered.

1. The feasibility of Open and Distance Learning modules for teachers.
 - The respondents who could help establish this kind of a training programme were asked to reflect on the feasibility of such an effort. The idea presented was for teachers to access modules from their classrooms over a six-month period. Overall, the idea appeared to be feasible to highly feasible ((I)NGO representatives at 37% and 30%, respectively, and education authority representatives at 33% and 27% respectively).

2. The feasibility of remote or mobile mentoring through SMS or by mentors who only visit teachers periodically.

Quite a few respondents suggested that such practices were already happening, though anecdotal evidence suggests it is being done informally and not as part of a structured system. Sixty-seven percent of school administrators, 26% of teachers, and 11% of (I)NGO representatives said such practices were already in place. Of those teachers who said that such practices were being used, however, many noted that interaction amongst groups of teachers, parents/caregivers, and/or with mentors was poor. Unsurprisingly, the feasibility of such approaches also had strong support, with the remaining 33% of school administrators saying such practices were highly feasible, 43% of teachers and 68% of (I)NGO workers saying it was either feasible or highly feasible. Teachers were quite thoughtful in their responses, noting that face-to-face mentoring was still very important.

7.10.4 Area of inquiry lens 4: Tools and practices used to support psychosocial and socioemotional wellbeing

The IRC's Healing Classrooms tools and UNRWA's conceptual framework for psychosocial support in UNRWA learning spaces were reviewed to help frame an understanding of best practice in supporting psychosocial and socioemotional wellbeing in FCAS contexts. Additionally, each of the case studies presented in the annex of the INEE Round Table on Psychosocial Support and Social and Emotional Learning round table report were considered for possible applications in the Syria context. Furthermore, Sesame Workshop's work with the IRC on Sesame Seeds, an approach to supporting the wellbeing of pre-primary school students in the Middle East region, was reviewed. Finally, the work of Theresa Betancourt (2005, 2008a, 2008b) looking at the needs of displaced children and those affected by armed conflict was also reviewed. From amongst these resources, the following good intervention practices were noted:

- *The use of mass media, home visits, and nurturing care and learning (Sesame Street and the International Rescue Committee, 2018).*
- *Encouraging family and community participation in programming (Betancourt, 2005; Betancourt, 2008a).*
- *Ensuring that caregivers, teachers, and community mentors return to the care and protection of children as a primary focus (Betancourt, 2008b).*
- *"Improving opportunities for children to deepen connections to family, peers, teachers and members of the larger community" (Betancourt, 2008b).*

Extrapolating from these practices, the following areas of inquiry were explored with informants:

- *the use of artistic forms of expressions to support wellbeing;*
- *the value of play in support of wellbeing;*
- *the use of mass/social media as a medium for delivering wellbeing related content;*
- *the establishment of socioemotional skill development programmes;*
- *the use of specialised home visits to support wellbeing; and*
- *the involvement of parents/caregivers and community members in support of wellbeing.*

Overall, informants were positive about integrating wellbeing-related activities with traditional cognitive skill development methods. (I)NGO informants tended to be more likely to comment that

such methods were already being used, if only minimally, than were their school administrator colleagues. The latter were more likely to mention concerns about actualising new wellbeing-related activities even if they did support them in concept.

Artwork, role-plays, theatre and storytelling as feasible ways of supporting and improving the wellbeing of children

Informant who could have an influence on the introduction or the elevation of such practices were asked to speak to the existence of art, drama and other means of artistic and dialectic means of expression. Overall, school administrators and (I)NGO representatives agreed or strongly agreed (100% and 90% respectively) that such practices could support and improve child wellbeing. Ten percent of (I)NGO representatives said that such activities were already happening. Importantly, a school administrator noted that there was a big practical difference between what they wanted to do and what they could do, stating that there were many limitations in setting up these kinds of activities. Perhaps the fact that the (I)NGO informants noted the existence of such activities suggests that they are only happening in (I)NGO controlled or influenced spaces.

The feasibility of setting up programmes that support socioemotional skill development

Learning spaces administrators and (I)NGO representatives were also asked how feasible they felt it would be to set up programmes that helped children develop their socioemotional skills, including skills related to executive function, emotion regulation, prosocial behaviour, conflict resolution, and perseverance. School administrators were again quite positive, with 100% agreeing or strongly agreeing. The concern about the difference between desire for such a programme and its actualisation was again noted. (I)NGO representatives were also supportive with 71% agreeing or strongly agreeing and 11% stating that such programmes were already taking place.

The feasibility of play-based activities to support wellbeing

Again, both school administrators and (I)NGO representatives were quite supportive of play as a form of wellbeing support (100% of former strongly agreed, and 82% of the latter agreed or strongly agreed.) Also again, (I)NGO representatives stated that such activities were already underway (19%). And yet again, school administrators thoughtfully noted that the curriculum is not designed to support such forms of experiential learning, which they believe contributes to the teachers' limited use of it in practice.

The feasibility of using mass/social media to help promote children's wellbeing

In the case of the use of mass and/or social media to support child wellbeing, informants were not as well aligned in their opinion. School administrators were again supportive of the idea (100% strongly agreed) but thoughtful and/or hesitant about how to actualise it. (I)NGO representatives were more cautious in their opinions, with only 44% agreeing or strongly agreeing and 11% saying that such practices already exist.

The feasibility of the use of home visits to help promote children's wellbeing

School administrators, (I)NGO representatives, and parents/caregivers were all very supportive of this idea, with 100% of school administrators agreeing or strongly agreeing, followed by 92% of parents/caregivers, and 88% of (I)NGO representatives. Again, school administrators highlighted the practical challenges they felt they would face in effectively reaching parents/caregivers and (I)NGO

representatives were more likely to state that such practices were already underway (11%) compared to only 1% of parents/caregivers.

Family and community participation in programming that support children's wellbeing

School administrators and (I)NGO representatives were more supportive of such involvement than were parents/caregivers themselves, and there appears to be attitudinal barriers amongst the latter that their involvement is necessary and that such efforts are even an appropriate part of education programming.

All school administrators agreed or strongly agreed that family and community participation in support of children's wellbeing programming was important. Some administrators noted that awareness raising campaigns would be helpful and that such practices have enabled improved child health-related parent and school partnerships in the past. Seventy percent of (I)NGO workers agreed or strongly agreed that such participation was important and 4% said such activities were already happening. Parents/caregivers were open to the idea, with 63% agreeing or strongly agreeing, but many noted that they felt they presently lacked the knowledge or experience to participate meaningfully. Quite a few mentioned that specialists and/or duty bearers in the education sector should take the lead and that parents/caregivers could support in minor ways. It is important to highlight that there were a sizeable number of comments about how such efforts did not relate to education and were not of interest (16% disagreed or strongly disagreed and 20% did not have an opinion).

7.10.5 Area of inquiry lens 5: The role of alternative and ALP in supporting learning improvements

According to UNESCO (2013), flexible learning opportunities, such as catch-up classes, help children get and stay engaged with learning, especially during periods of (protracted) instability. This is especially true for more vulnerable children, such as girls, the disabled, and children who have been out of school for some time. The team reviewed some parameters for assessing the value of ALP, by the likes of Charlick (2004), Nicholson (2006, 2007), Save the Children Uganda (2007), Baxter, P. & Bethke, L., (2009), and Boisvert, K., Flemming, & Shah, R. (2017). The team recognises that the topic of ALP could comprise an entire study in and of itself, and because the majority of primary education service provision in Syria is through formal systems, the topic was not critical to the study. As such, the questions asked about ALP were minimal, but deemed sufficient to inform an assessment of the feasibility for greater investment in them in Syria.

The following parameters for effective ALP were reviewed and analysed for feasibility in the Syria context:

- *The value-add of ALP in areas where the quality of formal education service delivery might be low (Charlick, J., 2004).*
- *Using multiple methods for delivering learning opportunities via ALP, including infused, parallel, and separate subjects (Baxter, P. & Bethke, L., 2009).*
- *The opportunities for peacebuilding, community employment, and improvements in self-directed learning skills (Nicholson, 2006a).*
- *Declines in illiteracy, petty crime, and child labour (Save the Children Uganda, 2007).*
- *The importance of linking such schemes to the formal system and/or other forms of accreditation and learning certification (Baxter, P. & Bethke, L., 2009).*

- *Being partial thoughtful in how to reach remote populations (Save the Children Uganda, 2007).*
- *Community engagement in delivery with as many opportunities for pure ownership over programmes as possible (Baxter, P. & Bethke, L., 2009).*
- *On-going teacher professional development and recognition for their completion of milestones (Baxter, P. & Bethke, L., 2009).*

With the analysis finding that such considerations were appropriate for the Syria context, informants were asked to share their opinions about the appropriateness of ALP and how acceptable they are or could be. The overall findings was that those responsible for or potentially responsible for ALP were supportive of it and found it to be feasible in the context. Again, (I)NGO representatives were more likely to state that such services existed, suggesting that where they do they are not well known amongst education authorities and school administrators.

The feasibility of multiple pathways for flexible learning (such as ALP, distance learning, SLP)

(I)NGO representatives approached such options as being more feasible than did education authority representatives (56% of the former thought such types of alternative education was feasible or highly feasible compared to 33% of the latter. (I)NGO representatives also stated that such activities were already happening at a rate higher than did their education authority counterparts (15% and 7%, respectively).

Accelerated or Alternative Learning Programmes as good education service delivery alternatives

School administrators and (I)NGO representatives were asked to consider if ALP were good options for education service delivery when there are disruptions in education service provision, large numbers of OOSC, and overcrowding in formal learning spaces. One hundred percent of school administrators agreed or strongly agreed and, similar to their education authority representatives, did not find that such practices were common (with no informants noting that ALP already existed). (I)NGO representatives were again much more likely to state that such services existed already (22%) and were supportive of such services (60% agreed or strongly agreed that ALP were good alternatives to traditional education services).

7.10.6 Area of inquiry lens 6: Strategic response planning along the humanitarian to development continuum, and most critically at the humanitarian development nexus

The team considered the application of a (confidential) NGO informant's sequenced response strategy for Syria, which identifies different interventions for different contexts along that continuum. Examples include focusing on engaging and protecting in the acute phases, beginning to create skill development pathways in the protracted phase, and contributing to stabilisation of the school management and teaching and learning practices in the stabilising phase. Informants responsible for oversight of education service delivery and its content were asked to consider this approach and its appropriateness for their contexts. The following table shows how strongly each informant type agreed or strongly agreed with the proposed foci of each phase, and whether or not such activities were already happening. Overall, there was general agreement with the content of the proposed intervention types per phase and with the sequencing.

Table 10: Informant opinions on intervention sequencing according to stage of crisis

| | Acute phase | Protracted phase | Stabilising phase |
|------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Education authorities | 66% | 60% | 71% |
| School administrators | 100% | 100% | 100% |
| (I)NGO representatives | 85% (11% already happening) | 78% (7% already happening) | 85% (4% already happening) |
| Average | 84% | 79% | 85% |

7.10.7 Area of inquiry lens 7: Opportunities presented by community-based education¹⁰⁵

Numerous studies have shown that establishing learning spaces in communities increases the chance that children in those communities will go to, and stay in, school. Studies have also found that this happens because learning spaces that are closer to communities attract more children, are more in touch with the needs and resources of parents, enable more active parental engagement, and have more motivated teachers (Attanasio & Verna-Hernandez, 2004; Burde & Linden, 2013; Duflo, 2004; Mocan & Cannonier, 2012; and Save the Children, 2012).

The team reviewed the lessons identified in the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack's 2014 document on the role of communities in protecting education, Burde's 2010, 2012 and 2013 assessments from Afghanistan which highlight the positive effects these learning spaces have on learning outcomes and gender equity, and Results for Development's 2018 case studies of community education in Nigeria and El Salvador. Examples of lessons and best practice from this literature includes:

- Community-based learning spaces can provide additional types of social services to children in conflict-affected contexts;
- Such learning spaces are more in line with the sociocultural (and sometimes religious) priorities of local communities;
- There are greater opportunities for more equitable access by marginalised groups; and
- The access opportunities community-based learning spaces present when formal systems do not have services in remote or marginalised communities in the early post-conflict days.¹⁰⁶

Using these and other assessments found in the literature about the value of community-based learning spaces, informants were asked to share how they felt with related statements. The following table shows the percentage of informants that agreed or strongly agreed with each statement. While as a whole, (I)NGO representatives, school administrators, and parents/caregivers were all supportive, it appears as though parents/caregivers would need more support than school administrators across the board in terms of their understanding of and attitudes regarding such

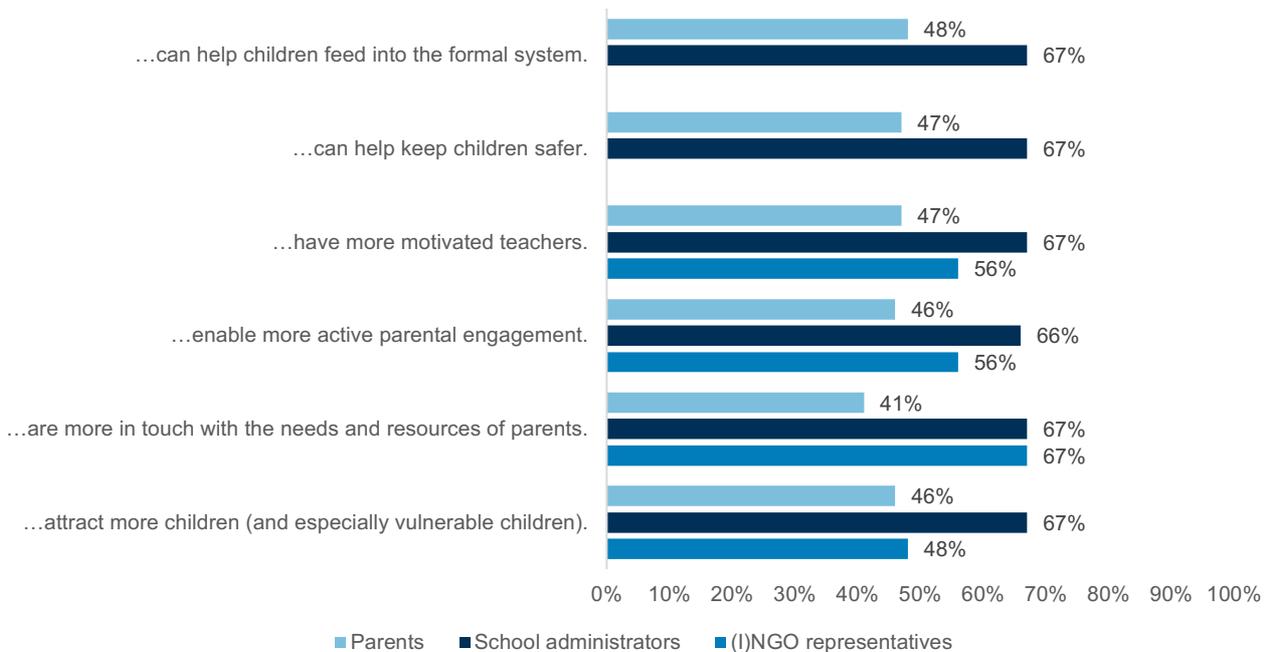
¹⁰⁵ Also referred to as "low-cost private learning spaces" or "affordable non-state learning spaces"

¹⁰⁶ With specific reference to the absorption by the MoE in post-Taliban years of "underground" learning spaces for girls set up in Taliban-led Afghanistan.

schooling. (I)NGO representatives might also need such support. It is helpful to note that most school administrators had largely positive feelings about such means for education service delivery.

The questions were: “Do you believe that learning spaces that are closer to communities and/or run with community leaders...”

Figure 128: Perspectives on the value of community-based education



While parents/caregivers appeared to be perhaps the most hesitant or perhaps the least informed about the value of community-based education, in group interviews they highlighted through their comments how useful they could in fact be. For example, a number of parent/caregiver informants mentioned how the centrality of learning spaces within villages helped elevate safety for girls. Numerous informants mentioned how harassment of girls in public spaces on the way to school was just as much of a safety concern as that within the school space with respect to verbal abuse. They also said they recognised that the closer parents/caregivers and teachers were in working together the more likely recovery from the traumatic effects of the conflict could be for children. They noted the social nature of the Syrian society and the value of lowering barriers to better teacher-child-parent/caregiver relationships.

Some parents/caregiver informants expressed concern about community-based learning spaces being too disconnected from formal systems. On this topic of concern, it is important to note that in post-Taliban Afghanistan, entities such as the International Rescue Committee and CARE were able to help integrate “underground” learning spaces run for girls into the formal system. The motivation here is likely to be related to widely recognised certification, a key motivator for parents. Tellingly, some parents/caregivers identified as undereducated said that they did not feel comfortable forming opinions—a point of consideration for social and behaviour change campaign considerations about the school to home learning continuum.

8 Conclusions

8.1 Correlative analysis: teaching, learning, and wellbeing

The literature shows that teachers who have strong intrinsic motivation, are reasonably remunerated, are appropriately trained and supported, and are socially, emotionally, physically, and cognitively well are likely to be good teachers. It further tells that good teachers are one of, if not the most, important factor influencing child learning and wellbeing. This study sought to review a few of these key elements of teacher quality through the analysis of data about teacher practices and behaviours in line with known standards for quality teaching. The study findings identify ***a preponderance of poor practices that not only likely fail to alleviate issues around children's wellbeing and learning challenges, but might contribute to their worsening.*** This finding is of particular concern in relation to:

- The prevalence of statements from children about teacher abuse;
- The prevalence of peer abuse amongst children; and
- The criticality of being literate and numerate at the Grade 3 level before moving to upper primary school.

The following sections highlight a few of the particular areas of concerns identified through this study in relation to how poor teaching practices and behaviours contribute to, or fail to, alleviate issues with learning and wellbeing. Suggestions for how to address these issues are explored in the recommendations section.

The frequency with which teachers identified high rates of self-efficacy about their abilities to promote equity, reading, maths, and wellbeing, in contrast to their weaker performance during observation is of concern. ***While high self-efficacy is helpful, it can also cloud self-awareness and thus further perpetrate poor practices. This finding is particularly concerning in light of the absence of strong supervision, mentoring, and/or accountability systems, which suggests that these practices can continue unabated.***

Despite children's reports of teacher abuse, ***the ability of teachers under observation to model sound practices such as patiently and positively redirecting negative child behaviours and using positive discipline, is a capacity on which to build.*** It suggests that teachers know what practices are and are not appropriate when it comes to supporting children's wellbeing.

Most teachers showed appropriate practices related to supporting literacy. That said, at least 25% of them need additional support. The fact that literacy-related activities are taking place in language classes and not in specific reading classes is another topic outside the purview of this study, but one that requires consideration.

More teachers, at least 30% of those observed, need to be better supported in developing skills and practices that support numeracy. Numeracy has taken a back seat to literacy in many classrooms, including those supported by the EICC community, but the tide is changing and more resources are likely to be better available in the near-term.

On the topics of literacy and numeracy, ***when contrasting relatively sound practise with poor reading and maths outcomes, it is critical to consider other factors that can negatively affect levels of literacy and numeracy. These include the relatively poor state of children's wellbeing, the lack of teaching and learning materials in support of reading and maths, and***

relatively limited engagement from parents/caregivers in support of literacy and numeracy in the home.

The increased percentage of teacher absences identified in the study in contrast to pre-conflict absences suggests that **teachers are not available as often as they are needed to support learning and wellbeing**. This means that one of the key elements of the opportunity to learn is missing for many Syrian children.

Teachers appear to be familiar with lesson planning and use it to a fair extent. However, the quality of that lesson planning, and the value of working with peers to help improve them as well as reduce the burden individual teachers, could be improved.

Relatedly, **the limited availability of peer support networks for teachers, particularly in a context where limited resources and toxic stress are negatively impacting teacher morale and learning, is concerning**. This concern is especially relevant considering that **such models have been shown to be particularly appropriate in FCAS in supporting improved teacher quality, motivation, and thus children's learning**.

As noted earlier, this study did not undertake an in-depth review of teacher wellbeing, but **anecdotal evidence suggests that one element of poor teacher practice is poor teacher wellbeing, and thus teachers cannot be expected to be functioning to standard even if they were better supported**. While **many teachers have good intentions and positive perspectives** about their work, **they need practical assistance developing their abilities to foster more participatory and differentiated means of supporting literacy, numeracy, and improved wellbeing**. Furthermore, while many can model sound practices in support of child wellbeing when under observation, **behaviour change is needed to ensure they more frequently choose positive discipline over abusive alternatives**.

Teachers' **reliance on "chalk and talk" methods perpetuates poor learning outcomes because, in part, it fails to address the multiple intelligences of children**. It is also a difficult method to rely on when dealing with young and often energetic children in overcrowded classrooms. The limited availability of teaching and learning materials and overcrowded classrooms are challenges over which teachers have limited control, and can likely only be addressed sustainably through major infusions of funding.

The **limited ability of teachers to properly differentiate in their classrooms, as well as their apparent lack of willingness to continue to work with children who appear to be struggling significantly, shows a concerning lack of both knowledge and commitment to helping children persevere**. Introducing proper differentiation practices to teachers and ensuring that they are able to distinguish between discrimination and differentiation is possible.

Teacher openness to participatory methods, like their openness to but hesitance about peer lesson planning, could be leveraged to help them more efficaciously reach more children with greater ease. This openness is again a resource on which to build future support for teachers. At present, however, their hesitance (or perhaps their lack of skills) means that children who have different learning needs are not developing skills they could with more differentiated and experiential learning opportunities.

On a related topic, the prevalence of the use of summative assessment, and the misunderstanding of how to appropriately undertake formative assessment, means that **most teachers are not**

properly tracking the learning of their students, and thus are not able to identify issues in real time in order to address issues before they become problems.

In summary, *teachers in the study area appear to be under-skilled, under-supported, and under-resourced to provide appropriate and effective opportunities for conflict-affected children to learn and improve their wellbeing.* The *preponderance of teaching behaviours and practices cannot be characterised as conflict-sensitive.*

8.2 Correlative analysis: the nature of the learning environment and its surroundings and their impact on teaching, child learning, and child wellbeing

The study was also designed in recognition of how critical the nature of the learning environment is in affecting teaching, child learning and child wellbeing. This includes the profile of school policies and practices, as well as the nature of external environment (such as safety concerns and parental/caregiver involvement). The findings of the study suggest that *the environmental factors that can support conflict-sensitive teaching, child learning, and child wellbeing are, for the most part, not in place in Syria.*

One of the most critical findings from this study was how little time was actually allocated to learning in the schools assessed: the average primary school child in non-GoS-held areas of Syria is only getting **66% of the absolute minimum number of hours required for them to have the opportunity to learn.**

The rates of perceived inaccessibility of learning spaces confirm that *equitable access to education is limited in Syria.* Furthermore, the *limited screening of children for special needs also suggests that children who are able to access learning spaces are not getting the support they need within them. Limited to no peer networks and a lack of specialists trained in psychosocial support mean that in these spaces, children are left without support.* The study team recognises that the limited availability of specialist resources available to support children in schools, as well as the limited number of agencies available to accept referrals, is a significant part of this challenge.

While the evidence suggests that learning spaces are getting safer, *children and parents/caregivers still expressed notable levels of concern about their safety in such spaces, particularly in relation to airstrikes and teacher abuse.* Even if strong teacher practices and behaviours in support of wellbeing were in place, or if stronger accountability measures existed to address teacher abuse issues, *the environment in which children are going to school is not conducive to learning or wellbeing.* This finding is particularly concerning in light of the toxic stress that many education sector stakeholders have been under since the start of the conflict, as evidenced by study wellbeing levels and anecdotal evidence about teacher wellbeing.

The fact that most schools are not posting timetables and class rules, or involving children in the co-creation of such rules, also contributes to *an environment in which children might not feel senses of control and belonging in the school space, which are foundational elements of child wellbeing.*

The *limited availability of play spaces or recreational materials adds to the poor support for child wellbeing in the context, especially considering* the evidence of the value of play and recreation in improving psychosocial wellbeing in conflict-affected contexts,

Relatedly, the **limited use of school space to frequently display children works**, especially considering the positive impact of **children** that such displays can have, further shows that even **simple practices in support of child motivation and wellbeing are not being undertaken**.

The **limited use of teacher screening and the poor documentation of teacher codes of conduct, or accountability to them, is also concerning in relation to protecting and promoting children's wellbeing**. Furthermore, **the limited formalisation of complaints systems, as well as lack of awareness of such systems and their inaccessibility to children with special needs, is concerning**. These findings suggests that **there is little standard setting and accountability for appropriate practices in learning spaces, and thus numerous opportunities for improper teacher practice**.

Traditional uses of **short-term or "one-off" teacher trainings are not providing teachers with learning opportunities that are appropriate for adult learners**. Furthermore, **limited rates of supervision and little to no mentoring appear to contribute to poor levels of professional development support to teachers**, and especially fail those new to the profession and suffering from the effects of the conflict themselves.

The difference in opinions amongst teachers and parent/caregivers about the purpose and value of parental/caregiver involvement in learning and wellbeing practices is not surprising. **Poor relationships between the school and home on the learning and wellbeing continuum leave gaps in support for child learning and child wellbeing that could be easily filled with improved attitudes and cooperation**.

The **limited availability of specialist support services for children who have particularly challenging needs means that there are likely no alternatives for children who require additional support**. This means that equitable education is in limited supply in Syria.

The fact that most **children in Syria are using variations of the same core curriculum, which itself is relatively sound (considering the circumstances under which it was developed and revised), is a positive aspect of an otherwise fractured and under-resourced education sector**. Regardless of how the ZoC are allocated in the future, most teachers and most children will be "singing from the same song sheet" if and when reintegration of education services under one service provider occurs. Even if that does not happen, **these similar curricular standards facilitate easier mobility for children and teachers amongst most education systems in Syria**. For children, this reality enables easier reintegration into school systems, and for teachers it enables them to implement lesson planning for new cohorts without having to face widely different curricular standards and pacing.

The apparent prevalence of the use of teacher performance assessments is another strong element of the current education systems, enabling a practice that, when done appropriately, **can provide invaluable and timely opportunities to hold teachers accountable to standards and to develop professional development strategies for them**. In line with the research around motivation, such practices can contribute to senses of autonomy, mastery, and purpose, which are critical to people working in cognitive (rather than manual) labour markets (Ariely, Gneezy, Loewenstein, & Mazar, 2005; Pink, 2011).

In summary, **the nature of the learning environment, influenced by the policies and practices that help to frame it and the chronic instability in which education sector stakeholders find themselves, combined with poor partnership between teachers and administrators in the**

school and parents/caregivers in the home and community, contribute to an environment that is not conducive to child learning or to improving child wellbeing.

8.3 Practice against standards

The evidence about the type of education that children need in FCAS is clear. According to the literature, ***safe, flexible, and community-based learning opportunities, social and emotional learning support, literacy and numeracy skill development, support for teacher professional and wellbeing, and partnership between schools and homes in support of learning and wellbeing are amongst the most important activities to provide in such contexts.***

This study's findings suggest that very few elements of these standards for effective support to learning and wellbeing for children in FCAS are in place in Syria.

8.3.1 Safe, flexible, and community-based learning opportunities

The study found that ***when children lived near their schools, they felt safer***, and when they had longer distances to travel, they expressed concerns for their safety. Teacher respondents expressed the same concern. Adult respondents suggested that they were largely open to the idea of better localisation of learning spaces, though ***parents/caregivers, and perhaps some (I)NGO representatives, appeared to need further convincing of the evidence that supports its efficacy.*** Overall, while there appear to be some cases in Syria in which schools are better localised in communities, this does not appear to happen by design.

Despite the availability of and sound use by many in the (I)NGO sector of the Self-Learning Programmes (SLP), other ***forms of ALP do not appear to be prevalent or well understood in Syria.*** This is particularly concerning considering that ***it is exactly in these types of contexts that ALP are most appropriate.***

While improving, ***the safety of learning spaces is still a concern.*** This is results of: i) poor practices inside the school, such as teacher abuse and limited accountability mechanisms to mitigate it; ii) bullying amongst children themselves; and ii) the ongoing conflict in the area.

8.3.2 Social and emotional learning support

The very fact that ***one of the greatest concerns mentioned by children was teacher abuse***, both in its physical and verbal forms, highlights a critical barrier to the wellbeing of children. Once teachers are no longer a key source of wellbeing issues for children, they might be better placed to begin contributing to the even more technically finite work of social and emotional skill development. At present, ***there are few consistent behaviours in support of either wellbeing or social and emotional learning in Syrian schools.***

8.3.3 Literacy and numeracy skill development

Broadly, ***teachers appear to know the types of pedagogical practises that can positively affect literacy and numeracy acquisition.*** Roughly 60-75% of teachers were able to model these types of practices under observation. However, ***the effectiveness of the delivery of opportunities to build reading and maths skills appears to be limited.***

There are a number of likely factors that influence these limitations. The first is the ***limited number of hours allocated to learning***, at 66% of the minimal time required according to the Opportunity to Learn index. The second is the ***limited supplemental teaching and learning materials available***

in classrooms. The third is the **poor teacher practices in relation to differentiation, formative assessment, and experiential learning.** The fourth is **the barrier that poor child wellbeing can present in the face of even the most effective teaching practices.** Finally, the fifth is **the limited engagement of parents/caregivers in support of children’s learning.**

8.3.4 Support for teacher professional and wellbeing

While **there appear to be somewhat frequent opportunities for teachers to train** and develop new skills, and while **the topics of these trainings seem appropriate, there appears to be a disconnect both in the methods of training used for adult learners as well as the content of the trainings.** This statement is supported by anecdotal evidence suggesting that **teachers themselves do not feel they are benefiting from these trainings,** as well as observations of their practices in the classrooms. It is further supported by comments that **supervision, mentoring, and/or coaching is limited to non-existent for teachers.** While the study was not able to look in-depth at teacher wellbeing, proxy indicators and qualitative data suggests that **teacher wellbeing and morale is low and that formal support in the education system for their psychosocial wellbeing is non-existent.**

8.4 Practice in light of GoS MoE standards

It is likely that the GoS will continue to recover increasing numbers of schools as it expands its ZoC. While this study was limited due to the team’s inability to collect primary data within the GoS’ ZoC, the data that it was able to secure is important to consider.

This study finds that **the environments for teaching and learning in GoS-held and non-GoS-held spaces might not be as disparate as expected.** References from parties familiar with schooling in GoS spaces noted issues with overcrowding and wellbeing, as did those in non-GoS-held areas.

The curriculum being used across these spaces is largely the same, though notably the most political aspects of the curricula, which have to do with history and concepts of civic duty and nationalism, are quite different. However, the fundamental subjects are largely the same. Due to the increased chances of their involvement with (I)NGOs, one might have expected teachers in non-GoS-held areas to have been exposed to more teacher training that could elevate their skills in child-centred and experiential pedagogical practices. While it is possible they have been trained in such topics, the findings suggest that **teachers in non-GoS-held areas are not performing well in the classroom to advance practices such as positive discipline, formative assessment, and differentiation.** Given to their increased likelihood of exposure to trainings from (I)NGO, one might have thought that they may have a slight advantage in skill development on these topics compared to their GoS colleagues, there does not appear to be much of one.

A further consideration must be made for the possibility that rote¹⁰⁷ styles of education, more common in GoS classrooms and in Syria historically, which can help foster memorisation rather than critical thinking, might remain the *modus operandi* in GoS schools going forward. Without going into much detail, it is the very nature of the “banking” style of education that educational philosophers such as Dewey, Piaget, Freire, and Montessori railed against as tools for oppression.

¹⁰⁷ Also called the “banking” style of education in which teachers attempt to “deposit” information into the minds of children.

8.5 Implications for other FCAS contexts

The *methodologies used to carry out the study, and in particular the theoretical, ethical, and innovative operational framing of them, could be reviewed for contextualisation in other FCAS*. This study proved that even in areas affected both by chronic conflict as well as ongoing instability, *it is possible to gather ethically sound, nearly representative data at the most granular level with respect to difficult to measure topics, such as attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours in the classroom*.

Unfortunately, there do not appear to be innovative practices or consistent modelling of known best practices in the EICC field to which the study can point. However, the largely universally valued GoS curriculum has been a potential benefit to the sector. *Its use, with minor variations, across ZoC is likely to be a benefit to sector stakeholders*, as was a similar case in Côte d'Ivoire, discussed by Chelpi-Den Hamer in 2007. In that case, actors not in support of the official government "thinned" the government curriculum to ensure its appropriateness to their sociopolitical requirements, but kept the academic content. This approach enabled *a pathway for children in non-government-controlled schools to follow toward reintegration and certification in formal learning spaces*. A similar case in Syria is feasible, though the safety of children schooled in non-GoS-held ZoC being accepted in GoS learning spaces is another topic of concern.

9 Recommendations

DFID's 2018 education strategy states clearly: "Our top priority will be raising the bar on teaching quality" (DFID, 2018). DFID's decision to focus its education work on improving support to teachers is based on a strong evidence base, discussed to some extent in this report, on the exponential returns the education sector reaps when teachers are skilled, motivated, supported, and well.

Many assessments of education sector needs in Syria rightfully identify the more policy level changes that affect the system from the top down. These needs are still significant in Syria and should be considered. They include important investment in areas such as education sector governance, which often translates to capacity building on policy development, education finance and budgeting, and infrastructure efforts. This study identified a few issues that can be addressed sustainably only through major macro-level investments, such as improving infrastructure so that more children can be in school and increasing the teacher cohort so that the children to teacher ratio is improved. The ACU's 2018 report thoughtfully called for improved investments in fuel, books, equipment, stationary, maintenance, and teacher salaries. These are both needed and valuable.

This study, however, was designed to focus on the most granular aspects of the education system that support teacher practice, child learning, and child wellbeing. It also builds on the evidence that says improving teacher quality is one of, if not the most important, investment that can be made in education.

The study team identified very specific areas for proposed investment, detailed below, focussed at the "micro"-level. The team purposefully chose to not differentiate recommendations by duty bearers, such as researchers, donors, policy makers, and implementors. Instead, it suggests that the proposed investments can only be truly actualised when all four stakeholder types work together with end users and leverage their unique positions, perspectives, and resources to improve EICC.

The recommendations are based on solid evidence from the literature about what works in improving learning; namely, improving teacher quality. Psachropolous, a well-respected educational economist,

made strong arguments for investing in teacher quality in his 2006 piece *The value of investment in education: Theory, evidence, and policy*. Burde (2015) identified the importance of investing in teacher training in particular in her piece *What works to promote children's educational access, quality of learning, and wellbeing in conflict-affected contexts*. Burns and Lawrie (2015) edited a piece that identified a series of thoughtful recommendations about how to best support teacher professional development in areas affected by crisis in *Where It's Needed Most: Quality Professional Development for All Teachers*. Recommendations included creating opportunities for peer-to-peer collaboration, ongoing support to teachers, and the creation of standards for teacher professional development. Frisoli (2013) explored the effectiveness of teacher learning circles (forms of peer-to-peer learning) in conflict-affected Democratic Republic of the Congo in supporting improved teacher motivation and skill development. These examples of research framed the study and heavily influence the recommendations.

The following suggestions relate to shifts that can be made in resource allocation with existing envelopes of funding, earmarking more resources for these investment areas and elevating accountability for practices in support thereof. This suggestion is made based on the existence of sound capacity building content that is appropriate for FCAS and likely already in Arabic. These recommendations are specific to Syria but are relevant to many FCAS.

In non-GoS-held areas of Syria, these investments appear to be of greatest need in Aleppo. Teachers in this governorate consistently underperformed in contrast to their colleagues in Idleb and Ar-Raqqa where socio-cultural norms appear to facilitate more equitable teaching and learning.

9.1 Invest in teacher professional development

9.1.1 Insist on continuous methods of in-service teacher professional development:

There is a strong evidence base for the efficacy of this method and its appropriateness for adult learners. It translates into better sustained learning, is often more accessible for teachers, and is usually more cost effective. Ensure that peer learning networks, including teacher learning circles, are a part of these systems.

9.1.2 Help male teachers be better supported.

The findings suggest that male teachers appear to have higher self-perceived levels of teaching skills than they have abilities to delivery sound teaching. Under observation, they consistently underperformed in comparison to their female colleagues, with a few minor exceptions.

9.1.3 Focus on the following knowledge building topics for teacher professional development:

- Differentiation: Teachers proved that they are not able to identify, use different teaching methods that support multiple intelligences, or help include children with special needs. They also suggested that they do not have a willingness to continue supporting children who are struggling.
- Relatedly, inclusive education and practices that support equity in the classroom, with a particular focus on particularly marginalised children like those who are displaced.
- Support for the development of numeracy skills.
- Skill building for teaching reading.

- Positive discipline: Strengthen teacher skill building on how to manage discipline challenges without resorting to verbal or physical abuse.
- Better prepare teachers for the challenges they face both at the start of the year and with the introduction of newly displaced children into the classroom.
- The effective use of formative assessment.

9.1.4 Focus on the following attitudinal and behaviour change-related topics for teacher professional development:

- The positive effects of supportive, nurturing, and motivational communication styles and the negative effects of abuse on children as they develop.
- The value of inclusive education, alongside principles of the rights of all children to education.
- The positive impacts of involving parents/caregivers as partners in the supporting the learning and wellbeing of children.
- Help teachers leverage their seemingly strong senses of self-efficacy about their teaching practices, while also highlighting the areas for skill building and practice growth that require their focus (detailed in section 3 above).

9.2 Invest in helping school administrators and parents create better learning and wellbeing environments for children

9.2.1 With both cohorts, focus on supporting the better integration of internally displaced populations:

This effort will require careful nuance, considering that modern patterns of displacement find most displaced persons integrated geographically with local communities. Time and again, respondents in this study noted how marginalised these populations were, and how much greater their support needs were. A number of respondents suggested the value of integration programmes that could facilitate behaviour change amongst both displaced and local populations to help them better live and learn together.

9.2.2 Focus on the following knowledge building topics with school administrators:

- How to establish Parent Teacher Associations and School Management Committees to help reduce the burden on their own workloads and facilitate improved community and parental/caregiver investment in learning.
- Establish Teacher Learning Circles to bring together teachers with varying skill profiles and levels to help each other with the practical and emotional workloads they bear.
- Establishing teacher wellbeing systems, inclusive of:
 - periodic performance assessments.
 - peer mentoring networks.

9.2.3 *Support parents/caregivers to become more active as partners in their children's learning and wellbeing:*

- On formative assessment, prepare parents/caregivers to transition from infrequent formal updates on child progress to frequent informal updates, which might highlight concerns that need to be addressed in partnership between teacher and parent/caregiver.
- Help parent/caregiver understand the positive correlations between learning and wellbeing, and vice versa.
- Introduce simple, practical tasks that parents/caregivers can do, both in the home, and through better engagement in the learning space, that even lower literacy parents/caregivers and those with limited time can do.

9.3 Shift funding and programming priorities, by investing in:

9.3.1 *Tools that can help the EICC community better assess the quality of, and thus improve investments in post-primary education, focusing first on secondary education.*

9.3.2 *Better funding pipelines and monitoring systems for integrated programming:*

Integrated programming can have a myriad of improved impacts on beneficiaries. Of particular value, are more holistic programmes that address the demand side of investment in education (namely the attitudinal and financial investments that parents/caregivers make in education), in addition to the more commonly addressed supply side investments (at the school level). Livelihoods and education programmes in contexts of stabilising conflict can be powerful.

9.3.3 *Higher amounts of funding per child, in line with UNRWA's investment levels, to improve learning outcomes through the types of activities that they espouse.*

These activities include continuous professional development for teachers, better teacher remuneration, integrated learning and wellbeing activities, and an improved focus on formative assessment. These costly investments pay off, as evidenced by their own indicators and as linked to the many arguments from educational economists about investing at the earliest levels of education and in teacher quality.

9.3.4 *Programme design methodologies that better involve teachers, school administrators, and education authorities:*

The evidence from this study suggests that (I)NGO representatives and their education sector colleagues are not necessarily working in a collaborative manner.

9.3.5 *Further studies that support teacher development:*

- Review teacher wellbeing levels and needs, and their correlation to learning and wellbeing outcomes amongst children.
- Assess teacher knowledge rather than only use observations of and opinions about teacher knowledge
- Better rapidly engage and support (potential) educators/teachers given the lack of a formal teacher education/professional development process in the existing systems.
- The effectiveness of teacher professional development (comparing what people are trained on and how that is transferred to classroom practice).

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11 Annexes

[Terms of Reference](#)

[Inception Report](#)

[Mid-year Report](#)