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Scaling of a peer mentoring and life skills programme: Lessons from government adaptation and adoption of CAMFED's Learner Guide programme in Tanzania

Research report

January 2026

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Contents

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Acknowledgements

This study was funded by the Allan and Gill Gray Foundation. It was co-led by researchers from the REAL Centre, University of Cambridge, and the School of Education, University of Dar es Salaam, with logistical and implementation support from the non-governmental organisation, Campaign for Female Education (CAMFED). The CAMFED Tanzania team, including Anna Sawaki (Acting Executive Director), Festo Mboya, Dr Nassor Said Kikumbih, Samwel Stanley and Dominica Lyambo, together with Lilla Oliver (CAMFED International), provided essential insights into the programme and context that guided the study, as well as logistical support.

We are grateful to the field supervisors (Dr Afrael Sarakikya, Elisante Mutoka and Nassoro Kitunda) and research assistants (Anastela Kamana, Dr Fortunatha Matiba and Lilian Godson) from the University of Dar es Salaam who led the data collection in Tanzania. We would also like to thank the research assistants (Mher Davtyan, Nowsha Farha and Onyinye Nkwocha) from the University of Cambridge who supported the analysis processes. We are deeply thankful to those involved in the Technical Working Group in Tanzania who made this study possible, and to the research participants who generously contributed their time and insights.

Disclaimer

The views presented in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the perspectives of the REAL Centre, University of Dar es Salaam, CAMFED or the Allan and Gill Gray Foundation.

Any errors in the report are the sole responsibility of the authors.

AI statement

All substantive analysis and writing in this report is human-authored. AI was only used to help compile and format the reference list and condense some sections of the original text.

Suggested citation

Ansari, A., Mgonda, N., and Rose, P. (2026). *Scaling of a peer mentoring and life skills programme: Lessons from government adaptation and adoption of CAMFED's Learner Guide programme in Tanzania: Research report*. REAL Centre University of Cambridge, and University of Dar es Salaam.

Executive summary

Despite Tanzania's recent progress in expanding education access, marginalised students face acute challenges to secondary school completion. Persistent barriers such as long travel distances, poverty, harmful gender norms (for example, early marriage), and insufficient psychosocial support make it difficult for students, particularly girls, to access and thrive in secondary education in Tanzania. In such education environments, peer mentoring offers critical social-emotional support to keep students engaged, with particular value for girls in countering restrictive gender norms that erode their confidence, aspirations or ability to continue education.

This report examines the process by which the Tanzanian Government has adapted and scaled CAMFED's Learner Guide programme, a peer mentoring life skills initiative that has also helped shift harmful gender social norms in the country. The Learner Guide programme aims to support marginalised girls in secondary schools to strengthen self-development and foundational learning skills, thus encouraging them to stay in school and improve their learning outcomes. The main support mechanism is provided by recent school graduates called Learner Guides, who went through the same CAMFED programme during their secondary education. These graduates subsequently return to their local schools to deliver a life skills and wellbeing programme called My Better World and provide peer-to-peer mentorship to students, both girls and boys, as well as take on roles within school and community committees. Its evolution into the government-led Life Skills programme (*Programu ya Stadi za Maisha* in Swahili) now engages both male and female community volunteers in delivering life skills education to girls and boys in secondary schools, irrespective of their background, equipping them with the tools to navigate educational and social challenges.

This qualitative study, conducted in three districts (Morogoro, Chamwino and Handeni) in Tanzania, through 88 interviews with district, ward, school, community stakeholders and CAMFED staff, examines the role of the middle tier at district and community levels in adapting and adopting implementation of the programme at scale.

The findings highlight how the Life Skills programme is perceived by stakeholders to bring important benefits for students and schools, such as improved student confidence, wellbeing, attendance, and resilience against challenges such as early pregnancy and truancy. However, there is need to pay deeper attention to gender in the design and implementation of the adapted Life Skills programme to ensure a gender-transformative focus, as under CAMFED's approach, and avoid unintended reinforcement of gender stereotypes. Core peer mentoring and life skills elements from CAMFED's Learner Guide model, such as being delivered by young graduates who students find easy to relate to, followed by deep embedding of community engagement for local ownership, also remain central to delivering the programme's observed benefits at scale. At the middle tier of government, strong institutional networks and multi-level communication between districts, wards and schools emerge as a key strength. There is, however, need for structured feedback mechanisms between the middle tier and the regional level of government in supervising programme implementation, to enable district and ward officials to raise contextual challenges such as lack of sufficient curriculum books, etc., and collaboratively develop solutions.

Drawing on these lessons, the research suggests that the national Government in Tanzania considers the following recommendations to inform wider scaling and adoption of the programme:

- Explicitly integrate a gender-sensitive approach in the Life Skills programme's design and implementation to ensure young girls are adequately supported, and harmful gender norms that restrict their educational participation and progression are appropriately addressed.
- Enhance community sensitisation through the local government authorities, particularly leveraging community structures and influential community members to enhance local understanding and ownership of the programme.
- Encourage the regional level to actively engage in programme supervision and establish feedback mechanisms with districts, wards, schools and ministries to address local implementation challenges.
- Consider allocation of a specific budget to implement the Life Skills programme sustainably.
- Generate more comprehensive evidence, including official monitoring reports at the middle tier level, to track the programme's progress and benefits over time.
- Continue to receive support from CAMFED until government structures, particularly at the middle tier, can independently sustain implementation at scale.

Collectively, the findings provide transferable insights for governments and partners seeking to adapt non-governmental organisation-led, gender-transformative education programmes into national systems in ways that preserve their positive outcomes, such as equity gains, while enabling context-responsive scaling. This includes the provision of technical support by non-governmental organisations to governments in the initial phases, such as CAMFED's support in scaling the Life Skills programme, while progressively building government systems for independent delivery.

1. Introduction

Context

The Government of Tanzania's education reforms in recent years, such as the provision of fee-free public primary and secondary education, have yielded significant enrolment gains in education (MoEST, 2025). Policies and action plans, such as the national Education and Training Policy 2023 and the Education Sector Development Plan 2025-26 to 2030-31 demonstrate the Government's commitment to promoting equitable access to quality education, and gender equality and inclusivity across all levels (MoEST, 2025). In November 2021, the Government of Tanzania also introduced a re-entry policy, allowing students who drop out of school for various reasons – such as family challenges, truancy,[i] indiscipline and pregnancy – to return and continue their education (MoEST, 2021). The policy particularly aims to support girls who become pregnant to continue with their education, providing them with counselling and guidance in schools.

However, persistent barriers, such as long travel distances and limited availability of schools in remote areas, make it difficult for students, particularly girls, to access secondary education in Tanzania. Additionally, poverty continues to impact learning environments at home, as well as parental decisions regarding sending their children to school. Harmful gender norms, such as early marriage, pregnancy and traditional gender roles continue to reinforce expectations that girls focus on care work or prepare for marriage rather than pursue continued education (Ciampi et al., 2023). Other risks, such as gender-based violence, harassment on the way to and from school, and unsafe or unsupportive school environments, are also more pronounced for girls, undermining their wellbeing and willingness to stay in school (Mutasingwa & Mwaipopo, 2022). These challenges often intensify as students move into adolescence, particularly during lower and upper secondary grades, and reflect in low completion rates – for instance, only around 35% of adolescents completed lower secondary school in in Tanzania in 2024, which is below both the regional sub-Saharan African and lower-middle-income country averages (World Bank, 2025).

In such education environments, peer mentoring and life skills programmes provide social and emotional support to students, helping them remain engaged in school. This is particularly the case for marginalised girls, including those living in households affected by poverty in rural settings, for whom such support helps counter restrictive gender norms that may limit their confidence, aspirations or ability to continue education. In this regard, this report explores the scaling of the Campaign for Female Education (CAMFED)'s peer mentoring and life skills Learner Guide initiative designed to support marginalised girls in secondary schools in Tanzania. The programme draws on CAMFED's longstanding engagement in Tanzania, where it has been operating as a not-for-profit organisation since 2006.

CAMFED's Learner Guide programme aims to support marginalised girls in secondary schools to strengthen self-development and foundational learning skills, thus encouraging them to stay in school and improve their learning outcomes. The main support mechanism is provided by recent school graduates called Learner Guides, who went through the same CAMFED programme during their secondary education. In addition, some school graduates have been recruited as Learner Guides who were not previously supported by CAMFED. These graduates subsequently return to their local schools and volunteer to help other children in their studies. They also become part of the CAMFED Association, which is a network of over 67,000 young women leaders once supported through CAMFED in Tanzania. Supported by the CAMFED Association, teachers and school authorities, the Learner Guides deliver a life skills and wellbeing programme called My Better World to girls and boys in government secondary schools that they support, provide peer-to-peer mentorship to students, particularly girls, and act as female role models in their communities by being members of school and

community committees. This support is identified as improving attendance and performance of marginalised girls who are particularly targeted by the programme in Tanzania, while also benefiting other girls as well as boys in the schools that are supported (Sabates et al., 2021; Rose et al., 2022). In addition, they have been found to help shift gender social norms within communities (Robinson & Wilbard, 2021; Ciampi et al., 2024; Mgonda & Ciampi, 2023).

Given the close engagement with the Government of Tanzania throughout its design and implementation and recognition of its success, the Government has subsequently collaborated with CAMFED to adopt and scale the Learner Guide model into the Life Skills programme (*Programu ya Stadi za Maisha* in Swahili), adapting it through a process of consultation. The programme is being implemented in co-delivery with CAMFED, and aims to address key educational and social challenges faced by secondary school students by equipping them with the tools to navigate these challenges, develop self-awareness, and build resilience through life skills.

The process of adapting and scaling the Learner Guide model as the Life Skills programme started in 2019, with the establishment of a Scaling Advisory Committee that oversaw the design and launch of the programme. Committee members included representatives from various government agencies and district officers, together with CAMFED. In an earlier phase of our collaborative research, engagement with members of the Scaling Advisory Committee led to identification of elements of the Learner Guide model that were considered to be appropriate to adapt and adopt by the Government of Tanzania, as well as strategic and feasible pathways for the Government's sustainable implementation of the programme at scale (Ciampi et al., 2023). The study's findings emphasised the prioritisation of four elements considered essential to scaling up CAMFED's peer mentorship and Life Skills programme through government systems, including:

- a focus on marginalised girls in government secondary schools, with the expectation that this would benefit all learners,
- the peer-to-peer mentoring approach, as provided by the Learner Guides,
- the inclusion of the life skills sessions taught by Learner Guides in government secondary schools, and
- the spirit of volunteerism and engagement within communities.

The Government's adapted Life Skills programme was intended to integrate these key elements of the Learner Guide model. At the time of piloting of the Life Skills programme, a broader Technical Working Group was formed, comprising members from the Scaling Advisory Committee as well as additional members, such as representatives from the Ministry of Community Development, Gender, Women and Special Groups, Ward Education Officers, Learner Guides and teachers, to lead action and implementation within government structures and provide further technical support. Its design differs from the Learner Guide programme implemented by CAMFED in the following ways, as further discussed in Section 4:

1. **Government ownership**: The Life Skills programme is being fully implemented by the Government of Tanzania, from their recruitment of Life Skills Facilitators to implementation and delivery of life skills sessions in schools. CAMFED's role largely remains that of supporting the Government to deliver the scaled programme, other than its involvement in providing training for relevant stakeholders.

2. **Life Skills Facilitators:** Under the Learner Guide programme, the volunteering Learner Guides are young women, mostly former CAMFED beneficiaries and alumni, and are part of the CAMFED Association network. Under the Life Skills programme, by contrast, Life Skills Facilitators are community volunteers recruited more broadly from within local communities and include both women and men. In both programmes, these volunteers

deliver life skills education in secondary schools and undertake community engagement, but the recruitment procedures for Life Skills facilitators have been newly designed by members of the Technical Working Group.

3. **Both female and male community volunteers:** A key difference between CAMFED's Learner Guide and the Government's adapted as the Life Skills programme is the inclusion of both young men and women as community volunteers, while the Learner Guide programme focused on young women. Of the 2,381 Life Skills Facilitators employed so far, approximately 36% are male.

4. **Guidance and Counselling Teachers:** Government guidelines for guidance and counselling in Tanzanian schools mandate that every school appoint both a male and female Guidance and Counselling teacher. Under the Life Skills programme, this government guidance and counselling structure is leveraged to train both male and female Guidance and Counselling teachers to work alongside the male and female Life Skills facilitators in addressing students' issues. This is similar to CAMFED's Learner Guide programme where female teachers are called Teacher Mentors and provided training to work alongside Learner Guides in addressing problems that students encounter at school or at home. Their role as a Teacher Mentor includes providing holistic support to the welfare of students, such as offering guidance and counselling, attending to the psycho-social wellbeing of students, supporting academic achievement and coordinating assistance such as home visits.

5. **District Adult Education Officers**: As the implementation of the Life Skills programme extended to new districts where there was no presence of CAMFED district-level staff, District Adult Education Officers oversee the programme's implementation and are meant to provide reports to district and regional governments as well as CAMFED (CAMFED Tanzania, 2025). These are existing government appointed positions with responsibility for adult education programmes.

The Life Skills programme was initially launched in 2023 in three pilot districts – Malinyi DC, Chamwino DC, Morogoro Municipal – involving 71 secondary schools and 123 Life Skills Facilitators (CAMFED Tanzania, 2025). Since 2024, efforts have been underway to expand the programme to 1,244 secondary schools in 41 additional districts out of the 184 districts in Tanzania, employing an additional 2,258 Life Skills Facilitators. Implementation in most of these schools is expected to begin in March 2026,.

Objectives of study

This study explores how CAMFED's Learner Guide programme is being adapted, embedded and scaled as the Life Skills programme within Tanzania's education system. It focuses in particular on documenting the processes at the middle tier at the district and community levels, examining the operationalisation of the programme at the district and community levels, and providing lessons from the adaptation for the Ministry of Education in Tanzania. It examines how the adapted elements of the Life Skills programme are being implemented and scaled in practice, and the challenges and opportunities arising from their implementation. In doing so, it supports the Government of Tanzania in identifying, planning and implementing strategies that strengthen the positive aspects of the adaptation and scaling process, while also mitigating the unanticipated and undesirable effects of scaling. The evidence also aims to contribute to understand processes of scaling up successful programmes through long-term, embedded systems transformation in other related contexts.

Report structure

Following the contextual and background information in this section, the report begins by providing a rationale and framework for the study and describing the study's research methodology. It then discusses findings regarding the ways in which the Life Skills programme has been adapted and adopted, including the associated benefits and challenges. The next section discusses findings regarding the processes involved in operationalising the adapted Life Skills programme, such as implementation arrangements, including training, coordination and monitoring, and factors that have enabled or posed a challenge to smooth implementation. Finally, the report synthesises the lessons learned as well as recommendations for strengthening implementation in Tanzania along with wider lessons for other related contexts, followed by a brief conclusion.

2. Framing and rationale for the study

This section conceptualises scaling and scalability as relevant to the Tanzanian Life Skills programme and provides the rationale for the study's focus on the middle tier. It draws selectively on recent grey literature and peer-reviewed sources documenting scaling processes, prioritising relevance to government-led adaptation of non-governmental organisation approaches in Tanzania.

Scalability is often understood as the expansion of programmes or interventions shown to be efficacious on a small scale to reach a larger number of beneficiaries or a greater proportion of target populations (Milat et al., 2013). Practitioners and scholars have also previously used it interchangeably with concepts such as transferability, traditionally focusing on the linear transfer of knowledge across different contexts (Sutoris, 2018). However, evidence indicates that even well-designed and successful programmes can fail to deliver intended outcomes when scaled up (Cilliers & Habyarimana, 2023). For instance, where governments adopt successful programmes run by non-governmental or other organisations to expand the number of beneficiaries and achieve sustainability, the adoption process can be challenging as resources, governance and accountability systems, and the conditions necessary for success, can differ significantly (Shukia et al., 2024). Contemporary perspectives on scaling therefore emphasise a more complex interplay, involving context-sensitive adaptation and systemic embedding of programmes to expand and deepen impact leading to lasting improvements in people's lives over time, not merely replication (Wyss et al., 2023).

In this sense, scaling is an iterative process that requires ongoing adaptation, refinement and course correction based on data collected, lessons learned and changes in the broader education environment (Robinson & Tinio, 2021). Prior research also suggests that such adaptations of educational interventions are not often systematically planned for or well documented, resulting in missed opportunities to learn from these modifications (Robinson & Tinio, 2021). Moreover, those involved in designing and delivering the programmes at scale – such as middle tier government officials in district and regional offices, policymakers and practitioners – often do not have the luxury of space and time to pause, reflect and course-correct based on developing changes (Robinson & Tinio, 2021). This is crucial as some of these changes or 'scaling effects' may be expected or planned, but others may be elusive and only get uncovered during implementation (McLean & Gargani, 2019). In the context of our study, the opportunities and challenges presented when implementing a life skills curriculum for secondary school students by Learner Guides or young women recruited within communities have been different to those encountered when implementing the same curriculum in an adapted model, through teachers in schools (Shukia et al., 2024).

Therefore, tracking the scaling process can help identify key challenges or opportunities as they arise, test adaptations, document any spontaneous or unplanned changes taking place; and reflect on the results to make future decisions accordingly (Robinson & Tinio, 2021). This study helps achieve this objective by documenting the process of adaptation and adoption of the Life Skills programme by the Ministry of Education and Prime Minister's Office – Regional Administration and Local Government[ii] in Tanzania. It explores the extent to which it is becoming embedded in the education system in ways that could contribute to systems transformation. It pays particular attention to the middle tier, spanning regions, districts and wards (sub-districts) between central and school levels, as this level of government can play a pivotal role in 'contextualising implementation for local uptake, sustaining impact through monitoring and support, and securing commitment on the ground' (Olsen & Wyss, 2025, p.3). It acts as a connective tissue between central and local governments (Tournier et al., 2025).

In the context of this study, this focus on the middle tier particularly includes examining the operationalisation of the programme at the district and community levels, such as through the appointment of District Adult Education Officers, as scaling involves engagement and adaptation in emerging relationships with a dynamic or evolving set of actors in the scaling system (McLean & Gargani, 2019). The research helps illuminate the evolution of the Learner Guide model led by female peer mentors into the scaled Life Skills programme, which engages both male and female community volunteers. It highlights and compares distinctive features of each approach, such as the involvement of both male and female Guidance and Counselling Teachers in the scaled programme, compared to Teacher Mentors who are primarily female in the original model. In doing so, the study provides valuable insights to support sustained educational reform by helping the Tanzanian Government strengthen effective aspects of adaptation and scaling of reforms aimed at empowering young people and addressing critical education issues, while identifying strategies to mitigate potential challenges in implementing the Life Skills programme through government systems.

3. Research design

Research questions

The overall objective of this research study is to explore how the Learner Guide programme is being adapted, embedded and scaled as the Life Skills programme within Tanzania's education system, with a particular focus on the middle tier at the district and community levels. This objective is addressed through the following research questions:

1. How, and in what ways, is the Learner Guide programme being adapted by the Government as the Life Skills programme for adoption and operationalisation at scale in co-delivery with CAMFED Tanzania?
2. What are the processes involved at the district level for operationalising the adapted Learner Guide programme as the Life Skills programme within schools?
3. What opportunities and challenges are arising in the process of embedding the adapted Learner Guide programme as the Life Skills programme within districts, and how are they being addressed at different levels (at school, ward, district and national levels).

Research participants

Building on our related recent study (Ciampi et al., 2024), this study adopted a qualitative approach involving informant interviews with stakeholders at the district, ward, school and community levels, as well as with CAMFED staff. The selection of respondents at each level was aligned with and expanded upon our previous research phase, incorporating elements specifically relevant to the Life Skills programme.

More generally, the district, ward and school level interviews were aimed at understanding the ways in which the Life Skills programme has been adapted and adopted, the different institutional arrangements at different levels for implementing the programme – including the actors involved, their roles and coordination and communication – as well as the opportunities and challenges in implementing the programme at each level.

At the district and ward levels, interviews were conducted with:

- **District Secondary Education Officers**, responsible for the overall administration, supervision and implementation of education policies at the district level.
- **Ward Education Officers**, who report directly to the District Education Officers and make contact with schools, delivering on a broad set of responsibilities, such as tracking school improvement, supporting teachers and collecting school-level information.
- **District Adult Education Officers**, responsible for overseeing adult education programmes at the district level, including supervising and supporting adult learners, encouraging academic progress through guidance and counselling, and managing administrative and academic activities to combat illiteracy.

At the school level, interviews were conducted with:

- **School Heads** in the selected government secondary schools.
- **Guidance and Counselling Teachers**, responsible for addressing students' problems by providing guidance and counselling support and working with the Life Skills Facilitators.
- **Life Skills Facilitators**, delivering the Life Skills programme in schools as well as engaging with the surrounding communities.

At the community level, interviews were conducted with members of relevant community groups or structures, as well as influential community members. These were aimed at learning about community members' awareness and perceptions of the Life Skills programme, including the links between home and school as mediated by the Life Skills Facilitators, associated benefits and challenges, as well as the comparisons between male and female Life Skills Facilitators. The community members were selected through the community mapping in our earlier study (Ciampi et al., 2023) and relevance of their roles in adoption and implementation of the Life Skills programme. They included:

- **Village leaders**, such as the Village Chairperson or Village Executive Officer responsible for local development.
- **Religious leaders**, including both Islamic and Christian leaders.
- **Traditional leaders**, such as community elders.
- **Members of Parent Teacher Associations**, working to improve education through partnerships between parents, teachers and schools.
- **Members of Parent Support Groups**, formed by CAMFED to work alongside teachers and community leaders to support vulnerable students.
- **Members of the Community Development Committees**, who help implement CAMFED programmes through beneficiary selection and support in implementation and monitoring, such as safeguarding, community mobilisation and creating advocacy and awareness.

At the CAMFED level, the team conducted interviews with district staff, including District Programme Coordinators, as well as personnel from the CAMFED Tanzania office. These aimed to gain a comprehensive understanding of the co-delivery model, encompassing the roles and responsibilities of various CAMFED team members, the processes involved in implementing the Life Skills programme, such as training and monitoring, as well as the associated challenges and opportunities.

After the first stage of analysis, a validation workshop was conducted with members of the Technical Working Group for the Life Skills programme, including representatives from the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST), the Prime Minister's Office – Regional Administration and Local Government, District Education Officers and secondary School Heads implementing the adapted programme. The workshop gathered feedback from government officials to inform the study's findings, and to provide insights for the recommendations including identifying opportunities for alignment with policy priorities and implementation realities.

Sampling of districts, schools and research participants

Selection of districts

The criteria for the selection of districts included:

- Districts where the Life Skills programme had been implemented for a minimum of one year to ensure sufficient time for its operation.
- Districts which were not part of the previous phase of research to avoid cross-study influence, and also avoid research fatigue.
- Districts that were accessible for data collection.

Based on these criteria, the selection of the three districts for the study was agreed in consultation with government stakeholders and CAMFED Tanzania. These included two districts where the Life Skills programme was recently adopted, and one district where the Learner Guide programme was being implemented earlier, but the Life Skills programme was adapted to new schools. Locations where the programme has recently been adopted included Morogoro Municipality in Morogoro region and Chamwino district in Dodoma region. Handeni

district in Tanga region was selected as the location where CAMFED's Learner Guide programme was being implemented previously. This allowed the study to generate findings based on the experiences of scaling the programme across two different sets of conditions. Notably, in Handeni, where both the original Learner Guide model and the scaled Life Skills programme have been implemented, respondents could potentially offer comparisons between the two approaches.

Selection of schools

Two schools were selected from two different wards in each district, providing a total of six schools in the sample. The criteria for their selection included schools which had both male and female Life Skills Facilitators, and which were accessible for data collection. Additionally, the study included sites where the scaling process had posed both positive and challenging experiences. For this purpose, of the two schools selected in each district, one was identified by the CAMFED Tanzania monitoring and evaluation team as having a relatively smooth experience of implementing the Life Skills programme, while the other was viewed as encountering challenges in the adaptation process. As identified in the initial phases of scaling, some of these challenges included difficulties in retaining Life Skills Facilitators and/or providing them incentives, logistical constraints such as distances between villages and schools, sustainability of the programme, etc. (CAMFED Tanzania, 2025).

Selection of participants

For each of the selected districts and wards, the participants identified included the current District Secondary Education Officer, District Adult Education Officer, CAMFED District Programme Coordinator and Ward Education Officer. At the school level, all the School Heads, Life Skills Facilitators and Guidance and Counselling Teachers serving each of the selected schools were included in the sample.

To locate the relevant influential community stakeholders, the Life Skills Facilitators were interviewed first and asked to help identify influential community members for the programme, including those with whom they interacted for programme activities. This purposive sampling aimed to include one male and one female member for each of the identified categories of influential community members. In Handeni district, where the Learner Guide programme was previously implemented by CAMFED, this also included the identification of Parent Support Group members who were part of the earlier programme. Contact was made with the community members through the School Heads in the first instance, who acted as gatekeepers for access to influential community members, such as members of Parent Teacher Associations as well as Guidance and Counselling Teachers.

The final sample comprised 88 respondents, of which 43 were female and 45 were male (Table 1. See Appendix A for a further breakdown of the sample).

Table 1: Study sample by respondent type

Respondent type	Male	Female	Total
District Adult Education Officer	0	3	3
District Secondary Education Officer	2	1	3
Ward Education Officer	5	1	6
Life Skills Facilitator	5	7	12
School Head	3	3	6
Guidance and Counselling Teacher	5	6	11
Village leader	4	2	6
Religious leader	6	6	8
Traditional leader	6	0	6
Parent Teacher Association member	2	4	6
Community Development Committee member	3	3	6
CAMFED District Programme Coordinator	0	3	3
Parent Support Group member	3	1	4
CAMFED staff	1	3	4
Total	**45**	**43**	**88**

Ethics and safeguarding

All necessary research permissions were obtained from relevant bodies prior to data collection, including research ethics approval from the University of Cambridge in the UK and clearance from the University of Dar es Salaam on behalf of the Tanzania Commission for Science and Technology. At the district level, the study's local partners, the University of Dar es Salaam and CAMFED Tanzania, wrote letters to the relevant district officials and also held an in-person courtesy meeting with them to introduce the research objectives and share the data collection plan in more detail. The district officials welcomed the initiative and affirmed their support to the research, including at the school level. Letters were also written to School Heads separately to introduce the objectives of the research and obtain their permission, as well as to clarify the support needed from schools (for example, permissions for carrying out interviews on the school premises).

The data collection team comprised local Research Assistants who were familiar with the context and sensitive to local norms. The interviews were conducted in Swahili. Female Research Assistants were specifically included to support interviews with females, enhancing rapport and comfort. The data collection team were provided with comprehensive training on CAMFED's Protection and Safeguarding Policy & Code of Practice, including guidelines for conducting interviews, safety of data and explanations of safeguarding, such as what constitutes a safeguarding issue and how to respond to it.

Sensitive issues were not anticipated, as the research did not involve direct work with vulnerable populations such as marginalised students, nor did it focus on explicitly sensitive topics. All participants were over 18 years old. Nonetheless, Research Assistants received comprehensive training on ethical protocols, safeguarding awareness and handling any unexpected disclosures to ensure participant wellbeing and data integrity. The team was also trained on following ethical protocols regarding informed consent, anonymity and voluntary participation in the study. In reporting the study's findings (in subsequent sections), care was taken to truncate details of some respondents to protect their identity, in line with the assurances of anonymity and confidentiality provided during data collection.

Consent forms and participant information sheets were translated into Swahili, and Research Assistants were instructed to read out the information where participants were not literate and/or unable to read. Before seeking written and/or verbal consent, the Research Assistants

also provided respondents the opportunity to ask any questions on any aspect of the study unclear to them.

Piloting and data collection

A team of six Research Assistants experienced in qualitative research were appointed from the University of Dar es Salaam to undertake piloting and data collection, two of whom had also facilitated data collection in the earlier phase of the research. Three males and three females were appointed, pairing up for data collection in the three districts. A four-day in-country training was arranged for the Research Assistants with the University of Dar es Salaam and CAMFED Tanzania teams in attendance. The training provided a detailed overview of the Life Skills programme, the study's related research objectives and scope, team roles and responsibilities, safeguarding and ethical considerations and data management. An item-wise review of each research tool was also conducted along with guidance on interviewing techniques, case scenarios and mock exercises to strengthen preparation for data collection in the field.

The study's pilot was conducted in Bagamoyo district in July 2025, including interviews at every level (district, ward, school and community), as well as with three Life Skills Facilitators. The research tools were slightly modified in light of the pilot reflections and finalised for fieldwork.

Data collection took place simultaneously across all three districts in early August 2025. Following each day of fieldwork, the study team, comprising the lead researchers and CAMFED Tanzania, held debrief sessions to reflect on progress, address challenges and refine plans for the following day. These discussions facilitated continuous learning, troubleshooting, and alignment within the team to ensure data quality and responsiveness to any issues if necessary.

Data analysis

Following data collection, the Research Assistants undertook translation and transcription of data following the guidelines provided during training. The transcripts underwent a quality assurance process including checks for completeness, anonymity and verbatim quotes, etc. and were regularly uploaded to a shared online cloud accessible only by the team.

The interview data were analysed using Dedoose, a cloud-based software designed to facilitate systematic coding and thematic analysis. Interview transcripts were imported into the platform, where the research team applied detailed coding to identify recurring patterns and themes. The coding framework was developed based on the questions included in the research instruments as an initial step. Once the pilot interview transcripts were made available, the coding framework was further refined. The Dedoose 'code and compare' feature was used to enhance interrater reliability, allowing the coders to code independently and later view, compare and discuss differences in code application. The codes were also reviewed on a weekly basis during meetings within the coding team, as well as based on queries logged by the team, at which point the coding framework was added to or adapted as needed. The analytical tools in Dedoose also enabled exploration of relationships within the data and supported the development of nuanced interpretations grounded in participants' own words.

Challenges and limitations

The leadership of the research by the University of Dar es Salaam, together with the support of CAMFED Tanzania, coupled with their close coordination with stakeholders at various levels, facilitated smooth data collection and helped minimise challenges during the process. However, the following limitations are of note:

- In some instances where community-level participants indicated that they had limited awareness or engagement with the Life Skills programme, they were unable to provide substantial information on the programme in relation to the study's specific research questions.

- The qualitative study aimed to gain in-depth insights into the scaling process. As such, it was focused in three of the 41 districts where the Life Skills programme has been scaled. This means that care is needed in generalising from the findings. However, it is possible to identify transferable lessons.

4. How and in what ways is the Learner Guide programme being adapted as the Life Skills programme?

This section discusses the study's research findings regarding the ways in which the Life Skills programme has been adapted and adopted by the Tanzanian Government, as well as the benefits and challenges associated with their implementation.

Programme adaptations

This section examines how planned adaptations in the design of the Life Skills programme (outlined in Section 1) have been realised in early implementation, including an analysis of the programme's ownership and objectives, the recruitment of relevant staff such as Life Skills Facilitators and Guidance and Counselling Teachers, and the implementation of the adapted life skills curriculum in schools.

(i) Programme ownership and objectives

The implementation of the Life Skills programme in Tanzania is being led by the Government, with CAMFED providing support.
According to CAMFED Tanzania officials, the Life Skills programme which was initially adopted in 2023, has been owned and led by the Government in Tanzania, including leadership on key processes, such as recruitment and monitoring, while CAMFED provides training and other technical support. As a CAMFED official stated:

> *"The Government or the school plays a part in identifying and recruiting the Life Skills Facilitators, even though CAMFED covers the training costs. Regarding supervision of the programme and motivation of these Facilitators, we expect the Government to take the lead."* (CAMFED official).

The funding for the programme is provided by in-kind contributions from the Government, district and school level resources, with CAMFED support in covering training costs.
According to CAMFED Tanzania, the Government supports the Life Skills programme by providing training venues and designating Guidance and Counselling Teachers, while CAMFED delivers technical training and advisory support:

> *"There is no funding from donors or development partners for training… as the Government got involved in implementation, resources at district level became the main source, specifically, 10% of local council revenues. We rely on these resources. We also depend on school-level plans where Facilitators are given small incentives, such as transport fare, food and other support that come from government sources. In terms of training, we leverage government resources, which, if converted into cash value, represent a large amount of funding. For example, we use classrooms, hostels, teachers and experts from ministries who cover areas such as health, counselling and other issues."* (CAMFED official).

The Life Skills programme aims to support secondary school students in Tanzania.
The Life Skills Facilitators serve a similar role in general as the Learner Guides under CAMFED's programme (Figures 1a and 1b), although with some differentiation as noted below. As illustrated in Figure 1b, the Government-led Life Skills programme aims to empower students in secondary schools by delivering peer mentoring and life skills support through Life Skills Facilitators, who are community volunteers.

Figure 1a: The CAMFED Learner Guide model

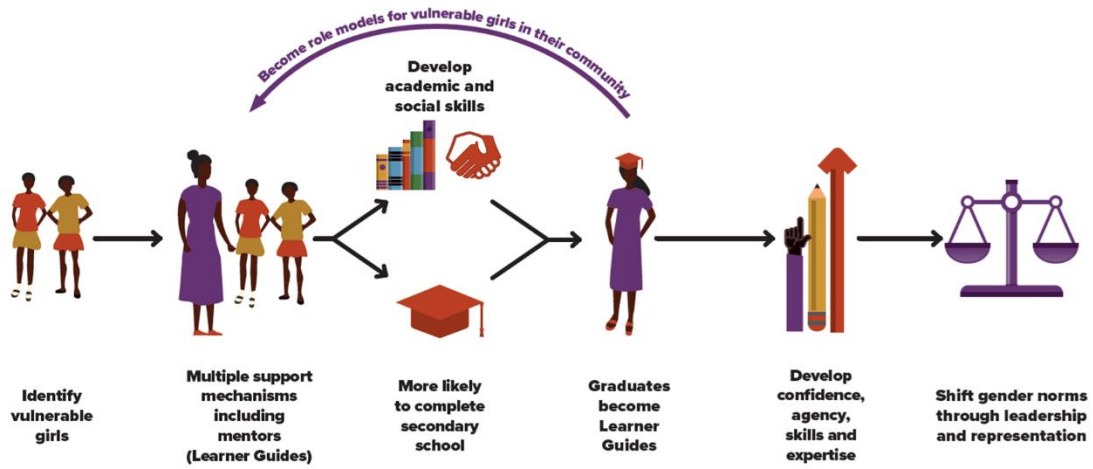
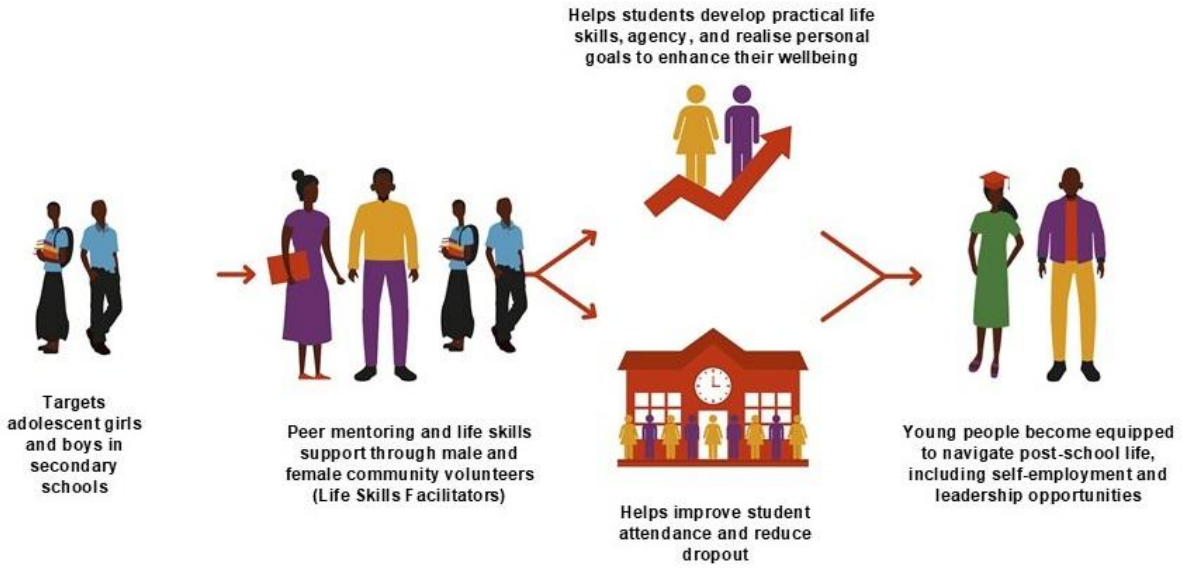


Figure 1b: The Life Skills programme



The Life Skills programme aims to help students develop practical life skills that help them realise their personal goals and enhance their wellbeing, as well as improve student attendance and dropout (CAMFED Tanzania, 2025). By equipping students with essential life skills, the programme aims to help students in navigating post-school life and carving a better future for themselves, including self-employment and leadership opportunities. As described by a Guidance and Counselling Teacher in school:

> *"The life skills we implement here are aimed at helping the child personally to value themselves, to recognise themselves, and to be able to solve their own challenges, and if possible, even help their family deal with their broader environment. So this programme builds them up more, especially girls, so that they can recognise their self-worth, value themselves, and be able to address challenges in the environments where they live."* (Guidance and Counselling Teacher, female, Morogoro).

The government respondents additionally acknowledged how the Life Skills Facilitators particularly support the more vulnerable and marginalised young people within communities, such as orphans and children subjected to abuse. For example, a Ward Education Officer highlighted:

> *"Sometimes the Life Skills Facilitators conduct direct follow-ups, such as home visits for children facing challenges, for example, some children are orphans, while others encounter issues like sexual abuse. These challenges often mean that the Life Skills Facilitators provide significant support to those children. Our schools have guidance and counselling services, so they collaborate with those teachers in some of the activities they conduct."* (Ward Education Officer, male, Morogoro).

However, the focus on supporting marginalised girls appears less explicit under the Life Skills programme.

For instance, while the initial proposed guidelines for programme implementation reference CAMFED's focus on girls' education and female leadership, the stated objectives of the Life Skills programme adapted from it are framed in largely gender-neutral terms, potentially diluting this emphasis (Unpublished internal document, 2025).[iii] The target groups for the programme are also identified as both adolescent girls and boys in Tanzanian secondary schools, as well as communities more broadly. However, the lack of a more explicit gender focus partly reflects the Government's need to better understand how to embed and translate the gender-transformative approach underpinning CAMFED's Learner Guide programme into the Life Skills programme's objectives, as well as the implementation guidance provided through the Technical Working Group.

Both the CAMFED- and Government-led programmes aim to engage volunteers in delivery of a life skills curriculum in schools and conduct follow-ups within communities to monitor and support students' attendance and learning.

The delivery of the life skills curriculum in school involves both classroom-based activities and activities outside of the classroom such as school gardens and farms, equipping students with practical life skills that can help them navigate socio-cultural challenges by developing self-awareness, self-reliance and resilience. These activities were acknowledged by respondents at the district- and lower levels. As a CAMFED district-level official expressed:

> *"Not all the topics are classroom-based. There are other topics that are outside the classroom, where the student learns outside the classroom. There's farming, there are games, it is different kinds of activities and handwork."* (CAMFED district-level official).

Additionally, the volunteering Life Skills Facilitators maintain follow-up with parents within communities, for example by conducting home visits to support students' attendance and resolve challenges in learning, both at school and home. As explained by a Parent Support Group member in Handeni:

> *"The purpose is to understand or to know the whereabouts of children, to know them deeply so to be able to understand how to help them. Also, they [the Life Skills Facilitators] cooperate with the community so as to find out the challenges the students encounter while in the community, so that they can come up with interventions to help those children."* (Parent Support Group member, male, Handeni).

Similarly, a Life Skills Facilitator in Chamwino mentioned:

> *"I sometimes walk to students' homes and we, as Facilitators, visit their homes to gather more details from their parents, for example, the times they are home and when they leave."* (Life Skills Facilitator, male, Chamwino).

While both programmes aim to support young people, CAMFED's Learner Guide programme has a stronger emphasis on fostering female leadership and community engagement, such as through Community Development Committees, Parent Support Groups, and CAMFED Association members.

The Learner Guide programme's focus on fostering female leadership stems from its aim of shifting gender social norms, aiming to especially empower marginalised girls and young women to become role models and future leaders in their communities. It emphasises peer mentorship, leadership and social norm change, driven by young women who have overcome adversity themselves and are from similar communities in which they serve. This is in light of the need to address gender social norms that adversely affect girls and young women in particular (Ciampi et al., 2023).

(ii) Recruitment of Life Skills Facilitators

The recruitment criteria for Life Skills Facilitators differ from those for the Learner Guides under the Learner Guide programme (Table 2).

Table 2: Comparison of selection criteria for Learner Guides and Life Skills Facilitators

Learner Guides	Life Skills Facilitators
Must be a female.	Can be a female or male.
Must have completed lower secondary education at the school.	Must complete at least lower secondary education.
Must reside within walking distance from the school.	Must live within the village where the school they will be working is located.
Must have demonstrated good conduct during her studies at the school.	Village approves of their social behaviour.
Must be between 18–25 years.	Must be between 18–25 years.
Must be ready to volunteer to teach life skills lessons to students.	Must be ready to volunteer to teach life skills lessons to students.

While the selection criteria for Learner Guides emphasise recruiting female graduates who have completed their secondary education specifically at the school they will serve, and who must reside within walking distance of that school, the Life Skills Facilitator selection criteria are somewhat broader. Life Skills Facilitators, who can be either female or male, must have completed at least ordinary secondary education or higher, but do not need to be alumni of the same school (Unpublished internal document, 2025). This distinction underscores the Learner Guide programme's focus on peer mentorship rooted in school experience. Regarding social behaviour, Learner Guides are also expected to have demonstrated good conduct during their time as students at the school. The Life Skills Facilitators, by contrast, are required to reside within the village where the school is located and undergo a village vetting process to assess their social conduct. Both Learner Guides and Life Skills Facilitators must be between 18 and 25 years old and willing to volunteer for a minimum of 2 years to facilitate the programme.

The Life Skills programme involves both male and female community volunteers as Facilitators, due to the Government's aim to expand the scope of support to *all* children.

The Life Skills programme includes both male and female community volunteers to demonstrate explicit support for all children in accessing and completing education. Members of the Technical Working Group specifically highlighted school dropout as a pressing challenge for secondary school boys, underscoring the need for mentoring support provided by male Life Skills Facilitators. As a government-led initiative, this approach is seen to align with the Government's broader goals of promoting gender equality, as highlighted by a CAMFED official in their interview:

> *"The difference comes in that, for the programme that was run by CAMFED, the focus was on girls, and even the volunteers were only girls. But when we started working with the Government… they saw that we could not have a government programme where only girls were Facilitators, because when they go out, they are not just speaking to girls. Remember, CAMFED's main goal was to support girls from disadvantaged backgrounds to access education. But the Government's goal is to ensure every child gets an education."* (CAMFED official).

Another CAMFED official further explained how the involvement of male Life Skills Facilitators helps expand the scope of the programme to reach and support more students in addressing the challenges they face. In Handeni, where CAMFED had a stronger presence through the Learner Guide programme previously, some community-level participants indicated how the involvement of male Life Skills Facilitators may be beneficial in correcting the misconception that the Learner Guide and adapted Life Skills programmes are meant to benefit girls only, which was not the intention of the Learner Guide programme.

The Government has prescribed specific guidelines for the recruitment of Life Skills Facilitators to be implemented through the middle tier, including districts, wards and schools.

The recruitment procedures for Life Skills Facilitators, including the criteria for selection and advertisements for posts have been designed by members of the Scaling Advisory Committee (CAMFED Tanzania, 2025). These include the following steps:

- Schools issue an announcement for the volunteer positions which are disseminated through multiple channels, such as public spaces, government offices and school notice boards.
- Interested and eligible candidates submit applications to their nearest school, where the school management review applications and interview and select successful applicants, as well as document the procedures followed.
- School Heads then submit the list of proposed Facilitators, along with approved minutes, to the respective District Adult Education Officer, who reviews the documentation and prepares a consolidated list for endorsement by the District Secondary Education Officer.
- All minutes and application forms are also forwarded by the schools to the CAMFED District Programme Coordinator, who retains the record for reference and training preparation, following which the selected volunteers are trained and deployed to implement the Life Skills programme in schools (Unpublished internal document, 2025).

Respondents across the three districts demonstrated awareness of the selection criteria and recruitment process for Life Skills Facilitators. As a district-level official explained:

> *"After the applications come in, the School Head, in collaboration with the Ward Education Officer and others, screens the applicants. They identify who is qualified, then conduct the interviews, and after completion, submit a list to us. We compile it and send it to the regional level, where the regional office forwards it to the relevant authorities. Then, the Facilitators are assigned to training locations, and after training, they return to schools where they are received by the Guidance and Counselling Teachers."* (District-level official).

The CAMFED-implemented Learner Guide programme and the adapted, government-led Life Skills programme involve different incentives.

Under the Learner Guide programme, CAMFED offers access to low-risk, interest-free loans to help young women establish or expand small businesses, along with vocational qualifications that facilitate entry into further education and employment (Ciampi et al., 2024). The Learner Guides also gain access to different opportunities for work from being part of the

CAMFED Association network. Additionally, the Learner Guides are driven by intrinsic motivation to give back to their communities and the opportunity to enhance social standing through recognised leadership, which also contributes as an incentive (Robinson & Wilbard, 2021; Rose et al., 2025). Under the government-led Life Skills programme, the Life Skills Facilitators receive small in-kind incentives from schools such as meals, tea or permission for small-scale vending activities that can help generate some income. Several School Heads reported using part of central government funds to support the Life Skills programme, such as covering Facilitators' tea or meal costs as incentives. As one School Head in Chamwino shared:

> *"Going back to the training we received, more than just ensuring the programme is implemented, our main focus was how to keep the Facilitators consistently present in schools… For example, when I prepare the teachers' meal plan, as the School Head, I also include the Facilitators as teachers. If there's any school event like a celebration, all the Facilitators are included in the planning committees. If there's an activity like sports or a trip, I give the Facilitators priority. You see? So this has helped. Even in school activities like tests or exams, Facilitators are assigned to supervise, and we give them something small."* (School Head, male, Chamwino).

Districts and schools are also encouraged to incentivise Life Skills Facilitators by linking them to short-term local government employment opportunities (for example, council duties linked to voter registration). CAMFED may also provide non-monetary incentives such as certificates of recognition, letters of commendation and professional development opportunities to motivate the volunteers (CAMFED Tanzania, 2025).

The willingness and collaboration of School Heads and Guidance and Counselling Teachers help facilitate the Life Skills Facilitators in delivering their duties.
For instance, School Heads described several ways of attempting to supplement the resources available for Life Skills programme activities, such as approaching other organisations for support; using proceeds from school farm projects as capital for programme activities such as gardening or farming lessons during life skills sessions; encouraging communities to contribute small in-kind items; incentivising Life Skills Facilitators through additional paid responsibilities, such as council duties linked to voter registration; and, where available, supporting students in attending school and life skills sessions by drawing on CAMFED Association funds, for instance to provide sanitary pads for students. Guidance and Counselling Teachers also described how they help encourage student attendance and motivate Life Skills Facilitators to continue their engagement in the face of challenges:

> *"The challenges that face Facilitators, we encourage them to continue [despite them]. If they continue, we speak with the School Head and we do something about it."* (Guidance and Counselling Teacher, female, Handeni).

(iii) Recruitment of Guidance and Counselling Teachers

The Guidance and Counselling Teachers under the adapted Life Skills programme and the Teacher Mentors under CAMFED's Learner Guide programme undertake similar roles in supporting students' wellbeing, but differ in the emphasis placed on gender.
Under the adapted Life Skills programme, Guidance and Counselling Teachers perform roles akin to CAMFED's Teacher Mentors, supporting students' psycho-social wellbeing, their academic achievement and coordinating assistance such as home visits. Like Teacher Mentors, they are selected from the existing school staff by School Heads in consultation with students, based on approachability, good conduct (with no prior disciplinary warnings), willingness to volunteer additional time and completion of guidance and counselling training. Unlike the Learner Guide model, however, where Teacher Mentors are primarily female, and male teachers are considered only if no female is available, under the adapted Life Skills programme, support is leveraged from both the male and female Guidance and Counselling

Teachers available in secondary schools. Government guidelines mandate that every school appoints both a male and a female Guidance and Counselling Teacher to ensure accessible support for all students.

District, ward and school level respondents across all three districts demonstrated awareness of the recruitment criteria for Guidance and Counselling Teachers, emphasising the role of students in the selection process. For example, in Morogoro, where the Life Skills programme was recently adopted, a district-level official mentioned:

> *"The Government has provided guidelines on how to select Guidance and Counselling Teachers… We, as the district, ensure that every school has a Guidance and Counselling Teacher. We provide instructions on how to find them, and the selection is done through students voting to choose the teacher."* (District-level official).

Similarly, in Handeni, where CAMFED's Learner Guide programme was being implemented previously, a Ward Education Officer described:

> *"In selecting Guidance and Counselling Teachers, there are government guidelines that must be followed. We cannot just get them from nowhere, without involving students. So, the students choose who will be their Guidance and Counselling Teacher, a person who can listen to their challenges and who can be easily reached."* (Ward Education Officer, female, Handeni).

The Guidance and Counselling Teachers collaborate closely with Life Skills Facilitators to support student learning and wellbeing, for instance, through jointly following up on attendance and addressing truancy through home visits.
A Guidance and Counselling Teacher highlighted how their authority as a school official supported Life Skills Facilitators when the latter's influence was more limited in the community:

> *"I remember a case where we had to involve the Village Leader. The Facilitators could not handle it alone because they are just community members, so they had to involve me as a Teacher."* (Guidance and Counselling Teacher, female, Chamwino).

(iv) Implementation of the adapted Life Skills curriculum

Under the Government's Life Skills programme, the My Better World life skills curriculum developed by CAMFED is being aligned with the Tanzania Institute of Education government curriculum and adopted in schools where the programme is being scaled.
A comprehensive life skills curriculum is central to the Life Skills programme, which aims to "add more content to formal education by providing practical skills that are often not covered in traditional curricula, such as decision-making, goal setting, time management, critical thinking, problem-solving, and effective communication skills" (Unpublished internal document, 2025). It builds on the My Better World curriculum delivered under CAMFED's Learner Guide programme, designed to foster students' self-awareness and resilience, strengthen problem-solving, goal setting, communication and self-confidence, and provide health education, including HIV/AIDS prevention and protection for girls against exploitation.

More recently, CAMFED undertook a review of the curriculum together with the district councils and young people at the school level to "*reflect changes in education and youth issues. Young people were involved in suggesting what should be updated or added*" (KII, CAMFED official). The reviewed curriculum is being intended for implementation in all schools, as explained by a CAMFED official during their interview:

> *"Before, the [My Better World curriculum] book was taught exactly as it had been prepared by CAMFED, but now the Government reviews the book to align it with the new curriculum and community needs. Some topics have been revised so that the programme can be taught in all schools."* (CAMFED official).

The adapted Life Skills curriculum complements and expands on the Tanzania Institute of Education government curriculum and adopts interactive teaching methods.
The majority of the district, ward and school level respondents across the three districts reinforced how the Life Skills curriculum complements the national curriculum to focus on related life skills. For example, a Life Skills Facilitator stated:

> *"In reality, the curriculum complements it [the Tanzania Institute of Education government curriculum], yes, because some topics are similar. For example, when you study in the Life Skills curriculum, there is a topic on basic human needs. That topic explains many things that also appear in the national curriculum. Another example is parenting, and also environmental issues, which are also present in the national curriculum. So in the end, it creates a connection: what the student learns here, he also learns there. So in many ways, the content complements."* (Life Skills Facilitator, male, Chamwino).

Respondents also acknowledged that the Life Skills curriculum is more detailed, practice-oriented and student-centred, employing interactive teaching methods. For example, a Guidance and Counselling Teacher in Handeni mentioned:

> *"This Life Skills curriculum helps students to do things practically. You can just see that they supplement each other [The Tanzania Institute of Education curriculum], and it is a very good thing."* (Guidance and Counselling Teacher, male, Handeni).

Similarly, a Guidance and Counselling Teacher in Morogoro highlighted:

> *"Let's say this Life Skills curriculum has been emphasised more - it comes to explain things in more detail compared to [the Tanzania Institute of Education curriculum] here, where we explain a little. That is, in the Life Skills curriculum, the explanation is more in-depth, to the extent that even the children learning enjoy it and like it more compared to the regular curriculum here. That's why sometimes I even ask, '"Why couldn't it be [implemented in] the whole school?"."* (Guidance and Counselling Teacher, female, Morogoro).

The life skills sessions are scheduled similarly under the adapted Life Skills programme as the Learner Guide programme.
Similar to the My Better World curriculum delivered under the Learner Guide programme, the adapted Life Skills curriculum is intended to be delivered on a weekly basis by the Life Skills Facilitators, with sessions being integrated into regular school timetables. As a CAMFED official explained:

> *"[Curriculum] delivery at the school level ensures that lessons are included in the main school timetable, and we prefer that they take place during school hours. Volunteers [Facilitators] teach for two and a half hours per week, though many of them contribute up to five hours. The school also provides teaching and learning materials to ensure that the sessions are delivered as planned."* (CAMFED official).

Similarly, a School Head in Chamwino described how he ensures the life skills sessions are included in the school timetable:

"My role is to ensure that these young people who have received training in peer education and life skills are assigned periods (lessons) according to the instructions we were given. The sessions must appear on the school timetable and must be taught. I've done that, and as their leader here at the school, I make sure to follow up…" (School Head, male, Chamwino).

Benefits and challenges in implementing the adapted design of the Life Skills programme

This section examines the benefits and challenges that have emerged in implementing the adapted design of the Life Skills programme described above.

(i) Benefits associated with implementing planned adaptations

Reported benefits of programme activities to students

The delivery of life skills sessions is reported to have improved students' self-awareness and overall wellbeing. Existing evidence on the Learner Guide programme indicates that it empowers students, particularly girls, by strengthening their self-awareness, confidence and self-esteem (Rose et al., 2025). The majority of respondents in the study anticipated similar benefits from scaling the adapted Life Skills programme, partly explained by the two programmes' common delivery of core life skills that build students' self-knowledge, autonomy, goal-setting, personal wellbeing and foster positive social values among them. For example, a Guidance and Counselling Teacher mentioned:

"I can say that the visible benefit is that the children are empowered to understand life skills. They are taught how to deal with their environment, entrepreneurship, self-awareness, and how to avoid circumstances that could be oppressive, especially for girls. They are also taught things that can help them achieve their goals." (Guidance and Counselling Teacher, male, Morogoro).

Similarly, a member of the Parent Teacher Association in Handeni said:

"This Life Skills programme is really important in reducing school absenteeism and helping children build self-confidence. Honestly, this programme really supports them - it teaches respect, discipline, confidence, reduces absenteeism and improves overall wellbeing at school." (Parent Teacher Association member, female, Handeni).

Learning life skills, including through gardening or farming activities at school, is reported to be helping students become self-reliant. As existing evidence on the Learner Guide programme indicates, gaining life skills strengthens students' entrepreneurship skills and helps them become financially self-sufficient, generating and contributing to new economic activities within their communities (Rose et al., 2025). Regarding the Government's Life Skills programme, respondents similarly mentioned evidence of students learning skills that help them become self-reliant and economically independent, including examples of some students setting up small-scale vegetable gardening at home. For instance, a member of the Community Development Committee in Morogoro shared:

"We have young people who are self-reliant and not dependent on employment. In this programme, they are taught to rear chickens, cultivate gardens and engage in entrepreneurship. Boys and girls are trained to avoid relying solely on employment and to be able to employ themselves." (Community Development Committee member, female Morogoro).

The respondents associated programme activities with observed positive changes in students' education outcomes.

While the Life Skills programme is still in its early stages and no official monitoring reports are available, respondents reported improvements in students' educational outcomes. Similar to existing evidence on the Learner Guide programme (Rose et al., 2025), these include increased school attendance and motivation, reduced drop-out rates, and an enhanced enthusiasm for learning. As a Ward Education Officer highlighted:

> *"The Life Skills programme has helped reduce absenteeism because of the lessons students get from the Facilitators. Another opportunity is gradual improvement in academic performance – each year we see some positive changes in results."* (Ward Education Officer, male, Chamwino).

Similarly, a religious leader in Morogoro stated:

> *"When a child is taught life skills, they become self-aware of who they are and what they do. This increases their attendance at school and helps them perform better academically. Sometimes, a child struggles because they lack the knowledge to understand who they are and how they should behave. But when they gain that knowledge, they change, attend school regularly, perform well, and other aspects of their lives improve."* (Religious leader, female, Morogoro).

Respondents attributed these improvements to specific programme activities, including peer support from young Life Skills Facilitators who relate closely to students of a similar age, their community follow-up efforts, and delivery of the adapted Life Skills curriculum through interactive teaching methods. For instance, a Guidance and Counselling Teacher mentioned:

> *"This programme has greatly helped the school by supporting students, many of whom didn't like school. They began to like it. Because of what they are taught and how they are guided, it has helped shift their thinking. For example, if they had problems or needed assistance, now they know where to turn. They've realised, "Oh, we can talk to these people and get help!" Because the Facilitators are even allowed to visit their homes to understand their challenges. So, for many students, things have started to improve."* (Guidance and Counselling Teacher, male, Chamwino).

Life Skills Facilitators play a pivotal role in implementing programme activities through their volunteerism, regular attendance and persistence in following up with students. Their position as local volunteers is also seen to enable them to communicate effectively with parents and community members, helping to build trust and a sense of ownership over the programme. As a CAMFED official described:

> *"By way of example, a local Facilitator may be able to communicate messages to parents more effectively than a School Head from a different tribe or culture. This has increased ownership of the programme by communities."* (CAMFED official).

Just as Learner Guides may volunteer to support vulnerable students with stationery, meals and other essentials from their own pockets when school or programme resources are insufficient (Rose et al., 2025), Life Skills Facilitators demonstrate a similar spirit of volunteerism in providing additional assistance to students, particularly those who are more vulnerable or marginalised. For example, a Life Skills Facilitator described:

> *"There was a student we helped. We visited him. He was living with his grandfather. The environment he lived in was very difficult. They used a kerosene lamp, which affected his ability to study. Sometimes he used candles. We decided to help him - as three Facilitators, we contributed money and bought him a solar lamp. There was also*

another student who had passed to join Form One but his parent told him he could not afford to have a school uniform due to his living conditions. We supported him, and he was able to attend school, and he has been in school up till now." (Life Skills Facilitator, female, Morogoro).

Perceived benefits of involving male Life Skills Facilitators

The majority of the respondents across all levels of the middle tier in the three districts mentioned the involvement of male Life Skills Facilitators as beneficial, especially for boys.

Respondents described several benefits of engaging male Life Skills Facilitators in class, including creating openness, and allowing boys to express themselves more freely. Those expressing this view included community members, such as traditional, religious and village leaders, who in our earlier study were found to be less likely to support the shifting of gender norms (Ciampi et al., 2024). Reasons provided for the benefits of including male Life Skills Facilitators included instances where boys may feel hesitant to share their thoughts with female Life Skills Facilitators and/or feel more comfortable expressing themselves to male peers. This related to respondents' views that the inclusion of male Life Skills Facilitators further strengthened the support provided by female Life Skills Facilitators in resolving students', especially boys', challenges. For example, a district-level official mentioned:

"Male Facilitators help us a lot in empowering the students, but also the boys feel happy that they too, are considered. Boys tend to open up more to their male peers. In some cases, a boy feels embarrassed to tell a female teacher, but when talking to a male teacher, he feels they share the same experience. So even if a boy has been a victim of sexual abuse, he may not tell a female teacher, but it becomes easier to confide in a male teacher. Therefore, this has created a sense of equality between boys and girls." (District-level official).

School level respondents, such as School Heads and Guidance and Counselling Teachers, also mentioned how these benefits bear potential to translate into improved participation for boys. For example, a School Head in Handeni mentioned:

"I think involving male Facilitators is a good thing. The boys have improved in cleanliness and attendance because we asked the Facilitators to help emphasise those issues. Learning is not only about getting government jobs, but there are also opportunities in volunteering and self-employment. So, it has helped them, even if not very much, but they now come to school and have improved in cleanliness and dressing." (School Head, female, Handeni).

A couple of respondents also mentioned how the involvement of male Life Skills Facilitators may especially be beneficial in improving girls' engagement.

For instance, a Life Skills Facilitator in Chamwino shared her personal experience of how even girls may feel encouraged to express themselves more freely, engaging with male Life Skills Facilitators:

"When I was teaching these Form One students, I found that many boys opened up more than the girls. But yesterday, when we attended a session led by a male Facilitator, many girls were the ones who opened up more than the boys." (Life Skills Facilitator, female, Chamwino).

Similarly, a CAMFED official described how interactions with male Life Skills Facilitators can lend female students greater confidence in expressing themselves to other male teachers and peers:

> *"The presence of male Facilitators has helped improve cooperation between female students and male teachers. Normally, it is difficult for a girl to ask a male teacher a question and most teachers are men. However, when a male Facilitator is present, he helps to neutralise the situation and gives girls confidence to ask questions and interact more freely."* (CAMFED official).

The Life Skills programme's reported influence on social norms

The reported improvements in students' wellbeing and academic performance are viewed as being associated with the programme's influence in tackling social norms, such as early marriage and pregnancy.
Similar to the Learner Guide model, respondents associated the implementation of the Life Skills programme with reduced incidents of early marriage and pregnancy and improved education outcomes for students. As a district-level official explained:

> *"One of the aspects we are looking at is the two-year academic progress. This programme started in this district and this is the second year, we are observing how the results will be at the end of the year. However, the positive results already seen include a significant reduction in absenteeism. Absenteeism has decreased and teenage pregnancies have stopped. Therefore, these are the opportunities we see that life skills can bring which are improving academic performance in this district."* (District-level official).

Existing evidence from the Learner Guide programme, including the earlier phase of the current research, demonstrates its role in reducing harmful social norms and practices, such as early marriage and early pregnancy within communities (Ciampi et al., 2023). The programme contributed to these reductions by providing improved sexual and reproductive health education to girls, conducting community sensitisation and awareness activities, reporting incidents to authorities and intervening directly, for example, with the Learner Guides preventing planned child marriages in communities.

These reported improvements seem to be driven, in part, by the peer-to-peer mentoring provided by Life Skills Facilitators, including their ability to inspire students as role models, as described by the study's respondents. For example, a School Head in Handeni mentioned:

> *"The Facilitators have helped reduce teenage pregnancies and truancy because they are close in age to the students. When students see the Facilitators encouraging them to study hard, and notice that the Facilitators succeeded in getting an education, they also want to come and teach their peers. This inspires motivation and effort because students feel that if they study hard, they too can achieve something or even come back to teach others."* (School Head, female, Handeni).

(i) Challenges in implementing planned adaptations

Insufficient community engagement

Community engagement, which is a critical component of the Learner Guide programme, appears limited under the Life Skills programme.
Under the Learner Guide programme, community structures supported by CAMFED (such as Parent Support Groups and School-Based Committees) provide opportunities for Learner Guides and school staff to engage with community members, and encourage their understanding and shared ownership of the programme (Rose et al., 2025). However, the majority of the representatives of community structures interviewed under our study, including some Parent Support Group members in Handeni, did not demonstrate awareness of the

Government's Life Skills programme, indicating limited community engagement that could potentially affect programme effectiveness. A Community Development Committee respondent noted:

> *"We leaders, including myself, the chairperson, and my committee members, should be given enough training and information about this programme: what it is, what it aims to achieve, and what its potential benefits are. Then, from our committee meetings, we could bring it to larger public gatherings and educate citizens. We could explain that such a programme exists in our schools, that it has specific goals, and that every community leader has a role in making it succeed. That approach would help. But given the current situation, since most citizens are not aware of this programme, it becomes very difficult."* (Community Development Committee member, male, Morogoro).

Similarly, a Parent Teacher Association representative mentioned:

> *"Parents and the community need sufficient education so that they understand the programme. Specialised individuals should provide this information to parents and the community, not just the students."* (Parent Teacher Association member, female, Handeni).

Several traditional leaders, religious leaders and village leaders also demonstrated limited awareness of the programme. Given prior research identifying them as least engaged in shifting harmful gender social norms (Ciampi et al., 2024), their involvement becomes particularly important, as some respondents described how harmful practices, such as early marriage, continued to persist within communities. For instance, early marriage continues to require attention in Handeni, despite the implementation of CAMFED's Learner Guide programme in the district previously, indicating the entrenched nature of gender social norms (Ciampi et al., 2024). As a village leader in Handeni noted:

> *"They still believe a girl must be married while still young. They consider it is important for a girl to get married and have children while she is young."* (Village leader, female, Handeni).

Thus, given the limited community engagement around the programme's objectives, the broader contexts within communities including the persistence of harmful social norms can undermine students' participation in school and in life skills sessions.

Community awareness regarding government ownership of the programme is limited, especially at the school and community levels.

This was observed across all districts, including Handeni where the Learner Guide programme has been implemented previously. For example, school level respondents such as Guidance and Counselling Teachers and Life Skills Facilitators demonstrated limited awareness of government ownership of the programme:

> *"What I know is only CAMFED is funding the programme. I have never seen the hand of the Government on the programme… they did not tell us about Government involvement on the programme. As for now, that has not yet been communicated openly."* (Guidance and Counselling Teacher, male, Handeni).

At the same time, evidence of awareness of government ownership of the programme at the ward and district levels signalled that it could potentially strengthen programme implementation. For example, a Ward Education Officer in Handeni explained how government ownership of the programme can motivate better monitoring and follow up at the ward and school levels:

> *"On the issue of management, in the past, I was not making strong follow up…but ever since we were involved 100%, we are managing the provision of the programme. In the past, we were not told what the Facilitators are supposed to do, but now, after the organisation (CAMFED) has involved us to start managing these people, we have improved our follow up."* (Ward Education Officer, female, Handeni).

Together, these perspectives reveal uneven awareness of government ownership of the Life Skills programme, remaining more limited at school and community levels. Such limited awareness of government ownership may constrain the programme's effectiveness, whereas clearer recognition of government leadership at all levels – district, ward, school and community – may help enhance ownership of the programme and strengthen implementation.

Community members and local structures that are engaged in the programme can play a critical role in supporting implementation.
In Handeni, where the Learner Guide programme was implemented previously, CAMFED-supported Parent Support Groups help to strengthen awareness, acceptance and community ownership of the programme by engaging and encouraging other community members to support the programme and the Life Skills Facilitators. As one Parent Support Group member explained:

> *"We continue to educate the community to understand that this programme is important and these Life Skills Facilitators are important people and thus the community should support them so that the programme should be sustainable."* (Parent Support Group member, male, Handeni).

Positive community responses further reinforce programme delivery, for instance through efforts to organise local incentives for Life Skills Facilitators. As a Parent Teacher Association member in Chamwino mentioned:

> *"There was a plan to collect contributions from each village to support the youth who volunteer. A meeting was already held and this was discussed, but the initiative is currently on hold until a new councillor is elected, as they serve as the chairperson of the Ward Development Committee."* (Parent Teacher Association member, male, Chamwino).

Prior evidence from the implementation of the Learner Guide programme also suggests that influential community members, such as traditional and religious leaders, can play a critical role in challenging harmful social norms and practices, and encouraging children's regular school attendance, including participation in life skills sessions (Rose et al., 2025). This further indicates the need to continue community engagement under the adapted Life Skills programme as well.

Challenges in recruiting Life Skills Facilitators and Guidance and Counselling Teachers

The age criterion in the selection of Life Skills Facilitators is likely to pose challenges in their recruitment, especially in more marginalised communities.
For example, referring to the age group specified for selection (18-25 years), the majority of respondents at the district, ward and school levels, as well as CAMFED Tanzania officials, described challenges in finding eligible young volunteers to serve as Life Skills Facilitators in schools. In rural and more marginalised communities, it is likely that structural disadvantages make it difficult for young people to meet key criteria, such as having completed at least secondary education, or being able to volunteer without pay due to poverty. For example, a district-level official mentioned:

"The main thing checked is age. Sometimes, people try to deceive, for example, someone might be 30 years old when we only need those aged 18 to 25. You may also find several youths applying but their applications are rejected because they don't meet the criteria, that is, they lack the required qualifications." (District-level official).

Similarly, a CAMFED official expressed:

"There is one criterion that is very difficult in rural areas, even for someone who is willing to volunteer, and that is the age criterion." (CAMFED district-level official).

Circumstances may also compel implementers at the ward and school levels to deviate from the established selection criteria in appointing Life Skills Facilitators and Guidance and Counselling Teachers.
For example, some stakeholders at the school level mentioned how, in the absence of suitable applicants, they had to disregard one or more selection criteria for Life Skills Facilitators in the interest of ensuring programme implementation. As a Guidance and Counselling Teacher identified:

"The challenge that I see is to have eligible persons. When you advertise for a position, you have the asserted criteria, but you find that such a person is not among the applicants. There are only people who fall short of the criteria... So we are forced to include those who do not meet the criteria so that the programme can continue to be implemented." (Guidance and Counselling Teacher, male, Handeni).

In some other instances, ward and school level respondents mentioned how meeting the prescribed criteria in the selection of Guidance and Counselling Teachers was a challenge. As one Ward Education Officer described in relation to meeting the training criterion:

"We have a specific procedure used to select Guidance and Counselling Teachers, although I am not sure how strictly this procedure is followed because, first, those teachers are supposed to have received training, and unfortunately, that happens very rarely. So they look for teachers who connect well with students, who are wise, have significant experience, and have been working for a long time. Those are the ones given the position. Although these are not strictly formal criteria, the circumstances are what matter." (Ward Education Officer, male, Handeni).

Similarly, another Ward Education Officer described how the School Head's judgement may sometimes take precedence over students' selection of Guidance and Counselling Teachers, which is the key selection criterion:

"Sometimes students may choose a certain teacher, and you will be left wondering why they chose that one…so considering the character of teachers, we will appoint the one who is capable or of better character than the one that was chosen by the students who may, when you look at him, seem like he has slept consuming alcohol every day. So we consider the character of a teacher on the whole." (Ward Education Officer, female, Handeni).

In another instance, a male Guidance and Counselling Teacher in Morogoro himself explained how he was not selected but voluntarily replaced a previously-appointed Guidance and Counselling Teacher due to a change in the school leadership:

"I was not selected. The leadership changed and there was some misunderstanding. The teacher who was a Guidance and Counselling Teacher refused to be involved. So, seeing that the students would be left without supervision, I decided to take on the role

and have continued up to today. Later, that teacher who had initially been the Counsellor and refused to continue with these responsibilities was transferred." (Guidance and Counselling Teacher, male, Morogoro).

Broadening the Life Skills Facilitator recruitment criteria, compared to CAMFED alumni in the Learner Guide programme, may risk reducing Facilitators' relatability to students' lived experiences.
Unlike the Learner Guide programme, where volunteers are CAMFED beneficiaries who have graduated from the same schools and overcome similar adversities as their students, the engagement of Life Skills Facilitators, who may not share these experiences, may affect their ability to effectively deliver life skills. For example, a CAMFED official emphasised:

"In the new [Life Skills Facilitator] programme, there are no CAMFED beneficiaries…The selection is open to youth, but we advise teachers to bring people who can serve as role models and relate well to the students they are supporting, especially those from challenging backgrounds. If someone comes from a privileged background, they cannot fully relate to the realities of the students and teach them effectively." (CAMFED official).

Existing evidence also indicates that Learner Guides, through their own experiences, may better be able to relate to the challenges faced by disadvantaged girls and boys in the same schools and thus have a greater likelihood of improving their wellbeing through group and individual sessions (Shukia et al., 2024).

Other challenges in recruiting Life Skills Facilitators and Guidance and Counselling Teachers include lack of awareness of selection processes or criteria, and external pressures in appointment, as identified by a small number of respondents.
For example, regarding the selection process for Life Skills Facilitators, one School Head mentioned:

"No, we were not given a specific guideline. We were only told to conduct the interviews [for Life Skills Facilitators], so we decided ourselves how to go about it. We, the teachers, then created our own guidelines. But we were not told what the questions should be or what kind of person the committee should include. However, if you go to another school, you might find a different procedure." (School Head, female, Morogoro).

Lack of monetary incentives for Life Skills Facilitators

The lack of monetary incentives for Life Skills Facilitators may pose a challenge to their continued engagement in schools.
Given that the Life Skills Facilitators do not obtain monetary or other incentives from the Government, there may be challenges with their retention. This is potentially why, despite efforts to offer small in-kind incentives to Life Skills Facilitators as noted in the previous section, the majority of respondents described lack of monetary incentives as a challenge in retaining and motivating them to continue their engagement. This could be partly related to the more limited intrinsic motivation that was noted as being important for CAMFED Learner Guides in the previous section. Members of the Technical Working Group highlighted that, beyond compensation for training participation, Life Skills Facilitators often lack sufficient incentives to continue serving their schools and tend to pursue paid employment elsewhere. These findings reinforce existing information that lack of financial incentives can potentially influence Facilitators' motivation and hence sustained programme implementation (CAMFED Tanzania, 2025). As a Life Skills Facilitator himself described:

> *"One of the main challenges is the issue of resources. For example, as it is now, when we come every day, we have to use our own money for transport without being paid anything in return. This becomes a challenge because at times it discourages you to the point of feeling like you should stop doing it."* (Life Skills Facilitator, male, Chamwino).

Similarly, a Ward Education Officer mentioned:

> *"The biggest challenge is that these Facilitators do not have any income or payment of any kind… As a result, there is high turnover in schools, not because they want to leave, but because they get a [paid] job elsewhere."* (Ward Education Officer, male, Morogoro)

Young males in particular, are likely to be constrained by their responsibilities as breadwinners to run their households:

> *"Another challenge is that male Facilitators often carry family responsibilities. Many of them are the eldest in their families and are expected to provide for the household. Since they are volunteers, they are not properly motivated by the Government, and support is often delayed. This makes it hard for them to balance the programme with income-generating activities that can help them meet their needs. For female Facilitators, even if they are over 18, they are often still supported by their families. This makes their situation different from that of male Facilitators."* (CAMFED official).

District Adult Education Officers play a particularly important role in motivating Life Skills Facilitators.
For example, they regularly meeting with the Facilitators, discussing implementation challenges, and providing practical and moral support. These efforts could help the Life Skills Facilitators feel valued and better equipped to deliver life skills sessions, as explained by a district-level official:

> *"It is important to build the capacity of the youth [Facilitators] and have a programme to meet with them regularly… This helps us succeed, and the youth realise that we care about them… We sit together, discuss existing challenges, and what needs to be done. When we encourage each other there, the youth feel empowered. Therefore, what is needed is that we should not leave the youth alone for long periods because they are volunteering. This approach has been successful."* (District-level official).

District officials also work with ward and school authorities to identify temporary paid opportunities for Life Skills Facilitators, such as voter registration or election supervision, which helps to incentivise their continued engagement.

Life Skills Facilitator retention also appears to be influenced by traditional gender roles prevalent within communities.
Respondents reported instances of both male and female Life Skills Facilitators discontinuing their involvement within schools. In addition to concerns over lack of financial incentives, attrition appears to be driven by traditional gender roles. For example, female Facilitators were likely to discontinue their engagement in schools after marriage due to relocation to their husband's villages and/or 'not being allowed' to continue engagement after marriage:

> *"Female Facilitators are often the majority but face more challenges. You find that female Facilitators get discouraged early and decide to leave, sometimes due to marriage or other reasons while male Facilitators tend to remain."* (District-level official).

One Guidance and Counselling Teacher in Morogoro also noted that these challenges tend to be greater for young women, who are already disadvantaged due to greater financial difficulties and may not be able to work due to their family responsibilities:

> *"From my experience, I have seen that girls face more challenges than boys. Many of the boys we recruit here come from families that are financially stable, so they don't have significant financial problems. Therefore, the main difficulties are for the girls, some of whom already have children. So when they come to teach in an unpaid setting, it becomes a challenge because they also have family responsibilities."* (Guidance and Counselling Teacher, male, Morogoro).

Where Life Skills Facilitators drop out, district level staff and CAMFED support the recruitment and training of replacements so that life skills delivery can continue with minimal interruption.
District Secondary Education Officers coordinate closely with Adult Education Coordinators and School Heads to monitor Facilitator attendance, address emerging issues at school and district levels, and identify and train replacements where Life Skills Facilitators are no longer able to continue. For instance, a District Secondary Education Officer discussed:

> *"At the school level, if the Facilitator misses one or two days, the School Head can resolve the issue by contacting them to understand their challenges. So, the solution starts at the school and district levels. If the Facilitator has left completely and is not available, then we find a replacement to take their place and provide training, which takes a little longer."* (District-level official).

CAMFED officials indicated that the government may also offer women and youth loan schemes at the district level, to encourage Facilitator retention so that they remain engaged with the programme. Where the Facilitators relocate, CAMFED works with district and school authorities to ensure their work is handed over to another trained Facilitator but also encourages them to continue their engagement in their new location. As a CAMFED official described:

> *"When these young people move away, it's something you cannot prevent because you cannot tell someone, "You must get married here!" What is emphasised is that if they relocate, and there is a project in that area, they should report to a nearby school to continue facilitating."* (CAMFED district-level official).

While most respondents did not note differences in activities between male and female Life Skills Facilitators, there were instances where concerns about reinforcement of gender stereotypes were noted.
For example, a School Head in Chamwino mentioned that male Life Skills Facilitators may emphasise business skills more during life skills sessions, while female Facilitators focus on domestic skills like knitting and cooking, risking reinforcing gender stereotypes. In addition, a Guidance and Counselling Teacher in Morogoro noted it was too early to assess male Life Skills Facilitators' involvement as they had only recently begun serving schools.

Potential risks in involving male Life Skills Facilitators

Although generally viewed as beneficial, the engagement of male Life Skills Facilitators may at times risk overshadowing or diminishing the importance of females, including female Facilitators.
This dynamic underscores broader gender hierarchy within communities, where male authority can inadvertently reinforce traditional power imbalances. For instance, a CAMFED district-level official explained:

"When a Facilitator is teaching, maybe girls may not be interested to listen from a female Facilitator but be attentive with the male Facilitator. As it is in other places, when he stands as a man, women become more attentive and vice versa." (CAMFED district-level official).

Similarly, a member of a Community Development Committee observed:

"Another benefit is that male Facilitators are not shy compared to female Facilitators. So, when they stand to teach the programme, they are more confident than female Facilitators. I don't speak with ill intention though." (Community Development Committee member, female, Handeni).

One district-level official in Handeni viewed the involvement of female Life Skills Facilitators as particularly valuable in building young women's confidence and sense of empowerment. However, compared to the Learner Guide model where prioritising young women as Learner Guides was central to building their confidence, leadership and visibility as role models, they noted that this focus appears less supported in the design and implementation of the Life Skills programme.

Several community respondents, including members of Parent Teacher Associations and Community Development Committees, also raised concerns regarding the involvement of male Life Skills Facilitators in schools.
This includes the potential for their engagement in inappropriate relationships with female students and norms around interactions and information sharing. Concerns included gender-appropriateness in addressing certain topics such as menstrual hygiene. As a Ward Education Officer in Chamwino explained:

"One challenge is that, you know, in our village, there are some topics that, if a man talks about them or gives advice, people do not take them seriously. It is expected that such things should be said by a woman. This affects how information is shared. This also happens when male youth cannot talk about certain issues, since the programme mixes boys and girls." (Ward Education Officer, male, Chamwino).

Similarly, a Guidance Counselling Teacher mentioned how gender social norms may make it challenging for girls to express themselves before male Life Skills Facilitators, indicating that young women may be better placed to support girls effectively as Facilitators than men:

"One challenge is that some girls may find it hard to share their problems with male Facilitators. While some may have confidence, others, because of our social norms, might feel uncomfortable. For example, they might think that saying certain words in front of a man is inappropriate or embarrassing. This can be a challenge for girls." (Guidance and Counselling Teacher, female, Chamwino).

In Handeni, where the Learner Guide programme has been implemented by CAMFED previously and so there has been community engagement in relation to the role of female Learner Guides, respondents demonstrated greater understanding and trust around the involvement of male Life Skills Facilitators. For example, a Parent Support Group member said:

"Like I have said, sometimes parents think wrongly of these males Facilitators that they are engaging in sexual relationships with their girls, which is not correct." (Parent Support Group member, male, Handeni).

Nevertheless, the community respondents' concerns merit greater attention and scrutiny in the recruitment and training of Life Skills Facilitators, such as ensuring that the selection criteria for Life Skills Facilitators that include villages approving of their social behaviour are followed, and Facilitator training on child protection and safeguarding is ensured. Community members should also be informed about the role that male Life Skills Facilitators are expected to play, and be encouraged to raise any concerns via established school processes or avenues for reporting complaints or incidents, including through the support of Guidance and Counselling Teachers, who are sensitised to such issues. For example, when asked about the challenges or risks involved in engaging male Life Skills Facilitators, a female Guidance and Counselling Teacher in Morogoro mentioned:

> *"I haven't seen any challenges here yet. But if any challenge arises, I would say it, because I am also a Counsellor."* (Guidance and Counselling Teacher, female, Morogoro).

Challenges in implementing the adapted curriculum

The implementation of the adapted Life Skills curriculum has practical challenges, such as large Facilitator-student ratios, insufficient number of curriculum books and timetabling issues.

Although Life Skills Facilitators are intended to deliver sessions for Form One to Form Four students with a government-recommended student-teacher ratio of 40:1, their large class sizes, which can include 60 to 90 students, imply the Facilitators may effectively end up teaching a much larger group in such schools:

> *"Facilitators are much overloaded. For example, one Facilitator is assigned two classes, but in reality, one class does not just have 45 students but up to 80 in one grade… Therefore, you find that the Facilitator teaches students from more than two classes… The student population in schools should be considered and divided among Facilitators to have a fair distribution."* (CAMFED district-level official).

In addition, insufficient availability of textbooks was noted as a constraint. As a district level official mentioned:

> *"What I would say is that more books should be provided. There are few books but many students. This causes even the Facilitators to have a heavy load in the classroom. That is the main issue, that more copies of the curriculum books should be supplied so that our youth can teach more easily."* (District-level official).

One Life Skills Facilitator in Morogoro also pointed out printing errors in the curriculum books being provided for Facilitators and students:

> *"We were given the books but some of the books here and the ones that were brought are not the same. Therefore, the books that students use, especially in Form Two, have some differences. You might open page 58 in one book and find different content on that page in the other book."* (Life Skills Facilitator, male, Morogoro).

At the same time, Facilitators demonstrate resourcefulness in addressing classroom challenges, such as shortages of curriculum books to ensure that all learners can participate meaningfully in life skills sessions. As one Facilitator commented:

> *"For the shortage of books, I prepare worksheets for teaching. I also create small groups and provide one per group. So, I manage it in that way [where] not everyone needs a book."* (Life Skills Facilitator, female, Morogoro).

Regarding the inclusion of life skills sessions in the weekly timetable, some Life Skills Facilitators described how other subject sessions are likely to take precedence over life skills, especially around the time of national examinations. For instance, one Life Skills Facilitator noted:

> *"Sometimes, I go to the class for my scheduled period, but I find that a teacher is teaching during my slot. When I tell them it's my period, they say I can teach in another period. At such times, I might have come from home, all the way from the bus stand, specifically for that period, only to face that challenge."* (Life Skills Facilitator, female, Chamwino).

CAMFED district officials work closely with district, ward and school level stakeholders to address such challenges in timetabling of life skills sessions. As a CAMFED district level official stated:

> *"I speak with the School Heads to allow our programme to be taught at the beginning of the year and when the national examinations are near, our curriculum is likely to be over. So, the students have time to prepare for the examinations. Such are the challenges that we can solve ourselves at the district level."* (CAMFED district-level official).

5. What are the processes involved at the district level for operationalising the adapted Life Skills programme?

This section discusses the study's research findings regarding the implementation arrangements and processes involved at the district level for operationalising the Life Skills programme, the challenges involved, as well as the factors enabling implementation.

Implementation arrangements

The Life Skills programme involves coordinated implementation with roles and responsibilities assigned to stakeholders across government levels, from national to school, as well as CAMFED.

At the national level, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology collaborates with the Prime Minister's Office – Regional Administration and Local Government for scaling the adapted Life Skills programme. The Ministry provides technical guidance on educational programmes and engages in policy review, including sharing relevant information and working together with CAMFED and the Prime Minister's Office – Regional Administration and Local Government to inform scaling decisions. The CAMFED national and regional offices are, in turn, responsible for providing regular progress reports to the Prime Minister's Office – Regional Administration Local Government and Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, supporting monitoring and evaluation visits and maintaining accurate datasets on supported students and teachers, including those receiving training (Unpublished internal document, 2025). As a CAMFED official explained:

> *"At the regional level, we work with Regional Education Officers because they are the guardians and supervisors of education, working with Social Welfare Officers depending on the councils in the project. We also collaborate with officials from the Ministry of Education. We meet with them every three months to review design, adoption and scaling of the programme. Through this, we share challenges reported from schools, such as gaps in tools or guidelines. The technical team includes members from the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, TAMISEMI (Prime Minister's Office – Regional Administration Local Government) and Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, the Ministry of Community Development, and representatives from the Ministry of Youth. Every three months, we meet to review progress. We also meet with parents in parent meetings to address issues or challenges raised by the Facilitators."* (CAMFED official).

The regional level of government is expected to provide oversight and supervision for the implementation of the Life Skills programme, consistent with its mandate for other education initiatives.

This role was viewed as effective during initial implementation of the programme in schools and districts. Members of the Technical Working Group recommended that it be maintained and further strengthened as the programme scales up. They proposed that regional offices could play a stronger supervisory role in coordinating activities, demonstrating political commitment and leadership, and fostering community awareness and engagement with the programme.

At the district level, the District Adult Education Officer, appointed by the Local Government Administration Authorities, coordinates with the District Secondary Education Officer for implementation of the programme.

They are responsible for guiding School Heads in selecting Guidance and Counselling Teachers, as well as managing the overall process of recruiting Life Skills Facilitators in schools within their respective districts. This includes responsibilities ranging from issuing vacancy announcements officiated by the District Council, to following up with Ward Education

Officers, preparing a district report of all applicants and issuing identification letters to appointed volunteers. The District Adult Education Officer also maintains all documentation for record and training purposes. They collaborate with CAMFED staff at the district level to organise training for the Facilitators, as well as identify any council or school opportunities for volunteering Facilitators. The Coordinator prepares quarterly implementation reports and has overall responsibility for ensuring that life skills sessions are timetabled in schools as well as that safeguarding and child protection policies are followed. A District Adult Education Officer described their role:

> *"As an Education Officer, I act as a link between CAMFED and the Director (Secondary Education Department). For example, when you come to me, I refer you to the Director and the schools. I also ensure that Facilitators are recruited following procedures, and I advise both Teachers and Facilitators. Sometimes, I visit schools to monitor what is being taught."* (District-level official).

At the ward level, ward authorities such as the Ward Education Officer are responsible for monitoring the implementation of the programme in schools and submitting a monthly report to the district office.
Like district-level officials, they are responsible for ensuring that life skills sessions are timetabled and safeguarding and child protection policies are followed in schools, as well as identifying any ward-level opportunities for Facilitators. As one of the Ward Education Officers explained:

> *"As the Ward Education Officer, I am directly responsible for ensuring, first of all, that these Life Skills Facilitators are recruited in accordance with the established procedures, making sure that we announce these opportunities through local government offices or various public notices that we issue. Once they are recruited, we enrol them in schools. As the Ward Education Officer, my role is to ensure that these Facilitators report to their assigned centres and carry out their duties in line with the guidelines and the schedule set by the school to deliver life skills education to our students."* (Ward Education Officer, male, Morogoro).

While ward authorities are also mandated to engage with communities about the Life Skills programme, the limited awareness and engagement of community members across the three districts (noted in previous sections) indicates scope for strengthening these efforts.
These findings were also validated by members of the Technical Working Group, who emphasised the importance of enhancing programme awareness through Ward Education Officers and Village Executive Officers through planned community meetings.

At the school level, School Heads are responsible for supervising weekly implementation of the programme.
They are also responsible for appointing a Guidance and Counselling Teacher, as well as carrying out the selection process for Life Skills Facilitators**.** Similar to the district and ward level officials, School Heads are also responsible for supervising implementation of the programme, including ensuring timetabling of life skills sessions and Facilitator attendance, as well as identifying any opportunities within school communities that can incentivise Facilitators. As one of the School Heads interviewed noted:

> *"My role is to supervise the Life Skills Facilitators and make sure they enter in their periods, and make sure that in those periods, they teach, and also to ensure they make follow-up on the absentees and give me feedback, and to help them in any way if they are failing in fulfilling their obligation."* (School Head, female, Handeni).

They are also responsible for providing professional support and materials for Facilitators to be able to deliver the life skills sessions, and introduce them to school-level stakeholders such as school committees, teachers, students and their parents. In addition, the School Heads are directed to prepare weekly implementation reports. For example, discussing their roles and responsibilities in relation to the Life Skills programme during the interview, a School Head mentioned:

> *"Sometimes we also involve the parents. We have a Parent Teacher Association where we include them in matters concerning the students. We also emphasise the role of Facilitators in educating the children."* (School Head, female, Morogoro).

CAMFED plays a central role in providing ongoing guidance to government counterparts and sustaining continuity of the Life Skills programme.
For instance, CAMFED works on regularly updating and refining implementation guidelines, which are developed in consultation with government officials, to improve programme practices. As a CAMFED district-level official noted:

> *"At CAMFED, we have been holding feedback meetings with stakeholders to address the challenges we have received and to find a way forward together. What are we doing now to ensure this programme continues to work? We develop joint strategies by meeting with government stakeholders."* (CAMFED district-level official).

(i) Training of stakeholders

The training for Life Skills Facilitators, Guidance and Counselling Teachers and School Heads under the adapted Life Skills programme are similar to those for their counterparts under the Learner Guide model.
The Life Skills Facilitators interviewed mentioned receiving a five-day training covering the life skills curriculum content and delivery methods, their specific responsibilities, classroom management techniques, lesson preparation and teaching strategies, as well as safeguarding and child protection. This is similar to the Learner Guide programme where Learner Guides, too, receive a five-day training on delivering life skills curricula, including the My Better World workbook content, implementation skills such as session facilitation and monitoring student attendance and wellbeing, child safeguarding protocols and protection from exploitation. While describing their training, a Life Skills Facilitator mentioned:

> *"Some of the things we learned included, first, what our responsibilities as Facilitators are and what we are coming to do here in the school. We were also taught how to manage a classroom, that is, we learned how to be a teacher for the students."* (Life Skills Facilitator, female, Handeni).

Similarly, the Guidance and Counselling Teachers receive training on how to support and supervise the Life Skills Facilitators and oversee the delivery of the life skills curriculum, including specific topics that the Life Skills Facilitators teach. They monitor programme implementation, as well as strategies for helping address students' challenges. As a Guidance and Counselling Teacher explained:

> *"We went through the same content that the Facilitators use to train students under the My Better World guidebook. Through this training, we came to understand what the Facilitators do in schools, something we did not know before."* (Guidance and Counselling Teacher, female, Chamwino).

Finally, School Heads trained under the Life Skills programme mentioned being trained on CAMFED's mission and their objective of supporting marginalised girls, their specific responsibilities for implementing the programme and procedures to ensure life skills sessions

are integrated into school timetables. Training also covered strategies to retain Life Skills Facilitators within schools and supporting their effective engagement.

The Life Skills programme also involves training for district and ward level officials. District-level respondents described how these training sessions covered the importance of teaching life skills to secondary school students, capacity building for effective programme implementation in relation to their specific responsibilities, and detailed guidance on the selection process for Life Skills Facilitators. As one official expressed:

> *"The training I have received includes how to recruit Facilitators. The first step is issuing an announcement, which is released by the Council Director. The announcement is then distributed and posted in public areas, and these are volunteer job postings… The training also covered how to shortlist candidates and conduct interviews."* (District-level official).

Ward-level officials similarly described receiving training on CAMFED and the overall objectives of the programme, the selection of Life Skills Facilitators, their training and monitoring. As one Ward Education Officer shared:

> *"Regarding these CAMFED trainings, initially, ward-level education officers were not involved. But if I'm not mistaken, the first time we were involved was perhaps the year before last, when we were introduced to what CAMFED is and gained an understanding of its work. We were explained how the Facilitators are selected and what CAMFED's objectives are. So, we attended the training."* (Ward Education Officer, male, Morogoro).

Despite generally good coverage of training across a range of stakeholders, gaps are apparent among some groups, indicating the need for closer follow-up at the middle tier level.
For example, two of six district-level officers, one of six ward-level officers and two (male) of eleven Guidance and Counselling Teachers interviewed reported not receiving training on the Life Skills programme. At the school level, the transfer of trained Guidance and Counselling Teachers may also pose a potential challenge, contributing to gaps in training coverage. As one Guidance and Counselling Teacher highlighted:

> *"Regarding training, I personally haven't received any yet because there were teachers who were initially involved, but challenges arose as some of them transferred, and among others, there was one who believed that when they attended those training seminars, they would gain something. But it seemed they didn't, so they kind of resigned and gave up."* (Guidance and Counselling Teacher, male Morogoro).

(ii) Coordination and monitoring

Strong coordination among district, ward and school level actors is reported for implementing and monitoring the Life Skills programme.
At the district level, District Adult Education Officers described working alongside the District Secondary Education Officers to oversee programme implementation in alignment with their intended roles and responsibilities. This included coordinating the recruitment of Life Skills Facilitators and monitoring the delivery of life skills sessions in schools, as well as whether and how schools provide incentives to retain them and support their continued engagement. For instance, a District Adult Education Officer stated:

> *"I ensure that Facilitators are recruited following procedures, and I advise both Teachers and Facilitators. Sometimes, I visit schools to monitor what is being taught."* (District-level official).

The District Secondary Education Officers also mentioned monitoring the overall programme in close coordination with the District Adult Education Officers, the Ward Education Officers and the CAMFED District Programme Coordinators. As one Officer explained:

> *"Once CAMFED has planned and provided training for the Life Skills Facilitators and assigned them to the relevant schools, it is the District Council's responsibility, especially the Secondary Education Department as the school owner, to monitor their performance. To ensure they work well, we make sure the lessons are included in the school timetable. In monitoring, we check if these lessons are in the timetable. We find that the lessons are scheduled, teachers are in the classroom teaching, and there are enough books for them to use. This is the first level of monitoring and it is our responsibility. We also check their working environment, and if they face challenges, CAMFED and the Council are available to address them."* (District-level official).

Regular monitoring at the district and ward levels was also confirmed through the interviews with CAMFED officials. As one official noted:

> *"…there is close monitoring at the district level. Sometimes, we demand information and have meetings with the District Education Officer or Regional Education Officer. They always have the information which means that there is close monitoring. They make follow-ups at all levels, for example, the District Officer, the Ward Education Officers and School Heads all make follow up. And CAMFED also makes follow-up to get the big picture to be able to offer the needed support."* (CAMFED official).

Such strong communication and coordination at district and ward levels is important for smooth programme implementation by responding to local challenges.
District and ward officials support efforts to reduce student absenteeism so that learners can benefit from life skills sessions, for example by collaborating with Village Executive Officers and local leaders to follow up with families of truant students. For instance, a District Adult Education Officer described:

> *"For truancy (unauthorised absence from school), right now we have those who are truant, and we've already told the School Heads to write down the names of truant students and submit them to the Village Executive Officer. He follows up by going to every family to track those names… he goes to the Village Chairperson and tells him to follow up on those children to return to school."* (District-level official).

CAMFED officials also highlight the active engagement of district education leaders, noting that they routinely track programme activities, identify challenges and work with schools and Facilitators to resolve issues promptly. As one of them shared during the interview:

> *"You can see that there is engagement from top education leaders at the district level, and they are the ones who follow up to know what has been done, what challenges exist, and if they see any challenges, they can solve them. For example, if a youth does not show up at their school this month, they already know why they did not come."* (CAMFED official).

The Ward Education Officers are identified as providing a critical link between the Secondary Education Department and the schools in coordinating and monitoring programme implementation.
The Ward Education Officers, together with the District Secondary Education Officers, collaborate with the District Adult Education Officers to conduct monitoring visits to schools to check the timetable for the delivery of life skills sessions, the use of suggested teaching methods and Facilitator attendance on the day. They also meet with School Heads, Guidance

and Counselling Teachers, and Life Skills Facilitators and try to address any issues raised. For example, a Ward Education Officer described:

> *"I collaborate with the CAMFED Coordinator at the Municipal Council. There is a CAMFED Coordinator at the municipality, but there is also an Education Officer who is involved in coordinating this matter. So, we Ward Education Officers, together with the District Secondary Education Officer, work in collaboration with the CAMFED Coordinator. We conduct monitoring, hold meetings, provide feedback, discuss existing challenges and find ways to resolve them."* (Ward Education Officer, male, Morogoro).

At the school level, the School Heads, Guidance and Counselling Teachers and Life Skills Facilitators follow internal monitoring mechanisms.
School Heads retain overall oversight of timetabling and Facilitator attendance, while Guidance and Counselling Teachers follow up on any absences and monitor how the Life Skills Curriculum handbook is used, including whether lessons are aligned with the intended curriculum. As a School Head noted:

> *"As their [Life Skills Facilitator] leader here at the school, I make sure to follow up on their class attendance. We have been doing that."* (School Head, male, Chamwino).

The Life Skills Facilitators, with support from the Guidance and Counselling Teachers, also prepare monthly reports for submission to the district office. As a Guidance and Counselling Teacher confirmed:

> *"The Facilitator is involved on the issues of collecting data of the programme and producing a report. And I look through them and sometimes I give them to send to the district office."* (Guidance and Counselling Teacher, female, Handeni).

Similarly, a Life Skills Facilitator herself mentioned:

> *"Every month, we must submit a report. Yes, it is mandatory to send the report, and the lesson plan must be written. In that report, you indicate, "In the past month, I taught this and that"."* (Life Skills Facilitator, female, Chamwino).

At CAMFED, monitoring takes place both at the national and district levels.
Monitoring at district level ensures timely delivery of required curriculum materials and books through both national and district level CAMFED staff coordination. The CAMFED Tanzania team also undertakes annual surveys assessing student benefits, as well as periodic school visits, meeting with district, ward and school level officials and others, such as members of the Community Development Committees, Social Welfare Officers, etc.

The central CAMFED office also maintains a database which is occasionally updated to track all Facilitators' status (active/inactive) and follow-up with districts on inactive cases. At the district level, the CAMFED District Programme Coordinators maintain close coordination with the District Adult Education Officers, the District Secondary Education Officers, Ward Education Officers, School Heads and Life Skills Facilitators themselves. They help follow up in case any Facilitator drops out or encounters challenges in delivering life skills sessions. The District Programme Coordinators also formally report to the CAMFED Tanzania team using reporting tools via mobile phones. As one Coordinator explained:

> *"First, I can say that Ward Education Officers work in schools that fall within their areas. So, there are reports they prepare themselves as part of their work and keep records to track the programme's progress at the school level. If minor challenges arise, they address them so the programme can continue functioning smoothly. Regarding formal*

reporting, CAMFED provides a tool for reporting via mobile phones, which generates written reports that are sent directly to CAMFED headquarters through me. I submit them to the headquarters. Data collected through this way happens once a year. However, for internal monitoring, we carry out follow-ups regularly. If any Facilitator drops out or encounters challenges, we communicate with them and resolve the issues." (CAMFED district official).

Despite strong coordination and oversight mechanisms, some stakeholders reported challenges, such as delays and lack of involvement at district, ward and school levels. For example, one Guidance and Counselling Teacher in Handeni reported delays in a Life Skills Facilitator preparing monthly reports, while a Life Skills Facilitator in Chamwino mentioned delays by actors at the school and ward levels in addressing issues raised by them. One School Head in Handeni also mentioned lack of involvement of district and ward level officials in monitoring programme implementation.

Some ward and school level respondents also indicated the need for resources to cover costs for completing monitoring activities.
For example, a School Head stated:

"Most of the time, a teacher is called to the district office or is supposed to take a document there. They use their own money and when they fail, they inform me. I give them the transport fare but there are times when we both do not have anything." (School Head, female, Handeni).

Similarly, a Ward Education Officer mentioned the need for resources to enable them to fulfil their role:

"There should be a formal allowance for Ward Education Officers for monitoring… the Ward Education Officer should also have a computer or tablet for communication, as well as transport, as this would help things run very smoothly." (Ward Education Officer, male, Morogoro).

Limited funding for the Life Skills programme in particular, and education programmes in general, was identified as a potential challenge to programme implementation and sustainability.
As a CAMFED official described during their interview:

"The first challenge is the shortage of financial resources, because the needs are very high compared to the available funds. The government provides training centres, hostels and Facilitators, but not money. With the current global political situation, donors like USAID, who used to support education, have withdrawn. So the Government struggles to meet even basic needs. That makes it difficult to find funds for other projects. Money is also needed to motivate volunteering Facilitators, but we rely on government funds – for example, the 10% allocated for loans depends on council revenues. Councils with high revenue flows can provide loans on time, but those with smaller revenues cannot. As a result, young people struggle to cover basic needs. If they are not supported financially, they may stop volunteering, which would harm the sustainability of the programme at school level." (CAMFED official).

CAMFED officials also described how lack of adequate resources may potentially affect the scaling of the programme in new district councils. As one CAMFED official mentioned:

"CAMFED requires significant resources to launch the programme in new councils while supporting the Government during their learning phase. We cannot introduce the programme fully and have the Government take over immediately. A transitional period

is needed for joint implementation so that the Government can be prepared to take the programme forward successfully, and this requires adequate resources." (CAMFED official).

Government commitment and policies provide an important enabling environment for the Life Skills programme.
For instance, the Government's re-entry policy allowing girls to return to school after pregnancy helps encourage education continuity and extends the reach and relevance of life skills provision. Similarly, the incorporation and prioritisation of life skills in national education development plans also lends weight to implementation. As a CAMFED official explained:

"The Government already prioritises life skills in its education development plans, especially in the five-year education plan. For example, the Government provides experts in technical working teams and school designs. And when the Government supports something, it reduces barriers to programme implementation." (CAMFED official).

Despite the range of enabling factors, programme implementation remains potentially constrained by some wider social and contextual challenges.
Seasonal shocks, such as drought and water shortages contribute to student absenteeism and can disrupt practical life skills activities. For example, when limited water supplies make toilet facilities difficult for girls to use, particularly during menstruation, it discourages their attendance, including for the life skills sessions. Where water shortages do not allow planting or farming activities to take place during life skills sessions, the delivery of the life skills curriculum may become affected. This reflects the need for the programme's design to be responsive to contextual realities and challenges.

6. Lessons learned and recommendations for future implementation

This section synthesises key lessons learned on adapting and scaling CAMFED's peer mentorship and life skills programme in Tanzania through government systems. It focuses in particular on the implications of scaling the programme at the middle tier of government, and concludes with recommendations for strengthening future implementation of the adapted Life Skills programme, as well as other programmes.

Lessons learned

Programme objectives and design

The Government's adaptation and embedding of the peer mentorship and life skills programme previously implemented by CAMFED has the potential for providing benefits for students, schools, parents and communities, as evidenced across the three study districts.

Similar to CAMFED's Learner Guide programme on which the Government's Life Skills programme is based, respondents highlighted the benefits to learners at the individual level, including increased student confidence and wellbeing through peer-to-peer facilitation that equips young people to navigate or mitigate socio-cultural challenges, such as risks of early marriage and pregnancy, and truancy. The views expressed also related the Life Skills programme with enhanced attendance for students in schools and learning outcomes. Improved teaching practices were also indicated, where Guidance and Counselling Teachers endeavoured to embrace more interactive, peer-based methods like the Life Skills Facilitators. In addition, positive behavioural shifts for students were reported to foster open communication and stronger family support. In some cases, communities reported reduced harmful practices, such as early marriage, alongside greater collective benefits of empowering their young people with life skills. Some also expressed particular benefits for vulnerable children and those belonging to marginalised communities.

The Life Skills programme requires deeper attention to gender in design and implementation to preserve CAMFED's transformative intent.

While the Life Skills programme aims to support both boys and girls, the gender-neutral framing of its objectives and guidelines risks diluting CAMFED's gender-transformative approach. This particularly includes its focus on empowering girls to overcome heightened disadvantages, such as related to harmful social norms, as well as for female peer mentors to emerge as leaders and agents of change within their communities. Broadening participation to include boys and male Facilitators without an explicit gender lens in the programme may risk reducing visibility for young women as role models, compared to CAMFED's Learner Guide approach. The risk of unintended reinforcement of gender stereotypes under the programme, such as Facilitator attrition being driven by traditional gender roles, further underscores the broader need to explicitly address gender throughout programme design and implementation.

Involving male Life Skills Facilitators has benefits, provided gender-sensitivity is ensured in their engagement.

While the inclusion of male Life Skills Facilitators can encourage boys' participation alongside girls' in class, it may undermine female Facilitators' authority and confidence in the eyes of students and school staff, potentially weakening the gender-transformative intent of building young women's leadership, which is central to CAMFED's model.

Core elements of the Learner Guide programme, including peer-to-peer mentoring and the life skills curriculum, are central to delivering the programme's observed benefits at scale.
Peer-to-peer mentoring, when rooted in mentors' own schooling and life experiences, are viewed by respondents as enhancing life skills delivery and boosting students' confidence, self-esteem and resilience against socio-cultural challenges. The findings underscore the value of delivering the programme through young volunteers who are recent graduates with whom students can relate, and with whom they can readily share experiences. This is identified as preferable to mentoring through older volunteers or Guidance and Counselling Teachers themselves, as this undermines the core purpose of peer-led relatability and shared lived experience. The adapted life skills curriculum, which complements and expands the Tanzania Institute of Education curriculum and promotes learning through interactive methods and practical activities, also holds potential for scaling to other schools in the future to boost student attendance, learning, confidence and self-reliance.

Resource constraints at the ward- and school- level were identified as a risk to smooth programme implementation.
Sufficient allocation of funds at ward and school levels is needed to enable smooth implementation, including support for monitoring activities, purchase of materials for in-class sessions, and outside-of-class life skills activities such as gardening or farming. Where resources fall short of these contextual needs, programme delivery risks being impeded, and therefore needs to be responsive to the government schools' resource constraints, including large class sizes and limited facilities.

The programme is likely to be affected by the wider political, economic and social environment.
For example, the Government's commitment and policies, such as those allowing re-entry to school, create an enabling environment for the Life Skills programme. Broader issues such as drought and water shortages also need to be taken into account in the design of the life skills activities, such as farming and gardening.

Community engagement

Community engagement, a cornerstone of CAMFED's Learner Guide programme, is vital for successful implementation of the Life Skills programme.
At the school and community levels, respondents indicated limited awareness of the adapted Life Skills programme, including government ownership, a key feature of the adapted programme. For instance, there is insufficient understanding of the programme's aims, objectives and implementation processes among community structures, such as Parent Teacher Associations and influential community members. One example is limited understanding of the rationale for recruiting both male and female volunteers. Where such sensitisation exists, such as among Parent Support Group members in the district where CAMFED had previously been active, it demonstrates potential to foster local ownership of the programme, as well as motivate and support community volunteers to serve as Life Skills Facilitators. This suggests the importance of carefully laying groundwork in coordination with the CAMFED, and building on their established foundations, where possible.

Support from community structures, influential community members and schools can enhance Life Skills Facilitators' motivation and retention as volunteers.
For instance, volunteer commitment can be strengthened through community structures, such as where Parent Support Groups support Facilitators' roles, provide community backing and assist with follow-up on at-risk students, and through schools, where schools offer small in-kind incentives to Life Skills Facilitators, such as meals, tea or permission for minor vending activities outside school. Such an approach also potentially helps preserve the voluntary peer mentoring model while leveraging local ownership for sustainability.

Scaling at the middle tier of government

Clear implementation arrangements, including well-defined roles, responsibilities and guidelines, are key to supporting scaling efforts.
Evidence from the three districts indicates that middle tier stakeholders were generally well aware of their roles and had effectively followed instructions to implement the programme at the local level.

Participation from middle tier government officials in decision-making processes is important in illuminating and addressing challenges in programme implementation.
For instance, feedback mechanisms between regional and district administrations can enable district officials to provide inputs on contextual challenges, such as volunteer recruitment and other difficulties or constraints in life skills delivery (such as lack of resources or school facilities, curriculum books, class sizes, etc.), creating structured opportunities to raise concerns at regional (and national) levels and collaboratively develop solutions.

Strong institutional networks and multi-level communication at district and lower levels of government are a key strength.
These networks help coordinate and monitor programme activities at different levels. Ward Education Officers, for example, provide a critical link between the Secondary Education Department and schools in overseeing and guiding programme implementation. At school level, School Heads, Guidance and Counselling Teachers and Life Skills Facilitators also follow internal monitoring mechanisms. These mechanisms can be particularly effective where they are leveraged deliberately for close follow-up on issues such as gaps in training for key stakeholders, for instance when trained Guidance and Counselling Teachers are transferred, or when trained Life Skills Facilitators are unable to continue their engagement in schools.

Continued support from CAMFED is helping strengthen programme implementation at the middle tier.
Evidence from the three districts indicates that the support provided by CAMFED, such as in training Life Skills Facilitators, monitoring programme implementation and addressing local challenges like Facilitator attrition through their District Programme Coordinators, facilitates and strengthens programme implementation at the middle tier. The continuation of such support until a time when the government structures, including the middle tier, can independently sustain the programme at scale will be important.

Recommendations

Based on the lessons learned, this section provides specific recommendations for the continuation and further scaling of the Life Skills programme, as well as transferable lessons for other programmes.

Recommendations for further scaling of the Life Skills programme

Programme objectives and design

The Ministry of Education should explicitly integrate gender considerations to preserve the programme's gender transformative intent, and ensure it carries through in implementation through the middle tier.
This includes embedding a stronger focus on marginalised girls' empowerment, female leadership and gender equity within programme objectives as well as guidelines and practical steps for implementation. Training for all stakeholders, including at the district, ward, school and community levels, and especially the male Life Skills Facilitators, should also emphasise gender equity to foster sensitivity in both intent and delivery.

The Ministry of Education should ensure programme design is responsive to government schools' resource constraints and broader contextual realities.
Programme design must address realities such as large class sizes, limited facilities and additional ward or school level needs for monitoring, class materials and outside activities like gardening or farming, where resource shortfalls risk impeding delivery.

Community engagement

The Government, through the regional and district offices, should enhance community engagement.
This should be aimed at creating greater awareness of the aims and objectives of the programme, including community members' awareness of government ownership of the programme, and acceptability of the roles of male and female Life Skills Facilitators, as well as encouraging volunteerism within communities.

District and ward offices should leverage community structures and influential community leaders to enhance local understanding and ownership of the programme.
At the level of the District Council, District Executive Officers, together with the District Adult Education Officers, should engage Community Development Committees and use their respective community engagement forums to promote the Life Skills programme and reinforce its government-led nature. District Secondary Education Officers should use existing structures, such as the Ward Development Committees, to engage community members through planned meetings at the ward and village levels. In particular, there is a need to involve influential community members, such as traditional leaders, religious leaders and village leaders as champions of the programme who can help foster local ownership and support.

Scaling at the middle tier of government

Regional offices should actively engage in programme supervision and establish feedback mechanisms with districts, wards, schools and ministries to address local implementation challenges.
The programme would benefit from stronger regional involvement in overseeing progress, alongside closer collaboration with district, ward and school level staff. These channels would enable on-the-ground actors to raise contextual issues, for example, in recruiting community volunteers, filling gaps in trainings for different stakeholders, etc., and collaborate on solutions through structured escalation to regional and national levels.

Schools should continue to incentivise Life Skills Facilitators through ongoing strategies.
Evidence from the three districts suggests that School Heads offer small in-kind incentives to Life Skills Facilitators, such as meals or tea in school. Additionally, members of the Technical Working Group suggested schools may consider providing permission to Life Skills Facilitators for minor vending activities outside school, in addition to continuing providing them with short-term employment opportunities, such as supervision of examinations, census duties, etc. They also suggested integrating Life Skills Facilitators into school matters more fully, alongside teachers, and supporting them in establishing small ventures such as school gardens or food sales. To complement these extrinsic incentives, efforts should also be made to promote intrinsic motivation, such as greater community respect for Life Skills Facilitators' roles and issuance of certificates that recognise their contributions and open doors to further opportunities.

Official monitoring reports and further independent research at the middle tier level are required to track the Life Skills programme's progress and benefits over time.
Effective monitoring mechanisms will prove essential going forward to quantify observed gains, such as enhanced student attendance, learning and confidence, and enable data-driven adaptations for sustained embedding. Evidence should also include an assessment of

the benefits and risks from including male Life Skills Facilitators, as well as strategies to mitigate them.

The Ministry of Education should continue to receive support from CAMFED until government structures can independently sustain implementation at scale.
The co-creation and co-delivery model adopted by the Government in partnership with CAMFED enables such flexible, scaffolded support, and positions this partnership as a model for scaling education programmes in other contexts.

Recommendations for other programmes

Based on the lessons learned for continuing and further scaling the Life Skills programme, the following are recommended for scaling other programmes more generally:

- **Embedding a gender equality and social inclusion lens** in scaling processes, explicitly integrating gender-transformative objectives from design through monitoring, and addressing contextual social norms that may limit girls' participation in education.
- **Working *with* and *through* communities**, leveraging community structures and influential community members, to challenge social norms that restrict young women.
- **Co-creating scaling plans and ensuring multi-level stakeholder engagement** to ensure smooth transition and create strong ownership, such as through the involvement of district, ward, school and community representatives in adaptation planning, implementation and monitoring processes.
- **Ensuring middle tier enablement** through clearly defined roles, training and capacity development, and feedback mechanisms for addressing local challenges.
- **Ensuring sufficient technical support** in initial phases of scaling, and gradually moving towards systems building for independent programme delivery.

Conclusion

This research explored how CAMFED's Learner Guide programme is being adapted, embedded and scaled as the Life Skills programme within the national education system in Tanzania. It offers transferable lessons for adapting education programmes through government structures more broadly, including maintaining core programme intent and key design features while enabling context-responsive implementation to realise benefits across students, schools and communities. This is particularly true for gender-transformative programmes like CAMFED’s, where government scaling may dilute the focus on gender in unintentional or unanticipated ways.

The study highlights the pivotal role of middle tier government actors (for example, regional, district and ward level offices) in effective implementation, requiring clear roles, multi-level communication and structured feedback mechanisms to address local challenges. Finally, embedding community engagement from the outset, such as through coordination with existing not-for-profit or other implementing organisations, school and community level structures such as Parent Teacher Associations and Parent Support Groups, as well as influential community leaders, can build essential local buy-in and programme legitimacy. These principles, which balance the preservation of programme designs with government ownership, middle tier enablement and community mobilisation, hold potential for scaling similar education interventions across low-resource contexts.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Study sample by district, respondent type and gender

District	Respondent type	No. of males	No. of females	Total
Morogoro	District Adult Education Officer	0	1	1
	District Secondary Education Officer	1	0	1
	Ward Education Officer	2	0	2
	Life Skills Facilitator	1	3	4
	School Head	1	1	2
	Guidance and Counselling Teacher	1	2	3
	Village leader	2	0	2
	Religious leader (Christian)	1	2	3
	Religious leader (Muslim)	1	0	1
	Traditional leader	2	0	2
	Parent Teacher Association member	1	1	2
	Community Development Committee member	1	1	2
	CAMED District Programme Coordinator	0	1	1
	Sub-total	**14**	**12**	**26**
Handeni	District Adult Education Officer	0	1	1
	District Secondary Education Officer	1	0	1
	Ward Education Officer	1	1	2
	Life Skills Facilitator	2	2	4
	School Head	0	2	2
	Guidance and Counselling Teacher	2	2	4
	Village leader	1	1	2
	Religious leader (Christian)	0	3	3
	Religious leader (Muslim)	1	0	1
	Traditional leader	2	0	2
	Parent Teacher Association member	0	2	2
	Community Development Committee member	1	1	2
	CAMED District Programme Coordinator	0	1	1
	Parent Support Group member	3	1	4
	Sub-total	**15**	**16**	**31**
Chamwino	District Adult Education Officer	0	1	1
	District Secondary Education Officer	0	1	1
	Ward Education Officer	2	0	2
	Life Skills Facilitator	2	2	4
	School Head	2	0	2
	Guidance and Counselling Teacher	2	2	4
	Village leader	1	1	2
	Religious leader (Christian)	1	1	2
	Religious leader (Muslim)	2	0	2
	Traditional leader	2	0	2
	Parent Teacher Association member	1	1	2

	Community Development Committee member	1	1	2
	CAMED District Programme Coordinator	0	1	1
	Sub-total	**16**	**11**	**27**
	Total (all districts)	**44**	**40**	**84**
CAMFED	Sub-total (CAMFED staff)	1	3	4
	Grand total	**45**	**43**	**88**

Endnotes

[i] Truancy refers to the intentional and unjustified absence of students from compulsory schooling, in violation of institutional regulations, parental expectations, and national ordinances. It is widely acknowledged as a barrier to effective learning and academic achievement among students. In the Tanzanian context, truancy arises from a complex nexus of socio-economic and psychosocial determinants. Contributing factors include household poverty, peer group influences, involvement in substance abuse, menstrual health challenges, strained teacher-student relationships, and long distances many students must travel between home and school. Taken together, these conditions illustrate the multifaceted interaction of structural constraints and individual circumstances that undermine consistent school attendance, both in urban and rural settings (Masumbuko, 2024; Seidu et al., 2021).

[ii] This was previously known as the President's Office – Regional Administration and Local Government, prior to the October-November 2025 elections.

[iii] This is an internal draft document being prepared by CAMFED in consultation with the Technical Working Group, and remains work-in-progress at the time of writing of this report.

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