Key findings from the IDRC OOSC Mapping Survey in Eight Districts across Northern, North-East, and Upper East Regions of Ghana

Policy Brief

Introduction, Background & Context

The UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) observes that many countries show greater promise towards achieving universal access to education by 2030. However, over 258.4 million school age children, adolescents, and youth, across the world, are still denied the right to education (UIS, 2019). More than one-third of this number (representing about 98 million children) live in sub-Sahara Africa (SSA), more than half (53%) are girls (UIS, 2019). The UIS further estimates that one out of five children, between the ages of 6 and 11, is out of school in SSA. Moreover, one out of three youth, aged 12 to 14, is out of school. More worrying is that about 60% of youth aged 15 to 17 are not in school. This is notwithstanding the continuous efforts by SSA governments to make education more accessible through Education for All (EFA) initiatives over the past two to three decades.

Following the example of Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya and others, Ghana introduced a free Senior high school (SHS) policy in 2017, with the government absorbing the full cost of publicly provided secondary education (other than Parent Teacher Association dues). This was in response to increased demand for senior secondary education. Ghana had made significant progress towards achieving universal access to basic education by making it free and compulsory. Thus, the free SHS policy was intended to ensure girls increased participation in secondary education; reduce the burden to parents of the cost of school fees and thus, expand access to all children who successfully complete lower secondary school, especially the poor and vulnerable. Notwithstanding, over 610,000 children of upper secondary age are still denied access to SHS (UIS, 2020), with over 11% of Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) takers failing to transition to SHS despite being placed (EMIS data, 2019). The SHS out-of-school population is almost twice the number at the basic level (418,000), which comprises 283,000 children at the lower secondary level and 135,000 children at the primary level (UIS, 2020). Overall, 25% of upper secondary age children are out of school, compared to 7% at the lower secondary level and another 7% at the primary level (Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, 2017/18).

The out of school rates differ across various indicators such as gender, socio-economic status, and geographical location, with children in deprived communities facing the highest rates of educational exclusion. Economic deprivation is closely linked to disparities in access to education and learning achievement across SSA, as students from poor, rural households and urban informal settlements often confront hunger, stigma, internal

exclusion, and other factors which negatively affect their learning experiences (UNICEF, 2019). Notable among the factors that contribute to the wide disparities in education access between groups include rural-urban migration, long distance to school, inefficiency challenges (such as ?????), poverty, negative socio-cultural factors such as early marriages, and high opportunity cost of enrolling a child in school. Poverty and/or conflict, for example, have denied millions of older children and youth access to basic education, particularly in rural SSA (UNESCO Monitoring report, 2018).

In response to the high out-of-school numbers in rural SSA, education innovators have designed flexible, context-specific education programs to extend education to children in underserved communities and reduce the high out-of-school rates. In Ghana, for example, School for Life (SfL), Action Aid, World Education, Ghana Institute of Linguistics, Literacy and Bible Translation (GILLBT), Afrikids, and other education innovators have implemented flexible, age-appropriate accelerated education programs (AEPs) to fill critical gaps in the delivery of essential educational services, especially in deprived rural and extreme poverty zones. These programs target out-of-school, over-age children and youth who have been excluded from education or had their education interrupted due to economic deprivation, crisis and/or conflict. The government of Ghana has provided a policy environment to mainstream the contribution of civic actors by creating a separate agency (Complementary Education Agency) to coordinate activities of education innovators and support them to go to scale. Despite this initiative, Ghana remains one of the countries in SSA facing staggering out-of-school rates, with nearly one million school age children being denied access to basic education.

The Knowledge and Innovation Exchange Research

As part of the ongoing global effort towards addressing the out of school phenomenon, the Knowledge and Innovation Exchange/Global Partnership for Education (KIX/GPE) and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) is supporting a comparative study of "Accelerated Education and Girls Focused Programs in Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone", which is being implemented by Associates for Change (AfC), Ghana, Dalan Development Consult, Sierra Leone and Centre for the Study of Economies of Africa (CSEA), Nigeria. The multi-country KIX study focuses on vulnerable children and youth in rural, extreme poverty and fragile environments across West Africa. The overarching objective of the study is to increase access to learning for children who are out of school by generating knowledge to improve effectiveness of AEPs and girls' focused models across West Africa and make a case for scalability and adaptability.

The KIX Ghana Mapping

To set the context for Ghana's study, Associates for Change (AfC) conducted an OOS mapping survey in eight (8) districts across three administrative regions, namely Northern, Northeast E, and Upper East. The study focused on profiling the different categories of out of school children in intervention and non-intervention communities, covering variables such as gender, age, disability, and others. This was done based on UNICEF's five-dimensional framework for measuring educational exclusion. The study contextualized the out school situation in Ghana and further explored the demand and supply drivers of out-of-school as well as the diverse contexts within which education innovations are being implemented (rural deprived and extremely deprived contexts, socio-cultural, and poverty contexts). The mapping survey provides a solid base with which to measure the effectiveness and efficiency of Accelerated Education programmes (AEPs) in the subsequent studies (tracer and longitudinal surveys) to be

conducted as part of the IDRC KIX research. This Policy Brief presents the key findings from the mapping exercise.

Mapping Methodology

The mapping survey was anchored on an explanatory mixed-method design, involving the use of quantitative and qualitative research approaches to answer the research questions. This approach enabled the team to triangulate data from different sources. The quantitative data was generated using a structured household survey, community and school-level checklist and key informant interviews while the qualitative data was generated from focus group discussions and key informant interviews with district education officers, community leaders, headteachers, teachers, Complementary Basic Education (CBE) facilitators, and out-of-school children (OOSC). This enabled the team to generate robust data on out of school children and to take stock of AEP graduates and transitioners, as well as unearth the supply and demand drivers of the OOS situation. A multi-stage sampling approach was adopted to select robust samples at each level of the survey (regional, district, community, and household levels). The criterion for selecting a region/district was based on district exposure to an AEP intervention. At most, four intervention and non-intervention communities were visited, covering a total of 58 communities across the 8 project districts. The households surveyed were selected using a systematic random sampling technique.

Results and Discussion

The Out of school situation in Ghana – based on national level data

The findings of this study are set in the context of two key national level data sources - the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS, 2017/18), and the 2021 national population and housing census data. The MICS 2017/2018 data revealed that about seven percent of primary

school age children (283,000) were out of school as at 2018. The MICS data also shows that Out-of-school rates for rural children are slightly higher than the national average, while the rates for urban children are slightly lower. A higher proportion of males (7.4%) dropped out at the primary level as compared to females (6.4%). At the Senior High school level, however, a higher proportion of girls (29%) are out of school compared to boys (21.3%). This is due to lack of financial support for schooling; teenage pregnancy, and early marriage in the districts studied, The 2021 census data presents a gloomier picture - indicating about 60% of children aged 3-years and older are out of school (move to footnote: out of school children are defined as those attended school in the past and those who never attended school). Girls account for 62.2% of this out of school population while boys account for 58.8%.

Prevalence of OOSC by age group – based on mapping data

The out of school population for this study is estimated using the 'never attended' and 'attended in the past (dropped out)' population with specific focus on the population aged 4 to 17. Table 1 below presents X categories of children identified in the study. These are as follows: i)children 'currently and fully in school' (1,836); ii) children who are 'sometimes in school' (i.e. are at risk of dropping out- 88); iii) children who 'dropped out of school' (303); iv) and children who have 'never attended' formal school (680), with the 'never attending population constituting a large proportion of the identified children. The findings show that the out of school population aged 4 to 17 (KG – SHS) stood at 983. **(33.8%) out of a population of 2,907 children aged 4-17** The results further show that the incidence of out of school is predominant among children aged 6-11 years (primary level), demonstrating a little over double of the out of school proportion of the figure reported by MICS.

Table 1: Categories of all children across the study areas

Categories		Age Groups				Total	OOS Pop.
		4-5	6-11	12-14	15-17		
Total Sample		236	1643	551	477	2907	KG: 134 (4.6%)
In-School	Freq.	97	1103	354	282	1836	
	%	**3.3%**	**37.9%**	**12.2%**	**9.7%**	**63.2%**	
Never Attended	Freq.	132	394	86	68	680	Prim.: 481 (16.6%)
	%	**4.5%**	**13.6%**	**3.0%**	**2.3%**	**23.4%**	
Drop Out	Freq.	2	87	98	116	303	JHS: 184 (6.3%)
	%	**0.1%**	**3.0%**	**3.4%**	**4.0%**	**10.4%**	
At Risk[1]	Freq.	5	59	13	11	88	SHS: 184 (6.3%)
	%	**0.2%**	**2.0%**	**0.4%**	**0.4%**	**3.0**	
Total		8.1	56.5	19.0	16.4	100.0	Total: 983 (33.8%)

Source: Household data, OOSC mapping survey, 2022

The high out-of-school rate among children of primary school age is largely driven by factors such as fosterage, parents'/ caregivers' inability to afford school expenses, household need to involve children in income generation activities, supply constraints, among others. Interestingly, the number of kinder garten children aged 4-5 (KG) in the 'never attended' category is substantial (132), implying that many children experience delayed enrolment in school or do not have access to KG facilities. In relation to drop-out incidence, the numbers are higher at the senior high level (15-17) indicating that children face a higher risk of dropout as they get into higher levels of education (SHS). This finding is in line with what was reported in the MICS report (2017/18).

Prevalence of OOSC by sex
Overall, the evidence shows a higher incidence of out of school children among the male population (533) compared to the female population (438). This result conforms with the national-level evidence from the Ghana Demographic and Health Survey (GDHS) and the Multiple Indicator Cluster Study (MICS) both of which demonstrate that there are more males out of school compared to females in Ghana. However, a higher proportion of girls drop out of secondary and fail to transition. Further, as Table 2 below shows twice as many children (male and female) have 'never attended' school (nearly 69%) as have dropped out of school (just over 31%) meaning that a higher number of school going aged children, particularly girls, have never been enrolled in school.

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[1] Sometimes in school

Table 2: Out of school population by sex:

Out of school Pop.	Female		Male		Total	
	Freq.	**%**	**Freq.**	**%**	**Freq.**	**%**
Drop Out	108	24.7%	195	36.6%	303	31.2%
Never Attended	330	75.3%	338	63.4%	668	68.8%
Total	**438**	**100%**	**533**	**100%**	**971**	**100%**

Source: Household data, OOSC mapping survey, 2022

Drop out numbers by grade and level deprivation

Table 3 presents data on school dropout numbers by grade and level of deprivation. The data shows there are more children who dropped out of school in rural deprived communities than in extremely deprived areas, contrary to a prior expectation. This is likely attributable to the higher number of rural deprived communities (39) in the sample as compared to the extremely deprived areas (19). and also by the fact that there are more children in school across the rural deprived areas and so are more likely to have more drop-outs. Further,

dropout rates are more pronounced at the lower level (specifically, between grade 1 and grade 6), with rural deprived communities accounting for about 63.3% of all drop out incidences. At the JHS three level, there were no dropouts in the extremely deprived communities. Interestingly, however, the dropout rates (total) decrease as children progress from grade 2 to higher grades. This contradicts the widely held view that older children in deprived areas tend to drop out of school more frequently because of the need to engage in income generation, take on family/ household responsibilities, or due to the rising opportunity cost of schooling.

Table 3: Drop out numbers by level/types of deprivation

Class level	Extremely Deprived		Rural Deprived		Total	
	Freq.	**%**	**Freq.**	**%**	**Freq.**	**%**
KG1	4	3.6%	8	4.1%	12	3.9%
KG2	6	5.4%	13	6.7%	19	6.2%
Primary School 1	21	18.8%	24	12.4%	45	14.8%
Primary School 2	24	21.4%	28	14.5%	52	17.0%
Primary School 3	15	13.4%	28	14.5%	43	14.1%
Primary School 4	19	17.0%	23	11.9%	42	13.8%
Primary School 5	6	5.4%	31	16.1%	37	12.1%
Primary School 6	6	5.4%	22	11.4%	28	9.2%
Junior Secondary 1	6	5.4%	6	3.1%	12	3.9%
Junior Secondary 2	2	1.8%	5	2.6%	7	2.3%
Junior Secondary 3		-	2	1.0%	2	0.7%
Senior Secondary 3	1	0.9%	3	1.6%	4	1.3%
Total	**112**	**100.0%**	**193**	**100.0%**	**305**	**100%**

Source: Household data, out of school mapping survey by AfC, 2022

Factors accounting for school dropout rates

This section of the policy brief highlights the key factors that contribute to children leaving school, based on perspectives from household heads and primary caregivers. The factors comprise social, financial, cultural, attitudinal, and others (see Table 4 below). The data shows that attitudinal considerations, such as 'children disliking school', account for more than half of the responses (52%). This is likely attributable to high demand of parents on child labor and inability to meet the children's basic needs, poor quality learning environment (high teacher absenteeism, lack of textbooks and TLMs), child's inability to cope in school due to poor academic performance, and so forth. These mostly cause children's interest in school to dwindle, subsequently leading to drop out. This phenomenon is predominant among males. Other key factors include 'inability to meet school expenses' (27.7%), limited importance attached to schooling (14.1%), poor academic performance (12%), engaging children in household chores (8.9%), and so forth.

Table 4: Factors accounting for school dropout

Factors	Female		Male		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
School is not important	8	10.7%	19	16.4%	27	14.1%
Limited interest in schooling (the child does not like school)	38	50.7%	62	53.4%	100	52.4%
His/ her mother's refusal	1	1.3%	2	1.7%	3	1.6%
Refusal of his/ her father	-	-	10	8.6%	10	5.2%
Refusal of another family member	1	1.3%	5	4.3%	6	3.1%
Must help with housework	6	8.0%	11	9.5%	17	8.9%
Must help with professional activities	1	1.3%	1	0.9%	2	1.0%
Pregnancy	-	-	2	1.7%	2	1.0%
Migration	12	16.0%	3	2.6%	15	7.9%
Inability to meet school expenses	21	28.0%	32	27.6%	53	27.7%
Poor academic performance	13	17.3%	10	8.6%	23	12.0%
Indiscipline	1	1.3%	7	6.0%	8	4.2%
Apprenticeship	12	16.0%	6	5.2%	18	9.4%
Total	75	39.3%	116	60.7%	191	100.0%

Source: Household data, out of school mapping survey by AfC, 2022

To further strengthen the evidence, qualitative data was sourced from household heads, district education officers, out-of-school children, and other stakeholders through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). Some of the perspectives corroborating this finding are highlighted below:

"...Parents have very low interest in the education of their children and would rather spend on funerals and naming of children..." (Tolon District Education Office, Northern Region)

"Due to lack of funds to get him learning resources such as books, uniform and others, he dropped out of school" (Household head, Talensi District, Upper East Region)

"Parents' unwillingness or lack of commitment to provide uniforms, books and other stationery for us to go to school" (FGD with OOSC, Yendi, Northern Region)

"Father got sick, and my mother is poor, and they could not provide uniform, books and bicycle so I dropped out…" (FGD with OOSC, Yendi, Northern Region)

"Some of us are not interested in schooling. Those out of school easily get money when they finish apprenticeship or travel to the cities than those in school" (FGD with OOSC, Saboba District, Northern Region)

"We dropped out because going to school is very tedious and at the end you may not even get a job after completing school" (FGD with OOSC, Kumbungu District, Northern Region)

"I wanted to start a business, so I don't end up like those who finish school without money or a job" (FGD with OOSC, Talensi, Upper East Region)

Highlight/ analyse key regional or district variations?

'At risk of dropping out' population

The study further assessed the 'at risk of dropping out' population using three different metrics, namely: a) over age for grade,; b) frequency of repetition (how many times children repeated a class);and c) frequency of school attendance. Using the 'over age for grade' metric, the data in Table 5 show that out of the 1,924 children currently in school, 592 (representing 30.8%) are at risk of dropping out because they are over age for their current grade. At age 12, children are expected to be at the Junior High level, however, about 297 (15.4%) of such children are at various stages in primary school, putting them at a higher risk of dropping out. Moreover, at age 15, children are expected to be at the Senior High level, however, about 292 (15.2%) of such children were found to be in either primary school or JHS, placing them at high risk of dropping out. Can you disaggregate by sex? Any regional/ district variations noted?

In terms of **frequency of repetition**, 158 pupils, who are currently enrolled in school, have been repeated, with 16% of them repeating a class more than ones. About two-thirds of this number is in primary school. Casely-Hayford et al., (2017) demonstrated that the more a student repeats a class, the higher the likelihood of that child dropping out of school. Regarding frequency of attendance, 435 (23%) skip some school days, especially during the rainy season. A significant proportion of children who skip school in the most disadvantaged localities are in lower primary school and kindergarten. This puts them at a higher risk of dropping out of school.

Table 5: At risk of dropping out by age groups (using overage for grade)

Current level of education	4 – 5		6 – 11		12 – 14		15+		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Kg 1	71	42%	100	59%					171	9%
Kg 2	25	16%	130	83%	2	1%			157	8%
Primary School 1	5	2%	310	93%	17	5%	2	1%	334	17%
Primary School 2			243	90%	24	9%	2	1%	269	14%
Primary School 3			214	79%	47	17%	9	3%	270	14%
Primary School 4			95	54%	68	38%	14	8%	177	9%
Primary School 5			49	36%	64	47%	23	17%	136	7%
Primary School 6			14	12%	75	62%	32	26%	121	6%

Junior Secondary 1			5	4%	44	39%	65	57%	114	6%
Junior Secondary 2			1	1%	17	20%	68	79%	86	4%
Junior Secondary 3					9	11%	77	90%	86	4%
Senior Secondary 1							3	100%	3	0.2%
Total	101	5%	1161	60%	367	19%	295	15%	1924	100%

Source: Household data, out of school mapping survey by AfC, 2022

To develop a stronger understanding of the reasons behind the high drop-out risks in deprived areas, we engaged many stakeholders (especially, district education officers), through FGDs, to elicit their views. Some of the perspectives are presented below:

"…Some parents have refused to enroll their children in school. They think that children who enroll in school and later drop out or complete without jobs become social misfits since such children no longer like to go farm or learn a trade. So, some parents   prefer to engage their children on the farms instead of wasting their time in school. Those who are half educated I mean the dropouts don't like farming. They claim they can't farm anymore, and the school has not benefitted them either" (SMC /PTA, Gushiegu District, Northern Region)

"Their parents can't pay fees, and they feel like it takes long for the children to benefit from education and is waste of money to encourage the children to attend school regularly" (SMC/PTA Member, Tolon District, Northern Region)

"Some of them get married at early age to abate the burden to parents of taking care of these children. Some parents do not also appreciate the value of schooling and as such, do not encourage their children to go to school" (SMC/PTA member, Karaga District, Northern Region)

"These problems emanate from early marriages, teenage pregnancy and poverty" (SMC/ Mamprugu, Northeast Region)

"Children commute to the nearest community to attend school because government has not established school in this community. This increases their risk of dropping out" (SMC/PTA member, Karaga District, Northern Region)

"The teachers are not adequate. Some of the classes do not have teachers and children idle when they go to school. Teacher absenteeism is another issue. Sometimes the children go and come back to tell us their class teachers are not in school" (SMC/PTA member, Gushegu District, Northern Region)

"There is inadequate furniture in the classrooms and so most of the children sit on the floor to write and this does not motivate the children to come to school regularly" (SMC/PTA member, Talensi District, Upper East Region)

The qualitative perspectives highlight socio-cultural factors (such as early marriage), economic reasons, supply constraints and inefficiency challenges, long distance to school, among others, as the underlying reasons behind the high dropout risks in deprived communities.

Number of Transitioned AEP learners – school level data

Table 6 presents data on the number of AEP graduates who are currently enrolled in the mainstream educational system disaggregated by sex, based on school-level data as provided by the headteachers. Overall, we found about 664 AEP transitioned graduates in formal schools across the study districts, with a higher proportion of AEP graduates in primary school being female (69%). This is likely attributable to

the conscious effort by most education innovators to create safe spaces for girls. The study further established that there were more AEP transitioned graduates in Primary 4 (26%), with female AEP graduates accounting for 72% of this number. P2 and P6 had the lowest numbers of AEP learners (15% and 17%, respectively).

Table 6: Number of transitioned AEP learners

No. of AEPs Grad. at each level	Male		Female		Total	
	Freq.	**%**	**Freq.**	**%**	**Freq.**	**%**
P2	26	13%	73	16%	99	15%
P3	56	28%	84	18%	140	21%
P4	48	24%	125	27%	173	26%
P5	43	21%	98	21%	141	21%
P6	30	15%	81	18%	111	17%
Total	**203**	100%	**461**	100%	**664**	**100%**

Source: Headteacher and teacher instrument, OOSC mapping survey, 2022

Number AEP graduates retained in school – district level data

Data from four of the eight study districts puts the number of transitioned AEP learners in the formal school system at 2,230 (see Table 6). The data show that a slightly higher number of girls transitioned into formal school (1,117 out of 2,230) than boys. Comparing the districts, Talensi had the highest percentage of AEP learners continuing in formal education (almost 90%), with the majority being female . This could be based on the education innovators extra support in providing children with uniforms and shoes to attend school and their interventions with parents on girls education. In the remaining districts, more males have been retained in the formal school than females, notably in Gushiegu district.

Table 1: Number of AEP graduates retained in school

District	Male		Female		Total	
	Freq.	**%**	**Freq.**	**%**	**Freq.**	**%**
Gushegu	60	5%	35	3%	95	4%
Karaga	6	1%	4	0%	10	0.4%
Talensi	910	82%	982	88%	1892	85%
Tolon	137	12%	96	9%	233	10%
Total	**1113**	100%	**1117**	100%	**2230**	**100%**

Source: District Education Office data, OOSC mapping survey, 2022

Gender Dynamics of Out of School Incidence

The findings reveal some gender dynamics with regards to the out of school population. The data shows that the drop-out numbers among the male population (64.3%) is twice that of the female population (35.7%) as reflected in the

out-of-school numbers at both primary and JHS levels.

These gender dynamics in drop out numbers are explained by a number of factors highlighted by household heads and primary caregivers. They comprise social, financial, cultural and attitudinal factors. In terms of attitudinal factors, issues such as children's dislike of school accounts for more than half of the responses (52%). This is largely attributed to parental inaction, unconducive school environment, and poor school/ academic performance. These issues compounded gradually result in pupils dwindling interest in schooling and subsequently their dropping out. The attitudinal issue is a more prominent driver explaining male drop-outs (62) than female drop-outs (39). Other key reasons include 'inability to meet school expenses' (53), limited importance attached to schooling (27), poor academic performance (23), and household chores (17) .

Transition challenges

AEP learners across the country are faced with several challenges. Interviews with District Education Officers revealed that most challenges with transition can be attributed to the lack of learning materials, mostly due to high poverty rates and the fact that these are costly. Meeting basic school needs such as uniforms, books, bags, shoes and stationery is a herculean task for most parents/ caregivers of AEP learners. The following quote supports this argument:

"Lack of basic school materials, due to poverty on the part of their parents, makes it difficult for some AEP graduates to transition to the formal system…" (DEO, Talensi District, Upper East)

In addition, long distances for pupils to access the nearest public school is a key challenge for transitioned learners. An official from the District Education Office in Gushegu notes that:

"Several communities do not have primary and JHS schools and as a result, the children travel long distances to school. This situation discourages the children who tend to drop out from school"

This explanation was corroborated by other District Educations Officers:

"Distance from the community to the school is a major barrier to education in this district, explaining why some AEP graduates fail to transition to the formal system…" (DEO, Karaga District, Northern Region)

"Distance to JHS schools, Low parental income are other key constraints that limit the transition effectiveness of AEP graduates into the formal system" (DEO, Yendi Metro, Northern Region)

Other social factors like early marriage and parents'/ caregivers limited ability to send their children to school are part of the transition challenges. Some parents are unable to allow their children to transition to formal school due to the pressure to have children assist them on the farm and sustain food security in the household.

Demand drivers of OOSC

Socio-cultural practices (such as early marriage), engaging children in both household chores, especially girls, and productive activities such as farming as well as economic deprivation and high poverty levels, etc., are key factors that contribute to the out of school phenomenon. This is supported by a range of qualitative perspectives including those presented in the Box below:

"My father asked me to drop out of school and come and help him on the farm. My father complained that he didn't have enough money to take me to school" (FGD with Female OOSC, Mamprugu Moagduri District, Northeast Region)

"We could not buy books, bags uniform and food" (FGD with Male OOSC, Tolon District, Northern Region)

"We are a large family (many children) and our parents cannot send all of us boys to school. He had to choose between who should go to school and those who should support him on his maize farm. Lack of funds from my parents to cater for me in school caused me to drop out" (Female OOSC)

"Children are mostly eager to go to Accra for kayaye" (Male Head teacher, Nwogu AME Zion Primary, Kumbungu, Northern Region)

"Most girls are engaged in household chores such as nursing their siblings, or involved in apprenticeship (mostly weaving), migrating to work as kayaye (girls who carry goods at markets)" (Male Teacher, Kpilo/ Napagyili D/A Primary, Kumbungu, Northern Region)

"Housemaid services, teenage pregnancy, early marriages, poverty, illegal mining and migration are key factors that drive children out of school" (Head Teacher, Kpatia Primary, Talensi, Upper East)

"Some girls skip school when they are experiencing their menstrual period, because they do not have sanitary pads." (Head Teacher, Kpatia Primary, Talensi, Upper East)

Supply drivers of OOS

Key supply drivers of OOSC drawn from the mapping study include long distances between home and school, lack of access, challenges with teacher deployment and associated issues, high pupil-to-resource ratio, and low rates of teacher retention, especially in deprived and hard to reach areas. This is corroborated by some qualitative views shared by different stakeholders and depicted in the Box below.

"Primary education faces a lot of challenges including lack of infrastructure, distance from the community to the nearest school and teacher absenteeism" (Karaga District Education Office)

"Most of the communities have primary schools but these schools are less equipped with infrastructure and resources needed for effective teaching and learning" (Talensi District Education Office)

"The distance from most communities to the nearest JHS is far, affecting the transition process" (District Education Officer, Talensi District, Northern Region)

"Long distance and Poverty are key barriers to education access" (District Planning Officer, Mamprugu Moagduri District, Northeast region)

"AEPs have increased enrolment and improved retention of OOSC in the regular system" (Karaga District Education Office, Northern Region)

"The introduction of AEP has brought back the children who were out of school. It has improved retention of children in school. A lot of the children were able to transition to the formal education system" (Talensi District Education Office, Upper East Region)

"The AE program has enhanced the understanding of parents about the relevance of education, instilling in them the need to take education of their children seriously, but has also reduced dropout rates. Other AE programmes have focused on helping OOSC to acquire livelihoods skills to help them earn a living and support families… sometimes, those in the formal system are supported with school uniforms, books, sandals" (Tolon District Education Office, Northern Region).

Conclusions

The out of school mapping set out to gather data on the prevalence of the out of school situation across selected districts, communities, and households in Ghana and across different

contexts. Based on the key findings of the study, the following conclusions are as follows:

- 33.8% (983 out of 2,907) of children aged 4-17 years across the 8-study districts are out of school; with fewer girls enrolling in school.
- A higher proportion of out of school children (16.6%) are at the primary level (6-11 years)
- Children's disinterest in school is the leading driver of school dropout, which is associated with parental neglect and inability to provide the childrrens basic needs, poor conditions of learning in schools, teacher absenteeism, limited or no Text books and TLMs, children's inability to cope in school due to poor academic performance.
- Other key drivers of school dropout include parents'/ caregivers lack of resources to meet school expenses; limited importance attached to education; need to engage children in household and livelihood, agricultural/ income generating activities, and socio-cultural factors (such as early marriage, child fosterage)
- About 1,185 children are at risk of dropping out – 592 of them are overage for their current grade, 158 have repeated a grade at least once while 435 skip school days for various reasons
- The reasons underpinning high dropout risks in deprived communities include poverty, socio-cultural factors (such as early marriage), economic reasons (inability to meet children's school expenses), supply constraints and efficiency challenges, long distance to school, among others
- About 664 AEP transitioned graduates were found to be at various grades in formal schools across the study districts, with a higher proportion of them being girls (69%).

This may be due to the conscious effort by most education innovators to create safe spaces for girls
- The number of AEP transitioned graduates (based on data from four out of the eight study districts) is about 2,230 learners, with a marginal difference according to sex (1,117 girls (50.09%) and 1,113 boys (49.91%)
- A major factor that affects the transition of AEP graduates into the formal system is the inability of many parents/ caregivers to meet their wards' school expenses (e.g., cost of stationery, textbooks, uniforms, etc), mostly due to the widespread prevalence of poverty
- Key demand drivers of OOS include socio-cultural practices (such as early marriage), need to engage children in household chores (especially girls), inability to meet school expenses due to economic deprivation and extreme poverty, and others
- Key supply drivers of OOS include long distance to school, lack of access, inefficient teacher deployment and associated issues, lack of critical infrastructure and resources needed to facilitate teaching and learning as well as low teacher retention, especially in deprived and hard-to-reach communities.

Recommendations

Government/Policy level actions

- There is the need to improve access to schools by re-assessing and mapping-out communities that need community-based schools and then working at supplying basic school facilities in such communities.
- There is the need to address high Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR) and Pupil Trained Teacher Ratio (PTTR) at KG level through training more teachers through the Colleges

of Education and also by providing (financial and other) incentives to make postings to remote and hard to reach areas more attractive.

Programmatic and strategic approaches to attain SDG 2 and presidential commitment to halving the numbers of out of school children:

- AEPs and Girls Focused Programmes require support (e.g. 1% or more of basic education budget investment in Ghana to sustain the gains achieved in addressing the OOSC issue.
- The Ministry of Education (MoE) should ensure that the 1% commitment to basic education earmarked for CBE is realised each year to sustain and scale up the CBE programme across the country.
- The Ministry should reintroduce the Untrained Teacher Diploma Programme in order to ensure teacher retention, reduce absentieesm especially in extremely deprived and hard-to-reach areas.

- There is the need to build a comprehensive database on OOSC so that appropriate and more targeted approaches can be designed, proposed and implemented.

For Schools and communities

- There is the need for continuous education of parents/primary caregivers to understand the imperative of educating ALL children
- It is important to improve household income particularly through alternative and sustainable jobs.

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Authors

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