



Time to Teach

Teacher attendance and time on task
in primary schools

The Gambia

Spogmai Akseer

October 2021

UNICEF OFFICE OF RESEARCH – INNOCENTI

The Office of Research – Innocenti is UNICEF’s dedicated research centre. It undertakes research on emerging or current issues in order to inform the strategic direction, policies and programmes of UNICEF and its partners, shape global debates on child rights and development, and inform the global research and policy agenda for all children, and particularly for the most vulnerable.

Office of Research – Innocenti publications are contributions to a global debate on children and may not necessarily reflect UNICEF policies or approaches.

The Office of Research – Innocenti receives financial support from the Government of Italy, while funding for specific projects is also provided by other governments, international institutions and private sources, including UNICEF National Committees.

The findings, interpretations and conclusions expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of UNICEF.

This paper has been peer reviewed both externally and within UNICEF.

The text has not been edited to official publications standards and UNICEF accepts no responsibility for errors.

Extracts from this publication may be freely reproduced with due acknowledgement. Requests to utilize larger portions or the full publication should be addressed to the Communications Unit at: Florence@unicef.org.

Any part of this publication may be freely reproduced if accompanied by the following citation: S. Akseer, *Time to Teach. Teacher attendance and time on task in primary schools in The Gambia*. UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti, Florence, 2021.

Correspondence should be addressed to:

UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti
Via degli Alfani, 58
50121 Florence, Italy

Tel: (+39) 055 20 330

Fax: (+39) 055 2033 220

florence@unicef.org

www.unicef-irc.org

twitter: @UNICEFInnocenti

facebook.com/UnicefInnocenti

© 2021 United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF)

Cover photo: ©UNICEF/UNI269311/Hövener

Editorial production: Sara Marchant, Dali Mwangore, UNICEF Innocenti

Graphic design: Small World Stories

Time to Teach

Teacher attendance and time on task
in primary schools in The Gambia

Spogmai Akseer

October 2021

Acknowledgements

This report was produced by a team of researchers at the UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti. The study was managed by Matt Brossard, coordinated by Despina Karamperidou and Cristine (Yue) Han, and written by Spogmai Akseer. Ximena Jativa supported the analysis of survey data. Stefania Vindrola, Silvia Peirolo, Matilde Rocca provided exceptional research assistance, and Lara Stefanizzi and Amparo Barrera offered invaluable administrative support to the team.

The research team would like to acknowledge the guidance of Gunilla Olsson (Director, UNICEF Office of Research), Priscilla Idele (Deputy Director, UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti) and the many UNICEF colleagues who helped with the planning and drafting process. The team is indebted to Cecilia Baldeh, Haleinta Bara Traore, Haritz Goya Lujambio (UNICEF WCARO), Maxime Germaine, Nuha Jatta and Maimuna Jaiteh (UNICEF The Gambia) for their excellent comments and for facilitating in-country training and data collection.

Invaluable editorial and communications support was provided by Dale Rutstein, Sarah Marchant, Celine Little, Cristina Pizzolato, Angie Lee and Dali Mwagore (all UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti).

Specific thanks go to The Gambia Chapter of the Educational Research Network for West and Central Africa, who helped pilot and pre-test the Time to Teach instruments and headed data collection in multiple regions, districts, and primary schools in The Gambia. The Innocenti team also thanks members of the National Research Steering Group, including The Gambian Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education and UNICEF's The Gambia Country Office, who provided direction, critical advice, and vital insights during the many stages of the project.

The research team is indebted to the 320 study participants (teachers, head teachers, pupils, community representatives, national officials, and subnational education officers) who generously shared their time, experience and materials with this project.

Contents

Acknowledgements	5
Abbreviations	8
Executive summary	9
Key findings	10
Section 1: Introduction	12
1.1. Context	12
1.2. Research objectives	13
1.3. Definitions, data, and methods	13
Section 2: Key findings	16
How frequently are teachers absent? A snapshot of the survey data on teacher absenteeism	16
2.1. National factors associated with teacher attendance	20
2.1.1 Provision of salaries and benefits	20
2.1.2 In-service teacher training	20
2.1.3 Language of instruction and posting requirements	21
2.2. Subnational factors associated with teacher attendance	22
2.2.1 Teacher monitoring	22
2.2.2 Lack of resources and capacity	23
2.2.3 Lack of sanctioning authority	23
2.3. Community factors associated with teacher attendance	24
2.3.1 Infrastructure	24
2.3.2 Climatic conditions	24
2.3.3 Parental engagement	25
2.4. School factors associated with teacher attendance	25
2.4.1 Workload	25
2.4.2 School leadership	26
2.4.3 School resources	27
2.5. Teacher factors associated with teacher attendance	27
2.5.1 Health	27
2.5.2 Family and social responsibilities	28
2.5.3 Content knowledge and classroom management skills	29

Section 3: Strengthening teacher attendance	30
3.1. Enhance access to receiving salary and benefits	30
3.2. Improve teachers' living circumstances	30
3.3. Provide training and support to teachers during non-teaching hours	31
3.4. Clarify roles and responsibilities of teachers and strengthen monitoring	31
Annexes	32
Annex 1: Primary education trends and statistics in The Gambia	32
Annex 2: Definition and explanatory framework	35
References	37

Abbreviations

ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EFA	Education for All
ERNWACA	Educational Research Network for West and Central Africa
FGD	Focus group discussion
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GTUCCU	Gambia Teachers Union Cooperative Credit Union
HML	Health Media Lab
IDI	In-depth interview
ICT	Information, communication and technology
MoBSE	Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education
MoFEA	Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs
MoH&SW	Ministry of Health and Social Work
MoTWI	Ministry of Transport, Works and Infrastructure
PTA	Parent–Teacher Association
RED	Regional education directorate
SGBs	School governing bodies
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SMC	School management committee
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
TLM	Teaching and learning materials
TTT	Time to Teach
WCAR	West and Central African Region

Executive summary

In many low- and middle-income countries, teacher absenteeism is an important barrier to achieving learning outcomes, with teacher school absence rates often ranging from 3 to 27 per cent (Guerrero, et al., 2012). In The Gambia, existing evidence suggests that teacher absenteeism has been consistently challenging as the country continues to respond to rapid expansions in primary school enrolment. This rapid enrolment has put substantial pressure on the education system's ability to recruit, train and retain teachers. It is estimated that up to 10 per cent of teaching time is lost due to teacher absenteeism.¹ This takes further time away from the already limited 734 hours of teaching time (compared with international standards of 880 hours) that The Gambia dedicates to teaching. In addition, evaluation by the Whole School Development and School Grant Programme found that teacher absenteeism varied across different regions, ranging from 12 per cent to 30 per cent, highlighting that similar to other countries in the West and Central African Region absenteeism is also a barrier to achieving required learning outcomes in The Gambia (Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, 2009).

Before the COVID-19 outbreak, monitoring teachers' instruction time and reducing teacher absenteeism were considered effective measures to promote learning attainment (World Bank, 2020). The education system in The Gambia had started to show improvements before the pandemic; however, the challenges this major sanitary and economic crisis has imposed on children's learning makes teacher attendance even more relevant today. The Time to Teach study seeks to support the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (MoBSE) in its efforts to strengthen the role of teachers in schools to increase their time on task. Its primary objective is to identify factors affecting the various dimensions of **primary school teacher attendance** and to use this evidence to inform the design and implementation of teacher policies. Specifically, the study looks at four distinct dimensions of teacher attendance: (1) being in school; (2) being punctual (i.e., not arriving late/leaving early); (3) being in the classroom (while in school); and (4) spending sufficient time on task (while in the classroom). It also identifies factors associated with teacher absenteeism at five different levels of the education system: national, subnational, community, school, and teacher.

Time to Teach is a mixed methods project employing qualitative and quantitative research tools. The study draws from national, system-wide, qualitative data collections and school observations, and a quantitative survey with 60 teachers working in 20 purposely selected primary schools. Data was collected in 2019, before the start of COVID-19. However, the findings of this report have relevant implications for current recovery measures and post-pandemic efforts towards improving The Gambia's education system.

¹ This does not include additional closures due to holidays, unplanned school closures, or additional forms of absence, including coming late, being absent from the classroom, or limited time on task.

Key findings

How frequently are teachers absent?

- Fourteen per cent of teachers report **absence from school** at least once a week, with a higher rate of occurrence in rural schools (19 per cent) than in urban schools (11 per cent).²
- Similar trends are evident for **late arrival/early departure** from school. More teachers in rural schools (12 per cent) report arriving late/leaving early from school once a week than teachers in urban schools (7 per cent).
- Ten per cent of teachers report weekly **classroom absence** while in school, with higher occurrences in urban schools (13 per cent) than in rural schools (8 per cent).
- Ten per cent of teachers report **limited time on task** at least once a week, with higher occurrences in rural schools (14 per cent) than in urban schools (6 per cent).
- Gender variations are not statistically significant except **in school absence**, as 24 per cent of female teachers reported weekly absence, compared with 6 per cent of male teachers.³

What are the main factors associated with teacher absenteeism?

- National-level determinants of teacher absenteeism include challenges in receiving pay and other benefits (due to delays, errors in payslips, or access to banks during non-teaching times), causing school and classroom absence as well as late arrivals. Training opportunities are needed, but these are mostly scheduled during school hours, affecting school and classroom attendance. Finally, teachers struggle to implement national directives because they are deployed late and lack language skills, affecting their time on task.
- Regional and sector-level factors such as inconsistent feedback and/or inadequate monitoring of schools and teachers, especially at rural schools, result in school absence and late arrivals. Head teachers and school inspectors also point to inadequate training and limited sanctioning authority of cluster monitors as additional barriers to effective school inspections.
- At the community level, lack of transport is a challenge for some teachers, especially those who live further away, causing them to be late or absent from school. **Heavy rains** also affect teacher presence in the school and classroom, their punctuality, and their time on task. Moreover, poverty and lack of parental engagement make it difficult for teachers to remain on task as they often need to repeat lessons.
- At the school level, teachers are engaged significantly in non-teaching tasks (administrative support to the school, attending to school visitors, unplanned meetings with the head teacher), causing them to be absent from the classroom. Similarly, head teachers do not appear to provide adequate monitoring of teacher attendance, resulting in higher instances of classroom absence and limited time on task. Findings also indicate the need for improving classroom infrastructure and providing teachers with adequate teaching and learning materials, both of which affect teachers' time on task and presence in the classroom.
- Teacher health, family, and social responsibilities also affect school attendance and timely arrivals or departures, especially for female teachers. In addition, teachers appear to struggle with using their instructional time effectively due to limited subject knowledge and lack of time and classroom management training.

2 The rural/urban difference in school absence is not statistically significant. The research team recognizes the small size of the Time to Teach survey sample. For this reason, all findings reported here have been thoroughly triangulated through qualitative interviews and focus group discussions with key education stakeholders.

3 The female/male difference in school absence is statistically significant ($p < 0.10$).

What are the potential recommendations for policy?

Findings point to salary, teachers' health and transportation, monitoring, and teacher engagement in non-teaching activities as key reasons hindering teachers' time on task. In response, MoBSE should consider the following measures:

- **Strengthen mechanisms for dispersing teachers' salary and non-salary benefits:** This entails supporting The Gambia Teachers' Union Cooperative Credit Union and coordinating with the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs to ensure that teachers can collect their pay during non-teaching hours. Closer collaboration with regional educational directors (RED) and the payroll department can also help avoid errors and delays in payments.
- **Improve teachers' access to health facilities and transportation:** Teachers should be included in school-based healthcare programmes similar to those provided to pupils. Health measures are especially relevant in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, considering the increased vulnerability of teachers as schools re-open. Transportation should be made more accessible and affordable. However, such measures may require closer cross-sectoral cooperation and collaboration between MoBSE and the Ministry of Health and Social Work.
- **Strengthen collaboration between head teachers and cluster monitors:** This will help to provide in-service training opportunities that meet school needs and do not conflict with teachers' instruction time. Since this may require additional resources in the long-term, the MoBSE's Directorate of Planning could consider expanding its current multi-grade and multi-subject training, thus increasing teaching versatility in the short-term, especially at schools with limited staff. The MoBSE should also consider developing a national policy that prioritizes teaching time so that local training initiatives are offered during non-teaching hours and in a standardized manner. Promoting the inclusion of online training initiatives in which teachers can participate remotely according to their teaching schedules is another viable alternative. Recent investments in distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic represent an opportunity that should not be missed.
- **Ensure teachers are not engaged in non-teaching tasks during scheduled lessons:** It is important to clarify roles and expectations of all educational staff in the proposed Teacher Education Policy Framework to standardize expectations and avoid overlap or confusion. The MoBSE may also need to expand the monitoring authority of school managers and inspectors so that teacher attendance standards can be implemented effectively at the school level. If future school closures are necessitated due to COVID-19, learning continuity needs to be ensured. Gathering evidence about teacher–student remote interactions directly from parents and/or students (via telephone or video calls) could help encourage teachers to remain on task.

Section 1: Introduction

1.1. Context

Teacher absenteeism wastes valuable financial resources, short-changes young pupils and is one of the most cumbersome obstacles on the path towards universal learning in developing countries. Studies from across the developing world have found national averages of teacher absenteeism ranging from 3 to 27 per cent (Banerjee, et al., 2012; Bennell and Akyeampong, 2007; Chaudhury, et al., 2006; Alcázar, et al., 2006). These national averages conceal even higher rates of absenteeism within countries and large variations in educational opportunities and outcomes, since educators tend to be more frequently absent in poorer and more remote communities and schools (Glewwe, Ilias and Kremer, 2010; Das, et al., 2007; Reimers, 1993).

Teacher absenteeism is particularly prevalent in sub-Saharan Africa. The Service Delivery Indicators study by The World Bank found that between 15 and 45 per cent of all primary school teachers in seven sub-Saharan African countries⁴ were absent from school, and between 23 and 57 per cent were absent from class, on any given day (Bold, et al., 2017). The same study estimated that on average, the loss of teaching hours due to teacher absenteeism corresponded to a waste of approximately 46 cents for every dollar invested in education, equivalent to an annual wastage of between 1 and 3 per cent of GDP (Filmer, D, 2015). Afrobarometer data⁵ drawn from 36 African countries also shows that teacher absenteeism contributes to unequal education outcomes, confirming a strong association between high levels of teacher absenteeism and the presence of marginalized and vulnerable groups.

In The Gambia, teacher attendance is a vital issue facing the education sector, despite recent gains in primary education that include higher completion rates in the West and Central African Region (WCAR) and the allocation of more funds for education than the ECOWAS subregional average (*see Annex 1*).⁶ While no recent studies capture teacher practices around attendance in the country, previous research suggests that this phenomenon is present across all regions (The Republic of The Gambia, 2006 and 2008). Before the outbreak of COVID-19, it was estimated that up to 10 per cent of teaching time was lost due to teacher absenteeism,⁷ and that attendance varied across regions, from 12 per cent to 30 per cent (Republic of The Gambia, 2008). Moreover, according to the 2011 Country Status Report for The Gambia, 32 per cent of the teachers reported missing at least one day of class during the previous week (Blimpo, Evans and Lahire, 2015). These trends suggest that further time is taken from the already limited 734 hours of teaching time (20 per cent lower than the internationally recommended standard of 880 hours) that The Gambia dedicates to teaching (World Bank, 2011).

COVID-19 has imposed acute challenges for the education system in The Gambia. Schools were closed for nearly half of the 2019–2020 academic year to prevent the risk of contracting and transmitting the virus among students and staff. An alternative education response was implemented by the MoBSE using radio and television as mediums for learning, as well as social media to facilitate the interaction between teachers, students and parents (Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, 2020). The pandemic has shown the lack of preparedness of the education system to effectively implement its remote learning strategy and to support educators (Dreseen, et al., 2020). Primary school teachers in The Gambia have received limited training in delivering education using distance learning platforms (UNESCO/UNICEF/World Bank, 2020). Also, connectivity and hardware challenges have prevented effective monitoring of teachers' time on task.

Box 1 summarizes studies exploring the magnitude of and factors driving teacher absenteeism in The Gambia. Findings suggest that while teacher absenteeism is recognized as a major impediment to achieving positive learning outcomes, the focus is mainly on **school absence**. Additional forms of absenteeism that limit teachers' time on task, such as late arrival or early departure from schools, absence from the classroom while being at school, and shortening instructional time while in the classroom, are not carefully considered in the literature.

4 Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda.

5 www.afrobarometer.org/

6 *See Annex 1* for a detailed overview of primary education trends, structure, and governance in The Gambia.

7 This does not include additional closures due to holidays, unplanned school closures, or additional forms of absence, including coming late, being absent from the classroom or limited time on task.

The Time to Teach study focuses explicitly on these variations and recognizes determinants of teacher absence as located and interconnected across the education system.

Box 1. Existing literature regarding teacher absenteeism in The Gambia

Findings from a 2010 study (Roberts-Holmes, 2010) suggest that teachers' motivation in The Gambia is low due to work overload, lack of teaching and learning materials and, overall, inadequate working conditions affecting rural areas especially; all these are factors the study describes as contributing to teacher absenteeism. This study is in line with findings from earlier policy research conducted by Voluntary Services Overseas (2007) which found that teachers' motivation was hindered by existing payment methods dispersed through banks that teachers could not access easily and hence, were required to travel during school hours to collect their pay. The same study also found teachers felt de-motivated due to inadequate or unfair provision of promotions and poor recognition of teachers' status in society.

In 2011, the government of The Gambia, in collaboration with The World Bank and UNESCO/BREDA, published a report on the status of the education sector, specifically addressing the magnitude of teacher absenteeism. Findings pointed to improved management practices at schools (including attendance monitoring by head teachers and school visits by cluster monitors) as a key factor in reducing teacher absenteeism (The World Bank, 2011).

Likewise, a 2015 report (Blimp, Evans and Lahire, 2015) assessing the impact of a large-scale programme seeking to empower local communities in school management, found that comprehensive school management training to head teachers, teachers, and community representatives in primary schools resulted in a 23 per cent reduction in teacher absenteeism. However, the study also found that this did not have any impact on pupil test scores, and pointed to adult literacy, school infrastructure and social-economic development in the community as potential factors.

1.2. Research objectives

The principal objective of the Time to Teach study is to generate and collate empirical evidence on the various types and determinants of primary school teacher absenteeism in The Gambia and to provide potential recommendations for improving teacher attendance rates.

More specifically, the study aims to:

- Understand the various forms of primary school teacher absenteeism and assess their prevalence in different regions, types of schools (e.g., public/private), and settings (e.g., rural/urban);
- Explore absenteeism from a systems perspective and identify factors at different levels of the education system that affect teacher attendance;
- Identify promising practices and provide actionable policy recommendations on increasing teachers' time on task as a means of improving learners' academic performance.

1.3. Definitions, data, and methods

The Time to Teach study moves beyond the conventional definition of teacher attendance – that of being present at school – to include other more subtle forms of teacher attendance such as being punctual, being in the classroom (while in school), and teaching when in the classroom (*see Annex 2*). While there are many valid reasons for a teacher to be absent, the study does not distinguish between authorized and unauthorized absence as its goal is to capture the total loss of time on task (during the school year), irrespective of the validity of teacher absence.

In addition, the study takes a systems approach toward explaining teacher absenteeism and therefore examines the relevance of factors at all levels of the education system, including the national, subnational, community, school, and teacher levels (see Annex 2).

As a mixed methods study, Time to Teach employed qualitative and quantitative research tools. In total, 20 primary schools in The Gambia were purposively selected based on the following three criteria: **geography** (region and district), **setting** (rural and urban), and **governance** (government, non-government and grant-aided) (see Table 1).⁸

Table 1: School type and number of participants

Region and school type	Head teachers	Teachers	Community leaders	Student focus groups	Regional directors	Cluster monitors
Region 1: Banjul and KMC						
Urban/private	2	6	2	2 x 14	1	3
Urban/grant-aided	1	3	1	1 x 7		
Urban/public	1	3	1	1 x 7		
Region 2: Brikama						
Urban/grant-aided	1	3	1	1 x 7	1	0
Rural/public	1	3	1	1 x 7		
Rural/private	1	3	1	1 x 7		
Urban/private	1	3	1	1 x 7		
Region 3: Kerewan						
Rural/public	2	6	2	2 x 14	1	1
Urban/public	1	3	1	1 x 7		
Region 4: Mansa Konko						
Rural/public	2	6	2	2 x 14	1	1
Urban/public	1	3	1	1 x 7		
Region 5: Janjambureh						
Rural/public	2	6	2	2 x 14	1	2
Urban/public	1	3	1	1 x 7		
Region 6: Basse						
Rural/public	2	6	2	2 x 14	1	2
Urban/private	1	3	1	1 x 7		
Participant total	20	60	20	140	6	9

Qualitative data was collected through approximately 200 semi-structured interviews with key education stakeholders (Ministry of Education officials, subnational education officers, community representatives, head teachers, and teachers); 20 focus group discussions with approximately 140 students; and 20 structured school observations (see Table 2).⁹ Student respondents were selected on the basis of their age and gender, and interviewed teachers on the basis of their age, gender, years of experience, and education.

Quantitative data were collected through a census approach, whereby all teachers present at selected schools during field visits were required to complete a close-ended survey. Self-reported data were received from 60 teachers. These data were drawn from schools selected for qualitative data collection and are therefore a snapshot of the 20 schools selected across the region rather than representative of the situation across all schools in The Gambia.

⁸ These schools were selected from a pool of 737 lower basic and basic cycle schools in the country using random sampling techniques.

⁹ A structured observation tool was used to record enumerators' observations on teacher absence, teacher student interactions, and teacher working relations during visits to selected schools.

In total, 260 individuals participated in the study.¹⁰

Table 2: Number of study participants in The Gambia

Respondent type and data collection method	Number of respondents
Head teachers (in-depth interviews – IDIs)	20
Teachers (IDIs and pen-and-paper survey)	60
Pupils (FGDs)	140
Community representatives (IDIs)	20
Regional education directors (IDIs)	6
Cluster monitors (IDIs)	9
National-level education leaders (IDIs)	5
Structured school observations ¹¹	20
Total number of respondents	260

Data collection, storage, and management were in line with international best practices and the UNICEF Procedure on Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation and Data Collection and Analysis (*see Box 2*).

Thematic content analysis was employed to code and analyse approximately 3,000 pages of transcribed interviews and focus group discussions. The Stata software package was used for the descriptive analysis of survey data.

Box 2. A brief note on research ethics

The UNICEF Office of Research-Innocenti applied for ethical clearance for the TTT study to the Health Media Lab (HML) and to the Institutional Review Board of the Office for Human Research Protections in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, both located in Washington, D.C. Ethical clearance was granted in July 2018.

Study implementation was preceded by extensive consultation with MoBSE and key education stakeholders on research tool design, sampling, and instrument administration. Tools were also shared with the Educational Research Network for West and Central Africa (ERNWACA) for review and feedback and were refined accordingly.

All contracted partners were extensively trained in research ethics and abided by the UNICEF Procedure on Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation and Data Collection and Analysis.

10 Like all studies relying on self-reported data, Time to Teach is not free of methodological limitations. Response bias may have been a challenge as absenteeism is generally a taboo subject. Therefore, it is unclear how truthfully teachers responded to questions around the nature and frequency of their absence, even though the principles of anonymity and confidentiality were highlighted during data collection. Selection bias may also have been an issue, as the teacher survey was administered only to teachers present at school on the day of the school visit. This means that some of the frequently absent teachers may not have been surveyed. To pre-empt this problem, all school visits were announced, and teachers were informed about them well in advance. Finally, the research team recognizes the small size of the Time to Teach survey sample. For this reason, all findings reported have been thoroughly triangulated through qualitative interviews and focus group discussions with key education stakeholders in all countries.

11 Field observations were used by the research for understanding school context, and not included as part of the total number of interviewees.

Section 2: Key findings

This section presents the findings of the Time to Teach study in The Gambia, starting with a snapshot of the reported frequency of the four dimensions of teacher absence overall and by key differences between location, school type, and gender. It is followed by more in-depth discussion of the factors found to be associated with these absence levels, combining the survey information and qualitative data collected from interviews and focus group discussions.

How frequently are teachers absent? A snapshot of the survey data on teacher absenteeism

Findings from the survey data reveal teacher attendance is a challenge across the selected schools with 14 per cent of teachers reporting absence from school at least once a week. This was closely followed by late arrival or early departure from school (experienced regularly by 11 per cent of teachers), absence from class (experienced regularly by 10 per cent of teachers) and reduced time on task (experienced regularly by 10 per cent of teachers) (*see Figure 1*).

There are, however, differences between rural and urban areas in reported absence between teachers in different locations, as 19 per cent of rural and 11 per cent of urban teachers describe school absenteeism as a challenge (*see Figure 2*).

Similar trends are evident in late arrival and early departure from school: 12 per cent of rural and 7 per cent of urban teachers report late arrival or early departure occurring at least once a week at their school (*see Figure 2*).

The percentage of teachers present in the school but absent from the classroom also varies across rural and urban regions, with higher instances of this type of absence per week reported among urban teachers (13 per cent) than in rural teachers (8 per cent) (*see Figure 2*).

Rural/urban differences are also evident in teachers' time on task while in the classroom, with 14 per cent of teachers from rural schools reporting reduced teaching time at least once a week, compared with 6 per cent of teachers from urban schools (*see Figure 2*).

Finally, gender variations are not statistically significant, except in school absence: 24 per cent of female teachers report weekly absence, compared with 6 per cent of male teachers (*see Figure 3*).¹²

Regarding absence from school, the reason most frequently given by surveyed teachers is health, closely followed by family obligations and official school business such as in-service training and administrative tasks (*see Figure 4*). School absence due to health and family reasons is higher among teachers in urban schools, while absence caused by official school business occurs at a similar rate in urban and rural schools. Difficulties in receiving salary is the fourth most frequently raised reason for absence, according to one in four teachers in rural schools. For their lack of punctuality, surveyed teachers' most frequent reasons were health, family obligations, and receiving salary (*see Figure 5*). Health affects more teachers in urban contexts, and receiving salary affects them twice as much in rural contexts. In addition, transport is the fourth most frequently raised reason; however, it is exclusively reported by teachers in urban schools (32 per cent).

Regarding absence from the classroom, performing administrative tasks is the reason most frequently raised by surveyed teachers, next were health and official school business (*see Figure 6*). The occurrence of teacher absence due to administrative tasks and official school business is similar in urban and rural schools; however, absence due to health affects urban teachers twice as much (57 per cent) as rural teachers (26 per cent). The fourth most frequently nominated reason for classroom absence is related to weather and has a higher occurrence rate among rural teachers (15 per cent) than among urban teachers (3 per cent).

12 The female/male difference in school absence is statistically significant ($p < 0.10$). The research team recognizes the small size of the Time to Teach survey sample. For this reason, all significant effects should be interpreted with caution and triangulated through qualitative data.

Finally, the reasons most frequently cited by surveyed teachers behind reduced time on task is misbehaving students, next were health and having too many classroom preparation tasks (see Figure 7). Health and misbehaving students are reasons primarily reported by teachers in urban schools (38 per cent and 42 per cent respectively), while having too many classroom preparation tasks is a factor reducing instruction time mainly for teachers in rural schools (38 per cent).

Figure 1: Proportion (%) of teachers who reported being absent frequently (at least once a week), by type of absence

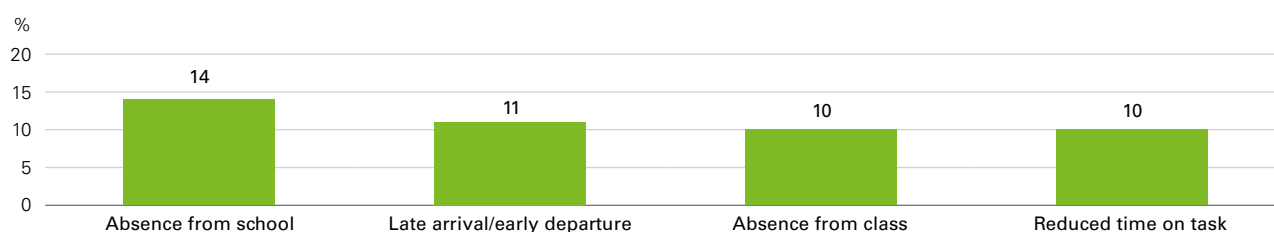


Figure 2: Proportion (%) of teachers who reported being absent frequently (at least once a week), by type of absence and school location

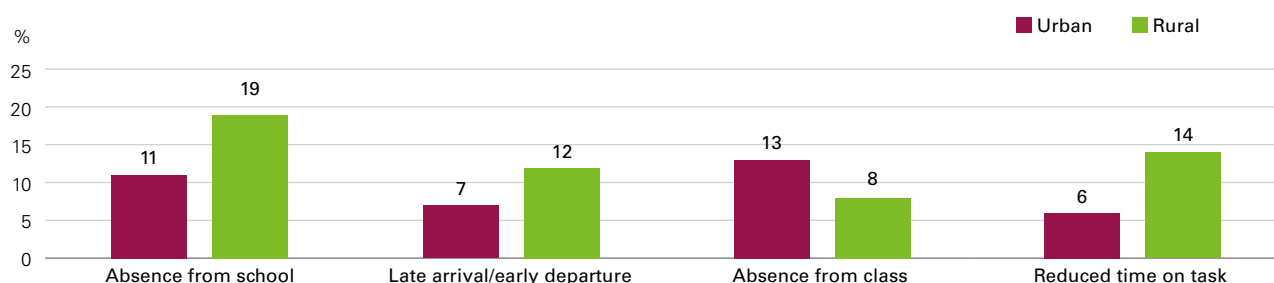


Figure 3: Proportion (%) of teachers who reported being absent frequently (at least once a week), by type of absence and teacher gender

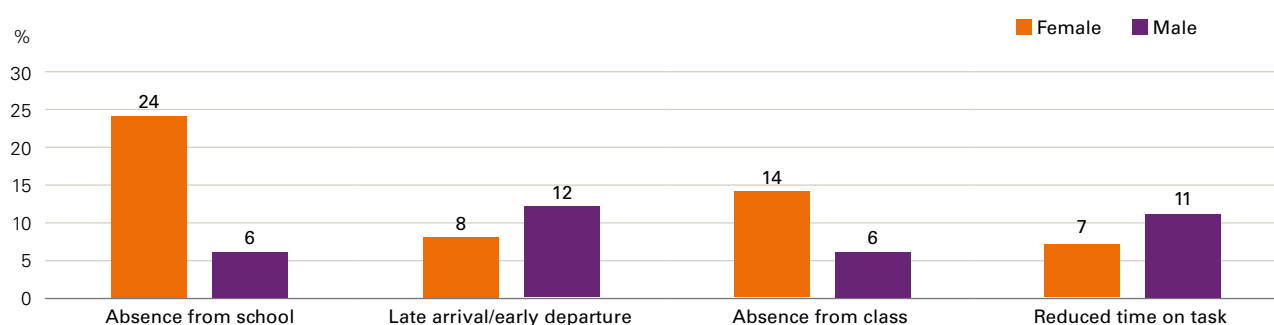


Figure 4: Primary reasons for school absence, by school location

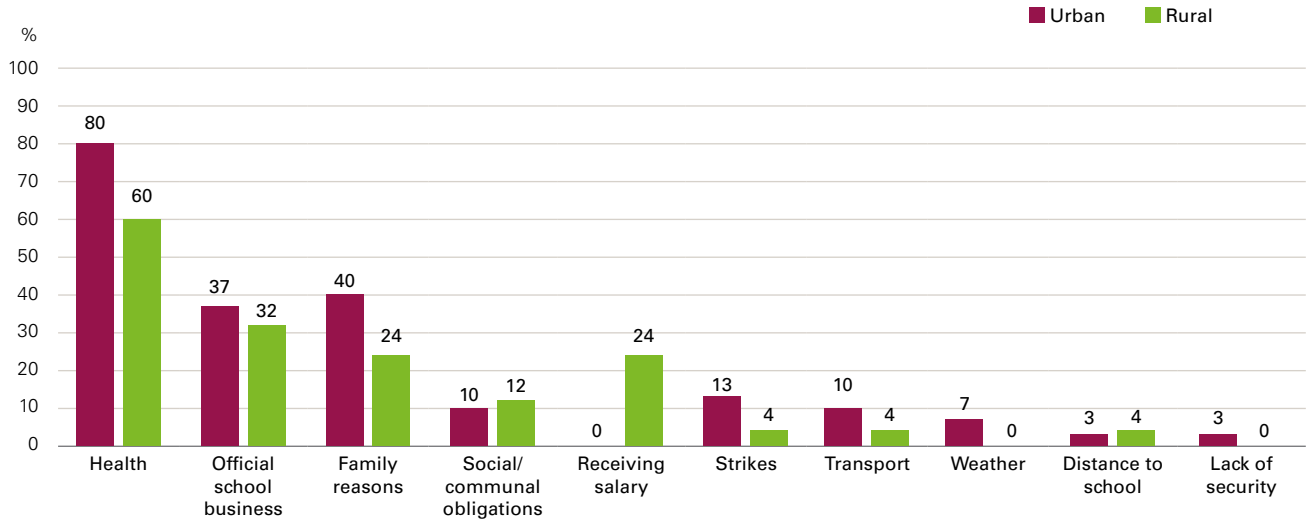


Figure 5: Primary reasons for arriving late to school or for departing early, by school location

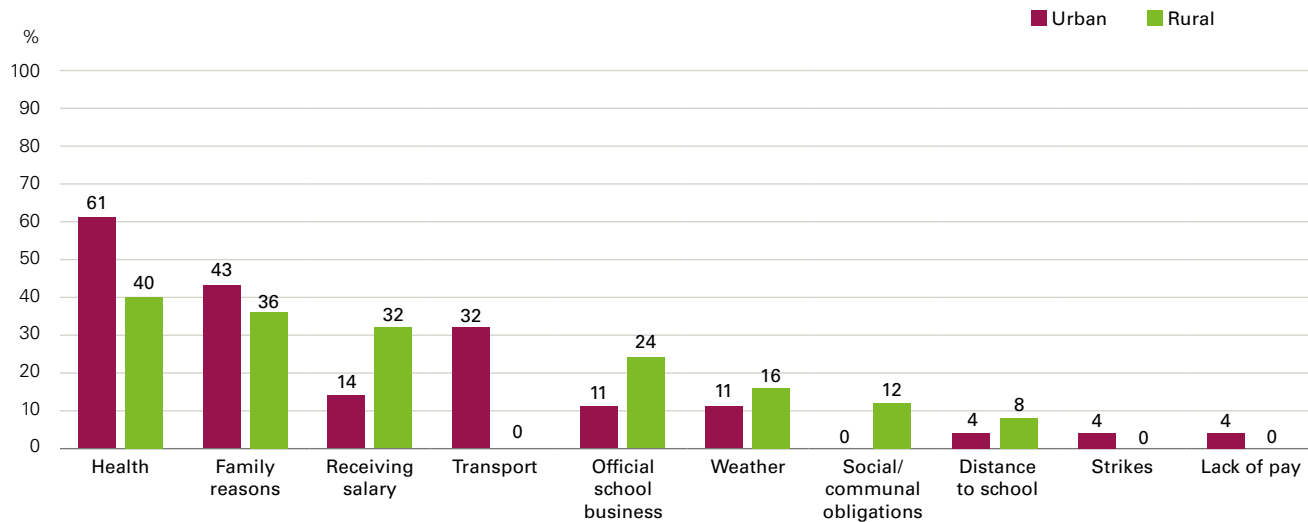


Figure 6: Primary reasons for classroom absence, by school location

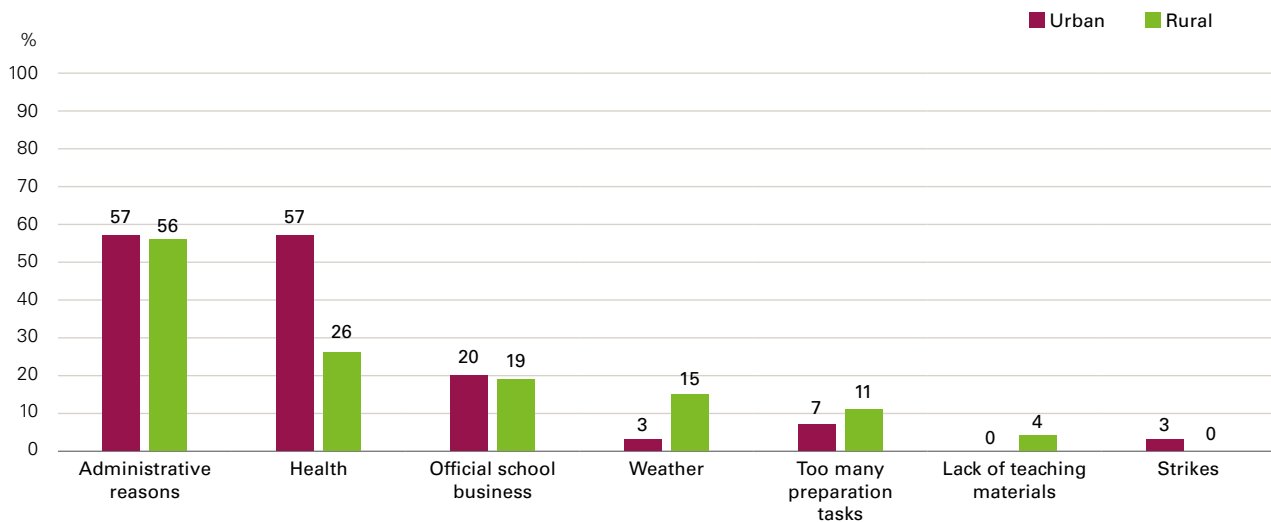
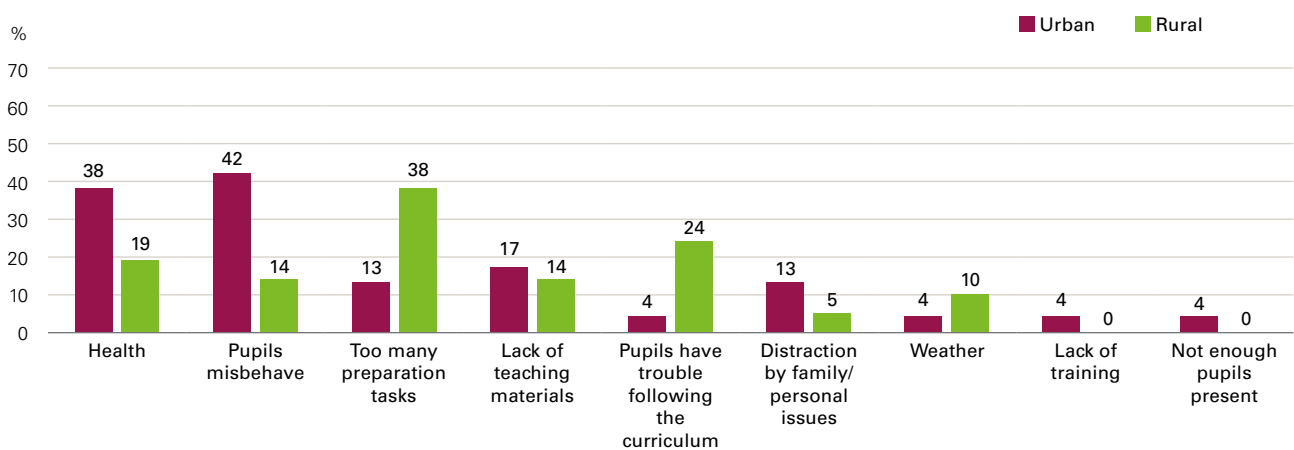


Figure 7: Primary reasons for reduced time on task, by school location



Though the sample size is small (60 participants), findings from the Time to Teach teacher survey suggest that teacher attendance is a challenge across The Gambia. Findings from the qualitative data are examined below to further elaborate on the key factors hindering teacher attendance in the country.

2.1. National factors associated with teacher attendance

2.1.1 Provision of salaries and benefits

Public school teachers across the 20 selected schools face regular challenges in receiving pay and other benefits they are entitled to, both in urban and rural areas, but predominantly in rural areas. This challenge results in frequent absence from school, the classroom, or in their late arrival and early departure. Often, the process of receiving salary includes a visit to the bank, which is not easily accessible due to timing and distance from the teacher's home and school, therefore requiring **additional travel time during school hours**. Some respondents point out that finding an open bank is often difficult, leaving teachers with few options but to collect their pay during teaching time.

Cluster monitors and regional education directors (REDs) point to The Gambia Teachers Union Cooperative Credit Union (GTUCCU) as a positive measure taken by the MoBSE to disperse salaries at the school level. However, these provisions appear to be inaccessible to many of the teachers interviewed. Instead, most teachers find it necessary to miss school, especially at the end of the month when salaries are due. Also, there are **delays in receiving payment due to errors in the payslips** (i.e., the exclusion of hardship allowances, typing errors, or the removal of an eligible teacher's name from the payroll), which necessitates teachers to take leave of absence from school to resolve the issue at a regional education office.

Along with absence from school, **teachers also miss scheduled classes to follow up with the administration about delays or errors**. Sometimes teachers miss their scheduled classes in protest, disclosing that the **stress of not having their pay on time affects their focus and ability to provide meaningful time on task to learners**. A teacher from an urban public school in Banjul and KMC explained: "When our salaries were delayed, the teachers decided to go on a sitting down strike. This left pupils alone in the classroom while teachers sat outside in protest." Regional directors seem to be aware of such occurrences, as explained by a representative: "Some teachers will be in the classroom physically, but they do not teach because he or she might have been teaching for months without payment, their double-shift or hardship allowance." Survey data supports teachers' dissatisfaction with salary delays in rural and urban schools. Of the 60 teachers who completed the paper-based questionnaire, only 23 per cent across rural and urban schools 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that they were happy with their salaries.

These findings support previous research in which teachers described their pay as not enough to meet their daily needs (VSO International, 2007) possibly a factor why teachers feel stress and worry. In the 2016–2030 strategic plan, MoBSE has promised to allocate a 60 per cent increase in hardship allowance for teachers working in remote or rural areas; however, the plan does not indicate how the ministry will ensure accurate and timely dispersion.

2.1.2 In-service teacher training

The MoBSE recognizes the lack of in-service training opportunities as a hindrance to achieving learning outcomes in the classroom and has proposed a long-term solution of developing a teacher policy framework to support teachers in making the national curriculum system relevant to local contexts (The Republic of The Gambia, 2016).

"I know that most of the teachers are punctual, and they go to work as required of them. There are some, however, who will run to Banjul for salaries. They may have salary slips but they might not be paid additional payments that they are owed for double shift or hardship allowances. Sometimes they also go to Banjul to collect their pay."

– Cluster monitor

"Teacher absence is not a problem at this school, except at the end of the month when salaries are due. That's when the pay master will tell teachers that they do not have a vehicle, so teachers must go to the banks directly to collect their pay."

– Teacher, rural public school, Mansa Konko region

However, throughout the 20 sampled schools, respondents pointed to national training programmes as a key determinant of teacher absence from schools, particularly at public schools, both in urban and rural regions. Often, these training sessions are held over several days and require travel to different regions. Schools sometimes send several teachers at the same time, resulting in the **absence of multiple teachers in the same week**. At one urban public school in Mansa Konko for instance, eight classes were found to be without teachers and no additional arrangements for lesson provision were evident.

“Today I was in my class and I gave work to my pupils. But then I had to leave my pupils to attend to another classroom because their teacher was away for training.”

–Teacher, rural public school, Janjabureh region

When teachers leave for training, their **classrooms are sometimes merged, causing overcrowding**. In some instances, pupils are present but without a teacher, causing excessive noise and disruption to other classrooms. Due to a **shortage of teachers**, some head teachers find it necessary to leave their responsibilities and attend to pupils. The absence of head teachers from their designated responsibilities can make it difficult for schools to ensure teachers are on task.

Respondents pointed to **national language training** as the main form of training teachers are required to attend, often for many days and during official school timings. Findings from interviews with head teachers and government officials suggest that **educational leaders are aware of the obstacles this creates at the school level**. A regional education director illustrated this point: “The national language training sessions are organized during Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. This affects most of our schools since we have over 164 teachers who are required to attend, and therefore [they] cannot carry out their lessons, they cannot teach.”

2.1.3 Language of instruction and posting requirements

Teachers across the different regions are **required to teach in English, beginning in Grade 4 and onwards**. This requirement is described by teachers and pupils as difficult to implement, particularly in rural public schools. A teacher from such a school in Basse explained: “Sometimes, if I speak continuously in English, this limits the learners’ understanding. It is only when I blend English with local languages, like Mandinka, that the learners understand.” Teachers worry that the need to explain in local languages limits their time on task.

“In my classroom, 40 per cent of the learners are Fula speakers, which I cannot speak. With the others, I try to use less English, especially those in Grade 2, and I also spend time elaborating so that they understand. I can say that 60 per cent of the pupils speak Mandinka, but these 40 per cent who only speak Fula, they are the pupils who are usually absent most frequently.”

–Teacher, rural public school, Mansa Konko

Others point out that **when pupils do not understand the lesson, instances of pupil absence from school are higher**. Teachers who cannot speak local languages are concerned as they realize this may hinder learning outcomes, a concern also shared by some pupils worried they might not be able to keep up with their lessons.

Several respondents disclosed that often, at the beginning of term, **teachers are administratively not prepared by the ministry to carry out their teaching responsibilities**. Teachers transferred to a new region often require additional time to complete the paperwork qualifying them to settle in and prepare for teaching. Sometimes teachers’ names have not been forwarded to schools before the start of the school year, or they do not have proper housing facilities and thus need to work with local educational officials and community members to resolve these challenges. As a result, teachers posted to areas outside their own communities are regularly absent at the beginning of the term.

“At the beginning of the school year, we hardly have 100 per cent of teachers in attendance. Some teachers do not show up in the first week because they have not finalized logistical arrangements with the Ministry, and they need to resolve these before they can start teaching.”

–Teacher, urban public school, Banjul and KMC region

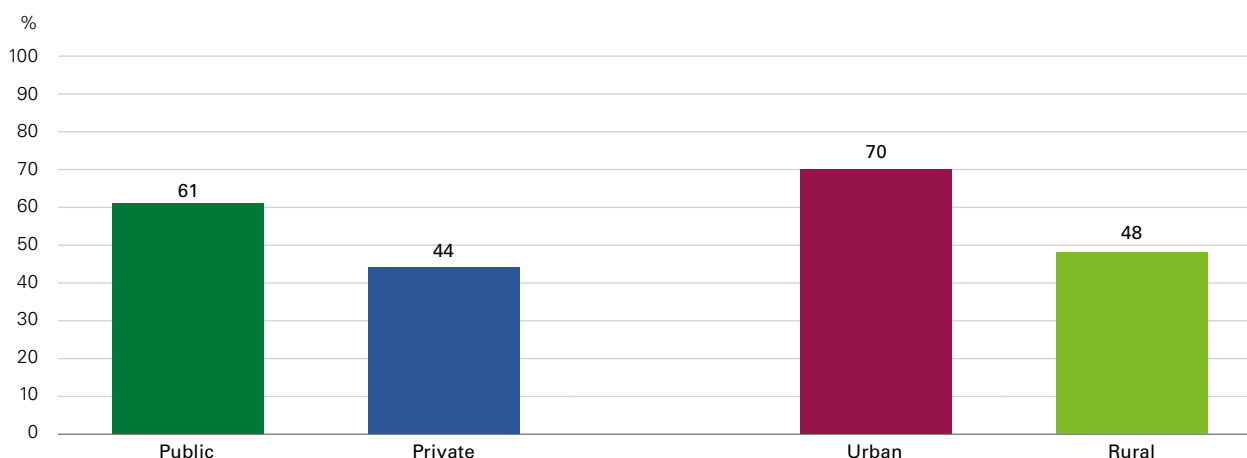
2.2. Subnational factors associated with teacher attendance

2.2.1 Teacher monitoring

Several respondents report that **regular monitoring by cluster monitors and REDs contributes positively towards teacher punctuality** at their schools. When cluster monitors check and follow-up on attendance sheets collected by head teachers, teachers appear to take extra measures to ensure they are punctual, to avoid having their name included in the attendance books.

However, survey responses suggest that the frequency of teacher monitoring varies according to the type of school. In particular, the Time to Teach survey found 61 per cent of teachers in public schools believe school inspectors and academic advisors visit their school regularly, in contrast to 44 per cent of teachers in private schools (see Figure 9).

Figure 9: Proportion (%) of teachers who agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, 'school inspectors and academic advisors visit this school regularly', by school type and location.



Some cluster monitors **reward teachers who are regularly present**, and this is described by head teachers as an additional incentive for teachers to be present at school and on time. Along with reviewing daily attendance sheets, cluster monitors also review teachers' lesson plans, which teachers appreciate as they find their **feedback important for enhancing their teaching practices**.

However, some school staff are concerned that **subnational engagement is inconsistent or inadequate, especially in rural schools**. Teachers and school managers at these schools feel they do not receive the support they require and are entitled to. Figure 8 shows the discrepancy between rural and urban monitoring by local government officials. Teachers in urban schools describe subnational engagement significantly higher in urban schools (70 per cent 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' with the statement that their schools were frequently visited) than in rural schools (48 per cent 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' with the same statement).

Survey responses identified a lack of teacher monitoring in rural schools before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to school closure and the implementation of distance education initiatives, the perception of inconsistent support from cluster monitors or other government officials may have further increased.

On the other hand, cluster monitors and regional education officers point to **limited communication with head teachers as an obstacle** in their ability to carry out effective monitoring. They describe **head teachers as occasionally reluctant to discuss teacher absence**, or to support school inspectors in carrying out sanctions against teachers who are regularly absent or late to school.

In the 2016–2030 National Education Strategy, school and community leaders will be prepared to lead the management of their schools as part of the government’s national decentralization efforts. However, the role of cluster monitors is not clarified, even though they are the key government authority monitoring teacher attendance at the school level. This could potentially result in further confusion regarding the monitoring roles and responsibilities of educational managers.

2.2.2 Lack of resources and capacity

Results from this study reveal that for many cluster monitors, carrying out their responsibilities is often a challenge due to **lack of resources**, particularly in Regions 3 and 5. Notably, not having access to regular and stable transport limits how frequently cluster monitors can visit schools and follow-up on issues related to absenteeism. This hinders the level of communication they have with schools in their district and creates inconsistencies in the level of support they can provide to each school, resulting in neglect of schools located further from their offices.

“Mobility is a major challenge for us. Some of our officials use their own vehicles and sometimes spend money from their own pockets to repair the motorcycles given to us by the ministry. I don’t know about others, but if I have access to transportation, I will be in schools every day.”

– Regional education director

Adequate transport is further challenged by the weather as it is more difficult to visit schools during the rainy season than in the dry season. A national level respondent explained: “Some of the monitors have a motorcycle but they are not always functional. Communication is a problem, especially during the rainy seasons as roads are not accessible by a motorcycle, therefore making it difficult to reach schools. If they are not in the schools, anything can happen.”

Regional Education Directorate officers also face these challenges and like cluster monitors, they too worry about implementing their duties without reliable transport. As some local education officials explained, lack of means of travel and insufficiency in the resources needed to carry out school inspections affect their motivation towards their responsibilities. The MoBSE has indicated it will allocate additional resources and support to regional education directors (The Republic of The Gambia, 2016), but it is not clear if this will include enhancing the capacity of local education officials to carry out monitoring responsibilities, particularly in schools located in remote areas.

“I believe that some of the challenges that we experience in relation to teacher attendance are a consequence of insufficient monitoring, which results from lack of capacity. They need capacity development so that they can effectively implement the ministry’s policies in the schools.”

– National education official

Insufficient training of cluster monitors and regional education directors also hinders their effectiveness in sanctioning absenteeism and holding teachers accountable for inadequate teaching or poor attendance. Related to this, some cluster monitors do not feel comfortable observing and giving feedback to teachers who may have achieved higher education levels than theirs. Finally, findings suggest cluster monitors **are burdened by their increasing workload** as the number of schools assigned to them for oversight is described as continuously increasing, although resources remain limited. This results in not only fewer school visits but also makes it more difficult to monitor classroom absence or limited time on task.

2.2.3 Lack of sanctioning authority

In The Gambia, educational management is highly centralized, with the MoBSE as the main authority in charge of overall management of the education system. Plans to move towards decentralization, with the increasing authority of local leaders in the management of schools, are under way (The Republic of The Gambia, 2016). Still, while regional education directorates have some authority over regional level operations and management, this does not seem to be the case with cluster monitors, who still depend on regional offices to carry out their responsibilities.

Across the 20 sampled schools, teachers and head teachers expressed concern with the **limited authority of cluster monitors to sanction teachers** who are regularly absent or late. They describe feeling frustrated when they present cluster monitors with challenges at their schools but are not provided with actionable solutions. Survey data confirm that most teachers strongly disagree, disagree, or are not sure if local education officials implement sanctioning measures at their schools. This perception is firmly held by teachers in both urban (77 per cent) and rural schools (85 per cent).

Salary deduction is a common form of punishment for school absence. However, cluster monitors are not able to implement this process and must wait for the approval of regional officials, who often do not inform cluster monitors of when or if action is taken. Cluster monitors fear this weakens their credibility and authority in the eyes of teachers and head teachers they work with. Some believe it is a reason why head teachers are reluctant to report teacher absence.

2.3. Community factors associated with teacher attendance

2.3.1 Infrastructure

Across the 20 schools, respondents describe the **lack of infrastructure in the community** as an obstacle affecting teachers in a variety of ways, some which interfere with their attendance. Teachers in rural areas for instance, sometimes miss school due to the lack of health facilities, educational government offices, or markets that are open during non-teaching hours.

Finding **reliable transportation** is also described as a regular challenge for teachers throughout the various regions, and across rural and urban schools, often causing teachers to arrive late, leave school early, or miss school for the entire day. Teachers who live further away from their schools are affected by these challenges – especially regarding absence from school – more frequently than those who live nearby. The MoBSE recognizes transportation as a challenge for pupils and has introduced various measures to support learners (The Republic of The Gambia, 2016); however, it does not seem to consider how these constraints might also affect teachers' instructional time.

Some community members and head teachers argue that it is mainly those teachers not provided **housing near the school** who are frequently absent or late. Also, teachers posted outside their own communities are more frequently absent than those from within the communities where they teach. For the former, they are frequently absent from school on Mondays because they visit their homes on the weekends and find they cannot make it back on time to teach due to limited availability, or cost, of transport.

Many teachers feel they have 'no choice' about visiting their families on weekends, despite finding it difficult to secure return transport to their deployed locations. This is a familiar challenge that education officials describe as difficult to address. The current strategic plan has proposed special incentive packages for deployed teachers and recognizes lack of housing as an important challenge, especially in Regions 3, 4, and 6 (The Republic of The Gambia, 2016). It is not clear, however, how teachers in the selected regions will be prioritized and whether a needs-based approach will be applied so that teachers who need the support most are targeted first.

"Most of the teachers are from different regions. So, when there are issues in their homes, like marriage, naming ceremonies, or death in the family, they have to travel. And because of how far they live from schools, they need at least 3-4 days. This affects their performance and completing the required amounts of teaching hours. It is a big problem."

– Cluster monitor

2.3.2 Climatic conditions

Lack of rain is described by some community members as an ongoing dilemma, notably in Basse, Brikama, Janjabureh, and Mansa Konko. In these regions, many families find it hard **to secure food**, especially at the beginning of the rainy season. While in these regions lack of rain affects the social and economic well-being

of families (and consequently, their ability to provide financial and material support to schools and teachers), in others heavy rains create challenges that affect both teachers and learners and can contribute to school and classroom absence, late arrival, and limited instructional time use. Impaired roads make travel to school difficult, resulting in absence or lateness for teachers and pupils. Classrooms are often not conducive to learning as the overall infrastructure of the school is poor. For example, enumerators for the Time to Teach project observed that classrooms often lacked sufficient shelter during heavy rainfall due to leakages. According to interviewed teachers, this restricts instruction time and quality (*see Section 2.4.3*). Teacher **attendance is also affected by the harvest season**, often resulting in higher instances of absence at the beginning of the school term, especially in rural and public schools.

2.3.3 Parental engagement

Teachers regularly associate the challenges learners experience in the classroom with **limited parental engagement**. In particular, they argue that pupils sometimes fall behind in their lessons because they are not encouraged at home to complete their homework, and because they do not have additional time to follow up with the pupil, having to move on to the next lesson. Parents' **difficult financial circumstances** affects their ability to make financial and material contributions to their child's school. While parents may not provide financial support, they are frequently engaged in providing non-monetary support (e.g., cleaning the school, rehabilitating school infrastructure, etc.).

Time to Teach survey data confirms the perception of low parental engagement among primary school teachers. When asked if parents are actively engaged in school matters, only 50 per cent of surveyed teachers at urban schools and 52 per cent of surveyed teachers at rural schools agreed or strongly agreed. The ministry appears to be aware of this low engagement of the community and has shown its interest to increase community participation through Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs), School Management Committees (SMCs) and mothers' clubs (The Republic of The Gambia, 2016).

2.4. School factors associated with teacher attendance

2.4.1 Workload

Respondents across the different regions described regular **engagement of teachers in non-teaching activities** – often requested by the head teacher and, occasionally, by regional education officials – as a significant factor affecting their classroom attendance and time on task. Some of these recurring tasks include administrative support to the school, attending to school visitors (parents, education officials), and unplanned meetings with the head teacher. When a teacher or head teacher is absent, teachers feel they have 'no choice' but to take on additional teaching or administrative responsibilities to ensure the smooth functioning of the school. Some teachers describe regular instances of interruption by parents or educational staff while they are teaching, causing them to stop their lessons momentarily. Others struggle with **increased class sizes** as this intensifies the effort they must put into their teaching to ensure learners are on task. As a teacher at a rural public school in the Mansa Konko region explained: "The main reason why teachers' instructional time is reduced is because of the number of children in the classroom. Teachers have to assess pupils, both orally and in writing, and they have to mark their work, which requires additional time." This is also corroborated by the Time to Teach survey data: teachers who have bigger classes are more likely to be absent from school and from the classroom.

"The main cause of absence from school is due to the teacher's engagement in administrative work. Some of the schools do not have watchmen or caretakers so the teachers volunteer to take on these roles, and this causes them to be absent for a day."

– Regional education director

Some regional education officials worry that a **shortage of school staff places further pressure on teachers to engage in non-teaching work**, thus causing them to be absent from teaching. A regional education director

explained: “Shortages of teachers is a challenge that has been noted previously as well and [is] an ongoing dilemma in the country as demands for education continue to increase” (VSO International, 2007).

It is also common **for teachers to be interrupted during teaching due to the health or behaviour of learners in the classroom**. Instances related to this are especially poignant in schools where the number of pupils per teacher is significantly higher than acceptable averages. Teachers feel compelled to stop their lessons to attend to learners and draw their attention to the lesson. Findings suggest that teachers struggle with managing pupils in the classroom (explored further in Section 2.5), causing them to limit their time on task. Pupils at an urban public school in Banjul and KMC illustrated: “Sometimes, while the teacher is explaining the lesson, pupils will be talking and this angers the teacher, so the teacher leaves the classroom in protest.”

The 2016–2030 National Education Strategic Plan recognizes teachers as central to ensuring that learning outcomes are achieved in their schools. However, the plan does not indicate if existing processes, or new ones, will be (re)-enforced to prioritize teaching tasks over non-teaching activities. Even in the existing teacher training manual, teachers are reminded to take attendance seriously to provide learners with 880 hours of direct contact. However, it does not provide instruction on balancing these with non-teaching responsibilities, which this study shows is often mandated and authorized by school managers. The current strategic plan also does not indicate whether these obligations will be further clarified in the new Teacher’s Education Policy document that the ministry plans to develop for the overall oversight of teacher training and work.

2.4.2 School leadership

Head teachers play a crucial role in teacher punctuality. When head teachers provide regular monitoring and follow-up, teachers are more alert to attending class. As respondents pointed out, when head teachers are inconsistent in **follow-up and observation**, there are higher instances among teachers of school and classroom absence, late arrivals, or reduction in instructional time.

Some interviewed teachers were concerned about the limited amount of monitoring head teachers carry out at their schools. However, findings from the paper-based survey paint a different picture, suggesting that most teachers consider their direct supervisors as effectively engaged in monitoring their attendance; most teachers at rural (85 per cent) and urban (87 per cent) schools agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that headteachers actively discouraged absenteeism.

While teachers commonly view their school management as actively focused on redressing absenteeism, some local education officials believe head teachers need to do more to improve teacher attendance. They worry that school **absence may be higher than what is reported by head teachers** (see also Section 2.2.1). Others express that **when head teachers are also absent regularly** they may be reluctant to report teacher absenteeism as this may result in their own disciplining or affect relationships with their staff.

School leaders, on the other hand, describe themselves as actively engaged in overseeing teacher attendance. A head teacher from an urban public school in Janjabureh explained: “We have two books at this school, one for late coming and the other for absence. In the past, I would use a red pen, but now I use a separate book, so now when someone signs in that book, they know that they were late.” At the same school, **teachers are apprehensive about signing the lateness book** and make a point of arriving on time to avoid this. Even when monitoring takes place, it does not consider classroom absence or limited time on task. In the 2016–2030 strategic plan, MoBSE has indicated it will provide additional leadership

“A teacher who is not reported by a head teacher for absence might also do the same for the head teacher. For instance, if a head teacher is regularly absent, the teacher will not report on them.”

– Cluster monitor, Region 1

“I keep records of when teachers are absent and when they are late. They are usually very surprised to see how often they have been late. I tell them, ‘be careful, I am monitoring you’”

– Headteacher, urban public school, Banjul and KMC.

training to headteachers but does not clarify if monitoring teacher attendance, especially the various forms of absenteeism, will also be included.

2.4.3 School resources

Limited classroom infrastructure makes it difficult for teachers to use the space in a manner that supports their time on task. A teacher from a rural public school in Mansa Konko explained: “These classrooms were built during colonial times and now they are very old and not conducive to learning. Pupils find it difficult to read what’s written on the blackboard, and the windows let in a lot of cold air, making it uncomfortable for teachers and pupils.” Some teachers also report a **lack of teaching aids** and struggle to remain on task as a result.

“When head teachers travel with the keys to school resource cabinets, the teachers cannot access important information. This can block the teacher’s ability because they are forced to look for alternative materials that they might not be familiar with. Maybe head teachers lock the resources while they are gone because they do not trust their staff.”

– Regional education director

Teachers also often depend on school meals, which are not always available. This compels them to leave the school grounds during school breaks and arrive late to class or miss their scheduled lessons. A teacher from a rural public school in Basse elaborated: “Last year, teachers would arrive to school without any food. So, sometimes they would leave to look for relatives who could give them food. But this year, the head teacher is providing meals, even with her own money, so attendance is improving.”

Survey findings show that across the 20 schools, **teachers and learners lack essential teaching and learning materials and other resources**, making it difficult for teachers to use their instructional time effectively. Learners who do not have the required texts and notebooks often cannot fulfil the requirements of their lessons and are not able to keep up with their peers. Sometimes schools have teaching resources, but the **head teacher controls access to them**. Education officials at the regional level are aware of this challenge and consider it to be a problem.

2.5. Teacher factors associated with teacher attendance

2.5.1 Health

Even before the outbreak of COVID-19, health was reported as a major driver of teacher absenteeism. Data from the paper-based survey points to health-related challenges as the main cause of **school absence** and lack of punctuality, and an important determinant of classroom absenteeism and reduced time on task (see *Figures 4–7*).

Survey data also suggests that teachers in urban areas are absent from school due to health at a higher rate (80 per cent) compared with teachers in rural schools (60 per cent). Moreover, teachers appear to be late more frequently in urban schools (61 per cent) than in rural schools (40 per cent) due to health reasons. This may be a consequence of a shortage of teachers in rural areas, as discussed in Section 2.1 and 2.4, placing additional pressure on teachers at rural schools to come to school, even when feeling ill.

In addition, while health is a key factor in classroom absence among surveyed teachers, it affects urban teachers twice as much (57 per cent) as rural teachers (26 per cent), suggesting teachers at rural schools might be attending to pupils while they are ill. This may also explain why more teachers at urban schools (38 per cent) than at rural schools (19 per cent) point to health as a factor in their limited instructional time use in the classroom.

Teachers sometimes stay home for several days, especially when healthcare facilities in the community are limited. A head teacher from an urban private school in Brikama elucidated: “We do not have medical facilities here, so when someone is not feeling well, there is no one to look after them, so they must stay home to look after their health.” Sometimes teachers arrive to school late or leave early to go home and rest, or to seek medical treatment. Some teachers pointed out that when they are sick, they still choose to come to school but miss their scheduled classes because they do not feel well enough to provide lessons to pupils. Others might be present in the classroom but are resting or they may provide a revised lesson plan that does not require them to speak or move around the classroom.

“We have teachers who are regularly absent because of poor health, and it’s affecting their pupils. We sent their pupils to another teacher, but when they completed national examinations, we found that they had performed very poorly.”

– Headteacher, urban public school, Banjul and KMC region.

2.5.2 Family and social responsibilities

Teachers’ responsibilities towards their families and communities are a significant factor in frequent school and classroom absence, late arrivals or early departures, and insufficient instructional time use. In particular, teachers in rural public schools describe feeling obliged to attend social engagements such as funerals, naming ceremonies, or weddings in the community. Looking after family members also commonly results in late school arrival or early departure.

Some respondents argue that female teachers are more frequently late to school because of additional responsibilities towards their families. Findings from the quantitative survey do not fully confirm this commonly held perception¹³ but do point to gender differences, notably in teachers’ job satisfaction. Male teachers are more satisfied with their work than their female counterparts (62 per cent vs 55 per cent).

The Gambia National Education for All report (The Republic of The Gambia, 2014) noted that female teachers faced additional barriers in working conditions and gender may be a factor in school absence. These gender differences might be even greater today due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as women across the world have experienced increasing care responsibilities at home associated with the sanitary crisis and to the closure of childcare services and schools (UNICEF, 2021).

Findings suggest that absence caused by personal or social needs is considered ‘inevitable’ and oftentimes school managers and inspectors do not hesitate in granting teachers permission to leave when requested. While some regional education officials seem to be aware and understanding of the impact of these factors on school absence and consider them as unintentional, cluster monitors and national-level respondents are less sympathetic and more sceptical of the legitimacy of such claims. Mainly, they insist that social events and personal leaves can be planned outside of teaching hours and therefore should not result in absenteeism. In addition, since schools and local government officials cannot always validate a teacher’s claim, some education officers believe that teachers can take advantage of this process. A regional education director explained: “A teacher can easily pick up the phone and call the head teacher, telling them that they are not coming to school because of a death, or some other occasion in their lives. Teachers think all they have to do is simply convince the head teacher and that there will be no serious consequences. Even the regional directors do not act or follow up. That’s when you see the challenges in this system”.

¹³ The Time to Teach study found no statistically significant gender variations, except in school absence where 24 per cent of female teachers reported weekly absence from school compared with 6 per cent of male teachers (see Figure 3).

While in their classroom, teachers continue to be distracted by family-related issues (either through visits or by receiving phone calls) and this shortens the time they spend teaching learners. Interviewed teachers pointed to stress caused by the pressures of looking after their families as a factor preventing them from concentrating on their lessons or completing their lessons within the allocated time. It is possible that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, stress levels among teachers might have increased. Experiencing financial uncertainty due to the current economic crisis, having more family responsibilities at home, or learning to cope with an increasing workload with the challenges of remote education could be hindering teachers' ability to concentrate while delivering lessons to students.

"I received a call from my parents while I was teaching that they needed me to buy food. I became very worried because I did not have the financial means to, so I became very stressed in the class."

– Teacher, urban public school, Kerewan region

2.5.3 Content knowledge and classroom management skills

Several respondents describe teachers' limited knowledge of the subjects they are teaching as an additional barrier to their time on task. Teachers who are familiar with the content of their subject are described as confident and more willing to come to school and be present in the classroom on time. Those who struggle however, are described as less punctual in coming to school or being in the classroom.

"Creating a lesson plan is not an easy task. Sometimes your resources are very limited in the textbook, so you must use the internet to search or to look elsewhere for additional materials."

– Teacher, urban private school, Brikama region

Some respondents consider subject knowledge as directly related to how well-prepared teachers are to give lessons. In addition, when teachers are not clear about the content of their subject, they struggle to create engaging and efficient lesson plans, which respondents point to as a common cause of classroom absence and limited time on task. This is especially the case in schools where teaching and learning materials are not readily available. Teachers also provide additional insight into why they might limit their time on task while in the classroom – mainly, they point to difficulties in managing students, especially when their classrooms are merged or over-crowded.

"Poor planning results in teachers not being able to complete their required teaching hours. When they do not develop engaging lessons ahead of time, they do not know what to teach the learners so sometimes, they leave the classroom and let the children read on their own."

– Regional education director

Not being able to manage pupils is highlighted by several respondents as a key reason why teachers are reducing scheduled lessons or why pupils at their school might not be making academic progress.

Section 3: Strengthening teacher attendance

In Section 2, several key factors associated with teacher attendance and time on task were highlighted. Notably, findings across the different levels in the education system point to difficulties with receiving salary, low access to health and transport services, monitoring challenges, and teacher engagement in non-teaching activities as key reasons why teachers may not be on task. This section looks at the potential implications of these factors for teacher policies and programmes and presents recommendations that may help strengthen MoBSE's efforts to improve teachers' time on task in The Gambia.

3.1. Enhance access to receiving salary and benefits

To improve the provision of salaries and non-salary benefits, MoBSE can benefit from considering the following:

- **Strengthen mechanisms for dispersing teachers' salary:** The ministry's collaboration with the Gambia Teachers Union Co-operative Credit Union (GTUCCU) for salary dispersion is presently limited and not accessible to most teachers included in this study. Yet the initiative is important as it saves teachers from visiting the bank and thus, the ministry should continue to strengthen and expand this partnership. Findings from this study suggest that teachers are either not aware of when GTUCCU visits their schools or are simply not available during that time. GTUCCU should work with head teachers to standardize visiting hours in advance to make it easier for teachers to collect their pay and avoid visits to the bank.
- **Make banks accessible during non-teaching hours:** For teachers whose salaries are deposited into their bank accounts, it is recommended that the payroll department in the MoBSE coordinates with the treasury at the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs to revise banking hours to accommodate teachers so that they do not have to leave school to collect their wages.
- **Avoid errors in payment eligibility:** Closer collaboration is needed between regional education directorates and the ministry to avoid delays or errors in teacher eligibility for additional allowances. Because local government officials support teachers when they are deployed to new schools, enhancing communication with the central authority regarding eligibility might also enable teachers to receive their incentives on time.

3.2. Improve teachers' living circumstances

To ensure teachers' living conditions do not limit them from carrying out their teaching responsibilities, the following measures are worth exploring:

- **Engage cluster monitors in delivery of new incentive packages:** Because the ministry will focus on Regions 3, 4, and 6 when providing the new incentive packages, it is important to engage cluster monitors in those regions to further strengthen the effectiveness of implementation by ensuring that teachers who require the most support are given priority.
- **Provide health-related support to teachers:** The School Health and Nutrition Unit of the Ministry of Health and Social Well-Being should consider including teachers in its school-level healthcare plans for learners, which may result in additional costs but would contribute significantly towards improving teacher attendance. This is essential amid COVID-19. The pandemic has highlighted the vulnerability of education environments in The Gambia, and mainly in rural areas where schools do not have adequate health, biosecurity, and sanitary conditions. School conditions should be monitored by MoBSE and teachers should be guaranteed access to health facilities to reduce the frequency of school or classroom absence, lateness, or early departure due to health factors. MoBSE should also pay attention to teacher motivations and mental health, because COVID-19 has increased their stress levels and workload and has created new care responsibilities, especially for female teachers.
- **Make transportation accessible:** As part of its efforts to develop a national partnership strategy, the ministry should consider collaborating with the Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure to reduce the cost and enhance the availability of transport for teachers.

3.3. Provide training and support to teachers during non-teaching hours

Closer collaboration and coordination between cluster monitors and school managers will help in the provision of relevant in-service training that does not conflict with teachers' time on task. Steps that can be taken include:

- **Ensure training opportunities do not conflict with time on task:** Cluster monitors need to coordinate with head teachers in developing a timeline for training programmes that does not conflict with scheduled lessons. This may require additional capacity development of head teachers, which the ministry should consider including as part of their efforts to strengthen school monitoring. The national teacher policy framework the ministry plans to develop should also include the importance of avoiding conflict with teaching time as this document will guide the overall structure and processes of training programmes in The Gambia. To provide training opportunities to teachers that does not affect their time on task, MoBSE should take advantage of the attention given to distance learning during the pandemic to promote remote training initiatives.
- **Provide needs-based training:** Head teachers should work closely with cluster monitors in developing context-specific training, which will also help MoBSE achieve its aim of making the curriculum relevant to local needs. This approach could complement current plans to provide information, communication and technology training to teachers, now regarded as crucial for the implementation of remote education responses and hybrid learning initiatives as a result of COVID-19.
- **Expand multi-grade and multi-subject training:** The Directorate of Planning should consider expanding provision of multi-grade and multi-subject training for in-service teachers, especially in schools with a shortage of teachers. REDs should also consider deploying teachers based on linguistic familiarity so that language barriers are minimized.

3.4. Clarify roles and responsibilities of teachers and strengthen monitoring

To ensure all staff (teachers, head teachers, sector monitors and regional education directors) are carrying out their responsibilities effectively and contributing towards enhancing teachers' time on task, the following measures are worth considering:

- **Prioritize teachers' time on task:** REDs need to work closely with cluster monitors and head teachers to ensure teachers are not engaged in non-teaching activities during scheduled lessons. In the long term, the Permanent Secretary's office could consider standardizing the practice throughout the regions by clarifying roles and responsibilities of educational staff in the proposed Teacher Education Policy framework. If future school closures are necessary due to COVID-19, learning continuity needs to be ensured. Gathering evidence about teacher/student remote interactions directly from parents and/or students (via telephone or video calls) could help encourage teachers to remain on task. Remote monitoring initiatives have already been implemented in other countries like Tanzania and Mongolia using SMS and chatbots respectively, to gather feedback from parents on improving responses to remote education (Dreseen, et al., 2020). Peru has also implemented a monthly remote monitoring system via telephone calls with families from public schools that includes collecting data about the frequency and motives of teachers/students (Peruvian Ministry of Education, 2021).
- **Increase community engagement:** Since MoBSE plans to strengthen local ownership of schools as part of its national decentralization agenda, engaging PTAs, SMCs and mothers' clubs in supporting schools with administrative tasks can help teachers to focus on teaching. It can also strengthen the relationship between schools and families, which is especially crucial during COVID-19.
- **Provide sanctioning authority to head teachers and cluster monitors:** The MoBSE may need to reassess its current teacher management processes so the roles of cluster monitors and REDs are clearer at the school level. Expanding the sanctioning authority of cluster monitors and head teachers should also be considered as these actors are in an ideal position to monitor all forms of teacher attendance (including being in class and spending sufficient time on task).

Annexes

Annex 1: Primary education trends and statistics in The Gambia

Country context

The Gambia is a country in West Africa surrounded by Senegal, apart from its western coastline along the Atlantic Ocean. It is physically and demographically one of the smallest countries in Africa. The Gambia has a population of over 2 million, predominantly Muslim, people. More than 60 per cent of the population is below the age of 24 years, and the annual population growth rate is 2.8 per cent (The Republic of The Gambia, 2014). Three quarters of the population lives in rural areas, with agriculture accounting for 65 per cent of employment. Agriculture accounts for one-third of the country's GDP, making the country largely reliant upon rainfall. The urban population benefits from greater incomes, higher levels of educational attainment, and better access to health care than the rural population (Roberts-Holmes, 2003).

Key primary education statistics and trends

The Gambia has a higher primary completion rate than other countries in West and Central Africa, dedicating the same (or higher) share of national funding to primary education. The country spends more on basic education than the ECOWAS subregional average, underscoring the priority made by the government to basic education. The Gambia allocates 3 and 8 per cent more to both lower and upper basic and secondary education than the regional average, respectively (World Bank, 2011).

Notably, the government has achieved its target of 100 per cent gross enrolment in lower basic education (see Table A1), with the number of female pupils (116.5 per cent) higher than male pupils (108.9 per cent) in 2019. For upper basic education however, overall enrolment decreased between 2013 and 2016 (see Table A2). Between 2017 and 2019 these numbers appear to have improved, with steady increases in both male and female pupil enrolment, although the overall total in 2019 (70.5 per cent) is still below the 75 per cent target set in the 2004–2016 strategic plan (The Republic of The Gambia, 2016).

Table A1: Gross enrolment ratio in lower basic education, 2010–2019

Year	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total (%)
2010	87.5	89.1	88.3
2011	85.6	87.3	86.5
2012	89.1	91.4	90.2
2013	91.7	93.9	92.8
2014	95.4	98.7	97.1
2015	99.0	103.5	101.2
2016	101.4	106.7	104.1
2017	105.4	111.8	108.6
2018	108.9	116.5	112.7
2019	113.2	122.6	117.9

Source: Modified from Education Statistics 2018/2019, Republic of The Gambia, MoBSE.

Table A2: Gross enrolment rate in upper basic education, 2010–2019

Year	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total (%)
2010	66.9	65.6	66.2
2011	65.5	66.2	65.8
2012	66.8	66.7	66.7
2013	68.9	67.3	68.1
2014	68.2	68.0	68.3
2015	68.3	68.2	68.3
2016	65.9	67.6	66.8
2017	65.0	69.7	67.4
2018	64.8	71.3	68.1
2019	67.0	73.9	70.5

Source: Modified from Education Statistics 2018/2019, Republic of The Gambia, MoBSE.

While more children have access to primary schools than before, regional disparities are significant. The country is organized into six administrative regions: five regions outside the capital plus the district of Banjul (the capital city). As shown in Table A3, Region 5 still lags behind others while Region 1, where the capital is located, registers the highest enrolment rate each year. While in 2010 Regions 1 and 4 had an enrolment rate of over 100 per cent, by 2016 only Region 5 had an enrolment rate lower than 100 per cent.

Table A3: Gross enrolment ratio in primary schools by region, 2010–2016

Region	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
	Proportion (%)						
Region 1 (Banjul)	107	107	109.2	106.6	109	111.7	113.8
Region 2 (Western)	91.8	91.1	95.1	100.6	106	111	112.2
Region 3 (North Bank)	86.6	86	89	91.5	99	106.8	111.8
Region 4 (Lower River)	105.1	94.2	97.2	103.4	101.4	101.7	102.5
Region 5 (Central River)	59.2	55.9	58.2	60.2	63.1	64.8	68.5
Region 6 (Upper River)	79	75.3	83.1	85.6	90.1	95.2	101

Source: UNICEF OoR – Innocenti, data pulled from Education Sector Strategic Plan 2016–2030, p.17

Compared with other SSA countries, the repetition rate is lower in The Gambia for lower basic education (5.2 per cent) and upper basic education (4.4 per cent). Within the education system, repetition is often higher in the lower grades (7.8 per cent in Grade 1 and 6.6 per cent in Grade 2) than in the higher grades (2.4 per cent in Grade 6). Similarly, grade repetition is higher in government schools than in private schools, particularly in lower basic education. The Gambia has also achieved success in lowering national dropout rates in recent years. In 2010, the average dropout rate for lower basic education was 8.5 per cent; in 2013 this rate had dropped to 4.8 per cent (The Republic of The Gambia, 2016).

Structure of the education system

The current basic education structure was introduced in 2002 and consists of pre-primary, primary, and secondary education (*see Figure A1*).

Figure A1: Structure of the education system

Secondary education	<p>Adolescents aged 13–18</p> <p>Duration: 3 years of upper basic education and 3 years of either academic or technical and vocational training</p>	At the end of upper basic education, pupils receive The Gambia Basic Education Certificate (GABEC). At the end of upper secondary, pupils receive the West African Senior Secondary Certificate (WASSC).
Primary education	<p>Children aged 7–12</p> <p>Free and compulsory</p>	Since 2002 there is no longer a primary cycle certificate but automatic promotion with continuous assessment at the school level
Early childhood education (ECE)	<p>Children aged 3–6</p> <p>Duration: 3 years</p>	

Governance: Key actors and responsibilities

The MoBSE is the most important actor in charge of education at national level, and is responsible for oversight of pre-primary, primary, and secondary education. The MoBSE is managed centrally, especially with respect to financial management, but partially decentralized to its six regional education directorates which facilitate more effective regional level operations and management (The Republic of The Gambia, 2016). Each of the regions has a regional education office along with a regional director. Regional directors are the key liaison between schools in their region and the ministry, overseeing the monitoring of activities at the school level and collecting key indicators regularly (World Bank, 2011).

The country has four types of schools: government schools (owned, maintained by, and under complete control of the government); grant-aided schools (schools receiving grants from the country's general revenue); private schools (schools other than government or assisted schools); and madrassa or Islamic schools. Islamic schools follow a curriculum using Arabic as the medium of instruction and emphasizing Islamic learning. Most Gambian madrassas are operated by private individuals, communities, or Islamic organizations with some support from the MoBSE. Moreover, most schools have established school governing bodies or school management committees that are responsible for day-to-day management (IBE-UNESCO, 2006/07).

Challenges and strategic priorities for teaching

In the early 2000s, against the backdrop of high population increase and scarce resources, the government set a number of objectives for the education sector, including increasing the output of trained teachers and the need to further prepare unqualified teachers (The Republic of The Gambia, 2000). Yet the issue was not overcome entirely because the number of teachers was still very low in the early 2000s, and the increase in staff members remained a strategic priority for The Gambia. Other strategic priorities included increasing the number of female teachers, promoting educational activities in French, improving the remuneration of teachers and providing professional training in special education (The Republic of The Gambia, 2008). Thus, the Gambian government proposed a comprehensive Education Sector Plan to be implemented by 2015 to tackle many of these issues, most of which, nevertheless, remain unresolved (The Republic of The Gambia, 2006).

Currently, the main strategic priorities are: improving teacher pre-service and in-service training, implementing a periodic external review of teachers' curricula, improving compensation schemes for teachers, and overall improving the system of school management – with particular focus on decentralization at the regional level, monitoring and evaluation, and financial authorities (The Republic of The Gambia, 2016). These efforts also include providing additional resources and support to local government officials. In addition, the 2018–2021 national development goals focus on further enhancing education goals by providing teacher mentoring opportunities for in-service teachers and strengthening head teachers' roles as leaders and mentors for teachers (The Republic of The Gambia, 2018).

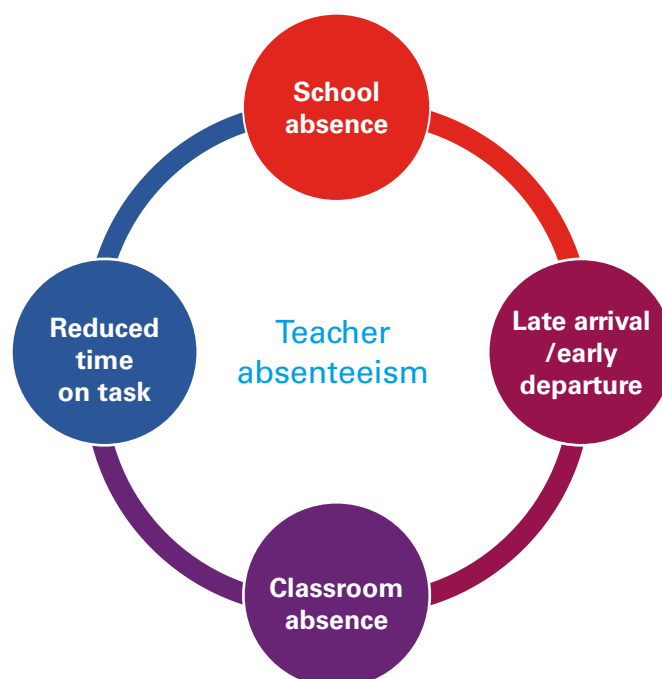
Annex 2: Definition and explanatory framework

The concept of teacher absenteeism in the Time to Teach study

For learning to occur, several minimal conditions related to the role of teachers in the learning process need to be fulfilled. Specifically, teachers must be in school, in the classroom, actively teaching, and teaching with appropriate pedagogical and content knowledge. Based on this assumption, the Time to Teach study moves beyond the conventional definition of teacher attendance, which focuses mainly on presence at the school, and instead introduces a **multi-dimensional concept** of teacher absenteeism (see Figure A2) that recognizes four distinct forms of teacher absence:

- (1) absence from school;
- (2) absence of punctuality (late arrival and/or early departure from school);
- (3) absence from the classroom (while in school); and,
- (4) absence from teaching (reduced time on task while in the classroom).

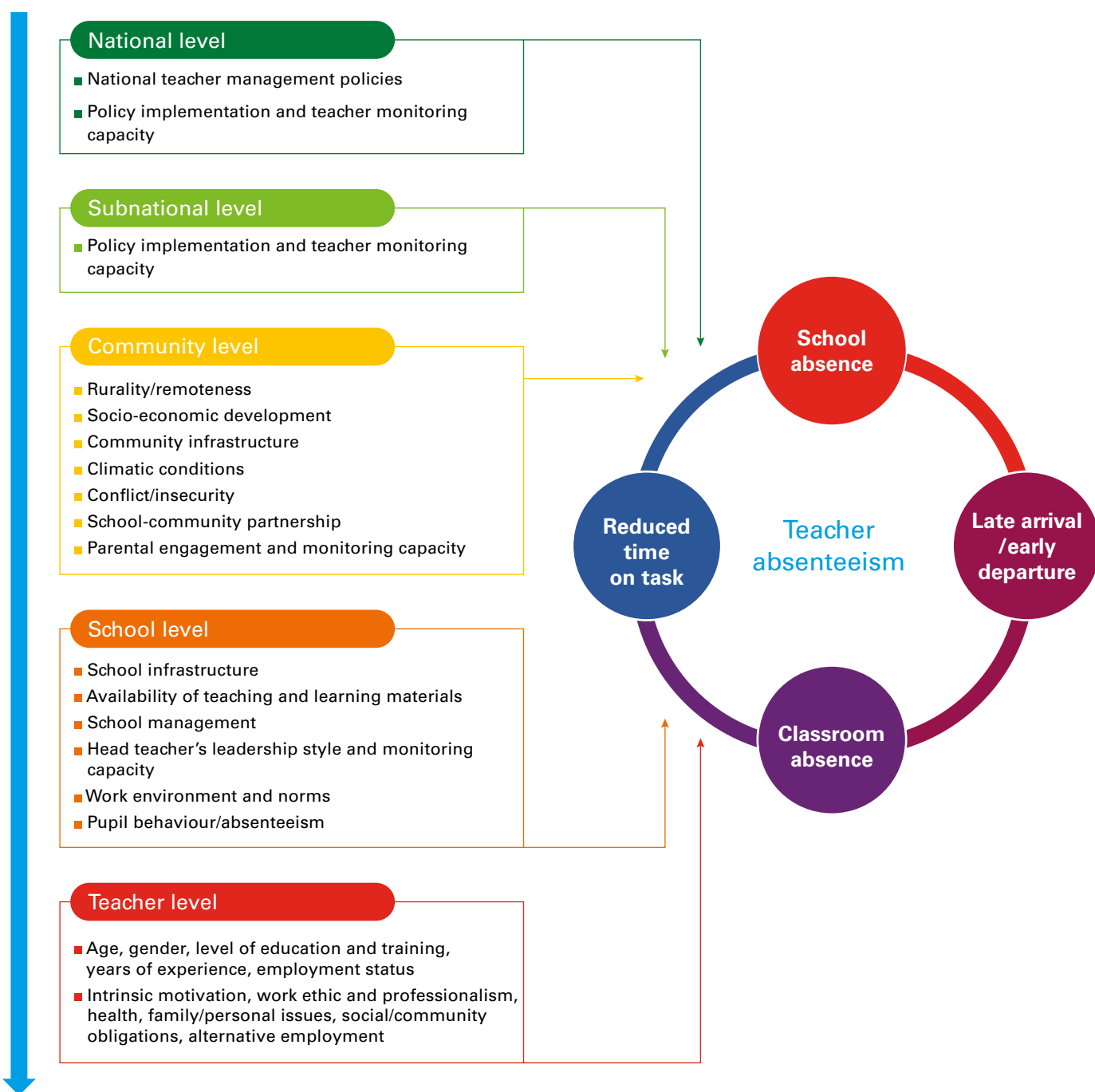
Figure A2: The concept of multi-dimensional teacher absenteeism



A systems approach

As the determinants of teacher absenteeism are likely to be located at various levels of the education system, Time to Teach adopts a systemic analytical framework. In particular, the study follows the work of Guerrero et al. (2012), who suggest three sets of factors affect teacher attendance: (i) teacher-level variables, (ii) school-level variables, and (iii) community-level variables. Expanding on this framework, the Time to Teach study looks at national and subnational level factors affecting different types of teacher absenteeism (see Figure A3).

Figure A3: Proposed explanatory framework



Source: Adaptation of the work of Guerrero et al., 'What works to improve teacher attendance in developing countries: A systematic review', 2012. London: EPPI Centre, Social Science Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London

References

- Alcázar, L., et al., 'Why Are Teachers Absent? Probing service delivery in Peruvian primary schools', *International Journal of Educational Research*, vol. 45, no. 3, 2006, pp. 117–136.
- Banerjee, R., et al., 'Student and Teacher Attendance: The role of shared goods in reducing absenteeism', *Economics of Education Review*, vol. 31, no. 5, 2012, pp. 563–574.
- Bennell, P., and Akyeampong, K., 'Teacher Motivation in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, No. 71, London: DfID, 2007.
- Blimpo, M. P., Evans, D. K., and Lahire, N., 'Parental Human Capital and Effective School Management: Evidence from The Gambia', World Bank, Washington, D.C., 2015, p. 6.
- Bold, T., et al., 'What Do Teachers Know and Do? Does it Matter? Evidence from primary schools in Africa', Policy Research Working Paper no. 7956, World Bank, Washington, D.C., 2017. openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/25964
- Chaudhury, N., et al., 'Missing in Action: Teacher and health worker absence in developing countries', *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, vol. 20, no. 1, 2006, pp. 91–116.
- Das, J., et al., 'Teacher Shocks and Student Learning Evidence from Zambia', *Journal of Human Resources*, vol. 42, no. 4, 2007, pp. 820–862.
- Dreseen, T., et al., 'Promising Practices for Equitable Remote Learning: Emerging lessons from COVID-19 education responses in 127 countries', Innocenti Research Brief, 2020.
- Filmer, D., 'Education Quality in sub-Saharan Africa', Presentation slides at RISE Conference, June 2015. Retrieved from riseprogramme.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/25_Filmer_SDI-RISE.pdf
- Glewwe, P., Ilias, N., and Kremer, M., 'Teacher Incentives', *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*, vol. 2, no. 3, 2010, pp. 205–27.
- Guerrero, G., et al., 'What Works to Improve Teacher Attendance in Developing Countries? A systematic review, The EPPI-Centre, Social Science Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London, U.K., October 2012. eppi.ioe.ac.uk/cms/Default.aspx?tabid=3377
- IBE-UNESCO (2006) World Data on Education 6th edition, 2006/07. Gambia. Retrieved from: http://www.ibe.unesco.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Publications/WDE/2010/pdf-versions/Gambia
- Reimers, F., 'Time and Opportunity to Learn in Pakistan's Schools: Some lessons on the links between research and policy', *Comparative Education*, vol. 29, No. 2, 1993, pp. 201–212.
- Roberts-Holmes, G., 'Towards an Understanding of Gambian Teachers' Complex Professionalism', *Teachers and Teaching*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2003, pp. 35–45 (p. 36).
- Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, 'Education Sector Medium Term Plan 2008–2011', p. 29, 2009. www.edugambia.gm/
- Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, 'Education Response Strategy to COVID-19: Key messages', 2020, retrieved from: <http://www.edugambia.gm/>
- Peruvian Ministry of Education, 'Semáforo Escuela Remoto', 2021, accessed at: minedu.gob.pe/semaforo-escuela/semaforo-escuela-remoto.php
- The Republic of The Gambia, Department of State for Basic and Secondary Education, 'Sector Report', 2006, p. 8.
- The Republic of The Gambia, Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, 'Education Sector Medium Term Plan 2008–2011', 2008, p. 29.
- The Republic of The Gambia, Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education and Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology, 'Education Sector Strategic Plan 2016–2030: Accessible, equitable and inclusive quality education for sustainable development', 2016.
- The Republic of Gambia, 'The Gambia National Education for All Report', Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education and The Gambia National Commission for UNESCO, 2014, pp. 35–36.

The Republic of The Gambia, 'The Gambia National Development Plan 2018–2021', 2018.

The Republic of The Gambia, Department of State for Education, EFA 2000 Assessment Report: The Gambia, p. 6. Retrieved from: EFA2000GAMReport.pdf

VSO International, 'Teachers Speak Out: A policy research report on teachers' motivation and perceptions of their professions in The Gambia, 2007, p. 16. vsointernational.org/sites/default/files/teachers-speak-out_tcm76-22691.pdf

World Bank, *The Gambia Education Country Status Report* (English), Africa Education Country Status Report, World Bank, Washington, D.C., 2011, p. 188.

World Bank, 'Expectations and Aspirations: A new framework for education in the Middle East and North Africa', World Bank, Washington, D.C., 2020.

UNESCO, UNICEF and World Bank, 'Education Responses to COVID-19: Key findings from the joint UNESCO/UNICEF/World Bank Survey of Ministries of Education (Phase 2)', 2020.

UNICEF, 'Caring for the Caregivers During the COVID-19 Crisis', 2021, accessed at unicef.org/media/84131/file/CFC-COVID-19.pdf

for every child, answers

UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti

Via degli Alfani, 58 – 50121

Florence, Italy

Tel: (+39) 055 20 330

Fax: (+39) 055 2033 220

florence@unicef.org

www.unicef-irc.org

twitter: @UNICEFInnocenti

facebook.com/UnicefInnocenti

© 2021 United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

unicef 
Office of Research – Innocenti