

# RAISE: a framework to assess and strengthen children's learning, wellbeing and inclusion



**The RAISE Framework represents a step forward in reimagining educational success.** By building upon traditional metrics that focus on measuring learning outcomes, it emphasises holistic dimensions that reflect the interconnected nature of learning. As education systems confront the challenges of inequality, crisis, and systemic disruption, RAISE offers a roadmap for building responsive, resilient, inclusive, and equitable systems.



Measuring and strengthening RAISE outcomes improves equity, inclusion, safety, relationships and resilience. When combined with quality teaching, learning is enabled.

**RAISE** supports students' learning by:



Regularly tracking retention and attendance, helps schools identify and support at-risk students. This enables early interventions and equitable learning opportunities. This underpins programming aimed at upholding the principles of **inclusion and equity**.



Monitoring interest and socio-emotional wellbeing, schools ensure learners feel safe, connected, and ready to learn, fostering resilience and belonging. This underpins programming aimed at upholding principles of **safety, relationships and resilience**.

**RAISE gives schools a fuller picture of student engagement.**

By tracking retention, attendance, interest, and social-emotional wellbeing alongside academic data, schools can better understand factors that influence learning. When students struggle, these broader metrics act as an early warning system, prompting timely support and reinforcing every child's right to education. Embedded within EMIS, RAISE provides policymakers with deeper insights into how well education systems deliver on equity, inclusion, safety, and resilience.

**Beyond test scores:** Traditional academic metrics such as literacy and numeracy assessments are crucially important. They enable students to understand where their strengths lie and where improvements are needed. The information is also crucial for parents and carers who play an important supporting role. For the teacher, this information provides direction to where investment in time, resources and strategies are needed. RAISE compliments this by providing an additional set of metrics that reflect the complex realities of learning, including in contexts of crisis, conflict, and inequality.

**RAISE is both a framework and an approach**, a framework for measuring and understanding the key drivers of learning (Retention, Attendance, Interest, and Social-Emotional wellbeing), and an approach that supports schools and systems to act on this data to strengthen inclusion, safety, and resilience.

### ADRA Norway's education program in action

Reaching seven countries, RAISE indicators will be used to:



Strengthen school performance with data-informed strategies that support at-risk learners and target the drivers of student learning, development and wellbeing.



Support teachers alongside continuous professional development. Teacher retention, attendance, interest and social emotional wellbeing are just as critical to effective teaching and learning. RAISE can underpin school efforts to find local solutions to holistically support teachers.



Contribute to building more resilient education systems by using evidence from schools to drive forward policy advocacy at the subnational, and national levels on important issues.



### The bigger picture:

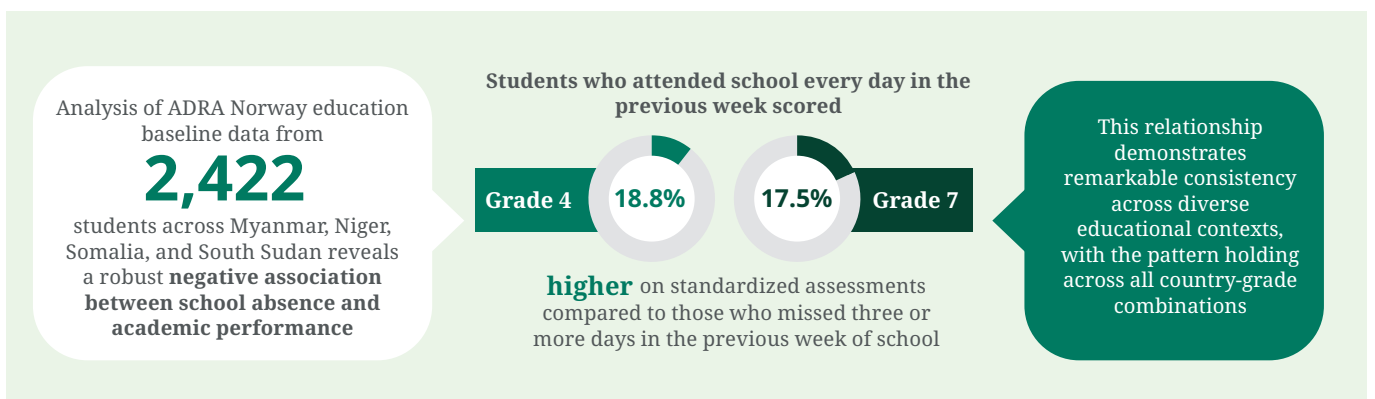
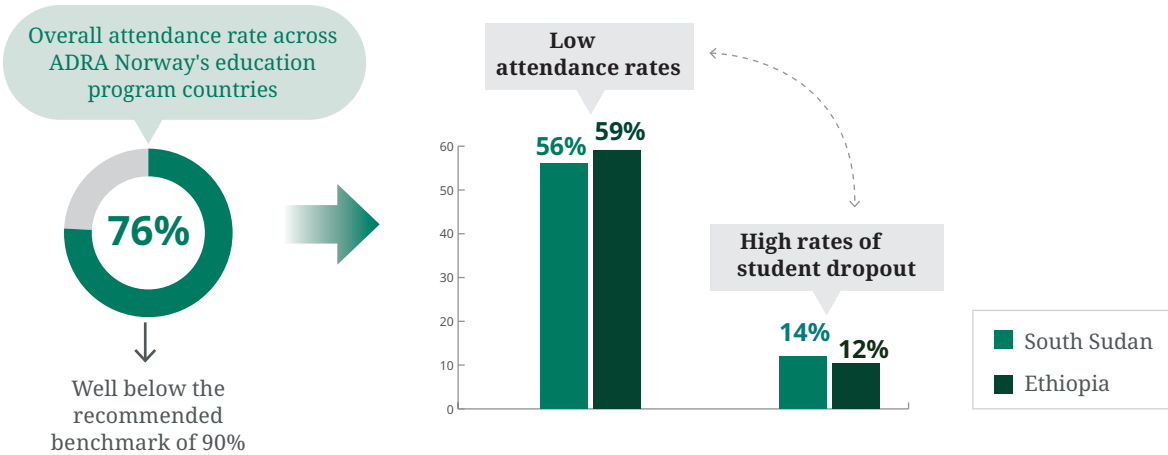
By embracing RAISE, education systems can tackle the root causes of poor learning outcomes, ensuring students are not only learning but thriving in safe, supportive, and resilient learning environments.



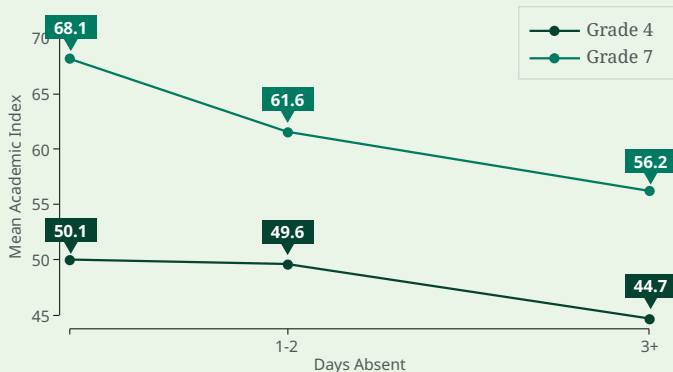


## Chronic absenteeism is strongly associated with dropout

Learners who miss school frequently fall behind in their learning, often feel disconnected from school and their peers, lose motivation and eventually dropout.



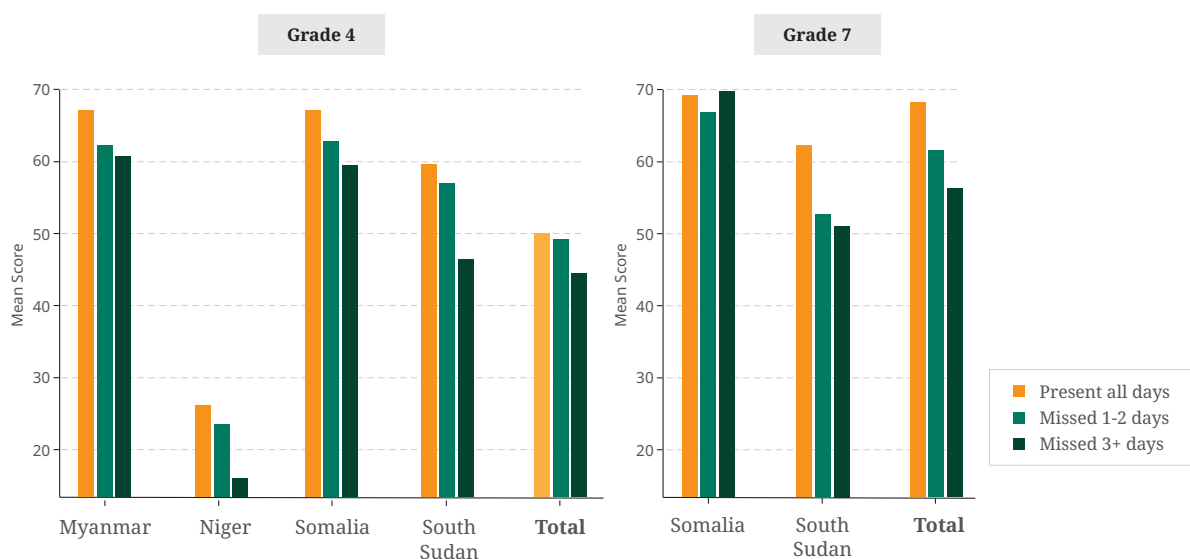
## Academic performance by days absent from school in previous week (Grade 4: n = 1628, Grade 7: n = 794)



Each additional day of absence corresponds with decreased academic performance.

The differential impact by grade level (with Grade 7 showing steeper declines) suggests that either the cumulative effects of absence intensify with academic progression, or that the curricula at higher levels require more continuous engagement. Both interpretations have significant implications for any intervention design.

## Academic performance by attendance group and country



## Absenteeism creates significant concern and challenges for teachers

Low student attendance was the most frequently cited (40%) student-related challenge among teachers in ADRA Norway's education program countries.

## Effectively addressing high absenteeism rates necessitates a multifaceted strategy

Across ADRA Norway's education program countries, the top three reasons reported by students for absenteeism were issues related to health (50%), home life (34%) and work (19%). Health related absences are closely related to food insecurity, with almost 1 in 5 (or 18.9%) students reporting that they did not have a complete meal the day before the assessment.

Data from the baseline highlights that by supporting schools and teachers to systematically track attendance as a daily routine – schools can quickly identify learners at risk and provide targeted support to prevent dropout and boost learning.

When education systems track attendance through their EMIS and establish national attendance targets, they create an important mechanism for monitoring whether all children are engaging in and benefiting from basic education. Improving attendance – alongside strengthening engagement in the classroom—is a critical step toward closing the persistent gaps in learning outcomes for disadvantaged students.

ADRA Norway is currently implementing a five-year, seven country initiative funded by Norad to strengthen inclusive, resilient, and equitable education systems through holistic, evidence-based and locally driven approaches. This baseline study was conducted as part of this program.



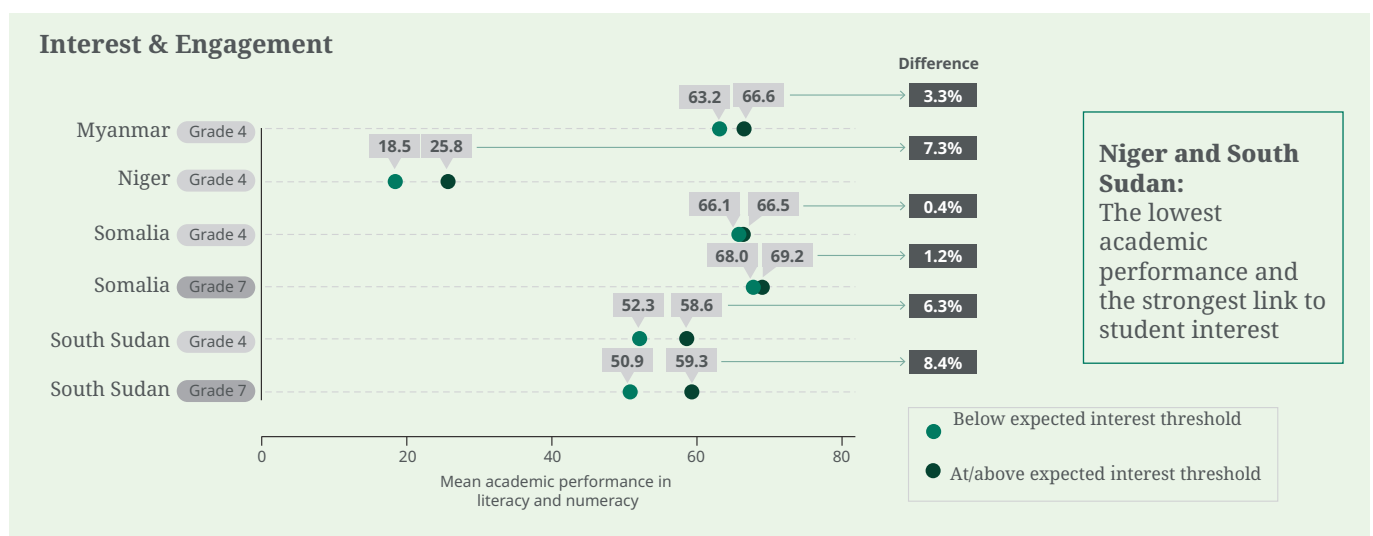
## Student interest and engagement are strongly linked to better learning outcomes



Beyond academics, interest fosters a sense of belonging and purpose. Participation in extracurricular activities, student-led initiatives, and school governance allows learners to connect with their communities, develop leadership skills, and cultivate a lifelong passion for learning<sup>1</sup>.

**Interest** drives intrinsic motivation, fueling both academic achievement and lifelong learning. Engaged students persist through challenges and take ownership of their education<sup>2</sup>. ADRA Norway's baseline study shows a strong correlation between student interest/engagement and academic performance across all program countries.

Data from 2,422 Grade 4 and 7 students confirms a positive association between engagement and academic results in every context, aligning with global evidence from meta-analyses<sup>3</sup>. This shows that interest and engagement are essential components of learning quality.



**Niger and South Sudan:**  
The lowest academic performance and the strongest link to student interest

<sup>1</sup> Bremner, N., Sakata, N., & Cameron, L. (2022). The outcomes of learner-centred pedagogy: A systematic review. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 94, 102649. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2022.102649>

<sup>2</sup> Abia, C., & Fraumeni, B. R. (2019). Student Engagement Evidence-based strategies to boost academic and social-emotional results. McREL, 20191115. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED600576.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Lei, H., Cui, Y., & Zhou, W. (2018). Relationships between student engagement and academic achievement: A meta-analysis. *Social Behaviour and Personality*, 46(3), 517–528. <https://doi.org/10.2224/sbp.7054>

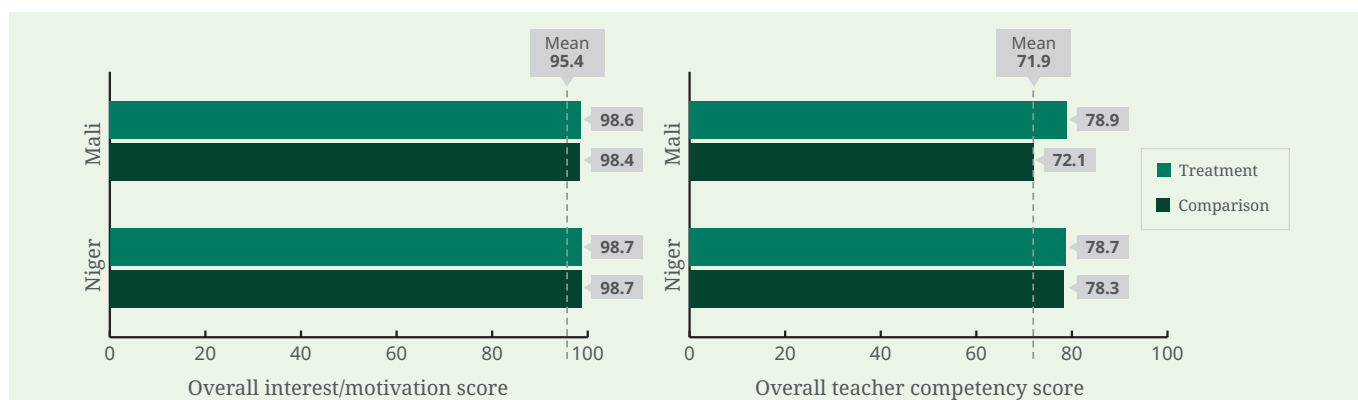
However, effect sizes vary widely across countries, reflecting the challenges of measuring a subjective construct like interest across different languages and contexts. In Somalia, for example, translation, cultural response patterns, and ceiling effects may be influencing results.

When data is aggregated, a **Simpson's paradox** appears: the Grade 4 pattern reverses, with students below the interest threshold (58.3) scoring higher than those at/above it (48.5). This happens because the two groups have very different country compositions. Most students below the threshold come from Somalia, the highest-performing country, while a large share of students above the threshold come from Niger, the lowest-performing country, driving the reversal in the combined totals.

### Several contextual factors influence results

**The relationship between interest and academic performance varies widely:** it is strongest in Niger and South Sudan (both low-performing contexts) suggesting that engagement may play a protective role for learners in fragile or crisis-affected systems. Somalia and Myanmar show smaller but still positive effects.

Psychosocial factors also matter. Enjoyment of school, future aspirations, and life satisfaction all drive overall interest. In Uganda (a refugee-settlement context) and Myanmar (conflict-affected areas), students reported high enjoyment but low aspirations and life satisfaction, lowering their overall interest scores. This highlights the strong influence of wellbeing on engagement.



**Evidence shows that interactive teaching, project-based learning, and culturally relevant curricula help sustain student interest<sup>4</sup>.** Baseline data from the ADRA Norway program also highlights the role of teacher competency: countries like Mali and Niger, which scored highest on both student interest (99%) and teacher competency (79%), show a strong correlation between the two. This suggests that strengthening teacher practice is one of the most effective ways to boost student motivation and engagement.

Beyond academics, interest helps build belonging and purpose. Evidence shows that extracurricular activities, student-led initiatives, and school governance strengthen community connection, leadership, and lifelong learning<sup>5</sup>. ADRA Norway baseline data confirms this: girls/GEM clubs are common in Ethiopia and Mali; school governance activities in Mali, Niger, and Somalia; and sports programs in Ethiopia, Myanmar, and South Sudan.

<b>Girls/GEM clubs</b>	→ Ethiopia <b>45.7%</b>	Mali <b>39.1%</b>	
<b>Student council/governance</b>	→ Mali <b>48.3%</b>	Niger <b>36.9%</b>	Somalia <b>36.0%</b>
<b>Sports programs</b>	→ Ethiopia <b>38.6%</b>	Myanmar <b>51.2%</b>	Sudan <b>38.0%</b>

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<sup>4</sup> Qureshi, M. A., Khaskheli, A., Qureshi, J. A., Raza, S. A., & Yousufi, S. Q. (2023). Factors affecting students' learning performance through collaborative learning and engagement. *Interactive Learning Environments*, 31(4), 2371–2391. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10494820.2021.1884886>

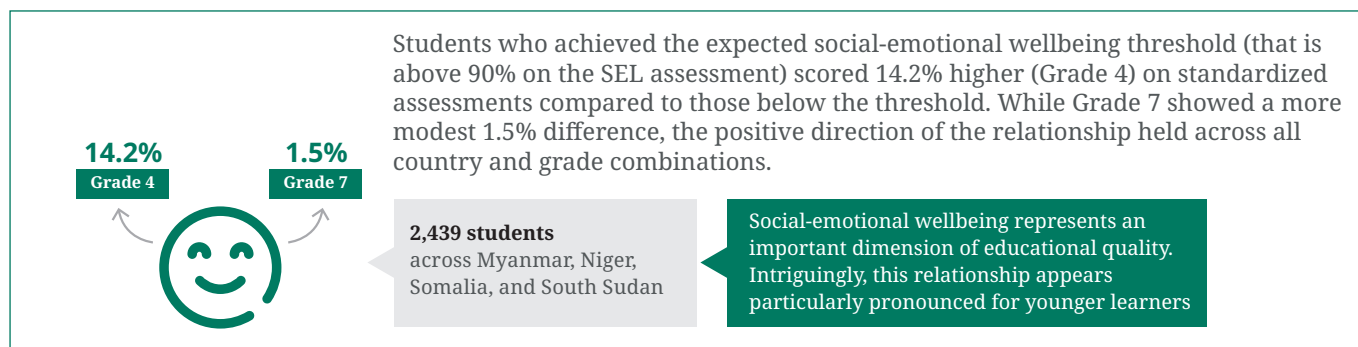
<sup>5</sup> Bremner, N., Sakata, N., & Cameron, L. (2022). The outcomes of learner-centred pedagogy: A systematic review. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 94, 102649. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2022.102649>



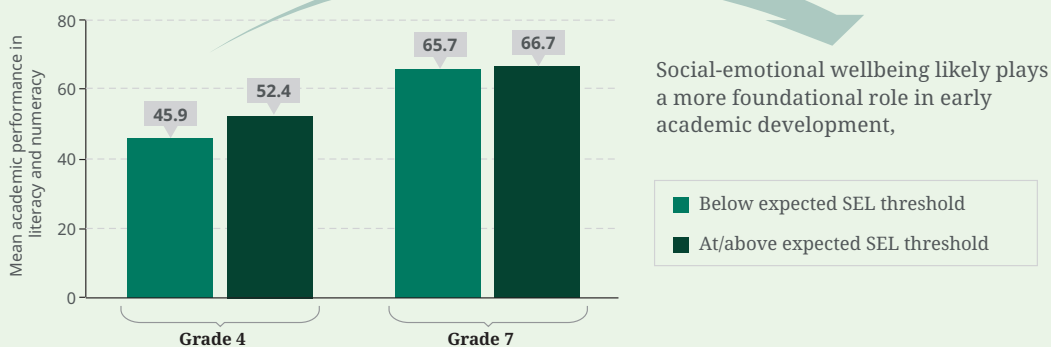
## Student wellbeing is strongly linked to better learning outcomes

Analysis of ADRA Norway education baseline data from 2,439 Grade 4 and 7 students across Myanmar, Niger, Somalia, and South Sudan reveals a consistent positive association between students' socio-emotional wellbeing and academic performance.

This aligns with global evidence linking student wellbeing and better academic outcomes. A meta-analysis of social emotional learning (SEL) programs found that students who participated in SEL programs outperformed their peers by an average of 11%<sup>1</sup>.

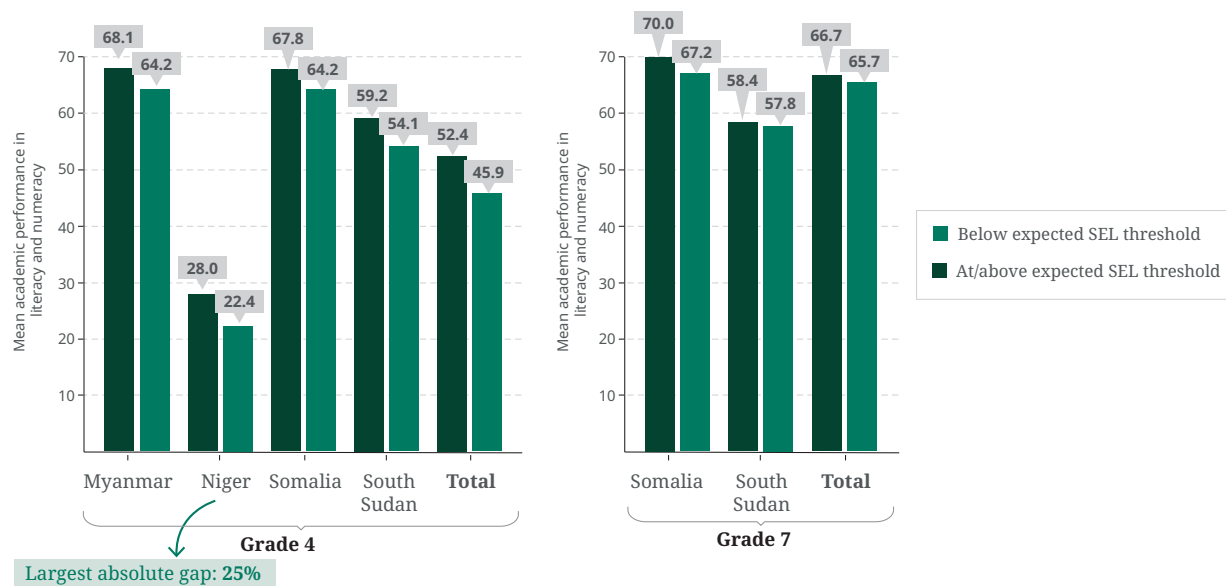


## Academic performance in literacy and numeracy correlated with social emotional wellbeing status for Grade 4 and 7 students



<sup>1</sup> Woolf, P., Digby J. (2025) Student wellbeing, an analysis of evidence. Oxford Impact. Oxford University Press

## Academic performance in literacy and numeracy correlated with social emotional wellbeing status for Grade 4 and 7 students by country



Similar to student absenteeism, the socio-emotional wellbeing-achievement relationship transcends specific cultural contexts or educational systems.

## Other correlations with student wellbeing

**Conflict and crisis significantly harm student wellbeing**, compounded by the loss of family, poverty, displacement and psychological trauma.



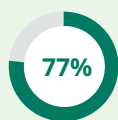
Uganda

Student wellbeing is lowest among students in Uganda where ADRA's program is implemented in a refugee settlement. Only 35% of students achieved the SEL threshold.



Myanmar

Similarly, in Myanmar where ADRA's program is implemented in conflict affected areas, student wellbeing is particularly low. Only 44% of students achieved the SEL threshold.



South Sudan

### Engagement in student clubs and extra curricula activities supports student wellbeing

Students that met the wellbeing threshold were highest in South Sudan where participation in student clubs and extra curricular activities were also among the highest.

## Student wellbeing is negatively impacted by a lack of family and school support



Ethiopia



Uganda

Overall student wellbeing is lowest in Ethiopia and Uganda. In both countries, students felt less supported by their families and schools than in other countries. Average SEL scores were 84% in Ethiopia (with 43% of students achieving the SEL threshold) and 85% in Uganda (with 35% of students achieving the SEL threshold), while in South Sudan, the average SEL score was 92% (with 77% of students achieving the SEL threshold).

This highlights the important role that families and schools play in fostering student wellbeing.

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# Overall RAISE & learning



## RAISE provides a holistic lens

By tracking Retention, Attendance, Interest, and Social-Emotional wellbeing, schools and systems gain a more comprehensive understanding of each learner's experience. Importantly, it highlights factors that schools and systems can actively influence, complementing efforts to address learning gaps through remediation or other instructional practices.

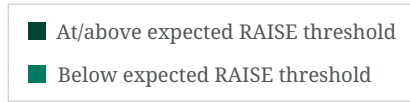
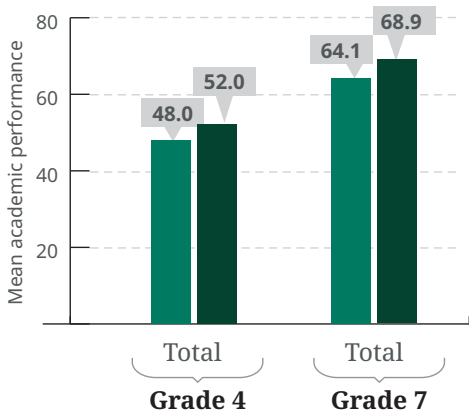


Students who meet the full RAISE threshold

Students who do not meet one or more of the RAISE benchmarks

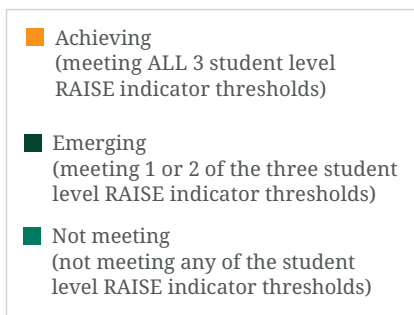
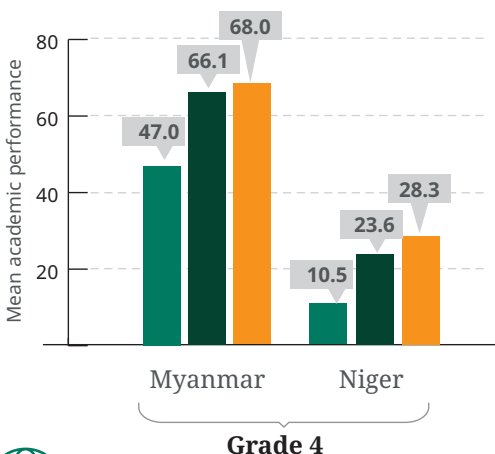
Demonstrate the foundational skills and knowledge in Grades 4 and 7 that underpin academic success.

Are more likely to lack the literacy and numeracy foundations needed to sustain their learning over time.



The data from ADRA Norway's education program baseline study across Myanmar, Niger, Somalia, and South Sudan validates this holistic approach: Students achieving the RAISE threshold consistently outperform those below the threshold by **4.0** percentage points on the Grade 4 Academic Index and nearly **5.0** points on the Grade 7 Academic Index.

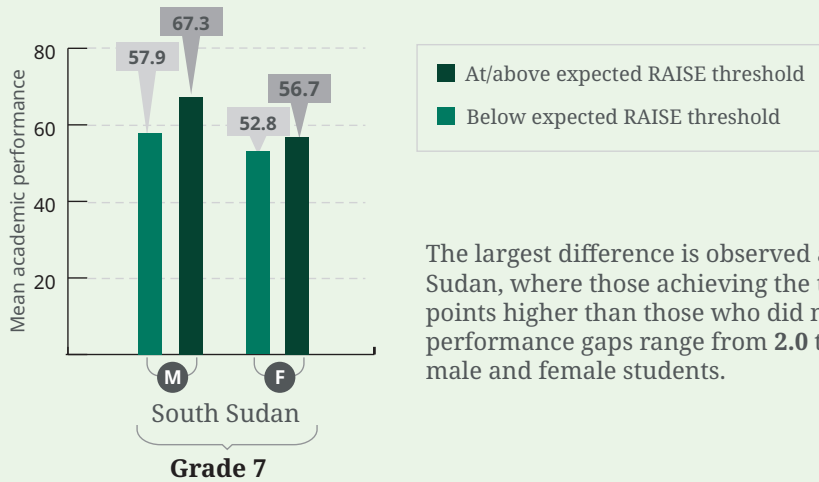
When the data is analysed using a three tier scale, a similar set of observations are found.



In Niger, where overall academic performance levels are lowest, the gap between students achieving and not achieving any of the three RAISE thresholds is a striking **18.0** percentage points.

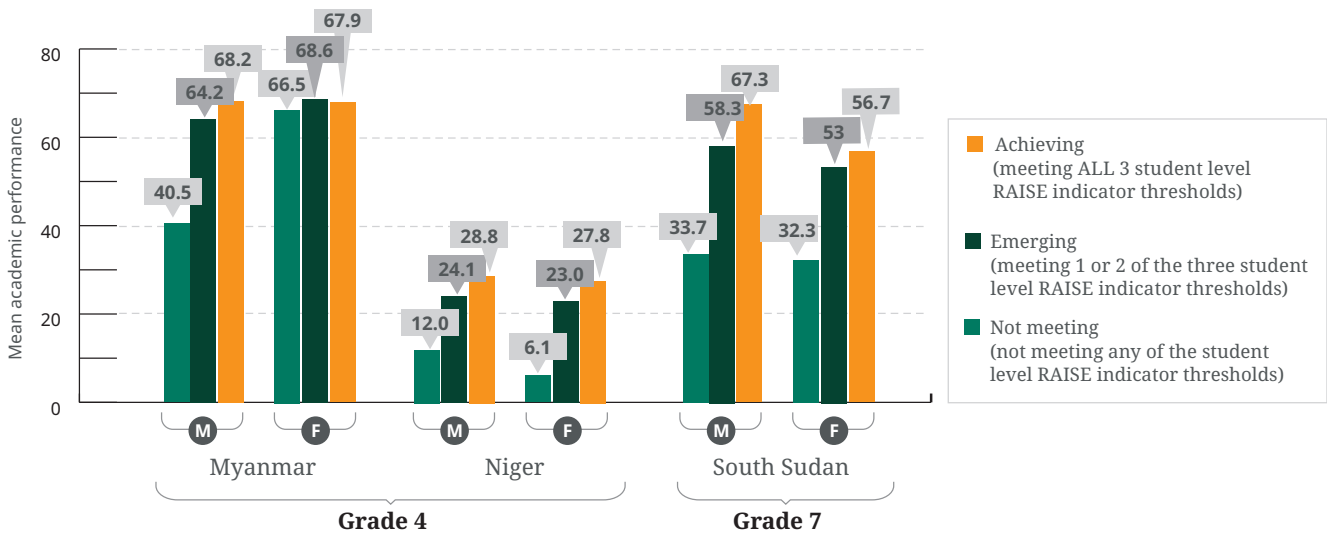
In Myanmar, where overall academic performance is much higher, the gap is even greater, reaching **21.0** percentage points.

The sex-disaggregated analysis shows that, overall, both male and female students benefit from achieving the RAISE threshold



The largest difference is observed among male students in South Sudan, where those achieving the threshold scored 9.5 percentage points higher than those who did not. Across all contexts, the performance gaps range from 2.0 to 9.5 percentage points for both male and female students.

When the gender-disaggregated data is analysed using the three-tiered scale, a similar pattern emerges: The gap between students who meet all three RAISE thresholds and those who meet none is striking.



The learning gaps narrow substantially when students meet at least one of the thresholds.

In Niger, for instance, the difference between Grade 4 girls who met all three thresholds and those who met none is 22.0 percentage points, yet the gap drops to under 5.0 percentage points when comparing girls who met all thresholds with those who achieved at least one.

## Findings



**Actively measuring RAISE can help schools identify early warning signs and initiate evidence-based responses.** When students struggle academically without comprehensive support, they risk entering a downward spiral (losing interest, missing school more frequently, and widening learning gaps) that ultimately lead to dropout. By monitoring whether students achieve the RAISE threshold, education systems can intervene before these compounding challenges become insurmountable, particularly for marginalised learners who face multiple, overlapping barriers to education.



**The conditions for learning are powerful drivers of student outcomes.** Actively monitoring RAISE enables schools and teachers to create supportive learning environments for all students. When students' progress toward meeting all three thresholds, they are placed in the strongest position to achieve positive learning outcomes.

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