

Protective School Environment Assessment



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 for assessing three dimensions of a quality learning environment: safety, stability, and nurturance.

It is a proxy measure that 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 items, answered through a mixture of direct observation and interviews with school management and teachers. The tool gives a total score for each school between 0 points (least protective environment) and 15 points (most protective).

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](#)

Why use the tool?

The *Protective School Environment Assessment* tool can be used to:

- **Monitor education quality**, accounting for physical infrastructure and relational aspects of the 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 (e.g. at baseline, midline, endline or periodically)

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**. They refer to:

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

These dimensions emerged from an in-depth review of literature about how the environment around the child affects development, physical and mental health, wellbeing, and resilience.² They cover physical, institutional, and social features that *support the physical and psychological well-being 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 (i.e. to determine the extent to which the tool accurately measures the concepts it is supposed to measure), to refine the selection of items and questions, and to test correlations with other factors.

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.

How to use the tool?

The *Protective School Environment Assessment* relies on information collected at school and teacher level. Answers for the assessment are collected through questions as well as direct observation. To collect all necessary information the interviewer should interview the school administration (i.e. the head teacher), directly observe the school's facilities, and interview at least four teachers (this may include the head teacher) or all teachers if there are less than four teachers working at the school.

What are the items?

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

Item		Data source	Scoring
			<i>Award one point if...</i>
Safety	Protected water source	<i>Observation</i>	School has a water source, and it is protected
	Availability of water and soap	<i>Observation</i>	Water and soap for handwashing are available to pupils
	Functioning toilets for pupils	<i>Observation</i>	Toilets are accessible to pupils and are functioning
	Separate toilets for girls and boys	<i>Observation</i>	Separate toilets exist for both girls and boys, and are functioning
	Rejection of violence by teachers	<i>Questions to teachers</i>	At least 75% of the teacher sample <i>disagree</i> or <i>strongly disagree</i> with the following statements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sometimes teachers are forced to hit students to make them listen - Sometimes teachers are forced to hit students to make them learn - Sometimes, physical punishment is the only way to get students to respect you
Stability	Availability of scholarships	<i>Questions to school administration</i>	Some pupils or their parents receive financial/material assistance in order to attend school
	Pupils' presence at school	<i>Questions to school admin.</i>	Pupils' presence is monitored, and pupils miss less than 4.5% of school days

	Teachers' presence at school	<i>Questions to school admin.</i>	Teachers' presence is monitored, and teachers miss less than 4.5% of school days
	Consistent access to qualified teaching staff	<i>Questions to school admin.</i>	Either no teacher left the school during the past academic year or official teachers replaced any teachers who left
	Functioning school canteen	<i>Questions to school admin.</i>	A canteen exists and functions 3 or more days a week
Nurturance	Existence of parent association	<i>Questions to school admin.</i>	A parent association exists and is involved in school management
	Use of adaptive teaching methods	<i>Questions to school admin.</i>	The school uses teaching methods that cater to different abilities in the same class (e.g. "teaching at the right level" or other accelerated education programmes, like bridging classes)
	Offer of extra-curricular activities	<i>Questions to school admin.</i>	The school offers extra-curricular activities (there is at least one session of sport, music, games per week)
	Teachers' beliefs about pupils' success	<i>Questions to teachers</i>	At least 75% of the teacher sample answer yes to both of the following questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Do you think that all students have the potential to learn and progress?</i> - <i>Do you think that all students have the potential to reach a secondary school level?</i>
	Rejection of gender stereotypes by teachers	<i>Questions to teachers</i>	At least 75% of the teacher sample answer no to both of the following questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Do you think boys are always better at certain subjects than girls?</i> - <i>Do you think girls are always better at certain subjects than boys?</i>

How to analyse the data collected?

Each of the 15 items 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	Protected water source	Observation	If B11 = "Yes", score 1 If B11 = "No", score 0
	Availability of water and soap	Observation	If B12 = "Yes", score 1 If B12 = "No", score 0
	Functioning toilets for pupils	Observation	If B13 = "Yes", score 1 If B13 = "No", score 0
	Separate toilets for girls and boys	Observation	If B14 = "Yes", score 1 If B14 = "No", score 0
	Rejection of violence by teachers	Questions to teachers	If at least 75% of teachers answer "Disagree" OR "Strongly disagree", to <u>all</u> the questions of the C5 series (C5.1 AND C5.2 AND C5.3), score 1 Otherwise, score 0
Stability	Availability of scholarships	Questions to school administration	If B4.3 = "Yes", score 1 Otherwise, score 0
	Pupils' presence at school	Questions to school admin.	If B5.3 shows that the school records allow to count the number of days missed by students, compute: $\text{Threshold_absence_students} (4.5\% \text{ of school days}) = (\text{Number of school days since the beginning of the school year}) * B2.1 * 0.045$ If $B5.4 < \text{Threshold_absence_students}$, score 1 If B5.1 = "No" OR B5.3 shows that the school records do not allow to count the number of days missed by students OR $B5.4 \geq \text{Threshold_absence_students}$, score 0
	Teachers' presence at school	Questions to school admin.	If B6.3 shows that the school records allow to count the number of days missed by teachers, compute: $\text{Threshold_absence_teachers} (4.5\% \text{ of school days}) = (\text{Number of school days since the beginning of the school year}) * B2.2 * 0.045$ If $B6.4 < \text{Threshold_absence_teachers}$, score 1

			If B6.1 = "No" OR B6.3 shows that the school records do not allow to count the number of days missed by teachers OR B6.4 >= Threshold absence teachers, score 0
	Consistent access to qualified teaching staff	Questions to school admin.	If B2.3 = "No" OR B2.5 >= B2.4, score 1 Otherwise, score 0
	Functioning school canteen	Questions to school admin.	If B3.2 is >=3, score 1 Otherwise, score 0
Nurturance	Existence of parent association	Questions to school admin	If B8.2 = "Yes", score 1 Otherwise, score 0
	Use of adaptive teaching methods	Questions to school admin	If B7.3 = "Yes", score 1 Otherwise, score 0
	Offer of extra-curricular activities	Questions to school admin	If B9.3 = "Yes", score 1 Otherwise, score 0
	Teachers' beliefs about pupils' success	Questions to teachers	If at least 75% of teachers answer "Yes", to <u>all</u> the questions of the C3 series (C3.1 AND C3.2), score 1 Otherwise, score 0
	Rejection of gender stereotypes by teachers	Questions to teachers	If at least 75% of teachers answer "Yes", to <u>all</u> the questions of the C4 series (C4.1 AND C4.2), score 1 Otherwise, score 0