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

Prioritizing Teacher Deployment and Retention in Conflict and Fragile Areas of the Upper East Region to Improve Basic Education Access, Retention and Transition

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SUMMARY

Access to Education in the Upper East Region is adversely affected by the growing conflict, insecurity, and fragility, with the greatest impact attributed to the lack of trained teacher availability in basic schools (primary/JHS). The Education Management Information System (EMIS) data collected by the Ghana Education Service, regional office in collaboration with AFC for the 2022/23 to 2024/25 academic years highlights how high-risk districts record the highest teacher vacancies, receive the lowest trained teacher deployments, and experience the highest trained teacher attrition leading to gaps. These factors have contributed to school closures, interrupted learning, and increased student dropout rates. Prioritising teacher deployment and retention in conflict-affected districts of Ghana's Upper East through targeted incentives, improved security, psychosocial support for teachers and students, and evidence-based workforce planning will ensure equitable access to quality basic education as a high priority for government.

POLICY CONTEXT

Conflict and insecurity in the **Upper East Region,** particularly in border districts such as Bawku, Binduri, Garu, Pusiga, Kassena Nankana West and Tempane, continue to adversely affect access and retention in basic education. Additionally, insecurity has created a critical shortage of teachers, making it difficult to sustain learning in affected communities leading to increasing student dropout. While national efforts have expanded educational opportunities across the country, the EMIS findings indicate that teacher management (retention, deployment and wellbeing) remains one of the greatest challenges facing Ghana's education delivery in fragile and conflict affected areas.

KEY EVIDENCE

The analysis of data from EMIS covering fourteen districts in the Upper East region (Nov. 2025)

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presents compelling evidence that teacher shortages are concentrated in the areas where educational needs are greatest and where conflict is heightening.

Teacher Vacancies: The research shows that High-risk districts such as Garu and Bawku central reported 1,069 teacher vacancies at the primary and Junior High School levels but received only 175 newly deployed teachers, representing just **16.4%** of identified staffing needs. In contrast, low-risk districts such as Bongo and Kasena Nankana reported 61.3% of their vacancies, indicating a significant imbalance in deployment. Overall, only **35.5%** of teacher vacancies across the Upper East region were filled in 2025/26.

Teacher Attrition: Teacher attrition is also considerably higher in conflict-affected districts of Ghana's Upper East region. Figure 1.0 indicates that while the trained teacher workforce expanded, particularly in Junior High Schools (JHS), teacher attrition also increased over the period. Primary schools recorded the largest workforce (4,769 teachers) and the highest number of exits (346) in 2024/25, yet they had the lowest exit rate (7.3%). In contrast, the JHS workforce grew from 2,876 teachers in 2022/23 to 3,722 in 2024/25, but trained teachers exiting the profession also increased from 221 to 320, causing the exit rate to rise from 7.7% to 8.6%. This upward trend suggests that teacher losses are growing faster than workforce expansion at Junior High School level, highlighting increasing retention challenges. Overall, the findings suggest that although recruitment efforts have strengthened staffing levels, improved trained teacher retention strategies are needed to sustain workforce growth and maintain educational quality particularly in fragile and conflict-affected areas.

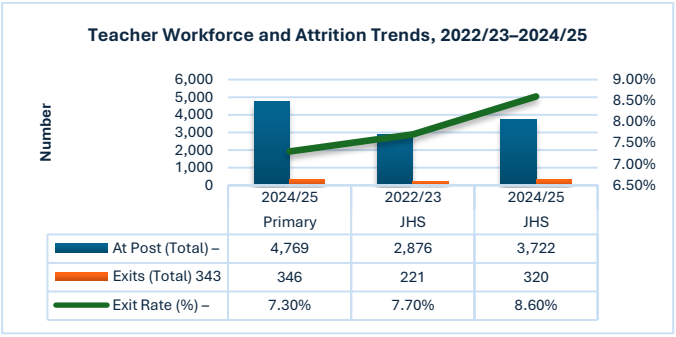


Figure 1 Teacher Workforce and Attrition Trends, 2022/23–2024/25

Source: AFC/EMIS Field Survey, 2025/26

Teacher Mobility: Teacher mobility further illustrates the challenge. The AFC/EMIS study records 908 transfers and release requests, of which almost 60% were applications for repostings. Although teacher inflows exceeded outflows, most inflows were repostings rather than newly recruited teachers from outside the region, indicating that workforce shortages in fragile districts remain unresolved.

Teacher Shortage: The shortage of teachers has direct implications for learner access, retention and transition within the Basic Education system. During the 2024/25 academic year, 15 schools were closed, with 14 located in high-risk districts. Some schools in Bawku Municipal remained closed for as long as ten months. High-risk districts also recorded 3,693 out-of-school children and 1,608 primary school dropouts, highlighting the close relationship between teacher availability and learning continuity.

Limited Support System: The report further shows that teachers in fragile districts receive comparatively limited psychosocial support and professional development. While support services expanded substantially in medium- and low-risk districts, coverage in high-risk districts remained unchanged, despite greater exposure to conflict-related stress. AFC and the Colleges of Education have embarked on an innovative low-cost training approach for psychosocial training with

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NABOCADO to address this ongoing challenge. In 2025 we piloted a low-cost training solution in Gbewaa and Bosco training colleges to ensure that newly deployed teachers (50) were given psychosocial training before deployment unfortunately these 50 teachers were not yet engaged by GES.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The current teacher deployment system does not adequately respond to educational needs in fragile and conflict-affected districts. Instead, safer districts continue to receive a greater proportion of available teachers while high-risk districts experience persistent vacancies and increasing attrition. Without deliberate intervention, teacher shortages will continue to undermine children's access to education, increase dropout rates, and widen educational inequalities within the Upper East Region.

Teacher deployment should therefore be recognised as both an education management priority and a conflict-sensitive intervention that safeguards children's right to basic education.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The Ministry of Education should prioritise the following actions:

1. **Adopt a conflict-sensitive teacher deployment policy** that prioritizes teacher allocation to districts with the greatest staffing shortages and educational disruptions. Approximately 300 trained teachers are needed for the 8 highest risk areas of the Upper East and provided with pscho social support training. These teachers ideally should be selected from the National Service cohort who have completed and served in schools in the Upper East.
2. **Introduce targeted retention packages** for teachers serving in fragile communities, including hardship allowances, accommodation support, accelerated promotion, and risk incentives.
3. **Strengthen teacher safety and wellbeing** by providing psychosocial support, improving collaboration with Colleges of Education, district education officers, district security agencies, and establishing teacher protection measures in conflict-prone communities.
4. **Recruit more untrained teachers from local communities (who can register on distance education programmes and provide support while they teach in schools UTTDBE model)** , as locally recruited teachers are more likely to remain in post during periods of insecurity (AFC studies on UTTDBE; www.associatesforchange.org).
5. **Use EMIS data routinely** to guide deployment decisions, monitor vacancies, identify attrition hotspots and improve workforce planning. AFC will work with the Regional Directorate of GES to conduct the same study for 2026/27 cohort.
6. **Expand professional development opportunities** for teachers in conflict-affected districts, particularly in psychosocial support, inclusive education and emergency preparedness.

CONCLUSION

The study's findings demonstrate that trained teacher shortages are now one of the greatest barriers to equitable access to basic education in the Upper East Region. High-risk districts

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continue to experience the highest vacancies, lowest deployment rates and highest attrition despite facing the greatest educational challenges. Prioritising teacher deployment and retention in conflict-affected communities will improve learning continuity, reduce educational inequalities and strengthen the resilience of Ghana's education system. A targeted, conflict-sensitive teacher management strategy is therefore essential to ensuring that every child, regardless of location, has access to qualified teachers and uninterrupted learning.

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