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# The Impact and Effectiveness of Accelerated Education programmes in Nigeria: the impact on Girls and Girls' Education

## *Working Paper*

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## **Abbreviations Meaning**

UNICEF	United Nations Children Education Fund
IDRC	International Development Research Center
KIX	Knowledge and Innovation Exchange
OOSC	Out-of-school children
AEP	Accelerated Education Program
ECR	Education Crisis Response
AENN	Addressing Education in Northeast Nigeria
FHI	Family Health International
MMC	Maiduguri Municipal council
RERA	Rapid Education and Risk Assessment
IRC	International Rescue Committee
ALP	Accelerated Learning Program

## Introduction

The campaign for gender equity and social inclusion in education access has been strong in recent times, especially among the global south nations. Being one of these nations, Nigeria has pursued the goal of making quality education accessible to all, irrespective of gender, religion, ethnic group, and socio-economic background. This is obvious as witnessed in policies such as free compulsory basic education as well as various incentivizing efforts evidenced in intervention programs such as school feeding program,<sup>1</sup> Almajeri's education initiatives,<sup>2</sup> establishment of Integrated Quranic and Technical School (IQTS), Nomadic Education Initiatives,<sup>3</sup> among others. Despite several policies and interventions initiated, girls' education still remains a major challenge in the country.

However, evidence shows that girls' education in Nigeria has suffered significant setback. According to UNICEF, 60% of out-of-school children (OOSC) in Nigeria are girls (Malala, 2023). The Nigerian team of the Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (KIX) West African Hub has embarked on a research on how to increase access to quality education for the rural and marginalized children using an innovation known as Accelerated Education Program (AEP). In pursuit of Research Questions (RQ) 1 and 2 respectively, among the five RQs posed on the study, OOSC Mapping study and a Tracer & Effectiveness study were conducted in 2022. The findings from these studies as well as those existing in implemented AEP reports<sup>4</sup> are used in this working paper to provide some evidence on the profile of OOSC and the effectiveness of the AEP innovation respectively, especially with respect to girls' education in Nigeria.

The OOSC mapping was a mixed method study (a household survey and Key Informant Interviews - KII & Focused Group Discussions – FGD) interviews conducted in 2 Local Government Areas (LGA) in Borno state (Jere and Maiduguri Municipal Council – MMC), within 30 communities. The communities were categorized in conflict context and in AEP intervention context. In conflict contexts, the categories are Host Communities and IDP Camps while in the context of an AEP experience, the communities are either Intervention or Non-intervention communities. Similarly, the Tracer & Effectiveness study was conducted in 3 LGAs (Jere, MMC and Konduga) in Borno state within 40 communities. In the study, children from age 13 to 20 who had benefitted AEP intervention in the last 3 to 5 years were traced and studied using KII and FGD. These children were categorized into 3 profiles. Profile 1 includes children who transitioned from AEP into the formal school and are still there. Profile 2 includes children who transitioned from AEP into formal school after AEP but later dropped out of formal school. Profile 3 children are those who could not transition to formal school after AEP but went on straight into the world of work.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://nasims.gov.ng/programs/hgsf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://ubec.gov.ng/department-of-tsangayaalmajri-education-program/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ncne.gov.ng/mandate/>

<sup>4</sup> These are reports of the past AEPs that have been implemented in Nigeria

## **Objective of the working paper**

The purpose of the working paper is to collate selected evidence from the OOSC mapping study and qualitative effectiveness study to highlight the impact of accelerated education programs (AEP) on girls' education in Nigeria. It attempts to take a direct slice of the instrument data to answer the research questions on Girls Education which are imbedded in our study. The working paper attempts to show the following:

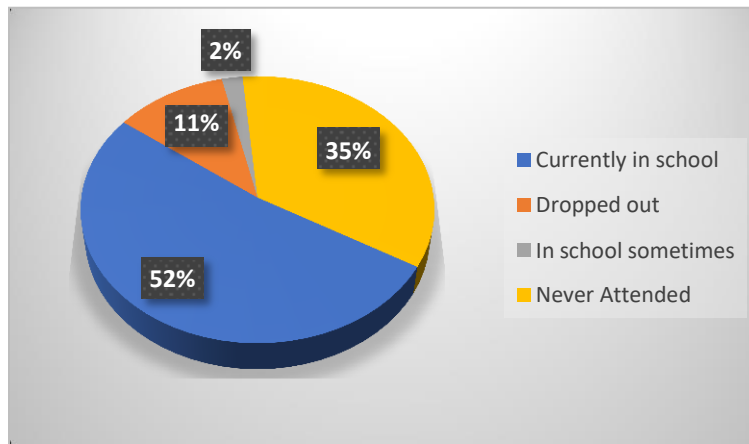
- How and under what conditions do AEPs address and contribute to the improvement of the quality of life and education trajectories particularly for girls in Nigeria
- How do AEPs strengthen the empowerment of girls to make decisions and help them transition to higher levels of learning and in the world of work.

The paper thus proceeds as follows: section 1 presents general context of girls' education and the out of school situation in Nigeria leveraging findings from the various sources including the mapping study; section 2 presents preliminary evidence from the Impact and effectiveness of AEPs on girls education; and section three concludes and recommends for scaling up AEPs for government

## **Section 1: Context of Girls Education and the Out-of-School Situation**

Nigeria has the highest population of OOSC in the world, not less than 10.5 million children. A full one-third of Nigerian children are not in school, and one in five out-of-school children in the world is Nigerian (UNICEF, 2023). This is mirrored by data on the OOSC mapping exercise for the northeast Nigeria. As found from the data as presented in Figure 1, out of the total of 4049 children of school age surveyed, 2096 are currently in school, 456 are dropped out, 84 are in school sometimes (i.e. at risk of dropping out) and 1413 have never attended school. These are in the proportions 52%, 11%, 2% and 35% respectively. The combined proportion of dropped out children and those who never attended school, 46% represents the OOSC which are almost half of the population of school age children. This magnitude of OOSC population clearly warrants attention and urgent intervention.

**Figure 1: Education status of children**



Source: Household Survey Data, OOSC Mapping 2022.

In order to reveal the education situation of girls, Table 1 presents the OOSC by gender. The total figures from this table tend to paint a favorable picture for girls’ situation. However, a slicing of data by gender reveals that although, a lower proportion of girls have never attended school, more girls than boys actually dropped out (about 52%) and more girls than boys are at risk of dropping out (about 55%) as they only attend school irregularly.

**Table 1: OOSC by Gender**

	Female	%	Male	%	Total
<b>Dropped Out</b>	235	51.54	221	48.46	456
<b>In school sometimes</b>	46	54.76	38	45.24	84
<b>Never Attended</b>	681	48.2	732	51.8	1,413
<b>Total</b>	962	49.26	991	50.74	1,953

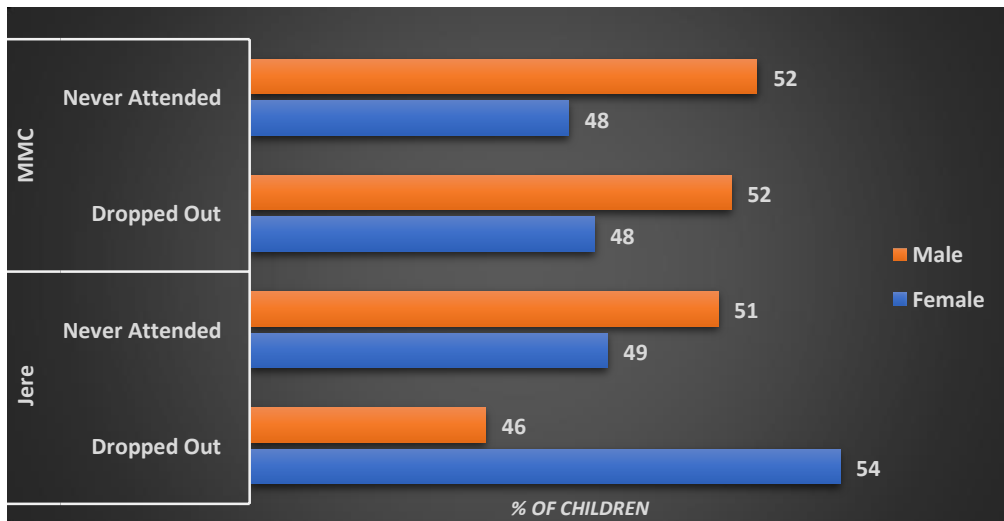
Source: Household Survey Data, OOSC Mapping 2022

Figure 2 presents the situation within the local governments. From this visualization, it is clear that Jere LGA experiences more girls’ educational deprivation than MMC. Jere LGA has more proportion of girls who have never attended school before (49%) compared to MMC. Also, more girl drop-outs than boys in this LGA as revealed by the higher proportion of girls of this education status (54%). Further evidence emphasized the complex challenges facing the girls in accessing education in the LGA, as revealed by some informants’ quotes:

*“The situation is very pathetic as most of them are left unattended and uncatered for, even never been in school” (Key Informant, Jere LGEA)*

*“They attached less importance for girls in this community because after they graduate from primary School most of them don't allow to further their education” (AEP facilitator, Jere)*

**Figure 2: OOSC disaggregated by gender and LGA**



Source: Household Survey Data, OOSC Mapping 2022

## 1.1 Barriers to girls’ education

From the foregoing, enquires were made in form of qualitative interview on the barriers to education of girls, using various instruments designed for different education stakeholders. The main barriers that stand out among the responses are socio-economic, religious, cultural and insecurity factors. These barriers are subsequently discussed.

### 1.1.1 Socio-economic factor

Extreme poverty in Nigeria, especially in the northern part of the country, is identified as a predominant socio-economic factor hindering enrolment in formal education (ACAPS, 2017). Most households are found in low income jobs at a subsistence level. Although education is currently free in Nigeria, the ancillary cost of funding children’s education is still considered unaffordable to many households. Families therefore tend to prioritize subsistence over children’s education. In many cases, the girl children tend to be most affected who often stay with their mothers to assist with trades such as cap making, hawking, sewing, etc., rather than go to school. In the OOSC mapping exercise, poverty remains a crucial factor undermining the ability of a girl child to education which has future implication for such child. Moreover, Parents-Teachers Association (PTA)/School Based Management Committee (SBMC), community leaders, as well as AEP facilitators, point to poverty as an undermining factor, as revealed in the evidence presented below:

*“Poverty and lack of interest shown by some parents and the children towards education” (Community Leader, Jere LGA, OOSC mapping)*



*“Lack of Uniforms, lack of scholastic materials, lack of means to meet the basic needs of the children” (KII with PTA/SBMC)*

*“They do some menial jobs to get food to eat and so regular attendance to school is difficult” (AEP facilitator, Jere)*

*“Inability of the parent to sponsor their children in schools” (AEP facilitator, Jere LGA)*

*“Lack of money and mostly Parents complain and when a girl reaches the age of 14 she gets married (FGD with PTA/ SBMC)*

### **1.1.2 Socio-cultural factors**

Apart from the poverty factor, the cultural beliefs/gender norms that manifest in male dominance, patriarchy, gender stereotypes, social exclusion, and others account significantly for the poor state of girls’ education in Nigeria. In the social context, men and women do not attract equal social status. A boy child tends to be valued higher than a girl-child in Nigerian society as he is perceived to be the one that perpetuates the lineage and expected to be the breadwinner of the home. This also reflects in households’ attitude towards education of girls, though perceived to be gradually changing. The female child’s education tends to be discounted since it is believed that she would eventually be given out in marriage someday, amounting to a wasted investment. So, most girls are encumbered with household chores believed to prepare them for their future matrimonial homes. As a result, some girls never get enrolled at all and those who do either drop out later or are at a high risk of dropping out, often signaled by irregular attendance. Specifically, overwhelming evidence from various stakeholders reflect this concerns as showed below:

*“We have been recording low attendance in the school especially when these children are engaged in household chores” (Headteacher, MMC)*

*“Most of them comes to school late as a result of engagement with the activities at home” (Community Leader, Jere)*

*“Cooking before coming to school and it contributes to late coming of these children to school” (FGD with PTA/ SBMC, MMC)*

*“Domestic chores like fetching water and the water point is not situated in the community and this mostly keep these children away from the school” (AEP facilitator, Jere)*

### 1.1.3 Religious beliefs

A religion induced prejudice is maintained in the northern Nigeria towards western education as it is popularly condemned of getting children amorally exposed. Many households therefore prefer Qur’anic education to formal education. A factor such as early marriage is entrenched in socio-cultural practices and religious beliefs (Mobolaji et al., 2020). In the northern parts of the country, constituted by majority Muslims, where religion is pivotal to identity and way of life, a girl child is expected to be married between the ages of 13 - 18, beyond which her fidelity is considered questionable if she is still unmarried (Mobolaji et al., 2020). A combination of these two factors poses a major threat to girls’ education, as their educational adventures get truncated once they enter marriage. Table 3 below shows the distribution of women aged 20 to 49 who got married before age 18. According to this Table from the Multiple Clusters Indicator Survey of 2016 - 2019, the prevalence of child marriage is evident in northern Nigeria. It is also alarming to note that on the national scene, an average of 44.1% of girls are married as a child.

**Table 2: Nigerian Women Aged 20-49 Married Before 18 (percent)**

Geopolitical Zones	2017
North Central	39.0
Northeast	56.6
Northwest	67.6
Southeast	13.9
South-south	21.5
Southwest	14.6
National Average	44.1

*Source: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2016-17, Survey Findings Report. Abuja, Nigeria: National Bureau of Statistics and United Nations Children’s Fund.*

On the OOSC mapping, when asked about other factors apart from the socio-economic and supply-side, that prevent girls from coming to school, the key informants gave various comments related to religion and early marriage are hereby quoted:

*“Early marriage and wrong perception of parents shown towards education” (Community Leader, Jere LGA)*

*“Parents perception. They consider begging to get food to eat is better than Education” (FGD with PTA/ SBMC, MMC)*

*“Early marriage, Sangaya system” (AEP facilitator, MMC)*

*“Lack of uniforms and sometimes the parents tell the girls wait until you get marriage before you continue with your education” (FGD with PTA/ SBMC, Jere)*

*“Quranic Education, wrong perception of Western Education” (AEP Facilitator, Jere LGA)*

#### **1.1.4 Insecurity**

The problem of insecurity also constitutes a threat to girls’ education, as it is most pronounced in northern Nigeria. Responses from our qualitative inquiry on the OOSC mapping exercise suggest that girls who are enrolled in school face the risk of gender-based violence on their way to school, which leads to an unwanted pregnancy in many cases. The security situation in northeast Nigeria has aggravated this problem, as girls were kidnapped from school by terrorists on various occasions. Amnesty International (2015) estimated that at least 2,000 women and girls had been abducted by the Islamic terrorist group since 2014, many of whom had been forced into sexual slavery.<sup>5</sup> Some comment from the KII on the OOSC mapping when asked which challenges are faced by girls when going to school, supports this:

*“Exposure to sexual harassment, tiredness due long walk, lateness to school Absenteeism, additional expenses on food, transport” (Community leader, Jere)*

*“Fear of attack, rape, stigmatization that is caused by teachers through abuse, peer group or bad company” (Headteacher, Jere)*

*Early pregnancy as a result of them attending Education outside the community (PTA/SBMC, Jere)*

Also, there is the problem of the absence of gender sensitive pedagogy in schools, as teachers' attitudes towards girls are influenced by a society where gender stereotypes and harmful gender norms are the order of the day. Teachers tend to perceive girls as being intellectually weaker than boys. As such, some academic subjects that are offered are considered more suited to boys than girls. For example, there is this subconscious belief that mathematics and science courses are better for males, while literary arts and home economics are for females (Okorie et al., 2022).

Efforts to address these barriers are seen in various intervention programmes aimed at promoting girls’ education in Nigeria. One of these is the Accelerated Education Programs (AEP). These are learning programs that employ accelerated learning methodologies to promote access to education in a reduced time frame for disadvantaged groups, out-of-school, over-age children, and youth who missed out or had their education interrupted due to

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2015/04/nigeria-abducted-women-and-girls-forced-to-join-boko-haram-attacks/>

poverty, violence, conflict, and crisis (Menendez et al., 2016) . A series of this program has been implemented in the northeast geopolitical zone of Nigeria with reports of huge success. Examples include the Education Crisis Response (ECR) project, Addressing Education in Northeast Nigeria (AENN), the Accelerated Learning Programme (ALP), among others. The published reports of these projects provide some evidences of the impacts of the project, some of which referenced latter sections.

## 1.2 Evidence from programme reports and OOSC mapping

The IDRC-KIX research project is embarked upon to study the potentials of AEP as an effective innovation to reduce the OOSC prevalence in Nigeria. This is done by gathering evidence on the impact of AEP intervention in increasing access to education, especially for girls. These evidences are collated via desk literature review of programme reports, insight notes and academic literature, as well as the conduct of surveys, interviews and focused group discussions (FGD). The ultimate aim of this project is to make these evidences available for the conduct of advocacy with policymakers in order to see the scaling up of this innovation. Some of the evidences are subsequently presented.

AEP has upheld the maxims of gender equity and social inclusion. These programs deliberately enroll more girls than boys in order to promote girls' education. In most of the past and current implementations, enrolment ratios of 55:45 boys to girls have been witnessed. The creation of separate learning centers for adolescent girls in some of the implementations also made it possible to cater specially to the needs of girls. The advent of AEP has further strengthened parents' awareness of the importance of educating their children. There is also an improved awareness among parents as to the importance of girls' education.

Table 4 shows some of the AEP implementations in Nigeria with statistics on the enrolment in the program and the transition of beneficiaries into formal education. <sup>6</sup> As seen in Table 4, the ECR project report adequately disaggregated the number of learners enrolled and later transitioned by gender. The project enrolled 43,944 girls which was 7547 higher than the number of boys enrolled on the program, 36397. This shows that 55% of the total enrolment was made up of girls. A higher number of females, 17789 than males, 12365, was also seen transition into formal education after completing the ECR project.

The AENN report did not disaggregate enrolment by gender but did so on the number of learners transitioned.<sup>7</sup> Although the number of boys, 6664 transitioned to formal school were higher in Cohort 1, a significantly high number of females were also mainstreamed, 6204.

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<sup>6</sup> While some reports are explicit regarding their statistic via gender disaggregation and cohort specification, others are conservative with their data by aggregating the statistics and in some cases, silent on them.

<sup>7</sup> This data applies to cohort 1 learners as detailed in Year 2, Quarter 2 progress report of the programme. The final report which should show the total number of learners transitioned was not accessible at the time of writing this piece. Given that AENN prioritizes female participation by design, a significantly high number of girls enrolment and transitioning are expected to be seen in the report

Similarly, in Cohort 1, a significantly high number of females were transitioned to formal school from the post literacy program. While no disaggregation was done in terms of enrolment and transitioning for the IRC-Accelerated Learning Program report, the inclusion of this programme in the table presentation contributes to the evidence on the gap being filled by AEP in education generally.

**Table 4: Characteristics of AEP implementations from 2014 to 2021**

Program	States where implemented	Learning centers	Enrolment		Transitioned	
			Male	Female	Male	Female
<b>Education Crisis Response (ECR) Project</b>	5 (Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Yobe)	1456	36,397	43,944	12,365	17,789
<b>Accelerated Learning Program (ALP)</b>	(Borno and Yobe)	400	34000		-	-
<b>Addressing Education in Northeast Nigeria [AENN]</b>	(Borno and Yobe)	912	Over 200,000		6664*	6204*
					4384**	4256**
*Cohort 1 learners						
**Adolescent cohort 1 learners transitioned into the Post-literacy program						

*Source: Author's collation from various program reports*

The OOSC mapping data also reveals this outcome as presented in Table 5. From the data gathered from the schools, it is seen that the proportion of AEP girls in total enrolment (TE) of girls is 34% which higher than similar proportion for boys, 32%. A high proportion of these girls were found in primary 6 and primary 3 showing 45% and 43% respectively. Primary 2, being more a less an inception primary grade, has the least proportion of AEP transitioned girls. In the overall, there is evidence that AEP is paving access to formal education for girls who could otherwise have been excluded.

**Table 5: AEP graduate learners who have transitioned into classes at primary school (2020/21)**

	Total Enrolment (TE)		AEP Transitioned			
	Girls (TE)	Boys (TE)	Girls (AEP)	AEP Girls (% of TE)	Boys (AEP)	AEP Boys (% of TE)
<b>Pry 2</b>	2488	2306	518	21	530	23
<b>Pry 3</b>	2309	2135	1001	43	743	35
<b>Pry 4</b>	3035	2241	904	30	784	35
<b>Pry 5</b>	2528	2688	832	33	813	30
<b>Pry 6</b>	2254	2330	1007	45	864	37
	12614	11700	4262	34	3734	32

*KII with Teachers/Headteachers, OOSCY Mapping 2022*

When asked about how AEP affects boys compared to girls, a headteacher confirmed this by acknowledging that the AEP programs admit more girls into the program than boys. The commitment of girls to education is also noted as they are reported to be more dedicated to the program. One of such statement is quoted:

*“They go hand in hand. Though the girls are more dedicated. I think you got more girls in the program”.* **(Headteacher, konduga LGA)**

Summarily, on the OOSC mapping, it was found that girls’ enrolment in formal education seems to have improved, as the data shows more out-of-school boys (51%) than girls (49%).<sup>8</sup> However, beyond enrolment, slicing of the OOSC mapping data provides further diagnosis of the situation of girls’ education. Although AEP targets improved girls’ enrolment, more girls (33%) than boys (23%) tend not to complete AEP. In AEP intervention communities, more females (54%) have dropped out of school than boys (46%), justifying the intervention. In IDP camps, there is a lower dropout incidence among girls (46%) as compared to boys (54%), which is attributable to the impact of the intervention. There is a higher prevalent dropout incidence among girls than boys at higher grades and age cohorts. This calls for more intervention in promoting the retention of girls in school. A higher proportion of girls are at risk of dropping out of school as a result of class repetition compared to boys as 52% and 67% of girls have repeated classes twice and thrice respectively.

<sup>8</sup> These details are found in the OOSC mapping report

## **Section 2: Preliminary Evidence from the Impact and effectiveness of AEPs on Girls Education**

The AEP tracer and effectiveness study was conducted to collate data from different perspectives on how AEP has improved the lives of the past beneficiaries, especially girls. This was conducted mainly through a qualitative approach, using interviews and focused group discussions. Interviews were administered to beneficiaries of the AEP on the changes that happened in their lives, especially in their education, after they underwent the AEP. The purpose of this was to obtain raw testimonials from them, which render a more convincing perspective of the impact. Some of these are presented in the subsequent subsections.

### **2.1 Evidence comparing the views of AEP and non-AEP beneficiaries on the impact that AEPs had on their lives**

Testimonials were derived from AEP graduates who transitioned into formal education, and comparisons were made with their counterparts who had been part of the formal school system from inception. This was done via carefully designed interview question items. Evidence shows that while many of the girls had been idle, others were into some kind of trade before joining AEP. In either case, these girls lacked basic numeracy and literacy skills, as many of them claimed they could neither read nor write.

*“Back then, most of us usually spent most of our time playing in the street, but since the arrival of the AEP program, most of us have devoted our time to learning and enhancing ourselves” (AEP Beneficiary JSS 3, Female, Konduga Primary School)*

A dire quest for learning was one of the major motivations for the girls to join AEP, even though most of them have uneducated parents. This desire to learn in some is not just an isolated desire, but one backed with purpose, as some responses exposed the thoughtfulness of some of these girls who dream to be economically capable of reciprocating the care that they have received from their wards or parents sometime in the future. One of such responses is in the quote:

*“I have the zeal and hope that if I study and finish, I will help my aunty who is taking care of me”. (AEP Beneficiary, JSS 1 Jajel School)*

AEP has, however, produced a notable change in the lives of these girls, who otherwise would have remained idle, married untimely, or preoccupied with chores. While some were mainly able to boast of literacy in Hausa, others acquired literacy skills in both the local language and English. Many of them also now attest to their numeracy competencies and cope well with their studies in formal school. In fact, these girls believe that their lifetime opportunity to transit into formal education has been made possible by AEP. The incentives in the form of scholastic materials and bags that were given to children had post program relevance for the

children as some of them were able to use the materials after transitioning to formal schools. Some comment that evidence these outcomes are provided in the quotes below:

*"I was able to transit to formal school after completing the AEP".* **(AEP Female Beneficiary, Jajel)**

*"I learned how to connect words in Hausa which I could not do before".* **(AEP Female Beneficiary, Dala Lawanti)**

*"I know how to read and write and after the program we are enrolled into school"* **(AEP Female Beneficiary, Old Maiduguri)**

*"I learned how to read and write and also respect my parents and elders"* **(AEP Female Beneficiary, Shuwari)**

*"I have started learning to speak English through the lessons I was exposed to on the AEP"* **(AEP Female Beneficiary, Shokari)**

*"I am still using the books and the bag that I was given during the AEP."* **(AEP Female Beneficiary, Mashmari)**

The opinion of the non-beneficiaries of AEP who are members of the same class with the beneficiaries suggest that AEP brought about appreciable transformation in the lives of the AEP beneficiaries. They believe that AEP beneficiaries exhibit better academic improvement than them as they acknowledge that they learn faster, calculate and read better. This alludes to the fact that AEP learning contents are consciously designed with quality which reflects in the learning outcomes of the beneficiaries. For instance, AENN was implemented using a condensed curriculum which conformed to the formal curriculum. The two levels on this program were layered according to the national policy on non-formal education. This first level covers Basic Literacy, equivalent to primary 1, 2 and 3 and teaches subjects including Hausa or Kanuri literacy, math, and social emotional learning. The second level is the Post-Literacy, which is equivalent to primary 4, 5 and 6 and focuses on English, math, science, and Nigerian history and values. Teachers of these subjects were adequately trained on the use of the curriculum, pedagogy and other instructional materials.

Table 6 presents the learning outcomes data of AEP graduates in comparison with the non-AEP beneficiaries, both randomly selected. The column percentages are presented for fair comparison as the number of AEP beneficiaries assessed was significantly more than the non-AEPs. The comparison is thus made in terms of the proportion of total AEP group that attains a



particular proficiency level as against the proportion of total non-AEP group that does the same. As can be seen, that the proportions of total AEP graduates who attained story level proficiency in English and Hausa literacy, 9% and 18%, are higher compared to this proportion among the non-AEP beneficiaries, 5% and 13% respectively. Similarly, the proportion of total AEP graduates who could calculate to 100 in numeracy, 27% is higher compared to this proportion among the non-AEP beneficiaries, 16%.

**Table 3: Learning outcomes of AEP vs non-AEP beneficiaries on ASER assessment**

Proficiency Levels	English Literacy		Hausa Literacy		Proficiency Levels	Numeracy	
	AEP (%)	Non-AEP (%)	AEP (%)	Non-AEP (%)		AEP (%)	Non-AEP (%)
Initial	16	19	22	30	Initial	4	7
Letter	28	32	20	33	Number (0-20)	11	14
Word	38	34	22	15	Number (21 - 100)	25	27
Paragraph	9	10	18	10	Calculate to 20	33	36
Story	9	5	18	13	Calculate to 100	27	16
Total	100	100	100	100	Total	100	100

Source: Tracer and Effectiveness Study Assessment Dataset, 2022.

*“They are able to read better than those who in school” (Non-AEP beneficiary, JSS2, Female)*

*“They understand lesson so easily than us” (Non-AEP beneficiary, JSS2, Female)*

*“They are having great improvement than those that are not beneficiaries” (Non-AEP beneficiary, JSS 3 Female)*

Also, they noted that the AEP graduates are more regular in school compared to them. The excitement about the opportunity of participation in formal education brought about by AEP is evident in the regular school attendance observed in the AEP graduates. Also, the value that these girls now have for education as well as the boost in self-esteem that comes with being a schoolgirl are possible motivations for regular school attendance as observed in these girls. One of the comments that allude to this is quoted:

*“They are always in school” (Non-AEP beneficiary, JSS 2 Female)*

A better behavioral conduct is also noted in the AEP graduates by non-AEP beneficiaries in the

class as they are found to be calm and obedient to instructions in the school. This is attributable to the Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) component of the AEP which was designed to help the recovery of children who have undergone emotional trauma as a result of conflict and displacement. Some of these social and emotional skills acquired during the behavioral modification process in the AEP could be noted by the non-AEP beneficiaries. The cleanliness of AEP graduates in the classroom is also noted by their non-AEP beneficiaries.

*“They have gotten knowledge and are very clean and calm” (Non-AEP beneficiary, JSS Female)*

*“We observe a better character and behavioral in most AEP” (Non-AEP beneficiary, JSS Female)*

Most interesting among the comments by the non-AEP beneficiaries are the ones that suggest that AEP girls now prefer schooling to early marriage. This highlights the potential of AEP in minimizing the tendency of opting for early marriage in girls if the program is sustained and scaled. Moreso, the parents’ perception about the potential of their girl children improves as opposed to yielding them untimely to matrimony. These parents witness their children demonstrate impressive academic competencies ignited through AEP. Some of these uneducated parents have indirectly benefited from AEP as some of their children who went through AEP now help them with basic calculations and reading of important materials like drug prescriptions. One of the responses is are quoted below:

*“They like school. They prefer school than early marriage” (Non-AEP Beneficiary Interview, Jajel school)*

## **2.2 Parental views of the impact and effectiveness of AEPs**

Basic education is a fundamental human right of every child in Nigeria. The responsibility of a child’s education primarily lies with parents. Unfortunately, due to some of the factors already discussed above, many parents still lag in this responsibility, which contributes to the out-of-school children's situation in the country. As already noted, girls are more affected as the girl child education is largely discounted by many households. An inquiry into girls’ perception of what hinders a female child from participating in a program like AEP or pursuing a formal education reveals that the girls acknowledged that most of their parents maintain the mentality that the ultimate relevance of a girl's life is marriage.

The advent of AEP is, however, beginning to change the narrative. Parents' interest in their kids' education has grown resulting from the outcome of AEP. These parents are joyful seeing their children develop educationally. A head teacher rendered it as quoted below:

*“Yes, I have heard. Like my neighbors do tell me how excited they are for their children being able to spell their names and sing some of the things they are taught during the evening school (AEP). They wish they had the opportunity, but they are grateful that their children have such opportunity. For this reason, you will see some parent bringing their children to be enrolled, sometimes I have to decline some because they are less than 5 years of age. Because of shortage of teachers it's not possible for us to enroll students for nursery classes. Even in the primary classes we still have shortage of teachers. But there have been success stories”*  
**(Headteacher, konduga LGA)**

In northeast Nigeria where the AEP effectiveness study was conducted, majority of parents only underwent Quranic education. As such, many of them do not subscribe to formal education. Some have reservations about formal education as they maintain the notion that it adversely exposes children. However, the awareness of the benefits of formal education brought about by AEP is beginning to change the orientation of these parents towards formal education. A head teacher puts it thus:

*“An Islamic school-teacher brought 3 of his children to be enrolled. He said it was not good for a child to grow up without secular education. Even if they are doing that of the religious one, they should also do that of the secular one too, so as to enjoy the benefit of both”*  
**(Headteacher, konduga LGA)**

### **2.3 Views from AEP graduates on how AEPs have brought about change in their lives**

As common with most of the girls, many were into petty trades before joining AEP, apart from those sitting idle. Selling from door to door was common among them in order to support the family subsistence. Some of these girls have the desire for education but due to poverty, their parents could not afford to sponsor their education. It can be said that the poverty situation worked together with other existing barriers to exclude these girls from education access. This left them with a feeling of deprivation as they watched some other children go to school. In some of the comments gathered, they said:

*“My parents do not have the means to put me into the formal school”*  
**(Aisha Mohammed, AEP Graduate JSS3)**

*“Our parents didn't have the means to send us to school and we could not afford it either. We were only doing door to door petty trading like selling candies, sweets and so on.”*  
**(Fatima Ali, AEP Graduate, JSS 2)**

*“I was also doing petty trading; other children were going to school, but I wasn't because my parents could not afford it.”*  
**(Bilkisu Umar, AEP Graduate, JSS 3)**

*“I was doing petty trading too and the reason why I wasn’t in school is because my parents could not afford paying the fees.” (Naima Rabiou, AEP Graduate, JSS2)*

A focus group discussion was held with the girls separately from boys to elicit direct reports from them on how AEP has changed their lives at both upper primary and junior secondary schools. Interesting findings were harvested from the comments made by these girls. Some of the positive transformations that AEP made in their lives are subsequently highlighted.

### **2.3.1 Improved self confidence**

AEP undoubtedly made appreciable changes in the lives of these girls as many of them now can boast of literacy and numeracy skills which have boosted their self-confidence. Girls naturally could be shy, more so when they perceive poorly of themselves. This makes them struggle with low self-esteem which if not corrected, can cripple the potentials of a growing child. However, the participation of these girls in AEP provided an opportunity for them to prove their academic and intellectual abilities. This went a long way in helping the girls to build confidence and a positive self-esteem. In some of their comments, they said:

*“The things we didn't know before, now we know them, and we are able to teach others.” (Fatima Mustapha, AEP Graduate, JSS 3)*

*“We didn’t know how to read and write but since we started going to school, we have learnt to read and write.” (Jumai Mamoud, AEP Graduate, JSS 3)*

*“Before, we roamed about but now that we know better even when we return from school we read our books” (Aisha Mohammed, AEP Graduate, JSS 1)*

*“Before then, we didn’t know anything. But due to the lesson (AEP) we can now read and write.” (Bintu Adamu, AEP Graduate, Pry 6)*

*“Before we couldn’t interact with people confidently, but now we are able to interact confidently.” (Bilikisu Umar, AEP Graduate, JSS 3)*

### **2.3.2 A better outlook of the future**

After undergoing AEP which helped these girls to be able to read, write and perform basic calculations, the girls were able to dream of a professional future. There was a change in their mentality as many of them dropped the mentality that their only relevance in life is to get married and nurse the home. AEP made these girls to develop high and lofty career ambitions as they could perceive that education provides a trajectory to a professional career for them in the future. Many of them were able to articulate their future career ambitions as some said

they want to become doctors, lawyers, engineers, etc. Some of the comments are quoted below:

*“It is the lesson (AEP) that enlightened us that now we have ambition, before then we didn’t have any ambition in life.” (Female AEP Graduate, JSS 3)*

*“I want to become a doctor so I can help other people” (Female AEP Graduate, JSS 3)*

### **2.3.3 Interest/motivation in continuing school (attendance at school)**

The success of these girls on the AEP program has inspired many of them to continue the pursuit of education. They have developed interest in going to school and exploring the opportunities it has for them. Their attendance in school was commended by their non-beneficiary counterparts who are in the same class with them. The desire to be self-actualized and become a benefactor to parents and siblings further fuels this commitment of the girls. All of these might not have developed had they not been exposed to education initially through AEP. Some of the statements are quoted:

*“We want to study and become something in life by God’s grace.” (Girls only FGD, Effectiveness Study, 2022)*

*“We want to study and be able to become something in life and help our parents and community the way they have helped us.” (Girls only FGD, Effectiveness Study, 2022)*

*“We want to be able to help our younger ones when we grow to gain knowledge that we got.” (Girls only FGD, Effectiveness Study, 2022)*

A head teacher strengthened this view by giving number to the retention rate of AEP graduates after they transition to the formal school. It is estimated that AEP graduates achieve up to 75% retention rate. As put by a teacher:

*“The impact of the AEP program has seen a significant number of AEP graduates complete their education. Most times 75%, we can't say 100%. For me I will say 75% even for those who are in the secondary section” (Headteacher, konduga LGA).*

### **2.3.4 Educational progress made so far**

Since joining formal education after completing AEP 3 - 5 years ago, many of these girls are now found in the upper primary and junior secondary school. The design of the program was a compression of a 3-year foundational curriculum i.e. the lower primary education into 1 year. On completion of the program many of them were able to transition to primary 4 to continue

their education in the formal system at the upper primary. The AEPs that produced these cohorts of girls are the Education Crisis Response project (2014 - 2017), Accelerated Learning Program (2017 - 2021) and Addressing Education in Northeast Nigeria (2019 -2021). The last cohort of the beneficiaries of the Education crisis project are now in junior secondary school. Table 7 shows the distribution of the girls across their current grades. In the primary grades, Primary 6 has the highest number of AEP graduates, 148 while JSS 2 has the highest number, 120 in the Junior Secondary School.

**Table 4: Current grades attained by traced AEP graduates**

Current grades	Number of Girls	%
JSS 1	81	16
JSS 2	120	23
JSS 3	83	16
P4	29	6
P5	61	12
P6	148	28
<b>Total</b>	<b>522</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source: Tracer and Effectiveness Study Data, 2023.*

## **2.4 The influence of AEP in overcoming barriers to girls’ education**

### **2.4.1 Addressing the poverty barrier**

AEP plays a notable role in addressing some of the barriers to girls’ education. As earlier noted, poverty is one of the foremost reasons for exclusion from education, especially for girls. Youth and adolescent girls take on more responsibility for providing for themselves and supporting livelihood in the household. Unfortunately, where skills and opportunity of economic empowerment are absent, this leads to a serious physical protection challenges and a rise in vulnerability, gender-based violence as well as sexual exploitation(USAID, 2017). In conflict contexts as in the case of Nigeria, most development partners come up with intervention that focus on providing food, clothing, shelter, health care and sometimes cash to internally displaced persons to start businesses (USAID, 2017). These interventions only serve the purpose of relief rather than empowerment needed by these youth to earn a living.

AEPs have, therefore, come to fill this gap as they are not just academic in nature. The design often includes some vocational skill acquisition component. The objective of this is to harness the income generating potentials of the beneficiaries by arming them with such skills that can be deployed as empowerment tool after the program. An example of AEP with such design is the Education Crisis Response (ECR) project. To address the vocational needs of its adolescent

beneficiaries, the ECR project provided nine months of basic literacy lessons and employability skills to 22,238 (10,321 males, 11,917 female) adolescent girls and boys affected by conflict (USAID, 2017). Inexpensive, relevant and tradable skills were identified and incorporated into the program delivery in the five project states including making perfumed ointments and creams, liquid soap, air fresheners, knitting, dyeing, tailoring, beads, leatherwork, body decoration (henna & dyes), vegetable oil extraction, mobile phone repairs, hairdressing, and shoemaking (USAID, 2017). Some others underwent apprenticeships with master craftsmen and women, focusing on skills like computer appreciation, vulcanizing, and brickwork, in order to become economically empowered and self-reliant.

#### **2.4.2 Overcoming socio-cultural barrier**

By participating in AEP, girls see the advantage of being educated rather than conceding to early marriage. They realize that education can make them become better mothers, economically empowered and professionally actualized. Many of them, therefore, choose to spare more years for formal education. Where the poverty barrier is not in place, most of these girls aspire to pursue their education up to the tertiary level and contribute to their society. Their parents also are beginning to form a better orientation towards their girls' education as they see how well their girl children can perform if adequately supported through formal education. Even, in cases where the children see the need to marry early, they still express strong desire to continue their education after marriage.

*"I want to study and be a doctor to help the women in my community"* **(Female AEP Graduate, World of Work)**

*"My plan is once I am married, I will continue my education"* **(Female AEP Graduate, World of Work)**

#### **2.4.4 AEP's impact on girls' life outcomes**

The AEP experience of these girls contributed to the current life outcomes as many of them are either in school or in the world of work. Those who are in school testify of how AEP helped them chose a career. Majority of them are in formal education with bright aspiration of pursuing their education to the highest level possible. While many of them understand the reality of the risk of drop out due to poverty barrier, their determination to become financially empowered to realize their dream is remarkable. As one of them puts it:

*"When I finish my secondary school, and if lack of money stops me from continuing to university, I will like to start my business at home."* **(Female AEP Graduate, JSS3)**

Many AEP beneficiaries are now leveraging on their vocational skills sets to raise money to go back to school after the AEP program because of the benefits they saw in the program.

A story of change is now presented:

*“My name is Ruka Adams. I attended the Horn of Hope accelerated education program. The lessons taught me English and Mathematics. Also, I acquired the knowledge of how to design materials and was equipped with tailoring skills. I now earn from my occupation because I get paid for sewing for my clients. The mathematics I learnt on the program also helps me in calculation the monies I receive and how to make payments. I could not continue my education because there’s not enough money to do so. I would like to take further education. I would like to become a medical doctor because it would help me, and I will be able to assist others as well.” (Female, AEP Graduate, JSS3).*

#### **2.4.5. How have the AEPs helped transform girl’s agency and empowerment**

The AEP program has influenced girls’ education in many ways. In our study of the effectiveness of AEP on girls’ education, we gathered some stories of change from AEP beneficiaries. Many of them made reference to the approach of teaching in the AEP which increased the interest of the AEP enrollees in formal education. As a result, they do not let their household chores and trade activities like sewing caps, cap knitting deters them from going to school. Some of them had dropped out of school due to poor finances before their AEP experience. The education materials such as pencils, pens, bags, water bottles, given as gifts are additional incentives to influence enrollees to come to school. The AEP program has influenced the beneficiaries in forming career goals as some want to be lawyers, doctors and soldiers.

AEP has also influenced parents’ desire to support their kids’ return to formal education by financially supporting the kids, monitoring their progress, supplying schooling requirements, as well as relieving them of their home chores in order for them to focus on their studies. Beneficiaries of the program testify of having acquired skill in communication, drawing, writing, mathematics, English and local languages literacy which has either helped them transition into formal education or function efficiently in the world of work. The educational exposure from AEP has enabled some of the beneficiaries to assist their uneducated parents in things like dialing phone numbers, reading doctor’s reports for them when they visit the hospital. Girls and their parents are therefore seeing the need to delay marriage in order to acquire adequate education. One of such stories of change is now presented:

*“My name is Aisha Garba. I am Fulani. Before enrolment in AEP, I was helping my mother to sell charcoal and also sewing caps. Whenever I saw others going for AEP, I desired it too. An AEP teacher told my mother to allow me to enroll rather than stay idle since the program is free and my mother agreed. My parents are*



*not financially buoyant enough to send me to school so they could not afford the money for uniforms, bags and exercise books. Before my enrolment in AEP, I was not happy with myself because I could not read the alphabet but during the AEP, I could do everything, there was a great change. I learnt how to write and became self-confident. Now I can stand even in the presence of the governor to speak.”*  
**(Female AEP Graduate, JSS3)**

## **2.5 Key factors which facilitated the effectiveness of AEPs in the different contexts of learning**

### **2.5.1 Deprived and extremely rural areas**

AEP intervention often targets deprived and extremely rural areas. In some of these places, there are no schools. In the OOSC Mapping exercise conducted, data shows that children in such communities who really want to participate in formal education trek 3 – 5 kilometers to access the school. The absence of school in a community is a typical case of deprivation and exclusion from education. Some of the responses we got from non-AEP beneficiaries attest to this as quoted:

*“There are no schools in the place we were, but when we relocated here, I saw that they have formal education which impressed me and I got enrolled”* **(Female AEP Graduate, JSS3)**

In this context, there is a lack of teacher presence as most teachers do not like to be deployed into hard to reach communities. A few who accept such deployments are irregular in attending their classes. Also, most schools in the rural areas are poorly resourced to adequately service educational needs of the communities. In certain cases where school is not available, children are subjected to harsh conditions of learning such as receiving lessons under a tree. As put by a headteacher:

*“Our challenge was shortage of teachers. Because aside from those who were retrenched some were sent for studies, so for that reason we had shortage of teachers. Also, we were challenged with lack of seats. As you would notice, there are classes that are empty and most of the chairs that are spoilt have been gathered into the classes behind. These are the challenges we are facing.”*  
**(Headteacher, Mandarari)**

AEP therefore fills these gaps by innovating around these constraints. A laudable innovation around the issues of lack of teachers was the use of trained community-based volunteers called learning facilitators (LF) to deliver AEP lessons in designated places within the community called non-formal learning centers (NFLC). These facilitators were trained to teach curriculum,

receiving regular coaching and monitoring support visits. A few available teachers who opted to be part of AEP were also trained to deliver AEP contents. In the word of a community leader who granted an interview:

*“The teachers are from our community. They understand our culture and religion. They are our children and they know our ways better”.* (Community Leader, Konduga LGA)

## 2.5.2 Conflict and fragile areas of Nigeria

AEPs have been successfully implemented in this conflict and fragile area of Nigeria. The northeast in particular has been affected by insurgency over the last decade leading to displacement of people from their communities. Educational infrastructures and resources in these communities were vandalized. Children’s and youths’ education were abruptly interrupted as a result of this. These displaced persons either sought refuge in neighboring communities know as Host Communities or were provided relief by the government in Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps. AEP was deployed as an emergency education response in this conflict affected area. Since the conflict disrupted the education of the children, AEP came to the rescue as an innovation for salvaging the situation. Given its accelerated and non-formal characteristic, AEP was able to help the displaced children recover their lost years of education as a result of the conflict induced interruption.

Program design and implementation has always adhered to the “Do No Harm” principle, reflected in key characteristics such as neutrality, impartiality, inclusiveness, respect for culture and custom, accountability, inter-personal skills, conflict-mitigation, peace-building and building social-emotional competencies of learners in the non-formal learning center curriculum implementation. For example, before the full commencement of the AENN program, a Rapid Education and Risk Assessment (RERA) was conducted. This was done so as to ensure a program design that suits a conflict context. The assessment examined all important issues including community dividers, community connectors, barriers to access and retention, risk to school extern, risk to school internal, gender-based violence external and internal to school and other cross cutting issues. On implementation, the AENN identified 156 safe spaces where 7,835 out-of-school children (3,823 males, 4,012 females) were enrolled and engaged with initial lessons.<sup>9</sup>

These displaced children were engaged by learning facilitators in game-based learning with a high degree of participation using a ‘Return to Learning’ guide which has 20 modules. The games were designed to help the learner’s well-being and improve their literacy as well as their

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<sup>9</sup> These details are available in the project quarterly report of the AENN program.

social and emotional learning skills. This was implemented for four weeks after which the safe spaces were turned to NFLCs. Similar strategies were used in previous programs such as the Education Crisis Response (ECR) project. As such, AEP filled the education gap that could have occurred with these children as a result of conflict and displacement. This safe space was also provided especially for marginalized girls during Covid-19 pandemic so there will be no interruption of their learning. As put in the words of an AEP Director:

*“During the Covid-19 pandemic, we organized safe places for marginalized girls that do not have access to school because of the Covid. Schools were closed down and we felt they needed to be carried along. So, we ran a safe space using the radio stations in collaboration with SUBEB, we connected podcasts for lessons, and we shared radios with our girls through life sessions. They made phone calls to their tutors and discussed their lessons. They were given a toll-free line and they usually call when it is time for lessons. That also helped when the schools resumed as the gap was closed and they continued from where they stopped. We had Back to Home, where we identify orphans, place them into foster homes and enroll them back to school. And a lot of them are doing very fine”.* (AEP Staff Director)

### 2.5.3 Facilitator Commitment levels

To ensure facilitators’ commitment, a monitoring and mentoring system was put in place to ensure that facilitators gave their best to the program's implementation. The learning facilitators who were trained on learner-centered pedagogy were supported through in-service training, teacher learning circles, and classroom observations and mentoring. This system of oversight kept the facilitators committed. After the mainstreaming of some of these children, the School Based Management Committee (SBMC)<sup>10</sup> ensured that teachers also remain committed to attending the classes to deliver regular lessons to the learners. In the words of a community leader and a headteacher:

*“SBMC has taught us to go on supervisions to see if these teachers are coming or not, I do that every week or bi-weekly”* (Community Leader, Jere LGA)

*“Yes, they study a lot, when I even enter my class, I can’t differentiate from AEP student and the normal student, recently we went for a competition, the children surprise us because of their performance. A lot are enrolling now in school”.* (Head teacher, Konduga LGA)

### 2.5.4 Flexible school timing

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<sup>10</sup> A collaboration between the school and the community in the oversight and assurance of accountability of the school system

The rural communities where AEPs have been implemented are mostly dominated by peasants who rely much on agriculture as their mainstay. Hence, children have a limited time to learn in farming seasons as households often co-opt them into the production framework. However, AEP takes advantage of flexibility in its timing to get the children learning. Lessons are organized at suitable times or hours that do not class with the hours when the children are to be on the farm or attending to other trades. In the words of one of the children:

*“I am able to attend my AEP lessons and later do my hawking and selling”.*

**(Female AEP Graduate, JSS2)**

As noted on the ECR project, attendance for the lessons dwindled during the farming season as learners got busy with agricultural activities. In order to address this challenge, community coalitions raised the level of campaigns among IDP communities to identify enrolled children who participated in the pre-enrollment exercise but did not have opportunity to enroll (USAID, 2017). Then, a decision was made by the coalition of communities on flexible lesson hours to ensure children could continue attending to their farming obligation and yet not miss classes (USAID, 2017).

## **Section 3: Conclusions and recommendations for scaling up AEPs for Government**

From the foregoing, the impact that AEP has had on girls' education in Nigeria can be summarized. AEP benefits both boys and girls. However, girls seem to be more fortunate for the opportunity of undergoing AEP as it has successfully circumvented the barriers that exclude them from participating in education. The girls testify that AEP practically helps them to come out of this intellectual redundancy. This is evidenced by many of these girls transitioning into formal school after completing the program.

Moreover, for those who could not transition into formal school but proceeded immediately into the world of work being far overaged, we see that the vocational skills they have acquired on AEP has empowered them economically. Also, the literacy and numeracy skills they have acquired also helps them with managing numbers and documentation in their businesses. There is also improved career aspiration among the girls as they see how their education can lead them into the professions of their dream in the future.

The exposure of the girls to AEP makes them appreciate the fact that they can delay marriage for education. This fact is also becoming more appreciated by parents who have seen the academic potentials of their girls as exposed by AEP with many uneducated parents benefiting from their girls' literacy and numeracy skills acquired during AEP. Also, the bias towards formal education from the religion point of view is now being dispelled through AEP as more and more girls who were only enrolled in religious education participate in the program.

### **3.1 Cost effectiveness of AEP**

Although no cost effectiveness analysis has been done for the Nigerian context, particularly, per child cost of AEP, however, evidence from other countries shows that AEPs are cost effective. From other countries' context, AEP has been argued to be cost saving from both the demand and supply perspective. On the demand side, the accelerated nature of AEP which translates into a shorter period completion of some education level implies a reduced cost of financing ancillary expenses for schooling such as uniform, school bags and sandal, textbooks and stationeries, transportation, etc. Meanwhile, on the supply side, the overhead costs of teachers which is often a major cost component in education budget is circumvented via the use of community-based volunteers for facilitation on AEP.

For example, in Ghana, unit cost in the Complementary Basic Education (CBE), which is a model of AEP is estimated at GHS 598 for 2019/2020, compared to that of the regular education sector (GHS 610), excluding the cost of teacher training in formal education (Abango & Casely-Hayford, 2021). Also, in the CBE model, a year of CBE is equivalent to 2.4 grades of formal schooling. This implies that for child who transitions from CBE, the government enjoys a cost saving of over twice the current unit cost per child promoted to grade 3 in the formal system

suggesting that CBE could be twice as cost-efficient as the formal system (Abango & Casely-Hayford, 2021). Similar cost efficiency is realizable in the Nigerian context.

### **3.2 Scaling up using top down and bottom up approaches with education innovators**

Given the established evidences of the effectiveness of this amazing education innovation, there is a bright prospect of seeing a significant reduction in the OOSC numbers in the country over the next few year if this innovation is adopted to scale. This however requires funding. So far, AEP implementations in Nigeria have been funded exclusively by donor organizations. This source of funding is known to be a short term and unsustainable. It is imperative and therefore recommended that the government takes ownership of this innovation and scale it up. The government through its ministries and commissions, needs to devise a way to institutionalize AEP by integrating it into the education ecosystem to cater for the OOSC population, providing a pathway for their transitioning into the formal system.

Two ways to actualize this are through a top-down and a bottom-up approaches. The top-down approach would involve policy formulation from the Federal Ministry of Education (FMOE) in pursuit of the institutionalization of AEP as the non-formal education pathway into formal education for OOSC. This will form a basis for the inclusion of AEP in the national education budget as sustained funding for AEP can only be guaranteed through a budgetary commitment. This approach will cascade a mandate on the lower level jurisdictions in education including the state ministries of education, State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) and the local government education authorities (LGEA). The involvement of the Universal Basic Education Board in this is also important in order to facilitate the disbursement of available grants and the monitoring of program implementations.

While a top-down approach may be hard to realize in most cases, a bottom-up approach tends to deliver some early result. This would involve a scaling effort from the community, local government and the state level to reach the federal or national scope. At this level, states who are experiencing a high population of OOSC should adopt AEP for reaching this population. This should be coordinated with the education authorities within the state including state ministry of education, SUBEB, State Agency for Mass Education (SAME), LGEAS, Education Innovators and the community. The funding of this is possible through the matching grant made available to states of the federation by the federal government. A proportion of this grant can be allocated to AEP in order to sustain the implementation on a long term.

In either case, a scaled-up AEP would sustain the gains made in increased education access to girls by the AEPs implemented by development partners so far. While the program effectively lowers the total number of OOSC, an implementation that adheres to the principle of gender equity will ensure the realization of significant improvement in girls' education and

empowerment nationally. A protracted effect of this intervention over time will become appreciable at a nation-wide scale.

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**Appendix:**

**1. School age children (6-18)**

	Frequency	Percent
Female	1,803	50.26
Male	1,784	49.74
Total	3,587	100

*Source: Household Survey Dataset, OOSC Mapping 2022*