



Scaling Education Innovation in Fragile and Conflict-Affected Areas

Policy Brief

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Executive Summary

Overview

In fragile environments, education is not just a luxury, but a lifeline which offers order, security, and hope to children whose day-to-day lives are marked by displacement and fear. In Borno State, the convergence of prolonged insurgency, recurrent flooding, displacement, and poverty has produced a critical education emergency, which we consider among the most severe in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Nigeria has about 19.7 million out-of-school children, and Borno State is reported to be one of major hotspots for these out-of-school children with an estimated OOSC of 54% (Sunday, 2024). To understand the micro-level constraints on education delivery the State, we surveyed 17 Accelerated Education Programme (AEP) community sites, 17 public schools, and 88 households across three Local Government Areas (LGAs): Jere, Konduga, and Maiduguri Metropolitan Council (MMC).

Our findings

Our findings point to three linked problems. First, education disruption—inform of school closures is a common phenomenon across these 3 LGAs. Fifty-nine percent of AEP sites and public schools we surveyed had closed at some point in the past three years. The proximate causes of these closures exhibit significant geographical heterogeneity with insecurity dominating in the rural AEP sites and flooding being the primary cause in the peri-urban and urban areas.

The learning loss associated with these closures is indeed substantial. When schools close, we find that 59% of children remain at home and only 13% transition to non-formal alternatives. Second, the current AEP system is under severe resource stress. Facilitators had gone 24 months on average without a stipend and 16 months without training. Third, the burden falls hardest on girls, displaced households, and children with disabilities.

1. Sunday, T. (2024). Still on the out-of-school children's statistics. Available from: <https://blueprint.ng/still-on-the-out-of-school-childrens-statistics/>

19.7M

Total estimated out-of-school children in Nigeria.

111:1

Pupil-Teacher Ratio in Konduga.

64.7%

Schools reporting flooding as cause of closure.

89.8%

Households experiencing internal displacement.

0%

Schools in Jere with adequately trained AEP teachers.

Policy Recommendations Overview

We provide five policy recommendation for stakeholders: (i) AEPs should be institutionalise within the formal state system, (ii) Teachers should be retrained and deployed more equitably (iii) Psychosocial and protection services should be embedded into school settings, (iv) Schools disaster preparedness should be strengthened and (iv) Efforts should be committed towards to multi-year structural financing.

1.0 Introduction

Nigeria has the third-largest number of out-of-school children globally. About 19.7 million children, including 9.7 million of primary age and 10 million of secondary age, are not enrolled or are not attending school regularly ([UNESCO, 2022](#); [ICIR, 2023](#)). This deficit is disproportionately concentrated in the Northeast region, and particularly Borno State. The Boko Haram insurgency, recurring floods, mass internal displacement, and chronic underfunding have made schooling unstable for many children.

Accelerated Education Programmes (AEPs) have become one of the main policy tools for responding to this crisis. These programmes are designed to offer condensed, flexible learning pathways for out-of-school children whose education has been interrupted by conflict, displacement, or poverty reintegrating them back into education. Understanding how these programmes work in practice, who they reach, how they are resourced, what challenges they face, and what communities think of them is essential for designing a more effective and equitable education response.

In this brief, we examine three related questions. First, how has fragility, conflict, and violence (FCV) disrupted schooling across different risk environments within Borno State? Second, how adequate and equitably distributed is the current education in emergencies (EiE) response? Third, what institutional reforms are necessary to transition from fragmented, project-based delivery to a durable, state-anchored system?

Our evidence comes from primary survey data collected simultaneously across three instruments in December 2025. We surveyed AEP facilitators, public school headteachers, and households in three LGAs in Borno State. These are Maiduguri Metropolitan Council (MMC), the urban centre with lower direct conflict exposure; Jere, a peri-urban area with high displacement; and Konduga, a rural area with direct conflict exposure. The sections that follow present the methodology, the effects of fragility on education, the current state of crisis response programmes, the barriers to scaling AEPs, and our policy recommendations.

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1. UNESCO (2022). New estimation confirms out-of-school population is growing in sub-Saharan Africa. UNESCO Digital Library. Available from: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000382577>
 2. ICIR (2023). International Day of Education: Nigeria battles a high number of out-of-school children

2.0 Methodology

We used a mixed-method survey design with three instruments administered simultaneously. The field work was carried out and supervised by the research team at the Centre for the Study of the Economies of Africa (CSEA). All responses were captured digitally using the SurveyCTO toolbox.

Table 1: Instrument Description

Instrument	Target	N	LGA Coverage	Key Themes
AEP Facilitator Interview	AEP class facilitators	17 sites	MMC (10), Jere (3), Konduga (4)	Enrolment, out-of-school children, stipends, teaching, governance
School Observation Checklist	Headteachers/ school staff	17 schools	MMC (10), Jere (3), Konduga (4)	Infrastructure, pedagogy, safety, governance
Household Survey	Household heads (parents/guardians)	88 households	MMC (24), Jere (24), Konduga (19)	Demographics, access, psychosocial support, perceptions, needs

Note: 21 household records are missing LGA assignments due to data entry gaps and therefore discussions are centred around those with the accurate LGA assignment.

The three instruments were designed to capture supply-side conditions through instruments AEP Facilitator Interview and School Observation Checklist, and demand-side realities through instrument the Household Survey, simultaneously, enabling us to triangulate findings from different angles. We selected AEP sites purposively to cover conflict-affected, IDP-hosting, rural, and peri-urban settings across the three LGAs. All 17 AEP sites correspond to communities also covered by the school observation checklist, which made within-community comparisons possible. Household respondents were drawn from communities hosting surveyed schools and AEP sites.

3.0 Impact of Fragility, Conflict and Violence on Education

3.1 School Disruption and Closure

Across all three instruments, we see a pattern of repeated disruption to schooling. Fifty-nine percent of AEP sites (10 of 17) and public schools (10 of 17) reported closing in the past three years. At the household level, 36 percent of respondents reported school closure in their community. These findings reflect both the lingering effects of the Boko Haram insurgency and the growing role of flooding as a cause of school shutdowns.

Table 2 reports the reason for closure across instruments. For the AEP sites insecurity and conflicts dominates, while for schools and household flooding is reported as the dominant trigger for closure, cited in 88% of household-reported closures and 65% of school-level closures.

We found the divergence in the closure causes quite intuitive because for the Boko Haram and related insecurity displacement was the foundational disruption to the non-formal programs and more recently the region has been characterized by increased flooding.

“The school was closed during the flood disaster because of the inaccessibility of the teachers and the students to the school where it happens here in the Jere community” — Headteacher, Jere

Table 2: Causes of School Closure

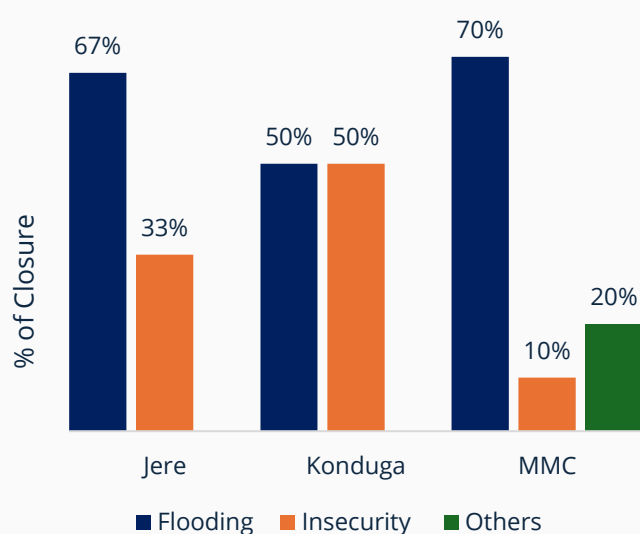
Closure Cause	AEP Sites	Schools	Households
Insecurity/Conflict	14 sites (82%)	4 schools (24%)	2 HH (6%)
Flooding	8 sites (47%)	11 schools (65%)	28 HH (88%)
Infrastructure damage	1 site (6%)	1 school (6%)	—
Teacher flight	1 site (6%)	—	—
Other	2 sites (12%)	2 schools (12%)	2 HH (6%)

Source: CSEA Field Data (collected December 2025) Note: Multiple causes were entered for some responses in AEP Sites and Schools

Figure 1 reports the breakdown for the closure causes by LGA. We notice that the reason for the closure also varies marginally by location. For instance, while still flooding dominates across the study areas, it is not surprising that in Konduga insecurity and conflict account for 50% closure. This is of course due to the heightened intensity of insecurity and conflict in this area compared to the other LGAs. A small number of schools however reported other causes, while some said they had never closed.

When schools close, children’s time is largely absorbed by the household. Fifty-nine percent of affected households said children stayed at home, 9 percent said they helped on the farm, and 9 percent said they supported domestic chores. Only 13% reported children attending non-formal programmes during closure. This is the major gap that the AEPs are designed to fill but are not yet doing so at scale. Responding to the duration of closures, 90 percent of schools reported prolonged shutdowns. Given these prolonged closures, it is in fact not surprising that enrolment reportedly fell by 47% and 23.5% of the schools saw decline in overall student attendance.

Figure 1: Causes of School Closure by LGA



Source: Computed by authors from CSEA Field Data (December 2025)

“Due to the recent flood, this also results in decreased enrolment and increased dropout...” — Headteacher, Shokari MMC

3.2 Impact on Teaching and Learning

Overall teacher attritions appear relatively low but varies by LGA. Out of 88 teachers, 10 teachers were reported to have left. Konduga had the highest attrition rate at about 19 percent, compared with 9 percent in MMC and 7 percent in Jere. The resulting pupil-teacher ratios are highly uneven. Pupil-teacher ratios are **111:1 in Konduga, 31:1 in MMC, and 8:1 in Jere**. Even though some schools rely on volunteer teachers to fill these gaps, most of them earn stipends below **₦10,000 per month**, hold no formal employment status, and receive minimal supervision which create risk for both quality of delivery and the ability of the schools to retain these volunteers.

At the AEP level, the most severe strain is facilitator welfare. Our data show facilitators working under conditions of extreme professional precarity. Across all LGAs, we found that facilitators had gone **15 months** on average without training. The longest gap was in Konduga at 19 months and the shortest in Jere at 13 months. The average time since stipend payment was **21 months**. In MMC, the gap stretched to 26 months, and even in Jere, 19 months was reported—nearly two years without pay in both cases. This lack of regular training and delayed payment of stipends points towards a systemic failure in the support of the workforce delivering education in these areas.

Figure 2: Teacher Attrition Rate by LGA

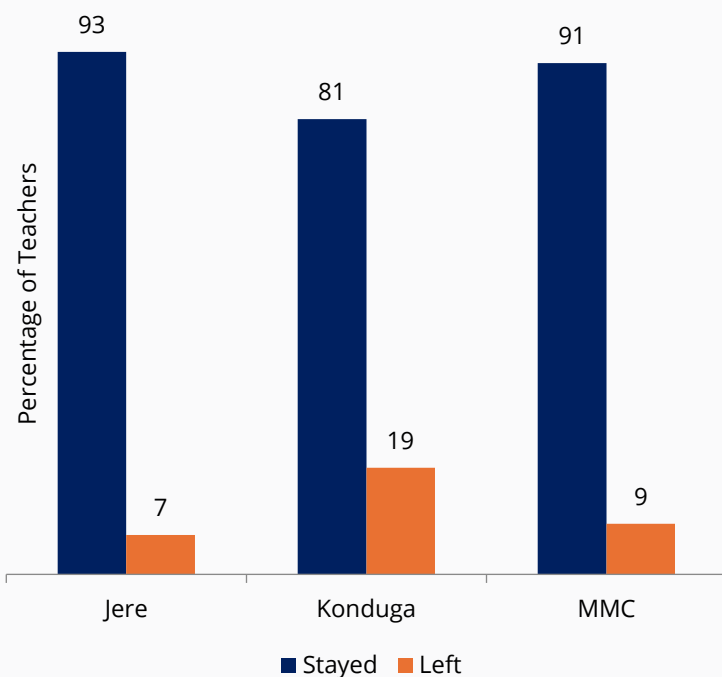
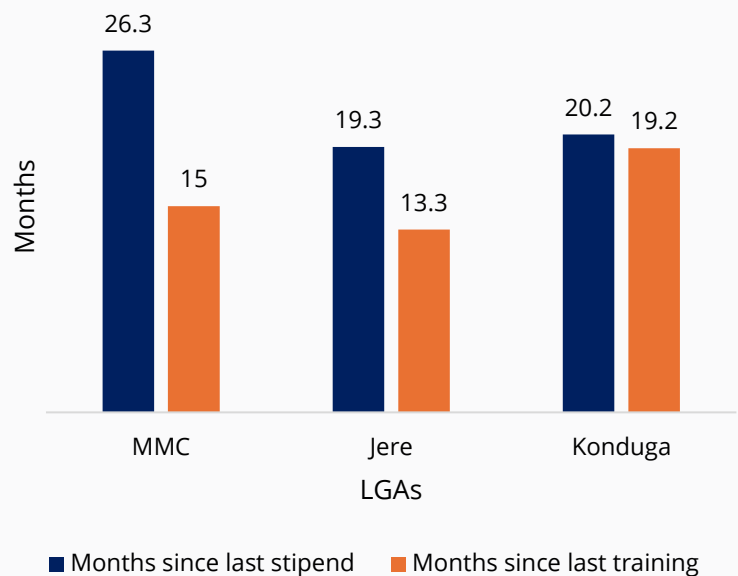


Figure 3: Average Months Since Stipend & Training



Source: Computed by authors from CSEA Field Data (December 2025)

3.3 Impact on Vulnerable Groups

Internally Displaced Persons

Among the groups most severely affected are the internally displaced children, girls, children with disabilities and orphans. We found that internally displaced persons (IDPs) are the most visible face of the emergency. Ninety percent of the surveyed households identify as IDPs, and all 17 AEP sites said that IDP and refugee children attend their classes.

"if we are to speak on the most vulnerable learners, I would say 99% of our students are vulnerable" — Headteacher, Shawari MMC

Barriers for Girls

Like in other northern regions, girls face a range of barriers that continue to hinder their access to education. These include cultural norms regarding early marriages, household duties, and poor menstrual hygiene support. As a result, enrolment rates among girls remains low.

Table 3 shows the distribution. In total, girls make up only 44 percent of enrolled students. This shows that girls are at a disproportionate risk of dropping out of schools once they completed primary school due to factors including but not limited to pressures to into early marriage, cultural norms restricting girls' education and economic deprivation. A headteacher at Mafoni Liberty told us *"Most of our dropouts are female"*

Contributing factor to this is also the absence of Menstrual hygiene management (MHM) facilities which is a critical retention factor for adolescent girls. We found that MHM facilities were absent in 41 percent of AEP sites. Boys are also affected, though often for different reasons. Some of them leave school to trade, farm, or do casual work to support their families.

Table 3: Enrolment Distribution by Gender

LGAs	Total Enrolment	Female	Male	Female (%)	Male (%)
Jere	610	254	356	41.64%	58.36%
Konduga	780	368	412	47.18%	52.82%
MMC	1,920	814	1,106	42.40%	57.60%
Total	3,310	1,436	1,874	43.38%	56.62%

Source: CSEA Field Data collected December 2025

A teacher at Gwange remarked *"Many boys drop out to engage in repetitive trading, farming or labour to support their families."*

Children with Disabilities

Children with disabilities represent yet another set of people experiencing the most severe exclusion. Many cannot access schools without physical support, adapted infrastructure, or trained teachers. In the study area, those supports are limited.

One of the headteachers in Konduga described this as a major problem for the vulnerable learners, especially for children with disabilities. Another teacher noted that physically challenged students need wheelchairs to attend school, and that some *"sit at home [thinking] that when they come to school they won't be helped"*.

4.0 Response to Crisis: Education Programmes and Systems

4.1 Disaster Management and Preparedness

Importantly, we found that all the public school has a base of safety and protection infrastructure to build on. All 17 schools we visited reported having safe learning environments, and all had delivered child protection training to teachers in the past year. Gender-based violence policies, awareness sessions, and teacher training were also in place for most schools. Anti-bullying measures and trained counsellors were present in 94 percent of schools. In a fragile and conflict-affected setting, we note that these are some important foundations.

However, some gaps remain. We found that only 71 percent of schools have a disaster and emergency preparedness plan. Functional incident reporting systems, essential for tracking and escalating protection concerns, were absent in 35 percent of schools. Clear emergency exits were also lacking. Five schools, including those in Konduga and one in Jere reported not having one entirely.

Table 4: Disaster Preparedness Plan Status

LGA	Fully Prepared (%)	Partially Prepared (%)	Not Prepared (%)
MMC	40	60	0
Jere	33.3	33.3	33.3
Konduga	25	75	0

Source: CSEA Field Data collected December 2025

4.2 Presence and Activities of Accelerated Educational Programmes

Accelerated Education Programme remains the most important education innovation in these regions. They are delivered mainly through **NGO partnerships with the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Plan International, and UNICEF**. Their role is to help over-age and out-of-school children move from non-formal learning into formal schooling through flexible, age-appropriate instruction. As of 2025, the NRC's AEP model alone had successfully mainstreamed 5000+ learners into the formal state schools in the Northeast ([NRC, 2025](#)).

Even so, access to these programmes remains uneven. Across the LGAs, we found that MMC has the strongest presence, with 70 percent of schools offering adequate remedial classes and 80 percent maintaining structured curricula. However, Jere stands out as the weakest LGA in terms of programme presence and quality. All surveyed schools reported inadequate structured curricula and a lack of trained teachers on campus, and two-thirds lacked adequate remedial classes.

Digital and radio learning tools follow the same pattern. These resources are most common in MMC and least available in Konduga, where insecurity and isolation limit access to distance learning options that could otherwise help offset the gaps caused by shortages in staff and infrastructure.

1. [NRC \(2025\). Holistic assistance gets over 5,000 children back to school in Nigeria.](#)

4.3 Gender Inclusion and Special Needs

Presence and Activities of Girls' Targeted AEPs

We also assessed the availability of programmes promoting girls' education by LGA and found that these initiatives are fully accessible in all the LGAs. All schools surveyed reported either providing support or having policies in place to assist pregnant girls and teenage mothers. Further, we also found that girls' targeted education programmes including SWEDD, Girls for Girls, and CAMA were present at 14 of 17 AEP sites (82%).

Notably, girls were also represented in leadership roles at 15 sites, and teachers at 15 sites reported receiving gender-responsive pedagogy training. Despite, these achievements, we found three gaps that we note continue to hinder the reach and impact of the girl's targeted programmes.

First, as noted before MHM facilities are absent at 7 of 17 AEP sites (41%). Second, gender-sensitive teaching and learning materials (TLMs) are present in fewer than half of public schools (47%) and are not systematically tracked at the AEP level. Third, only 32 percent of surveyed households are aware that girls' programmes exist. Jere had the lowest awareness of all three LGAs. The table below summarises the indicators.

Table 3: Gender-Related Indicators

Gender Indicator	Yes	Coverage
Girls' education programmes (SWEDD/G4G/CAMA)	14	82%
Girls in leadership roles	15	88%
Gender-responsive pedagogy training	15	88%
Pregnant/teen mothers supported	13	76%
MHM facilities in AEP sites	10	59%
GBV policy in schools	14	82%
Gender-sensitive TLMs in schools	8	47%

Source: CSEA Field Data collected December 2025

Learners with Special Needs

Inclusion for learners with special needs is stronger in the schools than in AEPs. Ninety-four percent of schools report physical accessibility for learners with special needs, and such learners are present in 15 of the 17 schools surveyed, with an average of 8.4 per school. The most striking concentration is at Sanda Kyarimi Secondary School in Jere, which reports 70 learners with special needs.

At the AEP level, however, provision for learners with special needs is largely absent. No AEP site records a dedicated pathway for learners with special needs. Enrolment data for these learners is not collected systematically in our facilitator survey, and no household respondent identified a special-needs programme as an available community resource.

5.0 Challenges of Scaling Accelerated Education Programmes in FCV Areas

Our analysis of the survey results points to six key, interconnected challenges affecting the scale and quality of AEP delivery in Borno State

1. Insecurity

Insecurity remains the most fundamental constraint. It disrupts farming, trade, and movement, and it weakens household income. A head teacher in Cofa Konduga told us *"The biggest challenge is our daily activities in insecurity. Most of our people here are farmers. So, farming in this situation is becoming more difficult by the day. So, this directly affects our daily lives as a community"*. This therefore creates a relentless cycle in which food comes before education, and as a result chronic absenteeism and dropout persist even when schools are open.

2. Facilitator Welfare

The single most acute operational constraint is the collapse of facilitator remuneration. With an average stipend gap of nearly two years and a training gap of over 15 months, AEPs are effectively running on voluntary labour and personal commitment which is not sustainable. One of the respondents remarked that the *"AEP programme is not taking place now in the community the contract has ended"*

3. Infrastructural Weakness

Schools across multiple LGAs have reported damaged or destroyed classrooms, inadequate furniture, and a shortage of basic learning materials. This has restricted children's ability to access schools, disproportionately affecting girls, children with disabilities, and those living in remote communities.

4. Financial Constraint

Every AEP site in the survey and 84% of households reported financial constraints as a barrier to education. School fees, uniforms, supplies, and the opportunity cost of children's time collectively exclude the poorest households from even the free-access AEP programmes. We found no meaningful demand-side subsidy for instance school feeding programme, conditional cash transfers, or uniform provision operating at scale across the surveyed LGAs that would have significantly reduce this barrier.

5. Psychosocial Support Gap

We found evidence of high levels child distress, including isolation, emotional difficulty, and stress. However, only 4.5 percent of communities reported having a PSS learning programme in place, and none offer digital PSS. Schools also reported having trained counsellors (94 percent), but only 65 percent have functional incident reporting system in place.

6. Project Cycle Dependency

Many programmes are implemented in silos without adequate linkage to government systems or multi-year financing commitments. Some schools reported useful NGO support for psychosocial training, but follow-through is inconsistent. One of the teachers told us, *"most of the NGOs have brought us psychosocial support programs to address the issue of mental health, well-being of our teachers, by training our teachers on psychosocial support, yet coverage remains partial"* and hence this leaves the system fragmented.

6.0 Policy Recommendations

We propose five recommendations as follows:

a. Institutionalise AEP into the formal education system

We recommend that AEPs should be incorporated as part of Borno State education delivery architecture with SUBEB, and LGEA playing a clear operational role and supervision. Curricula must be standardised and aligned with formal education standards. Transition pathways from AEPs to public schools should be certified at the state level so that learners do not slip back into invisibility

b. Improve teacher deployment, retention, and professional support

The Federal and State Ministries of Education should adopt a needs-based deployment system so that underserved LGAs such as Konduga are not left behind. Retention should be supported through better incentives, training, psychosocial support, and safer working conditions.

c. Institutionalise psychosocial and protection support systems

Psychosocial support services should be integrated into the education system to ensure consistent support for learners and teachers affected by trauma. Schools should also strengthen child protection mechanisms through clear safeguarding policies, active reporting systems, and referral pathways for abuse and violence, especially against girls.

d. Strengthen school safety and disaster preparedness

Education authorities should standardise disaster preparedness planning across all schools, ensuring that every school maintains updated contingency plans and conducts regular safety drills and simulation exercises. These measures will help ensure that teachers and learners are better prepared to respond to emergencies.

e. Commit to sustainable long-term financing

A special EiE fund should be created by the Federal Government, Borno State and development partners with multi-year programs to ensure that the effective programmes are held in place beyond single grant lifespans and are slowly absorbed by the recurrent government spending.

Field Photos: Interviews with Participants





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