



OOSC DEEP DIVE STUDY

**OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDREN
IN MALAWI AND PERU
FOLLOWING THE
COVID-19 PANDEMIC**



Prepared by Q³ Strategy



Save the Children

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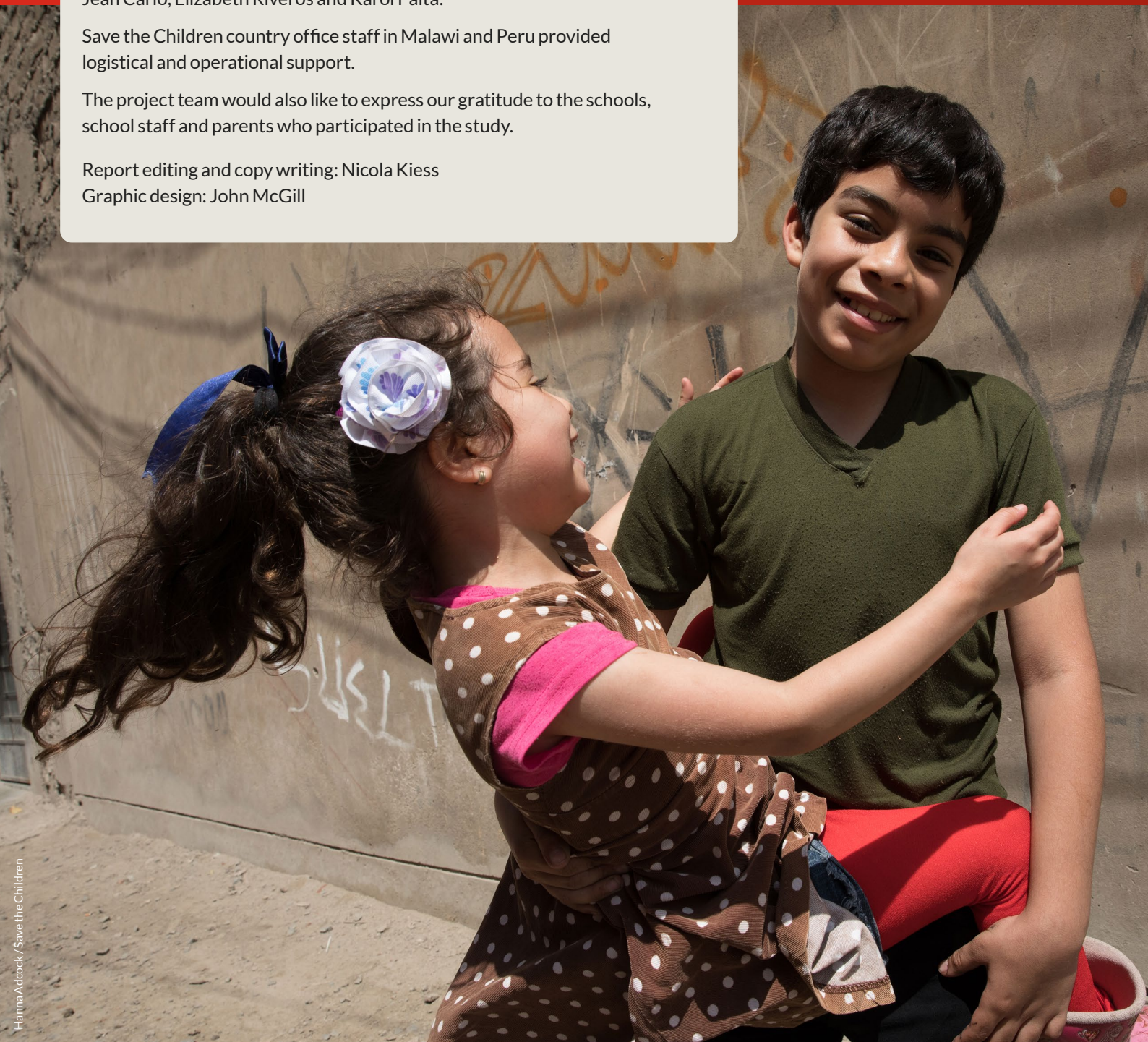
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CONTENTS

Abbreviations	4
Definitions	4
Executive summary	5
Primary report	7
Background	7
Key findings	11
Conclusions & recommendations	16
Malawi country report	18
Malawi background	18
Malawi study methodology	20
Overview of Malawi study results	22
Malawi study results	25
Malawi recommendations	30
Peru country report	31
Peru background	31
Peru study methodology	34
Overview of Peru study results	36
Peru study results	40
Peru recommendations	47
Appendix 1	
Research methodology	48
Appendix 2	
Study limitations	50
Appendix 3	
Stratification criteria	50
Appendix 4	
Guidance for Situation Analysis on Out-of-school Children	51
Appendix 5	
List of sample schools in malawi	72
Appendix 6	
List of sample schools in peru	74
References	76

List of tables and figures

Tables

Table 1: Average ranking of barriers to school participation	13
Table 2: Reported barriers, enablers and priorities for school participation (KIs)	14
Table 3: Number of schools surveyed by region and district (Malawi)	21
Table 4: Key informant interviews (Malawi)	21
Table 5: 2020/21 and 2021/22 enrolment at schools surveyed (Malawi)	25
Table 6: Proportion of children who are out-of-school children (Malawi)	26
Table 7: Number of OOSC by geography and group (Malawi)	27
Table 8: Attendance data for 2021/22 academic year (Malawi)	27
Table 9: Headteacher profiles of children most likely be OOSC (Malawi)	28
Table 10: Headteacher perspectives on changes in enrolment (Malawi)	29
Table 11: Reported barriers, enablers and priorities for school participation (Malawi)	29
Table 12: Number of schools surveyed by region, district and type (Peru)	35
Table 13: Key informant interviews (Peru)	35
Table 14: 2021/22 and 2022/23 enrolment at schools surveyed (Peru)	40
Table 15: Proportion of children who are out-of-school children (Peru)	41
Table 16: Change in number of OOSC by type of school, geography and group (Peru)	42
Table 17: Reported barriers to migrant enrolment and attendance (Peru)	42
Table 18: Attendance data for 2022/23 academic year (Peru)	43
Table 19: Headteacher profiles of children most likely to be out of school (Peru)	44
Table 20: Average ranking of barriers to school participation (Peru)	45
Table 21: Reported barriers, enablers and priorities for school participation (Peru)	46
Table 22: Key informant interviews (Malawi and Peru)	49
Table 23: Overview of resources	51
Table 24: Overview of secondary sources on out-of-school children	53

Figures

Figure 1: Consultations conducted in Malawi for primary data collection	21
Figure 2: School Survey Respondant Role (Malawi)	49
Figure 3: School Survey Respondant Role (Peru)	49

ABBREVIATIONS

CO	Country office
DHS	Demographic and health survey
DRE	<i>Dirección Regional de Educación</i> (Regional Offices of Education, Peru)
FPE	Free primary education
GDP	Gross domestic product
KII	Key informant interview
INEI	<i>Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática</i> (National Institute of Statistics and Informatics, Peru)
IPE	Peruvian Institute of Economy
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
LEA	Local education authority
MINEDU	Ministry of Education, Peru
MK	Malawian Kwacha
NAR	Net attendance rate
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OOSC	Out-of-school children
PELA	<i>Programa de Educación Logros de Aprendizaje</i> (Educational Programme for Learning Achievements, Peru)
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PTA	Parent teacher association
SB2S	Safe Back to School
SC	Save the Children
SCI	Save the Children International
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UGEL	<i>Unidad de Gestión Educativa Local</i> (Local Offices for Educational Management, Peru)
UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
UN	United Nations
USD	US Dollars
WHO	World Health Organization

DEFINITIONS

Out-of-school children

There is no universal definition of out-of-school children (OOSC). For the purpose of this study, out-of-school children are defined as children who have never enrolled in school, or who have enrolled in school but not attended for 45 days or more without informing the school in which they enrolled.¹

Dropouts

For the purpose of this study, dropouts are defined as children who have enrolled in school but not attended for 45 days or more without informing the school in which they have enrolled.

Please note that figures have been rounded to either one decimal place, whole number or percentage.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Today, hundreds of millions of children around the globe are out of school. This is a dynamic and complex challenge that prevents children from realising their right to a quality education and could have serious consequences for their future.

In March 2020, schools around the world closed as part of the public health response to the global COVID-19 pandemic. Although most schools have now fully reopened, the number of out-of-school children (OOSC) remains worryingly high in many countries. The pandemic has exacerbated existing barriers to school participation, but it also elevated effective mechanisms that could help to combat some of the key challenges faced by countries and populations most vulnerable to being out of school.

This deep dive study examines the education environment in two countries following the reopening of their schools for in-person teaching, to provide a point in time situational analysis of how the COVID pandemic has impacted school participation.

After closing their gates in March 2020, Malawi's schools reopened for full-time, in-person participation in March 2021, following seven months of full closure and five months of partial closure. This study's primary data collection was conducted in Malawi in January 2022, approximately 10 months after schools fully reopened.

Schools in Peru reopened in March 2022, after two years of full school closure. Primary data collection took place in Peru in May 2022, two months after schools reopened.

Primary data was collected through a survey in schools that had reopened to in-person teaching. Key informant interviews (KIIs) were carried out with key stakeholders including headteachers, ministry of education officials, parents and NGOs, to capture insights on the key barriers to school participation and to better understand the socioeconomic profiles of OOSC.

KEY FINDINGS

School enrolment reduced in the schools we surveyed in Malawi and Peru following COVID related closures.

After schools reopened, there was a 3% reduction in school enrolment in Malawi and a 10% reduction in school enrolment in Peru, across the schools surveyed.

There was a greater reduction in school enrolment amongst boys than girls, in both Malawi and Peru.

In Malawi, 6% fewer boys enrolled in the schools surveyed in 2021/22 compared with just 1% fewer girls. In Peru, 11% fewer boys enrolled in the schools surveyed after school reopening compared with 8% fewer girls.

However, there are still more OOSC who are girls than boys.

Reinforcing findings from other studies, the majority of OOSC in the schools we surveyed in Malawi and Peru were girls. In Malawi, 51% of OOSC were girls and in Peru, this number was 59%. However, a slightly higher proportion of boys were OOSC in Malawi (14% of boys compared with 13% of girls).

Economic barriers presented as the key barriers to school participation following the pandemic.

Indirect costs associated with school such as transport, enrolment fees, soap, lunch, books and uniforms, were the core barrier to school participation according to the study's findings in both Malawi and Peru. The pandemic exacerbated existing economic, structural, and cultural barriers to school participation. In addition, new barriers specific to COVID-19 emerged, such as fears of infection and forced vaccination, which stakeholders cited as amongst the main reasons for reduced enrolment following pandemic-related school closures.

Virtual schooling during the pandemic had some benefits for children in Peru, particularly for older students.

Certain groups who participated in the study said they faced challenges accessing the internet for schooling, particularly in rural areas. However, in Peru, virtual school participation resulted in additional flexibility, which was a benefit for older students who needed to balance school with paid work. The return to in-person teaching made school less accessible for these students. In Malawi, lack of sufficient infrastructure and the high costs of virtual learning meant these benefits were not experienced.

The education of parents had a greater influence on children being in school in Malawi than in Peru.

In Malawi, the educational attainment of parents was perceived to have a significant influence on school attendance across the schools surveyed. Parents who had not been formally educated were less likely to send their children to school, even if they recognised the benefits of education. In Peru, the importance of education for individual and social progress is well established and attendance at the schools surveyed was impacted to a lesser degree by parents' socioeconomic profile. Challenges existed for parents with reduced financial stability, but education was described as 'a way out.'

Children living with disabilities appear to have had renewed learning opportunities during the pandemic.

In both Malawi and Peru, the number and proportion of OOSC with a disability reduced at the schools surveyed following their reopening. The opportunity to access virtual education during school closures may have helped to re-engage some children who have physical disabilities or full-time care needs.

Children who migrate to improve their economic prospects often miss out on school. At the schools surveyed in Malawi, many children were out of school because they had migrated within the country. Boys, in particular, had migrated for work during the agricultural season. In Peru, the study found that children who had arrived from other countries were likely to be out of school because they were not registered when the school year began, or because schools had already reached capacity. Despite global data that highlights the critical challenge of migrant OOSC in Peru, 40% of the headteachers surveyed said they did not recognise any challenges associated with migrant children participation in schools in Peru, indicating a disconnect between their perception and reality.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1** Reduce indirect costs that act as barriers to school participation including the cost of school uniforms, books and examinations, and make good quality education free at the point of access through partnerships across government and programmes targeted towards households that are most at risk of children being out of school.
- 2** Conduct in-depth contextual assessments of the school age population and their access to the internet and digital devices. Focus mechanisms to increase access on populations that have the lowest access.
- 3** Understand the gender and age dynamics of school participation before and during crises and implement programmes accordingly. Incorporate gender-focused programming and conduct research to explore age and gender trends in more depth.
- 4** Conduct additional research to understand migration patterns, particularly those driven by crises, to tackle the impact of migration on school participation and inform education in emergencies (EiE).
- 5** Adapt programme approaches during emergencies and explore widespread research and learning opportunities across emergency settings to understand how educational needs, challenges and strengths are altered during emergencies, particularly those that are large scale.

Our primary report (pages 7–17) outlines key themes that emerged in the study findings across both countries. Please review the country reports (pages 18–47) for more country-specific information on the methodology, results, findings and recommendations for Malawi and Peru.

PRIMARY REPORT



Miguel Arreategui Rodriguez / Save the Children

BACKGROUND

INTRODUCTION

Education is critical for child development and social progress

Education is a fundamental right for every child and that right does not end in times of emergency. Education is also a means to enable other rights and is therefore a vital component in a child's development. Yet despite various global commitments such as Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4² and global initiatives such as Education for All, out-of-school children (OOSC) remain one of the most critical issues in education today.

Healthy early childhood development provides the foundation for learning, behaviour, lifelong health, resilient communities, and successful parenting of the next generation. Access to quality education must be ensured for all children, regardless of their background and/or level of physical or mental ability.³

Studies show that relationships with adults in the life of children are also essential for their development. This typically includes a child's relationship with their parents or caregivers, but also relationships with teachers and other members of the community. Research shows that early adversity, including directly experiencing violence, illness, poverty, child abuse or neglect, is associated with brain development alterations and harmful outcomes.^{4,5} However, positive early years' experiences with responsive, dependable adults can lead to stronger development and long-term success.

Out-of-school children: the challenge

At the end of the 2017/18 school year, about 258 million children and youth were out of school, according to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS). This included 59 million children of primary school age, 62 million lower secondary school children, and 138 million upper secondary school children.⁶ There are extensive inequalities in the distribution of OOSC; children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and the most vulnerable including migrant and refugee children are most likely to be out of school. Studies have conclusively demonstrated that children's socioeconomic class is one of the most significant predictors – if not the single most significant predictor – of their educational success.⁷

Around 20% of all children of primary school age live in conflict-affected countries, but in 2013, around half of all OOSC of primary school age lived in these countries.⁸ The likelihood of young children dropping out of school is significantly higher in conflict-affected countries than elsewhere in the world: only 65% of children in these countries attend the last primary school grade, in comparison to 86% across all low-income countries.⁹ Low educational achievement leads to lowered economic prospects later in life, perpetuating a lack of social mobility across generations.

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the most severe global education disruption in history and exacerbated the existing global OOSC challenge. At the peak of the crisis, UIS data showed that more than 1.6 billion learners across over 190 countries were out of school.¹⁰ Learning losses are almost inevitable; it is estimated that more than 100 million additional children will fall below the minimum proficiency level in reading as a result of the health crisis.¹¹

The impact of the pandemic on the accessibility of education disproportionately affects the most marginalised and deprived children, including young and adolescent girls, children from poor households, and children from rural areas who already had limited access to good quality education prior to the pandemic. These children are at an increased risk of being left behind and not returning to school at all. Save the Children estimates that around 10 million children globally may never return to school following the pandemic.¹²

Research has highlighted the divide in educational opportunities for children depending on their family's income and wealth – even in high income countries, only 75% of children from poor families complete secondary education, compared to 90% of children from the richest families.¹³ Studies also demonstrate a clear correlation between underinvestment in free public education and the number of children out of school. For example, Pakistan has some of the lowest education spending and worst educational inequalities in the world, and 24 million children out of school.¹⁴

There is a clear need for actors across sectors to work collaboratively and commit to realising the right to quality education for all children by ensuring that all children can return to school safely. In addition, they must ensure that systemic issues that are damaging the quality of learning are addressed to safeguard access to good quality education.

The impacts of school closures and the COVID-19 crisis on children is a nascent area of study. There is no universal mechanism to quantify and profile the type of children who are unable to attend school, which results in an inability to target them with the required assistance to complete their education. Many essential potential contributors to global OOSC estimates are either missing or have outdated information. Many countries rely on household surveys and school attendance records to estimate the scale of the OOSC challenge, but given the dynamic nature of the issue these methods of collecting data can be compromised by delays and by data becoming quickly outdated.

The Safe Back to School programme

In 2020, Save the Children declared children's safe return to learning – and to schools, when safe to do so – a global priority. Safe Back to School (SB2S) is Save the Children's global initiative to get the most marginalised children safely back into education and improve their learning outcomes and wellbeing. The campaign is being delivered across three pillars:

- 1 delivery of programmes**
- 2 advocacy and policy campaigns**
- 3 national coordination and leadership.**

Pillar one involves the delivery of programmes with a focus on reducing barriers to learning for marginalised children including girls, children with disabilities, children living in poverty and children that are displaced.

This OOSC deep dive study explores the quantitative and qualitative dimensions of OOSC and the impact of COVID-19 on these measures in two geographically, economically, and culturally diverse countries, Malawi and Peru, while piloting the use of a standardised mechanism for capturing such information. The purpose of this report is to both provide an in-depth understanding of the barriers and enablers for children returning to school and to identify lessons learned and recommendations for future emergencies that impact school participation.

COUNTRY CONTEXT: MALAWI

Located in Southern Africa, Malawi is a narrow, landlocked country bordered by Mozambique, Zambia, and Tanzania. It is divided into three administrative regions – North, Central and South – that reflect historical, socio-cultural, and political differences. The country's current population is 19.1 million and growing fast; the population is expected to double between 2019 and 2038.¹⁵

Malawi remains one of the poorest countries in the world. Despite recent economic growth, more than two-thirds of the population lives in extreme poverty,¹⁶ which is the fourth highest percentage in the world. In addition, Malawi has one of the youngest populations in the world, with 43% of people under the age of 15.¹⁷ From 2014 to 2015, the overall literacy rate in Malawi for the population aged 15 years and older fell from 65% to 62%,¹⁸ ranking Malawi 130th in the world on this measure.

In Malawi, the school dropout rate is high and learning outcomes are poor: a 2010 World Bank report on the country's education system estimated that only 52% of children completed six years of primary school, compared to a regional average of 61% for sub-Saharan Africa. In addition, children's test scores for English and Maths were among the lowest in the region.¹⁹ Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Malawi had significantly improved its school enrolment rates, particularly in primary education. However, the country's OOSC problem persists. While the primary to secondary transition rate is improving it remains low, at an estimated 38% in 2017. Net enrolment rates at the secondary level are only 16%.²⁰

Of those children who transition to secondary education, only 8% go on to tertiary education. UNICEF's 2019 Annual Report on Malawi estimated that around 2.4 million children (41% of all school-age children) were out of school in 2018, primarily due to socioeconomic reasons. These include high rates of child marriage, particularly in the southern part of the country, and lack of access to basic water and sanitation.²¹ USAID reports that only 41% of Malawian students complete primary education (measured by completion of the Standard 8 school year) on time.^{22,23}

Like many other countries in sub-Saharan Africa, Malawi experienced minimal direct impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, compared to high-income countries. By October 2022, the country had experienced 88,073 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 2,683 deaths, ranking amongst the lowest in the world for deaths per 100,000 population.²⁴ However, despite lower case and fatality rates, the pandemic evoked fear-led behaviours among Malawi's population, disrupted normal life habits, and impacted school enrolment and attendance.²⁵

In March 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic escalated, the Ministry of Education ordered the closure of all public and private schools and colleges. Schools partially reopened five months later for exam classes and fully reopened for in-person learning in October 2020. Following a surge in COVID-19 infections in Malawi, schools and colleges closed again in January 2021. Schools fully reopened for the second time in early March 2021.

UNICEF estimates that around six million school-age children in Malawi were forced to stay at home after schools in the country closed in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.²⁶ This caused great concern, as evidence from the 2013 Ebola outbreak shows that the longer girls in Malawi are out of school following school closures, their probability of returning to school greatly diminishes and the number of child marriages and adolescent pregnancies increases.²⁷

In 2020, the risk of adolescent pregnancy was highest for girls in East and Southern Africa (282,000), followed by West and Central Africa (260,000) and Latin America and the Caribbean (181,000).²⁸

COUNTRY CONTEXT: PERU

Peru is a country on the central western coast of South America, facing the Pacific Ocean.²⁹ The country's estimated population is 33 million.³⁰ Peru has a strong macroeconomic foundation including a relatively low public debt to GDP ratio. Prior to the pandemic, Peru experienced rates of economic growth well above the average for the region for over two decades. The official moderate poverty rate declined from 42% in 2007 to 20% in 2019.³¹ Peru's economy rebounded strongly in 2021 following the COVID-19 pandemic, but poverty reduction was slowed by structural rigidities in the labour market and inflation.³²

In Peru, high school dropout rates continue to be a problem. At the national level, 12% of children leave school before the age of 13, and 17% do not finish secondary school.³³ After decades of expansion, the Peruvian education system has relatively high levels of access, but a low and variable quality of teaching. The extent of the country's learning crisis was seen in 2013, when Peru ranked last in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), despite overall improvements for maths, reading and science.³⁴ Even today, the quality of education remains low for rural and marginalised groups, as many of the social services that are available are concentrated in the country's affluent urban districts.³⁵ The key barriers towards high-quality education are poor infrastructure, inadequate learning materials, outdated curricula, and a lack of well-trained teachers.

Significant inequalities related to geographical location, poverty status, ethnicity, cultural identity, and gender exist in educational attainment within the country and these socioeconomic factors are drivers of poor educational outcomes. Indigenous youth, for example, are more likely to be poor, come from uneducated households and reside in rural areas, where access to public services, transport and educational facilities is limited. Spanish-speaking students are more likely to access and complete basic education than the 12 per cent of young Peruvians who speak an indigenous tongue as their maternal language.³⁶

Peru was one of the countries hardest hit by COVID-19, with the number of deaths per 100,000 population being among the highest in the world. It is estimated that there are currently some 1.29 million Venezuelan migrants and refugees in Peru and approximately 250,000 of these migrants are children.^{37,38} Approximately 67,957 refugee and migrant children are not registered in Peru's Ministry of Education system.³⁹ A recent study focusing on Lima and La Libertad, two of the most populated regions in Peru and homes to the greatest number of migrants, found that 25% of migrant and refugee children were not attending school. The study identified key barriers to education that were faced by Venezuelan children including insufficient space available (45%), lack of access to the internet to enrol (29%) and arrival in Peru after enrolment had closed (23%), among other barriers.⁴⁰

In Peru, most schools closed to in-person teaching from March 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic began to escalate, until March 2022. Whilst virtual education was available, many children did not set foot inside a classroom for over two years. Data from UIS has highlighted that the early quarantine imposed by the Peruvian government impacted the education of 9.9 million students in the country.⁴¹

A small number of remote, rural schools continued in-person classes during the pandemic and a handful of private schools and well-resourced public schools began receiving pupils for two half-days a week in March 2021. However, 99% of Peru's schools remained closed completely or offered only online classes throughout the pandemic,⁴² resulting in a dynamic change within households. Living spaces became classrooms and parents, some of whom were already experiencing financial pressures, often became their child's teachers.

Over the course of the pandemic, the vast majority of children in Peru had to learn at home, via television, mobile phone or the radio. The Ministry of Education created a virtual educational platform called *Aprendo en casa* (I learn at home) to help students, but the majority of children did not have access to mobile devices to participate in the virtual learning.⁴³ According to the INEI, only 40% of households in Peru have internet access and this falls to only 6% of households in rural areas.⁴⁴ Data from the Network of Urban and Rural Municipalities of Peru (Remurpe) showed that 77% of the 500 local governments targeted by the remote learning programme (462) reported difficulties accessing the platform.⁴⁵ This meant that during the pandemic, dropout rates increased significantly, with more than one-third of children not attending school, despite the government's remote learning programme.⁴⁶

An important educational trend seen during COVID-19 was a large shift of children moving from private to public schools. According to a report by *Inversion en la Infancia*, 110,405 regular basic education students moved from private to public education.⁴⁷ This is the likely result of lack of affordability due to squeezed household income. This shift has had a great impact on access to schools (especially for migrants and other vulnerable groups), since there were no vacancies within schools nearby and groups with limited resources could not afford the transportation to schools further away.

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

This deep-dive study was commissioned by Save the Children International (SCI) and conducted by Q3 Strategy. It builds on COVID's Educational Time Bomb: Out-of-school children global snapshot, a rapid assessment conducted in 2021 that comprised an online survey of OOSC in schools across six countries – Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Malawi, Nigeria, Somalia, and Uganda – during the COVID-19 pandemic.⁴⁸ The aim of this study was to better understand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on OOSC by establishing a mechanism to collect accurate, standardised, real-time data around children who are out of school, and gathering information on OOSC in two countries.

The study objectives were to:

- 1 Establish a systematic and efficient approach** to gathering a situation analysis of OOSC that could be leveraged in other contexts and at different time points.
- 2 Gather primary data** on the OOSC situation in given contexts, to advise programmatic targeting and policy recommendations, engaging with key stakeholders.

A mixed methods approach was used to explore the OOSC context in Malawi and Peru. Primary data collection was conducted over a 14-day period in January 2022 in Malawi, and over a 15-day period in May 2022 in Peru. Primary data was collected through surveys in schools with headteachers and deputy headteachers and through 42 key informant interviews (KIIs).

A total of 125 schools were surveyed in Malawi (n=63) and Peru (n=62). In Malawi, all surveys were conducted in primary schools. In Peru, 37% of surveys were conducted in primary schools (n=23), 45% in secondary schools (n=28) and 18% in basic alternative schools (n=11). For more information on the research methodology, please see Appendix 1.

KEY FINDINGS

School enrolment reduced following the COVID-19 pandemic

The study findings show a reduction in enrolment following the reopening of schools after the pandemic, across the schools surveyed in both Malawi and Peru.

In Malawi, the total number of students who enrolled across the 63 schools sampled was 104,805 in the 2021/22 academic year, compared to 108,470 enrolments in the previous school year. This was a 3% reduction in enrolment.

In Peru, the total number of students who enrolled across the 62 schools surveyed was 27,677 in the 2022/23 academic year, compared to 30,588 enrolments in the previous school year. This was a 10% reduction in school enrolment across the schools surveyed, following their reopening.

There was a greater reduction in school enrolment amongst boys than girls, in both Malawi and Peru. In Malawi, enrolment reduced by only 1% for girls compared to 6% for boys. Similarly in Peru, enrolment reduced by 8% for girls compared to 11% for boys.

Out-of-school children increased in Malawi but decreased in Peru

In Malawi, the study findings indicate that across the schools surveyed, there was an estimated increase of 5 percentage points in the proportion of OOSC following school reopening (from 9% to 14%). This increase was greatest in the Central region, where the proportion of OOSC increased by 9 percentage points. Whilst the findings are not causative, qualitative insight would suggest that this is due the geographical positioning of the Central districts being closest to economic opportunities (e.g., Lake Malawi, the country's main tourist attraction and centre of the farming industry).

The number of OOSC increased by 45% in Malawi and this increase was slightly greater in girls (49%) than in boys (42%). The estimated dropout rate for the 2021/22 academic year was 12% based on the data from the schools surveyed in Malawi and was highest amongst schools surveyed in the North region (22%) compared to schools in the South region (7%) and the Central region (12%).

In Peru, the findings indicate that across the schools surveyed, the proportion of OOSC decreased by 6 percentage points following the reopening of schools.⁴⁹ The dropout rate for the surveyed schools in Peru could not be established as at the time of primary data collection, schools had not yet been open for 45 days. This meant it was not possible to identify children who had enrolled but not attended for 45 days as per the definition on page 4.

Existing gender inequalities are reflected in a greater number of OOSC girls – but the pandemic has driven an increase in the proportion of Malawian boys who are OOSC

Amongst schools surveyed in Malawi, 14,173 children were identified as OOSC in the 2021/22 academic year (out of 104,805 enrolled). This represents 14% of the school population. Across the schools surveyed in Peru, 1,158 children were identified as OOSC in the 2022/23 academic year (out of 27,677 enrolled). This represents 4% of the school population.

However, there were variations in the rate of OOSC according to gender and disability status.

In many countries, including Malawi, girls are typically the demographic group that are most likely to be out of school for reasons such as early marriage, early pregnancy and other gender-based factors.^{50,51} This is borne out by the survey findings, as 51% of OOSC in the schools surveyed in Malawi were girls. However, from 2020/21 to 2021/22 there was a greater increase in boys who were OOSC than girls. The economic crisis driven by the pandemic's impact on household income may have resulted in more boys migrating to seek economic opportunities and therefore leaving education.

Published literature also points to the importance of visible female role models in schools as a factor supporting continued female participation in education. In a study assessing the impact of female teachers in rural primary schools, it was found that dropout rates for girls were lower in schools that had at least one female teacher when compared with those without female teachers.⁵²

In Peru, 59% of OOSC across the schools surveyed were girls. This reflects gender inequality and disparities present in society. In Peru, child marriage and early pregnancy are ongoing challenges that disproportionately impact girls. This was highlighted by the study findings, with 45% of survey respondents citing early marriage as a key reason for girls being out of school.



Thoko Chikondi/Save the Children

School participation has increased for children living with a disability following school reopening

Amongst the schools surveyed in both Malawi and Peru, the findings indicate a decrease in both the number and proportion of OOSC with a disability following school reopening. The opportunity to access virtual education during school closures may have helped to re-engage some children with physical disabilities and full-time care needs in education. The absolute number of OOSC with a disability reduced by 79% following school reopening in Malawi, and the proportion of OOSC with a disability decreased by 21 percentage points. Similarly, the number of OOSC with a disability reduced by 2% in Peru following school reopening and as the proportion of OOSC with a disability reduced by 5 percentage points.

In Peru, enrolment of children with disabilities increased by 21% at the schools surveyed between the 2021/22 and 2022/23 academic years. However in Malawi, enrolment of children with disabilities reduced by 8% at the schools surveyed. This indicates that while children with disabilities who are already enrolled are more likely to participate in school, in Malawi there are still barriers to enrolment for children with disabilities.

Low family income and indirect school costs are the greatest barriers to school participation

The study found that economic and financial barriers were the key barriers to school participation across the schools surveyed in Malawi and Peru. In Malawi, boys from poor backgrounds are often forced into work and girls from poor backgrounds often get married early or assume household duties, like tending for younger siblings during school hours. Cultural differences regarding the value of education in the North and South regions of Malawi^{53,54} emerged as a key factor in school participation, with attendance higher in the North region (and the Central region, due to migration patterns).

Despite education being free in Malawi and Peru, associated costs for items such as books, transportation, enrolment costs and uniforms, make education inaccessible to vulnerable populations in both countries, including those who are living in poverty and migrant populations in Peru.

Table 1 (opposite) shows the average ranking of barriers to school participation according to school representatives and other interviewed stakeholders, who were asked to rank each barrier on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being the lowest barrier and 5 being the highest. In both Malawi and Peru, family income was the highest-ranking barrier to school participation, with an average rank of 4.1 out of 5 in Malawi, and 3.1 out of 5 in Peru. This was followed by lack of funding for schools, with an average rank of 3.9 in Malawi and 3.0 in Peru.

Table 1
Average ranking of barriers to school participation (1= lowest, 5 = highest)

Barriers	Malawi		Peru		
	All (primary)	All	Secondary	Primary	Basic
Family income	4.1	3.1	2.9	3.5	2.6
Lack of funding for schools	3.9	3.0	2.8	3.1	3.4
Economic background (wealth)	3.9	3.0	2.9	3	3.1
Parents' level of education	4	2.2	1.9	2.7	1.8
Parent or family, perception of education value	3.9	2.3	2.0	2.8	1.7
Lack of education programmes and initiatives to reduce out-of-school children	3.7	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.2
Household characteristics (divorced, single parent, abandoned)	3.2	2.8	2.5	2.9	3.2
School closure due to COVID-19	3.4	2.5	2.3	2.9	2.3
Physical barriers (e.g., bad roads, no public transport)	3.0	2.9	3.0	2.9	2.6
Fear of getting COVID-19	3.2	2.5	2.7	2.4	2.5
School facilities/infrastructure (e.g., WASH)	3.5	2.2	2.5	2.4	1.3
School accessibility (distance, quality of roads)	3.2	2.2	2.0	2.5	1.7
Students lack protection against COVID-19	3.1	2.3	2.2	2.3	2.3
Cultural and religious norms and values	2.8	1.9	1.7	2.2	1.5
Personal characteristics (e.g., age, gender)	2.8	1.7	1.4	2	1.4
Parental status resulting in social exclusion (e.g., refugee status, displacement status)	2.4	2.0	1.7	2.3	1.6
Access to transportation	2.2	2.2	2.0	2.5	1.9
Safety concerns (bullying, violence)	1.9	2.3	1.8	2.7	2.1
Quarantining because of COVID-19 (symptoms, contact with positive person or tested positive)	1.7	2.2	2.3	2.4	1.6
Physical or non-physical disability (e.g., learning difficulty)	2.1	1.7	1.4	2.1	1.5
School culture and norms	1.9	1.8	1.6	2.1	1.6
Safeguarding issues (e.g., trauma or violence preventing school attendance)	1.8	1.8	1.7	2.0	1.6
Status of the child resulting in social exclusion (e.g., migrant refugee status, displacement status)	1.6	1.8	1.6	2.1	1.5
Teachers are not in school because they have/had COVID-19	1.9	1.5	1.4	1.7	1.2
Quarantining because of COVID-19 (symptoms, contact with positive person or tested positive)	1.7	2.2	2.3	2.4	1.6
Teachers are not in school because of fear of getting COVID-19	1.7	1.6	1.4	1.9	1.3
Language of instruction	1.6	1.5	1.3	1.8	1.4
Other COVID related barriers	1.4	1.7	1.7	1.9	1.4
Teachers are not in school because they are not getting paid because of COVID-19 implications	1.5	1.3	1.2	1.5	1.1

Economic barriers also emerged during KIIs as the key obstacle to school participation in both Malawi and Peru. Table 2 (below) provides a summary of the key themes emerging from key informant interviews in relation to:

- 1 barriers to school participation;
- 2 facilitators to school participation; and
- 3 priorities for action.

Parents' educational attainment is a key factor in their approach to and expectations for their children's education

The study found that parents were the key facilitator of school participation, with the role of parents and their perspectives emerging as a key theme in both the survey and key informant interviews. Whether or not parents had been educated and their subsequent success (or perceived lack of success) were key factors in their approach to their children's schooling and their children's attitudes towards schooling.

In Malawi, surveyed parents generally acknowledged and agreed with the importance of education for positive long-term outcomes. This was nuanced based on the socioeconomic profile of the parents (namely whether they were educated), which impacted their prioritisation of schooling in the context of socioeconomic barriers. Overall, the study highlighted that parents who do not have formal education are less likely to send their children to school (despite recognising the benefits of education), which may explain the higher number of OOSC identified in Malawi compared to in Peru.

However, in Peru, the importance of education for individual and social progress was well established and impacted to a lesser degree by the socioeconomic profile of the parent. Challenges did exist for parents with reduced financial stability, but education was depicted as 'the way out.' One of the key barriers for migrant children in Peru was the fact that parents were often dependent on their children to bring income into the household, making it difficult to prioritise education.

Table 2
Reported barriers, enablers and priorities for school participation (KIIs)

Theme	Total	Malawi	Peru
Focus 1: Key barriers to school participation			
Economic barriers (e.g., entering the workforce, ability to pay exam fees)	69	33	36
Societal barriers (e.g., gender-based norms, child marriage, early pregnancy)	27	5	22
Exclusion of vulnerable population	24	6	18
Cultural norms (e.g., value of education, religious beliefs)	21	12	9
Local infrastructure (e.g., transportation routes, internet access)	19	7	12
School infrastructure (e.g., access to clean water, sanitisation stations)	16	5	11
Lack of infrastructure for disabled people (e.g., access ramps)	9	3	6
Focus 2: Enablers of school participation			
Influence of parental profile on school participation	57	16	41
Role of parents in encouraging school participation	53	20	33
Role of children in influencing parents to support school participation	18	6	12
Role of parents in discouraging school participation	17	7	10
Focus 3: Action to address OOSC and key programme and policy priorities to be implemented			
Governmental policy and legislative adoption/revision	95	45	50
Design and components of programmes to address OOSC	29	12	17

Policy and legislative action, specifically around ensuring the continuity of education during emergencies and to incentivise the completion of education, were also reported as an enabler and seen as the core mechanism to effectively tackle school participation challenges arising prior to and during the pandemic, particularly for vulnerable groups.

There was a stark difference in the effectiveness of virtual schooling in Peru and Malawi

Many survey respondents in Peru highlighted the value of digital participation in supporting access to remote education during school closures.⁵⁵ However, certain groups also highlighted the difficulty that they faced accessing the internet for schooling, particularly in rural areas. The study found some significant benefits of virtual learning in terms of flexibility of working arrangements for parents and students, particularly for older students (and adult learners) in basic alternative schools and students who migrated to the provinces during the pandemic, who were able to participate in learning if they had access to digital devices.

The return to in-person participation was associated with a greater dropout rate, particularly within basic alternative schools, which cater for older students. This is likely to be due to barriers such as poor transport, the cost of travel to class, and students' need to have an income or a job during school hours.

Conversely in Malawi, digital schooling was extensively criticised. While the government did make efforts to broaden the roll out of digital technologies, this was inaccessible given the poor infrastructure and high costs associated with learning via virtual forums (e.g., the cost of internet data). Consequently, digital forms of education were not effective in circumventing the gap in access to learning during the pandemic, as they were not accessible to many.



Miguel Arreategui Rodriguez / Save the Children

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Despite the different social, political, and economic environments in Malawi and Peru, there are several similarities in the OOSC landscape. Recommendations for both countries are:

Reduce the indirect cost of participating in school.

In both Peru and Malawi, economic barriers emerged as the key barrier to school participation. Aside from living in poverty, the cost of uniforms, exams, and soap (for washing uniforms) were raised in Malawi as key drivers of poor school enrolment and participation. Similarly in Peru, high transportation costs, the cost of school enrolment, and the cost of uniforms were reported as key barriers. For boys, the economic climate following the pandemic is resulting in additional pressure to be out of school earning an income. Pregnancy and marriage were key reasons for girls being out of school. Costs of schooling and lack of school infrastructure (from transport to toilets and textbooks) may precipitate their disinterest in school and promote risky sexual behaviour and early school exit.

- **Recommendation:** Reduce indirect costs that act as barriers to school participation and make good quality education free at the point of access. Provide free learning materials to all students and do not impose costly requirements to attend school that do not contribute to learning, such as uniforms. Specific examples emerging from the study include: make uniforms non-compulsory, provide meals in school, ensure examinations are free, and provide sanitary products for young girls.
- **Recommendation:** Explore new partnerships including with other governmental departments (e.g., Ministry of Transport) to improve local infrastructure (e.g., roads and public transportation services) around and within school, particularly considering the accessibility needs of children with disabilities.
- **Recommendation:** Target programmatic activities at populations or households most at risk of children being out of school due to financial barriers. In the short-term, additional government funding to support the reduction of indirect costs may be limited. Mechanisms to better understand at risk households within target geographies may help with targeting of support.

Conduct contextual assessments to support widespread introduction of virtual delivery approaches in the case of an emergency. Digital participation is a valuable tool and in the case of a global or regional emergency (e.g., COVID, Ebola, etc.) it is the only viable approach to sustained learning. As highlighted by the findings in Peru, such approaches may broaden access to education for specific groups within society, however the disparity in access to digital devices and the internet across populations may widen inequities in access, and subsequent educational outcomes. There is limited data on the level of access that students have to digital devices (smartphones, tablets, or computers) and stable internet access in both countries in this study. Given the economic climates in Malawi and Peru, and the proportion of the population living in poverty, it is critical to gain a better understanding of access before virtual models of education are introduced. The digital divide and inequity in access to digital services is well recognised in literature and was highlighted in the study findings, particularly in Malawi.

- **Recommendation:** Recognise that the time to prepare for emergencies is now. In anticipation of future health emergencies or situations requiring virtual schooling, conduct in-depth contextual assessments of the school age population and their access to digital devices and the internet. Mechanisms to increase access should focus on populations with the lowest access in collaboration with central government, to guarantee the delivery of services to the most vulnerable in the event of an emergency.
- **Recommendation:** Adopt the Comprehensive School Safety Framework 2022–2030 (CSSF), which provides strategic guidance to duty bearers and their partners to promote safe, equitable and continuous access to a quality education for all.⁵⁶

Understand gender and age dynamics in relation to school participation before and during crisis and implement programmes accordingly.

The study findings indicate a shift in the gender dynamics of school participation during crisis and suggest that there has been a greater change in the number and proportion of boys who are OOSC following the pandemic, predominantly driven by economic factors. In some cultures, boys are seen by families as a mechanism to generate income, whilst girls are seen as a cost. Both genders are impacted during crisis and under the auspices of heightened financial pressure; early pregnancy and child marriage increases amongst girls whilst boys transition out of school and into the workforce. Adolescents are more at risk of dropping out as they approach working or marrying age.

- **Recommendation:** Incorporate gender focused programming to offset the impact of crises on education. Typically, educational programming focuses on increasing participation amongst female students, however there is a critical need to strengthen school participation for all genders and to increase focus on the participation of boys in education during crises, to circumvent the apparent impact of increased pressures on them to earn an income.
- **Recommendation:** Explore in more-depth the recent trend in increasing numbers of boys being OOSC since the pandemic and ascertain likely future patterns and response needs.
- **Recommendation:** Ensure that information and awareness campaigns are specific to the needs of children at different ages, and that mechanisms are in place to support older children who are reaching working age to continue their education without negatively impacting household income.

Understand migration patterns, particularly those driven by crisis and implement programmes accordingly.

Migration emerged as both a driver of school drop-out and OOSC (in Malawi) and a key barrier to school participation (in Peru). In Malawi, many children (particularly boys) leave school and migrate within the country in search of better economic possibilities. Whilst in Peru, children migrate across borders to continue their education but often cannot, due to schools being full and challenging enrolment requirements.

- **Recommendation:** Carry out additional research to better understand and tackle the various ways in which migration can impact school participation and inform education in emergencies (EiE). Establish mechanisms to understand migration patterns within emergency contexts and incorporate approaches that enable school participation.

Adapt education in emergencies (EiE) programme approaches and leverage knowledge gained across emergency settings.

The study findings suggest a shift in educational needs, challenges and strengths of existing educational services during emergencies, particularly large-scale emergencies. Barriers and facilitators for education may change during emergencies and vulnerabilities are typically exacerbated. Existing interventions and programmes may need revision and the application of learnings gained from global emergencies like COVID-19 and other emergency settings (e.g., conflict zones).

- **Recommendation:** Explore widespread learning opportunities before emergencies occur. Recognising that the COVID-19 pandemic is just one of many global emergencies, research across a range of emergency settings may be helpful to understand critical components of programmes that should be adjusted at the onset of emergencies with the potential to disrupt learning.
- **Recommendation:** Advocate for reduction in siloes between governmental departments. The pandemic highlighted the interconnectivity of all elements of society and the study findings highlight the need for cross-functional and cross-sectoral responses to address multi-dimensional barriers to education.

For more information on the study findings for each country, please explore the results of the country reports in the following sections.

MALAWI COUNTRY REPORT



Thoko Chikondi / Save the Children

MALAWI BACKGROUND

INTRODUCTION

Malawi is an ethnically diverse, youthful and vibrant nation, often referred to as the 'warm heart of Africa.'⁵⁷ The population currently stands at 19.1 million and according to a 2018 census, young people make up the largest and fastest growing proportion of the population, with 51% of Malawians aged below 18 years old and 70% aged below 30 years.^{58,59}

The Malawian population comprises different ethnic groups including Chichewa (Chewa), Nyanja, Yao, Tumbuka, Lomwe, Sena, Tonga, Ngoni, Ngonde, Asians and Europeans. The Chewa people form the largest single group within the population (36%) and are largely in the Central and South regions of the country. The Yao people (14%) are predominately found around the South region of Lake Malawi and the Tumbuka (9%) are found mainly in the North of the country.⁶⁰

EDUCATION IN MALAWI

On 1 July 2022, Malawi had 6,583 primary schools with 4,956,667 children enrolled and 1,524 secondary schools with 392,229 students enrolled.⁶¹ Primary school education in Malawi comprises of 8 years, commonly referred to as Standard 1 to Standard 8. The official primary school age in Malawi is 6–13 years, however it is very common for students of varying ages to attend primary school as many students must repeat some primary years. Students must gain a Primary School Leaving Certificate based on their Standard 8 final exam results in order to progress to secondary school. USAID reports that only 41% of Malawian students complete primary education (measured by completion of the Standard 8 school year) on time.⁶²

While the primary to secondary transition rate is improving it remains low, at 38% in 2017 according to educational management information system (EMIS) data. Net enrolment rates at the secondary level are only 16%.⁶³ From 2014 to 2015, the overall literacy rate in Malawi for the population aged 15 years and older fell from 65% to 62%, ranking Malawi 130th in the world on this measure.^{64,65}

THE STATE OF PLAY IN MALAWI PRIOR TO THE PANDEMIC

Prior to the pandemic, Malawi had significantly improved its school enrolment rates, particularly in primary education. However, there was a persistent OOSC problem. UNICEF reported in 2018 that only 59% of school-going children in Malawi finished the first four years of primary education⁶⁶ and its 2019 Annual Report on Malawi estimated that around 2.4 million children (41% of all school-age children) were out of school in 2018.⁶⁷

Based on an educational attainment assessment of 15 to 24-year-olds in 2010, nearly 60% of students failed to complete primary school, only 16% received some secondary education and 5% received no education at all.⁶⁸ Furthermore, Malawi has one of the highest school dropout rates in Southern Africa, with 15% of girls and 12% of boys dropping out between Standard 1, 5 and 8 of primary school in 2016.⁶⁹

Before the pandemic, disparities in educational attainment, enrolment and retention were noticeable between children with and without disabilities, children of different genders, and children from poorer communities. UNICEF reports indicate that overall disability prevalence in Malawi among children aged 5–17 years was 6% in 2018, and Malawi has signed and ratified several international conventions that enshrine the rights of children with disabilities to education.⁷⁰ While there are some national policies addressing the implementation of special needs education in Malawi (such as the National Special Needs Education Policy), prior to the pandemic there were still systematic and socio-cultural barriers to participation of children with disabilities in education.

However, educational data for children with disabilities seemed to be improving. A situation analysis by UNICEF highlights an increase from 2–3% in the proportion of children with special needs in both primary and secondary schools between 2009 and 2018.⁷¹ However, in 2017 the Malawi Human Rights Commission found that the 21 special needs schools in Malawi, along with institutions for children with disabilities, were inadequately funded.⁷²

There were also significant differences in school participation between girls and boys in Malawi before the pandemic. Historically, girls have been more likely to drop out of school than boys, particularly during adolescence, and they typically drop out earlier. In 2010, half the girls who dropped out of school (and 8% of boys) reported pregnancy or marriage as their main reason for leaving school.⁷³ Malawi also has high rates of child marriage (42% of girls are married by age 18), although the constitution was amended in February 2017 to raise the minimum age of marriage, from 15 years old with parental consent to 18 years old.⁷⁴

To address the OOSC problem, the Malawian Government developed the Education Sector Implementation Plan II (2013/14 – 2017/18). A 2018/19 education sector performance report⁷⁵ reviewed progress against the plan and outlined the government's ambition to strengthen education management and accountability within the education sector, to improve learning outcomes for all. In the 2018/19 financial year, the overall budget for the education sector was MK 275.8 billion (USD 249.5 million), of which MK 224.5 billion (USD 219.4 million) was for recurrent expenditure, and MK 51.3 billion (USD 50.1 million) was for development outlays. The basic education programme received the largest share of the recurrent budget (62%).

EDUCATION IN MALAWI DURING THE PANDEMIC

In March 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic escalated, the Ministry of Education ordered the closure of all public and private schools and colleges. Schools partially reopened five months later for exam classes and fully reopened for in-person learning in October 2020. Following a surge in COVID-19 infections in Malawi, schools and colleges closed again in January 2021. Schools fully reopened for the second time in early March 2021 and have remained open since.

UNICEF estimates that around six million school-age children in Malawi were forced to stay at home after schools in the country closed in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.⁷⁶ This caused great concern, as evidence from the 2013 Ebola outbreak shows that the longer girls in Malawi are out of school following school closures, their probability of returning to school greatly diminishes and the number of child marriages and adolescent pregnancies increases.⁷⁷ In 2020, the risk of adolescent pregnancy was highest for girls in East and Southern Africa (282,000), followed by West and Central Africa (260,000) and Latin America and the Caribbean (181,000).⁷⁸

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM IN MALAWI

It is crucial to understand how many children in Malawi are out of school, who they are, and why they are out of school, to inform policy and practice that will improve the situation and support progress towards global goals for education. However, research on the number of OOSC, their socio-demographic profile, and reasons for poor school attendance and declining literacy rates in Malawi is limited. Between September 2021 and January 2023, Q3 Strategy conducted this in-depth research study to better understand the OOSC context in Malawi following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Focusing on primary school education in Malawi, the study aimed to capture real-time data on the number of OOSC, the possible reasons for these children being out of school, and the socio-demographic characteristics that make children of primary school age susceptible to being out of school.

OVERVIEW OF THE MALAWI STUDY

This, deep-dive study was commissioned by Save the Children International and conducted by Q3 Strategy. It builds on a rapid assessment conducted in 2021 that comprised an online survey of OOSC in schools across six countries – Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Malawi, Nigeria, Somalia and Uganda – during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The aim of this study was to:

- i inform policy** and
- ii strengthen programmes** to improve real-time, effective data capture of OOSC and Save the Children's responses to future crises.

The study objectives were to:

- 1 Establish a systematic and efficient approach** to gathering a situation analysis of OOSC that could be leveraged in other contexts and at different time points.
- 2 Gather primary data** on the OOSC situation in given contexts, to advise programmatic targeting and policy recommendations, engaging with key stakeholders.

MALAWI STUDY METHODOLOGY

A mixed methods approach was used to explore the OOSC context in Malawi. Quantitative and qualitative insights emerged from data collected face-to-face using the OOSC study survey (Appendix 4) with a representative from each school sampled in Malawi. Additional qualitative insights emerged from semi-structured interviews conducted with key stakeholders who play an influential role in school attendance (including parents and representatives from NGOs and donor organisations).⁷⁹

In Malawi, it was important to ensure that the geographical areas selected for the study were representative of the cultural and economic heterogeneity across the country. Stratification criteria (see Appendix 3) were developed in collaboration with Save the Children Malawi to support a stratified randomisation approach that was used for school sampling. Based on this, 60 schools⁸⁰ were selected for primary data collection in Malawi. However, due to adverse weather conditions it was not possible to visit some of the selected schools in Chikwawa so alternative schools were selected in Machinga, which resulted in a sample of 63 schools across 7 districts (see Appendix 5 for a list). All three geographical regions (North, Central and South) were represented, as shown in Figure 1.

It is important to note that primary data collection in Malawi focused on primary schools, as these are the focus of compulsory education in Malawi and Save the Children's OOSC programmes in Malawi.

Primary data was collected in-person over a 14-day period in January 2022. Leveraging tools developed as part of the guidance (see Appendix 4), the data collection team conducted primary data collection in schools in consultation with key stakeholders. The team comprised a project lead, a project associate and seven enumerators.

A purposive sampling framework approach was used to identify the most relevant stakeholders for key informant interviews, who could share their knowledge, experience or perceptions of the barriers to school attendance. With support from Save the Children Malawi, stakeholders were identified and selected for key informant interviews. With support from headteachers, the research team was connected to relevant parent teacher associations (PTAs), which was the primary recruitment mechanism for consultation with parents.

PARTICIPANTS

Data on OOSC was collected from 63 schools across 7 districts.

Figure 1
Consultations conducted in Malawi for primary data collection

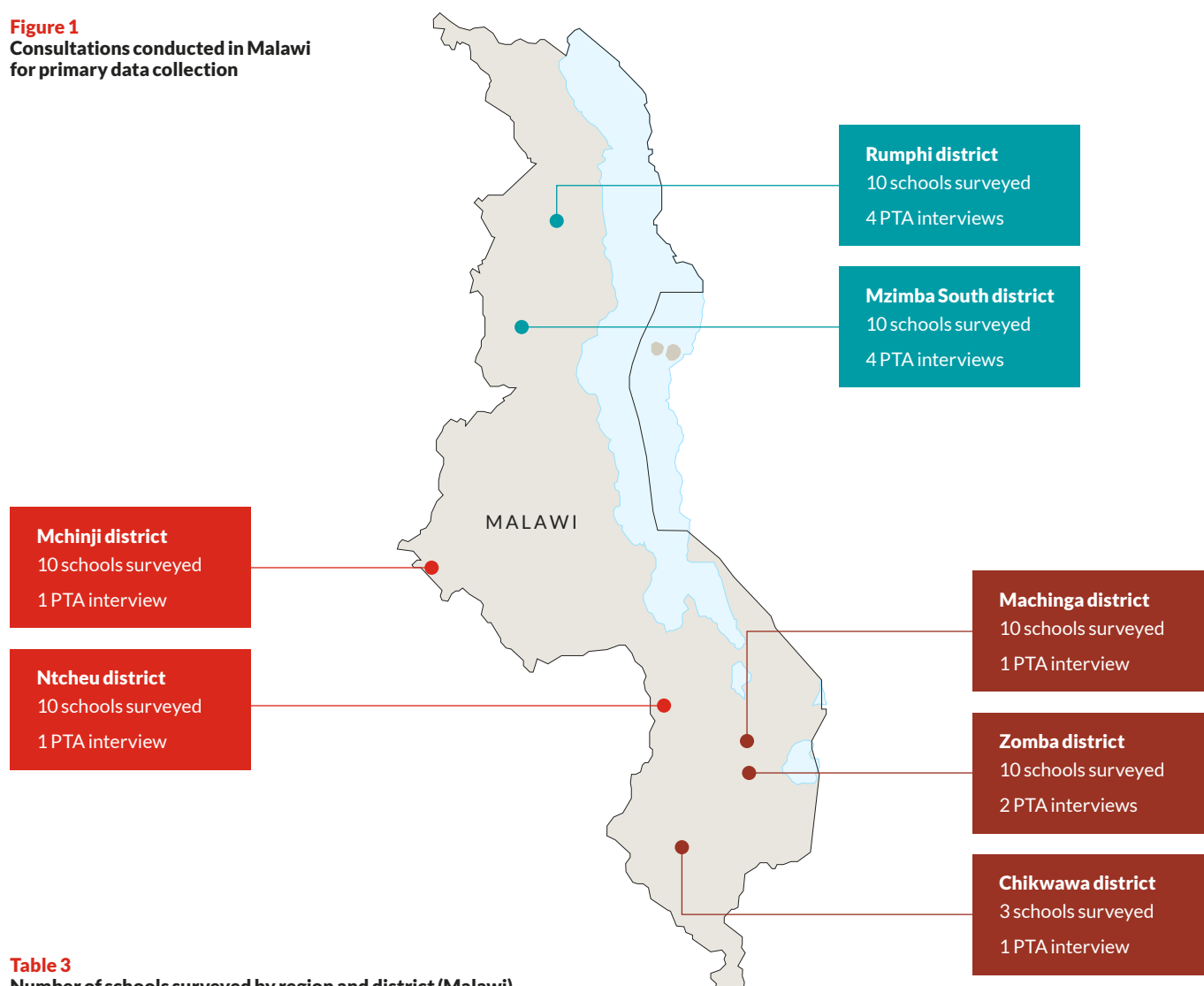


Table 3
Number of schools surveyed by region and district (Malawi)

Location	Number of schools
Malawi	63
North	20
Mzimba South	10
Rhumpi	10
Central	20
Mchinji	10
Ntcheu	10
South	23
Zomba	10
Chikwawa	3
Machinga	10

Table 4
Key informant interviews (Malawi)

Stakeholder group	Number of interviews conducted			
International NGOs	3			
Local NGOs	3			
Donor organisations	1			
Academics	0			
Government officials	0			
	North	Central	South	Total
Parents	8	3	3	14

OVERVIEW OF MALAWI STUDY RESULTS

COVID-19 fears exacerbated existing barriers to education

The findings in Malawi suggest that the OOSC challenge has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The study explored how enrolment, attendance, OOSC and dropout rates, all important measures of how well an education system is performing, appear to have worsened across the schools surveyed following the reopening of Malawi's schools for in-person teaching following the pandemic.

However, many of the barriers that were mentioned during the study and associated with the pandemic are actually exacerbations of existing economic, structural and cultural barriers to school participation. For example, teachers highlighted several COVID-19 related challenges as core reasons for changes in enrolment following the reopening of schools. COVID-19 related restrictions including lockdowns resulted in reduced household income for many families and compulsory mask wearing when schools reopened.⁸¹ Parents and headteachers highlighted that these measures acted as key barriers to school participation. Although schools were provided with funding to address such challenges, many of the surveyed schools had not received this funding or emphasised its inadequacy.

Such findings reiterate the pre-existing economic barriers associated with school participation. However, other new barriers specific to COVID-19 such as fear of infection and forced vaccination emerged as amongst the main reasons for changes in enrolment following the pandemic, with 19% of school respondents surveyed citing this.

Parental influence on participation in education in Malawi

Understanding baseline perspectives on the importance of education prior to the pandemic is crucial to inform approaches to increasing participation in national education systems. The importance of education was explored in consultation with schools and during key informant interviews, where stakeholders were asked to detail their perspective on the importance of education and whether there were differences based on the demographics of the child, e.g., the child's age, gender and whether the child has a disability. Four out of 14 parents interviewed (29%) reported that they had a child out of school at some point within the compulsory education period.

All the respondents who were interviewed stated that they believed education was important for long-term economic potential and as a key contributor to societal development. However, the degree of this importance and the reason for it varied across demographic groups. For example, 86% of respondents related the importance of education to securing future employment and 45% of respondents related it to social progress.

One parent noted that: *"The community these days needs educated people for the country to develop. That is why I encourage my children to attend school, so that they don't miss what their fellow learners have learnt in class."* A similar sentiment was expressed by another stakeholder: *"Schools are the backbone of someone's life. If you have a child without education, the parent is denying the child what he/she has. We also believe education is critical in terms of providing the needed capacities to be independent and make sound decisions about their personal life and community life, to meaningfully contribute to community development once one has the education."*

The role of parents in facilitating or inhibiting participation and success in early education is well established in literature.⁸² Literature has also highlighted how parents' perceived importance of education alters depending on their socioeconomic profile, namely whether or not they are educated,⁸³ which can influence their child's academic performance and potential for drop out.^{84,85} Stakeholders (non-parents) who were interviewed acknowledged that parental perspectives on education differed depending on the parent's education level.⁸⁶ This finding also emerged in the survey, where 62% of respondents indicated that children whose parents are uneducated are more likely to be out of school. This was highlighted by a stakeholder (non-parent), who said: *"Definitely – parents who are educated would send their children to school and spend more resources."*

School participation is driven by social, ethnic and cultural factors

The study findings demonstrate a negative trend in the number of children enrolled at the surveyed schools and the number of out-of-school children across Malawi, however there was geographical variation. The absolute number of OOSC increased at the sampled schools across all three of Malawi's regions following the pandemic, however the increase was smallest in the North region at 6% compared to 23% in the South and 87% in the Central region. Further, boys in the North region were the only demographic group that experienced a reduction in OOSC (-5%) after schools reopened in the 2021/22 academic year.

These findings align with well-recognised differences between ethnic groups in relation to the value of education, particularly its importance for the Tumbuka people, most often located in North Malawi, Eastern Zambia, and Southern Tanzania.^{87,88} Dropping out of school and participating in early sex, early pregnancy, and early marriage are influenced by the same underlying socioeconomic factors including poverty, poor school performance, absenteeism, school characteristics and peer, family and community pressures and expectations.^{89,90,91,92,93,94}

Economic pressures of the pandemic drive a trend in boys becoming more likely to be out of school

Historically, girls have been the segment of the population in Malawi and across populations globally with the greatest proportion of OOSC and the highest likelihood of dropping out, due to factors such as poverty, early and forced marriage, pregnancy, parents' negative attitudes towards the education of girls, and household chores.^{95,96} According to a World Bank blog in 2016, Malawi has some of the highest dropout rates amongst girls in the region. In Malawi, the dropout rate for Grade 7 females averaged 20% over the five years prior to the blog, compared with 11% for males. The report highlights pregnancy, financial hardship, and child marriage as the key reasons for such high dropout rates among girls in Malawi.⁹⁷

In addition, Malawi has historically had one of the highest rates of child marriage in the world, with a 2015 study reporting that 50% of girls were married before the age of 18.⁹⁸ In 2015, marriage was said to account for 16% of school dropouts in Malawi, making it the third most common reason for girls to drop out of secondary school after school fees and pregnancy (both 27%).⁹⁹

The study findings suggest that the COVID-19 pandemic forced more girls to leave school, as demonstrated by the fact that there was a greater increase in the number of girls out of school than boys after schools reopened, except in a few surveyed districts like Chikwawa¹⁰⁰ and Mchinji. Further, study respondents highlighted that girls who get married early were the demographic group that is most likely to be out of school after the pandemic.

Published literature points to the role of visible female role models in schools as a factor supporting continued female participation in education. In a study assessing the impact of female teachers in rural primary schools, it was found that dropout rates for girls were lower in schools that had at least one female teacher when compared with those without female teachers. One respondent explained: *“Role modeling for girls is required. We need female teachers after finishing teacher colleges – but they would rather get married. In rural areas, there are few female teachers.”*

When asked how gender impacts a child's out of school status, 83% of the study respondents believed that girls were at a higher risk of being out of school than boys due to numerous factors including child marriage, patriarchy, and the 'prioritisation of boys going to school over girls'. The view that girls were at a disadvantage when compared to boys, due to factors such as these was recorded 10 times in key stakeholder interviews.

Overall, findings from the study's interviews were congruent with existing literature on the topic of gender and OOSC, and supported some of the data collected from schools on the gender of out-of-school children. This data showed that rates of enrolment and attendance amongst boys and girls were only marginally different across the surveyed schools, however the increase in girls who were out of school following the reopening of schools after the pandemic was greater than the increase in boys who were out of school (49% compared with 42%). This was most notable in the district of Mzimba Rumphu in the North, where the number of girls out of school following school reopening increased by 50% and to the number of boys out of school decreased by 7%.

However, the findings indicate that the COVID-19 pandemic and its socioeconomic impacts have resulted in a shift in OOSC trends. At the schools surveyed, there was a greater reduction in enrolment among boys than girls after schools reopened, fewer boys enrolled in the 2021/22 academic year than girls. What's more, attendance was lower in the 2021/21 academic year amongst boys who had enrolled than among girls who had enrolled. The study findings highlight that 'boys who join the workforce' are the second most likely demographic group to be out of school, which is likely related to the increased economic pressures associated with the pandemic.

Despite this, challenges remain around female participation in education. The findings from the survey highlight how pre-COVID cultural norms around the role of girls in the household, both as domestic support and a source of income once married, continue to impact their ability to continue in education. In response to questions about key barriers to school participation, stakeholders said: “Yes, Malawi society is patriarchal. The value of the education of the boy is given prominence more than girls. The girl’s role is getting married and doing chores,” and “culturally, preference goes to the male student or due to poverty if given an option between a girl or boy.”

Access to adequate financial resources is a key barrier to school participation

Whilst the correlation between poverty and school participation is well established, the manifestation of how economic pressures result in OOSC, and poor school participation varies. Based on the study findings, access to adequate financial resources appears to be the main barrier to school participation in the schools sampled.

Despite the introduction of free primary education (FPE) in Malawi, national data indicates that primary school enrolment declined between 2016 and 2017, and secondary enrolment has remained low. The study findings also demonstrate a reduction in enrolment and attendance, and an increase in OOSC, at the sampled schools. Indirect costs such as the cost of books, uniforms, transport, soap and school meals and reduced resources for household support, remain a critical barrier to accessing education for children in poor households and were raised in both the survey and key informant interviews. Financial pressures were most likely exacerbated by the pandemic.

The survey consulted headteachers and deputy headteachers about the key reasons for non-attendance at the schools surveyed. The word ‘poverty’ was the most cited response, mentioned during 17 of the 63 surveys (29%) with headteachers and deputy headteachers in Malawi. Beyond this, reasons related to income or economic costs associated with education were mentioned regularly, with examples given of children ‘dropping out of school to find jobs’ and ‘boys leaving for greener pastures in foreign countries’. In terms of the profile of children who were most likely to be out of school, 64% of responses referred to boys joining the workforce. For girls, the concept of ‘marrying them off’ to reduce the household’s economic burden was highlighted.

Key informant interviews echoed these findings, with parents raising indirect costs as a key barrier to continued education, for example: “She had no school uniform, and I didn’t have money to get her one,” and “now I’m able to afford... to provide for my family in terms of soap, food for them to go to school and the necessities of the house.” Both survey respondents and KIIs noted the association between schools receiving support from the UN World Food Programme and increased enrolment and attendance, as the provision of one free meal a day greatly reduced the economic pressure for families that are living in poverty. For example, one respondent noted that: “Parents who are economically challenged have a hard time sending their kids to school. The public education is free, but it’s not like that. For example, [there are paid] competitions and examinations, there are resources needed to support children’s learning.”

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in loss of income and additional economic strain for many households. In Malawi, poverty has increased since the pandemic and the gap between the richest and the poorest households has widened (based on the Gini coefficient).¹⁰¹ According to a nationally representative survey carried out in 2021, paying school related costs (e.g., for examinations, books and uniforms) was the leading cause of dropouts among boys and early pregnancy and early marriage among girls.¹⁰² With over 50% of Malawians living below the poverty line pre-pandemic and substantial numbers dependant on agriculture and farming as a means to survive, providing the necessary resources for a child’s education can easily be deprioritised.¹⁰³ Migration linked to agricultural seasons and geographies was highlighted by a number of teachers particularly in the South region as a core reason for drop out and lack of school participation: “The richest quintile sends their kids to school – the poorest, they don’t. It is a [financial] burden and the child who is not at home can’t help. Poor families are not convinced about the importance of education.”

The challenge of not having the essential resources required to support children’s education has been long documented in relevant literature. In 2009, Chimombo and Chonzi identified inadequate clothing and lack of money to buy school supplies, as reasons for non-enrolment and the lack of participation of girls in classroom activities.¹⁰⁴

According to the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) carried out in 2015–2016, the net attendance rate (NAR) for school increased with household wealth, especially at the secondary school level. School attendance in the lowest wealth quintile was 5% of girls and 4% of boys, compared with 42% of girls and 40% of boys in the highest wealth quintile.

MALAWI STUDY RESULTS

1 Enrolment

According to the study findings, the total number of students enrolled across the 63 schools surveyed was 104,805 in the 2021/22 academic year (at the time of data collection). This included 48,978 boys (47%) and 55,827 girls (53%). In total, 1,338 (1%) of enrolled students were children with disabilities.

In the previous year (2020/2021), prior to COVID-19 related school closures, total enrolment across these 63 schools stood at 108,470. This included 51,841 boys (48%) and 56,629 girls (52%). In total, 1,448 (1%) of enrolled students were children with disabilities.

These figures indicate that enrolment in the sampled schools fell by 3% between 2020/21 (the academic year prior to school closures due to the pandemic) and 2021/22 (when schools reopened). There was a reduction in the number of children enrolled across all three geographic regions, and among boys, girls, and children with disabilities. However, the reduction in enrolments was greater among boys (6%) than girls (1%). The schools surveyed in the South region, particularly those in the Zomba district, experienced the greatest reduction in enrolment between these academic years.

Enrolment increased at the surveyed schools in some areas and among some groups of students. In Mchinji district, the total number of students enrolled increased by 3%, driven by a 6% increase in the number of girls enrolled. In the North region, enrolment of girls increased by 1% driven by a 1% increase in the number of girls enrolled in Mzimba South schools. More children with disabilities enrolled in the surveyed schools in Zomba (12% increase) and Machinga (6% increase).

Table 5
2020/21 and 2021/22 enrolment at schools surveyed (Malawi)

Enrolment	2020/21 enrolment				2021/22 enrolment				Percentage change			
	Total	Boys	Girls	CWD*	Total	Boys	Girls	CWD*	Total	Boys	Girls	CWD*
Total	108,470	51,841	56,629	1,448	104,805	48,978	55,827	1,338	-3%	-6%	-1%	-8%
Proportion	-	48%	52%	1%	-	47%	53%	1%				
North	28,743	14,165	14,578	897	28,255	13,550	14,705	806	-2%	-4%	1%	-10%
Mzimba South	20,215	9,919	10,296	712	19,875	9,425	10,450	627	-2%	-5%	1%	-12%
Rhumpi	8,528	4,246	4,282	185	8,380	4,125	4,255	179	-2%	-3%	-1%	-3%
Central	33,852	16,524	17,328	150	33,667	15,916	17,751	131	-1%	-4%	2%	-13%
Mchinji	18,048	8,816	9,232	33	18,652	8,825	9,827	30	3%	0%	6%	-9%
Ntcheu	15,804	7,708	8,096	117	15,015	7,091	7,924	101	-5%	-8%	-2%	-14%
South	45,875	21,152	24,723	401	42,883	19,512	23,371	401	-7%	-8%	-5%	0%
Zomba	18,530	8,290	10,240	182	16,443	7,196	9,247	204	-11%	-13%	-10%	12%
Chikwawa	8,567	4,158	4,409	87	8,293	4,052	4,241	57	-3%	-3%	-4%	-34%
Machinga	18,778	8,704	10,074	132	18,147	8,264	9,883	140	-3%	-5%	-2%	6%

*CWD = Children with disabilities

Reduction in students enrolled

Increase in students enrolled

No change in students enrolled

2 Out-of-school children

At the 63 schools surveyed, 14% of children who enrolled (n=14,173) were documented as being out-of-school children (OOSC) in the 2021/22 academic year, compared to just 9% in the previous year. This is a 5 percentage point increase in the proportion of OOSC following school reopening. The increase was greatest in the Central region, where the proportion of OOSC increased by 9 percentage points.

2.1 Scale of the problem

The number of OOSC at the surveyed schools increased by 45% between the 2020/21 and 2021/22 academic years. The greatest regional increase in OOSC was 87% in the Central region, compared to 6% in the North region. Overall, whilst the number of boys and girls who were OOSC was equal prior to school closure, more girls were out of school after schools reopened.

The number of girls who were OOSC at the schools surveyed increased more than the number of boys who were OOSC at an aggregate level (49% vs. 42%) and across most geographies except Chikwawa district and Mchinji, where the increase in OOSC was greater amongst boys.

Table 6
Proportion of children who are out-of-school children (Malawi)

OOSC as proportion of those enrolled	2020/21				2021/22				Proportion change			
	Total	Boys	Girls	CWD*	Total	Boys	Girls	CWD*	Total	Boys	Girls	CWD*
Overall average	9%	9%	9%	27%	14%	14%	13%	6%	5%	5%	4%	-21%
North	3%	4%	2%	9%	3%	4%	3%	5%	0%	0%	1%	-4%
Mzimba South	4%	4%	3%	9%	4%	4%	3%	4%	0%	0%	0%	-5%
Rhumpi	2%	2%	2%	9%	2%	2%	2%	7%	0%	0%	1%	-2%
Central	11%	10%	11%	2%	20%	20%	20%	27%	9%	10%	9%	25%
Mchinji	10%	9%	12%	6%	26%	26%	25%	43%	15%	17%	13%	37%
Ntcheu	11%	11%	11%	1%	13%	12%	14%	23%	2%	1%	3%	22%
South	11%	13%	10%	78%	15%	17%	14%	3%	4%	4%	4%	-75%
Zomba	13%	15%	10%	1%	17%	21%	14%	3%	4%	5%	4%	2%
Chikwawa	3%	2%	4%	0%	9%	10%	8%	0%	6%	7%	4%	0%
Machinga	14%	16%	13%	235%	16%	16%	16%	4%	2%	1%	3%	-231%

*CWD = Children with disabilities

Reduction in proportion of OOSC
Increase in proportion of OOSC
No change in proportion of OOSC

2.2 Gender and OOSC

A similar number of OOSC were boys and girls at the schools surveyed in both the years studied, with girls accounting for 51% of OOSC and boys accounting for 49% in the 2021/22 academic year. Most notably, the number of boys who were out of school decreased by 5% in the schools sampled in the North region whilst the number of girls who were out of school in the same region increased by 22% following the pandemic. This supports existing literature and data on the gender divide and differences in school attendance in Malawi.

2.3 Disability and OOSC

Children who were classified as being disabled accounted for around 1% of total students enrolled at the surveyed schools across both academic years in the study. In 2021/22, they also made up 1% of total out-of-school children across these schools. The proportion of OOSC children with disabilities decreased by 21 percentage points following school reopening, whilst the absolute number of disabled out-of-school children across the sampled schools decreased by 79%. The proportion and absolute number of disabled OOSC decreased in the schools sampled in both the North and South regions, but the proportion increased by 25 percentage points and the number increased by 1,100% in the Central region.

Table 7
Number of OOSC by geography and group (Malawi)

Number of OOSC	2020/21				2021/22				Percentage change			
	Total	Boys	Girls	CWD*	Total	Boys	Girls	CWD*	Total	Boys	Girls	CWD*
Total	9,750	4,875	4,875	396	14,173	6,926	7,247	84	45%	42%	49%	-79%
North	903	539	364	81	957	514	443	37	6%	-5%	22%	-54%
Mzimba South	728	434	294	64	754	416	338	25	4%	-4%	15%	-61%
Rhumpi	175	105	70	17	203	98	105	12	16%	-7%	50%	-29%
Central	3,603	1,615	1,988	3	6,746	3,167	3,579	36	87%	96%	80%	1,100%
Mchinji	1,884	795	1,089	2	4,792	2,325	2,467	13	154%	192%	127%	550%
Ntcheu	1,719	820	899	1	1,954	842	1,112	23	14%	3%	24%	2,200%
South	5,244	2,721	2,523	312	6,470	3,245	3,225	11	23%	19%	28%	-96%
Zomba	2,330	1,280	1,050	2	2,800	1,500	1,300	6	20%	17%	24%	200%
Chikwawa	270	91	179	0	750	390	360	0	178%	329%	101%	0%
Machinga	2,644	1,350	1,294	310	2,920	1,355	1,565	5	10%	0%	21%	-98%

*CWD = Children with disabilities

Reduction in numbers of OOSC

Increase in numbers of OOSC

No change in numbers of OOSC

3 Attendance

Among the schools surveyed, attendance as a proportion of enrolment was highest in the Central region during the 2021/22 academic year. Across the region, attendance as a proportion of the number of students enrolled was 95%, above the average for all schools surveyed of 89%. This was followed by the North region, where attendance was slightly above the average at 90%. Amongst schools surveyed, those in the South region had the lowest attendance at 83%.

Table 8
Attendance data for 2021/22 academic year (Malawi)

Region	Number of children who attended school				% of enrolled students who attended school			
	Total†	Boys	Girls	CWD*	Total	Boys	Girls	CWD*
Total	93,018	42,773	49,723	1,110	89%	87%	89%	83%
North	25,300	11,862	13,311	781	90%	88%	91%	97%
South	35,760	15,602	20,114	198	83%	80%	86%	49%
Central	31,958	15,309	16,298	131	95%	96%	92%	100%

† Participating schools were asked to state the total number of children who regularly attended school (60% of classes or more each week) as well as the number of boys, girls, and children with disabilities who regularly attended school. In some cases, the total number of children attending regularly was greater than the number of boys and girls attending regularly.

*CWD = Children with disabilities

4

Who is out of school and why

Headteachers were asked to profile children who were most likely to be OOSC. Their responses suggest that key demographic groups who are OOSC include girls who get married early (mentioned by 89% of respondents), boys who join the job market early (64% of respondents), and children with parents who do not value education (62% of respondents).

Table 9
Headteacher profiles of children most likely to be OOSC (Malawi)

	Count	Proportion of responses
Girls who get married early	56	89%
Boys who join the job market early	40	63%
Children with parents who do not value education	39	62%
Boys associated with armed groups	24	38%
Children with disabilities (physical and non-physical)	18	29%
Children living in rural/remote areas	12	19%
Children whose parents/caregivers have a disability	10	16%
Children whose parents/caregivers work longer hours	8	13%
Children who cannot afford school fees	8	13%
Children of migrant, refugee, or displaced families	8	13%
Children who cannot afford transportation fees	6	10%
Children with educated parents (e.g., parents with a certificate of completion of primary education)	4	6%
Children living in urban areas	3	5%
Children of ethnic minority groups	3	5%
Children living in peri-urban areas	2	3%

The survey also explored headteacher and school teacher perspectives on key barriers to school enrolment, particularly following the COVID-19 pandemic. Fear of COVID emerged as the key reason for changes in enrolment according to the teachers who were surveyed, as shown in Table 10 opposite.

The key themes that emerged from the survey were also reflected in discussions with stakeholders and are detailed in Table 11. These were:

- 1** Barriers to school participation
- 2** Influence of parents on school participation
- 3** Action to address OOSC and key programme and policy priorities to be implemented.

The number of respondents who raised these issues, and the frequency with which they were raised, are shown in Table 11.

Table 10
Headteacher perspectives on changes to enrolment following COVID-19 (Malawi)

What would you describe as the main reason for this change in enrolment in your school since the COVID-19 pandemic started?		
Main reason for change in enrolment	Count	Proportion of responses
Fear of COVID	12	19%
Early marriage	7	11%
COVID related restrictions	6	10%
Adolescent pregnancy	6	10%
Incentives related to local programmes	6	10%
Fear of COVID vaccine	5	8%
Parental influence	5	8%
Fear alleviated by COVID measures	5	8%
Loss of motivation	5	8%
School infrastructure	5	8%
Income generation	4	6%
Migration	3	5%
Migration related to agriculture industry	2	3%
Delayed enrolment	1	2%

Table 11
Reported barriers, enablers and priorities for school participation (Malawi)

Theme	Frequency raised	Number of respondents
Focus 1: Key barriers to school participation		
Economic barriers	33	20
Cultural norms	12	7
Local infrastructure	7	6
Exclusion of vulnerable populations	6	5
Societal barriers	5	4
School infrastructure	5	5
Lack of infrastructure for disabled people	3	4
Focus 2: Enablers of school participation		
Role of parents in encouraging school participation	20	14
Influence of parental profile on school participation	16	7
Role of parents in discouraging school participation	7	4
Role of children in influencing parents to support school participation	6	5
Focus 3: Action to address OOSC and key programme and policy priorities to be implemented		
Governmental policy and legislative adoption/revision	45	6
Design and components of programmes to address OOSC	12	9

MALAWI RECOMMENDATIONS

Increase efforts to understand the impact of crises on the education of boys, to inform and strengthen programming and offset the impact:

The study findings indicate that there was a shift in the gender dynamics of school participation in Malawi during the COVID-19 crisis and that boys were slightly more likely to be out of school following the pandemic. This was predominantly driven by socioeconomic factors that led to higher prioritisation of economic opportunities than completion of education. This may indicate that in Malawi, economic pressures associated with crises like COVID-19 could have a greater impact on boys, increasing their potential to drop out of school or not enrol at all.

- **Recommendation:** Strengthen school participation efforts towards boys during crisis, to circumvent the greater impact of such pressures on their educational outcomes.

Partner with aligned national and subnational organisations to strengthen combined outcomes and implement a holistic approach: The study findings suggest that programmes that offset the indirect costs of schooling could lead to increased school enrolment and attendance levels.

- **Recommendation:** Establish long-term partnerships with local and international programmes that work to offset economic pressure on families (e.g., the UN World Food Programme), particularly targeted towards households living in poverty, whose children are most likely to be out of school.
- **Recommendation:** Improve co-ordination of development and implementation of policies across relevant government ministries (including transport, youth, sports, and education) and reduce funding gaps through provision of school grants, learning materials, increased teacher capacity and improved infrastructure.
- **Recommendation:** Advocate for education to be at the forefront of conversations with the Department of Disaster Management during times of crisis, to promote timely co-ordination and decision making.

Elevate the importance and role of education in driving social progress with parents, particularly those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds: Focus efforts in the South of Malawi on parental influence and the value of education. The study findings highlight the variation in school participation between the North and South of Malawi, which may in part be due to cultural differences that affect the value parents attribute to education. The parental influence in the North region and their higher appreciation of education for its social mobility benefits has a direct influence on enrolment and dropout rates.

- **Recommendation:** Elevate the importance of education for social progress during sensitisation and information programmes in the South, focusing on parents as the core influencer of school participation.

PERU COUNTRY REPORT



Susan Warner / Save the Children

PERU BACKGROUND

INTRODUCTION

Peru is an extremely diverse country with more than 40 different languages and up to 90 distinct indigenous and Afro-descendant ethnic groups.¹⁰⁵ The main ethnic groups are Quecha and Aymara, but there are also various ethnicities of people native to or indigenous of the Amazon, Black, Moreno, Zambo, Mulato, Afro-Peruvian, Afro-descendant, White, mixed race ('mestizos') and other ethnic groups, including people of Chinese and Japanese descent. The population currently stands at 33 million and, according to the latest WHO data published in 2020, life expectancy in Peru is 78.5 years for males and 81.3 years for females.¹⁰⁶

Inequalities, particularly related to income, ethnicity, level of education, gender, geographical location, and other socioeconomic determinants, remain high compared to most other countries. Income and wealth are concentrated amongst a small fraction of ultra-rich people.¹⁰⁷ According to World Bank data, 78% of the population live in urban areas and 22% live in rural areas.¹⁰⁸ About 10 million (29%) live in Lima (Peru's capital) and the nearby city of Callao, and approximately 58% of the population live in coastal areas.¹⁰⁹

As of 2020, 26% of Peru's urban population was classified as poor, but that number climbed to 46% in rural communities.¹¹⁰ However, household survey data indicates that the last two decades of growth has led to a narrowing of socioeconomic gaps among ethnicities. Most notably, the mestizo (mixed race) ethnic group surpassed the White population on income per capita, and Native Americans also experienced a relative improvement in their income.¹¹¹

Urban-rural education gaps remain a global obstacle when addressing out of school variances. In Peru, there has been a constant effort by the Ministry of Education (MINEDU) to increase school attendance. According to the UIS, school enrolment in Peru was 71% in 2017, though no equivalent statistic is available for school attendance.¹¹²

Peru was one of the countries hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, with the number of deaths per 100,000 population being among the highest in the world. The decline in global consumer demand for Peru's goods and services, and the implementation of lockdown measures had a large impact on household income. Total employment fell by 40% (about 6.7 million workers) in the second quarter of 2020. Earnings and hours of work also declined for those who remained employed. According to the World Bank, Peruvian households experienced the largest employment and income losses out of the 13 LAC countries in its high frequency surveys, since informal jobs were both more vulnerable and more prevalent in Peru.

EDUCATION IN PERU

Education in Peru is compulsory from the age of 6 years old through to 16 years old and in 2019, the country had a literacy rate of nearly 95%.¹¹³ However, the education system in Peru has significant inequalities in learning access and outcomes based on socioeconomic status, gender, geographical location, disability, and migration status. For example, in 2019, the illiteracy rate for males was just 3%, compared to 8% for females. When contrasting men and women from different geographic areas, disparities are even more stark. In rural areas, 34% of women were illiterate, compared to 11% of men. In urban areas this inequity is lower, but still present, with 7% of women and 2% of men unable to read and write.¹¹⁴ Moreover, access to education is most difficult in indigenous, remote communities, where illiteracy rates remain the highest. In remote areas in the Amazon rainforest, for example, school enrolment rates are as low as 73%.¹¹⁵ Peru has an unequal distribution of universities, which combined with existing economic and commercial routes drives mobility in certain patterns.¹¹⁶

The Ministry of Education is responsible for designing education policies, delivering programmes and managing the national education budget. Under the Ministry, there are regional offices of education (*Dirección Regional de Educación*, or DRE), which are often closely linked to the Governor's office. Local Offices for Educational Management (*Unidad de Gestión Educativa Local*, or UGEL), which are the closest governmental link with schools, report to DREs.¹¹⁷

Over the last 11 years, education has been the sector to which the largest proportion of the Peruvian public budget has been allocated. In 2019, Peru's public education budget was USD \$8.8 billion (4% of GDP for that year). However, according to the Peruvian Institute of Economy (IPE), despite the budget allocation, local governments spent just two-thirds of the budget.

STRUCTURE OF PERU'S EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

The education system in Peru consists of:

- i compulsory basic education, which includes elementary (primary) and secondary education; and
 - ii higher education.
- Elementary (primary) education consists of six years of teaching (grades 1 to 6), with children generally enrolling in the first grade at six years old. The country's elementary net enrolment ratio has remained above 98% since 2000, but the number of children enrolled has fallen over recent years. In 2019, 3.7 million children enrolled in elementary education, a 12% reduction since 2004, due to a decline in the country's fertility rate.
 - Secondary education consists of five years of teaching (grades 7 to 11). According to National Institute of Statistics and Informatics (INEI) data, nearly 2.6 million students were enrolled in secondary education in 2019 – only a 5% reduction since 2007. This is because despite the shrinking of the country's youth population, which has caused a decline in primary school enrolment, in recent years more children have begun to enrol in secondary education.¹¹⁸

For compulsory basic education, the academic year runs for 38 weeks each year, usually from April to December although the school year was adjusted following closures during the pandemic. There are three modalities: regular, special education (for students with disabilities), and alternative basic education (for students over 15 years old, who have dropped out of school but want to complete their secondary education). Alternative basic education covers the same grades as secondary education.

THE STATE OF PLAY IN PERU PRIOR TO THE PANDEMIC

Prior to the pandemic, Peru was facing an education crisis. In 2013, the country ranked last in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA).¹¹⁹ After decades of expansion of schools, the Peruvian education system had relatively high levels of access, but a low and variable quality of teaching.¹²⁰ While Peru had near-universal primary education, had tripled access to pre-school education in the preceding five years, and had raised the secondary school enrolment rate above the regional average, high numbers of students graduated from its schools without basic mathematics and literacy skills. Moreover, despite education being compulsory until the age of 16, high school drop-out rates are a significant problem in the country. At the national level, 12% of children leave school before the age of 13, and 17% do not finish secondary school.¹²¹

To address these issues, the Ministry of Education launched the *Programa de Educacion Logros de Aprendizaje* (PELA, the Educational Programme for Learning Achievements). The programme seeks to improve the learning achievements and outcomes of each and every student in public school, through a comprehensive intervention strategy.¹²²

EDUCATION IN PERU DURING THE PANDEMIC

In Peru, most schools closed to in-person teaching from March 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic began to escalate, until March 2022. Whilst virtual education was available, many children did not set foot inside a classroom for over two years. Data from UNESCO has highlighted that the early quarantine imposed by the Peruvian government impacted the education of 9.9 million students in the country.¹²³

A small number of remote, rural schools continued in-person classes during the pandemic and a handful of private schools and well-resourced public schools began receiving pupils for two half-days a week from March 2021. However, 99% of Peru's schools remained closed completely or offered only online classes throughout the pandemic,¹²⁴ resulting in a dynamic change within households. Living spaces became classrooms and parents, some of whom were already experiencing financial pressures, often became their child's teachers.

Over the course of the pandemic, the vast majority of children in Peru had to learn at home, via television, mobile phone or the radio. The Ministry of Education created a virtual educational platform called *Aprendo en casa* (I learn at home) to help students, but the majority of children did not have access to mobile devices to participate in the virtual learning.¹²⁵ According to the INEI, only 40% of households in Peru have internet access and this falls to only 6% of households in rural areas.¹²⁶ Data from the Network of Urban and Rural Municipalities of Peru (Remurpe) showed that 77% of the 500 local governments targeted by the remote learning programme (462) reported difficulties accessing the platform.¹²⁷ This meant that during the pandemic, dropout rates increased significantly, with more than one-third of children not attending school, despite the government's remote learning programme.¹²⁸

An important educational trend seen during COVID-19 was a large shift of children from private to public schools. According to a report by *Inversion en la Infancia*, 110,405 regular basic education students moved from private to public education.¹²⁹ This shift has had a great impact on access to schools (especially for migrants and other vulnerable groups), since there were no vacancies within schools nearby and groups with limited resources could not afford the transportation to schools further away.

MIGRANT CHILDREN IN PERU

In addition to the COVID-19 related challenges affecting all Peruvian children, migrant children, especially those from Venezuela, face even greater barriers to accessing education. Peru is the second main destination for Venezuelan migrants and refugees after Colombia, hosting around 1.3 million Venezuelans. These include an estimated 250,000 school-aged children. A recent study from Save the Children Peru highlighted that a quarter (25%) of migrant children living in Lima and La Libertad are not attending school. This is mainly due to insufficient space available at public schools due to issues such as the large influx of students from private to public schools; lack of access to the internet to enrol; arrival in Peru after enrolment had closed; and discrimination from school administrators.¹³⁰

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM IN PERU

It is crucial to understand how many children in Peru are out of school, who they are, and why they are out of school, to inform policy and practice that will improve and support progress towards global goals for education. However, research on the number of OOSC in Peru, their socio-demographic profile, and reasons for poor school attendance, high dropout rates and low literacy rates is limited. Between September 2021 and January 2023, Q3 Strategy conducted an in-depth research study to better understand the OOSC context in Peru following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Focusing on primary, secondary and basic alternative school education in Peru, the study aimed to capture data on the number of OOSC, the possible reasons for these children being out of school, and the socio-demographic characteristics that make children less likely to enrol at and attend school.

The aim of this study was to improve real-time, effective data capture of OOSC and evaluate the impacts of school closures on OOSC, to inform policy and strengthen programmes and Save the Children's responses to future crises.

OVERVIEW OF THE PERU STUDY

This deep-dive study was commissioned by Save the Children International and conducted by Q3 Strategy. It builds on a rapid assessment conducted in 2021 that comprised an online survey of OOSC in schools across six countries – Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Malawi, Nigeria, Somalia and Uganda – during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The aim of the study was to:

- i inform policy** and
- ii strengthen programmes** to improve real-time, effective data capture of OOSC and Save the Children's responses to future crises. The study objectives were to:
 - 1 Establish a systematic and efficient approach** to gathering a situation analysis of OOSC that could be leveraged in other contexts at different time points.
 - 2 Gather primary data** on the OOSC situation in given contexts, to advise programmatic targeting and policy recommendations, engaging with key stakeholders.

PERU STUDY METHODOLOGY

A mixed methods approach was used to explore the OOSC context in Peru. Quantitative and qualitative insights emerged from data collected face-to-face using the OOSC study survey (Appendix 4) with a representative from each school sampled in Peru. Additional qualitative insights emerged from semi-structured interviews conducted with key stakeholders who play an influential role in school attendance (including parents and representatives from NGOs, academia and government).

In Peru, it was important to ensure that the geographical areas selected for the study were representative of the cultural, territorial and economic heterogeneity across the country. Stratification criteria (see Appendix 3) were developed in collaboration with Save the Children Peru to support a stratified randomisation approach that was used for school sampling. Based on this, 60 schools were selected for primary data collection in Peru. However, for two schools in Lima (Gran Amauta and Ramon Castilla), the Educational Institution included both primary and secondary schools in the sample, increasing the number of schools to 62 (see the full list of schools in Appendix 5).

Primary data was collected in Peru over a 15-day period in May 2022. Leveraging tools developed as part of the project toolkit (see Appendix 4), the data collection team conducted primary data collection in schools and in consultation with key stakeholders. The team comprised a project lead, six enumerators, and a coordinator for the enumerators.

A purposive sampling framework approach was used to identify the most relevant stakeholders for key informant interviews, who could share their knowledge, experience or perceptions of the barriers to school attendance. With support from Save the Children Peru, stakeholders were identified and selected for key informant interviews. With support from headteachers, the research team was connected to parents who participated in key informant interviews.

PARTICIPANTS

Data on out-of-school children was collected from 62 schools across four districts within three regions of Peru. The sample included 23 primary schools (37%), 28 secondary schools (45%) and 11 basic alternative schools (18%).

Table 12
Number of schools surveyed by region, district and type (Peru)

	Number of schools	Primary	Secondary	Basic alternative
Total	62	23 (37%)	28 (45%)	11 (18%)
Huancavelica	20	10	9	1
Huancavelica district	10	6	3	1
Yauli district	10	4	6	0
Lima	22	4	9	9
Amazona	20	9	10	1

Table 13
Key informant interviews (Peru)

Location	Number of schools
Stakeholder group	Number of interviews conducted
Parents	11
International NGOs	3
Local NGOs	1
Academics	1
Government officials	6
Total	22

OVERVIEW OF PERU STUDY RESULTS

The study findings paint an interesting picture of how the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences for education delivery approaches have in some ways strengthened, and in other ways worsened, the ability of certain segments of Peru's population to participate in their national education system.

Schools in Peru reopened for in-person schooling in March 2022 after two consecutive years of closure and only virtual delivery of education. Whilst at an aggregate level, the study findings show an overall reduction in both enrolment and the number of out-of-school children at the schools surveyed, this differed by region, characteristics of the child, and type of school. For children at basic alternative schools, the ability to participate in education was reduced following the reopening of schools for in-person teaching because there was less flexibility for older students who need to earn an income in order to participate in school. Return to in-person school was therefore noted as a key barrier to participation from this group. For other children, the reopening of in-person education was associated with increased motivation to re-join social circles that were lost during school closure, which facilitated strong attendance and enrolment in schools.

The study explored how enrolment, attendance and OOSC rates changed following the reopening of schools for in-person teaching in Peru. It is important to note that at the time of data collection, schools had been open fully for in-person attendance for less than 45 days on average, so it was not possible to identify children who had dropped out (enrolled but not attended for 45 days) as per the definition on page 4.

Importance of education in Peru

Understanding baseline perspectives on the importance of education is crucial to inform approaches to increasing participation in the national education systems. The importance of education was explored in consultation with schools and during key informant interviews, where stakeholders were asked to detail their perspective on the importance of education and whether there were differences based on the demographics of the child, e.g., the child's age, gender, migration status, and whether the child has a disability.

The majority of respondents interviewed believed that education was a fundamental part of a child's development and a necessary tool for the progression of wider society at large. The perceived importance of education was referred to by all key informant interviewed in Peru. For example, one stakeholder said: *"Education is the most important aspect in terms of human development on a personal and societal level."* Another said: *"For me, education is obviously important, because it is an important factor in our society, where we take advantage of passing on knowledge and, aside from just knowledge, we expect the children to develop their competences so that they can cope with life."*

Education was commonly associated with societal progress and economic growth. Several respondents felt that the impact of a lack of education went beyond the individual child and affected society more broadly. For example, one stakeholder said: *"We feel this enormous economic loss each time we see a citizen cease to exercise their right and obligation to educate themselves. This is not just an issue for parents or schools, this is an issue for all of society – we all lose out and we should be alarmed."*

Students' own motivation to be educated was acknowledged extensively during stakeholder interviews as a core driving factor for their school participation. However, children's influence in their educational participation can be used by students to either advocate for their participation or to discourage it. Following the closure of schools during the COVID-19 pandemic there was a general increase in students' motivation to participate in school, particularly driven by the opportunity to re-engage socially, which was noted by 56% of interviewees. When key stakeholders were asked about children's perspectives on education, they stated: *"There could be some adolescents who would prefer not to go to school, but I believe that the majority of them think that school is a space for development, for friendship, for coexistence and for socializing,"* and *"there are very, very few who do not like to study. I see that there is an interest on their part, to better themselves."* Separately, 8% of the headteachers surveyed in Peru highlighted loss of motivation as a core reason for reduced school enrolment after schools reopened.

All the parents who were interviewed in Peru stated that education was important, regardless of their own level of education. One parent said: *“Education is important, and I ask the authorities not to stop supporting education, so that children can help themselves to become someone in life.”* There was widespread recognition of education as a human right, which was referred to by six of the interviewed parents. For example, one parent said: *“We believe that it is a legitimate right that the State must guarantee, so that our children receive a quality education, in order to build more democratic, more humane and fairer societies.”* Others said, *“education is one of the key rights of a person, which allows the development of their opportunities,”* and *“our people continue to insist on the importance of their children attending school and have a legitimate concern for their right to education.”*

Geographical variation in school participation

The study was conducted across three regions: Huancavelica, Amazonas and Lima. The findings reflect that Lima, Peru’s capital city, serves as a hub for key services such as education, health, and transportation.¹³¹ Schools surveyed in Lima had a far greater number of students enrolled per school in 2022/23 (average 668) than other regions, and the greatest reduction in the proportion of OOSC between 2021/22 and 2022/23 (–12 percentage points).

While Lima has Peru’s highest GDP per capita, the more rural regions of Huancavelica and Amazonas rank amongst Peru’s lowest five regions for GDP per capita. Between the 2021/22 and 2022/23 academic years, the number of OOSC rose by 77% at surveyed schools in Huancavelica and 6% at surveyed schools in Amazonas, but declined by 71% at the surveyed schools in Lima.

The centralisation of services in Lima causes a problem of disarticulation among regions, which makes the gap between Lima and other areas even wider. Whole sectors of the population who live in places other than Lima often become severed from one or more government services. Although Peru is engaged in a process of decentralisation, its geography makes this difficult to accomplish. Peru’s mountainous terrain frequently limits access to basic transportation services, which makes educational development and equity a challenge.

In addition to issues of terrain, poverty in Peru runs deepest amongst the indigenous population in remote, rural areas. Peru is divided into 25 regions, and five of these (Apurimac, Ayacucho, Cuzco, Huancavelica and Puno) are home to 45% of indigenous Peruvians.

In 2009, UNICEF calculated that 78% of children whose first language was Quechua or Aymara lived in poverty, compared to 40% of those whose mother tongue was Spanish. UNICEF also reported that only 32% of indigenous children in Peru between the age of three and five years old attend school, compared with 55% for non-indigenous children.¹³² Interviewed respondents described the difficulties that students in rural areas face when pursuing education: *“Our children who are in rural areas are probably in very difficult economic and geographical situations. The means of communication, or the means of transport in the rural Andean areas – mainly the means of transport – are problematic. Generally, the schools are quite distant, the children have to travel for three hours, or five hours, to get to school.”*

Migration and education in Peru

Peru is the second main destination for Venezuelan migrants after Colombia and hosts approximately 1.3 million displaced Venezuelans, including around 250,000 children. A recent study led by Save the Children found that over a quarter of Venezuelan migrant children living in Lima and La Libertad, two of the most populated regions in Peru, were not attending school. The study identified the following as the main barriers to education faced by Venezuelan children: insufficient space available (45%), lack of access to the internet to enrol (29%) and arrival in Peru after enrolment had closed (23%).

However, many survey respondents in this study (41%) denied the existence of such challenges for migrant children. Even headteachers from schools in Lima stated: *“The problem does not apply in the city, the [migrant] girls live here, and we are trying to regularise their schooling and recognise them as students who have already completed a certain grade in the place where they go,”* and *“he [the headteacher] is unaware of the existence of these [challenges] in his school, he says that they all manage to enrol.”* Another said: *“We do not have any problems with enrolment [of migrant children], as I have already mentioned, because we go from house to house, and we use a loudspeaker (microphone) and other activities to reach everyone.”*

The topic of migrant participation in school was also explored in KIIs, but stakeholders did not identify specific barriers to education for migrant children. However, financial barriers related to enrolment, transport and availability of work in the local region are all significant barriers to school participation for migrant children. One interviewee stated that, *“they are children living in extreme poverty, they don’t have school supplies, clothes and transport,”* and another said that *“the problem is due to low economic resources, they don’t have enough money to buy school supplies and what they need to go to school.”* This was confirmed in the survey findings, where financial challenges of parents and other financial barriers were identified as key barriers by 17% of respondents.

The study findings suggest denial of the challenges and barriers to school participation for migrant children in Peru, despite the availability of strong data to the contrary, which could itself be considered a barrier to participation. However, this may have arisen due to the prominent role played in the study by Ministry of Education personnel (see Appendix 2). Regardless, headteachers and other school staff should recognise the central role they play in improving educational outcomes for migrant children. Denial of the challenge will delay the implementation of necessary interventions to improve outcomes for this minority group.

Demographic characteristics and their role in school participation

Gender

Over recent decades, gender equality in Peru has advanced in several ways. Achievements include improved educational attainment for women at all levels and higher returns to education among women. Though substantial progress has been made, gender parity in educational attainment has yet to be achieved, with 43% of men aged 25 and over having a secondary education compared to 35% of women.¹³³ The illiteracy rate amongst women in Peru is 9%, almost three times the illiteracy rate of men in Peru (3%).¹³⁴

This gender inequality was corroborated by the study’s quantitative findings, where girls represented 59% of total OOSC compared with 41% of boys. However, the gender distribution of OOSC varied greatly across regions and districts. Most notably, the surveyed schools in the Huancavelica district experienced a 152% increase in the number of female OOSC from 2021/22 to 2022/23 but a 7% decrease in the number of boys who were OOSC.

Gender disparity in educational attainment is often a reflection of gender inequality and disparities in wider society. In the case of Peru, physical violence against women, child marriage, and early pregnancy are ongoing challenges that disproportionately impact girls. This was reflected in the study findings, for example 45% of survey respondents in Peru cited girls who get married early as a key demographic who were likely to be out of school.

The key informant interviews raised similar barriers that limit school participation for girls. Many of the interviews voiced the unequal distribution of household labour, teenage pregnancy, and lack of a safe and adequate schooling environment for girls as key contributing factors to the gender variation of OOSC. One respondent stated that, *“Many girls do not attend school because they are already mothers, because they are pregnant, because they are in relationships or because they have become responsible for the care of their families.”*

Safety of girls in school environments and violence against girls in wider society are key concerns that were noted extensively in interviews and in existing literature. According to a respondent who has a long-standing role as a public educator, *“Girls suffer a much greater situation of violence, stigmatisation and discrimination in terms of their rights. For example, the pandemic has overburdened girls and adolescents with domestic chores, thus reducing their time and energy for schoolwork. In addition, they are the main victims of gender-based violence.”* Another stated, *“We believe that boys and girls are quite vulnerable, of course, with a higher incidence of girls. Girls are more vulnerable due to the fact that, as we are seeing in society, they are the most affected by sexual harassment.”* A World Bank report published in 2021 described violence against women as the most widespread form of violence in Peru, occurring across regions, income levels, education levels, and age groups, with a third of women likely to suffer physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime.¹³⁵

Teenage pregnancy was another frequently reported cause for girls being OOSC, with one KII respondent saying: *“There is no adequate protection in cases of school pregnancies and things like that, and these are usually some of these barriers that make school not so viable for girls and adolescents, more than for boys or men.”* This concern reflects the fact that Peru has one of the highest rates of teenage pregnancy in the world. According to Peru’s Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) in 2017, 14% of adolescent females (aged between 15 and 19 years old) were a mother or were pregnant, with the highest prevalence in rural areas, where approximately 1 out of 4 adolescents was a mother (24% in rural areas, versus 12% in urban areas).¹³⁶

Though Peru has a dedicated Ministry for Women, there is much work to be done to address the complex social structures and multifactorial causes of gender disparity in education before true and sustainable gender parity is achieved.

Disability

Children with disabilities also emerged in the study as a demographic group that experienced disparities in educational input and output indicators. The findings show that there was a 21% increase in enrolment of disabled children at surveyed schools following their reopening in 2022. The total number of disabled out-of-school children decreased by 2% over the same period.

However, despite a reduction in OOSC overall, the study uncovered various barriers to school participation for children with disabilities including lack of accessible school facilities, stigma and discrimination. In districts where enrolment of children with disabilities reduced or the number of OOSC with a disability increased, the study found that accessibility of schools was a key barrier to participation that had resulted in drop out or poor attendance. Key informant interviews raised the theme of education as a right for all and one stakeholder noted that: *“Of course, they are probably one of the most affected populations with respect to full access to their rights. There is a lack of policies that break down the barriers to full education for children with disabilities.”*

Stakeholders also highlighted critical gaps in addressing the diverse needs of children with disabilities. One parent said: *“There is a real issue with the infrastructure for disabled people, for example accessibility. We need to make sure that disabled people can come to school without experiencing any inconvenience and we also need to employ professionals that are open and inclusive and [reduce] the need to therefore rely on family/other social support systems. For example, those of us who have children with disabilities depend entirely upon family because there are no care policies or universal social policies that reach the kind of people who are discriminated against.”*

OOSC and level of education

In Peru, public school education is free at primary, secondary and basic alternative levels. Peru’s General Education Act states that education is a human right and a public service for every person.¹³⁷ Despite education being free to access, OOSC exist across all educational levels. Data published in the National Household Survey 2013 reported that the lowest levels of attendance were amongst children in basic alternative schools (78%). Net attendance was highest at primary school (93%) and stood in between these two figures for secondary schools (82%).¹³⁸ This was reflected in data collected for this study, which found the lowest attendance rates at basic alternative schools and highest attendance rates at primary schools.

While nearly all children attend primary school in Peru, there is a decline in the number of youth enrolling in secondary school, with 17% (almost one in five) dropping out before graduation, a situation that has worsened as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.¹³⁹ Stakeholders interviewed for this study felt students were equally likely to be out of school if they were very young or if they were adolescents. They reported that younger children were more likely to be out of school if their parents worked or lived a long distance from school. One stakeholder said: *“At the initial and primary education levels because of the dependence of the children on their parents, because often the parents have moved from one place to another in search of some kind of welfare, so obviously the child has to go with them and this has repercussions on their attendance.”*

Economic barriers were often cited as the main reason why older children were not in school. Respondents believed adolescents were more at risk of dropping out of school to support their family, migrate for work, or due to pregnancy or child marriage. According to one respondent: *“The other side is the secondary classroom, where we have also seen cases, especially in the pandemic, where families or parents who, due to the economic crisis, want their adolescents to begin to work. They are faced with the prospect, let’s say, of having to choose whether the child goes to school or the child works. If the need is very great, the family will opt for the child to work.”*

Numerous external and societal factors contribute to higher out of school rates in basic alternative schools and secondary schools. As adolescents progress through the educative cycle, societal pressures and responsibilities may increase the barriers to education, resulting in low enrolment in basic education and increasing dropout rates amongst students in secondary schools.

PERU STUDY RESULTS

1

Enrolment

As summarised in table 14 below, according to the study findings, the total number of students enrolled across the 62 schools surveyed was 27,677 in the 2022/23 academic year (at the time of data collection). This included 12,628 boys (46%) and 15,049 girls (54%). Of these students, 256 (1%) were children with disabilities.

In the previous year (2021/22), total enrolment across these 62 schools stood at 30,588 with 14,169 boys (46%) and 16,419 girls (54%). Of these students, 211 (1%) were children with disabilities.

Overall, enrolment in the sampled schools reduced by 10% between 2021/22 and 2022/23. The reduction in enrolments was greater among boys (11%) than girls (8%). This trend was seen in all the districts and regions where schools were sampled, except in the Amazona region and in the Yauli district where enrolment of girls increased at the surveyed schools, by <1% (Amazona) and 3% (Yauli district).

In almost all the districts and regions surveyed, the downward trend in enrolment was reversed for children with disabilities. Overall, enrolment of children with disabilities increased by 21% at the 62 schools sampled. The increase in enrolments was greatest in the Lima region at 34%, whilst the Huancavelica region saw an increase of 11% in the enrolment of children with disabilities, and there was a 13% increase in enrolment of children with disabilities at the sampled schools in Amazona.

2

Out-of-school children

At the 62 schools surveyed, 4% of children who enrolled (n=1,158) were documented as being out-of-school children in the 2022/23 academic year, compared to 10% (n=2,966) in the previous academic year. Overall, this is a 6 percentage points decrease in OOSC across the schools surveyed in Peru, following their reopening in 2022. This was true across the majority of regions and type of schools, except in Huancavelica where OOSC increased by 1 percentage point and at basic alternative schools, where OOSC increased by 3 percentage points.

2.1

Scale of the OOSC challenge

The number of OOSC at the schools surveyed in Peru fell by 61% between the 2021/22 and 2022/23 academic years. However, the change in OOSC differed significantly by region, and type of school.

In secondary schools, OOSC decreased by 70% across all the schools surveyed but increased by 93% in the Huancavelica region and 51% in the Amazona region.

In primary schools and basic alternative schools, there was a more consistent reduction in OOSC across geographies except in basic alternative schools in the Amazona region, where there was an 150% increase in the number of OOSC across schools surveyed.

Table 14
2021/22 and 2022/23 enrolment data (Peru)

Demographic	2021/22 enrolment				2022/23 enrolment				Percentage change			
	Total	Boys	Girls	CWD*	Total	Boys	Girls	CWD*	Total	Boys	Girls	CWD*
Total	30,588	14,169	16,419	211	27,677	12,628	15,049	256	-10%	-11%	-8%	21%
Huancavelica	10,043	4,116	5,927	74	8,321	3,317	5,004	82	-17%	-19%	-16%	11%
Huancavelica district	7,833	2,956	4,877	33	6,190	2,266	3,924	43	-21%	-23%	-20%	30%
Yauli district	2,210	1,160	1,050	41	2,131	1,051	1,080	39	-4%	-9%	3%	-5%
Lima	15,820	7,566	8,254	90	14,693	6,897	7,796	121	-7%	-9%	-6%	34%
Amazona	4,725	2,487	2,238	47	4,663	2,414	2,249	53	-1%	-3%	0%	13%

*CWD = Children with disabilities

Reduction in number of students enrolled

Increase in number of students enrolled

No change in number of students enrolled

Table 15
Proportion of children who are out-of-school children (Peru)

OOSC as proportion of those enrolled	2021/22				2022/23				Proportion change			
	Total	Boys	Girls	CWD*	Total	Boys	Girls	CWD*	Total	Boys	Girls	CWD*
Overall average	10%	10%	9%	23%	4%	4%	5%	18%	-6%	-6%	-5%	-4%
Primary	3%	2%	3%	22%	2%	2%	2%	8%	-1%	0%	-1%	-14%
Secondary	16%	18%	15%	26%	5%	4%	6%	27%	-11%	-13%	-9%	1%
Basic	5%	5%	5%	14%	8%	8%	7%	15%	3%	3%	2%	1%
Huancavelica	1%	1%	1%	3%	3%	2%	3%	5%	1%	0%	2%	2%
Huancavelica district	1%	1%	1%	0%	3%	2%	4%	7%	2%	1%	3%	7%
Yauli district	2%	2%	2%	5%	1%	1%	2%	3%	-1%	-1%	0%	-2%
Lima	17%	17%	17%	44%	5%	5%	6%	31%	-12%	-12%	-11%	-14%
Amazona	3%	3%	4%	13%	4%	3%	4%	11%	0%	0%	0%	-1%

*CWD = Children with disabilities

Reduction in proportion of OOSC

Increase in proportion of OOSC

No change in proportion of OOSC

Table 16
Change in number of OOSC by type of school, geography and group (Peru)

	Total				Primary				Secondary				Basic alternative			
	Total	Boys	Girls	CWD*	Total	Boys	Girls	CWD*	Total	Boys	Girls	CWD*	Total	Boys	Girls	CWD*
Total	-61%	-67%	-56%	-2%	-22%	-20%	-24%	-59%	-70%	-76%	-64%	26%	-10%	-5%	-15%	50%
Huancavelica	77%	-7%	152%	100%	-67%	-86%	-40%	0%	93%	4%	169%	200%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Lima	-71%	-73%	-69%	-8%	-12%	0%	-19%	-100%	-80%	-82%	-78%	19%	-19%	-18%	-22%	50%
Amazona	6%	3%	8%	0%	-35%	-37%	-33%	0%	51%	45%	55%	0%	150%	183%	117%	0%

*CWD = Children with disabilities

Reduction in numbers of OOSC

Increase in numbers of OOSC

No change in numbers of OOSC

2.2 Gender and OOSC

Overall, the study findings indicate that more girls were OOSC than boys when schools reopened after the COVID-19 pandemic. This was the case across all regions and types of schools that were surveyed except for basic alternative schools, where boys were slightly more likely to be out of school than girls.

Overall, girls accounted for 59% of OOSC and boys accounted for 41% in the 2022/23 academic year. Furthermore, there was a 67% decrease in the number of boys who were recorded as OOSC (a reduction of 6 percentage points) compared to a smaller decrease of 56% for girls (a reduction of 5 percentage points).

Most notable are the study's findings in the Huancavelica region, where there was a 7% decrease in the number of boys who were OOSC at the surveyed schools compared to a 152% increase in girls who were OOSC in the same region.

2.3

Disability and OOSC

Children who were classified as being disabled accounted for less than 1% of total students enrolled at the surveyed schools across both academic years in the study.

Overall, enrolment of children with disabilities increased by 21% between the 2021/22 and 2022/23 academic years, whilst the number of children with disabilities who were recorded as OOSC decreased by 2%. However, there were variations across the regions surveyed. The findings indicate a 100% increase in OOSC with a disability in Huancavelica, an 8% decrease in Lima, and no change in Amazona. There was a 50% increase in OOSC with disabilities at the basic alternative schools surveyed. See Appendix X for a full set of data tables.

2.4

Type of school and OOSC

The number of OOSC fell across all types of schools surveyed in Peru (primary, secondary and basic alternative schools) between the 2021/22 and 2022/23 academic years.

However, the basic alternative schools that were surveyed had the greatest proportion of their enrolled students recorded as OOSC in 2022/23 (8% compared to 5% for the surveyed secondary schools and 2% for the surveyed primary schools). The reduction in OOSC was lower at the sampled basic alternative schools (a 10% reduction in OOSC year-on-year, compared to a 70% reduction at the surveyed secondary schools and 22% reduction at the surveyed primary schools). As a result, basic alternative schools had a greater proportion of total OOSC in 2022/23 (an increase of 3% when compared to the previous academic year).

2.5

Migration and OOSC

The survey explored headteacher perspectives on key barriers to migrant participation in schools (summarised in Table 17). Across the 62 schools surveyed, 41% of headteachers indicated that there was no challenge for enrolment of migrant children. Documentation related barriers were noted as a key barrier to enrolment of migrants by 17% of survey respondents.

Table 17
Reported barriers to migrant enrolment and attendance (Peru)

	Proportion of respondents	Total number of mentions	Primary	Secondary	Basic
No enrolment challenge for migrants	41%	24	13	7	4
Documentation related barriers	17%	10	3	4	3
Parents' financial situation	10%	6	2	4	0
Other financial barriers	7%	4	2	0	2
Distance and transport	5%	3	1	2	0
Low capacity of schools	5%	3	1	2	0
Migration away from initial enrolment site	5%	3	1	0	2
Parents do not prioritise education	3%	2	0	2	0
School infrastructure	2%	1	0	1	0
Language barrier	2%	1	0	1	0
Poor quality/lack of resources within schools	2%	1	0	1	0
Missed enrolment dates	2%	1	0	1	0

3

Attendance

As highlighted in table 18 below, the study findings indicate that among the schools surveyed in Peru, attendance as a proportion of enrolment was highest in 2022/23 amongst schools surveyed in the Huancavelica region (98%). In terms of type of school, the primary schools that were surveyed had the best attendance at 99%, whilst basic alternative schools had the poorest attendance at 75%.

Table 18
Attendance data for 2022/23 academic year (Peru)

	Number of children who attended school				% of enrolled students who attended			
	Total†	Boys	Girls	CWD*	Total	Boys	Girls	CWD*
Overall average	26,465	12,015	14,412	2443	96%	95%	96%	95%
Primary	10,408	5,061	5,319	85	99%	99%	98%	93%
Secondary	14,169	6,242	7,927	119	97%	98%	96%	96%
Basic	1,888	712	1,166	40	75%	63%	83%	98%
Huancavelica	8,126	3,188	4,910	75	98%	96%	98%	91%
Huancavelica district	5,930	2,039	3,891	37	96%	90%	99%	86%
Yauli district	2,030	1,077	953	38	95%	102%	88%	97%
Lima	13,967	6,548	7,409	121	95%	95%	95%	100%
Amazona	4,372	2,279	2,093	48	94%	94%	93%	91%

† Participating schools were asked to state the total number of children who regularly attended school (60% of classes or more each week) as well as the number of boys, girls, and children with disabilities who regularly attended school. In some cases, the total number of children attending regularly was greater than the number of boys and girls attending regularly.

*CWD = Children with disabilities

4

Who is out of school and why

Headteachers were asked to profile children who were most likely to be OOSC. Their responses suggest that the key demographic group that is likely to be OOSC is boys who join the job market early' (mentioned by 52% (n=32) of respondents). Girls who get married early (child marriage) also emerged as a key demographic group with a high potential to be out of school, followed by children with parents who do not value education.

The survey also explored headteacher and school teacher perspectives on key barriers to school participation, particularly following the COVID-19 pandemic. School representatives were asked to rank a series of barriers on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest. The average ranking for each barrier is shown in Table 20.

According to the surveyed teachers, family income was the key barrier to school participation, with an average rank of 3.1 out of 5 and an even higher ranking (3.5) among representatives of secondary schools. This was closely followed by other socioeconomic barriers such as economic background. School closure due to COVID-19 and fear of getting COVID also emerged as key barriers to school participation.

Table 19
Headteacher profiles of children most likely to be out of school (Peru)

Who is most likely to be out of school?							
	Total	Primary	Secondary	Basic	Huancavelica	Lima	Amazona
Boys who join the job market early	32	10	14	8	12	13	7
Girls who get married early	28	7	16	5	7	6	15
Children with parents who do not value education	25	9	16	0	10	4	11
Children living in rural/remote areas	19	6	13	0	5	2	12
Others	19	9	7	3	9	6	4
Children whose parents/caregivers work longer hours	13	4	8	1	1	10	2
Children who cannot afford school fees	9	4	5	0	0	5	4
Children of migrant, refugee, or displaced families	7	5	2	0	0	4	3
Children with parents with an educational background (e.g., parents with a certificate of completion of primary education)	6	1	3	2	0	6	0
Children with disabilities (physical and non-physical)	6	5	1	0	2	1	3
Children whose parents/caregivers have a disability	5	3	1	1	0	2	3
Children who cannot afford transportation fees	5	2	3	0	0	3	2
Children of ethnic minority groups	2	0	2	0	0	0	2
Boys associated with armed groups	1	1	0	0	0	1	0
Children living in urban areas	1	0	0	1	0	0	1
Children living in peri-urban areas	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 20
Average ranking of barriers to school participation (Peru, 1= lowest, 5 = highest)

Barriers (from highest to lowest ranked)	Total	Primary	Secondary	Basic
Family income	3.1	2.9	3.5	2.6
Economic background (wealth)	3.0	2.9	3	3.1
Lack of funding for schools	3.0	2.8	3.1	3.4
Physical barriers (e.g., bad roads, no public transport,)	2.9	3.0	2.9	2.6
Household characteristics (divorced, single parent, abandoned)	2.8	2.5	2.9	3.2
School closure due to COVID-19	2.6	2.3	2.9	2.3
Fear of getting COVID-19	2.5	2.7	2.4	2.5
Lack of education programmes and initiatives to reduce out-of-school children	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.2
Safety concerns (bullying, violence)	2.3	1.8	2.7	2.1
Students lack protection against COVID-19	2.3	2.2	2.3	2.3
Parent or family perception of education value	2.3	2.0	2.8	1.7
School accessibility (distance, quality of roads)	2.2	2.0	2.5	1.7
Access to transportation	2.2	2.0	2.5	1.9
School facilities/infrastructure (e.g., WASH)	2.2	2.5	2.4	1.3
Quarantining because of COVID-19 (symptoms, contact with positive person or tested positive)	2.2	2.3	2.4	1.6
Parents' level of education	2.2	1.9	2.7	1.8
Parental status resulting in social exclusion (e.g., refugee status, displacement status)	2.0	1.7	2.3	1.6
Cultural and religious norms and values	1.9	1.7	2.2	1.5
School culture and norms	1.8	1.6	2.1	1.6
Status of the child resulting in social exclusion (e.g., refugee status, displacement status)	1.8	1.6	2.1	1.5
Safeguarding issues (e.g., trauma or violence preventing school attendance)	1.8	1.7	2	1.6
Other COVID related barriers	1.7	1.7	1.9	1.4
Personal characteristics (e.g., age, gender)	1.7	1.4	2	1.4
Physical or non-physical disability (e.g., learning difficulty)	1.7	1.4	2.1	1.5
Teachers are not in school because of fear of getting COVID-19	1.6	1.4	1.9	1.3
Teachers are not in school because they have/had COVID-19	1.5	1.4	1.7	1.2
Language of instruction	1.5	1.3	1.8	1.4
Teachers are not in school because they are not getting paid because of COVID-19 implications	1.3	1.2	1.5	1.1

The key themes that emerged from the survey were also reflected in discussions with stakeholders. These were:

- 1 Barriers to school participation
- 2 Influence of parents on school participation
- 3 Action to address OOSC and key programme and policy priorities to be implemented

The number of respondents who raised these issues, and the frequency with which they were raised, are shown in Table 21.

Table 21
Reported barriers, enablers and priorities for school participation (Peru)

Theme	Frequency raised	Number of respondents
Focus 1: Key barriers to school participation		
Economic barriers	36	19
Societal barriers	22	11
Exclusion of vulnerable populations	18	9
Local infrastructure	12	10
School infrastructure	11	6
Cultural norms	9	7
Infrastructure for disabled people reducing accessibility of schools	6	4
Focus 2: Enablers of school participation		
Influence of parental profile on school participation	41	15
Role of parents in encouraging school participation	33	12
Role of children in influencing parents to support school participation	12	6
Role of parents in discouraging school participation	10	7
Focus 3: Action to address OOSC and key policy and programme priorities to be implemented		
Governmental policy and legislative adoption/revision	50	12
Design and components of programmes to address OOSC	17	8

PERU RECOMMENDATIONS

Disseminate real-time school vacancy data: internal migration and a shift from private to public schools during the pandemic has resulted in limited or no capacity within public schools for new students. This is a barrier of particular significance for children who migrate to Peru, especially those who migrate after the academic year has begun. Schools outside of Lima, in particular, have poor information systems with which to disseminate availability data, so parents and potential students are forced to physically go from school to school in search of schools with capacity.

- **Recommendation:** Establish a systematic mechanism to disseminate information about schools' capacity to take on new students. This could extend to sharing information about enrolment processes and requirements.

Implement student-focused communications: Children are a core decision maker in their own school participation. There is an opportunity to motivate them to increase their participation by highlighting the social engagement opportunities of in-person schooling

- **Recommendation:** Implement a student focused communications strategy that elevates the advantages of school participation beyond education to enhance student motivation and support improved outcomes.

Increase enrolment flexibility to reduce unintentional exclusion of migrant children and other vulnerable groups: The rigid approach that some authorities take to school enrolment along with stringent age criteria and documentation requirements, present a major challenge and are a key barrier to the participation of undocumented migrant students in the education system.

- **Recommendation:** Eliminate age criteria and documentation requirements to enrol at basic alternative schools to ensure that migrant children and other vulnerable groups (e.g., those younger than 14 and/or without documentation) are not excluded from education.

Combat violence, discrimination, and other safeguarding concerns: Safety of girls in school environments and violence against girls in wider society was a key concern raised throughout the study findings and within literature. Moreover, violence against women is noted as the most widespread form of violence in Peru.

- **Recommendation:** Train teachers and other school staff to recognise and protect students against safety and safeguarding concerns within the school environment.

Mobilise teachers as part of a multipronged approach to tackling OOSC amongst migrant children: The high proportion of migrant children who are OOSC was highly underrepresented and not properly acknowledged amongst headteachers and their deputies in this study, despite the vast body of evidence in literature and data emerging from the KIIs in this study. Teachers are either in denial about the problem (for fear of blame or inability to enact change) or unaware of the issue, perhaps because migrant children struggle to enrol at school so are not visible to the school leadership.

- **Recommendation:** Sensitise teachers on the complexities of the migrant OOSC challenge and the role they can play in improving school participation within this vulnerable group.

APPENDIX 1

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A mixed methods approach was used to explore the OOSC context in Malawi and Peru. This appendix describes the set-up and design of the research methodology and the study's operational framework.

Guidance for Situation Analysis on Out-of-school Children

The study used the Guidance for Situation Analysis on Out-of-School Children, which is adaptable to different geographical settings and socio-political and cultural contexts. Its tools and resources support users to collect data that will provide insights on:

- 1 The number of out-of-school children**, to contextualise the scale of the challenge
- 2 The demographic and socioeconomic profile of out-of-school children**
- 3 The barriers that most commonly result in children being out of school including obstacles** that prevent children from enrolment and attendance, and lead to drop-out.

Set-up and design of the research project

An engagement meeting was held with Save the Children country offices (COs) in Peru and Malawi, to ensure that the pilot study design was tailored to support their long-term strategic objectives. Two workshops were conducted with the COs to understand:

- 1** their desired investigative focus and the relevance of the study for SB2S programming;
- 2** emerging trends identified in OOSC relating to the COVID-19 pandemic; and
- 3** specific interest areas relevant for policy development.

Following these workshops, a toolkit was developed with quantitative and qualitative tools to collect OOSC data within the countries of focus. The toolkit included:

- 1** Guidance on conducting a study on out-of-school children using secondary data
- 2** Guidance on enrolment and drop-out monitoring, including a survey tool and key informant interview guide.

The operational framework

Engagement from cross-sector stakeholders was critical to this study's success. An operational framework was established to define roles, responsibilities, remit and points of entry for all stakeholders engaged throughout the duration of the project. Stakeholders included:

- **Ministries of Education:** In Malawi and Peru, Save the Children facilitated the engagement of Ministry of Education officials to support pilot activities.
 - In Malawi, discussions were held with Regional and District Education Officers in the districts visited, to ensure schools were informed about the study and to obtain authorisation.
 - In Peru, officials from the Ministry of Education were engaged in revision of the toolkit, translation of tools for contextualisation and use of the local language, and selection of the sample of schools. They provided authorisation for the study and informed schools about data collection activities. Stakeholders from the Ministry of Education took part in KIIs and reviewed the study's recommendations.
 - **Save the Children country offices (COs):** COs identified appropriate personnel to support data collection (enumerators, logistic and translation services), obtained relevant authorisations to conduct the study and led the purposive selection of geographical regions, provinces and/or districts and randomised selection of schools based on predefined stratification criteria (see Appendix 3).
- In addition to stratification criteria, other factors considered during validation of the sample were:
- In Malawi, it was important to ensure that regions selected for the study were representative of the cultural and economic heterogeneity across the country. There was also an ambition to explore the role of sex and gender in school participation.
 - In Peru, it was important to ensure that the geographical areas chosen for the study were representative of the diversity in ethnicity and terrain across the country. There was an ambition to explore the role of migrant or refugee status on school participation.
 - In both countries, it was important to consider the accessibility of schools and extent to which local education authorities would be able to co-operate with the study.

Primary data collection

Primary data collection was conducted over a 14-day period in January 2022 in Malawi, and over a 15-day period in May 2022 in Peru. The data collection team comprised a project lead, an education specialist, a research lead and 14 enumerators (7 in each country). They collected primary data through interviews in schools (using the survey tool in Appendix 4) and key informant interviews with stakeholders (using the key informant interview guide in Appendix 4).

A purposive sampling framework approach was used to identify the most relevant stakeholders for key informant interviews, who could share knowledge or experience of barriers to school attendance. Stakeholders were identified and selected for key informant interviews with support from the CO. Parent teacher associations (PTAs) were the primary recruitment mechanism for parents, with support from headteachers.

School survey

A total of 125 schools were surveyed in Malawi (n=63) and Peru (n=62).

- In Malawi, 63 schools were surveyed across seven districts in the Central (n=20), South (n=23) and North (n=20) regions.¹⁴⁰
- In Peru, 62 schools were surveyed across four districts in the Amazona (n=20), Lima (n=22) and Huancavelica (n=20) regions.¹⁴¹

In Malawi, 100% of surveys were conducted in primary schools. 70% of surveys were conducted with headteachers and 25% with deputy headteachers. 71% of respondents to the survey had 15 or more years of teaching experience. Of the schools visited only 3% (n=2) were partially open. The other 97% (n=61) were fully open and had been operating this way for 5.67 months on average.

In Peru, 37% of surveys were conducted in primary schools (n=23), 45% in secondary schools (n=28) and 18% in basic alternative schools (n=11). 92% of survey respondents were headteachers and only 2% were deputy headteachers. 82% of respondents had 15 or more years of experience. On average, schools had only been fully open for in-person participation (for the full school week) for two months.

Headteachers and other school representatives were asked to quantify the number of OOSC including those who had enrolled but dropped out, calculated as those who had enrolled but not attended for 45 days or more, and those who had never enrolled but were within the catchment area of the school.

Figure 2
School Survey
Respondant Role (Malawi)

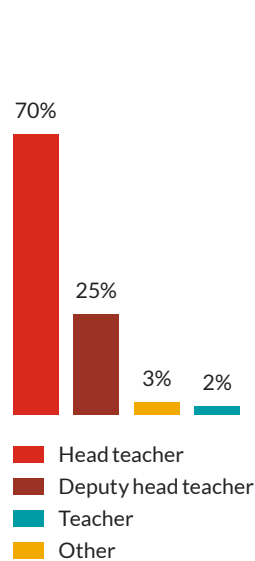
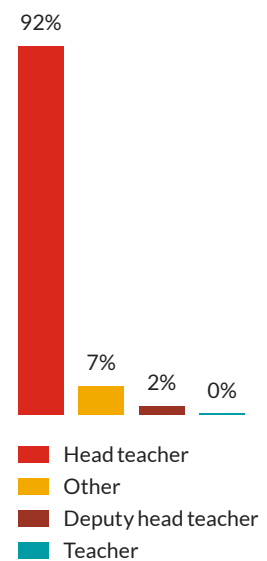


Figure 3
School Survey
Respondant Role (Peru)



Key information interviews

Forty-three semi-structured interviews were conducted with stakeholders including parents, ministry of education officials, and representatives from academic, NGO and multilateral funding organisations.

Table 22
Key informant interviews (Malawi and Peru)

Stakeholder group	Total	Malawi	Peru
Parents	25	14	11
International NGOs	6	3	3
Local NGOs	3	3	1
Academics	1	0	1
Funding organisations	1	1	0
Government officials	6	0	6
Total	43	21	22

Data analysis

Descriptive analytical treatments of the raw data were used to evaluate the findings and explore trends in three domains (gender, geography, and disability status). Interpretative thematic analysis was used to evaluate the key informant interview findings, and interview transcripts were coded and analysed.

APPENDIX 2

STUDY LIMITATIONS

When the data collection took place in Malawi, schools had been fully reopened for approximately 10 months so the topic of OOSC and dropouts could be well explored. However, when data collection took place in Peru, schools had only been fully reopened for approximately two months. This meant schools were still carrying out enrolment. As they had not yet been open for 45 days, it was not possible to identify children who had enrolled but not attended for 45 days, as per the definition of OOSC.

Possible bias of headteachers was a limitation of the study especially in Peru. Ministry of Education officials in Peru were extensively involved in the study 1. This, together with the fact that public school funding streams are based on attendance and enrollment rates, may have encouraged school representatives to paint the best-case scenario when they were surveyed. Furthermore limitations in the data systems available to headteachers on OOSC – especially children never enrolled – were a further constraining factor.

Due to the complexity and length of time required to obtain approval from the Ministry of Education and ethical approval bodies for child consultations, the study focused on surveying consenting adults. The findings could have been more fully informed with participation from students, particularly migrant children. A further limitation is that parents of migrant children were not consulted as part of the study.

The sample size and methods meant that the study findings could not be generalized for Malawi or Peru at national levels nor subnational districts within the countries.

APPENDIX 3

STRATIFICATION CRITERIA

The following parameters were used to guide the selection of the sample of schools:

- Schools with a population of 700 students and above should be prioritised, where this is not possible schools should have a population of at least 400 pupils (schools with fewer than 400 pupils should be excluded from the sample)
- The sample should include representation across the following types of primary schools:
 - Private, public, community-based, and refugee schools
 - Female only schools, male only schools, mixed gender schools
 - Schools for children with disabilities
- The sample should include representation across the following populations:
 - Urban, rural, semi-urban
- The sample may include geographies (regions) where migrant populations are more prevalent
- The sample should include representation across geographies:
 - Representation across geographic regions (for example in Peru, the coastal region in the west, the Andes in the central part of the country, and the Amazon in the east)
 - Representation across administrative regions (for example, Peru has 25 regions)
- The final sample should include 60 schools
 - Malawi – primary schools only
 - Peru – primary, secondary and basic alternative schools

A final consideration was to prioritise schools and districts where Save the Children has active programming, to generate insights that may inform future programming activities.

APPENDIX 4

GUIDANCE FOR SITUATION ANALYSIS ON OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDREN

Prepared by Q³ Strategy and further developed by Save the Children International

Background

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the most severe global education disruption in history. At the peak of the crisis, UNESCO data showed that over 1.6 billion learners across 190+ countries were out of school.^{142,143} The impact of the pandemic on the accessibility of education disproportionately affects children, most impacted by inequality and discrimination including adolescent girls, children from poor households, displaced children and children from remote rural areas who already faced challenges to regular access to education prior to the onset of the pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic was overlaid on longer term challenges of conflict and climate related crises.

To support children return to learning, in the context of these disruptions it is important to know **how many children are out of school, who they are and what obstacles they face in access to education**. Although some data exist, this is often incomplete, outdated, inconsistent, of varying quality and/or based on estimates. It is therefore necessary to identify mechanisms to support bridging this information gap at least at sub-national levels.

Purpose

The Guidance for Situation Analysis of Out-of-School Children has been developed to guide assessment of the out of school situation in specific geographies. The toolkit may be adapted to unique geographical settings, socio-political and cultural contexts in different rural areas and urban environments.

The toolkit consists of the following tools;

- 1 Guidance for conducting an assessment to estimate numbers of out-of-school children**
- 2 Enrolment and drop-out situation analysis guidance**
 - a Survey tool**
 - b Key informant interview guide**

The guidance provides tools and resources to support users to collect data on out-of-school children (OOSC) specifically exploring;

- 1** Estimating the scale of the OOSC challenge
- 2** Identifying the different demographic and socio-economic profiles of OOSC
- 3** Identifying the barriers to access to school

This guidance should be used to supplement existing MEAL procedures and guidance set out in the following document and related links: [SCI Procedure – Research, Evaluation and Assessment](#).

Overview of resources

Below is the overview of each tool and their specific applicability.

Table 23
Overview of resources

Resource	Type	Phase of Work	User/Target Audience	Purpose
Guide to existing secondary sources	Guidance document	First step	User: Study Team	a) Guide assessment teams to gain insights into the OOSC challenge in the geographies of focus, leveraging existing data sources.
Survey tool	Data collection tool	Second step	Target Audience: Headteachers and other school staff	a) Support primary data collection activities in schools to gather data to inform estimates of the number of children out of school, enrolment, attendance and key barriers to access to education
Key informant interview guide	Data collection tool	Third step	Target audience: multi-sector	a) Support stakeholder interviews to explore stakeholder perspectives around OOSC, school attendance and barriers to access to education

Some specific considerations for using the toolkit are outlined below:

Before using the toolkit – defining focus of study

Prior to using the resources contained within the toolkit, the assessment team should seek to define parameters of the study. This will be dependent on the objective of the study, e.g. to inform policy and programmes, support advocacy or to support schools with targeted interventions to address the impact of disruptions to education from conflict, climate related crises or pandemics.

Questions to consider when defining the objectives and parameters of your study:

- a Study size.** How many countries/sub-national localities are included within the study? Is the study focused on the state level (national) or district/province level (subnational)?
- b Which actors are conducting surveys on out-of-school children** and what are the options for collaboration?
- c Identification of KII.** For example teachers and head teachers may know more about children recently dropped out of school but may not have knowledge of the wider out of school situation. They may also have biases and triangulation will be needed. If available other stakeholder should be included such as parent teacher associations and camp managers (in situations of displacement) can be interviewed for data. Also, health facilities can be consulted for the birth rate and overall demographics.
- d Cultural context.** Will cultural nuances be captured across the geographies of focus? How will the cultural context affect the parameters of the study and the ways it is implemented – for example how to work with community leaders and to hire local enumerators.
- e Variety of available products.** Is comparable data collected at country, regional and local level
- f Government approval.** Government approval will be required for consultation with children, young people and vulnerable populations in specific countries and to access schools. It is important to follow local guidance and approval processes.
- g Ethical approval.** Ethical approval through SCI's ERC process will be needed.

Whilst using the toolkit – assessing the quality of data

Data quality is defined in terms of completeness, relevance, accuracy, timeliness and accessibility. These dimensions of quality are as follows:

- **Completeness:** Data are complete when data values are present for all records, occurrences or logical entities in pre-primary, primary and secondary education, including learners with special educational needs.
- **Relevance:** There is no point in collecting data unless it is put to some meaningful use in education decisions. Excessively long questionnaires should be avoided.
- **Accuracy:** Accuracy should be prioritised in the data capturing methods, data validation methods and data verification processes, possibly at the expense of time and money. Data should be within the normal range for data collected for that specific data element and entity. Limitation to accuracy should be identified and reported transparently.
- **Timeliness:** Data should be current or up to date. Data must be on time and available when they are required. Otherwise, the credibility of the information system diminishes. Data from all the reporting institutions should be submitted at the appointed time.
- **Accessibility:** Data may not be accessible to the assessment team at all levels of the education system. The assessment team should know what data are available, as well as where to find and retrieve them. Questions to consider in this step include:
 - How applicable is the available data to the monitoring of enrolment and drop-out rates?
 - Is data easily accessible to the assessment team?
 - Will the data that is inaccessible have an impact on the final product of the assessment?

After using the guidance – triangulation

Data triangulation involves the use of different sources of data and information to establish a comprehensive understanding of the OOSC context. Triangulation helps the assessment team to validate the data obtained, by cross checking it with data from multiple sources. It assesses the consistency of findings obtained and also helps to capture different dimensions of the same area of study.

Information and data collected through the Enrolment and Dropout Monitoring Tool, Monitoring Tool and Survey Tool should be **triangulated** with secondary data (e.g., EMIS databases, local school records, demographic health surveys, etc.) where possible. This should be **contextualised** to ensure they reflect the experiences of children in-scope.

Furthermore this data should be compared with available demographic data from relevant actors such as managers of health facilities and nutrition projects.

It is always important to make sure that collected data is disaggregated by **gender, age**, and other variables where possible such as language group, disability, rural or urban residency, refugee or migrant status.

Overview of secondary sources on out-of-school children

Table 24
Overview of secondary sources on out-of-school children

Source	Description	Free
Academic Search Premier	Academic Search is a monthly indexing service. Its academic focus is international universities, covering social science, education, psychology, and other subjects.	No
British Education Index (BEI) – EDUCATION-LINE	British Education Index covers all aspects of educational policy and administration, evaluation and assessment, technology and special educational needs. Indexing British education journals, theses and more, this resource is searchable by educational level and age group. Coverage dating back to 1929.	No
The Latin American Council of Social Sciences (CLACSO)	The Latin American Council of Social Sciences (CLACSO) is an international non-governmental institution with associative status in UNESCO, created in 1967. Currently, it brings together 806 research and postgraduate centers in the field of social sciences and humanities in 51 countries in Latin America and other continents.	Yes
Educational Administration Abstracts	Educational Administration Abstracts is a database providing bibliographic records covering all areas of educational administration, including educational leadership, educational management and educational research.	No
Education Abstracts	Education Abstracts includes rigorous curation of open access (OA) journals, which has resulted in a growing collection of 105 global OA journals. Once validated and certified for inclusion, these OA journals are treated with high-quality subject indexing and sophisticated, precise/accurate full-text linking.	No
Education Research Abstracts Online (ERA)	Education Research Abstracts Online (ERA) is an exciting and comprehensive database comprising fully indexed abstracts that cover the current international research in education. A versatile research tool, ERA is supported by a fully-flexible search engine and comprises links to the full-text online versions of articles where possible.	No
Education Research Complete	Education Research Complete includes rigorous curation of open access (OA) journals, which has resulted in a growing collection of 303 global OA journals. Once validated and certified for inclusion, these OA journals are treated with high-quality subject indexing and sophisticated, precise/accurate full-text linking.	No
Education Resources Information Centre (ERIC) database	ERIC is an online library of education research and information sponsored by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) of the U.S. Department of Education. ERIC provides access to bibliographic records of journal and non-journal literature from 1966 to the present.	Yes
Google Scholar	Google Scholar is a freely accessible web search engine that indexes the full text or metadata of scholarly literature across an array of publishing formats and disciplines.	Yes
International Journal of Current Research in Education, Culture and Society (IJCRECS)	International Journal of Current Research in Education, Culture and Society (IJCRECS) is an attempt of Eureka Group of Journals to bridge the gap between "Campuses and Corporate" by including both academic research activities as well as the innovation done on industries and corporate professionals.	Yes
International Journal of Educational Research	The International Journal of Educational Research publishes research manuscripts in the field of education.	Yes
JSTOR	JSTOR provides access to more than 12 million academic journal articles, books, and primary sources in 75 disciplines.	No
Redalyc Scientific Information System	The Redalyc project (Red de Revistas Científicas de América Latina y El Caribe, España y Portugal) is a bibliographic database and a digital library of Open Access journals with the general aim of building a scientific information system made up by the leading journals of all the knowledge areas edited in and about Latin America.	Yes
Scopus	Scopus uniquely combines a comprehensive, expertly curated abstract and citation database with enriched data and linked scholarly literature across a wide variety of disciplines. It quickly finds relevant and authoritative research, identifies experts and provides access to reliable data, metrics and analytical tools. Be confident in progressing research, teaching or research direction and priorities – all from one database and with one subscription.	No

Source	Description	Free
Sustainability	Sustainability is an international, cross-disciplinary, scholarly, peer-reviewed and open access journal of environmental, cultural, economic, and social sustainability of human beings. It provides an advanced forum for studies related to sustainability and sustainable development and is published semi-monthly online by MDPI.	Yes
Journal of Statistics and Data Science Education	The Journal of Statistics and Data Science Education (JSDSE) is an open access peer-reviewed journal published by the American Statistical Association. It disseminates accessible knowledge for the improvement of statistics education at all levels, including elementary, secondary, post-secondary, post-graduate, continuing, and workplace education. Although JSDSE is a journal of the American Statistical Association, submissions are welcome from educators, practitioners, and researchers around the world.	Yes
International Journal of Educational Development	The purpose of the International Journal of Educational Development is to report new insight and foster critical debate about the role that education plays in development. Aspects of development with which the journal is concerned include economic growth and poverty reduction; human development, wellbeing, the availability of human rights; democracy, social cohesion and peace-building; resilience and environmental sustainability.	Supports open access

Guidance on primary data collection

The enrolment and drop-out monitoring guidance provides broad guidance on how to track and capture, through primary data collection from school offices and Head Teachers or school administrators, school enrolment, retention and drop-out rates¹⁴⁴ in schools in defined geographic locations.

This guidance is particularly may be used following a crisis – such as a pandemic, climate or conflict related crisis- that has led to temporary school closures or disrupted children’s access to education in other ways. The guidance is relevant where sufficiently up to date information is not currently available from government or other secondary sources in the country of focus or specific districts and additional primary data collection needs to be undertaken, where Save the Children is well positioned to carry this out compared to other actors in the country or district or where Save the Children is able to partner with other organisations that are well resourced for conducting surveys in the country or specific geography.

This guidance is for Save the Children Staff who are already familiar with the [SCI Procedure on Research, Evaluation and Assessment](#) and it’s recommended linked documents.

Familiarity with these procedures is essential.

**Disclaimer – We are aware that the attendance measurement and thresholds (both quant and qual) for drop outs do differ context to context, thus guidance within this document around their calculation should be adapted and processed before their use.*

The aim of this document is to guide the assessment team (Country Officers and/or other evaluation teams (e.g., MEAL officers, external evaluation partners, etc) through primary data collection activities using the following steps:

- 1 Set the study objectives in detail** including specifying the geographical area where data will be collected on enrolment, retention and dropout.
- 2 In-country primary data collection** data collection tools and their targets – which actors would provide the data.

This guidance should be used once the scope of study and key study objectives have been agreed and the assessment team have used the reviewed available secondary data.

This guidance document builds on the Safe Back to School (SB2S) the SB2S [Situational Analysis Tool](#) and is supplemented with additional insights emerging from UNESCO and World Bank data, as well as data from countries’ Education Management Information System (EMIS) databases.

Drop-out rates may in some cases be obtained through enrolment and attendance data provided by individual schools, whilst risk of drop-out is based on identified barriers to access and exposure to these barriers. Barriers related to risks of dropping out vary across countries and within countries. Findings from the assessment will provide preliminary insights on the specific array of barriers relevant within specific contexts. School reporting periods may differ across countries and based on the academic calendar, so if an external team from outside the country is conducting the work they should work with the in-country team to identify the most appropriate timing for data collection.

Primary data sources:

- **Key Informant Interviews**, to gain qualitative data and information from key stakeholder groups. Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) will provide an opportunity to gather the perspectives from a range of stakeholders e.g. Government officials, I/LNGOs, Civil Society Organisations, advocacy organisations, etc parents and caregivers, community leaders, child protection committees, school management committees, parent teacher associations, community health workers, teachers and children about:
 - i) attitudes and perspectives on the reasons behind school dropouts in communities, including the identification of social norms and behaviours underpinning attitudes and behaviours that lead to obstacles to access to education; and
 - ii) obvious barriers and challenges to returning to school following a crisis. Particular attention should be paid to differentiations across specific demographic groups (e.g., age, education level, gender, children with disabilities, LGBTQ¹⁴⁵, refugee status, etc).
- **Household surveys**, which can be used to reach a wider audience and collect both qualitative and quantitative information from the community and to identify children who have never enrolled.

The above suggested rapid data sources should be supported with (in the longer run) following primary data from SCI or its partners;

- 1 Barriers Assessment (focused on FGDs with children not adults)
- 2 Conflict Analysis
- 3 Gender Analysis
- 4 Feedback and Reporting Data
- 5 Child Safeguarding Trends and Data (Reach out to CSG Focal point)
- 6 HR Records on languages being spoken, and ethnicity and tribal background of SCI personnel
- 7 Case Management Data
- 8 Health Facility Data including demographics and top 10 morbidities (Including E-Warn System)
- 9 WASH Assessments (including KAP and access to water) and Alerts
- 10 Food or Cash Assistance Registration and PDM Data
- 11 Case Management Data

A collection

1 Sampling of Schools

The Country Officers and/or team conducting the assessment will need to decide which schools should be included within the study. Please refer to your MEAL specialists in the CO or the region or from the GHSTE platform for guidance on sampling before making decisions. An available tool that MEAL Advisors may use to start with is the Sample size Calculator Decision Tool In a few cases it may be possible to partner with others to conduct national studies. In many cases it may be necessary to focus on one district (or equivalent) and the findings may be used to influence district authorities or to inform Save the Children programming decisions in the district.

The sampling should refer to the local knowledge of the staff, asking about the particular demographic, ethnic and tribal differences to ensure that various groups and contexts are targeted.

Education Facilities should be targeted in consideration of their modalities, TLS vs School, ECD's, Remote vs In Person or Mobile vs Static modalities. Entire of these differences should influence the targeting selection within the sampling of schools.

If relevant, also targeting can consider the reason for displacement whether manmade or natural disaster, in comparison with the ones did not recently get affected as a control group.

2 Sampling and Engagement with Key Stakeholders

When planning for the data collection phase, it is important to think about **who you want to engage** with for the key informant interviews and what information you wish to obtain to inform for the study objectives. Key stakeholder should be purposively sampled and may include:

- Governmental/Ministry Officials
- Parents/caregivers
- Case Management or CP Teams
- Teachers
- School administrators
- Local healthcare professionals
- Community service organisations
- Counsellors
- Civil Society Organisations
- Representatives from INGO
- Researchers

3 Data collection activities

Once stakeholders have been identified and sampled, primary data can be collected using the Survey of Schools/Teachers Tool (Appendix 1) and Key Informant Interview Guide (Appendix 2). Where possible these should be undertaken face-to-face to ensure accessibility to the study to schools that have limited access to internet and internet devices.

Primary data collected through the Survey of Schools/Teachers and Key Informant Interviews should be **triangulated** with secondary data collated during the assessment (e.g., EMIS databases, local school records, demographic health surveys, etc) where possible. This should be **contextualised** to ensure they duly reflect the experiences of children in-scope.

It is important to always make sure that collected data is disaggregated by **gender, age**, as a minimum, to support inclusive/equitable research and contribute to knowledge gaps in these areas. Other disaggregation can include characteristics such as rural or urban residency, refugee status, internally displaced, migrant status, ethnicity, disability, socio-economic status and, LGBTQ.

Using the Survey of Schools/Teachers Tool (Appendix 1), data on enrolment, drop-outs and students at risk of dropping out can be collected from sampled schools, directly. Where there are data gaps, quantitative data can be complemented using the Key Informant Interview Guide to gain insights into the reasons for children having dropped-out or are at risk of dropping out.

SURVEY OF SCHOOLS/TEACHERS TOOL OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDREN DATA AND RESOURCE TOOLKIT

Prepared by Q³ Strategy



INDIVIDUAL INFORMATION

1. What is your name? _____
2. In what capacity/professional role are you providing your answers?
 - Headteacher
 - Deputy Head Teacher
 - Teacher
 - Other, please specify: _____
3. How long have you been working in this capacity in your current school?
 - Less than 2 years
 - 2-5 years
 - 5-10 years
 - 10-15 years
 - 15 years or more
4. Which of the below statements best describe the context of where you work?
Check all that apply.
 - Rural location
 - Semi-urban location
 - Urban location
 - Other, please specify: _____



SECTION 1: GATHERING DATA ON THE OOSC CONTEXT WITHIN SCHOOLS

This section focuses on gathering mainly quantitative data the OOSC within specific schools. Schools may need to refer to their existing enrolment and attendance monitoring platforms/records to provide some key data points.

PART A. DETAILS OF YOUR SCHOOL

5. Name: _____
6. Location (District): _____
7. Is the school/learning institution a public (government owned) or private school?
 - Public (Government-run)
 - Private (Fee-paying)
 - Community school
 - School for refugees
 - SCI managed school
 - Temporary learning space
 - Mobile school
 - Vocational training centre
 - Other, please specify: _____
8. What are the grade levels in your school? [multiple choice]
 - Secondary school
 - Pre-primary school
 - Primary school
 - ECCD Centre
 - Other, please specify: _____

[If the school covers multiple levels – use a continuation of the questionnaire to capture the additional levels]
9. How do learners enrol in your school?
 - Sit for entry exam
 - Predefined catchment area
 - Apply if interested
 - Show the right qualification
 - Other, please specify: _____



PART B. SCHOOL AND OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDREN STATUS

10. What is the current status of your school? By 'open', we mean children can attend lessons in person. Please select one option only.

- Open fully (e.g., classes are being held exclusively in person)
- Open partially (e.g., open for some grades/age groups; open on specific days, blended/hybrid)
- Virtual/Online due to a crisis
- Closed due to a crisis
- Closed temporarily due to a crisis
- Other [If your school status is not listed here, please specify the status below]: _____

11. a. For this current academic year, that started [insert date DD/MM/YYYY] approximately how many **children in total** are enrolled in your school?

a.(i) Enumerator verified by observing school records (check/tick one): Yes[] No[]

b. For this current academic year, that started [insert date DD/MM/YYYY] approximately how many **boys in total** are enrolled in your school?

b.(i) Enumerator verified by observing school records (check/tick one): Yes[] No[]

c. For this current academic year, that started [insert date DD/MM/YYYY] approximately how many **girls in total** are enrolled in your school?

c(i) Enumerator verified by observing school records (check/tick one): Yes[] No[]

12. a. For this current academic year, that started [insert date DD/MM/YYYY] approximately how many children with a disability are enrolled in your school?

a.(i) Enumerator verified by observing school records (check/tick one): Yes[] No[]

b. Please specify the number of students with the disability:

Which definitions and framework do you use to identify children with disabilities?



Primary section where applicable

13. a. For this current academic year, that started [insert date DD/MM/YYYY] approximately how many **primary school children** are enrolled in your school?

- a.(i) Enumerator verified by observing school records (check/tick one): Yes [] No []

- b. For this current academic year, that started [insert date DD/MM/YYYY] approximately how many **boys** are enrolled in the **primary level** in your school?

- b.(i) Enumerator verified by observing school records (check/tick one): Yes [] No []

- c. For this current academic year that started [insert date DD/MM/YYYY] approximately how many **girls** are enrolled in the **primary level** in your school?

- c.(i) Enumerator verified by observing school records (check/tick one): Yes [] No []

- d. For this current academic year that started [insert date DD/MM/YYYY] approximately how many children who identify as **with a disability** are enrolled in the **primary level** in your school?

- d.(i) Enumerator verified by observing school records (check/tick one): Yes [] No []

Secondary section where applicable

14. a. For this current academic year that started [insert date DD/MM/YYYY], approximately how many **secondary school children** are enrolled in your school?

- a.(i) Enumerator verified by observing school records (check/tick one): Yes [] No []

- b. For this current academic year that started [insert date DD/MM/YYYY], approximately how many **boys** are enrolled in the **secondary level** in your school?

- b.(i) Enumerator verified by observing school records (check/tick one): Yes [] No []

- c. For this current academic year, that started [insert date DD/MM/YYYY] approximately how many **girls** are enrolled in the **secondary level** in your school?

- c.(i) Enumerator verified by observing school records (check/tick one): Yes [] No []



d. For this current academic year, that started [insert date DD/MM/YYYY] approximately how many children **with a disability** are enrolled in the **secondary level** in your school?

d.(i) Enumerator verified by observing school records (check/tick one):Yes[] No[]

15. a. For the previous academic year, that started [insert date DD/MM/YYYY] approximately how many children in total were enrolled in your school?

a.(i) Enumerator verified by observing school records (check/tick one):Yes[] No[]

b. For the previous academic year, that started [insert date DD/MM/YYYY] approximately how many **boys in total** are enrolled in your school?

b.(i) Enumerator verified by observing school records (check/tick one):Yes[] No[]

c. For the previous academic year, that started [insert date DD/MM/YYYY] approximately how many **girls in total** are enrolled in your school?

c.(i) Enumerator verified by observing school records (check/tick one):Yes[] No[]

d. For the previous academic year that started [insert date DD/MM/YYYY], approximately how many children who identify as **with a disability** are enrolled in your school?

d.(i) Enumerator verified by observing school records (check/tick one):Yes[] No[]

Primary section where applicable

16. a. For the previous academic year, that started [insert date DD/MM/] approximately how many **primary school children** are enrolled in your school?

a.(i) Enumerator verified by observing school records (check/tick one):Yes[] No[]

b. For the previous academic year, that started [insert date DD/MM/YYYY] approximately how many **boys** are enrolled in the **primary level** in your school?

b.(i) Enumerator verified by observing school records (check/tick one):Yes[] No[]



c. For the previous academic year, that started [insert date DD/MM/YYYY] approximately how many **girls** are enrolled in the **primary level** in your school?

c.(i) Enumerator verified by observing school records (check/tick one): Yes [] No []

d. For the previous academic year, that started [insert date DD/MM/YYYY] approximately how many children **with a disability** are enrolled in the **primary level** in your school?

d.(i) Enumerator verified by observing school records (check/tick one): Yes [] No []

Secondary section where applicable

17. a. For the previous academic year, that started [insert date DD/MM/YYYY] approximately how many **secondary school children** are enrolled in your school?

a.(i) Enumerator verified by observing school records (check/tick one): Yes [] No []

b. For the previous academic year, that started [insert date DD/MM/YYYY] approximately how many **boys** are enrolled in the **secondary level** in your school?

b.(i) Enumerator verified by observing school records (check/tick one): Yes [] No []

c. For the previous academic year, that started [insert date DD/MM/YYYY] approximately how many **girls** are enrolled in the **secondary level** in your school?

c.(i) Enumerator verified by observing school records (check/tick one): Yes [] No []

d. For the previous academic year, that started [insert date DD/MM/YYYY] approximately how many children **with a disability** are enrolled in the **secondary level** in your school?

d.(i) Enumerator verified by observing school records (check/tick one): Yes [] No []

18. In the previous academic year, that started [insert date DD/MM/YYYY], from the information you have available, how many children in your school's geographic area were out of school?



- a. Total _____
- b. Girls _____
- c. Boys _____
- d. Children with a disability _____
or
- e. Unknown _____
- f. Enumerator verified by observing a source referred to by the (check/tick one): Yes [] No []
- g. What source was observed? _____

19. In the current academic year academic year, that started [insert date DD/MM/YYYY] from the information you have available how many children in your school's geographic area are out of school?

- a. Total _____
- b. Girls _____
- c. Boys _____
- d. Children with a disability _____
or
- e. Unknown _____
- f. Enumerator verified by observing a source referred to by the head teacher (check/tick one): Yes [] No []
- g. What source was observed? _____

20. How many children have enrolled in your school and stopped attending for more than 45 days since the school has reopened?

- a. Total _____
- b. Girls _____
- c. Boys _____
- d. Children with a disability _____
or
- e. Unknown _____
- f. Enumerator verified by observing school records (check/tick one): Yes [] No []



21. a. Has the number of children enrolled in your school increased, decreased, or remained the same since your school has reopened following closures due to the crisis.
- Increased
 - Decreased
 - Remained the same
 - Don't know/Cannot answer
 - Not applicable
 - Enumerator verified by observing school records (check/tick one): Yes No

b. What would you describe as the main reason for this change in enrolment in your school since crisis started? If enrolment has not changed, please describe why you believe this is the case.

PART C. ATTENDANCE

22. How many children are attending 60% or more classes each week?

- Total: _____
- Boys: _____
- Girls: _____
- Children with a disability: _____
 - Boys with a disability: _____
 - Girls with a disability: _____

Or

- Unknown _____
- Enumerator verified by observing school records (check/tick one): Yes No

23. Has attendance in your school increased, decreased or remained the same since your school has reopened following the crisis?

- Increased



- b. Decreased
- c. Remained the same
- d. Don't know/Cannot answer
- e. Not applicable
- f. Enumerator verified by observing school records (check/tick one): Yes[] No[]

24. What would you describe as the main reason for this change in attendance in your school since the crisis started? If attendance has not changed, please describe why you believe this is the case.

PART D. PROFILE OF OUT OF SCHOOL CHILDREN

25. Which school level/age group constitutes the highest proportion of out of school children in your school's geographical catchment area?

- a. Pre-primary children
- b. Primary children (Infant, Junior and Senior)
- c. Lower secondary children
- d. Upper secondary children
- e. Other, please specify: _____
- f. Don't know
- g. Enumerator verified by observing school records (check/tick one): Yes[] No[]

26. a. Since schools have reopened: are boys or girls more likely to be out of school? Select one option only.

- a. Boys are more likely to be out of school than girls.
- b. Girls are more likely to be out of school than boys,
- c. Both boys and girls are more likely to be out of school.
- d. Neither boys nor girls are likely to be out of school.
- e. Don't know or not applicable

f. Based on your answer, please explain why:



27. Which types of children are most likely to be out of school? Check all that apply.

- a. Girls who get married early
- b. Boys associated with armed groups
- c. Boys who join the job market early
- d. Children with educated parents who value education (e.g., parents with a certificate of completion of primary education)
- e. Children with uneducated parents who do not value education
- f. Children with disabilities (physical and non-physical disabilities)
- g. Children whose parents/caregivers have a disability
- h. Children whose parents/caregivers work longer hours
- i. Children who cannot afford school fees
- j. Children who cannot afford transportation fees
- k. Children living in urban areas
- l. Children living in rural/remote areas
- m. Children living in peri-urban areas
- n. Children of migrant, refugee or displaced families
- o. Children of ethnic minority groups
- p. Other, please specify: _____

Part F. Barriers and Facilitators

28. For children not attending school, in your opinion what are the top three reasons they are not attending: _____
- a. Based on this, what would you describe as the key reasons they are not attending: _____



29. **Instructions:** On a scale of 1 (very weak) to 5 (very strong), rate the relevance of each barrier/factor below that prevents children from going to school, or that puts them at risk of dropping out.

Barrier	1 (Very Weak)	2 (Relatively Weak)	3 (Neutral)	4 (Strong)	5 (Very Strong)	I don't know
A. COVID-19 and schools						
School closure due to COVID-19						
Fear of getting COVID-19						
Students lack protection against COVID-19						
Quarantining because of COVID-19 symptoms						
Teachers are not in school because of fear of getting COVID-19						
Teachers are not in school because they have/had COVID-19						
Teachers are not in school because they are not getting paid because of COVID-19 implications						
Other COVID related barriers, please specify: _____						
B. Individual Characteristics						
Personal characteristics (e.g., age, gender)						
Physical or non-physical disability (e.g., learning difficulty)						
Status of the child resulting in social exclusion (e.g., refugee status, displacement status)						
Health related matters (e.g., Mental health, physical health challenges)						
Protection issues (e.g. violence preventing school attendance)						
C. Family						
Parents' level of education						
Parent or family, perception of education value						
Parental status resulting in social exclusion (e.g., refugee status, displacement status)						
Family income						
Household characteristics (divorce, single parent, abandoned)						



D. Social and economic conditions						
Cultural and religious norms and values						
Economic background (wealth)						
E. School conditions						
School distance from home						
Transportation						
Safety concerns (bullying, violence)						
School culture and norms						
Language of instruction						
F. Other Challenges						
Lack of education programs and initiatives to reduce out of school children						
Lack of funding for schools						
Physical barriers (e.g. poor transportation, distance)						
Other, please specify:						

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE: OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDREN DATA AND RESOURCE TOOLKIT

Prepared by Q³ Strategy



SECTION 2: STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES ON SCHOOL ATTENDANCE: The next set of questions focus on gather perspectives, attitudes, beliefs, barriers and facilitators to school attendances or non-attendance.

Part G. Open-ended questions

1. In your opinion, what are the perspectives of parents, carers, guardians of children who are **enrolled and attending** school regularly on the importance of school attendance?
2.
 - a. Does this differ by age of the child? _____
 - b. Does this differ by gender of the child? _____
 - c. Does this differ by whether the child has a disability or not? _____



3. In your opinion, why do children drop out of school?
4. What are the key challenges surrounding school participation in the local context?
5. What are the key policies, programmes, and initiatives that tackle out of school children issue in your country/local context?
 - d. Are these interventions successful and why?
 - e. How can these policies, programmes, and initiatives be improved?
6. From your perspective what are the key priorities to drive change in school attendance and reduce the OOSC challenge?

7. Have you used any tools in conducting a systematic and robust assessment of children who are out of school? What are they? And how effective have they been?

The purpose of this part of the survey is to learn more about you.

What is your gender?

- a. Female
- b. Male

Options to decide on including these options

- a. Non-binary
- b. Transgender
- c. Intersex
- d. Prefer not to say

What is your first language?



The tool builds on the community-level integrated case management model to address barriers to safely accessing education and learning, by seeking to incorporate/understand the perspectives of all stakeholders (child protection committees, school management committees, parent teacher associations and community health workers, social workers/other social protection professionals) around the issues pertaining to OOSC in addition to exploring the role they have to play in addressing barriers to education and promoting attendance.

STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES ON SCHOOL ATTENDANCE: The questions focus on gathering the perspectives, attitudes, beliefs, barriers and facilitators to school attendances or non-attendance.

INDIVIDUAL INFORMATION

The purpose of this part of the survey is to learn more about you and your work setting.

8. What is your name and what do you do?
9. What is your relationship to the child(ren)?
 - Parent
 - Guardian
 - Other: _____

10. Which ethnic group do you identify with?

[This question should be tailored to the population context and replaced with specific options relevant to demographics within the country/region of focus]

- Please specify: _____
11. Which of the below statements best describe the context of where you live?
Check all that apply.
 - Rural location
 - Semi-urban location
 - Urban location
 - Other, please specify: _____

Open-ended questions [Parents, Guardians and OOSC]

1. What is your perspective on the importance of education and school attendance?
2. Do you face barriers that prevent you from enrolling your children in school? Yes, No
3. Do you face barriers that sometimes prevent you from sending your child to attend school? Yes No
4. What are the key challenges and barriers that you face in supporting your child to access school?



5. Have these challenges and barriers changed since the crisis? If so, how?
6. What kind of support do you need to enrol your children in school?
7. Who are the key actors you think can provide this support?
8. What kind of support do you need to support your child to regularly attend school?
9. Who are the key actors you think can provide this support?
10. Are you aware of any initiatives/programs that provide support for your child to access school? Yes / No
11. Can you provide an example?

Open-ended questions [Other Stakeholders]

12. What is your perspective on the importance of education and school attendance?
13. In your opinion, what are the perspectives of parents, carers, guardians of children who are enrolled and attending school regularly on the importance of school attendance?
 - f. Does this differ by age of the child?
 - g. Does this differ by gender of the child?
 - h. Does this differ by whether the child has a disability or not?
 - i. Does this differ by socio-economic status of the parents/guardian?
 - j. Does this differ by parents' level of education?
14. In your opinion, what are the perspectives of parents, carers, guardians of children who are not enrolled and nor attending school regularly on the importance of school attendance?
 - k. Does this differ by age of the child?
 - l. Does this differ by gender of the child?
 - m. Does this differ by whether the child has a disability?
 - n. Does this differ by socio-economic status of the parents/guardian?
 - o. Does this differ by parents' level of education?
15. In your opinion, what are the perspectives of children themselves (particularly those not in school) on the importance of school attendance?
16. What are the key challenges surrounding school participation in your local context?
17. What are the key policies, programmes, and initiatives that tackle out of school children issue in your country/local context?
 - p. Are these policies, programmes, and initiatives successful and why?



q. How can these policies, programmes be improved?

18. From your perspective what are the key priorities to drive transformative change in school attendance and reduce the OOSC challenge?

19. Have you used any tools to conduct a systematic and robust assessment around the status of children who are out of school? What are they?

20. What is your gender?

- Female
- Male
- I prefer not to say

Consider these further optional categories

- Non-binary
- Transgender
- Intersex

APPENDIX 5

LIST OF SAMPLE SCHOOLS IN MALAWI

Type of school	Region	District	Zone	Name of school
Primary	North	Mzimba North	Emoneni	Emoneni FP School
Primary	North	Mzimba North	Enkondhlewani	Enkondhlewani Primary School
Primary	North	Mzimba North	Ekwendeni	Ngazi School
Primary	North	Mzimba South	Ephangweni	Embangweni School
Primary	North	Mzimba South	Kaphuta	Mzimba LEA School
Primary	North	Mzimba South	Manyamula	Kalweya FP School
Primary	North	Mzimba South	Kaphuta 1	Kazengo
Primary	North	Mzimba South	Manyamula	Manyamula School
Primary	North	Mzimba South	Kaphuta 1	Kaphuta School
Primary	North	Mzimba South	Katete	Kamarambo Primary School
Primary	North	Rumphi	Bumba	St Denis School
Primary	North	Rumphi	Bolero	Bolero FP School
Primary	North	Rumphi	Bumba	Chikwawa School
Primary	North	Rumphi	Mzokoto	Mzokoto FP School
Primary	North	Rumphi	Mhuju	Mhuju School
Primary	North	Rumphi	Katowo	Katowo FP School
Primary	North	Rumphi	Katowo	Kabulufu School
Primary	North	Rumphi	Mhuju	Mbulunji School
Primary	North	Rumphi	Mzokoto	Mkombezi FP School
Primary	North	Rumphi	Bumba	Chozoli School
Primary	Central	Mchinji	Boma	Kamuzu LEA School
Primary	Central	Mchinji	Mkanda	Mkanda School
Primary	Central	Mchinji	Chimteka	Chimteka School
Primary	Central	Mchinji	Kapiri	Msupadzi School
Primary	Central	Mchinji	Waliranji	Kamwanya School
Primary	Central	Mchinji	Chimteka	Mphanga School
Primary	Central	Mchinji	Waliranji	Chazuka School
Primary	Central	Mchinji	Boma	Bua School
Primary	Central	Mchinji	Waliranji	Waliranji School
Primary	Central	Mchinji	Kapiri	Nthema School
Primary	Central	Ntcheu	Lizulu	Mlanda School
Primary	Central	Ntcheu	Ntonda	Ntonda
Primary	Central	Ntcheu	Nsipe	Nsipe FP School
Primary	Central	Ntcheu	Chikande	Khomba FP School

Type of school	Region	District	Zone	Name of school
Primary	Central	Ntcheu	Ganya	Namale School
Primary	Central	Ntcheu	Gumbu	Ntcheu RC School
Primary	Central	Ntcheu	Lizulu	Lizulu School
Primary	Central	Ntcheu	Ganya	Ganya FP
Primary	Central	Ntcheu	Kasinje	Kasinje School
Primary	South	Chikwawa	Nchalo	St Mathews School
Primary	South	Chikwawa	Mbewe	Bereu School
Primary	South	Chikwawa	Boma	Dyeratu School
Primary	South	Zomba	Songani	Songani School
Primary	South	Zomba	Ntonda	Matandwe School
Primary	South	Zomba	Songani	Matawale School
Primary	South	Zomba	St Michael	Mikundi School
Primary	South	Zomba	Ntonda	Primiti Girls
Primary	South	Zomba	Chimwalira	Nanjiri FP School
Primary	South	Zomba	St Michael	Mpyumpu School
Primary	South	Zomba	Chikala	Nsala School
Primary	South	Zomba	Sonagani	Matiti School
Primary	South	Zomba	Namapata	Mitondo School
Primary	South	Machinga	Machinga Boma	Chinkwenzule School
Primary	South	Machinga	St Therese	Nkasaulo School
Primary	South	Machinga	Ntaja	Matope Primary School
Primary	South	Machinga	St Therese	St Theresa School
Primary	South	Machinga	Chikweo	Luwatale Primary School
Primary	South	Machinga	Chikweo	Nampeya School
Primary	South	Machinga	Chikweo	Chikweo Primary School
Primary	South	Machinga	Namasika	Namasika School
Primary	South	Machinga	Namasika	Malundani School
Primary	South	Machinga	Namasika	Nainunje Primary School

APPENDIX 6

LIST OF SAMPLE SCHOOLS IN PERU

Type of school	Region	District	Zone	Name of school
Primary	Huancavelica	Huancavelica	Huancavelica	37001
Primary	Huancavelica	Huancavelica	Huancavelica	36011 Artemio Rey Sanchez Jara
Primary	Huancavelica	Huancavelica	Santa Barbara	36556
Primary	Huancavelica	Huancavelica	Yananaco	36009 Moises Ordaya Aliaga
Primary	Huancavelica	Huancavelica	Huancavelica	36001
Primary	Huancavelica	Huancavelica	Huancavelica	36002
Secondary	Huancavelica	Huancavelica	Santa Ana	Coar Huancavelica
Secondary	Huancavelica	Huancavelica	Santa Barbara	Isolina Clotet De Fernandini
Secondary	Huancavelica	Huancavelica	San Cristobal	San Cristobal
Secondary	Huancavelica	Huancavelica	Huancavelica	Francisca Diez Canseco De Castilla
Basic alternative school	Huancavelica	Huancavelica	Santa Ana	Ceba - Ramon Castilla Marquezado
Primary	Huancavelica	Yauli	Yauli	36036
Primary	Huancavelica	Yauli	Ambato	36118
Primary	Huancavelica	Yauli	Ccasapata	36303 Jose Carlos Mariategui
Primary	Huancavelica	Yauli	Ccollpaccasa	36330
Secondary	Huancavelica	Yauli	Ccollpaccasa	Jose Maria Argueras Altamirano
Secondary	Huancavelica	Yauli	Yauli	San Martin De Porres
Secondary	Huancavelica	Yauli	Ccasapata	Victor Raul Haya De La Torre
Secondary	Huancavelica	Yauli	Ambato	Antonio Raymondi
Secondary	Huancavelica	Yauli	Chucllaccasa	Mariano Melgar Valdivieso
Primary	Lima	San Martín de Porres	San Martín de Porres	IE 2023 - Pedro E. Paulet Mostajo
Primary	Lima	San Martín de Porres	San Martín de Porres	3037 Gran Amauta
Primary	Lima	San Martín de Porres	San Martín de Porres	2023 Augusto Salazar Bondy
Primary	Lima	San Martín de Porres	San Martín de Porres	IE 3043 Ramon Castilla
Secondary	Lima	San Martín de Porres	San Martín de Porres	0051 Clorinda Matto de Turner
Secondary	Lima	San Martín de Porres	San Martín de Porres	Isabel Chimpu Ocllo
Secondary	Lima	San Martín de Porres	San Martín de Porres	2023 Augusto Salazar Bondy
Secondary	Lima	San Martín de Porres	San Martín de Porres	3037 Gran Amauta
Secondary	Lima	San Martín de Porres	San Martín de Porres	Jose Granda
Secondary	Lima	San Martín de Porres	San Martín de Porres	El Pacifico
Secondary	Lima	San Martín de Porres	San Martín de Porres	Le Jose Granda
Secondary	Lima	San Martín de Porres	San Martín de Porres	3043 Ramon Castilla
Secondary	Lima	San Martín de Porres	San Martín de Porres	Los Jazmines de Naranjal
Basic	Lima	San Martín de Porres	San Martín de Porres	Ceba 3043 Ramón Castilla

Type of school	Region	District	Zone	Name of school
Basic	Lima	San Martín de Porres	San Martín de Porres	IE José Granda
Basic	Lima	San Martín de Porres	San Martín de Porres	Ceba 2032 Manuel Escorza Torres
Basic	Lima	San Martín de Porres	San Martín de Porres	Ceba 2027 José María Arguedas
Basic	Lima	San Martín de Porres	San Martín de Porres	Ceba 3037 Gran Amauta
Basic	Lima	San Martín de Porres	San Martín de Porres	Ceba 2023 Augusto Salazar Bondy
Basic	Lima	San Martín de Porres	San Martín de Porres	Ceba 3022 Jose Sabogal
Basic	Lima	San Martín de Porres	San Martín de Porres	Ceba 2003 Libertador Jose de San Martin
Primary	Amazona	Imaza	Centro Poblado Mesones Muro	IE 16208
Primary	Amazona	Imaza		IE 16361
Primary	Amazona	Imaza		IE 16209
Primary	Amazona	Imaza	Calle Ricardo Palma S/N Chiriaco	16318
Primary	Amazona	Imaza	Comunidad Nativa UUT	16356
Primary	Amazona	Imaza	Comunidad Nativa Paantam	16 714
Primary	Amazona	Imaza	Comunidad Nativas de Yupicusa	16317 – Yupicosa
Primary	Amazona	Imaza	Comunidad Nativa De Chipecuzco	16351
Primary	Amazona	Imaza	Numpatkaim	16353
Secondary	Amazona	Imaza	Chiriaco	Tecnico Industrial Tupac Amaru
Secondary	Amazona	Imaza	Centro Poblado Mesones Muro	I.E.S Mesones Muro
Secondary	Amazona	Imaza	Comunidad Nativa De Pakui	I.E Pakui
Secondary	Amazona	Imaza	Wawas	Wawas
Secondary	Amazona	Imaza	Wachapea	Fe y Alegría 62 San José
Secondary	Amazona	Imaza	Imacita	Alberto Acosta Herrera
Secondary	Amazona	Imaza	Shushunga	Shushunga
Secondary	Amazona	Imaza	Yamakaintsa	Fe y Alegría 55 Valentín Salegui
Secondary	Amazona	Imaza	Nuevo Belen	Kisua Nantip Uwak
Secondary	Amazona	Imaza	Comunidad Nativa Chipecuzco	Jose Kistug Pujupat
Basic	Amazona	Imaza	Chiriaco	Ceba Teodulo Becerra Erez

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Adverse weather conditions meant that a Chikwawa district in the southern region was inaccessible and schools across the district were closed. To mitigate the impact on the study, a new sample of schools was selected in a neighbouring district (Machinga).
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Imaza in the Amazona region, San Martin de Porres in the Lima region, and Huancavelica and Yauli in the Huancavelica region.
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School absence data is excluded from the guidance document as absence data is often not collected systematically at national and sub-national levels across countries.
- 145
This group will only be identified and engaged as such if the context is safe for LGBTQ adults or children to do so.



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