



## ACCELERATE ED+ POLICY BRIEF

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

#### Effectiveness of Accelerated Education and Girls-Focused Education Innovations in Nigeria

Authors: Dr. Oluwatosin Edafe, Tikristini Olawale (2025)

#### Summary of Key Points

This policy brief focuses on Accelerated Education innovations and Girls-Focused programmes implemented in Nigeria. It is intended for governments, policy makers, NGOs, and international organizations working on education in Nigeria, Ghana, and Burkina Faso. It highlights the main challenges education faces in Fragile, Conflict, and Violence-affected (FCV) areas of the country, and the effectiveness of Accelerated Education innovations in enhancing education in emergencies. This brief calls on policymakers to increase funding and uptake appropriate strategies to strengthen and expand education innovations and girls-focused programmes to improve access to quality education.

#### Background

Education is critical to individual and societal advancement, yet it faces severe challenges in West Africa, particularly in Northern Nigeria due to conflict and violence. A significant impact of these disruptions is the growth in the numbers of Out-of-School Children and Youth (OOSCY), driven by complex and multiple reasons including ethnic and religious divides. Young women and girls' life trajectories are particularly affected, resulting in unequal access to education, work, and participation in society. These inequalities are further worsened by internal migration and displacement, which results in deepened vulnerability such as intergenerational poverty and teenage motherhood (Hanmer et al., 2024). Insurgency and terrorism in Nigeria, with the insecurity and fear it engenders, has left approximately 19.7 million children out of school, disproportionately affecting girls from impoverished and rural backgrounds (Oyekan et al., 2023). These conditions highlight the challenge of maintaining formal education institutions and ensuring the safety of learners and teachers in Fragile, Conflict and Violence (FCV) affected areas. Education interruptions not only impair the immediate welfare of children but also obstruct national development agendas and the fulfilment of global education benchmarks such as Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 that aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning

opportunities for all. Hence the urgent need for policy interventions and scalability of proven programmes/innovations – including accelerated education – to ensure access to quality education and learning for vulnerable children.

## **Education Innovations in Nigeria**

To address the pressing education crisis in Northern Nigeria, several education innovations have been introduced to expand access to quality learning opportunities for Out-of-School Children and Youth (OOSCY). These approaches are designed to provide flexible, inclusive, and context-responsive education models, ensuring that children affected by conflict, displacement, and socio-economic barriers can regain access to learning. Each program is tailored to meet the unique challenges faced by marginalized learners, particularly young girls and children from disadvantaged backgrounds. The following innovations represent key efforts aimed at bridging educational gaps, promoting resilience, and contributing to national and global education goals, including Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4.

## **Accelerated Education Innovations in Nigeria**

### **1. Education Crisis Response (ECR) Program**

This program was launched in October 2014 and ran for three years expanding access to quality learning opportunities for displaced, out-of-school children and youth ages 6 to 17 in Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe and Yobe states. Its objectives include actions to:

- Restore access to quality education for displaced out-of-school children (OOSC)
- Use enhanced national approved curriculum to teach literacy and numeracy
- Promote and provide vital psychosocial support and services to often traumatized learners
- Facilitate the transition of learners into formal schools and provide life skills training to older children

### **Implementation Strategy:**

In partnership with the International Rescue Committee, HOHVIPAD, and more than 30 Nigerian organizations, the project also engaged traditional and religious leaders to provide safe, accessible locations for classes, to increase community support for the learners and to ensure sustainability of the activities. Open to children of all ethnicities and religions, the program created over 1,241 non-formal learning centres, located in churches, mosques, Qur'anic schools and other locations, serving over 80,000 children. Using an enhanced national approved curriculum, the displaced children received basic education, with an emphasis on math and literacy in English and Hausa language. In addition, the centres provided vital psychological and social services to the often-traumatized children, many of whom had witnessed horrendous acts of violence. In each of the non-formal learning centres, the Nigeria Education Crisis Response program improved the quality of teaching and learning materials. Class sizes were limited to ensure greater attention for the students, particularly since some may have been absent from formal schooling for up to two years. Classroom teacher (also called facilitators) were selected from the communities where the internally displaced children

currently reside. To actively engage the children and youth, the project trained community-based non-formal learning facilitators, putting them through a five-day empowerment training course where they were taught how to weave-in socio-emotional learning activities to help traumatized learners heal and strengthen their resilience. Over 1,000 facilitators were trained, thus helping them to create a friendly and welcoming learning environment for the displaced children. For older learners who often take on increased responsibility to provide for themselves and family, the project incorporated vocational trainings in addition to basic education, to provide skills that they may use to generate the much-needed income to support their families. Experts in various vocational skills were sourced from the communities to train over 22,000 adolescent boys and girls.

### Efficiency & Impact:

- The program enrolled a total of 80,341 children (43,944 girls and 36,397 boys) throughout the duration of the project, with each cohort of children undergoing learning for a minimum period of 9 months.
- Over 30,154 learners in total (17,789 females, 12,365 males) were mainstreamed into formal schools to continue their education at different grade levels ranging from Primary 1 to SS2.
- 50.2 % of enrollees could read accurately
- 72.8% of the enrollees met or surpassed the socio-emotional competency criteria including self and social awareness
- 85.4% of total enrollees completed the basic literacy and skill acquisition program

**Table 1:** Learning outcomes of the ECR program

States	Learners Enrolled	Percentage of learners that can read at the end of the program	Percentage of learners who met or surpassed criteria for social emotional competency	Percentage of learners who completed the basic literacy and skills acquisition program
<b>Adamawa</b>	17,898	51%	84%	82%
<b>Bauchi</b>	15,503	51%	67%	91%
<b>Borno</b>	15,197	37%	72%	89%
<b>Gombe</b>	16,026	50%	72%	90%
<b>Yobe</b>	15,717	62%	69%	75%
<b>Total</b>	<b>80,341</b>	<b>50.2%*</b>	<b>72.8%*</b>	<b>85.4%*</b>

**\*These are averages for all the states**

**Source:** ECR Final Report, 2017

## 2. DFID-EiE NFLC

The DFID-funded Education in Emergencies (EiE) Non-formal Learning Centres (NFLC) project ran from October 2017 to September 2018. The program aimed to improve the literacy, numeracy and social-emotional skills of 9 to 14-year-old out-of-school children who live in Yobe and Borno. The objectives of the projects are to provide quality education to out-of-

school children (OOSC) in conflict-affected areas and to strengthen community-based non-formal learning centres (NFLCs).

### **Implementation Strategy:**

The program established 400 non-formal learning centres across the selected states, serving over 34,000 out-of-school children from 2017 to 2018. The project also equipped learning facilitators (LFs) with content knowledge and the pedagogical skills they need to teach through instructional coaching, face-to-face facilitator training, coaching through mentor teachers and teacher learning circles, which provided on-going peer support.

### **Efficiency & Impact:**

- Reached over 34,000 out-of-school children across Borno and Yobe states
- Trained 400 learning facilitators on literacy, numeracy, and Social Emotional Learning (SEL)
- Improved educational access, foundational learning outcomes, and emotional well-being of OOSC in Northern Nigeria

### **3. Addressing Education in Northeast Nigeria (AENN)**

The Addressing Education in Northeast Nigeria (AENN) project responded to the immediate educational needs of over 250,000 children and youth in Borno and Yobe states from 2018 – 2021 through the provision of non-formal education in safe environments, while laying a foundation for the sustainable improvement of education systems at the community and government levels. Funded by USAID, objectives of the program were to address educational disruption caused by conflict and insurgencies in these states.

### **Implementation Strategy:**

The program established 912 non-formal learning centres across eight (8) Local Governments Areas (LGAs) in Borno and Yobe state. These learning centres served over 200,000 out-of-school children including children with disabilities. Using a community-led approach, the program engaged and trained teachers and facilitators from the communities to support and encourage learning.

### **Efficiency & Impact:**

- The program enrolled a total of 273,344 children (143,366 girls and 129,978 boys)
- The program trained 15,385 community teachers and facilitators
- 92% of the children that participated in the program improved their literacy and numeracy comprehension
- 94% of enrolled out-of-school children were mainstreamed to formal schools at the end of the program
- 298 destroyed classrooms were rehabilitated
- 263 schools were provided with water, sanitation, and hygiene facilities

#### **4. Opportunity to Learn (OTL) Program**

This innovation is an ongoing program, running from 2021–2026. Funded by USAID, the project activities are carried out in up to 12 Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states, through the Accelerated Basic Education Programme (ABEP). Objectives of the program are to ensure out of school children and youth in North-eastern Nigeria are safely able to gain foundational skills, including literacy, numeracy, and social and emotional skills, to progress to higher levels of education, training and/or engagement in the workforce.

##### **Implementation Strategy:**

The project delivers Accelerated Learning Programmes (ALP) for out-of-school children aged 10-15 by establishing 1,214 non-formal learning centres across selected LGAs. The program also provides training and capacity building for learning facilitators and administrators of ALP centres. In addition, the program provides direct disbursement of teaching and learning materials to ALP centres, and provides advocacy at the state and community levels to drive enrolment of OOSC.

##### **Efficiency & Impact:**

- Served over 34,000 OOSC in the initial cohort.
- Improved access to education for vulnerable children and youth.
- Trained learning facilitators and provided learning materials.
- Strengthened local and state institutions to manage and oversee non-formal education programmes.
- Transitioned 13,000 OOSC to formal education to continue learning at various grade levels ranging from JSS1 to SSS2

#### **5. Girls for Girls (G4G) and Social Emotional Learning (SEL)**

This is a girls-focused program aimed at enhancing girls' access to education and retention in school, and empowering girls with leadership and life skills to improve their confidence and decision-making abilities. Its goal is to promote gender equality by addressing barriers such as access to quality education, early marriage, cultural norms, and economic challenges. This program, funded by UNICEF and UK Department of International Development (DFID), is implemented by local NGOs (KABUHDAH) and the Federal government of Nigeria. The first two phases ran from February 2021 to December 2022 and the project is current in its third phase.

##### **Implementation Strategy:**

The project is run through a peer education program that establishes clubs for girls in local community centres and schools. Community engagement and sensitization is carried out to ensure that communities are aware of the benefits of G4G and to encourage participation. Girls are placed into G4G groups, consisting of 20–30 girls per group. Mentors who are recruited

within communities are assigned to each group and trained on their roles and responsibilities, including how to manage and monitor G4G activities. Girls are then taught using G4G modules, which includes specific components on life and vocational skills, menstrual hygiene management and social emotional learning such as self and social awareness, and relationship building skills. This initiative actively promotes girl's retention, transition, and successful completion of basic education, while empowering girls and addressing gender inequalities.

### **Efficiency & Impact:**

- At least 135,000 girls benefited from G4G Northeast Nigeria through 4,514 functioning G4G groups in primary schools, integrated Qur'anic schools and JSSs.
- Girls' attendance rates increased from 43% to 70% over the first two phase of the intervention.
- The percentage of girls who could read fluently at 31 words per minute or higher improved from 15% to 46%
- The second phase of the program recorded over 50% increased enrolment, retention and transition of girls into formal education

### **6. Radio Education Programme (REP)**

Through funding from the German Government (KfW), the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), and Education Cannot Wait (ECW), UNICEF is supporting radio learning classes and radio clubs as alternative learning pathways in north-east Nigeria. The radio learning classes, and radio clubs provide Out of School Children in IDP camps with access to education, particularly since the COVID19 pandemic. The focus of the radio learning program is for poor and displaced children to have access to education services. The end goal is that the children can be mainstreamed into the formal education system after a period of nine months.

### **Implementation Strategy and Impact:**

The radio clubs are led by the children with supervision from a community-based mentor. The children listen to pre-recorded education programmes which covers topics on personal hygiene, social emotional learning, including self/social awareness and relationship-building skills. The program also covers lessons on the importance of girl education. After listening to pre-recorded radio education programmes on the benefits of girl child education, the children use the information to act plays in market squares and community centres to create awareness. Radio clubs are helping to enrol girls in schools and supporting their socio-emotional wellbeing. The program is also helping to promote community engagement, fostering resilience, and facilitating recovery efforts. For these children, learning through the radio has benefits beyond education. It offers the opportunity to meet new friends, exchange friendly banter, and deal with the trauma of multiple deprivations.

### **Conclusion**

The above experiences show that Accelerated Education and related innovations as well as Girls-Focused programmes improve foundational literacy and numeracy rates for out-of-school children in conflict and emergency areas through the provision of basic education. Beneficiaries of these non-formal programmes can have up to a 90–95% transition rate to

formal education. Furthermore, these programmes' focus on community-driven approaches that engage teachers and facilitators from within the communities to provide mentorship, and address socio-cultural barriers, thus making them a scalable and impactful model for addressing access to quality education and gender disparities in education. They have proven ability to reach vulnerable populations in FCV (Fragile, Conflict, and Violence-affected) areas and are adaptable for integration into formal education systems or vocational education, hence, increasing access, retention, and learning outcomes for marginalized children. It is therefore important for government to take ownership of these innovation and scale them up by making a budgetary commitment to the long-term funding of these programmes. Many of these programmes/innovations are funded by international organisations and adequate funding is not always guaranteed, hence a commitment from the government will be necessary to ensure that the goals of these programmes are fully achieved.

## **Recommendations**

To ensure equitable and sustainable access to quality education for Out-of-School Children and Youth (OOSCY) in Nigeria's conflict-affected regions, the following policy actions are recommended:

### **1. Institutionalize and Scale Proven Innovations**

The federal and state Ministries should adopt and mainstream successful Accelerated Education Programmes (AEPs) and Girls-for-Girls (G4G) programmes into existing national education systems, ensuring consistency in delivery and funding. This includes adopting AEP curricula as part of non-formal education streams, incorporating G4G modules into life skills and guidance programmes in public schools, and assigning state-level task forces to oversee scale-up. Governments should also replicate these models in other underserved regions, using lessons from successful pilots to adapt interventions for different local contexts.

### **2. Ensure Sustainable Financing**

Federal and state governments should earmark specific budget lines for non-formal and accelerated education programmes within their annual education sector plans. This involves incorporating AEPs and related programmes into State Education Sector Operational Plans (SESOPs) and the Medium-Term Sector Strategy (MTSS). Education planners and budget officers should work with programme implementers to cost the interventions realistically and include them in annual budget proposals, while gradually reducing dependence on external funding through phased co-financing strategies.

### **3. Strengthen Gender-Responsive Strategies**

State education ministries should scale up targeted interventions, such as Girls-for-Girls (G4G) clubs and menstrual hygiene management sessions, by embedding them in school improvement plans and teacher training curricula. Local government education authorities (LGEAs) should collaborate with community leaders, religious institutions, and parent-teacher associations (PTAs) to deliver sensitization campaigns that address early marriage and harmful gender norms. Peer mentoring and life skills modules should be institutionalized through structured extracurricular programmes in both formal and non-formal education centres.

#### **4. Build Local Capacity and Ownership**

Education authorities at the state and LGA levels should formalize the recruitment of facilitators from within target communities by establishing clear guidelines and incentive structures, such as stipends or certification pathways. Training programmes should be tailored to local needs, emphasizing pedagogy, socio-emotional learning, and inclusive practices. Partnerships with teacher training colleges and NGOs can support the delivery of continuous professional development, while community education committees should be empowered to oversee and support facilitator performance and accountability.

#### **5. Enhance Data-Driven Monitoring and Evaluation**

Federal and state education ministries should strengthen Education Management Information Systems (EMIS) to capture disaggregated data on enrolment, attendance, learning outcomes, and learner transitions specific to AEPs and non-formal education. This includes integrating indicators for gender, disability, and location into monitoring tools and routine data collection. State Universal Basic Education Boards (SUBEBs) should assign dedicated M&E officers to track programme performance, and findings should be used in quarterly review meetings to inform policy adjustments and scale-up decisions.

#### **6. Leverage Multi-Sectoral Partnerships**

Establish state-level coordination platforms that bring together education, health, protection, and social welfare ministries alongside NGOs and development partners to jointly plan, implement, and monitor education interventions in humanitarian settings. These platforms should align with existing structures like Education-in-Emergencies Working Groups or State Emergency Management Agencies. Joint programming should prioritize integrated service delivery, such as linking school enrolment with child protection case management, health screenings, and psychosocial support, to holistically support learners' wellbeing and retention. In addition, a Policy Learning Working Group (PLWG) should be formed to convene key stakeholders across sectors. This group will review implementation data, facilitate peer learning across states, and develop actionable, evidence-based policy recommendations to inform adaptive and scalable education solutions.

**For more information, please contact Centre for the Study of the Economies of Africa (CSEA)**

Website: [www.cseaafrica.org](http://www.cseaafrica.org)

Email: [enquiries@cseaafrica.org](mailto:enquiries@cseaafrica.org)

Tel: +234-(0)9-291-4822 or +234-(0)9-291-4820

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