



Supporting Adolescents to Complete Secondary School (SACS)

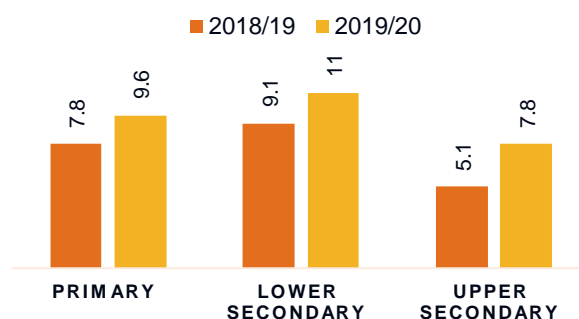


SACS implementation areas:
Huye, Nyanza, Ruhango,
Karongi, Nyabihu and Ngororero
districts in Rwanda

Following the increased school dropout and non-enrollment caused by the COVID-19 crisis, SACS supported adolescents by organizing “return to school” campaigns in collaboration with local government authorities. SACS also provided parents of vulnerable adolescents with small grants to engage in **income generating activities**, increasing their incomes and boosting recovery from the economic shocks caused by the pandemic.

The **Supporting Adolescents to Complete Secondary School (SACS)** project was a Start Small Foundation funded **COVID-19 response project (2021 – 2023; USD 1,033,610)** aimed at addressing educational needs and mitigate negative impacts of COVID-19 on students, teachers, and families living in poverty in six Rwandan districts. The project aimed to **support 71,994 adolescents, aged 10-19 years to complete lower secondary in 9-and 12-year basic education schools.**

Following the increased school dropout and non-enrollment caused by the



Rwanda experienced a nationwide increase in school dropout rates in 2020. *Source: Ministry of Education*

To develop adolescent life skills and ability to remain in school, SACS worked in collaboration with the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion (MIGEPROF) to amplify its national adolescent mentorship initiative. The project **covered 245 schools, formed 2,105 clubs where 72,089 (40,089 girls & 32,000 boys) students**

93% and 68% of students are members of school clubs and school savings clubs, respectively.

(56% girls) participated in activities for leadership skills development; received psychosocial support; and had access to training on savings, financial literacy, and entrepreneurship through adolescent Savings and Loans Associations. The project trained 1,417 Peer Mentors from each target school to support adolescents in managing stress, anxiety, and depression, referring to psychosocial counsellors when needed. Students emphasized the importance of participating in school clubs that aided interaction, dialogue, and mentorship opportunities,

contributing to higher attendance and higher retention rates in the program schools. The average dropout rate in SACS-supported lower secondary schools stands at only 2.3% compared to 11% nationally.

Key results



Retention

97.7% retention rate (97.3% girls, 98.3% boys) among assessed lower secondary students in project schools vs. 11% nationally*



Knowledge on SHR

SRH knowledge increased significantly from 54% to 91% for girls & 61% to 93% for boys, from baseline to endline**



Reporting GBV

The proportion of students acknowledging the right to report GBV cases increased from 97% to 100% among girls & 97% to 100% for boys from baseline to endline



Savings

Adolescents' average savings rose from Rwf 2,088 to Rwf 8,622 and parents' average savings rose from Rwf 5,293 to Rwf 12,246***



Improved leadership skills

Youth Leadership Index score increased from 63% to 70% between baseline and endline



Improved parent-child relationship

60.2% to 89.7% increase in parents reporting enhanced ability to have dialogues with adolescents

* **National Data:** 2020/21 Education Statistical Yearbook – Ministry of Education, Rwanda

** **SRH knowledge** is measured here by the percentage of adolescents who were able to correctly answer all three SRH related questions, (1) if a girl can get pregnant the first time she has sex, (2) if condoms can be used more than once, and (3) If used properly, whether condoms can prevent pregnancy.

*** **Exchange Rate:** 1,169.41 Rwf = 1 USD

Anxiety & Depression

While SACS had a major impact among students, anxiety and depression remain high. Overall, **58% of the adolescents reported experiencing depression**. The level of anxiety among adolescents increased from 62% at baseline to 68% at endline, reflecting the impact of the post-COVID shocks.

SACS reached a total of 87,252 in & out of school adolescents (46,137 girls and 41,115 boys), surpassing its original targets. SACS has also managed to improve household and community relationships - supporting nearly 17,000 parents from vulnerable households were linked to participate in Village Saving and Loan Associations (VSLAs) to improve their economic condition, thus enabling adolescents to stay in school and transition into upper grades. SACS has also promoted a culture of savings and entrepreneurship among students and parents.

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