Protective School Environment Assessment Tool

A school-based survey to measure education quality in cocoa-growing communities

Overview

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What is the tool?

The *Protective School Environment Assessment* is a simple tool to assess three dimensions of a quality learning environment: safety, stability, and nurturance.

It is a proxy measure, which captures aspects related to the physical and relational environment at school. Higher scores are associated with lower levels of teacher violence, higher levels of pupil wellbeing at school, and better learning outcomes for children.[1]

How does it work?

The tool consists of 15 simple questions, answered through a mixture of direct observation and interviews with school management and teachers. The tool gives a total for each school between 0 (least protective environment) and 15 (most protective).

Why use the tool?

The Protective School Environment Assessment tool can be used to:

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[1] See: ICI (2022) Child rights and quality education: Results and learning from an innovative bundle of interventions to improve quality in Côte d'Ivoire

- **Monitor education quality** accounting for physical infrastructure and relational aspects of school
- **Identify gaps and weaknesses** that could be addressed to improve the quality of education and better protect children
- **Support the planning of interventions** to improve education quality
- **Measure changes** to education quality at school over time (eg. at baseline, midline, endline or on a periodic basis)

How was the tool developed?

ICI developed this tool to measure three aspects associated with a protective school environment for children: **safety, stability** and **nurturance**. These are:

Safety:	Stability:	Nurturance:
The extent to which children are secure from physical or psychological harm within their social and physical environments *This dimension covers personal safety, and physical safety, a respectful school culture and interpersonal relationships.*	**The extent to which healthy relationships and environments are predictable and consistent** *This dimension covers the predictability and consistency of school policies, stability of attendance by pupils and teachers.*	**The extent to which caregivers and the environment sensitively respond to and meet the emotional, physical, cognitive, and social needs of the child** *This dimension covers considerations like the existence of supportive relationships and of a positive learning environment.*

These dimensions emerged from an in-depth review of literature about how the environment around the child affect's development, physical and mental health, wellbeing, and resilience.[2] They cover physical, institutional, and social features that *support the physical and psychological wellbeing of the child and promote learning.*[3]

ICI pilot tested an initial version of the tool in May 2021 in 12 schools of Côte d'Ivoire. Results of the pilot study were used to test the validity of the tool (ie. to determine the extent to which the tool accurately measures the concepts it is supposed to measures), to refine the selection of items and questions, and to test correlations with other factors.[4]

How to use the tool?

The Protective School Environment Assessment tool relies on information collected at school and teacher level. Answers to the questions are collected either through direct observation, by questions to school administration (ie. the head teacher), or through direct questions to a sample of teachers.

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[2] Nelson, C. A., Bhutta, Z. A., Burke, H. N., Danese, A., & Samara, M. (2020). Adversity in childhood is linked to mental and physical health throughout life. *BMJ*.

[3] Robinson, L. R., Leeb, R. T., Merrick, M. T., & Forbes, L. W. (2015, 12). Conceptualizing and Measuring Safe, Stable, Nurturing Relationships and Environments in Educational Settings. *Journal of Child and Family Studies, 25*, 1488–1504.

[4] See ICI (2021) Measuring the protectiveness of the school environment for further details and results.

What are the questions?

The following table lists the 15 items assessed, the data source, and how to score them:

	Question	Data source	Scoring
			Award one point if…
Safety	Does the school have a protected water source?	*Observation*	School has a water source **and** it is protected
	Are water and soap for handwashing available?	*Observation*	Water **and** soap for handwashing are available to pupils
	Are there functioning toilets for pupils?	*Observation*	Toilets for pupils exist **and** are functioning
	Are there separate toilets for girls & boys?	*Observation*	Separate toilets exist for both girls and boys **and** are functioning
	Do teachers reject the use of violence?	*Questions to teachers*	At least 75% of the teachers *disagree* or *strongly disagree* with the following statements: - *Sometimes teachers have to hit students to make them listen* - *Sometimes teachers have to hit students to make them learn* - *Sometimes physical punishment is the only way to get students to respect you*
Stability	Are scholarships available to pupils?	*School administration*	Some pupils receive financial material assistance in order to attend school
	Do more than 90% of students regularly attend school?	*School administration*	Pupils' presence is monitored **and** less than 10% of pupils are absent for 4 or more days in the past month
	Do more than 90% of teachers regularly attend school?	*School administration*	Teachers' presence is monitored **and** less than 10% are absent for 4 or more days in the past month
	Is the teaching team fully staffed?	*School administration*	**Either** no teacher left the school during the past academic year **or** any teachers who left were replaced by "official" teachers
	Does the school canteen function at least 3 days a week?	*School administration*	A canteen exists **and** functions 3 or more days a week
Nurturance	Is there a parents' association involved in school management?	*School administration*	A parents association exists **and** is involved in school management
	Are adaptive teaching methods used?	*School administration*	The school uses teaching methods that cater for different abilities in the same class (eg. "teaching at the right level" or other accelerated education programmes, like bridging classes etc.)
	Does the school offer extra-curricular activities?	*School administration*	At least one after-school club exists (eg. offering sport, music, games etc.)
	Do teachers believe that all pupils can succeed?	*Questions to teachers*	At least 75% of the teachers answer **yes** to both of the following questions: - *Do you think that all students can learn and progress?* - *Do you think that all students have the potential to reach a secondary school?*
	Do teachers reject gender stereotypes about pupils' ability?	*Teachers*	At least 75% of the teachers answer **no** to both of the following questions: - *Do you think that boys are always better at certain subjects than girls?* - *Do you think that girls are always better at certain subjects than boys?*

How to analyse the data collected?

Each of the 15 questions is given a score of either 0 or 1. The total number of points is added together to achieve a total score between 0 (least protective) and 15 (most protective).

The scores of each sub-scale (safety, stability or nurturance) can also be used independently to test if a given component of the school protectiveness is related with a given outcome.

Survey forms

Download the relevant material here:

- Protective School Environment Questionnaire (in English)
- Protective School Environment Questionnaire (in French)
- Guidance on computation of scores

Guidance on computation of scores

The table below explains how to obtain the scores for the 15 items in the questionnaire. These computations steps should *not* be done during data collection, but in a second step of analysis.

	Item	Source	Computation method
Safety	Existing protected water source	Observation	If B10 = "Yes", score 1. Otherwise, = 0.
	Water and soap for the hands are readily available	Observation	If B11 = "Yes", score 1. Otherwise, = 0.
	Existing functioning toilets	Observation	If B12 = "Yes", score 1. Otherwise, = 0.
	Existing separate toilets for girls and boys	Observation	If B13 = "Yes", score 1. Otherwise, = 0.
	Rejection of violence	Teachers	If at least 75% of teachers answer "Disagree" **OR** "Strongly disagree", to all the questions of the C4 series (C4.1 **AND** C4.2 **AND** C4.3), score 1 point for question C4. Otherwise, score 0.
Stability	Existing scholarships in school	School administration	If B4.1 = "Yes" **AND** B4.3 = "Yes", score 1. Otherwise, 0.
	Pupils' presence is monitored and <10% are regularly absent	School administration	If B5.2 = "Yes" **AND** B5.3 = "Yes", compute: Threshold_absence_students (10% of students, 4 days / month) = (Number of school days since the beginning of the school year / 22) * 4 * (B2.1 / 10) If B5.4 < Threshold_absence_students, score 1. If B5.2 = "No" **OR** B5.3 = "No" **OR** B5.4 >= Threshold_absence_students, score 0.
	Teacher's presence is monitored and <10% of teachers are regularly absent	School administration	If B6.2 = "Yes" **AND** B6.3 = "Yes", compute: Threshold_absence_students (10% of students, 4 days / month) = (Number of school days since the beginning of the school year / 22) * 4 * (B2.2 / 10) If B6.4 < Threshold_absence_students, score 1. If B6.2 = "No" **OR** B6.3 = "No" **OR** B6.4 >= Threshold_absence_students, score 0.
	School staff is stable or 1 or several teachers left and was/were replaced	School administration	If B2.3 = "No" OR B2.5 >= B2.4, score 1. Otherwise, 0.
	The canteen is functioning more than 2 days a week	School administration	If B3.1 = "Yes" **AND** B3.2 is >2, score 1. Otherwise, 0.
Nurturance	Parents' association involved in school management	School administration	If B8.1 = "Yes" **AND** B8.2 = "Yes", score 1. Otherwise, 0.
	Existing adaptive teaching methods	School administration	If B7.1 = "Yes" **AND** B7.3 = "Yes", score 1. Otherwise, 0.
	Existing extra-curricular activities	School administration	If B9.1 = "Yes" **AND** B9.3 = "Yes", score 1. Otherwise, 0.
	Teachers think all pupils can succeed	Teachers	If at least 75% of teachers answer "Yes", to all the questions of the C2 series (C2.1 **AND** C2.2), score 1 point for question C2. Otherwise, score 0.
	Teachers have no gender stereotypes about pupils' capacity	Teachers	If at least 75% of teachers answer "Yes", to all the questions of the C3 series (C3.1 **AND** C3.2), score 1 point for question C3. Otherwise, score 0.