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Advancing Education Solutions: Research for Scaling up Education Innovations in Emergency and Fragilities and FCV Affected Areas of Burkina Faso, Ghana, and Nigeria

RISK ASSESSMENT REPORT

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Executive Summary

The Risk Assessment Report provides a comprehensive overview of the current social, economic, environmental, and political context in the project countries—Burkina Faso, Ghana, and Nigeria– with the goal of examining both national and local risks and vulnerabilities that disrupt educational infrastructure and access. The report looks at both causes and consequences of disrupted education, including the rising numbers of out-of-school children (OOSC), and economic development challenges. The risk assessment is captured in a risk matrix showing each country's security challenges and impact on the education sector, proposing a risk ranking (high, medium, low). The risk assessment informs the overall research on the potential of scaling education innovations in fragile, conflict, and violence affected areas (FCV). The FCV context includes the Sahel, Central East and Central South regions in Burkina Faso, the Northern and Upper East regions of Ghana, and Northeast Nigeria.

Within the context of Education in Emergencies (EiE), the report sheds light on the existing emergency response, violence prevention, and child protection capacities across the three countries, assessing their ability to address both natural and human-made crises, from climate-related disasters to protracted conflict and forced displacement. Key actors in the EiE domain include the Ministry of Basic Education, the Ministry of Solidarity, The National Council for Emergency Relief and Rehabilitation and the Technical Secretariat for Education in Emergency Situations in Burkina Faso; the Ministry of Education, the Ghana Education Service, the National Disaster Management Organisation and the Disaster Management and Prevention Department at local government areas in Ghana; the Ministry of Education, the National Emergency Management System, and the Nigeria Education in Emergencies Working Group in Nigeria. Local and international partners as well as regional networks also play a crucial role in supporting government responses to emergencies.

The risk assessment highlights that banditry, insurgency, and terrorism pose critical threats to education in Burkina Faso, particularly in the Sahel region, and in Nigeria, especially in the BAY states (Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe). Armed conflict and violence perpetrated by the Islamic State in the Sahel (ISIS) and the Al-Qaeda-affiliated Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM) in Burkina Faso, as well as Boko Haram and the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) in Nigeria, have led to widespread school closures. In 2024, over 5,000 schools were closed in Burkina Faso (R-EiE WG 2024). Since 2009, more than 1,400 schools have been damaged or destroyed, and 802 schools were forced to close in Nigeria's BAY states (Nigeria EiEWG 2024). Other issues include the destruction of educational infrastructure, the relocation of teachers, mass displacement, worsening food and water crises, the kidnapping of children from boarding schools and the recruitment of children and youth into armed groups. Economic shocks in Nigeria's project areas, notably in Borno state, are also considered of high risk given inflation and extreme poverty rates. At the medium-risk level, Burkina Faso and Nigeria face epidemic diseases and water stress, often exacerbated by drought conditions.

In Ghana, key concerns include rising ethnic tensions in the Upper East Region, the arrival of at least 9,000 refugees from Burkina Faso in border communities, illegal mining (*galamsey*)—which contributes to school dropouts among children—and the growing threat of terrorism, evidenced by the gradual presence of jihadist groups and reports of child and youth recruitment. Due to insecurity in the Upper East region, schools have remained closed since January 2025. Seasonal flooding is classified as high-risk given the impact on education. Diseases such as cerebrospinal meningitis, cholera, and COVID-19 remain potential risks, though they are considered unlikely to occur and would have a minor impact. In Ghana, the risk of earthquakes is also considered low.

The risk assessment of these challenges considered the existing vulnerabilities and capacities of various national and local actors in responding to emergencies across the three countries. In Burkina Faso**,** children, particularly in conflict-affected areas, face extreme hardship due to poverty, displacement, food insecurity, and disrupted education. Over 2 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the country have seen their education repeatedly interrupted by terrorist attacks. Despite peacebuilding and emergency education efforts led by the government, UN agencies, and NGOs, significant capacity and resource gaps persist.

Nigeria presents a similar landscape, where children, women, youth, and rural IDPs are the most at risk. Their vulnerability is driven by limited educational access, unemployment, poverty, and structural discrimination. While humanitarian support is provided by national and international actors, the response remains undermined by insufficient capacity and resources, and in some cases, military action has intensified the violence.

In Ghana**,** rural women, children, and youth continue to face marginalization. Education is frequently disrupted by climate-related hazards such as flooding, which results in school closures and damage to education infrastructure. Additionally, violence and insecurity, particularly in the North and Upper East regions, often lead to the displacement of teachers, further affecting learning outcomes. Despite ongoing peace efforts and support from international, national, and local actors, critical vulnerabilities persist. These include limited disaster preparedness, inadequate resilient infrastructure, insufficient response to the refugee crisis and environmental degradation caused by *galamsey*, as well as weak coordination among security agencies.

Educational alternatives to formal schooling are fundamental to ensuring continued access to education to the most vulnerable, especially in FCV-affected areas. Evidence from Burkina Faso, Ghana, and Nigeria highlights ongoing efforts to support children, youth, parents, and teachers in coping with crises. These initiatives include providing psychosocial support to learners and educators, distributing learning materials, establishing temporary learning spaces,

and rebuilding safer, more resilient schools. They also emphasise the importance of integrating inclusive innovations, such as Accelerated Education Programmes, Speed Schools, and girls-focused programming that includes digital solutions into crisis-responsive education systems. Digital solutions include remote learning and radio programmes, which should be embedded into national education policies and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) strategies to enhance the resilience of education systems. While this remains a work in progress, the governments of all three countries are gradually building their capacities. Programmes and initiatives implemented in response to recent emergencies that have severely impacted education, such as the COVID-19 pandemic in Ghana, insurgency, and terrorism in Burkina Faso and Nigeria, have provided valuable experience and laid the groundwork for more robust and structured response strategies.

In light of existing gaps in emergency preparedness and response, this report outlines key recommendations. These include the need for increased and sustained funding for education and EiE, specifically, with a focus on capacity-building and training for teachers, administrators, and parents, particularly in emergency preparedness and Mental Health and Psychosocial Support. Strengthening national and regional emergency response frameworks, along with improving prevention mechanisms, such as early warning systems and school emergency plans are also critical. In addition, fostering coordination between humanitarian and development actors, integrating socio-emotional learning and psychosocial support into national EiE strategies and DRR plans, and embedding risk awareness and conflict resolution into curricula are some of the essential steps. These measures aim to build resilient, inclusive education systems capable of withstanding future shocks while protecting the right to quality education in safe, supportive learning environments for both students and teachers.

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