Teaching and Learning in Fragile Contexts (TLFC) Research Paper

Early Childhood Care and Education for Internally Displaced Children in Ethiopia: Access to Holistic Quality Services, Child Learning and Development Outcomes and Policy Implications

All About Children Africa (AACA)

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Abstract

This study attempted to examine children's access to ECCE in IDP settings at Debre Birhan, the quality of the services, impacts on children's learning and development and implications. Findings suggested that access to ECCE in camps was extremely limited and of very poor quality. IDELA measures seem to show no significant developmental delays among displaced children compared to host peers, indicating notable resilience. It is assumed that while ongoing conflict would risk similar impacts on host-community children, opportunities for school feeding and reenactment with regular preschool routines seem, among others, to expediate recovery for IDC. Finally, interventions for further research, policy making, and practical implications were suggested.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

AACA: All About Children Africa
AIR: American Institute for Research
ANOVA: Analysis of Variance
CODE: Canadian Organization for Development through Education.
CIPP: Context, Input, Process, and Product
ECCE: Early Childhood Care and Education
EiE: Education in Emergencies
EMIS: Education Management Information Service
ESDP: Education Sector Development Program
GAC: Global Affairs Canada
GO: Government Organization
HCC: Host Community Children
HH: Household
IDC: Internally Displaced Children
IDELA International Development and Early Learning Assessment
IDMC Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC
IDP: Internally Displaced Persons
IDS: Internally Displaced Students
IGAD: Intergovernmental Authority on Development
MHPSS: Mental Health and Psychosocial Support
NFI: Non-Food Items
NGO: Non-Governmental Organization
PP: Preprimary
PPS: Preprimary School
PTSD: Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
TLFC: Teaching and Learning in Fragile Contexts
TPLF: Tigray People's Liberation Front
UNESCO IICBA: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa.
UNICEF: United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

Acknowledgments

All About Children Africa (AACA) expresses gratitude to all those involved in conducting this research project and disseminating the findings. First and foremost, we need to acknowledge that this research project would haven't been possible without the financial grant from Global Affairs Canada (GAC). The feedback/comments from members of the proposal selection jury also need to be acknowledged for immensely contributing in the refinement of the research proposal. Furthermore, AACA is also greatly indebted to the research participants at Debre Birhan displacement camps (children, parents and teachers), the data enumerators (Minalu and his team) and supervisors (Fisseha Teklu and Belay Tefera), the research project team members (Belay Tefera, Fisseha Teklu, Zelalem Wondimu and Fantahun Admas) and the technical, administrative and professional support from both former and current staff of CODE (Malvern Maduku, Jane Cooper, Elliane de Lima, Peter Zimerman, and Mona Ghali). AACA can't afford to fail extending gratitude to our colleagues (the first-round grantees of the 2023 TLFC Research Grant) for the feedback they provided to us during virtual presentations of our preliminary findings. Finally, we want to extend gratitude to all stakeholders who participated in the Half-Day Dissemination Workshop conducted at Kaleb Hotel, Addis Ababa, on December 26, 2026, to share findings of the report and deliberate on the way forward in implementing the recommended policy implications.

This research project work was carried out with the financial grant from "Global Affairs Canada" (GAC). The views expressed in this work are those of the research team and do not necessarily represent those of CODE, Global Affairs Canada (GAC) or the Government of Canada.

Executive Summary

Introduction

The eastern African region has been increasingly evolving into a volatile and conflict zone where thousands, if not millions, are becoming internally displaced every single year. The Ethiopian case even turns out to be the most devastating figure where in the last few years alone an estimated 4 million IDPs were put on record. In such humanitarian crisis, education of children particularly in the early years that is believed to enhance resilience of children is still considered as something that can wait rather than as a basic necessity and rights of children. This study investigated internally displaced children's (IDC) access to early childhood care and education (ECCE), the quality of the services, and learning and development outcomes with the following basic questions:

1. What displacement experiences have the children and parents gone through and how did this impact children's profiles?
2. To what extent do young children in the IDP at Debre Birhan are accessing quality ECCE services?
3. What are the learning and development outcomes of IDC, and
4. How did the displacement experience impact these learning and development outcomes and
5. How do these learning and development outcomes compare between boy and girl children and across age?

Methods

The study was guided by the CIPP Model as a conceptual framework to expediate our understanding of the impacts of internal displacement on children's development and learning (Product) in terms of the structural provisions for quality enhancement in preprimary schools and home environments (input) that in turn impact the ongoing parental and teacher support to the children in the two settings (Process) within the general displacement contexts of IDPs at Debre Birhan located nearly 130 KMs from Addis Ababa. Mixed-methods design was employed in such a way that International Development and Early Learning Assessment (IDELA) was conducted to generate quantitative data on holistic learning from a sample of 190 children in three types of PPS (In-Camp, Hybrid and Host Community), and interview to collect in-depth qualitative data from five teachers in PPS having children from displacement settings as well as seven parents of children from displacement background.

Results

Interview conducted with parents have suggested that there was, at the onset of displacement, sudden, forceful, and disastrous attacks directed against them and possessions because of their ethnic identity. Severe negative experiences

accompanied these initial phases of displacement where killings of people, burning houses, looting or destruction of properties etc. have all occurred before their eyes and their children. The journey to escape was adding more pain to negative encounters as they were supposed to travel through dangerous routes, in the nights, staying in jungles, walking barefoot, with no ammunition etc. In the process, some were looted, others hijacked and killed, women put to slavery and raped, children separated from parents etc. Early settlements at Deber Birhan were a challenge for individual comers but was facilitated and welcoming by fellow host communities and humanitarian agencies; but things took a different overtone later on. Current life conditions feature acute deprivations of basic necessities because many of them were making a living with little aid from others. Interviewed parents have indicated that children were exhibiting different psychological, behavioral and social problems because of the traumatic experiences they went through. Yet, only limited number of children were able to access PP education; only few In-Camp PPS were opened, even these few ones were closed and the only on remaining was with very limited provisions where sustainability was again a challenge. Hence, while only few were in PPS, the quality of the PPS was low. In fact, the quality of PP education in Ethiopia at large is generally low, but the one in the In-Camp setting was alarmingly the lowest. But, given the material challenges many households suffer even in the host communities, the PPS feeding service provided to the children was perhaps the strength we noted in the In-Camp ECCE center. Furthermore, the fact that these children were given the opportunity to connect back to the organized school routines is quite useful aid in their recovery process. To the complement of this, IDELA measures have suggested that children from IDP were in fact not significantly delayed in the early learning and developmental milestones from host community children. In fact, data from parents and teachers indicate some signs of resilience in the sense that children's learning and attitudes towards school was reported to be positive. It was also underscored that the ongoing conflict in Amhara region might expose host community children to similar negative impacts like those from displacement background.

Policy Implications

Government initiatives to understand education in displacement settings as part of emergency report and provide necessary budgetary, material and technical support to establish and expand quality EiE is critically needed. The government needs also to put legislative, regulatory and policy provisions to ensure collaborative, sustainable, quality, relevant and professional ECCE services in displacement settings. Building the capacities of stakeholders (local leadership, education office holders, principals, teachers and communities) on EiE design, management and implementation needs to be done subsequent to policy provisions with focus on MHPS and play-based pedagogy. Initiating PP school-based mental health educational intervention would also help to extend services to families having troubled problems because of traumatizing experiences of displacement.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

According to a research study by Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, about 452 million children were living in a conflict zone in 2020, and almost half of roughly 80 million forcibly displaced people worldwide are children (Hall & Ahmad, 2022). Due to the military conflict that broke out in November 2020 between the federal government and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), Ethiopia was one of the top three states in the world in terms of internally displaced people (IDP) that year[1]

In addition to the internal displacement influx, Ethiopia is Africa's second-largest refugee host country, with more than 628,500 refugees coming from neighboring South Sudan (EMIS, 2019); over 60% of whom are school-aged children. Ethiopia has a long history of assisting refugees, including the formulation of a National Refugee Strategy in 2015-18 that was linked with the Education Sector Development Program (ESDP) V & VI. Within the constraints of available resources, the refugee law, which was established and updated in early 2019, gave refugees the same right of access to preschool as Ethiopian residents. Establishing new school buildings and expanding existing ones are all part of the national effort, as it is increasing the supply of education, integrating refugee education into the national system, and improving the quality and relevance of refugee education (EMIS, 2019).

One of the main goals of preprimary (PP) education is to create a safe learning environment in institutions and organizations that are in charge of the development, education, and socialization of young children and their families. A substantial body of data indicates that young children are especially vulnerable when they are in a war or other conflict areas (Bosqui & Marshoud, 2018). Children experience anxiety and fear, which impedes their normal growth and way of life and affects everyone in the ecological system—parents, families, and schools. They also perceive a threat to their own lives. Children who are affected frequently experience psychological and physical harm, including Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (Murray, 2019; Slone & Shoshani, 2017). Therefore, children need to access services that are mindful not only of their academic learning but their holistic needs including those helping children release their anxieties and trauma through guided and free play.

Understanding the detrimental impact displacement bears on children's early development as well as the need to ensure children's right to education, there has been a global response of using Education in Emergencies (EiE) as a tool to mitigate the impacts. EiE is education that takes place even in the most terrible situations like wars, crises, and disasters (Nicolai & Triplehorn, 2003) employing many approaches that

[1] See https://www.unocha.org/es/themes/internal-displacement).

promote early childhood development by minimizing trauma exposure (De Nutte et al., 2022; Shoib et al., 2022). The Sustainable Development Goal 4, Target 4.2 also encourages governments to prioritize access and quality of inclusive PP education for the most disadvantaged children (United Nations, 2015) based on the evidence that children provided with a high-quality PP education tend to thrive and develop academically, while children with fewer opportunities for early learning are left behind (Melhuish et al., 2015).

The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) region is the most volatile area with tens of thousands of displaced people or and migrating to other countries. In Ethiopia alone, there are several displaced families who are unable to access the already fragile infrastructure. Meeting children's needs is difficult for typical families in general, but it is of particular concern in IDP contexts. Caregivers and stakeholders reported limited resources to address the unique psychosocial needs of caregivers and children in these settings (Spier et al., 2023). War-affected children are exposed to a series of psychosocial challenges that can be addressed through integration of these children in early childhood care and education programs; yet access is limited for various reasons and this needs to be addressed in program intervention, policy crafting and future research engagements (Belay et al., 2022). This being the case, we, however, virtually found no research focused on the internally displaced children's (IDC) access, opportunities and challenges to ECCE and its policy implication. Therefore, this empirical research aims to improve essential knowledge of the barriers in accessing ECCE and how it can enhance early development outcomes and policies. Furthermore, additional empirical data are needed on the challenges of ECCE in forced displacement on children's early development and ways to improve ECCE in a fragile context.

Currently, Ethiopia seems to experience humanitarian crisis due to cycles of multiple, often overlapping crises primarily driven by the convergence of four major factors: climate crises (flood and drought), armed conflicts, diseases, and economic shocks. An estimated number of 4 million people in drought-affected Afar, Amhara, Tigray, Oromia, South Ethiopia and Southwest Ethiopia already expressed need for urgent food assistance, according to the Government and Food Cluster.[2] Ethiopia is one of the countries hosting large number of IDPs globally due mainly, but not limited to, civil conflicts motivated by ethnic violence of one group by another.

1.2. Objectives

The main objective of the study is to investigate internally displaced children's (IDC) access to ECE, the quality of the services, and learning and development outcomes.

[2] https://reliefweb.int/report/ethiopia/ethiopia-situation-report-10-jan-2024

1.3. Research Questions

1. What trajectories of displacement experiences have children and parents been experiencing and how did this impact children's profiles?
2. To what extent do young children in IDP setting access quality ECCE services?
3. What do the learning and development outcomes (motor development, early numeracy, early literacy, executive function and socio-emotional competencies) of IDC look like?
4. Is there statistically significant difference among children as a function of displacement status (IDC and non-IDC or Host Community Children-HCC), gender and age?

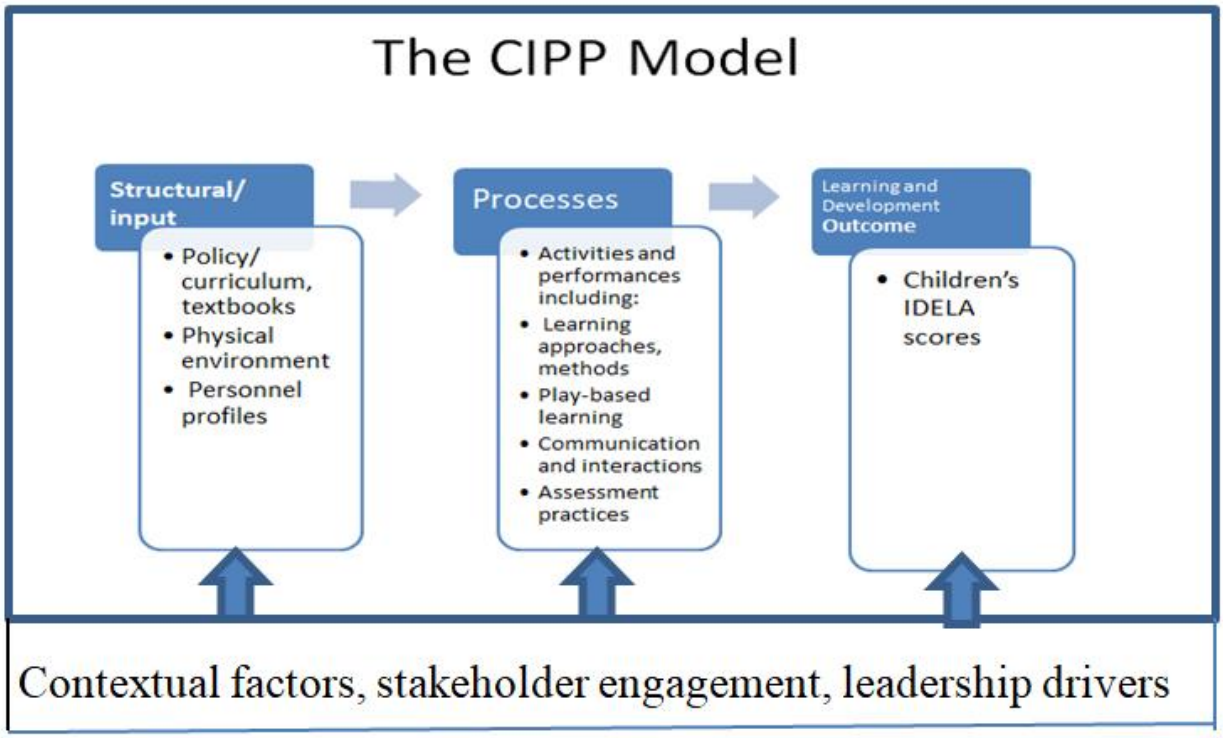
1.4. Scale and Scope

Considering the budget funded to this project and accepting the suggestions provided by the selection jury, we decided to limit the scope of the project to IDP context, disregarding the refugee contexts suggested in the original proposal. The refugee context is very dynamic, heterogeneous and poses complex challenges that would call for extended resources and time to attend to complexities involved. Hence, focusing only on IDPs, the study is conducted in Amhara Region where the largest IDPs were found. As per existing statistics, Debre Birhan tis one of the largest concentrations of IDP camps in the Amhara region. Debre Birhan is found to be hosting the greatest number of IDPs. Debre Birhan Town is located 130 km from Addis Ababa where there were 4 IDP camps; each originally having an In-Camp ECCE center but only one being functional during data collection. There are also IDPs already integrated into the host communities with children attending ECCE centers along with the host community.

1.5. Conceptual Framework

The Context-Input- Process-Product (CIPP) Model is used as a conceptual guide for this research. It was originally developed in the 1960s (Stufflebeam, 2003) and successively contextualized in different settings including Ethiopia (e.g. Belay et al, 2024). As also shown in the diagram, Input refers to the resources (PP school environments, teacher profiles, curriculum and textbooks, IDC's entry behaviors and background). The Process encompasses ongoing child-teacher interactions, classroom pedagogical practices, PP school-parent relationships etc.). Product stands for learning and development outcomes that IDC are expected to achieve as a result of PP school attendance. Lastly, Context stands for the overall physical, social and cultural setup and life conditions affecting stakeholders' functioning including children's learning engagements, preprimary schools' functioning and teachers' performances.

Figure 1: The CIPP Model



2. Methodology

2.1. Design

Mixed-methods design that blends the qualitative strand with the quantitative one to understand access and barriers to ECE and learning and socio-emotional outcomes of IDC in Ethiopia was used. In more specific terms, the study employed a convergent parallel design (Creswell, 2012) in which both qualitative and quantitative data were collected simultaneously but analysed separately and then findings merged to draw conclusions and policy recommendations. Qualitative data were secured from interview conducted with teachers and parents. Quantitative data were collected from two sources: structured observation of PP schools' indoor and outdoor environment and a measure of children's learning and developmental outcomes. The observation was also recorded through still camera to capture structural layouts and resources. Secondary data were also collected from IDP management office in the study area.

2.2. Study Setting and Population

The study site for this research was Debre Birhan Town. This site was selected for the number of IDPs who resided in. There were a total population of about 22,653 with a comparable number of males and females. It is easy to imagine the additional burden that the ongoing conflict in the Amhara region would pose on the capacities of people in the region to host IDPs from other settings. Table 1 provides the number of IDPs in the study site while this study was conducted.

Table 1: IDPs' household and individual data

S.N	IDPs Site Name	HH Head				Total IDPs		
		Male	Female	Child	Total	Male	Female	Total
1	China Center IDPs Site	2748	1256	85	4089	6052	6076	12128
2	Woyneshet Paper Factory IDPs Site	1263	781	26	2070	3133	3247	6380
3	Bakelo IDPs Site	729	358	1	1088	2101	2044	4145
Grand Total		4740	2395	112	7247	11286	11367	22653

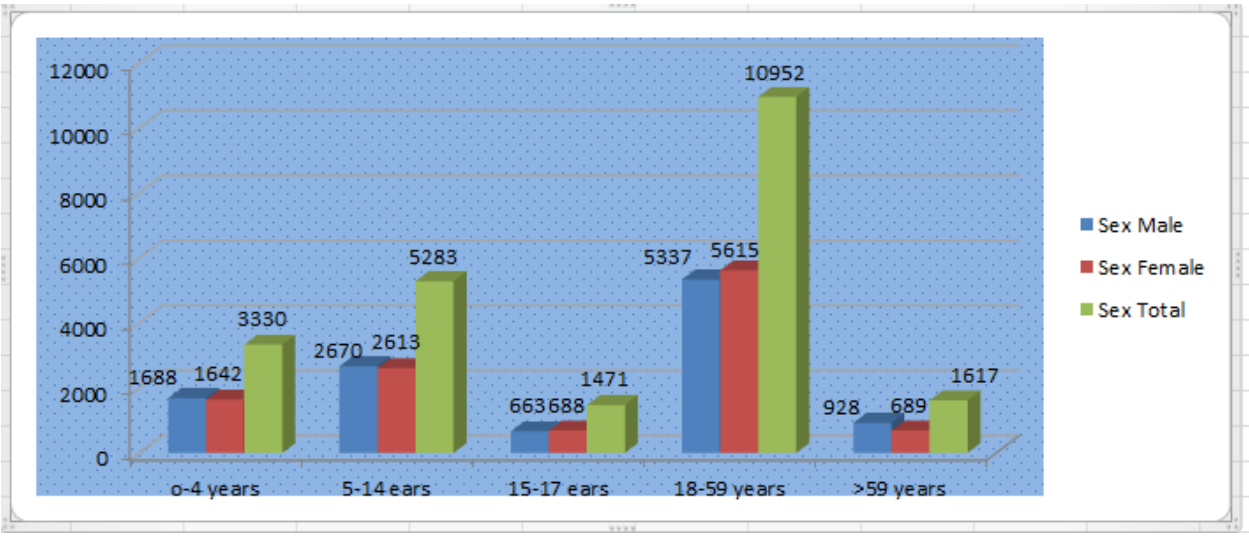
Age and sex disaggregated data in the table shows that IDPs encompass individuals from both sexes and all age groups.

Table 2 IDPs age and gender disaggregated data

IDP Site Name	(0-4) Year			(5-14) years			(15-17) Year			(18-59) year			>=60 year		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
China Center IDPs Site	876	825	1701	1358	1397	2755	350	461	811	3027	3035	6062	441	358	799
Woyneshet Paper Factory	520	530	1050	747	747	1494	159	192	351	1436	1583	3019	271	195	466
Bakelo IDPs Site	292	287	579	565	469	1034	154	155	309	874	997	1871	216	136	352
Grand Total	1688	1642	3330	2670	2613	5283	663	808	1471	5337	5615	10952	928	689	1617

The pattern of the population size follows the normal population distribution; where males and females are proportional, the size bulges out in the middle at the productive age level; with the elderly and children appearing smaller.

Figure 2: IDPs at Debre Birhan Disaggregated by Age and Gender



We can also see that while the number of males is a little higher in the early ages, it tends to reduce in the middle and later years as males are likely to join armed groups or are more likely targeted by attackers during displacement.

The table below also shows the population of IDPs who are vulnerable in one form or another.

Table 3: IDPs Vulnerability information

IDPs Site Name	**Vulnerability Type**							
	Unaccompanied Children	Individuals with disabilities	Individuals with Mental illness	Pregnant Women	Breast Feeding / lactating women	Individual with Chronic illness	Female Headed HH	Child Headed HH
China	27	154	126	87	462	113	1256	85
Woyneshet	13	116	218	48	362	17	781	26
Bake	30	77	118	28	202	40	358	1
Total	70	347	462	163	1026	170	2395	112

As it can be seen in this table, a significant proportion (n=4,747) of individuals are reported to be vulnerable in various forms. It can also be noted that except for the two categories (pregnant as well as lactating women), the rest vulnerabilities are directly related to the impacts of displacement in one form or another.

2.3. Sample and Sampling

Public ECCE centers at Debre Birhan are of three types: ECCE centers for Hosting Community Children (HCC) alone, In-Camp ECCE centers hosting IDC alone and Hybrid centers hosting both IDC and HCC. Because there was only one In-Camp ECCE center functional during data collection, then a random sample of one center was also taken from the other two groups to ensure equality. Our unit of analysis that was a point of

sampling in these three centers included observation sites, teachers, parents and children.

Sampling Observation Sites. In each sample ECCE center, the entire compound and one classroom were observed with and without children. While checklist was used to document observation by data collectors, still camera was used to take snapshots on the spot.

Sampling Teacher Interviewees. Qualitative data were collected using interview with a sample of five purposefully selected teachers; three from Hybrid and two from In-Camp centers as can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4: Sociodemographic features of teacher interviewees

Socio-demographic factors	Teacher codes				
	T_1	T_2	T_3	T_4	T_5
1. Type of the center	Hybrid	Hybrid	Hybrid	In-Camp	In-Camp
2. Sex	Female	Female	Female	Female	
3. Age	24 years	28 years	34 years	25 years	
4. Qualification and field of study	Diploma in ECCE	BA in non-ECCE; Diploma in ECCE	Diploma in ECCE	Diploma	
5. Year of service in ECCE	4 years	6 years	11 years	2 years	
6. Year of service	4 years	5 years	5 years	2 years	
7. On the job training	No	No	No	Yes	

Sampling of IDP Parents. Seven parents of IDC were also selected from among the In-Camp and Hybrid IDC while they were coming to the centers to accompany their children and were willing to spend time for the interview. The descriptive profiles of these parents are given in the table.

Table 5: Sociodemographic features of IDP (parent) interviewees

Code	Type of parent	Marital status	No. of children	Livelihood	Duration of stay
IDP P_1	Father	Married	2	Aid	4 years
IDP P_2	Father	Married	4	Aid	4 years
IDP P_3	Father	Married	5	Aid	4 years
IDP P_4	Mother	Divorced	1	Aid + waitress	2 years
IDP P_5	Mother	Separated	1	Daily laborer	3 years
IDP P_6	Mother	Married	3	Housewife	2 years
IDP P_7	Mother	Married	3	Daily Laborer	4 years

Sampling of Children. As regards children, two groups (HCC and IDC) of children were used; not in a comparative way but to use HCC as a referencing point to understand the impacts of displacement on IDC.

At the time of data collection, Debre Birhan hosted more than 100 thousand IDPs. This figure is highly contested because the number is still increasing due to the ongoing conflicts in the country. On the other hand, there are also efforts by government agencies to redeploy some IDPs back to the deserted settlements and this makes population estimates challenging. Hence, we cannot get a good estimate of the target population. The problem is further complicated by absence of age- disaggregated data in ways that can help understand the proportion of those aged 4 to 7/ 8 years; the focus of the present study. So, in the absence of this population data, we have decided to apply a sample size determination formula for a single but unknown population given below:

$$n = \frac{z^2 \times \hat{p}(1-\hat{p})}{\varepsilon^2}$$

Where:

z is the z score , **ε** is the margin of error
N is the population size, **p̂** is the population proportion

Applying a 95% confidence and a margin of error of 5% for unlimited population size, the z for a 95% confidence level is 1.96 and a total of 384 young children aged 4 to 6 years were originally planned to be sampled.

We were originally informed that a total of four IDP camps were found at Debre Birhan and therefore we kept this in mind while calculating sample size using the above sampling formula. But, while we were trying to revise and fine tune our proposal based on feedback from CODE, we found out that only one ECCE center was functional; the remaining being closed either because of repatriation, or lack of funding. Hence, we took sample only from one center having a total of 80 children aged 5 to 7 years. We also sampled IDC (n=38) from Hybrid schools (that contains both IDC and HCC) to check if integrating children in the host community PP schools would provide better opportunity for children as well as a comparable proportion of sample from PP schools hosting community children alone (N=90). The age and sex distributions of these children are provided in the Table 6.

Table 6: Sampled children from the three PP school types by sex and age

Groups	Child Sex * Child Age Crosstabulation				
	Sex	Age			Total
		5 years	6 years	7 years	
IDC In-Camp	Boys	1	30	9	40
	Girls	2	30	8	40
	Total	3	60	17	80
IDC in Community (Hybrid)	Boys	2	13	-	15
	Girls	10	13	-	23
	Total	12	26	-	38
Community	Boys	11	24	-	35
	Girls	6	31	-	37
	Total	17	55	-	72

Total	Boys	14	67	9	90
	Girls	18	74	8	100
	Total	32	141	17	190

2.4. Instruments

1. ECCE Quality Assessment *Checklists*

Based on existing quality framework for ECCE and the expected minimum standard guides for ECCE in displacement settings, the following three components of quality assessment were identified (see also the figure at the bottom).

Structural standards

- *Physical environment:* secure and safe learning environment promoting the protection and the psychosocial well-being of learners, teachers and other education personnel with relevant training and experience; adequate, accessible and appropriate resources; care and cleanliness; classroom organization; teacher-child ratio, and turnover.
- *Curriculum*: textbooks and supplementary materials are relevant and appropriate
- *Programming***:** Dosage, intensity and scheduling are child friendly
- *Personnel characteristics*: appropriateness of teacher qualification, field and experience; extent to which teachers and other education personnel receive periodic, relevant and structured training according to needs and circumstance.

Process standards: Teaching and learning mechanisms:

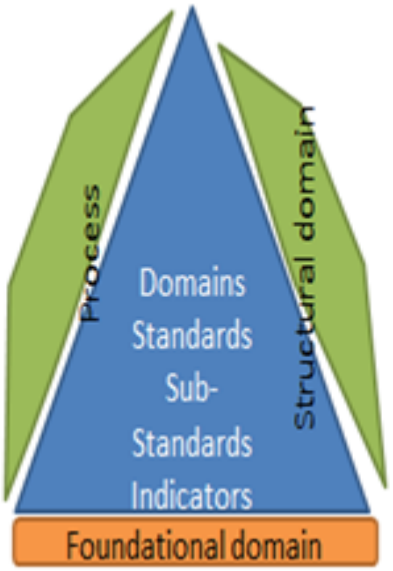
- *Methods and approaches:* Instruction and learning processes are learner-centered, participatory and inclusive; varieties of activities performed; Play-based learning employed.
- *Interactions and communication*: Positive interactions and less authoritarian in their instructional style; knowledge, skills of educators; appropriate methods are used to evaluate and validate learning outcomes.
- *Assessment*: Appropriate methods of assessment are used to evaluate and validate learning outcomes

Foundational standards

- *Leadership, coordination (preschool school level*): extent to which leader/principal/head teacher/director and administrative staff provides support, guidance and coordination; and support and supervision mechanisms for teachers and other education personnel function effectively.
- *Family engagement*: Families and teachers work together in many ways of promoting child development, socialization, and education.
- *Community engagement*: Community members participating actively, transparently and without discrimination in analysis, planning, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of education responses. In addition, community resources are identified, mobilized and used to implement age-appropriate learning opportunities.

As a recap, ECCE quality assessment components as domains, standards, sub-standards and indicators are displayed in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3: ECCE Quality Assessment components: Domains, Standards and Indicators



Domains	Standards	Sub-Standards	Indicators
Structural	• Physical environment and resources • Curriculum, textbooks and materials • Personnel profiles	8	36
Process	• Pedagogical approaches and methods • Assessment	7	18
Foundations	• Leadership and coordination • Community engagement • Community resource mobilization • Family engagement	4	27
3 domains	9 standards	19 sub-standards	81 indicators

Based on the operationalization of Quality ECCE above, the assessment process utilized two types of checklists to assess the quality of indoor and outdoor environment. The first checklist contains 3 domains, 9 standards, 19 sub-standards and 81 indicators. The second contains non-structured general descriptions for subdomains.

2. Interview with Teachers and parents

Interview with teachers: Interviews were conducted with five teachers to understand impacts of IDP on children and how classroom practices were responding. The interview guide had the following contents:

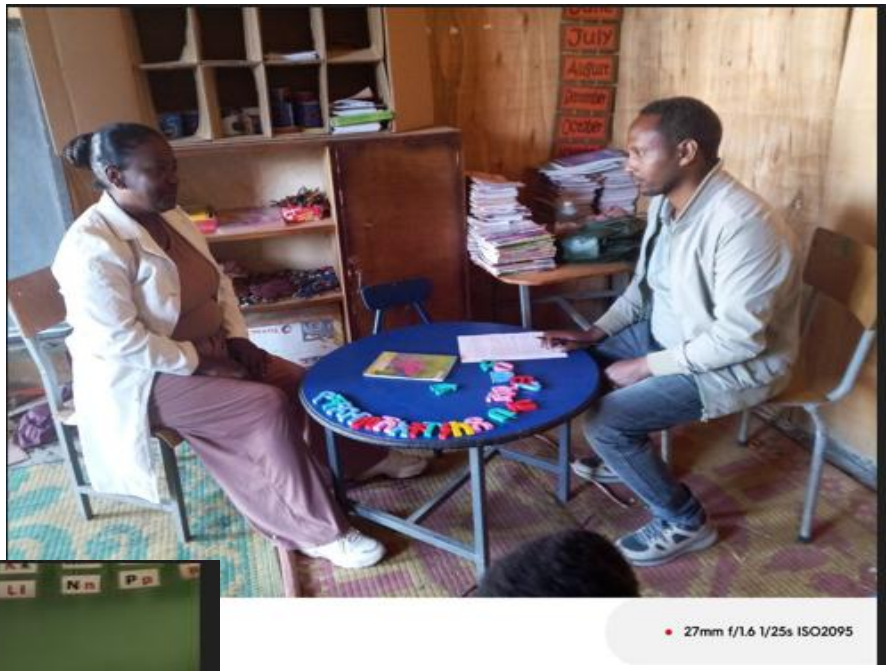
- Part I. Biodata: Socio-demographics: of the Interviewee including attendance on the job training after IDP children joined your preschool/ classroom.
- Part II. Children with IDP background: observed different behaviours of children from IDPs that other children don't show, any challenges they encounter in terms of adapting to school, environment, etc., special services they are believed to require.
- Part III. Teachers' professional support: challenges encountered in managing classrooms where there are IDPs and support services provided to these children.
- Part IV. Parents support services: comparing parental support for children for IDP and host communities.
- Part V. Changes after children with IDP background joined the center: For ECCE center entertaining IDPs with host community children, things that have changed

in the center and classroom positively or negatively and things to be done to manage the problems.

3. Interviews with Parents

Interview was conducted with nine parents to understand focusing on the following:

- Part I. Socio-demographics of the Interviewee
- Part II. Experiences at the time of displacement: reasons forcing to leave residence areas.
- Part III. Experiences during displacement: challenges encountered while in the journey to the present destination, and how these encounters have affected the parent as a person and the children.
- *Part IV. Settlement and current conditions:* challenges encountered on arrival and your efforts to settle down, current life challenges, problems children have developed because of the challenges they went through as well as current life conditions, problems they encounter in the preschool center, and notions about the importance of education of children in the early years.
- *Part V. Suggestion:* issues believed to change to overcome parental problems and that of the children.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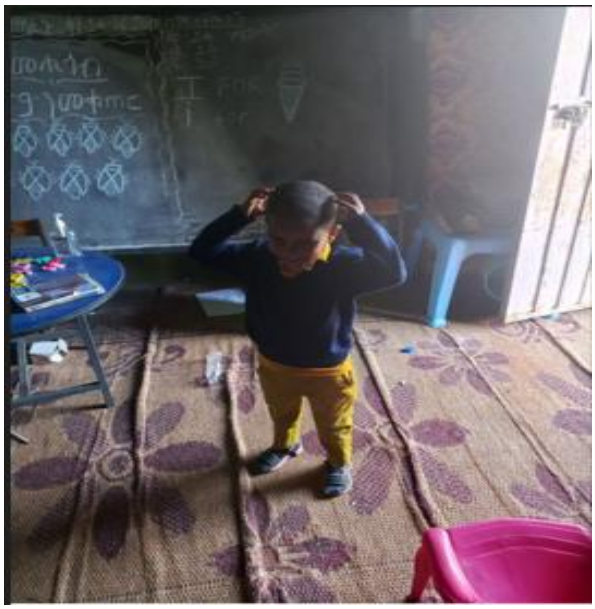
3. Assessment of Learning and Development Outcomes

Pre-primary education is expected to contribute to children's school readiness. The extent to which this contribution has been achieved is often assessed by different measures; the choice of which depends on several factors including the very definition of readiness, the purpose for assessing readiness, and the characteristics of the children to be assessed (Maxwell and Clifford, 2004). There are generally two types of school readiness assessment tools: tools that assess developmental milestones and tools that assess academic knowledge (Carlton and Winsler, 1999). One of the tools that attempt to measure the blend of both attributes is the International Development and Early Learning Assessment (IDELA) that was originally developed by Save the Children to assess early childhood development holistically (Save the Children, 2018, 2022). Another merit of IDELA pertains to that fact that it has also been widely used in 30 mostly low- and middle-income countries including Ethiopia. Experiences in these countries lend support to the robust psychometric properties of the tool; that IDELA ensures high quality school readiness assessment and plays a key role in improving any outcome for early childhood development (IDELA, 2015; Save the Children, 2018). IDELA has been tested multiple times in Ethiopia, demonstrating strong inter-rater reliability across various domains, such as motor development, emergent literacy, emergent numeracy, and socio-emotional development (IDELA, 2015). Additionally, the construct validity of the variables was tested and found to be relevant (IDELA, 2015; Save the Children, 2018).

With this information as a hallmark, data on children's school readiness was assessed in our present study in both intervention and non-intervention groups using IDELA. IDELA) was used to measure children's Learning and Development (3.5 to 6 years). IDELA is an internationally and locally adapted measure of young children's learning and development taking an average of 35 min per child. IDELA has the following sub-components:



Inhibitory control

Executive function (EF) in IDELA refers to a set of foundational cognitive, emotional and behavioral processes that enable young children to plan, focus attention, remember, and control impulses to ultimately achieve goals.

IDELA has two components of skills including working memory and inhibitory control.

a. Working Memory (Short-term Memory Task): children are presented with a simple sequence of pictures or instructions (e.g., "Touch the head, then the knees") and asked to repeat them in order.

b. Inhibitory Control (Head-Toes-Knees-Shoulders Task): Children are presented with tasks and required to do the *opposite* of what the assessor says (e.g., touch their toes when told "touch your head").

Early literacy skills: preschoolers' alphabet knowledge, phonological understanding, expressive vocabulary, and listening comprehension skills are assessed. This domain assesses children's skills in areas such as print awareness, expressive vocabulary, and listening comprehension. Print awareness is measured through an understanding of print concepts, including recognizing letters and words. To evaluate expressive vocabulary, children are asked to describe pictures or objects, demonstrating their ability to use language effectively. Listening comprehension is assessed by having children listen to stories and answer questions, which evaluates their understanding and retention of information.

Print awareness

Early numeracy: focuses on measuring mathematical skills such as verbal counting, set development, mental addition, numeral recognition, spatial meaning, and calculation vocabulary are all examples of early numeracy. Children's abilities in number identification, measurement and comparison, and simple problem-solving skills. In number identification, children are asked to identify numbers and demonstrate counting knowledge through one-to-one correspondence. Measurement and comparison skills are assessed through tasks that involve comparing quantities or sizes. Simple problem-solving is evaluated by engaging children in activities that require logical reasoning to solve basic problems.

Motor development section of IDELA measures young children's physical coordination, balance, fine-motor skills, and gross-motor control.

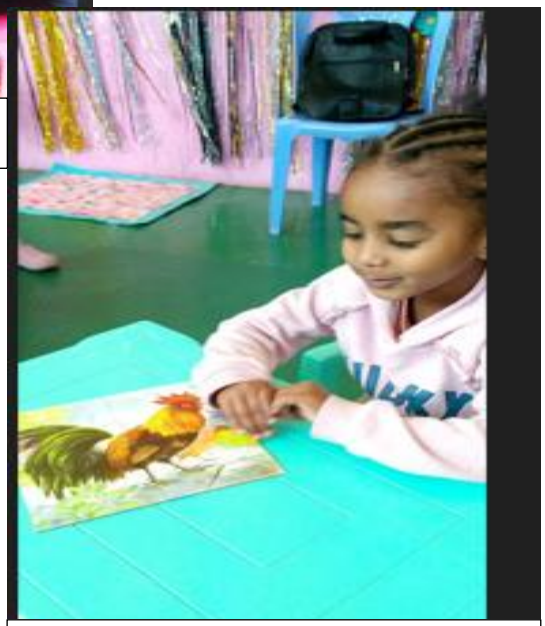
The motor skills are divided into two broad areas:

- **Gross motor skills that embrace** large-muscle activities like jumping, running, balancing etc.
- **Fine motor skills include** for coordinating small-muscle like hand–eye coordination, manipulating objects, drawings.

IDELA's motor tasks are **hands-on and observational measures which are** appropriate for children aged **3 to 6**,

Gross motor coordination

Comparing



Puzzle completion

Approaches to Learning: how happy, socially engaged, and safe a child feels; child's curiosity, persistence, and enthusiasm during the testing.

Socio-Emotional competence: Self-regulation, social cognition, social maturity, and emotional stability are the four areas of socio-emotional development. This domain is measured using indicators such as empathy, emotional awareness, self-awareness, conflict resolution, and peer relationships.

IDELA Score Analysis

IDELA benchmarks were applied to categorize children into three groups: the struggling category (children who scored below 24% on the IDELA measure), the emerging category (children who scored between 25% and 74%), and the mastery category (children who scored 75% and above on the IDELA indicators). IDELA scores are analyzed in four categories of performance levels indicated below:

Table 7: IDELA Score Interpretation Guide

Range of scores (in %)	Interpretation
0 – 25	Very struggling
26 – 50	Struggling
51 – 75	Emerging
76 – 100	Mastering

2.5. Data Analysis

Our analysis is organized in such a way that we firstly present the experiences and impacts of internal displacement at large and with focus on children. Then, we conduct ECCE Quality Assessment where we try to depict the structural, process and foundational domains based on data drawn from three observation sources (checklists, open observation and pictures) and teacher interview. Finally, we examine children's learning and development outcomes employing IDELA measures where findings are presented by subdomains for IDP and non-IDP children trying to show how IDPs stand in relation to the non-IDPs. Interview reports from teachers and parents are also presented to show past and present conditions of children.

2.6. Ethical Considerations and Security Clearance

Data collection was proceeded with security clearance from Debre Birhan IDP Management center. Letter of cooperation for data collection was presented first to the education office and then to the PP schools to secure permission. Informed consent was secured from parents to conduct interview with the children. Informed oral consent was also secured from parents and teachers to participate in the interview, record their voices as well as taking their pictures to use it in this report alone. The names of places of origins, ethnic groups, and persons associated with displacement were deliberately omitted in the report to avoid further complications.

3. Results

3.1. IDP Experiences and Impacts

3.1.1. IDP Experiences Before, During and After displacement

Understanding the impact of displacement on children and parents may call for inspection of experiences at all phases (before, during and after) of displacement because IDC's present life tends to embody all sorts of wounds of the past, the demands of life at present, and worries of life in the future (Hirut & Belay, 2003). Accordingly, this section explores what really happened to IDPs at the onset, during and after displacement.

1. *Experiences at the time of displacement*

Interviewees were asked to share what really forced them to leave their home. They were asked to share narratives of the event in retrospect and how they think this encounter has affected them as a person and the children. In all the stories shared, it was learned that the displacement was forceful, sudden, and disastrous to the life and possessions of many individuals. We may need to listen to the poignant stories from the horses' mouth:

> *We were displaced from our area of residence abruptly, with no prior information or warning. The process was sudden and unexpected (IDP P6). Our displacement happened suddenly when armed terrorist entered our area (IDP P7). I was forcibly displaced from my home and district due to violent threats. Armed terrorists attempted to kill us, but because our home was closer to town, we managed to escape (IDP P1). We had no warning or information about the attacks—they came suddenly, fully armed, destroying homes and claiming our possessions. They built settlements in the jungle using materials from our destroyed properties and survived by stealing our livestock, including sheep and cattle. This went on for three months before they escalated their violence to mass killings. (IDP P2).*

The attacks were sudden only for the participants, but it was very well thought of by the attackers who, for example, wait for social occasions as an opportune moment to launch massive attacks, "when the violence erupted unexpectedly, there was even a wedding ceremony underway" IDP P7). In few cases, information was communicated informally about the attack, but people failed to take it seriously; exposing themselves to dangers. Some direct quotes are presented as follows that show how the attack progressed over time.

> *Before the violence fully erupted, some individuals warned us that we would have to leave, but at the time we thought it was a joke. However, the situation worsened day by day. Even the authorities kept insisting that things would stabilize, yet we saw no sign of improvement. Eventually, fleeing was the only option left to us (IDP P3). Individuals warned us, saying, "They are going to kidnap you and kill you," forcing us to flee to a*

> *rural area in the middle of the night with my child. We stayed there for a few days, but when we returned, we found our house had been burned down. Before the violence began, the kebele administration specifically warned residents in the countryside, including my four relatives, to flee, as the situation had escalated beyond their control. Some heeded the warning and escaped, but those who were caught were tragically killed. Those of us near town left our homes as terrorists approached. Fearing for our lives, we fled and were displaced, driven by sheer terror (IDP P1).*

In other cases, survivors themselves scanned threats and decided to leave before attacks:

> *I was displaced from my hometown due to multiple challenges. Primarily, the area was uncomfortable for me, and there was growing instability. I feared that the situation could suddenly escalate, so I made the difficult decision to leave. Fortunately, nothing directly happened to me or my relatives, but uncertainty and fear were constant. There was a particular incident involving my neighbor during a period of unrest. Witnessing this made me realize that similar events could happen again, which reinforced my decision to leave. In my previous location, after midnight, peace was never guaranteed—something unsettling would always happen, adding to my anxiety (IDP P4).*

In some cases, displacement overstays amidst conflicts. For instance, in one event it was said that a fierce armed conflict raged for four months, during which civilians lived in constant fear and then later lost everything as feared—livestock and other possessions were stolen. As the enemy grew in number, attacks on innocent civilians became intensified. Therefore, the targeted ethnic group community began fleeing, and the attackers became more organized, systematically hunting, capturing, and slaughtering residents who do not belong to their ethnic group. Initially, they targeted the armed members of the profiled ethnic group, but eventually, they turned their violence toward the entire targeted community. As a result, people had no choice but to flee. People were forced to stay in one place with no food or water, while our men tried to stand together and defend them. However, the situation became overwhelming—*the attackers chased our men away with guns, leaving our community with no option but to flee. The war affected us immensely. We lost all our resources, clothing, and financial means (IDP P1).*

Who was doing the attack was a very complex scenario. It was described as an extension of attacks against civilians of profiled ethnic group following fights of militias of the attacked ethnic group with the local enemy group. It was also described as an attack of residents of profiled ethnic group by a rebel group that fights against the government. It was still described as an attack by local youth targeting the profiled ethnic group that was believed to be an enemy. It was even a local government targeting people believed to have illegally constructed houses etc.

The most painful experience was the notion held by some survivors that the local governments themselves, who were supposed to protect residents, were involved in some cases.

> *Seeking safety during attacks, we gathered at the local administrator's office, hoping for protection. However, even there, the situation was grim. Instead of offering support, the administrator dismissed our suffering, saying that the violence was a result of our own wrongdoings (IDP P3). Initially, houses were identified in the name of having no legal document and then demolished. The destruction seemed to be based on ethnicity, with homes separated along racial lines before demolition. Our homes were demolished and we were living renting houses in the neighborhood. But, local authorities sought out compound owners who rented houses to us and detained them (IDP P6).*

Despite differences in the perceived perpetrators, what runs common through all the survivors was that the attack seemed to target people of specific ethnic group:

> *The displacement seemed to be ethnically motivated, as specific ethnic group members living together were explicitly targeted (IDP P6). I was forced to leave my home due to my ethnic identity. My husband was with me initially, but ever since the conflict began, I have not seen him—I fear he was kidnapped. I do not know exactly who was responsible, but as the violence escalated, I had no choice but to flee with my child (IDP P5). What forced me to leave my home was my ethnic identity My displacement was driven by racism and religious persecution. My ethnic group was declared unwelcome in the region, leading to widespread violence (IDP P2). Another challenge I faced was discrimination in my workplace, particularly in the waitress part. When moving to a new place, conversations with colleagues often involve discussing one's identity. When I revealed that I have a different ethnic identity, I experienced difficulties and exclusion, making it even harder for me to integrate. My identity became a source of conflict in my professional life, adding to the overall struggle that influenced my decision to leave (IDP P4).*

It was found that severe negative experiences have accompanied the initial phases of displacement that included killings of people, burning houses, looting or destruction of properties etc. What makes the atrocities harsh was that they all happened before the eyes of the survivors:

> *In front of some families, attackers burned homes, forcing many to go into hiding to avoid being killed. Some tried to escape with their belongings, but they were caught and executed on the spot (IDP P3). When we attempted to take our belongings—such as goats and other possessions—they blocked us and forced us to leave with nothing. Many experienced mass killings, and those who managed to escape did so with only their families, leaving all their property behind… (IDP P3). Our house was burned down. … (IDP P7). We escaped leaving many dead on the streets, including children and pregnant women. The displacement took everything from us. We only managed to take a few small belongings, leaving behind everything else (IDP P7). My shop was completely destroyed, including all its contents, leaving me with nothing. For two months, we were homeless, staying in the store house and working as daily laborers to survive (IDP P6). The displacement has affected me profoundly, both socially and*

> *economically. I lost everything, leaving behind all my possessions, and now I have nothing. This has made it impossible for me to provide basic needs. for my child. She is now six years old, and the hardship continues to impact her in many ways (IDP P5)**.*** *Sadly, many individuals were caught and killed—while some managed to flee. The killings were indiscriminate, with victims being captured and executed one by one. About half of those affected escaped, while the other halves were killed (IDP P1). Our properties were looted, burned, and destroyed, and many individuals were brutally slaughtered using daggers. They singled out men and women, even targeting pregnant women, brutally tearing their stomachs open with swords or daggers. Faced with such horror, our only option was to flee. We had nothing with us—no belongings, no food. Many people were killed, but we tried to escape with our children, unsure whether we would make it out alive. Death surrounded us, yet we ran, hoping to survive. Carrying property was forbidden—anyone caught attempting to flee with belongings was encircled and punished (IDP P2).*

The atrocities in some cases were repeated as in, for example, the case of a women who says:

> *Determined to be independent rather than reliant on aid, I used my knowledge of database systems and sought financial support from relatives to start a business. Instead of simply asking for help, I requested assistance in purchasing equipment to create a job for myself. With their contributions, I was able to buy essential materials like a copy machine and other supplies, starting a small business. However, everything was later destroyed by invaders, leaving me with nothing once again. Now, I am at home without any money or capital, struggling to find a way forward. I have lost hope and feel directionless, unsure of what the future holds for me (IDP P7).*

2. Experiences during displacement

Harsh experiences while on the move to the place of destination seemed to worsen the initial negative experiences at the onset of displacement. Asked to narrate their stories during this phase of displacement, IDPs gave several accounts like traveling on feet because of inability to cover transportation cost, travelling with high risk to their life either at night or in the jungle, uncertainties and worries that they could be targeted by the enemy, experience of looting and killings etc.

For many of the IDPs, it was a journey without resources for transportation:

> *I didn't even have money for transportation, so I had to sell some of my belongings just to make the journey (IDP P4). We traveled to our current location on foot, carrying our child in turns while also managing the few belongings we brought with us (IDP P7). Reaching Debre Birhan was a difficult journey; we had no money for transportation and had to rely on the kindness of people in Addis Ababa, who helped us with whatever they could. Even after arriving here, we endured severe hardships until we finally received aid (IDP P1).*

It was not only a journey with acute shortage of resources, but it wasn't even safe:

The journey to our current destination was filled with challenges, including the risk of being killed or kidnapped, financial struggles, and transportation difficulties (IDP P5). We had to flee under the cover of night—if we had attempted to leave during the day, we would have been easily spotted and killed (IDP P3).

While on transportation, individuals were checked to identify them based on physical appearance and language. Then, some women were forced into servitude before ultimately killed, and men endured the same fate. They also indiscriminately took them all—pregnant women, men, women, even the sick—into the jungle, where they were never heard from again (IDP P2).

The road was closed, forcing us to spend an entire night on the road before we could proceed. Additionally, transporting my belongings was difficult—I was asked for receipts for my possessions, and some of my materials were stolen by thieves along the way (IDP P4).

During our journey to our current location, we faced immense challenges. Many children and vulnerable individuals were forced to stay in the jungle for several days without food or shelter. Tragically, some did not survive. Those who endured the ordeal continue to struggle with severe psychological distress—some experience hallucinations, believing that danger is still approaching, saying, 'They are coming.' At one point, grenades were thrown at us in an attempt to kill our group, but thankfully, our family members were not harmed (IDP P3).

After leaving our home, we stayed for a few days at a camp before continuing our journey. Along the way, we encountered several obstacles. At certain checkpoints, individuals pretended to be government workers and robbed many of us, taking essential belongings such as blankets, beds, and other valuable possessions. They accused us of escaping with our property and even threatened us, demanding that we return. Some were forcibly sent back, only to attempt fleeing again on another day. The harassment we endured throughout the journey was immense (IDP P3).

The travel wasn't straight for many; they had to travel to different other destinations with all its ordeals before reaching at the present destination in Debre Birhan. Some individuals began to settle down in the process believing that it was their final destination, but to only experience a second-round displacement:

When I fled my residence, I initially went to Addis Ababa, where I stayed for two years, selling onions and other goods on the roadside to survive. However, I was eventually forced to leave that area as well, leading me to relocate here. During our time in Addis Ababa, my child was able to receive education for one year—completing KG 1 and beginning KG 2. However, when the house I rented was demolished, her schooling was interrupted, and I had to move her to this new IDP Camp. Due to the challenging circumstances and our difficulty in adapting to the new environment, she was unable to resume her education immediately. As a result, she missed an entire year of

schooling. Fortunately, this academic year (2024/5.), she has finally been able to restart her education (IDP P5).

3. *Early Experience and Settlement*

As a stranger, settlement in the current place can't obviously be easier at the initial phase. This is compounded by lack of resources that limit meeting the very basic necessities of life, "*Initially, finding a house and adjusting to the new environment was extremely challenging, but over time, I gradually adapted to the community and was able to enrol my child in school* " one of the respondents said. On the contrary, other participants acknowledged that things were better initially but challenges followed later mainly because they were able to secure support from various sources at the beginning that dwindled overtime: charity organizations, previous IDPs showing the way, and some familiar people/ relatives supporting along the way:

> *Initially, things were better—charity organizations frequently visited us and provided aid. We wouldn't have survived these past four years without the support of the Amhara people and charity organizations. Upon arriving here, the host community gave us shoes, clothing, and other essential items—but because we are so many, providing aid to all has been incredibly difficult (IDP P2).*
>
> *Those who arrived in Debre Birhan before us provided crucial support, helping us adjust to the new situation (IDP P6).*
>
> *Fortunately, one of my husband's relatives lived here and welcomed us, allowing us to stay with her for a short time (IDP P7).*
>
> *Upon arrival, we faced numerous challenges, including starvation and other hardships. Individuals we knew helped facilitating our transition, even assisting in renting a house for us. We borrow money from people we knew for about two months until we could start adapting to the new environment (IDP P6).*

Some individuals may not have people to count on. At the same time, they just went to the current destination individually and were not able to get the visibility for support accorded to groups of IDPs. In such exceptional cases, the only option was to count on oneself for a living; as in the case of a women who shares an interesting story of how she turned this challenge into an opportunity of taking personal initiative to be independent from day 1:

> *After arriving here, settling down was challenging, but I believed in myself. I told myself, I have my hands and feet, so I can work. Instead of depending on assistance, I prefer to earn a living through my own efforts. For my child to have a better future, the first step is for me to remain strong and independent. If I can establish my own stability, I can more effectively ensure my child's well-being and secure his future (IDP P4)*

4. *Current Life Conditions*

Participants have shared a feeling of being secured now unlike life in the past; "Unlike the area we fled from, there is no persecution based on our ethnic background or

religion. We no longer live in a constant fear of being killed—our only threat now is hunger" (IDP P2). However, this solution for their security has come with its own toll that has been compromising their current life. On top of uncertainties and insecurities of the past, IDPs have been subjected to a host of many other challenges. Of critical concerns are financial hardships, instabilities and struggles affecting their ability to provide for basic necessities of the families including food, closing and other essentials as well as education for children. According to an interviewee, "*living under these conditions as dependent on others with no way to rebuild our lives for four years has been unimaginably hard*" (IDP P2).

This being the case, many of the IDPs interviewed expressed that, on the one hand, opportunities for work to support their living are limited and, on the other hand, the support services secured from others have been dwindling overtime, " there are limited work opportunities due to the large number of displaced individuals in the area, and too low wage when daily labor jobs are available" (IDP P3). Those who say they have been assisted by charity organizations are complaining that this aid has deteriorated overtime, "Initially, things were better—charity organizations frequently visited us and provided aid. However, overtime, this support has significantly decreased and yet no opportunities even for daily labor to support our lives" (IDP P3).

A more worrisome report recently issued by the IDP management office at Debre Birhan highlighted serious gaps in their basic necessities as summarized in the table below. As it can be referred into the data in the summary table, IDPs seem running short, as expected, of supplies that meet the basic necessities of life.

Table 8: IDPs gaps by domains of needs

Cluster	Needs and Gaps
	• Additional shelters required in Debre Birhan to decongest existing camps; still above 75% of IDP Populations live in congested and unprotected situation, So land issues required Macro level discussion with Government body. • Shortage of non-food items (NFI) are also issues in camp life.
	• There have been shortages of food at large; The Food cluster at North Shewa Zone taken as the role of the government but Government delivers only 3 times for the last nine month in 2023. • Formerly the main food source of Debre Birhan IDPs were community volunteers from different part of the countries and abroad but due to the current security situations support from the volunteers stopped for the last 2 or 3 months. So food cluster needs huge advocacy
	• There is a shortage of drinking water, latrines, showers in China and Woyneshet paper factory camps.
	• Shortage of medicine, little support for IDPs with chronic diseases. Need to streamline referral system between Debre Birhan and Addis Ababa.
	• Lack of access to primary education, Primary schools at host community deliver services to IDC but they can't give the service for all. • Scholastics materials also the problem of IDP students • Build additional classroom at host community schools and deliver scholastics materials for IDS is key to fulfil child Education right. • Lack of education partners. Imagine 1-Day is solo service provider.
	• Conflicts going around the camps

The information in the table can be corroborated by interview data drawn from the very persons themselves who have been experiencing the plight of displacement on daily basis.

Shelters: Particularly for those living within the host communities, managing house rents has been a challenge. *"Our shelter is weak and deteriorating—it cannot protect us from rain or harsh weather conditions" (IDP P3). "Adjusting to cold weather of Debre Birhan has been a challenge" (IDP P4*).

Food and Nutrition: Many of them report that the food provided to them is extremely limited and cannot sustain an entire family and the clothing they receive is often in poor condition, barely helping to withstand the harsh cold weather of Debre Birhan (IDP P3). *"Starvation has severely impacted our children and stripped us of all dignity." (IDP P2). "Food insecurity, lack of clothing, and unstable housing continue to be major struggles for us. Yet, despite our efforts to find ways to generate income, there are no job opportunities available for us"*. (IDP P3). The severity of economic hardship can be seen in the vignettes below showing how a mother was struggling to manage the impacts of this problem:

> *This economic hardship has forced me to restrict my child's activities—for example, I do not allow him to go outside because when he sees other children eating bread, he longs for it and asks me to buy it, which I cannot afford. He also asks to be enrolled in a private school because he has noticed that private schools administer tests and provide students with their results, unlike government schools where such assessments are lacking. I try to reassure him by saying that he will be tested in the future, but financially, we are unable to provide everything he needs (IDP P7)*

WASH: According to a teacher, managing classrooms with IDC presents several challenges. One of the key concerns is ensuring their hygiene and proper nutrition. Regarding hygiene, water and soap are available, but this year, the distribution has not yet started (T5).

Health: Evidence suggest that war has profound and enduring effects on health, not only through direct mortality but through the destruction of the systems that sustain life[3]. As expected, supply of medicines, lack of referral system to hospitals for critical cases, and shortage of trained health personnel characterize the health status of the IDPs at Debre Birhan. This is exacerbated by the conflicts in Amhara region causing damage on several health infrastructures so that IDPs may not count on services in the neighboring health facilities.

Education: The education sector in Ethiopia has also been affected due to conflict, resulting in damaged or non-functional school facilities and millions of children missing school across the country. For example, in Amhara region alone (where Debre Birhan is located), more than 2.5 million children remain out of school because of the impact of the Northern Ethiopia conflict (2020-2022) and the ongoing armed hostilities in the

[3] Martini R. *War and health*. Acad Med. 2024

region[4]. Since the conflict began in July 2023 for instance in Amhara Region, and as of October 2024, the regional Public Health Institute reported 1,681 survivors, including 1,645 women and 36 men, that sought help for sexual violence in 32 health facilities. Nearly 47 per cent of these survivors are under 18.[5]

Those living within the host communities afford the education of children, limited work opportunities due to the large number of displaced individuals in the area, and too low wage when daily labor jobs are available. Particularly for those living within the host communities, managing house rents has been a challenge (IDP P4),

Protection: It was learned that IDPs were experiencing protection problems in two ways. First and foremost, *the area around the IDP camps doesn't seem safe—conflicts and violence occur frequently. (IDP P2*) as the result of the conflict going on between government forces and the rebel groups in the Amhara region. Furthermore, informally secured evidence during visits has shown that IDPs already settled at Debre Birhan were occasionally forced by government agencies to return to their place of origin. In fact, we have seen IDP camps closed because of this relocation. They were relocated on the ground that peace has been restored; but this seems more of a political decision than genuine peace taking hold in the place of origin because different informal sources held that the relocated people were targeted for attack upon return and, as a result, some even managed to escape and return back to the resettlement camps.

Psychological challenges: some were experiencing challenges of adjustment in the current living arrangements, "*I was born and raised in an area where people tend to be more sociable. Here, however, I've noticed that individuals are not as outgoing, making social integration somewhat challenging" (IDP P4).* In other cases, memories of lost family members are intruding into the life of survivors as in a child frequently asking about her father, which has been emotionally difficult for both of the mother and the child (IDP P5).

The harsh realities of life in the camp have generally been expressed in the vignettes below:

> *The camp we live in is far from the city, making access to resources even more challenging. The only thing we receive in adequate supply is water, but in every other aspect, we live in scarcity. The uncertainty about where to go next has left us feeling hopeless. But even now, uncertainty about our future fills us with anxiety. In this compound, we receive no assistance. The government provides only 15 kilograms of flour every two to three months—but the flour is of poor quality, often rotten and barely edible. Our lives remain at risk. Many individuals here can no longer walk; they are bedridden due to extreme malnutrition. Pregnant women suffer without food. There are around 1,500 fathers and a total of 4,490 people in the camp, all in dire conditions. We are all struggling, and there is no one in a position to help another—we*

[4] ibid
[5] https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/ethiopia/ethiopia-situation-report-13-december-2024#

are all suffering equally. It feels as though we are fading away, as even those who manage to work and feed themselves ultimately succumb to starvation. I fled with my six family members, carrying nothing with me except the I wore. The only clothing I own now is what has been provided by charity organizations. (IDP P2)

3.1.2. IDP Impacts on Children

IDP experiences presented in the previous section would tell the scale of problems children were exposed before, during and after the displacement process. By way of reiterating some of these experiences, we may need to emphasize mentioning the following:

During the time of fleeing, some children were separated from their parents for three to four days, surviving alone in the jungle until their parents found them through relentless searching (IDP P2). In front of some families, attackers burned homes, forcing many to go into hiding to avoid being killed. Some tried to escape with their belongings, but they were caught and executed on the spot. This experience has deeply affected both us and our children. The trauma of witnessing violence, losing everything, and being forced from our home has left lasting scars. Our children, too, have been shaped by these hardships, struggling to process the fear and instability they endured (IDP P3)

Many parents have also underscored the different problems that their children exhibit at home; worries over financial constraints of parents, emotional struggles to settle down, panicking at the sight of armed people, disturbed sleeps because of traumatic experiences… Hoping that putting their views verbatim would reveal the scale of the problem, below are quotes taken directly from parents and presented in ways that they can elucidate the main theme below:

Financial and material deprivations: These children are the victims of parental and familial deprivations of resources to the extent that these problems turn out to be a constant source of worries for children:

One of the biggest challenges we face is financial hardship, which even my child is aware of. He does not like hearing about our lack of money and expresses a desire to work. Another significant concern is his fear of armed individuals (IDP P7).

General uneasiness

The behavior of our children was changed drastically due to the stress and instability of the situation (IDP P6). The abrupt changes have been especially tough for our children (IDP P6). The children who witnessed such violent acts (gun shooting at them during travel to escape) are deeply affected. Some continue to relive the trauma, saying, 'Weapons were thrown, and they found me,' as though the attack is happening all over again in their minds. These encounters have left lasting scars on both of us as parents and our children. The fear, uncertainty, and exposure to violence have deeply shaken their sense of security. Even now, the psychological effects linger, making it difficult for

them to feel safe or trust the stability of their surroundings (IDP P3). This journey and the difficult circumstances have had a profound effect on my child…, the challenges affected all of us deeply, we endured extreme hardship, and the emotional burden has been overwhelming (IDP P7).

Conflict, violent tendencies: Teachers hold that conflicts sometimes arise among the children in the firm of disputes and insults. A teacher takes a particular note concerning behavior observed in the preprimary where some children cope with their trauma through play:

Some create toy guns out of paper, pretending to engage in gunfire, chasing each other and acting as if they have been shot and killed. Unlike previous generations who feared the sound of gunfire, these children imitate it, reflecting the distressing events they have witnessed. If appropriate interventions are not provided, these children may continue to reenact these traumatic experiences instead of processing and recovering from them (T4)

Over reactivity to stimuli evoking negative memory

Our children remain deeply traumatized—whenever they see the National Defense Force, they panic, thinking the terrorists are coming. Even the sound of gunfire here unsettles them. It's not just the children, mothers also struggle with the lingering fear. Though they have gradually adjusted to their new reality, the trauma still lingers. My child continues to struggle emotionally. When he hears the sound of gunfire, he panics, asking, 'Have terrorist come? Are they terrorist?' His shock and fear persist, and I always try to calm by reassuring him that we are now in a peaceful place, away from war (IDP P7). The trauma of displacement is deeply ingrained in our children… Now, whenever they see armed National Defense Forces, they panic, saying, "Those who chased us are coming this day, the children continue to experience fear" (IDP P2). My child has developed deep anxiety and fear. Now, whenever he sees armed National Defense Force members, he reacts in distress, saying, "They are going to kill me." The instability persists—attacks are sudden and unpredictable (IDP P7).

Loss of appetite, and sleep problems

My child has lost his appetite and struggles to eat… Whenever he sees armed individuals, he panics, saying, 'They are coming on me—close the door! They are coming to kill me.' Despite this distress, he is very intelligent when it comes to his education. He frequently asks us to buy learning materials, but sadly, we do not have the financial capacity to provide them (IDP P7). My child lacks interest in interacting with others or playing with her peers. She often expresses a strong desire to stay with me, repeatedly saying, "I want to go with you. You have to take me to school and bring me back" (IDP P5). Many children experience disrupted sleep, often waking up suddenly and unusually. Some also suffer from hallucinations, believing that attackers are coming against them—especially when they see the National Defense Force or hear the sound of gunfire (IDP P1).

'Longing for'-'Hatred of' the past

> *When government officials asked us to return home, the children strongly resisted. Those who fully understood the situation responded by saying, "If you want to go, you can leave, but we will stay here, find daily labor jobs, and survive on our own." Whenever the topic of returning home arises, they recall those distressing moments and prefer to stay in different households, even as workers, rather than face the uncertainty of going back (IDP P2). But a contradiction was noted where those who had better experiences back home were unable to adjust to changes and demand parents for a go back, "The displacement has had a severe impact on our children, making it difficult for them to adjust to their new reality. At times, they have expressed a deep desire to return home, saying, "Let us go back to our house" (IDP P6).*

Teachers believe that preprimary school children from IDP backgrounds come from various locations their ability to adapt varies significantly based on their place of origins. According to a teacher, children from one area tend to adjust more easily compared to those from other areas, who have been deeply affected by their experiences (T4). Furthermore, a teacher holds that some children face even greater hardships, as in the case of orphaned children who have lost both parents and live without direct family support (T4). As indicated in a previous table, there are a total of about 70 unaccompanied children who are more likely to live in child headed households (of about 112 as indicated in the previous table). A teacher explains how the needs of these children are compromised:

> *Many of the IDC lack parental support—some have lost one or both parents, making it difficult for them to maintain routines. For instance, there is a child who lives with only his father. He often arrives late to school, and when asked about it, he explains that his father leaves early for work, leaving him without breakfast (T5).*

3.1.3. Children's Access to Pre-primary School

While the exact number of preprimary school aged (4 to 8 years) IDC is lacking because of the existing statistics lumping ages in different classification categories as already indicated in the previous tables, it can be understood from the table below that the number of children aged 14 ears and below is very close to 8,643. From these, the number of children in IDP preprimary schools is only 140 suggesting that access to education is nearly non-existent.

Table 9:Estimated IDC's Access of Pre-primary Education in the Camp

Individuals	Males	Females	Total
Total number of IDC in Debre Birhan aged 0 to 14 years	4,358	4,285	8,643
Number of children attending preprimary schools in IDP camp	76	64	140
Number of teachers in IDP preprimary school	0	4	4

According to a teacher in the IDP preprimary school, many children under the age of six are not included in the learning program, "Since the current focus is on accelerated learning to prepare children for grade one, younger children—aged five and six—are often left out, limiting their early educational opportunities" (T4).

The number of in-camp preprimary schools was very limited to begin with. From these small numbers, some were even closed because of conflicts going around. A mother with three children has the following to say:

> *When we arrived here, there was a pre-primary school providing services for young children. However, due to the ongoing conflict between rebel groups and the National Defense Force this year, the school was closed down. Currently, there are no pre-primary schools near our home, so we had to search for an alternative. The only available school is very far from us, requiring a 50-birr transportation fee. Since we cannot afford the full cost, I walk barefoot for a significant portion of the journey—around 20-to-25-birr worth of distance—before taking transportation to minimize expenses. This situation is extremely difficult for our child, and even now, life remains challenging for both them and us (IDP P6).*

This lack of access for children to preprimary school has compounded the challenges of working mother to be torn between the need to work for a living and the need to take care of the children rather staying at home. Some mothers may take refuge in relatives or neighbors to fill in their absence, but this has not proven for them to be effective as the following mother explains.

> *Currently, one of my biggest challenges is ensuring my child's well-being while I work. Since she stays with relatives during the day, she does not receive the care and protection that a mother would provide. Instead, she faces mistreatment, including physical punishment and harassment. One day, she was even exposed to a life-threatening situation, but thankfully, some individuals saw her and intervened in time to save her. My work schedule does not allow me to personally care for my child throughout the day. (IDP P5)*

3.2. Preprimary School Quality

Three types of Preprimary (PP) Schools were sources of sample: In-Camped, Hybrid and Host Community PP schools. Only two In-Camp PP schools were functional out of four during data collection and it was not even possible to collect data from one of the two camps because of security problems. Hybrid PP schools were those having children from host communities as well as IDPs integrated into the host communities. These groups, too, were very limited and all those in the Town hosting IDPs were accessed for sampling.

3.2.1. Teachers' profiles and support

As regards teachers, all of them were females; many with Diploma (two years) level training in early childhood education but none of them had any training on IDPs. On the other hand, none of the PP teachers from In-Camped IDP had any formal training on early childhood education; but some short term training on IDP. Some PP schools for community children also have assistant teachers.

Table 10: Sample preprimary (PP) schools and Teachers

Type of sample PPS (Preprimary School)	PP Teachers (all female)				
	Total		Training in ECCE		On the job Training after IDPs Joined the center
	Main	Assistants	Cert.	Dip	
In-camp PPS	4	-	-	-	None in the ECCE field but 4 got on the job training
Hybrid PPS	4	3	1	6	None
Host PPS	6	-	1	5	None
Total	14	3	2	11	

An attempt was made to learn the continuous professional development (CPD) experiences of teachers to help them manage the emerging needs of such children like, for example, supporting IDC. Accordingly, asked if she has ever attended on the job training after IDC joined her preschool/ classroom, a teacher gave an affirmative response "Yes, I have attended training provided by USAID, which lasted for 10 days". She provided an extended pedagogical benefit of the training as follows:

> *The training focused on key areas, including methods of teaching young children—starting from foundational skills and incorporating songs—and how to provide care for children while respecting their individuality. I am very grateful for the training, as it significantly improved my approach to teaching. Before the training, our teaching method was quite rigid—we would simply enter the classroom and instruct children to write, without considering their developmental needs. Through the training, we were taught the importance of guiding children on how to hold pencils correctly in a gentle*

> *and supportive manner, to ensure that they develop writing skills in a way that is appropriate for their age and abilities (T4).*

A female preprimary teacher aged 34 years and with diploma in ECCE and 11 years of service has rather amplified the gaps in such kinds of trainings saying:

> *We have just received general training, but not specific to IDP. The training was on how to identify psychological problems of children in general. We are just caring for all of them as mothers.*

This lack of professional training among PP teachers particularly in Hybrid PP schools would entail challenges in recognizing IDC's special behaviors. Such teachers don't seem to aptly note subtle classroom and outside behaviors of children from IDP background as they say, "*I did not observe significant variations; to me, their behaviors are remarkably similar to the host community children (HCC)*", "*currently in these kindergarten classes, I haven't faced major challenges in supporting IDC*" etc. (T?). The vignettes below would cast doubts on such claims mainly on the ground that this could be inability to read signposts of the problems of IDC:

> *Many children in our classrooms have lost one or both parents and often experience deep psychological trauma, yet they appear calm, making it difficult to identify and address their struggles. Children with trauma seem calm and difficult to discern. Proper training is necessary for educators to effectively support them (T4).*

An added reasons could be some contradictory responses secured from some teachers. While some teachers believe that IDC are not any different from HCC, they also shared an experience that children's plays from displacement settings are dominated by war-related activities and use of weapons. This would mean then that teachers can hardly provide any special support when IDC happen to have a need for psychosocial support services. Some teachers were also having a wronged belief about recovery, "*Children have natural adaptation abilities- they assimilate quickly and heal naturally*" suggesting a wait-and-see approach even when children seem to have some needs online for support.

Some misconceptions captured from interviewees also casting shadows on teachers' professionalism: notions about the role of play and a half-day school programing. While talking about problems, a teacher considers children's desire for play as a problem rather than considering it as a natural tool for learning, *"Many children tend to prioritize play over learning, making it difficult for them to retain information" (T4*). Another teacher expresses concerns about a half day-based schooling schedule that was introduced in one of the PP schools early this academic year. Both parents and teachers don't like this half day program but for dissimilar reasons. While parents want their children to stay in school for the full day so that they can stay at work to make a living, teachers believe that the single-shift system (half-day classes) may create feelings of inferiority on children compared to those staying for full day. Others say it is a waste of children's productive time; believing that learning occurs only in structured settings. Other

teachers get into contrasting their children with those in other PP schools and feel their children can be put to harm. A teacher says, "Other schools run full-day programs, making our children feel disadvantaged" (T3).

This evidence would generally suggest that there are possibly professional gaps among teachers. In fact, teachers may not have the skills to provide psychosocial support to the IDC. However, they are in good spirits and struggling to meet at least some material needs of these children. For instance:

> *There is a child who lives with only his father. He often arrives late to school, and when asked about it, he explains that his father leaves early for work, leaving him without breakfast. In such cases, we coordinate with the food worker in the compound to provide him with something to eat, or we personally give him a biscuit (T5).*

We would then finally conclude this section with a conclusion about the gaps of meeting IDC needs and endorsing the suggestion of a father to train teachers to address this gap:

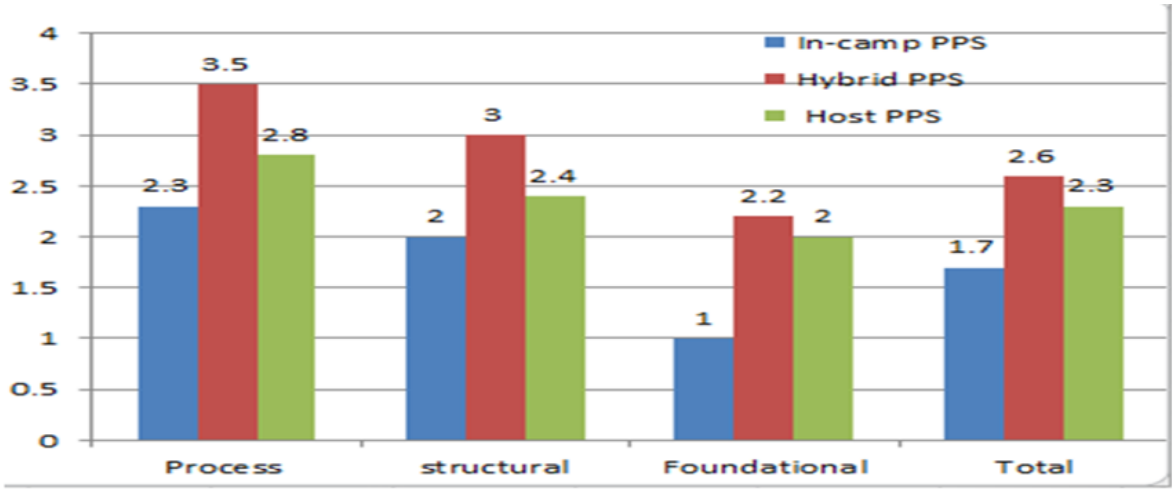
> *There is a gap in childcare and emotional support. Strengthening caregivers' skills and raising awareness about children's needs would improve children's overall well-being. Proper training for teachers and caregivers would ensure that children receive the attention and care they require (IDP P3).*

3.2.2. Center Profile

a) Pre-primary School Ratings

Trained data collectors were required to rate on a five-point scale the PP school environment with respect to structural, process and foundational quality measures. The average ratings are summarized in the graph below:

Figure 4: Average ratings of the three PP schools on structural, process and foundational measures.



.Quality ratings are generally low in all the three types of centers; but the non-IDP pre-primary schools seem a little better. IDPs were rated the lowest in all but more so in the

foundational domain. More details of the ratings are presented in Table 12 by sub-domains.

Table 11: Average ratings of the PP School Environments by Sub-Domains

Domains	Standards	Average ratings on indicators		
		In-camp PPS	Hybrid PPS	Host PPS
Structural	1) Learning environment safe, secure	2.1	4.6	2.9
	2) Resources are adequate, relevant	1.3	3.3	2.0
	3) Classroom organization appropriate	1.3	1.5	1.0
	4) Teacher-child	4.0	1.0	1.0
	5) Scheduling is child friendly	1.5	3.5	3.0
	6) Supplementary curriculum, textbooks	2.1	2.9	2.9
	7) Personnel characteristics	1.7	4.0	3.7
Process	8) Instruction and learning	1.8	1.8	1.8
	9) Varieties of activities performed	2.0	3.0	2.8
	10) Play based learning employed	1.3	2.3	2.3
	11) Interactions, instructional style	2.0	3.5	3.5
	12) Knowledge, skill of educators	2.0	4.0	2.0
	13) Assessment methods	1.7	2.0	2.0
Foundational	14) Principal provides support	1.0	3.5	3.1
	15) Supervision mechanisms	1.0	2.7	2.0
	16) Families and teachers collaborate	1.0	1.8	2.0
	17) Community members participate	1.0	1.2	1.0
	18) Community resources mobilized	1.3	2.0	1.7

As can be referred in the summary table, IDP-based PP schools were consistently rated low except for student-teacher ratio where it fairs better.

b) Open Observation: General Description

Trained data collectors were invited to keep personal memos of their general observations and experiences of IDP and host community-based PP schools with respect to the three domains as well as their general impressions of the field work. Experiences summarized in next table show that similarities are rather common in terms of these structural, process and foundational measures. Play materials are limited and play-based learning utterly absent with teacher-and exam-centric practices taking hold in both settings; even in those settings with trained PP teachers. Even parents from IDP background were articulating this pedagogical gap:

The current school relies more on strict orders and commands rather than interactive learning, which has been an adjustment for them. This lack of quality education and nurturing care is a significant challenge. Initially, upon arrival, our children struggled to interact and play with others in their new environment, frequently asking to return home. However, over time, they have gradually stopped expressing that sentiment, though the adaptation process remains difficult. (IDP P6)

It was also noted that while school feeding seems to be consistently provided in the IDP group, this is not consistently happening in the host community groups.

Table 12: Descriptive Summary of Open Observations of PP Schools against the Three Broader Domains

Center	Structural domains	Process domains	Foundational domains
In-camp ECCE center	• Located in IDP camp, it is a tent 15 KMs from the center • Established and operated by an NGO (imagine 1 day) • School feeding program by NGO • No outdoor space • Small class size that is good for interaction, play and child-center activities • Classroom with no learning resources, play materials • Teachers with limited training in ECCE • Half day schedule	• No child-centered activities • Teacher dominated interaction; a lost opportunity • No play-based pedagogy; even free play is not observed • Exams and tests used in assessment • Teaching seems lecture like as no aids used	• No community participation, no community resource mobilization; it is NGO supported • Government involved utterly absent • No supervision and leadership from education office
Community ECCE center	• Center accessible • Indoor and outdoor materials, but play materials are commercial • Large class size that leaves no space for interaction and child centered activities • School feeding that is not consistent • Teacher trained in ECCE, but not in IDP related ECCE issues • Half day schedule started this year in one of the centers	• Teacher-centered teaching • Opportunity for free play outdoor • IDP children frequently play war related activities; holding guns and pretending to shoot • Exams and tests used for assessment	• Parent and community contribute financially • IDP parents do not like the shift system • They do not support their children in their home works • Some have their own mental health issues to manage

c) Pictures

Pictures captured during observations are presented to show typical features of the PP school classrooms and outside in small towns in Ethiopia and those in IDP settings.

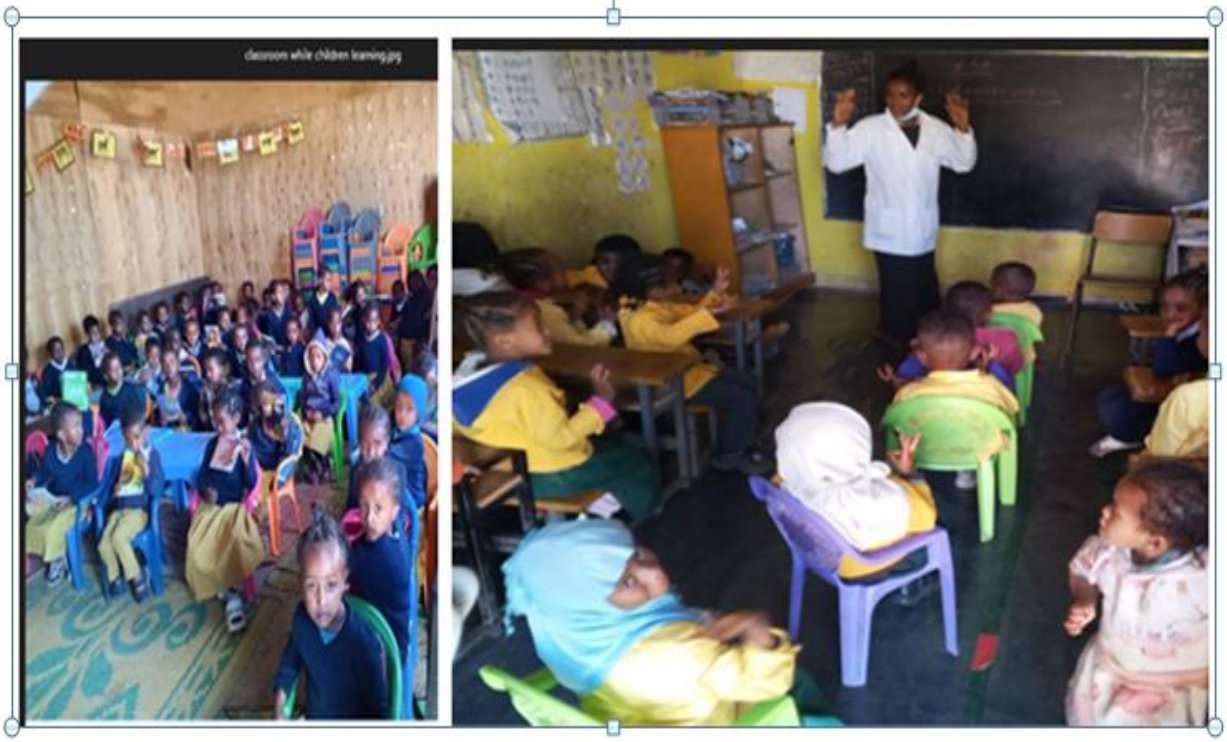
d) Outdoor environment in host community preschools

Outdoor environment is nearly non-existent in the IDP camps; but a very splendid space in the non-IDP settings as can be seen in the visuals below. As it can be seen in this display, playground is rough and unsafe; play equipment non-functional, slides dangerously high slop, materials sloppy and concentrated in one place hindering movement. More interesting, outdoor learning doesn't exist but entirely limited to free play only with occasional supervision by teachers.

The learning space allocated for classrooms is not suitable. Previously, we had a better area, but over time, it became muddy and unusable, forcing us to relocate. One major issue is the lack of fencing around the school compound. We requested fencing to create a safe and designated space for children's learning and play, but due to the road cutting across the school, it was not possible. Without proper boundaries, children face interference from outsiders. Elders frequently pass through the area, and older children—who are not part of the school—sometimes come before us, hit younger students, and then leave. This disrupts the learning environment and poses safety risks. To manage these problems, fencing the compound is essential to create a safe and enclosed space for learning and play. But we ask them always the learning areas to be fenced assuming that better security and monitoring would help protect the children and ensure they can learn without external disturbances (T5).

Indoor environments are also noted with typical features that include: Overcrowded rooms, interaction barely exists, rooms devoid of accessibly learning resources/ corners, and teacher-dominated teaching and learning is not active.

2.Indoor environment in host community preschools

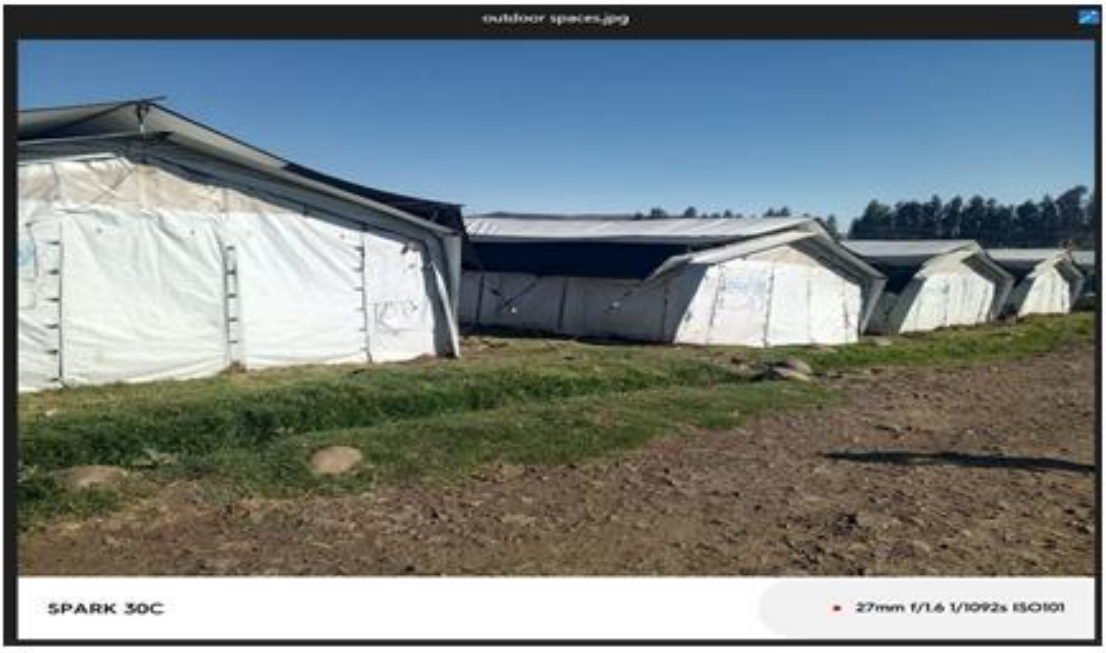


3.Learning (left) and Play materials (right)

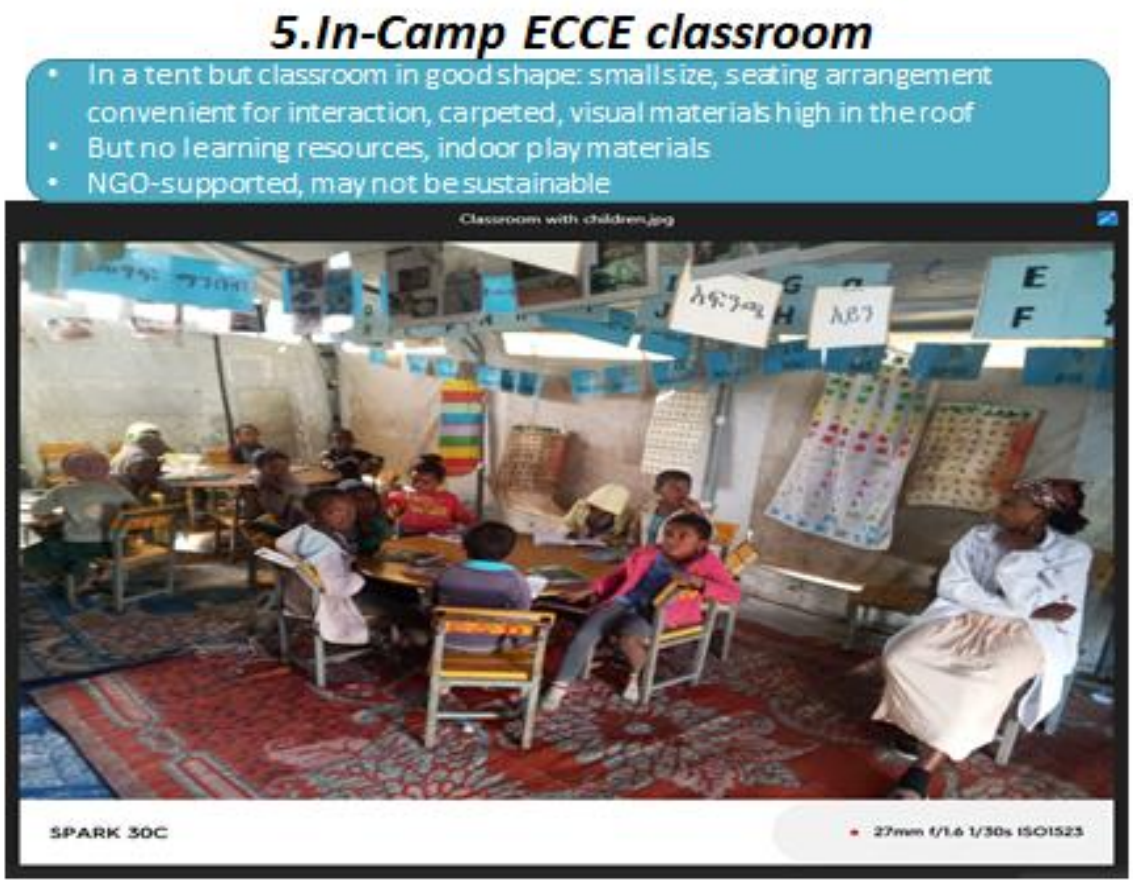
Materials not in use-in the coordinator's office (top), in class but in disarray (bottom)

Play materials (commercial), inadequate, not integrated into learning

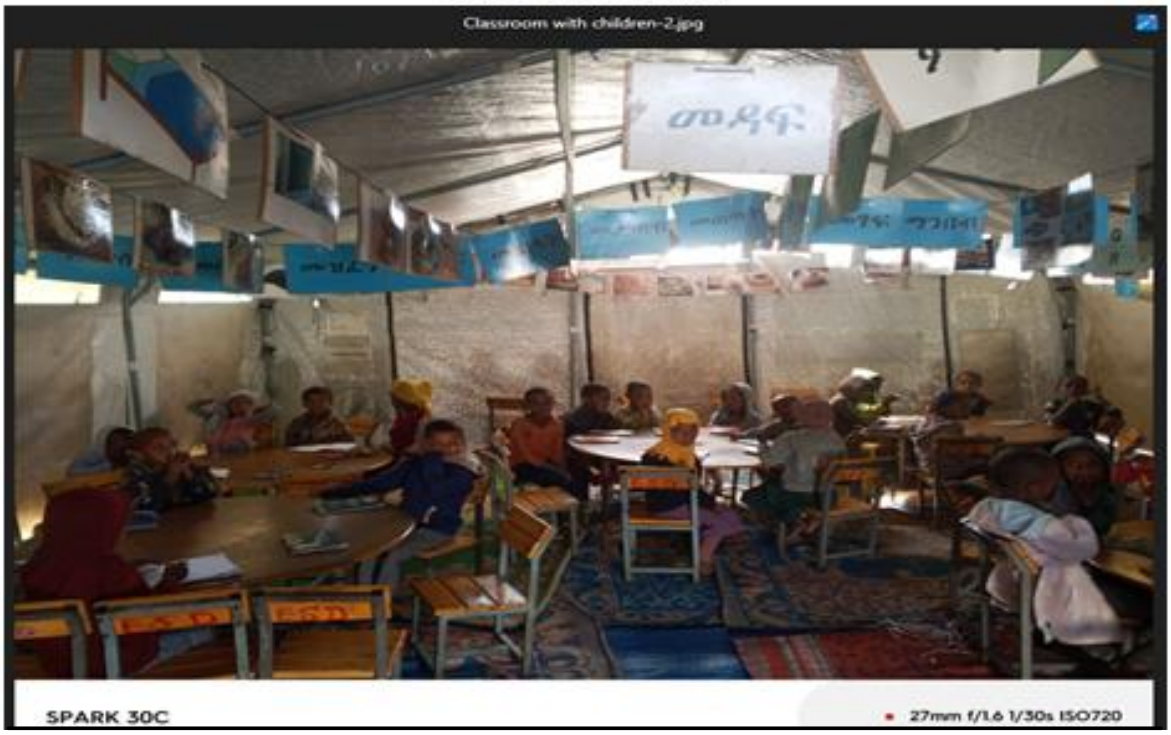
4.IDP camp where the ECCE center is located



In IDP camp, while we have child-sized chairs, tables, and carpeting, the classroom covering is made of canvas. Due to environmental conditions, teachers are forced to keep children indoors, as the outside space is unsuitable. The field is shared with the surrounding community, which results in noise disturbances that disrupt lessons. Additionally, there are no outdoor play materials for the children. A teacher said that she has been teaching these children for three months, but due to the challenges mentioned, there have been very few days when outdoor play was possible. During their training, they learned about the importance of outdoor activities—children should not be confined inside for long periods, and outdoor activities such as playing or writing letters in the sand should be integrated into their learning. However, the current setting does not allow for this. As a result, they witnessed increased boredom among the children. If the environment were more suitable, teachers could implement these necessary activities. Unfortunately, older children play football and handball near the classrooms, which further distracts the younger children from their lessons.



6. Visual materials high in the roof of the tent (see also next slide)



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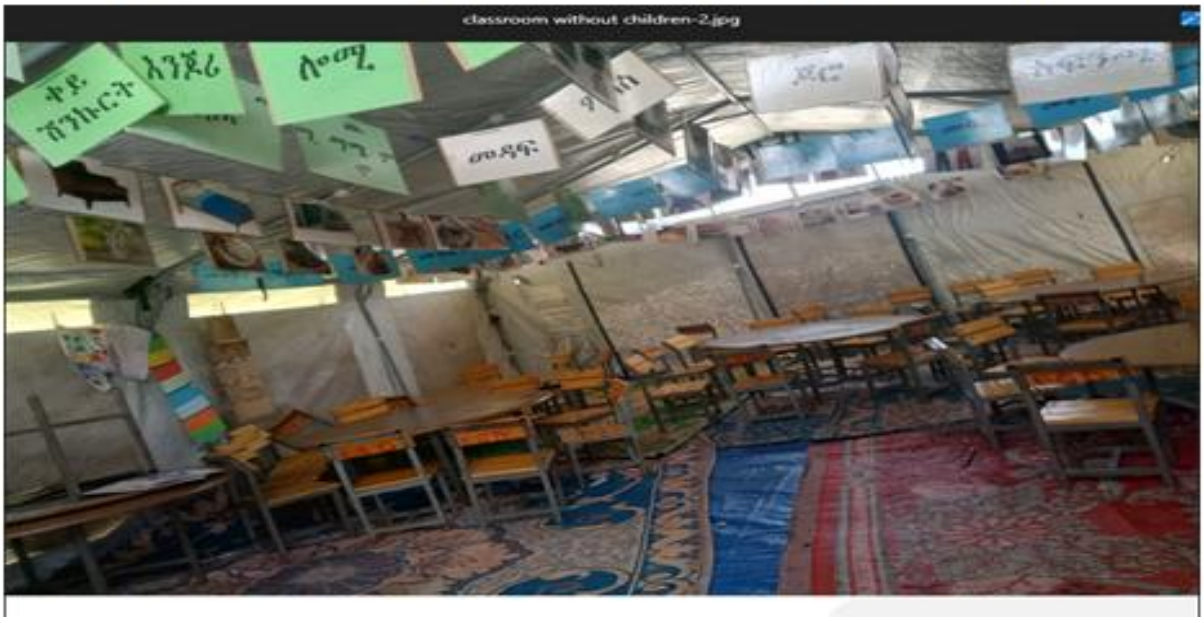
7.Sensory overdose with materials high in the roof of the tent but sufficient space



Generally, we may say that while In-Camp centers have no outdoor spaces at all, hybrid and Host PP schools have a wide outdoor space yet not that much functional-a lost opportunity! Similarly, while community PP schools are overcrowded, In-camp ECCCE centers have a small child- to- teacher ratio; a classroom convenient for interactive,

play-based learning yet a lost opportunity. Children of different ages—ranging from 2 to 7 years—are mixed together. It would be more effective to separate them based on age and developmental needs, ensuring that each child receives appropriate education tailored to their level. (IDP P3).

Finally, security concerns were also raised in both community as well as IDP settings. In the community settings, it was reported that children were turned vulnerable because of lack of fencing the compound:

> *There is an urgent need to fence the compound to ensure the children's safety. For example, one day, I noticed that a student named Zekarias did not return to the classroom. Upon inquiry, the guard informed me that he had been hit by another child who was not a student at the center. Incidents like this highlight the need for improved security measures to protect the students and create a safe learning environment (T4).*

A teacher also expresses her observation that IDC generally tend to prefer play over learning as the case is in all children, but lack of play materials remains a challenge. In the IDP settings, security at the preschool was reported to be inconsistent:

> *While guards are sometimes paid, there are periods—such as the last three months—when they receive no compensation at all. This makes it difficult to ensure continuous protection for the children. (IDP P3)*

3.2.3. Parental support

To ensure effective learning, it is crucial to engage parents, as family involvement plays a significant role in children's ability to understand and succeed in education.

This being the case, both parents and teachers consider parental involvement particularly among the IDPs in the education of children limited both at home and in the PP schools.

> *One of the challenges we have observed is the lack of parental follow-up, which has impacted children's ability to grasp educational concepts. Teachers spend only four hours with the children daily (from 2:00 PM to 6:00 PM), during which they provide instruction. While some learning occurs within this timeframe, certain aspects of education require parental support at home. Without this assistance, children often struggle with assignments and respond with statements like, "I do not know," when asked to complete tasks independently (T4).*
>
> *There is a noticeable lack of parental involvement and follow-up. If parents actively support their children by reading and reviewing their work, children could have better understood what they have written (T4).*

In apparently 'I Am Okay-You Are Not' kind of approach, some teachers seem to blame parents a little more extremely while putting themselves at the epicenter of support single handedly. For example, according to a teacher:

> *Parental participation in children's education is quite limited, particularly among IDFs. When asked for support, some parents react defensively, arguing that it is solely the teacher's responsibility to support the children. However, these same parents are quick to criticize any gaps in education without taking steps to contribute to their child's learning process (T4).*

Alike teachers, parents themselves, too, have all hesitated that they are making the required provisions, and some expect to be invited to deliver their part:

> *In terms of interaction with my child's teachers, I have had limited communication. The only direct engagement I've had was when they called me to discuss an issue regarding my child being late to school. Beyond that, I have not had regular interactions with them (IDP P1). In terms of parental involvement, I have not yet been invited to participate in school activities, but when I am, I will engage actively to support her education (IDP P5). Early education helps children prepare for grade one and develop essential learning habits. However, my participation in school-related activities is very limited. My involvement mainly consists of taking him to and from school, rather than engaging with his teachers or monitoring his progress closely. Additionally, the teachers have not reached out to ask for parental contributions. Nonetheless, I am fully prepared to support his education in any way possible whenever I am asked. (IDP P7)*

Generally, parents and community involvement seems better in the host community groups while this doesn't seem the case in the IDP group. In fact, parents of children from IDP group were interviewed about the importance of education of children in the early years and many of them have a very good grasp of the importance of early childhood education and also appreciate the school feeding program and how they were empowered to work because of easing the burden of childcare.

While positive support among IDP groups is not to the required level, there are, however, evidence from teachers of rather negative support from parents. Children can be subject to domestic violence because of parents with mental health concerns:

> *Some abusive parents threatened children. One of the key challenges we face is ensuring the emotional and psychological well-being of the children. While we care for them and try to provide a supportive learning environment, the attitudes and behaviors of parents sometimes create additional difficulties. For example, some parents express harmful statements like 'I will kill you' to their children. These words, if internalized, could negatively impact a child's development (T4).*

3.2.4. Professional Support

Processional psychosocial support to IDPs and children doesn't seem to hold both in PP schools as well as in the IDP camps. A teacher expresses that many IDC still struggle with psychological issues. According to her, there was an organization that used to provide psychological support to enable children cope with their difficulties, but unfortunately, it is no longer operating within the compound. This teacher beliefs that

special services for psychological support remain a critical need and, when available, this service proved highly beneficial—children experiencing distress were engaged in activities such as playing ball and participating in sports, which helped them overcome negative emotions. Therefore, the most essential services required are psychological support, structured recreational activities, and food assistance to ensure their physical and emotional stability (T5).

3.3. Learning and Development Outcomes: IDELA Results

While the plan was to consider quite larger sample, we were able to find a total of 190 children from the three groups of children: In-Camped IDP (42%), Integrated IDP (20%) and Host Community children (38%). In fact, there was no problem for children from host communities, but we need to balance size with the other two groups. The two groups of IDPs were not settled very well and their status changes every time making sampling a challenge. We tried to match the three groups by sex and age so that comparability would be somehow possible. Accordingly, while the three groups are comparable by sex and age, girls seem a little higher than boys but, age-wise, children aged 6 years (74%) are disproportionately higher in all the groups.

Table 13**:** Children's Profiles by Groups, Sex and Age

Groups		Sex			Children's Age			Total
		Boys	Girls	Total	5 years	6 years	7 years	
IDC	IDC in Camps	40	40	80	3	60	17	80
	IDC in Host Communities	15	23	38	12	26	0	38
	Total	55	63	118	15	86	17	118
Children from Host Communities		35	37	72	17	55	0	72
Total		90	100	190	32	141	17	190

Our analysis will begin with children's level of performance in general and by sub-component in particular. Then, we compare this performance by sex and age. Finally, we compare IDELA performances among the three groups.

3.3.1. Children's Performances on the Sub-Domains

The average IDELA measures in Table 9 show performances that seem encouraging except for early literacy and a little on the socio-emotional measures.

Table 14: Descriptive statistics on IDELA measure

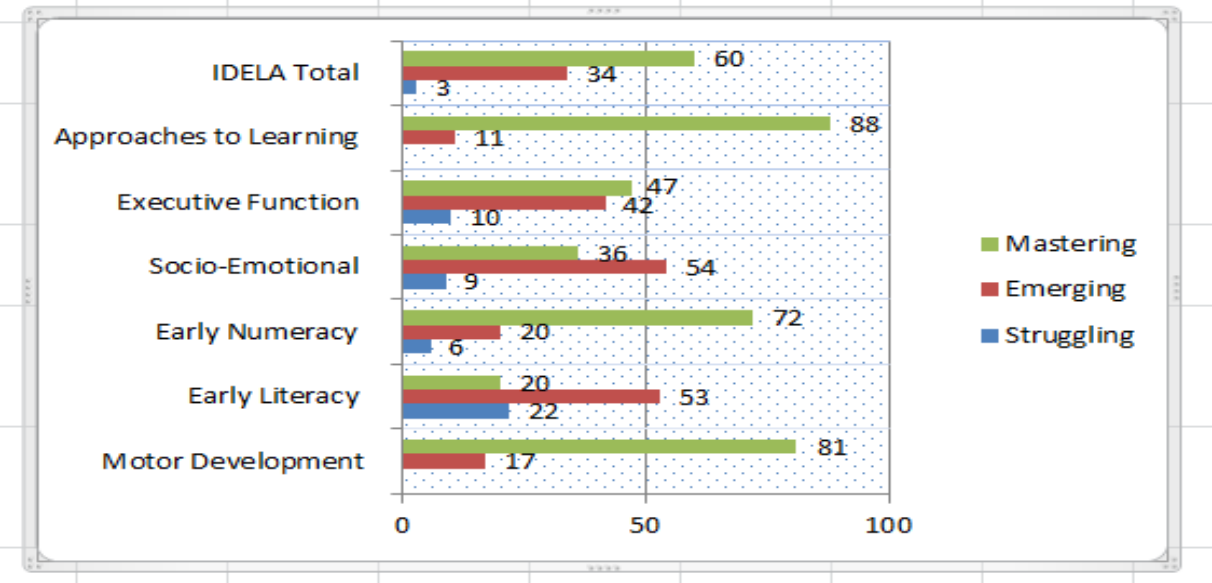
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Early Literacy	118	17.50%	100.00%	60.7194%	17.31966%
Early Numeracy	118	10.00%	100.00%	81.7623%	16.98402%
Social-emotional Skills	118	23.00%	97.00%	69.9322%	14.55308%
Executive Function	118	22.50%	100.00%	73.7669%	18.17363%
Motor Development	118	26.25%	100.00%	88.8845%	14.18113%

Approaches to Learning	118	41.67%	100.00%	92.8230%	12.12141%
IDELA Total	118	32.85%	96.00%	75.3065%	12.37420%

3.3.2. Level of Mastery of the development indicators

To be a little more meaningful, a graph was constructed showing the percentage of those in the four levels of performers (very struggling, struggling, emerging and mastering) by using quartile measures. As it can be seen in the graph, those in the 'Very Struggling' category were nearly non-existent. Those in the 'struggling' category were still negligible but noticeable; ranging from a minimum of 1 in 'Approaches to Learning' to a maximum of 22 in 'Early Literacy'.

Figure 5: IDC's Performance score on IDELA sub-scales.



While the results are encouraging, it should, however, be understood that children are expected to be in a Mastery Level for them to succeed in primary schools. Given that the assessment was taken towards the end of the academic year, time doesn't seem to allow transitioning of children in emerging levels to a Mastery Level in the remaining 1 month of the academic calendar.

3.3.3. Children's Performances on Components of the Sub-Domains

Further analysis is made to understand the specific areas where children were not performing to the expected level mainly focusing on the four sub-domains where performance is relatively lesser (Table 15).

Table 15: IDELA Performances on specific components of four selected domains

Domains	Sub-domains	N	Mean
Socio-emotional	Self-awareness	118	78.6525%
	Emotional awareness	118	63.1356%
	Number of friends	118	47.2034%
	Empathy total	118	73.2203%
	Solving conflict	118	87.2881%
Early numeracy	Comparison	118	97.8814%
	Sorting	118	89.8305%
	Shape Identification	118	56.6102%
	Number Identification	118	74.5339%
	Simple Operation	118	86.4379%
	Number Puzzle Pieces	118	83.4746%
	One-to-One Correspondence	118	83.3390%
Early literacy	Expressive vocabulary	118	63.3898%
	Print awareness	118	87.0056%
	Letter Identification	118	44.5339%
	Letter Sound	118	16.6667%
	Writing	118	60.8051%
	Oral Comprehension	118	91.6949%
Executive Function	Memory	118	72.8814%
	Head-Toes Game	118	74.4915%

As indicated in the Table 15, children seem struggling in areas where more structured learning environment is needed to develop the skills as in, for example, phonological awareness, letter identification, writing (of the early learning components), shape identification (of the early numeracy components) and number of friends (of the socio-emotional components).

3.3.4. Performance and development indicators by sex and age

Performances on IDELA measures were compared between young boys and girls through an independent mean test. It is surprising that differences were noticeable from these early stages where boys were earning consistently higher than girls; no matter how small the differences were. In fact, these differences were statistically significant (Table 16) in motor development (t_{116}=2.2, P<0.05), Early Literacy (t_{116}=2.0, P<0.05), approaches to learning (t_{116}=2.o, P<0.05), and, obviously, in IDELA total (t_{116}=2.2, P<0.05).

Age-wise comparison was expected age differences where mastery proceeds from lower to higher ages. But, while inconsistencies were noted between 5 and 6 years; each excelling alternatively, seven-year-olds didn't stand out first in any one of the measures. In fact, the 17 children aged seven were all from the In-Camp IDP group (see Table 1) evidencing that even when children were with a better age, they underperform compared to those with lesser ages. In fact, One Way ANOVA yielded significant age

differences in Executive Function ($F_{2,115}$=5.83, P<0.01) and approaches to learning ($F_{2,115}$=4.51, P<0.01); though not the IDELA total was not significant ($F_{2,115}$=1.85, P>0.05).

Table 16: Independent mean test of boys and girls and one way ANOVA of the three age groups on IDELA Measures

Sub-domain	Group Statistics										
	Sex differences					Age differences					
	Mean		t	Df	Sig.	Mean			F	df	Sig.
	Boys	Girls				5 Years	6 years	7 years			
IDELA Total	77.9	73.0	2.2	116	028	76.7	90.0	84.0	1.85	2,115	.162
Motor Dev.	91.8	86.4	2.2	116	.034	88.1	61.1	56.0	1.31	2,115	.274
Early Literacy	64.0	57.8	2.0	116	.050	64.1	82.8	73.1	.94	2,115	.392
Early Numeracy	84.0	79.8	1.4	116	.164	85.7	70.7	67.1	2.85	2,115	.062
Social-Emotional	71.9	68.2	1.4	116	.178	69.0	76.1	70.0	.46	2,115	.630
Executive Function	73.8	73.8	-.0	116	.994	71.0	76.9	60.4	5.83	2,115	.002
App. to Learning	95.1	90.9	2.0	116	.050	95.9	94.0	84.2	4.51	2,115	.005

3.3.5. Performances by Children's Displacement Status

The last but critically important comparison aims to check if IDP exposure could impact development and learning (Table 17). No matter how small the differences could be, the patterns in fact show that children in host communities are scoring higher compared to those IDC from integrated with communities and these IDPs are better than those in the camps. However, these differences reached significant level only in motor development ($F_{2,187}$=6.302, P<0.01).

Table 17: One Way ANOVA of differences in IDELA performance by the three groups of children

Sub-domain						
	Differences in Children's background					
	Mean			Df	F-value	Sig.
	Host communities	IDPs in communities	IDP in camps			
IDELA Total	75.7	74.5	73.4	2,187	.540	.583
Motor Dev.	90.6	85.4	81.7	2,187	6.302	.002
Early Literacy	59.5	63.1	58.6	2,187	.780	.460
Early Numeracy	81.8	81.6	82.8	2,187	.083	.920
Social-Emotional	70.8	67.9	70.4	2,187	.465	.629
Executive Function	74.3	72.5	69.8	2,187	1.260	.286
Approaches to Learning	93.7	90.8	90.8	2,187	1.307	.273

3.3.6. Signs of Resilience Amidst Challenges

The various challenges that the preprimary school children have experienced along with their parents would somehow compromise their learning and development profile.

However, some parents have been empathically talking about the learning progress of their children (academic skills acquired as well as positive attitudes towards learning and the preprimary school) suggesting some evidence of resilience against the odds.

In terms of academic skills, parents have the following to share:

> *My younger child is currently in pre-primary school and has already developed strong reading and writing skills. (Father in matrimonial relationship, 4 children, 4 years, live with aid, stayed here for 4 years). Academically, my child is clever, especially when it comes to literacy—she is good at identifying and reading alphabets (IDP P5). Unlike in my own time, when children entered school with little prior learning, my child can already write his full name and recognize letters (IDP P7)*

Some parents have also articulated impressive positive attitudes of their children towards learning and the preprimary school:

> *My child loves school so much that even if he attends on Saturdays and Sundays makes him happy. What amazes me the most is his self-motivation—he eagerly practices writing and reading the alphabet on his own and proudly shares his progress with me (IDP P4). Beyond academics, attending school keeps my child engaged and refreshed. When he goes to school, he enjoys learning and interacting with others, but when he stays home all day, he quickly becomes bored. I would even be happy if there were classes on weekends to keep him engaged. (IDP P7). Fortunately, my child has not encountered any major problems at school. Sometimes, even when we tell him to stay home for the day, he insists on going, showing his strong enthusiasm for learning. At first, adapting to the new school environment was difficult for him—he was fearful of the other children and struggled to feel comfortable. Over time, however, he has adjusted and no longer experiences the same anxiety. While he has adapted to school life, he still does not engage much in play activities with other children (IDP P7). Since arriving here, he has adjusted well and is showing positive changes. At school, I have not received any complaints from teachers, which reassures me that he has adapted well to the school environment; he prefers staying indoors and never expresses a desire to play outside with other children. I encourage this behavior because I have observed negative influences among some other children. Overall, my child has adapted well to the new environment and has not faced significant challenges like some other children (IDP P4)*

Lacking interest in play activities for a child is a serious concern casting shadows on the child's resilience but the parent above externalizes the problem suggesting that the child's preference to stay home could be a coping mechanism to rejections outside.

Teachers also narrated stories of success, counting on the fact that attending classes has provided them with a structured routine, as well as reducing the time they spend idly at home:

> *Last year, we taught a group of children for only four months, yet they performed remarkably well when they transitioned to Bakelo Primary School. I am very proud of*

> *them—they grasped what we taught and progressed well. Currently, we are teaching children for a full year, which allows for a more structured learning experience. In grades one and two, we have a dedicated teacher working with displaced children over the age of eight (T4).*

On top of positive preschool experiences, a number of factors would contribute towards children's resilience. Some of these positive counts that need mentioning are parental support and transfer of language skills from home to preschools unlike experiences before displacement.

With respect to parental support, while many parents were complaining that they were unable to provide support to their children, there were others who shared information on how they were supporting their children:

> *At home, I actively support his learning by testing him on what he has learned, especially his ability to recognize and write alphabets. Early education helps children prepare for grade one and develop essential learning habits (IDP P7).*

A teacher has also expressed:

> *Many parents actively follow up on their children's attendance. Some even provide their phone numbers, allowing communication to ensure their children are attending school. In my classroom, some children exhibit behavioral challenges. Their parents often insist that teachers should discipline them, including physical punishment, to ensure they focus solely on learning (T5).*

Language of instruction in the current residence also seems to boost learning. In the place of origin, the language in preschool and at home were incompatible. But the displacement brought with it a blessing in disguise of turning the two environments in terms of language use:

> *Here, education is delivered in their mother tongue, Amharic, whereas in other locations, the instruction is in Oromiffa. This makes learning here more suitable for our children, and they prefer to remain in this environment. (IDP P2)*

4. Discussion

Internally Displaced Children (IDC) have been shown, as expected, to be exposed to various challenges directly or indirectly through targeting their parents before, during and after displacement. While IDC could be very young at the time of displacement and might not be aware of what was happening around them during displacement, they couldn't be free from impacts as parenting capacities of IDFs can be negotiated. Previous research in a very similar context of conflict-induced displacement following the Ethio-Eritrean war has shown several atrocities accompanying displacement that claimed lives, demolished possessions and spread insecurities and horrors that in the end wounded the mental health of parents and undermined their financial and material capacities to care for children (Hiru & Belay, 2003). In a rather more recent small-scale

qualitative study with IDFs in Burayu camp of the Oromiya region, it was also found that exposure to violence, loss of shelter and livelihoods, and food/information insecurity has increased caregivers' psychological distress which indue course drained parents' ability to provide consistent supervision, protection, and psychosocial support to children (Kemei et al., 2023). Displacement-related loss of income, social supports, and safe spaces repeatedly observed among our present participants was equally documented in a previous study that limited such key components of parental capacities as reduced responsive caregiving (less play, stimulation, and emotional availability) and higher caregiver stress (AIR, 2023). It was still reiterated in another study that displacement was negatively impacting both short- and longer-term household functioning (housing, food security, income) as well as parental resources (time, emotions) to meeting children's basic needs like affection, health, and education (IDMC, 2021). A more poignant outcome comes from a systematic review of research from different countries including Ethiopia that established nexus between caregivers' trauma and mental health problems after displacement with poorer parenting behaviors (withdrawal, harsher discipline), which in turn associate with worse socio-emotional and cognitive outcomes for young children (Bernhardt et al., 2024). This would mean that teachers' voices of concern against parental care wasn't a mere 'I am Okay, You Are Not' kind of blame on parents as mentioned earlier but was rather a genuine concern that needs to be redressed.

Against a saga of these vulnerabilities, we would naturally expect that IDC would harbor several unfortunate learning and developmental outcomes which, in our present study, unfolded itself in such problems as general uneasiness, conflict and violent tendencies, acting out, loss of appetite and sleep, just to mention some. In a similar previous study of the psychosocial profile of displaced children in Woldiya and Tigray during the Ethio-Eritrean war, Hirut and Belay (2003) have indicated that the displaced children were "experiencing in their present life all sorts of wounds of the past, the demands of life at present, and worries of life in the future". The children were experiencing the trauma of abuse and effects of separation of the past, problems of managing the material needs and negative attitudes of the host community in the present, and the uncertainties and despondency of life in the future. These researchers have documented specific challenges of the displaced children in terms of ten indicators: stressful experiences during displacement, experience of separation from significant others, difficulties meeting material needs, emotional and behavioral problems, inappropriate perceptions of the self, others, the environment and life at large, engagement in less organized activities that fail to promote holistic development, lack of access to information pertinent to one's life, worrisome parental conditions (health and economic), less friendly relationships with host communities, and inadequate support received from others. While problems in our present case seem a little lighter, the problems recorded in the Woldiya-Tigray appear very strong, extended and explicit possibly because of two reasons. First and foremost, in the former study, data were directly collected from the children themselves than through a third party like teachers. Yet, local research evidence has amply documented that PP teachers in Ethiopia had limited mental health

literacy of children in distress (Dessie et al., 2021; Terefe, 2018; Desta et al. n.d., UNESCO, 2024) suggesting that their reports would be less reliable. Furthermore, children in the former study were older in age; thus, being able to better articulate their problems than someone talking about what they feel. Despite these couple of justifications, the possibility of resilience in the present children should not, however, be ruled out from the explanation as indicated in our previous as well as subsequent discussions.

Against these experiences of IDC, we may now need to ask a critical question regarding IDC's access to quality PP school as well as the extent to which the PP school climate is operating to undo the possible deleterious impacts of displacement on children. To begin with the issue of IDC's access to some form of intuitional care and education, it has been shown that a very limited number of the children were accessing these services and even the sustainability of services to these smaller groups accessing the services is questionable as the IDP camps were closed for various reasons. As it has been shown in the results section, the PP school environment (outdoor and indoor spaces and resources, pedagogical experiences and teachers' profiles) for those accessing institutional care and education didn't seem robust enough to creating an enabling environment. In fact, the community and hybrid PP schools seem a little better but even these ones were not to the expected level of quality. In a context where the quality of the very regular public preprimary schools themselves was shown to be a point of serios concern (see, for example, Belay et al., 2020; Belay et al., 2022), one may not be taken by surprise to come across a low quality IDP primary school at Debre Birhan. Evidence from across various settings tend to corroborate these quality concerns where in IDP PP sites we often have:

- disruptions to schooling, overcrowded/temporary learning spaces, volunteer/under-resourced teaching, and service gaps (IDMC, 2022)
- temporary/insufficient facilities, under-trained teachers, and interrupted services (UNICEF, 2019; MoE, 2021)
- limited caregiver capacity and early childhood development and education services (AIR, 2023)
- limited learning opportunities, insecurities, loss of services and disrupted caregiving environments that negatively affect children's development and the functioning (Kemei et al., 2023), and
- overcrowding, teacher shortages, variable teacher quality, and programmatic gaps featured in refugee education to equality characterize IDPs (World Bank, 2019).

It has been observed that IDC were not getting any special professional support from teachers, parents or any other support group. In fact, there could be a possibility to misunderstand troubled IDC among teachers let alone supporting them because these children may prefer to stay silent and teachers can wrongly interpret this to mean calmness because teachers have limited mental health literacy. In a situation assessment conducted by UNCESCO IICBA, it was found that most teachers lacked basic

awareness about MHPSS well-being issues for themselves and their peers and are unfamiliar with the steps to take when faced with challenges.[6] More worrisome is the case of double or single orphaned IDC who are prematurely left to fend for themselves as well as those living under distress because of psychologically troubled parents abusing them. While these are exceptional cases, the bottom line is many IDPC were found living under acute deprivations that compromise their engagements in organized routines (play, learning and work) that promote resilience and growth. In this regard, it may be interesting to understand how far children's developmental and learning profiles were compromised by the experiences children went through. The IDELA measures have proved, however, that the IDC's' developmental and learning profile were not substantially lower as it was expected. Findings suggested that while HCC were a little better than those in the hybrid settings and those in hybrid settings a little better than IDC, these differences were not substantial to warranty statistical significance in many cases. The question is then what is happening in these dynamics that possibly "shielded" the IDPs. A number of explanations can be given to account for this phenomenon employing different vantage points.

The first could be taking the possibility that IDC could be bouncing back from problems as some evidence has already suggested previously in the results section. Several evidence suggest that children's mere engagement in regular and organized activities like schooling *per se* has its own benefit; despite the quality of schooling experiences. It has been argued that education *per se* can play an important role in meeting the various practical needs of the children (Belay et al., 2022) including psychosocial, health, protection and social needs (Nicolai, 2003; Sinclair, n.d; Bensalah, 2002). Educational services in organized institutional settings tend to help meeting the needs of children in a holistic manner; ensures a safe environment to venture out, facilitates engagement in structured activities, provides opportunities to learn to cope with risks, avails care for vulnerable children, and shields the little ones from exploitation (Nicolai, 2003). As a protection to children in emergencies, educational response helps meet the psychosocial needs of children affected by conflict that have disrupted their lives, studies and social networks, protects them from different abuses, provides a sense of stability and health and teaches such new skills and values as peace, tolerance, conflict resolution, democracy, human rights, environmental conservation etc. (Bensalah, 2002). In doing so, education in emergencies then facilitates the healing process of the children (Sinclair, 2001).

From a different vantage point, lesser impacts of IDC background can possibly be explained in terms of measurement error related to the use and timing of IDELA; that IDELA may not be strong enough to capture the impacts of IDC or may be that the negative impacts of displacement may require a little longer time to mature and unfold its impacts, in which case the IDELA measurement might have occurred prematurely.

[6] https://www.iicba.unesco.org/sites/default/files/medias/fichiers/2024/07/Study%202024-3.pdf

On a third account, we may also need to explain the phenomenon of reduced impact of displacement on children's profiles from the possibility that the HCC could possibly be of a comparable experience in terms of negative developmental encounters because of the ongoing conflict in the Amhara region including the Debere Birhan area. In an assessment that attempted to examine the MHPSS wellbeing of teachers and learners in the conflict-affected areas of northern Ethiopia including the Amhara region, it was found out that a disproportionate number of teachers and learners were found substantially impacted by the conflict (Alebachew et al., 2024). In another study, Gebeyaw and colleagues (2023) have assessed the effects of the conflict in the Amhara region on child and adolescent health and found out that over a third (276, 34.59%) of the children were displaced due to the conflict, three hundred and thirty one (41.48%) children got diseased with the majority not receiving treatment, over two- thirds (557,69.80%) of children had experienced violence of different types, one hundred and thirty four (41.23%) children had acute malnutrition with two- third (66.42%) of them having severe acute malnutrition. Hence, the conflict in the Amhara region itself had deadly impacts on the lives of children and adolescents causing massive displacement, lack of basic humanitarian needs, extreme level of violence, hunger and malnutrition, and lack of health services.

5. Conclusions and Policy Implications

5.1. Conclusions

In line with the results and discussions presented above, we can conclude finally that IDPs in Debre Birhan have been exposed to several disabling challenges as a result of the ordeals of displacement before, during and after it happened. It was found out that the current life conditions of parents wouldn't allow them attending the holistic needs of their children as they don't have the resources (time, material and feelings) to nurture for the children. In some extreme cases, parental abuses were noted possibly because of troubled parents where the unbearable harsh realities of the past could possibly haunt them coupled with the current realities of acute deprivations as well as a gloomy future tainting frustrations and despair. These experiences could impact the children in myriad ways as it was shown already. However, only few were able to access PP schools to get them on track of learning and development. And the sustainability of this limited service in one In-Camp PP school is seriously questioned as it was managed by an NGO. Experiences suggest that some of the PP schools were closed not only because of security problems and relocation alone but also because of budget constraints from the NGO managing the PP schools. The involvement of the government is confined to ensuring security and protection and less evident when it comes to education. The services to IDPs in Debere Birhan seems to uphold the traditional intervention in humanitarian crisis where education was put aside from the list of basic necessities.

With respect to the quality of PP schools, it was found that while the quality of the PP school environments in Ethiopia in general is of a low quality, the IDP one is found still lower. Yet, IDELA measured learning and development outcomes seem to promise children's resilience. Some parental data also suggest that children's learning and attitudes were encouraging. This in a way was a confirmation of the position in previous research of the possibility of building resilience through integration of IDC in early childhood care and education programs (Belay et al., 2022). But there is a need to consider the conclusions given here against the following limitations of the research.

5.2. Limitations of the research

The first concern pertains to the need to examine if HCC were also affected by the ongoing conflict in the region. The need to exploring the psychosocial profile of the children directly than through other agents is also helpful. We may still need to use other tools (in addition to IDELA) that would give a little more space in exploring the emotional dynamics of children in a qualitative manner. Including other IDP camps and expanding sample size is also be needed to ensure external validity of findings.

5.3. Policy Implications

While research may continue in the suggested direction above, we also suggested the following issues for policy and practical interventions.

Early learning is an essential part of humanitarian intervention

While treating causes of displacement requires a sustainable solution rather than treating its impacts (symptoms), we should still work on the symptoms as well. First and foremost, stakeholders need to understand early learning as part of the primary humanitarian intervention like food, shelter and treatments and when it is missing it needs to be considered a critical factor missing from the life of the child. Local government agencies are the ones with the utmost need for consciousness about this because when they appeal to donors for aid, they have not most commonly been seen including the necessities and gaps in early learning believing that it can wait. Furthermore, all phases of emergency need to incorporate psychosocial support of one kind or another. Programs put in place need to generally contribute, in one form or another, to the healing processes of affected parents and children and ultimately establish a sense of normalcy in the affected areas. This should include establishing daily routines of family and community life, opportunities for children to express and engage in structured activities like school, play and sports (Human Rights Watch Africa, 1996).

Government has a critical role

Government needs to involve in the ECCE in displacement settings; now breaking its silence for so long. While a child's right to education is clearly defined in international legal frameworks that the Ethiopian government itself has equally ratified and, hence,

the government needs to ensure the promises entered by signing these treaties, the case for children's education as an emergency response becomes stronger as it goes beyond meeting legal rights to catalyze children's resilience. Hence, the government needs to understand these dual benefits and try to improve access to PP schools in displacement settings.

Revise ECCE policies

Legislative, regulatory and policy provisions also need to be put in place to bind stakeholders towards early childhood education in a sustainable, professional and timely manner. For example, policy provisions on ECCE, curriculum, and textbooks need to be revised to become responsive to these emerging needs of the IDC.

Build teacher's capacity

Once enabling systemic measures are taken, the next step is naturally to build capacities of actors including local leadership, education office holders, principals, teachers and communities. In fact, critical training needs of teachers in IDP settings have already been amply documented in a situation analysis by UNESCO IICBA where teachers themselves lack literacy on the basics of mental health, let alone on intervention techniques. In some cases, teachers themselves develop mental health concerns, and this would jeopardize their classroom pedagogy and interaction with children. Hence, training teachers on MHPSS and wellbeing has a multiplier effect as it empowers teachers to manage their mental health, that of the children, parents and the IDP community at large.

Support parents as well as children

Last but important, ECCE centers be used to support parents of children from IDP background. That is, ECCE centers can be used as an entry gate to reach out to parents and provide educational and mental health support so that they can manage their own mental health concerns as well as building a healthy, enhanced, and play-based interaction with the children. GOs, NGOs, communities and schools need to join hands to institute such school-based mental health educational intervention because it provides opportunities for children, their families and communities to begin the trauma healing process, and to learn the skills and values needed for a more peaceful future and better governance at local and national levels. These psychological benefits together with learned knowledge, skills and values can contribute to peacebuilding and to social and economic development (Sinclair, 2001).

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