



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

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**Policy Brief**

**Understanding the Out-of-School Crisis in Borno State, Nigeria: Evidence for Policy Action**

**Centre for the Study of the Economies of Africa (CSEA)**

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## Introduction

Education in Borno State remains severely disrupted due to prolonged conflict, displacement, and climate-related shocks, particularly flooding. The state has been at the epicentre of insurgency-related violence, which has significantly weakened education infrastructure and access. It is estimated that more than 5000 classrooms and school buildings in Borno State have been destroyed as a result of violence and conflicts, and over 2300 teachers have been killed (News Central TV, 2025). These disruptions have contributed to reduction in school enrolment, irregular attendance, and weakened learning outcomes (Ogunode et al., 2025). Recent estimates suggest that 54%; over half of school-age children in Borno are currently out-of-school, reflecting one of the most severe education crises in Nigeria (Sunday, 2024).

Education is a fundamental human right and a powerful tool for fostering peace, stability, and development. However, in times of crisis such as armed conflicts, natural disasters, epidemics, and forced displacement, this right is often disrupted, leaving millions of children vulnerable and out of school (Ogunode et al., 2025). Education interventions in conflict and emergencies context serves as a vital tool for protection, stability, and hope. It provides affected children and learners with a sense of normalcy, safeguarding children from exploitation, trauma, and long-term social exclusion through psychosocial support and opportunities for future growth (Ogunode et al., 2025). Education interventions also contribute to peacebuilding and social cohesion by promoting tolerance, inclusion, and resilience among affected communities (Ayoko, 2025).

This policy brief provides an understanding of the current education situation in Borno state, Nigeria. It highlights the key drivers of educational exclusion, assesses the availability of education innovations, and identifies policy gaps affecting the implementation of education innovations. It also proposes effective strategies for strengthening education-in-emergencies interventions and improving learning continuity in Borno state.

## Rationale and Methodology

Limited understanding of which education innovations are most effective, adaptable, and cost-efficient in fragile, conflict, and violence (FCV) contexts constrains the development of resilient education systems capable of withstanding shocks and ensuring learning continuity for all children, particularly girls and other marginalised groups (Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies [INEE], 2024). Addressing this knowledge and evidence gap is essential for informing policy, strengthening practice, and breaking cycles of intergenerational poverty and exclusion across FCV affected areas.

This policy brief draws on evidence from the situational analysis conducted by Centre for the Study of the Economies of Africa (CSEA) in November, 2025 on education in emergencies in the Borno state, Nigeria. The study employed a mixed-methods research design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors affecting access to education in fragile contexts. The research was conducted in three selected local government areas (LGA), namely Maiduguri Metropolitan Council (MMC), Jere, and Konduga, which experience varying levels of conflict-related insecurity, displacement, and socio-economic vulnerability. The study population included multiple, interrelated categories of respondents, including teachers, learners, parents, community members, education officials, and civil society actors. The study was conducted in 33 communities across the three selected LGAs. 17 school surveys were conducted, and 100 household surveys were done across the communities. In addition, 80 FGDs (for students, teachers, parents, communities) and 57 KIIs (with headteachers, NGOs, State/LGA representatives) were conducted.

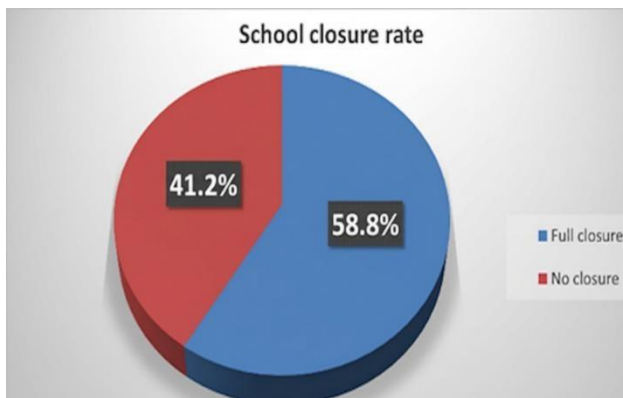
The study assessed key variables including: school functionality and closure patterns, enrolment and attendance trends, teacher availability and deployment, access to learning materials and psychosocial support, and the availability/effectiveness of education innovations such as Accelerated Education Programmes (AEPs), girls' programmes (G4G), SEL and digital radio interventions, etc.

Data were collected through four main sources. Firstly, a systematic review of national education policies, sector strategies, and Education in Emergencies (EIE) frameworks was undertaken to understand the policy and institutional context shaping education responses in fragile settings. Secondly, structured questionnaires were administered to teachers, headteachers, and community respondents to capture information on school disruptions, enrolment patterns, teacher deployment, access to learning materials, and preparedness for emergencies. Thirdly, semi-structured interviews were conducted with key education stakeholders, including officials from the Borno state's ministry of education, school leaders, civil society organisations, and programme implementers, to explore institutional responses to emergencies and the implementation of education innovations. Finally, focus group discussions were held with teachers, parents, community members, in-school learners, and AEP participants to capture community perspectives on school closures, barriers to education, gender-related risks, and coping strategies during crises. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistical techniques, while qualitative data were examined through thematic analysis to identify key patterns, challenges, and opportunities for strengthening education systems in fragile contexts.

## Key Findings

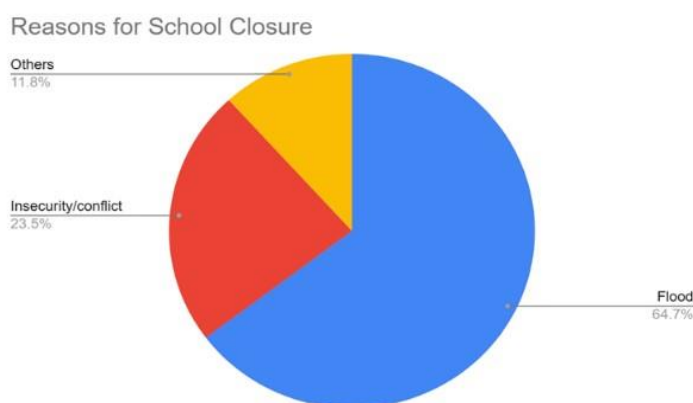
- **Widespread and Prolonged School Disruptions:**

As seen in figure 1, results across the sampled areas revealed that 58.8% of schools experienced full closure while 41.2% remained operational. Among schools that reported closure, about 90% indicated that the closure was prolonged more than 6 months of academic calendar, suggesting that school disruption extended beyond short-term interruptions in many affected schools. These figures show extreme vulnerability and indicate that school disruption is not an isolated occurrence but a widespread phenomenon across the sampled areas, thus, significantly affecting learning continuity. **Figure 1: School Closure in Borno State, Nigeria**



- **Drivers of School Closure:**

School closures across the assessed areas were driven by a combination of environmental shocks and conflict-related disruptions. As seen in figure 2, flooding was the most frequently reported factor associated with school closure, accounting for 64.71% across the study area. In contrast, insecurity and conflict accounted for 23.53% of school closures. A lower percentage of schools (11.8%) reported other causes of school closure such as teacher absenteeism, displacement and migration. These patterns suggest that while flooding represents the most common trigger of school closures across the study area, conflict and insecurity continue to play a significant role in disrupting education in specific locations. The coexistence of environmental shocks and conflict-related disruptions highlights the complex situation within which schools operate in the region. **Figure 2**



- **Reduction in School Enrolment and Irregular Attendance**

The crisis conditions described above have had significant effects on school participation across the study areas. One of the most perceived dominant impacts is reduction in school enrolment and attendance. 47% of headteachers reported reduced enrolment of learners and 23% reported reduction in the number of learners attending school in the study areas. Others

reported instances of reduced learners' participation (12%), reduced learners' understanding (11%) and low turnout of students (7%). Key factors contributing to this phenomenon include displacement and household poverty, safety concerns, loss or relocation of teachers, and economic shocks affecting families. Economic hardship plays a significant role, as parents whose livelihoods were affected by conflict or flooding, particularly farmers, reported difficulties in maintaining school expenses, leading to withdrawals and prolonged absence among learners. Respondents also reported that fear of attacks, displacement, and transportation challenges prevented students from attending school consistently.

- **Weak Teaching and Learning Conditions**

The quality of teaching and learning in Borno State is severely affected by conflict and crisis. Respondents reported that schools that remain operational often face overcrowding due to the consolidation of students from closed schools, posing a significant pressure on infrastructures and facilities. As a head teacher in Gwange, MMC noted, *"Before the crisis, schools had fewer students, better teacher to student ratios, and more stable learning conditions. Facilities were less strained, and more students lived close to their schools..."*

At the same time, teacher shortages are driven by displacement, insecurity, and a lack of incentives for deployment in high-risk areas, particularly Konduga LGA. The study report reveals attrition rate of teachers in Konduga, MMC, and Jere LGA at 19%, 9%, and 7% respectively. While Jere and MMC LGA maintain relatively adequate staffing, Konduga LGA experiences severe teacher shortages and high pupil-teacher ratios that may compromise instructional quality. Teachers who remain in the system often operate under extremely challenging conditions, with limited training and support to address the needs of learners affected by trauma and disruption. Instructional time is frequently reduced, and the overall learning environment is not conducive for effective teaching. These factors collectively contribute to poor learning outcomes and low levels of student engagement.

- **Gaps in Psychosocial and Protection Support Services**

The report also highlights significant gaps in the provision of psychosocial support services within schools. Many learners in Borno State have experienced trauma related to conflict, displacement, and loss, yet access to structured mental health and psychosocial support

remains limited. 35% of respondent reported not having access to coping support platform for learners and teachers with emotional stress. Although 65% of respondents reported having some form of counselling or referral support service in place, where such services exist, they are often implemented as part of short-term projects led by non-governmental organisations, rather than being integrated into the formal education system. As a headteacher in Bulabulli Deyabe, Jere LGA explained; *“Some organisation came to counsel our students telling them to relax and be calm. My teachers have not received any training.*

Teachers are rarely trained to provide basic psychosocial support, and referral pathways to specialised services are weak or non-existent. As a result, the emotional and psychological needs of learners are largely unmet, affecting their well-being and ability to learn.

- **Gender and Inclusion Challenges**

Gender disparities remain a significant barrier to education in Borno State. Girls are disproportionately affected by factors such as domestic responsibilities and gender-based violence, all of which limit their ability to enrol in and complete schooling. Results from the report shows that 54% of girls in the surveyed areas are out-of-school, compared to 46% of boys. Findings from the survey also indicate a high prevalence of violence within the educational environment, as 70.59% of the headteachers reported incidents of violence or abuse in their schools within the last 12 months. Despite this high incidence, only 47.06% reported having a functional system for reporting such incidents. Safety concerns, particularly during periods of insecurity, further exacerbate these challenges. While targeted programmes such as the G4G, aimed at promoting girls’ education have shown positive results, their reach remains limited. Similarly, children with disabilities and other marginalised groups face systemic barriers that prevent them from accessing inclusive education. Findings from the school assessment show that gender sensitive and inclusive teaching materials are largely absent across the study areas, only 11.8% of schools surveyed reported adequate provision of gender-sensitive and inclusive teaching materials. The lack of tailored support services and inclusive infrastructure continues to hinder progress in this area.

- **Gaps in Policy Implementation**

Although to address education in emergencies, Nigeria has developed various comprehensive national policy frameworks such as the Education Sector Strategy and the Education in Emergencies (EiE) Contingency Plan, which highlights policies that focuses on; maintaining access to education during emergencies, providing temporary learning spaces, supporting psychosocial services for affected children, and coordinating humanitarian actors and education authorities during crisis (NEMA, 2019), implementation gaps persist and remains inconsistent at subnational and local levels, hindering and limiting the effectiveness of these policies. Many LGA and communities lack the operational tools and resources needed to translate policy into action. Coordination among stakeholders is often weak, leading to duplication of efforts in some areas and gaps in others. In addition, data systems are insufficient and do not support real-time decision-making, further constraining effective response.

- **Promising but Under-Scaled Education Innovations**

Despite the challenges, the analysis identifies several innovative approaches that have demonstrated effectiveness in improving access to education. Accelerated Education Programmes (AEP), for example, provide flexible learning opportunities for over-age and outof-school children, enabling them to reintegrate into formal education systems. this programme operates through community facilitators in partnership with NGOs and the State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB), running afternoon classes typically from 12:30 to 4:00 pm. Community leaders in Galtimari and Konduga confirmed that AEPs are effective in addressing learning gaps among displaced and over-age children, with Konduga community leaders stating that the programme is "*very effective*". However, the continuity of these programmes depends heavily on external NGO financing, and community leaders in Gwange and Konduga repeatedly called for "*support from government and NGO*" and the involvement of the federal government as prerequisites for programme sustainability.

Similarly, girls' education initiatives like the G4G, which combine mentorship, community engagement, and financial support have shown success in improving retention and reducing harmful practices. Radio and digital learning platforms have also played a critical role in maintaining learning continuity during school closures. However, interviews with

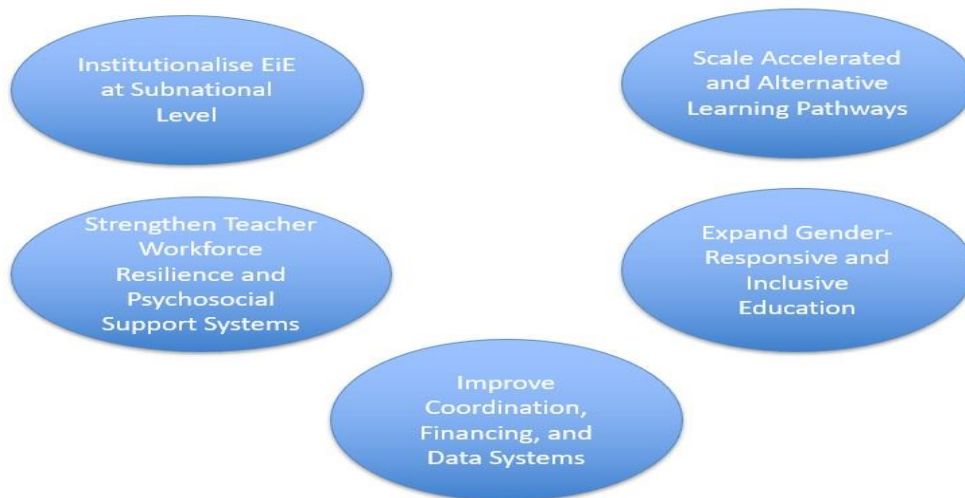
headteachers and community heads revealed variation in the presence of these innovations across local government areas (LGAs), 70%, 67%, and 50% of respondents in MMC, Jere, and Konduga LGA respectively reported the availability of some form of education interventions. This reflects uneven access to alternative learning pathways in communities heavily affected by displacement and learning disruption. Overall, while some targeted support is emerging, the adequacy of these programs remains inconsistent, particularly in high-need areas like Konduga LGA. In addition, respondents highlights that these innovations remain largely donor based and are not yet integrated into mainstream education systems. As noted by a headteacher in Shokari, MMC "...some organisations provide funding for 12 months or so. When they withdraw due to fund cutoff, no one to take over instantly". Hence, scaling these interventions will require stronger government ownership, sustainable financing, and alignment with national policies.

### **Policy Implications and Recommendations**

These findings highlight the urgent need for a paradigm shift in how Education in Emergencies is approached in Borno State. Rather than relying on reactive, short-term interventions, there is a need to build a resilient education system capable of anticipating, absorbing, and recovering from shocks. This requires embedding EiE within core education sector planning and ensuring that subnational actors have the capacity and resources to implement policies effectively. It also necessitates a stronger focus on teacher support, as well as the integration of gender and inclusion considerations across all interventions. Furthermore, scaling successful innovations will be critical to expanding access and improving learning outcomes. This will require coordinated efforts among government, donors, and implementing partners, as well as increased domestic investment in education.

To address the challenges identified, a five-pillar strategy is proposed for policy action to strengthen education in emergencies. These pillars include; i. Institutionalising EiE at Subnational Level, ii. Scale Accelerated and Alternative Learning Pathways, iii. Strengthen Teacher Workforce Resilience and Psychosocial Support Systems, iv. Expand GenderResponsive and Inclusive Education, and v. Improve Coordination, Financing, and Data Systems.

**Figure 3: Five-Pillar Strategy for Strengthening Education in Emergencies (EiE)**



### **Pillar 1: Institutionalise Education in Emergencies (EiE) at Subnational Levels**

Institutionalising Education in Emergencies (EiE) at subnational levels is critical to ensuring that education systems in Borno State are resilient, responsive, and capable of sustaining learning during crises. While national-level frameworks exist, their effectiveness is limited without operationalisation at the state, Local Government Area (LGA), and community levels, where service delivery occurs. The Borno state government should Embed EiE within the state and LGA education sector plans, budgets, and administrative structures to ensure that emergency preparedness and responses are not treated as ad hoc interventions but as core system functions. This will require the development and adoption of context-specific Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) with clearly define roles, responsibilities, and response protocols during shocks such as conflict or flooding. In addition, LGAs and community leaders should strengthen school-level preparedness through disaster management committees and contingency planning to enable quicker, more coordinated responses when disruptions occur. Furthermore, integration of early warning systems that link education actors with broader humanitarian and disaster response mechanisms is critical to ensure timely action and prevent prolonged school closures.

### **Pillar 2: Scale Accelerated and Alternative Learning Pathways**

Given the high number of out-of-school and over-age learners in Borno State, the state ministry of education in collaboration with NGOs and development partners should prioritise scaling accelerated and alternative learning pathways, which is essential to restoring access

and improving learning outcomes. Accelerated Education Programmes (AEPs) and girls' focused programs (G4G) have demonstrated effectiveness in enabling children who have missed years of schooling to have access to quality education and reintegrate into the formal education system. However, these programmes remain largely donor-driven and limited in scale. To address this, the state ministry of education should institutionalise education innovations within the formal education system, with clear certification pathways and alignment with national curricula. Expanding temporary learning spaces in underserved and high-risk areas like Konduga and Jere LGAs will further ensure continuity of education during periods of displacement or school closure. In parallel, leveraging radio and digital learning platforms can provide flexible, scalable solutions for reaching learners in inaccessible remote locations.

### **Pillar 3: Strengthen Teacher Workforce Resilience and Psychosocial Support Systems**

Teachers are central to the continuity and quality of education, particularly in crisis contexts. In Borno State, however, the teacher workforce faces significant challenges, including insecurity, displacement, high attrition rates, and limited professional support. Strengthening teacher workforce resilience is therefore essential to sustaining education delivery. The state government and SUBEB should look into implementing targeted incentives such as hardship allowances, housing support, and enhanced security measures, to attract and retain teachers in high-risk and underserved communities. Equally important is the provision of continuous professional development focused on EiE pedagogy, multi-grade teaching, and psychosocial support, enabling teachers to effectively respond to the needs of learners affected by trauma and disruption. Improving teacher deployment systems to ensure equitable distribution across LGAs is also critical. By investing in the resilience and capacity of teachers, the education system can maintain instructional continuity and improve learning outcomes even in the face of ongoing crises.

### **Pillar 4: Expand Gender-Responsive and Inclusive Education**

Education in Borno State is marked by significant gender and inclusion disparities, with girls and other vulnerable groups facing heightened barriers to access and participation. Expanding gender-responsive and inclusive education is therefore essential to ensuring that no child is left behind. This requires scaling interventions that address the specific challenges faced by

girls, including gender-based violence. Community engagement initiatives and mentorship programmes can play a key role in shifting social norms and promoting the value of girls' education. This should be championed by community leaders in collaboration with NGOs that specialises in gender equity and inclusion. In addition, schools particularly in Jere and Konduga LGA must be equipped with gender-sensitive infrastructure, such as safe sanitation facilities and menstrual hygiene management resources, to create supportive learning environments. Inclusive education efforts should also extend to children with disabilities and other marginalised groups, ensuring that learning materials, teaching approaches, and school environments are accessible and responsive to diverse needs. Strengthening referral systems for protection and psychosocial support within schools and communities in Borno state will further enhance the well-being and retention of vulnerable learners.

#### **Pillar 5: Improve Coordination, Financing, and Data Systems**

Effective coordination, sustainable financing, and robust data systems are foundational to the success of EiE interventions. In Borno State, fragmentation among government agencies, development partners, and humanitarian actors often leads to duplication of efforts and inefficient use of resources. Strengthening coordination mechanisms led by SUBEB and EIEWG at the state and LGA levels will enable better alignment of priorities, improved resource allocation, and more coherent implementation of interventions. Increasing domestic financing for education in emergencies is equally critical to reducing dependence on external funding and ensuring sustainability. This includes integrating EiE into regular education budgets and exploring innovative financing mechanisms to support long-term resilience building. At the same time, the development of real-time, reliable data systems is essential for informed decision-making and rapid response. Strengthening Education Management Information Systems (EMIS) to capture data on school closures, enrolment, attendance, and learning outcomes in crisis contexts will enhance planning and accountability. Improved monitoring and evaluation frameworks will further ensure that interventions are evidencebased and effective.

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