



Canada



Working Paper: The impact and effectiveness of Accelerated Education Models on Girls and Girls' Education¹ 2023

Transformational effectiveness of AEPs/GFM in West Africa: Assessing impact from a Gender Perspective

1.0 Introduction

This paper provides evidence on the impact and effectiveness of AEPs/GFMs in addressing the challenges of out-of-school children (OOSC) and youth across West Africa, using a gendered transformative approach. It explores the impact of these models on girls, particularly, on girls' empowerment, transition and retention in school and general life outcomes based on evidence from an IDRC funded 'out-of-school' mapping and effectiveness study². The working paper answers two key questions relating to the education of girls:

1. How do AEPs contribute to the improvement of the quality of life and education trajectories particularly for girls in West Africa and how do these differ from boys;
2. How do AEPs strengthen the 'agency' and empowerment of girls to make decisions and help them transition to higher levels of learning and in the world of work.

Section 1: Context of girls' education and the out of school situation in Ghana

This section provides evidence relating to the different conditions under which children, especially girls, learn. Issues around infrastructure, access to teaching and learning resources and so forth are highlighted and explored.

1.1 The Out-of-School (OOS) Context in Ghana

This section of the paper highlights the evidence on the prevalence of the out-of-school phenomenon in Ghana. Globally, the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS, 2019) estimates that one out of five children between the ages of about six and 11 in sub-Saharan African are out of school. One out of three youth aged about 12 to 14 are out of school. Alarming is the fact that about 60% of youth aged about 15 to 17 are not in school. The most marginalized, particularly

¹ This working paper was developed by Dr. Leslie Casely-Hayford, Jones Frimpong, Dr. James Natia Adam, Louisa Adjei and Eunice Bodza

² Access to Quality Education for Rural and Marginalised Children in West Africa— A Comparative Study of Accelerated Education and Girls Focussed Programmes in Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone

girls, are most at risk, including forcibly displaced children and young people, orphans and children with disabilities. With each missed school year, there is greater likelihood that these children will be unable to return to formal education, resulting in heightened risks to their protection and future prospects (Ananga E., 2011; Casely-Hayford et al., 2017).

The Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) data estimates that over 7-10% of primary aged children in Ghana are out of school based (UNICEF 2017/18) but the recent Ghana census data from the Ghana Statistics Service suggests that this number is much higher. According to 2019 statistics from UIS, about one million Ghanaian children aged 5-16 years are out of school. Of this number, an estimated 265,188 are of primary school going age. This is similar to the estimates provided by the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS, 2017/18). In total, the MICS estimates the primary out-of-school numbers to be 283,000 children of primary school-age (Figure 1).

A slightly higher proportion of males (7.4%) dropped out at the primary level as compared to females (6.4%), although fewer females enrolled in school to begin with.

At the Senior High school level, however, it is important to note that a higher proportion of females (29%) are out of school compared to males (21.3%). 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. The 2021 census data presents a gloomier picture - indicating that about 60% of children aged 3-years and older are out of school (*attended in the past and never attended*). Females account for 62.2% of this out of school population while males account for 58.8%.

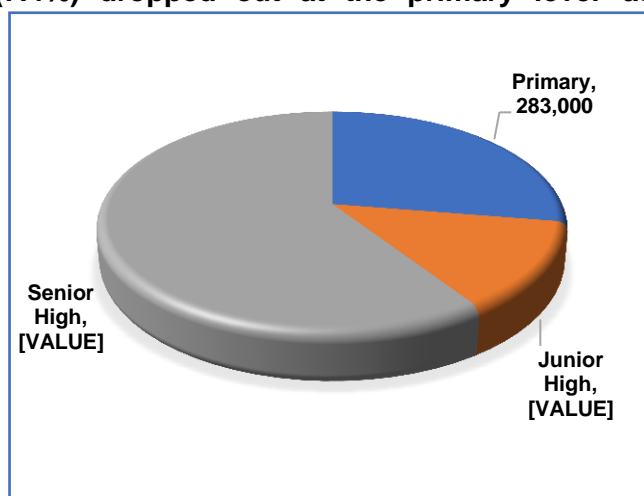


Figure 1: Out-of school children and youth

Source: Ghana Education Fact Sheets, MICS (2017/18)

A recent mapping study conducted by Associates for Change (AfC, 2022) as part of the GPE supported IDRC study on 'improving access to quality education for marginalized children in West Africa', found that the out of school population aged 4 to 17 (KG – SHS) stood at 33.8% (983) out of a population of 2,907 children aged 4-17. The results further show that the incidence of out of school is highest among children aged 6-11 years (primary level), implying a little over double of the out of school proportion of the figure reported by MICS. The differences suggest that the COVID pandemic, increasing levels of extreme poverty and conflict could be key drivers of this increase not to mention the supply challenges regarding the posting of trained teachers and the provision of basic school infrastructure and textbook availability.

1.2 Out of school numbers based on the National Population and Housing Census (2021)

According to the 2021 National Population and Housing Census, there are currently 1,215,546 children aged 4-17 years (KG to SHS) who are out of school (*never attended and attended school in the past*). A slightly higher percentage of males (51%) are out of school compared to females (Figure 2). The number of out-of-school children ages 6-17 (primary to SHS) stood at 928,318.

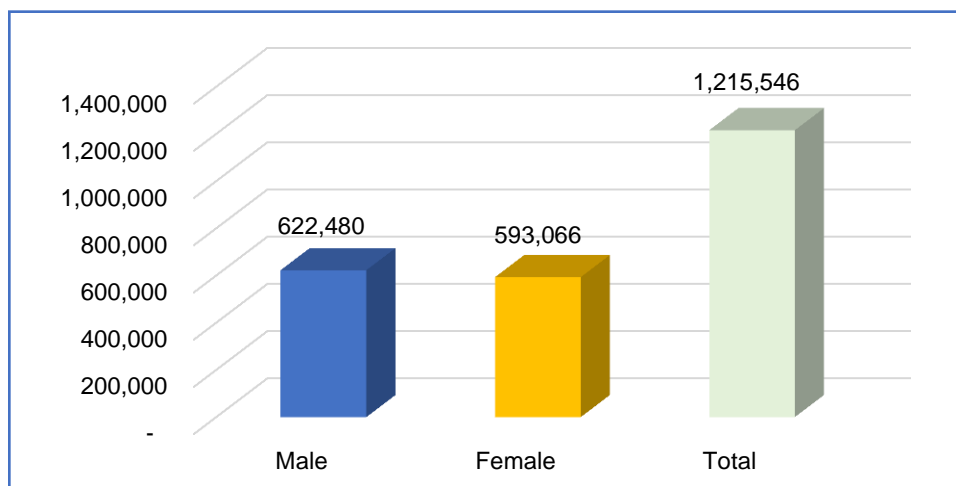


Figure 2: Out-of-school children in Ghana - 2021 Census (4-17 years)
Source: 2021 National Pop. & Housing Census

1.3 Out of school numbers, drop outs and transition levels based on OOS mapping study

Table 1 presents the out of school statistics by sex – based on the OOS mapping study. The evidence shows the presence of high out of school rates among the male population (55%) compared to the female population (45%). This result is in sync with the national-level evidence from the Ghana Demographic and Health Survey (GDHS) and the Multiple Indicator Cluster Study (MICS), which indicates that there are more males out of school than females in Ghana. Further, the ‘drop out’ population across both males and females is twice as lower as the ‘never attended’ population, implying that a higher number of children within the school going age are not in school.

Evidence of more male ‘out of school’ children (533) than females (438)

Table 1: OOSC 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

1.3.1 Drop-out numbers by class level and sex

The data as presented in Table 2 indicates the number of dropouts at each class level by sex. The findings show majority of dropouts occurred at the primary level (Primary 1 to 6) with the highest drop-out number occurring at primary 2 (17%). The data further shows that the out of school population decreased by higher levels across the junior high schools. The gender dynamics show that the drop-out numbers among the male population (64.3%) is twice that of the female population (35.7%) and this reflects in the out-of-school numbers at both primary and JHS levels.

Table 2: Drop-out population by sex

Class level	Female		Male		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
KG1	3	3%	9	5%	12	3.9%
KG2	7	6%	12	6%	19	6.2%
Primary School 1	14	13%	31	16%	45	14.8%
Primary School 2	16	15%	36	18%	52	17%
Primary School 3	18	17%	25	13%	43	14.1%
Primary School 4	15	14%	27	14%	42	13.8%
Primary School 5	12	11%	25	13%	37	12.1%
Primary School 6	13	12%	15	8%	28	9.2%
Junior Secon. 1	4	4%	8	4%	12	3.9%
Junior Secon.2	3	3%	4	2%	7	2.3%
Junior Secon.3	1	1%	1	1%	2	0.7%
Senior Secon. 3	2	2%	2	1%	4	1.3%
Total	109	100%	196	100%	305	100%

Source: Household data, OOSC mapping survey, 2022

1.3.2 Factors accounting for the dropouts by gender

A number of factors contributing to the drop-out numbers are highlighted in this section to re-emphasize the key challenges that contribute to children leaving school, based on the perspective of household heads and primary caregivers. These comprise social, financial, cultural and attitudinal factors (Table 3). Attitudinal factors such as (*children not liking school*), accounts for more than half of the responses (52%). Disliking school may be attributable to a number of reasons including parental inaction, unconducive school environment, poor academic performance and so forth, which gradually lead to dwindling interest in schooling and subsequently dropping out. This reason is a more prominent factor for male drop-outs (53.4%) compared to the case of female drop-outs (50.7%). Other key reasons include 'inability to meet school expenses' (27.7%), poor quality of the education provided/ limited importance attached to schooling (27), poor academic performance (14.1%), household chores (8.9%) and so forth.

Table 3: Factors accounting for the drop-outs by sex

Factors	Female		Male		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
School is not important	8	10.7%	19	16.4%	27	14.1%
Limited interest in schooling	38	50.7%	62	53.4%	100	52.4%
His mother's refusal	1	1.3%	2	1.7%	3	1.6%
Refusal of his 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	100.0%	116	100.0%	191	100.0%

Source: Household data, OOSC mapping survey, 2022

1.3.3 Number of transitioned AEP learners – school level data

Table 4 presents data on the number of AEP graduates who are currently enrolled in the mainstream educational system disaggregated by sex using school-level data as provided by the headteachers. Overall, the results show that there are about 664 AEP graduates in formal schools across the study areas. The findings indicate that on average, a greater proportion of AEP graduates in primary school were females (69 percent), which may be attributable to the conscious effort by most education innovators to create safe spaces for girls. The study revealed that there were more AEP-enrolled pupils in P4 (173, 26 percent), with a higher number of female AEP graduates at the P4 level than at the other levels. The results also show that P2 and P6 had the lowest numbers of AEP learners (15 percent and 17 percent, respectively). The majority of male AEP learners were found in P-3.

Table 4: 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

1.3.4 AEP transitioned learners retained in formal schools – district data

The statistics in Table 5 show the percentage of AEP graduates who were retained in the formal school system based on district level data. Based on data from four out of the eight study districts, the number of transitioned AEP learners in the formal school system was 2,230. The results revealed a slightly higher number of girls transitioned into formal school (1,117 out of 2,230) than boys. Across the districts, Talensi had the highest percentage of AEP learners continuing in formal education (almost 90%), with the majority being female. The remaining districts had more boys than girls who remained in the formal school, notably in Gushiegu district.

Table 5: AEP transitioned learners retained in formal schools

District	Male		Female		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Gushiegu	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

Section 2: Preliminary evidence from the impact and effectiveness of AEPs on girls education

Accelerated Education programmes are providing contextually relevant educational solutions to children and youth, especially to girls across West Africa. These are particularly relevant to areas of fragility, extreme poverty and in locations where teachers are unwilling to serve. The AEPs that specifically target girls, such as the Complementary Basic Education (CBE) and STAGE programme in Ghana have had positive impacts on reducing early marriage, and adolescent pregnancy. This section highlights the evidence on the effectiveness and impact of selected AEPs on girls.

Evidence comparing the views of AEPs and non AEPs Instrument 3 and 4 (Girls Separate from Boys) on the impact that AEPs had on their lives...

The introduction of AEPs and Girls Focused Programmes (GFPs) has over the years helped to tackle several of the education access constraints faced by girls in the rural and deprived societies. The effectiveness study³ assessed the evidence on the impact of AEPs from the perspectives of beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries at the school level. The findings show similarities in views regarding how effective the AEPs have been in providing the opportunity for children, especially girls who may not have had the opportunity to formal education.

The AEP beneficiaries highlighted the **improvement in reading and writing skills**. Majority of the beneficiaries indicate monumental improvement in simple and complex grammar writing skills, critical thinking ability, and speaking fluently. According to a female AEP class 5 students in the Tolon District:

As for me and I think with my close friends, the CBE has helped me and maybe us. I have observed that the CBE has addressed girls' barriers to access formal education. Currently, I understand every lesson and instructions delivered in the English language. Since, I now understand English language, my desire for education has improved and I don't even miss school.

Similarly, a female class 6 student who doubles as an AEP graduate praised CBE for giving her life. She recounts that:

I used not to like school and I was always late to school because I could neither read nor write. In fact, I was the deaf and dumb type in class since I could not participate in questions and answer session. As a result, I dropped out of school and started to follow my friends to roam aimlessly. Three years later, I heard of the CBE programme from the local facilitator who encouraged me to enrol. I initially resisted, but later accepted to join. Arr... today, because of the programme, I have gained the confidence to continue my education. I can now read, write and speak good English language than before.

The above narratives suggest that AEP has made monumental improvement in girls literacy skills. Consequently, the literacy skills have been extended to other fields including the reading of Bibles in both English language and their mother tongue. Most of the interview results across all the districts shows that over 90% of AEP graduates can read the Bible better in the Ghanaian language compared to the non-AEP beneficiaries. The students' reading skills in their mother tongue has helped them to transfer the skills to pronounce simple and complex words in English language.

³ This study was conducted as part of the bigger study on an IDRC funded study on 'improving access to education for marginalised children in West Africa'.

. The interview results indicate that some of the AEP beneficiaries can read in Ghanaian language, e.g., Dagbani. Both boys and girls boast of their ability to read the Bible in their mother tongue without any form of support.

Some of the beneficiaries also indicate that through AEPs, they have enhanced their personal hygiene in school and at home. In the FGD, it emerged that some of the girls were often humiliated resulting sometimes in girls crying in class and dropping out of school. The interview results show that both teachers and male students indeed intimidated and humiliated girls from poor homes because they were improperly dressed up. However, many of the CBE graduates indicate that the CBE programme has empowered them more in terms of their personal hygiene behaviour. In the words of a CBE female JHS 1 student;

We used to dress anyhow to school and put our books in polythene bags to school. But the CBE programme provided teaching and learning resources including pencils, books, school bags, among other. Also, the CBE facilitators did provide education in the areas of HIV/AIDs, sexual reproductive health and personal hygiene matters. All these have improved the relationship between teachers and female students in the formal education (FGD, Tolon).

The above narrative suggests that the topics taught at the CBE programme are in tandem with the curriculum in the formal education system which makes the CBE very important and complementary.

The views espoused by the AEP beneficiaries were corroborated by the non-AEPs. From the perspective of the non-AEP graduates, the CBE programme has helped to improve literacy levels among the the CBE graduates leading to their performance in almost all the subjects taught at the basic level of formal education. They indicated that most of the CBE graduates have improved their reading and writing skills and now contribute actively in questions and answer during instructions. The voice of one of the non-CBE graduates indicates that:

I am very surprised that the boys and girls I used to beat in every exams since day one have suddenly emerged to be the top performing students in my class. A few years back, some of the CBE graduates dropped out due to poor performance in class exercises and exams. But when they attended the afternoon school (referring to the CBE), they have picked up quickly and have overtaken some of us in the class..

The following voices in box 1 re-echoes the above narrations:

Box 1: Voices of non-AEP students

“It has helped to improve the literacy level of students, most of the children are now able to read and write in their local language.” (Female JHS 2 student, Rural Deprived, Saboba District)

“Some students were not good academically, but when they attended the CBE classes it helped to improve their performance.” (Male P6 student, Rural Deprived, Talensi District)

2.2 The Learning outcome data at Primary and Lower Secondary Level (JHS)

This section presents evidence on learning outcomes of students at both the primary (primary 5 and 6) and at the JHS level (JHS 1 and 2). This was done as part of the effectiveness study using the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) tool for the

primary level and the Secondary Education Grade Reading Assessment (SEGRA). The findings show that AEPs have given the learners ability to read in their mother tongue, in English language and other local languages.

2.2.1 ASER results (L1 and English) disaggregated by gender

Figure 3 illustrates the literacy assessment of P5 and P6 pupils. The results show that a larger proportion of AEP girls were performing at a higher level in local language reading – 13% (story reading level) compared to AEP boys (6%). In contrast, most boys were performing at letter levels or word level in their first language.

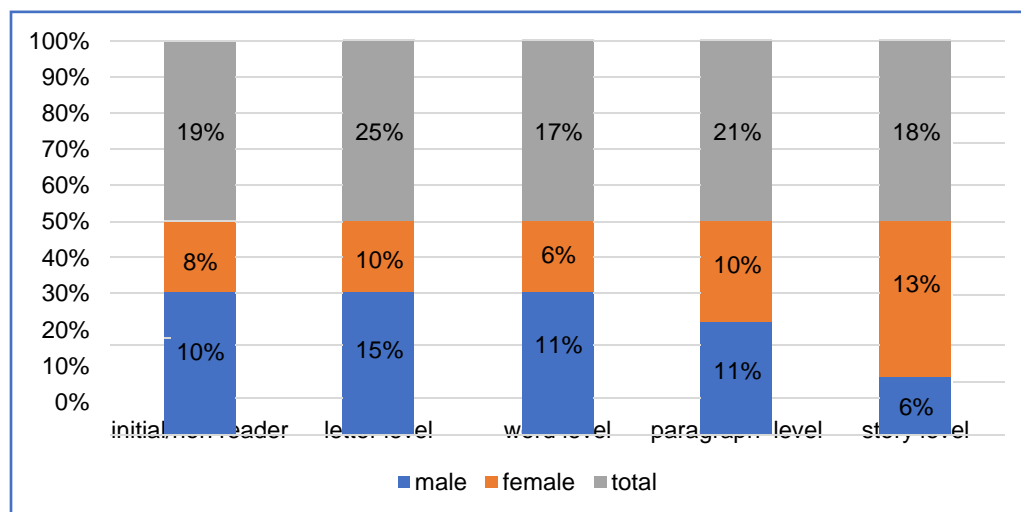


Figure 3: ASER Literacy results (local language) for P5 & P6 students by gender

Source: Fieldwork data, effectiveness study, Nov. 2022

Figure 4 shows that boys performed slightly better on the ASER English reading test scores (15%) compared to girls (12%) – reading at a higher level (story level). The ASER results also show that more girls performed at lower levels, initial level (6%); letter level (11%) and word level (18%) compared to boys.

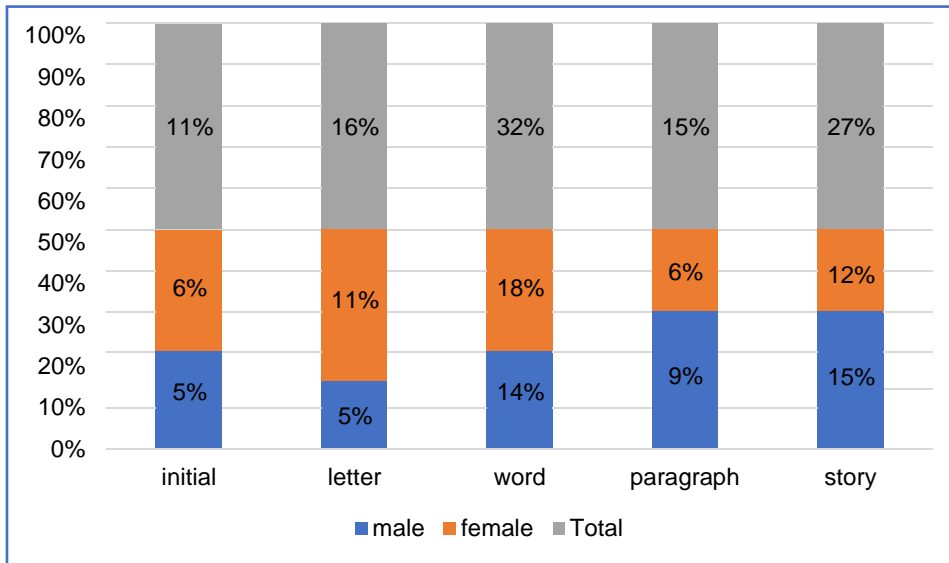


Figure 4: ASER Literacy results (English) for P5 &P6 students by gender
 Source: Fieldwork data, effectiveness study, Nov. 2022

2.2.2 ASER Numeracy results disaggregated by gender

AEP girls tested at upper primary level (P5 and P6) were mainly performing at number proficiency levels (18% to 16% for girls) compared to boys (Figure 5) who were reaching higher levels of proficiency in multiplication and division compared to girls (16% vs 15% for girls).

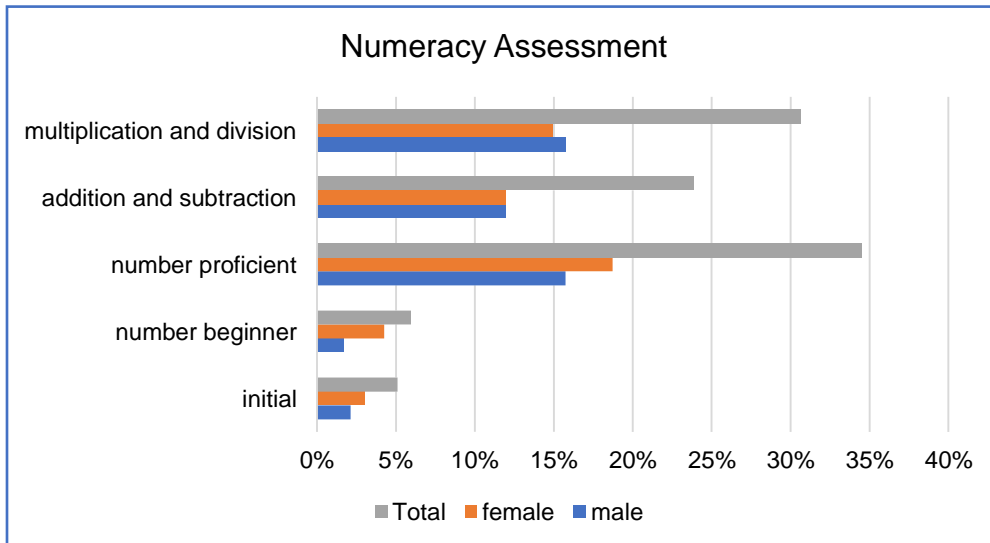


Figure 5: ASER numeracy results for P5 &P6 students by gender
 Source: Fieldwork data, effectiveness study, Nov. 2022

2.2.3 SEGRA results disaggregated by gender

The SEGRA findings (Table 6) show a higher proportion of boys achieved better ‘basic competences (58%) compared to girls (42%) on all scores. The results showed that the AEP boys outperformed girls at the “basic competency achieved exceptionally well” level of assessment.

Table 6: SEGRA Reading Comprehension among AEP learners in Ghana

Reading comprehension	Sex of pupil/youth		
	Male	Female	Total
Not achieved majority of the Basic Competences	17%	12%	29%
Achieved the minimum number of Basic Competences	5%	3%	8%
Achieved Basic Competences	5%	5%	10%
Achieved Basic Competences well	9%	7%	17%
Achieved Basic Competences exceptionally well	22%	15%	37%
Total	58%	42%	100%

Source: Fieldwork data, effectiveness study, Nov. 2022

The following quotations speak to the quantitative evidence:

“It has helped me to read and write and speak English” (AEP Girl transitioned from AEPs in Northern Ghana)

“They made me motivated to learn to read and write. I felt comfortable to learn and asking questions because of the use of local language” (FGD with OOSC, Kumbungu District, Northern Region)

“It helped to get children who were in school to now attend school. Also help improved, the literacy level of the community, most of the children are now able to read and write in their local language” (Female JHS 2 Rural Deprived Saboba)

“It has reduced illiteracy in the community. It has reduced out of school children at home.” (Female JHS 2 Extremely Deprived Yendi)

“Some students were not good academically, but when they attended the CBE classes it helped to improve their performance” (Male P6 student, Rural Deprived, Talensi District)

2.2.4 Provides the opportunity for out-of-school girls to return to school:

The evidence from education innovators over the years showed that more girls were able to **enrol and transition** into formal education after completing the formal education system compared to AEP boys. Most of the AEP programming in Ghana proactively selected slightly more OOSC girls than boys (55% girls vs 45% boys) – but due to their social and economic disadvantage this was not always achieved. The data in Table 1 shows about 16,657 children were enrolled in the Afrikids programme during cycles 1–5. Of this, 53% were girls. In Cycle 5, the gender difference became more noticeable, with females accounting for almost a third (59%) of the beneficiaries; the monitoring reports suggest that this was due to increasing the

awareness creation on the importance of girls education among community leaders and household heads, increasing the number of female facilitators in the programme and along with providing incentives to girls to enrol in the programme.

A similar trend is observed on the GILLBT-managed CBE programme (Table 2) – where evidence showed a higher proportion of females across all the AEP cycles except for Cycle 4, where there were more males compared to females.

Overall transition rates for both AEP implementers were having high rates of transition from AEP to the formal education system in their last few cycles of the programme (between 98% for Afrikids to 90/100% of AEPs). Interesting a higher proportion of girls (54-59%) were transitioning from CBE into the formal education system for Afrikids.

Table 7: Performance of AfriKids CBE programme

Education Innovator	CBE Cycle	Enrolment				Total	Transition				Percentage Transitioned	
		Boys	%	Girls	%		Boys	%	Girls	%	No.	%
AfriKids	1	822	58%	594	42%	1416	552	51%	539	49%	1091	77%
	2	1083	46%	1293	54%	2376	994	45%	1208	55%	2202	93%
	3	2739	49%	2876	51%	5615	2699	49%	2819	51%	5518	98%
	4	2273	46%	2627	54%	4900	2234	46%	2587	54%	4821	98%
	5	965	41%	1385	59%	2350	945	41%	1352	59%	2297	98%
Grand Total		7,882	47%	8,775	53%	16,657	7,424	47%	8,505	53%	15,929	96%

Source: Afrikids Annual Report, 2020

Table 8: Performance of GILLBT CBE programme

Education Innovator	CBE Cycle	Enrolment				Total	Transition				Percentage Transitioned	
		Boys	%	Girls	%		Boys	%	Girls	%	No.	%
GILLBT	1	745	45%	920	55%	1665	616	43%	804	57%	1420	85%
	2	3200	49%	3366	51%	6566	2907	49%	3018	51%	5925	90%
	3	2000	50%	2008	50%	4008	1750	50%	1722	50%	3472	87%
	4	530	52%	487	48%	1017	460	50%	459	50%	919	90%
	5	366	50%	361	50%	727	366	50%	361	50%	727	100%
Grand Total		6,841	49%	7,142	51%	13,983	6,099	49%	6,364	51%	12,463	89%

Source: GILLBT Data, 2021

In comparison to transition data, most cycles had an equal number of AEP learners transitioning from CBE to formal education - approximately 50% of girls and boys girls transitioned throughout cycles 3,4,5. At the end of Cycle 5, there was a transition rate of 100%. Cycle 1 had the smallest proportion of transitioned pupils (85%).

Story of change relating to providing opportunity/access to girls and the vulnerable:

My name is Bilijiba Nakol, I come from Kpegu, I'm 16-year-old. I am in class five. My first name is Esther...when Afrikids had not yet come here, I was in the house doing nothing

Afrikids came to my village and had a meeting at the chief palace. They mentioned that, that they wanted to enroll children who were not attending school in a special programme then I went, and my name was written. Now when I completed the CBE... I have transitioned to formal school and am in class five. Prior to the introduction of the STAGE Project in my community, I could not go to school because I did not have a school uniform, books and a bicycle. My condition as a special needs child was also a challenge.

I joined the STAGE program at the age of 12. Afrikids provided me with everything I needed. What restricted my participation in the AEP programme was my condition. I am a child with special needs. I sometimes found it difficult pushing my wheelchair. Being around my other colleagues also felt like a challenge.

Anytime I had to go for classes, my mother would bath, and prepare me for the programme. The community members also helped me to the school.

I'm currently in school. I am able to help myself to school.

Through the AEP I'm now a student learning like my colleagues. I can write and read. I have been given books, pencils and erasers. I have been provided with a wheelchair which aids me in moving about freely.

I would appeal that all who have special needs like me should be given the opportunity to go to school and become part of the society.

2.2.5 How have the AEPs helped transform girl's agency and empowerment

▪ Girls' Empowerment and Awakening

A key part of the training provided to girls through the AEP model is to empower them to stand up for their rights relating to access to education, resisting attempts to be married off and so forth. The analysis showed that the AEPs have contributed significantly to empowering young girls/adolescents to be self-confident and aware of their rights and responsibilities. Participants in the AEP are instructed on life skills including sexual reproductive health rights; moral values such as trustworthiness, cooperation, respect, and self-confidence. Consequently, AEP students feel that they are able to communicate in public and engage in class, at the family and community levels. Findings from the interviews with AEP learners at upper primary and Junior High school levels across the 8 study districts reveal that the AEP girls were well aware of the ways to prevent abuse, potential assault and adolescent pregnancy. The following voices speak to this:

Box 3: AEP Female beneficiary Voices

"CBE programmes has opened my mind into real life. Education is not for only boys but for girls too. I can become anything I aspire to in life. I know my right and can't be given into marriage against my will. I can develop myself well and get good job and good salary to support my future family." (Female P5 student, Rural Deprived, Tolon District)

"I have gained knowledge in relation to my rights. So, I can now stand against anything that does not promote my right in the community such as early marriage, child labour and others." (Female JHS 1 student, Rural Deprived, Tolon District)

"I have been able to stay away from boys since I joined CBE programme. I have learned not to be going out in the night and I also don't attend our village market" (Female P5 Extremely Deprived Community, Yendi District)

Through the CBE programme, I have been able to learn how important it is as an educated girl to live in a society like this and also it has boosted my aspiration in life. I cannot be taken for early marriage without my concern (female P6 student Rural Deprived, Tolon)

I am now having strong ambition for further studies; therefore I can withstand any of our childhood marriages which may cause me not to achieve any goal in life. (female JHS 2 student Rural Deprived, Tolon)

The CBE programme made me understand that education is for all and not for only males or boys (Female P5 student, Rural Deprived, Tolon)

AEP facilitator used to advise us to take good care of ourselves. This has helped us to be focused in life and stand up for our rights (Female JHS 1 student, Rural Deprived, Tolon)

I do not mean I always stand and fight for my right but when it can to my peace of mind, I am always willing to positively respond/resolve the situation (Female P6 student, Rural Deprived, Saboba District)

Economic Empowerment of girls

The results show that AEPs have enabled girls to develop skills that generate income to them to escape from poverty. As part of the training provided to girls by the AEP model, the AEP graduates can apply numeracy and literacy to their work. The analysis revealed that AEPs have considerably contributed to empowering young girls/adolescents to account for their finances, interact with customers, and read tool manuals. These skills are acquired by AEP participants in order to earn money while out of school. Again, some AEP models were primarily based on life skills, such as soap-making, dressmaking, and hairdressing. Consequently, AEP participants believe they are capable of running a business and surviving on their own as a result of the crafts they learned during the programme. Interviews with AEP students at the upper primary and junior high school levels in each of the eight study districts revealed that some AEP females now generate income from sources other than farming and communicate with their customers in English. The following voices support this viewpoint:

Box 4: AEP Female beneficiary Voices

In my tailoring business, the lessons learnt from the AEP has helped me to take the measurements of my clients and write their names. (male world of work, Rural Deprived, Saboba)

It helped me read words which I am using currently although I am not in school. (female)

world of work, Rural Deprived, Kumbungu)

I learnt maths and science from the CBE program, and I use both in my work space. The maths involves numbers and in tailoring we deal in numbers and in science too, we do measurements using numbers. (female world of work, Extremely Deprived, Talensi)

The CBE has helped me with my customer service. I know how to handle my customers, because when they come, and I treat them well they will remember and always come back. But if I treat them badly they won't come. and they will also inform other people and they will not patronize me. (female world of work, Extremely Deprived, Talensi)

the lessons from CBE has helped me a lot in Kumasi When we were in CBE they taught us Maths, So, when I was in the chop bar when they come to buy something I know the change I have to give. sometimes when somebody speaks English with me I understand and sometimes I respond. (female world of work, Extremely Deprived, Talensi)

2.3 How have the beneficiary (girls) participation and involvement in AEPs helped them to address the barriers to their education and stand up for their rights and overcome these barriers

From the perspective of female AEP beneficiaries, their participation and involvement in the AEP has helped to address the barriers of education and subsequently empowered them to stand for their rights and overcome these barriers. Prior to joining the AEP, some beneficiaries were faced with barriers such as illiteracy, poverty, sicknesses and lack of ignorance of their rights and many essential values of life. The stories of change revealed that the AEP supported the girls in overcoming some of the barriers to education by providing them with stationery during the AEP and school uniforms, bicycles and stationery after transitioning to formal school. The AEP empowered girls who previously lacked knowledge on hygiene were taught the importance and how to practice it.

Again, the stories of change revealed that the AEP did a tremendous job by encouraging girls to stand up for their rights relating to access to education and resisting attempts to be married off and so forth. The stories of change showed that the AEPs have contributed to empowering young girls/adolescents to be self-confident and aware of their rights and responsibilities. The following stories of change speak to this:

Stories of Change (Girls)

DISTRICT: A young girl with special needs in Kpegu E.P. primary school in extreme rural deprived areas of, SABOBA indicates that:

My name is Bilijiba Nakol, I come from Kpegu, I'm 16 years old. I am in class five. My first name is Esther, the food I like best is beans. When Afrikids had not yet come here, I was in the house doing nothing. Afrikids came to my village and had a meeting at the chief palace. They mentioned that, that they wanted to enroll children who were not attending school in the programme then I went and my name was written. Now I have transitioned to formal school and in class five.

Prior to the introduction of the STAGE Project in my community, I could not go to school

because I did not have a school uniform, books and a bicycle. My condition as a special needs child was also a challenge. I joined the STAGE program at the age of 12. Afrikids provided me with everything I needed. What restricted my participation in the AEP programme was my condition. I am a child with special needs. I sometimes found it difficult pushing my wheelchair. Being around my other colleagues also felt like a challenge.

Anytime I had to go for classes, my mother would bath and prepare me for the programme. The community members also helped me to the school.

I'm currently in school. I am able to help myself to school.

Through the AEP I'm now a student learning like my colleagues. I can write and read. I have been given books, pencils and erasers. I have been provided with a wheelchair which aids me in moving about freely.

I would appeal that all who have special needs like me should be given the opportunity to go to school and become part of the society.

Stories of Change

Also, Lucky (a female respondent from Northern Ghana had this to say:

My name is Lucky, I come from Hawala, I attend JHS school. I am 14 years old, the food I like best is TZ and the game I like best is football. Before I joined the CBE, I was sitting in the house, selling my mother's things. I did not know what I was doing. My friends went to the CBE and came and told me that it was good so I joined. My parents encouraged me to join the CBE. When I joined it helped me and I still wish to continue my education. My motivation was that, my friends said if I join, it will help me and I joined and it has actually helped me a lot.

The main challenge that prevented me from going to school before the AEP was that, I did not know what to do to go to school. My parents are illiterates so they did not understand the importance of education.

However, there was no issue that restricted my full participation in the AEP. My parents encouraged me to go to the classes and said they wouldn't want me to end up like them.

Currently, I am attending school and in JHS 2. The CBE Programme has taught me so much that I now know what is right from wrong. The advice I will tell the youth is that they should be serious about their education. Parents should continue to encourage their children to go to school and the government should continue to support the CBE programme.

Through the AEP I'm now a student learning like my colleagues. I can write and read. I have been given books, pencils and erasers. I have been provided with a wheelchair which aids me in moving about freely.

I would appeal that all who have special needs like me should be given the opportunity to go to school and become part of the society.

Stories of Change

Another special needs child in the Upper East community of, Talensi indicates that:

My name is Kalar Nnagner, I come from Kpegu, I'm 12 year old. I am in class five. My Teacher's name is Augustine. The food I like best is rice. My favourite subject is science. I am a beneficiary of the AFRIKIDS STAGE Programme.

There was a time when people who were interested in joining the programme were asked to write their names so I also wrote mine. Prior to joining the programme, I was doing nothing because I had a challenge with my leg.

I joined the Afrikids Programme when I was ten (10) years old.

Because of the pains in my legs, my parents sometimes resisted me from attending the AEP. classes. My parents provided whatever I needed for the program, if only they were able to afford. I am attending school now. I am a class five student of Kpegu Primary school.

Afrikids gave me books, pencils and erasers. Through the program, I can now read and write. The most significant thing I learned from the AEP programme is how to read and write both my local language and English. I learnt vowels and consonants in Likpakpaln. I also learnt personal hygiene and how to keep the environment clean to prevent the breed mosquitoes, and other poisonous reptiles.

I would like to thank Afrikids for providing education for me. I would also advise my colleagues to take their education serious. I would advise the government to always help us with such programs.

2.3.4 How girls have been able to overcome socio-cultural challenges (forced or early marriage, FGM...fosterage)...

- **Addressing/reducing incidence of child marriage⁴**

The introduction of AEPs and Girls Focused Programmes (GFPs) has contributed to tackle several issues faced by girls in rural and deprived societies. Prior to the introduction of the GFPs, child marriage was on the rise because parents did not value formal education for female children and believed that her “place was in the home, and where she would learn to serve her future husband”. Following the implementation of the AEP programmes, including the Afrikids’ STAGE Project which targeted out of school girls, there has been a significant change in the lives of girls in these communities. The STAGE project sought to enable out of school children, particularly, girls who had dropped out of school, to either go back into the formal education system or acquire a skill in catering, dressmaking, soap making, beadmaking or hairdressing. The findings show that not only has STAGE project helped to enroll girls to access appropriate education, but it has also empowered girls to know their rights and enlightened parents on the importance of girl-child education. Some SMCs/PTAs confirmed that activities of Girls Focused Programmes have been visible and have brought about an increase in the number of girls who have enrolled in school, bridging the gap between boys and girls in terms of education, and

⁴ Based on the Ghana Mapping Study (2022, Associates for Change Commissioned by IDRC /KIX)

reduced the incidence of child marriage. These are the voices of some parents concerning the presence and impact of Girls Focused Programmes:

“... It has reduced early marriage and teenage pregnancy” (SMC Member, Gushegu District, Northern Region)

“A lot girls transitioned from the CBE programme to the formal system and that helped to prevent child marriages” (SMC/PTA member, Talensi District, Upper East Region)

“...A lot of female learners have been transitioned into formal school under this programme” (Chief/Elder, Saboba District, Northern Region)

“...It has helped the children to learn about the dangers of teenage pregnancy and early marriages” (PTA Member, Karaga District, Northern Region)

2.2 Parental views of the impact and effectiveness of AEPs on girls:

Community leaders and parents were engaged as key stakeholders in the AEP space by monitoring and supporting the programme when their children attended, they often had to release both boys and girls from work on the farm or other duties at the household (cooking, cleaning and child care). A synthesis of their views revealed that the communities in the project area benefitted greatly from the AEPs implemented by organizations such as Afrikids, School for Life and World Education.

The school management committees and Parent Teachers Associations (SMCs/PTAs) affirmed that the AEPs brought about change in their communities by developing the literacy skills of most of the out of school children in both local language and later in English; and as a result, they became adept at reading and writing. The majority of the AEP learners transitioned to formal school, and parents were happy with the AEP practice of the local language. They attested that this helped the children to achieve better results in school, since they understand what they were being taught. In some cases, it also assisted the household better support their girls' education pathway by reducing their workload/chores for a few hours while they attended AEP classes and then when they were placed in formal education systems. The improvement in their literacy also made one more remarkable outcomes for the girls –the parents' investment in the girls education where there had been a preference for boys; in some cases it helped girls avoid the push towards marriage by the family and community.

Voices of some of the parents of AEP students at primary and JHS levels highlighted below:

“There was a great impact because it made them acquire the skills of reading and writing and so when they were transitioned to formal school, they had things easy for them” (SMC/PTA member, Karaga District, Northern Region)

“It made it easy for most of those (OOSC children) who were not enrolled in the formal school to transition into the regular education system” (School Management Committee member --SMC, Kumbungu, Northern)

‘Yes, it has improved on the reading ability of the children and through the programme, some of the pupils are provided with free uniform, books and bags’ (Headteacher, Nwogu AME Zion Prim. School, Kumbungu District, Northern Region)

“The children picked up quickly as they were taught in the local language and were able to perform well when they transitioned” (SMC/PTA member, Yendi District, Northern Region)

“It has helped them to be enrolled in the normal school. It has helped the children by supplying them reading and writing material. It has reduced the burden on parents by providing uniforms, bags and sandals for girls. It has provided girls with bicycle for moving from home to the school” (SMC/PTA member, Saboba District, Northern Region)

2.4 How have AEPs helped them overcome poverty barriers

The evidence for example, shows that in contexts where economic deprivation denies children the right to education, CBE provides necessary teaching and learning resources to help marginalised children learn under flexible arrangements. This affords them the opportunity to participate in education and still support their households, either on the farm or through other economic activities. Thus, many boys and girls living in marginalized and low-income households have had access to basic literacy and numeracy training through the CBE programme, subsequently transitioning into the mainstream school system. The evidence also suggests that the CBE programme has opened school doors to many students previously underserved, most of whom subsequently transitioned into the formal school system and even progressed to higher levels (Casely-Hayford et al., 2018).

2.3.4 How have AEPs participation impacted on their life outcomes and in what way (entering the world of work, attaining higher levels of education etc)

▪ Changes in future career prospects

From the perspective of AEP beneficiaries, their participation in the AEP has expanded their worldview, especially in relation to their future career prospects. Some of the beneficiaries prior to the AEP were unaware of many formal employment options and did not realise it was feasible to pursue them. Girls who were previously uninterested in pursuing a career in science are now showing a marked increase in enthusiasm for the field. Again, the qualitative study revealed that some AEP students had attained greater professional status, with some becoming teachers and police officers, which the children are looking up to. The following voices speak to this finding:

Box 5: Voices of female and male beneficiaries

“I was a farmer before AEP but now I want to be a doctor” (Female P5 student, Rural Deprived, Tolon, District)

“Before the AEP programme, I had no plans for the future, I always thought the farm was the only occupation one could do but when we started going for the classes I realized that there is more to do than just farming” (Female JHS 2 student, Rural Deprived, Karaga District)

“After AEP and now in formal school, my aspirations in life have changed. I want to become a teacher now. I did not think this way before AEP” (Female P5 student, Rural Deprived, Karaga District)

“The AEP has impacted on the lives of those who wanted to go to school but didn’t have the opportunity to do so” (Female P6 student, Rural Deprived, Talensi District)

▪ Change agents/pioneers in the communities

A further synthesis of the evidence showed some CBE beneficiaries have become role models in their communities as a result of their work, studies and advancement in life – which are traceable to their participation in AEPs. As a result of their academic and professional accomplishments, the school-aged children in the community view the AEP graduates (Girls and Boys) as role models and people to look up to for inspiration.

Box 6: Voices of beneficiaries

“Some of the girls are now looking unto her and also prayed to become like her” (Female P5 student, Rural Deprived, Tolon District)

“I know of someone who is now a teacher and he started through this programme” (Female P6 student, Rural Deprived, Tolon District)

“It has made a lot of us who would not have had the opportunity to go to school now attending formal school. Some passed through the programme and are now teachers” (Female JHS 1 student, Rural Deprived, Tolon District)

“Through CBE Maamoa Nwenpak has gained admission into SHS programme and he is my role model. Initially, Maamoa was not attending school but later enrolled in the CBE programme went to Bunbong JHS and now in SHS” (Male P5 student, Rural Deprived, Yendi Municipality)

2.4 What were the key factors which facilitated the effectiveness of AEPs in the different contexts of learning (use the Facilitator interviews, interviews with Education innovators, Districts etc and potentially community or head teacher interviews etc)

The interviews and FGDs show that the AEPs are flexible and allow beneficiaries to attend the class while their animals are tethered. Majority of the AEP beneficiaries also indicate that the AEPs do not punish, rebuke, and humiliate children who fail to wear school uniforms.. Also, the provision of teaching and learning resources to the beneficiaries motivated them to continue to attend. The fact that the programme is run in the people’s mothers’ tongue, teaching and learning is described by majority as being participatory and all inclusive.

2.5.1 Deprived and extreme rural areas factors (Lack of teacher presence, irregularity of teachers, harsh conditions of learning, poor resourced schools and limited time for children to learn in farming seasons)

The lack of teachers coupled with teachers’ refusal to serve in rural areas make AEP the best alternative for rural education. AEPs are helping children in deprived and extremely rural areas to acquire knowledge and training in their mothers’ tongue to prepare them for adult life. Since, parents are not required to pay school fees, provide teaching and learning resources and attend PTA, the communities uphold AEP as serving the needs of the communities. Thus, AEP does not affect the social structure of the communities but rather respect them.

2.5.2 Facilitator Commitment levels: based in the community, mentoring and coaching and follow up with the children

Unlike teachers in the formal school system, the AEP facilitators are very committed to work although they do not receive monetary incentive. For the facilitator the social recognition and status gained by virtue of their relationship with the education innovators is their main source of inspiration to work. They are often driven to mentor and coach the children and occasionally follow up with the children in their homes to examine their welfare. This act of checking up on the children has yielded positive commendations from the children. Some of the children indicate that the facilitators treat them like “little gods” because the facilitators visit to enquire about their challenges at home.

2.5.3 Flexible school timing off farm hours/ harvest high demand labour etc.

AEP has been described by both boys and girls and community members as flexible in terms of the timing for school attendance. This is because the children and youth are able to effectively combine their work with school activities. While some communities host their classes in the afternoon, others do it in the evening depending on the the needs of the family.

Section 3: Conclusions and recommendations for scaling up AEPs for Government and impact on Girls Education

Within the countries of focus in West Africa, Accelerated Education Programmes (AEP) are providing contextually relevant educational solutions to children and youth who remain out of school and or drop out. The innovations are particularly relevant to children ‘left behind’, and for areas of fragility, extreme poverty, and locations where teachers are unwilling to serve. They have shown positive results in relation to learning outcomes, learning efficiency for the poor, school readiness and gender equity.

Governments have a responsibility to provide alternative pathways to primary education within contexts where poorly resourced schools remain unable to provide basic learning, literacy and numeracy gains. Evidence from the IDRC West Africa Study on AEPs demonstrates that accelerated systems of education which have been working for the last two decades should be move to full scale and mainstreamed within the government budget systems; AEPs in Africa need to be provided with consistent resourcing and budgeting to attain scale in order to achieve the needed impact and reduce the OOSC phenomena.

The evidence is also demonstrating that learning outcomes for the vast majority of AEP learners result in high transition rates (over 80%) into the formal system; having skipped 3-4 years of formal schooling yet having equivalent levels of competency in literacy and numeracy. This can mean cost savings to government and the families who are supporting these children in often poverty zones and rural deprived areas where schools are not fully functioning.

Yet Government systems need to be ready to accept and accommodate AEP learners who transition into the mainstream. This will likely mean innovative approaches to teacher deployment and using locally based community teachers to ensure that schools can receive and ensure quality for the growing numbers of children.

Key recommendations to Governments and Policy makers in West Africa

Based on the findings of the working paper, the following recommendations are offered to help scale up AEP and girls’ focused programming:.

Government/Policy level actions

▪ Need to have a targeted approach to addressing the OOSC phenomenon

The evidence on OOSC in Ghana shows that the out of school phenomenon is predominant among children aged 6-11 (primary level). Thus, more targeted investment is required for accelerated education programmes and approaches to help to address the high number of OOSC particularly girls who are still left behind in formal education at rural areas of northern Ghana.

▪ Need to sustain the gains achieved on AEPs and Girls Focused Programmes through sustained funding:

The lack of funds and logistics have impeded the operationalization of AEPs and girls focused programmes in Ghana. Against this backdrop, the study recommends that the Government of Ghana and the donor community should provide sustainable funding to the Complementary Education Agency and non-governmental organizations to enable them roll back OOSC in hard-to-reach communities. The funds can also be directed at providing learning resources to motivate children, particularly girls in poor homes to continue formal education. The evidence synthesized in this position paper points to significant results achieved in relation to learning outcomes, completion and transition levels on all the AEPs and girls' focused innovations across West Africa. These models have proven to be very effective in addressing the out of school issues, especially for girls.

Governments across the Sub-region should scale up these Accelerated Education programmes as key models in expanding access to education, assure basic foundational learning outcomes and equity for the poor especially in deprived rural remote and conflict-prone areas.

Ensure that AEP learners and Girls remain and complete basic education pathways

The Ministry of Education and agencies should work ensure that funding earmarked for basic education including AEPs is released in a timely basis to ensure that AEP learners and girls completed basic education without much hinderance. Also, collaboration between UNICEF and UNESCO is pivotal in ensuring that international standards are met and that partnerships with local actors are achieved.

Improving Education Systems readiness for transition and entry of AEP learners

- Ensure trained teaching quotas for rural schools are attained in order to improve quality primary schooling in areas where schools are receiving children from AEPs and girls model programming.
- Consider adopting a new model of community-based volunteer teachers in areas where trained teachers continue to resist postings and deployment due to harsh conditions and the lack of incentives.
- Orient head teachers on "inclusion policies" which enable girls and boys to re-enter school at upper primary and beyond once they have dropped out or to encourage those who have never been to school to enrol.
- Continue training teachers on inclusive, gender and child friendly teaching methods in order to retain AEP learners along with others; particular attention should be paid to using inclusive teaching methods which support differentiated learner needs.

- Promote phonic based approaches at lower primary and where possible use local-language speaking teachers to teach initial reading and numeracy skills to students; collaborate with EIs to build on their existing local language curriculum and materials.

Additional recommendations:

- The findings from this study shows that factors that address the OOSC barriers are multifactorial and require direct support to girls, their families, and communities.
- The challenge: is that some of the key demand and supply barriers can still prevent completion at primary and junior high if not addressed---distance to school, basic needs, any school fees
- AEP programming should be complemented by income generation and safety net programming especially for the girl child
- the law against child marriage should be strictly enforced

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