Waache Wasome TECHNICAL PAPER

DROPOUT EARLY WARNING SYSTEM (DEWS)

Poverty, violence, long travel distances, and a lack of supplies often negatively affect Tanzanian students' ability to consistently attend school. For adolescent girls, these vulnerabilities are compounded by unwanted pregnancy, early marriage, and negative gender norms — which can lead to dropout and discontinuation of education.

To help break this cycle, the Bantwana Initiative of World Education, Inc. (WEI/Bantwana) has implemented its tested **Dropout Early Warning System** through the *Waache Wasome* ("Let them Learn") project. This simple, structured process helps teachers proactively identify dropout risk and take preventive and supportive action. The DEWS model offers a framework to identify negative "ABC" patterns of **A**ttendance, **B**ehavior, and **C**lass performance and provides training and mentoring that equip teachers to respond to warning signs with positive reinforcement and appropriate support.
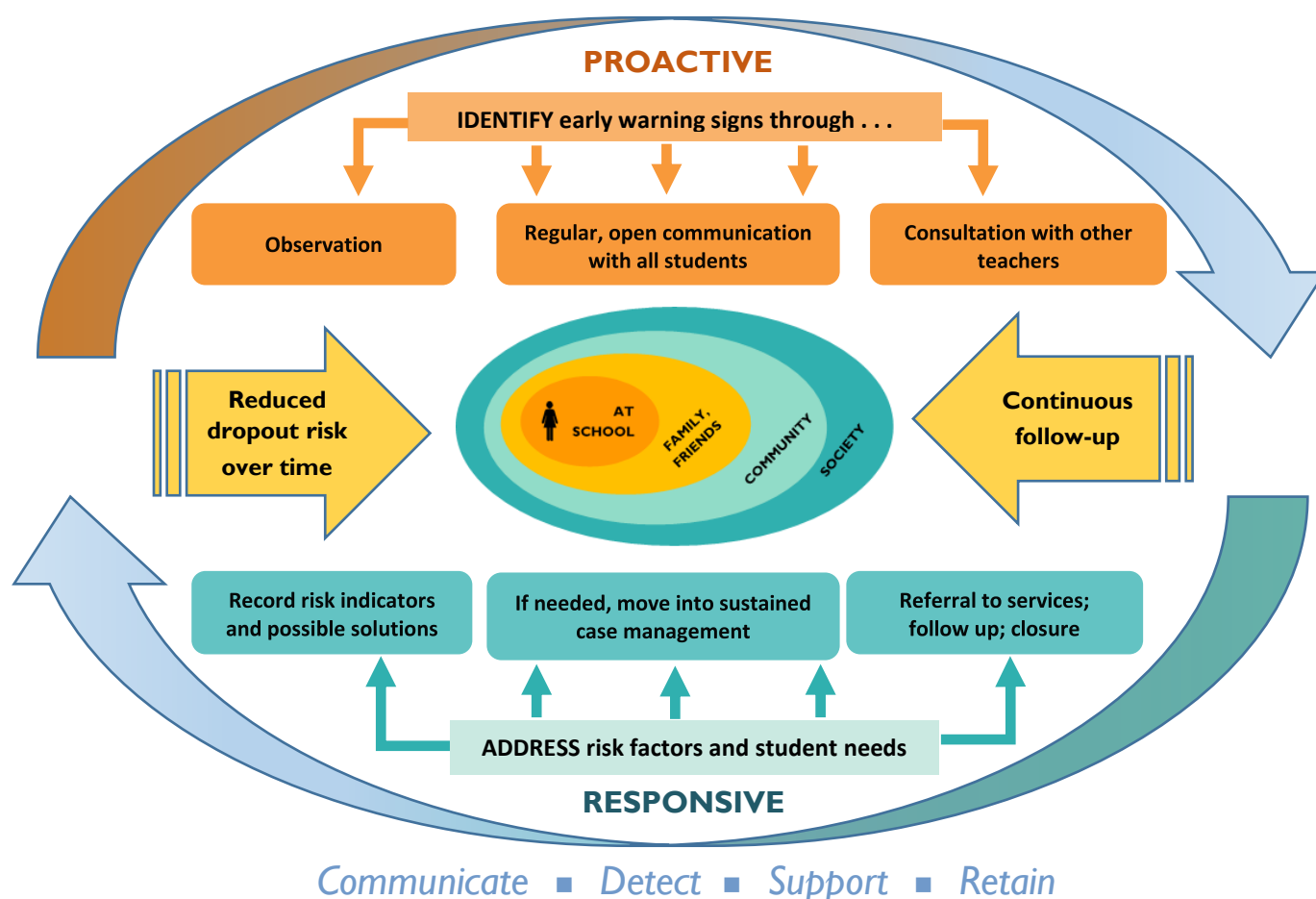
In just three years of implementing DEWS under *Waache Wasome*, the project's 108 partner schools identified and supported nearly 6,500 at-risk students with individual and family counseling, linkages to materials and financial support, and referrals to social and protective services. In mid-2021, our DEWS identification and case-management tools were adapted for integration into the Tanzanian government's national online School Information System, to be made available to schools across the country.

Pioneering Proactive, Wraparound Support for Students

WEI/Bantwana's evidence-informed DEWS model is built on the simple logic that early action and response lead to prevention and positive change. Rooted in human-centered design, it takes a holistic view of a student's school, family, and social environment — and various stressors in each of these settings.[1]

With training, educators learn to more fully understand the factors that put already vulnerable students at greater risk — and to practice positive communication with students and families and use a structured "case management" process to support at-risk students and address the aggravating factors. In conjunction with project training on reducing and reporting school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV), secondary school teachers and administrators are introduced to preventive and responsive tools and strategies that support adolescents to continue with and complete their education.

The introduction and adaptation[1] of the **Dropout Early Warning System (DEWS)** marks an exciting first for Tanzania's education sector, where schools have so far not been equipped with strategies to support student retention and engagement.

PROACTIVE

IDENTIFY early warning signs through . . .

| Observation | Regular, open communication with all students | Consultation with other teachers |

Reduced dropout risk over time

AT SCHOOL · FAMILY, FRIENDS · COMMUNITY · SOCIETY

Continuous follow-up

| Record risk indicators and possible solutions | If needed, move into sustained case management | Referral to services; follow up; closure |

ADDRESS risk factors and student needs

RESPONSIVE

Communicate ■ *Detect* ■ *Support* ■ *Retain*

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[1] WEI/Bantwana's Tanzania team adapted the DEWS model from the experience of our other country programs (Eswatini, Uganda, Zimbabwe), where it has been tested and implemented since 2016 in partnership with Ministries of Education and Social Welfare.

Core Elements of DEWS

When working in over-crowded and under-resourced classrooms and with limited teacher training and parent engagement, schools typically resorte to rote learning and harsh discipline to keep students "in line" and move them along the curriculum. In the process, learners' individual circumstances or psychosocial needs often go unnoticed. Yet, these are the very factors that can contribute to students' missteps or misbehavior, declining performance, and eventual dropout.

As part of *Waache Wasome* efforts to foster more conducive (and girl-friendly) learning environments, WEI/Bantwana has trained and equipped teachers with key knowledge and tools to help them detect "red flags" early on — and to marshal a combination of school and community resources to mitigate and address adverse educational outcomes.

Rather than being a single event, school dropout is the end result of a series of compounding factors that eventually become too much for a student to handle. Teachers in *Waache Wasome* partner schools are learning that being aware of and responsive to students' life situations and vulnerabilities and following supportive, solution-oriented strategies can help adolescents address negative patterns that could derail their education.
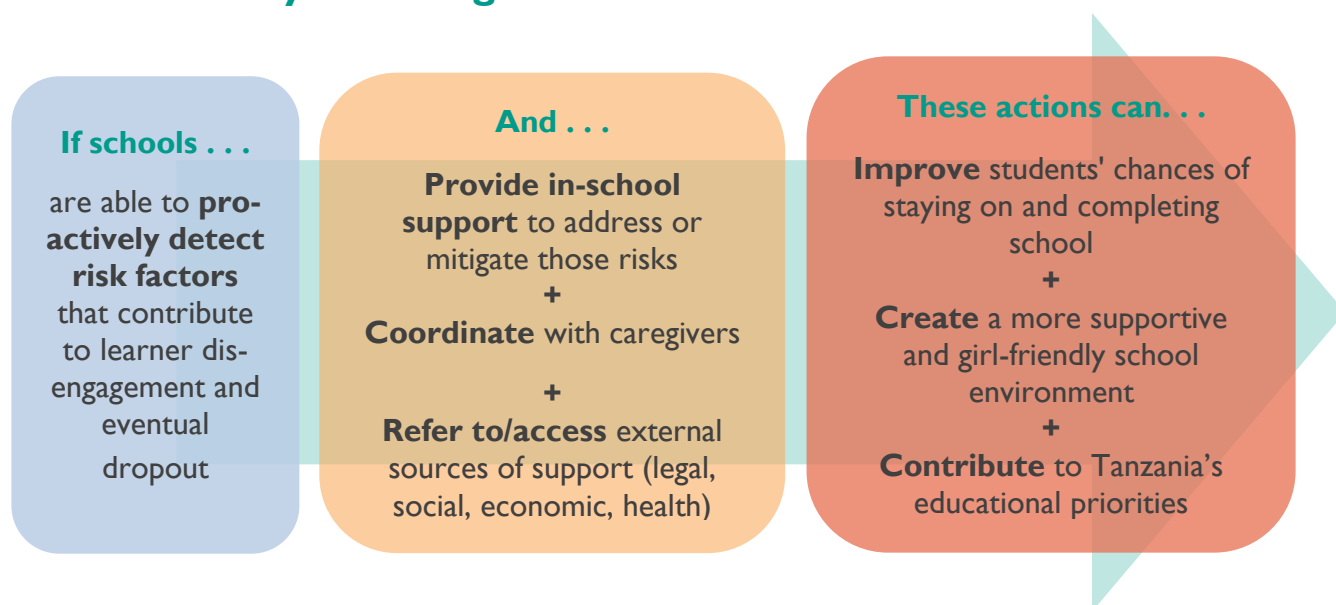
Risk Recognition

DEWS is designed to take into account . . .

- The ABCs or red flags that teachers should observe and detect
- A student's personal and family situation or home life
- School conditions, including discipline practices, student-teacher communication, etc.

	Warning Signs	Possible Reasons
Absenteeism	Prolonged absence from school Shorter, repeated absences from specific classes or from school generally Chronic late arrival or early departure	Hunger Illness Multiple household/care responsibilities Needs to work outside the home Lives very far from school Insufficient caregiver oversight
Behavior	Aggressive, argumentative, short-tempered Withdrawn, sullen, depressed Attention seeking, acting out Lack of class or social participation	Household dynamics or dysfunction Subjected to abuse, bullying, or other violence at home, community, or in school Unidentified disability (sight, hearing, etc.)
Course or class performance	Ongoing low achievement Inability to complete assignments Sudden decline in grades or performance	Long travel distances Hunger Unsuitable homework facilities at home Multiple household/care responsibilities Illness Unidentified disability (sight, hearing, etc.).

DEWS Theory of Change

If schools . . .	And . . .	These actions can. . .
are able to **pro-actively detect risk factors** that contribute to learner dis-engagement and eventual dropout	**Provide in-school support** to address or mitigate those risks **+** **Coordinate** with caregivers **+** **Refer to/access** external sources of support (legal, social, economic, health)	**Improve** students' chances of staying on and completing school **+** **Create** a more supportive and girl-friendly school environment **+** **Contribute** to Tanzania's educational priorities

Case Management Approach

With training, teachers and members of school Disciplinary/DEWS Committees learn to more fully understand the factors that put already vulnerable students at greater risk — and to follow a basic set of steps for each case, with follow up by relevant teachers or school management between each step:

1. Identification and initial interaction *(Possible resolution)*
2. Counseling & Support, involving class teacher; other teachers; school administration; parents; peers *(Possible resolution)*
3. Guiding & Disciplinary Committee involvement, including counseling; referrals to government services; linkages to community support structures; ongoing caregiver engagement *(Possible resolution)*
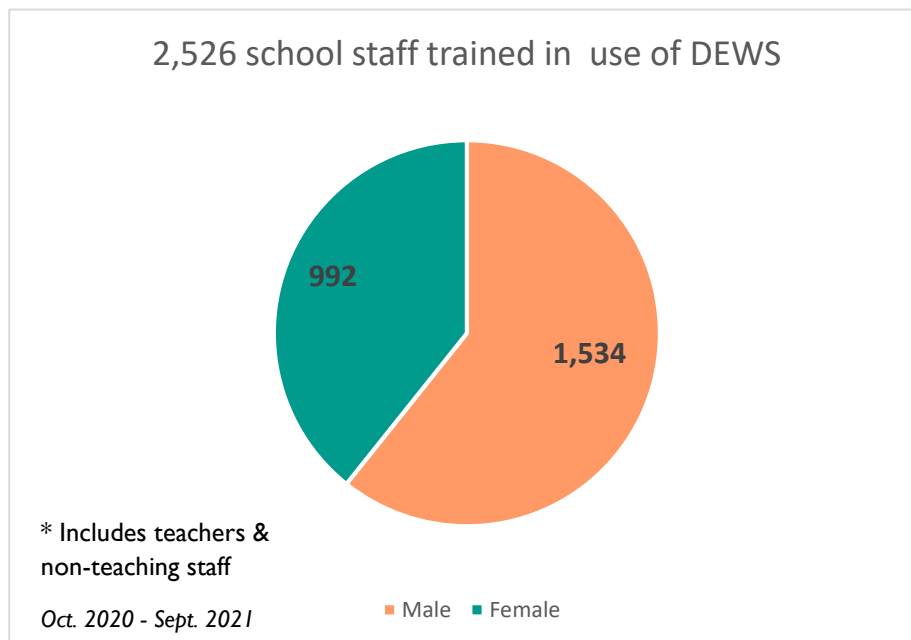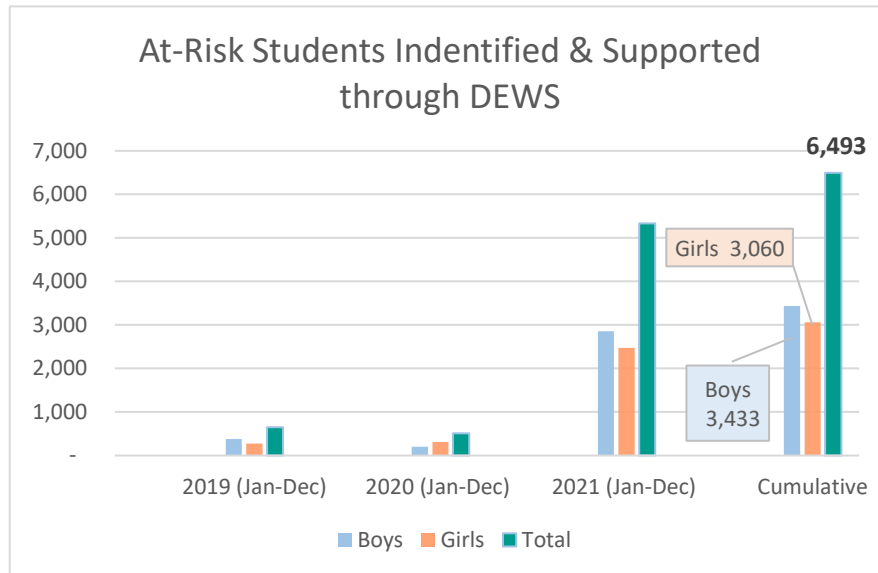4. Case closure and/or return to steps 2 & 3

Being selective ensures the system is sustainable: Mistakes and occasional misbehavior are part of growing up. Therefore, DEWS is intended to note consistently poor behaviors or abnormalities — *not* minor, everyday mischief. Hence, not every incident needs to be opened as a "case." This distinction is important to avoid system overuse and fatigue.

Local services awareness and linkages are essential: Project staff have worked closely with school teams and local government stakeholders in each council to create draft service directories that can provide contact information for a range of social, legal, protective, and other services relevant to support the needs of at-risk youth identified through DEWS.

" "I see the approach of addressing early signs of risk among our children as the best way to support and care for them, because we will be addressing the root cause, before the problem occurs."

- *Arusha City Education Officer*

R E S U L T S

At-Risk Students Indentified & Supported through DEWS

Girls 3,060

Boys 3,433

6,493

Boys · Girls · Total

2019 (Jan-Dec) · 2020 (Jan-Dec) · 2021 (Jan-Dec) · Cumulative

2,526 school staff trained in use of DEWS

992

1,534

* Includes teachers & non-teaching staff

Oct. 2020 - Sept. 2021

Male · Female

Lessons, Successes, Challenges

Since first being introduced with 36 partner schools in 2018, both the system itself — as well as teacher understanding, willingness, and ability to use DEWS — have evolved and greatly improved. As of 2021, *all* 108 project partner schools were implementing the system with an appreciation of key factors:

- The varied causes and the negative and long-term consequences of school dropout
- The purpose & benefits of a warning system — to both students as well as educators
- How to identify risk indicators, determine underlying factors, and address those
- Establishing positive student-teacher interactions and a conducive learning environment
- Following a systematic and supportive approach to prevent disengagement and dropout — or acting to reverse it when it occurs
- Involving and engaging available local resources to make school retention a community-wide priority and joint effort

Successes

- ✓ Enhanced educator awareness of the importance and benefit of DEWS
- ✓ Evidence and reports of using positive discipline
- ✓ Overall improvement in student-teacher communication
- ✓ Student willingness to approach teachers and initiate discussions about problems they are facing
- ✓ Consistent identification and counseling of at-risk students
- ✓ Students in need receiving financial support through the Education Funds operated under LIMCA, Waache Wasome's community savings and lending group model
- ✓ Direct linkages and referrals to social, legal, and health services -- as well as to government stakeholders with decision-making authority
- ✓ Teachers willing to go the "extra mile" by visiting households and families of students identified as being at risk of dropout or possible abuse

> "
>
> "You have opened a new chapter on how to deal with children — especially vulnerable students who need more of our attention so that they can achieve their dreams."
>
> - *Busara Mzunda, Deputy Head, Mukendo Secondary School*

Challenges

- Traditionally limited parent engagement in children's education experience & school matters
- Longstanding, harsh disciplinary approaches change slowly
- Timeliness and accuracy of documentation call for consistent monitoring
- Follow-up of referrals is needed to ensure services have been accessed or provided

National online School Information System (SIS)

Alerts and Notifications provide instant information to the Head Teacher, for informed decision making.
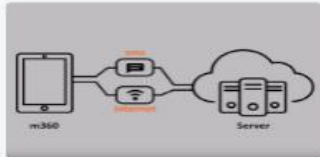
Data updates are transmitted to the server everytime there is internet or SMS available. Transmission happens without user intervention.

Aggregated web reports consolidate data from all schools, at the ward, council, region or national levels. Reports are powered by SAP Business Objects 4.2 Enterprise.

+

bantwana
WORLD EDUCATION
INITIATIVE

DEWS Module
- Initial student registration & support needs information
- Continuous /ongoing services tracking
- Resolution/case closure

Scaling the DEWS Mechanism Nationally in Tanzania

After three years of testing and refinement with *Waache Wasome* project schools in five councils, WEI/Bantwana's **Dropout Early Warning System** was integrated into Tanzania's national online School Information system (SIS) in mid-2021. The SIS enables schools to capture information about student and teachers, resources, and performance.

The Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology and the President's Office - Regional Administration and Local Government (PO-RALG) mandate that all schools, public and private, must use the SIS. Hence, integration of WEI/Bantwana's DEWS module implies huge scope for scale up, as hundreds of Tanzanian schools obtain access to these essential tools and processes for preventing dropout and documenting needed supportive actions and responses.

The idea for including DEWS tools in the SIS came from project-trained teachers, who have worked closely with *Waache Wasome* on dropout prevention, preventing and reducing school-related gender-based violence, and supporting student academic and social asset-building clubs. Given the value of DEW's pro-active, early warning approach, and wanting to reduce the need for parallel paperwork, the WEI/Bantwana team liaised with PO-RALG to explore possible integration. In early 2021, our staff oriented software and coding specialists from PO-RALG on the basics of DEWS, and helped to streamline tools and recording parameters. In June 2021, the system was tested with teachers from 13 schools in Arusha City and their inputs were taken into consideration.

DEWS went "live" on SIS in August 2021, and WEI/Bantwana continued to support partner schools and Council Education and IT officers in monitor its use to troubleshoot and propose any needed refinements through the end of that school year.

Identified & Supported through DEWS*

6,493 secondary school students

(3,060 girls, 3,433 boys) at risk of dropout due to lack of resources, orphan-hood, abuse, domestic violence, distance from school, etc.

* Jan. 2019 - Dec. 2021

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Learn more at www.bantwana.org or contact us at bantwana@worlded.org.