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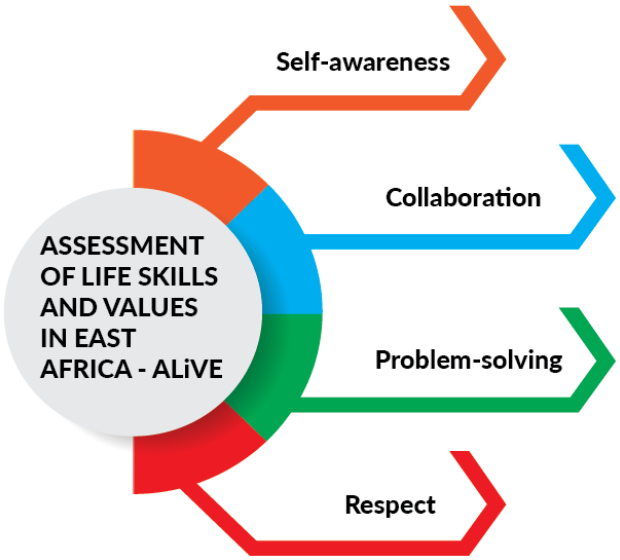
Regional Education Learning Initiative



UNDERSTANDING COLLABORATION IN THE UGANDAN CONTEXT: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY

A Report for the Assessment of Life Skills and Values in East Africa (ALiVE) Project

COLLABORATION - UGANDA

This report is a product of the Regional Education Learning Initiative (RELI). RELI, through the Values and Life Skills (VaLi) thematic group, aimed to collaborate with local leaders to cocreate and develop contextualized assessments in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. The RELI project, Assessment of Life Skills and Values in East Africa (ALiVE), has three main objectives: (a) develop contextualized, open-source tools for the assessment of life skills and values in the East African context; (b) generate large-scale data on life skills and values across the three countries; and (c) use this data to inform change and build capacities within the VaLi-ALiVE member organizations.

Prepared by

Prof. Monica Fontana and Francesca Peverelli, Luigi Giussani Institute of Higher Education, Kampala (Uganda)

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1.1 Brief Description of the Project

The Regional Education Learning Initiative (RELI), through the Values and Life Skills (VaLi) thematic group, intends to collaborate with local leaders to cocreate and develop contextualized assessments in Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania. The initiative, Assessment of Life Skills and Values in East Africa (ALiVE), has three objectives: gathering information (and knowledge), building community, and advocacy. These three broad objectives mirror RELI's three pillars: being a hub for knowledge, transforming member organizations, and influencing policy. Over three years (2020–2023), ALiVE will do the following: (a) develop contextualized, open-source tools to assess life skills and values in the East African context; (b) generate large-scale data on life skills and values across the three countries; and (c) use this data to inform change and build capacities within the VaLi-ALiVE member organizations. These organizations will advocate for the three national education systems to focus on and produce these competencies, to inform regional policy throughout the East African Community, and to inform global thinking on how to measure life skills and values as *relevant and effective* learning outcomes.

ALiVE will be a context-relevant, summative assessment. The assessment will target adolescent boys and girls from ages 13 through 17 years, both in school and out of school, focusing on three competencies and one value: *self-awareness, problem solving, collaboration,* and *respect*. Embracing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) spirit of *leaving no one behind*, the initiative will conduct the assessment at the household level. The aspiration is that this will be a simple and easy-to-use tool, making it feasible and affordable to conduct an assessment on a national scale.

The first phase in developing the contextualized assessment tools was to conduct ethnographic interviews across the three countries with three categories of informants: adolescents, parents, and key persons such as teachers, social workers, youth patrons or matrons, among others. The interviews were to gauge participant perceptions and understandings of the selected ALiVE competencies: *self-awareness, collaboration, problem solving,* and *respect*.

1.2 The General Objective of the Contextualisation Study

The study aimed to achieve a contextualised understanding of *collaboration* in Uganda to determine the skill structure and derive the best tools for a large-scale assessment of *collaboration* in the three countries.

1.3 Research Questions

The study sought to answer the following questions:

(i) How do adolescents, parents, and other key actors in Uganda define and understand *collaboration*?
(ii) How do the common definitions differ across the participants' categories (adolescents, parents, and key persons), genders, and locations?
(iii) Which subskills emerge from the common understanding of this skill, and how do they vary across the participants' categories, genders, and locations?
(iv) What are the common dispositions and values identified by the different categories of the participants based on gender and location?
(v) Which support systems and other factors help the adolescents develop *collaboration* skills?
(vi) What are the common methods identified and used by the participants to assess *collaboration* skills in adolescents?

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Study Design

Since the purpose of this study is to learn about and reflect on a certain social group's way of life and understanding, a qualitative approach and an ethnographic design were adopted to explore and collect participants' perceptions and understandings of the selected ALiVE competence in the local context of Uganda. Ethnography is a widely used research tradition in the social sciences. It can be defined as the study of social interactions, behaviours, and perceptions that occur within social groups, teams, organizations, and communities (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Therefore, the ultimate goal of this tradition is to analyse and form a detailed understanding of the particularities of a given social group. That is why we considered this the most appropriate design for conducting the present study.

2.2 Study Sites

The study was conducted in 5 districts in Uganda, which were sampled based on their status as rural or urban, their economic activity (pastoralist, core-urban, agricultural), and their distance from Kampala. Two villages in each district were randomly sampled. Table 1 summarizes the five locations.

2.3 Study Population

The study population consisted of adolescent boys and girls from 13 through 17 years of age, both in and out of school, parents, and key persons (people close to the adolescents such as teachers, social workers, youth patrons or matrons in religious communities, and others).

Table 1: Data Collection Regions, Sites, and Selection Criteria

CRITERIA	REGION AND DISTRICT
Core urban characteristics, low-income areas within the capital city	Region: Central District: Kampala
Core rural characteristics, agriculture-rich, and within 100 km from the capital city	Region: East District: Jinja
Core rural, agriculture-rich, 300–400 km from the capital city	Region: North District: Oyam
Core rural, pastoralist areas, 400–800 km from the capital city	Region: North (Karamoja) District: Moroto
With different characteristics from all mentioned above	Region: West District: Kikuube

Given that the study was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic period, researchers specifically selected districts where RELI members were working, due to ease of contact, logistics, and observance of the COVID-19 health protocols.

2.4 Study Population, Sampling, and Sample

The study population consisted of adolescent boys and girls from 13 through 17 years of age (both in and out of school), parents, and key persons (people close to the adolescents such as teachers, social workers, youth patrons or matrons in religious communities, and others). Research assistants selected interview participants using systematic sampling based on a list of target participants per category in each village.

In each sampled village, researchers targeted at least 4 interviews with 2 adolescents of each gender (combining those in primary, secondary, vocational training centre, and out of school); 4 interviews with 2 parents of the sampled adolescents and 2 of non-sampled adolescents (while combining fathers and mothers); and 4 interviews with key persons (teachers, social workers, and others who consistently work with adolescents, from both genders). This resulted in a target of 24 participants per district for the one-on-one interviews. The sample totalled around 120 participants for the interviews. Given the prevailing challenges, however, the study reached a total of 120 participants in the interviews. The foregoing information is summarized in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Number of Participants Interviewed per Category and Site

District	Adolescents		Key persons		Parents		Total		
	Boys	Girls	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Overall
Jinja	04	04	04	04	03	05	11	13	24
Kikuube	03	05	05	03	00	08	08	16	24
Moroto	04	04	04	04	03	05	11	13	24
Kampala	04	04	03	05	04	04	11	13	24
Oyam	04	04	06	02	05	03	15	09	24
Total	**19**	**21**	**22**	**18**	**15**	**25**	**56**	**64**	**120**

Notably, out of 120 participants for the one-on-one interviews, only 95 (43 men and 52 women) were interviewed on *collaboration*.

In addition to the interviews, 20 focus group discussions (FGDs)—(10 FGDs for adolescents and 10 FGDs for parents)—were conducted. For the FGDs, 3 participants (adolescents or parents) were selected to join the other 4 who participated in the interviews. FGDs in each village ultimately consisted of 5 to 7 participants.

2.5 Data Collection Methods and Tools

- **Interviews**: One-on-one interviews with adolescents, parents, and key persons were conducted to determine their understanding of *collaboration* skills in Uganda's context. Researchers used an interview guide that was developed prior to data collection.

- **Focus Group Discussion (FGD)**: Discussions with adolescents and parents were conducted in order to cultivate a deeper understanding about the issues that emerged from the interviews. Researchers developed and used specific FGD guides for each site and its interviews.

2.6 Training of Research Teams and Fieldwork

In each district, there was need for an experienced qualitative researcher to take the lead in interviewing and for a research assistant to provide support in terms of logistics, recording, and note-taking. At least one of the researchers needed to be fluent in the language of the study location. To ensure the collection of quality data, a 2-day researcher-training session (covering 4 hours per day) of the researchers was conducted via Zoom on 19 and 21, 2020. The training emphasised the background and objectives of the ALiVE project, the research approach and methodology, data collection methods and tools, recording and note-taking techniques, ethical issues, and more.

Before going into the field, the research assistants were provided with resources to finalize preparatory work that included notifying local authorities, listing, sampling, and notifying the

sampled participants. Data collection was conducted in the 5 districts between November 2 and 6, 2020. The exercise lasted two days in each village. The first day was spent on the in-depth interviews, while the second day was reserved for the FGDs, which were conducted at a safe and central location within the village. Interviews and FGDs were audio-recorded and hand-written for backup and to ensure accuracy during translation or transcription.

2.7 Coding System and Data Analysis

A coding system was established to analyse the 95 interviews on *collaboration* following the method of thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is "a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79).

The analysis was centrally conducted for all the interviews and FGDs from the three countries. For the analysis of the interviews, we established a coding system based on *contextual (descriptive) variables*, including (a) category of informants, (b) sex of the participants, (c) country, and (d) district. In *quantitative* terms, the contextual variables were analysed descriptively (in terms of frequency and percentage) using Microsoft Excel and Dedoose.

The coding system also considered *content variables* related to (e) definition and process described by the participants, (f) subskills, (g) dispositions and values, (h) behaviours, (i) related skills, (j) support systems and factors for enhancing *collaboration* skills, and (k) methods to assess the skill in adolescents. In *qualitative* terms as recommended by Gibbs (2018) and using the Dedoose program (version 8.3.41.), we performed an analysis of the understandings of *collaboration* as presented in the interviews, paying specific attention to elements of contextualisation in contrast with what has been found in the literature review.

These predetermined categories emerged from the analysis of five interviews (at least 1 from each category) conducted by nine research assistants to achieve an inter-rater reliability in the coding system. Apart from these predetermined categories, others emerged from the main topic of *collaboration*; this report thus addresses the local perspective of the skill structure. The process of analysis involved the identification of patterns of similar ideas, concepts, or topics to establish the connection and integration of information with the theoretical foundation (Miles & Huberman, 1994) as well as a suggested indication or evidence for contextualisation. The codes were created following the criteria for qualitative evaluation: dependency, transferability, credibility, and verifiability (Duffy, 1987).

Furthermore, the *synthetic analysis* followed the three stages pointed out by Thomas and Harden (2008): the free "line-by-line" coding of the primary interviews, including sentences or paragraphs as the analysis unit, the organization of these "free codes" into related areas to construct "descriptive themes," and the development of "analytical themes" (p. 4). The analytical themes go beyond the findings of the primary interviews and generate additional concepts, understandings, or hypotheses. The analytical themes are then related to the recommendations for assessment, intervention, and policymaking to contextualise *collaboration* skills in East Africa.

In addition, the researchers used the *triangulation* technique (Flick, 1992, 2004) to search, identify, select, evaluate, and summarise data from interviews, based on pre-defined criteria and emergent categories.

Finally, *data reduction* was applied through a mixed-method analysis: (a) the initial subgroup classification of the interviews is based on each participants category (adolescents, parents, and key persons), sex, and district; and (b) data reduction involves techniques of extracting and coding data. These mixed-method analyses were carried out using the Dedoose program, which allows for the analysis of the frequency of the codes in terms of the demographic information of the participants and allows for the integration of qualitative and quantitative data. In this regard, three types of descriptive analysis were conducted: code co-occurrence, cross-tabulation of the code and participants' characteristics, and cross-tabulation of the code and 2 or more participants' characteristics.

Notably, for each of the quotations in the findings, we have included a code that helps in identifying the category of the participant. In each code, the first letter represents the country (Uganda), the second letter represents the category of participants (e.g., 'A' for adolescent, 'P' for parent, and 'K' for key person), and the number represents the number assigned to the participant.

2.8 Ethical Considerations

The research team upheld approaches that address ethical considerations in dealing with different categories of participants. These included obtaining informed consent, ensuring the confidentiality of information obtained from the participants, compensating the participants (both monetarily and non-monetarily), and ensuring voluntary participation. Precautions were taken to adhere to the COVID-19 guidelines issued by the Ministry of Health at that time, especially those of not exceeding 15 persons for every gathering, wearing masks, physical distancing, and the washing and sanitizing of hands.

3 FINDINGS

3.1 General Characteristics of the Participants

Overall, 95 participants (47 men and 48 women) were interviewed on *collaboration* skills. Thirty-two of these were adolescents (16 boys and 16 girls), 32 were parents (11 men and 21 women), and 31 were key persons (20 men and 11 women). Furthermore, the average ages (in years) of the participants were 15.6 for adolescents (15.9 for boys and 15.2 for girls; SD=1.6), 41.6 for parents (37.6 for men and 43.7 for women; SD=10.8), and 34.5 for key persons (35.0 for men and 33.6 for women; SD=8.4).

3.2 Codes and Central Themes in Collaboration

3.2.1 Definition and Process

The first category identified during the coding process concerns the contextualised definition of collaboration. It includes the local-language definition and the process involved in the collaborative experience. This theme concerns the codes and the analysis of the definitions of collaboration provided by the participants.

As presented in the previous sections, 95 people including parents, teenagers, and key persons defined collaboration, either based on their understanding of the concept and personal experiences or offering examples of people they consider strong collaborators.

The analysis reveals the various ways in which participants defined collaboration and the term (and meaning) they usually use in their local languages. Within this category (definition), 6 codes emerged indicating common features of their understanding of the skill. In some cases, the participants' responses are complete definitions, while in other cases they are practical descriptions of the collaborative interactions or process: "Collaboration according to me, is a way people interact and understand one another. It can either be verbal or in sign language. That's collaboration. We can even not talk but have eye contact but we're collaborating. It's a sign of communication and we can understand ourselves" (U-K-22).[1] In cases like this, even if the definition is informal, the participant presents an effective collaborative experience that helps researchers understand the local perception of this skill. Furthermore, some interviewees report the habits of people who, in their experience, are collaborative.

[1] The first letter represents the country (Uganda), the second letter represents the category of participants (e.g., 'A' for adolescent, 'P' for parent, and 'K' for key person), and the number represents the number assigned to the participant.

Table 3: Codes That Emerged from the Participants' Definition of Collaboration

Category: Definition of collaboration Codes	**Participants (sources)**	**%**	**Excerpts**	**%**
Working or Staying together	64	77.89	73	73.73
Teamwork or Cooperation	22	23.15	24	24.24
Sharing	18	18.94	18	18.18
Helping community	10	10.52	11	11.11
Unity	7	7.36	7	7.07
Agreement	5	5.26	5	5.05
TOTAL	**95**[2]		**99**[3]	

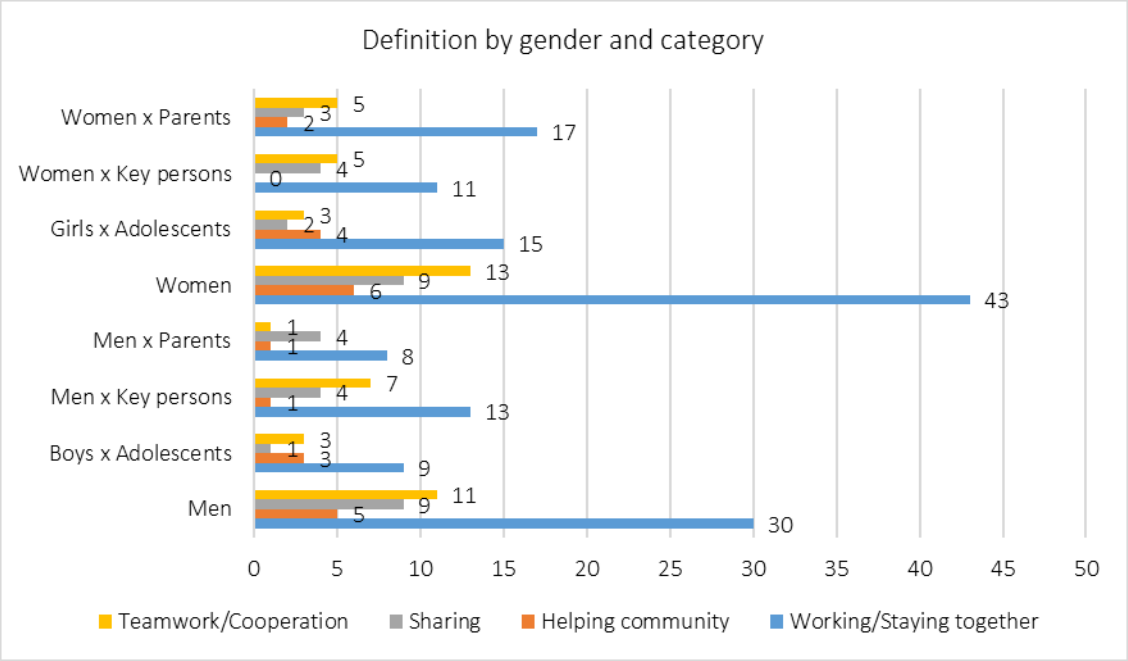
Most of the participants (64), 73.7% of the total excerpts in definition, identify collaboration as working together, while other participants added relevant components such as sharing (18.2% of the excerpts), helping each other (11.1%), or teamwork (24.2%). Two meaningful components emerged from the definitions of the participants: the importance of reaching an agreement (5 participants) and unity (7 participants).

In Figure 1 the total number of excerpts in each code by gender and category of the participants can be observed. The frequencies have been calculated to include the total number of these codes' appearances in the full interviews and not just the portion on definition, even though most of the excerpts were found to be responding to the questions on the definition of collaboration.

[2] This refers to the total number of participants who were interviewed on collaboration. It is not the sum of the observed frequencies, since more than one code in the theme could emerge from the same participant.

[3] This refers to the total number of excerpts that emerged in the definition of collaboration. It is not the sum of observed frequencies, since one excerpt could contain more than one of these codes.

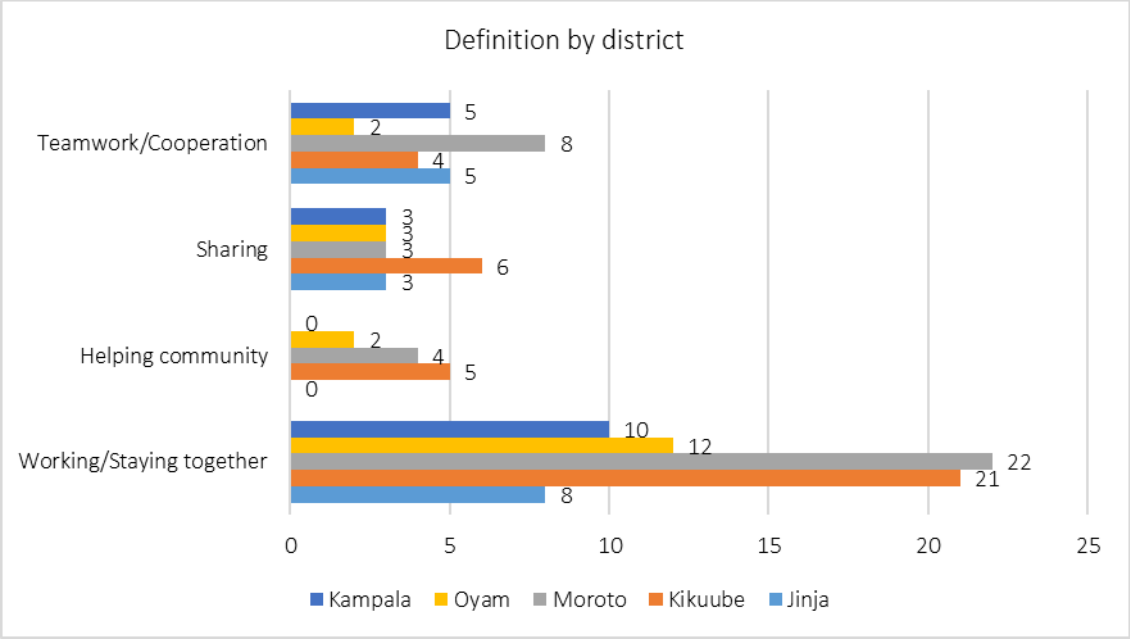
Figure 1: Frequency of Excerpts That Include Working Together, Sharing, Helping the Community, and Teamwork, by Gender and Category



The most relevant result is observed in Figure 1, where the prevalence of *working together* forms the central meaning of collaboration for both girls/women and boys/men when observing the frequency of this code regardless of category (adolescent, key person, or parent).

When we analyse the same definition's codes in the different study sites (see Figure 2), further significant findings emerge. *Working together* is still the most frequent code in defining collaboration, being especially relevant in Kikuube and Moroto. Introducing a gender perspective in the different sites does not result in any significant difference in Kampala or Moroto. Participants in Oyam mentioned "working together" and "sharing" more than participants in Jinja. For more details on descriptive analysis of the codes by gender, site, and category, refer to Appendix 1.

Figure 2: Frequency of Excerpts That Include Working Together, Helping the Community, and Teamwork, by District



Therefore, it can be stated that the most common definition that emerged from the analysis was *working with others* in a general way, while there were interviewees who mentioned the same concept, but added features underlying certain aspects, such as the "relationship" that is necessary to collaborate; for example, "Working together, how we relate you and I. Togetherness" (U-P-07). Here, working together does not mean working in general, but highlights the importance of the relationship between those collaborating. Similarly, another respondent emphasises "togetherness and the depth of the relationship between the people" who are collaborating, saying that collaboration is working hand in hand while living peacefully: "I think it means working hand in hand. I think we can say how can we work together? How can we live together peacefully?" (U-P-08).

Several times, collaboration was identified with the subskill of teamwork or cooperation, mentioned by 22 participants (24.2% of the excerpts) in the definition at the beginning of the interview. As some participants stated, collaboration means "making an alliance with others; associating and cooperating" (U-K-40) or "working in a team is synonymous with collaboration meaning that the relationship among peers is necessary in order to collaborate" (U-P-07).

The use of *teamwork or cooperation* as synonymous with collaboration could be due to the absence of a term that differentiates teamwork from collaboration in the local language. Teamwork or cooperation was associated with collaboration only in the interviews conducted

in English. This implies that there is no term in the local languages that differentiates *teamwork* and *cooperation* from *collaboration*.

A substantial number of interviewees brought up an element that is part of their everyday lives: *sharing*. It is not just about sharing material things with someone in need but encompasses the whole sphere of trusting encounters among peers. It is not necessarily aimed at solving problems but is a form of help and peer support as a way of living in groups and sharing (U-K-35). This respondent reveals that being in a group is a great opportunity to share problems. The aim of this sharing is often to get advice from other experienced community members. Similarly, collaboration takes place through sharing because "it has to do with convening people with a mission to have a pressing need discussed and resolved" (U-K-37). Collaboration here means communicating consequential decisions to others.

As can be seen in these first definitions, the community is the real protagonist in the definition of collaboration and includes a welcoming role for individuals. It is the place where everyone contributes to the common good.

This association reveals something peculiar about the identity of those involved; they conceive of themselves as members of a community: "Working together is getting along with others in making developmental decisions. For example, sharing ideas to see that we get positive outcomes and also be respected" (U-P-23).

Another relevant code that emerged in the analysis and is related to the previous ones, is *helping the community*, which is found in 11.1% of the excerpts concurrent with the definition of collaboration. *Help* is providing something to someone in need without expecting anything in return. It means being an active contributor to the community, as one parent says about someone who teaches these skills to others in order to help them start an income-generating activity: "What strikes me most is the fact that he learnt some handcrafts, so he teaches others how to beautify bottles, which he collects from various places and teaches others how he adds value to mere bottles. Sometimes he brings books and teaches them" (U-P-39).

Another feature of helping is responding to a practical need (U-P-34). A good collaborator was defined as someone attentive to the community's needs and who shares their know-how about how to contribute to the needs of others during the pandemic (U-P-39, U-P-34, U-P-06). One parent stressed the importance of having a good relationship with others for being a helpful member of the community (U-P-01).

Definition and *agreement* appeared in 5 excerpts, and even if the number of co-occurrences is not very high, the content is particularly interesting. For instance, a key person states the following:

> Of course, now, I like that working together with people who can understand you. Maybe there's some work you are working on, maybe there's some conversation you're making, each party should understand the other. You should work hand in hand. You should understand, if I have something that pains me, I tell you and if I tell you, you don't have to feel bad. And if you tell me, maybe you can advise me that we do like this, yes, you need to understand then I also need to understand you. (U-K-23)

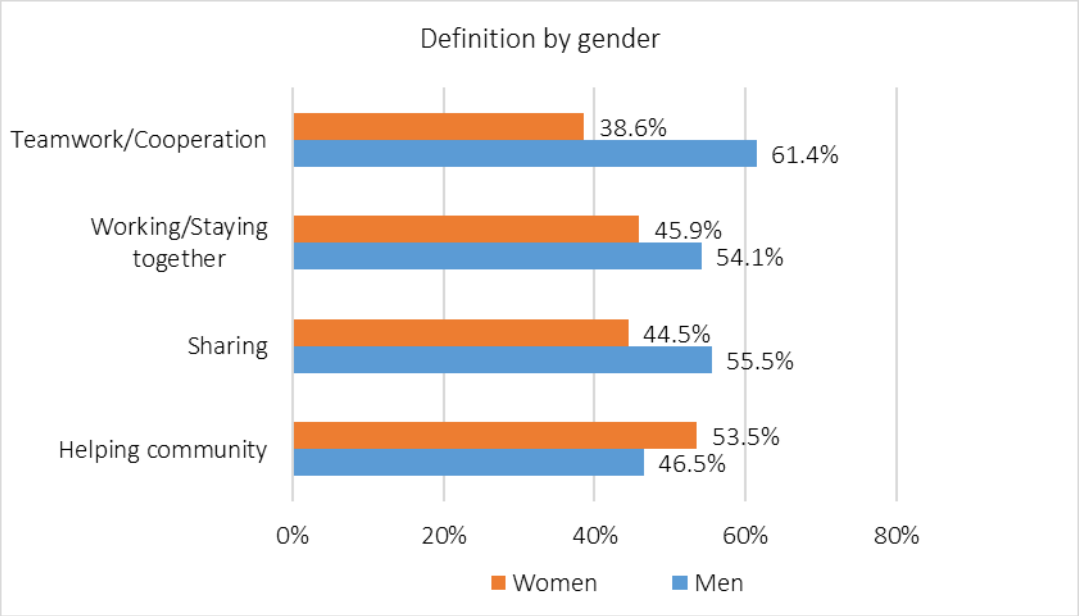
The participant emphasizes that to work together properly, it is important for the collaborators to have shared views on things and to be on good terms with one another. This means collaboration involves two-way communication.

There is a final element that is significant despite its small number of occurrences, and that is *unity.* Several participants associated the meaning of collaboration with "being together." Unity is not just being physically together but "staying peaceful at home as a family" (U-K-13). Therefore, there is a shared purpose of being together, which generates a bond.

Finally, some descriptive analyses were conducted to respond to the research questions regarding the differences between the main codes identified in defining collaboration by gender, category of participants, and district.

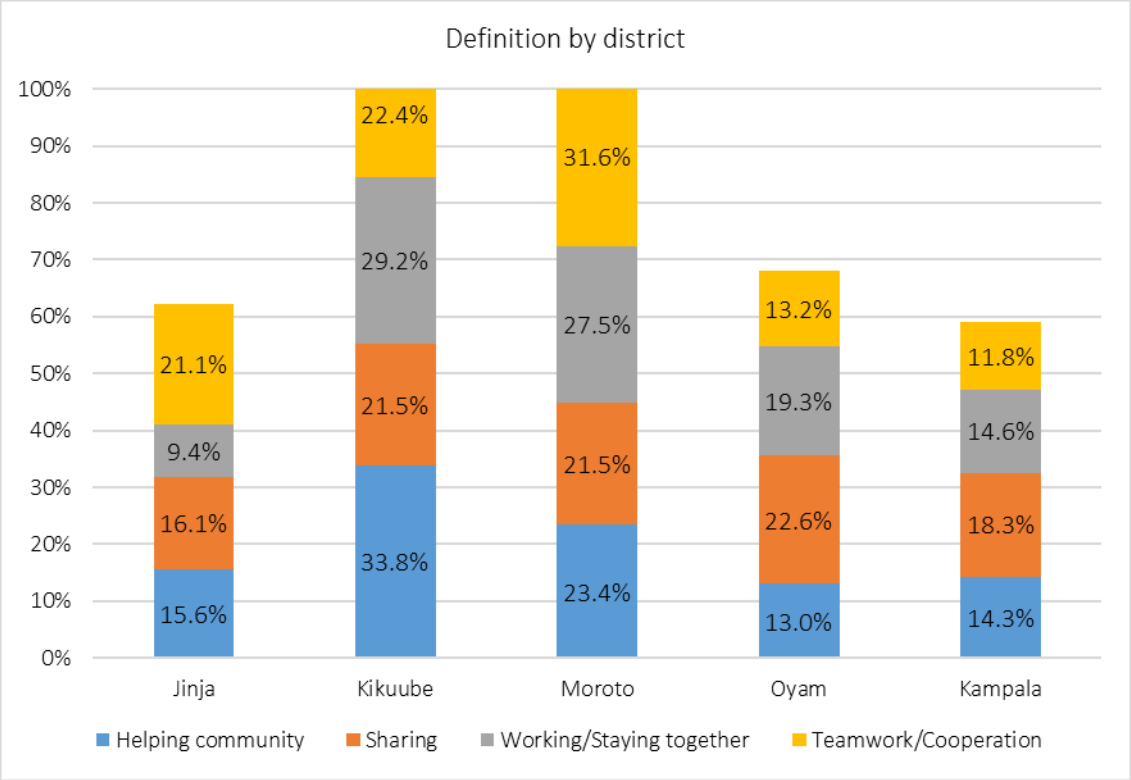
As can be observed in Figure 3 the men mentioned *teamwork*, *working together*, and *sharing* more times than the women. *Teamwork*, however, was the only code in which meaningful differences were found. Instead of *teamwork*, the women mentioned *helping the community* only a few more times than the men.

Figure 3: Percentage of Excerpts That Include Teamwork, Working Together, Sharing, and Helping the Community, by Gender



In the next Figure, we conducted a further analysis to explore the different perceptions of collaboration such as helping the community, working together, sharing, and teamwork, across the different study sites.

Figure 4: Percentage of Excerpts That Include Helping the Community, Teamwork, Working Together, and Sharing, by Site



As can be observed in Figure 4, the overall differences by site are quite relevant. Kikuube and Moroto stood out with more mentions of teamwork, working together, and helping the community: these are the biggest differences found in the interviews analysed.

Finally, regarding the category of the participants, only the prevalence of *teamwork* in the key persons (51.3%) stands out. For more details refer to Appendix 1.

Collaboration, Problems, and Problem Solving

There were 10 excerpts in which collaboration co-occurs with problem solving, and 8 in which it co-occurs with problems—meaning that some participants associate collaborative practices with problem-solving skills and the problems of everyday life as well as the personal challenges of community members. This observation offers an interesting perspective on the concrete features of community life in Uganda.

Here emerges a peculiar trait of the characterisation of collaboration that helps to complete its contextualised definition; that is, the relationship between collaboration and the sphere of problem solving is linked to the connection between the definition of collaboration as “helping

the community," highlighted in the previous section. Collaboration is not associated with an extrinsic goal but is considered intrinsic to community life, thus linked to the needs of its members to solve a common problem. A clear example of that was found in some of the parents' interviews, which defined collaboration as "coming together as a family to solve problems" (U-P-30) or "being together, for example growing up and fighting battles together as a family to overcome problems" (U-P-31).

Problems and challenges, both personal and communal, are the elements that trigger the mechanisms of collaboration. In this sense, collaboration and problem solving have a common origin: the need. The need is something that occurs in reality and that community members are called to face together. Needs come from reality and not from an extrinsic project; hence it is not an external goal.

Similarly, some adolescents (e.g., U-A-21, U-A-22, U-A-35) identified collaborative behaviour with the ability to solve problems: "They solve their problems, and they also work together" (U-A-22). Some interviewees responded by narrating typical events or situations to explain what collaboration means. This glimpse into their lives shows problems and challenges up close, revealing how they deal with them collectively.

The most interesting aspect of the problems reported in the excerpts was the problem-solving strategy. First, the problem is shared with the members of a community—an element found in most of the excerpts as can be observed in these examples:

> I could be having an idea of starting a farm but with no capital and then share the idea with someone, and then this other person could tell me that he has the money. We can then collaborate on such grounds. I have the idea, he/she has the money. (U-P-38)

> Collaboration is like friendship. You befriend your neighbour, you work together, do business together, cultivate together. Help one another when you have a problem, say you need money, he can lend you. (U-K-12)

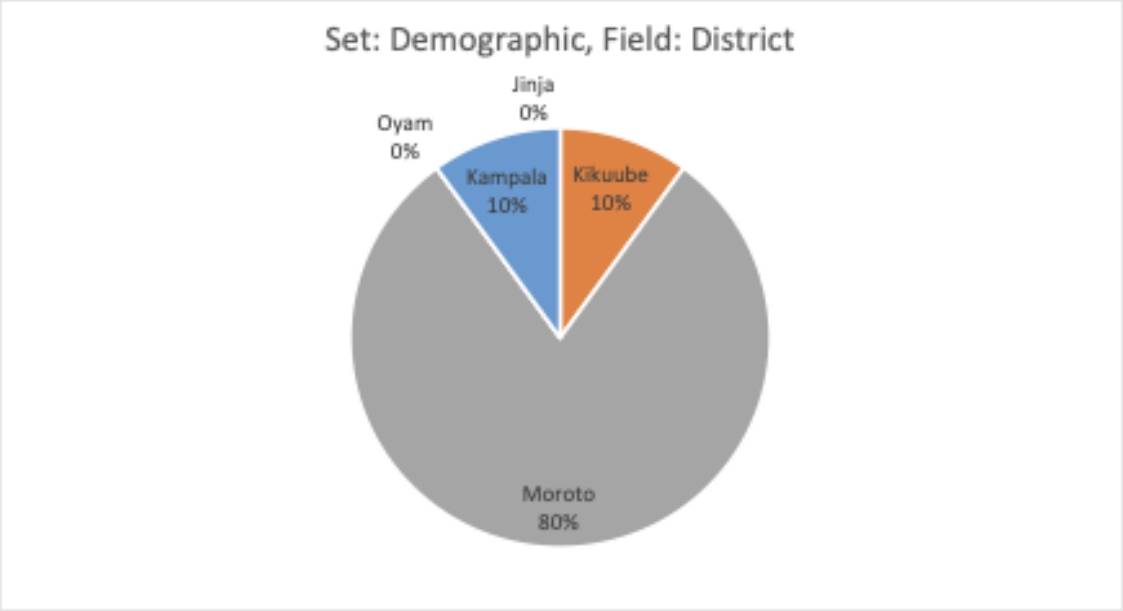
The strategy stated by the participants is to share and solve problems as a community:

> More so if you engage yourself in community work, like if you identify a problem, like you sensitize people to come together and solve those problems at hand in the community. Take an example, for us here we have a borehole where we fetch water and sometimes you find that borehole is so dirty and needs somebody to clean up or to spearhead the cleaning then you mobilise some other members that use the same borehole to come together and even sweep and clean the place. (U-K-08)

Researchers also conducted a descriptive analysis to explore the presence of problem solving as part of the meaning of collaboration, using the following descriptors: district, category, gender, and age of the participants.

As can be observed in Figure 5, only a few participants from Kikuube, Moroto, and Kampala mentioned the problem-solving process as part of the concept of collaboration.

Figure 5: Percentage of Excerpts That Include Problem Solving in the Meaning of Collaboration by District



Though a very small number of participants mentioned this concept when defining collaboration, it was mostly indicated by women (7 excerpts out of 10).

In conclusion, we can say that the interviewees did not explicitly mention problem solving as a process with different steps for reaching a solution, but rather that most of them view problem solving as closely connected to collaboration. In fact, the whole process of identifying and solving a problem takes place collaboratively in the community to which every individual belongs.

The community itself is conceived as a place to entrust problems; it is not the lone individual who must solve them. This is possible because the community is made up of "similar" people, and there is a *community who solves problems* through mutual help. The community is a comparative term and a resource for the individual: an entity fuelled by the contributions and the needs of each of its members.

3.2.2 Subskills

Table 4: Categories and Codes That Emerged as Subskills of Collaboration

Categories: Subskills Codes		**Participants (sources)**	**%**	**Excerpts**	**%**
RELATIONSHIP SKILLS	Relationship skills	49	51.57	68	28.93
	Expressive communication	29	30.52	39	16.59
	Receptive communication	30	31.57	36	15.31
	Guidance and counselling	21	22.10	26	11.06
	Teamwork or Cooperation	48	50.52	52[4]	22.12
SELF MANAGEMENT	Goal setting	8	8.42	9	3.82
	Planning	3	3.15	3	1.27
	Self-confidence	6	6.31	7	2.97
	Self-regulation	4	4.21	5	2.12
TOTAL		**95**		**235**	

Figures 6 and 7 present a general view of the frequencies of the skills mentioned by the participants by gender, category, and district.

[4] This 52 corresponds to 76 occurrences of teamwork in the interviews, minus 24, which are the times *teamwork* is included in the definition.

Figure 6: Frequency of Excerpts That Include Subskills of Collaboration by Gender and Category

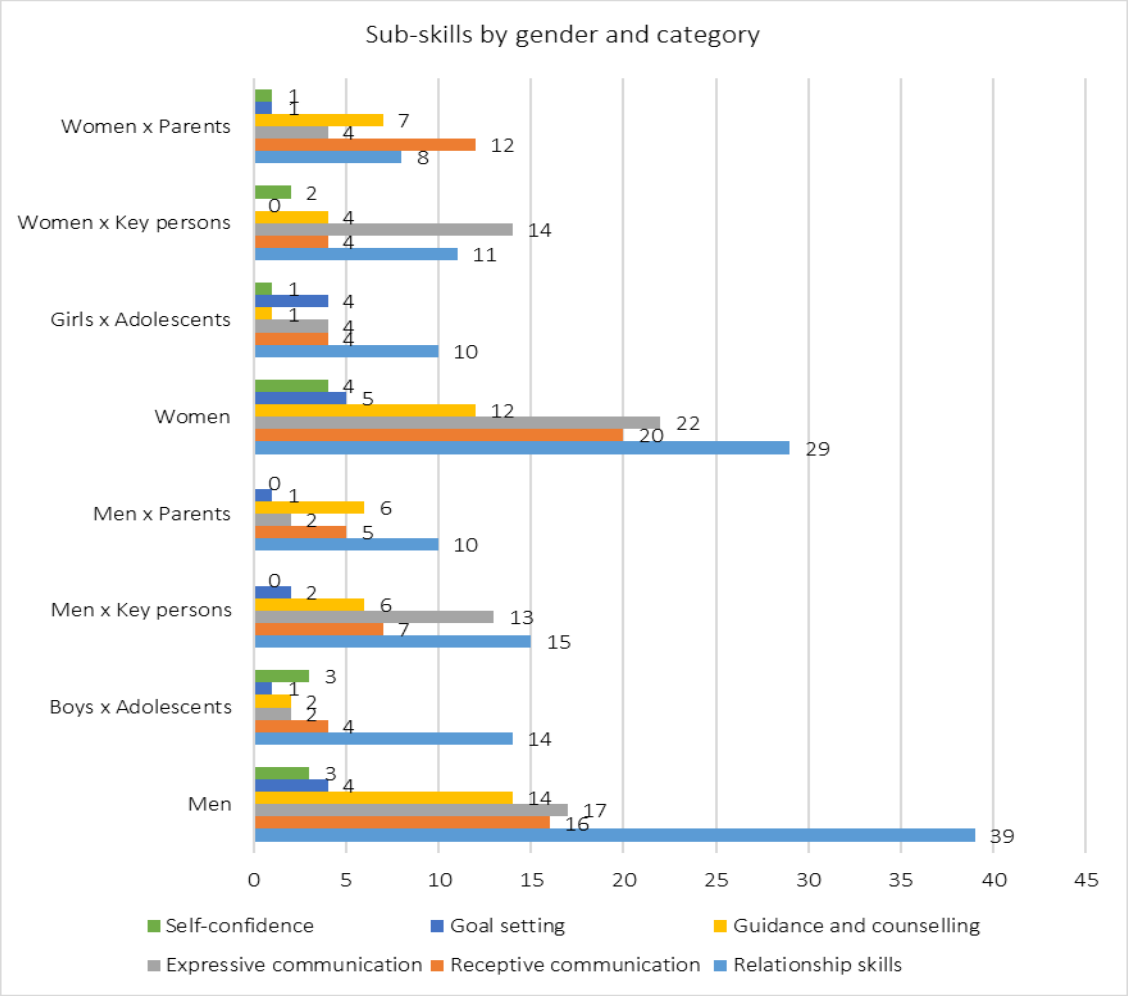
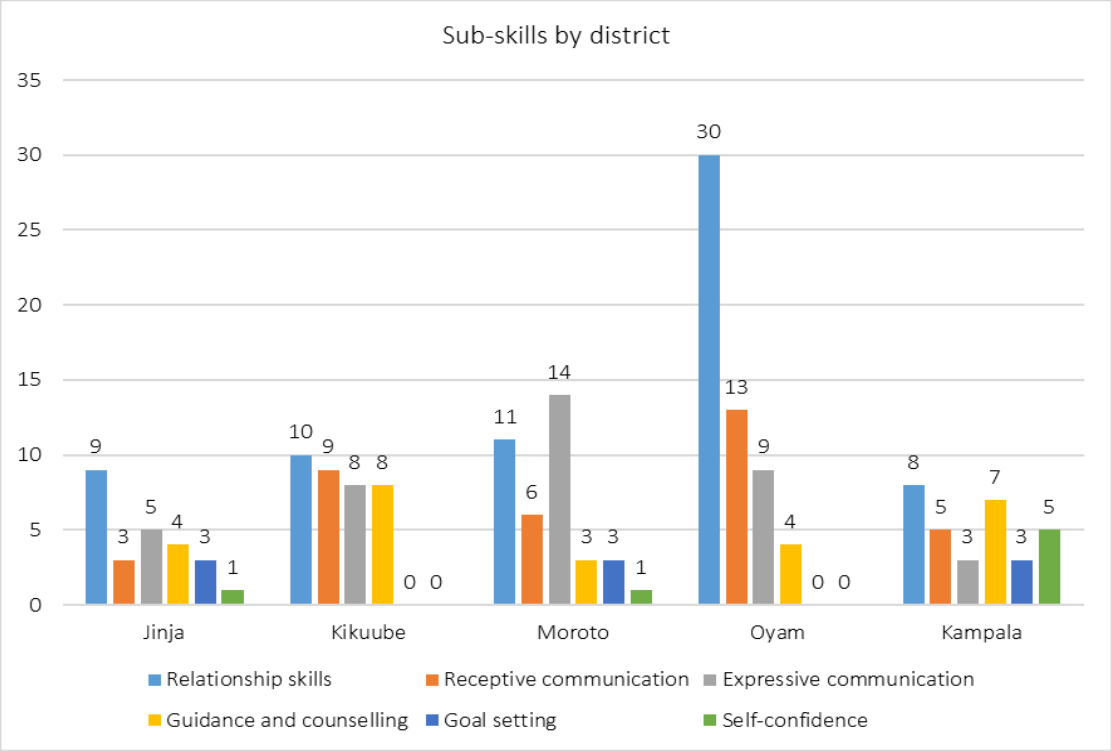


Figure 7: Frequency of Excerpts That Include Subskills of Collaboration by District



The analysis of the data highlights the *relationship skills* required to be a good collaborator. These skills were mentioned by both men and women, particularly in Oyam. As can be seen from Table 4 and Figures 6 and 7, the most important skills are interpersonal. The macro category of relationship skills contains other skills such as expressive and receptive communication and offering guidance and counselling. Only a small number of excerpts instead focus on goal setting or planning as a collaborative skill that can be classified as self-management.

An interesting aspect is the reference to *guidance and counselling*: participants identified both the request and the offer of guidance as an aspect that could nourish collaboration. Here too the communal dimension of *collaboration* was predominant.

A small number of participants mentioned *goal setting* in their conception of collaboration. This data suggests a very important feature: collaboration in the Ugandan context is not linked to an extrinsic goal, but its value lies in dynamics within the community.

The relationship skills coded in the interviews are identified as real skills that must be exercised and nurtured, but sometimes they are also presented as dispositions.

As happens in the expressions used to define collaboration, the act of *being social* is highlighted as one of the most typical aspects of the collaborator. In this sense, the characteristics of a good collaborator are frequently phrased as "he should be a very social person who loves doing things with other people, but not alone, and one who likes sharing with everyone regardless of religion" (U-A-07). It is relevant to note that people must overcome social and cultural barriers to collaborate. Similarly, the behaviour expected of a good collaborator is related to socially engaged people: "They are interactive even with new people" (U-A-02). Some adolescents describe a good collaborator as someone who is naturally inclined to pay attention to the needs of others, for instance, someone who ". . . has to have the desire of being helpful to others" (U-A-11).

Various adults reported a link between collaboration and *relationship skills*, adding the element of respect as a key element of the relationship. This link between skills and the value of respect highlights an important aspect: mutual esteem and respect as the basis for a collaborative relationship. In fact, the use of skills is not enough, in light of the values needed. That is to say, collaboration is not only formal coordination, but also increases *unity* among community members. For instance, "this person should be inspiring, able to interact freely and this person should have respect for himself and others" (U-K-17); or "meeting people and greeting them properly without being proud, respecting people" (U-K-14).

Another relevant element that emerged in the analysis is the nature of *communication*. Effective collaboration always occurs through communication, whereby the interlocutor is good at both listening and responding. As one of the key persons noted about a teenager, "she has a polite way of talking with her fellows and even in respect of other people who come to associate with her, she is welcoming to them" (U-K-14).

This shows how a certain communicative attitude leads to group unity, where members collaborate to deal with the problems of the community. The act of welcoming communication plays a key role in triggering the collaborative process.

According to other participants, a good collaborator has *leadership* abilities because he must combine the efforts of several people and direct them toward a common good (e.g., U-K-08, U-K-37). One example of an excerpt related to leadership as a subskill of collaboration is as follows: "The way he communicates to the friends, he has the mobilisation skills; mobilising some others to come together and join him whenever there is a problem at hand" (U-K-08). Similarly, another participant had this to say:

> He has communication skills, which he uses to solicit football kits from various organisations. He is good at persuading. He is also a good listener. Many of his peers report their grievances to him and he listens to all their problems. (U-K-37)

A surprising fact that emerged from the analysis is the homogeneity of responses of a group of adolescents (U-A-02, U-A-05, U-A-19, U-A-22, U-A-28, U-A-35, U-A-38) when asked how to enhance collaboration among themselves. Although in slightly different terms (listening skills, being a good listener), all of them insisted on receptive communication, or rather, on the ability and willingness to listen. Listening allows one to be enriched by another person's experience. In fact, one can only become a good advisor if one is a good listener (see next paragraph). This spontaneous connection between listening skills and collaboration highlights the awareness of the fact that this connection is needed to contribute to a common mission. Indeed, some of them confirmed the link between listening and collaboration by adding the element of respect. Here we confirm that respect, as a value, is an essential element for the functioning of the collaborative process. The following excerpt presents a clear example of this conception of collaboration that includes some values as a disposition: "they have love for others in the community. They respect one another. They listen to each other. They help one another" (U-K-37).

On the other hand, some parents explore the process of listening and comparing the opinions of peers. This process is necessary to achieve a constructive result, thanks to the mutual agreement of the collaborators: "Listening to ideas that are brought in place, and after listening then understand, then you can either accept or oppose" (U-P-06).

As mentioned before, the listener is enriched by the experience of the other. The awareness that grows from listening to each other means that the experiences of the members of one's community become one's teachers. In this way, everyone is enriched and everything becomes an element of advice and correction. The process described flows in both directions: the one *requesting counselling* and the one *offering advice*.

According to some adolescents (U-A-08, U-A-35, U-K-12, U-K-12) it is precisely the act of giving advice that characterises a peer as a good collaborator. A good collaborator is able to offer a meaningful contribution to their peers.

The following excerpt presents a very good practical example of this flow of asking and giving advice in the community:

> To show that I am collaborative, let's say I am lacking something: I should be able to go to my neighbour and request for it and they give it to me. In case my fellow is having problems in her home and she wants to quit her marriage, I should be in a position to advise her not to leave, and help her settle the issue even with her husband so that she can to go back to her marriage and settle. That shows a good collaboration. If my neighbour doesn't have something, she can come and get it from me. If we had agreed to go and dig on someone's farm, we should go and work together, that is collaboration. (U-K-13)

As regards this subskill, it is important to note that the interviewees are *community centred*. Listening and offering advice are not related to the workplace but to the community.

Four out of the eight participants who considered the skill of goal setting (U-A-19, U-P-20, U-A-32, U-P-06) associated it with the definition of collaboration. For instance, “collaboration can mean working together. It can be two people sharing to achieve one common thing, one common goal” (U-P-20) or “collaboration can be explained as people working together. For example, if we are meant to clean the homes that is when we all collaborate and come with a common goal” (U-A-32).

Another adolescent provides an interesting practical example, saying that when a task is too big for one person, “people can collaborate to finish up in time and also can mean coming together to have meals as one” (U-A-19).

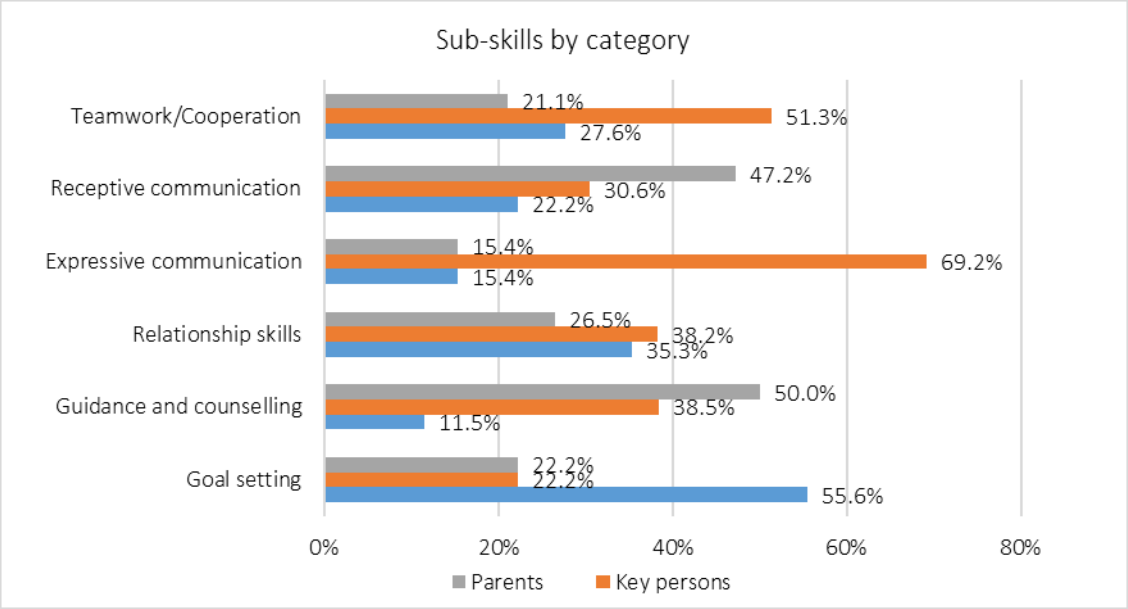
As stated in previous sections, the goal to be achieved never comes from outside the community or from a superior workplace. The goal and the need to plan belong to the individual; the individual asks for help from other community members to reach the goal. In other words, it is the community that contributes to the need of the individual, and the goal does not need to be shared for collaboration to take place.

In conclusion, to develop and exercise collaboration skills, it is necessary to have excellent relationship skills combined with the willingness to listen and the ability to ask for and offer advice and counselling. In other words, the ability to relate to peers as well as expressive and receptive communication play a key role.

Finally, one can observe from the interviews that Ugandans conceive themselves in relation to the community, and their material and emotional needs are considered and supported at the community level.

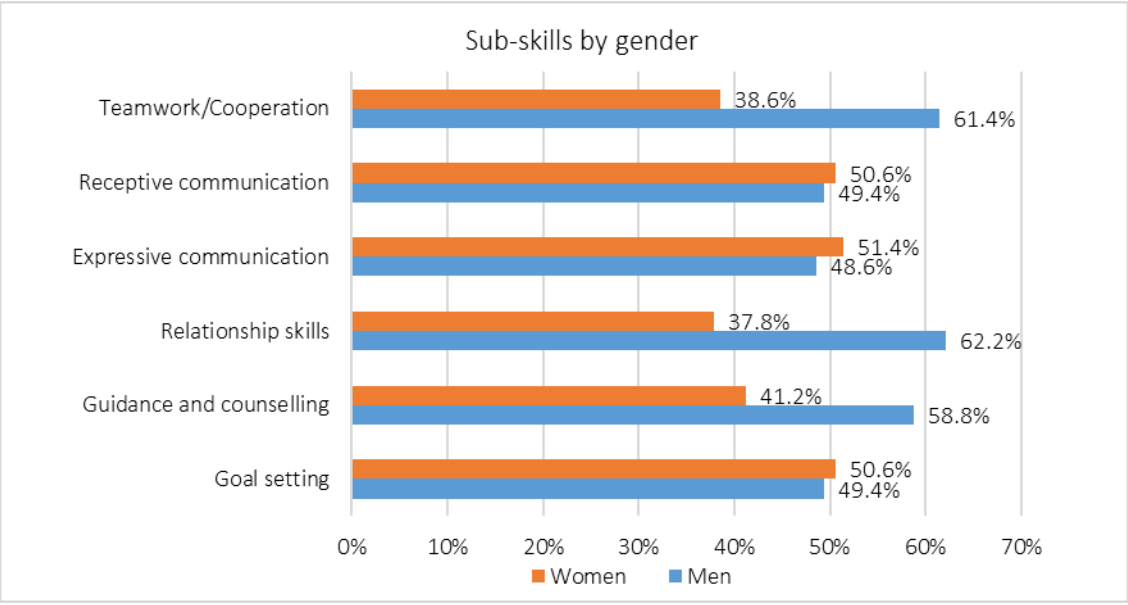
As regards the descriptive analysis, key persons placed high importance on teamwork and communication skills, while adolescents placed high importance on goal setting. Parents instead highlighted receptive communication and guidance and counselling (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Percentage of Excerpts That Include Subskills of Collaboration by Category



When data are disaggregated by gender (Figure 9), it is clear that teamwork as well as relationship skills and guidance or counselling are mentioned more frequently by men (61.4%, 62.2%, and 58.9 respectively) than women.

Figure 9: Percentage of Excerpts Including Subskills of Collaboration by Gender



As regards *expressive* and *receptive communication*, no differences were found by gender: these subskills were mostly mentioned in Moroto by men key persons. Similarly, the frequency of *receptive communication* is also reduced (36%): women of Kikuube mentioned it more, but the differences are minimal. It is important to note that the adolescents did not mention it at all. When expressive and receptive communication is compared by gender, the differences are minimal in favour of girls/women. For more details on the differences by site, refer to Appendix 2.

3.2.3 Dispositions

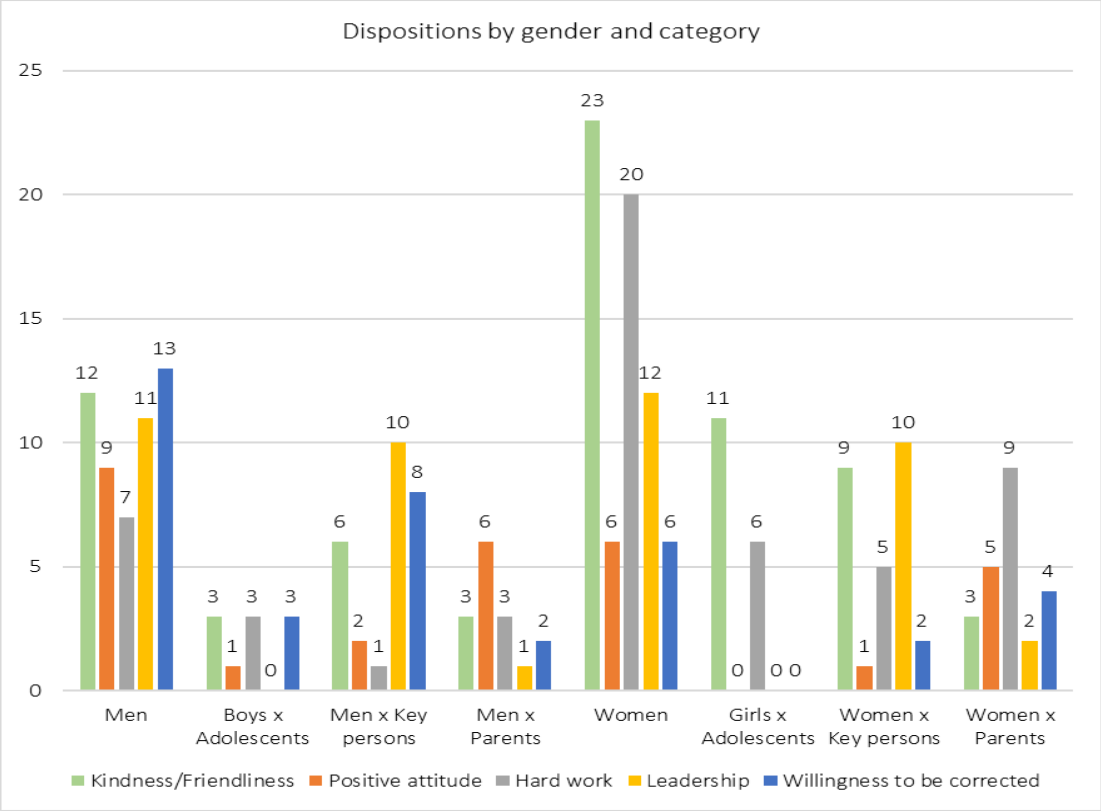
The process of learning and exercising a skill can be supported and facilitated by the presence of some dispositions. These are some aspects of a person's character that help nurture and enhance the practice of a skill like collaboration. Regarding collaboration, the dispositions the participants indicated as most relevant were *hard work*, *kindness or friendliness*, *positive attitude*, *leadership*, *passion*, and *willingness to be corrected or advised* (see excerpts or participants detail in the table below).

Table 5: Codes That Emerged as Dispositions of Collaboration

Category: Dispositions Codes	**Participants (sources)**	**%**	**Excerpts**	**%**
Kindness or Friendliness	26	27.36	35	29.91
Hard work	21	22.10	27	23.07
Leadership	14	14.73	23	19.65
Willingness to be corrected or advised	13	13.68	19	16.23
Positive attitude	13	13.68	15	12.82
Passion	6	6.31	7	5.98
TOTAL	**95**		**117**	

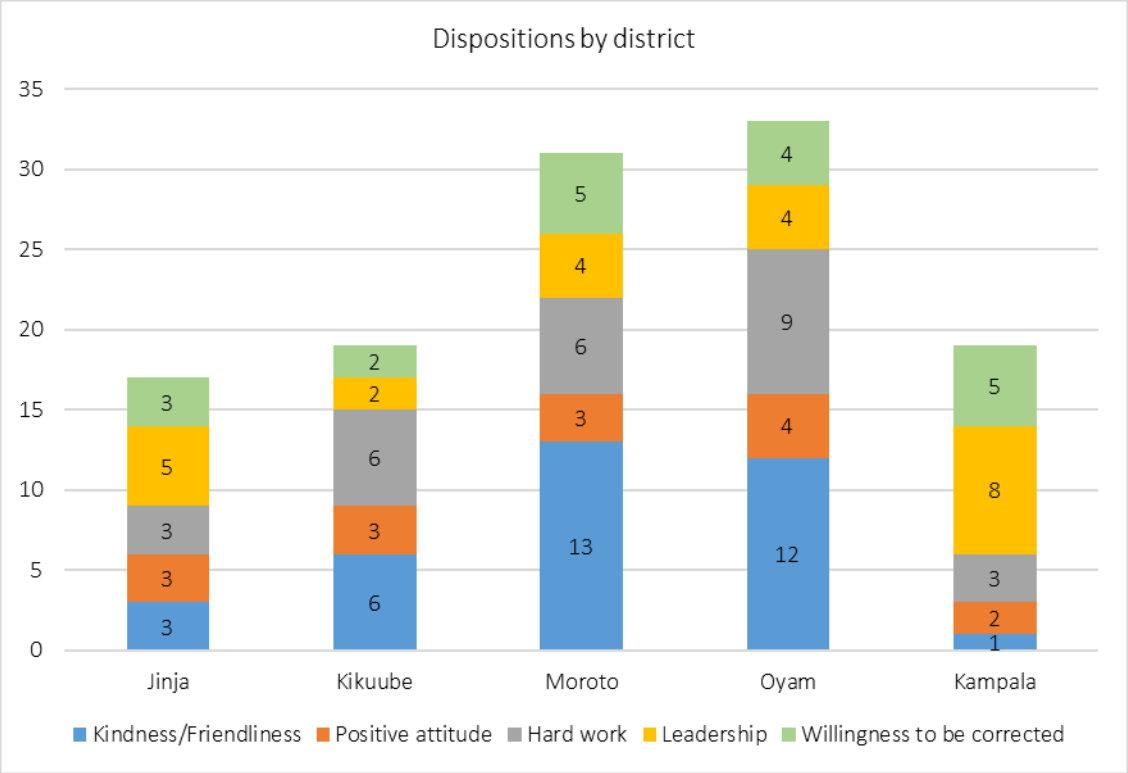
A general view of excerpts, which include dispositions of collaboration comparing gender and category (Figure 10) and comparing districts (Figure 11), is presented below:

Figure 10: Frequency of Excerpts Including Kindness or Friendliness, Positive Attitude, Hardworking, and Leadership, and Willingness to Be Corrected, by Gender and Category



It is especially significant that the prevalence of *kindness or friendliness* and *hard work* is more evident in women than in men. Key persons, both women and men, mentioned *leadership* while parents highlighted the necessity of a *positive attitude* (men) and *hard work* (women). It is worth noting that there is a low frequency of excerpts for adolescent boys while the girls mentioned the same dispositions as women, namely, *hardworking*.

Figure 11: Frequency of Excerpts Including Kindness or Friendliness, Positive Attitude, Hardworking, Leadership, and Willingness to Be Corrected, by District

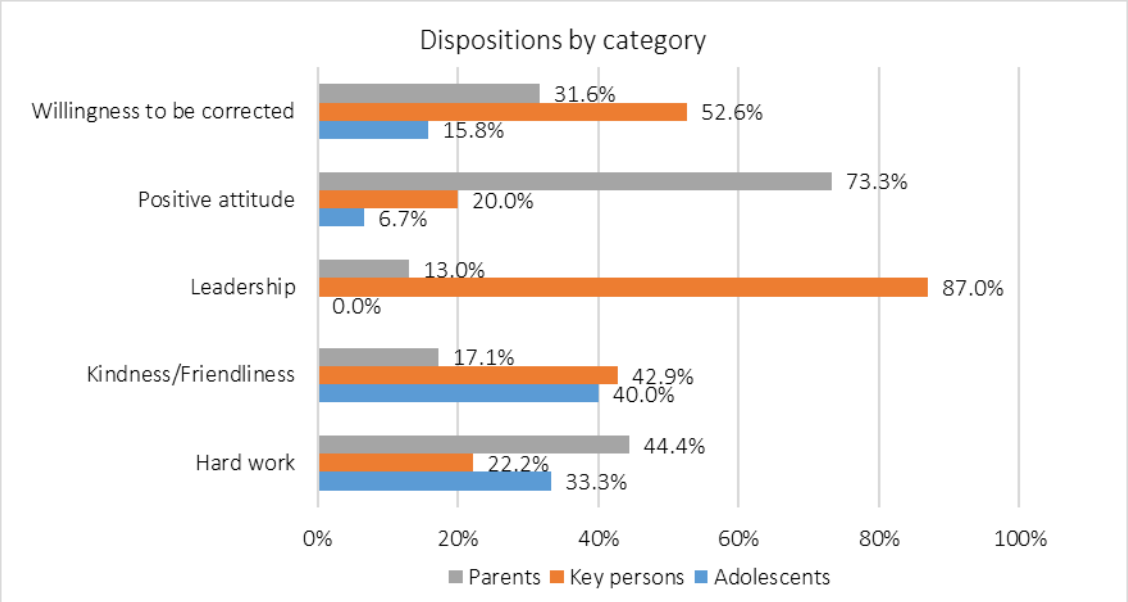


It should be noted that out of the participants who contributed to the 9 excerpts identifying *hardworking* as an important disposition of a good collaborator, 6 are adolescents (U-A-05, U-A-18, U-A-26, U-A-30, U-A-31, U-A-36). When asked about what makes a peer a good collaborator, they said that he is collaborative precisely because he is hardworking.

In other words, being collaborative is typical of a hardworking person. Similarly, some parents who were asked about the behaviour of a collaborative adolescent replied, "these adolescents have good listening skills. Does home chores and they are hardworking" (e.g., U-P-38).

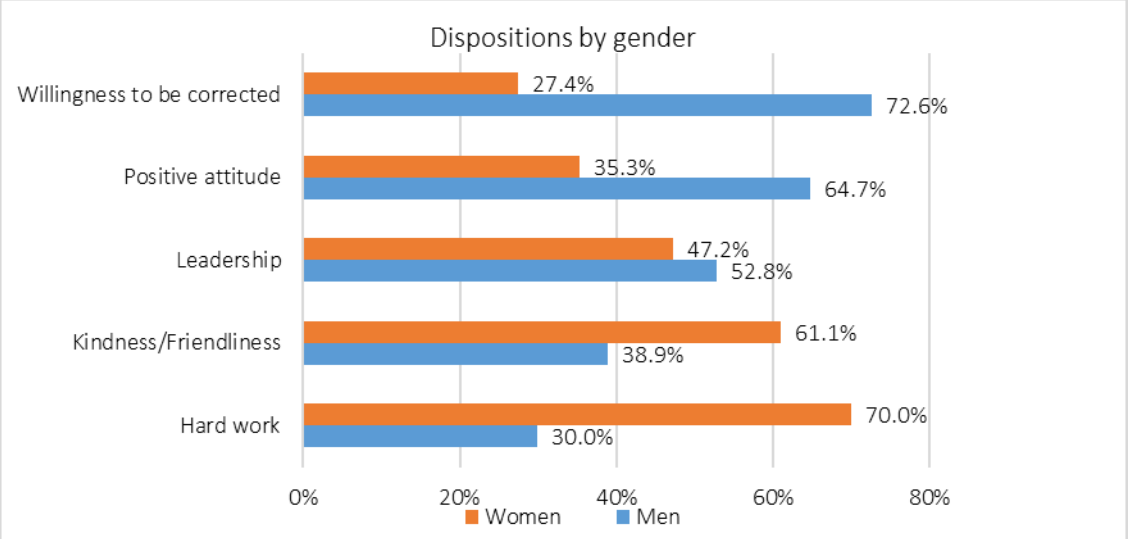
In Figure 12, disaggregated data by category and percentage help us compare the dispositions of collaboration that emerged from all categories of interviewees. In particular, adolescents mentioned *kindness or friendliness* and *hardworking*, while key persons highlighted the need for *leadership* qualities to collaborate as well as the *willingness to be corrected or advised*. The parents also mentioned *hardworking* but stood out as mentioning *positive attitude* as an important disposition for collaboration.

Figure 12: Percentage of Excerpts Including Dispositions by Category



As regards other descriptive analyses, findings in terms of gender are particularly significant, as can be observed in Figure 13. Being kind or friendly and being hardworking were highlighted mostly by the girls or women while *willingness to be corrected* or advised as well as *positive attitude* were highlighted mostly by men. No significant differences are observed for *leadership*.

Figure 13: Percentage of Excerpts That Include Dispositions of Collaboration by Gender



As can be observed in Figure 12 and Figure 13, a *positive and welcoming attitude* is another trait the participants (especially parents) identified as typical of a good collaborator. The excerpts of *positive and welcoming attitude* identified in adolescents are few but significant: collaborative people "have good behaviours. Always welcoming. And when I don't know something, you find that person, consult him. He doesn't react badly; he just gives you what is right" (U-A-08); "are easily approachable" (U-A-13); and is "a friendly person" (U-A-16). To these adolescents, this is the most important sign that a friend has strong collaboration skills. Moreover, there are some adolescents and key persons who highlight that being collaborative means avoiding fights and being peaceful (U-A-17, U-A-23, U-K-27) and who describe the person with a collaborative attitude as one who feels free to ask for and follow advice and has a curious and open attitude (U-K-09, U-K-19, U-K-23).

A key person (U-K-24) used the terms *empathy* and *sympathy* to indicate the ability of those who have collaboration skills to connect spontaneously with group members. Similarly, a parent explained that having a positive attitude means "being close to people, loving friends and associating like going for burials and sacrificing to help others. For example, if you hear something has happened at another home you go there and give support. It may not be financial help, but even physical help is important" (U-P-26). It also includes being engaged and committed to what the community members are going through: being empathetic, present, and attentive to community needs (U-P-32).

The parents also described the attitude of positive and collaborative adolescents as those who feel free to ask someone to discuss their personal issues with them (U-P-07, U-P-08). One of them summarised the value of comparison by explaining that we are not part of a community by chance but that through respect, comparison, and working together, we can enrich each other's experience:

> One, they should have a positive attitude. Whenever you have a positive attitude towards something whether towards digging or whatever, you will learn it quickly. Secondly, they should learn from their friends who are doing it best because we learn from others. We need each other. They need us, we also need them. (U-P-08)

A significant number of participants (20.89%) identified *leadership* as a typical element of a collaborative nature. A parent detailing the behaviour of a collaborative student said the following:

> I just see the way he does things in class, for example, he has shown he is really a very good group leader. When I assign them work, you find that he really tries as much as possible to do the work in groups. Even when he knows [he can do] it alone, he will always want to do it with his other friends and try to help them as much as possible. I also see him in the way he does other things outside, for example, in a

> school setting you find that he is always engaged in this other voluntary work, community work and so on and so forth and he likes doing it in a group. (U-P-26)

In addition, he is surprised by "his ability to work with his friends and to bring together his friends always to encourage them to work together as a team." Here, leadership is understood as the ability to create a group according to a need and to meet that need, or at least contribute to the solution.

Leadership also happens at school: teachers and parents shared that there are students who can command the attention of a class during a discussion. Others mobilise groups to do something that needed to be done or that was requested by an adult (U-K-17, U-K-20, U-K-28, U-K-35). Finally, according to some participants, leadership skills are accompanied by self-awareness and the ability to resolve conflicts (U-K-35, U-K-37).

Passion is an element that appears in some interviews and even if it is not numerically relevant, it reveals an indispensable element. For instance, one parent (U-P-13) stated that to enhance collaboration you need love for what you are doing. And another parent (U-P-23) highlighted a different nuance when speaking of a collaborative adolescent, saying, "They should be youths who love to study and are respectful." Passion or love for our own job or activity is identified as typical of those who are role models for collaboration. This skill requires great availability and trust in the perspective and the contribution that fellow collaborators could offer.

Similarly, two adolescents (U-A-28, U-A-30) describing what it takes to be collaborative both replied, "[a collaborative person] should listen to advice and stay in good terms with other people."

The reality we face today calls for adolescents who are good collaborators and who know how to listen to elders so they can help their peers and those younger than them. This requires excellent interpersonal skills and effective communication as well as the ability to listen to others and identify with them. This availability combined with passion, hard work, and the *willingness to be corrected* by adults will nurture people who are more aware and able to face today's challenges. In a nutshell, a person with collaboration skills has a positive attitude, is responsible, and is committed to listening and communicating.

In this way, the challenges will not burden the individual but will be dealt with through the contributions of the whole community.

3.2.4 Values and Behaviours

Participants were asked to describe the characteristics of an adolescent who has cooperative behaviour. The responses describe practical attitudes, and collaboration is associated with a set of values that elevate the importance of social cohesion.

As shown in Table 6, the most relevant occurrences are *good or positive behaviour* (54.6%; 77 out of 141 excerpts), *discipline*, *exemplary*, and *obedience*. Helping the community (16 excerpts) and sharing (19 excerpts) were also mentioned as relevant behaviours of a collaborative person. As presented in Table 3, these codes play a key role in the definition of collaboration and were identified as skills that are relevant to the needs and requirements of the community to which the participant belongs. For this reason, these codes have not been included in the following table and figures.

Table 6: Codes That Emerged as Behaviours and Values of a Collaborator

Category: Behaviours and values **Codes**	**Participants (sources)**	**%**	**Excerpts**	**%**
Good behaviour	60	78.94	77	54.60
Respect	26	34.21	44	31.20
Discipline	14	18.42	17	12.05
Obedience	13	17.10	20	14.18
Love	13	17.10	16	11.34
Exemplary	8	10.52	10	7.09
TOTAL	**76**		**141**	

Figures 14 and 15 present a general view of the frequency of excerpts, which include behaviours and values of collaboration by gender, category, and district. Overall, it is worth noting the strong prevalence of good behaviour and respect, especially among women.

Figure 14: Frequency of Excerpts That Include Good Behaviour, Respect, Discipline, Obedience, Love, and Exemplary, by Gender and Category

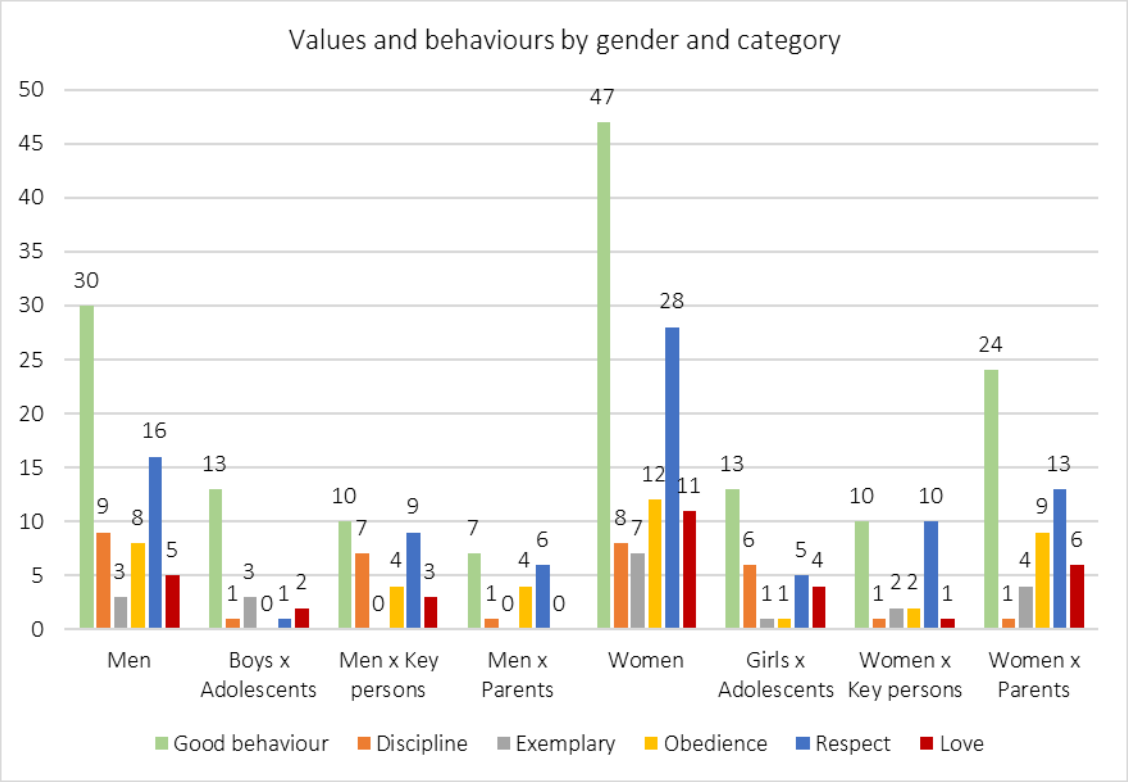
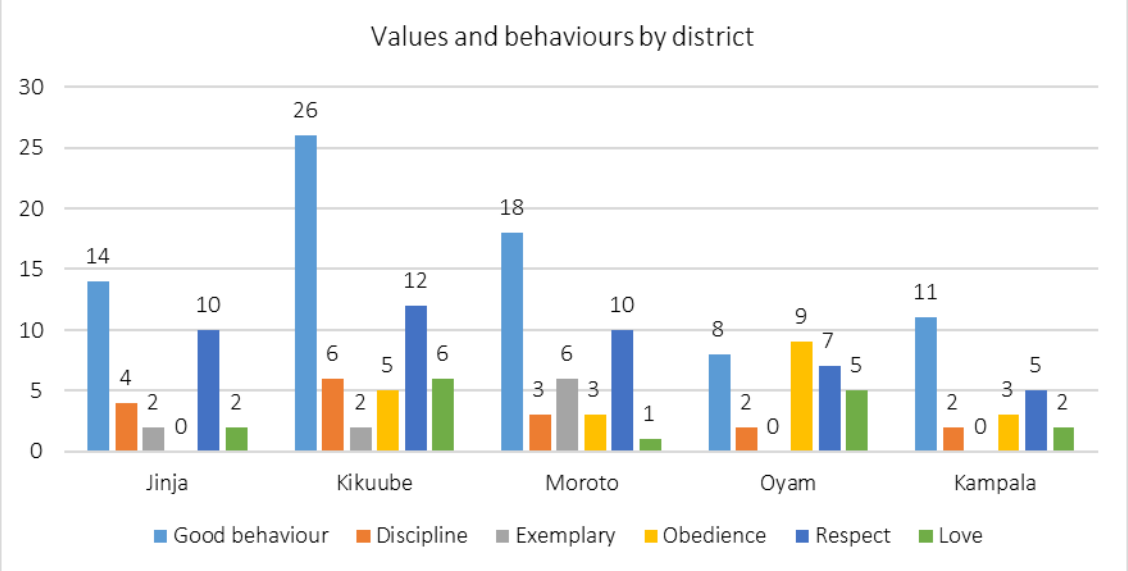


Figure 15: Frequency of Excerpts That Include Good Behaviour, Respect, Discipline, Obedience, Love, and Exemplary, by District.



The definition of *good behaviour* that most participants share includes, “Good behaviour traits like helping others and sharing things like food. One needs to have good discipline and be willing to share things in order to be considered collaborative” (e.g., U-A-11), or in other words, being collaborative means “being ready to contribute and give” (U-K-04). A particularly interesting element is that of readiness and attentiveness to the needs of the community as a unique component in their understanding of collaboration. The collaborator is active and present to the members and the needs of the community.

Another value recognized as fundamental according to the participants of various categories (U-A-05, U-A-07, U-A-24, U-K-07, U-K-11, U-K-40, U-P-07, U-P-11, U-P-12, U-P-13, U-P-20, U-P-39) is respect, which was mentioned in 14.6% of the excerpts.

Among the other skills addressed in this study, the co-occurrences with respect stood out. This aspect is not completely accidental. In fact, it is almost impossible for a collaborative process to be set in motion if the group members do not respect each other. Respect is in a sense the prerequisite for collaboration. Respect is understood both among peers and toward the elderly, and it appears in the description of role models. One participant talking about an adolescent girl said, “everyone talks about her in the village, she is well known of the good values and everyone will say she talks to everyone and respects everyone and she has also supported other people in the village” (U-K-04). Similarly, a parent said that a collaborative adolescent is “respectful of the friends, the elders, and the family members” (U-K-04). Additionally, one adolescent highlighted that collaborative behaviour is the “one seen in those who are disciplined, respectful, and have love for other people” (U-A-24).

The recurrence of respect is interesting because it is identified as a cornerstone of the local culture; it seems to be the foundation of other values. Love, friendship, and collaboration take place in an environment where people respect each other.

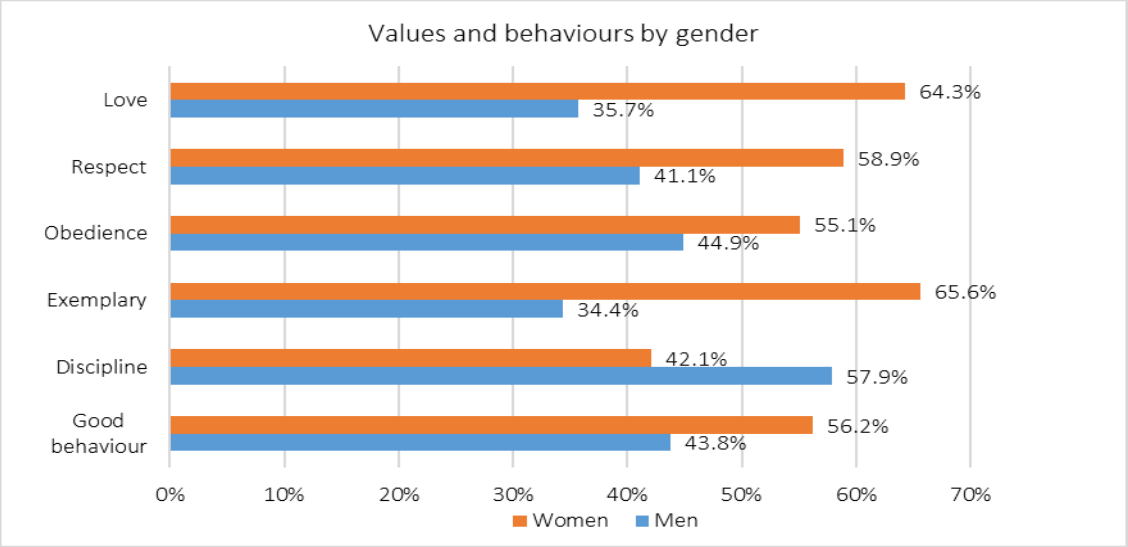
Discipline is often combined with respect. Discipline and *being exemplary* identify the good collaborator who must be a role model for the community. When asked to describe the behaviour of a peer with collaboration skills, adolescents refer to good behaviour (U-A-11) and to having exemplary conduct in school (U-A-5).

Love and *kindness* have a few excerpts with significant meaning. Indeed, there is a deep connection between skills and values. Some parents described the behaviour of collaborative adolescents as follows: “they are loving, caring, empathetic. Because they know you will need them today and they will need you tomorrow. That’s why they keep on depending on their friends knowing they will also depend on them” (U-P-08) and “She shows a lot of love towards her friends as well as working together” (U-P-09).

In this section, a key element emerges: belonging to a community means sharing needs and problems that are supported and solved through collaboration. However, the exercise of this skill and its processes is inconsistent if there are no shared values that hold all community members together. It is worth noting that working together, sharing, and helping the community emerged as the main codes that define collaboration (refer to Table 6).

As presented in Figure 16, more women mentioned positive behaviour, obedience, and respect as important behaviours and values of a collaborative person, while more men highlighted discipline.

Figure 16: Percentage of Excerpts That Include Love, Respect, Obedience, Exemplary, Discipline, and Good Behaviour, by Gender



As regards the categories of the participants, it is worth noting that parents and adolescents contribute to some codes like obedience and discipline in a dichotomous way. For example, obedience is mentioned mostly by the category of parents (65%) and only by the 5% of the adolescents. For more details, refer to Appendix 4.

Love Is a Cross-Cutting Aspect

Love (mentioned especially by women as can be observed from Figure 16) is associated with various categories of codes that emerged in the analysis. This is because this skill is conceived as strictly intertwined with values. There are, however, some particularly important examples regarding the use of love. It is used twice as the definition of collaboration (U-A-15, U-P-09). While not a significant number, it is relevant that love is identified as the defining factor of collaboration. Like respect, without it, there can be no effective collaboration. When asked

about a synonym for collaboration, one parent replied, “loving your friends like they love you,” and similarly one adolescent said that collaboration is “loving one another.”

Finally, in addition to the cases in which love is combined with positive conduct, there are some excerpts in which it is mentioned as an attitude toward others. For example, collaborative people are “loving, caring, empathetic” (U-P-08), or love is meant as something that triggers collaboration in a moment of need: “If I’m in problems and you show me love, then we collaborate.’’ (U-P-08)

One member belonging to the category of parents combined a series of values describing the attitude of a good collaborator: “They have love for others in the community. They respect one another. They listen to each other. They help one another” (U-P-13). In several cases, love is then combined with other values like respect and the ability to be friendly and able to listen to others (U-K-29, U-K-36, U-K-24, U-A-24).

In conclusion, it is important that collaboration has the word *work* (labour) in it, which is perceived locally as proper to love.

3.2.5 Related Skills and One Value

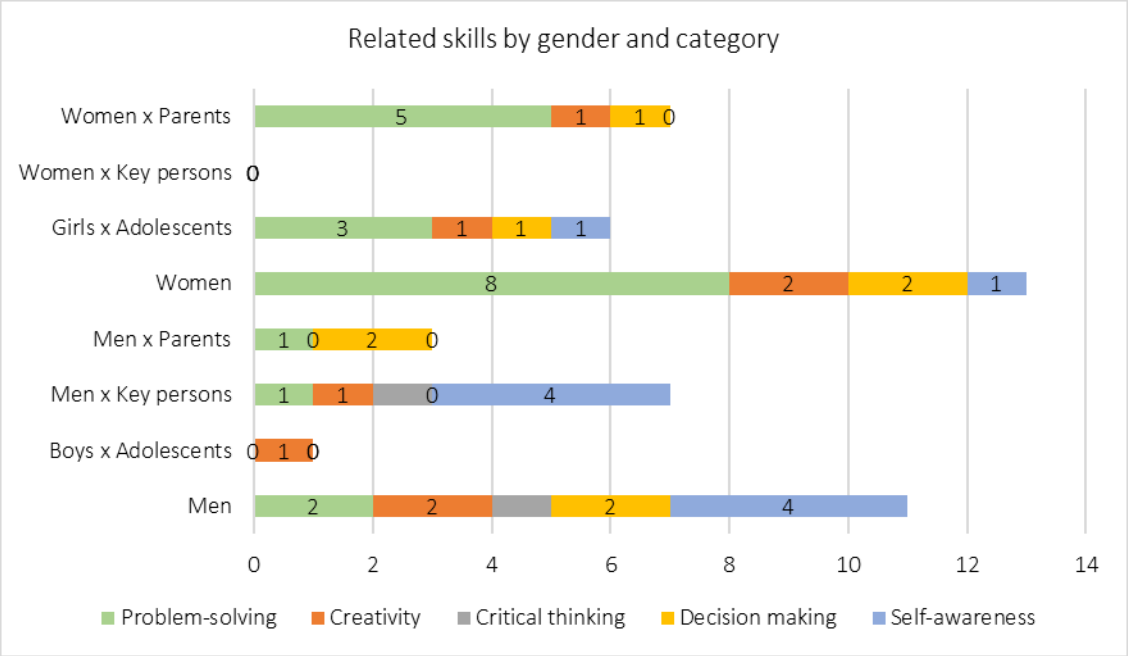
Further analyses were conducted to explore the relationship between collaboration and other skills frequently related in the scientific literature. As can be observed from Table 7, problem solving has also been identified by 9 participants as an important skill related to collaboration (10 excerpts; 45.5% of the excerpts, which include skills related to collaboration). In addition, a very small number of excerpts on self-awareness, creativity, critical thinking, and decision making were mentioned. Nevertheless, these skills play a fundamental role, and the insights into the connections made by some participants deserve to be reported.

Table 7: Skills Related to Collaboration

Category: Related skills Codes	**Participants (sources)**	**%**	**Excerpts**	**%**
Problem solving	9	9.47	10	45.45
Self-awareness	5	5.26	5	22.72
Creativity	4	4.21	4	18.18
Decision making	4	4.21	4	18.18
Critical thinking	1	1.05	1	4.54
TOTAL	**95**		**22**	

In Figure 17 it can be observed that there is a low frequency of excerpts mentioning skills related to collaboration. Only problem solving has a meaningful presence in quantitative terms.

Figure 17: Frequency of Excerpts That Include Problem Solving, Self-Awareness, Creativity, Decision Making, and Critical Thinking, by Gender and Category



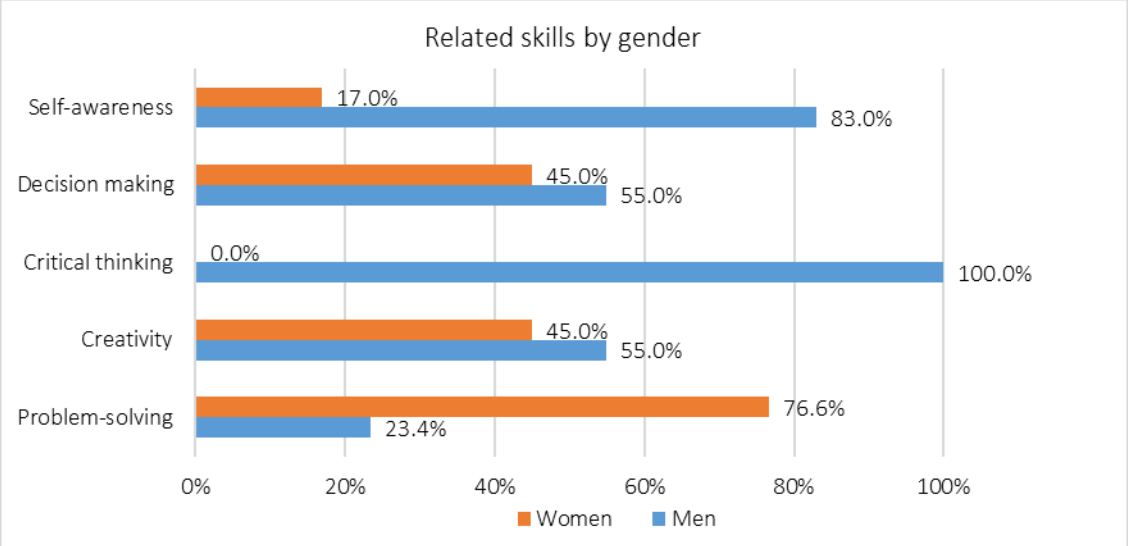
Regarding creativity, some key persons explained that being creative and flexible is necessary for being a good collaborator because it is necessary to deal with people and problems: “Being so much collaborative with others. You need to be somebody who is creative, flexible, who loves one another. You can have many friends and that’s how you can collaborate with others” (U-K-29). Similarly, some adolescents (U-A-36) mentioned creativity as an important skill for developing good collaboration, and one parent said, “Being innovative is part of being collaborative” (U-P-19).

Making decisions about the ideas that have been shared at a community level is crucial. Two excerpts are significant for explaining the value of decision making for being collaborative; collaborating means making “developmental decisions” after sharing problems and needs with peers (U-P-23), and to become more collaborative it is important to make a “collective effort to pay school fees for schooling children. Farming together to get money. Making decisions together” (U-P-15). In addition, some adolescents (U-A-25) identified a collaborator as “someone who can find a resolution after sharing and listening.”

Only one participant (U-K-22) associated being collaborative with critical thinking, stating that critical thinking is necessary for an adolescent to become more collaborative.

Apart from the reduced number of excerpts, some differences in the percentage of excerpts including these skills were found based on gender. As shown in Figure 18, some differences were found in problem solving, critical thinking, and self-awareness. Problem solving was favoured by girls or women while critical thinking and self-awareness were favoured by boys or men.

Figure 18: Percentage of Excerpts That Include Problem Solving, Critical Thinking, Decision Making, Self-Awareness, and Creativity, by Gender



3.2.6 Support Systems and Enabling Factors

A question was asked during the interviews about the systems, facts, actions, etc. that foster the development of collaboration skills in adolescents. As can be observed in Table 8, school, family, friends, community, and place of worship were the most mentioned contexts for enhancing collaboration. Without a doubt, school and training (79.8 of the participants in 89 out of 164 excerpts) were mentioned as the best setting to acquire this skill.

Table 8: Codes Emerged Within Support Systems and Elements to Enhance Collaboration

Category: Support System/Enhance Codes	**Participants (sources)**	**%**	**Excerpts**	**%**
School or Training	75	79.78	89	54.26
Family	53	56.38	58	35.36
Friends or Peers	47	50	61	37.19
Community or Development	38	40.42	45	27.43

partners				
Place of worship	6	6.38	6	42.85
TOTAL	**94**		**164**	

An overview of the support systems, which can foster and enhance collaboration skills, is presented in the following figures, disaggregated by gender and category (Figure 19) and by district (Figure 19).

Figure 19: Frequency of Excerpts That Include Support Systems, by Gender and Category

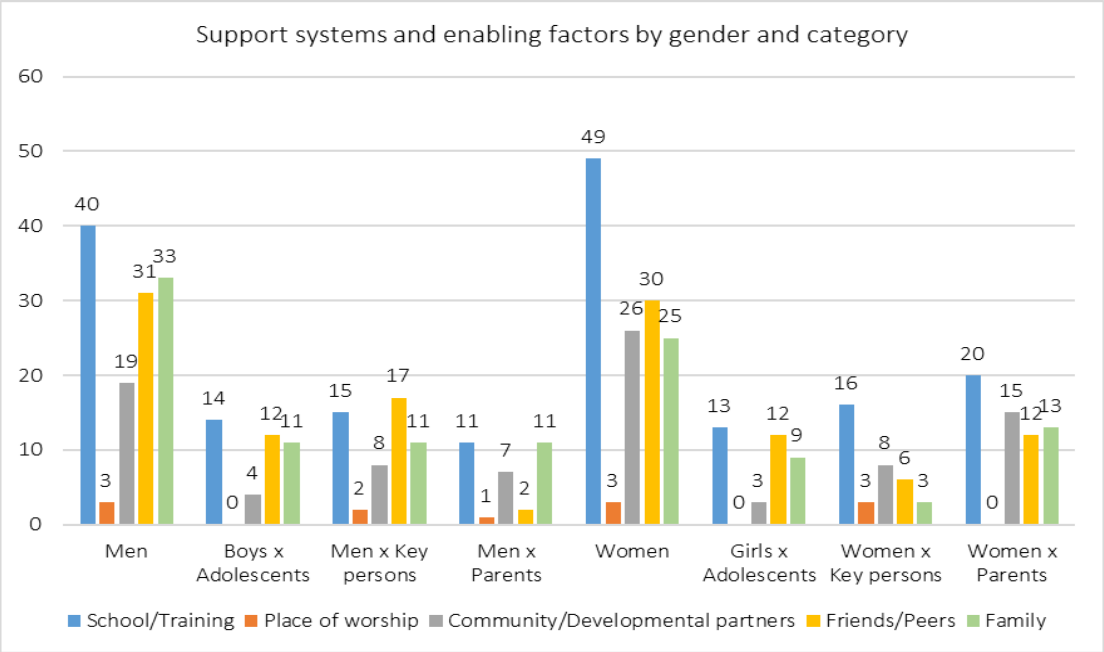
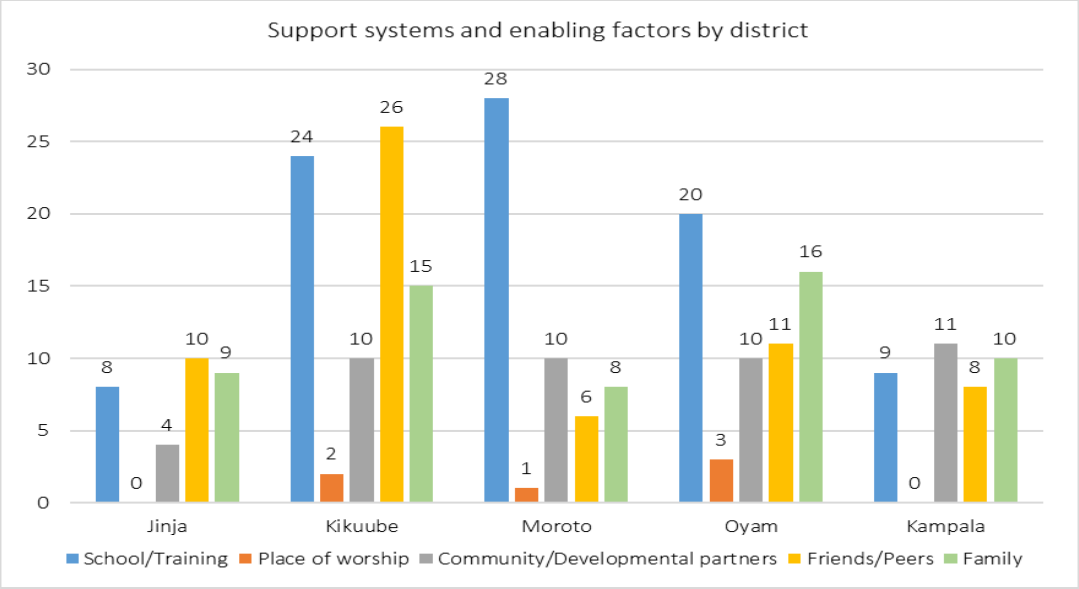


Figure 20: Frequency of Excerpts That Include Support Systems by District



Support systems are a necessary tool to enhance the development of collaboration among adolescents. As can be seen from Table 8, almost all the participants recognize the key role of school education and family. These two key environments find their most important allies in the community and development partners. For a small set of participants, the religious sphere also plays an important role in the development of collaboration among young people, since these places and the people in them are taught to pay attention and to help others.

Other codes belonging to different categories were also described as factors that enhance collaboration skills in 54 excerpts and 46 documents. The most frequently quoted codes refer to some components of the definition of collaboration as sharing (14 excerpts); working or staying together (8 excerpts); relationship skills including communication (7 excerpts); helping community (4 excerpts); teamwork or cooperation (4 excerpts); and different values mentioned once or twice by the participants as trust, honesty, respect, love, kindness, friends, and hardworking. These numbers and codes are not included in Table 8 to highlight the following description on the support system codes established in our codebook.

As mentioned above, the *school as a training environment* is recognized as the place where collaboration is learned. However, only a few participants gave practical indications on what activities, situations, or figures teach someone how to collaborate. Participants gave only general indications, saying that at school debates and clubs help students learn collaboration. (U-P-06)

An interesting aspect that was highlighted is the connection and dialogue between school and *family*: “If the child is in school, I need to work hand-in-hand with the school administration. If there’s a problem, I need to be going there to understand what is happening. That’s like working hand in hand” (U-K-23). Indeed, some parents are aware of the fact that the common purpose of school and family is to prepare young people for the future challenges they will have to face.

Key persons in particular stress that what young people learn at school needs to be supported by what happens at home. A key person explained that if at home children have the habit of working with parents and contributing to domestic chores, it is easier to make group activities work at school (U-K-13).

One key person, talking as a parent, described the process of transferability of cooperation by explaining that this must be nurtured in school, in the family, and in the spiritual context: “We parents are to instil discipline in them. Plus helping them to be religious by teaching them to fear God, then you can add schools” (U-K-14).

Many participants recognized that *being with peers* was a privileged opportunity, where the collaborative process was spontaneously brought into play. For instance, some of them explained that families are often overburdened by stress and it is precisely the friendships among peers that favour the collaborative process: “I think it is peer through which they get to learn the stories their parents tell them and interactions and as well show them how to collaborate with them” (U-P-08).

It is friendship in itself that enhances collaboration, because it is easier for people to “come together” and listen to each other when they are connected as friends (U-P-11). Teenagers were also of this opinion. They explained that in their group of friends it was very common to share problems and help each other (U-A-02, U-A-07).

Training offered by *local organisations and institutions* is also important for equipping young people and adults with collaboration skills. It is relevant that family, community, school, and development partners are often combined in participants’ responses. Indeed, they have a clear perception that collaboration is something that happens within networks of people. These networks in turn communicate with each other across the whole community.

In conclusion, most of the participants highlighted the fundamental role of the environments in which young people are educated. These are school and family, where meeting and sharing take place, thereby educating the adolescent and encouraging the learning process. The healthy growth of the individual needs to be nourished in various places—not only in the family and not only in the school, which can exhaust the resources of both. Everyone contributes,

and school certainly plays a key role alongside the family. Moreover, relationships with friends and the community also support and nourish young people in their growth.

3.2.7 Assessment Methods

One of the last categories that emerged from the interviews is the assessment strategies the participants suggested for collaboration skills. The content identified in the responses was not very precise or detailed, but it was quite clear that the best way to recognise whether adolescents possess collaboration skills is by asking them to do something and observe whether the task is completed in a collaborative way. That is why task performance and observation are the two main codes that comprise the assessment category (Table 9).

Table 9: Codes That Emerged as Assessment Methods for Collaboration

Category: Assessment Codes	**Participants (sources)**	**%**	**Excerpts**	**%**
Task performance	32	33.68	33	45.20
Observation	32	33.68	32	43.83
Staying with the people	7	7.36	7	10.14
Interviews	6	6.31	6	8.69
TOTAL	**95**		**73**	

As can be observed in Table 9 and

Figure 20, observation and task performance cover 45.8% and 45.2%, respectively, out of 73 excerpts (95 sources). Only a few participants identified interviews (8.69 of the excerpts) and

staying with the people (10.1% of the excerpts) as effective tests for collaboration. The large number of quotations related to observation reveals how difficult it is to test collaboration, since the method was mentioned without any reference to a task or tool to be used when observing a particular person or sample.

Assigning a *task* and checking whether it is done in a collaborative way is identified as an effective test for collaboration. In fact, parameters can be set to measure the collaboration strategies that the young person found. Most of the tasks we face in life cannot be accomplished alone. (U-P-33)

A member belonging to the category of key persons had the interesting intuition to include playing in a football match, because this is a task in which it is impossible to avoid collaboration: "I can't play alone so I need other teams, so we need to test the collaboration, that is we have to share, joint effort and also create relationships. Should I assign activities to other people apart from playing football?" (U-K-33).

Similarly, another key person suggested assigning a task that involved engaging others in achieving a common goal as a way to test for collaboration (U-K-35), bringing the definition of collaboration closer to that in the Western world

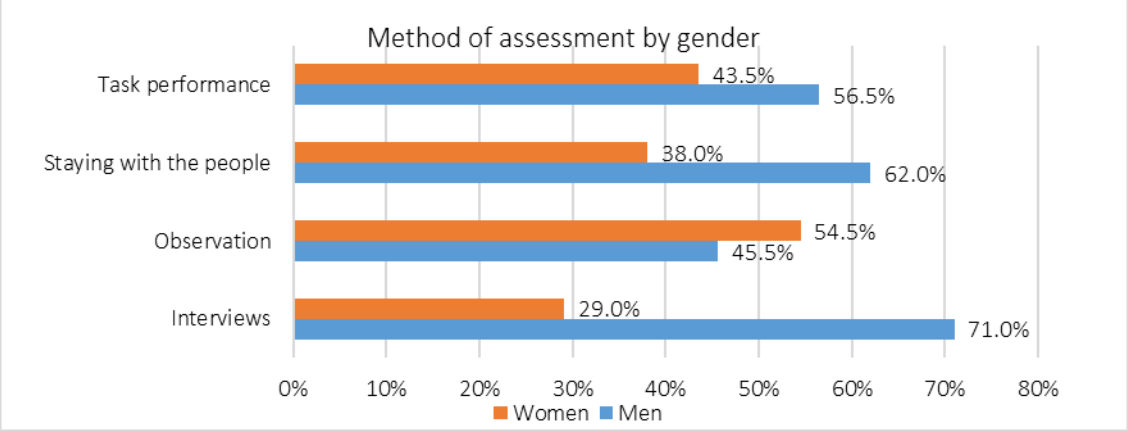
Staying with the people emerged in only 7 excerpts—a small share of the 73 excerpts of assessment strategies. Nevertheless, the content embedded in this code suggests an interesting method of assessment. The most relevant statements were from adolescents: "You can stay closely with them and observe the things that they tell you or the things that they talk about" (U-A-10) or "coming together and being friendly" (U-A-21). This simple way of identifying collaboration skills offers a key inductive and participatory method of assessment in ethnographic studies. Only being close to the people, living with them, and even becoming friends with them will allow the researcher to get a complete picture of the study target.

In conclusion, the participants suggested putting in place situations that would require the exercise of collaboration. Secondly, they proposed observing an adolescent's behaviour while solving a problem or performing a task to see whether the adolescent involves fellow peers in the task or addresses it alone. Third, adolescents also suggested ethnographic approaches, which include living and sharing with the people. These valuable contributions reveal that collaboration is a skill because it emerges that such a versatile competence is linked to the presence of other people and, for this reason, it is difficult to test. It is easier to observe and recognize it in spontaneous attitudes.

When the data are disaggregated by gender (Figure 21), both men and women identified task performances as one of the best ways to assess the skills. Observation methods are the most mentioned by girls and women while more boys and men identified interviews and staying with

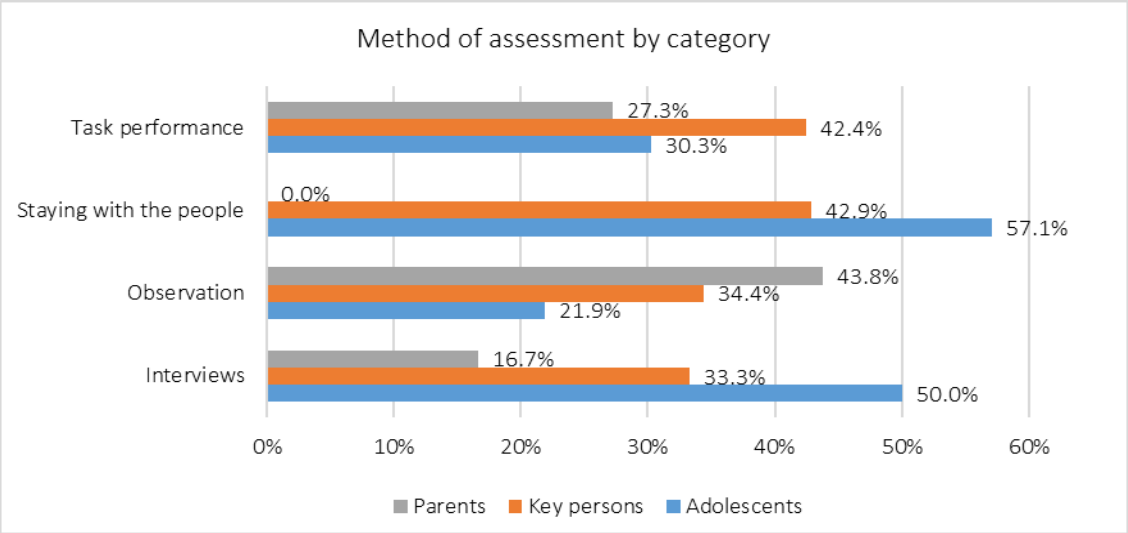
the people. Even though the frequency of this last method—staying with people—is low, it deserves to be highlighted since it is a clear indication for ethnographic studies.

Figure 21: Percentage of Excerpts Including Task Performance, Interviews, Observation, and Staying with People, by Gender



The most mentioned method that key persons identified for assessing collaboration is task performance, while adolescents mentioned that the interviews and especially staying with people are the best ways to determine if someone has collaboration skills. The parents on the other hand especially value observation, as can be observed from Figure 22.

Figure 22: Percentage of Excerpts Including Task Performance, Interviews, Observation, and Staying with People, by Category



4 CONCLUSIONS

In Uganda, it is common to find references to collaboration as a necessary soft skill in both school and work contexts. The Lower Secondary Curriculum Framework by the Uganda National Curriculum Development Centre invites teachers to implement collaborative projects to enhance the awareness of the key role this skill plays in the life of every learner. Indeed, collaboration is one of the cornerstones of the adequate social development of an individual.

For this reason, the interviews analysed in this report aimed to investigate how Ugandans understand and conceptualise collaboration. The culture, the tradition, and the way of collaborating at the local level reveal the specific features of the local perception of this skill.

The literature review conducted before this contextualised work led to a consensus around the definition of collaboration as "working together to achieve a common goal" (Care et al., 2016; Kim & Care, 2020; 2005; Lai, 2011; Marek et al., 2015, among others). Based on the analysis of the interviews, however, the aspect of achieving a common goal is absent or is described in other ways. It is usually not related to the achievement of goals in the workplace but usually refers to achieving the common good of the participants' community. Since a person belongs to a certain community, that person is also expected to collaborate with the members of that community; the purpose is intrinsic, not extrinsic. It should be noted that the definitions that emerged in the interviews connect with the etymological meaning of collaboration. Collaboration comes from the Latin root *com* and *laborare*, meaning *to work together*. Similarly, Ofstedal and Dahlberg (2009) assert that "people who practice true

collaboration create a shared vision with joint strategies when working on a problem, issue or goal" (p. 38).

Therefore, it is important to highlight that collaboration is not just practiced because of a common goal or a need, but in many cases it is understood as the common way of living together while sharing an experience or helping in the community. It does not assume the purpose or the need to collaborate but reflects a way of conceiving of oneself in relation to the community.

Problems and challenges, both personal and communal, are the elements that trigger the mechanisms of collaboration. In this sense, collaboration and problem solving have a common origin: need. A need is something that grows from the reality and the challenges that the community members face together each day. Needs arise from reality, not from an extrinsic project.

The most relevant conclusion about the contextualised understanding of collaboration in Uganda may be the *sense of community*, or *sense of belonging* found in most of the definitions, explanations, and characterisations of collaborative people and their values. Collaboration is not reduced to the accomplishment of tasks in school or work settings but is a way of living and conceiving of ourselves. This awareness was reflected in the interviews through the following expressions: working with others, togetherness, helping the community, sharing, unity, and other such positive dispositions.

The findings of this study remind us of the intertwined social and individual aspects of development as recognised both by Piaget and Vygotsky, and help us to reflect on the three different theoretical positions in collaboration research: socio-constructivist, socio-cultural, and shared (or distributed) cognition approaches. Along the axis, between the 'individual' and the 'group', collaboration can be studied and measured as the individual skill (cognitive) used while working collaboratively or as group interactions. Based on the participants interviewed in our study, we can conclude that when people collaborate in Uganda, a group is generated from a single cognitive system (Dillenbourg et al., 1996). It seems as if the environment is an integral part of cognitive activity, and not merely a set of circumstances in which context-independent cognitive processes are performed. Therefore, the focus should be placed largely on the social context, that is, the social communities in which these collaborators participate (Dillenbourg et al., 1996, p. 6).

The cross-cutting presence of some values throughout most of the interviews is closely related to this intertwined social and individual component. Even if there was no specific question about values, the participants mentioned respect, trust, love, and unity as necessary prerequisites for collaborating with others.

Regarding the support systems and factors that nurture and foster collaboration skills, it is important to note the value given to the school, peer groups, and family system, as the contexts in which collaboration can be taught. Factors such as peer group and family background have been highlighted as relevant to boosting collaboration skills. On the other hand, these findings suggest that facilitating a collaborative culture within the schools could make a difference in whether students acquire this important skill.

Finally, the excerpts related to the assessment of collaboration recall and corroborate the difficulty of measuring collaboration skills in the existent literature. What seems to be common among most of the participants is the fact that observing behaviour or the accomplishment of a particular task is what determines whether a person is collaborative.

4.1 Limitations of the Research

The findings presented in this report should be read in light of the limitations presented throughout the processes of planning, data collection, and data analysis.

Regarding the data collection process, the way the interviewers asked the questions had some influence on the participants' responses. Due to the large number of interviews, different styles were used to conduct them. For instance, some direct styles elicited particular responses due to the inclusion of leading explanations.

Researchers encountered two other difficulties in this process: the lack of familiarity with the participants and the challenge of interacting with the adolescents. Specific skills may have been necessary when interviewing adolescents.

The need to use the English language to ensure a common understanding of the sources and to share the findings with the scientific community and other stakeholders posed a challenge to the participants in terms of understanding of the questions—especially for adolescents and parents. Most of them responded to the questions in their local languages, which introduced the added complexity of translations. The challenge of using the English language as a medium of communication and the need for translation into the local languages meant that during the interviews some nuances and cultural connotations of the words used may have been lost in the process. The findings of this report were reviewed by the Ugandan researchers for cultural sensitivity.

Regarding the process of data analysis, the complexity of the study (including different skills in different countries) affected the treatment of the documents and the codebook. It was impossible to anticipate all the challenges that would arise during the coding and analysis. Qualitative analysis required a systematic and collaborative process among the researchers involved in reading, analysing and coding the sources. Given the large number of interviews for such a qualitative study, a large number of researchers was involved in the process, increasing the challenges as well as the richness of the analysis. Nevertheless, different strategies were implemented to guarantee the reliability and accuracy of the findings. On the

other hand, the team analysed interviews in two rounds in order to achieve sufficient inter-rater reliability. Raters maintained constant comparison and communication through daily meetings to share challenges, doubts, and suggestions.

Finally, it would have been beneficial to conduct a second round of interviews with the participants to verify whether their understandings of collaboration were included in the findings of this report.

4.2 Recommendations for Future Research and Assessment

A unique understanding of the collaboration skills in the Ugandan context has emerged from this study. This should open a new path of research in order to develop more contextualised studies on life skills based on different cultures and contexts.

New strategies and assessment methods should be informed by these new contextualised studies and concepts. Authentic knowledge about the nature of a skill as used in a particular culture could inspire new methods of assessment.

Certain unique aspects of this study seem to call into question the appropriateness and importance of conducting an inductive process. Therefore, more studies, including a qualitative participatory approach as a first step in developing assessment tools, are recommended. This finding supports the benefit of the mixed-method approach in assessment studies.

More iterative processes are also recommended in future studies to verify the preliminary findings.

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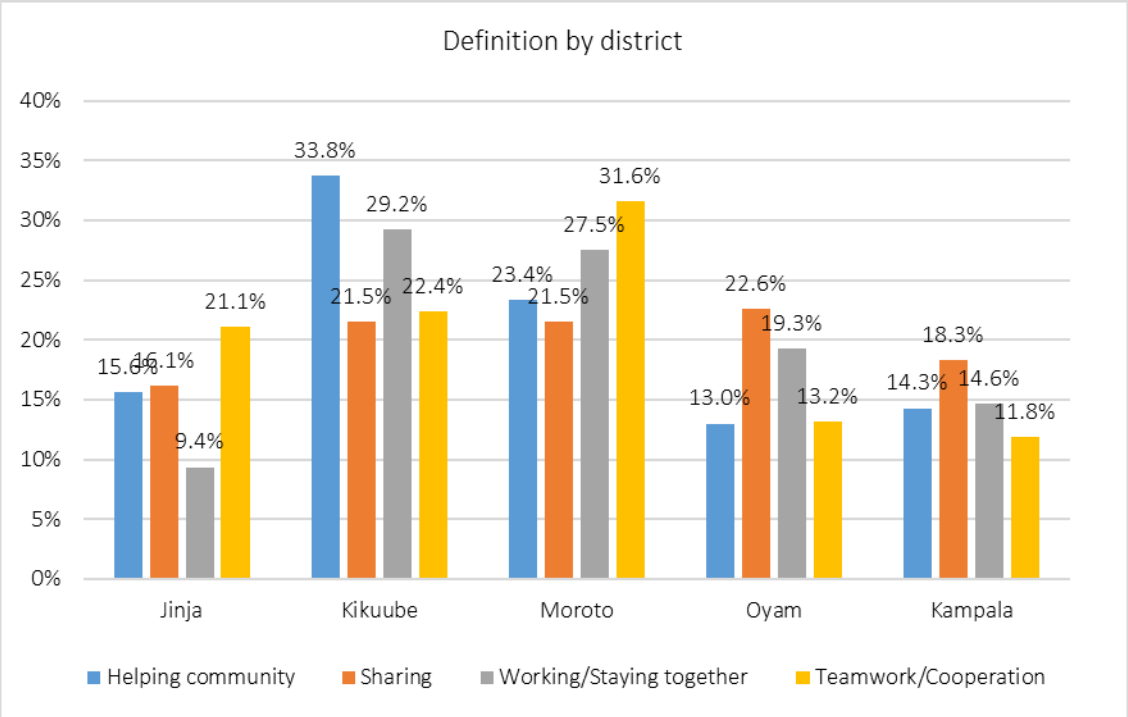
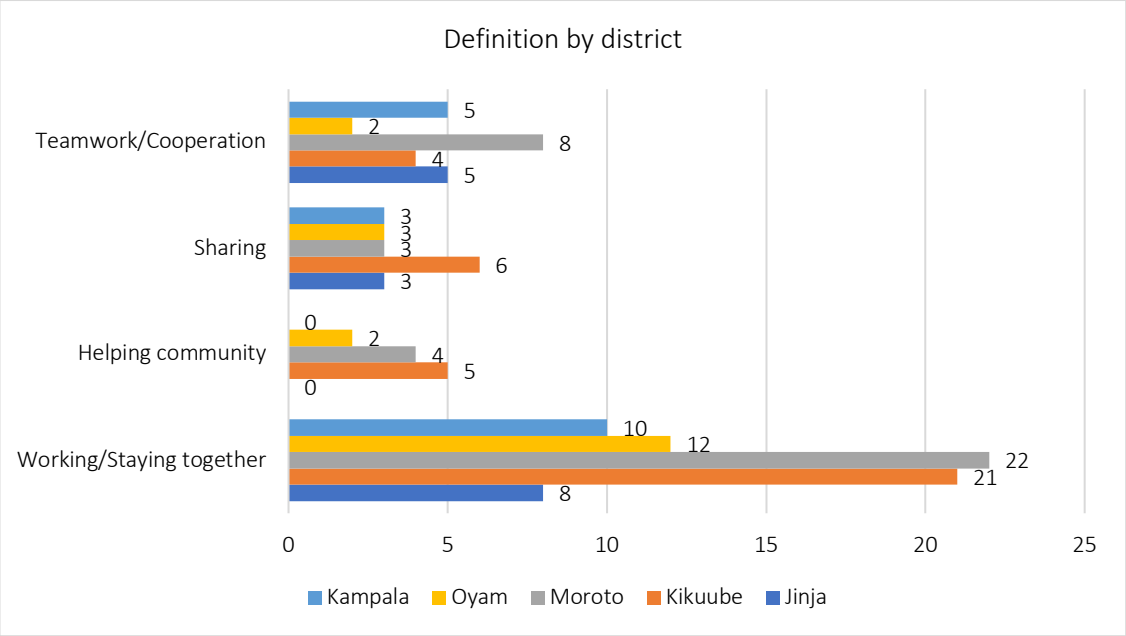
APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Descriptive Analysis of the Main Definition Codes by Descriptors




Definition by district
Teamwork/Cooperation
Sharing
Helping community
Working/Staying together
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2
8
4
5
3
3
3
6
3
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2
4
5
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8
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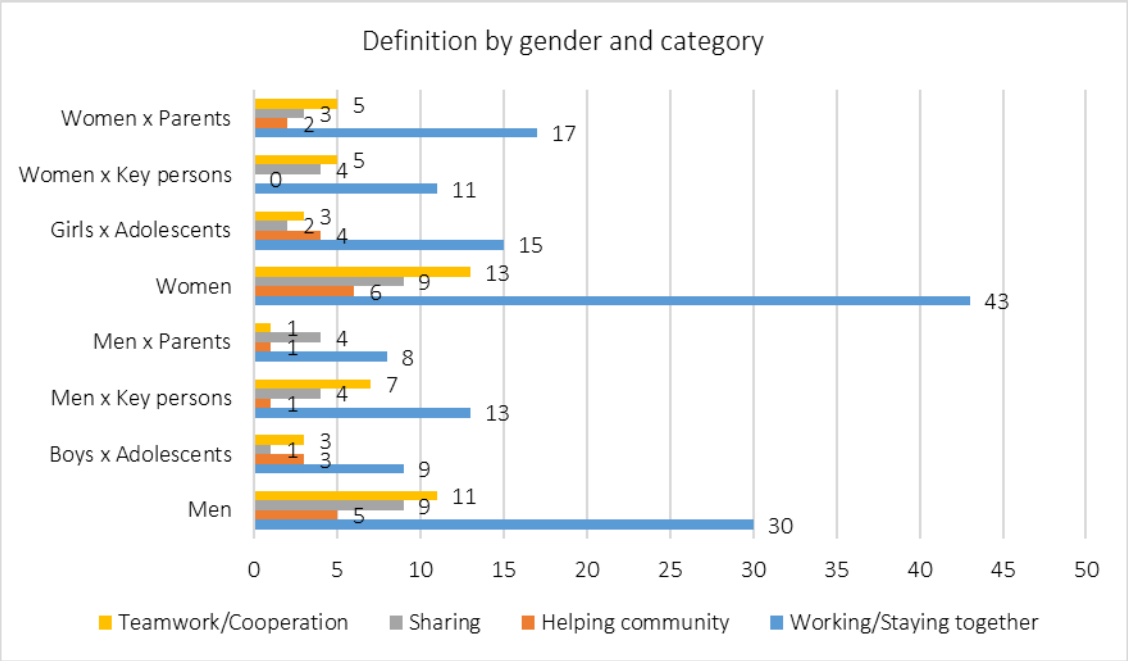
Kampala
Oyam
Moroto
Kikuube
Jinja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Women x Parents
Women x Key persons
Girls x Adolescents
Women
Men x Parents
Men x Key persons
Boys x Adolescents
Men
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5
4
0
11
3
2
4
15
13
9
6
43
1
4
1
8
7
4
1
13
3
1
3
9
11
9
5
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35
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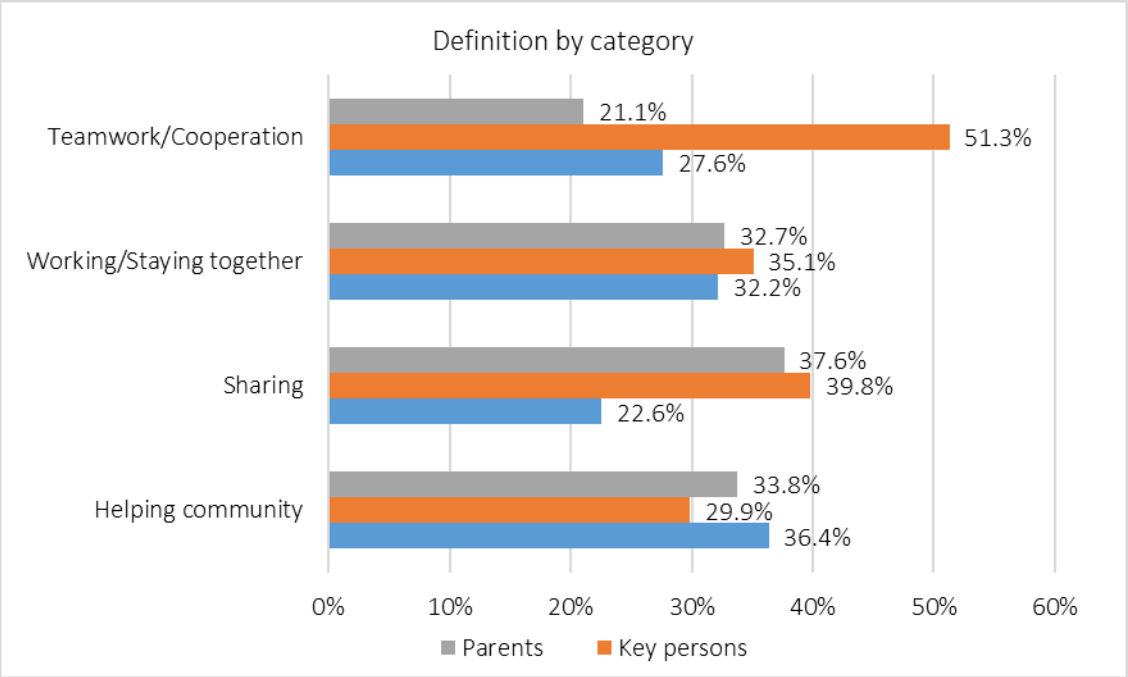
45
50
Teamwork/Cooperation
Sharing
Helping community
Working/Staying together


Definition by category
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Working/Staying together
Sharing
Helping community
21.1%
51.3%
27.6%
32.7%
35.1%
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37.6%
39.8%
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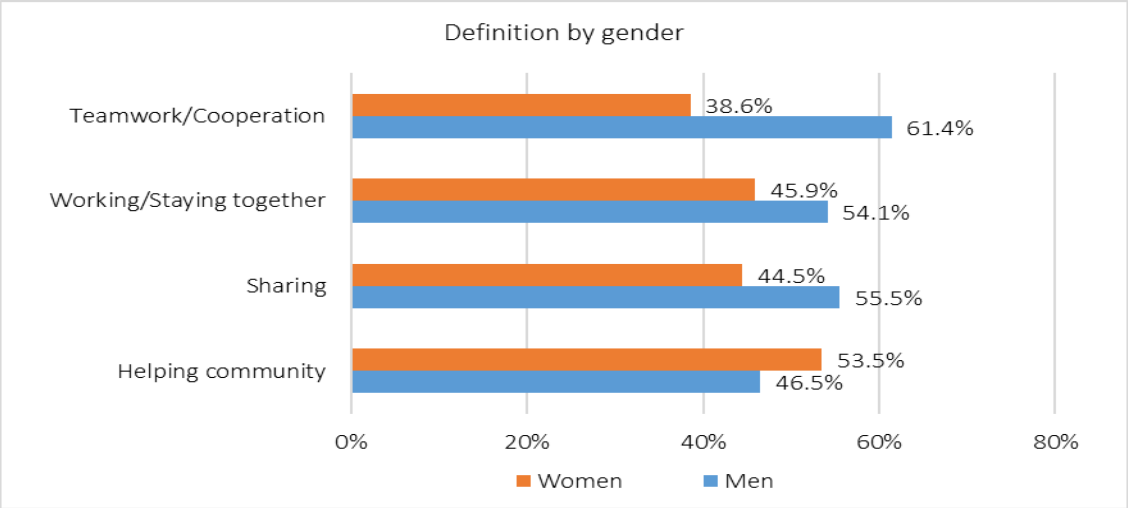
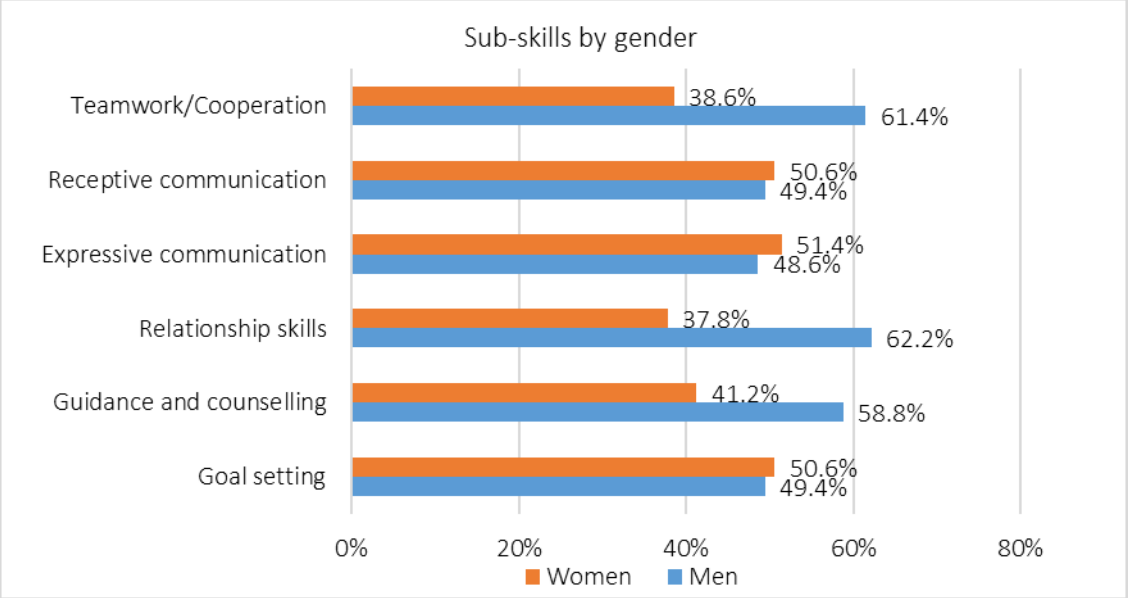
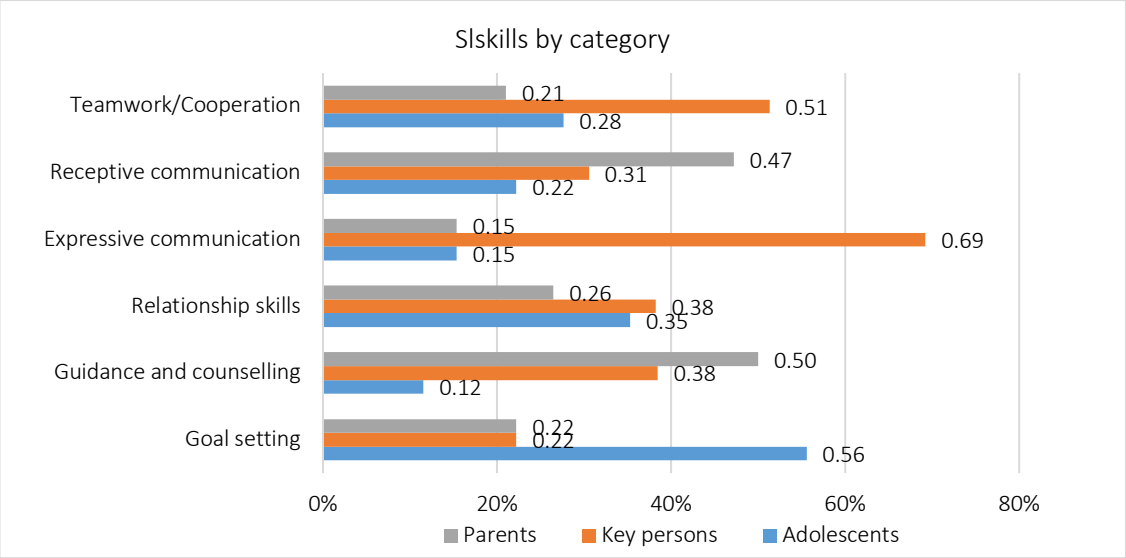
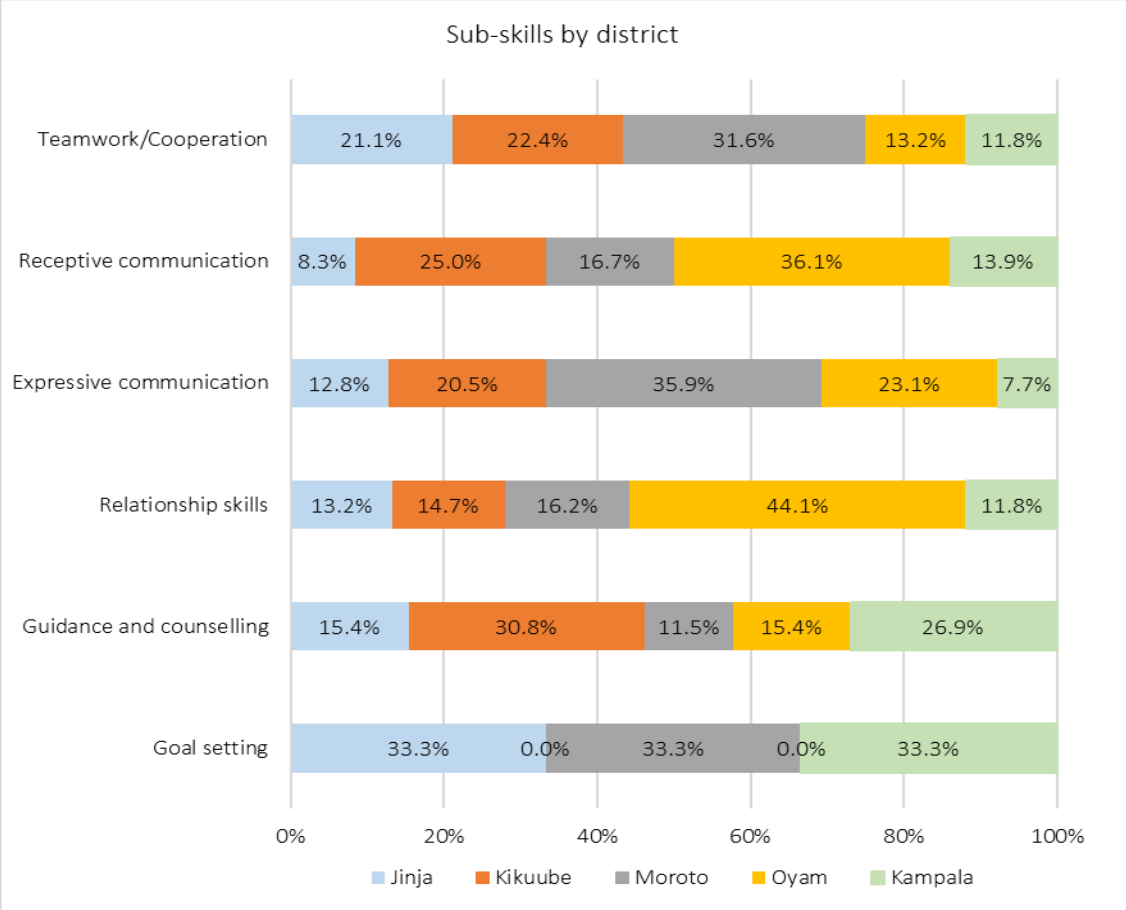
40%
50%
60%
Parents
Key persons



Appendix 2: Descriptive Analysis of the Main Subskills Codes by Descriptors




Slskills by category
Teamwork/Cooperation
Receptive communication
Expressive communication
Relationship skills
Guidance and counselling
Goal setting
0.21
0.51
0.28
0.47
0.31
0.22
0.15
0.69
0.15
0.26
0.38
0.35
0.50
0.38
0.12
0.22
0.22
0.56
0%
20%
40%
60%
80%
Parents
Key persons
Adolescents


Sub-skills by district
Teamwork/Cooperation
Receptive communication
Expressive communication
Relationship skills
Guidance and counselling
Goal setting
21.1%
22.4%
31.6%
13.2%
11.8%
8.3%
25.0%
16.7%
36.1%
13.9%
12.8%
20.5%
35.9%
23.1%
7.7%
13.2%
14.7%
16.2%
44.1%
11.8%
15.4%
30.8%
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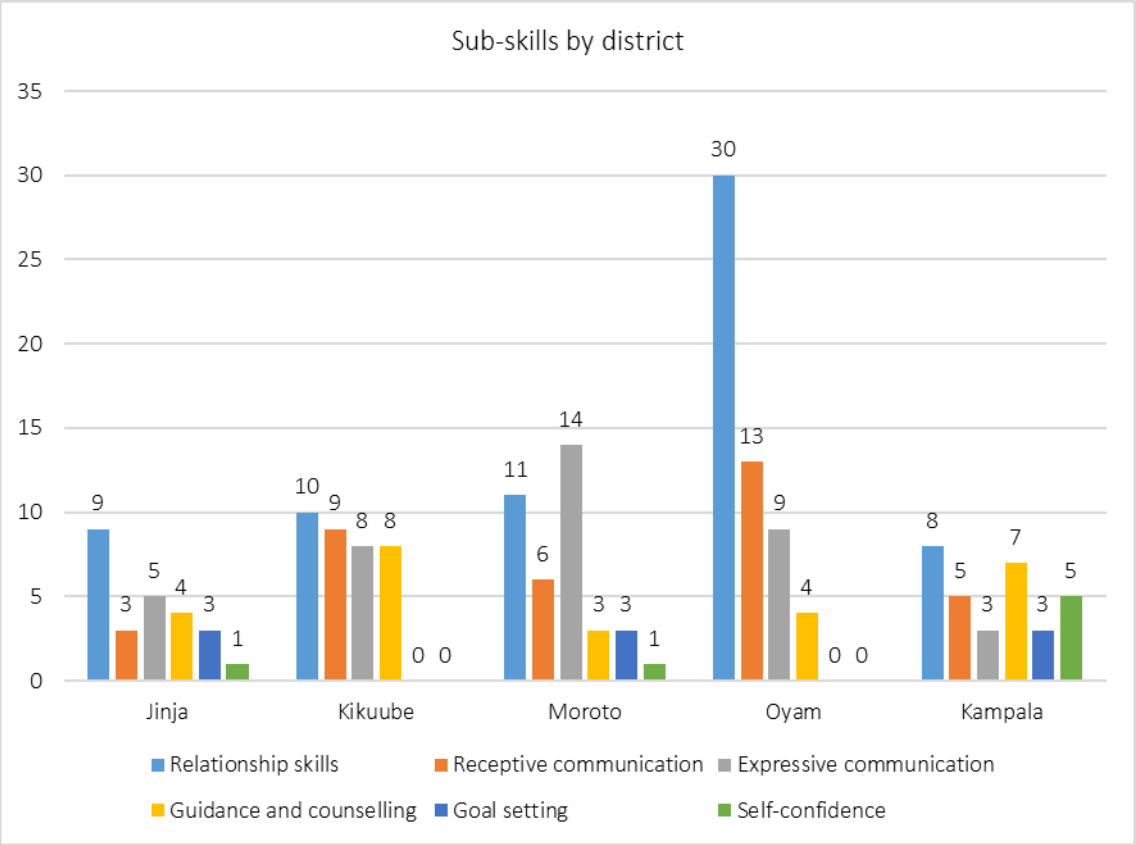
Jinja
Kikuube
Moroto
Oyam
Kampala


Sub-skills by district
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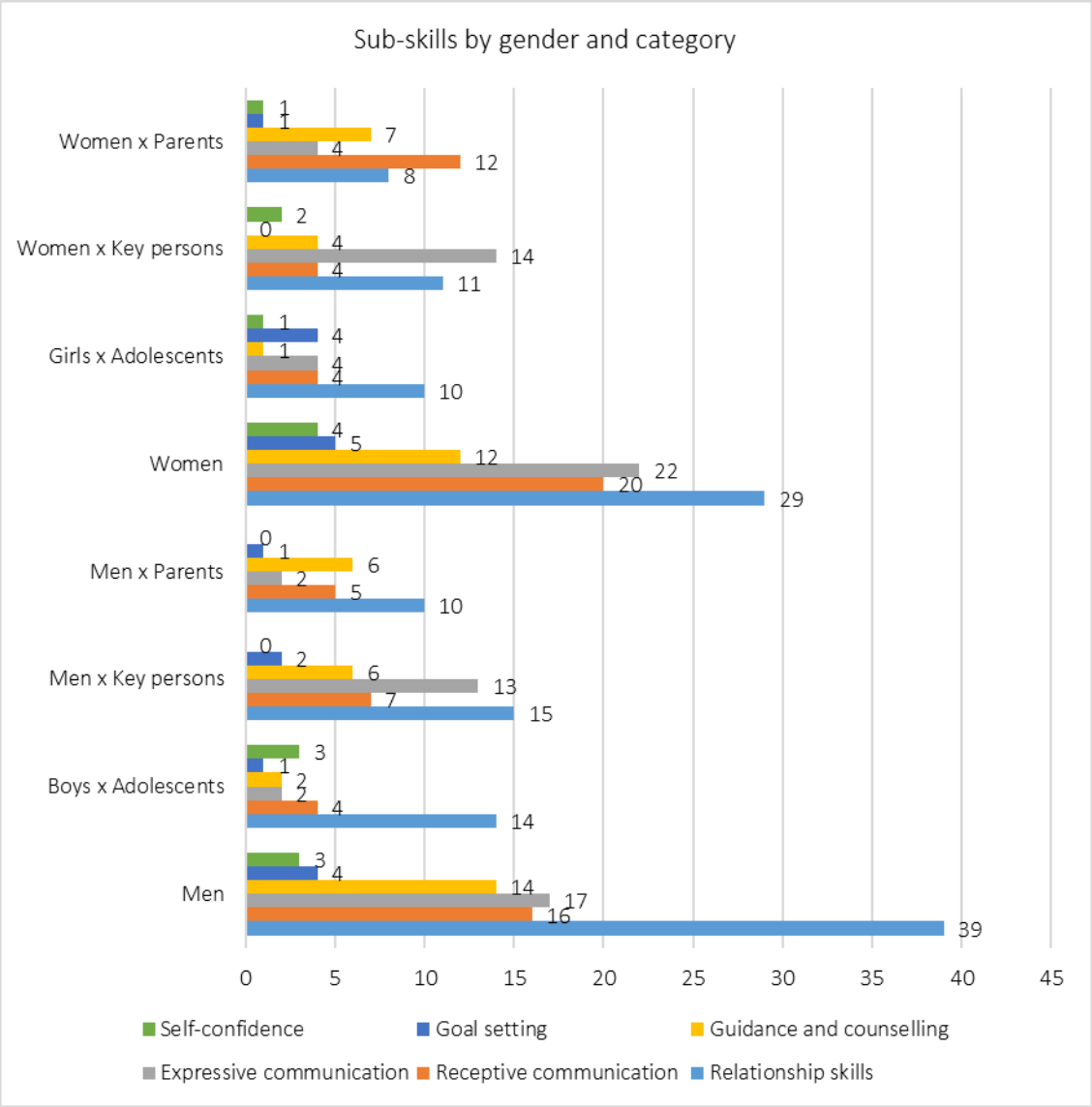
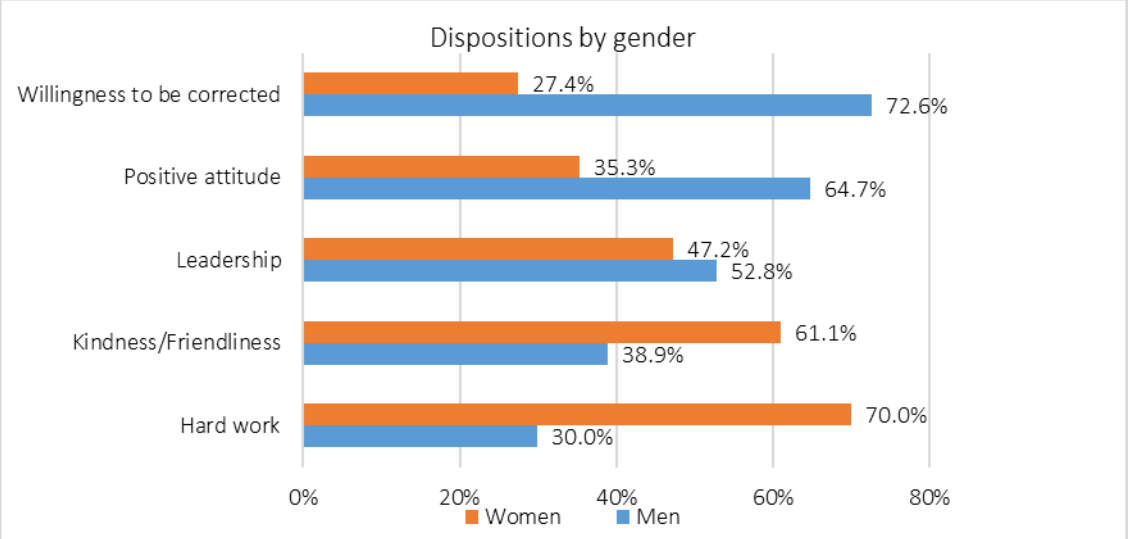
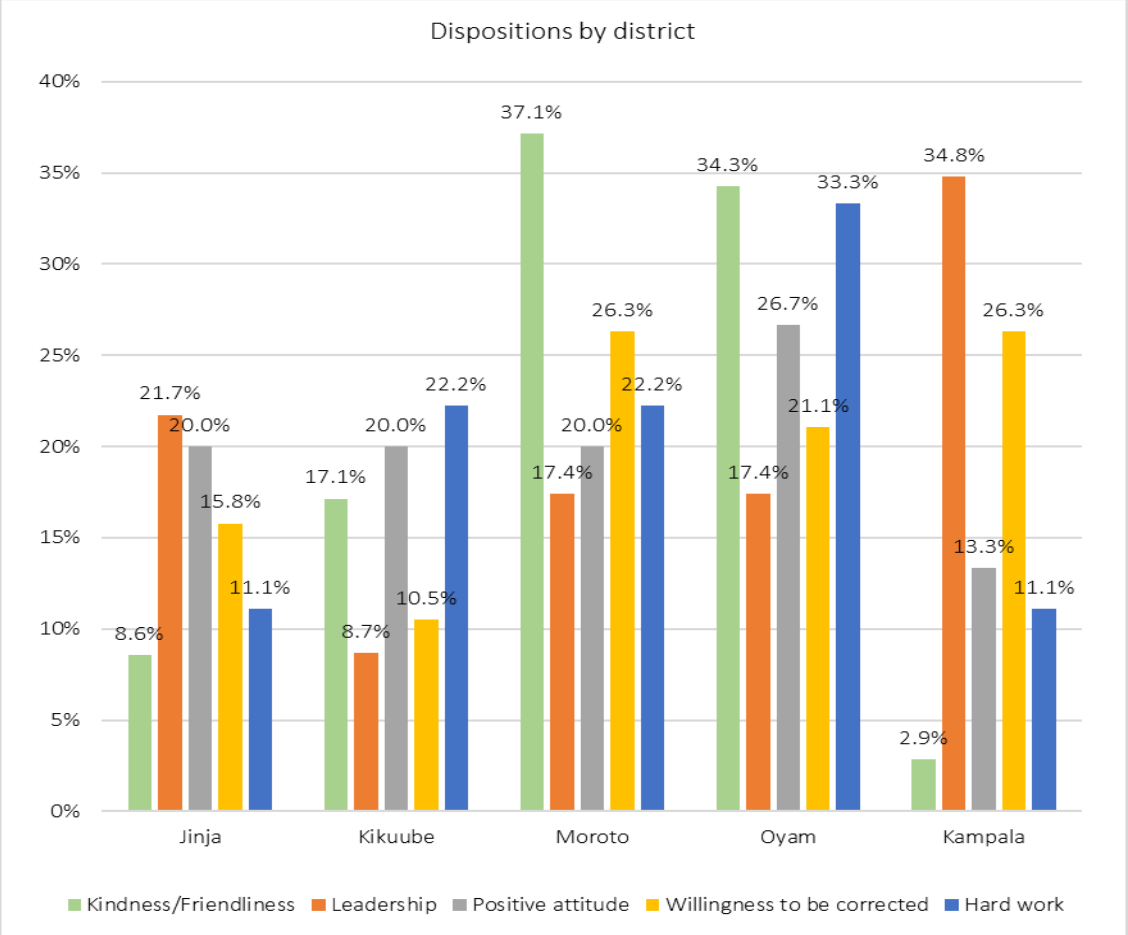
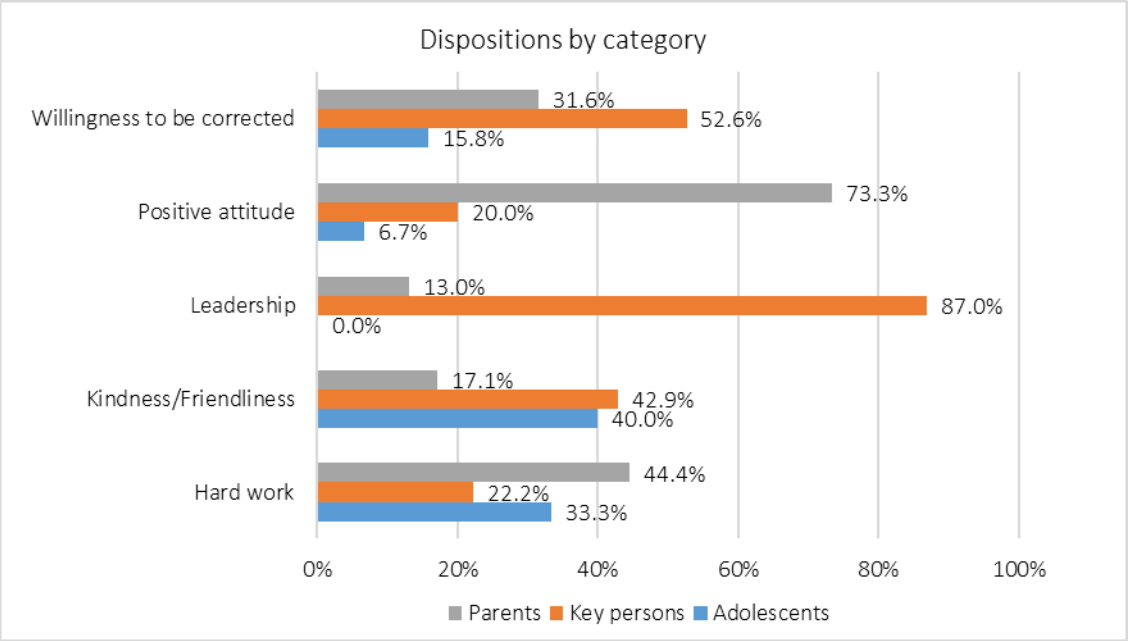
30
25
20
15
10
5
0
9
3
5
4
3
1
10
9
8
8
0
0
11
6
14
3
3
1
30
13
9
4
0
0
8
5
3
7
3
5
Jinja
Kikuube
Moroto
Oyam
Kampala
Relationship skills
Receptive communication
Expressive communication
Guidance and counselling
Goal setting
Self-confidence

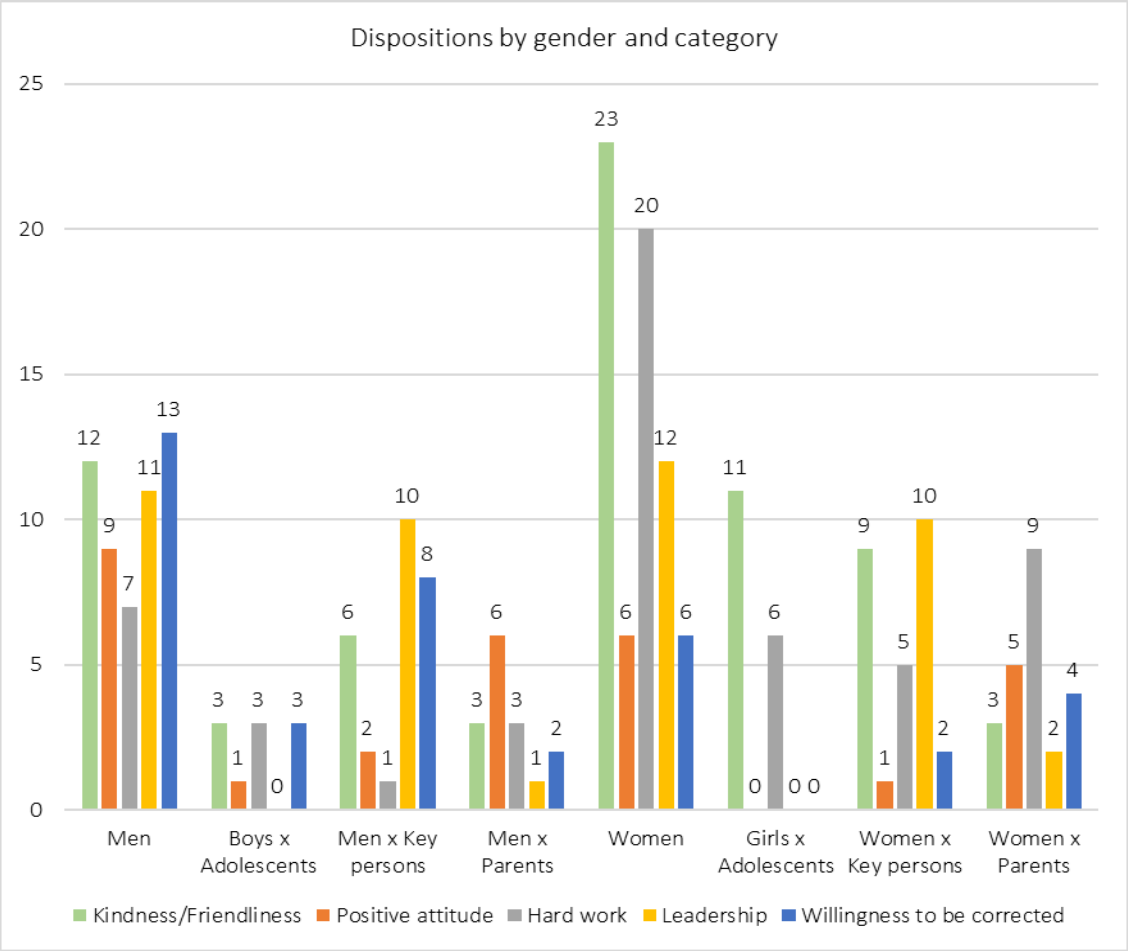

Sub-skills by gender and category
Women x Parents
Women x Key persons
Girls x Adolescents
Women
Men x Parents
Men x Key persons
Boys x Adolescents
Men
0
5
10
15
20
25
30
35
40
45
Self-confidence
Goal setting
Guidance and counselling
Expressive communication
Receptive communication
Relationship skills

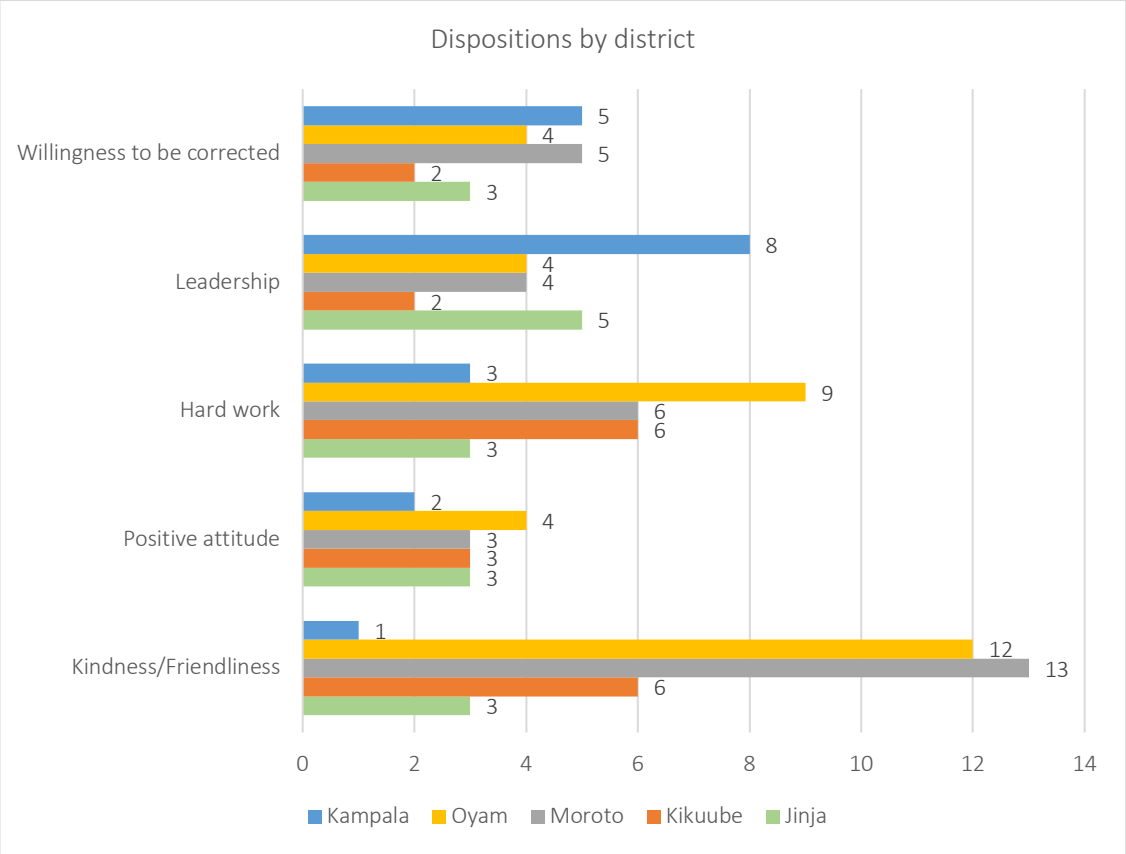
Appendix 3: Descriptive Analysis of the Main Dispositions Codes by Descriptors



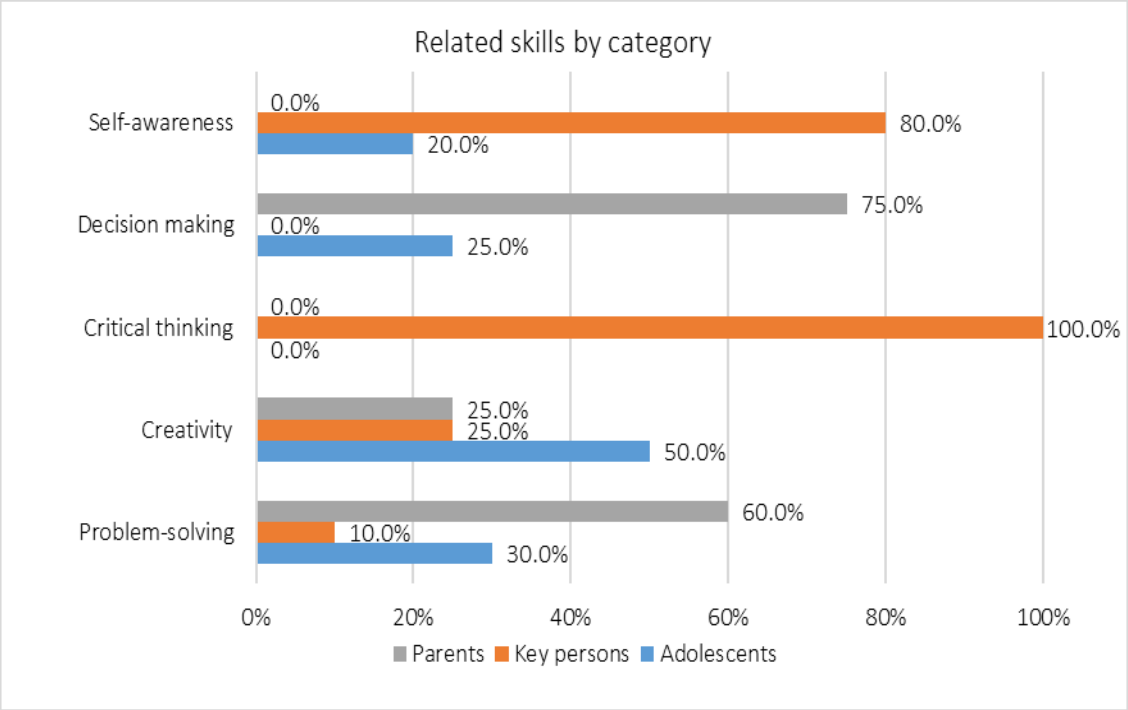


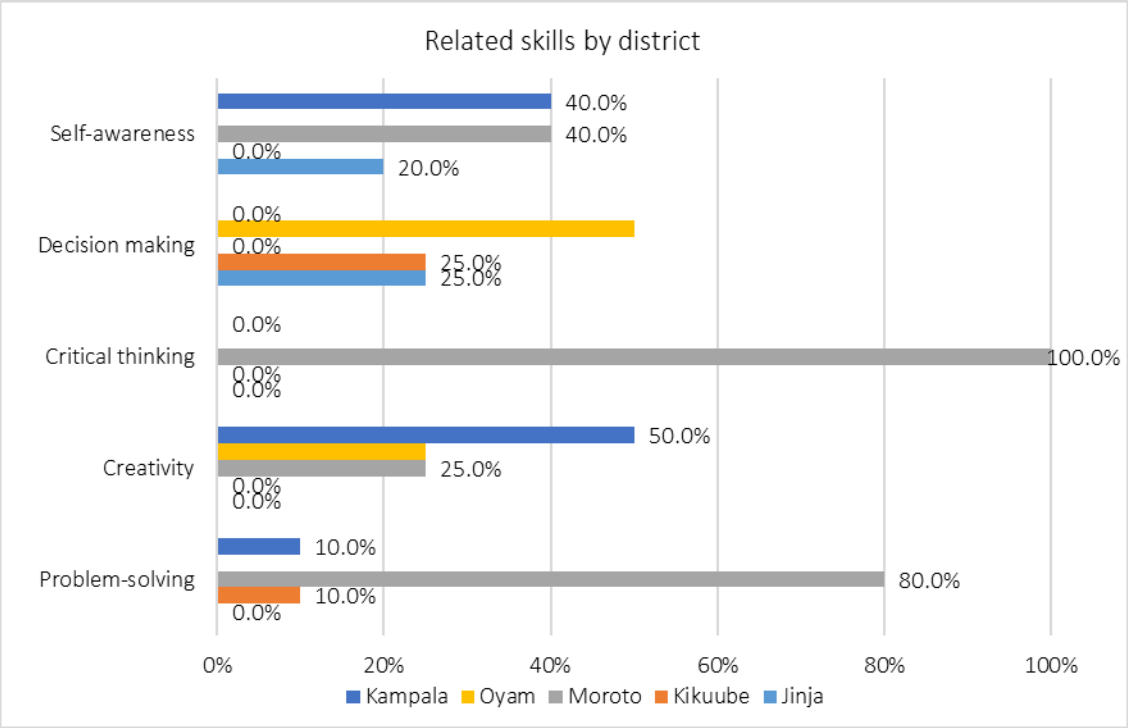

Dispositions by category
Willingness to be corrected
31.6%
52.6%
15.8%
Positive attitude
73.3%
20.0%
6.7%
Leadership
13.0%
87.0%
0.0%
Kindness/Friendliness
17.1%
42.9%
40.0%
Hard work
44.4%
22.2%
33.3%
0%
20%
40%
60%
80%
100%
Parents
Key persons
Adolescents

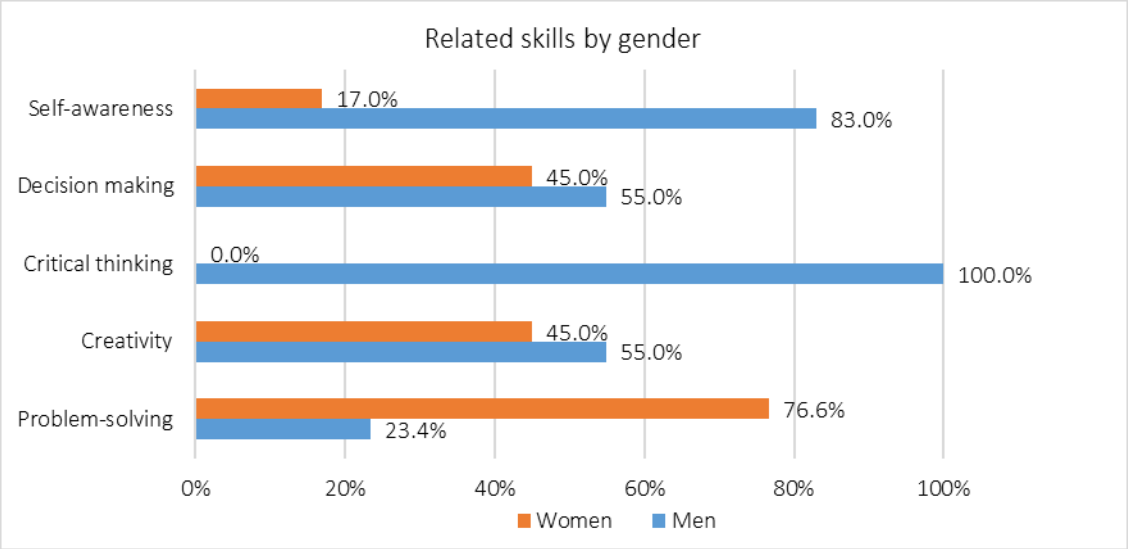

Dispositions by gender and category
25
20
15
10
5
0
12
9
7
11
13
3
1
3
0
3
6
2
1
10
8
3
6
3
1
2
23
6
20
12
6
11
0
6
0 0
9
1
5
10
2
3
5
9
2
4
Men
Boys x Adolescents
Men x Key persons
Men x Parents
Women
Girls x Adolescents
Women x Key persons
Women x Parents
Kindness/Friendliness
Positive attitude
Hard work
Leadership
Willingness to be corrected

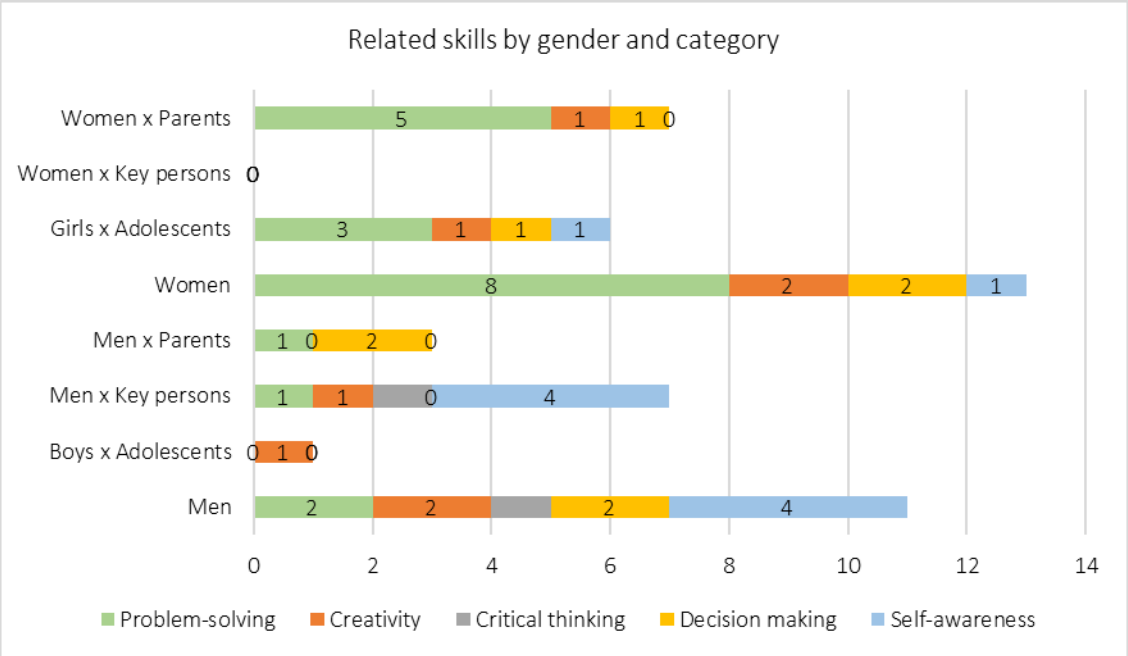

Dispositions by district
Willingness to be corrected
Leadership
Hard work
Positive attitude
Kindness/Friendliness
5
4
5
2
3
8
4
4
2
5
3
9
6
6
3
2
4
3
3
3
1
12
13
6
3
0
2
4
6
8
10
12
14
Kampala
Oyam
Moroto
Kikuube
Jinja

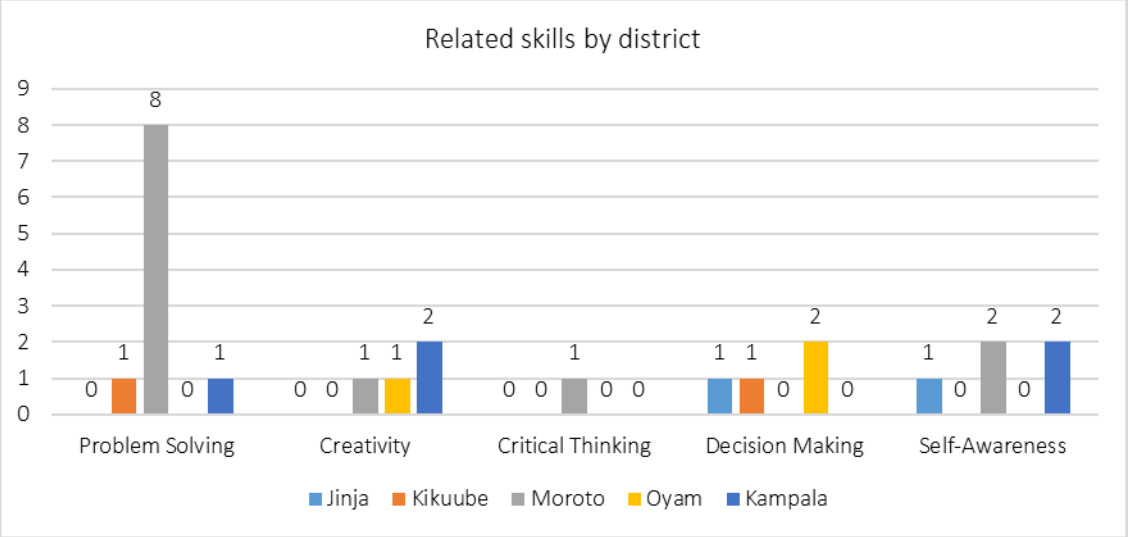
Appendix 4: Descriptive Analysis of the Main Related Skills Codes by Descriptors



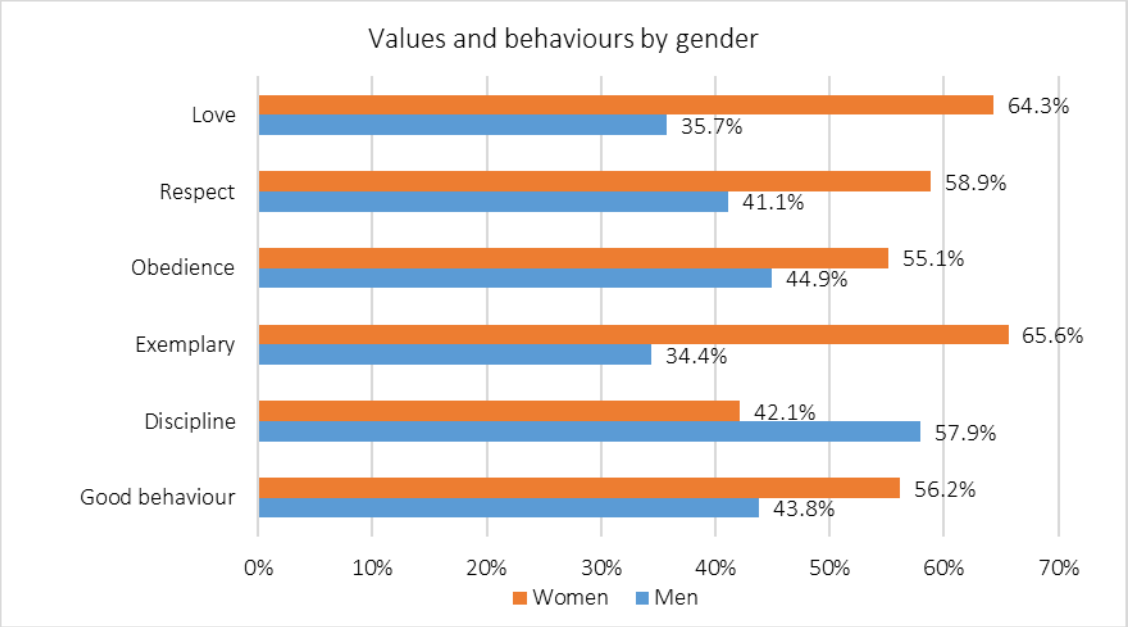

Related skills by district
Self-awareness
Decision making
Critical thinking
Creativity
Problem-solving
40.0%
40.0%
0.0%
20.0%
0.0%
0.0%
25.0%
25.0%
0.0%
100.0%
0.0%
0.0%
50.0%
25.0%
0.0%
0.0%
10.0%
80.0%
10.0%
0.0%
0%
20%
40%
60%
80%
100%
Kampala
Oyam
Moroto
Kikuube
Jinja

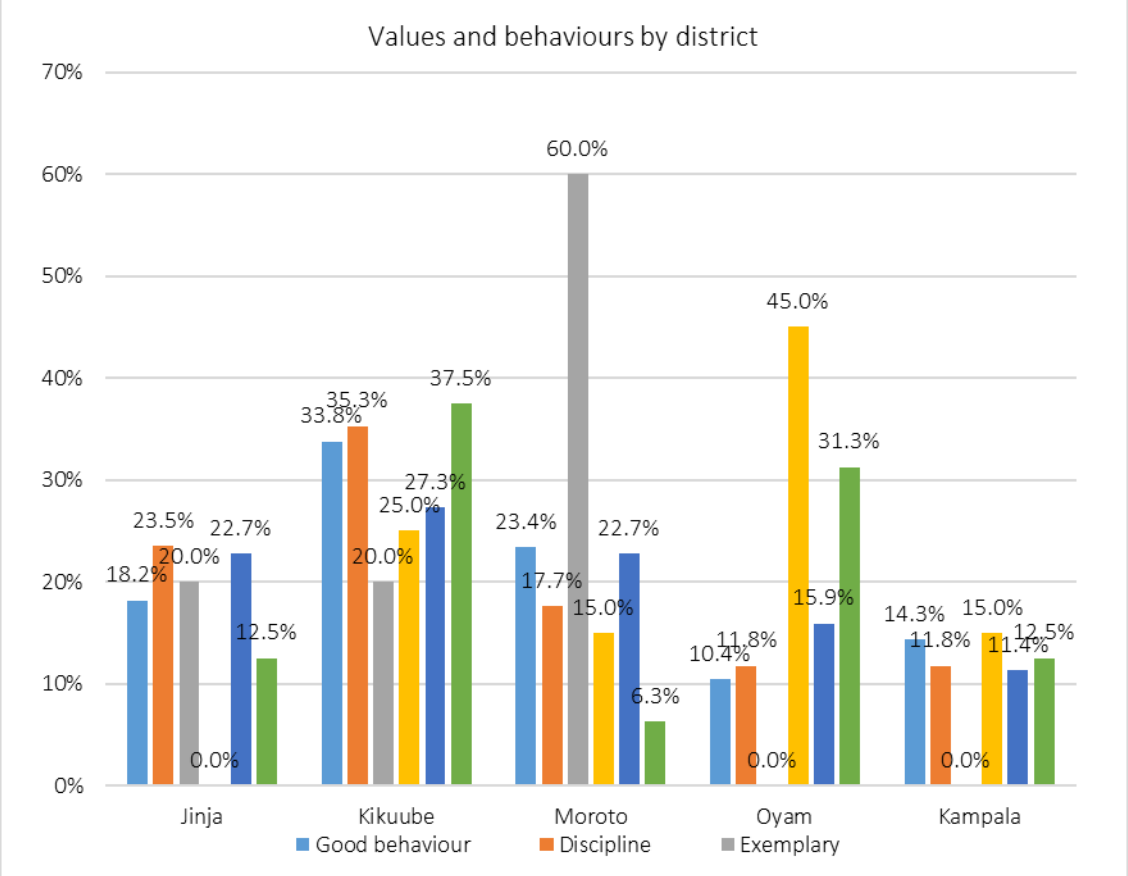

Related skills by gender
Self-awareness
Decision making
Critical thinking
Creativity
Problem-solving
17.0%
83.0%
45.0%
55.0%
0.0%
100.0%
45.0%
55.0%
76.6%
23.4%
0%
20%
40%
60%
80%
100%
Women
Men

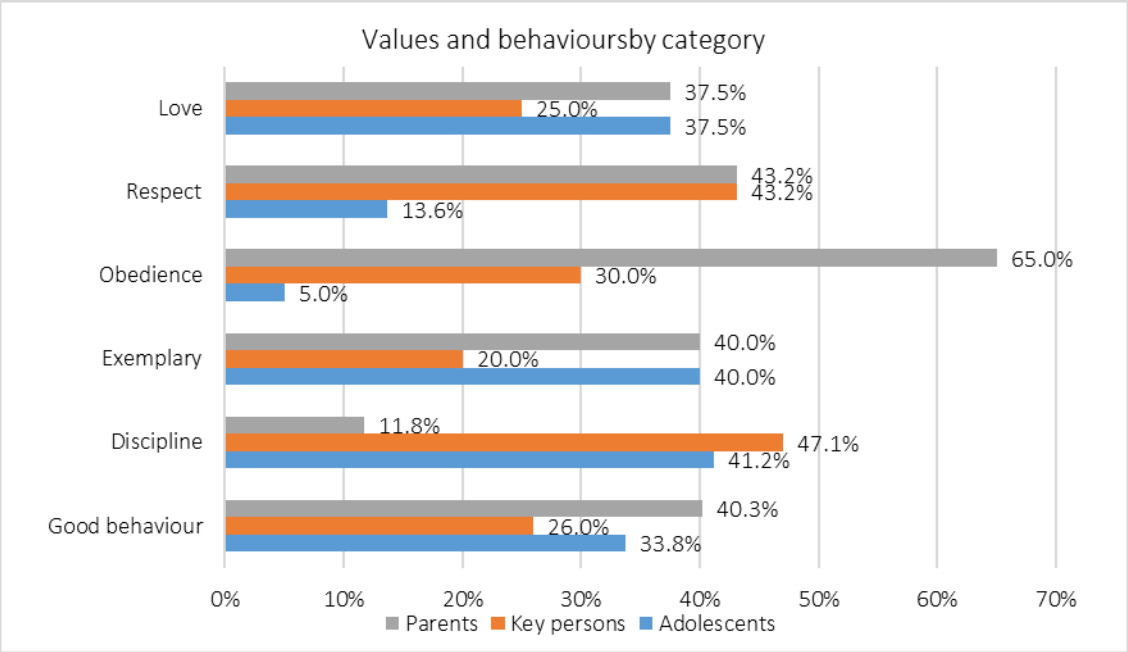

Related skills by gender and category
Women x Parents
Women x Key persons
Girls x Adolescents
Women
Men x Parents
Men x Key persons
Boys x Adolescents
Men
0
2
4
6
8
10
12
14
Problem-solving
Creativity
Critical thinking
Decision making
Self-awareness

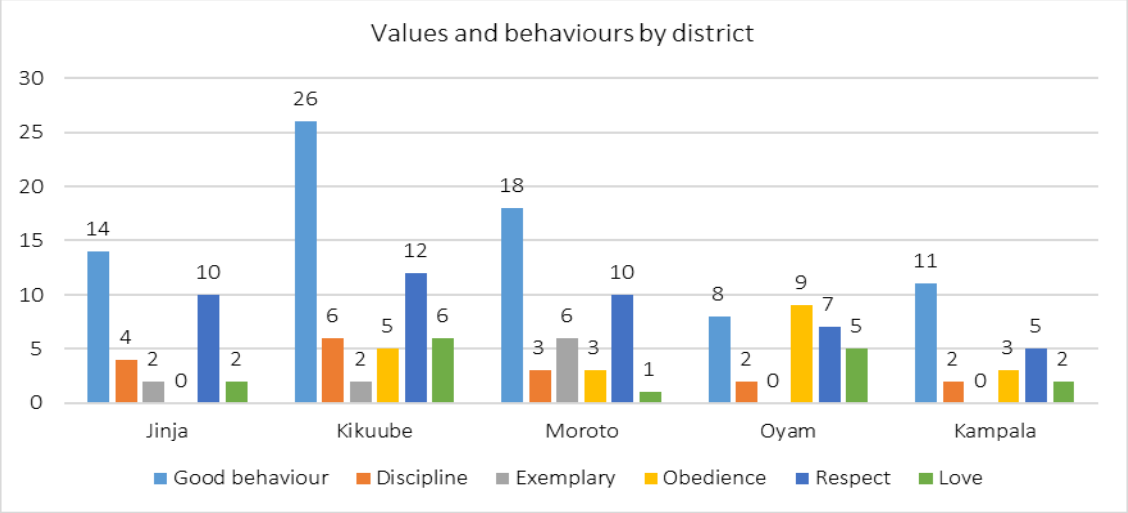

Related skills by district
Problem Solving
Creativity
Critical Thinking
Decision Making
Self-Awareness
Jinja
Kikuube
Moroto
Oyam
Kampala

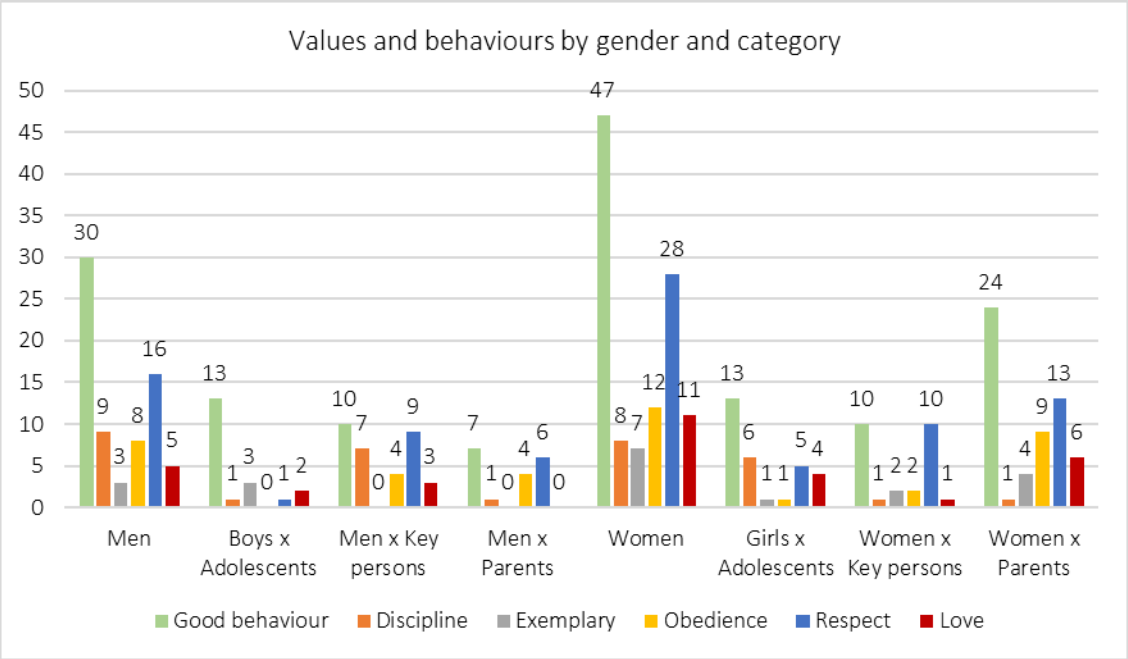
Appendix 5: Descriptive Analysis of the Values and Behaviours by Descriptors



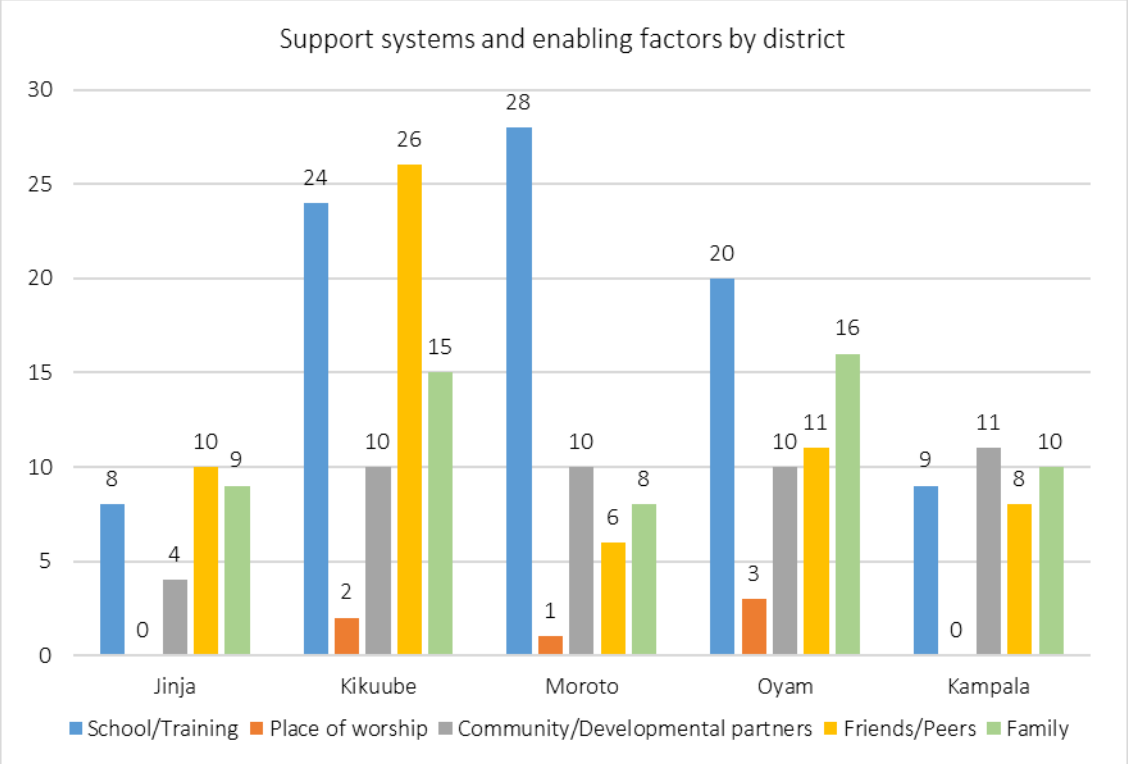


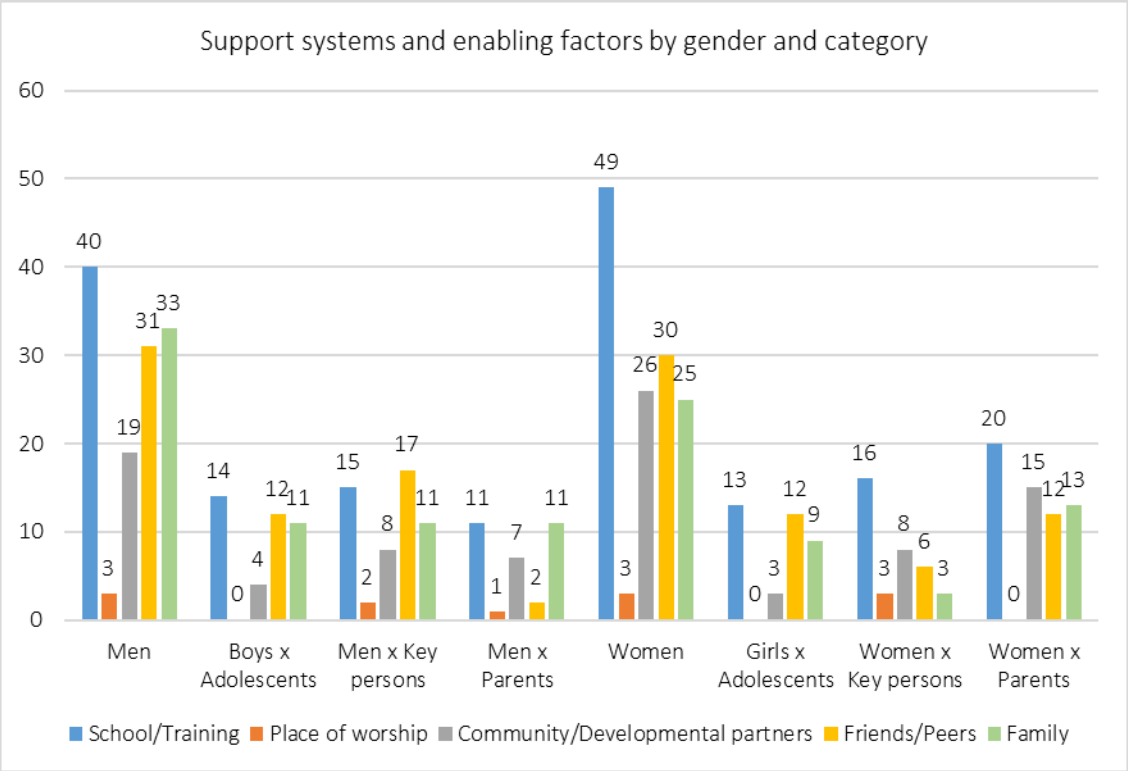

Values and behaviorsby category
Love
Respect
Obedience
Exemplary
Discipline
Good behaviour
37.5%
25.0%
37.5%
43.2%
43.2%
13.6%
65.0%
30.0%
5.0%
40.0%
20.0%
40.0%
11.8%
47.1%
41.2%
40.3%
26.0%
33.8%
0%
10%
20%
30%
40%
50%
60%
70%
Parents
Key persons
Adolescents

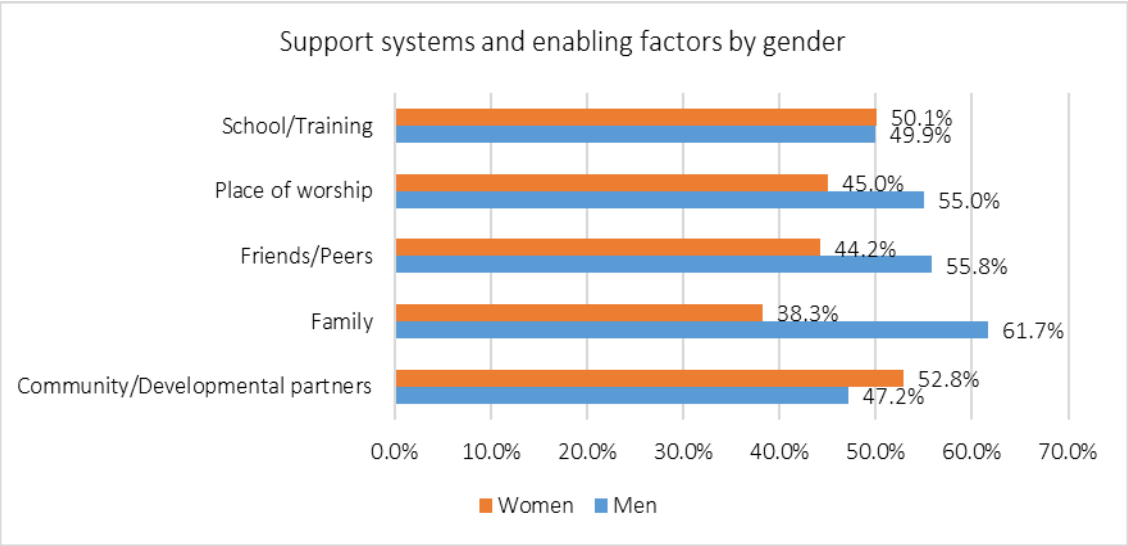

Values and behaviours by district
30
25
20
15
10
5
0
14
4
2
0
10
2
26
6
2
5
12
6
18
3
6
3
10
1
8
2
0
9
7
5
11
2
0
3
5
2
Jinja
Kikuube
Moroto
Oyam
Kampala
Good behaviour
Discipline
Exemplary
Obedience
Respect
Love

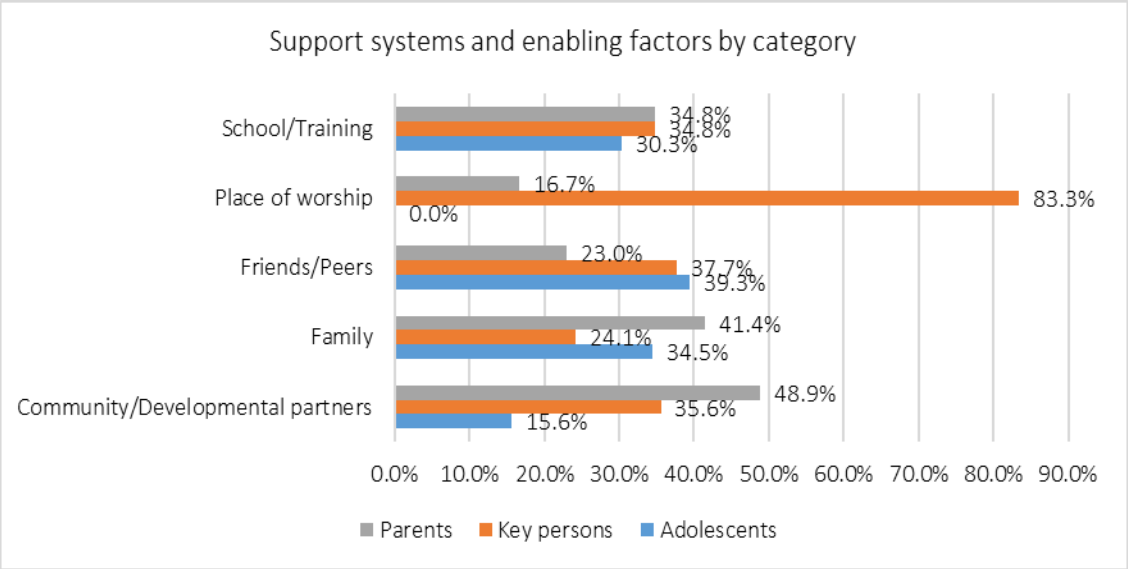


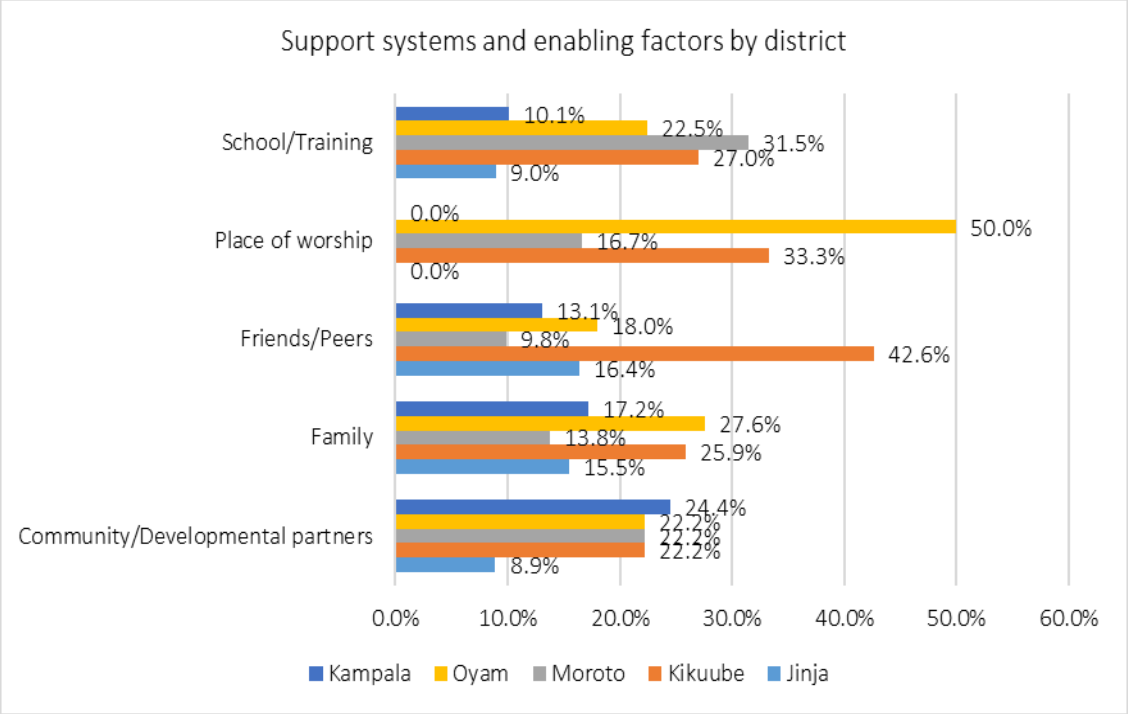
Appendix 6: Descriptive Analysis of the Support Systems and Enabling Factors by Descriptors



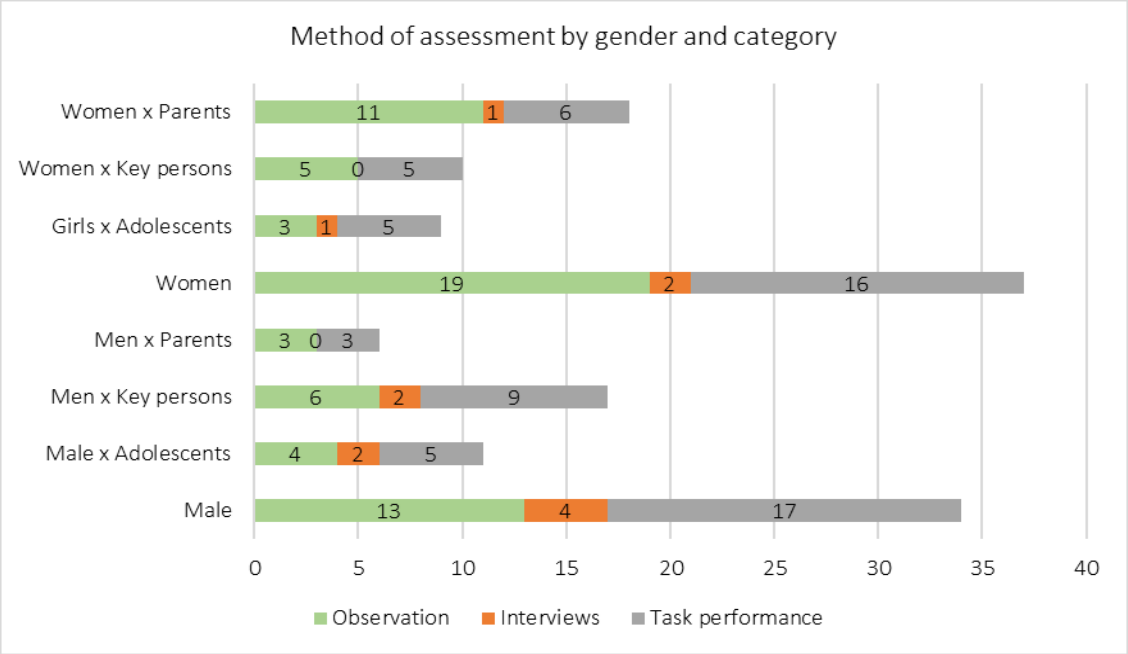

Support systems and enabling factors by gender and category
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
40
3
19
31
33
14
0
4
12
11
15
2
8
17
11
11
1
7
2
11
49
3
26
30
25
13
0
3
12
9
16
3
8
6
3
20
0
15
12
13
Men
Boys x Adolescents
Men x Key persons
Men x Parents
Women
Girls x Adolescents
Women x Key persons
Women x Parents
School/Training
Place of worship
Community/Developmental partners
Friends/Peers
Family

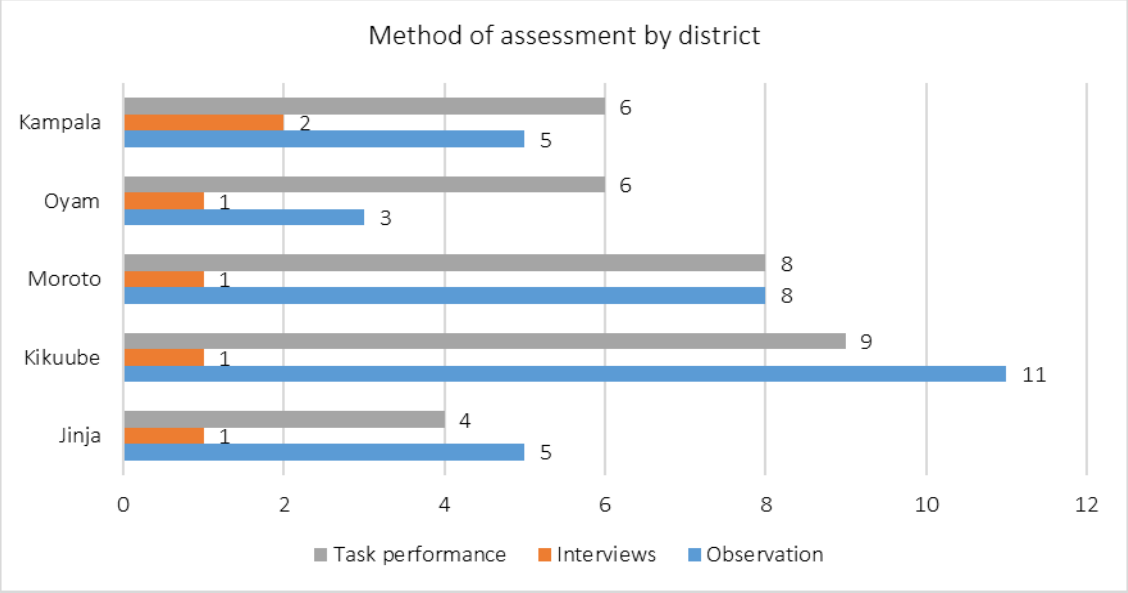

Support systems and enabling factors by gender
School/Training
Place of worship
Friends/Peers
Family
Community/Developmental partners
50.1%
49.9%
45.0%
55.0%
44.2%
55.8%
38.3%
61.7%
52.8%
47.2%
0.0%
10.0%
20.0%
30.0%
40.0%
50.0%
60.0%
70.0%
Women
Men

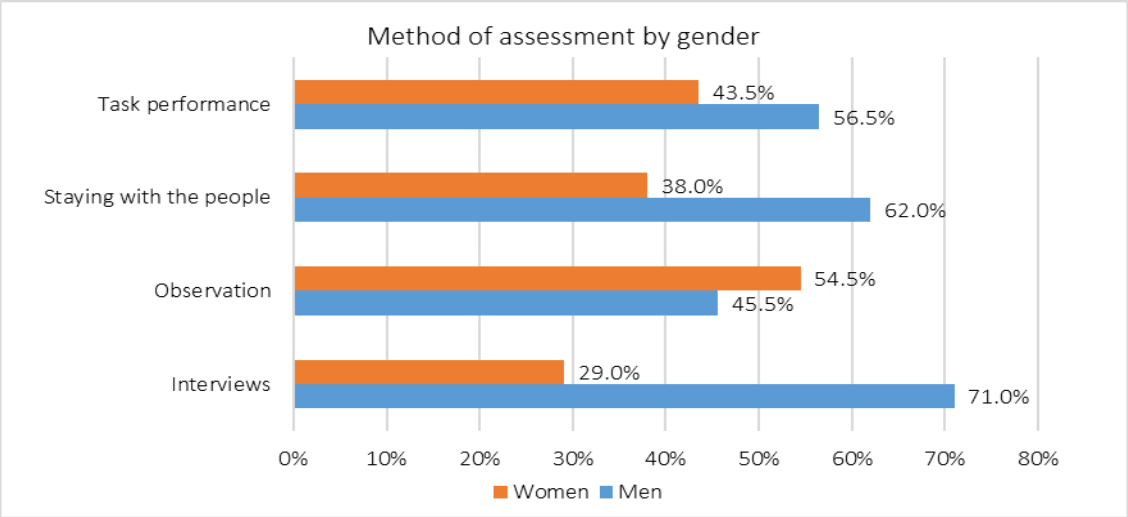

Support systems and enabling factors by category
School/Training
Place of worship
Friends/Peers
Family
Community/Developmental partners
34.8%
34.8%
30.3%
16.7%
0.0%
83.3%
23.0%
37.7%
39.3%
41.4%
24.1%
34.5%
48.9%
35.6%
15.6%
0.0% 10.0% 20.0% 30.0% 40.0% 50.0% 60.0% 70.0% 80.0% 90.0%
Parents
Key persons
Adolescents

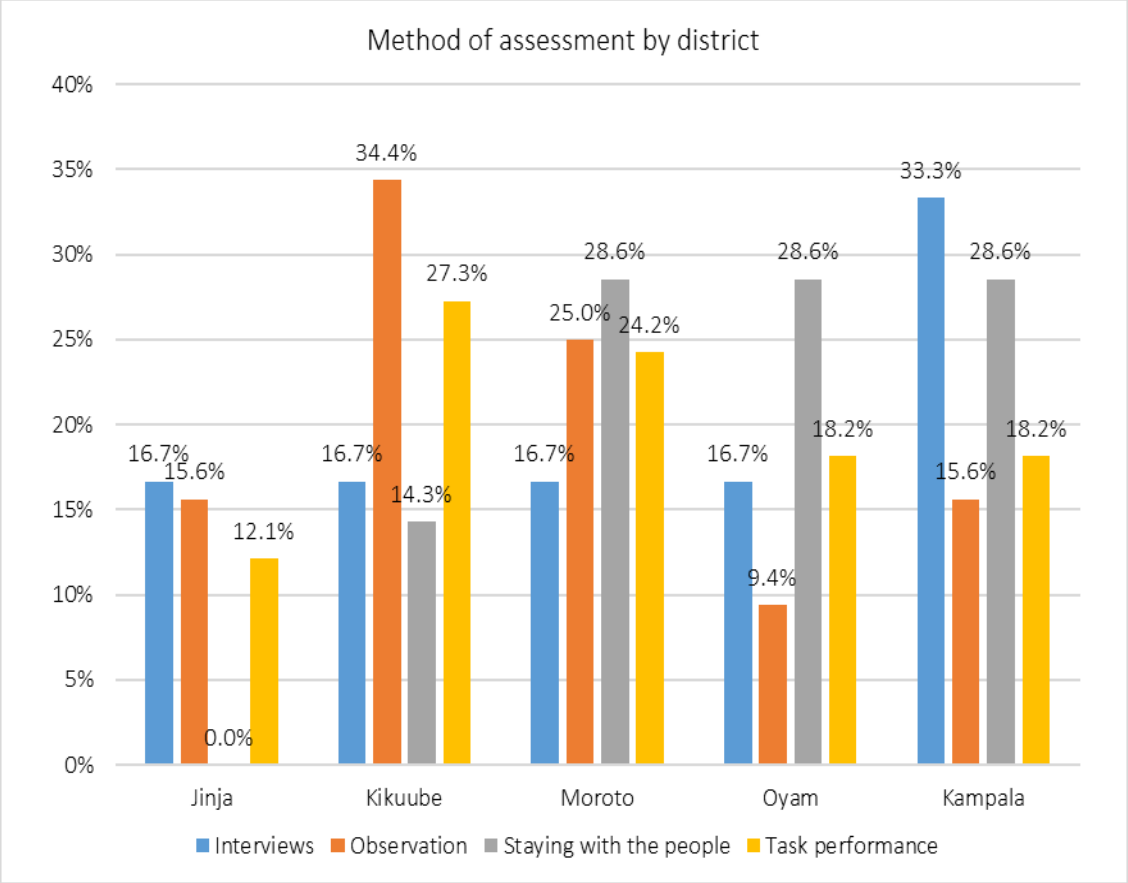

Support systems and enabling factors by district
School/Training
Place of worship
Friends/Peers
Family
Community/Developmental partners
10.1%
22.5%
31.5%
27.0%
9.0%
0.0%
50.0%
16.7%
33.3%
0.0%
13.1%
18.0%
9.8%
42.6%
16.4%
17.2%
27.6%
13.8%
25.9%
15.5%
24.4%
22.2%
22.2%
22.2%
8.9%
0.0% 10.0% 20.0% 30.0% 40.0% 50.0% 60.0%
Kampala
Oyam
Moroto
Kikuube
Jinja

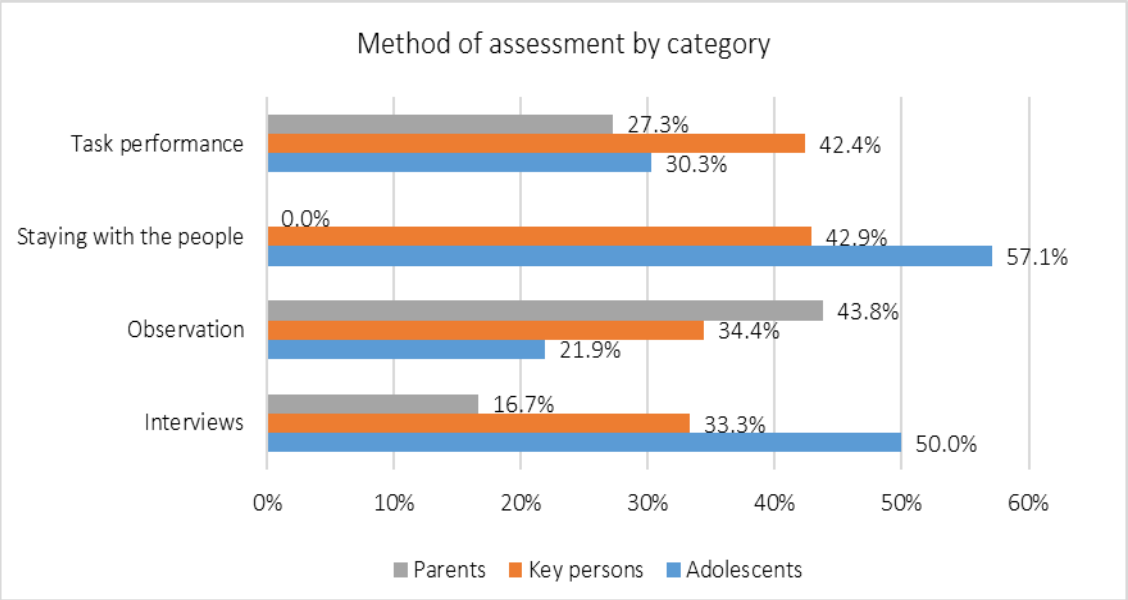
Appendix 7: Descriptive Analysis of the Assessment Methods by Descriptors






Method of assessment by gender
Task performance
43.5%
56.5%
Staying with the people
38.0%
62.0%
Observation
54.5%
45.5%
Interviews
29.0%
71.0%
0%
10%
20%
30%
40%
50%
60%
70%
80%
Women
Men


Method of assessment by district
40%
35%
30%
25%
20%
15%
10%
5%
0%
16.7%
15.6%
0.0%
12.1%
16.7%
34.4%
14.3%
27.3%
16.7%
25.0%
28.6%
24.2%
16.7%
9.4%
28.6%
18.2%
33.3%
15.6%
28.6%
18.2%
Jinja
Kikuube
Moroto
Oyam
Kampala
Interviews
Observation
Staying with the people
Task performance


Method of assessment by category
Task performance
Staying with the people
Observation
Interviews
27.3%
42.4%
30.3%
0.0%
42.9%
57.1%
43.8%
34.4%
21.9%
16.7%
33.3%
50.0%
0%
10%
20%
30%
40%
50%
60%
Parents
Key persons
Adolescents


Wellspring
Philanthropic Fund


echidna giving


imaginable
futures


LUIGI
GIUSSANI
INSTITUTE
OF HIGHER
EDUCATION


uwezo
UGANDA


Zizi Afrique
Foundation


GIRLS LIVELIHOOD
& MENTORSHIP INITIATIVE


Milele Zanzibar Foundation
Kuongeza Maendeleo. Accelerating Progress.