FINAL DRAFT

Situational Analysis Report: Ghana

Advancing Educational Solutions: Research for Scaling Education Innovations in Emergencies and Fragile, Conflict and Violence-affected areas of Burkina Faso, Ghana and Nigeria

Associates for Change

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This situational analysis is part of an ongoing regional study on West Africa titled *Advancing Educational Solutions: Research for Scaling Education Innovations in Emergencies and Fragile, Conflict- and Violence-Affected Areas of Burkina Faso, Ghana and Nigeria*. While the broader study spans three countries, this report focuses exclusively on Ghana, examining education system dynamics in fragile, conflict- and violence-affected (FCV) settings, with particular attention to how conflict, displacement, climate stress, and entrenched social norms interact to undermine access to safe, inclusive, and quality education.

The analysis draws on a mixed-methods design combining school surveys, key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and community consultations across three districts, namely Bawku West, Bongo, and Kassena Nankana in the Upper East Region. In total, the study engaged 533 household head respondents, 33 headteachers, 8 civil society actors, and 4 district education officials, 22 NGO' alumni and members. The findings reveal deep structural fragility within the education system, characterised by recurrent conflict-related disruptions, uneven teacher deployment, high teacher mobility and attrition, weak disaster preparedness, and limited access to alternative learning pathways.

Quantitative evidence highlights the severity and spatial concentration of educational exclusion. Data from the GES indicate that approximately 48,000 children are out of school across the three study districts, 100 percent of whom are in Bawku West District, underscoring its status as a conflict epicentre. School dropout patterns mirror this trend: All 234 recorded dropouts in 2025 occurred in Bawku West, with boys accounting for 52.1 percent and girl's 47.9 percent, pointing to systemic rather than gender-exclusive drivers of exclusion. Although reported school closures were typically short-lived, averaging four days per incident (ranging from a minimum of 1 to a maximum of 19 days). Additionally, 89 percent of closures were attributed to insecurity and conflict, indicating that even brief disruptions are structurally embedded in FCV contexts and cumulatively erode instructional time and learner engagement.

Gendered vulnerabilities remain pronounced. While enrolment figures show near parity between boys and girls among out-of-school children, qualitative and school-level data reveal that girls face heightened risks of dropout linked to early marriage, teenage pregnancy, household labour burdens, insecurity along school routes, and inadequate menstrual hygiene management. Although some schools report access to gender-sensitive teaching and learning materials, less than half consistently report functional anti-sexual harassment policies, school-based counselling services, or structured psychosocial support mechanisms, limiting the protective value of these inputs. Learners with disabilities are particularly underserved, with uneven availability of trained focal persons, limited assistive resources, particularly sharp during emergencies, and weak monitoring systems across districts.

The study further documents stark disparities in the availability and uptake of education innovations. Accelerated Education Programmes and catch-up or bridging initiatives are present in some districts but remain unevenly distributed, with limited coverage in high-conflict areas where out-of-school rates are highest. Despite evidence of their relevance during periods of disruption, radio and mobile learning interventions were reported as absent or underutilised in many surveyed schools, even in communities experiencing recurrent school closures. Psychosocial support and socio-emotional learning (SEL) training for teachers were reported in select districts, but provision remains fragmented, heavily donor-dependent (particularly from NABOCADO), and weakly integrated into national teacher professional development systems.

Community-based actors such as Camfed Association (CAMA) and Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) alumni, Men and Boys Clubs, youth volunteers, faith-based organisations, and local civil society organisations, emerge as critical frontline responders. Their roles in learner identification, re-enrolment, mentoring, psychosocial support, and norm change are widely recognised by communities. However, these contributions remain largely informal, unevenly resourced, and weakly coordinated with Ghana Education Service structures, limiting their scalability and sustainability. Similarly, while Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Assemblies retain statutory responsibility for basic education oversight, their operational capacity in FCV districts is constrained by insecurity, fiscal shortfalls, and competing security expenditures.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that while promising education innovations and local resilience mechanisms exist, they operate within a fragmented and under-resourced Education in Emergencies (EiE) ecosystem. Weak integration of EiE into national and district planning, limited conflict- and displacement-sensitive education data, and insufficient alignment between humanitarian and development actors continue to undermine the scalability and durability of effective interventions. The study underscores the need for coordinated, system-level approaches that link emergency response with long-term education system strengthening, placing equity, protection, and resilience at the centre of policy and practice in FCV settings. Without such a shift, gains achieved through innovative programmes will remain fragile, leaving the most vulnerable children and youth at sustained risk of educational exclusion.

Key Policy Recommendations

In response to these findings, the study proposes the following priority policy actions to strengthen education access, equity, inclusion and resilience in FCV contexts:

1. The Ministry of Education of Ghana should integrate EiE into national and district education sector plans and budgets and strategy and emergency plans with national disaster responses and capacities (e.g. NADMO) to ensure preparedness, predictable financing, and sustained learning continuity in crisis-affected areas.

2. The GES should establish and/or strengthen District Education Emergency Committees in FCV-prone districts to improve coordination among education authorities, security agencies, civil society, and humanitarian partners.
3. The GES should introduce targeted incentives for teachers in conflict-affected districts, including hardship allowances, accommodation support, and security guarantees to address chronic shortages and attrition.
4. The Transforming Teaching, Education & Learning (T-TEL) and The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NaCCA) should institutionalise teacher training in psychosocial support and socio-emotional learning as part of pre-service and in-service professional development.
5. The GES should increase the deployment of female teachers and school-based counsellors, particularly in high-risk communities, to improve the protection of girls' their safety, attendance and retention in schools.
6. The government/Ministry of Education should strengthen existing partnerships with local CSOs by providing dedicated funding to support their work on education access and psychosocial support in crisis-affected areas.
7. Philanthropists and volunteers should sponsor the establishment of community information centres and mobile learning vans which have specifically designed models and programs to support learning during school closures and displacement in line with the national emergency education framework.
8. Existing channels of communication between research institutions and community-based organisations should be further reinforced, alongside the development of MOUs to strengthen collaboration among key actors.
9. The GES should be resourced adequately to strengthen EMIS and education data systems to capture conflict, displacement, gender, disability, school closures, teacher mobility, and learner re-entry trends. This will require tailored budgetary allocation by government to meet this requirement
10. School Management Committees and Parent Teacher Associations should collaborate through the formation of joint committees to monitor school disruption and recovery patterns to inform timely, evidence-based EiE responses and long-term resilience planning.

These recommendations call for a shift from reactive, project-based responses toward integrated, system-level approaches that place equity, protection, and resilience at the centre of education policy and practice in FCV settings.

Research Gaps

While this situational analysis provides important insights into the education landscape in FCV affected contexts in Ghana, it also reveals several critical knowledge gaps that warrant further investigation. Addressing these gaps in future research is essential for strengthening evidence-based policy, improving programme design, and ensuring the scalability and sustainability of Education in Emergencies interventions.

First, the cost-effectiveness and financing sustainability of education innovations in FCV contexts remain underexplored. While AEPs, radio education, SEL, and girls' mentoring programmes are widely recognised as promising, there is insufficient comparative evidence on their costs, efficiency, and scalability under different conflict intensities. Research is needed to examine financing models, government absorption capacity, and the conditions under which donor-supported innovations can be institutionalised within national systems.

Second, there is a gap in evidence on how education interventions adapt to varying levels and types of conflict and fragility. Current studies often treat FCV contexts as homogeneous, overlooking differences between chronic low-intensity insecurity, episodic violence, displacement-driven fragility, and cross-border spillover effects. Future research should examine how programme design, delivery, and outcomes recalibrate across these gradients of risk, including during periods of escalation and de-escalation.

Third, the interaction between harmful social norms and education outcomes requires deeper, gender-disaggregated analysis. While this study highlights the influence of early marriage, teenage pregnancy, child labour, galamsey,[1] and performative masculinity, there is limited causal evidence on which norm-change strategies are most effective, for whom, and under what conditions. Research should assess community-based, school-led, and youth-driven approaches to shifting norms and assess their differential impact on girls' and boys' education trajectories as well as on learners with diverse social identities, including persons with disabilities.

Furthermore, the role of teachers and education workers in FCV contexts remains under-researched beyond issues of deployment and attrition. There is limited understanding of what drives the psychosocial wellbeing of female and male teachers, their different coping strategies, the ethical dilemmas they face in performing their duties, and their professional identities in conflict settings. Research should examine how teacher support systems, incentives, and protection mechanisms influence instructional quality, learner safety, and system recovery.

Finally, there is a need for stronger evidence on governance, coordination, and political economy of EiE implementation. How decisions are made, resources allocated, and responsibilities negotiated among government, humanitarian actors, donors, and communities in FCV contexts remains poorly understood. Future research should examine coordination mechanisms, power dynamics, accountability structures, and the integration of EiE into decentralised education systems.

[1] Galamsey in Ghana refers to illegal small-scale gold mining, often carried out without a license and in ways that damage the environment.

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AEP	Accelerated Education Programme
AFC	Associates for Change
BW	Bawku West
CBE	Complementary Basic Education
BECE	Basic Education Certificate Examination
CAMFED	Campaign for Female Education
CAMA	CAMFED Association
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DACF	District Assemblies Common Fund
DEOC	District Education Oversight Committee
DLC	District Learning Centre
EiE	Education in Emergencies
EMIS	Education Management Information System
FCV	Fragile, Conflict- and Violence-Affected
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FAWE	Forum for African Women Educationalists
GALOP	Ghana Accountability for Learning Outcomes Project
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GEI	Gender Equity and Inclusion
GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
GES	Ghana Education Service
G4G	Girls for Girls Programme
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
INEE	Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
IOM	International Organization for Migration
JHS	Junior High School
KII	Key Informant Interview
KNW	Kassena Nankana West
MMDAs	Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoGCSP	Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection
NADMO	National Disaster Management Organisation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NORSAAC	Northern Sector Action on Awareness Centre
OOSC	Out-of-School Children
OOSCY	Out-of-School Children and Youth
PSS	Psychosocial Support

PTA	Parent–Teacher Association
REPs	Radio Education Programmes
SEL	Socio-Emotional Learning
SHS	Senior High School
SMC	School Management Committee
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
SWEDD	Sahel Women's Empowerment and Demographic Dividend
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UER	Upper East Region
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WFP	World Food Programme

1. INTRODUCTION

The situational analysis is part of an ongoing regional study conducted in West Africa titled: *Advancing Educational Solutions: Research for Scaling Education Innovations in Emergencies and Fragile, Conflict- and Violence-affected Areas of Burkina Faso, Ghana and Nigeria.* The research is funded by GPE KIX and International Development Research Centre and Centre de recherches pour le développement international (IDRC-CRDI) over two-years (2024-2026). It is designed to assess the effectiveness of innovations that aim to rebuild and strengthen access to learning, improve retention of OOSC FCV affected areas. The present report is based exclusively on the research conducted in Ghana.

The situational analysis provides a comprehensive and evidence-based assessment of the operational, institutional, and socio-political contexts for scaling education innovations in fragile, conflict- and violence-affected (FCV) settings across Burkina Faso, Ghana, and Nigeria. Drawing on recent data and field-based insights, the study examines how conflict, displacement, and structural fragility shape access to education, learning continuity, and system resilience. It is designed as a foundational analytical resource to support cross-country learning and to inform strategic decision-making by EiE stakeholders, including governments, development partners, civil society organizations, and practitioners. By synthesizing contextual and comparative evidence, the analysis identifies key challenges, opportunities, and leverage points for strengthening EiE policies, programmes, and practices, while advancing the right to inclusive, equitable, and quality education in crisis-affected contexts.

The report is structured to guide both policy reflection and operational planning. Following this introduction, the methodology section outlines the study design, data collection tools and instruments, enumerator training processes, data management and analysis procedures, ethical safeguards, and study limitations. Subsequent sections review national EiE-related policies and plans in the three countries, highlighting gaps between policy intent and implementation, as well as lessons from district- and regional-level stakeholders, including international and local NGOs. Within the context of conflict and displacement, the analysis documents patterns of school closures in formal education, their underlying drivers and duration, and the scale and experiences of out-of-school children, teachers, refugees, and internally displaced persons (IDPs). It further explores how affected learners and communities adapt to disrupted education providing insights to inform more responsive, resilient, gender transformative and context-sensitive education interventions in FCV settings.

1.1 Background of the study

This study is part of a regional initiative aimed at scaling up proven and context-responsive education innovations for children, teachers, and communities living in FCV settings in West Africa, focusing on Burkina Faso, Ghana, and Nigeria. Protracted conflict, displacement, climate stress, and socio-economic fragility in these countries have severely disrupted education systems, resulting in high numbers of out-of-school children, weak learning

outcomes, and increased risks of dropout, particularly among girls and other socially excluded groups. Building on evidence generated through earlier IDRC-supported research on Accelerated Education Programmes (AEP) and Girls-Focused Programmes, this project seeks to strengthen the evidence base on what works, for whom, and under what conditions in emergency and FCV contexts. The content and process of the research is informed by a Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) perspective.

The study examines the effectiveness of a range of educational innovations designed to restore the access of girls and boys to learning, improve retention, and support holistic child development in emergency and FCV areas. The innovations include Accelerated Education Programmes (AEPs) for children who have never been to school and out-of-school learners, socio-emotional learning (SEL) and psychosocial support for teachers and students, inclusive education strategies for socially excluded and vulnerable groups, and alternative and digital learning modalities such as radio-based education. By systematically assessing the impact and scalability of these cost-effective interventions across low-, medium, and high-risk FCV areas, the research aims to generate actionable evidence to inform policy, programming, and investment decisions through various engagement with policy makers and other stakeholder to disseminate research findings.

Guided by a strong equity and gender-transformative lens, the project prioritizes innovations that promote gender equality, social inclusion, learner safety, and the psychosocial wellbeing of both learners and teachers. Using a rigorous mixed-methods design, the study compares interventions across diverse conflict contexts (low, medium, and high-risk) and engages closely with governments, civil society organizations, education innovators, and community stakeholders in each country. In addition to generating policy-relevant evidence on transitions, retention, and completion, the research seeks to strengthen the capacity of national and sub-national actors to implement and sustain effective innovations at scale. Ultimately, the study aims to inform national education frameworks and emergency response strategies, while contributing to regional and global learning on resilient, equitable and inclusive education systems in FCV settings.

1.2 The research problem

Education remains a cornerstone of individual wellbeing and societal development. Yet, across West Africa it is increasingly undermined by protracted conflict, violence, and fragility. In Northern Ghana, eastern and western Burkina Faso, and Northern Nigeria, insecurity has severely disrupted education systems, leading to rising numbers of out-of-school children and youth (OOSCY) and persistent declines in learning quality (Cadamuro et al., 2021). These disruptions are driven by interlocking factors that collectively limit access to safe and continuous schooling. Girls and young women are disproportionately affected, as interruptions to education often coincide with increased exposure to early marriage, teenage pregnancy, domestic responsibilities, and unsafe livelihoods, resulting in long-term inequalities in education, health, employment, and civic participation (World Bank, 2024).

In Northern Ghana, entrenched socio-cultural practices such as harmful gendered norms and behaviour, early marriage, and household labour expectations, alongside recurrent ethnic and land-related conflicts, continue to constrain educational access, particularly for girls (Alhassan & Odame, 2015). These challenges are compounded by growing internal and cross-border displacement. Ghana's northern regions, for instance, are hosting more than 8,000 refugee families fleeing insecurity in Burkina Faso, intensifying pressure on already limited education and social services and heightening local tensions over land, food, and basic resources (UNHCR, 2023). In Burkina Faso, insecurity linked to violent extremism has forced the closure of over 6,000 schools, leaving more than two million children without access to education and exposing them to heightened protection risks (MENAPLN, 2023). Similarly, in Nigeria, prolonged insurgency and terrorism have resulted in approximately 19.7 million school-age children being out of school, with girls from poor and rural households bearing the greatest burden (UNESCO UIS, 2022; Oyekan, Ayorinde & Adenuga, 2023).

Across the three countries, jihadist activity, communal violence, and ethnic tensions continue to erode the safety of schools and the availability of qualified teachers. In Ghana's Bawku district, more than two decades of conflict between Mamprusi and Kusasi communities have led to the withdrawal of trained teachers and health workers and the sustained deployment of security forces. Comparable tensions are emerging in refugee-hosting communities in northern Ghana and Burkina Faso, where competition over land, food, and services risks deepening fragility (Ofosu-Peasah, 2024). These dynamics underscore a shared regional challenge: namely, how to sustain education provision, protect learners and teachers, and maintain quality learning in contexts of chronic insecurity?

Despite the scale and urgency of these challenges, a critical gap remains in context-specific evidence on how education access, quality, and equity can be sustained and scaled in FCV and emergency settings. Limited understanding of which education innovations are most effective, adaptable, and cost-efficient in such contexts constrains the development of resilient education systems capable of withstanding shocks and ensuring learning continuity for all children, particularly girls and other socially excluded groups (INEE, 2020). Addressing this evidence gap is essential for informing policy, strengthening practice, and breaking cycles of intergenerational poverty and exclusion across crisis-affected regions in West Africa.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Study design

This situational analysis adopted an exploratory sequential mixed-methods study design to ensure a comprehensive and context-sensitive understanding of EiE in Ghana. The research design was selected to capture both the policy–systems architecture and the lived, operational realities of EiE implementation at national, regional, and district levels. Given the complexity and sensitivity of EiE where education delivery intersects with conflict, climate shocks, displacement, and institutional capacity, a flexible and exploratory framework was essential to address gaps and constraints, as well as opportunities that may not be evident through a single method or data source.

At the core of the design was a descriptive and analytical situational assessment, combining document review, key informant interviews, surveys, and field-level insights. The document review focused on national education policies, sector plans, EiE-related frameworks, and partner reports to map the formal policy and institutional context shaping EiE in Ghana. This component provided a macro-level understanding of policy intent, strategic priorities, and alignment with global EiE norms, particularly the Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) Minimum Standards, which emphasise preparedness, coordination, protection, and continuity of learning in crisis settings (INEE, 2024).

The qualitative orientation of the study was deliberate, recognising that EiE effectiveness is strongly influenced by institutional practices, informal coordination arrangements, capacity constraints, and perceptions of risk, which are best explored through in-depth, semi-structured engagement (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Interviews were designed to elicit perspectives on preparedness, response mechanisms, coordination practices, teacher deployment, psychosocial support, and challenges encountered during school disruptions.

The study also incorporated a multi-level systems lens, ensuring that insights from national policy actors were triangulated with district-level experiences, particularly in crisis-affected or high-risk areas. This approach allowed the analysis to surface implementation gaps between national frameworks and district realities, a recurring issue in EiE contexts where contingency plans may exist but face constraints in operationalisation. By integrating perspectives across governance levels, this study design strengthened the validity and explanatory power of the findings (Yin, 2018). Additionally, it is aligned with good practice in EiE and humanitarian education research, which recommends triangulated, qualitative-heavy approaches to understanding crisis environments, institutional readiness, and system resilience (INEE, 2024; UNESCO, 2020). The design ensured that the situational analysis was not only descriptive, but also analytically robust and capable of informing practical EiE programming, policy adaptation, and system strengthening in the Ghanaian context.

2.2 Study contexts

The situational analysis was conducted in three districts in the Upper East Region of Ghana, comprising the following districts: Bawku West, Bongo, and Kassena Nankana. The Upper East Region is in the north-eastern part of the country. The districts are characterised by semi-arid climatic conditions, seasonal rainfall, and a predominantly agrarian economy (GSS, 2021). (see Figure 1).

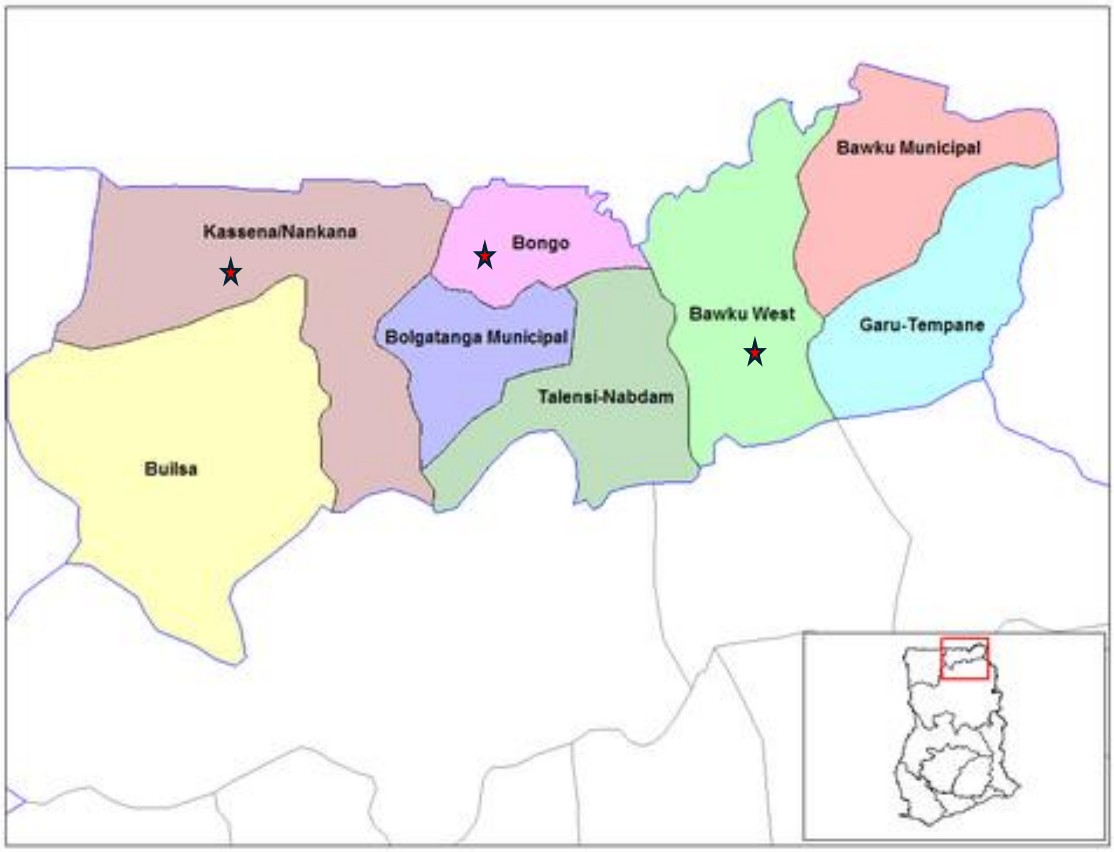


Figure 1 Selected Study Districts in the Upper East Region of Ghana

Source: Associates for Change, 2025

Socio-economic vulnerabilities

The upper east region is among the country's most socio-economically disadvantaged areas, with high poverty incidence, limited infrastructure, and recurrent exposure to climate-related shocks, particularly flooding and drought. These structural vulnerabilities intersect with recurrent ethnic clashes and conflicts that hinder education access, learning activities and outcomes and contribute to migration and displacement which are shaped by a complex interaction of protracted communal violence, farmer herder conflicts, climate stress, and emerging regional insecurity, rather than large scale civil war This makes it important to analyse the educational situation in this context.

Bawku West, Bongo, and Kassena Nankana districts share a common context of chronic vulnerability in northern Ghana, where poverty, climate stress, and social exclusion intersect to constrain education access, continuity, and learning outcomes. Across all three, schools operate under persistent pressure, with Complementary Basic Education (CBE) programmes and NGO interventions playing a key role in supporting out-of-school children and strengthening system resilience. However, the nature of these vulnerabilities differs:

Bawku West is primarily affected by spillover effects of the protracted Bawku conflict, leading to insecurity-related disruptions such as displacement, absenteeism, and teacher retention challenges. Also, recurrent chieftaincy conflicts in Bawku and surrounding areas, coupled with competition over land and water between farmers and pastoralists, have driven repeated episodes of internal displacement, with households relocating to nearby towns and communities such as Bolgatanga, Navrongo, and Sumbrongo, often relying on host families. These movements are further intensified by climate variability and the spillover risk from insecurity in Burkina Faso, while seasonal and circular migration to southern Ghana remains an important coping strategy, especially for youth. Evidence from community members and school actors highlights how displacement undermines education through loss of income, inability to afford uniforms or learning materials, overcrowding in host schools, and fear linked to ethnic identity or livelihood patterns. Although government security deployments, humanitarian assistance through NADMO and partners, and peacebuilding efforts by traditional and religious leaders are ongoing, responses remain constrained by insecurity, limited funding, and weak data.

Bongo faces recurrent climate shocks, particularly seasonal flooding, which damages infrastructure and interrupts schooling. The effect of conflict on education is however non-existent as the district has not recorded any conflict in recent times. However, there is evidence that come victims, particularly women and children often migrate from the conflict prone area like Bawku West and Central to find temporary refuge and safety.

Kassena Nankana, though relatively better served and more densely populated, contends with a mix of peri-urban and rural challenges, including poverty, seasonal migration, and periodic flooding, alongside a higher concentration of development interventions.

Together, the districts illustrate how overlapping risk factors shape varied EiE needs within a shared context of structural disadvantage.

State of education before conflict

Prior to the intensification of violent conflict in the early 2000s, the Bawku municipality occupied an important place in the educational landscape of the Upper East Region. The municipality functioned as a regional education hub, hosting reputable senior high and technical institutions such as Bawku Senior High School and Bawku Technical Institute, which attracted students not only from surrounding districts but also from neighbouring Burkina Faso and Togo. Despite widespread poverty, education was strongly valued as a pathway to social mobility and stable employment in teaching, nursing, and the civil service. Families often made considerable sacrifices to keep their children in school, particularly boys, while School

Management Committees and Parent Teacher Associations played active roles in school oversight, resource mobilisation, and community engagement. As one CAMA respondent recalled, *"education was going on well, student retention was good,"* underscoring a period when schooling was relatively stable before conflict disruptions set in.

This relative stability was also reflected in teacher deployment and community cooperation. Educators were willing to accept postings to Bawku, sometimes viewing the area as an opportunity to gain professional experience and establish long term social ties. A respondent from the KULDEP (a development or local empowerment programme operating in or around Bawku) programme noted that *"people wanted to be posted to the north here… some even end up marrying here,"* illustrating a time when Bawku was not widely perceived as a high risk posting. Parental support for schools was also more reliable, with communities contributing to school equipment and other basic inputs when requested. As a headteacher from Hairiya Islamic School explained, *"before the conflict, things were running the way they were supposed to in education… parents supported,"* highlighting the strength of school community relations during this period.

The prolonged conflict has since reversed many of these gains and exposed the fragility of the education system. Cycles of violence have disrupted schooling, weakened student retention, and contributed to long term disengagement, particularly among adolescents who dropped out during periods of insecurity and later turned to early marriage or informal livelihoods such as galamsey. The education sector has also suffered from extensive teacher migration, leaving many schools understaffed and unable to recover learning losses. As one KULDEP respondent observed, *"when school is understaffed, you can see the* effects on the children… *people who are there are leaving, so others are not willing to come."* At the same time, resources that might have supported educational infrastructure and materials have been diverted to security expenditures, further constraining recovery efforts. A headteacher from Anerigu DA Primary noted that development funds are increasingly used to *"cater for the security personnel,"* limiting investment in schools. These dynamics illustrate how the conflict has transformed a once functional, community supported education system into one struggling with structural deficits, weakened governance, and prolonged recovery challenges.

Migration and displacement context

Migration and displacement in fragile settings encompass both voluntary and forced movements, but within conflict and violence affected contexts the dominant concern is forced displacement. In the Upper East Region of Ghana, migration and displacement are shaped by a complex interaction of protracted communal violence, farmer herder conflicts, climate stress, and emerging regional insecurity, rather than large scale civil war. Recurrent chieftaincy conflicts in Bawku and surrounding areas, coupled with competition over land and water between farmers and pastoralists, have driven repeated episodes of internal displacement, with households relocating to nearby towns and communities such as Bolgatanga, Navrongo, and Sumbrongo, often relying on host families. These movements are further intensified by climate

variability and the spillover risk from insecurity in Burkina Faso, while seasonal and circular migration to southern Ghana remains an important coping strategy, especially for youth.

Evidence from community members and school actors highlights how displacement undermines education through loss of income, inability to afford uniforms or learning materials, overcrowding in host schools, and fear linked to ethnic identity or livelihood patterns. Although government security deployments, humanitarian assistance through NADMO and partners, and peacebuilding efforts by traditional and religious leaders are ongoing, responses remain constrained by insecurity, limited funding, and weak data.

2.3 Study population and sampling size

The study population for this situational analysis comprised actors of the education system and community stakeholders directly affected by or involved in EiE across the three purposively selected districts in northern Ghana: namely, Bawku West, Bongo, and Kassena Nankana. These districts were selected because they represent diverse yet overlapping EiE risk profiles, due to factors such as exposure to conflict and insecurity (notably spillovers from the Bawku conflict), climate-related shocks such as flooding, and persistent educational exclusion among vulnerable groups. The selected project areas provide a robust empirical basis for understanding EiE dynamics in fragile and shock-prone settings in Ghana.

The study population included multiple, interrelated categories of respondent to capture the full education ecosystem operating before, during, and after emergencies, notably:

(i) teachers and headteachers in basic, public schools
(ii) in-school learners at the upper primary level
(iii) past and present learners of CBE, particularly those transitioning into or out of the formal system
(iv) parents, caregivers, and broader community members
(v) district-level education and NGO actors, including GES officials and EiE-implementing organisations.

Including these diverse groups ensured that the analysis reflected both institutional perspectives and lived experiences of learners and communities, which is critical in EiE contexts where shocks affect households, schools, and governance structures simultaneously (INEE, 2024).

A purposive and stratified sampling approach was adopted, consistent with the qualitative-dominant design of the study. Districts were first purposively selected based on EiE relevance, after which respondent categories were stratified to ensure balanced representation across gender, role, and exposure to emergency-related disruptions. Teachers and headteachers were selected from schools with history of closure, displacement, or learning disruption, while learners were selected with the support from school authorities to ensure age-appropriate and ethically sound participation. For CBE learners, both current participants and programme

graduates were included to capture insights on access, continuity, and re-integration into formal education during and after emergencies.

In terms of sampling size, the study did not seek statistical representativeness; rather, it aimed for analytical depth and thematic saturation, which is appropriate for situational analyses in humanitarian and EiE research (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Guest et al., 2012). Across the three districts, the study engaged 533 respondents from households across 29 communities. In Bawku West, 118 respondents across 9 communities, 177 respondents in 11 communities in Kassena-Kana West, and 175 respondents in 9 communities in Bongo were sampled. The final sample chosen was primarily women and girls, particularly in the case of the household survey and key informant interviews, with girls making up the majority of participants in the FGD at the school level, even though the sampling strategy used did not specifically prioritize female respondents. This sample size was sufficient to enable within-district and cross-district comparison, while allowing the study to identify recurring patterns, gaps, and context-specific variations in EiE preparedness, response, and recovery. Sampling continued until thematic saturation was reached within each selected areas where interviews were conducted, at which point no substantially new insights were emerging from additional interviews or discussions (Guest et al., 2012).

2.4 Methods of data collection and procedure

The situational analysis adopted a multi-method data collection approach, combining primary and secondary data sources to generate a comprehensive and contextually grounded understanding of EiE in the selected districts of northern Ghana. In line with established EiE and humanitarian research practice, the study relied on a qualitative-dominant design, complemented by a structured survey/questionnaire to capture descriptive patterns and strengthen triangulation across data sources (INEE, 2024; UNESCO, 2020). This integrated approach enabled the study to examine both policy–systems dimensions and lived experiences of education disruption and response.

A systematic desk review constituted the first stage of data collection, with a deliberate emphasis on extracting and critically assessing Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) dimensions across policy and programmatic documents. Relevant national and sub-national documents were reviewed, including the Education Strategic Plan (2018–2030), Education in Emergencies (EiE) frameworks and contingency plans, Ghana Education Service (GES) operational guidelines, and reports from development partners and NGOs implementing EiE and complementary education interventions.

To draw out GESI elements, the review applied a structured analytical framework combining document coding and thematic content analysis. Specifically, documents were interrogated along key GESI domains, including: (i) the explicit articulation of gender and inclusion objectives; (ii) the extent to which policies identify and target vulnerable and marginalized groups (e.g., girls, children with disabilities, displaced populations, socially excluded, and out-

of-school children); (iii) the presence of disaggregated data and indicators; (iv) institutional arrangements and accountability mechanisms for GESI mainstreaming; and (v) implementation strategies, including resource allocation and monitoring provisions. This approach enabled a systematic identification of both explicit commitments and implicit assumptions regarding equity and inclusion within the policy architecture.

In general terms, the GESI analysis across the reviewed documents was moderately robust at the level of policy intent but weaker in operational depth and accountability. On the one hand, a key strength observed was the strong rhetorical and normative commitment to gender equity and inclusive education, with most documents explicitly recognizing disparities in access, participation, and learning outcomes among marginalized groups. In several instances, there was clear alignment with international frameworks on inclusive education, and some policies incorporated targeted interventions such as girls' education initiatives, inclusive infrastructure, and community-based approaches.

However, important weaknesses were evident. First, GESI considerations were often broadly framed and insufficiently disaggregated, with limited differentiation across intersecting vulnerabilities such as disability, displacement status, geography, and socio-economic conditions. Second, while policy documents frequently articulated inclusion goals, there was a notable gap between policy commitments and implementation mechanisms, particularly in terms of financing, institutional responsibility, and measurable indicators. Third, monitoring and evaluation frameworks were generally weak on GESI, with limited use of sex- and vulnerability-disaggregated data to track progress. Finally, few documents demonstrated a systematic integration of GESI into contingency planning and EiE responses, suggesting that inclusion remains an add-on rather than a fully embedded principle in emergency education programming.

Findings from this desk review not only informed the design of primary data collection tools but also sharpened the study's analytical focus on the disconnect between GESI policy commitments and implementation realities, thereby refining key lines of inquiry for the fieldwork (Yin, 2018).

Primary data collection comprised three main methods: KIIs were conducted with 4 regional and district GES officials (1 females, 3 males), 29 headteachers and teachers (12 Female, 17 Male, 6 NGO programme staff (All males), and 18 community leaders (7 Females, 11 Males). Semi-structured interview guides were used to ensure consistency while allowing flexibility to explore context-specific issues and GESI concerns. Interviews focused on EiE preparedness and response mechanisms, coordination practices, teacher deployment and retention, psychosocial support, inclusion of vulnerable learners, and operational challenges during periods of disruption. This method was particularly effective for eliciting institutional perspectives, experiential knowledge, and system constraints that are often undocumented (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Also, 33 FGDs (9 Female only, 13 Male only, and 11 Mixed gender) were held with 6 in-school learners per community made up of past and present CBE learners, 7 community members. The discussions provided insights into collective experiences of school closures, access to alternative learning pathways, protection concerns, and community coping strategies during emergencies. FGDs were conducted in gender-sensitive groupings and, where necessary, separately for adults and children to ensure safe and open participation. Participatory rural appraisal techniques such as scoring and ranking were employed to encourage reflection and dialogue, making FGDs especially valuable for understanding how emergencies affect different learners and households differently and how community responses interact with formal education systems (UNICEF, 2019).

In addition to qualitative methods, the study administered a 524-question questionnaire to household heads, of whom 62.4% were female and 37.6% were male. The questionnaire captured descriptive quantitative information on issues such as frequency and duration of school disruptions, access to alternative learning modalities, availability of learning materials, teacher presence, and perceived preparedness for emergencies. The inclusion of the survey strengthened the situational analysis by enabling the identification of patterns and variations across districts, while complementing the depth provided by qualitative narratives. This mixed-methods orientation aligns with best practice in complex humanitarian and education systems research, where qualitative insight benefits from limited quantitative grounding (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

Throughout fieldwork, data collection and preliminary analysis occurred iteratively, allowing emerging themes to inform subsequent interviews and discussions and supporting the achievement of thematic saturation. Survey data was reviewed concurrently to identify trends that could be probed further through qualitative engagement. Daily debriefings and consolidation of field notes enhanced reflexivity and analytical rigour. This iterative and triangulated procedure is particularly suited to EiE contexts, where conditions are dynamic and adaptive learning is essential (Guest et al., 2012; INEE, 2024).

2.5 Training of data enumerators

Prior to field deployment, data enumerators were comprehensively trained at the Farmers' Training Centre in Pusi Namo, in the Upper East region-Bolgatanga, to ensure consistency, data quality, and ethical compliance during the situational analysis. The training brought together approximately 30 participants (17 Females, 13 Males), comprising GES, NGO staff and experienced enumerators drawn from the districts of Bawku West, Bongo, Garu, Bolgatanga, Binduri and Kassena Nankana. The mixed composition of the team was deliberate, combining local contextual knowledge from GES personnel with the technical field experience of seasoned enumerators, thereby strengthening both contextual sensitivity and methodological rigour.

Source: Associates for Change, 2025

Figure 2: Enumerator training and preparation for data collection in Upper East Region

The training focused on familiarising participants with the objectives of the research's situational analysis, the study design, and the specific data collection tools, including key informant interview guides, focus group discussion protocols, and the structured questionnaire. Emphasis was placed on ethical research conduct, including informed consent, confidentiality, child safeguarding, how to ensure best GESI practices and conflict-sensitive engagement, in line with EiE and humanitarian research standards (INEE, 2024; UNICEF, 2019). Practical sessions were planned to walk enumerators through the tools question-by-question, followed by role plays and mock interviews to ensure shared understanding, appropriate probing, and consistent administration across districts.

In addition, the training addressed field procedures and quality assurance measures, including respondent selection, accurate recording of responses, translation into local languages when necessary, and daily debriefing protocols. Enumerators were also oriented on how to manage sensitive discussions related to insecurity, displacement, and psychosocial distress, with clear referral guidance provided when protection concerns emerged. By the end of the training, enumerators demonstrated readiness to conduct data collection with ethical integrity, technically consistent, attention to gender sensitivity and responsiveness to the fragile and emergency-affected areas of the study.

2.6 Pre-testing

Following completion of the desk review, all field tools (interview guides, FGD guides, and questionnaires) were finalised and pre-tested to ensure clarity, cultural appropriateness, and alignment with the research objectives. Access to districts and communities (see Annex 1 for list of districts and communities) was coordinated with District Education Offices and local authorities to secure approval and facilitate community trust. Data collection teams were

oriented on research ethics, child safeguarding, conflict sensitivity, and EiE principles prior to field deployment. Data was collected in English or relevant local languages (e.g., Kusaal, Grunni and Kassem), with careful translation when necessary. Interviews and FGDs were documented through detailed notetaking and, where consent was granted, audio recording to support accurate transcription.

Pre-testing of the data collection tools was conducted in Pusi Namo, Upper East region as an integral part of the enumerator training process. During this exercise, enumerators engaged in simulated administration of the survey/questionnaire, key informant interview guides, and focus group discussion protocols, using role plays and mock interviews to replicate real field conditions. The pre-testing enabled the research team to assess the clarity, sequencing, and appropriateness of questions, as well as the time required for administration and the suitability of language and probing techniques. Feedback from enumerators was used to refine the tools, address ambiguities, and ensure consistency in interpretation across districts. This pre-testing process strengthened tool reliability and enumerator confidence, thereby enhancing overall data quality and preparedness for field deployment (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

2.7 Data management and analysis

Data management and analysis followed a systematic, multi-stage process. This included secured data storage, thorough cleaning to eliminate missing values, consistent variable coding for quantitative. For qualitative data, audio transcription, anonymization of names for ethical standards, systematic coding and analysis were designed to ensure data quality, confidentiality, and analytical rigour throughout the situational analysis. Both qualitative and quantitative data were managed in accordance with good practice in education and humanitarian research, with clear procedures established for data handling, storage, and analysis from the point of collection to interpretation and reporting (INEE, 2024; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Immediately after fieldwork, all completed interviews, focus group discussion notes, and questionnaires were collected, labelled, and sorted by district, respondent category, and data collection methods. This initial sorting facilitated tracking of coverage across the study districts and ensured that all tools were completed before analysis commenced. Audio recordings and field notes were securely stored on the AFC server and google drive, with access limited to the core research team to maintain confidentiality.

Qualitative data from key informant interviews and FGDs was then transcribed verbatim by a team of selected and trained transcribers with experience in education and social research. Transcription was conducted in English, with careful translation from local languages when required and followed a standardised transcription protocol to ensure consistency across transcripts. Completed transcripts were reviewed by the research team for accuracy and completeness before being cleared for coding and analysis. This step was critical for preserving the integrity of participants' narratives and contextual meanings.

To support systematic qualitative analysis, data analysts were trained on Dedoose, a qualitative data analysis software suited for managing large volumes of textual data and supporting collaborative coding. The training covered the development of a shared coding framework, application of deductive codes derived from the study objectives and EiE analytical domains, and inductive coding to capture emergent themes from the data. Following training, transcripts were uploaded into Dedoose and coded iteratively, allowing analysts to compare patterns across respondent groups and districts. Regular review sessions were held to refine codes, resolve discrepancies, and strengthen intercoder reliability, enhancing the credibility of the qualitative findings (Yin, 2018).

Quantitative data from the structured questionnaire was entered into Microsoft Excel for cleaning, validation, and descriptive analysis. Data entry templates were designed to minimise errors and ensure consistency across districts. The quantitative analysis focused on generating descriptive statistics (frequencies, Percentage and means). These results were used to complement and triangulate qualitative insights, helping to identify patterns and variations that informed deeper qualitative interpretation.

2.8 Ethical considerations

The study was conducted in accordance with established ethical principles for social, education, and humanitarian research, with particular attention to the sensitivities associated with EiE contexts and overall GESI concerns. Ethical practice was guided by the principles of voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality, and the do-no-harm imperative**,** consistent with international standards for research in fragile and crisis-affected settings (INEE, 2024; UNICEF, 2019). Prior to data collection, permission was obtained from relevant education authorities at regional and district levels, and community entry protocols were observed to ensure transparency and trust.

All participants were provided with clear information about the purpose of the study, the nature of their participation, and their right to decline or withdraw at any stage without consequence. Written or verbally informed consent was obtained before interviews, focus group discussions, and surveys were administered. For respondents who could not speak English, the content of the consent form was translated appropriately. For children, consent was obtained from teachers, and data collection was conducted in child-friendly and safe environments such as the classroom or sitting areas around the schools. Enumerators were trained in child safeguarding, confidentiality, and conflict-sensitive engagement, and no personally identifiable information was included in transcripts or datasets. When discussions revealed distress or protection concerns, facilitators followed referral guidance to appropriate local support structures. These measures ensured that the study upheld high ethical standards while safeguarding the dignity, safety, and wellbeing of all participants. Ethical clearance to carry out this research was obtained from the University of Ghana Ethics Committee for the Humanities (ECH). The relevant reference number for the clearance as provided is ECH 052/ 25-26 dated 22nd September 2025.

2.9 Study limitations

Despite the methodological rigour applied in the design and implementation of this situational analysis, the study faced several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. A key limitation relates to geographic coverage, as data collection could not be completed in the districts of Garu, Binduri, and Bawku Municipal, which are significantly affected by insecurity and would have provided additional insights into EiE dynamics. While these districts were initially included in the study design, evolving security conditions made sustained field engagement unsafe and required adjustments to the data collection plan.

Data collection in the Garu District on the 20th of October 2025 was abruptly truncated following an incident involving targeted gunshots close the data collection point in Garu. In line with ethical research practice and the duty of care policy of AFC, the field team immediately suspended activities and withdrew from the area. This decision, though necessary, resulted in incomplete data for Garu and the exclusion of Garu, Binduri, and the Bawku Municipal districts from the final dataset. As a result, the study may underrepresent the experiences and operational challenges of EiE implementation in high-intensity conflict settings, where disruptions to education are often most severe.

The exclusion of these districts has implications for the generalizability and completeness of the findings. While the districts of Bawku West, Bongo, and Kassena Nankana provided valuable and diverse perspectives on EiE preparedness and response, the absence of data from the most acutely (high risk) affected areas means that the analysis may not fully capture the extreme end of insecurity-related disruptions, including prolonged school closures, large-scale displacement, and intensified protection risks for learners and teachers. Consequently, findings should be interpreted as reflective of accessible and stable districts within a broader fragile context, rather than as a comprehensive representation of all EiE-affected areas in the region.

Additionally, the volatile security environment influenced data collection depth and its duration, including in districts where security assessments made it possible to complete the fieldwork. In some communities, interviews and group discussions were shortened or conducted under heightened caution, which limited how much probing was possible on sensitive issues such as conflict dynamics, trauma, and protection concerns. While triangulation across data sources helped mitigate this limitation, it remains possible that certain experiences or perspectives were underreported.

3. SELECTED EDUCATION INNOVATIONS

This study focuses on three evidence-informed education innovations that have demonstrated strong potential to restore access to quality learning for OOSCY in FCV contexts across Burkina Faso, Ghana, and Nigeria. These innovations have been deliberately selected because of their relevance to Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) and their capacity to address the compounded educational, psychosocial, and protection challenges faced by vulnerable girls, boys, and young people in conflict-affected communities.

Accelerated Education Programmes (AEPs) form the first innovation cluster and include Speed Schools (SSAP) in Burkina Faso and Complementary Basic Education (CBE) models implemented in Ghana and Nigeria. In Ghana, the CBE model is operational in the Upper East Region with support from the Government of Ghana, UNICEF, and education innovators such as the local NGO Navrongo–Bolgatanga Catholic Dioceses Development Organisation and the Ghana Institute of Languages, Linguistics and Bible Translation (GILLBT). Evidence generated through ongoing GPE KIX research led by Associates for Change (AFC) and partners demonstrates that AEPs are highly effective in enabling children and youth in rural and deprived settings to acquire foundational literacy and numeracy within compressed timeframes and to successfully transition back into formal schooling (AFC, 2023a; AFC, 2023b; Owusu et al., 2023; CSEA, 2023). The situational analysis will further assess how AEPs integrate Radio Education Programmes (REPs) to support distance learning, teacher professional development, and community-based delivery during school disruptions, with particular attention to cost-effectiveness and scalability (UNICEF Ghana, 2020c; UNICEF Burkina Faso, 2022a; UNICEF Nigeria, 2023h; Adamba, 2020).

The second innovation cluster focuses on girls' education and inclusive, gender-transformative programming, including girls' clubs, mentoring schemes, and community-based support structures. These approaches are designed to address entrenched gender norms, early marriage, teenage pregnancy, and school dropout in FCV settings. The Camfed Association (CAMA), which is the alumnae group formed by the Campaign for Female Education, is one example of organizations that have been actively involved in increasing girl's access to foundational skills and empowerment programs in Ghana. With mentoring programs, CAMA helps girls develop literacy and numeracy skills while providing them with skills training on sexual and reproductive health issues which does not only helps them get into and finish school but has gone a long way to further help them develop self-respect, confidence, and the ability to make informed decisions. The program has used a peer-based approach where girls serve as role models and mentors in their respective communities, thus giving their peers practical ways to deal with social and economic issues that they face (CAMFED, 2020; UNESCO, 2022).

The third innovation area centres on teacher training in socio-emotional learning (SEL), psychosocial support, and retention-focused pedagogy, including the use of radio and digital platforms. Initially scaled during the COVID-19 pandemic, these approaches have become critical education continuity mechanisms, particularly in Burkina Faso and Nigeria due to

ongoing insecurity and school closures. The evidence indicates that REPs can effectively support distance learning for learners while simultaneously strengthening teachers' capacity to respond to trauma, displacement, and psychosocial distress (UNICEF, 2024a).

However, limited research has examined how these innovations perform under sustained conflict and violence, particularly in relation to psychosocial support for learners and teachers and their adaptability at scale in FCV contexts. The proposed research therefore seeks to interrogate existing evidence while generating new, context-specific data on the effectiveness, equity outcomes, and scalability of these education innovations across the three countries.

4. THE ENABLING POLICY ENVIRONMENT

Ghana's EiE policy environment has evolved incrementally rather than through a single, standalone "master policy" as is typical in contexts of protracted crisis. Instead, the EiE agenda is embedded within sector-wide education policies and planning instruments that prioritise equity, safety, inclusion, and risk mitigation, and which are increasingly complemented by EiE-specific preparedness and contingency measures. At the strategic level, Ghana's Education Strategic Plan 2018–2030 provides the overarching policy direction for improving equitable access, learning outcomes, and system governance. These priorities assume heightened importance in crisis-affected and disadvantaged districts.

Beyond explicitly education-focused policies, Ghana's broader policy ecosystem includes a range of instruments and commitments that, while not labelled as EiE, are EiE-relevant in practice. National and partner reporting under the Safe to Learn Agenda highlights attention to school safety, prevention of violence, and protection of learners and teachers. These commitments strengthen the enabling environment for EiE by promoting safer learning spaces and reinforcing preparedness and protection measures that become critical during periods of conflict, displacement, or environmental shocks.

Taken together, these policy elements reflect a defining feature of Ghana's EiE approach: EiE is rarely delivered as a standalone track. Rather, it is implemented through a combination of formal system actions led by the Ministry of Education (MoE) and Ghana Education Service (GES), alongside partner-supported modalities such as Complementary Basic Education for OOSC, radio and distance learning, school feeding, peacebuilding initiatives, child protection services, and psychosocial support, particularly in FCV settings. This multi-actor delivery ecosystem is well documented in recent national EiE landscape work that integrates desk review with stakeholder interviews spanning national, regional, district, and community levels (Associates for Change, 2025).

4.1 Education Strategy Plan

Within this policy landscape, Ghana's Education Strategic Plan (ESP) 2018–2030 serves as the primary policy anchor for EiE-related programming. The ESP articulates the sector's long-term ambitions around:

(i) improving equitable access and participation
(ii) improving the quality of teaching and learning
(iii) strengthening management, financing, and accountability

All the ambitions are directly stressed by emergencies such as conflict, climate shocks, and public health crises (Ministry of Education, 2018). From an EiE perspective, the ESP is significant for several reasons. First, it provides the policy legitimacy for targeting disadvantaged, hard-to-reach, and crisis-affected populations. Second, it creates an entry point for institutionalising continuity-of-learning measures, including alternative delivery modalities and system resilience mechanisms, when formal schooling is disrupted. Third, it offers a common reference framework around which development partners and humanitarian actors can align their support to government-led response and recovery efforts. This alignment logic is reinforced in Ghana's education sector coordination arrangements, which position the ESP as the central framework for prioritisation and system strengthening (Ministry of Education, 2018). Through the ESP 2018-2030, the ministry focuses on gender equality and social inclusion by ensuring that education access and participation among the poor and vulnerable groups, particularly girls, is enhanced. The document appreciates the challenges faced, which include factors like poverty, child marriage, among others. Generally, equity is made key to improving system performance and developing inclusive education initiatives.

At the same time, the ESP is not an operational EiE instrument. Rather, it establishes the strategic direction that EiE plans, contingency frameworks, and district-level response mechanisms are expected to translate into workable protocols, financing pathways, and service delivery arrangements. This distinction is critical in districts where insecurity or recurrent shocks repeatedly interrupt schooling, and where implementation capacity, rather than policy intent, becomes the primary constraint (Associates for Change, 2025).

4.2 Education in Emergency Contingency Plan

A notable recent development in Ghana's EiE architecture is the reported formulation of an Education in Emergencies Contingency Plan (2023–2026) developed by the MoE/GES. This is framed as a practical instrument to guide preparedness, rapid response, and continuity of learning during shocks, particularly in contexts of conflict and insecurity. Public discourse and media reporting around the Bawku conflict in 2025, for example, reference the plan as a mechanism intended to sustain learning during prolonged disruptions and strengthen system responsiveness (Citi Newsroom interview with Dr. Kwabena Bempah Tandoh, 2025).

However, evidence from district-level experience suggests that the existence of national-level frameworks does not automatically translate into effective implementation. Recent EiE landscape analysis drawing on semi-structured interviews with national, regional, district, and community stakeholders indicates that in parts of Bawku Municipal and Bawku West, school closures have at times lasted two to six weeks, leaving displaced learners without consistent access to alternative learning arrangements (Associates for Change, 2025).

Further interview-based findings highlight that district education offices and partner NGOs are often operating under significant constraints, including:

- teacher shortages and posting/retention challenges in FCV-affected districts, undermining learning continuity.
- fragmented psychosocial support services, frequently project-dependent and insufficient relative to the scale of trauma experienced by learners and teachers.
- weak coordination and information-sharing mechanisms, resulting in parallel reporting systems, duplication of effort, and uneven geographic coverage particularly in remote and border communities (Associates for Change, 2025).

Collectively, these field-level insights suggest that the effectiveness of the EiE contingency plan will hinge on the extent to which it is translated into district-ready Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), supported by rapid financing and logistic triggers, shared coordination routines, and clearly defined roles and responsibilities between GES structures and partner actors. Such operationalisation is urgent to effectively support communities affected by emergencies such as conflict and/or natural disasters. It will be important to ensure that the SOPs that are develop reflect the importance of gender inequalities and social exclusion which impact different groups in these contexts differently.

4.3 Opportunities and Gaps for EiE implementation

Opportunities

Several conditions create space for strengthening EiE implementation in Ghana. First, there is an active and diverse EiE ecosystem in FCV-affected areas, involving government agencies such as GES and NADMO alongside UN agencies and NGOs delivering complementary education, radio learning, school feeding, peacebuilding, and protection-linked interventions (Associates for Change, 2025). This provides a strong foundation for coordinated response if effectively harnessed.

Second, the policy anchoring provided by the ESP and related sector coordination frameworks offer a pathway for integrating EiE priorities into mainstream education planning, rather than treating EiE as a temporary or parallel intervention (Ministry of Education, 2018). Third, the availability of global EiE norms and tools, notably the INEE Minimum Standards, provides a well-established framework for strengthening quality assurance, coordination, and accountability across preparedness, response, and recovery phases (INEE, 2024).

Gaps

Despite these opportunities, persistent gaps remain— notably at the implementation level and with regards improved equity. Evidence from EiE landscape work points to uneven geographic reach, with remote, border, and conflict-prone communities often underserved exacerbating existing patterns of exclusion and inequality. There is limited institutionalisation of

psychosocial and trauma-informed support within the education system. Teacher workforce constraints in insecure districts undermine the quality of education. Last but by no means least coordination weaknesses undermine coherence and responsiveness (Associates for Change, 2025). These gaps directly affect the system's ability to maintain learning continuity during disruptions, protect learner wellbeing and inclusion, promote gender equality and support recovery of learning outcomes after crises.

5. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

5.1 Demographic characteristics of household respondents

Gender of household heads - The results in Table 1 show a clear female majority among respondents, with women accounting for 327 individuals (62.4%) compared to 197 men (37.6%) out of a total sample of 524. This pattern is consistent across the districts, where female representation ranges from about 31.8% to 36.1% per district segment, while male representation is notably lower, particularly in the third district (25.9%).

Table 1. Gender of household heads across districts

Gender	District			Total (*n* = 524)
	Bawku West (*n* = 180)	Bongo (*n* = 175)	Kassena Kana West (*n* = 169)	
Female	105 (32.10%)	104 (31.80%)	118 (36.09%)	327 (62.40%)
Male	75 (38.07%)	71 (36.04%)	51 (25.89%)	197 (37.60%)

Source: AFC Household Survey Data, 2025

Proportion of gender within households - Table 2 shows the proportion of female and male household heads surveyed within the sampled households. The results indicate a broadly balanced gender distribution across the sampled households in Bawku West, Bongo, and Kassena Nankana West districts of Ghana's Upper East Region, with a slight predominance of females in all areas—53% in both Bawku West and Bongo, and about 51.9% in Kassena Nankana West, compared to male proportions which range from 47% to 49%.

Table 2: Gender distribution of sampled households

District	Male	Female
Bawku West	0.47	0.53
Bongo	0.47	0.53
Kassena Nankana West	0.49	0.519

Source: AFC Household Survey Data, 2025

Although the differences are modest, this consistent female majority may reflect common dynamics in emergency, FCV contexts, where men are more likely to migrate, engage in conflict itself, or face higher mortality risks, leaving women as primary caregivers and, in some cases, heads of households. This is consistent with the gender distributions reported in the

Population and Household Census data for the study districts. This pattern has important implications for programming, highlighting the need for gender-sensitive interventions that account for women's vital role in household management and resilience, while also addressing potential protection risks and ensuring inclusive support for both men and women.

In an emergency, FCV context such as the Upper East Region of Ghana, this skew toward female respondents reflects underlying social dynamics, including male outmigration for livelihood opportunities, displacement, or involvement in conflict-related activities, leaving women more present at the household level. It may also indicate that women are more available or more willing to participate in household surveys, especially as primary caregivers and managers of household welfare. These findings have important implications for humanitarian programming, suggesting that interventions should be strongly gender-responsive, with a focus on women's roles in sustaining households, while also considering the potential vulnerabilities women and girls face, such as increased care burdens, limited access to resources, and heightened protection risks.

Age group of household heads - The age distribution of household heads shows that most respondents are adults in their economically active and later working years, with nearly three quarters falling between the ages of twenty and forty-nine years (**Table 3**). Household heads aged fifty and above form the single largest group overall, particularly in Bongo, suggesting that many households are led by older adults who may be supporting extended families. Kassena Kana West has a relatively younger profile, with higher shares in the twenty to thirty-nine age groups, while Bawku West shows a more even spread across age categories. Very few households are headed by individuals under twenty, indicating that child headed households are rare in the sample.

Table 3. Age group of household members

Age group	District			Total (*N* = 524)
	Bawku West (*N* = 180)	Bongo (*N* = 175)	Kassena Kana West (*N* = 169)	
Under 20	4 (40.0%)	1 (10.0%)	5 (50.0%)	10 (1.91%)
20-29	37 (32.50%)	29 (25.43%)	48 (42.11%)	114 (21.75%)
30-39	45 (36.0%)	29 (23.2%)	51 (40.8%)	125 (23.90%)
40-49	42 (33.60%)	46 (36.80%)	37 (29.60%)	125 (23.90%)
50+	52 (33.30%)	68 (43.60%)	36 (23.10%)	156 (29.77%)

Source: AFC Household Survey Data, 2025

Educational level of household heads - Household heads' educational levels are generally low across the three districts, but Bongo and Kassena Nankana West perform better at higher levels. While Bawku West lags with the highest concentration of no formal education (41%)

compared to Bongo (37%) and Kassena Kana West (26%). The results are presented in **Table 4**.

Table 4: Educational level of household heads across districts

Age group	District			Total
	Bawku West (*N* = 180)	Bongo (*N* = 175)	Kassena Kana West (*N* = 169)	(*N* = 524)
No formal education	73 (41.24%)	63 (37.05%)	52 (25.54%)	188 (35.95%)
Primary	42 (24.3%)	36 (21.2%)	43 (24.43%)	121 (23.14%)
JHS	0 (0%)	2 (1.8%)	0 (0%)	2 (0.38%)
Secondary	41 (23%)	58 (34%)	56 (31.81%)	155 (29.64%)
> Secondary	19 (10.7%)	11 (21.15%)	22 (12.5%)	52 (9.94%)

Source: AFC Household Survey Data, 2025

Average household size - The average household (HH) size is relatively large across all three districts which reflects extended family living arrangements. The total average household size across the three districts was 8 persons. This ranges from one to 34 household members across the three districts (*see* **Table 5**). Although the household structures are large across all the districts, Bongo records the highest household size of 9 persons compared to Bawku West of 7 persons and Kassena Kana West of 7 persons. In crisis contexts, the larger number of household members is likely to have implications for resource availability, and household capacity to support children's education particularly the provision of learning materials, as reflected in dropout and never attended school rates since households prioritise basic survival over education.

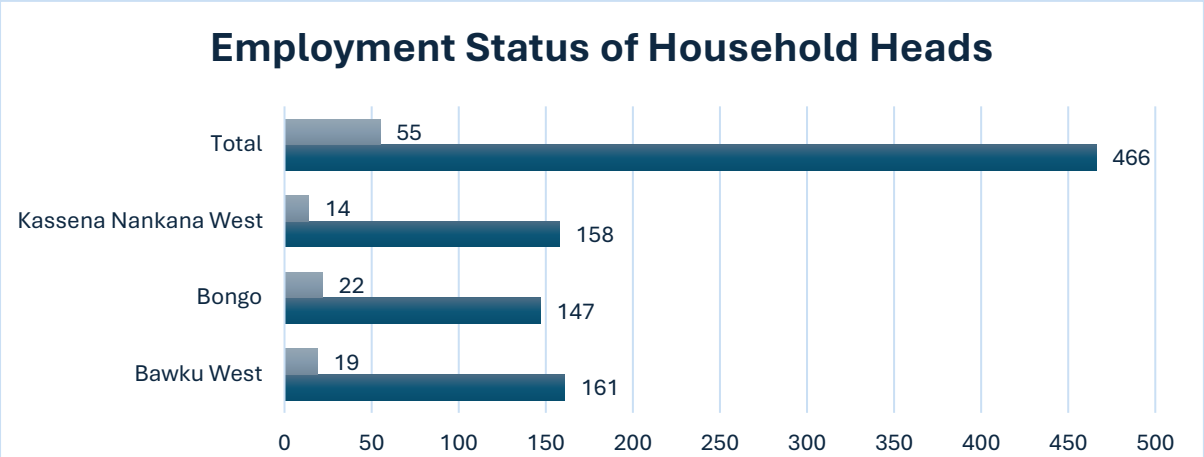
Table 5: Average household size (*n* = 3,971)

District	Mean (SD)	Min.	Max.
Bawku West	7.44 (2.92)	1	22
Bongo	8.73 (5.11)	1	33
Kassena-Kana West	6.56 (3.61)	1	22

Source: AFC Household Survey Data, 2025 ***Note.*** Average HH size across three districts is **8 persons**

Employment status - The study reveals a high aggregate employment rate of 89.4% across the three districts, suggesting a survivalist resilience typical of fragile contexts where informal or subsistence labour is the primary means of existence. However, the 10.6% unemployment rate—concentrated most heavily in Bongo, which accounts for 40% of the total unemployed—represents a critical vulnerability, as every unemployed household head in an emergency setting signifies an entire family at immediate risk of extreme poverty and food insecurity. In conflict-prone areas like Bawku West, while employment figures remain high, the work is likely high-risk and unstable, whereas the idle labour force across the region serves as a potential catalyst for further social instability, highlighting the urgent need for humanitarian

interventions that prioritize sustainable livelihood security over mere survival. High household unemployment and economic fragility across these districts drive up child labour and school dropout rates as families are forced to prioritize immediate survival over the indirect costs of education. Meanwhile, the persistent conflict in areas like Bawku West exacerbates these risks by triggering teacher displacement and school closures, which severely undermines the quality of learning and long-term development for children in the region. *See* **Figure 3** below.



Status	Bawku West	Bongo	Kassena Nankana West	Total
Unemployed	19(34.54%)	22(40.0%)	14(25.46%)	55(10.60%)
Employed	161(34.60%)	147(31.54%)	158(34.0%)	466(89.40%)

Figure 3. Employment status of household heads

Source: AFC Household Survey, 2025

5.2 Findings

5.2.1 Access, Participation and Disparities in Formal Education

Access, participation and disparities in formal education were mapped out across the study districts. The number of school closures, duration and causes; the out-of-school situation; extent of enrolments and dropout rates and the influencing factors; as well as the teacher situations were examined. Gender dynamics were identified across these important indicators.

5.2.2 School closures

The findings (
Figure *4*) show a stark disconnect where districts like Bawku West maintain high labour participation out of survival necessity while simultaneously suffering a near-total collapse of educational infrastructure, with 44% of schools fully closed due to conflict. This creates a dual-crisis where the immediate economic resilience of household heads is negated by a structural failure to provide schooling, effectively trapping the next generation in a cycle of limited opportunity and persistent fragility.

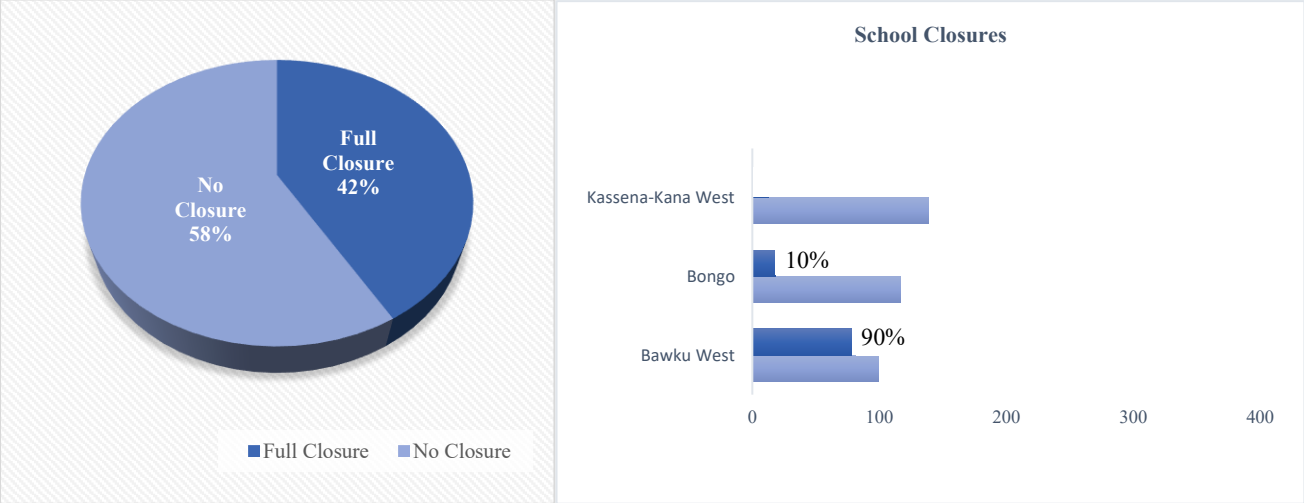


Figure 4. School closure status

Source: AFC School observation

Duration of school closures - The respondents revealed that school closures usually lasted for a minimum of one (1) day to a maximum of 19 days. The average number of days of school closure was 4 days according to the results displayed in Table 10. The results means that schools are mostly disrupted for a few days which may be due to the nature of the conflict, insecurity and/or was use of school closure as a precautionary or safety measure. Thus, schools are temporarily closed in response to immediate risks and reopened once conditions stabilise (INEE, 2024; UNESCO, 2021). However, evidence also suggests that repeated short interruptions can have cumulative effects on instruction time, learner engagement, and attendance, particularly for vulnerable children in fragile and low resource settings, thereby increasing the risk of learning loss and dropout over time (UNICEF, 2020; World Bank, 2022).

This underscores the importance of EiE preparedness measures that are responsive to frequent short-term disruptions, including flexible learning arrangements and rapid response mechanisms, to mitigate the impact of recurrent closures on learning continuity.

Table 6 Duration of school closures

Variable	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Standard Deviation
Duration of school closures	4	1	19	5.54

Source: AFC School Level Survey Data, 2025

Major causes of school closures - The school level and household surveys show that all school closure events occurred within high-risk districts, where conflict has been persistent. Findings from the situational analysis provide more detailed insight at the community and school levels. Among schools that reported closures in the past three years, 89% attributed these closures to insecurity and conflict, while only 11% cited teacher absenteeism based on the data collected from District Education Office (Figure 5). This also aligns with data collected from household where other reasons were identified as show in Fig 6. This indicates that closures are largely the result of external shocks beyond the immediate control of schools.

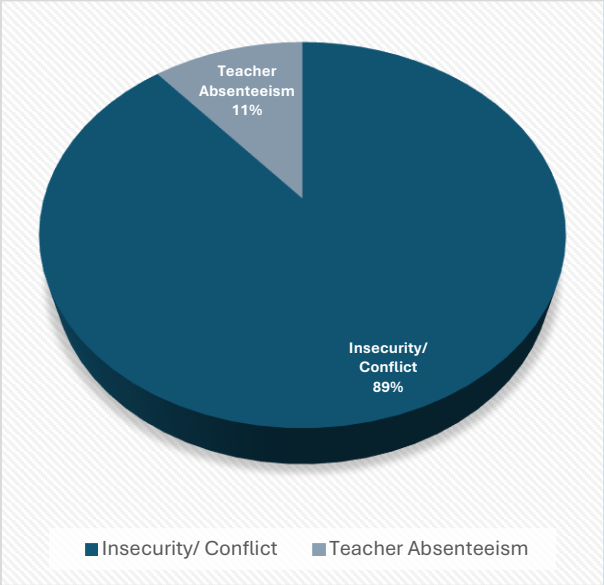


Figure 6: Major causes of school closures
Source: AFC School Level Survey Data, 2025

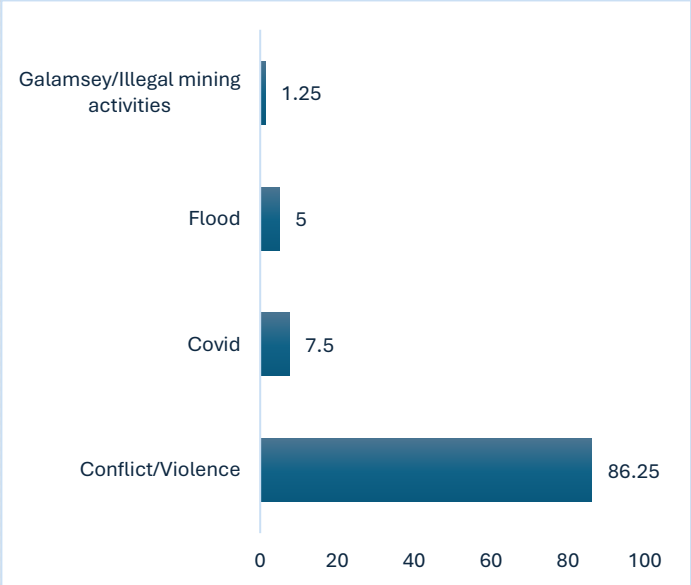


Figure 6: Major causes of school closures
Source: AFC Household Survey Data, 2025

The findings indicate that conflict and violence are the dominant drivers of school closures, accounting for over two thirds of all reported cases. This pattern is overwhelmingly concentrated in Bawku West, where almost all closures are attributed to insecurity. This confirms that school disruption in this district is largely crisis driven rather than the result of routine administrative or environmental factors. In Bongo and Kassena Kana West, the reasons for closure are more varied. Covid related disruptions, flooding and economic related issues, such as small scales mining activities, appear more prominently in these districts. Although the

absolute numbers are smaller, this diversity of causes suggests that school closures in these areas are linked to structural and seasonal challenges rather than insecurity alone.

5.2.3 Out-of-school situation

The study determined the extent of the out-of-school phenomenon among children in the three districts. Data from the Household survey revealed that the number of out-of-school children for study districts increased from 171 before closures to 325 after closures, indicating that many children did not return once schooling was interrupted. This suggests that even short but repeated closures can push vulnerable children out of the system. According to an official from the District Education office,

"Fear, curfews, and general insecurity create an environment that is deeply unconducive to learning." ***(KII_DEO_BM)***

which significantly discourages many children from returning to school. According to a parent who participated in a FDG at Bawku West district.

"The insecurity situation in the district… heightened by the fear factor… further reduces regular attendance to school and discourages children to return to school even when the situation is normalized because of trauma." **(FGD_Parents_BW)**

In this context, disruption interacts with existing structural constraints which makes it difficult for the system to sustain consistent participation and learning. During school closures, data from household survey shows that most children remain at home to help with household chores or help parents in various economic activities (Fig 7).

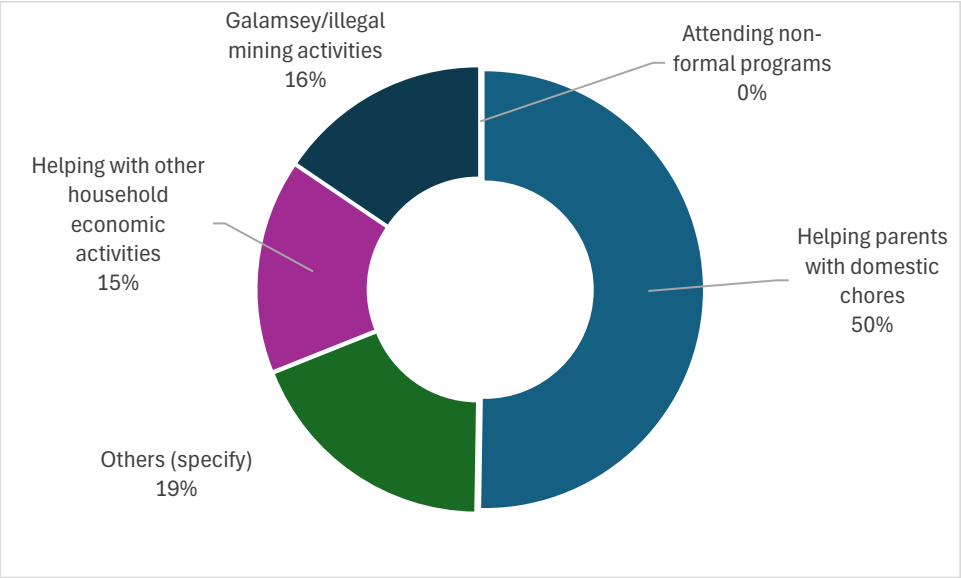


Figure 7 Children's activities during closure

Source: AFC Household Survey Data, 2025

5.2.4 School dropout trends and gender distribution

It is observed that school dropout trends in the district are driven by structural and contextual factors which affect both boys and girls although the precise factors at play may be very different for girls and boys. Qualitative evidence from interviews and focus group discussions provides deeper insight into the processes driving dropout in Bawku West. Participants consistently linked declining enrolment and school withdrawal to prolonged teacher shortages resulting from insecurity. Headteachers explained that the absence of teachers has reduced the attractiveness and functionality of schools, prompting some learners, particularly boys since they have more opportunities, to shift into alternative livelihood activities such as illegal small-scale mining or galamsey and petty trading, while others disengage entirely from schooling. One headteacher in Binaba observed that the lack of teachers has discouraged school attendance, noting that learners increasingly choose informal economic activities over schooling when teaching and learning are irregular or absent. Another headteacher from Timonde emphasised that declining enrolment is directly tied to staffing gaps, explaining that even when communities value education, the absence of teachers makes it difficult to sustain learner participation.

Longer term perspectives from school leaders illustrate the cumulative nature of the decline. A headteacher with several years of service in the district reflected that enrolment has steadily reduced over time, with current figures far lower than those recorded in earlier years. The gender dimensions of dropout show that 53% are male, while 47% are female. This sustained decline has led to structural changes within schools, including the consolidation of classes and the closure of classroom blocks that are no longer in use. A headteacher from Hairiya Islamic School explained that previously, schools operated multiple streams with large class sizes. Yet now they are compelled to merge streams due to reduced enrolment, leaving some school facilities idle.

It is important to note that while both boys and girls are affected by these trends, the findings indicate that girls face additional gender specific risks linked to insecurity. Several participants highlighted that fear of walking long distances to school, often without footwear and through insecure areas, discourages regular attendance among girls and increases their likelihood of dropping out. A headteacher from Tinginum Primary School noted that insecurity along school routes has particularly affected girls, leading to poor attendance and weakened academic performance.

'For that one, it affects school enrollment in the sense that, especially on the part of the girls, the fear to walk to school, you know, over here, most of them go to school by walking barefooted. Barefooted so they fear that they may get be attacked on the road so attendance is very poor.' ***(KII Headteacher KNW)***

These gendered mobility and safety concerns compound the broader system challenges and further undermine the retention of female learners which inevitably affects not only girls' education but their future life opportunities.

5.2.5 Trends in school enrolment

Findings from key informant interviews indicate that, alongside patterns of dropout and decline observed in some contexts, several schools have experienced an increase or relative stability in enrolment in recent years, although these trends are not uniform across districts or schools. Participants described enrolment growth as generally gradual and, in some cases, fluctuating rather than linear. An assistant headteacher from the Bongo District noted simply that enrolment has been increasing, while a headteacher from Kassena Nankana West similarly observed a modest upward trend in learner numbers. These accounts suggest that, in certain communities, access to schooling has improved, potentially reflecting localised stability, community commitment to education, or the influence of education support initiatives.

'In terms of enrolment there is generally an increase. The girls are more but decline as they move to higher grades. I will say it fluctuates' ***(KII Head Bongo)***

'The trend in enrollment keeps decreasing, the enrollment we have for the past years is far better than this year because it keeps decreasing'. ***(KII Head KNW)***

'It affects both boys and girls, because if there's a danger both boys and girls must run for safety. There has been some upward trend as regards enrollment' ***(KII Head KNW)***

Gender dynamics featured prominently in discussions of enrolment change. Headteachers frequently reported that girls often constitute a larger share of enrolment at lower grades, but that their numbers tend to decline as pupils transition to upper primary and junior high levels. Entrenched gender inequalities therefore persist in determining the different educational trajectories of girls and boys ultimately leaving girls in a much weaker position in terms of broader life opportunities. One headteacher in Bongo District explained that while enrolment has generally increased, female participation fluctuates because girls' numbers reduce at higher grades. This pattern points to persistent retention and transition challenges for girls, even in schools where overall enrolment is improving, and suggests that increases in access do not automatically translate into sustained participation at the higher end of the education cycle.

School-level examples further illustrate these trends. A headteacher from Galangrum reported that enrolment in the school had increased by 25%, comprising 75 boys and 61 girls, reflecting modest growth with a slightly higher male enrolment. Such cases highlight that some schools can attract and retain learners despite broader regional challenges, particularly where teaching presence is relatively stable and communities remain engaged.

At the same time, not all schools reported change. In a few cases, enrolment levels were described as largely stable over time, including during periods of heightened insecurity. A

headteacher from Googo Primary School, in the Bawku West District, noted that enrolment had not changed significantly in recent or previous years and that conflict had not visibly affected learner numbers. These contrasting experiences underscore the highly uneven nature of enrolment dynamics across schools, setting the stage for a closer examination of contexts where enrolment has instead continued to decline, as discussed in the next section on decrease in enrolment.

Decrease in enrolment - Key informant interviews indicate that declining enrolment remains a significant challenge in several schools, with participants consistently attributing this trend to teacher shortages and deteriorating learning conditions. Across districts, respondents explained that when teaching and learning becomes irregular or ineffective due to the absence of teachers, both pupils and parents lose confidence in the school system, resulting in withdrawals and transfers. An assistant headteacher from Tangasia observed that enrolment continues to fall because teachers are unavailable, prompting parents to remove their children from affected schools and enrol them elsewhere. Similarly, a headteacher from Gurigo DA Primary School, in the Bongo District, noted that current enrolment levels are substantially lower than in previous years, describing a steady downward trend that has persisted over time. Participants emphasised that declining enrolment affects both boys and girls, particularly in contexts marked by insecurity and uncertainty. As one headteacher explained in Bawku West,

'Enrollment has not been the best over the years……' ***(KII Headteacher)***

'The trend in enrollment keeps decreasing, the enrollment we have for the past years is far better than this year because it keeps decreasing. ……..It affects both boys and girls, because if there's a danger both boys and girls have to run for safety' (***KII Headteacher KN West)***

In some schools, enrolment was described as persistently weak rather than sharply declining, reflecting long standing structural challenges. A headteacher from Boya Primary School, for instance, noted that enrolment had not been strong over the years, suggesting a chronic rather than episodic problem.

Further insights from Chiana province highlight how teacher shortages interact with poor infrastructure and overcrowding to drive enrolment decline. A school leader explained that parents remove their children when teachers are absent and when pupils are forced to sit on the floor due to lack of school equipment.

'there are no chairs and teachers, Students sit on the floor to learn and due to that Students are not motivated to attend school …….when a child returns from school and their uniform isn't washed because they sit on the floor they may not be able to attend school the next day' ***(FGD Comm Leaders KN West)***

'The enrollment is going down because of the problems we are facing parents remove their children because teachers are not their others are leaving because children are sitting on the floor, I learnt this is the only school that controls population in the district but now the number is going down.

Teachers comes from long distance to the school, some even come from Navrongo…..'.
(KII_Assistant Headteacher KNW)

She noted that although the school previously played a key role in managing pupil numbers in the area, enrolment has steadily reduced due to these combined challenges, and the long distances teachers must travel to reach the school. These conditions reinforce perceptions of poor learning quality and reduce parental willingness to keep children enrolled.

Evidence from Boya Primary School illustrates the direct relationship between staffing levels and pupil dropout. The headteacher reported that upon assuming duty in September 2024, the school was already facing acute staff shortages, which undermined pupils' motivation and attendance. The respondent explained that when teachers are consistently lacking, children lose interest in schooling and dropout frequently.

'…….I came here September 2024. I came to meet this issue of the school facing a problem of inadequate staff. And this has been the trend. The children do not have that kind of flair or zeal that they should go to because the teachers are not always enough to take them through teaching and learning. And so the dropout is always here and there' **(*KII Headteacher, BW).***

During a period when the school had only five teachers, dropout was described as widespread and enrolment also declined sharply. However, collaboration between the school management committee, parent teacher association, and community leaders led to the recruitment of three volunteer teachers, which contributed to renewed growth in enrolment.

A similar pattern was reported at the Kusanaba Primary School, where enrolment fluctuated in response to teacher numbers. The headteacher explained that when learners arrive at school and find no teacher in their classroom, they become discouraged and stop attending, while parents complain that effective learning is not taking place.

"School is understaffed… others are leaving and this is affecting student learning and participation." ***(KII Headteacher_BW)***

Teacher turnover is not good… affects learning."(***FGD Teacher_BW)***

''…..Actually, some were, you know, what was happening was that, when the conflict started and then there was no adequate security, you yourselves would not agree to go to the place like Akurugo-Daboo Junior high that was just where the conflict was. You know, the way it was, it was not just an everyday affair. They will fight and then relax. So, anything, even a common knockout, can trigger conflict. So, when it happens, no one will even go. They may even stay at home for some weeks and then it got too sometimes they were no longer going. The teachers were not even there. Because you go there, you end up being shot. Though I can't say with authority whether it was sanctioned from the district level or maybe the people themselves feared for their lives'' ***(KII_Assist Headteacher KN_West)***

*'As most teachers are leaving because of the conflict, especially those that are not from this place. So, because of their lives and then the things that they do, they prefer to seek peace elsewhere. So, they're leaving. And if there are no teachers, it will almost have a negative impact on learning activities in the school'.**(KII Headteacher BW)***

*'Teacher availability is one of the serious challenges in this school. I can tell you about the fact that at a school with an enrollment of 399 children, we have only five teachers. Okay. And so, when we want to talk about teacher-learner issues, you can do the calculation for yourself. And so, it is challenging. Some of the classes are just empty. As a head teacher, for now, I am teaching one, two, and then basic one. So, it is affecting us so much. For we as teachers and that of children, you know, when are not many teachers, the children, we'll have to lose the depleted number of hours of contact. And so, we are losing A lot'. **(KII Headteacher BW).***

As a result, enrolment rises and falls depending on staffing levels. The headteacher confirmed that although enrolment initially declined a few years ago, it began to increase again after the school secured volunteer teachers with support from the community, Parent Teacher Associates (PTA), and the School Management Committee (SMC).

Gender Dynamics in School Enrolment and Retention - Findings from participant interviews and school level data indicate that gender patterns in enrolment are fluid and highly context specific, with no single trend prevailing across all schools or districts. In many cases, boys outnumber girls in enrolment, a pattern commonly attributed to social, economic, and household pressures that disproportionately and negatively affect girls. Participants linked lower female enrolment to factors such as teenage pregnancy, domestic and farm labour, food insecurity, and competing social responsibilities, all of which contribute to irregular attendance and higher dropout risks among girls.

Girls are kept at home doing domestic chores as some parents find this to be the best option so they can keep their homes in future **(*KII CBE Facilitator)***

*'Some of our girls are after money, the results of which are teenage pregnancy leading to early marriage which in the long run abort all educational prospects''. **(FDG Guide for Parents, Bongo)***

*For some after their results are released and they did not pass they think that is the end of their lives then they start thinking of getting a man to marry or run to this place and hide myself forgetting that it is not only through school that can provide for one **(CAMA KN West).***

At the same time, the data show that boys' enrolment is not uniformly stable. In some schools, particularly at the junior high level, participants reported declining numbers of boys, often associated with economic pressures, conflict and mobility related activities such as migration or livelihood seeking

'. ……. *boys and girls drop out but mostly the boys because when there's a conflict, they normally kill the boys, so people always send their boys away, they believe if you don't kill the boys and they wake up'* (***CAMA_Interview KN)***

'....I think the girls attend school more than boys. When you go to the schools, more girls are enrolled than the boys because in this village, a lot of girls have been to school, and we have really seen them become big people so the girls are inspired to go to school but for the boys, they mostly drop out and either travel to work and never return to continue or they will leave the school and go to galamsey. And this has been a challenge for the community' ***(FGD parents BW).***

A headteacher from Sikabiisi Junior High School (JHS) noted a downward trend largely driven by falling male enrolment, underscoring that boys are also vulnerable to disengagement. Across contexts, participants consistently emphasised that conflict and insecurity affect, as safety concerns force families to withdraw children from school regardless of gender.

School level examples further illustrate this mixed picture. In Balungum Ganlagrun community, an assistant headteacher reported a clear numerical dominance of boys, with 75 boys compared to 59 girls,

Boys number is 75 and girls 59. There has been a downward trend. Most being boys recording low enrolment ***(ASST. Headteacher, Bongo).***

A headteacher from Tanzika noted increases for both genders with the number of boys remaining slightly higher

'*…Previously we had for boys: 89 and for girls: 84 but currently we have for boys: 93 and for girls :9' (KII Headteacher, KN West)*

Conversely, other schools reported stronger female participation. A headteacher from Googo Primary School observed that girls consistently outnumber boys, a pattern echoed in Kumbugsino, where an assistant headteacher described classes having more girls than boys. This probably is due to incentives provided by the state (e.g., free sanitary pads) and non-state actors (provision of scholarships for girls).

Okay, so for me personally, I would say that CAMFED has helped me very well. As at the time I was at my senior high school, they used to help me with sanitary pads and all other things that I needed to be able to focus on my education (***CAMA_Hariya Islamic BW)***

In other locations, girls' enrolment has declined sharply due to family related pressures, as reported by a headteacher from Kodorogo, although schools have attempted to respond through counselling and learner support. More positively, some participants highlighted progress in

girls' enrolment, with a headteacher from Zorko Gamborongo noting sustained growth in female participation over recent years.

The school structure supports students through routine counselling. Enrolment has appreciated over the years with increase in girl child enrolment as compared to boys (50 boys and 58 girls and this has been the case for some time ***(KII Interview Headteacher ZORKO Gamborongo)***

The male learners are 162 and the female learners are 222. So, the enrolment has improved compared to the past. ***(KII Headteacher BW)***

Thus, the evidence points to a gender landscape which is shaped by the interaction of social norms, household constraints, economic pressures, school conditions, and insecurity. These intersecting factors produce varied gender outcomes for girls and boys across locations and school levels, highlighting the need to examine more closely the underlying drivers that influence enrolment and dropout for both boys and girls.

Factors influencing school enrolment and dropout rates - The household interviews revealed that the school enrolment situation before school closures is influenced by many factors with financial constraints and domestic responsibilities accounting for the main reason within the study areas as shown in Fig. 8.

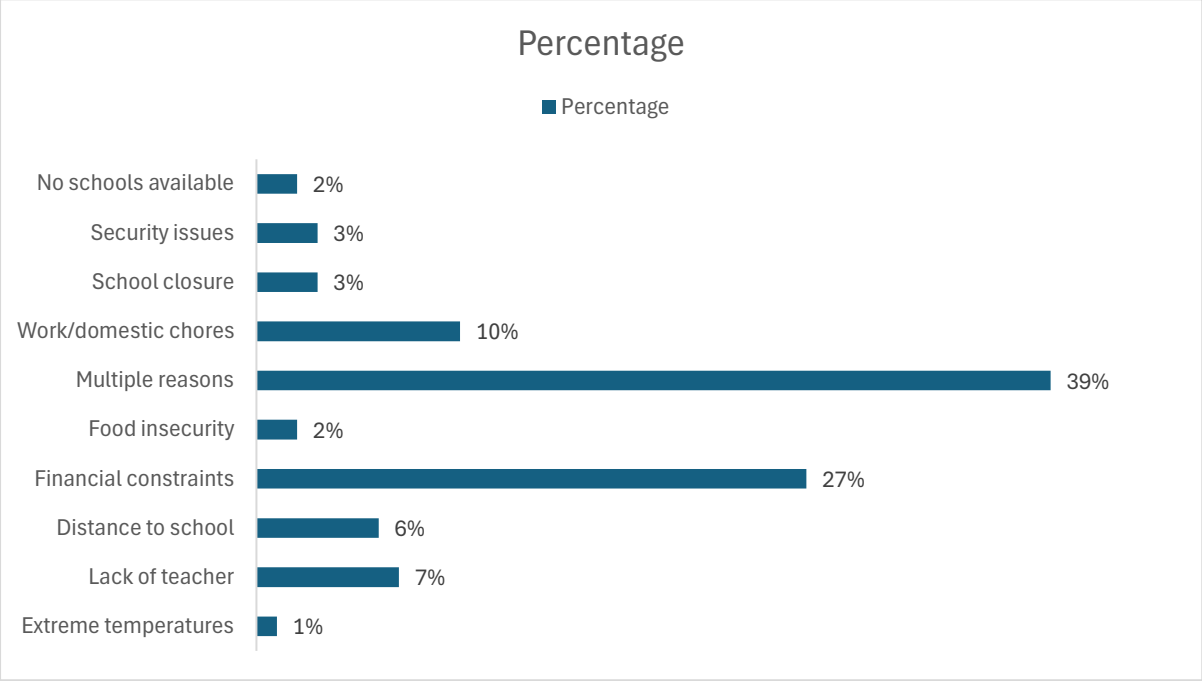


Figure 8 Challenges to enrolment before closure

Source: AFC Household Survey Data, 2025

The Fig 8 shows that majority indicated multiple reasons for children not enrolling or dropping out of school The reasons mentioned as a follow up to this question includes two or three of the factors already mentioned. The implications is that, a resolution of the situation will require multiple interventions to address the needs or challenges influencing the outcome

Participants engaged during various FGDs, and informal interviews also provided detailed and consistent explanations of the factors shaping school enrolment patterns and dropout rates across the study communities. While both boys and girls withdraw from school, respondents repeatedly observed that dropout rates are higher among girls, even though girls often have higher enrolment at the kindergarten level.

'The reason is that at KG the girls are always more than the boys, but as they move on, the girls start to drop out one by one, and the boys too. So it is like that. Girls are more than the boys in the school. The ladies are still more. Both the ladies and the boys drop out, but the number of girls is still more. When they get to upper primary, they start to drop out one by one. Most of the girls go to "serve," and the boys who are muscular or grown already-who are physically developed in adolescence-some of them stop and go to galamsey'. ***(KII Headteacher BW)***

This pattern reflects a gradual but persistent decline in girls' participation as they move through the education system, pointing to structural and social constraints deepening their exclusion increasingly intensely with age and grade progression.

At the early childhood and lower primary levels, girls frequently outnumber boys in school. However, as pupils transition to upper primary, enrolment begins to decline for both sexes, with girls exiting the system at a faster rate. Participants explained that many girls are withdrawn from school to engage in domestic labour, including migration to urban centres to work as house helps.

The reason is that at KG the girls are always more than boys, but as they move on, the girls start to drop out one by one, and the boys do too. So, it is like that. Girls are more than boys in school. The ladies are still more. Both the ladies and the boys drop out, but the number of girls is still more. When they get to upper primary, they start to drop out one by one. Most of the girls go to "serve," and the boys who are muscular or grown already-who are physically developed in adolescence-some of them stop and go to galamsey KII Headteacher BW.

This time, I think girls attend school more than boys. When you go to the schools, more girls are enrolled than the boys because in this village, a lot of girls have been to school, and we have really seen them become big people so the girls are inspired to go to school but for the boys, they mostly drop out and either travel to work and never return to continue or they will leave the school and go to galamsey. And this has been a challenge for the community KII Headteacher BW.

….. The trend is that girls are always more than the boys. That is the trend of the enrollment KII Headteacher BW

……There is decline in enrolment with girls dropping out the most due to family issues KII Headteacher Bongo

Others leave school to support household livelihoods, particularly in farming, where girls accompany their mothers to farms and provide childcare for younger siblings. These demands disrupt regular school attendance and often result in permanent dropout.

For boys, dropout decisions were closely linked to physical maturity and livelihood opportunities. Participants noted that boys who appear physically strong or mature during adolescence are more likely to leave school to pursue income generating activities, most notably illegal small-scale mining, also known as galamsey.

'Galamsey' activities has been one problem identified to cause enrollment downturn' ***(KII Head teacher Bongo).***

The biggest challenge is the galamsey, because the children want quick money to spend on what they want. ***(FGD parents BW)***

Galamsey emerged as a major driver of male school dropout, as its immediate financial returns make schooling appear less relevant (Associates for Change, 2025). The visibility of peers or relatives returning from mining with material assets further reinforces this perception and encourages early withdrawal from school. A headteacher from Anerigu DA Primary School observed that once boys reach upper primary and see siblings or peers returning from mining activities with motorcycles and other assets, many abandon their schooling altogether.

Galamsey' activities have been one problem identified to cause enrollment downturn. Also, the town is a border town, it shares border with Burkina Faso, and many do some form of business transaction with the neighboring country and does not see education as important, accounting for the low enrollment ***(KII Head teacher Bongo).***

Economic dynamics in border communities further compound enrolment challenges for both boys and girls. In towns located along country borders, cross border trading and informal business activities are common, and education is often deprioritised in favour of immediate economic gain. A headteacher from Sikabiisi JHS noted that the combination of galamsey activities and proximity to the Burkina Faso border has contributed significantly to low enrolment, as families and even young children focus on trading and income generation rather than schooling.

' ……. also, the town is a border town, it shares border with Burkina Faso and many do some form of business transaction with the neighboring country and does not see education as important, accounting for the low enrollment' ***(KII Head teacher Bongo).***

These livelihood pressures affect both genders, although they manifest differently through gendered roles and expectations. These dynamics underscore the need to examine how

systemic factors, particularly teacher availability and deployment, interact with household and community pressures.

5.2.6 Deployment of Teachers

Analysis of the data highlights marked disparities in teacher deployment across the three study districts, with significant implications for teaching and learning conditions. Bawku West District emerges as the most constrained context, reporting a total of 214 teacher vacancies at the primary and junior high school levels and recording no new teacher deployments during the period under review (Table 7). As a result, all identified vacancies remained unfilled, pointing to a significant deployment gap in a district already affected by insecurity, declining enrolment, and elevated dropout rates. This pattern underscores the cumulative disadvantage faced by Bawku West, where staffing shortages continue to undermine school functionality and learner retention.

In contrast, the Bongo District demonstrates a more responsive deployment pattern, with 48 teachers posted to primary schools and 50 to JHS, resulting in a total of 98 deployments. Although vacancy data was not fully disaggregated for the district, the scale of deployment suggests a comparatively functional staffing response that is better aligned to school level needs. Kassena Nankana West presents a different dynamic, reporting 90 teacher vacancies but recording 190 deployments, a figure that exceeds the stated vacancy level (Table 7). While this may reflect backlog deployments, redistribution, or aggregation of postings not fully captured in vacancy records, it nonetheless indicates a stronger inflow of teachers relative to reported need. However, the absence of disaggregated data for primary level deployments limits more precise interpretation. Beyond the scale of deployment, however, questions also arise regarding who is being deployed, particularly in terms of gender balance.

Table 7: Teacher Vacancies and Deployment by District

District	Reported Vacancies (Primary & JHS)	Primary Teachers Deployed	JHS Teachers Deployed	Total Deployed
Bawku West	214	0	0	0
Bongo	–	48	50	98
Kassena Nankana West	90	-	-	190*
Total	304	238	50	288

Source: Associates for Change, 2025. - Note: Primary deployments in Kassena Nankana West were reported only as totals without disaggregation.

Gender distribution of teacher deployments - Gender disaggregated EMIS data on teacher deployment are available only for the Bongo District, limiting comparative analysis across the three study districts. Within Bongo, deployment patterns show a relatively balanced gender

distribution at the primary level, where 26 female teachers were deployed compared to 22 male teachers (Table 8). This suggests that women are reasonably represented in entry and lower-level teaching positions. However, at the junior high school level, the pattern shifts noticeably, with male teachers making up most deployments, accounting for 36 out of 50 postings. This contrast indicates a decline in female representation at higher levels of schooling, reflecting persistent gendered patterns in teacher placement and progression.

In the Bawku West District, no teacher deployments were recorded during the period under review –2024/2025 academic year, so gender-based analysis could not be applied in that context. The absence of deployments for both male and female teachers reinforce earlier findings of severe staffing constraints in the district. In Kassena Nankana West, while overall deployment numbers were high, the lack of sex disaggregated data for primary level postings prevents meaningful assessment of gender balance. This data gap highlights broader limitations in deployment reporting and constrains analysis of gender equity in teacher distribution.

In short, the available evidence suggests that while female teachers are being deployed into the system, particularly at the primary level, their presence diminishes at higher levels of schooling, and data gaps further obscure gender dynamics in some districts. These patterns raise important questions about teacher retention, mobility, and exit from the system and underline the urgent need to fill data gaps in an ongoing and sustainable manner.

Table 8: Gender distribution of teacher deployment by district and level

District	Level	Male	Female	Total
Bawku West	Primary	0	0	0
	JHS		0	0
Bongo	Primary	22	26	48
	JHS	36	14	50
Kassena Nankana West	Primary	Not available	Not available	190*
	JHS	0	0	0

Source: Associates for Change, 2025.

5.2.7 Teacher attrition trends and exist rates

The household survey data from the three districts reveal that, 42.45% of the respondents (211 out of 497) within the study area reported teacher departures, whereas 57.55% indicated no such occurrences. Bawku West reported the highest incidence of departures, representing 58.52% of the households who reported teacher turnover, followed by Bongo at 36.94% and Kassena-Kana West at 30.49%. On average, the total number of teachers that left the schools across the districts was three teachers per school Bawku West recorded the most departures, reaching a maximum of eight teachers compared to five teachers in Bongo and six teachers in Kassena-Kana West and this can be attributed to the ongoing conflict situation in the district.

This indicates that teacher turnover, especially in Bawku West, may interfere with learning continuity.

Analysis of data from district education office on teacher mobility and exits reveals distinct attrition patterns across the three study districts, with important implications for staff retention and system stability. In the Bawku West District, no transfer applications were recorded during the period under review, while 66 release applications were documented, comprising 43 males and 23 females (Table 9). This pattern indicates that teacher movement in the district is occurring almost entirely through exits from the system rather than internal transfers, pointing to persistent challenges in retaining teachers in a context affected by insecurity and poor working conditions. The absence of transfer requests suggests that teachers are not seeking redeployment within the district or region but are instead leaving the system altogether.

The Bongo District presents a contrasting profile characterised by both internal mobility and exits. The district recorded 36 transfer applications, of which approximately two thirds were submitted by female teachers, alongside 30 release applications. This combination suggests a more fluid staffing environment, where teachers are actively seeking relocation while others exit the system. Although pressures remain, the presence of both transfers and releases implies relatively greater opportunities for movement and adjustment within the education system compared to Bawku West, potentially reflecting more favourable security or living conditions.

In Kassena Nankana West, 36 transfer applications were recorded, all submitted by male teachers. In addition, the district reported a high volume of 74 release applications, although no gender disaggregation was provided for these exits. While the absence of sex disaggregated data limits more nuanced interpretation, the scale of releases indicates substantial staff turnover, even in a district that recorded relatively high teacher deployment levels. This suggests that deployment alone is insufficient to guarantee retention, particularly when working and living conditions remain challenging.

These findings show that teacher attrition is shaped not only by deployment levels but also by contextual factors influencing retention, with conflict affected districts experiencing exits without corresponding internal mobility, and relatively stable districts exhibiting higher but still pressured turnover. These patterns have direct consequences for continuity of teaching and learning, underscoring the importance of examining the coping and support platforms available to learners and teachers.

Table 9: Teacher mobility and exit indicators by district

District	Transfer Applications (N=72)		Release Applications (N=96)	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Bawku West	0	0[2]	43(75.40%)	23(59.0%)
Bongo	12(25.0%)	24(100%)	14(24.60%)	16(41.0%)
Kassena Nankana West	36(75.0%)	0	-	-
Total	48(66.70%)	24(33.30%)	57(59.40%)	39(40.62%)

Source: Associates for Change, 2025

Note*: Kassena Nankana West did not report complete gender breakdown.*

5.2.8 Coping Platforms for learners and teachers with emotional stress

The household survey data provided by household heads show that 48% of all children received psychosocial or counselling support in the past year. Receipt of support varies across districts, with Kassena-Kana West having the highest proportion of children supported (64 percent), Bawku West at 50 percent, and Bongo the lowest at 28 percent (Table 10).

Table 10 Psychosocial Support Received in the past 12 Months

Psychosocial support received	District			Total (*N* = 477)
	Bawku West (*N* = 170, 36.0%)	Bongo (*N* = 149, 31.0%)	Kassena Kana West (*N* = 158, 33.0%)	
No	85 (50.0%)	108 (72.48%)	57 (36.08%)	250 (52.41%)
Yes	85 (50.0%)	41 (27.52%)	101 (63.92%)	227 (47.60%)

Source: AFC Household Survey Data, 2025

Findings from the analysis indicate that coping or support platforms for learners and teachers are largely informal, unevenly implemented, and limited in scope across the study districts, particularly in schools receiving learners affected by conflict related displacement. Most schools rely on school based psychosocial practices such as morning devotions, guidance and counselling sessions, parent teacher association engagements, and co-curricular activities including quizzes, debates, drama, and competitions.

''I think every time we normally organize some like regular quiz competitions, sometimes it also deals with drama. We do it to tolerate stresses, and other activities apart from the curricular activities that are meant to help to relief tensions and then stresses''. ***(KII_Assist Headteacher KNW)***

''Every Wednesday we organize morning devotion to educate them on mental health. PTA meetings also include discussions. Information centres are not available here''. ***(KII Headteacher BW)***

''We just speak to them and see if there is the need to help or speak to their parents or to involve PTA for assistance'' ***(KII Head Teacher KN West).***

'Guidance and Counselling (G&C) services have been able to mount up and have help affected children to cope with their situation' **(KII Head teacher Bongo)**

Participants perceived these activities as being helpful in easing emotional stress, promoting peer interaction, and supporting learners, especially those who have relocated from conflict affected areas such as Bawku West. However, respondents consistently highlighted the absence of structured information centres, formal mental health services, and consistent community level psychosocial interventions, Support was often limited to verbal encouragement, informal monitoring, and referrals to parents or PTAs.

'We don't have any activity we do to support teachers and children going through trauma and stress. But we do short talks to encourage them'' ***(KII Head Teacher BW)***

'We do give advice or counseling to affected teachers and students; we give them advice that will make them not to fall into danger and some provisions to support them'' ***(KII Headteacher KN_West)***

'There are guidance and counselling when the pupils and teachers are in distress or traumatized. Headteachers and teachers visit victims when in distress or lose their parents or family members'. ***(KII_Headteacher Assistant KN West)***

'Some teachers are really doing well in counseling our children who might have been affected by some level of trauma or distress'' ***(FDG Community Leaders, Bongo)***

Interview evidence suggests wide variation in the availability and depth of support available. Some schools reported actively using guidance and counselling sessions, school assemblies, and extracurricular activities to help learners cope with stress and emotional challenges, while others indicated that no organised coping mechanisms exist at all. Although a few participants mentioned hearing radio programmes that address psychosocial wellbeing and life challenges, their reach, regularity, and linkage to school level support systems were unclear, pointing to weak integration between community media initiatives and education-based support structures.

The findings further show that vulnerable learners, particularly displaced children, orphans, and older boys, are disproportionately affected by these gaps in support.

'Psychosocial support encouraging the students emotionally to be able to learn. I think orphans should be given this support'' **(FGD parents BW)**

Schools continue to admit displaced learners even when basic requirements such as school equipment and learning materials are not available, resulting in situations where children must sit on classroom floors and depend on donated supplies.

'My children go to sit on the floor since there is no furniture, and I often have to wash their uniforms'.' There is the need to get furniture for school and for the JHS, the children are overcrowded, most often, the children will go to school on shift bases and need an additional school block' ***(FGD Parents Bongo)***

While some displaced learners adapt quickly and perform well academically, many struggle with poverty, limited parental care, and lack of essential learning resources. These constraints contribute to discouragement, low participation, and heightened dropout risks, especially among boys aged sixteen years and above forcing them to migrate to southern Ghana to engage in illegal small-scale mining.

Participants also noted that learners arriving from conflict affected communities often bring with them emotional and social vulnerabilities, arising from factors including separation from parents, lack of communication with caregivers, and reliance on extended family members who may be unable or unwilling to meet their educational needs. In contexts where the school environment is perceived to be unsupportive due to teacher shortages and poor resources, learners reported reduced motivation and limited engagement. Conversely, a small number of schools indicated minimal observable impact on learners' emotional wellbeing, attributing this to effective social integration or to the absence of active conflict in their immediate communities.

The analysis highlights heavy reliance on improvised, school-led coping strategies, underscoring the need for more structured psychosocial support systems, trained personnel, and material resources to strengthen resilience among learners and teachers. These gaps have important implications for how resources are prioritised and used within schools, pointing to the relevance of examining budget support and functionality at the Junior High School (JHS) and Senior High School (SHS) levels.

5.3 Psychosocial Support by GES and Non-Governmental Organisations

Evidence from EMIS data shows that psychosocial support training for teachers has expanded in scale over time but remains unevenly distributed across districts, reflecting both shifting priorities and contextual pressures. In the 2022/23 academic year, GES organised a limited number of psychosocial support training sessions, with Bongo District recording two sessions and Kassena Nankana West recording eight sessions, while no sessions were conducted in Bawku West. During the same period, non-governmental organisations contributed modestly, conducting eight psychosocial support sessions in Kassena Nankana West, with no NGO-led training reported in either Bawku West or Bongo. This pattern suggests that early psychosocial interventions were relatively small in scale and concentrated in districts perceived as more stable or accessible.

By contrast, the 2024/25 academic year shows a substantial scale-up of GES-led psychosocial support training, particularly in districts experiencing heightened stress and vulnerability. During this period, GES organised 132 training sessions in Bawku West and 130 sessions in Kassena Nankana West, signalling a strong institutional response to the growing emotional and psychological needs of teachers working in fragile and conflict affected contexts. In Bongo District, however, GES conducted only 12 sessions, indicating a much lower level of engagement relative to the other two districts. Overall, GES conducted a total of 284 psychosocial support training sessions across the three districts, underscoring its central role in strengthening teacher capacity to support learner wellbeing (Table 11). Nevertheless, the limited contribution of NGOs beyond Kassena Nankana West and the sharp inter-district variation highlight ongoing gaps in coverage and coordination, suggesting the need for more balanced, sustained, and collaborative psychosocial support systems within EiE responses.

Table 11: Psychosocial Support by GES and Non-Governmental Organisations

Indicator	Bawku West District	Bongo District	Kassena Nankana West District
Psychosocial Support – GES (22/23)	0	2	8
Psychosocial Support – GES (24/25)	132	12	130
Psychosocial Support – GES (Total)	132	14	138
Psychosocial Support – NGOs (22/23)	0	0	8

Source: Associates for Change, 2025

5.3.1 Training in psychosocial learning

The results indicate uneven but notable progress in training headteachers in psychosocial learning across the three districts. Over the past twelve months, 66.7 percent of headteachers in Bawku West and 77.4 percent in Bongo District reported having received training in psychosocial learning, suggesting relatively strong exposure in these two districts (Figure 10). In contrast, Kassena Nankana West recorded much lower coverage, with only 25 percent of headteachers trained, while 75 percent had not received any training during the same period. Overall, 13 out of the 24 headteachers surveyed had participated in psychosocial learning training, indicating growing but still incomplete capacity to support learners experiencing emotional and psychosocial challenges in fragile contexts.

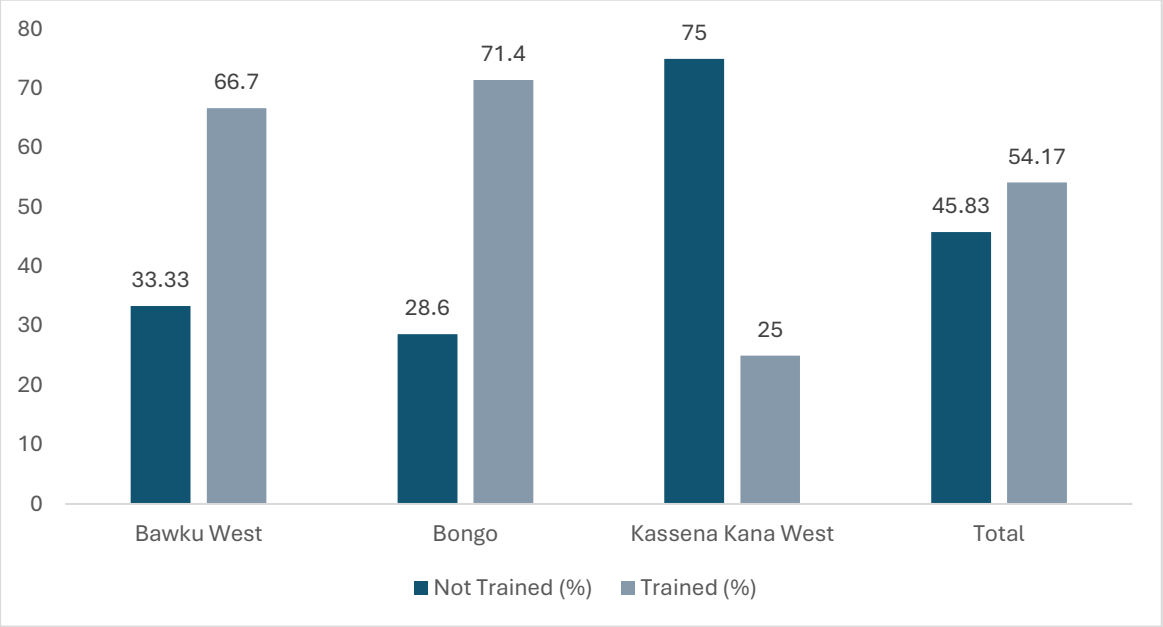


Figure 9: Headteachers trained in Psychosocial Learning

Source: AFC School Level Survey Data, 2025

Key informant interviews provide deeper insight into the sources and application of psychosocial learning skills. Headteachers in Bongo District explained that foundational psychosocial competencies are already embedded in teacher training college curricula, particularly through courses in educational psychology and social studies. One headteacher noted that while this foundation is useful, more specialised training would strengthen classroom practice, stating:

'Psychosocial issues are already included in our professional training at the College of Education through educational psychology, but when teachers are taken through focused psychosocial support training, it becomes an added advantage for delivering social and emotional learning and addressing students' challenges' ***(KII Headteacher, Bongo).***

In Bawku West, headteachers echoed this view but emphasised that local context shapes how psychosocial knowledge is applied. A school leader explained that community norms and religion influence responses to learner behaviour, noting:

'In training college there is a component on psychosocial issues, but in the community societal differences affect how we apply it. Being an Islamic community, we sometimes rely on guidance from Mallams and the Arabic instructor' ***(KII Headteacher, Bawku West).***

In Kassena Nankana West, headteachers acknowledged the importance of psychosocial training but highlighted resource constraints and reliance on informal in-service approaches. Respondents explained that schools often address psychosocial issues through staff

discussions, selected peer presentations, or Professional Learning Community sessions rather than structured training programmes. As one headteacher observed,

'We include professional development for teachers, but it is not what is required because we have limited resources to run the programme fully' ***(KII Headteacher, Kassena Nankana West).***

The above findings suggest that while pre-service and in-service systems provide a foundation for psychosocial learning, coverage, depth, and contextual adaptation remain uneven, reinforcing the need for sustained, well-resourced, and context-sensitive psychosocial capacity building for teachers in all districts.

5.4 Disaster Risk Management, Displacement and Protection Architecture

This section examines disaster risk management, displacement, and protection systems within schools across the three study districts, focusing on preparedness, safety infrastructure, and the broader conditions affecting learners' well-being. It highlights critical gaps in contingency planning, uneven access to protective measures, and the growing influence of conflict, displacement, and socio-economic pressures on education delivery. The analysis underscores the need for more coordinated, context-specific approaches to strengthen resilience, ensure learner protection, and support continuity of education in fragile and shock-prone environments.

5.4.1 Disaster Contingency

Findings from the school level data reveal substantial gaps in disaster preparedness across the three study districts. Out of the 24 schools assessed, only five schools, representing 20.8 percent, reported having a disaster contingency plan, while the vast majority, 79.2 percent, operated without any formal preparedness measures. This indicates that disaster risk management and emergency planning remain weakly institutionalised at the school level, despite the exposure of these districts to conflict, flooding, and other shocks that regularly disrupt schooling (Figure 11).

District level patterns further illustrate uneven preparedness. Bawku West District recorded the highest number of schools with contingency plans, with three schools reporting some form of preparedness framework. Bongo District followed with two schools having contingency measures in place, while Kassena Nankana West reported no schools with disaster contingency plans at all, a particularly concerning finding given the district's vulnerability to climate related hazards and periodic disruptions. These variations point to differences in local capacity, prioritisation, and support for preparedness, setting the stage for a more detailed examination of disaster contingency by district.

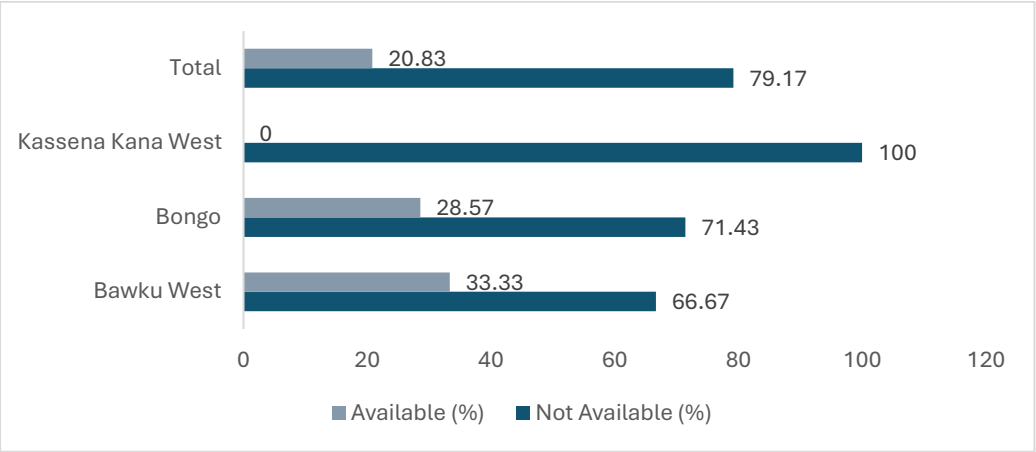


Figure 10 Disaster Contingency Plan

Source: Source: AFC School Level Survey Data, 2025

5.4.3 Disaster Contingency by District

Further analysis of school level preparedness shows that access to basic evacuation infrastructure remains uneven across districts, reflecting partial and inconsistent implementation of disaster contingency measures. Overall, 15 out of the 24 schools assessed, representing 62.5 percent, reported having accessible emergency exits, indicating some capacity to support safe evacuation during emergencies such as fires, floods, or security incidents (Table 12). However, a substantial proportion of schools, 9 out of 24 (37.5 percent), reported that accessible emergency exits were not available. The absence of such basic safety infrastructure poses serious risks to learners and staff, particularly in contexts where rapid evacuation may be required.

District level variations reveal important differences in preparedness. Kassena Nankana West District demonstrates relatively stronger preparedness, with 6 out of 8 schools, representing 40 percent of all schools with accessible exits, reporting the availability of emergency exits. In contrast, Bawku West District recorded 5 schools with accessible exits, accounting for 33.3 percent, while Bongo District recorded the lowest coverage, with 4 schools, or 26.7 percent, having accessible emergency exits. These disparities suggest differences in school infrastructure conditions, prioritisation of safety measures, and possibly district level support for disaster preparedness. While the presence of emergency exits in most schools is encouraging, the persistence of significant gaps highlights the need for targeted investments and enforcement of minimum safety standards, particularly in districts with lower coverage.

Table 12: Available Emergency Exists

Accessible Emergency Exits	Bawku West		Bongo		Kassena Kana West		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Not Available	4	44.4	3	33.3	2	22.2	9	37.5
Available	5	33.3	4	26.7	6	40	15	62.5
Total	9	37.5	7	29.2	8	33.3	24	100

Source: AFC School Level Survey Data, 2025

5.4.4 Budget support and functionality

Analysis of data for District GES indicates limited and uneven budget support linked to conflict or vulnerability across the study districts. Among the three districts, only Bongo District had schools classified under the Ghana Accountability for Learning Outcomes Project (GALOP). However, these GALOP assisted schools in Bongo did not receive conflict specific or emergency related budgetary support, suggesting that assistance was not aligned with EiE. In contrast, there were no GALOP schools in the Bawku West District despite facing higher levels of insecurity and education disruption, and no dedicated budget support or conflict related assistance. Similarly, the district of Kassena Nankana West recorded no GALOP assisted schools and no evidence of targeted budgetary interventions. This situation points to a significant mismatch between risk exposure and resource allocation, with implications for school functionality, preparedness, and the ability of districts to respond effectively to education disruptions.

5.5 Gender Based Violence and Protection in Schools

Findings indicate that gender-based violence (GBV) prevention and gender protection measures are unevenly implemented across the study districts, reflecting both contextual differences and gaps in school level capacity. Among schools that reported having GBV prevention measures in place, the Bongo District accounts for the largest share at 41 percent, while the districts of Bawku West and Kassena Nankana West each account for 29 percent. Conversely, schools without any GBV prevention measures are concentrated in Bawku West at 57 percent and Kassena Nankana West at 43 percent, with none reported in Bongo (Figure 6). The low reported gender-based violence in schools in Bongo district can likely be attributed to underreporting, strong community norms, and increased awareness efforts, rather than its actual absence

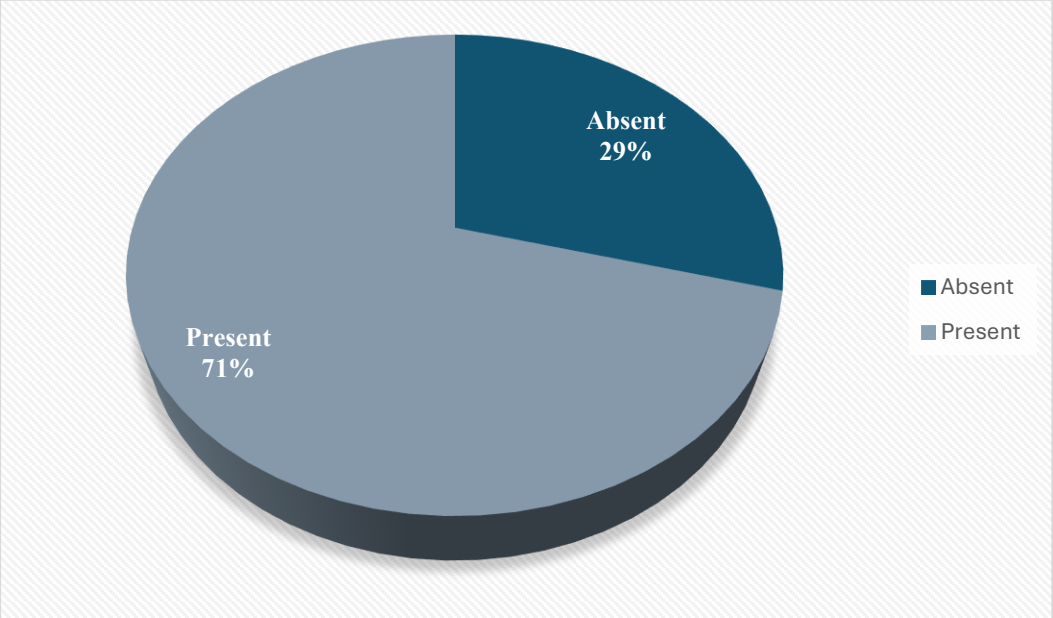


Figure 11: Gender-based violence prevention measures in schools
Source: AFC School Level Survey Data, 2025

This distribution suggests that while gender protection mechanisms exist in parts of the system, significant protection gaps persist in districts that are more exposed to conflict spillovers, poverty, and structural vulnerabilities. Participants emphasised that GBV risks cannot be understood in isolation from broader factors such as insecurity, illegal mining, poverty, weak infrastructure, and lack of learning materials, which together heighten vulnerability for girls and boys within school environments.

Qualitative accounts further reveal how conflict and insecurity shape gender protection risks, even in communities where schools remain operational. Some headteachers described their communities as relatively calm, noting that schools have not been closed and learning continues with minimal disruption. However, respondents from conflict affected and adjacent areas highlighted how fear, displacement, and economic disruption undermine both protection and participation, particularly for girls. One headteacher explained the cumulative impact succinctly, stating:

'*It is not only the conflict, but the conflict has played a key role. Illegal mining and poverty levels are also there, and all these together affect the children, especially the girls'* ***(KII Headteacher, Binaba Primary).***

Another school leader described how insecurity drives displacement and weakened protection systems, noting:

'Most of the teachers have left the district, parents also move out for safety, and they carry their children with them. Attendance reduces, dropout increases, and schools collapse into fewer streams' ***(KII Headteacher, Hairiya Islamic).***

These accounts highlight that gender protection in schools is deeply intertwined with broader conditions of safety, staffing, and community stability, stressing the need for integrated responses that link protection measures with resourcing and functionality, which is explored further in the next section on budget support and school functionality at the JHS and SHS levels.

5.6 Presence of IDP/Refugee Learners

Data from household survey indicates that many surveyed households across all three districts have not experienced displacement (Fig 12). Bawku West records the highest number of displaced households, followed by Kassena Kana West, while Bongo shows relatively fewer cases of displacement. The differences in displacement across districts reflect differences in exposure to insecurity and related shocks. It is also worth noting that even relatively low levels of displacement remain significant. Displaced households are often more likely to experience disruptions to children's schooling due to mobility, loss of livelihoods, and weakened access to social services. The higher incidence of displacement in Bawku West suggests a potentially greater risk of interrupted school attendance and learning continuity in that district.

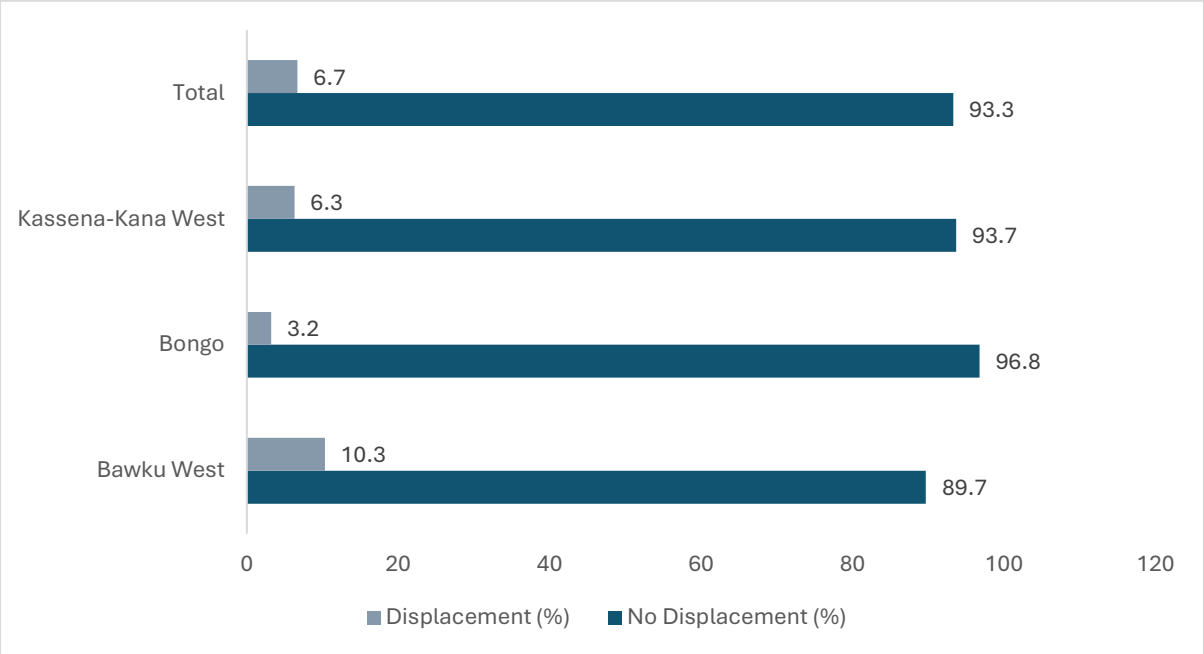


Figure 12 Households with IDP

Source: AFC Household Survey Data, 2025

Table 13 shows that conflict and violence are the dominant drivers of displacement across the study districts, accounting for over two thirds of all reported cases. This pattern is especially pronounced in Bawku West, where nearly all displacement is attributed to conflict or violence, reinforcing its status as a high-risk district within the education in emergencies context. In Bongo, while conflict remains the main factor, a notable share of displacement is linked to other causes, suggesting a more mixed risk profile. Kassena Kana West presents a different dynamic, with displacement driven largely by factors other than conflict, alongside smaller but visible contributions from floods and extreme temperatures.

Conflict related displacement, which dominates in Bawku West, is more likely to cause abrupt school closures, prolonged interruptions to learning, and heightened protection risks for children. In contrast, displacement linked to environmental and other livelihood related factors, as seen more clearly in Kassena Kana West, may result in more gradual or seasonal disruptions but can still undermine regular school attendance. Considering reasons for displacement underlying vary by district, education responses need to be context specific rather than uniform across the three areas

Table 13 Reason for Displacement Across Districts

Reasons	District			Total
	Bawku West	Bongo	Kassena Kana West	
Conflict/Violence	16 (94.12%)	5 (71.43%)	4 (30.78%)	25(67.57%)
Extreme temperatures	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (7.69%)	1 (2.7%)
Flood	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (15.38%)	2 (5.41%)
Others	1 (5.88%)	2 (28.57%)	6 (46.15%)	9 (24.32%)
Total	17 (45.95%)	7 (18.92%)	13 (35.14%)	37 (100%)

Source: AFC Household Survey Data, 2025

Furthermore, data from school assessments show that the presence of internally displaced and refugee learners is uneven across the study districts and strongly concentrated in Bawku West. Overall, fewer than half of the schools assessed, 10 out of 24 representing 41.7 percent, reported enrolling displaced learners, while the majority, 58.3 percent, reported none (Figure 13). Schools enrolling displaced learners are predominantly located in Bawku West, which accounts for 60 percent of all schools reporting IDPs or the presence of refugees. The Kassena Nankana West district contributes 30 percent, while the Bongo District accounts for only 10 percent (Table 14). This pattern is consistent with data collected from the district education office, which record displaced learners exclusively in Bawku West, where enrolment was reported in six primary schools and three junior high schools. The concentration of displaced learners reflects the district's proximity to active and spillover conflict zones and underscores the differentiated exposure of schools to emergency related pressures.

Table 14: Presence of IDP/Refugee Learners by District

Presence of IDP Learners	Bawku West		Bongo		Kassena Kana West		Total	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Not present	3	21.4	6	42.9	5	35.7	14	58.3
Present	6	60	1	10	3	30	10	41.7
Total	9	37.5	7	29.2	8	33.3	24	100

Source: AFC School Level Survey Data, 2025

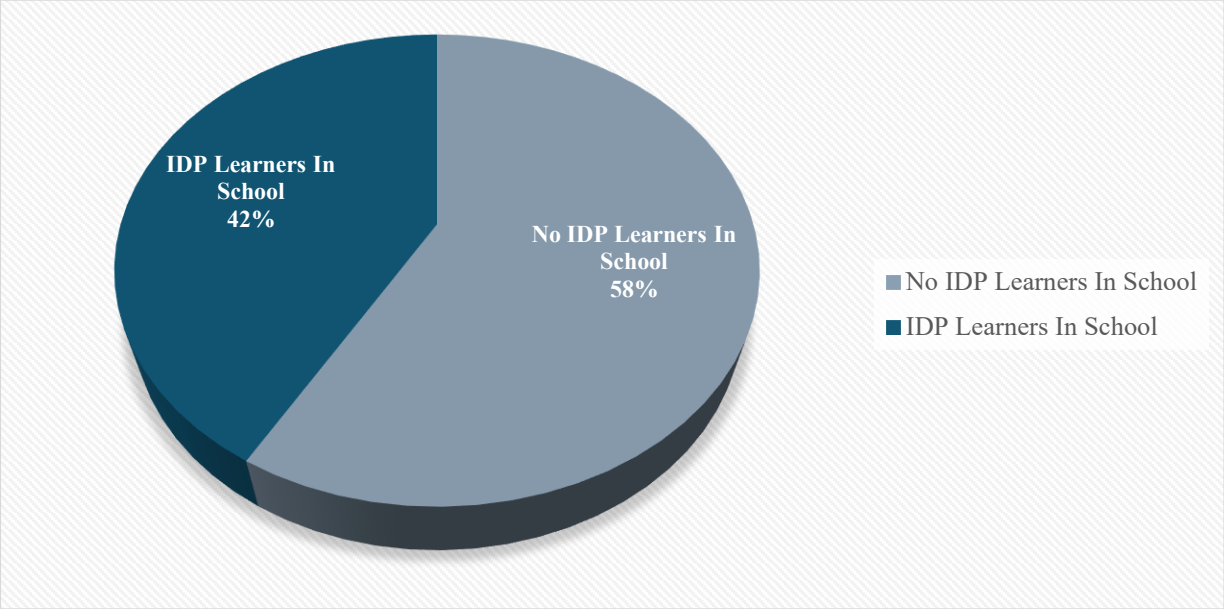


Figure 13: Presence of IDP/Refugee Learners

Source: AFC School Level Survey Data, 2025

Qualitative evidence highlights that displacement is closely linked to localized conflict dynamics rather than uniform regional instability. Several headteachers in Bongo and parts of Kassena Nankana West described their communities as calm and operationally stable, noting that schools have not been directly affected by conflict and continue to function normally. As one headteacher explained:

There is no conflict in the area, and schooling has continued without disruption **(KII Headteacher, Kodorogo)**.

In contrast, respondents from Bawku West and adjacent communities described conflict as deeply disruptive, triggering fear, displacement, and repeated interruptions to schooling. A headteacher from Binaba captured this experience, stating,

'the conflict really has a negative impact on education and on our daily activities. Teachers leave, parents relocate with their children, and absenteeism and dropout increase' ***(KII Headteacher, BW).***

'…….when there is a fight, we are afraid to go to school because there will be people shooting guns and killing. We are small and cannot run away when we go to school whenever there is conflict. We will be in the house, and we do not learn anything. …… We are not learning well when there is no food in the school. (***FGD Student KN West)***

These movements have weakened school community support systems, reduced enrolment, and forced some schools to collapse multiple streams into single classes.

Participants also emphasized that conflict driven displacement rarely acts alone. Poverty, galamsey, livelihood disruption, and lack of learning materials intersect with insecurity to deepen educational exclusion for displaced learners. As one respondent noted,

'……*it is not only the conflict, but the conflict has played a key role together with poverty and galamsey'* ***(KII Headteacher, BW).***

While some communities reported gradual return and relative stabilization in recent years, fear, trauma, and vulnerability continue to shape schooling decisions for displaced families. These realities highlight the need for flexible, targeted education responses that can absorb displaced learners and support reintegration, pointing directly to the relevance of community education approaches and accelerated education innovations.

5.7 Accelerated Education Programmes

Household interviews conducted revealed that majority of children in the three districts are enrolled in formal school with less than 5% enrolled in informal, Accelerated Education Programmes (AEPs) as shown in Figure 14.

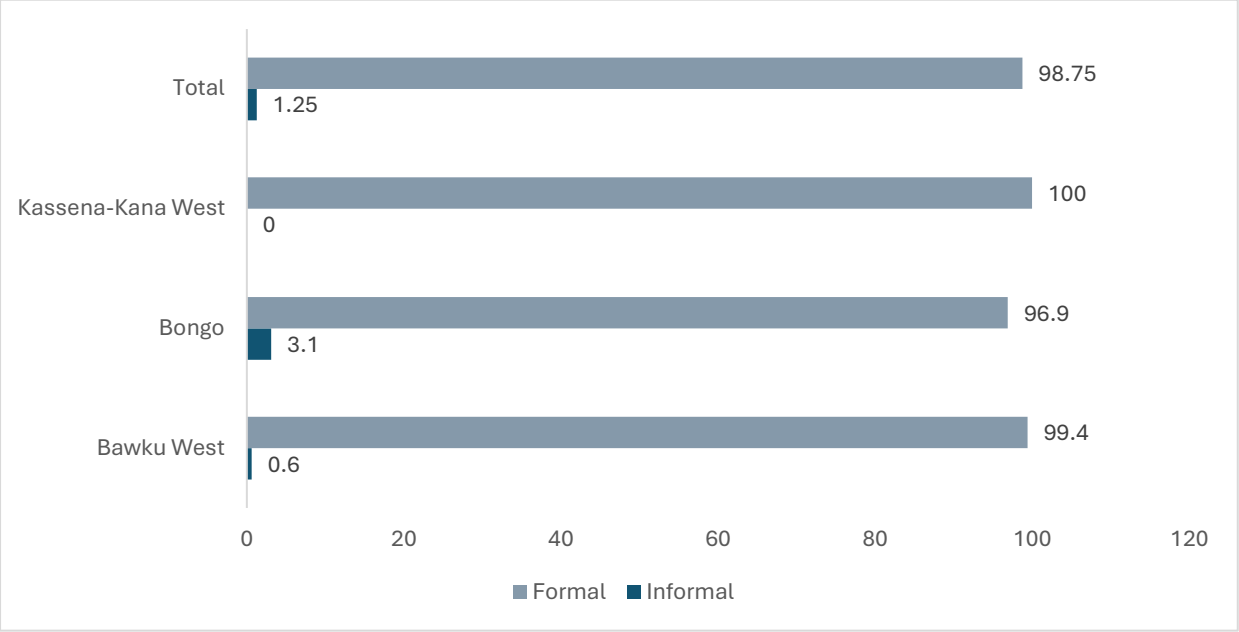


Figure 14 Enrolment in Formal and EAPs
Source: AFC Household Survey Data, 2025

Interviews with headteachers were conducted to assess the availability, uptake, and perceived responsiveness of AEPs as learning support options for out-of-school and over-age learners in Bawku West, Bongo, and Kassena Nankana West. The findings reveal marked variation in the presence of AEPs across districts, reflecting uneven access to alternative learning pathways in communities affected by conflict, displacement, and learning disruption. Overall, while AEPs are recognised by school leaders as relevant and necessary, their actual presence remains limited in several high-need areas.

District-level patterns show that the Bongo District has the highest AEP coverage, with four out of seven schools, representing 57.1 percent, reporting the presence or prior implementation of AEPs in nearby communities. In contrast, Kassena Nankana West recorded AEP presence in only one out of seven schools, or 14.3 percent, while Bawku West reported AEP availability in just one out of nine schools, or 11.1 percent (Figure 15). These figures indicate that the districts experiencing higher levels of education disruption and vulnerability, particularly Bawku West, are also those with the lowest access to accelerated learning options, creating a mismatch between need and programme availability.

Headteachers in districts with limited AEP presence noted that the absence of such programmes constrains their ability to respond to learners who return to school after displacement, prolonged absence, or over-age entry.

'…… No, we use to have CBE in our community but for time now, they are no longer doing it. It's been up to ten (10) years since they stopped.'.
'…. Yes, school for life used to do it. It was mostly done for children who were not enrolled in formal school and are above KG level to catch up and transition into the formal school. They mostly targeted children who take care of animal' ***(FGD parents BW).***

Where AEPs were present, respondents viewed them as valuable entry points for reintegrating learners into the formal education system, especially those who had missed extended periods of schooling.

'There is no school in the community and so many of the children don't attend school. We however have a night school which has provided the opportunity for some of the children to have some basic education' **(FGD CBE Committee, Bongo)**

'Yes I have visited, and I was very impressed. They use local language, local songs and primers for literacy and numeracy. They engage the students in the learning process which makes the children like the teaching approach' ***(FGD CBE Committee, Bongo)***

However, the uneven distribution of AEPs suggests that many schools lack clear pathways to support learners who cannot immediately transition into age-appropriate grades, shedding light into the importance of examining how existing AEPs are linked to catch-up or bridging programmes.

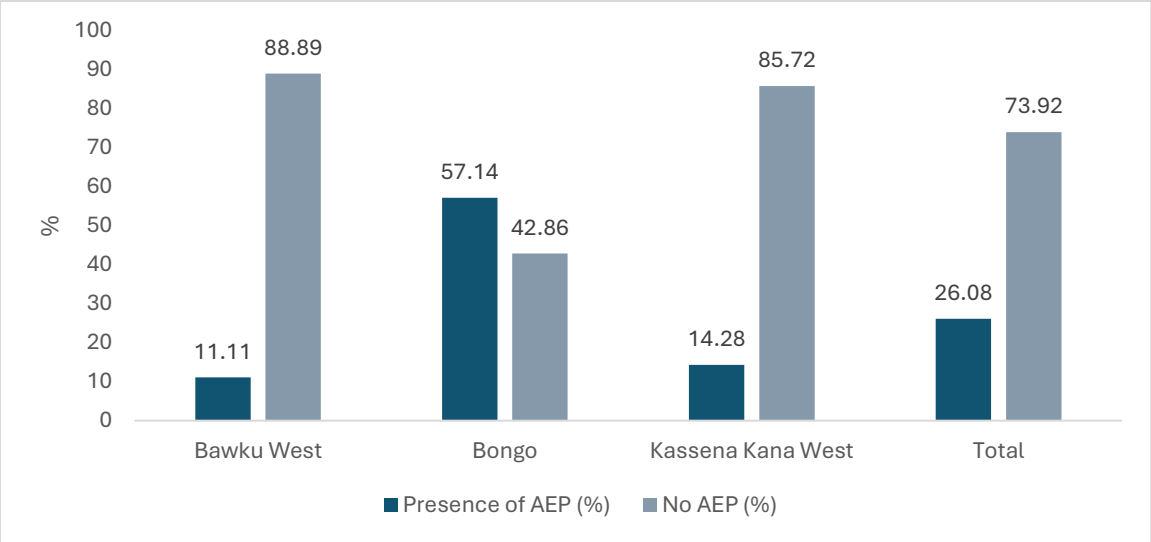


Figure 15: Presence of AEPs

Source: AFC School Level Survey Data, 2025

5.7.1 Linkages to Catch-Up or Bridging Programmes

Findings from headteacher interviews indicate that linkages between schools and formal catch-up or bridging programmes are extremely limited across the three study districts, constraining pathways for learners who have experienced prolonged disruption, displacement, or delayed entry into schooling. In Bawku West and Bongo districts, all headteachers interviewed reported that their schools are not implementing any catch-up or bridging programmes, reflecting a complete absence of such linkages within the formal school system. In Kassena Nankana West, the situation is marginally better, with 75 percent of schools also reporting no involvement in catch-up initiatives.

The results depict that only two schools out of a total of 26, representing 7.7 percent, reported any form of engagement with a catch-up programme (Figure 16). This very low level of coverage suggests that most schools lack structured mechanisms to support learners who are over-age, returning after displacement, or struggling to re-integrate following interruptions to schooling. As a result, many learners are either placed directly into age-inappropriate classes or excluded altogether, increasing the risk of poor performance and eventual dropout. The limited presence of catch-up and bridging programmes highlights a critical gap in the education response and underscores the importance of examining the availability and scope of teaching and learning programmes within schools.

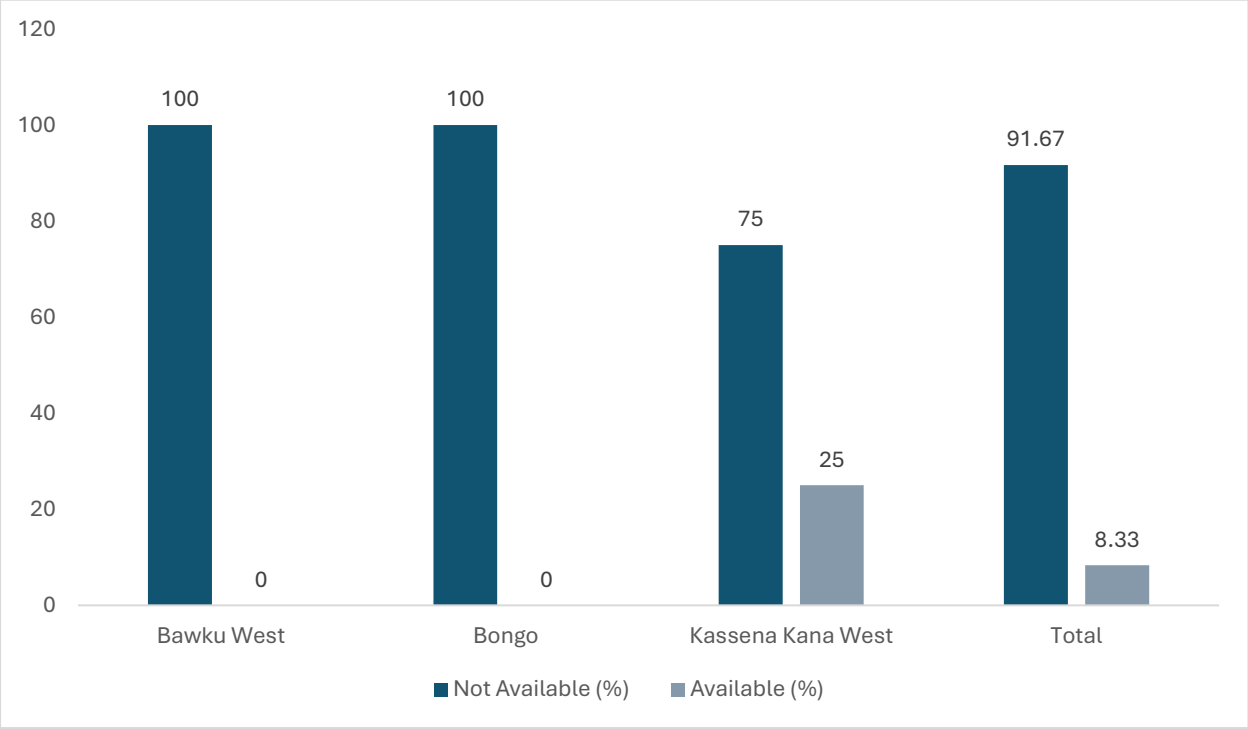


Figure 16: Linkages to Catch-Up or Bridging Programmes

Source: AFC School Level Survey Data, 2025

5.7.2 Availability of teaching and learning programs in schools

Access to teaching, learning programmes, and materials varies considerably across the study districts, reflecting uneven resourcing of schools and differential learning conditions. Information collected from school headteachers shows that the availability of teaching and learning materials is not uniform, with some districts better equipped than others. In the Bawku West District, the situation is particularly constrained, as 11.11 percent of schools reported that they do not have sufficient teaching and learning materials, limiting effective classroom

instruction and learner engagement. This shortfall compounds the challenges already associated with teacher shortages and learner displacement in the district.

Bongo District shows relatively worse access, with 43 percent of schools indicating that teaching and learning materials are not available, suggesting a more challenging learning environment (Figure 17). The district of Kassena Nankana West presents a better situation than Bongo, where 62.5 percent of the headteachers interviewed reported having access to learning materials, while the remaining schools indicated shortages. These variations highlight persistent inequities in school level inputs, with implications for learning quality, retention, and recovery following disruption. Thus, the findings point to the need for more targeted and equitable provision of teaching and learning programmes, particularly in districts facing higher vulnerability and system stress.

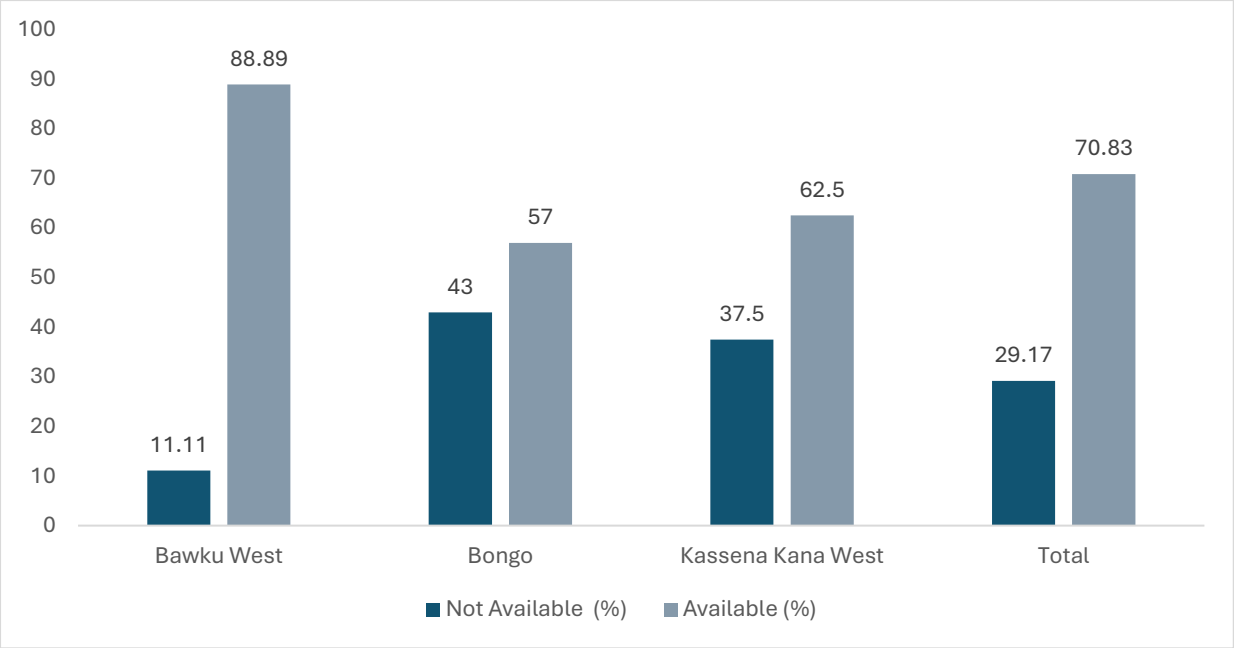


Figure 17: Availability of teaching and learning materials in schools
Source: AFC School Level Survey Data, 2025

5.7.3 School Curriculum Alignment with formal education standards

Headteachers were interviewed to assess the extent to which schools maintain curriculum alignment with formal education standards, even when operating under emergency or crises. The findings show that most schools continue to implement a structured curriculum, indicating a strong commitment to maintaining formal learning continuity despite contextual challenges. Overall, 91.3 percent of schools across the three districts reported having a structured curriculum aligned with national standards, suggesting that curriculum delivery remains largely intact at the school level.

District level analysis reveals some variation. The district of Kassena Nankana West recorded full coverage, with 100 percent of schools reporting the use of a structured curriculum,

reflecting strong adherence to formal education requirements. In Bawku West and Bongo districts, small gaps were observed, with approximately 10 to 14 percent of schools reporting the absence of a structured curriculum (Figure 18). While these gaps are relatively limited, they are notable given the heightened vulnerability of some communities to conflict, displacement, and teacher shortages. In general, the findings indicate that curriculum alignment is largely sustained, but targeted support is required in districts where disruptions risk weakening consistent curriculum delivery.

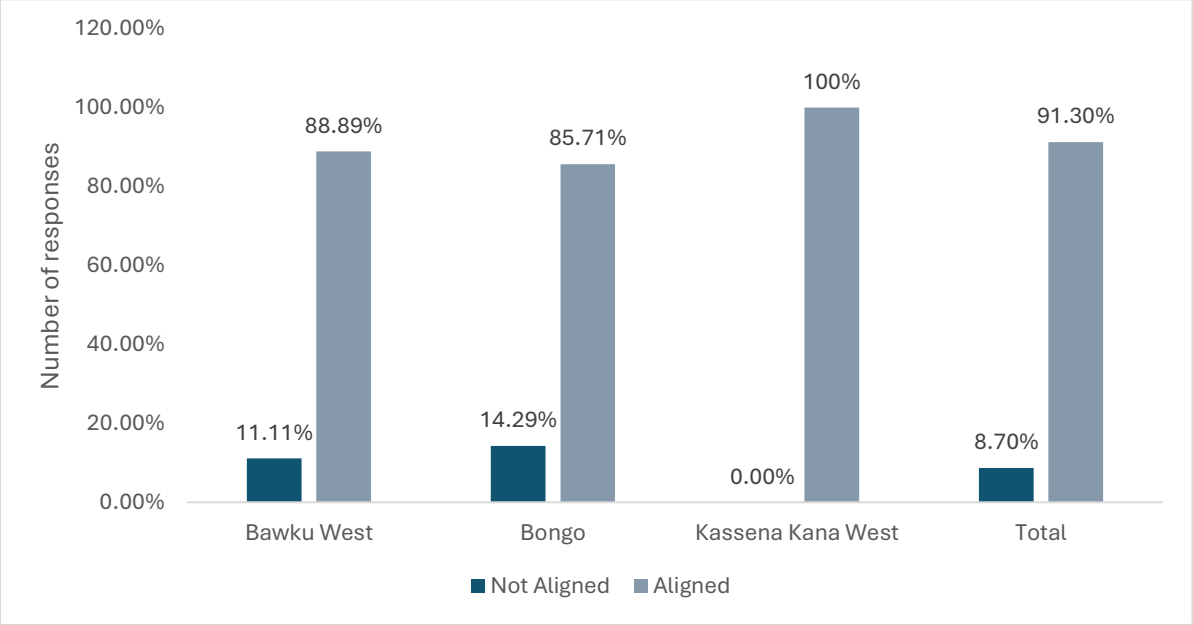


Figure 18: School Curriculum development

Source: AFC School Level Survey Data, 2025

5.7.4 Informal Educational Programmes

The household interview revealed that some of the informal education programs available to the children in Bawku West District, Bongo District, and Kassena-Nankana West District include community literacy programs, religious education programs, training programs for the apprentices, and after-school support programs. All these programs help the children to acquire basic literacy and numeracy skills. The programs are important to the children as they help to support the formal education system. Therefore, the programs are beneficial to the children in the respective communities

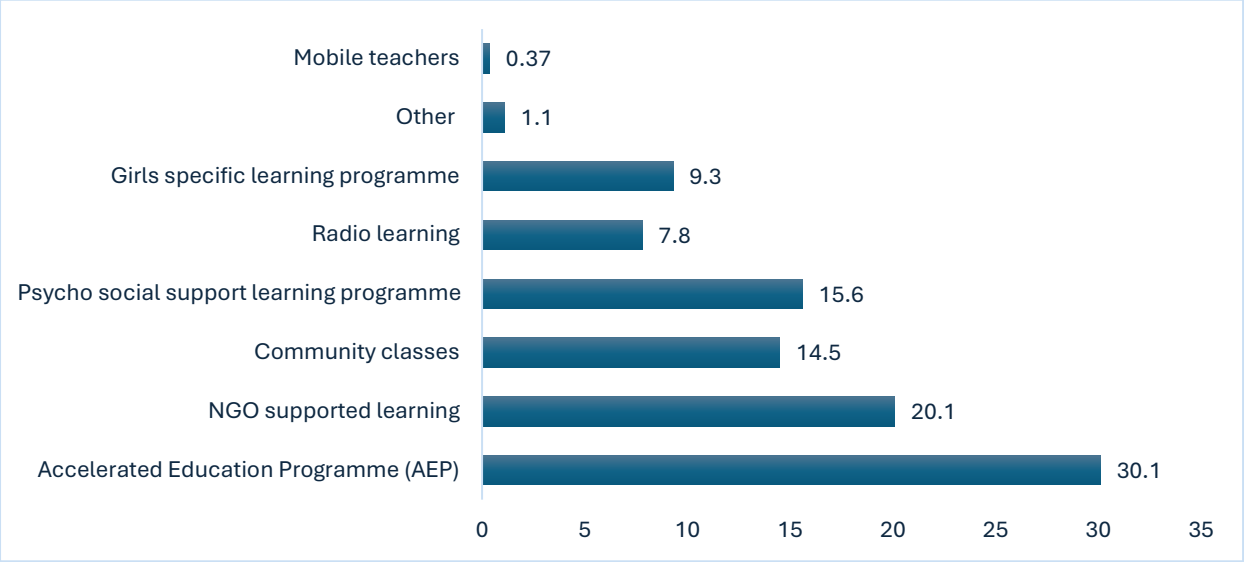


Figure 19 Types of Education Intervention
Source: AFC Household Survey Data, 2025

5.7.5 Remedial Classes

The organisation of remedial classes as a learning recovery strategy in emergency and fragile contexts remains uneven and limited across the study districts. Remedial classes are particularly important in settings where conflict, displacement, and social instability disrupt regular schooling and create learning gaps. However, findings from the school survey indicate that such targeted learning support is not systematically implemented, and distance or contingency learning modalities are rarely used during periods of disruption.

District level analysis shows stark contrasts. None of the schools assessed in the Bawku West District reported organising remedial classes, a significant concern given the district's prolonged exposure to conflict and repeated interruptions to schooling. In contrast, the Bongo District demonstrates relatively stronger engagement, with 57.1 percent of schools reporting the provision of remedial classes, suggesting greater capacity or support for learning recovery. Kassena Nankana West recorded remedial classes in 37.5 percent of schools, indicating partial but still limited coverage (Figure 20). The findings point to the need for stronger integration of remedial and catch-up strategies within school responses to crisis, particularly in districts experiencing sustained instability.

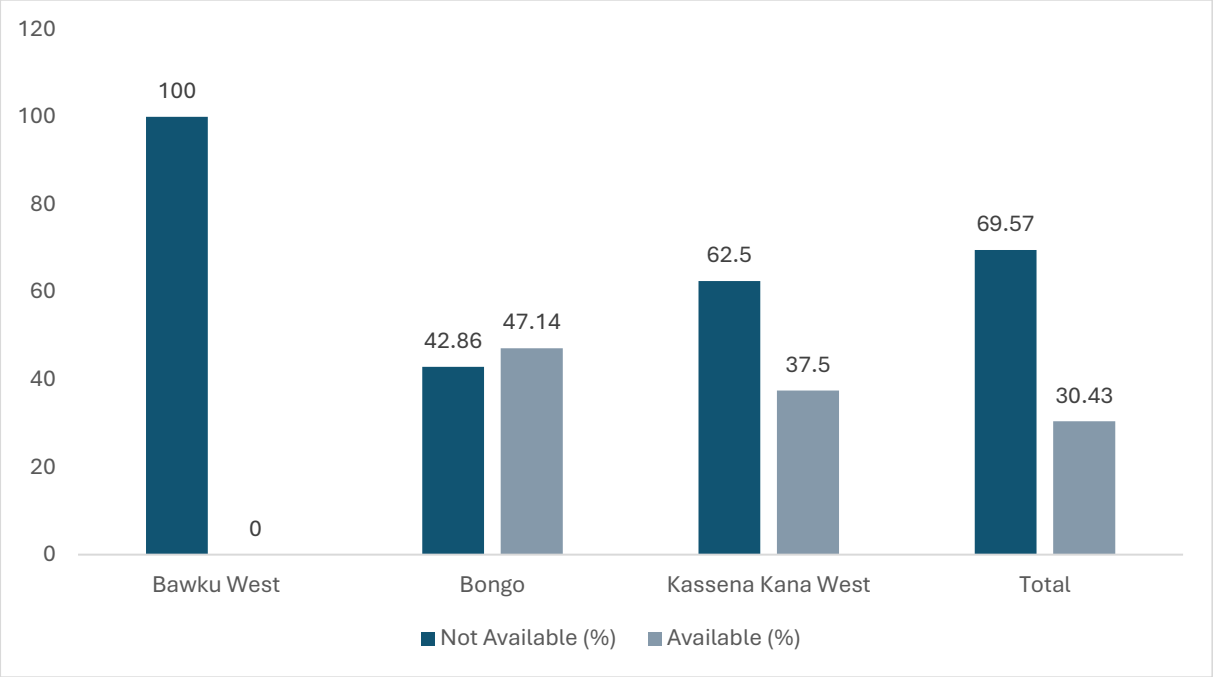


Figure 20: Remedial Classes

Source: AFC School Level Survey Data, 2025

5.7.6 Radio Programmes or Mobile Learning Sessions

The assessment shows that radio based learning and mobile learning sessions are absent across the three study districts, indicating limited use of alternative delivery modalities to sustain learning during emergencies. Such approaches are particularly important in contexts affected by conflict, displacement, or school closures, yet their uptake remains exceptionally low. Overall, the findings point to a heavy reliance on face-to-face instruction, with few contingency options available when regular schooling is disrupted.

District level data reveal minimal variation but consistently low coverage. In Bawku West District, only 11.1 percent of headteachers interviewed reported the availability of radio programmes or mobile learning sessions. Bongo District shows a similarly low level of provision, with 14.3 percent of schools indicating the use of alternative learning modalities (Figure 21). In Kassena Nankana West, none of the schools assessed reported offering radio or mobile learning activities. Across the full sample of twenty-four schools, only two schools had any form of radio based or mobile learning support in place. The findings underscore a significant gap in emergency learning preparedness and highlight the need to strengthen low cost, scalable distance learning options as part of education in emergencies responses.

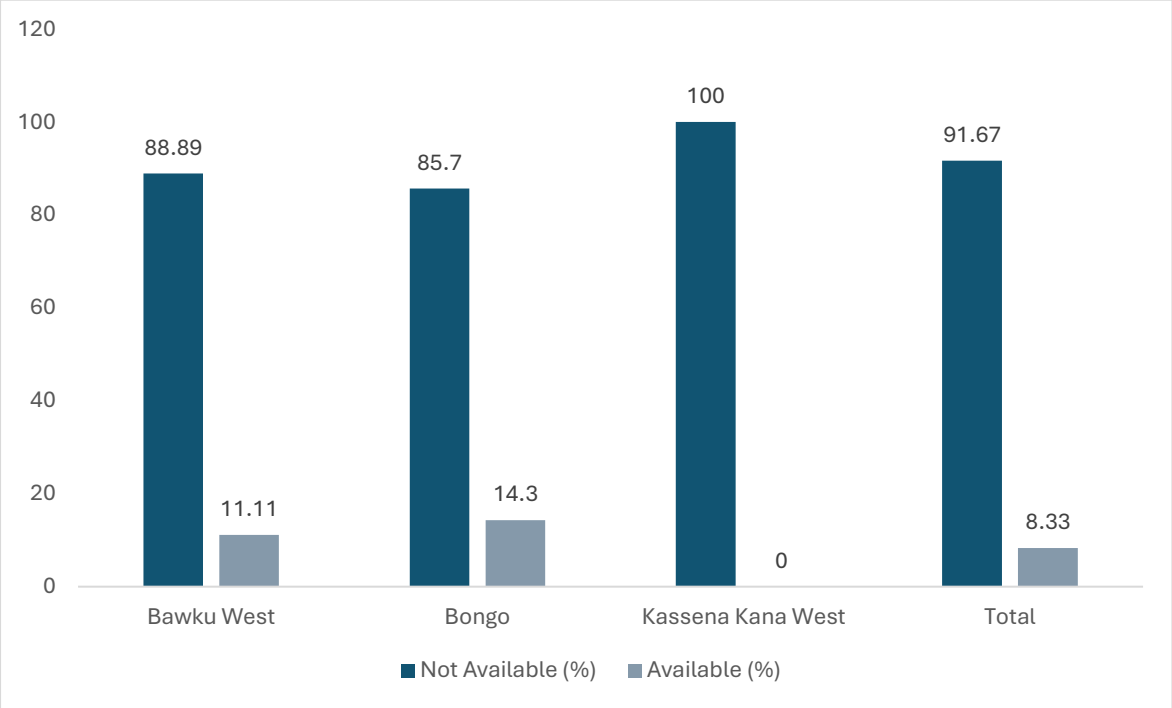


Figure 21: Availability of Radio Programmes or Mobile Learning Sessions
Source: AFC School Level Survey Data, 2025

5.8 Programmes Promoting Girls' Education

At the national level, initiatives aimed at promoting girls' education in Ghana primarily focus on improving access, retention, and protection, particularly for girls in marginalised and fragile contexts. These interventions are especially relevant in the Upper East Region, where poverty, insecurity, and restrictive socio-cultural norms continue to limit girls' educational opportunities. Within such settings, targeted programmes that address barriers to girls' participation are critical for sustaining enrolment and progression through the education cycle.

Findings from the school assessment reveal uneven availability of programmes promoting girls' education across the three study districts. Bawku West District recorded the lowest coverage, with only 12.5 percent of schools reporting the presence of girl focused education programmes. In contrast, Bongo District shows comparatively stronger engagement, with 57.1 percent of schools indicating the availability of such programmes. Kassena Nankana West reports that 42.9 percent of schools have initiatives designed to support girls' education (Figure 22). While these figures suggest some progress, the findings underpin the need to scale up and better target girls' education programmes across all districts, with particular emphasis on contexts where socio economic pressures and insecurity continue to undermine girls' access, retention, and learning outcomes.

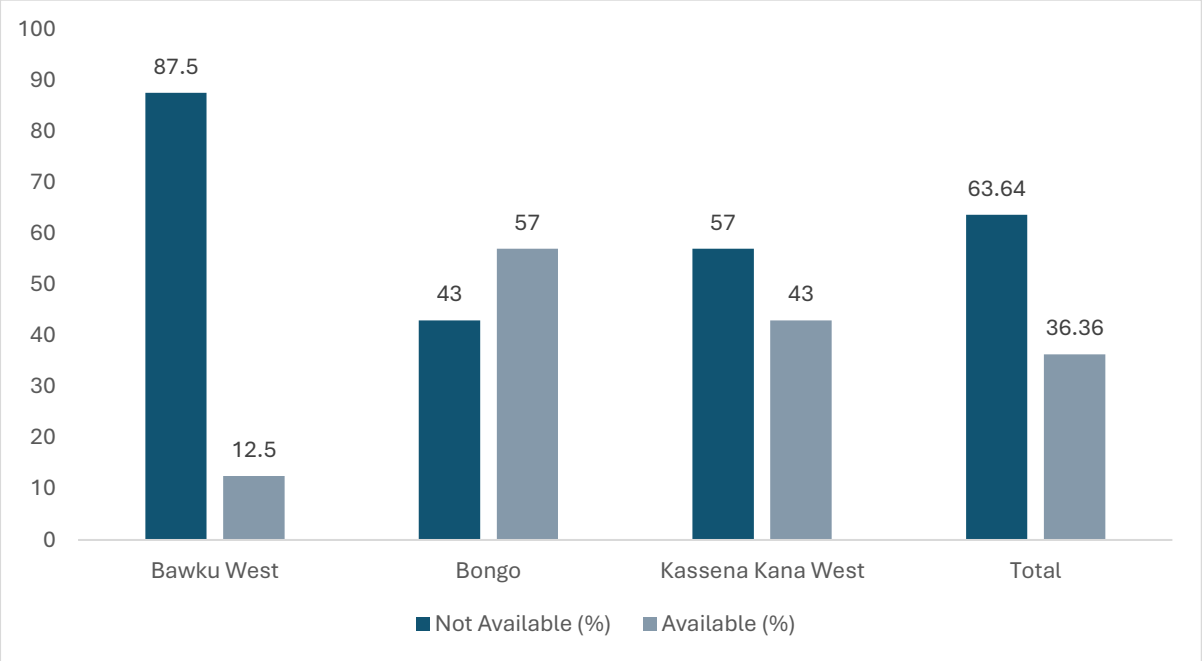


Figure 22: Availability of Programmes Promoting Girls' Education
Source: AFC School Level Survey Data, 2025

5.8.1 CAMA and FAWE Alumni and Other Community Clubs

CAMA and FAWE alumni, together with allied community clubs such as Men and Boys Clubs, play a critical grassroots role in advancing girls' education, protection, and wellbeing in the Upper East Region. Operating as trusted community-based actors, these groups function primarily as mentors, mobilizers, and advocates who bridge the gap between schools, households, and communities. Through the Learner Guide model, CAMA members return to their former schools and communities to serve as role models for younger girls, providing guidance on education pathways, self-development, and life skills, while reinforcing the value of schooling in contexts marked by poverty, fragility, and gendered barriers.

Within schools and communities, CAMA and FAWE alumni focus on practical, prevention-oriented roles. They support vulnerable girls through mentoring on sexual and reproductive health and rights, psychosocial wellbeing, and personal development, and they actively track learners who have dropped out or are at risk of leaving school due to pregnancy, migration, or economic pressures. One CAMA member from Bongo described her role as

"Mobilizing children that are vulnerable and needy… and those who have dropped out of school, I try my best to bring them back to school." **(FGD CAMA Girl Bongo)**

This outreach function is particularly important in fragile settings, where formal systems for follow-up are weak and many girls disengage quietly from education.

Complementing this work, Men and Boys Clubs contribute by addressing harmful social norms within households and communities. Their role centres on sensitizing parents and caregivers about their responsibilities toward girls' wellbeing, including the provision of basic needs such as sanitary materials, and promoting shared accountability for preventing teenage pregnancy

and early school withdrawal. A club organizer from Wolingum explained that their engagement focuses on educating parents to

"The community has faced poverty that has led to teenage pregnancy because parents could not provide for the children based on that some of the children must travel to go and work but comes back with pregnancy and school dropouts is a major problem in the community. There was one teenage girl who got pregnant when I spoke with her it was like the mother was not able to provide for her needs and there was this guy who came back from galamsey so the guy was buying almost everything she want for her, buying her books for school menstrual pads, supporting her with school needs and anytime the guy gives her money the mother takes the money from the girl until she got pregnant and the boy said she is not responsible. So, CAMA came in support her with baby dresses and psychological support and after she delivered, we send her back to school. So basically, these are some of our core values..." **(*CAMA_Interview KN West)***

Collectively, these community-based actors do not replace formal education or protection systems, but they play a vital supportive role by strengthening community ownership, reinforcing positive norms, and sustaining girls' participation in education where institutional capacity is limited.

i. Positive Impacts of CAMA and FAWE Interventions

Findings across the three districts reveal consistent, interrelated themes demonstrating how CAMA and FAWE interventions drive change at multiple levels. The analysis below integrates verbatim excerpts directly supporting each theme while also highlighting variations across Kassena Nankana West (KN), Bawku West (BW), and Bongo.

Educational Access and Retention Through Material Support - A dominant and highly visible theme particularly in Bawku West (BW) is the provision of material support to enable girls to remain in school. Participants repeatedly linked programme support to their ability to stay enrolled.

"They have supported us a lot… gari, sugar, soap, sanitary pad, milo, sugar, uniform, then shoe." ***(Bawku West CAMA Member BW)***

"If not because of CAMFED, I think I could have dropped out of school… CAMFED supported me in terms of food, uniforms and sandals." (CAMA BW)

"They gave me so many provisions I needed to be in school like; gari, milo, pads, shoes… uniform, sugar." ***(CAMA Assoc. FGD-Members BW)***

A particularly compelling narrative from Bawku West illustrates how support enabled school re-entry after disruption

"I got married… divorced… came home pregnant… CAMFED enrolled me and they gave me a lot of provisions… it supported me a lot." ***(CAMA Assoc. Member BW)***

While similar support is acknowledged in Kassena Nankana-west and Bongo, it is less central in their narratives, suggesting that in Bawku West the programme plays a more critical safety-net role, whereas in Kassena Nankana and Bongo it complements other coping strategies.

Confidence Building and Personal Transformation - Across all districts, participants strongly emphasized increased confidence and self-development, with particularly rich accounts from Kassena Nankana West (KN). Confidence building emerges as a core transformative outcome, enabling girls to move from silence and marginalization to active participation and leadership.

"This program has built my confidence level… it taught us how to identify your strengths and build on them… it has built me, shaped me." ***(FGD CAMA _Kassena Nankana west)***

"At first I can't speak in public but after going through the training I can face any crowd." ***(FGD_ CAMA Kassena Nankana west)***

Similarly, in Bongo, confidence is linked to leadership roles:

"I used not to be able to stand in front of people to speak… but now… I am one of the executives… you need to organize meetings." ***(CAMA FGD BONGO)***

In Bawku West, confidence is often expressed through peer influence and observation:

"Those that I used to know… shy… because of CAMA, they are able to stand in public speaking with courage." ***(CAMA_Binaba BW)***

Life Skills, Agency, and Decision-Making - Participants across districts reported gaining practical life skills and decision-making abilities, particularly around education and personal safety. The program has built agency, equipping girls not only to make informed decisions but also to support peers facing similar challenges.

"It has helped me… to make good decisions as learners." ***(CAMA FGD, Kassena Nankana*** *west)*

"Some of us did not know what sexual abuse is… if not for CAMA I will not know how to handle rape case." ***(FGD, CAMA, KN)***

In Bawku West, these skills are more action-oriented:

"CAMA members reported guiding students on how to cope in school, prepare for examinations… and navigate social pressures." ***(FGD, CAMA,BW)***

Additionally, participants described how these skills extend to mentoring others:

"When you go to the classroom… you will see some students who are not participating… and if I can help in any way I do so." ***(FGD CAMA KN)***

Pathways to Education and Career Aspirations - An emerging theme, particularly in Bawku West, is how CAMFED programme participation shapes girls future aspirations and career direction. This demonstrates how exposure to mentoring roles (e.g., Learner Guides) creates pathways into professional identities, especially in education.

The programme does not only retain girls in school but also influences long-term aspirations and career trajectories.

As some participants noted that:

"It has given me a skill… a teaching skill… it motivated me to go into tertiary to study educational courses." ***(CAMA KII BW)***

Economic Empowerment and Challenging Gender Roles - Economic empowerment is more strongly articulated in Kassena Nankana and Bawku West, where participants describe gaining livelihood skills and challenging traditional gender norms. Livelihood and skills training contribute to economic independence, while simultaneously disrupting entrenched beliefs about gender roles.

"To impact young women… how they get their startup and how they are able to advertise their business." ***(Business Guide_Hairiya Islamic)***

"Females can do the same" in farming and animal rearing. ***(Agric Guide_Kasena Nankana west)***

Although less prominent in Bongo, there is evidence of shifting perceptions:

"People thought that it was only boys that have access to education but… FAWE intervention transformed the perception." ***(FAWE Bongo)***

Community-Level Transformation and Social Change - Participants consistently described broader community impacts, especially in Kassena Nankana west and Bawku West. CAMA/FAWE interventions extend beyond individuals to foster community-wide behavioral and attitudinal change, contributing to safer and more supportive environments for girls.

"Teenage pregnancy… occurs but due to this program… it makes them control themselves." ***(FGD, CAMA KN)***

"By educating girls and parents, teenage pregnancy cases had reduced and antisocial activities… were being addressed." ***(CAMA BW)***

Community engagement activities also reinforce collective responsibility:

"Our executives… organize us to go for cleanup… they are doing a lot of things in the community." ***(CAMA BW)***

FAWE participants highlighted behavioral change among younger children:

"The way they behave with their mothers at home… some have changed from their bad behaviours." ***(FAWE KNW)***

The findings demonstrate that CAMA and FAWE interventions are impactful because they address interconnected barriers, economic hardship, limited agency, restrictive gender norms, and lack of opportunities. Their effectiveness lies in a multi-layered approach, as illustrated by participant experiences:

"Things your parents would not have been able to provide, CAMFED helps us with them." ***(CAMA BW)***

"It has built my confidence… I can face any crowd." ***(CAMA KNW)***

*"It transformed the perception… it was only boys that have access to education****." (FAWE Bongo)***

ii. Limitations of CAMA and FAWE Interventions

While the data confirms the generally positive trajectory of CAMA/FAWE interventions in promoting girls' education and economic empowerment, a critical thematic analysis of participant feedback reveals significant systemic and operational limitations. These constraints diminish the program's depth, equity, and scalability. Analysis of Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) across Bawku West and Kassena Nankana West districts surfaced three interconnected limitations: Structural Exclusion via Rigid Selection Processes, Resource Scarcity Undermining Mentorship and Livelihood Impact, and Perceived Gender Inequity and the Exclusion of Vulnerable Boys.

Structural Exclusion and the Paradox of "Quota-Based Selection" - A dominant and recurring concern among participants is the disconnect between the programmes intent to target the *most* vulnerable girls and the practical outcomes of the selection process. The data reveals a paradox of timeliness versus need. Donor-imposed selection deadlines create a scenario where the girls who report to school *earliest* are often those with sufficient initial resources, while the genuinely destitute those still struggling at home to raise basic funds for admission or uniform arrive late to find the quota already exhausted. These excerpts highlight a critical flaw in implementation of fidelity. The rigid, time-bound selection window overrides the community's ability to accurately identify and enroll the chronically poor. The consequence is a perception of unfairness and elite capture, where "low-hanging fruit" (easily accessible, already-enrolled students) benefit at the expense of the out-of-school or late-enrolling ultra-poor girl.

This creates a form of administrative exclusion by design. A CAMA Assistant Member from Googo (Bawku West) articulated this frustration with striking clarity in a KII, stating:

"The needy ones are more than the quota. So, it's a big challenge... whenever they ask them to do selection for the beneficiaries, they do it earlier. That time, too, those who are vulnerable and needy are still in the house struggling to get money to buy their educational items and report. By the time they report, the opportunity is gone. So, it's like we normally give support to those who are not needy. " **(KII CAMA Asst. Member BW)**

"When it comes to the selection of needy children sometimes, they end up selecting those who do not have any problem, which is not good because those who need more are left behind." **(FGD CAMA Members Kassena Nankana West)**

The Hidden Cost of Focus: Exclusion of Vulnerable Boys **-** A significant and sobering finding within the limitations section is the emergent concern regarding gender solidarity versus household equity. While the program's mandate is unequivocally girl-centered, community members are witnessing a new frontier of vulnerability affecting boys in the same socioeconomic strata. Although not a critique of the program's *failure* (as it achieves its gendered mission), it is cited as a limitation of the overall ecosystem of support in the community. The absence of a parallel structure for vulnerable boys creates tension and a perception of imbalance.

"Sometimes our boys too, they are there and some of the parents cannot take care of all their children. Some of them too, they have only boys. And they are suffering; they cannot take care of them to be able to go to school. So, if CAMFED can help like young boys, it will be good." **(CAMA. Member, Bawku West Kusanaba)**

This statement, notably from a CAMA member and not a detractor, highlights an ethical by-product of targeted programming. In households with *only* male children facing extreme poverty, the family receives zero educational safety net support. While justified by the historical marginalization of girls, this perception of exclusion is a contextual limitation that affects community buy-in and potentially exacerbates resentment in extremely poor households with no daughters. It signals a gap in the wider social protection landscape that CAMA/FAWE cannot be expected to fill alone, but which nonetheless limits the *perceived* equity of the intervention at the community level.

5.8.2 Continued Schooling of Pregnant Girls and Teen Mothers

Support mechanisms that enable pregnant girls and teenage mothers to remain in school are critical for reducing dropout, advancing gender equity, and improving long term social and economic outcomes. In Ghana, particularly in the Upper East, national policy commitments and community level support are intended to ensure that pregnancy does not permanently exclude girls from education. School friendly practices, guidance and counselling, flexible learning arrangements, and supportive community attitudes play a key role in helping young mothers continue their education and break intergenerational cycles of exclusion and poverty.

Findings from the study reveal uneven availability of such support across the three districts. In Bongo District and Kassena Nankana West, all or most schools reported having measures in

place to support pregnant girls and teenage mothers, indicating strong institutional and community acceptance of girls continued schooling. In contrast, Bawku West District recorded significantly lower coverage, with only 42.9 percent of schools offering such support (Figure 23). This gap is particularly concerning given the district's exposure to conflict, displacement, and heightened vulnerability, which already place girls at increased risk of school dropout. The results highlight the need for more deliberate and sustained interventions in Bawku West to strengthen school level support for pregnant girls and teen mothers and ensure equitable access to education across all districts.

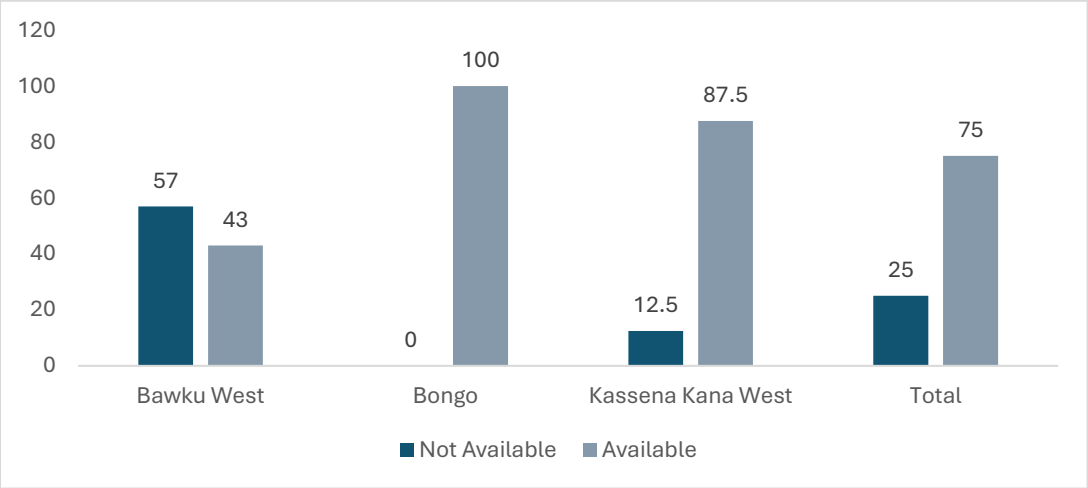


Figure 23: Support for Continued Schooling of Pregnant Girls and Teen Mothers
Source: AFC School Level Survey Data, 2025

The research established that the educational interventions that were carried out through informal programs had a positive effect on the learning and development of the children. The programs helped the children to enhance their literacy and numeracy skills as well as to build their confidence in learning. The programs were also important in child social development as well as in providing alternative educational programs for out-of-school children. Educational interventions were important in the enhancement of children's learning. Fig 24 shows the perception of headteacher on the impact of education interventions carried out through informal programs such as Complementary Basic Education within the study districts

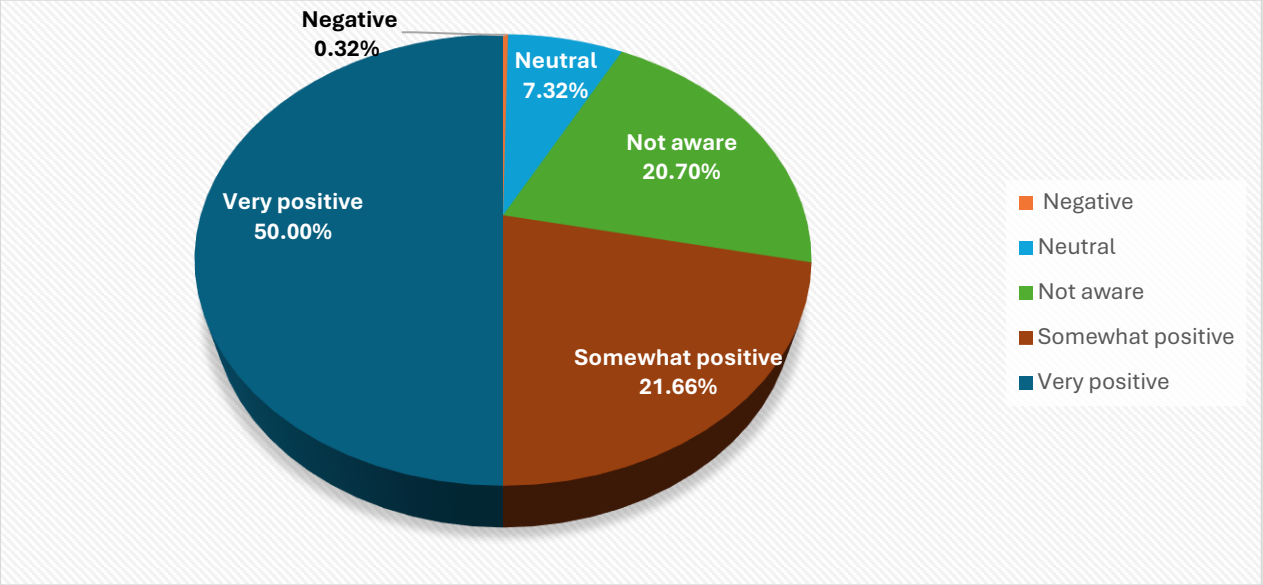


Figure 24 Perceived Impact of Education Intervention

Source: AFC School Level Survey Data, 2025

5.8.3 Gender and Teaching and Learning Materials

Sensitivity to gender and social inclusion in teaching and learning materials is particularly important where conflict, displacement, and socio-economic vulnerability deepen existing gender and social inequalities. Inclusive teaching and learning materials help promote equity, positive representation, and safe learning environments for all learners, including girls, children with disabilities, and other excluded groups. In fragile settings, such materials also play a role in reinforcing social cohesion and reducing stigma by ensuring that diverse identities and experiences are reflected in classroom content.

Findings from the school assessment indicate that most schools across all three districts are equipped with teaching and learning materials that are gender and inclusion sensitive, although coverage varies. Bongo District records the highest level of coverage at 85.7 percent, followed by Bawku West at 77.8 percent, suggesting strong attention to inclusive materials in these areas (Figure 25). Kassena Nankana West records lower coverage at 71.4 percent, indicating that while progress has been made, further effort is needed to strengthen the gender responsiveness and inclusiveness of teaching and learning materials. The above results point to positive momentum but also highlight the need for continued investment to ensure that all schools, particularly in more vulnerable districts, consistently use materials that support inclusive and equitable learning.

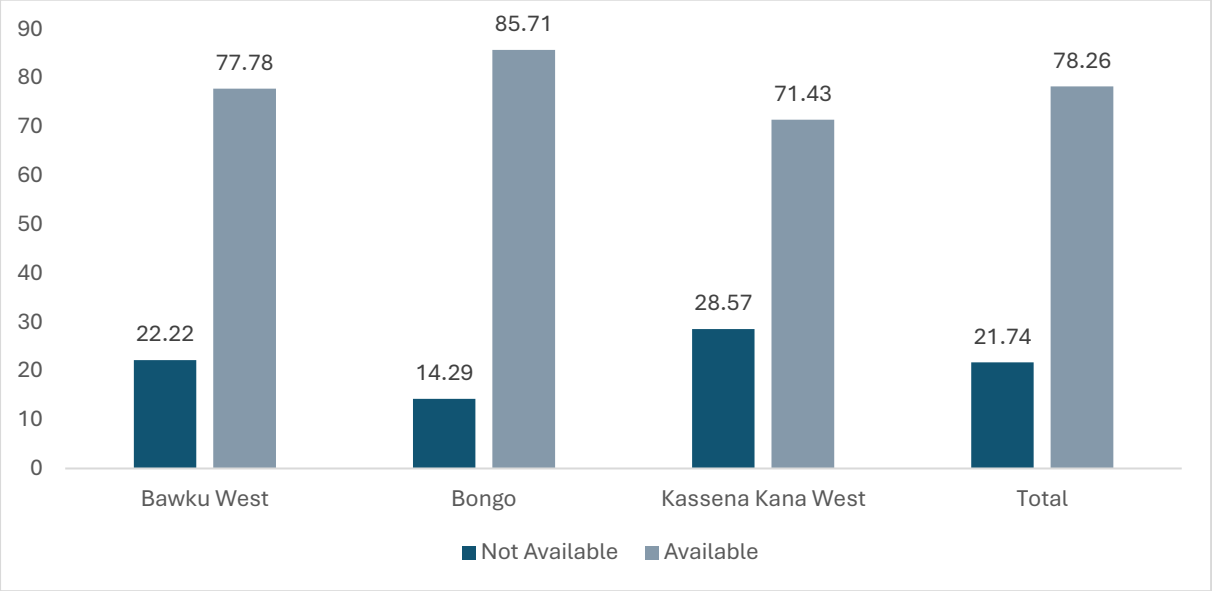


Figure 25: Gender and inclusion sensitivity in TLMs
Source: Associates for Change, 2025

5.8.4 Facilities and support for menstrual hygiene management

The availability of adequate menstrual hygiene management facilities and support is essential for safeguarding girls' dignity, health, and continued participation in schooling. Access to safe, private, and functional WASH facilities, alongside appropriate menstrual supplies and guidance are factors that directly influence adolescent girls' attendance, concentration, and retention. In FCV areas such as parts of the Upper East Region, gaps in water, sanitation, and hygiene infrastructure are often intensified by insecurity, displacement, and limited resources, further exacerbating concerns with menstrual hygiene management (Figure 26).

School toilet and urinary facility for boys and girls

Handwashing facility

Figure 26: WASH facilities often with no access to water (Bongo District)
Source: Associates for Change, 2025

Findings from the study indicate that inadequate menstrual hygiene facilities and support remain a constraint in some schools, contributing to absenteeism and discomfort among

adolescent girls. Where facilities are insufficient or poorly maintained with no access to water, girls are more likely to miss school during menstruation or disengage from classroom activities. The evidence highlights the need for strengthened investment in gender responsive WASH infrastructure, consistent provision of sanitary materials, and school level sensitisation to ensure that menstrual hygiene does not become a barrier to girls' education, especially in vulnerable and emergency affected communities (Figure 27).

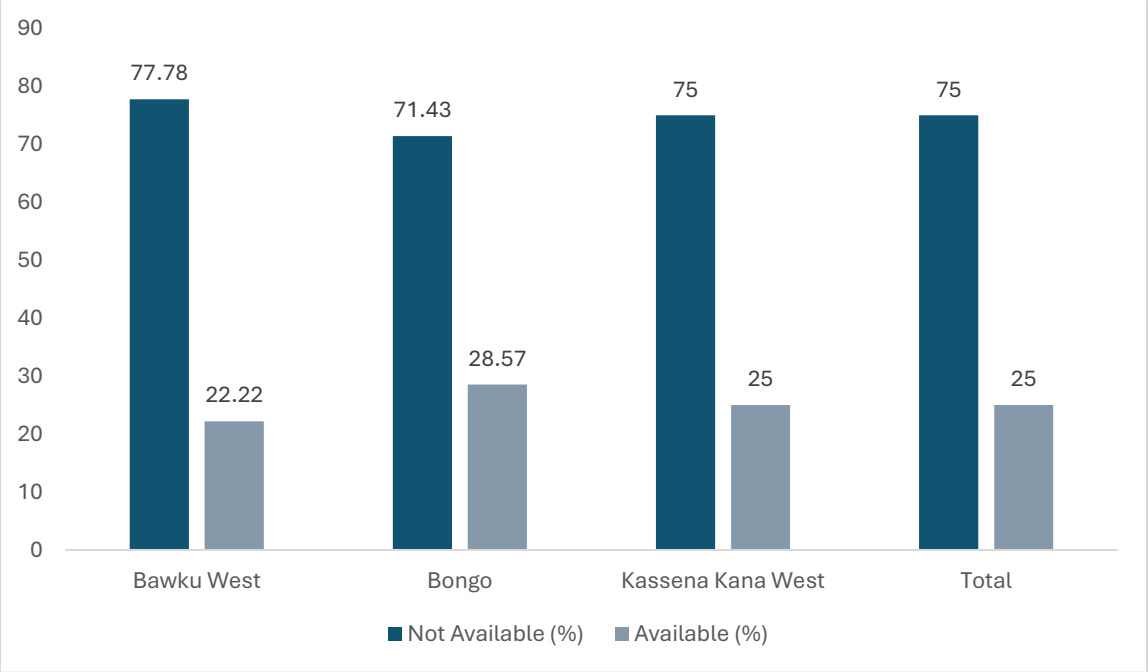


Figure 27: Facilities and support for menstrual hygiene management
Source: Associates for Change, 2025

5.8.5 Incidence and Response to Sexual Abuse Cases in the School

In FCV contexts, the risk of sexual abuse, violence, and exploitation in and around schools requires sustained attention, as insecurity, displacement, and weakened community protection systems can heighten the vulnerability, particularly of girls. Effective prevention, reporting, and response mechanisms are essential to ensuring safe and protective learning environments. Findings from headteacher interviews suggest that reported cases of sexual abuse within schools are low across the study districts. Both Bongo District and Kassena Nankana West reported no cases, while Bawku West recorded reported cases in 11 percent of schools (Figure 28). On the surface, these figures may suggest limited incidence; however, respondents and existing literature caution that sexual abuse is often underreported, particularly in contexts where stigma, fear of retaliation, cultural norms, and weak reporting pathways discourage disclosure.

Participants emphasised the importance of maintaining vigilance, strengthening school-based child protection committees, and ensuring that learners are aware of safe and confidential reporting channels. The need for protection is further reinforced by broader factors such as ready access to water and sanitation facilities, which can promote girls' sense of safety and dignity and indirectly reduce their exposure to harm. The evidence supports the need for integrated child protection approaches that combine prevention, awareness, reporting, and response, alongside improvements in school infrastructure and support services, to safeguard learners and sustain girls' retention and learning outcomes in emergency affected settings.

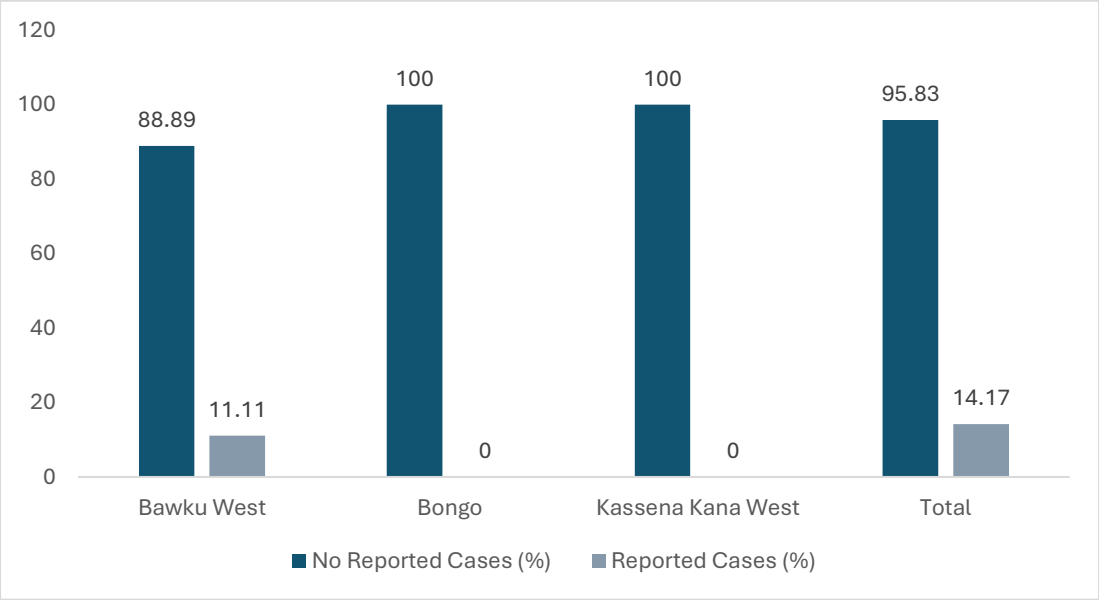


Figure 28 Incidence and Response to Sexual Abuse Cases in the School
Source: Associates for Change, 2025

5.8.6 Awareness of Discriminatory Practices Against Girls

Headteachers awareness of discriminatory practices against girls is a critical indicator of a school's capacity to promote gender equity and create a safer, inclusive learning environment. School leadership plays a significant role in setting norms, enforcing rules, and responding to behaviours that undermine girls' participation, dignity, and retention in education. Where headteachers can recognise discrimination, they are better positioned to put in place corrective measures, strengthen child protection mechanisms, and foster school cultures that uphold equal treatment for all learners, particularly in fragile and socially conservative contexts where girls' education is often at greater risk.

Findings from the study show that while the majority of headteachers reported no discriminatory practices against girls in their schools, a notable minority acknowledged that such practices do occur. Specifically, more than 70 percent of headteachers indicated that they were not aware of discrimination against girls, while approximately 27 percent confirmed the presence of discriminatory practices within their schools (Figure 29). This proportion, though

smaller, is significant and signals the persistence of gendered attitudes and behaviours that can negatively affect girls' confidence, attendance, and learning outcomes. The results underscore the need for sustained sensitisation, leadership training, and monitoring to strengthen headteachers' capacity to identify and address discrimination. Addressing these gaps is essential to ensure equal access to education, safeguarding girls' rights, and promoting inclusive school environments where all learners can participate fully and safely.

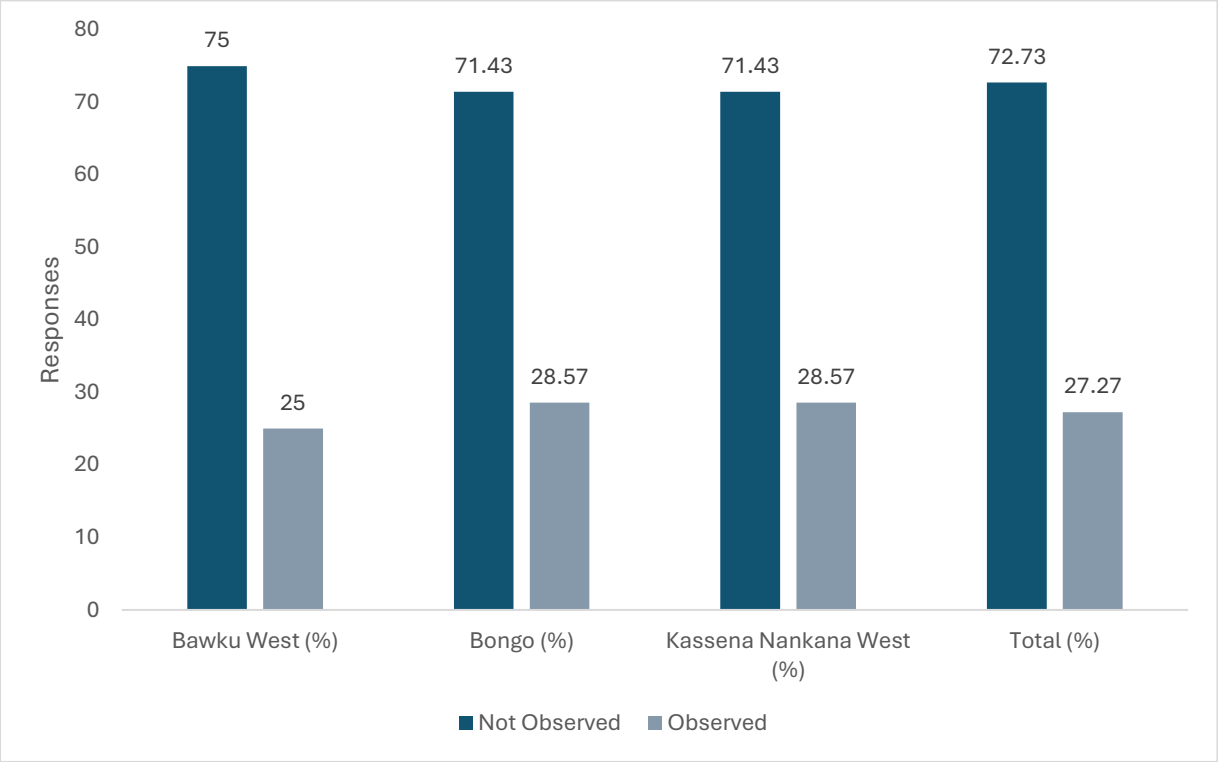


Figure 29: Awareness of Discriminatory Practices Against Girls
Source: Associates for Change, 2025

5.8.7 Safety of Girls within the School Environment

Creating a safe and supportive school environment is a fundamental factor influencing girls' access to education, their active participation in learning, and their long-term retention in school. In fragile and conflict-prone contexts, perceptions of safety are especially important, as insecurity both within and around schools can quickly undermine attendance and discourage families from allowing girls to continue their education (Figure 30). Assessing school safety therefore not only helps to identify immediate risks but also highlights critical protection gaps and the effectiveness of existing measures aimed at safeguarding girls and promoting inclusive learning spaces. Findings from the study indicate serious concerns regarding school safety for girls. The household survey revealed that about 62% feel girls face challenges as compared to 38% for boys.

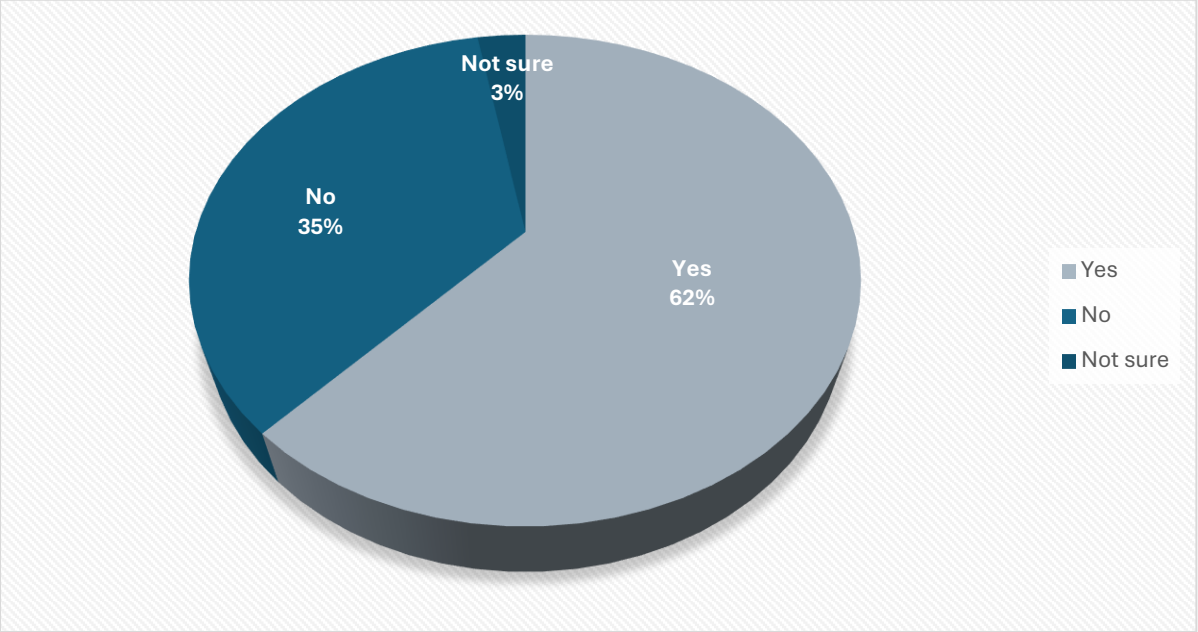


Figure 30 Girls facing educational challenges relative to boys

In the case of the result from interviews with headteachers as illustrated in Figure 31, the majority of headteachers (72.73 percent) reported that their school environments are unsafe for girls, while only 27.27 percent considered their schools to be safe. This widespread perception of insecurity points to persistent risks such as harassment, violence, and inadequate protective infrastructure and mechanisms. Such conditions have far-reaching implications, as fear and insecurity can lead to irregular attendance, early dropout, and weaker learning outcomes among girls. The findings underscore the urgent need for targeted interventions, including the enforcement of child protection and anti-harassment policies, capacity building for teachers and school leaders, improvements in school infrastructure, and strengthened monitoring and reporting systems. Addressing these safety concerns is essential to ensuring that schools function as secure, nurturing spaces where girls can learn, thrive, and reach their full potential.

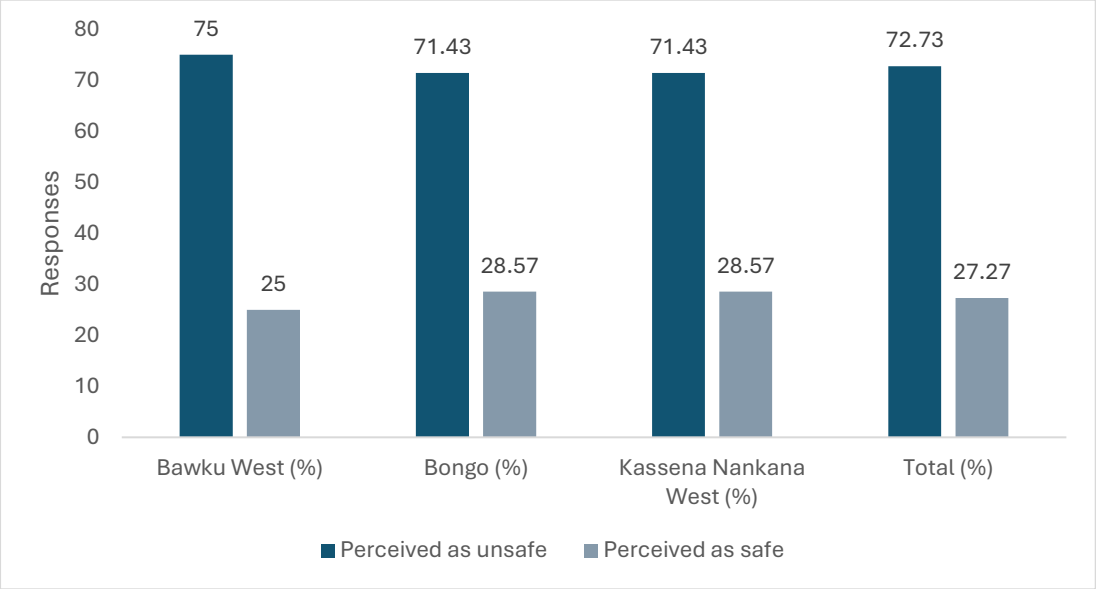


Figure 31: Safety of Girls within the School Environment
Source: Associates for Change, 2025

5.8.8 Female Staff Involvement in Identifying and Following Up on Girls' Absenteeism

The involvement of female staff in identifying and following up on girls' absenteeism plays a critical role in promoting regular attendance, retention, and the overall well-being of girls in school. In the Upper East Region, where socio-cultural norms, household responsibilities, insecurity, and safety concerns often shape girls' schooling experiences, female staff are uniquely positioned to provide trusted support, mentorship, and early intervention. Their engagement can help schools better understand the underlying causes of absenteeism and offer timely, gender-responsive guidance to girls and their families.

Findings from the study indicate a moderate level of female staff engagement in this area. As shown in Figure 32, 55 percent of headteachers reported that female staff actively track and follow up on girls' absenteeism. While this reflects some degree of responsiveness to girls' needs, it also reveals that follow-up mechanisms are not yet systematic or consistently applied across schools. In many cases, actions appear to depend on individual initiative rather than on clearly defined, institutionalized procedures. Strengthening formal structures for monitoring absenteeism, clarifying roles for female staff, and integrating these practices into school-level management systems would enhance early identification of risks and contribute to improved attendance and retention outcomes for girls.

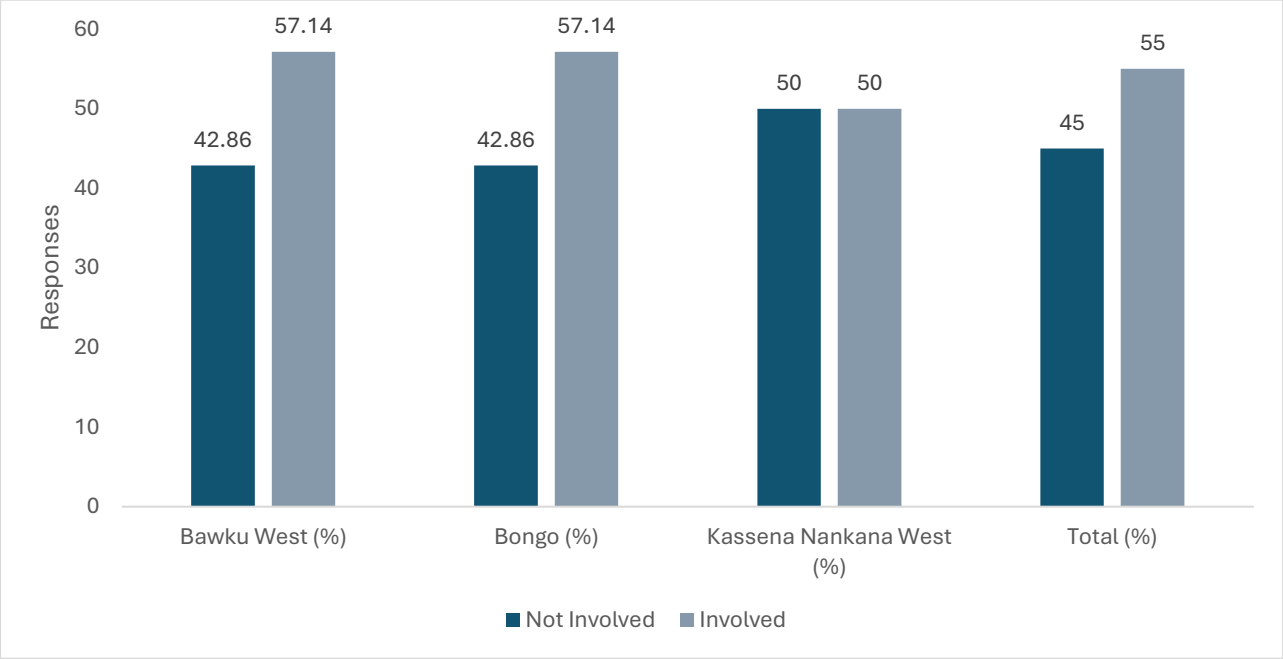


Figure 32: Female Staff Involvement in Identifying and Following Up on Girls' Absenteeism

Source: Associates for Change, 2025

5.8.9 Teacher Training on Gender Inclusion

EMIS data reveal substantial variation across districts and years in NGO supported teacher training on gender equality and social inclusion issues, both in terms of geographic coverage and intensity. In the 2022/23 academic year, NGO supported training was heavily concentrated in the Bawku West District, where 132 teachers were trained, compared to fourteen teachers in the Bongo District and twenty-six teachers in the Kassena Nankana West. This pattern indicates a strong clustering of NGO interventions in Bawku West during that period. By contrast, in the 2024/25 academic year, NGO supported training activities shifted entirely to the district of Kassena Nankana West, where fifty-five teachers were trained, while no NGO supported training was recorded in either Bawku West or Bongo. This temporal shift suggests reallocation of NGO focus rather than an expansion of coverage across districts, highlighting the episodic and project dependent nature of such interventions.

The data further reveal marked gender imbalances in participation, particularly in earlier training cycles. In Bawku West during 2022/23, most trained teachers were female, with 114 females compared to only eighteen males, while Bongo District's training was male dominated, with twelve males and two females trained. Kassena Nankana West showed more balanced participation in 2022/23, with a slight female majority (Table 15).

In 2024/25, NGO supported training in Kassena Nankana West achieved full gender parity, with 55 male and 55 female teachers trained, reflecting a more deliberate effort towards promoting gender equity in training. Thus, the findings imply that while NGO interventions

play an important role in strengthening gender and inclusion capacity among teachers, they remain uneven, fragmented, and heavily dependent on external projects, underscoring the need for stronger integration with GESI systems and more consistent, equitable incorporation of gender and inclusion training into routine teacher professional development, particularly in fragile and conflict affected contexts.

Table 15 Teacher Training on Gender Inclusion

Indicator	Bawku West District	Bongo District	Kassena Nankana West District
Teachers Trained by NGOs (22/23 Male)	18	12	12
Teachers Trained by NGOs (22/23 Female)	114	2	14
Teachers Trained by NGOs (22/23 Total)	132	14	26
Teachers Trained by NGOs (24/25 Male)	0	0	55
Teachers Trained by NGOs (24/25 Female)	0	0	55
Teachers Trained by NGOs (24/25 Total)	0	0	55

Source: Associates for Change, 2025

5.8.10 Community/Civil Society Organisation Gender Supports

Findings from key informant interviews and focus group discussions with CAMA beneficiaries indicate that community and CSO support for girls' education through the CAMA programme varies considerably across districts, particularly in terms of local presence, scale, and consistency of mentorship activities. In some communities, especially in parts of Bongo District, CAMA activities were reported to be weak or absent at the community level, with engagement largely confined to district-based events. One CAMA member captured this gap succinctly, stating, *"There was nothing like that here in this district,"* highlighting the limited visibility and reach of mentorship support where girls continue to face significant educational barriers.

In contrast, Kassena Nankana West and parts of Bawku West demonstrated more active, though still uneven, engagement. In Kassena Nankana West, CAMA members reported mentoring about 25 girls as formal mentees, while also providing broader informal support to over 100 learners, particularly at the senior high school level. Mentorship activities were often rotational, and classroom based, enabling engagement with 200 to 300 students per term, including both boys and girls. As one respondent explained:

'25 girls selected as mentees and apart from the mentees I have over 100 learners that I take care of because we are in the SHS and we have 4 girls in the SHS so we have shared the class amongst ourselves and in the school I have over 100 learners I take care of.," ***(CAMA Members KN West)***

illustrating both commitment and scale.

In Bawku West, CAMA members reported mentoring between 15 and 25 girls, with some extending support through churches and early childhood groups. However, across districts,

respondents consistently cited constraints such as lack of formal posting, weak coordination, and the absence of community information centres, which limit outreach and dilute the depth of direct mentorship for girls. While CAMA alumni demonstrate strong personal commitment, the effectiveness of community and CSO gender supports remains constrained by limited institutional backing and uneven community level infrastructure.

5.8.11 Presence of Anti-Sexual Harassment Policy

The presence of a clear anti-sexual harassment policy is a critical safeguard for protecting learners, particularly girls, from abuse, exploitation, and intimidation within school environments. Such policies provide structured guidance on prevention, reporting, and response mechanisms, while also signalling institutional commitment to dignity, safety, and accountability. In fragile and conflict-prone settings, where risks to girls are often heightened, these policies are especially important for fostering a safe and respectful learning climate that supports regular attendance, sustained participation, and equitable educational outcomes for both girls and boys.

Findings from the study show that just over half of the schools assessed (56.52 percent) reported having an anti-sexual harassment policy in place (Figure 33). However, a substantial proportion of schools, particularly in Kassena Nankana West, lack any formal policy framework. This absence of clear, documented protection mechanisms exposes learners, especially girls, to increased vulnerability and can undermine their sense of safety and trust in the school environment. The implications include reduced attendance, limited classroom participation, and higher risks of dropout. These findings underscore the urgent need to expand policy coverage, strengthen implementation, and improve awareness among school staff, learners, and communities to ensure that all schools provide safe, supportive, and gender-equitable learning spaces.

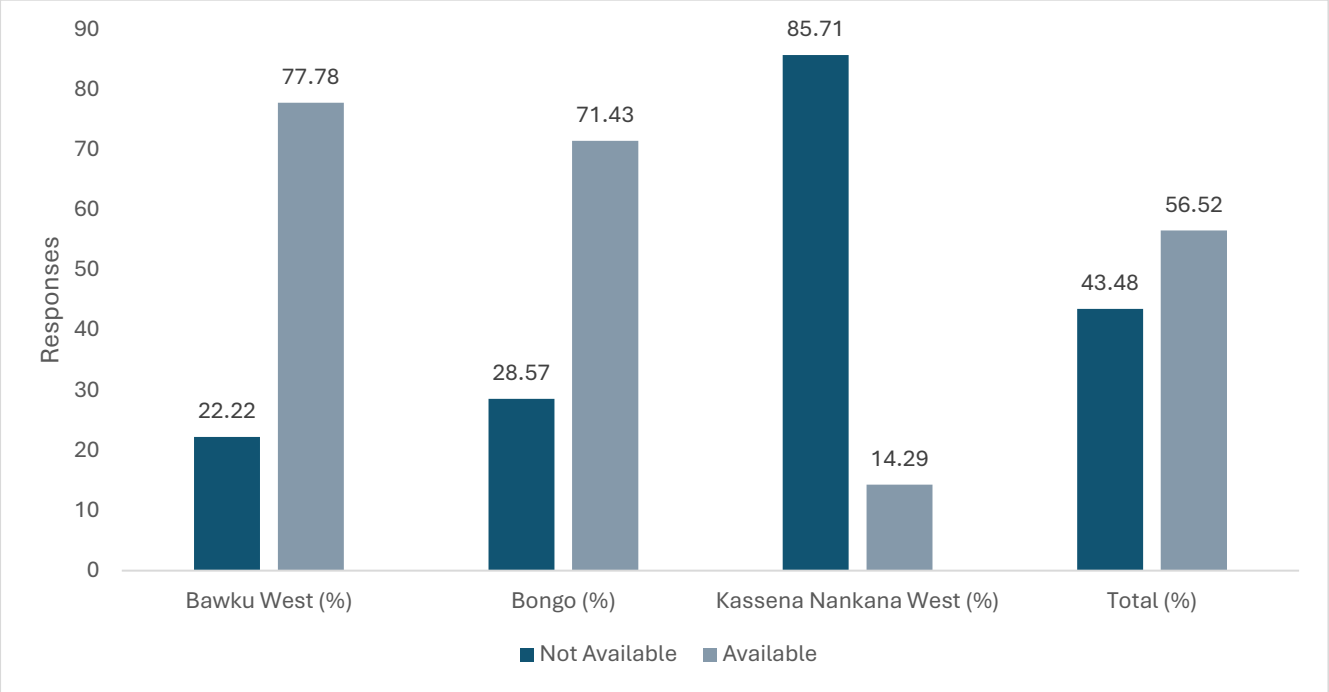


Figure 33 Availability of Anti-Sexual Harassment Policy

Source: Associates for Change, 2025

5.8.12 Teacher Training on Gender Inclusion

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promoting gender equity in training. Thus, the findings imply that while NGO interventions play an important role in strengthening gender and inclusion capacity among teachers, they remain uneven, fragmented, and heavily dependent on external projects, underscoring the need for stronger integration with GESI systems and more consistent, equitable incorporation of gender and inclusion training into routine teacher professional development, particularly in fragile and conflict affected contexts.

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Source: Associates for Change, 2025

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5.9 Support for Learners with Special Needs

Providing adequate support for learners with special needs is central to achieving inclusive education, as it ensures that all children, regardless of physical, sensory, or learning challenges, can participate meaningfully in schooling and benefit from instruction. In the Upper East Region, targeted interventions and the presence of trained or designated staff are particularly important for identifying learning difficulties early, adapting teaching approaches, and preventing exclusion from the education system.

Findings from the study show that just over half of the schools assessed, representing 54.55%, reported having some form of support in place for learners with special needs (Figure 34). While this suggests a moderate level of responsiveness overall, the distribution of support is uneven across districts. Bongo District demonstrates comparatively stronger provision, indicating that supportive practices for learners with special needs are more established there.

In contrast, significant gaps persist in the districts of Bawku West and Kassena Nankana West, where many schools lack adequate structures, trained personnel, or resources to address the needs of these learners. These gaps present a major barrier to access, retention, and academic progress for children with special needs and underscore the need for strengthened district-level capacity, inclusive education training, and systematic support mechanisms to ensure equitable learning opportunities across all districts.

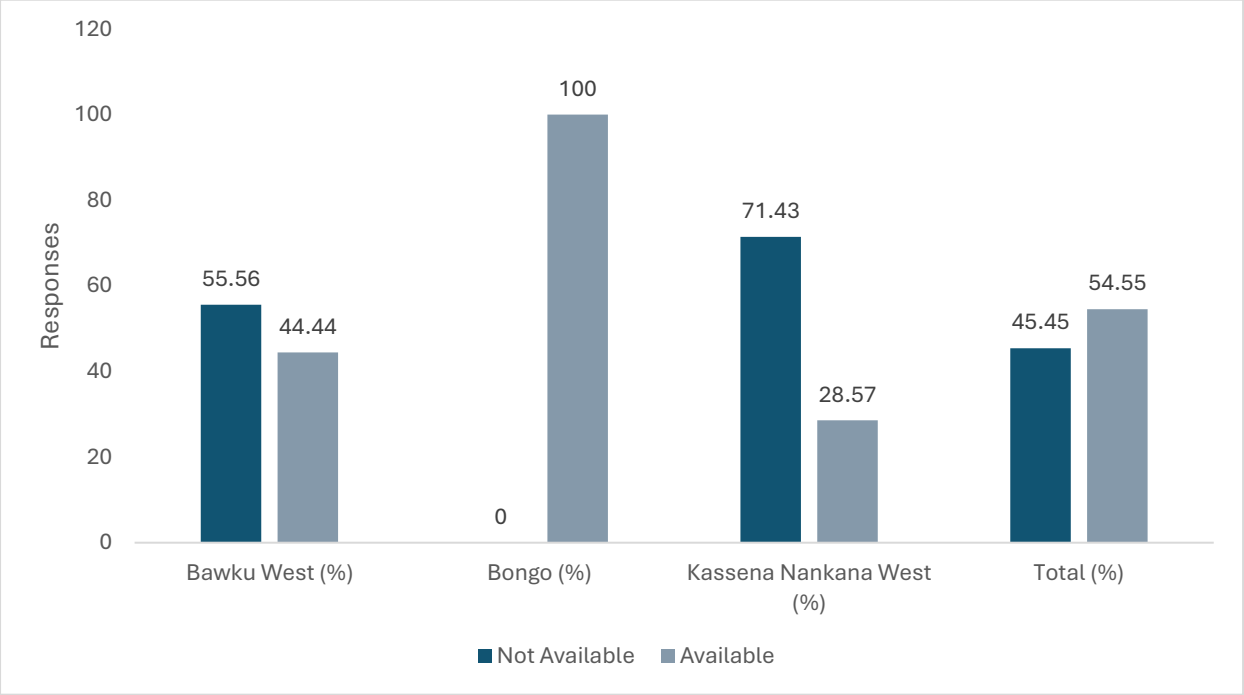

Figure 34 Support for Learners with Special Needs

Source: Associates for Change, 2025

5.9.1 Staff Responsible for Monitoring Students with Special Needs

The presence of designated staff responsible for monitoring the well-being of learners with special needs is a core requirement for inclusive education, as it ensures the early identification of challenges, continuous support, and the appropriate adaptation of teaching and learning processes. Such staff play an important role in tracking learners' academic progress, identifying barriers to participation, and coordinating relevant support within the school and with external services. In contexts affected by fragility and limited resources, structured monitoring becomes even more important, as learners with disabilities or learning difficulties, particularly vulnerable girls are at heightened risk of exclusion and neglect.

Findings from the study indicate that only 39.13 percent of the schools reported having staff members specifically responsible for monitoring students with special needs (Figure 35). This low level of coverage points to significant gaps in inclusive education practice across the study districts. The situation is particularly concerning in Kassena Nankana West, where no schools reported having any formal structures or designated staff for monitoring learners with special needs. The absence of such mechanisms limits the ability of schools to provide targeted support, adapt instruction, or track learning progress, thereby increasing the likelihood that these learners will fall behind academically, disengage from schooling, or be excluded altogether. The findings highlight an urgent need to strengthen institutional capacity for special

needs education through the appointment and training of dedicated staff, improved referral systems, and stronger integration of inclusive education within school management practices.

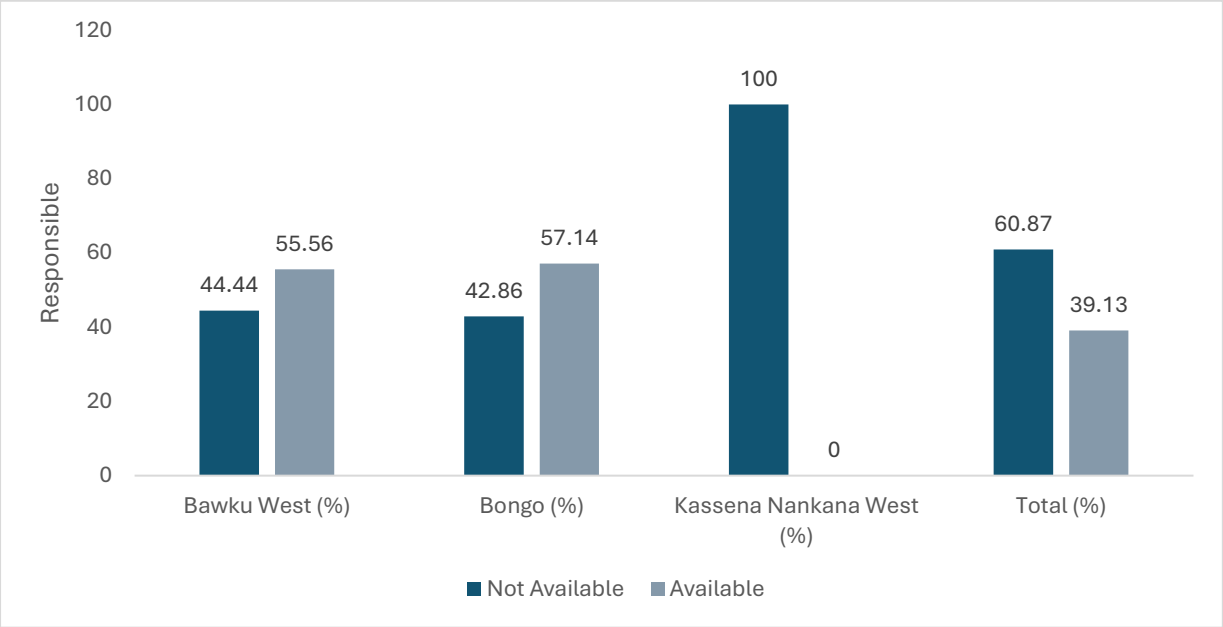

Figure 35: Staff Responsible for Monitoring Students with Special Needs
Source: Associates for Change, 2025

5.10 Mapping the EIE situational outcomes

A systems analysis of EiE Situational Outcomes, when mapped, discloses a complex inter-relationship in terms of systems components and feedback loops. This mapping allows identification of structural, social, and environmental factors influencing the quality, access, and equity of education in crises. Using the systems map (Figure 36) we present how the findings of this study are interconnected in terms of causal relationships.

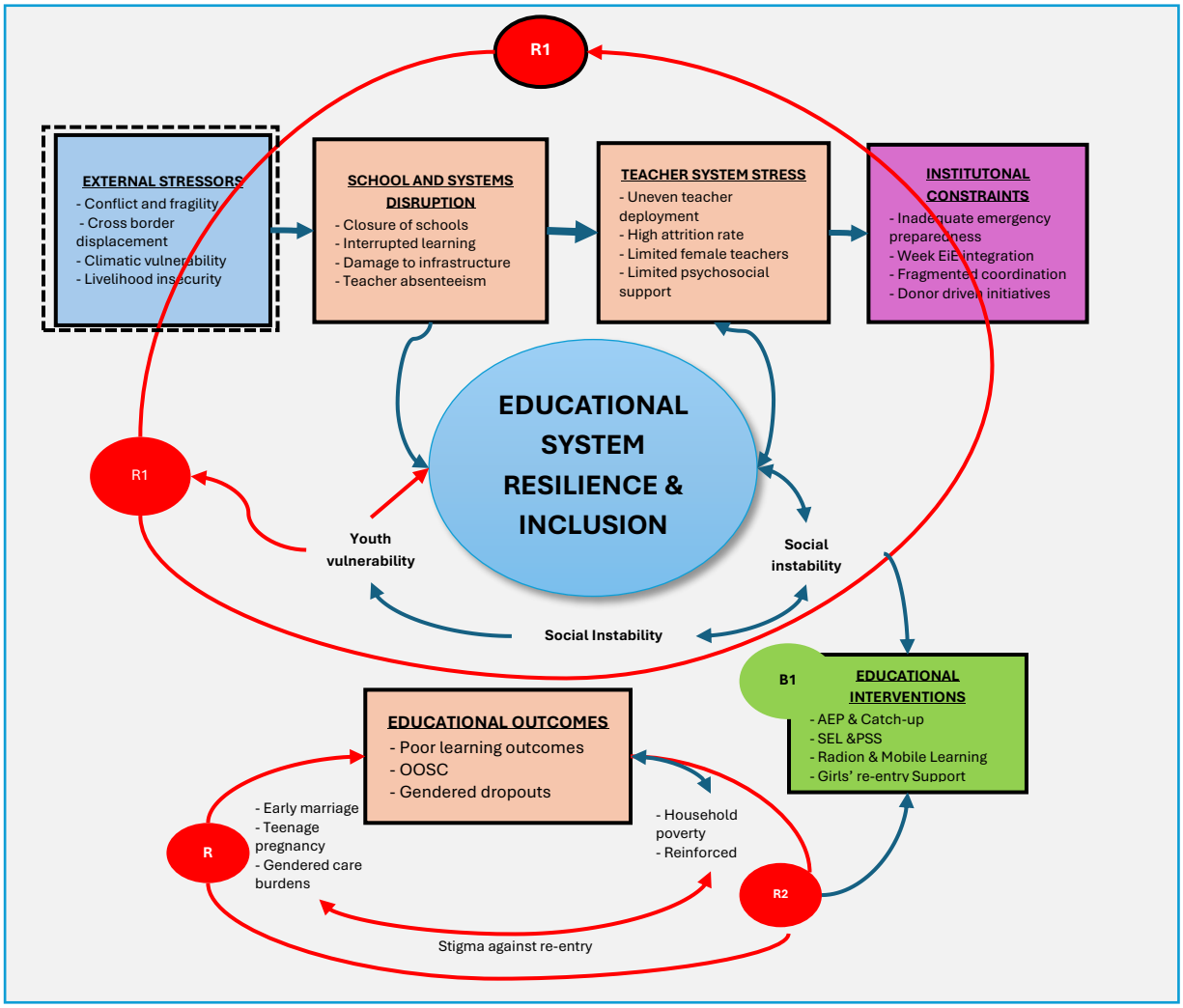

Figure 36: EiE Situational Analysis Systems Map

LEGEND

R2 Reinforcing Loop B1 Exogenous Factors ------- Exogenous Factors

The systems map illustrates the interaction between various factors that define education outcomes within the study areas in the Upper East region of Ghana. R1 represent and negative factors such as youth vulnerability, social instability and early marriage that reinforces the negative effects and worsen the challenges associated with the education system. The B1 represent the positive factors such as educational interventions which stabilise and improve the educational system. There are factors that border on insecurity and climate change, capacity,

and norms. At the core of the diagram, the education system resilience and inclusion are central and aligns with the Ghana Education Sector Policy goal of incorporating the strategic plans relating to children in deprived and vulnerable areas.

In the Upper East Region, sustained pressure on the education system is driven by spill-over insecurity from the Sahel; proximity to the border with Burkina Faso; periodic cross-border displacements; and extreme livelihood insecurities. This situation is further exacerbated by recurrent flooding and drought that cause disruptions to schooling, damage fragile school infrastructure, and increase learner absenteeism. This, heightened by the fear factor and economic stress at the household level, further reduces regular attendance to school, especially during the peak of farming seasons when most parents prefer their children to help on the farms.

Within the education system, closures of schools, disrupted school calendars, and damage to the school infrastructure are direct factors that affect teaching and learning and the increasing number of OOSC. This is of particular concern in the districts of… as the closures compound issues of absenteeism and attrition of teachers in hard-to-reach border districts were low deployment and retention of teachers already present difficulties. In addition to the psychosocial impact of the conflict on teachers and learners as explained in the report, the presence of female teachers in rural communities continue to be very low affecting girls' enrolment and participation in schools.

These vulnerabilities are further reinforced by institutional constraints: limited integration of EiE into district-level planning; fragmented coordination between the GES, NADMO, Metropolitan/Municipal/District Assemblies, and humanitarian actors; and weak early warning and EMIS functionality reduce preparedness and timely response to shocks. Contributing further, the short-term, donor-driven nature of interventions limits the system's ability to scale and sustain effective solutions, which is contrary to the priorities in ESP and the EiE Strategy on systems strengthening and institutionalization.

It is also worth highlighting the fact that, at the deep structural level, prevailing negative norms and societal patriarchal structure governing girls, gender, gender inequality, teenage pregnancy, early marriages, gendered burdens of caring, stigmatization of re-entering the education system, etc., continue to thrive in the Upper East Region. It is worth pointing out that these negative norms constitute a major force, driving girls to drop out of the education system, thus entrenching household poverty, as well as intergenerational exclusion.

The systems map indicates a reinforcing fragility loop whereby disruptions in education make youth more vulnerable and increase social instability, which perpetuates risks of insecurity. A balancing loop then shows how EiE aligned interventions, such as accelerated and complementary basic education, catch-up programmes, psychosocial support, radio and mobile learning, and targeted girls' re-entry initiatives, decrease learning loss and OOSC by enhancing system resilience and furthering ESP objectives in the Upper East Region.

6.0 DISCUSSION

6.1 Accelerated Education, Psychosocial Support and Gender Equity

Using the iceberg model as a systems thinking tool, the discussion seeks to provide insight into the underlying factors leading to an event or situation, that is the incidence of OOSC, which is often evident to all (Kanyagui et al., 2025). The study findings reveals that while there are visible, surface-level improvements in areas such as AEPs, psychosocial support, and gender inclusion in the Upper East Region, these gains are uneven and fragile, masking deeper systemic challenges. At the level of observable events, programme implementation varies widely across districts.

The Bongo District records relatively stronger coverage of AEPs with 57.1 percent of schools reporting availability, compared to much lower coverage in Bawku West and Kassena Nankana West. Linkages to catch-up and bridging programmes remain extremely limited, with fewer than one in ten schools reporting any provision. Teaching and learning materials are inconsistently available, remedial classes are offered in only a minority of schools, and alternative learning modalities such as radio or mobile learning are largely absent. Menstrual hygiene management facilities are inadequate in most schools, despite the presence of gender-sensitive teaching materials. Psychosocial support training has reached just over half of headteachers, and while anti sexual harassment policies exist in some schools, their application remains inconsistent. Community based mentorship initiatives, including those under the CAMA programme, are present but fragmented, with limited engagement of female teachers in addressing girls' absenteeism.

At a deeper level, recurring patterns point to structural disparities rather than isolated implementation gaps. Districts experiencing higher fragility, particularly Bawku West and Kassena Nankana West, consistently lag Bongo in access to accelerated learning options, psychosocial support, and gender equity interventions. NGO supported initiatives show strong variation over time and space, with concentrated bursts of activity rather than sustained coverage. Gender equity programmes are often recognised in principle but weakly embedded in school routines, while mentorship and community engagement depend heavily on individual initiative rather than institutionalised systems. These patterns suggest that successes remain episodic and project driven, rather than part of a coherent and integrated EiE response.

At the deepest layer of the iceberg, systemic structures explain the persistence of these gaps. Chronic resource constraints, including shortages of teaching and learning materials, inadequate WASH infrastructure, and limited availability of trained personnel, undermine effective implementation. Teachers' ability to apply psychosocial and gender-sensitive approaches is shaped by socio cultural and religious contexts, which are not always adequately accounted for in training and programme design. Coordination between the GES, NGOs, and community actors remains weak, leading to fragmented delivery, duplication, and limited follow-up. While relevant policies and guidelines exist, enforcement and monitoring are often insufficient, allowing gaps between policy intent and practice to persist. Together, these

structural conditions reproduce inequities, restrict learning opportunities for girls and vulnerable learners, and limit the transformative potential of accelerated education, psychosocial support, and gender equity interventions in FCV contexts.

6.2 Impacts of Conflict and Insecurity on Education, Livelihoods, and Vulnerable Groups

There are multifaceted effects of conflict and insecurity on education, livelihoods, and social wellbeing within the study context. The study highlights how prolonged instability disrupts teaching and learning, deepens economic hardship, and exacerbates the vulnerabilities of already at-risk populations.

6.2.1 Teaching and Learning

The Bawku conflict has had a severe and far-reaching impact on teaching and learning, fundamentally undermining the functioning of schools and the delivery of the curriculum. Recurrent violence has resulted in frequent school closures, abandonment of facilities, and the destruction or looting of infrastructure and learning materials. Even when schools remain officially open, fear, curfews, and general insecurity create an environment that is deeply unconducive to learning. Teachers and learners often attend school irregularly, lessons are repeatedly interrupted, and curriculum coverage is significantly delayed. As one KULDEP programme respondent explained, what *they're supposed to cover within the term may not be possible… some days they may not even teach, even though they are in the school, they don't have peace of mind to teach."* ***(KII NGO KULDEP BW)***. This persistent uncertainty erodes instructional time, weakens academic progression, and leaves learners with substantial learning gaps.

A central driver of this collapse is the forced displacement and migration of teachers and students. Many teachers, particularly those posted from outside the area or with families in conflict hotspots, leave to protect their lives, resulting in acute staffing shortages. Schools are compelled to combine classes, leave some classrooms unattended, or rely on headteachers to teach multiple grades simultaneously. A headteacher from Boya community captured the scale of the challenge: *A school with an enrolment of 399 children, we have only five teachers… some of the classes are just empty." Similarly, parents in Binaba noted that "most teachers hailing from Binduri, Garu, and Bawku leave anytime there is conflict… and because of this, it is affecting teaching and learning (**Head Teacher, BW)***. These conditions have transformed schools from structured learning spaces into overcrowded, poorly supervised environments, accelerating absenteeism, disengagement, and dropout. Overall, the conflict has not merely disrupted education but has systematically dismantled the human, material, and psychological foundations required for effective teaching and learning, making recovery contingent on long-term security, teacher retention strategies, and trauma-informed system rebuilding.

6.2.2 Livelihood

Agriculture and livestock production, the backbone of the local economy, have been particularly affected. Farmers face attacks in their fields, abandoned farms, and destroyed harvests, leading to sharp declines in food production and rising food insecurity. Livestock rearing and cattle trade, once a major source of income, have been crippled by targeted attacks on herders and the inability to move herds safely. These shocks directly affect household welfare and children's schooling, as parents struggle to meet basic needs. A headteacher from Hairiya Islamic School and a CAMA girls explained the knock-on effects on families and learners: *economically, the conflict has affected parents… the children come to school but do not stay. They come hungry and run away."* ***(KII Headteacher_KNW)***. *Diorba is a community that produces rice and they sell rice to most of the communities and during the conflict they could not farm that much, they couldn't go to farm and some of the farm products were destroyed so getting rice to buy that time was difficult making prices of rice to go high.* ***(NGO_CAMA_KN West)***

Overall, the conflict has created a destructive economic downward spiral, trapping households in vulnerability and undermining long-term development. Without sustained peace and conflict-sensitive economic recovery interventions that restore markets, livelihoods, and trust, the region's economic potential will remain suppressed, with lasting consequences for education, social stability, and human development.

6.2.3 Vulnerable Groups

The Bawku conflict has had a profoundly disproportionate and destructive impact on already vulnerable groups, intensifying pre-existing inequalities and exposing them to layered forms of harm. Women and girls face heightened risks of sexual violence, including rape, assault, and intimidation, often used as tools of fear and humiliation during periods of unrest. These abuses are widely underreported due to stigma, fear of reprisals, and the breakdown of justice and protection systems. At the same time, women's economic roles have been severely undermined. As key actors in petty trading and market activities, the repeated closure of Bawku's central market has destroyed their livelihoods, while unpaid care responsibilities have expanded as families cope with injury, displacement, and trauma. Girls' education has been particularly affected, as insecurity, lack of menstrual hygiene facilities, and fear of abduction reduce attendance and increase dropout. Children more broadly experience the loss of schooling, safety, and stability, with prolonged closures, teacher shortages, and trauma creating conditions for a "lost generation" marked by poor learning outcomes and limited future opportunities. Food insecurity and disrupted health services further compound these challenges, with children often the first to suffer from malnutrition and preventable illness.

Displaced persons, children living away from their parents, and persons with disabilities face even more acute vulnerabilities. Many internally displaced persons lose homes, assets, documentation, and social networks overnight, becoming dependent on host families who themselves have limited resources. Living outside formal camps makes displaced children and families less visible to humanitarian actors and more vulnerable to neglect. An assistant

headteacher from Kumbugsino vividly described the challenges faced by displaced learners living with relatives. '*Their parents are not here, how to even get learning materials becomes a problem… because they are not their direct children, they sometimes ignore them. They also have no access to phones to call their parents back home and tell them their needs*. ***(KII_Assist Headteacher KNW).*** In such environments, psychosocial distress is widespread, and the absence of consistent support discourages school participation. Headteachers noted that vulnerable learners often lose motivation when schools lack teachers and basic materials. As one headteacher from Boya explained, *they want to come and meet an environment that is ready to support them. When that is not available, they are discouraged and unable to participate well.* ***(KII Headteacher_BW)***

Adolescent boys, particularly those aged sixteen and above, face a different but equally damaging pathway, as economic desperation and the absence of functioning schools push them toward migration and illegal mining. As another respondent from Boya observed,

'when they come and the environment is not educative… they leave for Kumasi to involve themselves in galamsey'. ***(KII Headteacher* BW).**

'Parents push their boys to go to Kumasi for money to work at galamsey' ***(FGD Community Leaders BW).***

'…. When the students get to upper primary going to JHS, then they usually stop the school and travel to Kumasi or Galamsey' ***(Community Leaders BW).***

In sum, the Bawku conflict functions as a powerful force multiplier of vulnerability. It systematically erodes the fragile protections available to women, children, displaced persons, and persons with disabilities, exposing them to physical danger, economic deprivation, and long-term psychological harm. Addressing their needs is not only a humanitarian obligation but a prerequisite for recovery and sustainable peace. Any effective response must therefore prioritize targeted protection, inclusive education, livelihood support, and psychosocial services for these groups, without which the cycle of vulnerability and exclusion will persist.

6.3 Challenges in Delivering Interventions in FCV Contexts

Insecurity - Implementing interventions in FCV areas of the Upper East Region, particularly in and around Bawku, is constrained by deep-seated, interlinked challenges that go beyond routine development or humanitarian programming. Insecurity remains the most immediate and pervasive constraint. Threats such as targeted attacks, stray gunfire, porous borders, and the risk of ambush severely limit the mobility of government officials, humanitarian actors, and civil society organisations. Curfews and roadblocks compress operational timeframes and restrict access to remote and high-need communities, often forcing implementers to concentrate activities in relatively safer towns while the most vulnerable populations in conflict epicentres

remain underserved. As one NGO practitioner explained, insecurity has eroded trust and predictability to the extent that, *"you don't know who you are meeting… and even moving with a vehicle can make you a target,"* ***(KII_NGO BW)*** adding that curfews mean programmes must be abandoned midstream or avoided entirely. The volatility of the conflict further undermines planning, as a single violent incident can trigger sudden escalation, suspension of activities, and emergency evacuation of staff, making continuity and long-term engagement extremely difficult.

Social and structural constraints **-** Beyond physical insecurity, social and structural constraints significantly complicate intervention delivery. In highly polarized settings like Bawku, aid and development initiatives are often interpreted through ethnic and political lenses. Decisions about beneficiary selection, staff recruitment, or project location can easily be perceived as favouring one group over another, unintentionally reinforcing divisions and undermining trust. Poverty and weak livelihoods further intensify vulnerability, particularly for girls and young people. A CAMA respondent recounted how economic hardship and the absence of parental support led to teenage pregnancy and school dropout, noting that "*parents couldn't provide for the children… and support only came from men involved in galamsey*,**"** ***(NGO_CAMA KN West)***. This situation exposes many vulnerable girls to exploitation.

Infrastructural and Human Resource Constraints **-** Education-focused interventions also face severe infrastructural and human resource constraints, including poor road networks, lack of accommodation, and dilapidated school buildings, which discourage teacher postings and retention. As one community leader observed, '*there are not enough teachers to teach the children Broken classrooms, when the children are in class, they feel scared because of the building. Poor infrastructure'* ***(Community Leaders Bongo).*** Buttressing this same point, a program manager working with a local NGO, Kuldep noted that, *'you have many schools that are understaffed. And when school is understaffed, you can see the effects on the children. Like teachers ask for transfer to leave. It will have an effect because you won't get new teachers posted there because If people who are there are living, how then would people who are not yet there be willing to go there? Yes. And so that kind of, like I said, performance is going to be affected.* ***(NGO Kuldep, BW)***

Gender, School Safety, and Harmful Social Norms **-** The intersection between gender, child protection, and harmful social norms constitutes a critical, yet often underestimated, determinant of educational access, participation, and retention in the study districts of Bawku West, Kassena Nankana West, and Bongo. The evaluation data reveals a distinct continuum of vulnerability: social norms that devalue education and reinforce rigid gender roles within the household do not remain at the gate of the school; they permeate the classroom and the schoolyard, manifesting as bullying, harassment, peer violence, and eventual dropout.

While schools are legally mandated to function as protective spaces, evidence from community voices indicates a significant disjuncture between adult perceptions of school safety and

learners lived experiences. This analysis integrates findings on school-based violence and community-based harmful norms to argue that improving safety and retention requires addressing the root cultural beliefs that shape how children particularly girls are valued, treated, and disciplined both at home and in educational settings.

The Cycle of Retaliation and Underreporting - A major safety concern identified in the data is the absence of effective, trusted reporting mechanisms within schools. Learners perceive that reporting bullying to teachers is either futile or invites further victimization. Consequently, a culture of self-help and retaliation has taken root. This is particularly pronounced among girls, who described being forced to adopt aggressive postures to deter bullies. A female pupil at Anerigu Primary School in Kassena Nankana West articulated this survival strategy starkly, revealing how the victim is often socialized into becoming a perpetrator to secure safety:

"If I am stronger than the person, I will beat the person." (Anerigu Primary School, KN West - Female Pupil).

This quote demonstrates that the school environment, instead of teaching conflict resolution, inadvertently reinforces a norm of physical dominance. For a female pupil to state this openly suggests that the formal protective structures (teachers, prefects, guidance counselors) are perceived as either absent or ineffective. The gap between adult oversight and peer reality is immense. A community leader in Zangogo (Bongo District) acknowledged the existence of this dynamic bullying, though notably framed it as *"limited"* a perception gap that likely contributes to the under-prioritization of anti-bullying measures in school improvement plans. The data confirms that improving school safety demands deliberate efforts to address gendered power relations and strengthen supervision, as the current environment normalizes violence as a legitimate conflict resolution tool

Environmental Insecurity as a Gender Issue - Beyond peer-to-peer violence, learners identified environmental safety deficits as a compounding factor. The presence of roaming animals and exposure to harsh weather within unfenced school compounds creates a specific burden for girls. These environmental factors increase feelings of exposure and physical insecurity, which, when layered with the threat of peer harassment, creates an environment where girls do not feel fully respected or protected, thereby weakening their ability to learn without fear.

The Household as a Site of Educational Devaluation - The violence and insecurity experienced in school are often a reflection or extension of the emotional and aspirational neglect experienced in the home. The data strongly indicates that harmful norms begin at the household level long before a child sets foot in a classroom. Specifically, parental discourse and gendered expectations actively undermine children's confidence and commitment to education.

Verbal Diminishment and Parental Authority Erosion - A pervasive and insidious norm identified across Bawku West and Kassena Nankana West is the use of discouraging language by parents. This is not simply a lack of encouragement; it is an active process of delegitimizing the child's academic identity and capability. A young woman from Boya in Bawku West provided a stark illustration of this dynamic, describing how parental speech acts as a mechanism of educational withdrawal: *"Some of the parents do not know how to tell the child to go to school... they always say, 'oh, you do not even know anything, so you can just stop school.' "* ***(FGD, CAMA, BW)***. This narrative reveals a deep-seated norm where the child's struggle in school is met not with support but with confirmation of low expectations. This creates a self-fulfilling prophecy of failure and disengagement. Compounding this is the erosion of the school-home compact. Respondents noted that parents increasingly challenge teachers' authority, intervening aggressively when children complain about discipline. This triangulation Parent vs. Teacher vs. Child destroys the collaborative environment necessary for a protective school culture. The child learns that education is not a joint venture between family and school, but a site of conflict where the parent is ready to withdraw the child at any moment.

Persistent Gendered Beliefs: "She Will Still Marry" - The data confirms that harmful gender norms remain a powerful barrier, specifically defining girls' roles around domestic work, marriage, and caregiving rather than academic achievement. While there are emerging counter-narratives regarding school re-entry after pregnancy, the baseline belief that formal education is irrelevant to a girl's ultimate destiny persists in traditional homes. A CAMA member from Tinginum in Kassena Nankana West linked this belief directly to the community's long-term social structure: *"....there are still some traditional homes who believe that girls' education is not important… because after school they will still have to marry. "* (CAMA, KN West). This excerpt explains the supply-side paradox of girls' education interventions. Even when bursaries (like CAMA/FAWE support) remove financial barriers, the normative barrier remains. If a family believes the return on investment for a girl's education is zero (or even negative, as it might delay marriage duties), they will not support her retention. This finding underscores that interventions focused solely on *access* without addressing *normative value* will hit a hard ceiling of impact. The existence of some counter-narratives in the data regarding re-entry after pregnancy suggests these norms are not immutable, but sustained community dialogue and awareness are required to dislodge them.

Competing Social Economies Galamsey, Masculinity, and the "Quick Money" Norm - A third major thematic finding is the emergence of Galamsey (illegal small-scale mining) as a dominant competing social norm that directly rivals formal education in value and reward structure. This theme is particularly particular for boys but carries significant implications for girls' safety and household dynamics as well.

The Allure of Immediate Gratification - Across Bongo, Bawku West, and Kassena Nankana districts, respondents described a powerful pull factor away from schooling toward mining sites. The norm is reinforced by visible consumption peers returning from galamsey sites with

smartphones, motorbikes, and cash which creates intense social pressure on other youth. Education is perceived as a slow, uncertain, and unrewarding pathway in comparison. This sentiment was crystallized by a parent from Googo in Bawku West, who articulated the economic calculation from the student's perspective: *"the students think education is not fast in money making, but it is easy to get rich with galamsey.* ***"(FGD Parents BW).*** This situation represents a significant normative conflict. The community is sending two conflicting signals: *"Go to school to secure a future"* versus "*Galamsey provides status now."* For adolescents navigating identity formation, the latter is a far more potent social norm. It redefines masculine success from educated professional to resource-extractive laborer with disposable income. For girls, while they may not be the primary miners, the data shows they face heightened risks of exploitation and injury in the orbit of mining camps, and the absence of boys from school due to mining normalizes male dropout and changes the classroom gender dynamic.

Other Ritualized Risks: Funerals and Night Life - The data also identifies unsafe funeral-related activities and night-time social events as harmful practices that disrupt education. Respondents described late-night gatherings, motorcycle stunts (often linked to galamsey wealth displays), and inadequate supervision during funerals. These events contribute to accidents, injuries, and early pregnancies. These practices persist due to deep cultural entrenchment and the adolescent desire for social visibility and belonging. While recognized as harmful by adults, enforcement of rules is weak, indicating a gap between community rhetoric and community action.

6.4 Interventions Gaps within the study context

Interventions in fragile and conflict-affected areas of the Upper East Region, with Bawku as the epicentre, require a multi-layered, coordinated, and context-responsive approach that goes beyond short-term crisis management. Effective responses must simultaneously address immediate protection needs, restore basic services, and tackle the structural drivers of fragility such as exclusion, weak governance, climate stress, and livelihood insecurity. Key actors include national institutions such as the National Peace Council, Ministry of the Interior, NADMO, and the GES, working through the Upper East Regional Coordinating Council and District Assemblies. These are complemented by UN agencies, international and local NGOs, and community-based organisations with deep local legitimacy, alongside traditional authorities, religious leaders, women's groups, and youth associations. Coordination among these actors remains critical to avoid fragmented interventions and duplication, and to ensure alignment around a shared regional strategy for peacebuilding, education recovery, and social cohesion.

At the school and community levels, interventions remain fragmented in coverage and intensity. Some schools reported benefiting from targeted initiatives, particularly in education and psychosocial support. A headteacher from Tangasia noted that

*"UNICEF came in and took teachers and headteachers through how to manage conflict… and supported us with some materials to manage the situation," (**Headteacher KN_West)***

highlighting the value of short-term capacity building in conflict-sensitive education. In Bongo, complementary basic education initiatives were cited, with one headteacher explaining that

*"Afternoon classes and night classes under the CBE programme support literacy and numeracy performance of children in the community**." (KII Headteacher Bongo)***

Other schools reported material and welfare-oriented support, including GALOP-supported school maintenance, provision of learning materials, sanitary pads for girls, and PTA-led financing and volunteer teaching. As one headteacher in Binaba observed, *"NGOs have brought donor support… PTA supports with funds and volunteer teachers,"* underscoring the importance of community contributions where state support is limited.

However, many respondents across districts reported an absence of visible or sustained interventions in their schools or communities. Headteachers from Zorko Gamborongo (Bongo district) and Tangasia (Kassena-Nankana West) stated plainly that *"there has been no intervention or programmes in this community,"* while others could recall only isolated projects such as GALOP or CBE without ongoing follow-up.

Support for children with disabilities was particularly weak, often limited to referrals to social welfare with little tangible outcome. In several cases, schools relied on improvised, internally driven measures such as providing uniforms to needy learners, supporting displaced children informally, or implementing mother-tongue instruction as a coping strategy. The findings show that while pockets of good practice exist, interventions in FCV areas remain fragmented, short-term, and highly dependent on external actors or individual initiative. A more integrated and sustained approach, centred on inclusive dialogue, climate-resilient livelihoods, education recovery, and institutional strengthening, is required if interventions are to move beyond temporary relief and contribute to durable peace and resilience in the Upper East Region.

6.5 Institutional Arrangements underpinning EiE

There are institutional arrangements that underpin the delivery of Education in Emergencies (EiE) in fragile, conflict, and violence (FCV) contexts. These have been discussed as follows:

6.5.1 Civil Society and Government Structures Supporting EiE

The EiE response architecture in the Upper East Region is anchored in government-led structures that provide policy direction and formal mandates, but whose operational capacity is significantly constrained by protracted conflict and insecurity. GES remains the principal authority responsible for education delivery, including curriculum oversight, teacher

management, supervision, and coordination of emergency education responses at district level, often through District Education Emergency Committees. Teacher attrition, poor logistics, and restricted access to fragile and conflict prone areas put a limitation on GES initiatives. The effort of GES is complemented by NADMO, which acts as the government's first line of defence during emergencies by offering makeshift shelters and basic supplies that can also be used as classrooms. However, due to its non-specialist mandate, NADMO's involvement in ongoing EiE programming is constrained. The Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection also plays a critical protective role by addressing GBV, child labour, and psychosocial vulnerabilities that directly undermine access to education, including through support for case management and psychosocial training in affected districts.

International actors provide essential financial, technical, and material support that fills critical gaps where state capacity is weakest. UNICEF leads EiE coordination within the UN system, supplying EiE kits, supporting teacher training on psychosocial support, advocating for safe schools, and financing local and international implementing partners. UNHCR focuses on refugee protection and education, particularly for children displaced from Burkina Faso into border districts such as Pusiga and Bawku West, supporting host schools with infrastructure and learning materials. Across Northern Ghana, the World Food Programme contributes through school feeding interventions that incentivise attendance and improve learning outcomes, although these programmes are often disrupted during periods of insecurity. International NGOs such as Plan International, Save the Children, and World Vision operationalise EiE through temporary learning spaces, accelerated education programmes, dignity kits for adolescent girls, and child protection and back-to-school campaigns, frequently relying on local partners to maintain access in high-risk areas.

At the frontline of EiE delivery are local civil society organisations and community-based structures, which combine contextual knowledge, trust, and access but operate with limited and unpredictable resources. Local NGOs and CBOs, including NORSAAC, RAINS, CDA, and other hyper-local groups, play a pivotal role in mobilising communities, identifying out-of-school and at-risk children, providing culturally responsive psychosocial support, and sustaining education activities in areas inaccessible to external actors. Faith-based organisations such as the Catholic Education Unit, Anglican Church, Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission, and local mosques and churches often manage schools that function as neutral and trusted spaces during conflict, offering continuity of learning and moral advocacy for child protection. School Management Committees and Parent-Teacher Associations, where functional, secure school facilities and negotiate community support, while traditional authorities and religious leaders use their legitimacy to mediate access, declare days of peace for examinations, and condemn attacks on education. Youth and women's groups further contribute through safety monitoring and peer support for adolescents. As one student noted,

"Advocacies and campaigns against harassment done by some NGOs such as CAMA Those culprits are always punished to deter others from engaging in such acts. The community don't shield such people; they are given up to the law enforcement agencies", **(FGD Student Bongo)** underscoring the protective role of local actors.

Despite this dense ecosystem of actors, the EiE response remains fragmented and uneven. Students and community members consistently called for stronger government and NGO support, particularly in the provision of learning materials, furniture, infrastructure rehabilitation, and digital resources. Appeals for affordable books, uniforms for displaced learners, safe classrooms, and access to computers highlight the gap between institutional frameworks and lived realities. The EiE system in the Upper East Region reflects strong local resilience operating under chronic strain. Government institutions hold the mandate but lack reach, international partners bring resources but face access and contextual limits, and local civil society provides trust and continuity without sustainable funding. Strengthening EiE therefore requires rebalancing the system toward flexible, long-term support for local CSOs and district-level structures, reinforcing inclusive coordination platforms, and grounding education responses in community-owned solutions that can endure insecurity while safeguarding learners and teachers.

6.5.2 Youth volunteering

Youth volunteering plays a vital yet under-recognised role in sustaining education delivery in the Upper East Region, particularly within FCV districts such as Bawku, Pusiga, and Garu. In contexts marked by teacher flight, school closures, and limited state capacity, young people often become the frontline providers of educational continuity. These volunteers, frequently recent senior high school graduates or National Service personnel, support formal schools as teaching assistants, temporary class teachers, or facilitators in AEPs that target over-age and out-of-school learners. Their proximity in age and shared lived experiences enable them to connect effectively with learners, especially adolescents affected by displacement and trauma. Beyond instruction, youth volunteers provide informal mentoring, assist with enrolment and back-to-school campaigns, and serve as trusted intermediaries between schools and communities, reinforcing confidence in education at a time when fear and uncertainty undermine participation. In some settings, multi-ethnic youth teams working together in schools also offer a quiet but powerful model of coexistence, contributing to social cohesion and peacebuilding at community level.

However, the reliance on youth volunteering also exposes deep ethical and sustainability challenges. Volunteers often operate without formal training, adequate supervision, or protection, while being drawn into broader insecurity dynamics within their communities. As one NGO respondent observed, insecurity compels communities to divert scarce resources toward self-protection rather than education, deepening vulnerability and undermining schooling. At the same time, community engagement remains strong, with headteachers noting that, *"community leaders together with the youth are consulted and allowed to give their*

*opinions before programmes are introduced," **(KII Head Teacher KNW)*** reflecting local ownership of education initiatives. Yet tensions persist, including strained teacher–parent relations and the risk of volunteers being caught between authority structures and community expectations. While young people have stepped in to protect their communities' educational future, over-reliance on their unpaid or under-supported labour risks entrenching a two-tier education system in which the most vulnerable learners are taught by peers rather than trained professionals. A more deliberate EiE strategy is therefore required to recognise, support, and safeguard youth volunteers as a temporary but essential complement to formal education systems, rather than a substitute for sustained investment in qualified teachers, safety, and institutional recovery.

6.5.3 Regional and District Assembly Support to Education

Under Ghana's decentralized governance framework, Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Assemblies are legally mandated to serve as the frontline institutions for local development, including the provision and maintenance of basic education infrastructure and oversight. In principle, the Local Governance Act, 2016 (Act 936) and the Education Act, 2008 (Act 778) assign District Assemblies responsibility for constructing and rehabilitating schools, equipping classrooms, supporting water, sanitation and hygiene facilities, mobilizing communities around education, and collaborating with the GES through District Education Oversight Committees. In the Upper East Region, however, especially within districts such as Bawku West and Bawku Municipal, the ability of Assemblies to fulfil these roles is severely constrained by insecurity, weak fiscal space, and competing emergency priorities.

In practice, the core challenge facing Assemblies in fragile districts is that development planning has been overtaken by crisis management. Limited and irregular inflows from the District Assemblies Common Fund, coupled with a collapse in internally generated revenue due to disrupted markets and livelihoods, have reduced the resources available for education. Insecurity further restricts the movement of technical staff, making it difficult to inspect schools, supervise projects, or respond to urgent infrastructure needs in hotspot communities.

As a result, educational support is often reduced to sporadic or partner-driven interventions rather than systematic investment. A teacher in Katui summarized the nature of Assembly–GES collaboration as largely material-focused and limited in scope, noting that, *'they support basic schools, especially the primary schools. They help with learning materials like reading books and manual cards for phonics… sometimes they also organize quizzes based on these books to help children read and identify words with sounds'.* ***(FGD Teachers KNW)***. While such support is valuable, it remains insufficient in districts where conflict has damaged infrastructure, driven teachers away, and heightened protection risks for learners.

In general terms, District Assemblies in conflict-affected parts of the Upper East Region remain institutionally present but functionally constrained, operating more in emergency response mode than as engines of educational development. Strengthening their role in EiE will require

targeted and flexible financing, capacity building in conflict-sensitive planning, and stronger coordination mechanisms that align Assemblies, GES, NGOs, and community actors. Without rebuilding the effectiveness of these local governance structures, sustainable recovery of education services in fragile districts will remain elusive.

7. CONCLUSIONS

This situational analysis set out to generate an evidence-based understanding of the conditions shaping education access, continuity, and quality in FCV areas of Ghana, particularly in the northern region, within the context of a broader research spanning Burkina Faso, Ghana, and Nigeria. The findings reveal that education systems in these contexts are not disrupted by singular shocks but operate within environments of chronic vulnerability, where insecurity, displacement, poverty, climate stress, and weak institutional capacity interact to undermine schooling. In such settings, education is persistently at risk, and resilience depends less on isolated interventions than on the ability of systems and communities to adapt, absorb, and respond to recurring disruptions.

Across the study districts in Ghana, conflict and insecurity emerge as dominant drivers of school disruption, learner exclusion, and teacher attrition. Although school closures are often of short duration, their cumulative effects are significant, contributing to learning loss, irregular attendance, and increased dropout risks, particularly in districts such as Bawku West. The concentration of out-of-school children and documented dropouts in this district underscores the depth of educational fragility in conflict-affected zones. Teacher shortages, driven by insecurity and poor retention conditions, further weaken school functionality and erode community confidence in formal education, reinforcing cycles of disengagement for both boys and girls.

Gendered patterns of exclusion remain pronounced, though highly context specific. While girls often enrol in higher numbers at lower grades, their participation declines sharply at upper primary and junior high school levels due to intersecting pressures related to domestic labour, early pregnancy, migration, and restrictive social norms. At the same time, boys face increasing risks of dropout linked to livelihood pressures and the perceived economic returns of illegal small-scale mining and cross-border trade. These dynamics highlight that gender inequality in education is shaped by shifting social, economic, and conflict-related incentives that affect different boys and girls differently over time.

The analysis also demonstrates that harmful social norms and community practices significantly shape educational outcomes in FCV settings. Norms that devalue girls' education, legitimise early withdrawal from school for economic activities, undermine parental support for schooling, or normalise risky behaviours among boys continue to weaken retention, protection and safety. However, the findings equally point to the presence of countervailing norms and practices, including community advocacy for girls' re-entry to education after pregnancy, parental engagement in some districts, and emerging recognition of education as a

pathway to long-term stability. This coexistence of harmful and protective norms underscores the importance of context-sensitive, norm-responsive education interventions.

Despite these challenges, the situational analysis identifies important sources of resilience and opportunity. AEPs, CBE, girls' mentoring initiatives, SEL approaches, robust GBV prevention strategies/ measures to address Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and radio-based education have demonstrated strong potential to restore access, support learning continuity, and facilitate reintegration into formal schooling.

At the system level, the policy environment provides a partial but uneven foundation for EiE. While national education strategies and emerging EiE contingency frameworks signal political commitment to equity and preparedness, implementation gaps at district and school levels persist. Weak coordination, inadequate psychosocial support structures, insufficient teacher deployment mechanisms, and limited decentralised capacity constrain the translation of policy intent into operational impact. These gaps are most visible in high-risk districts, where the need for EiE responses is greatest but institutional capacity is weakest.

In general terms, the study concludes that improving education outcomes in FCV settings requires a shift from short-term, project-based responses towards integrated, system-strengthening approaches. Scaling education innovations in FCV contexts will depend on aligning community-driven practices with formal education systems, embedding psychosocial and gender-responsive support within routine service delivery, strengthening district-level preparedness and coordination, and ensuring sustained investment in teacher deployment and retention. Without parallel efforts to address governance fragility, social norms, and livelihood pressures, gains in access and learning will remain fragile.

The findings of this situational analysis therefore provide a compelling case for scaling proven, inclusive, and adaptive education innovations as part of a broader strategy to build resilient education systems in FCV settings. Furthermore, adopting community-driven approaches that position local communities as primary implementers is essential for ensuring the long-term sustainability of local initiatives. By grounding EiE interventions in local realities, strengthening institutional capacity, and prioritising the needs of the most marginalised learners, education can serve not only as a response to crisis but as a cornerstone of recovery, social cohesion, and long-term development across Ghana.

8. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

In response to these findings, the study proposes the following priority policy actions to strengthen education access, equity, inclusion and resilience in FCV contexts:

1. The Ministry of Education of Ghana should integrate EiE into national and district education sector plans and budgets and strategy and emergency plans with national

disaster responses and capacities (e.g. NADMO) to ensure preparedness, predictable financing, and sustained learning continuity in crisis-affected areas.

2. The GES should establish and/or strengthen District Education Emergency Committees in FCV-prone districts to improve coordination among education authorities, security agencies, civil society, and humanitarian partners.
3. The GES should introduce targeted incentives for teachers in conflict-affected districts, including hardship allowances, accommodation support, and security guarantees to address chronic shortages and attrition.
4. The Transforming Teaching, Education & Learning (T-TEL) and The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NaCCA) should institutionalise teacher training in psychosocial support and socio-emotional learning as part of pre-service and in-service professional development.
5. The GES should increase the deployment of female teachers and school-based counsellors, particularly in high-risk communities, to improve the protection of girls' their safety, attendance, and retention in schools.
6. The Ministry of Education should strengthen existing partnerships with local CSOs by providing dedicated funding to support their work on education access and psychosocial support in crisis-affected areas.
7. Philanthropists and volunteers should sponsor the establishment of community information centres and mobile learning vans which have specifically designed models and programs to support learning during school closures and displacement in line with the national emergency education framework.
8. Existing channels of communication between research institutions and community-based organisations should be further reinforced, alongside the development of MOUs to strengthen collaboration among key actors.
9. The GES should be resourced adequately to strengthen EMIS and education data systems to capture conflict, displacement, gender, disability, school closures, teacher mobility, and learner re-entry trends. This will require tailored budgetary allocation by government to meet this requirement
10. School Management Committees and Parent Teacher Associations should collaborate through the formation of joint committees to monitor school disruption and recovery patterns to inform timely, evidence-based EiE responses and long-term resilience planning.
11. There is a need to operationalise the EiE contingency plan through district-level SOPs. These need to should be supported by rapid financing, logistics, clear coordination, and defined roles among GES and partners to ensure quick and timeous emergency response. This will ensure that these SOPs explicitly address gender inequalities and social exclusion, so the needs of different groups are properly met.

These recommendations call for a shift from reactive, project-based responses toward integrated, system-level approaches that place equity, protection, and resilience at the centre of education policy and practice in FCV settings.

9. GAPS IDENTIFIED FOR FUTURE RESEARCH TO FILL

While this situational analysis provides important insights into the education landscape in FCV affected areas in Ghana, it also reveals several critical knowledge gaps that warrant further investigation. Addressing these gaps through future research is essential for strengthening evidence-based policy, improving programme design, and ensuring the scalability and sustainability of EiE interventions.

First, the cost-effectiveness and financing sustainability of education innovations in FCV contexts remain underexplored. While AEPs, radio education, SEL, and girls' mentoring programmes are widely recognised as promising, there is insufficient comparative evidence about their costs, efficiency, and scalability in contexts with different levels of conflict intensity. Research is needed to examine financing models, government absorption capacity, and the conditions under which donor-supported innovations can be institutionalised within national systems.

Second, there is a gap in evidence on how education interventions adapt to varying levels and types of conflict and fragility. Current studies often treat FCV contexts as homogeneous, overlooking differences between chronic low-intensity insecurity, episodic violence, displacement-driven fragility, and cross-border spillover effects. Future research should examine how programme design, delivery, and outcomes recalibrate across these gradients of risk, including during periods of escalation and de-escalation.

Third, the interaction between harmful social norms and education outcomes requires deeper, gender-disaggregated analysis. While this study highlights the influence of early marriage, teenage pregnancy, child labour, galamsey, and performative masculinity, there is limited causal evidence on which norm-change strategies are most effective, for whom, and under what conditions. Research should assess community-based, school-led, and youth-driven approaches to shifting norms and assess their impact on girls' and boys' education trajectories.

Furthermore, the role of teachers and education workers in FCV contexts remains under-researched beyond issues of deployment and attrition. There is limited understanding of male and female teachers' psychosocial wellbeing, coping strategies, ethical dilemmas, and professional identities in conflict settings. Research should examine how teacher support systems, incentives, and protection mechanisms influence instructional quality, learner safety, and system recovery. It should look at the different needs of male and female teachers and gendered ways of addressing these.

Finally, there is a need for stronger evidence on governance, coordination, and political economy of EiE implementation. How decisions are made, resources allocated, and responsibilities negotiated among government, humanitarian actors, donors, and communities in FCV contexts remain poorly understood. Future research should examine coordination mechanisms, power dynamics, accountability structures, and the integration of EiE into decentralised education systems. It should examine in-depth examples of good practice in order to determine what works best in emergency and FCV affected contexts in Ghana and elsewhere in West Africa.

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Annex 1 List of intervention and non-intervention communities

District	Intervention community	Which intervention	Non-intervention communities
Bawku West District	Tarikum	NABOCADO IDP CAMP/psychosocial	Tiili
	Timonde	GILBIT foundation learning programme school level	Binaba
	Gbantongo	GILBIT foundation learning programme school level	Kusanaba
	Googo	GILBIT foundation learning programme school level	
	Boya	GILBIT foundation learning programme school level	
	Hariyia Islamic		
Garu District	Barbuaka	GILBIT foundation learning programme school level	Tambaalug
	Nomboko	GILBIT foundation learning programme school level	Sumaduri
	Worikambo	GILBIT foundation learning programme school level	Avosim
	Kpatia	GILBIT foundation learning programme school level	
	Garu Central		
Bongo District	Zorko Awaah	CBE and FAWE alumni	Goo
	Kunkua	Community information centre/FAWE alumni	Gambrongo
	Kodorogo	CBE/CEA intervention CAMA alumni	Bongo soe
	Ganlarum	CBE/CEA intervention CAMA alumni	
	Sikabisi	CBE/CEA intervention CAMA alumni	
	Vea Zangongo	Community information centre	
Kassena-Nankana West District	Tinginum	Psychosocial Support for teachers CAMA	Kumbisino
	Wolingum	Psychosocial support CAMA	Anerigo
	Tingabia	Psychosocial support CAMA	Tansiko
	Ketiu	CAMA/FAWE/Community information centre	
	Kutiu Saa	FAWE	
	Chiana	CAMA	

Institutions leading data collection by district

SN	District	Institution
1	Bawku West District	GILLBT/ NABOCADO
2	Garu District	GILLBT
3	Bongo District	AFC
4	Kassena Nankana West District	AFC

Date and activity

SN	Date	Activity
1	1st to 10th October	Preparations towards the situational analysis (being in touch with the partners and district education/Regional Education offices, all selected enumerators
2	14/15th October	Consultations with partners in preparation for the enumerator training
3	16th October	Arrival of researchers and enumerators for training (hopefully NABOCADO famers training venue
4	17th – 18th October	Training in Researchers and Enumerators
5	19th October	Travel to research communities
6	20th – 24th October	First week of research/data collection in various communities
7	25th October	Reflection meeting by teams across each of the focal districts
8	27th – 29th October	Final mop up of research by selected enumerators and team leads

Instrumentation

The instruments have been grouped into three different categories: School, community and district level instruments.

School level instruments

Instrument 1: School Observation Checklist
Instrument 2: Key Informant Interview Guide for Headteacher/Assistant Headteacher
Instrument 3: Focus Group Discussion Guide for Teachers
Instrument 4: Focus Group Discussion Guide for Students

Community Level Instruments

Instrument 5: Interview and Observations tool of Accelerated Education Programmes (AEPs) and Complementary Basic Education (CBE) in the Community
Instrument 6: For Consultation with the AEP CBE committee (FGD)
Instrument 7: Household Survey Questionnaire
Instrument 8: Focus Group Discussion Guide for Parents
Instrument 9: Focus Group Discussion Guide for Community Leaders
Instrument 10: Questionnaire for CAMA and FAWA association members

Instrument 11: Focus Group Discussion Guide for CAMA and FAWA association member

District-Level Instruments

Instrument 12: Questionnaire for Regional and District EMIS Officers

Instrument 13: Key Informant Interview Guide for Regional and District Education Directorate

Instrument 14: Key Informant Interview Guide for Non-Governmental Organisation

Annex 2: Ethical Clearance

UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

ETHICS COMMITTEE FOR THE HUMANITIES (ECH)

P. O. Box LG 74, Legon, Accra, Ghana

My Ref. No: ECH 052/ 25-26

September 22, 2025

Dr. Leslie Casely-Hayford
Associates for Change (AFC)
Accra-North, Accra
Ghana

ETHICAL CLEARANCE
(ECH 052/ 25-26)

The Ethics Committee for the Humanities (ECH) conducted an expedited review and approved your protocol titled:

ADVANCING EDUCATIONAL SOLUTIONS: RESEARCH FOR SCALING EDUCATION INNOVATIONS IN EMERGENCIES AND FRAGILE, CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE-AFFECTED AREAS OF BURKINA FASO, GHANA AND NIGERIA

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: **DR. LESLIE CASELY-HAYFORD**

Please note that the final review report must be submitted to the Committee at the completion of the study. Your research records may be audited at any time during or after the implementation. Any modification of this research project must be submitted to ECH for review and approval prior to implementation.

Please report all serious adverse events related to this study to ECH within seven (7) days verbally and in writing within fourteen (14) days.

This certificate is valid until September 21, 2026. You are required to submit annual reports for continuing review.

Please accept my congratulations.

Yours sincerely,

Professor C. Charles Mate-Kole
ECH Chair

Cc: Dr. Chukwuka Onyekwena, Centre for the Study of the Economies of Africa, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso
Dr. Yaro Yacouba, Centre d'Etudes, de Recherches et de Formation pour le Développement Économique et Social (CERFODES)
Dr. Nana Amma Asante-Poku, Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research, UG

Tel: +233-303933866 Email: ech@ug.edu.gh

Annex 3 Data Capture

Name of Community	1: School Observation Checklist	2: KII Guide for Headteacher/Assistant Headteacher	3: FGD Teachers	4: FGD Students	5: Interview and Observations tool of (AEPs) and (CBE) in the Community	6: FGD AEP CBE committee	7: HH Survey Questionnaire	8: FGD Parents	9: FGD Community Leaders	10 FGD CAMA and FAWE association members	11: FGD CAMA and FAWA	13: KII Regional and District Education Directorate	14 KII Guide for NGO
Total Bawku West	9	9	9	9	1	1	180	9	9	11	1	1	2
Bongo District	8	8	8	8	0	1	160	8	8	Done	Done	Done	Done
Kasena Nankana	9	9	9	9	0	1	180	9	9	11	0	1	1