

TIME TO TEACH PROJECT OVERVIEW

The study

The Time to Teach (TTT) project is a multi-country research initiative that investigates the determinants of teacher absenteeism in 20 sub-Saharan and Northern African countries.

Established in 2017, the project is a collaboration between UNICEF Innocenti, UNICEF regional and country offices, national governments, local research partners, DFID, World Bank, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and Mastercard Foundation.

The challenge

Teacher absenteeism is one of the most troubling obstacles on the path toward universal learning in many African countries. Recent evidence from the region suggests that between one quarter to half of all primary school teachers are absent from class on any given school day and as many as half of all teachers are absent from school. These numbers conceal even higher rates of absenteeism and large variations in educational outcomes within countries, as teachers tend to be more frequently absent in poorer and more remote communities and schools.

Teacher absenteeism is currently recognized as a major element of the ineffectiveness, inefficiency and inequity of education systems in Africa, and multiple governments in the region have taken legislative action against it. However, the evidence base on how policies and practices at various level of the education system influence teacher absenteeism remains scant.

Objectives

The Time to Teach project seeks to collate and strengthen the evidence base on the determinants of teacher absenteeism and provide practical recommendations for improving teacher attendance rates. The study provides critical insights into the factors that influence teacher attendance and aims to assist the policy and programmatic work of national ministries of education and UNICEF country offices.

Specifically, the project seeks to:

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- Identify factors at different levels of the education system (national, sub-national, community and school) that underpin and sustain high rates of absenteeism in participating countries;
- Map existing national and sub-national teacher management policies and assess their impact on teachers' motivation, school and classroom attendance, and capacity to teach up to standard;
- Identify best practices, policy and policy implementation gaps and provide country-specific policy recommendations on reducing teacher absenteeism;
- Develop a regional knowledge base on the drivers of and remedies for teacher absenteeism and facilitate cross country learning.

Geographic scope

The Time to Teach project collaborates with national governments and national research institutes on a country basis. The project is currently implemented in three African regions – a total of 20 countries.

- **Eastern and Southern Africa:** Mozambique, Rwanda, Kenya, Comoros, Somalia (Puntland), Tanzania, South Sudan, Uganda
- **West and Central Africa:** Ghana, Gambia, Liberia, Nigeria, Mauritania, Côte d'Ivoire, Niger, Gabon, Guinea, Togo, Guinea-Bissau
- **Northern Africa:** Morocco

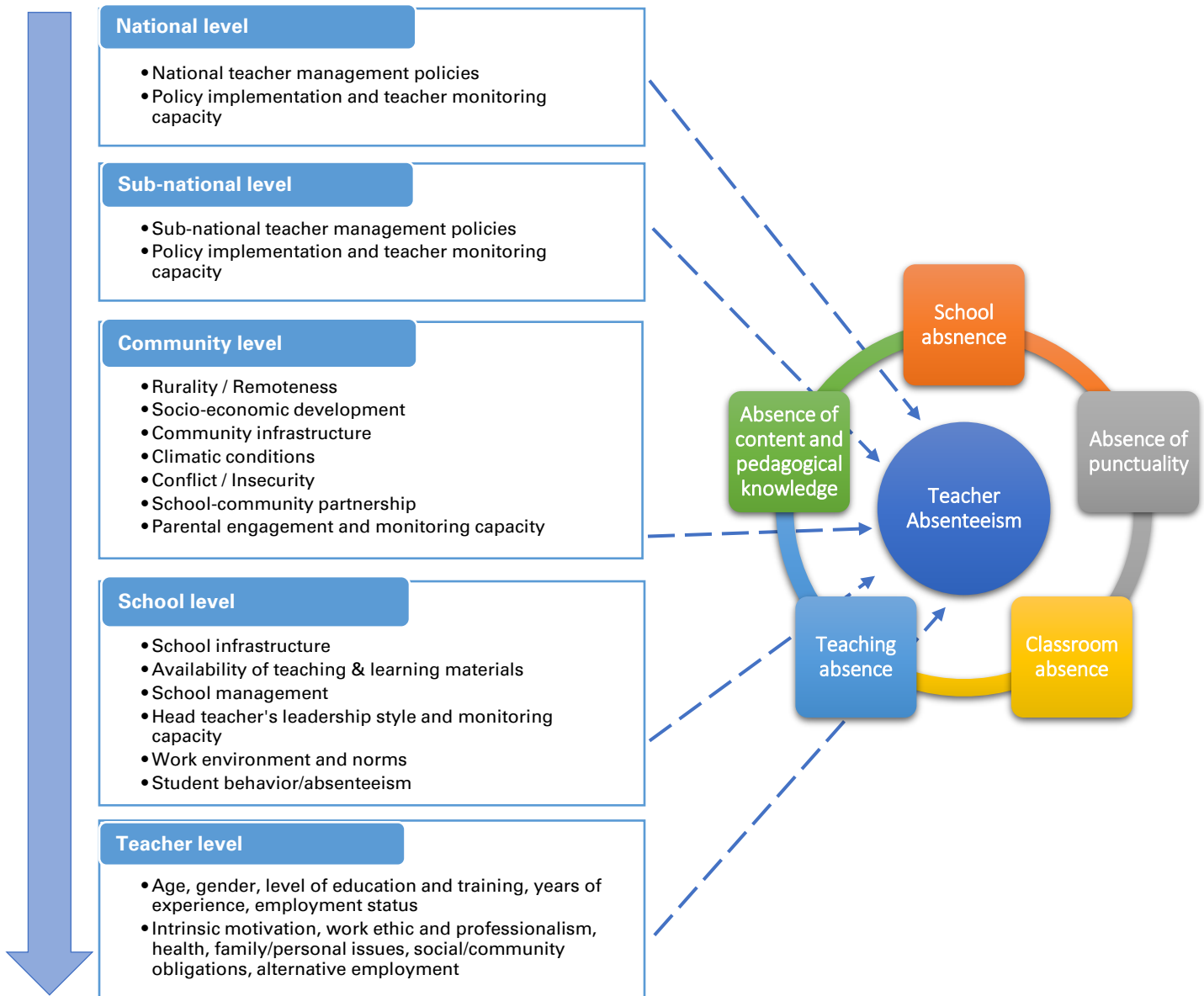
Analytical framework

The Time to Teach project views teacher absenteeism as a complex and multi-faceted phenomenon that can take several forms, including absence from school, absence from class, absence from teaching (while in class) and absence of quality teaching (while actively on task).

The project examines each type of absenteeism holistically and from a system's perspective. This involves analyzing a large number of determinants and identifying pathways to chronic teacher absences though these determinants.

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The Time to Teach explanatory frame



Study implementation

In each participating country the Time to Teach project entails six stages:

- 1. Planning and inception.** This stage includes the formation of a steering committee and consultations with national partners on

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research design, sampling, methodology, ethical clearance and research instrument development.

- 2. Desk-based review.** The desk review is conducted to identify national teacher management policies; planning and strategic documents developed around teacher absenteeism; relevant monitoring and evaluation frameworks; assessments of teacher absenteeism programmes; guidance documents; and results from previous studies on absenteeism.
- 3. Fieldwork preparation.** This stage involves hiring a local partner for data collection, training enumerators on research methods and ethics, translating and back-translating research instruments to ensure consistency and quality, developing a fieldwork plan, pre-testing/piloting and instrument finalization.
- 4. Fieldwork.** Data collection is carried out through face to face, semi-structured interviews with key education stakeholders at the national and local levels. This includes ministry and sub-national education officers, teachers, head teachers, students, and community representatives. A paper-based survey is also administered to teachers in sampled schools.
- 5. Data analysis and report drafting.** Collected data is analyzed, using multiple qualitative and quantitative techniques and country reports are drafted. Findings of country reports are further analyzed and synthesized in order to tease out good practices, common challenges, and lessons learned across participating regions. The country and regional reports are reviewed and endorsed by the steering committee.
- 6. Dissemination and consultation.** Results are disseminated through national and international conferences to share key

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findings and provide practical policy recommendations to improve teacher attendance.