



Ministry of Education
REPUBLIC OF GHANA



COMMUNIQUE

High-Level Conference to Address the Out-of-School Children Crisis in West Africa

The Africa Union
Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS)
G 7 conference 2024
Global Partnership for Education
IDRC
UNICEF
UNESCO

Ministries of Education and Ministries of Finance, Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Mali and Burkina Faso

Call for Governments in West Africa to institutionalize complementary/ parallel track system of reaching out of school children in Africa.

Increased funding to Accelerated Education programming in West Africa international Fund for Out of School Children to be established.

A high-level conference was convened on June 11 and 12, 2024 in Accra, Ghana to consult on “**Tackling the Out of School Challenge in West Africa**” brought together experts, researchers, government officials from the Ministries of Education, academia and civil society from Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Mali and Burkina Faso. This conference built on the findings from the Accelerated Education Working Group conference convened in Senegal in 2022. Research and evidence point to the growing numbers of out of school children in the last five years in several countries including Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Mali and Burkina Faso. Delegates from IDRC, UNESCO, UNICEF, Accelerated Education Working Group (AEWG), Governments and civil society who are working on alternative education pathways and modalities convened to deliberate on the evidence and plan for a continental strategy to tackle the out of school challenge.

The key findings from the KIX GPE research in West Africa suggests the following:

- The Out of School Populations are increasing with Nigeria over 19 million out of school children (6-16); Ghana over 1.2 million out of school children, Burkina Faso with 3.5 million, Mali with and Sierra Leone 1.0 million out of school children (UNESCO, 2023)
- Demand and supply barriers to entry and completion of primary education persist. These include: poverty, socio cultural practices and beliefs along with lack of school infrastructure and trained teachers especially in rural deprived communities. All operating within fragile/conflict contexts and limited budget allocation for education.
- A proven cost-effective solution for governments in tackling the out- of- school challenge is to scale up the Accelerated education programming in the region which includes; speed schools, complementary basic education and other educational models which focus on populations of children who have never attended and or dropped out.

Research on AEP effectiveness and efficiency, supported by IDRC/GPE/KIX reveal the

following:-

- The AEP model reaches the most deprived and extreme poverty areas including conflict zones in some countries.
- Over 90% of Accelerated education learners (AEPs) transition into upper primary school after they complete the AEP courses.
- Learning outcomes are achieved in a shorter time frame compared to the formal system. Often, AEP beneficiaries achieved foundation literacy and numeracy within one year, skipping 4-6 years of primary schooling;
- AEP beneficiaries attain 50% levels of reading comprehension compared to their non-AEP counterparts in the P3 or P4 classes.
- AEPs beneficiaries are found to stay and complete primary education due to their higher levels of learning confidence and ability
- AEPs beneficiaries are resilient. Those who are prepared to transition into Junior secondary school have potential to move on to senior high school levels, if they have the economic means.
- Girls are particularly impacted by AEPs since they have acquired a higher level of education. Exposure to AEPs results in a shift from parental beliefs to stronger negotiation skills and beliefs to protect them from early marriage and pregnancy.
- AEP programs are cost effective and efficient. Evidence has shown that governments will save at least one third of the cost of formal school per year.

Several governments have begun putting in place institutional arrangements to run the programs with close collaboration with civil society; these include: policies on AEPs, curriculum and legislative instruments to create agencies within the Ministry of Education. Some governments in collaboration with the private sector and civil society have developed, approved and tested AEP curriculum for country wide usage, which can be adapted across the continent.

In order for governments to reach the targets under the SDG 4 we will require the following:

1. All governments in the sub region dedicate **at least 7% to 10%** of their basic education budget to tackling the out of school crisis by investing in accelerated education programming.
2. The recognition and full integration of AEP into national and educational system through appropriate policies and legislation to ensure sustainability.
3. Each government develop a road map and action plan for tackling the out of school crisis and policy on Complementary or Accelerated Education
4. Countries should also develop and enhance partnerships with research institutions, CSOs and the private sector to support and scale up AEP programming.
5. We urge all governments in collaboration with civil society to develop and test AEP curriculum as well as approve for country wide usage.
6. Government allocate at least 15% of its teaching wage bill to accelerated education programming through ensuring community volunteer AEP facilitators transition onto distance education programmes for teaching certification and then on permanent contract.
7. That communities are supported to start accelerated education programmes particularly in rural, remote and conflict prone areas of West Africa by selecting local facilitators and supported by government resources to provide training and ensure AEP curriculum/ books are provided.

We are now asking the **international community** to ensure that:

Existing Global funds focused on improving basic education, girls' education and /or foundation learning-- (e.g. GPE financing) include at least a 10% allocation to accelerated education programming as a key measure for addressing the out of school challenge.

A **new global fund** under the Accelerated Education Working Group be set up by donors and development partners including private sector actors to ensure that countries can co share the financing of AEP programmes in the region with special attention on countries with highest rates of out of school children. A separate resource envelope should be focused on education in emergency.

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